

07 July 2022

**To the Chairperson and Members
Of the Central Area Committee**

**REPORT on PUBLIC CONSULTATION and PROPOSALS for MARTIN SAVAGE PARK,
ASHTOWN.**

Background Information:

In late 2020, Oliver Plunketts GAA Club and Phoenix FC presented a draft plan to Dublin City Council for an all-weather synthetic senior GAA pitch, an all-weather synthetic senior soccer pitch, a synthetic sprint athletics track and handball alleys with surround walls. All were proposed to be floodlit. In initial discussions, while acknowledging the merit of improving recreational facilities for local clubs, DCC raised concerns with regard to traffic congestion, the Brent geese (Annex 1 species) which feed in the park and the potential impact on residential amenity and the integrity of the park as a public open space for the needs of the whole community.

Issues were also raised by residents and local councillors about these plans and they expressed their wish that any proposals would be subject to an open and transparent consultation process with the community.

Subsequently, in consultation with Dublin City Council, the clubs acknowledged the concerns raised and scaled back their requirements.

In a report to the March 2021 Central Area Committee it was acknowledged that the park requires improvement and the community should be consulted as a first step to informing the longer term plans for the park including the consideration of all weather facilities. It was also stated that DCC Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services supported by the Area Office would undertake a community consultation process when the covid restrictions ceased with a view to gaining the thoughts, considerations and needs of the whole community.

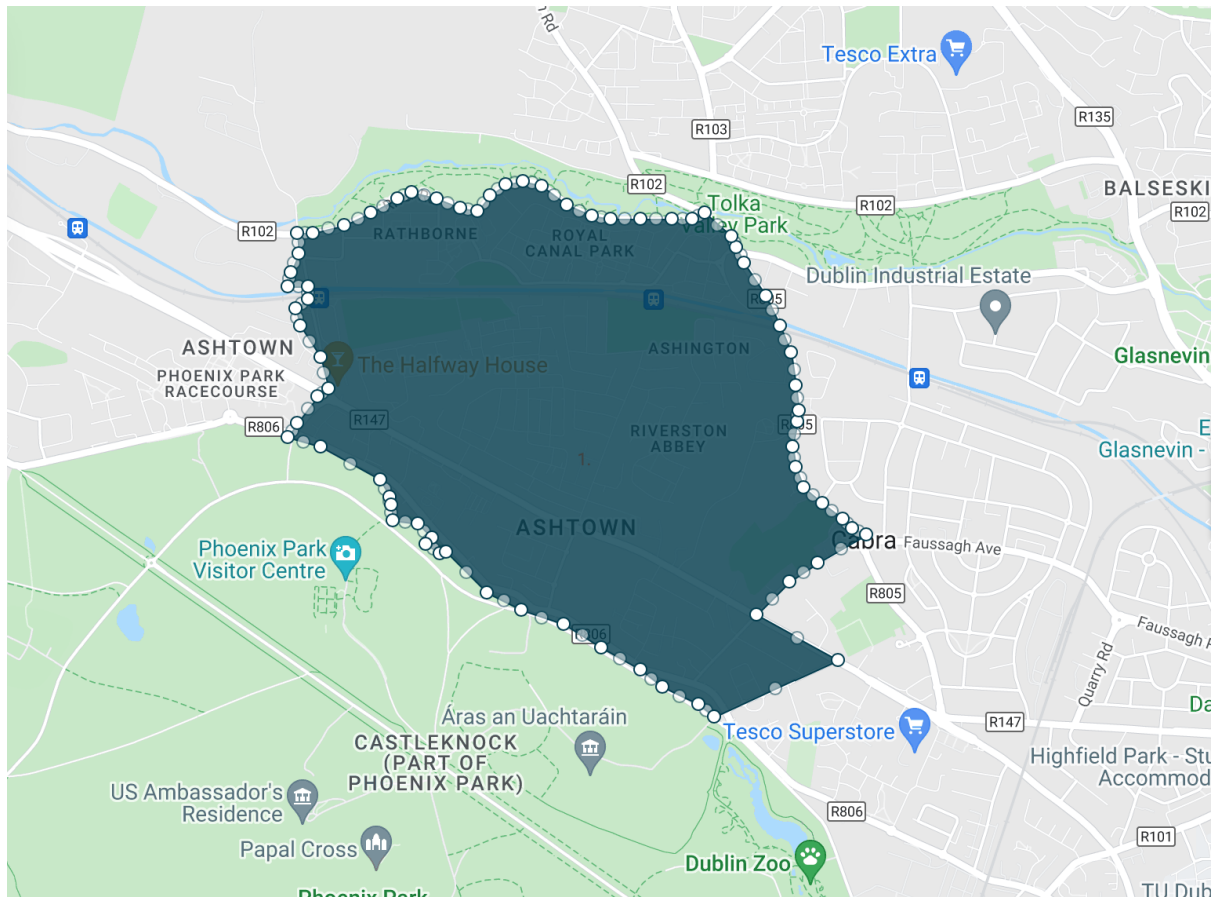
At the February 2022 Central Area Committee it was reported that a site investigation had been carried out by DCC to assess the potential flooding impact of an all-weather facility. The flood impact investigation involved the excavation of 10 one metre deep trial holes which were inspected by the Senior Engineer, Flood Projects Division, DCC. The investigation found that the ground is made up of “well draining boulder clay” and that “in order not to increase the risk of flooding to Glendhu Park the proposed design (of the all-weather facility) will have to mimic the existing flood flow regime in the area or be an improvement on it.”

