



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL06.249406

Development	Air supported sports dome with associated fan units, internal lighting, drainage scheme, paths, electrical infrastructure and associated site works.
Location	Our Lady's School, Templeogue Road, Terenure, Dublin 6W.
Planning Authority	South Dublin County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	SD17A/0259
Applicant(s)	Siol Schools Trust
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party v. Decision
Appellant(s)	Siol Schools Trust
Observer(s)	Jacqueline and William Stein and others (20 in total)
Date of Site Inspection	6 th March 2018
Inspector	Erika Casey

Contents

1.0	Site Location and Description	3
2.0	Proposed Development	3
3.0	Planning Authority Decision	4
3.1.	Decision	4
3.2.	Planning Authority Reports	5
3.3.	Prescribed Bodies	6
3.4.	Third Party Observations	6
4.0	Planning History.....	7
5.0	Policy Context.....	8
5.1.	Development Plan.....	8
5.2.	Natural Heritage Designations	9
6.0	The Appeal	10
6.1.	Grounds of Appeal	10
6.2.	Planning Authority Response	13
6.3.	Observations.....	13
6.4.	Further Responses.....	14
7.0	Assessment	16
8.0	Recommendation.....	25
9.0	Reasons and Considerations.....	25
10.0	Conditions.....	25

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site has an area of 0.94 ha and is located in the grounds of Our Lady's School, Templeogue. The site currently accommodates a cinder hockey pitch. The school complex accommodates a number of buildings and associated sports facilities. There is a separate all weather hockey pitch with flood lighting located to the north of the school site fronting Templeogue Road. There is an existing linear, single storey building currently used as a refectory and study hall located to the north east of the site and the principal school building abuts the northern boundary.
- 1.2. Bushy Park House (a protected structure) and associated apartment development is located adjacent to the east of the site. The apartment blocks typically range in height from 5 to 6 storeys. The Dodder Valley is located to the south of the site which comprises an extensive belt of mature trees and planting. Springfield Road which accommodates a long terrace of two storey semi-detached dwellings is located to the west. Vehicular access to the existing school and subject site is via an existing access road from the Templeogue Road that serves the school and adjacent Bushy Park House residential development.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises the erection of an air supported sports dome with associated fan units, internal lighting, drainage, paths and electrical infrastructure.
- 2.2. The dome has a curvilinear shape and will have a maximum height of 14 metres and will encompass an area of 4,422 sq. metres. A 4.6 metre high structure is located to the south west of the dome to accommodate fans and an emergency generator. This will be acoustically sealed to minimise noise levels.
- 2.3. The dome comprises the construction of a double membrane structure with a part white and part green speckled colour arrangement. To ensure the structure remains air locked, access is via revolving doors. A transport tunnel is also provided on the north elevation to facilitate delivery of equipment to the dome. The dome will accommodate two internal playing areas in addition to changing rooms, seminar rooms, toilets and storage area. Part of the facility will include a hardwood floor to

facilitate sports such as basketball. The remainder will comprise artificial grass carpet suitable for sports such as GAA, soccer and rugby.

- 2.4. The interior of the dome will be illuminated by a number of LED/HED lights with a maximum lux of 300. No external lighting is proposed. The development will be served by the existing 73 car parking spaces in the school grounds. The proposed operational hours are 08.00am to 10.00pm Monday to Friday and 09.00am to 10.00pm at the weekend.
- 2.5. It is stated in the application that it is envisaged that the facility will provide a significant upgrade to the schools existing sporting amenities and allow them to expand their PE programme. In addition, it will be used by local clubs in the evening and weekends. The facility will be run by a non profit organisation known as Sportdome and the ownership of the facility will remain vested in the Siol Schools Trust. The life expectancy of the facility is 40 years.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

3.1.1 To Refuse Permission for 2 no. reasons:

“1. Having regard to the location is the site on lands zoned Objective RES ‘to protect and/or improve residential amenity’ in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022, and having regard to the height, mass, scale, location, hours of use and light emanating from the proposed internally lit dome, located adjacent to the River Dodder, (an area with the zoning objective – to protect and enhance the outstanding natural character and amenity of the Dodder Valley), the proposed development would seriously injure the residential amenities and depreciate the value of residential properties in the vicinity and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. It is the policy of the Council to promote the natural, historical and amenity value of the County’s watercourses, to address the long term management and protection of these corridors and the strengthen links at a regional level. Policy G3 Objective 5 (in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022) seeks to restrict the encroachment of development on watercourses, and provide for protection

measures to watercourses and their banks, including....the protection from light spill in sensitive locations.....The proposed development would contravene these policies and objectives.”

