



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-305726-19

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	547 no. residential units (279 no. houses, 268 no. apartments), 2 no. creches and associated site works. Lissywollen, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Section 5 Pre-Application Consultation Request		
<b>Date:</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2019	<b>Start Time</b>	11:05 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	Offices of An Bord Pleanála	<b>End Time</b>	12:35 p.m.
<b>Chairperson</b>	Tom Rabbette	<b>Executive Officer</b>	Ciaran Hand

### Representing An Bord Pleanála:

Tom Rabbette, Assistant Director of Planning
Una O' Neill, Senior Planning Inspector
Ciaran Hand, Executive Officer

### Representing Prospective Applicant:

Tracy Armstrong, Planning Consultant, Delphi Design
Alan Fenton, Planning Consultant, Delphi Design
David Smith, Architect, Delphi Design
Slavica Polic, Architect, Delphi Design
Thomas Jennings, DBFL
Laura McLoughlin, DBFL
Ronan MacDiarmada, RMDA
Thomas Freeman, Applicant
Sarah Forde, Applicant
Emer O'Brien, Applicant
Cathal Ross, Applicant

## **Representing Planning Authority**

Barry Kehoe, Director of Services Planning and Transportation
Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner
Lorraine Middleton, Executive Planner
Paula Hanlon, Senior Executive Planner
Mark Keaveney, Director of Services Housing
Paul Hogan, Senior Executive Architect
Damien Grennan, Senior Engineer Transportation
PJ Carey, Senior Executive Engineer Transportation
Patrick Nally, Senior Executive Engineer (Athlone Moate District Engineer)
Jonathan Deane, Senior Engineer Water Services, Environment and Climate Change

## **Introduction**

The representatives of An Bord Pleanála (ABP) welcomed the prospective applicant, Planning Authority (PA) and introductions were made. The procedural matters relating to the meeting were as follows:

- The written record will be placed on the pre-application consultation file and will be made public, along with that file, should an application arise following the conclusion of this consultation process,
- ABP received a submission from the PA on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019 providing the records of consultations held pursuant to section 247 and its written opinion of considerations related to proper planning and sustainable development that may have a bearing on ABP's decision,
- The consultation meeting will not involve a merits-based assessment of the proposed development,
- The meeting will focus on key site-specific issues at strategic overview level, and whether the documents submitted require further consideration and/or amendment in order to constitute a reasonable basis for an application,
- Key considerations will be examined in the context of the statutory development plan for the area and section 28 Ministerial Guidelines where relevant,
- A reminder that neither the holding of a consultation or the forming of an opinion shall prejudice ABP or the PA concerned in relation to any other of their respective functions under the Planning Acts or any other enactments and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in legal proceedings.

The ABP representatives acknowledged the letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019 formally requesting pre-application consultations with ABP. Prospective applicant advised of the need to comply with definition of SHD as set out in the Act of 2016, in relation to thresholds of development. It was also noted that the Inspector dealing with the pre-application consultation request would be different to who would deal with the application when it was submitted. Recording of the meeting is prohibited.

## **Agenda**

- 1. Development Strategy for the site to include, inter alia, the layout and design of the street network, specifically the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and urban edge/interface of buildings with this street, with specific reference to criteria set out in the Lissywollen Framework Plan and compliance with the criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual, A Best Practice Guide 2009.**
- 2. Pedestrian/Cyclist links across the development, links to the Old Rail Trail, and pedestrian priority from the School to the Old Rail Trail.**
- 3. Urban Design Issues.**
- 4. Appropriate Assessment Screening.**
- 5. Site Services.**
- 6. Any Other Matters.**

- 1. Development Strategy for the site to include, inter alia, the layout and design of the street network, specifically the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and urban edge/interface of buildings with this street, with specific reference to criteria set out in the Lissywollen Framework Plan and compliance with the criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual, A Best Practice Guide 2009.**

### **ABP sought further elaboration/discussion on:**

- Design and layout of east-west Lissywollen Avenue, its design as a distributor road, lack of a strong urban edge, level of set-back from the road due to parking.
- Lack of enclosure by buildings and question over ability of planting alone to create enclosure.
- Lissywollen Framework Plan and its overall vision for the area.
- Requirement of RSES to create a new urban quarter at this location.
- Landscape strategy, overall hierarchy, function and usability; overlooking of open space, lack of enclosure by buildings.
- Landscaping and noise barriers along N6.
- Density and housing mix.

### **Planning Authority's comments:**

- The east-west route has the potential for a link, but it could function as a local street
- The road layout is linked with the open greenway of spaces.
- Scale and massing could be improved.
- Orientation of blocks relative to Lissywollen Avenue and overlooking of the street.
- Urban design is more of an issue than density.
- The mix should cater for sustainable communities.

### **Prospective Applicant's response:**

- Location of the road is at the desired point of entry.
- Roads are DMURS compliant.
- Definition of entry by blocks D, E and F, and creation of focal points at blocks A, B and C.
- There is linkage between open spaces.
- Hedgerows are being kept.
- Pepper potting of social housing is proposed.
- The density is 43 units per hectare. Roads and open spaces are excluded from the calculation.

- The housing mix is meeting requirements.

**Further ABP comments:**

- There is a need to create a sense of enclosure along the east-west road and greater emphasis on the creation of a new urban quarter is required.
- Re-examine the parking strategy.
- Clarify the number of 2 bed 3 person apartments, in relation to SPPR guidance.
- Density would appear to comply with national guidance.