This investigation clarified that an all-weather facility could be designed to incorporate the required flood water attenuation to the satisfaction of the Flood Projects Division.

The Area Committee was informed that as a next stage, it was intended to proceed with a non statutory public/community consultation on a draft plan (presented to the meeting) which would involve meeting with the residents and community groups that had expressed an interest in the development of the park.

Public Consultation Methodology:

The Area Committee requested that a leaflet drop should be carried out in the local catchment area and the Area Office organised this which involved over 4,000 residences in the area outlined in the map below.



In addition, posters were placed at the entrance points to the park and a site meeting with local residents associations and other stakeholders was arranged.

The leaflets and posters contained the following information:

The improvements proposed are as follows:

- *The layout of an all-weather facility in two units. A larger area 130mx70m and a smaller area 35mx25m both of which are multi-functional for training and field sports. These will be enclosed with weld mesh fencing to 4 sides with an additional 3m high ball stop netting at the goal ends.*
- *The smaller pitch also includes a hurling wall on its southern side comprising a 19m long and 5m high precast concrete practice wall with supporting concrete fins, and*



- *enclosed weld mesh fence with an additional 3m high ball stop netting above and ball stop netting cover to the entire practice pitch.*
- *Floodlighting is required to illuminate the facility for evening use, therefore new floodlights will form part of the proposed works which will provide the minimum illumination required for training use (the FAI Irish Governing Body of Soccer recommend a minimum of 250 lux level for training and competition). The installation of the new floodlighting system will involve the erection of 8 No. galvanised steel columns supporting up to five LED luminaries on each columns, three at the ends and five in the centre. The columns will be a maximum of 16m high and will be fixed in position. The luminaries will be fitted with low glare hoods to reduce light spill horizontally back from the pitch. The use of modern fittings will greatly reduce the potential for light nuisance or 'pollution'.*
- *The all-weather facility would be designed to provide the required flood water attenuation to the satisfaction of the Flood Projects Division and to ensure no impact on nearby properties.*
- *A childrens playground.*
- *A perimeter path is proposed to be constructed around the park to enable people to walk and exercise using the perimeter of the park. The existing pavement between Glendhu and Ashtown DART station would be widened and public lighting installed for walking and cycling to the new recreational facilities.*
- *Eight 16m high galvanised steel columns for floodlighting are proposed for installation on the grass GAA pitch outside Oliver Plunketts GAA Clubhouse. Measures to improve the drainage of the existing grass pitches will also be implemented.*
- *There will also be improved biodiversity elements including additional tree and pollinator friendly planting.*

If you would like to submit comments on the above please send your email to parks@dublincity.ie

Outcome of Public Consultation:

The total number of submissions received from the consultation process was in the order of 815, which broke down as follows:

708 no. submissions in favour of proposal

87 no. submissions against proposal

20 no. submissions offered suggestions only

Summary: While the majority of submissions were supportive of the draft proposals a large cohort of these were from members of St Oliver Plunkett Eoghan Ruadh GAA Club and Phoenix Football Club. While there was also a positive reaction and feedback from local park users (non-club members), schools and business owners, it is clear that the residents of the estates directly adjoining the park including Glendu Road, Glengariff and Martin Savage Park residents are strongly opposed to the proposals for a number of reasons related to the position of the hurling wall, the size of the proposed all-weather pitches, floodlighting, noise, traffic implications, loss of informal amenity space and the potential for increased flooding.

However, it should be noted that there was also positive reaction from these residents to other improvements to the park and they requested further consultation with DCC on these matters.

Kempton Residents Association was broadly positive towards the proposals whilst not seeking any entrance to the park and its amenities from their estate.

A selection of quotes in favour of proposal, as follows - Many submissions expressed frustration and concern in terms of existing playing conditions and the general lack of facilities in the area. Many expressed the benefit of reduced travel time will have on health and lifestyle, as well as the impact on the environment.

“They will allow us as parents and our children to use and enjoy the facilities throughout the whole year without having to travel long distances to winter training facilities”.

There was support for lighting aspect in the park and the role it can play in improving security.

