



Case Reference / Description	127 no. residential units (65 no. houses, 62 no. apartments), 283 no. student bedspace accommodation, creche and associated site works. Cartronroy, Kilnafaddoge, Lissywollen (townlands), Athlone, Co. Westmeath.		
Case Type	Section 5 Pre-Application Consultation Request		
Date:	14 th October 2021	Start Time	14:30
Location	Remotely via Microsoft Teams	End Time	16:00
Chairperson	Tom Rabbette	Executive Officer	Helen Keane

Representing An Bord Pleanála:

Tom Rabbette, Assistant Director of Planning
Una O'Neill, Senior Planning Inspector
Helen Keane, Executive Officer

Representing Prospective Applicant:

Richard Doorly, Henry J Lyons Architects
Miriam Corcoran, Henry J Lyons Architects
Adam Price, ORS Consulting Engineers
Mark Heslin, ORS Consulting Engineers
Craig van Deventer, DK Partnership
Mike Waldvogel, Forestbird Design Landscape Architects
Mark Cunningham, Applicant
Conor Frehill, HW Planning
John O'Brien, HW Planning

Representing Planning Authority

Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner
Paula Hanlon, Senior Executive Planner
Jonathan Deane, Senior Engineer Environment Dept.
Damien Grennan, Senior Engineer Roads & Transport Dept.
Pat Nally, Senior Executive Engineer Municipal District Athlone Moate
Alan O'Neill, Chief Fire Officer
Yvonne Haughey, Executive Planner

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 once the Opinion has issued,
- ABP received a submission from the PA on 2nd September 2021 providing the records of consultations held pursuant to section 247 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended 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 6th August 2021 formally requesting pre-application consultations with ABP. The prospective applicant advised of the need to comply with the definition of SHD as set out in the (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act of 2016, as amended, in relation to thresholds of development. The representatives of ABP advised that the Inspector dealing with the pre-application consultation request would be different to the Inspector who would deal with the application when it was submitted. Recording of the meeting is prohibited.

Agenda

1. Development Strategy – context of development to west, southeast, and south; timing and delivery of Lissywollen Avenue; open space strategy.
2. Design and public realm – Lissywollen Avenue; Blackberry Lane; internal street layout and car parking strategy.
3. Residential Amenity - Sunlight Daylight Analysis; photomontages.

4. Transportation.
5. Surface water management and SuDS.
6. Any Other Matters

1. Development Strategy – context of development to west, southeast, and south; timing and delivery of Lissywollen Avenue; open space strategy.

• **ABP Comments:**

In relation to Development Strategy, ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion/consideration in relation to the following:

- Context and interaction with development to the west, including east-west linkages and desire lines to the amenities within the permitted development to the west; how the development relates to the permitted development to the west in terms of the overall vision, particularly with regard to the permitted Lissywollen Avenue (as set in the Framework Plan) and how that Avenue is treated in terms of its urban edge when compared against the Framework Plan and the development to the west;
- Further consideration of the treatment of Blackberry Lane (hedgerow removal and houses backing onto it) and its future function; consideration in relation to how proposed development at this location supports objectives of the Framework Plan to maximise linkages to the Old Rail Trail and to the wider environs; how will pedestrians access the Old Rail Trail from Blackberry Lane.
- Rationale in relation to extent of land utilised for student accommodation in Parcel 4 relative to the area shown in the Lissenwollen Framework Plan and clarity in relation to boundary line to the southeast; the Framework Plan envisages Parcel 4 as a distinctive student quarter with its own characteristics and requirements – elaborate on how the student quarter will visually and physically read as a separate quarter with specific management requirements while maintaining an open and permeable environment;
- Documentation should include information and certainty in relation to the timeframe for delivery of the permitted Lissywollen Avenue and the red line boundary of the site should be considered in this regard;
- Objective O-LUF7 is 'To ensure a continuous frontage and passive supervision over open spaces and green links, in particular, along the Old Rail Trail Greenway'. Further consideration of requirement for an 'interactive urban edge' along the Old Rail Trail and any limitations in this regard, including ground levels.
- Clarity/certainty required over location and number of pedestrian connections proposed onto Old Rail Trail, as required by the Framework Plan and in the interests of pedestrian/cyclist permeability and accessibility. Any consents required in this regard should accompany a planning application.
- Clarity on hierarchy, function and usability of open space across the site; how this is managed for students and for families. Main elements of landscape plan should be reflected on the site layout plan.
- Clarity in terms of calculations as to what is usable open space versus a pedestrian/cycle path connecting spaces.

- Ecological Assessment required, including Tree and Hedgerow survey. Clarify potential for impacts on existing tree/hedgerow line along Old Rail Trail, how existing is to be protected particularly during construction, and where are most suitable points for connection onto Old Rail Trail; what vegetation needs to be removed to facilitate this, causing minimal amount of intervention, with construction techniques elaborated upon.
- **Prospective Applicant's Comments:**
- The prospective applicant is seeking to strike an appropriate design approach.
- Will articulate at application stage the relationship of the proposed development to the lands to the west.
- Blackberry Lane is to become a biodiverse route. Orientation of development as proposed will allow protection of this.
- Will have consideration for creating more distinct character areas, in particular student quarter.
- There is a setback at Lissywollen Avenue, but this is required to retain existing hedgerow. Visibility of pedestrian connections can be more pronounced and distinguished to support greater interaction at ground level.
- The proposed development is grounded in the zoning objective.
- A tree/hedgerow survey will be undertaken.
- **Planning Authority's Comments:**
- The Athlone Town Development Plan is in place until new urban area plan is adopted.
- The PA cannot currently permit an access onto the rail corridor without consulting CIE. This wasn't an issue for permitted development to the west as the council owned the land and consultation with CIE had taken place.
- Will engage with the prospective applicant on the access to the greenway.

