

Motions with Replies
Central Area Committee Meeting
14th February, 2017

Item 1

Motion in the name of Councillor Eilis Ryan

While welcoming the development of student housing, this Committee notes the reduction in social housing in the North Inner City as a result of the exemption from Part 5 requirements for student housing developments.

This Committee notes with alarm the advertised extremely high expected rental income for investors of a number of student residences currently under development in the area.

This Committee requests that the Manager write to Minister Simon Coveney on behalf of the Committee on this matter, requesting a review of (a) the impact of student housing developments on Part 5 social housing output and (b) measures which will be taken to ensure student developments are affordable to students in the North Inner City.

Report

A letter will be forwarded to the Minister if the members agree the terms of the motion.

Item 2

Motion in the name of Councillor Eilis Ryan

This Committee notes the density of Airbnb rental accommodation in the North Inner City and the resulting impact this has on rent prices in the city. In particular, the Committee notes the high number of multi-property Airbnb “hosts” who rent out multiple properties in the North Inner City on a full time basis for short stays.

The Committee requests that Dublin City Council Planning and Housing Departments prepare a full report, for presentation and debate at the Housing Strategic Policy Committee, in relation to the impact of Airbnb on rents in Dublin, recent court proceedings relating to planning breaches and Airbnb rentals and measures taken by other cities.

Report

Dublin City Council notes the increased scale of economic activity now attributable to the so-called ‘sharing economy’ whereby person-to-person (P2P) transactions are conducted using internet platforms and information and communications technology applications that allow for access to, rather than ownership of, tangible and intangible assets.

Such P2P transactions are argued to represent a new model of economic activity that brings a focus on consuming more efficiently and brings consumers lower prices and broader choice while also enabling them to capitalise on their property and skills to generate extra-income. The counter-argument is that P2P transactions typical of the ‘sharing economy’ cause market imbalances and unfair competition in relation to traditional market incumbents and actors because of non-regulated issues related to, *inter alia*, labour standards and rights, consumer protection, taxation, liability, quality of services and user safety.

This is particularly noticeable in the provision of transport and accommodation services where business models hosted through digital platforms connect demand and share capacity dynamically in real-time and where transactions are completed through a variety of methods that offer 'access' over 'ownership' (e.g. P2P sharing, subscribing, re-selling and swapping).

Among these business models are short-letting letting companies that enable P2P transactions for use of accommodation. In Dublin city, these companies include Airbnb as well as others trading *via* property portals including Daft.ie, Rent.ie, Let.ie, dublinshortlets.com, tridentholidayhomes.ie, servicedapartmentsindublin.ie and premiersuitesdublinballsbridge.eu.

It is proposed that a short scoping report on the sharing economy and accommodation services in Dublin will be brought to DCC's Housing SPC on March 10th 2017. This will set out an initial set of research questions for consideration, discussion and possible adoption by SPC members in order to help inform the overall research aims and objectives of any future study that may be undertaken by Dublin City Council.

Item 3

Motion in the name of Councillor Eilis Ryan

This Committee offers its full support to Bus Eireann workers who are being threatened with pay cuts and cuts to terms and conditions. It calls on the Government to increase funding to Bus Eireann as a matter of urgency in light of the environmental and sustainability benefits of increasing public transport use in Ireland.

Report

A letter will be forwarded to the Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport if the members agree the terms of the motion.

Item 4

Motion in the name of Councillor Eilis Ryan

This Committee supports the use of kitchen facilities at the MACRO centre by the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland, to continue their successful initiative of providing a space where asylum seekers can cook and socialise, as done previously in the Project Arts Centre. We ask that this possibility be investigated with MASI and the results reported back to the Committee.

Report

The MACRO building only has one kitchen which is already attached to another lease therefore there are no suitable cooking facilities within the building for MASI to use.

However, MACRO have offered to show MASI the facilities that are in the building. A contact name and number will be provided to the Councillor.

Item 5

Motion in the name of Councillor Dermot Lacey

This Committee agrees to request the Manager to see if the following suggestion relating to the Daniel O'Connell monument in O'Connell Street can be advanced:-

"I am writing to suggest that lighting be installed from around the base of the Daniel O'Connell Statue on O'Connell Street. Since this is a focal point on the

City's main thoroughfare, which is also named after him, I feel that it should be visible at night as well as during the day. Currently, the statue is almost invisible from O'Connell Bridge at night-time. By lighting this, I believe that it would greatly improve the aesthetics of the street, and would greatly improve the view along the Liffey at night. Also, such lighting would, I feel, contribute to a decrease in anti-social behaviour in this particular area of the street".

Report

Two important factors of how we experience the O'Connell monument include its daytime character where every detail can be seen and enjoyed, and indeed interacted with as there is public seating on its south side. Its night-time view is characterised by an iconic silhouette. Flood lighting of the monument may negatively impact on the enjoyment of the public bench.