“As a woman extra lighting and perimeter path for walking and jogging is a real bonus”

“The inclusion of floodlighting would be a huge addition to both the club and the community who can take advantage of the sense of security that would bring during the winter months”.

There seemed to be a generally feeling that new proposal is inclusive for both sport users and informal use.

“The proposed development will be a great asset to everyone in the wider area, promoting outdoor and healthy activities, and bring a greater community spirit to the Navan Rd area.”

There was support expressed by teachers and children for proposed development from local schools including Educate Together in Ashtown. St. John Boscós, Mary Help of Christians and St. Dominics. The inclusion of playground was highly welcomed.

“Being a primary school teacher in the local area I also see the benefit this proposed development will be for our local schools”

“Other enhancements to the park will benefit the wider population and I would welcome the addition of a playground for smaller children”



There was recognition that carpark facilities provided recently at SuperValu will go some way to alleviating car parking issue.

“More recently an agreement was made with SuperValu to allow club members and travel teams use almost 50 spots in their underground CP. This has made a massive difference to traffic congestion and parking in or near the club”.

There was a number of submissions that expressed support of proposals in general but did have some reservations regards the position of the hurling wall aspect and the the all-weather pitch.

“This park is an integral part of our community for many reasons and the proposed improvements will make sure it stays that way for a long time to come”. Local resident

“I feel that the plans developed by DCC Parks division are fantastic, in that they are inclusive, catering to all local residents, from smaller children to young and older people and will make the park safe and accessible year round, rather than only during the summer months” - Local resident

“The inclusion of the all-weather pitch, hurling wall, improvements to the grass pitches and the floodlighting will be of enormous benefit to the members of our GAA club which is made up of people living in our Community” – local resident

“I am retired and like many retired within our community I see a major benefit in the floodlit walking and cycling aspect of the development plan with the provision of the extended pathway around the pitch area”

“I have been a member of this community for over 40 years, I volunteer for many of the organisations in the area and enjoy "giving back" as it is such a tight knit, supportive community and St. Oliver Plunketts plays an enormous part in creating a positive environment for both young and old in our community”.

“This development will be of significant benefit to my children, the local schools, and all in the vicinity”.

“The drainage to pitch number 1 should help with the flooding around the area and will help have a playable pitch throughout the winter months”

“I work teaching the history of public parks. I completely understand the challenges in delivering this project. I urge you to continue your work which is for the benefit of the community and, in particular, for the children of our area”.

A selection of quotes in objection, as follows -

“My Family and I reside in XX Glendhu Road and our home borders the boundary wall of MSP on the residential side. Whilst my family and I are believers that the development of MSP will be of enormous benefit to St Oliver Plunketts Eoghan Ruadh, Phoenix FC, local schools and the local area in general we do have some major concerns on some of the aspects of the parks development based on the latest plans published – please note our concerns:”

“The light pollution will be horrendous, the constant noise will be awful too. Never mind the increase in traffic and flood risk. This really needs to be changed to have less impact on people who are expected to live beside it”

“It concerns me deeply that with the exception of a basic leaflet there has been little to no engagement/communication with the actual residents of the area whom this development will negatively impact”.

“It is difficult to conceive a plan for Martin Savage Park that would have an adverse impact on local residents, and jeopardise the safety and welfare of family homes and those in residential care to facilitate a small cohort of sporting clubs – without any consultation process taken place. The all-weather surfaces, the hurling wall and caged paths are proposed in the area of the park least suited for this type of development. There will be no park left for local families to enjoy, no area to kick a ball, kids to play, walk your dog, no amenities, no picnic or planted area”

“We would implore you to relocate these facilities to another area in the park or to another location entirely in order to prevent a serious noise nuisance to local residents”

“On a more general note, this is 2022. If Ireland is sincere in the desire to highlight itself as a progressive and forward thinking European partner, it should be seeking to preserve, cultivate, and develop all of its urban green spaces. It should not be digging them up to replace them with fenced off artificial surfaces!”

“I write in partial support of the proposed development at Martin Savage Park. I do however; have a problem with the proposed 'Wall Ball' of Hand Ball Alley area of the plans”

“It will be like living beside a rifle firing range”.

Record of meeting with local residents on site Friday 29th of April 2022.

Below is a summary of the issues raised:

All Weather Pitch

There was complete opposition to the development of an all weather pitch in the suggested location with concerns raised about.....

- light pollution into the adjacent properties.



- impact of noise into the adjacent property especially for children at bed time and the elderly, with pitch likely having use to 9.30 – 10.00 pm all year round.
- Impact on Brent geese that feed in that location & bats from the lighting.
- privatising (fencing off) of the open space for use by the clubs to the detriment of locals.
- Particular concerns were raised about the corralling of members of the public between the fenced off all weather pitches and those walking along the northern boundary between Ashtown train station and Glendhu Park entrance. This was raised as a safety issue due to the lack of escape route for anyone caught between the two points.
- Loss of trees.
- There is a house with special needs residents (16 No. plus staff) living in the area and they use the park daily, the fenced off area will negatively impact on their enjoyment of the park as they will not have access to the green open space that they use and will have to walk further into the park.
- Height of the fencing was a concern, while it would have a visible impact as proposed it was not high enough to prevent balls and sliotars entering gardens.

