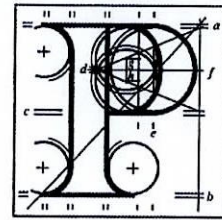


Our Case Number: ABP-316272-23

Planning Authority Reference Number:



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Ivana Bacik TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Date: 18 August 2023

Re: Bus Connects Templeogue/Rathfarnham to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme
Templeogue/Rathfarnham to City Centre

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above-mentioned proposed road 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 road development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it or approved it with modifications.

The Board has also received an application for confirmation of a compulsory purchase order which relates to this proposed road development. The Board has absolute discretion to hold an oral hearing in respect of any application before it, in accordance with section 218 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Accordingly, the Board will inform you in due course on this matter. The Board shall also make a decision on both applications at the same time.

If you have any queries in relation to this matter please 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,

Eimear Reilly
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737184

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|--------------------|---------|--|
| Teil | Tel | (01) 858 8100 |
| Glaio Áitiúil | LoCall | 1890 275 175 |
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| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 64 Sráid Maoilbhríde | 64 Marlborough Street |
| Baile Átha Cliath 1 | Dublin 1 |
| D01 V902 | D01 V902 |

Templeogue/Rathfarnham to City Centre Bus Corridor Scheme – No. 316272

Observation – Ivana Bacik TD

Dáil Éireann, Leinster House, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 – 6183136. Email: ivana.bacik@oireachtas.ie

As a public representative for the Dublin Bay South constituency and a local resident in Dublin Bay South, and having appraised the documentation supplied by Bus Connects, I wish to provide the following observations on the Templeogue/Rathfarnham to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme.

First, I wish to express my support for the scheme, which represents a key step towards improving public transport and cycling infrastructure along this busy route. As a regular cyclist myself, and noting the support of the Dublin Cycling Campaign for the scheme, I am strongly supportive of plans for improved bus services, the increased provision of safe cycle lanes and active travel infrastructure. It is of great benefit generally to see plans for the development of a cleaner, quieter, more sustainable environment for everyone living and working in the area covered by this scheme.

Indeed, as we move to a more sustainable city, it is essential that greater provision is made to facilitate active travel and improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. It is also essential that increased levels of public transport options are provided, and in particular that buses are given enhanced space on our roads.

Increased frequency of buses, and reduced journey times on public transport, will encourage and enable more people to take public transport, which in turn will lead to reduced levels of congestion in our urban villages. Reducing traffic congestion will result in substantial benefits for local communities in reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality and enhancing pedestrian and cyclist safety.

I am also strongly supportive of the move towards metro and light rail transit for Dublin, and will keep pressing, along with local residents and constituents, for the introduction of a fair, forward-looking and sustainable transport solution for our area and the entire city – in particular, the urgent development of the long-awaited Metro Link.

Along with local residents, I have sought to see provision made for the continuation of Metro Link from St Stephen's Green to South West Dublin, and have questioned the decision to make provision for the terminus at Charlemont. We need to ensure the provision of convenient, well-planned and affordable public transport with accessible links between buses, light rail and metro, so as to bring about significant and necessary reductions in car usage.

In the short to medium term, it is unarguable that buses remain the most accessible and effective public transport option available for supporting Dublin's growing population. Therefore, the implementation of improved and enhanced bus corridors and bus lanes will enable this mode of public transport to serve local communities in a more efficient, accessible and timely manner.

In this submission, along with expressing my general support for the scheme, I also wish to raise some concerns and observations that have been expressed to me by a number of residents' associations and constituents, and that are related to particular aspects of the scheme. I would ask that these views and concerns be taken into account.

I thank all the many constituents, residents and groups in and adjacent to my constituency who have engaged with me on this scheme.

Rathmines

Rathmines is a vibrant and dynamic urban village and residential community with many amenities and extensive pedestrian footfall. Recent changes to road layout through expansion of pavement areas and new seating facilities outside the Swan Centre have certainly improved the infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists.

However, Rathmines remains far too unsafe for pedestrians, especially children and those with disabilities or impaired mobility, due to the historic prioritisation of cars and the continued dominance of the car throughout much of Rathmines town centre. In particular, the narrow junction at Castlewood Avenue and Rathmines Road remains too dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists, and this must be addressed adequately in the scheme. In addition, the current layout along Rathmines Road, despite the existing cycle lane, remains dangerous for cyclists due to high levels of traffic and the ongoing prevalence of illegal parking in bus and cycle lanes. The easy passage of buses along the route can also be impeded due to considerable amounts of car traffic.

On these grounds, I welcome the implementation of a bus corridor on Rathmines Road for the benefit of all. In particular, the implementation of segregated cycle lanes along the route will lead to a significant improvement to cyclist safety, and should encourage more people to use bicycles on a regular basis. Any changes to routes along Rathmines must also ensure continued safe access for those with impaired mobility to all the amenities and public buildings along this busy route, like medical services, shops and restaurants, cinemas and leisure amenities, Swan Leisure, the Swan Centre, Rathmines church and other venues. I am particularly grateful to those constituents who have raised their concerns about this with me.

Terenure

Like Rathmines, Terenure is a dynamic and vibrant community with an excellent mix of residential homes, commercial enterprises and leisure facilities located around the village centre. Plans to enhance pedestrian safety in the village, particularly at the main crossroads, are very welcome as this crossing remains highly unsafe. This is a crossing that is extensively used by parents and children going to and from the many local schools and pre-school facilities, and as with Rathmines, cars continue to be given undue priority over pedestrians and cyclists in the road layout.

