

Planning Application Reference No : 313220

Applicant : TBC

Description of Development : Hammerson Allianz SHD Plans for Dundrum Village

Location : Old Dundrum Shopping Centre, Main Street Dundrum

As long-term residents of Dundrum, we wish to strongly object to the above proposed development

Over the past 5 years “Imagine Dundrum”, a community development organisation, has worked assiduously with the local community in Dundrum and the surrounding area, to draw up ideas and proposals for the development of this site. They have held many meetings attended by hundreds of residents and engaged intensively with planning and architectural experts, local authority planners and the developers themselves. These ideas have been accepted by local councillors and reflected in the new County Development Plan. However, what is now proposed is an example of developer capitalism, where the only aim of the developer is to maximise the financial value of the site, while completely ignoring the residents’ stated needs and wishes. This is not local democracy, it is not even the proper planning and development of the area as envisaged by the Planning Acts.

The enormous scheme now proposed by the developers is totally out of scale with the existing “village” and the surrounding residential areas, and would completely destroy the character and heritage of the existing village. Other traditional villages in the area, e.g. Ranelagh village and Rathfarnham village, have managed to maintain their character, with sensitive infill new development, but what is proposed for Dundrum would completely obliterate the character of the village. The proposed scheme is overwhelming in height, scale, massing, and bulk. It is a visually dominant scheme which would alter the village and indeed the surrounding residential estates in a profoundly negative matter.

Cities and town centres must contain a wide variety of uses in order to be interesting, dynamic community spaces with which people can identify (see Jane Jacobs’ seminal work, “The Death and Life of Great American cities”). The outline scheme proposed by Imagine Dundrum contained, in addition to commercial and residential buildings, cultural and social buildings and spaces. And the residential buildings catered for people at different stages of their life, including families and retired folk, and dwellings for rent and for sale. The development now proposed is essentially a huge monocultural build-to-rent apartment scheme, with no social, cultural or recreational facilities for the community. It will of necessity have a fairly transient population and will only store up problems for the future. In an article in the “Irish Times” (May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022) the Chief Executive of Dublin City Council, Owen Keegan, said that the “over-dominance” of build to rent schemes in Dublin has been “unsustainable”, with the potential to have “significant long-term adverse impacts on the housing needs of the city”. He said that the emergence of “very large schemes solely comprising of build-to-rent with a lack of housing mix is considered inappropriate and will not contribute to the creation of long-term and viable communities”.

The existing Old Shopping Centre on the site provides a wide and varied range of local retail uses. The very limited retail provision in the new development will result in the loss to the community of these small local retail uses.

The existing buildings on the west side of Main Street are essentially two storeys. The Imagine Dundrum scheme would have been sympathetic to retaining the character of the street, and with more of the existing buildings retained, whilst also allowing for some increase in height with new buildings. The proposed development essentially proposes a wall of buildings 5 storeys in height along whole length of the west side of Main Street (Apart from Glenville Terrace). This will completely overpower the human scale of Main Street, and will be completely at odds with the scale and character of the existing buildings on the east side of the street. And the loss of the existing small shops and businesses on the west side will further contribute to a 'dead' street frontage. We were unable to find any drawings submitted by the developer showing the before and after visual streetscape along Main Street, with both sides of the street shown. Such drawings and montages are essential to illustrate the effect of the development.

We also failed to find any drawings or montages showing the visual relationships of the proposed development along Dundrum By-Pass to the houses on Sweetmount Avenue, The Laurels and Sweetmount Park. The 16 storey block at the north end of the site would completely dominate the houses on Sweetmount Avenue and destroy the ambience and setting of the attractive Carnegie Library. It would also be visually intrusive over quite a wide area.

The visual design of the proposed development can best be described as "Legoland with Tweaks". The massed blocks along the By-Pass remind one of Communist Era apartment blocks – they show no finesse or grace. There is essentially no decent open space provision in the development. The open spaces are glorified lanes required to provide daylight to the apartments in the interior of the scheme. The "square" open space behind the church is very much a "left-over" space on this backland piece of ground. Its utility would be very limited because of the traffic noise from the busy adjoining by-pass.

We would strongly urge An Bord Pleanala to reject this application in its entirety, so that a revised plan may be submitted which will accord with the Council's Development Plan and involve proper planning for the development of viable sustainable communities on this important site, and the maintenance of Dundrum Village's character.

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