Hurling Wall

- The hurling wall is part of the smaller synthetic pitch so same concerns were expressed with the additional concern of the constant 'thud' from the wall as the sliotars rebound from it (could run late into the evening).

Parking & Traffic

- There is already a traffic and parking issue in the estates when there are games and the residents are concerned that all weather pitches will increase this problem into the evenings. It was stated that emergency services have been hindered by street car parking.
- There was a request for a traffic management plan but the meeting accepted that the control of parking is supposed to be managed by the clubs. However residents dispute that this takes place.
- The parking issue was stated to be the reason why the residents of Kempton don't want access to the park.

Flooding

- There was concern on the impact of the all-weather pitch on flooding in the area. Residents provided photographs of the flooding in 2008 and 2011 and informed that the swales have been breached. DCC has provided sand bags for the houses in the event of a flooding incident. It was suggested that the drainage issue is part of a wider issue further down the network and as long as this is existing then there is a

risk of any additional water causing a flooding incident in this area as there is nowhere for the water to go.

- The meeting was informed that the all-weather pitch would include below ground attenuation structures the design of which would be signed off by Flood engineering specialists.

Local Residents and the Clubs

- There was a stated lack of trust between the clubs and the local residents and a wider concerns that the local resident's views are not getting heard. The opinion is that not all those who are members of the clubs are residents in the area and therefore do not see the potential impact on those living locally.

General Park Improvements

- The play area appeared to be generally supported.
- The perimeter path supported by some and not others, concern with anti-social behaviour to the back of Martin Savage Park houses and this was discussed previously when the original path was installed. Widening the existing path was not generally supported it was considered the path was already the required width.
- Concerns was raised that there was insufficient amenities or facilities for the wider community and local residents. (just ball sports and play are for kids)
- Some support for additional benches. / concern with anti-social behaviour.
- Boules and a Sensory Garden were suggested.

DCC and Local Residents

- It was requested and agreed that DCC Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services would meet local residents and go over proposals of what they would like to see in their park.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

From the consultation it is clear that general improvements to the park such as creating a perimeter footpath, improving existing pavements, the provision of a playground, up-grading the outdoor gym, the provision of benches, additional tree planting and areas for biodiversity and possibly a 'sensory garden' and boules pitch would be supported by all residents and stakeholders.

Recommendation: It is proposed to meet with the residents groups to discuss and agree such improvements much of which could be implemented without any further planning approval.

The development of infrastructure to support all weather training and increased use of the park into the evenings has divided the community with those residents who live closest to the park strongly opposed to any intensification of existing recreational facilities because of the current issues they have referenced with regard to random and irresponsible car parking and the potential for future flood events which they perceive would be made worse by developments in the park.

From a park design/management perspective, it would be acceptable for a park of this size and scale to incorporate an all-weather facility to complement the grass pitches and support the training needs of local community clubs. In this instance clubs from two codes of sport have partnered to share this facility which could be licenced to them for community use. This is a successful model adopted in other public parks.

Recommendation: Having consideration of all the inputs of local stakeholders it would be considered reasonable to proceed with a proposal to Part 8 for an all-weather pitch (110mx66m) provided that.....

1/adequate flood attenuation is designed into the new works to the satisfaction of the Flood Protection Office;

3/ the Active Travel Unit will be requested to study and report on how permeability to the park and its amenities can be enhanced with a view to reducing traffic congestion and car parking. They will also be requested to work with the clubs and their members to promote walking and cycling.

2/ the two clubs will be required to provide a plan for managing car parking and minimising traffic relating to their use of the amenities and facilities in the park.

The proposal for improving the drainage and floodlighting the main GAA pitch will be the subject of further consultation between DCC and Oliver Plunketts club with regard to the cost of maintaining such an intensively used grass pitch.

Recommendation: Subject to agreement with Oliver Plunketts GAA club the flood light installation on the existing senior GAA grass pitch could be included in a Part 8 proposal.

In acknowledgement of the issues raised in the non-statutory public consultation it is not proposed to proceed with the hurling wall and the smaller synthetic multi use training pitch. However, the desire for additional facilities in the Ashtown area (area leafleted) is noted and consideration will be given to the development of additional and complementary facilities at Ashington Park which is an under developed park serving the same clubs and communities.

Recommendation: Carry out a study for the better utilisation of Ashington Park for recreational facilities.

Leslie Moore

Head of Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services

Culture, Recreation and Economic Services Department