

1, St. Cronan's Road,
Little Bray,
Co. Wicklow.

28th October, 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

I wish to submit an Observation regarding Shankill Property Investments Ltd.'s Strategic Housing Development application to build their 'Coastal Quarter' on part of the former Bray Golf Club lands at Ravenswell, Bray, Co. Wicklow - Case Ref. TA06D.314686.

In this Observation, I intend to concentrate on both flood risk and on the interdependence between this application and Wicklow County Council's Part 8 proposal (Ref. PRR 21/869) to build an access road across these lands to their proposed public transport suspension bridge: *this proposal is at present the subject of a Judicial Review.*

I am aware that some of my neighbours from Little Bray are focusing on other aspects of this application, such as the Environmental Impact and Natura Impact statements, and the Traffic and Transport element, all of which are extremely important to our neighbourhood. I would like to add my support to those Observations as well, which I have read and agree with.

Coastal Quarter SHD2 Flood Risk Assessment at:

<https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Reports/Engineering/FLOOD%20RISK%20ASSESSMENT.pdf>

1) Flood Zoning:

Shankill Investments' application assesses "the majority of the Coastal Quarter", that is the high ground (above the present schools' road) as a Flood Zone C:

- on page 36 at 6.3;
- twice on page 27 (pdf page 75) at 5.1 and 5.2 of their Technical Note; and again

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

- on page 29 at 6 (pdf page 77), where they add: “A limited portion within the southern corner of the site is located within a Flood Zone ‘A’ and Flood Zone ‘B’ during both the fluvial and tidal flood events.”

However, Bray's Local Area Plan 2018 clearly shows almost all of the entire former Bray Golf Club lands – both above and below the schools' road – as Flood Zones A and B. See page 20 (pdf page 23) of Appendix C: Flood Risk Assessment of Bray's Local Area Plan 2018 at

<https://www.wicklow.ie/Portals/0/Documents/Planning/Development-Plans-Strategies/Local-Area-Town-Settlement-Plans/Bray/Bray-Municipal-District-Local-Area-Plan-2018/Appendix%20C%20-%20Strategic%20Flood%20Risk%20Assessment%20-Bray%20MD%20LAP%202018.pdf>

Their Justification Test for allowing Mixed Use development on any portion of this site is dependent on the accuracy of that assessment. In other words, if Shankill Investments' flood zoning is correct, then the Justification Test - on which Bray Municipal and Wicklow County Council are allowing Mixed Use development throughout this site – fails.

It fails at 2 (v) as, if there is a substantial Flood Zone C within the site, and a Flood Zone B, then Flood Zone A should be avoided altogether, according to the Sequential Approach set out on page 22 (Fig. 3.1) and continued on the following page of the mandatory Planning System Flood Risk Management Guidelines at

<https://www.opr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2009-Planning-System-Flood-Risk-Mgmt-1.pdf>

It also fails at 3, if a rudimentary mistake like this has been made in the Council's Flood Risk Assessment of the site.

If Shankill Investments' flood zoning is correct, however, then it is not in line with Bray's LAP 2018.

In either scenario, Shankill Investments' application fails on flood zoning.

Shankill Investments' application assesses the low ground (below the present schools' road) as Flood Zones A and B.

Bray's LAP 2018 agrees, with Shankill Investments noting on page 29 at 6 (pdf page 77), as already stated, that: “A limited portion within the southern corner of the [Coastal Quarter

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

development] site is located within a Flood Zone 'A' and Flood Zone 'B' during both the fluvial and tidal flood events."

2) Topography:

Part of this lower land is designated for hard landscaping with a "a series of three terraces linked by a fully accessible feature walkway" ... "in order to deal with topography in this location". See page 45 of their Architectural Design Statement at

<https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Reports/Architecture/Architectural%20Design%20Statement.pdf>

The terrace is required to link their proposed Market Square on what is now the schools' road down to Flood Zones A and B, below the schools' road.

I will return to that proposal in my next section, but first I would like to deal with topography, as shown in this application, and flood risk. Shankill Investments have dealt with topography on their site in some detail. They have not mentioned how the topography of the land upstream interconnects with the necessity to preserve the floodplain on their site.