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Report (20.09.2017)

- It is considered that while the airhall would represent a visually unusual structure, its visual impact on structures located to the north, north west and east is limited to that of long distance views. The airhall, which is an attempt to improve facilities within the school is a minimum distance of 33 m from structures to the west and east. However, it is considered that due to the scale, extent and massing of the building, it would have a significant visual impact on surrounding residential amenity and the Dodder Valley. This would be compounded by light spill.
- From the CGI images submitted, the proposed dome appears from the photomontages to act as one large light bulb and the Planning Authority has serious concerns regarding the scale of the proposed development and the impact of light pollution from the dome on adjoining dwellings, particularly from apartments to the east of the structure which are located at a height above this large scale structure.
- Notwithstanding the findings of the bat assessment submitted, there are serious concerns regarding overspill of light and the effect of a large scale lit structure located within close proximity to the River Dodder and subsequent impacts on habitats and biodiversity.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Roads Department Planning Report (20.09.2017): No objection. Conditions recommended regarding parking and a construction traffic management plan.

Water Services Planning Report (01.09.2017): Further information recommended regarding surface water attenuation and surface water layout.

Environmental Health Officer (31.08.2017): No objection. Conditions recommended regarding noise control and air quality.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Irish Water (05.09.2017): Further information recommended with regard to watermain layout and that drainage drawings are unclear and incomplete.

3.4. Third Party Observations

3.4.1 A number of third party observations both in support and against the development were submitted to the Planning Authority. Issues raised can be summarised as follows:

Support

- The development would provide a much needed indoor training facility, particularly during the winter months. Pitches at Bushy Park are often not available during the winter months due to flooding.
- Should be seen in a positive light as a progressive and community friendly facility, the first of its kind and size in Ireland.
- It is a not for profit development that will be of value to local sporting clubs and bodies.
- The development will improve sporting participation and is located in an area with a high density of families and will have consequent health benefits.
- Development will provide a safe and secure environment for children.

Objections

- The development would generate additional traffic exacerbating existing congestion. Additional parking is necessary to serve the development. Concerns regarding potential overspill parking to the Bushy Park House development and emergency vehicle access.
- Hours of operation will result in traffic accessing the site during unsociable hours causing a nuisance to local residents.
- Concerns regarding light pollution, glare and UV radiation.
- Object to potential noise impacts from both users of the facility and plant/air ventilation units.

- The visual impact of the dome would be obtrusive. Scale of development is excessive. Tree planting will not mitigate the visual impact of the development.
- Consider that visual impact assessment does not assess true impact of the development.
- Negative impact on property values.
- Negative impact on residential amenity of adjacent properties.
- Concern that structure may be used for other events such as concerts.
- The potential commercial use of the dome is not within the remit of the school.
- Consider that hours of operation should be limited.
- Construction stage impacts.

4.0 Planning History

4.1 There have been a number of previous planning applications on the site. The majority of these relate to additional school accommodation – Planning Authority References S01A/0133, SD03A/0710 and SD07A/0599. Under application reference S99A/0165 permission was granted for a new synthetic grass sports pitch with flood lighting on the site of the existing floodlit dust pitch for use by Our Lady’s School and Our Lady’s Hockey Club.

Other Relevant Decisions

Planning Authority Reference SD16A/0373/An Bord Pleanála Reference PL06S.248184 - Templeogue Tennis Club, Templeogue Road.

4.2 Permission granted by the Board in November 2017 for a development comprising a demountable airhall with a height of 10 metres and an area of 1,620 square metres, single storey structure for fans and emergency generator and a single storey shed for storage of airhall when not in use at Templeogue Tennis Club, Templeogue Road, Templeogue Village, Dublin. The Board’s Order stated:

“Having regard to the planning history of the proposed development, its location in proximity to the River Dodder Amenity Area and the Riverside Cottage Architectural Conservation Area as designated in the South Dublin County Council Development

Plan 2016-2022, and the photomontages lodged with the application, the Board considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the temporary airhall structure would not seriously injure the visual and residential amenities of properties in the vicinity of the proposed development, would not detract from the character and visual setting of the adjoining Architectural Conservation Area and would not have a negative noise or visual impact on the Dodder Valley Amenity Area. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.”

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

5.1.1 The operative development plan is the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022. The site is zoned RES *‘To protect and/or improve residential amenity’*. The use classes ‘Sports Club/Facility’ are open for consideration under this zoning objective.

5.1.2 The southern boundary of the site is adjacent to the Dodder River which is zoned objective HA – DV: *‘To protect and enhance the outstanding character and amenity of the Dodder Valley’*.

