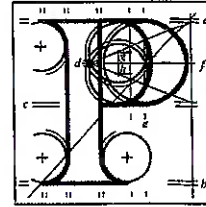


Our Case Number: ABP-316272-23



An
Bord
Pleanála

Maura Byrne
86 Rathgar Road
Dublin 6
D01 V902

Date: 26 July 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,

Niamh Thornton
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737247

HA02A

Tel	Tel	(01) 858 8100
Glaio Áitiúil	LoCall	1800 275 175
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Ríomhphost	Email	bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
D01 V902	D01 V902

An Bord Pleanála (Strategic Infrastructure Division),
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1,
D01 V902
25 July 2023

Submission re Templeogue/Rathfarnham to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme

To An Bord Pleanála Board,

My family and I live at 86 Rathgar Road, D06Y449. There is a bus stop outside the house next door to us (number 85). The location of this bus stop causes our family considerable concern particularly with access into and out of our house. In fact, there are driveways outside each house from number 82 to 88 Rathgar Road and all are affected as there are already far too many buses disrupting access to all our homes and this is before the NTA proposal to route more buses through Rathgar.

We made two submissions to the NTA (2019 and 2022) to have this bus stop moved because of severe problems with access, pollution and safety issues. In the current NTA plans the bus stop has been moved down to outside number 80 and 81 Rathgar Road. While we are happy that the bus stop is moved, we feel that the correct location for this bus stop should be outside two large apartment blocks at numbers 94-95 and 96-97 Rathgar Road. Besides being much closer to Rathgar Village, crucially, there is more than three times the area of space for buses to pull in and out. The buildings have parking at the back so no need for these residents to park on the street.

We feel strongly that the Bus Connects plan is fatally flawed and will result in destroying one of Dublin's most important heritage Villages by turning it into a bus corridor. I work with the Rathgar Residents Association as the Rathgar Business Liaison person and if the Bus Connects plan is granted, there will no longer be businesses in Rathgar because so many parking spaces will be lost trying to accommodate the volume of buses coming through the village. This would be a national shame. Local shops and communities are vital to the fabric of Dublin society. To reduce local Dublin villages to bus corridors is wrong. There needs to be a balance between public transport, reducing emissions and supporting thriving, connected communities. Our family are committed to 'giving back' and supporting the environmental targets. I purchased an electric car in January 2023, I take the bus far more often than before and I walk to the local shops.

This proposed bus corridor would cut through Rathgar and have very significant negative impacts for Rathgar Village and all of the surrounding roads and indeed many other urban villages and roads in South West Dublin. The claimed gains to the overall average speed of buses are too small to justify the burden being placed on Rathgar and the surrounding area.

While the initial Busconnects proposals have been amended through various iterations of NTA led "public consultation", we believe the plans continue to unnecessarily overburden our village and surrounding roads but offer little benefit by way of improved public transport.

Residents, communities and businesses have been side lined as an inconvenient afterthought in the proposals.

We fully support improvements to Dublin's bicycle lanes and public transport network, in particular from an environmental and public health and safety perspective. However, we also believe that Dublin's environment, heritage and community should not be compromised by the introduction of the bus corridor proposed by BusConnects. In its current form, it promises to save commuters mere seconds off journey times.

We submit that the price is too high for so little gain: heritage, trees, livelihoods and wildlife are threatened across Dublin. Key concerns for the Rathgar area include the impact on environment including increased emissions, noise and loss of trees, Compulsory Purchase Orders on Terenure Road East (and further afield on Rathfarnham Road), traffic implications on all local streets and roads, the negative impact on the public realm and streetscape, the bus gate at St Mary's College in Rathmines, one way traffic, right/left turn bans and the impact on the businesses in Rathgar during construction phase and due to loss of parking in the village and in the area. The RRA is also enormously concerned about the proposed reduced width of footpaths in the Rathgar area and also question the overall safety of the proposed cycle paths.

Road-widening, which threatens the architectural layout of our streets and will require the felling of mature trees, is strongly opposed by the Rathgar community. Residents on many of our smaller streets and roads will suffer as a result of increased traffic flows and parking issues. Many villages across Dublin are at risk of losing their identity due to the proposed Busconnects design which is based on outdated road widening and indeed outdated traffic count data which was collected in November 2019 and February 2020. Because of changes in work practices arising from Covid, this data is no longer indicative of the passenger flows in and around Rathgar as residents can attest. CSO statistics reveal the change in commuter traffic and in the continuation of working from home patterns by so many workers.