All of the houses in Little Bray immediately upriver from this site are built on the same Flood Zone A that extends downriver onto the former Golf Club lands. As a result, those homes have suffered numerous minor floods since they were built, and four major floods in 1905,'31, '65, and '86.

In each of those floods, the waters flowed north over the banks of the river and into our homes (as many of our houses are built below the level of the river), but they also came as flash floods from upriver, causing immense damage. These flash floods were following the original estuary bed, and they flowed, as any river will, towards the sea, along the deepest channel. *That deepest channel – the original river bed – is the Lr. Dargle Road and the Greenpark Road, and all of the smaller roads in between.*

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

The result was that, in every one of those floods, while our homes were temporarily destroyed, the flood waters left them immediately to continue along the floodplain onto the old Bray Golf Club lands, which provided a flood storage area until the river and the sea had abated enough to take them back again. Every minute that flood water, especially polluted with sewage, remains in a building causes spiralling damage. *If the flood storage area on the old golf links is blocked, our homes will become the flood storage area instead.*

The flood waters entered the old Bray Golf Club lands from two directions.

The first was by breaking down the river wall at Ravenswell Road, at the point where high spring tides meet a flooded river. That overflow spread out sideways over the floodplain, and saved our homes in Little Bray from what would otherwise have been catastrophic extra flooding. That can no longer happen, as a flood defence wall has been built between the river and Ballymore's site to protect the floodplain from flooding from that side. Any future flooding that the Dargle's normal riverbed cannot contain at that point will now be forced back upriver towards the first undefended place in the flood defences – the Fran O'Toole bridge – from where, as topography will show, it will follow gravity downhill into our homes. *See Figure 10: LiDAR Derived DTM of the applicant's Flood Risk Assessment.*

The second entry point for the flood waters is the escape route always provided for them through the side gate onto the old golf links. In all of the major floods, the current has swept downstream across Castle Street and in through both entrances to Dwyer Park in order to reach the side gate of the old golf links: this is located at the end of Burns Lane, the laneway between O'Sullivan's pub on Castle Street and the little row of shops that climb up from that lane to the bridge. Those floods have flowed through our homes, destroying them enroute, but at least have allowed us to start the process of drying and cleaning and repairing, and sometimes rebuilding, *immediately.*

Maintaining Flood Zone A as a storage area for flooding from our homes is vital, if our neighbourhood is not to become a flood storage area instead, and maintaining a free route to that Flood Zone A along its former channel is also vital, for the reasons of topography outlined above.

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

3) Flood Defence Scheme:

This has become even more important with the installation of our flood defence scheme, warmly welcomed by our community. However, we are also acutely aware that if the flood defences fail upriver from our homes, at any time, the water will now be trapped on our side of the defences, unable to return to the river. If the flood waters are blocked downstream of us by development on the floodplain, and alongside us by flood defences on one side and the steep climb to the Dublin Road on the other, our homes will remain underwater for a very long time indeed...

None of that has been taken into account in Shankill Investments' application. They simply state that their proposals 'will have no effect on flood risk in the surrounding area', without providing any evidence whatsoever for this claim.

Criteria 2, Part 1, of their Justification Test on page 39 of their Flood Risk Assessment simply rests on the present Flood Defence Scheme – which must be ignored when assessing flood risk, as they have acknowledged elsewhere – plus “an element of compensatory storage ... provided within the boundary of the Coastal Quarter site area to facilitate a small volume of flood water displaced by the proposed road and Market Square”. They do not take into account at all the possible failure of the flood defences upstream and the consequences – for us - of blocking their escape route to the sea in that event.

Their 'Justification Test - Conclusion' on page 40 of that same document confirms this. It states: “There is no residual risk to the Coastal Quarter Development.”

Putting a very expensive flood defence system in place here, and then allowing development on a floodplain downstream, is the equivalent of fire-proofing a house to the highest standard – and then blocking the fire escape.