**2. Pedestrian/Cyclist links across the development, links to the Old Rail Trail, and pedestrian priority from the School to the Old Rail Trail.**

**ABP sought further elaboration/discussion on:**

- Pedestrian and cyclist movement strategy, which is recognised as being key to the success of the area given the existing asset of the Old Rail Trail Greenway and proximity via this route to the town centre, schools, Athlone IT and businesses.
- Proposal for existing pedestrian/cyclist route at western boundary to be altered to incorporate a street catering for car parking.
- Proposal for communal parking spaces located proximate to the pedestrian/cycle links onto the Old Rail Trail.
- Level of overlooking of the Old Rail Trail and ability to highlight/announce the access points through design of dwellings.

**Planning Authority's comments:**

- Pedestrian/cyclist links are important.
- There is good connectivity and permeability for cycles routes.
- There is provision for the proposed bridge over N6 and it is important to connect this appropriately back into this development and to the Old Rail Trail.
- School links to the Old Rail Trail are important.
- The framework allows some flexibility.
- The overall aims are in principle satisfactory.
- Detail how this proposed development respects Athlone.
- This is a transition zone between existing residents and future residents.
- More information is needed for reverse parking.
- There should be provision for 2 more bus stops at the northern side of the road.
- Electric car charging should be included.
- There should be a mobility and management plan included.

**Prospective Applicant's response:**

- Pedestrian and cycle links will be detailed
- There will be strong connections from the school to the Old Rail Trail.
- Comments noted.

**Further ABP comments:**

- There needs to be more detail regarding open spaces at the greenway entrance

- Outline the pedestrian and cycle links across the development, need to ensure north-south as well as east-west movement. North-south movement would be improved if there was an improved urban edge to the street.

### **3. Urban Design Issues.**

#### **ABP sought further elaboration/discussion on:**

- Passive surveillance of open space and along pedestrian/cycle routes through the scheme.
- Requirement for dual aspect units at appropriate locations.
- Design of apartment block J and interaction with open space.
- Design of entrance blocks and creation of a strong urban edge.
- Positioning of blocks B and C relative to the road and block A at the western entrance.

#### **Planning Authority's comments:**

- This is a public/private development
- Houses are facing the greenway which is positive, with no parking to the front which would have created inappropriate set backs.
- Access to Garrycastle could be stronger
- Block A is not positioned in a sufficiently prominent manner.
- There should be more elevations overlooking open space.
- Gable of end of duplex units onto the road is not appropriate.
- Open space is squeezed between block B and C
- There needs to be more of an urban feel.

#### **Prospective Applicant's response:**

- A strong urban edge is being created at certain points.
- There are small green spaces.
- Houses have a visual link to the green space.
- Northern side of the avenue has a stronger urban edge.
- There needs to be information for blocks B, D, and F in relation to overlooking, overshadowing and connectivity.
- More detail will be provided regarding units on the ground floor of duplex units.
- Two crèches are required by Framework Plan to serve the population.

#### **Further ABP comments:**

- The urban edge needs to be tighter, better defined.
- There are set backs and gable ends onto the east-west route, creating a weak urban area and a suburban feel.
- Separation distances have weakened the urban edge.
- Address dual aspect of duplex units.
- 2 creches are being proposed – ensure scale of crèche to southwest is sufficient to cater for future population as well as being economically viable.

#### **4. Appropriate Assessment Screening**

**ABP sought further elaboration/discussion on:**

- Clarify historic references by NPWS.

**Planning Authority's comments:**

- The habitat was removed during work and is not there/was not there.

**Prospective Applicant's response:**

- Nothing is present, and this will be outlined.

#### **5. Site Services**

**ABP sought further elaboration/discussion on:**

- Swales
- Attenuation tanks
- SUD's measures

**Planning Authority's comments:**

- There should be no increase in the tank size.
- SUDS measures appropriate subject to design.
- More detail is needed for glazing and ventilation for houses in the north east in relation to noise issues,

**Prospective Applicant's response:**

- Alternative SUD'S will be used
- There will be tree catchments, tree pits and long linear lines
- There will be no increase in tank sizes.

**Further ABP comments:**

- The SUD's strategy needs to be robust.

#### **6. Any other matter**

**ABP comments:**

- Ensure all documentation submitted is accurate and drawings legible, eg number of character areas; breakdown of unit mix; site survey.
- To review development in context of objectives set out within Lissywollen Framework Plan.
- Clarify by way of a map what is the net area.
- Clarify the number of 2 bed 3 person apartments being proposed and compliance with SPPRs as set out in the apartment guidelines 2018.
- Crèche requirements.
- Noise impact assessment.
- Clarify flooding is not an issue.

**Planning Authority's comments:**

- No further comments

**Applicants Comments:**

- No further comments

**Conclusions**

**The representatives of ABP emphasised the following:**

- There should be no delay in making the planning application once the public notice has been published.
- Sample notices, application form and procedures are available on the ABP website.
- Irish Water would like prospective applicants to contact Irish Water at [cdsdesignqa@water.ie](mailto:cdsdesignqa@water.ie) **between the Pre-Application Consultation and Application stages**, to confirm details of their proposed development and their proposed design.
- The email address to which applicants should send their **applications** to Irish Water as a prescribed body is [spatialplanning@water.ie](mailto:spatialplanning@water.ie).

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Tom Rabbette  
Assistant Director of Planning  
May, 2020