

Dear Inspector and board members,

We're one of the few owner occupiers in College Gate; the following is exclusively related to our own situation.

We moved in College Gate in 2009 and we are still living in the same apartment, for a total of 15 years to date: as tenants for the first 9 years, as owner occupier for the following 6, out of which, the last 3 as a family as we welcomed to the world our daughter. This location being so central, is extremely well connected with all public transport: Dart, Luas, Dublin Bikes and a number of bus services from different providers - this is still a very important aspect for us.

For most, buying a property is a milestone that is celebrated with family and friends but in our case, we never had the occasion as by chance, the same day the Metrolink project was made public in newspapers, we signed the last document of the conveyance process; that was the 18th of March 2018. It is a very unfortunate and very real coincidence, as the public Residential Property Price Register record shows.

Through the last 6 years, we went through all the emotions that one can possibly think of, except joy and happiness of being owner occupier. The project's timeline kept changing without adding certainty, thus we didn't know for how long we could have enjoyed the renovations we made to the apartment, due to its age and for our newborn.

We understand this is a strategic and very large project that will affect the future of Dublin and indirectly, Ireland. We're not opposing it, but the continued impact on our lives, both at physical and psychological levels, must not be underestimated: we're still carrying the burden due to the fact that while noticeable progress has been made - namely this Oral Hearing - we're not yet in any better position. As of today, we continue to live in this stressful limbo, which words can never describe enough. We're aware of the document called "Chapter 10 Human Health" and paragraph "10.5.1.4 Psychological Effects", with notes specific to College Gate.

And let's be clear that in the worst housing crisis of the Country, we're not willingly selling our primary property residence that we managed to buy after many years of work and savings, which is now blighted because of this project; we're forced out of it through the CPO process, should the project be approved. In the recent history of Ireland, this is the first time that an entire block of 70 apartments is targeted for compulsory purchase, which has obviously a different and substantial impact on human capital, when compared to land CPOs that happened in the past for motorways and other projects.

Since Metrolink day one, TII's published documents show that it's possible to build where College Gate currently is. We asked TII about what will be built on top of the new Tara metro station, however their reply was that their remit is up to the ground level and that they don't know - which we understand but is rather disappointing.

Published video rendering of Metrolink on Vimeo, on July 2022, show the outline of new buildings in place of College Gate - but no one seems to know.

It was noticed a change of the words used in documents over time: a document published in 2018 called "*metrolink-concept-engineering-design-report*", at page 52, section 6.5, uses the words "Development Opportunities" and "Potential" referring to two developed options.

In another document, last updated in 2022 called "*Structures Details Book 2 of 3 MetroLink Stations Dublin City Council*", at page 42, the drawing shows instead the words "Proposed future development by others" instead.

So, is it still a "Potential Opportunity", or has someone already "Proposed a future development"?

While TII may not be aware of, or not in their remit, clarity beyond doubt should be published, regarding what one can only assume at this stage, is "Proposed" to be built there in the future.

Assuming a new mixed-use building will be built, like College House (still under construction), owner occupier like ourselves are losing the possibility having a chance to purchase an apartment in the same exact area (equivalence principle). Which is rather upsetting.

Unfortunately, the issue of finding another suitable property in the area, is exacerbated - on top of all the usual issues of acquiring a property - by the following: all the recent apartment developments around College Gate, are "Built to Rent", thus preventing anyone from being an apartment owner in the area.

Two example of those "Built to Rent" are: College House with 58 apartments under construction (that's where the Apollo House was). And planning permission granted (application n.4778/19) to Esprit Investments Limited to build (started but site inactive for some time now), among office and retail space, 49 apartments at Townsend and Shaw street corner. Both mentioned location are two minutes walk from College Gate.

Other recent buildings built in the last few years in the area, are 2 Hotel and 2 Aparthotel: Travelodge Plus Hotel (568 rooms) and Premier Inn (Gloucester Street South, 113 rooms); two Staycity Aparthotels (one in Moss St with 268 rooms, the other in Mark St with 142 rooms). A grand total of 1,091 hotel rooms and 58 apartments built for rent. No new apartments for sale.

Here are few brief additional very important points:

- College Gate airspace and prime location are extremely valuable, as building's height restriction was removed few years ago: for reference, one can look at the recorded purchase prices of the "The Brokerage" apartments bought by developer Marlet: that block was located in the corner opposite The Irish Times newspaper building, where the new College House building is now being built. Behind The Irish Times building, is College Gate.