2. Design and public realm – Lissywollen Avenue; Blackberry Lane; internal street layout and car parking strategy.

- **ABP Comments:**
In relation to Design and Public Realm, ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion/consideration in relation to the following:
- Consideration of internal north-south streets and associated dominance of perpendicular parking against design guidance within DMURS.
- Pedestrian links west and issues of passive surveillance and legibility of these connections in the streetscape.
- Legibility of pedestrian links to Lissywollen Avenue to the east.
- Overlooking of Lissywollen Avenue to the northwest.
- Boundary to Old Rail Trail to southwest
- Consideration of passive surveillance of Blackberry Lane and addressing of Objective O-AM11 To prohibit the siting of rear elevations/gardens onto public open spaces, streets and the N6 national route.
- Consideration of maintenance/supplementation of existing boundary along Blackberry Lane as an existing amenity (supported by the Framework Plan) in place of its removal.

- **Prospective Applicant's Comments:**
- The prospective applicant can reinforce the East West connections.
- Seeks to retain Blackberry Lane as a green lane, as proposed.
- Public lighting is to be included.
- It may not be possible to have an active front along all of southern boundary as there is an embankment along part of the greenway.
- **Planning Authority's Comments:**
- Have consideration for security, such as public lighting, and passive surveillance to Blackberry Lane.
- The PA is seeking a variety of residential typologies.
- Lissywollen Avenue is integral in providing connectivity.
- Refer to the Planning Authority's Opinion.
- The PA agrees with ABP's comments in relation to the parking.

3. Residential Amenity - Sunlight Daylight Analysis; photomontages.

- **ABP Comments:**
In relation to Residential Amenity, ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion/consideration in relation to the following:
- Visual Impact Assessment – consideration of additional/amended viewing points relating to the Old Rail Trail. Photomontages should include views when trees not in leaf.
- Sunlight-daylight analysis required in accordance with Building Height Guidelines and Apartment Guidelines.
- Passive surveillance of Blackberry Lane and connections to Blackberry Lane.
- Tree/hedgerow survey required. Objective of Framework Plan to protect and supplement existing landscape features of amenity and biodiversity value.
- **Prospective Applicant's Comments:**
- Direct neighbours are nearly 50 metres away.
- The prospective applicant seeks to retain the mature trees between the proposed development site and the greenway.
- **Planning Authority's Comments:**
- No further comments.

4. **Transportation.**

- **ABP Comments:**

In relation to Transportation, ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion/consideration in relation to the following:

- Compliance with DMURS.
- Clarity in relation to status of Blackberry Lane and agricultural gates at exit onto the greenway.
- Details in relation to timing and delivery of Lissywollen Avenue.
- MMP and clarity in relation to direct connections from student accommodation to AIT via the Old Rail Trail.

- **Prospective Applicant's Comments:**

- The prospective applicant intends to include required works in the redline boundary.
- A bus stop is to be included next to the R2 Block.
- Will liaise with the National Transport Authority.

- **Planning Authority's Comments:**

- The PA has concerns in relation to the junction to the east of the proposed development.
- Provide further information on how the bus route will be facilitated.
- There is an opportunity to provide a straight cycle route to Athlone Institute of Technology.
- It is envisaged that contracts in relation to Lissywollen Avenue will soon be signed and the road will be delivered in 2022.

5. **Surface Water Management and SuDS.**

- **ABP Comments:**

In relation to Surface Water Management, ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion/consideration in relation to the following:

- SuDS measures proposed - examine incorporation of more nature based solutions alongside engineered solutions. Consideration of additional SUDS measures including green/blue roofs.
- Development plan policy CPO 10.119: Require that planning applications are accompanied by a comprehensive SUDS assessment that addresses run-off quantity, run-off quality and its impact on the existing habitat and water quality.

- **Prospective Applicant's Comments:**

- Can have further consideration for what can be incorporated in suitable green spaces.

- **Planning Authority's Comments:**

- The prospective applicant is to have consideration for more nature-based solutions. There is a lot of scope on the site.

6. Any other matters

- **ABP Comments:**

- EIA screening required at application stage, application stage documentation should include compliance with article 299B of the regulations.

- **Prospective Applicant's Comments:**

- Material Contravention Statement a consideration.
- Comments in relation to EIA screening noted.
- The prospective applicant is happy to work with the PA to provide adequate lights and connectivity along Blackberry Lane.
- The carparking layout is linear so that connectivity can be provided for a cycleway and a walkway.

- **Planning Authority's Comments:**

- The proposed building height of 3-7 storeys is substantial at this location but the PA is supportive of the height.
- The prospective applicant is to provide a site-specific document for construction waste.

Conclusion

The representatives of ABP emphasised the following:

- There should be no delay in making the planning application once the public notice has been published.
- A Schedule of Documents and Drawings should be submitted with the Application.
- 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 **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.

Tom Rabbette
Assistant Director of Planning
October, 2021