

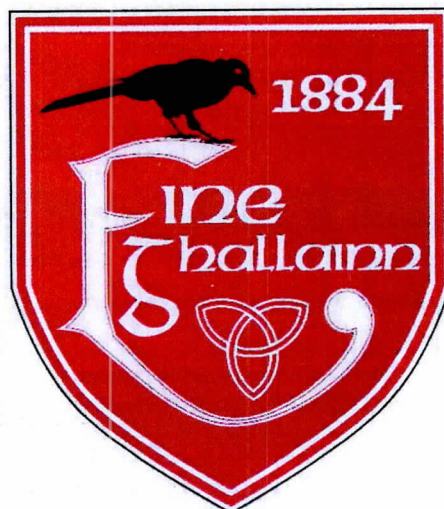


FOUNDED 1884

Fingallians GAA Club
Our Club, Your Club, Our Community

Fingallians GAA Club

**Lawless Memorial Park
Swords
Co. Dublin
K67 NX02**



**TII Submission for the Railway (Metrolink-Estuary to Charlemont via Dublin Airport) Order
2022**

**The following addendum document is the original written
submission from 2023**

AN BORD PLEANÁLA

07 MAR 2024

LTR DATED _____ FROM _____

LDG- _____

Lawless Memorial Park, Swords, Co. Dublin.
Ceanntóid, Páirc Uí Laighléis, Sórd Colmcille.

Tel: 01-8400125

Email: fingallians@gmail.com

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Executive Summary

Fingallian's GAA Club fully supports in principle, the project to deliver a metro railway service to Swords. However, we are submitting an observation to An Bord Pleanála as we believe that the Club, its membership and the wider community will suffer adversely as a consequence of construction works and the plans being proposed for the Balheary green space when works are completed.

Under the current plan, Fingallians will be significantly worse off in terms of available playing facilities. At a minimum the Club would expect no impact to existing facilities as a result of the development of Metrolink. The current plan results in Fingallians losing a full-size pitch.

We also believe the proposed works will cause a significant risk to the health and safety of club members and the wider community as adequate provision is not being made to enable safe access to Balheary or Fingallian's GAA Club.

Fingallian's C.L.G. – History

Fingallian's is one of the oldest GAA clubs in the country, being the first organised Dublin club to register with the GAA when the Association was established in 1884. Proudly centred in Lawless Memorial Park (LMP), Swords, the club has grown to be one of the largest sporting clubs in Fingal. Fingallian's is a community-based volunteer not-for-profit organisation promoting Irish culture and the amateur Gaelic games of Hurling, Gaelic Football, Ladies Gaelic Football, Camogie and Athletics.

Fingallian's C.L.G. - Current activity

Fingal is the fastest growing county in Ireland with a population of 296,214 as of the 2016 census – this is a 77% increase between 1996 and 2011. Swords, as the capital of Fingal, has seen a similar dramatic increase in population with 70% of the Swords population aged between 15 and 64 years.

At the time of this submission, the club has > 2,100 members. The playing membership is made up of more than 90 teams (8 years old to adult) playing football, hurling, ladies' football, camogie and athletics. Every Saturday morning throughout the year > 300 young boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 8 attend our nursery and academy which provides them with an introduction to Gaelic Games and a social and athletic outlet in a safe and secure outdoor environment. Indeed, membership and participation at all levels is increasing year on year with the growth of Swords and its environs. This is an ever-present challenge as the growth is so rapid and current facilities are already inadequate despite on-going significant investment by the club in improving our setup.

Fingallian's members and players are from the greater Swords catchment area along with a significant number from the North County with the clubhouse being used daily by a range of local organisations. Fingallian's community extends to the 11 local primary and secondary schools who use the Fingallian's clubhouse and Balheary pitches for training and games throughout the academic year.

Fingallian's community commitments extend beyond competitive sport with additional emphasis on our social Gaelic 4 mothers and others and over 40s football for men. In 2020 we also introduced our Fins Stars program for young people with special needs with more than 10 coaches. One recent development has been the addition of Swords Memory Café in conjunction with local businesses, to

provide a support service for people with dementia and their families. The facilities are also used by a multitude of local groups including, dancing, karate, bingo and the Irish Blood Transfusion Service.

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Recognising our responsibility to develop Irish traditional culture, Fingallians is an active and award-winning participant in Scór, promoting music, dance, agus an Ghaeilge. The Club received a national award for its promotion of the Irish Language.

Lawless Memorial Park is the Club home since foundation, comprising our sports hall, full-sized playing pitch, all-weather pitch, training area, ball wall and gym. With its close proximity, the club is completely dependent on the two pitches in Balheary for both training and games purposes throughout the year.

The Club uses both pitches extensively in the evenings, up to 40 hours per week per pitch and the local schools utilise Balheary during school hours. However, this only caters for 50% of our teams who can only train within the immediate environs of the club. As an equal sponsor of male/female participation in sport, the club must provide access to suitable welfare facilities for our female and younger players and hence the majority of female games/training must happen in Balheary.

Any reduction or restriction in access to the Balheary facilities in the short and medium terms will have a detrimental impact on Fingallian's ability to manage the demand for playing time. It is imperative that An Bord Pleanála considers as part of the planning application that suitable alternative facilities are provided for the duration of the project and when construction is finally completed.

Connectivity and Movement

The Club fully supports in principle, the development of Metrolink as it will be a key enabler for the commuter residents in the town bringing them to and from their homes and to Fingallians in the most efficient ways possible with reduced carbon footprint aligned with the council improvements for cyclists. However, the project cannot be delivered at the expense of the already limited recreational and green spaces in the locality.

