

OBSERVATION TO AN BORD PLEANÁLA

OBSERVATION ON PLANNING APPLICATION ref no 313220 for

Development at Old Dundrum Shopping Centre & Properties on Main Street Dundrum

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MY OBSERVATION

I wish to record my strongest possible objection to the Strategic Housing Development proposed by Dundrum Retail GP DAC (on behalf of Dundrum Retail Ltd. Partnership) for Dundrum Village's old Shopping Centre and most of the West Side of Main Street.

I urge An Bord Pleanála to reject it totally.

I have been a resident of Dundrum for almost 50 years, and have chosen to stay here for reasons including its unique, walkable and 'liveable' character as a historic Village and for its social coherence, thanks to the strong community networks and investment in the locality which local people have built up over the years.

Overview of my grounds for objection

Given my positive lived experience of Dundrum as my home place, I am appalled at the damage this development would do to both the above vital aspects of *any* place – first the hugely destructive impact on our physical environment resulting from the massive domineering scale and the sheer 'placelessness' of the buildings themselves and the planned destruction of Dundrum's historic built heritage on Main Street.

Second, a huge housing-only development of this type can only undermine Dundrum's potential as the natural 'hub' or focal point of a much wider area and community, which requires the provision of all the other necessities (civic, cultural, employment, leisure etc.) which can create a vibrant new urban village, and one where the rapidly-growing surrounding population can equally feel a sense of belonging and participation.

Dundrum's MTC status and the thinking in the new County Development Plan

After years of neglect, it is beyond time that Dundrum got the development and revitalisation that it deserves – it is the second major town in DLR County, and at the centre of an area of rapidly expanding population on the West side of the County, but its current services and facilities are totally inadequate to support them. The need for a new and modern Library is just one example of what is needed, and the award of a seed grant from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund last year, to enable work to begin on a Civic Centre, acknowledges the significant change in provision that is required. Our County Council has clearly recognised all of this in its longstanding designation of Dundrum as a Major Town Centre.

The proposed apartment scheme rides rough-shod over all of the careful and thoughtful planning for Dundrum's future in this MTC role, which our Councillors and County officials have carried out over the years in consultation with local citizens, and which is now embodied in the forward-looking *Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028*.

Housing – the scheme is wrong for this site, and the thinking behind it is out of date

Dundrum needs housing – but taken as a housing scheme only (leaving aside its siting which will physically obliterate our historic Village) this scheme, with a substantial majority of one and two-bedroom apartments, offers almost nothing for young families, older ‘downsizers’ or people with disabilities.

I understand that the developers have stated that their scheme is aimed at young single professionals – but their thinking here is out of date. The future model of work – leaving aside future pandemics requiring people to stay at home – involves far more remote/ home working, which small apartments with only one bedroom, no balcony, and precious little communal outside space clearly cannot provide.

The developer’s argument regarding the need for this housing scheme conveniently ignores the recent proliferation of very large, mostly Build To Rent, apartment schemes in a ring surrounding the core of Dundrum!

Consultation? Developer has ignored the local community

As a citizen, I believe that I have some right to be consulted about the future of my home place, when plans for drastic change are under consideration. It is ironic and disheartening for many of us that, not very far from Dundrum Village, we have been able to watch the Land Development Agency’s careful process of engagement with the local community in relation to the Central Mental Hospital lands, which has produced some very positive outcomes. Also, I would cite the Aarhus Convention in relation to the right to live in a healthy – in the broadest sense of the word – environment.

So it is deeply shocking when a major development company (Hammerson) which has focused in its corporate ethos and responsibility statements on relations with and benefits for the local communities where they build, have refused (despite numerous requests) to engage with the local community in Dundrum about a scheme which has the potential to disturb and disrupt all our lives in a very profound way.

Conclusion

There are other reasons I could add as to why these plans from this developer are totally unsuitable for Dundrum Village and would create a huge barrier to its proper development within the framework of established national and local spatial and place-making Plans and policies. I trust that An Bord Pleanála will be well aware of these.

So for the sake of the future of Dundrum, its present and future residents, this scheme must be rejected, and I urge An Bord Pleanála to do so.

Wendy Cox

May 9th 2022