Terenure Road East, Rathgar Village and Rathgar Road are not bus corridors. They form a residential area with schools, hospitals, places of worship, shops and a vibrant community. Spanning out from these roads are a myriad of smaller roads and streets which have their normal ebb and flow. BusConnects' plans propose a total change in the dynamic of these roads, in particular Highfield Road which will now see an increase of traffic and the introduction of a new Orbital bus route. Many other side streets in our area will suffer devastating knock on effects including increased traffic, increased emissions due to congestion, one-way systems and parking issues. What the NTA has refused to do, however, is to trial the proposed traffic changes.

A comprehensive underground metro would allow Dublin's residents, commuters and visitors to access the city and its environs whilst saving Dublin's environment, built heritage and special character. The introduction of school buses would also make a vast improvement to the lives of both families and residents across Dublin.

The NTA admitted in its own material (page 3 public consultation January 2019) that:
"Growth areas can only be served in the short and medium term by the bus as opposed to the long-term projects such as rail and luas."

Four years have passed since that statement was made. The NTA admits that this is a short term solution which cannot possibly deal with the real issues; so why fell mature trees? Why CPO land to widen roads? Why undermine established communities? Why permanently destroy the Georgian and Victorian heritage of niche urban villages?

As a short-term solution there are many changes that could be made to make the current bus system more efficient at no cost to community and villages. These include policies aimed at reducing private cars on our roads; for example, **implementing congestion charges and comprehensive park and ride facilities. Contactless payment has not been introduced despite being in use in neighbouring jurisdictions.** In an age when payments are made via smart phones and/or Revolut, for example, the NTA has consistently failed and/or delayed the introduction of such measures in Dublin.

It is also noteworthy that the NTA has not proposed a new park and ride facilities at the Tallaght/Tempelogue M50 turn-off to encourage car drivers out of their cars and onto more environmentally friendly bus services (in the absence of a metro). The NTA is making no actual effort to take cars out of the system in South West Dublin nor is it encouraging commuting traffic to swap to bus services as they enter Dublin City which. Either would ease congestion on our streets and improve South West Dublin's air quality without requiring infrastructural changes.

There are steps that could be taken now which would improve bus times. It is impossible to understand why the NTA has delayed measures which would prioritise buses over other traffic. The NTA should also be required to introduce non-invasive measures to improve bus journey times for example by introducing priority bus lights, cashless fare on buses and other technical advances. It is exasperating – and frankly cynical - that these measures, in particular cashless fares, have been linked to this BusConnects planning vehicle.

One is left with the impression that the NTA is artificially attempting to obscure that these costly infrastructure changes will provide little improvement in time saving to the bus commuter journey by bundling the tried and tested non-invasive time saving measures in with the bus corridors in an effort to ensure that some positive time saving can be pointed to. This can be the only logical reason for the NTA's refusal to deploy effective modern computer-led solutions to bus time savings. There is simply no sound basis for resorting to archaic road widening and tree removal. Jennifer McElwain, Professor of Botany at Trinity College Dublin, made a submission to the NTA against tree felling. We rely on that submission as hugely valuable trees are still to be lost unnecessarily. (See submission attached for your convenience.)

Rathgar Residents Association urges that all non-invasive improvements be made before any irreversible and detrimental changes are made to our villages, streets and the environment of Dublin and the Greater Dublin Area. We also believe that any proposed measures should be trialled before planning is granted to fully ascertain the impact of the BusConnects' proposals, particularly as traffic modelling as been performed in a piecemeal fashion. The traffic implications of all 12 corridors running concurrently have not been modelled let alone trialled in real time.

The true cost of the environmental fallout of traffic and congestion cannot be understood until traffic modelling for the entire Busconnects project is performed. Therefore, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) submitted by the NTA for this corridor is fundamentally flawed and is not fit for purpose as it does not take into account the fall-out of other bus corridors in the area for example the Kimmage to the City Centre Corridor etc.

Given that the NTA has not proposed any new park and ride facilities for this bus route - and in view of the fact that it is the NTA's own stated aim is that BusConnects is intended to make it more difficult to drive a car in Dublin - an inevitable impact of this proposed corridor (with the traffic changes) is that there will be more not less car traffic; it will simply be rerouted. The NTA proposal offers no alternative parking solutions for commuters. Therefore, they will be forced to make enormously circuitous routes to the city centre thereby increasing emissions, and causing further negative environmental and congestion impacts. The traffic implications for residents and commuters alike have not been modelled; we fear that that is a deliberate lacuna in the data as it would reveal the chaos that will ensue.