5.1.3 Relevant policies and objectives include:

C7 Objective 1: *To support the provision of new or improved sports and leisure facilities in the County.*

C7 Objective 3: *To support and provide a framework for the improvement, maintenance, upgrade and refurbishment of existing community based facilities, within the County, to meet current and future needs.*

C7 Objective 4: *To encourage the co-location of community and sporting facilities.*

C7 Objective 5: *To promote and support communities and clubs in developing minority sports in the County by providing indoor and outdoor spaces for the pursuance of these activities.*

IE7 Objective 5: *To ensure external lighting schemes minimise light spillage or pollution in the immediate surrounding environment and do not adversely impact on residential or visual amenity and biodiversity in the surrounding areas.*

G3 Objective 5: *To restrict the encroachment of development on watercourses, and provide for protection measures to watercourses and their banks, including but not limited to: the prevention of pollution of the watercourses, the protection of the river bank from erosion, the retention and/or provision of wildlife corridors and the protection from light spill in sensitive locations, including during the construction of permitted development.*

G4: Objective 4: *To minimise the environmental impact of external lighting at sensitive locations within the Green Infrastructure network to achieve a sustainable balance between the recreational needs of an area, the safety of walking and cycling routes and the protection of light sensitive species such as bats.*

HCL Policy 10 Dodder Valley: *It is the policy of the Council to protect and enhance the visual, recreational, environmental, ecological, geological and amenity value of the Liffey Valley and Dodder Valley, as key elements of the County's Green Infrastructure network.*

HCL10 Objective 6: *To recognise the key role the Dodder River plays in the County's Green Infrastructure network by facilitating and supporting the continued development of the Dodder Valley (HA-DV) as a linear park, greenway and an area of special amenity, recreational, heritage, biodiversity and conservation value to include the completion of the Dodder Green Route along the full length of the Dodder River.*

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

- 5.2.1 The site is located close to the River Dodder, however, this is not designated as a Natura 2000 site. There is a pathway source connection between the Dodder and the South Dublin Bay SAC and SPA. The nearest Natura 2000 site is Glenasmole Valley SAC located c. 7km to the south west of the site.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

- The proposed development is a much needed facility. It will provide a significant upgrade in the sports facilities currently available in the area and will greatly benefit the school and local clubs. It will encourage sports participation and lead to a healthier community.
- The appeal submission includes some amendments to the development including revised landscaping proposals comprising the planting of additional parkland trees and evergreens. Lighting proposals for the dome are also amended to ensure that there is no horizontal light spill.
- The level of light used inside the dome has a lux level of 300. This is modest compared to the 500 lux level commonly used for outdoor playing pitches. The entire lighting proposal for the dome has been reviewed. The revised design for the dome submitted with the appeal submission now proposes that the outer layer of the dome's double membrane will include block out properties which will reduce light spill to an absolute minimum. An element of translucency (with an area of 70 m by 10 m) is proposed only at the top of the dome to allow natural daylight penetration. The light level to be omitted from this area will be 0.42 lux which is similar to moonlight. Light spill through the roof will be vertical and there will be no side spill. A full lighting assessment is submitted. No external lighting is proposed.
- It is calculated that the light spill onto the edge of the woodland from horizontal spill will be imperceptible and will be very significantly within the 3 lux figure of the Bat Guidelines. There will be some skyglow but it will be within the relevant guidelines of 0.2% to 2% upwards light. With additional planting along the edge of the woodland, there will be no measurable direct light spill entering into it, with no effect on the river and its banks. Revised night time CGI's submitted with appeal submission.
- When considering the visual impact of the development, it is important to note that the receiving landscape is considered to be of minimum sensitivity. A revised landscape masterplan is submitted with the appeal showing additional

planting along the eastern, southern and western boundaries of the site between the dome and key visual or habitat viewers/receptors. It is considered that this additional planting will reduce the visual impact of the development.

- The subject site is currently occupied by a hockey pitch. It is, therefore, reasonable for the school to have an indoor facility at this location. There is no alternative location within the school grounds where the facility could be located. The dome is located between 34 and 53 metres from the adjacent apartment blocks and 35 metres to the rear of the properties on Springfield Road. The location of the dome between the woodlands and school campus means that the visual impact can be reduced. The proposed dome has similar core dimensions as a sports hall or 4 storey classroom block.
- The mass, scale and volume of the building are consistent with a large sports venue, an essential part of any school campus. The proposed landscape screening and woodland blocks are designed to help integrate the proposal into the surrounding suburban context. The site is land asset for the school and its potential for recreation and education must be utilised. There will be no significant negative impact on residential or visual amenity nor reduction in property values. The existing vista and use of the site is a former sports facility rather than a greenfield or undeveloped amenity. Revised Landscape and Visual Impact Report and CGI's submitted with the appeal documentation.
- When considering noise impact, it is noted that the EHO raised no concerns relating to noise impact. The covering of the existing hockey pitch will internalise noise and thus will be an improvement from the noise generated from the current open air activities. The double membrane will control internally generated noise to within reasonable acoustic levels.
- As the access points are airlocked, noise emissions are minimised. With regard to the plant serving the dome, fibre glass encasing will be provided to ensure that all external machinery and equipment is acoustically sealed. The noise generated from the ventilation units will be designed to a manufacturer's specification of 55 dBA and this will be reduced to 40dBA at the nearest apartments. Happy to accept a condition to this effect. The entrances to the facility are located as far as possible from the nearest residential properties.