Again I am grateful to the many constituents who have contacted me to seek the installation of appropriate pedestrian crossings and lights in this area, and on whose behalf I have made representations seeking the necessary improvements.

Some constituents in the Fortfield Road, Terenure Road West and adjoining roads have expressed concerns to me about the impact upon their communities of new turning restrictions, and have proposed that the provision of 'local access' arrangements would be very helpful to address this issue. I would submit that in all Bus Connects schemes, urban village community concerns on this issue in particular should be taken into account. Constituents have also raised their concerns with me more generally regarding the impact of the Bus Connects proposals on residents of Greenlea Road, and the Terenure Road West area.

While improvements in public transport are widely welcomed by local residents, they are concerned that Terenure Road West is already a dangerous and busy road, particularly for cyclists during rush hour; and they wish to be reassured that the Bus Connects proposals will lead to reductions in traffic volumes, and to increased levels of service for busy bus routes.

Impact of Construction on Local Communities

As stated above, I strongly support proposals to increase bus connectivity, support active travel and reduce congestion in the area covered by this scheme. I would ask that during construction every effort is made to ensure that there is minimal disruption to local communities. Where possible, construction should take place in daytime hours so as to keep noise pollution to a minimum at night. When construction begins, I would ask that there is sufficient communication with residents and businesses regarding the times and dates of construction; this will allow residents to make the necessary arrangements and prevent any loss of business.

I would submit that once plans are finalised, Bus Connects should consult with Dublin City Council and inform local public representatives and residents' groups so as to ensure a coordinated approach to roadworks along the routes. Ideally, if there is any other maintenance work to be done along these routes, it should be done in conjunction with Bus Connects construction, so as to minimise possible disruption for residents and businesses.

In addition, it is vital that individual local residents and households who will be directly affected by construction works in implementing this scheme and other Bus Connects schemes should receive timely and regular communication about the works due to be carried out, the relevant timeframes and impact upon their homes, e.g. with temporary loss of utilities during construction; it is very important that those directly affected should receive such information on a timely basis.

Protection of Biodiversity

I would request that, when finalising the routes, consideration should be given to the negative environmental impacts of construction and that plans should be developed to have as little long-term impact on biodiversity as possible. In particular, it is vital that, as far as possible, existing tree coverage should be preserved along the route.

In this context, while Rathfarnham is outside my own constituency, the Rathfarnham Wood Residents' Association have expressed their concern to me about the potential effect of aspects of the scheme upon biodiversity in the Woodland area of Rathfarnham Castle Park. They seek reassurance that the impact of construction work upon animals, birds, habitats and wildlife in this wonderful amenity will be minimised; their concerns have also been addressed by their local representative, my colleague Labour Councillor Pamela Kearns, in her own submission.

Public Consultation – Level of Required Fee

Finally, it is vital that public consultation is actively supported and facilitated with proposals and schemes like Bus Connects. In this regard, I have previously expressed my concern about the level of fee required to make a submission on this consultation process – see below for the text of my press statement issued in May on this point. For some local residents' groups and individual residents who will also be making submissions on other Bus Connects schemes, they may have to pay multiple fees - €50 in respect of each consultation.

Thus, I have called on the government to review the level of the fee required in public consultations on Bus Connects schemes, so as to enable greater public participation and accessibility in the ongoing statutory consultation process. Our local Labour Councillors in the relevant wards in Dublin Bay South, namely Mary Freehill (now on leave), Fiona Connelly and Dermot Lacey have also expressed their concern to me on the issue of fee levels for engagement

with the consultation process. Like me, they have been contacted by many constituents on this, and thus our submission reflects those concerns.

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED 26 MAY 2023

Concern raised about impact of fee required for civic engagement in statutory public consultation processes

Labour Leader Ivana Bacik TD has raised concern about the fees associated with making a submission to An Bord Pleanála during statutory public consultation processes on infrastructure projects.

Deputy Bacik said,

“Ireland has ratified the Aarhus Convention, which is an international agreement affirming the right to public participation in decision-making. Civic engagement should not be contingent on income. Individuals should not be prohibited from having their say in a public consultation, simply because they cannot afford it.

“At a time when we are experiencing a cost-of-living crisis, I am increasingly hearing from constituents who are having to think twice before making a submission during public consultation on new infrastructure in their area. We all want to see new projects introduced to improve infrastructure in this country, and I am particularly supportive of effective new public transport, active travel and cycling infrastructure. That is why it is so important that a robust planning and consultation process is in place to ensure that issues are resolved early on. Everybody stands to benefit from a more accessible consultation process.

“My constituents in Dublin Bay South have contacted my office on many occasions, frustrated because of financial restrictions on their engagement with the mechanisms which are there to enable their participation. In the context of the ongoing statutory consultation on the Bus Connects route from Rathfarnham/Templeogue-City Centre, constituents who wish to make comments in support of, and/or with concern about, aspects of the plans, have expressed their concern at the €50 fee associated with making a submission to An Bord Pleanála within this process. I would ask Government to consider whether the level of this fee should be reviewed, with a view to strengthening deliberative democracy and a process of inclusive social dialogue at local and national level.”

ENDS



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Labour

Ivana Bacik TD

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The Deputy is a Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 (details available on www.lobbying.ie)