In an age where AI is capable of so much and where there have been huge technical advances, traffic modelling is essential prior to any major road infrastructure project. If the NTA does not have access to the technical capability to model all 12 corridors across the wider Dublin area and has not performed this task, then planning permission cannot be granted. The data has simply not been collated. The plans are based on outdated traffic count data, fragmented and disjointed modelling, and a wholly inadequate EIA. We have been asking for this to be done from the outset.

The current plans overburden Rathgar village and surrounding roads with an increase of bus frequency which will be detrimental to the liveability of our village and area. The NTA's insistence on routing all buses from Templeogue/Tallaght and Rathfarnham through Rathgar Village puts a disproportionate burden on Rathgar (and on Rathmines). These bus routes could have easily been separated with a bus service interconnection in Terenure Village and separate bus services along Terenure Road East (towards Rathgar) and, alternatively, along Terenure Road North and Harolds Cross Road. Indeed, the interconnection of bus services lies at the centre of the Busconnects ethos so it is very difficult to understand the proposal to route all those buses along one route only (through Rathgar).

Moreover, it should be noted that all NTA Busconnects infrastructure public consultations separated the Tallaght/Templeogue to Terenure Village and Rathfarnham to City Centre corridors into two distinct separate consultations and are only now joining both corridors together for the ABP planning process.

Forcing all buses through Rathgar has the direct impact of overwhelming Rathgar village and community. The route had previously been designated as a cycle route, but that too has been reversed by the BusConnects proposals.

The NTA proposals will also lead to an inadequate public transport service for Harolds Cross Road which is experiencing a huge growth in housing and education facilities.

A major flaw in the BusConnects' plan for this corridor is that the N81 and R137 have been inexplicably bypassed. For years, the Rathfarnham to City Centre Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) has used the Harolds Cross Road as its route into the city centre. The R137 was identified as a QBC because it is a shorter, more direct, unconvoluted, and wider route to the city centre. Instead, BusConnects plans to have buses turning down the mainly residential Terenure Road East.

Signage in Terenure currently directs incoming city traffic via Harolds Cross Road. The NTA's decision to totally discount the Harolds Cross Road has the effect of leaving a large wedge of

the city underserved by public transport while overburdening Rathgar and Rathmines, the latter which is already serviced by the Luas (at Beechwood and Charlemont).

Prior to BusConnects, there was BRT – Bus Rapid Transport. The Rathfarnham to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Report titled ‘CBC FEASIBILITY STUDY AND OPTIONS ASSESSMENT REPORT’ and dated December 2017 written for the National Transport Authority by DBFL Consulting Engineers and Transportation Planners and which can be found in the NTA Busconnects documents supporting this planning application on the NTA’s website <https://templeogueathfarnhamscheme.ie/> is a key document in this planning application. It is the scoping and feasibility study that the entire corridor is based on. It states:

“The Clongriffin – Tallaght BRT is of particular relevance to section 2 of the Rathfarnham CBC route. The CBC route should complement the BRT service but should not duplicate the potential routing of the Clongriffin – Tallaght BRT route, which is likely to travel via the Harold’s Cross corridor as per the Transport Strategy for the GDA (2016 – 2035) and identified in Figure 1.2 of this report.”

The above section of the feasibility and options report has huge implications for this planning application. The Clongriffin – Tallaght BRT project while viable in 2017 when the report was written - has since been abandoned. However, the fact that the Harolds Cross Road was excluded at the earliest stages of this current BusConnects project and never fully assessed and analysed is a fundamental flaw of this project.

During public consultations with the NTA, the above flawed analysis was highlighted to the NTA by RRA and individually by residents. An alternative routing of this proposed corridor via Harolds Cross Road was proposed, but the submission was dismissed by the NTA with a few paragraphs of generic text in the submission analysis. Failure to consider the Harolds Cross Road comprehensively – in circumstances where it was originally identified by the same agency for BRT – wholly undermines this planning application. A full rescoping feasibility study and option assessment, including population growth and access to bus services, is required. A refusal to acknowledge the flawed exclusion of what is a major traffic route from consideration when selecting routes leaves huge gaps in the credibility and soundness of this planning application.

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I hope that you will take in account that Rathgar is a heritage village, full of character that will be destroyed if the Bus Connects plan (in it's current form) is granted permission.

Thank you for reading this submission.

Maura Byrne, 86 Rathgar Road, D06Y449

Business Liaison – Rathgar Residents Association