Fingallians is particularly concerned about the short-term impact of the Metrolink works in the Lissenhall area. Based on our understanding of the planned works

- Both full-size playing pitches will be unavailable for up to 12 months (estimate) as the southern-most pitch (pitch #1 below) has to be re-aligned. Pitch #2 will be developed as an all-weather but reduced in size when compared to the existing pitch. As a result, this pitch will not be suitable to host matches. While we welcome the intended provision of an all-weather pitch it is essential that the design is re-considered and increased to a full-size all-weather flood-lit pitch.
 - At present we have two full size pitches which are used year round
 - Providing a full-size all-weather pitch will ensure a maximum utilisation (# of games and teams) of the pitch throughout the entire year particularly during adverse weather conditions
 - Ensure less travel – this will have a positive impact on reducing car journeys and hence a reduction on our carbon footprint by reducing the need for renting indoor facilities throughout north county over the winter months
 - There is sufficient space to enable the increase in size.

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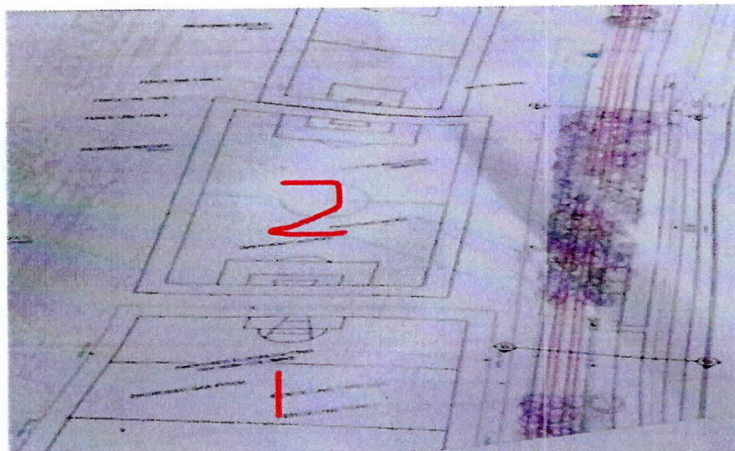


Photo # 1: Pitch #1 is full size – photo shows significant difference in size of Pitch # 2

- The revised plan for the footbridge crossing the R132 suggests it will be permanently removed which is contrary to the original plan (see photo below). This will bring an increased risk to the large numbers of club members, particularly the exceptionally large numbers of juveniles, travelling teams, parents/supporters and the general public who access Balheary and LMP on a daily basis.

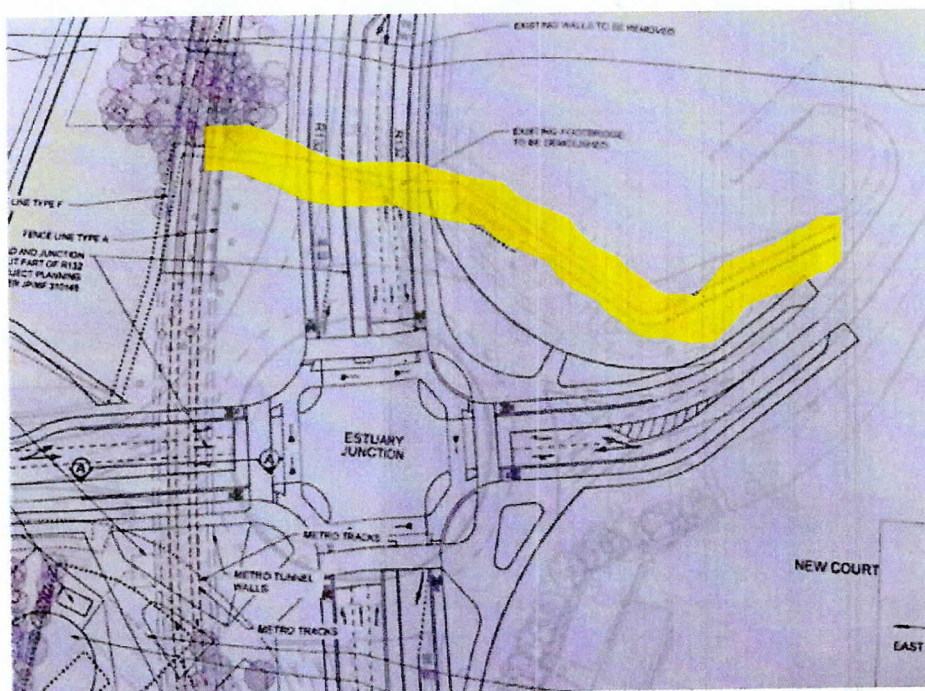


Photo # 2: Pedestrian bridge to be demolished highlighted in yellow

- Provision must be given to Fingal maintenance vehicles (grass cutting) and emergency access for an ambulance.

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Conclusion

Fingallian's GAA Club appreciates the opportunity to make a submission in respect of the Metrolink development.

Proceeding with the development without providing alternative local arrangements will impact

- the nurturing and development of our young members in all aspects of GAA games, health and wellbeing
- the facilitation of ladies' sport where we have the largest participation rate across Fingal
- the promotion of all aspects of Irish cultural activities
- the use of the Club's facilities to provide an outlet and opportunities for our local special needs community
- The ability to provide sufficient sports infrastructure to meet the needs to a rapidly growing town

Signed

Colin Foley
Chairperson
Fingallians GAA Club

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