4) Proposed Access Road across Flood Zones A and B:

The southern part of Shankill Investments' application is built around a proposed access road (to a proposed public transport suspension bridge) which is the subject of a Judicial Review at present. Wicklow County Council submitted a Part 8 proposal (Ref. PRR 21/869) for this bridge and access road, maintaining that it would have no effect on the

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

environment, and so an EIS would not be required. Surprisingly, Bord Pleanála's Inspector agreed with that assessment, despite the fact that Wicklow County Council are maintaining in their Part 8 proposal that the lowland of the old Bray Golf Club lands is a Flood Zone C, while Bray's LAP 2018 Flood Risk Assessment assesses that land as Flood Zones A and B – another direct contradiction in our local authority's flood risk assessments. The decision by An Bord Pleanála is the subject of the Judicial Review.

Shankill Investments claim that their application is 'stand-alone', yet their drawings, their graphics, and their text give the lie to this claim. In particular, their proposal on page 77 (graphic on page 78 at Fig. 18) of their Flood Risk Assessment proposes building up the level of the ground at the southern end of the site against the side of the proposed access road, which is proposed to be built on an embankment:

"In order to enable a sustainable development of the site and **to reduce the risk of flood inundation to the site it is proposed to raise ground levels within the southern area of the site**. It is also proposed to include a proposed road along the southern boundary within the model."

This a) simply assumes the access road will go ahead, with some contempt for the judicial process surrounding it; and b) shows no regard for the danger building up the ground level across the floodplain might cause for a very vulnerable community living upriver.

This assumption is shown from the very beginning of their documentation, i.e. the second and third Architect's drawings shown at <https://coastalquartershd2.com/drawings/architecture/>.

Drawing BRA-GHA-SW-XX-DR-A-05001 (Site Location Map) shows the schools' road, leading to the railway underpass, as it is at present. In Drawing BRA-GHA-SW-ZZ-DR-A-05002 (Site Layout Plan, Sheet 1 of 2), however, the part of the schools' road between the area they designate as the Orchard (in front of Coláiste Raithín) and the railway underpass disappears as a public road.

It is replaced in this application by the frontage of Block C, adjacent to the Orchard, and Block B2, adjacent to the railway underpass. See Block C, South Elevation, and Block B, South Elevation, at

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

[https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Drawings/Architecture/BRA-GHA-ZC-ZZ-DR-A-05240%20-%20Block%20C%20-%20Elevations%20\(Sheet%201%20of%202\).pdf](https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Drawings/Architecture/BRA-GHA-ZC-ZZ-DR-A-05240%20-%20Block%20C%20-%20Elevations%20(Sheet%201%20of%202).pdf) and

[https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Drawings/Architecture/BRA-GHA-ZB-ZZ-DR-A-05221%20-%20Block%20B%20-%20Elevations%20\(Sheet%202%20of%202\).pdf](https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Drawings/Architecture/BRA-GHA-ZB-ZZ-DR-A-05221%20-%20Block%20B%20-%20Elevations%20(Sheet%202%20of%202).pdf) respectively.

Block C contains at ground floor level a childcare facility, a café, and a shop, with the latter two fronting onto what is at present a public road, while the entrance to the childcare facility is just around the corner. Block B2 contains a gym and juice bar at ground and mezzanine level.

In front of Block C, crossing the public road and descending onto Flood Zone B below, is the Market Square, while a Plaza area fronts Block B2, again on what is still, and may well remain, a public road.

That road culminates at the railway underpass, which is described in this application (page 45) at

<https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Reports/Architecture/Architectural%20Design%20Statement.pdf>

as the 'Underpass Entrance Node'. It states:

"This character area has been created by the removal of the existing access road to the underpass and replacing it with a plaza area that marks the entrance to the proposed development for pedestrians and cyclists travelling to and from the harbour and beyond to Bray Town Centre. The plaza also provides connection with the existing cycle path from the harbour, creates a setting for the commercial unit on the southern elevation of Block B and provides a connection point between the northern and southern portions of the Coastal Gardens walkway."