- College Gate is in a prime location and refurbishments / renovations are happening all around it, as previously mentioned. To reiterate the lack of available apartments, as of today, for the the Dublin 2 area we currently live in, the property website Daft.ie shows around 20 apartments similar to ours, for Sale in the whole Dublin 2 area.

The cheapest apartment is 13% more expensive than the potential baseline value of our current apartment, using the RPPI formula and Property Index as indicated in the proposed discretionary scheme.

Dublin 2 is the most expensive area for square feet and the Asking Price vs Selling Price Variance, is between 6% and 12%, for the last 2 to 4 years – and almost surely, this trend will continue and even increase.

The proposed baseline value from the discretionary scheme, is at a very minimum between 22 and 25% short to put us in a position of trying participate at the usual "bidding war", to acquire a 2nd hand replacement property.

- From a recent RTE's newspaper article, titled *"Ranelagh residents say Metro terminus will be 'intolerable burden'"*, we'd like to report some of the comments written in that article, previously made at the OH, by their barrister Michael Furminger:

- *"My clients will bear excessive and disproportionate costs to any benefits to the common good,"*
- *"Even if the project has a net gain for Dublin that is too high a price to pay for the residents on Dartmouth Road,"*
- *"See it from the point of view of the families. These families are going to pay the cost," – "Mr Furminger said his clients bought the two properties as "family homes" and not as an investment properties."*
- *"He claimed that the construction project will have such an impact on the properties that they will be reduced to "near nominal value".*

It is our understanding that those residents, while certainly inconvenienced by the construction works, are not affected by CPO. If they "will bear" such "excessive and disproportionate costs to any benefits", then what should we say, as our primary property residence will be forcefully taken away through compulsory purchase? We are of the view, that along with other residents affected by CPO, we are those paying the ultimate price for the common and greater good.

It is also paramount for us being a family, to be in a position to continue provide the same level of wellbeing to our daughter: crèche and school are a very important topic which must not be forgotten.

We had to subscribe our daughter to the crèche months before she was due to be born, due to the lack of such facilities in the area and their low availability for take in newborn/infants. Almost all school have a waiting list that one may or may not be able to join as not all schools operate the same way. We will need TII and TULSA's help, to make sure the CPO won't adversely affect nor reduce the opportunities our daughter has at the moment, living in College Gate.

Not yet knowing where we will live next, additional and adequate support is needed, in our view by TII to engage with Tusla on our behalf, to ensure direct approval for our daughter to be enrolled to the crèche or primary school of our choice / closest to the place where we'll live.

Closing notes:

As reported in multiple published documents, TII has made (only) few contacts with us over the years and those were vague and unhelpful as they didn't provide any certainty for our future: in other words, consultation hasn't been adequate to date, for owner occupiers like us.

Referring to item 4 *"Mitigation of Impacts on the Human Environment"* of our previously submitted objection, and TII's written reply in the published document called *"MetroLink RO Statutory Consultation 5.2 Pt 1 of 2 - TII Response to Submissions 001 to 140.pdf"*, page 507, item 5:

*"TII understand and acknowledges the importance of residential property owners being able to plan their affairs with as much notice and certainty as possible. As part of the Land Acquisition Strategy, TII has introduced a discretionary scheme to encourage early engagement. [...]"*

The first draft of the so publicised "discretionary scheme", was shared with us in August 2023. That is 5 years and 4 months since the project was made public and that draft, was also subject to changes recently, in Feb 2024.

We are not sure at this point, what TII's view is regarding the *"with as much notice"*: as things stand, it looks like the ABP review process for this RO, may be completed before having an appropriate amount of time, to review with our professionals and propose changes as necessary, to a final version of the proposed discretionary scheme, potentially voiding the whole *"early engagement"* strategy.

It is also worth noting that from the document called *"A5.2 Construction programme Including Tunnel Elements"*, page 3, construction works for "Tara Station Compound/Deep Station" are scheduled to start in Q3 of Year 1, potentially allowing only 6 months from the start of the project to College Gate residents – which is inadequate in our opinion, to address the needs of relocation of 70 apartments, especially considering, once more, the *current dramatic housing crisis* which is getting worse and worse with no precedents in the history of the State. *Human rights* must be considered as well.

While TII's efforts are certainly appreciated with such a large and strategic infrastructure project, some conditions of such scheme must be changed further to be viable for us: we'll be looking to have meaningful discussions and find a suitable mutual agreement, at the appropriate time and place.

Thank you for your attention and time.