

**REPORT TO THE SOUTH CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE
MEETING: 15TH NOVEMBER 2023**

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| Proposal: | LAW: Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) - Part VIII |
| Applicant: | Dublin City Council, South Central Area Office |
| Location: | Meath Street, Dublin 8 |
| Proposal: | <p>Proposal to undertake public realm improvements to Meath Street and its immediate environs. The plan provides for changes to the public realm including footpaths, kerbs, carriageway, street furniture and fixtures, street lighting and the allocation of parking and loading bays along the street. The plan also provides for the addition of street trees, landscaping and public seating.</p> <p>Meath Street is located within the Thomas Street & Environs Architectural Conservation Area. The proposed works are adjacent to protected structures on Meath Street.</p> |
| Plan Ref no: | LAW 4301/23 |

The proposed Part 8 development was presented to the South Central Area Committee on 21st June 2023. The proposals were put on public display from 15th August to 12th September 2023. The plan and particulars of the scheme were available for inspection on Citizen Space, the City Council's online consultation portal and at the Civic Offices, Wood Quays and South Central Area Office public counters. The closing date for submissions and observation was 25th September 2023.

It is the intention of the South Central Area Office to present this Part 8 to the City Council at its meeting on 4th December 2023. **The approval of a Part 8 is a reserved function of the City Council.**

OBSERVATIONS

229 observations have been received for this Part 8 Application. The largest proportion of observations were supportive of the scheme, a proportion were neutral (perhaps generally supportive but with reservations or particular areas of concern), and a small number were not supportive. The issues raised can be summarized as follows:

Street Design

- General welcome for the refurbishment of the street
- Welcome repaving, extension of footpaths, refurbishment of carriageway
- Support for use of continuous footpaths/ raised table crossings at junctions

- Requests to amend location of parking spaces
- Requests to amend location of loading bays
- Provision for funerals at St Catherine's Church (hearse, mourning coach, visitor parking etc)
- Provision of benches/seating/ concern at the antisocial potential of benches/seating
- Provision of accessible parking/ provision for less able bodied users
- Access to adjoining streets
- Queries regarding compliance with DMURS/ design details
- Queries regarding the two-lane, right and left turn junction with Thomas Street

Street Culture and Perceived Gentrification

- Concerns at the changing nature of business on the street
- Support for additional café culture/ resistance to growth of café culture on street
- Concerns regarding specific uses
- Welcome the reinvigoration/ renewal of the street
- Welcome the provision for market stalls and moves to formalise on-street trading
- Request to respect the essential character/heritage of the street - 'the heart of the Liberties'
- Street should 'move with the times'
- Support for independently owned retail/businesses on the street
- Comments regarding the extent of consultation on the plans, engagement with local residents and businesses

Bins and Waste Collection

- Requests for additional bins to be installed on Meath Street
- Suggestions to install undergrounded bin chambers on Meath Street
- Request to discontinue or reform bag service
- Request to install large recycling bins close to Meath Street

Trees and Green Infrastructure

- General support for the addition of trees on the street
- Suggestions on tree species
- Request for water filling station
- Request for EV charging
- Request for SUDs measures, rainwater planters

Parking Matters

- Concerns at the reduction in car parking provision
- Welcome the reduction in car parking and greater focus on pedestrians
- Concerns of impact on parking on adjoining streets – perceived distance to Thomas Street Car Park
- Queries regarding time limited pay parking

Pedestrianisation

- Requests to pedestrianize the street
- Suggested alternative routes for traffic
- Calls for partial pedestrianisation/ open street events

Cycling Facilities

- General support for increased cycle parking on the street
- Request for two way segregated cycle lanes
- Request for cycle-pedestrian only street

In addition, a submission was received from the Dept. Housing, Local Government and Heritage largely relating to the retention of heritage paving and the suggested reinstatement of traditional paving features such as fanned corners.

CONSULTATION

Non-statutory consultations were held early in the preliminary design process to obtain views of the public on proposed realm improvements to Meath Street and its immediate environs. Consultations with local residents and businesses were undertaken in October 2018 and early 2019. These events which highlighted the issues and aspirations of the community for Meath Street and which helped to shape the initial concept design, prepared in June 2019.

Work commenced in 2020 to develop a preliminary design based on the initial concept. Community engagement sessions were held in April 2021 to present the preliminary design and gain feedback. A draft design was also placed on display on Meath Street at this time. A number of adjustments to the design were made following comments raised during these meetings.

As part of the design process extensive engagement was undertaken with technical departments and other stakeholders within Dublin City Council to ensure that the proposal is fully consistent with current plans and policies of the City Council as well as national guidance and standards.

The proposal were also advised to various Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) for their comment.

CONSIDERATION BY THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

Rationale for the Proposed Development

The vision for the scheme is to provide for the renewal of the public realm of Meath Street in The Liberties. The supporting statement which details the various elements of the proposed public realm improvement scheme, also includes several detailed historical and environmental appraisals which were carried out to inform the final proposals.

