



Proposed Civic Plaza at College Green and ancillary Traffic Management Measures

On 18 May 2017 Dublin City Council made an application for approval to An Bord Pleanála, under Section 175 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for the development of a new Civic Plaza, ancillary traffic management measures and minor works at College Green, Dublin.

This proposal was in accordance with the City Council's long held objective to develop a world class Civic Plaza in College Green, a location steeped in historical and architectural importance for the city and the nation. The development of the proposed Civic Plaza at College Green, is facilitated greatly, by the urgent need to reconfigure College Green to take account of the increased numbers of pedestrians and cyclists in this area and the new requirement to cater for 55-metre long Luas Cross City trams. In addition, the proposal would have contributed significantly in addressing the issues of competing transport demands for road space at this location, by simplifying complex traffic signalling arrangements, removing conflicting movements and streamlining all bus and taxi movements along the north south axis.

An Bord Pleanála, on 17 October 2018, issued its refusal to grant consent to the application for the following reasons and considerations:

It is considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable and that it would produce a quality public realm that would significantly enhance the amenity and attractiveness of this city centre location, would significantly improve the visual amenities of the area and would improve appreciation of the architectural and cultural heritage of this important site.

However, it is considered that:

- (i) Notwithstanding the use of the regional traffic model, the Board cannot be satisfied that the traffic analysis carried out, and the associated information provided, particularly at local level, was sufficient to accurately quantify traffic impacts of the proposed development and the magnitude of those impacts,
- (ii) (ii) The consequent uncertainty but likely significantly negative impacts for bus transport, in light of the scale of re-routing of buses proposed, the Page 181 critical importance of bus transport to the city, and its future role in facilitating model shift from public car usage, in line with national policy,
- (iii) (iii) The identified and unresolved capacity issues on the Quays in their capacity to accommodate the scale of bus re-routing proposed, and
- (iv) (iv) The failure to demonstrate that the existing footpaths on both sides of the Quays have the capacity to accommodate the increased numbers of pedestrians that would be re-directed onto the Quays as a result of bus rerouting, the proposed development would give rise to significant adverse impacts on pedestrians and on bus transport within the city centre and would, therefore, be contrary to proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

On foot of this decision from An Bord Pleanála, 3 options were available to the City Council and were outlined in Report No. 314/2018 to the November City Council meeting as follows:

1. To seek a Judicial Review in relation to the decision of An Bord Pleanála. An application in this regard must be lodged within 8 weeks of the decision to refuse.
2. To lodge a new application to An Bord Pleanála for the Plaza and traffic management measures having regard to the An Bord Pleanála decision.
3. To abandon the Plaza proposal at this time and proceed to make the necessary alterations to traffic management arrangements in this area to address the competing transport demands that must be addressed using the Councils own powers as a roads authority.

As confirmed at the December City Council meeting, it was decided not to pursue the option of seeking a judicial review and instead it was decided to prepare and lodge, during 2019, a new application to An Bord Pleanála for the Civic Plaza and traffic management measures having regard to the An Bord Pleanála decision. In addition, it was confirmed that traffic management changes would be introduced at College Green in the near future to address current concerns in relation to pedestrian and cyclist safety and to facilitate the more efficient movement of public transport through the area.

In taking this decision to submit a revised application to An Bord Pleanála, it was noted that An Bord Pleanála had found the proposal for a Civic Plaza at College Green to be “acceptable and that it would produce a quality public realm that would significantly enhance the amenity and attractiveness of this city centre location, would significantly improve the visual amenities of the area and would improve appreciation of the architectural and cultural heritage of this important site”.

This decision to submit a revised application to An Bord Pleanála met with broad support from Councillors. In addition, I am satisfied that there is strong public support for the proposed College Green Civic Plaza. Accordingly, the College Green design team will now be instructed to review the original proposals and to consider what amendments are required in order to address the concerns raised by An Bord Pleanála. In doing this, intensive discussions will also take place with the relevant transport and other stakeholders such as National Transport Authority, Dublin Bus, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and others. It is expected that a revised proposal will be developed and prepared for submission to An Bord Pleanála in 2019.

The City Council is currently evaluating the operation of College Green for all modes including pedestrians, cyclists, Luas and Bus and will be looking to put in place more suitable arrangements particularly for pedestrians and cyclists than some of the temporary measures that are in place at present.

I can confirm, as requested by Councillors, that updates in relation to the proposals for College Green Civic Plaza and traffic management measures will be brought for discussion to the Transportation SPC as they develop.

Dick Brady
Assistant Chief Executive
18th December 2018