Sports slots and sessions will finish punctually and there will be a quick transition from one session to another with minimal waiting and little or no congregation outside. A waiting area within the dome is provided. There will be no live or piped music in the dome.

- The proposed hours of operation are considered reasonable. Happy to accept a condition to this effect. The facility is not for large sporting events that attract large volumes of spectators. There are no social facilities proposed. The proposed dome is largely constructed off site ensuring that construction works are minimised and the construction period considerably reduced. This will result in minimal noise and ecological impacts. The revised Ecology Report submitted with the appeal notes that the additional noise which is likely to emanate from the project will not have a significant negative impact to wildlife.
- The proposed development will not encroach physically into the adjacent woodland and the integrity of the woodland will not be affected by the proposed development. The bat survey submitted concluded that there would be no long term effect on bats once a dark corridor was maintained along the river. As the development is not going to physically encroach along the edge of the woodland, there will be no light impact into it. There is a significant level difference and separation distance between the river and the site as well as extensive dense planting. A revised Ecological and Bat Report submitted with appeal concludes that there will be no illumination of the river or riverbank and the combination of tree planting and more opaque material have removed the potential of interference with bats within the area.
- The development will not encroach on any existing watercourse. There will no pollution to the adjacent watercourse from noise, artificial light or from any other source either during the construction or post construction period. The development is, therefore, not contrary to policy G3 Objective 5 of the current County Plan.
- Notes that the South Dublin Co. Co. Planner's Report makes a number of references to a separate proposal for a sports dome at Templeogue Tennis Club. States that in the current application, residents are located further away

from the proposed facility and technology has been applied to eradicate horizontal light spill. Each application should be considered on its own merits.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

- The Planning Authority confirms its decision. The issues raised in the appeal have been covered in the Planner's Report.

6.3. Observations

6.3.1 Twenty observations were received by Jacqueline and William Stein, Geraldine Balfe Carey, Bushy Park Management No. 3 & 4 Ltd., Norman and Myra Gruson, Irene and Sean Furlong, Margaret Nagle and D. Mangan, Robert and Sybil Poynton, Andrea Dodd, David Taggart, Martin Laffin, Martine Deasy, M. and E. Ross, David Heelan, Amy Cahill, Mary Tobin, J. and M. Drury, E. and E. Bolger, Arnold and Ann Lewis, Sean Silke and Sheila Melin. The issues raised are similar and can be summarised as follows:

- **Visual Impact:** Consider the scale and size of the structure to be obtrusive and that it will have a significant adverse visual impact and negative impact on the residential amenities of adjacent properties. Proposed tree planting measures are insufficient to mitigate impacts. State that Landscape and Visual Assessment does not adequately illustrate the view obstruction that will occur. Consider that in many instances the visual impact would be classified as significant major and long term with a significant magnitude of change.
- **Noise:** concerns that the proposed development will generate significant noise intrusion when operational. No noise impact assessment has been undertaken. Note that the current hockey pitch is only used infrequently and that the development will result in a significant intensification of sporting activities until after 10pm in the evening. It, therefore, will not result in an improvement of the existing noise environment. Concerns regarding noise from plant required to operate the facility. Consider that there is no guarantee that proposed acoustic enclosures will work effectively and that noise levels will be within prescribed limits.

- **Traffic and Parking:** Consider that the development will exacerbate congestion on the existing access road and may impede emergency vehicle access. Concern that there is insufficient car parking to serve the development which will result in overspill parking to the surrounding area and in particular to the adjacent apartment development. Note that existing hockey pitch is used for overspill parking at present when there are events at the school.
- **Material Change of Use:** Contend that the use of the facility in the evening and weekends will have a commercial remit and will transform what is currently a private resource into a public one.
- **Light Impact:** Significant concerns raised regarding potential light pollution from the dome. Consider mitigation measures proposed by the applicant to be unrealistic.
- **Dodder Valley:** Impact on the character and amenity of the Dodder Valley.
- **Other Issues:** Concerns regarding litter and waste management, potential antisocial behaviour and fire safety, impact on property values.

6.4. Further Responses

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds on behalf of Siol Schools Trust (05.02.2018)

- It is acknowledged that there is congestion on the access road to the site during the peak periods of 8.00 – 9.00 am and 3.00 - 4.15 pm. There will be no community use of the dome during the morning peak period. During the afternoon peak, the dome will be used exclusively by the school for after school activities. Therefore, there will be no additional traffic generated by the development during either peak traffic period. The development will disperse traffic flows as children will be staying on longer in school to avail of the facility beyond the afternoon peak traffic congestion period.
- The facility will not be used for commercial activity. It will be used in the evening by local, not for profit sports clubs. It is envisaged that many will use public transport, cycling or walk to the facility which will mean that the use of private car to the proposed dome is likely to be relatively low amongst local groups.

