

Observations on SHD application

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SHD Development : 313220

Name of Developer: Hammerson-Allianz

Location: Old Shopping Centre, Dundrum Village

GROUND

Introduction

I am not a planner or construction expert.

I did however work for many years in the then Department of the Environment. I saw at first hand how developer-led decisions and weak planning (including a flabby appeals process) led to poor civic outcomes. And it is on the basis of this extensive experience that I am now writing.

In the early 1990s there was an opportunity to create high density, low rise city living, if only family appropriate accommodation and civic spaces had been planned for. Instead developers were facilitated by the local authorities in maximizing the number of small units provided, without regard to the varied needs of living communities, including families and downsizers. The result has been the creation of ghettos for social housing, the creation of anonymous communities of transient workers with no community development or connection to the wider city. It has been a planning disaster.

The aim of all development must be to provide the infrastructure (housing, educational, transport, civic spaces) to create and support healthy living communities. What is happening with the planning system now is the very

opposite of this. Developers are replicating the disasters of the early 1990s, doing nothing more than forcing inappropriate development simply because the land is in their possession and without regard to the needs of the surrounding communities.

I have lived in this area for more than 40 years, my husband even longer. There are vibrant integrated neighborhood communities in this area, with a healthy mix of young families and older couples and singles. The glue that creates and holds these communities is based on the ability of neighbors to physically meet while bringing children to school, walking dogs, maintaining our green spaces and flowerbeds- all the day to day activities of a suburban area.

In all cases the old Dundrum village and Main Street is the hub around which we gather and the DLR is to be congratulated on the creation of quiet meeting places in the village during Covid. The provision of additional facilities to meet this demand needs to be enhanced, rather than diminished.

The crucial issue for me is that Dundrum is a suburban village not a major town centre, and given its layout how could it ever be anything other than this?

My specific concerns about the proposed development arise primarily from this belief and are set out below.

1. The proposals constitute a Material Contravention of the existing designation of Dundrum as a major town centre as the proposals are to be 95% residential and fail to meet the mixed commercial/retail/residential/entertainment criteria for a major town centre.
2. The scale, height and density of the proposals are overbearing and completely fail to respect the existing historical and suburban context.
3. The proposed 5 storey structures on Main Street are out of proportion with the existing streetscape, are too close to the street and will cast heavy shadow.
4. The proposals will involve the demolition of buildings on Main Street already designated as part of an Architectural Conservation Area. How can the professional opinions of the experts be overridden in this way? I'm old enough to remember the controversy surrounding the demolition of Viking Dublin at Wood Quay to make way for the Civic Offices, a major tourist opportunity foregone. Once destroyed, lost for ever.

5. Dundrum as a town/village centre needs a civic centre, a place where the local communities can gather to avail of public services, cultural and community-based activities. This building and space should be sited to relate to the Main Street and should be at the heart of any new appropriate development. The proposals fail to meet these objectives in any meaningful way. The proposed siting of an open space behind the church is unattractive, inappropriate and will not encourage the lively interaction that could be achieved.
6. The height of the blocks proposed are outrageously out of keeping with the low rise context. These blocks particularly those 8 storeys and over are overbearing, will significantly change the landscape and cast unacceptable shadow on residents in the Sweetmount Area.
7. The so-called 'Landmark' building, at 16 storeys is impossible to comprehend. This will be grossly disproportionate to the surrounding area, will be a serious intrusion on the landscape, intrude on the privacy of surrounding homes and clash with the existing 'Landmark' construction, the Taney Luas bridge. We don't need another 'Landmark' building and this building should be significantly reduced in height.
8. The high proportion of one-bedroomed apartments -38% - is totally inappropriate in a suburban setting. What this suburban area needs is a mix of two bedroomed and three bedroomed apartments to fill the acute need for downsizers and new families in the area. One bedroomed apartments are only suitable for single dwelling transient workers who do not make permanent homes in an area and are not part of a local community.
9. It is unclear whether these units are to be built to rent or purchase. The acute need in this area is for affordable housing for purchase not for excessively priced rental that no one can afford.
10. The proposed development will have serious negative impacts on a range of services in the area. Traffic is already very congested in Dundrum and even

is 20% of the units have a car space this will significantly worsen the traffic in the area.

11. The Luas is already under serious pressure at key times – between 7-9 am and 4-7 pm. It is a fact that many commuters working in the city need to take the Luas to Stillorgan and beyond in order to get on to it at all. I retired several years ago and had to do this myself in order to reach town by 8am. It is not possible to add additional carriages to the trams, so how will the new population in Dundrum, as well as those coming on stream from new developments further south along the line, access public transport? Surely planners have learned the lessons of the past – put the services in place first before the development.
12. Educational facilities are already oversubscribed, with only three permanent primary schools – Holy Cross RC, Taney C of I and Gaelscoil na Fuinnseoige – in place. Where will additional children be accommodated?
13. The proposals provide for one crèche only. Again crèches and spaces available in the area are already thin on the ground. The developers are ignoring the fact that even ‘young professionals’ start families with the resulting needs.

Conclusion

An Bord Pleanála is the last body to adjudicate on wise and appropriate development. It cannot ignore the realities of life and should act in the interests of society not developers, who will walk away from the problems created by these proposals. I have seen at first hand the social problems emerging in the Beacon Quarter as families are living in cramped units, inappropriate for family life and teenagers are prowling around this concrete jungle with no green space, no facilities and no connection to the surrounding suburbs.

We do not want to replicate this in Dundrum and ask that An Bord Pleanála exercise the power available in the interests of living communities.

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