The desirability and practicalities of providing enhanced lighting of the O'Connell Monument was seriously considered in 2005 as part of the conservation works. It was agreed at the time that it was not desirable or achievable without the installation of a well-considered scheme of lighting that would integrate, ground lighting, lighting within the statue and also perhaps some lighting from adjacent buildings.

It would be premature to give further consideration to this matter until after the LUAS works have been completed and the monument is cleaned according to conservation best practice.

Item 6

Motion in the names of Councillors Ray McAdam and Ciaran Cuffe

This Committee agrees to request that the Chief Executive reports on the following proposed variation to the City Development Plan

'That the Dublin City Development Plan 2016 – 2022 Section 16.10.7 Guidelines for Student Accommodation (page 169) be amended as follows:

Change "The applicant will be requested to submit evidence to demonstrate that there is not an over-concentration of student accommodation within an area, including a map showing all such facilities within 0.25km of a proposal"

To "The applicant will be requested to submit evidence to demonstrate that there is not an over-concentration of student accommodation within an area, including a map showing all such facilities within 1km of a proposal"

Reason: to provide clarity and improved information on the existing and proposed number of students living in the area'

Report

Context:

There are over 80,000 third-level students in Dublin and this number is envisaged to increase substantially in future years.

The current Dublin City Development Plan includes policy: "to support the provision of high-quality, professionally managed and purpose built third level student accommodation on campuses or in appropriate locations close to the main campus, in the inner city or adjacent to high-quality public transport corridors and cycle routes, in a manner which respects the residential amenity and character of the surrounding area, in order to support the knowledge economy. Proposals for student

accommodation shall comply with the “Guidelines for Student Accommodation” contained in the development standards” (QH31).

It is also policy; “i) to promote Dublin as an International Education Centre / Student City, as set out in national policy, and to support and encourage provision of necessary infrastructure such as colleges (including English Language Colleges) and high-quality, custom-built and professionally managed student housing.

ii) To recognise that there is a need for significant extra high-quality, professionally managed student accommodation developments in the city; and to facilitate the high quality provisions of such facilities.” (CEE19)

Guidelines for student accommodation are contained in section 16.10.7 of the Development Plan. These guidelines include the following text:

In assessing proposals, the planning authority will have regard to the pattern and distribution of student accommodation in the locality, and will resist the overconcentration of such schemes in any one area, in the interests of achieving a sustainable mix of development, whilst also providing for successful urban regeneration, good public transport/ cycling / walking connectivity, and the protection of residential amenity.

The guidelines also require that proposed schemes be shown to be professionally managed and support integration with the local community.

The increase in student numbers across all universities and colleges in Dublin has resulted in an attendant increase in the need for appropriate housing. This has resulted in the emergence of off-campus Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) operated by professional management companies. Large Scale Purpose Built Student Accommodation advertised for rent as of December 2016 is estimated to be in the order of 9,100 bedspaces. The emerging trend is that third level institutions block book off-campus accommodation with a housing management company, and then direct students to these.

In the 2015 “Student Accommodation Report: Demand & Supply” (Higher Education Authority), the demand for student bedspaces nationally, both Higher Education institution (HEI) and private, was 57,104 bedspaces in 2014, and projected to increase to 68,670 by 2024. The current supply of bedspaces, both HEI and private, suitable for student accommodation is estimated (2015) to be just under 31,300 bedspaces. Taking account of projected bedspace development, as of 2015, the HEA estimates that the total available beds will rise to just 43,500 nationally in 2024. The HEA also estimates that there is unmet demand of about 25,800 bedspaces, meaning these students are forced to compete in the private rental sector, which itself is under pressure due to (inter alia) rental cost inflation and low supply.

Benefits and concerns relating to PBSA:

There are benefits to PBSA in the city as underutilised and often vacant sites are unlocked and developed to provide quality purpose built Student Accommodation. PBSA provides an increasing benefit to the economy of its surrounding community through impacts of both direct and indirect spending. Student housing in an area can also provide new local businesses including retail services.

PBSA can also release private rental units for non-student use. It is likely that there is a degree of student living in Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMO). The development of significant numbers of PBSA would result in many Houses in Multiple Occupancy (by students) being reverted back into single use and released into the private rental market.

The provision of Purpose-built Student Accommodation is not without its concerns. Impacts often associated with student populations can be by way of noise generation and late night activity, even though students bring desirable daytime

activity/animation “liveliness” into areas. In terms of social effects of PBSA, there is the potential displacement of existing residents through competition in the open rental market. There is also the impact of the transient nature of students and term time limits meaning the same students may not live in the same area consistently and do not do so throughout the year. This can lead to less sense of community and less activity outside of the academic year.