Historically, the evolution of Meath Street saw it thrive as a commercial hub for many decades up until the 20th century. However, Meath Street has seen retailing decline over the last 20 years, it is understood that this is due to a combination of several factors, including competition from larger scale retailers and general changes in shopping habits. This has resulted in the proliferation of empty commercial premises and underused buildings along the street, as well as a steady reduction in more traditional pavement trading and in clothes and grocery sales. Although a number of new uses have emerged such as small offices, unfortunately these activities have limited street presence, however, the presence of cafes have the potential of re animating the street scene.

A detailed evaluation of the existing physical public realm of Meath Street highlighted the dominance of car parking along the streets with a consequential diminished pedestrian space and a poor visual environment. The pedestrian realm at present is characterised by the following:

- Less than optimal pavement widths;
- Lack of seating and places to enjoy sitting;
- Lack of visual coherence in details;
- Poor quality surface materials;

- Lack of greenery;

Surveys were conducted to assess both the existing number of car parking spaces and parking needs. Total car parking on Meath Street at present equates to 41 spaces. Additional parking was observed at weekends but was not fully utilised. There is provision for 40 bike parking spaces at present.

Assessment

Compliance with Planning Policies and Objectives

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets 2013 aims to encourage more sustainable travel patterns and safer streets, designers must place pedestrians at the top of the user hierarchy, enhance pedestrian realm and provide easy crossing points at key junctions of the emerging route network.

The Dublin City Development Plan contains a number of policies of relevance. In accordance with the National Transport Authority strategy, a hierarchy of transport users is supported, with pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users at the top of this hierarchy, having their needs considered first in the planning of transport provision.

Section 8.5.7: Car Parking (ch8) of the City Development Plan, recognises the need to further control and manage on-street parking across the city to safeguard and enhance city living for people. In these terms, Policy SMT25 seeks to manage on-street car parking to serve the needs of the city alongside the needs of residents, visitors, businesses, kerbside activity and accessible parking requirements. Similarly, Policy SMT26: 'Commuter, Shopping, Business and Leisure Parking' seeks to discourage commuter parking and to ensure adequate but not excessive parking provision for short-term shopping, business and leisure uses.

Having regard to the above, the Planning Authority considers that the proposal accord the City Development Plan as it would reduce the amount of on- street parking along Meath Street and discourage all-day parking so that drop-off and pop-in shopping parking are facilitated. In comparison to the existing arrangements along Meath Street, the Planning Authority considers that the proposal represents a better balance in terms of parking provision and the needs of other street users and prioritise street space for pedestrians. The submitted Supporting Statement details how the scheme aligns with DMURS, where possible, and notes supporting reports completed such as vehicular tracking and Road Safety Audit.

Policy SMT8 of the City Development Plan supports public realm enhancements that contribute to place making and liveability and which prioritise pedestrians in accordance with Dublin City Council's Public Realm Strategy ('Your City – Your Space'). Meath Street also forms part of SDRA 15 – Liberties and Newmarket Square, and the Planning Authority noted that Public Realm improvement is a key objective for Meath Street. Many of the SDRA's guiding design principles have been incorporated into proposed public realm improvements.

The Planning Authority therefore considers that the proposal delivers an appropriate design response as follows:

- Improves access and permeability through the provision of a quality, accessible public realm with improved walking and cycling infrastructure.
- The layout has been designed to accord with the principles of DMURS.
- Urban Greening and Biodiversity: through the integration of greening and biodiversity measures via the introduction of micro greening measures including tree planting.

- Reduces the dominance of car parking and the resultant poor visual environment, particularly at the northern end of Meath Street, which would aid in enticing pedestrians from the adjoining Thomas Street.
- Create opportunities for future event markets and other street uses. Discrete electrical service points are proposed to serve potential clusters of temporary stalls that would retain and enhance the distinctive commercial character of Meath Street which has historically, evolved as a commercial hub, with the Liberty Market being a focus of activity both within the buildings and spilling out onto the street as it does at present.

Overall the Planning Authority considers that the proposed public realm improvement scheme accords with the policies of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028 through the provision of a safe and comfortable street environment which protects and enhances the individual character of Meath Street.

The Planning Authority considers that the public realm improvements on Meath Street is part of a wider policy context for street improvements in the city. The proposal has been developed in accordance with detailed consultation with the Council's internal Departments, the general public, and the policies in the relevant statutory plans and guidance documents.

The proposed scheme will result in substantial improvements to the existing public realm and will enhance the pedestrian users' experiences of Meath Street and the surrounding junctions.

The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area and is in accordance with the relevant planning policies and objectives and national guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

The Planning Authority considers the proposed development to be consistent with the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022 -2028 and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It is recommended that the Elected Members approve the proposed development and that the proposing Department should have regard to a number of standard conditions.

CONCLUSION

The Area Office recognises that the Planning Authority considers that the proposed development to be consistent with the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan 2022 - 2028 and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The proposal has been developed in accordance with detailed consultation with the Council's internal Departments and with the general public. Accordingly, it is the Area Office's intention to bring this Part 8 to the City Council for approval.