The proposed changes to this area - by the developer - are described earlier in the same document, on page 14, as follows:

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

“To the south eastern corner, the entrance to the coastal path has been substantially increased to create a more inviting gateway from the railway underpass into the Coastal Quarter. The pedestrian underpass is considered one of the key gateways into the scheme and is therefore the location of the ‘landmark’ taller element of the proposed scheme. At ground level the visitor is greeted by a double height space on the corner with a juice bar at ground level and gym at 1st floor/mezzanine level. These two uses will ensure continuous activity at this key location. Tables and chairs on a south facing outside terrace associated with the juice bar will further animate this space.”

The last paragraph on the following page (15) gives the height of this ‘landmark’ taller element of the proposed scheme as 12 storeys. This can be seen on the Block B, Southern Elevation drawing, referenced above on my page 7.

The interconnection between the proposed changes at the railway underpass and Block B2 are explained on page 23 of

<https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Reports/Landscape/6948%20-%20LANDSCAPE%20DESIGN%20STRATEGY%20REPORT.pdf>

as: “the footprint of Block B has been redesigned to create a wider access route from the existing underpass as part of the Entrance Node on to the Coastal Gardens route.”

These changes are illustrated in a graphic on page 14, in the same document.

The text accompanying that graphic repeats the statement made on page 45 of the Architectural Design Statement, regarding the removal of the existing access road to the underpass and replacing it with a plaza area “.

That this section of presently public road is intended, within this application, as a very social space, is obvious from the text on page 25 of Architectural Design Statement:

“The proposed development encourages social relationships and the culture of sharing spaces and functions. The layout has been arranged so that the community elements (the childcare facility, the cafe and the convenience store) form the ‘public front’ of the scheme to the south. These important elements front onto the ‘Market Square’. This public space

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

forms the main entrance to the proposed development and will be a lively space accommodating outdoor seating for the café and incidental play areas for children coming from and going to the adjacent childcare facility and schools. It is intended to host weekend farmers markets and other events.”

Because this proposed Market Square not only crosses the public road, but then descends onto Flood Zone B, it is difficult to ascertain where exactly the proposed farmers market and other events will be held – on the public road or the low ground or somewhere in-between on the ‘series of three terraces’ described below on page 45 of the Architectural Design Statement:

“The Market Square is a key node within the overall Harbour Point masterplan and the key public space within the Coastal Quarter. This mainly hard surfaced plaza area will provide an external community space for artisan markets, seasonal community events and as a breakout seating space to be used by the commercial premises within the ground floor of the adjacent apartment buildings fronting onto the square. In order to deal with topography in this location, the square will be set out as a series of three terraces linked by a fully accessible feature walkway.”

There are multiple graphics and references to the social aspect of this proposed Market Square and its hard and soft landscaping (and indeed to the proposed Underpass Entrance Node and Block B2) throughout the Architectural Design Statement (including pp25, 32, 35, and 40). Again, however, there is no clarity regarding where – within the Market Square area, from the schools’ road down to Flood Zone B – these activities are planned to take place.

Clearer is their repeated intention to make a separate application to construct a very extensive building, referred to variously as a ‘Feature’, ‘Landmark’, or ‘Special’ building, on Flood Zone B, thus putting a very non-water compatible element into the Coastal Garden applied for here.

This Landmark building is illustrated, and its extent shown, in the graphic at Page 80 of their MasterPlan - Market Square and Coastal Gardens at

<https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Reports/Other/Harbour%20Point%20Bray%20Masterplan.pdf>

Again there are multiple references to this proposed building within the present application's documentation, e.g. the Architectural Design Statement at page 32 and the Landscape Design Strategy report at page 24.

To claim that the changes proposed along the present schools' road have nothing to do with the proposed access road that is the subject of a Judicial Review is simply ludicrous, as can be seen in particular in Figure 20: Overall Site Layout on page 18 of the Architectural Design Statement

Wicklow Co. Council's disputed access road consistently appears as an integral part of the applicant's plans in any map or graphic on or below the present schools' road between Coláiste Raithín and the railway underpass, including the following text from page 33 of the Architectural Design Statement, which refers to Figure 33 on the same page:

"The main access road leading to the future public transport bridge and the link from this road to the rail underpass will be taken in charge by the Local Authority."