- It is anticipated that the maximum capacity of the dome at any one time would be 45 participants. The likely traffic generated by such numbers is insignificant. Parking available on site will be freed up after normal school hours to serve the development in the evening time. The existing hockey pitch is only used on very occasional occurrences for overspill parking. There is an alternative site within the school that can be developed for more permanent parking if required.
- Planning conditions can be imposed that will ensure that noise levels generated will be within acceptable levels. Notes that the use of the existing underused hockey pitch could be increased and that sports activities could be held in this location into the evening. The proposed dome will internalise noise within a sealed environment, preventing noise intrusion to adjoining properties. The use of the facility until 10 pm is considered reasonable.
- The visual impact report includes a representative range of view points that were agreed in advance with the Planning Authority.
- Compliance with Fire Regulations lays beyond the scope of planning. The proposed development presents no fire danger to the surrounding residential properties.
- Empirical evidence has been submitted with the application that light emissions from the proposed dome will not be an issue.
- In considering the scale of the development, regard must be had to the immediate context of the site in a school grounds where sports facilities are a fundamental and expected part of the school infrastructure. The proposed trees around the perimeter of the site and dome will create landscape capacity to integrate and accommodate the new dome. The change to a more enhanced sports facility is not uncharacteristic or unreasonable. The scale of structure proposed is simply a product of its function. No important features that constitute the landscape are removed or lost and new landscape planting is added.

7.0 Assessment

7.1.1 The main issues in this appeal are those raised in the grounds of appeal and observations. Appropriate Assessment also needs to be addressed. I am satisfied that no other substantive issues arise. The issues can be dealt with under the following headings:

- Principle of Development.
- Impact on Residential Amenity.
- Traffic and Parking.
- Visual Impact.
- Impact on the Dodder Valley.
- Other Issues.
- Appropriate Assessment.

7.1. Principle of Development

7.1.1 The proposed development comprises the construction of a new sports dome that will accommodate sports pitches suitable for a wide variety of different sporting activities. The site of the dome is currently a hockey pitch. Whilst it is understood the current pitch is somewhat underutilised, it nonetheless is an established sporting facility within the existing school grounds and the principle of such a use is established at this location.

7.1.2 It is envisaged that the proposed dome will significantly intensify the existing use of the site as it will provide an all weather facility. The dome will be used by the school to expand its physical education programme during and after school hours and it is stated that it will also be used in the evening and weekends by other sporting groups and clubs in the locality. A number of letters of support were submitted at the planning application stage from such clubs voicing support for the facility and noting the lack of appropriate and suitable all weather facilities in the Terenure area.

7.1.3 I am satisfied that the subject development will provide a necessary sporting amenity that will have benefits not only for the existing school but for the wider community. Under C7 Objective 4 of the current South Dublin County Development Plan, it is a

specific policy to encourage the co-location of community and sporting facilities. In this regard, I consider the location of such a facility within an existing school grounds to be appropriate where its use can be fully maximised. A number of the observers have voiced concerns that the facility will operate a commercial entity. I am satisfied however, from the information on file that the facility will predominantly be used by the school and by not for profit local and voluntary sporting organisations. I consider the use to be consistent with the established educational and sporting use of the site, consistent with the zoning objective and objective of the South Dublin County Development Plan and acceptable in principle from a planning perspective.

7.2 Impact on Residential Amenity

7.2.1 Concerns have been raised by the observers that the development will have an adverse impact on the residential amenities of adjacent dwellings, particularly in terms of noise and potential light pollution. The impact of the development on the residential amenities and value of property in the vicinity is also cited as a reasons for refusal by the Planning Authority

Noise Impact

7.2.2 It is stated by the observers that the proposed development will have a negative impact due to potential noise intrusion from the facility once operational in terms of the intensification of use and activity and also due to the plant required to operate the dome.

7.2.3 It is noted that the site currently accommodates a hockey pitch, and whilst this facility is under used, there is nothing to preclude its more intensive use, with consequent increased noise impacts. It is in this context, that the proposed development must be considered.

7.2.4 I would concur with the case set out by the applicants that the dome, due to its form and double membrane construction, is likely to internalise much of the noise activities associated with the pitches. It is also noted that access to the dome is via revolving doors in order to keep the structure sealed and that this will further minimise potential for noise impacts.

7.2.5 In terms of plant, this will be located in a separate acoustically screened enclosure. The Planner's report notes that the subject plant and ventilation units is located 68 metres from the nearest residential dwelling to the west and 71 metres from the

nearest dwellings to the west and cites no objections to the proposal from a noise perspective. The Environmental Health Officer also had no objections to the development from a noise perspective. It is stated that the noise generated from the ventilation units will be designed to a manufacturer's specification of 55 dBA and this will be reduced through the use of insulation to 40dBA at the nearest apartments. I am satisfied that a condition can be imposed to ensure that appropriate noise limits are not breached.