In Dublin the impact of PBSA has not yet become clear given the relative lack of such development until very recently. It is anticipated, based on international experience, that there will be higher levels of student activity in communities close to Higher level Institutions as a result of PBSA. The potential impacts of students moving from open market rental housing into PBSA (which provide a relatively stable rent price closer to HEIs) can also be anticipated to a degree. There may be loss of income for retailers / food providers currently focussed on the student market as these students move elsewhere.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

The value of PBSA is evident in providing good quality housing while removing potentially thousands of students from the open private rental market, and PBSA should continue to be supported as per current planning policy and in accordance with the guidance. The Planning Authority’s approach can be refined over time to steer PBSA into appropriate locations and to prevent excessive numbers from concentrating in certain areas. PBSA should not be encouraged in areas with no evident link to HEIs, or in areas not well connected by public transport / cycling / walking to Third Level Institutions.

Taking into account all of the above, there is no objection to the concept of a 1km analysis distance which effectively helps broaden the information base for all future planning applications.

A 1km radius equates to an area of 3.1sq.Km – which is a substantial area of the city. There is a need for good linkages to avoid the creation of isolated student communities in large scale PBSA complexes.

Guidelines for student accommodation are contained in the development standards section of the Development Plan are comprehensive and should remain applicable in the event of the 1km radius being introduced by Variation to the Development Plan, following consultation. On this basis, it is recommended that the proposed Variation Process be initiated.

Item 7

Motion in the name of Councillor Ciaran Cuffe

That this Committee requests the Manager to provide a detailed report on the feasibility of opening Blacquiere Bridge (at the junction of Royal Canal Bank and the North Circular Road beside Phibsborough Library) to pedestrian and cycle traffic including site investigations and desk based research.

Report

The Environment and Transportation Department is not in a position to undertake the activities required for a detailed feasibility report at this stage due to unavailability of resources in terms of staff and funding.

Item 8

Motion in the name of Councillor Ciaran Cuffe

That this Committee requests the Manager to provide a detailed report on the feasibility of reopening the water supply from the Royal Canal to Blessington Basin (noting that the Blessington Basin is under the control of Dublin City Council), as an alternative means of ensuring the cleanliness of the waters in the Blessington Basin.

Report

Parks Services will investigate past history on the method used to supply water to the basement catchment area and will report back to the Councillor in due course.

Since the formal re-opening of the Parks in 1994 the water supply to the basin area has been by way of natural rainfall with water levels controlled by an overflow outlet system. For the next fifteen to twenty years there were no major issues with regard to water quality. However, in recent years problems have become more evident with regard to intense algae blooms during the summer months.

An investigation found that over the years a significant depth of sludge built up on the bed of the basin and with the increase in water temperatures during the spring and summer month's microbial activity increased within the sludge leading to an algae bloom. Since 2015 Parks Services have been working with an environmentally sensitive treatment company with a view to improving the water quality and reducing the intensity of the algae bloom in the Basin. The treatment allows for the breakdown of the sludge by use of a combination of natural bacteria and since its introduction the water quality has improved with a significant reduction in the intensity of the algae bloom. For example, at the start of year one of treatment the measured depth of sludge was 900mm and by the end of the year this was reduced to 600mm. By the end of year two the measured depth was 300mm and by the end of this year the sludge depth should be minimal. Also there has been a significant improvement in the water quality, for example in 2015 as the water temperature increased the algae bloom was evident in May and lasted until end of October, last year the algae bloom was not evident until July. Parks Services shall continue to monitor the water quality in the basin with a view to reaching the desired water quality.

Item 9

Motion in the name of Councillor Nial Ring

Having regard to the motion passed at the December CAC in relation to naming of the housing development at North King Street and following consultation with the local history group in the area and well and relatives of the proposed name, this Committee confirms that the development should be named after Sean Foster who, at two years of age, was the youngest casualty of the Easter Rising and who was shot while being wheeled in his pram by his mother on Church Street, outside the Father Mathew Hall.

Report

This is a matter for the members.

Item 10

Motion in the name of Councillor Janice Boylan

That this Area Committee looks at the Discretionary Funding for this year and allocates monies to the Family Parish Centre in Prussia Street to refurbish the main hall. The walls need painting and the flooring is years old and need to be replaced. The work that this Parish Centre does for the community of the North West Inner City and beyond is amazing. It is a base for most of the Residents Committees and Stonebatter Pride of Place to name but a few, who use the centre. It is in use everyday by young and old and a face lift to the main hall would be greatly

appreciated and valued by all who work in and use the centre every day. I cannot stress the importance of this community facility in the heart of the North West Inner City.

Report

The Discretionary Fund is currently under review by the elected members.