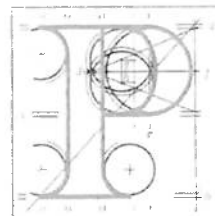


Our Case Number: ABP-318758-23

Your Reference: SID-OBS-001495



An
Bord
Pleanála

Brian Hanratty
75 Betaghstown Wood
Bettystown
Drogheda
Co. Louth
A92 A2H3

Date: 15th February 2024

Re: Proposed public realm improvement works known as the "Westgate 2040 Project"
in Drogheda, County Louth

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter. Please accept this letter as a receipt for the fee of €50 that you have paid.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it or approved it with conditions.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned officer of the Board at laps@pleanala.ie.

Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

Aisling Reilly
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737131

JA02

Teil	Tel	(01) 858 8100
Glaó Áitiúil	LoCall	1800 275 175
Facs	Fax	(01) 872 2684
Láithreán Gréasáin	Website	www.pleanala.ie
Ríomhphost	Email	bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
D01 V902	D01 V902

SUBMISSION RE: WEST GATE VISION 2040 – YOUR REF. ABP 318758-23

MADE BY: Brian Hanratty

(a) On behalf of his family AND

(b) As a Director of the Cross-Border Heritage and Environment Forum:

The Battle for the Boyne (and representing same)

ADDRESS FOR BOTH (a) and (b):

75 Betaghstown Wood, Bettystown, Drogheda A92 A2H3

INTRODUCTION:

The above application is a welcome development in an area of central Drogheda that could be described as the “epicentre” of heritage assets locally – and sited adjacent to the historic River Boyne - which has been sadly neglected for decades. The work of the various parties involved – especially Louth Co.Council and Consultants, M/s Turley is to be commended in assembling a comprehensive application in relation to this key area of public realm that has the potential to lead and inspire the transformation of a neglected area of central Drogheda (such as the almost derelict Narrow West Street).

The project will likely impact on the west side of Drogheda for at least the rest of this century, and possibly longer. It is vital therefore that An Bord Pleanala carefully assesses all aspects of this application to ensure it sensitively and respectfully presents this key part of historic Drogheda as it grows from being Ireland’s largest town to becoming Ireland’s next city.

That history can be traced back thousands of years. The first trace of human activity in Ireland was a flint (currently in the National Museum) discovered in a local quarry; the nearby UNESCO World Heritage site of the Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne – better known as Bru na Boinne – features Europe’s largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art, and attracts visitors from across the world. So does the site of the largest land battle ever fought in the British Isles – the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. (King William stayed in Drogheda on the eve of the battle). Further west are other exceptional heritage sites such as the Hill of Tara; Trim Castle and Loughcrew.

Within the West Gate area are – for example - the remains of the Old Abbey and the site of the former West Gate itself. It looks across at Ballsgrove and the historic Millmount complex. Within a short distance is the unique barbican St. Laurence Gate; the historic Tholsel building and several churches of significant importance. Ideally, a much needed (limited) coach park for visitors should be considered on or adjacent to the site.

Therefore, in earlier public consultations, it is not surprising that over 500 submissions were received, with a particular interest in protecting the exceptional heritage of this central location in Drogheda, while facilitating access; reflection and enjoyment by locals and visitors alike.

It is our desire to both protect and proudly promote this key heritage area which should also inform and introduce all who visit it of the wider history and heritage of Drogheda and the Boyne Valley which collectively has the richest seam of heritage sites on this island.

It is disappointing that the plan fails to do this as set out. A suggestion would be to remove the peculiar Corten Steel “canopy” on Fr. Connolly Way (it looks like an open plan bike shed and grates with the landscape and distracts from southerly views of the river and the south side of Drogheda). Along the walk, suitable panels could replace it describing heritage highlights in Drogheda and “upstream” in the Boyne Valley as well as signposting these where possible. These panels should be mainly visual and be easy to understand for both the youngest and oldest readers. The plan needs to better “engage” with Ireland’s most historic river beside the site and could have a staging area for water sports etc.

In relation to the proposed extensive use of Corten Steel, it is our view that it is an entirely inappropriate material and competes with the heritage assets such as the Old Abbey. A material and colour scheme that complements – rather than conflicts with such assets – should replace it. The two large uprights at the entrance are equally intrusive. Overall, it gives the impression of a “Corten Steel showroom” and is entirely inappropriate in our view.

It is presumed – but not evident in a sketch of Georges Square – that wheel chair access is facilitated throughout the site. It is regretted that given Drogheda’s size and visitor potential, that the plan envisages the removal of the only public toilets which are adjacent to Drogheda’s busiest bus stops on Georges Square –which need a suitable bus shelter.

I hope these suggestions will be considered. Our main concerns relate to the use of Corten steel. For example at the Old Abbey, proposed roofing could be in the colour of the Abbey’s stone to be less intrusive. Better signage and information regarding the WGV area; Drogheda generally and as its known as “The Gateway to the Boyne Valley,” panels which encourage visitors to explore further.

Please confirm receipt. Thank you.

Brian Hanratty