7.2.6 Concerns have also been raised regarding the noise generated by people coming and going to the facility. The proposed sports dome will not operate after 10pm at night and I consider this to be a reasonable time for such activities to run without adversely affecting the amenities of adjacent dwellings. It is detailed that the facility is not large enough to cater for spectators and given that the facility accommodates a maximum of 2 pitches that can be used concurrently, I am satisfied that the dome will not attract significant volumes of people.

Light Impact

7.2.7 Concerns have been raised by both observers and the Planning Authority regarding potential light pollution from the dome with the Planning Officer noting that it would appear as a large 'light bulb', particularly from the apartments to the east.

7.2.8 In response to these concerns, the applicant has submitted revised proposals as part of their appeal submission to address the issue of light pollution. A detailed technical lighting assessment has been provided. This states that the internal pitches themselves will be lit by a total of 54 LED lanterns designed to produce a maintained average illuminance to the playing area of 300 lux. It is now proposed however, that the outer membrane of the proposed dome structure will comprise an opaque material that will effectively omit any potential for horizontal light spill from the internal lighting of the dome. It is proposed to retain one roof light aperture with an area of 70 m by 10 m that will facilitate daytime use of the sports dome without artificial lighting. It is calculated that the intensity of light spill through this roof light strip will be in the order of 0.42lux. It is detailed that this will have a similar illuminance to moonlight which typically has a lux level of 0.3.

7.2.9 The only light spill from the proposed development will be upwards from the roof light. This will be of low intensity and generally will only be visible from the upper

floors of the adjacent apartments to the east. It is detailed that this will be viewed as sky glow rather than light spill. The report notes that the level of sky glow is considerably less than the recommendations set out in the Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance for suburban areas. The report also highlights that the proposed lighting regime is less than one would expect in a public or private street lighting arrangement.

7.2.10 Having regard to the detailed technical information submitted with the appeal, I am satisfied that the proposed sports dome will not give rise to significant level of light pollution. The proposed mitigation measures and revised design and materials proposed will ensure that there will be minimal light intrusion through the sides of the dome structure. It is noted that the lux levels typically associated with a flood lit sports pitch is in the order of 300 lux. The development will be significantly less than this at 0.42 lux. The light emissions through the roof aperture will be minimal and would not give rise to any material negative impacts to the amenities of adjacent residents.

7.3 Traffic and Parking

7.3.1 Significant concerns have been raised by a number of the observers that the proposed development will exacerbate existing congestion on the access road to the site which also serves the adjacent Bushy Park residential development and that there is insufficient car parking to serve the development.

7.3.2 It is acknowledged by the applicant that congestion does occur on the access road particularly during peak morning and afternoon times when pupils and teachers are arriving/leaving the school. I would concur with the applicant however, that the proposed development is unlikely to exacerbate this situation. During the daytime and early afternoon, the facility will be predominantly used by pupils of the school as part of their normal PE curriculum. It will, therefore, be used by pupils and teachers already present in the school and will not be a generator of traffic in its own right.

7.3.3 In the evening and weekend, it is likely to be used by local clubs and societies. Many of these are local to the school and thus may potentially use other modes of transport to access the facility. In any event, their use of the facility is likely to occur outside of the peak traffic periods. The facility accommodates two pitches, and even if both are occupied simultaneously, the facility is unlikely to generate significant

traffic volumes. It is noted that the Roads Department of South Dublin County Council raised no concerns regarding the development from a traffic perspective. I am satisfied that that having regard to the nature of the proposed development that it will not give rise to significant traffic movements so as to generate a traffic hazard.

7.3.4 In terms of parking, it is understood that the school currently accommodates in excess of 70 surface car parking spaces. The majority of these spaces will be vacated after normal school hours and thus will be available for evening and weekend users of the sports dome. I consider this level of parking sufficient to serve the development and that the development is unlikely to give rise to any overspill parking issues.

7.4 Visual Impact

7.4.1. It is stated by the Planning Authority that the scale, mass and height of the dome is likely to give rise to significant adverse visual impacts.

7.4.2 The proposed dome is undoubtedly a large structure. It extends to an area of over 4,400 sq. metres, has a maximum height of 14 metres and is c. 19 metres in length. The dome will be highly visible particularly from the existing apartments to the east and the two storey housing to the west. In considering the visual impact of the development however, one must have regard to the existing site context including the zoning of the site.

7.4.3 The subject site represents a brownfield urban site that is zoned RES: *To protect and improve residential amenity* under the current South Dublin Development Plan. Whilst the site is currently used as a hockey pitch, its zoning implies that it has the capacity to be developed for a wide range of uses including educational, institutional, residential etc. Sports Club/Facility is open for consideration under this zoning objective. The general character of the area is suburban, with the Dodder Valley, a significant amenity area located to the south. The site itself is set back a considerable distance from adjoining residential development. From the apartments to the east, the set back varies from 33.5 metres to 53 metres. The two storey dwellings to the west are set back c. 35 metres from the boundary of the sports dome.

