

Date: 8th May, 2023.

To the chairperson and members of
the North Central Area Committee

REPORT - THE PROPOSED GREENDALE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, KILBARRACK

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT:

In 2017 the North Central Area proposed to construct a new neighbourhood centre which would promote social inclusion and address the need for a safe and secure facility that would enable the whole community from the very young to the elderly, to come together and participate in a variety of activities thereby improving the overall sense of community.

The motivation to construct this centre was based on -

- Multiple groups seeking accommodation or improved premises in the area.
- Dearth of good quality fit for purpose neighbourhood facilities.
- Possibility of including boxing facility in new building.
- Area Office strategy to develop new high quality community facilities.

The site identified for the proposed location of the neighbourhood centre was Thornville Drive, Kilbarrack, outlined below as Area A.



This site was chosen as it is in –

- ▶ Council ownership, zoning allows for 'Community Facility' under Considerations of Use, no services to relocate.
- ▶ Good location – adjacent to shopping centre which is a focal point for congregation, beside local schools and S.C. Complex.
- ▶ Good public transport links.
- ▶ Ample parking, relatively neutral location/nearest house considerable distance away.

Consultation

During 2018 /2019 consultations were undertaken with residents including, questionnaires regarding usage of the proposed centre, workshops and information meetings. There was a mixed response to the proposed centre with strong persistent local community opposition against it.

Proposed Actions

Due to the significant increase in the cost of this Project beyond budget it was proposed to carry out a Cost Benefit Analysis and a further Needs Analysis of the project in 2020.

Unfortunately, with the onset of Covid 19 this was put on hold and delayed.

In 2022 NCA engaged Mazars to carry out a Cost and Demand Analysis to determine whether the proposed centre should be progressed as planned, based on an assessment of the objectives, costs and limitations of the project. A summary of their Report and findings are outlined as follows:

1 Project Objectives

1.1 Provide facilities for all in the community -

The new centre would enable all age groups in the community to access activities in a safe and secure facility.

1.2 Ensure the Centre would be self-financing -

While the development of the Neighbourhood Centre would be funded by DCC, the centre would have to be self-financing for the ongoing costs (e.g., cleaning, security, receptionist, ongoing maintenance, etc.). This would mean that the rent payable to DCC from the tenants and other users of the facility must be equal to or greater than the sum of these costs. The estimated ongoing costs are discussed in Section 2.1.

1.3 Ensure that an Anchor Tenant would manage the facility -

DCC would not be in a position to manage the day-to-day operation of the facility. Therefore, the Council would seek an "anchor tenant" which would take on this responsibility.

2 Cost

2.1 Capital Cost -

The original costing approval sought by DCC in 2017 was estimated at €3.25m. In 2019, DCC engaged a Quantity Surveyor to provide an updated cost estimate for the proposed design. The estimated cost in 2019 was €4.25m. An inflation factor of 25% was applied to this estimate in order to account for the high levels of inflation in the years from 2019 to 2022. An additional contingency of 2% was also applied in order to account contractors “future proofing” the tender prices against future inflation.

With these additions, it is estimated that the overall capital cost of the project would be approximately €5.4m. This high level estimate does not include the professional fees that would also be associated with the project.

2.2 Ongoing Costs –

In order to project the level of maintenance and other ongoing costs that would be associated with the Centre, the estimated costs for a similar Neighbourhood Centre in Dublin City were used. Using the square footage of the Centre and the area for the Greendale Centre, it has been calculated on a pro rata basis that the proposed Greendale Centre would cost around €150,000 annually to maintain and operate.

3 Limitations

3.1 Self-financing –

In 2018 the DCC Project Team, along with the Architects carried out site visits to numerous Neighbourhood/Community Centres and met with the managers to discuss financing income streams, activities and accommodation. Based on this research it was clear the revenue generated from community groups using the facility would not be sufficient to cover the costs.

There was a very strong message received from the various Centres for the need to have an anchor tenant in order to be financially viable and to take on the day-to-day running of the facility.

3.2 Anchor Tenant -

Following site visits and consultations with various Neighbourhood/community Centres it was decided that the ‘anchor tenant’ would be a childcare facility as the demographic of the area would suit this type of service being offered.

It should be noted that there was no interest from any of the statutory agencies to rent space/become an ‘anchor tenant’ in the proposed Centre.

However, it would now be unlikely to find a childcare facility to be an ‘anchor tenant’ as there are currently sufficient childcare facilities already in close proximity to the proposed Centre, and there is insufficient demand for an additional similar service.

MAZARS CONCLUSION

Based on the investigations carried out by DCC, it was determined that (a) an anchor tenant would be required to take on the day-to-day management of the proposed centre, and (b) it would be unlikely that such a tenant could be persuaded to take on this responsibility due to lack of demand.

With little certainty as to the ability to find such a tenant, this report concludes that there is a very high risk of DCC having to take on the management of the centre, with the likely need for additional public funding to be provided beyond the construction of the building, and therefore the project should not be progressed as proposed.

As outlined in 2.1.1 the estimated capital cost of the project would now be circa €5.4m compared to its original approval cost of €3.25 leaving a €2.15m shortfall.

FUTURE OF THE PROPOSED CENTRE

Dublin City Council, North Central Area Office concur with Mazars conclusions and consider that the proposed Neighbourhood Centre is not a viable proposal due to lack of an anchor tenant and the vast estimated increase of €2.15 m capital cost of the Project.

Deirdre Murphy

Administrative Officer, May 2023.