As noted at the beginning of this section, the applicant's plans actually include building up the ground at the southern end of their site against the proposed access road.

In addition, Page 47 of the Architectural Design Statement says:

"Care has been taken to ensure that landscape levels along the Coastal Gardens are raised above the existing ground levels so that the new ground levels will be close to podium level."

In short, this application, once it reaches the present schools road, is inextricably linked with Wicklow's Part 8 proposal, just as their Master Plan is inextricably linked with this present application.

5) Interconnectedness:

Bray's LAP has zoned this site in its entirety, and, while the zoning is extremely debatable, the idea of zoning it as one site is definitely correct. Having a MasterPlan for the entire site, as Shankill Investments have, also makes practical sense. What makes no sense at all is to allow piecemeal applications to build on this totally interconnected site, all in the ownership of the one developer, particularly as Shankill Investments' Harbour Point Bray MasterPlan at

<https://coastalquartershd2.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/documents/Reports/Other/Harbour%20Point%20Bray%20Masterplan.pdf>

shows either ignorance of, or indifference to, the flood route. Buildings are proposed across the present side entrance onto the floodplain (see graphic on page 78 of the MasterPlan, at the south-west corner of the site). The route shown into the River Park, which will provide some soakage for the buildings around it in the event of flood, comes downhill from the river – the same direction the floods come into our homes from the south. Meanwhile, *flood waters coming down our streets towards that area would have to climb uphill to that access route at the south-western corner of the site in order to reach the River Park.*

What is permitted on the high ground will place in thrall what may be permitted on the low ground. A simple example is that Bray's LAP 2018 has a target of 1,000 housing units for this site, with no breakdown between high and low ground. Shankill Investments back this target up in their Architectural Design report, on page 5, when they say: "When fully built out, Harbour Point has the potential to deliver over 1,000 homes together with associated retail, recreational and social facilities that will form an urban extension of the historic core of Bray." If 564 housing units are built on the high ground, then at least a further 436 housing units will need to be built on the low ground, in Flood Zones A and B, to meet this target.

This Coastal Quarter site cannot be judged in isolation as regards flooding. What is permitted on this site will have a profound effect, as already described, on the future safety of the very vulnerable community upstream.

Our neighbourhood is 'a very vulnerable community' as it contains two creches, several residential homes for severely and less severely disabled people (one in a bungalow facing the river), as well as one storey homes adapted for elderly people and people with mobility

**Re: Shankill Property Investment's 'Coastal Quarter' Application:
Sub. by nmcm re Case Ref. TA06D.314686 – Former Bray Golf Club lands**

problems, such as wheelchair users. This places it firmly within the Highly Vulnerable category of the Vulnerability chart set out in Table 3.1 of page 25 of the Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, and repeated on page 10 of the applicant's Flood Risk Assessment. ***We live on the same Flood Zone A as the floodplain on the old Bray Golf Club lands that we are trying so desperately to protect.***

In Summary:

- 1) This application should fall on Flood Risk Management as there is a direct contradiction between their assessment of flood risk on the high ground and that on which Bray's LAP justifies building on this site at all.
- 2) The applicant's assessment of topography does not take into account the topography of – and therefore the flood risk to - the long established, and very vulnerable, community located upstream from their proposed development.
- 3) The present Flood Defence Scheme, while protecting us from frequency of flooding, will, in the event of a failure upstream, work against us as the flood waters will now be trapped on our side: if the escape route for those floods is also blocked downstream by ill-planned development, then our homes will have to perform the function of flood storage area now provided by the former Bray Golf Club lands. In addition, the flood defence wall alongside the old golf club lands now prevents future high tides battling a flooded river from overflowing onto an empty floodplain: they will instead overflow downhill into our homes.
- 4) This application is inextricably linked with an access road that is presently the subject of a Judicial Review, and should not therefore go ahead until this has been decided.
- 5) The former Bray Golf Club lands is one site, owned by one developer, and should be treated as such, instead of allowing piecemeal applications, which include multiple references to future plans, including those by our local authority, presently under Judicial Review.

Yours respectfully,

noeleen mcmanus