7.4.4 The Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application notes that the receiving landscape is of medium sensitivity. The scale of magnitude of landscape

effects to be imposed on the landscape by the development is also classified as medium. It notes that there would be alterations to some key elements or features of the area, and the introduction of elements that would be prominent but not substantially uncharacteristic in the context of the receiving environment, particularly its current use and school context.

- 7.4.5 The Visual Impact Report acknowledges that the visual impact of the dome will be high when viewed from the most sensitive visual receptors in the vicinity of the site. From Springfield Road the significance of the change is regarded as high and likely to be adverse in the short term pending the regrowth of existing boundary treatment planting. It notes that the impact will be neutral in the medium to long term. With regard to the impacts from the apartments to the east, the significance of change is regarded as high and adverse at lower levels (ground to 4th floor) due to the dominance of the new dome in the view and the intrusion on wider landscape views. It notes that levels 5 and 6 would experience a significance of change that is high but neutral as the wider landscape views would suffer less intrusion due to elevation. The report acknowledges that there will be adverse impacts to some of the apartment dwellers where the dome will dominate and intrude significantly on pleasant existing views.
- 7.4.6 As part of the appeal response the applicant proposes further mitigation through the provision of a revised landscape masterplan. It is proposed to plant to all boundaries a belt of fast growing trees including Italian Alder- a tall semi evergreen tree which gives some winter screening, Silver Birch and Western Red Cedar, a fast growing dense conifer. To the east, a double row of small leaved lime trees is proposed to provide further screening. Additional planting comprising *Tilia cordata* to the west is also proposed. It is stated that the landscaping will increase the capacity of the landscape to absorb the change, break up the scale and dominance of the structure and create a new landscape amenity.
- 7.4.7 Having reviewed the photomontages, CGI's and Visual Impact Report, I am of the view that the proposed dome will have a significant visual impact, particularly when viewed from the lower levels of the apartments (ground to 4th floor) to the east. The landscape mitigation proposals will however, soften the visual impact somewhat. The new trees will help assimilate the dome into its setting, and whilst they will not screen the structure in its entirety, they will reduce its dominance.

7.4.8 The significance of the visual impact, however, must be considered in the context of the sites location and zoning. As detailed above, the site is an urban brownfield site that is zoned for development, and in this context, any development would significantly change the existing open views of the hockey pitch. In this regard, I am of the view that whilst the development will have a high visual impact from the perspective of the adjacent residential receptors, the magnitude of this change is medium as the degree of change is not unwarranted having regard to the existing school context and the fact that the site is zoned for development. I acknowledge that the school has limited space in which to expand or develop additional facilities and amenities and the subject site represents a suitable and viable site for the development. It will ensure the effective utilisation of an undeveloped site.

7.4.9 The sports dome in my view will provide a major new sporting amenity and facility for the school and wider community and will have a significant planning gain. The separation distances to adjacent houses and apartments and revised landscape proposals will help reduce the visual impact of the development. The design of the dome due its form and lack of fenestration has less impacts on residential amenities than if the site were to be developed for a comparative infill development such as a further institutional/educational building or conventional sports hall. I am satisfied that in this context, the development will not materially affect the visual amenities of the area.

7.5 Impact on the Dodder Valley

7.5.1 Concerns were raised by the Planning Authority regarding the impact of the development on the Dodder River Valley and in particular that the development would contravene Policy G3 Objective 5 of the Development Plan in that light spill would impact negatively on bat species along the river corridor.

7.5.2 The subject dome is located on the site of the existing cinder hockey pitch. It generally maintains the same physical footprint of the pitch and in this regard does not physically encroach upon the River Valley. The construction phase of the dome is much shorter than a conventional building as it arrives on site in a kit form and is assembled on site. In this regard, potential construction impacts are minimised.

7.5.3 A bat survey was submitted with the application which identified that four different species of bat were identified in the area but that no roost sites were believed to be

present. The report concluded that there will be no long term effect upon bats once a dark corridor is maintained along the river. An additional addendum report is submitted with the appeal which further assesses the impact of the development with the revised lighting and landscaping proposals. It notes that a combination of a landscape belt of Western Red Cedar trees planted along the southern boundary of the site along with the increased opacity of the dome material would ensure that there will be no illumination of the Dodder Valley and no impact upon feeding and commuting bats. The light report submitted with the appeal also notes that the level of illuminance from the roof top aperture will be in the order of 0.42 lux. The relevant guidelines by Bat Conservation Ireland stipulate a maximum level of 3 lux where feasible from sport playing pitches. The development is well within this recommendation.

