

14th December 2021

To the Chair and the Members of the Central Area Committee

Re-development of George's Dock

At its meeting in December 2019, following a robust debate, the Elected Members approved, by a significant majority, a Part VIII planning application for a major redevelopment of George's Dock. The proposed redevelopment consisted of a white-water rafting course, a swift water rescue training facility with an urban street scene for use by the emergency services and a kayaking/canoe polo/swimming pool within the derelict outer basin at George's Dock. The Council also approved the demolition of the existing City Council Dockland offices on Custom House Quay and the construction of two new Quayside buildings – one to service the George's Dock development and a second to replace the Docklands offices.

Since the approval of the Part VIII there has been a considerable amount of negative commentary related to this project. This has created a narrative around the project that appears impossible to reverse and that has undermined the planned funding of the project. While the merits of the project, as set out in the Business Case and Cost Effectiveness Analysis, are still as strong today as they were in 2019 we have been unable to convince the various State funding bodies, to support the project and provide part funding to supplement the Council's own funding contribution. Notwithstanding the support of the City Council, it has become clear that there is significant hostility towards the elements of the project that would boost the tourism offer in Dublin and provide a world class sporting facility.

In light of the funding difficulties, I am recommending that the Council does not proceed with the George's Dock element of the project.

The existing Docklands Office building is no longer '*fit for purpose*'. A recent independent condition survey has identified serious issues with the building. As a result it is now necessary for the Council's Docklands Unit to vacate the building and move to rented office accommodation nearby. The survey suggests a need for significant renovation works to be undertaken to the building at an estimated cost of circa €4m if it is to be brought back into use. (Site access difficulties and the need to incorporate flood defence works partly explain the high cost.) Given the very poor architectural quality of the building and the prominence of the site, refurbishment is not considered an appropriate or viable option.

I am recommending that the City Council proceed with the construction of the two new Quayside buildings. The cost of two buildings, as approved in the Part VIII, is estimated at €9m.

One of the new buildings will serve as replacement for the City Council Docklands offices. The second building, will be used by the Council's Sports and Recreation Services Department as a Water Activities Centre to enable them to provide an expanded programme of water based activities based on the River Liffey working in close cooperation with the City Council's Municipal Rowing Centre at

Islandbridge. This will achieve a major objective of the Docklands Water Animation Strategy. More detailed information on the programme to be provided at the facility is attached.

The outer basin at Georges Dock is still in need of an imaginative solution and it is clear that a water based activity is the most suitable use for the Dock. There is also a need to provide a Swift Water Training facility to support the training needs of Dublin Fire Brigade and other emergency services. The Docklands Office will bring a revised proposal for the redevelopment of the Dock to the Elected Members in early 2022 with the intention of submitting a new Part VIII planning application by Q3 2022.

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