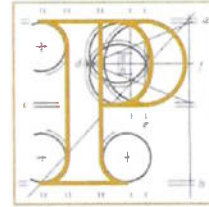


Our Case Number: ABP-318758-23

Your Reference: SID-OBS-001486



An
Bord
Pleanála

John and Tracey Murtagh
Old Abbey Dance Studios
No 2 The Close
Millmount Abbey
Drogheda
Co. Meath
A92 EK46

Date: 15 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

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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

We are John and Tracey Murtagh, the proprietors of Old Abbey Dance Studios, situated on Old Abbey Lane in Drogheda.

Background:

We acquired and constructed our studios (Old Abbey Dance Studios) in 2005, developing the building and establishing our business as a performing arts school for children and young adults. As the sole business in this area for the past two decades, we have encountered various challenges, yet we have remained steadfast and committed to our vision for this community. We have tirelessly advocated for every enhancement to the area. When we initially opened, the laneway had a muddy surface. We had to advocate for the extension of the tiling from the main street to include Old Abbey Lane. Over the past 20 years, we have been staunch advocates and 'guardians' of the lane.



Old Abbey Lane 2004

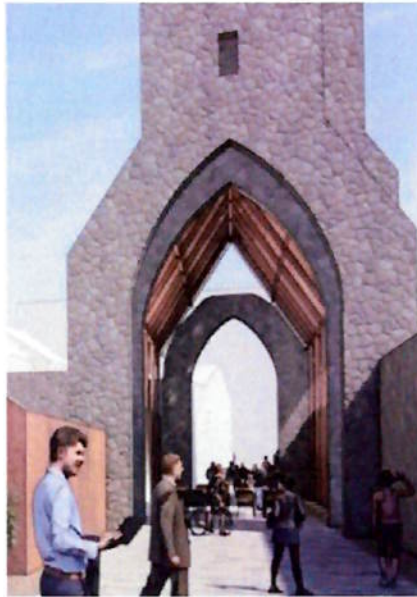


Old Abbey Lane today

We have educated many thousands of children and young adults in performing arts over the past two decades. In 2016, we were granted educational status in recognition of our significant contribution to the performing arts industry and the standard of our students' education. Besides the social importance, Old Abbey Dance Studios has become an integral part of the community, with local shops benefiting from the footfall of parents and students that we bring to the town centre. We are a crucial local community link, both culturally and economically.

Overall support:

We extend our overall support for the West Gate 2040 and the application. However, we have several concerns that we feel need to be addressed at this point to ensure the success of our business and Old Abbey Lane moving forward.



The identity and flexibility of the roofed space in Old Abbey Lane are not fully understood.

A feasibility study for a similar project was commissioned around 2010 to facilitate the use of Old Abbey Lane as a covered space for performances. At that time, it became evident that facilities such as toilets, bar/food preparation, power supply, storage for seating, backstage amenities, sound desks, and speakers would be necessary for these performances to take place. Since these essential facilities are not proposed in the current submission, the space does not seem usable unless this equipment is brought in. Given that the process of creating an event is unclear, and the location of these key elements is not specified, we would have concerns that the roofed element will only be utilised on a small number of days, leaving it unoccupied for up to 50 weeks of the year.



Security of Old Abbey Lane:

If the space is not in full-time use and occupation, there is a fear that it will become a site of antisocial behaviour. There needs to be a clear strategy involving either gated control or increased occupation of the lane. Passive policing of the lane with associated activities would be acceptable, but the current proposal lacks a clear full-time function to address this concern.



Heaviness of the roof will block daylight to the studios.

The Roof:

The roof structure will tower over our building, and this will have a significant impact on the quality of the Dance Studio spaces. A substantial effort was made during the Studios design to position our building back from the medieval arch, while opting for a complete glass wall to the front to ensure an unimpeded view. The proposed structure will obstruct light and the view to these spaces. No detailed cross-section has been provided for the roof structure, but it is evident from the existing cross-section that our view will be obstructed by a sheet of corten steel in front of the dance studio glazed front. We believe that with careful design, these issues could have been resolved, but currently, there is no resolution in place.



Our glass front will be overshadowed by the steel roof