7.5.4 I am satisfied that having regard to the mitigation measures proposed as part of the appeal submission that the proposed development will not encroach on the Dodder River Valley nor extend excessive light pollution into it. I note that an extensive belt of existing mature trees exists between the site and the existing river and banks and that the river is at a much lower level than the site. In this context, due to the fact that horizontal light spill from the dome will now largely be contained coupled with the extensive evergreen planting proposed, I consider it unlikely that there will be any material impact on existing bat species present in the valley. A sufficient dark corridor will be retained along the river valley to ensure protection of bat species. As noted above, I also consider that through the imposition of appropriate conditions, there will be no adverse noise impacts.

7.6 Other Issues

7.6.1 Other issues raised by the observers relate to concerns regarding litter and waste management, potential antisocial behaviour, fire safety and impact on property values.

7.6.2 Having regard to the nature and scale of development, I consider it unlikely that it will generate significant volumes of waste. Waste management can be addressed through the normal management measures currently employed by the school. No evidence has been submitted to suggest that the proposed development will have an adverse impact on property values. With regard to fire safety, it is considered that

this is a matter that will be addressed under the relevant Fire Regulations and not pertinent to this assessment. I do not consider anti social behaviour likely considering the end users of the proposed facility.

7.7 Appropriate Assessment

- 7.7.1 The subject site is not located within or directly adjacent to any Natura 2000 site. The River Dodder however, provides a pathway to the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA (site code 4024) and the South Dublin Bay SAC (site code 0210). The distance to the boundary of these areas is c. 5km. A screening report is submitted with the application. This identifies that the qualifying interest of the South Dublin SAC relates to its mudflats and sandflats. The South Dublin SPA is an internationally important site for water birds.
- 7.7.2 The report notes that because of the distance separating the site and the SPA/SAC there is no pathway for loss or disturbance of important habitats or important species associated with the features of interest of the SPA. The development will connect to the public sewer. There is a pathway from the site via surface flows to Dublin Bay, via the River Dodder. As the site is already mostly of hard standing, any increase in the volume or quality of run off is likely to be negligible. Water quality is not listed as a conservation objective for the SPA/SAC. The report states that discharges of surface water from the project cannot result in significant effects to the Dublin Bay SAC/SPA. It also noted that whilst there will be earthworks during the construction phase, that there is a broad area of vegetation between the site and the Dodder that will act as a buffer. While sediment can be detrimental to the ecological quality of freshwater bodies, the same is not the case for estuaries and tidally influenced habitats which rely on vast quantities of sediment for their functioning.
- 7.7.3 It is reasonable to conclude that, on the basis of the information on the file which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, having regard to the distance to the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1 It is recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions for the reasons and considerations set out below.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

- 9.1 Having regard to the established sporting use of the site, to the residential zoning objective pertaining to the site, to the policies and objectives of the South Dublin County Development Plan to provide for the improvement and enhancement of sporting facilities in the County and to the mitigation measures proposed in terms of landscaping and lighting of the dome structure, it is considered that, subject to the conditions set out below that the proposed sports dome would not seriously injure the visual and residential amenities of properties in the vicinity, would not have a negative noise, light or visual impact on the Dodder Amenity Area and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 17th day of October 2017, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

3. The proposed hours of operation of the sports dome shall be between 0800 hours and 2200 hours Monday to Friday and 0900 hours to 2200 hours at the weekend and public holidays.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

4. The noise level shall not exceed 55 dB(A) rated sound level (that is, corrected sound level for a tonal or impulsive component) at any point along the boundary of the site between 0800 and 2200 hours, Monday to Friday inclusive, and shall not exceed 45 dB(A) at any other time. Procedures for the purpose of determining compliance with this limit shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

Reason: To protect the residential amenities of property in the vicinity of the site and the Dodder Valley Amenity Area.

5. The site and building works required to implement the development shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1800 Monday to Fridays, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Public Holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenities of adjoining property in the vicinity.

6. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise management measures and off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste.

Reason: In the interests of public safety and residential amenity.

7. The landscaping scheme submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 17th day of October 2017 shall be carried out within the first planting season following substantial completion of external construction works. All planting shall be adequately protected from damage until established. Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of five years from the completion of the development shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

8. Prior to the commencement of works, the adjoining woodland along the Dodder River Valley should be clearly marked off and identified as a sensitive ecological zone. Protective fencing along the edge of this zone shall be maintained until the development has been completed. Excavations in preparation for foundations and drainage, and all works above ground level in the immediate vicinity of this zone shall be carried out under the supervision of an ecologist, in a manner that will ensure that all major roots are protected and all branches are retained. No work shall be carried out within the area enclosed by the fencing and, in particular, there shall be no parking of vehicles, placing of site huts, storage compounds or topsoil heaps, storage of oil, chemicals or other substances, and no lighting of fires, over the root spread of any tree within this zone.

Reason: To protect trees and planting during the construction period in the interest of visual amenity.

Erika Casey
Senior Planning Inspector

15th March 2018