

13 Sweetmount Park
Dundrum
Dublin D14N732

7 May 2020

Observations in relation to Dundrum Village SHD proposal (ABP Ref Number 313220)

Dear Sir/Madam

I refer to the above proposal and wish to make the following observations.

In making these observations, I acknowledge:

- the need for the site of the old Dundrum Shopping Centre and surrounding areas to be developed, and
- The opportunity for any such development to contribute to the provision of much-needed housing.

Disproportionate influence of private interests

The proposal as it is currently framed effectively constitutes the capture and takeover of a suburban village by private interests. The development site encompasses the entire length of Dundrum's main street and, given this footprint, has significant implications for the long-term future of the town and its use by non-residents of the new development.

While the centralisation of influence by any one party is itself a significant risk, this would be alleviated somewhat if any such party displayed some degree of empathy towards the views of neighbouring parties and was willing to engage in some form of meaningful communication. In this regard, it is worth emphasising that notwithstanding the proposed scale of the development, Hammerson Allianz has steadfastly refused to engage with the local community. It has displayed an unwillingness to even listen to local concerns, much less to take them into account.

This is particularly disappointing for residents of Dundrum who, for years, have been given repeated assurances that the town's main street would be sympathetically developed. It is particularly ironic, in this regard, that Hammerson Allianz's plans should be revealed just four weeks after the adoption of DLRCOCO's new county development plan, one of the principal objectives of which was the preparation of a Local Area Plan for Dundrum. The SHD proposal effectively removes all scope for any meaningful attempt for such a plan.

In the circumstances, it is hard to view the SHD proposal as anything other than a corporate "raid" with absolutely no regard for the citizens of Dundrum who will continue to live in the village long after the proceeds of the raid have been delivered.

Local Concerns

Given the unwillingness of Hammerson Allianz to engage, the community now looks solely to An Bord Pleanála to receive local concerns and to consider these fully in its review of the SHD proposal.

Of most concern is what would be the final (and irreversible) removal of any opportunity to draw together the various disparate elements of the area into a single **centre** capable of providing the various community facilities that might ordinarily be expected of a suburban village.

The proposed development removes any future possibility of addressing these needs. As currently structured, it will ensure that Dundrum main street will forever exist in its current form - a lifeless, soulless facility that exists only to service the daytime needs of its commercial occupiers.

Proposed Scale

While the proposed development will help to address the housing shortage, its scale is disproportionate both to surrounding residential structures as well as to the number of retail and other support outlets that would form part of the development. A development that comprises 95% residential use is not sympathetic to the legitimate requirements of its eventual occupants.

Also, the low number of parking spaces to be provided is entirely disproportionate to obvious need. A provision of 320 spaces for nearly 900 apartments (a good proportion of which are two and three-bedroomed units) assumes that a parking space will be required only by one of every three apartments. This assumes that existing public transport will be sufficient to address all the transportation needs of the development's residents. This is wishful thinking at best.

Impact on existing residential areas

The inability of the proposed SHD to provide adequate parking facilities is effectively acknowledged by the developers through their inclusion in the plans of a pedestrian bridge across Dundrum by-pass to link with Sweetmount Park.

Given the effective reduction in retail outlets, relative to those currently provided in the existing old shopping centre, it cannot be argued that there will be any anticipated additional demand for access to the development from residents of Sweetmount Park and surrounding areas.

More likely, demand for the bridge will be from the other direction. The inclusion of the pedestrian bridge is a tacit acknowledgement that the development's residents will require access to existing parking capacity beyond the site being developed. This is particularly hard on residents of Sweetmount Park who, for years, have had to live with the difficulty of all-day parking by users of the Luas and staff of Dundrum Town Centre (where, incidentally, the unwillingness to provide car parking for staff was predicated on the argument, repeated on this occasion, that public transport would be a sufficient alternative. This was not borne out in practice.)

Summary

The SHD proposal, as currently framed, is a crude attempt to maximise the financial return of a commercial project without any regard for the local community and neighbouring properties.

It is regrettable that the project is not subject to normal planning processes where even minor applications are subject to decisions by democratically-elected public representatives, ultimately accountable to citizens. In these circumstances, this places an even greater

responsibility on An Bord Pleanala to take good account of the views of local residents and to make a decision that allows Dundrum to develop as a vibrant suburban village capable of meeting the legitimate needs of current and future residents.

I would ask An Bord Pleanala to reject the SHD application as it is currently framed.

Yours sincerely

Eamonn Balmer