

'Keep Murphy's Rock Wild' Group.

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c/o Maria O' Flynn, 79 Thorndale, Dublin Hill, Cork. T23C9CA

Planning Application Reference Number: 313994

Applicant: Cork County GAA Board

Description of Development: Demolition of disused Hurley manufacturing factory and associated outbuildings, construction of 319 no. residential units (203 no. houses and 116 no. apartments), creche and associated site works.

Introduction: We welcome the opportunity to submit our comments and observations regarding the planning application 313994.

We also wish to note that the list of applications is not kept up to date on the an Board Pleanála website and this makes it more difficult for members of the public to access the correct documentation. This goes against the Aarhus Convention principle of Access to Information which is essential for the public's right to participate in planning matters.

We do not think this is an appropriate development for the following reasons:

- It is in direct contravention of the Cork County Development Plan 2014. The footprint of the entire site is within an area that has been zoned open and recreational space and should be retained as green infrastructure for nature and community amenity area.
- The development is proposed for an area with the highest recreational and nature value in this community and its surrounds. It is a rarity in a city like Cork. There are other areas more suitable for development within the community that would not have such high negative impact on this hugely significant area of biodiversity.

- There are serious shortcomings in respect of existing water supply and wastewater services for the scale of the proposed development. Development on this site poses significant risks to water bodies and will impact on meeting the requirements of the River Basin Management Plan and Water Framework Directive.
- As our water quality continued to decline during the 2nd Cycle of the RBMP we must do everything we can to reverse that trend and protect waters from further risk of deterioration. Pollution risks to the river, given the invasive works and steep gradient, are significant. It is concerning that the pipe for surface water will be fed directly into the river. According to the Flood Risk Assessment Report aquifer vulnerability in this region has an extreme vulnerability rating. This vulnerability determines “the ease with which groundwater may be contaminated by human activities” The northern portion of the site due to the watercourse is at most risk of flooding and it is correct that that area should be kept as a natural and most effective flood plain and wetland area. However, the drilling, the compaction, soil movement and remodelling of site levels deemed necessary for such a development will have significant impacts on the geological and hydrogeological environments however this is blithely written off in the EIAR as “an unavoidable consequence”.
- The protection of wildlife is not sufficient, despite the presence of many species in the area that are governed by the Wildlife Act, the Birds Directive, and the Habitats Directive. Aside from some efforts regarding the Marsh Fritillary butterfly habitat, there are no measures to protect biodiversity in the area and ensure loss of same.
- Surveys of wildlife in the area are not adequate and aside from some suggested efforts around butterfly habitat there are no measures to ensure no net loss of biodiversity in the area. Whilst appreciating that the site does not fall within a designated site such as an SAC or SPA the reports give less than adequate consideration to the Birds and Habitats Directives and legislation governing wildlife through the Wildlife Act as well as overall commitments to no net loss of biodiversity. The mix of an aquatic environment, trees and wild grassland in this area provides a very important habitat for many species. The EIAR confirms the presence of Otters which are subject to strict protection under Art 12-16 of the Habitats Directive. Bats also an Annex IV species under the Habitats Directive are confirmed as being present “high levels of Leisler’s bat activity and low levels for all other species” yet the conclusion is that the project impact will be “an imperceptible magnitude” and represent “an effect of negligible significance”. The crisis in species loss with more and more added to amber and red lists year by year is the result of these “imperceptible” effects. Where we have the right habitat and healthy populations, we need to afford them adequate protection as is our legal duty under the nature laws we have. This site is in the most isolated location on the top of the plateau, it will therefore have significant light trespass and glare impacts down the valley which will result in negative impacts on light sensitive species such as moths and bats.
- Local observations report many species of birds in the site area. The CJEU in c-473/19 in respect of the protections afforded to all wild birds provided clarification

in this regard and needs to be reflected in the approach when consider the application.

- The EIAR states that the Glenmought River downstream of the project is “a freshwater habitat of county importance owing to populations of brown trout and Annex II species such as river lamprey and otters that are known to rely on this habitat for spawning and breeding/ foraging” But this is where the surface water pipe is proposed to be located. We have already lost so much of the space left to nature, we need to act urgently to conserve such existing natural habitats and landscapes, as the level of remaining habitats of such value in the city is now critical.
- The sprawl effect of such a development will impact the social, cultural and placemaking values of existing communities. This area is rich in history. The site has remained, a vital area for nature and people, and has been fondly known locally for generations, as Murphy’s Rock. Generations of people, in particular from the northside of the city, have spent many a day experiencing nature here. It continues to be very much part of the social, cultural, and historic fabric of their lives.
- The site had a significant contribution to the economic development of the area with the historic remnants of the mills still visible along the path from Kilcully to Blackpool. As listed in the EIAR there are 3 Protected Structures and eight structures listed by the NIAH within 1 km of the proposed site with the nearest just 40m north of the development boundary. The ASI lists 14 archaeological sites within 1 km of the site, one just 25m from the site boundary. There are risks to these from the ground works that will be carried out by this kind of development in such close proximity.
- The northside of Cork City continues to rank significantly on the deprivation index and the work of Cork Healthy Cities highlights the need to consider the social determinants of health in planning in the city. The evidence of the importance of access to blue and green spaces is conclusive in respect of people’s health and wellbeing. This natural asset, a wildlife haven, has evolved over time and is a unique and precious place that needs to be protected so that existing communities can continue to enjoy it. Future residents of the general area also deserve to have access. There are already substantial housing developments currently underway nearer to the city end of Blackpool, not to mention an enormous number (over 700) of homes being developed between Dublin Pike, Rathcooney, Ballyhooley road, and Ballyvolane. This area will already be overloaded by the huge amount of development, in an area that was once too, designated green belt. The additional residents as well as the existing, need to have access to quality green and blue recreational spaces. South of the river in Cork, there are numerous areas designated recreational space, so too there are areas purposefully maintained for biodiversity and left wild. Can we not give equal consideration and status to the nature, wildlife, biodiversity and mental health of the residents of Cork’s northside?
- The development proposed is below the minimum density allowed anywhere in the city and the amount of car parking provided is above the maximum allowed in the city development plan.

Conclusion: We need to see balanced development for both people and nature and the upholding of commitments to the Landscape Convention when designing and making decisions on planning. There is an urgent need to creatively engage in landscape change - in a manner that will enhance our natural as well as man-made heritage. At a time when biodiversity is a buzzword used loosely by politicians and planners, we now urgently need biodiversity to be genuinely considered - not just used as a prop to endlessly greenwash. Addressing our biodiversity crisis needs to be paramount.

We cannot see under any current circumstances how this application can be granted when the planning conditions and zoning under which it is applied for is for open space and recreation. We understand the need for housing - not just housing - but housing that enables low carbon sustainable communities, simultaneously protecting and valuing rather than degrading existing biodiversity - This development will fail in this regard. There are other more suitable sites in close proximity that we suggest are more suitable. We respectfully ask that you refuse permission for this proposed development.