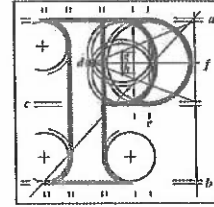


Our Case Number: ABP-316272-23

Planning Authority Reference Number:



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Tom Kelly
2 Townhouses
Terenure Road East
Dublin 6
D06 N32V0

Date: 22 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 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

HA02A

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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
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D01 V902	D01 V902

2 Townhouses
Terenure Road East
Dublin 6
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An Bord Pleanála (Strategic Infrastructure Division)
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

15 August 2023

RE: Templeogue / Rathfarnham to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme

- 1) Planning Application**
- 2) Compulsory Purchase Order 2023**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to formally object to the planning application and Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of the Templeogue / Rathfarnham to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme.

I am writing both as a concerned member of the public, and as a property owner affected by the CPO (I understand on this basis the €50 fee is waived).

I would like to preface my objections by noting that I am intimately familiar with best practice for development of large-scale infrastructure projects, as a former board director of Heathrow Airport with oversight of the Third Runway expansion project, as well as numerous renewable energy development projects in the UK and Ireland. The consultation process conducted by the National Transport Authority in respect of the BusConnects scheme has fallen very far short of the standards I would expect to see, and prescribed under the relevant legislation⁽¹⁾.

Additionally, I would note that it is highly abnormal for approval of a Compulsory Purchase Order to come before the relevant planning authority in the absence of approved planning permission. The application before An Bord Pleanála for approval of a CPO is both surprising and disappointing.

My core objections are as follows:

- 1) The requirement to purchase the specified land has not been properly demonstrated
- 2) The consultation process has not given residents adequate opportunity for engagement
- 3) The design of the Bus Corridor Scheme will negatively impact not just the immediate vicinity of the corridor, but a far wider zone
- 4) The scheme would result in irreparable damage to the heritage of the local area, and to the local community
- 5) The scheme would severely impact the quality of life for local residents

I detail these further in the body of this letter.

Kind regards,
Tom Kelly

1) Housing Act 1966, Local Government (No.2) Act 1960, Housing Act 1966, Planning & Development Act 2000, Local Government Act 2011, Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008

1) The requirement to purchase the specified land has not been properly demonstrated

a. The proposed scheme has not taken into account changing work & travel patterns resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic

The BusConnects plan was formulated prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and most of the public consultation process took place during a protracted period of lockdowns. It is unquestionable that the use case for BusConnects has been fundamentally altered by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the changes it has brought to travel and working patterns.

Ireland has the highest proliferation of home-working in the EU⁽¹⁾, and it is absolutely certain that this shift is a permanent one. Indeed, the Irish government has ensured a statutory right for workers to request remote working from their employer⁽²⁾.

The BusConnects scheme has not been altered to take account of this development – with the development of the draft preferred route option concluding immediately prior to the pandemic in March 2020, and being finalised shortly after in the middle of the pandemic. This is frankly astonishing, and very clearly falls short of an adequate standard of basic project planning or cost-benefit analysis for an initiative of this nature and scale.

b. The proposed scheme has not adequately taken into account alternative forms of transport

Chapter 3 of the Templeogue Rathfarnham Scheme public consultation documents (templeoguerathfarnham.scheme.ie) lays out the consideration of alternative forms of transport to meet the travel demands for the area out to 2042.

The extent of the analysis included is, without question, extremely poor.

Sections 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 outline the consideration given to a Light Rail Alternative and a Metro Alternative – both systems that are favoured over buses in a huge number of urban areas internationally. These sections of the 62-page chapter 3 (and thousands of pages contained within the overall suite of documents), run to less than one page.

Applications of technology in optimising management of traffic flows has also been insufficiently explored as I note further in 1.e below.

It is simply inarguable that this is not a sufficient appraisal of alternative transport options to cater to the needs of the localities covered by the strategy, nor does it represent a meaningful attempt to engage with concerned parties.

c. No attempt has been made to properly sequence improvements to the bus corridor

The proposed expansion of the bus corridor is part of a suite of improvements aimed at reducing journey times to the city centre. The NTA is seeking to move ahead with the most disruptive, damaging step in the overall plan, without having first implemented "quick-win" improvements and assessing the results.

Without having implemented cashless payments, re-organised spacing of bus stops, new park & ride facilities, and a simplified fare structure, it is simply premature to launch a full-scale CPO process. The costs of doing so are enormous, while the benefits can neither be properly forecasted nor demonstrated without these above steps having been taken first.

1) BNP Paribas Real Estate Ireland research, based on data from Eurostat: <https://www.realestate.bnpparibas.ie/about-us/press-releases/ireland-tops-euro-poll-working-home-growth>

2) Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill

d. The scheme is short-sighted and not remotely future-proofed

The travel improvements contemplated by the BusConnects scheme in general, and the Templeogue Rathfarnham Bus Corridor in particular, are very marginal – resulting in improvements to travel times of only a few minutes. With an increasing population, any improvement delivered is likely to be very short-term and the requirement for some form of rail system will ultimately supersede the argument for sole reliance on bus transport. It absolutely stands to reason that Dublin will need a metro or an expansion of the existing light rail system in years to come. The Templeogue Rathfarnham Bus Corridor provides, at best, only a very short-term fix to a far longer term problem – it therefore does not meet the needs of the area and proper consideration should be given to a more viable long-term alternative e.g. a rail system.

e. The sites proposed for CPO on Terenure Road East do not seem to be required in the context of the NTA's Signal Controlled Priority Plans

The NTA in its own public consultation documentation Core Bus Corridor Preferred Route (12) (Rathfarnham to City Centre) highlights the proposed landtake between St. Joseph's Church and Brighton Road as being necessary to facilitate Signal Controlled Priority at Rathgar Avenue. This does not make sense when the road is already sufficiently wide to accommodate (as it currently does) two general traffic lanes, a bus lane and a cycle lane between Beaumont House and Brighton Road. A far better alternative would be to maintain the road as-is, with signal controlled priority beginning from the end of the existing bus lane opposite Beaumont House. Due consideration does not appear to have been given to this option.

Equally, facilitating signal controlled priority via flexible bus lanes (with traffic flowing one direction during the morning peak and the other direction during the evening peak) do not appear to have been considered anywhere in the public consultation documents. The term "smart highways" appears only once in the assessment of technological alternatives (3.2.9 of Chapter 3).

2) The consultation process has not given residents adequate opportunity for engagement

a. The public consultation process conducted through the Covid-19 pandemic did not meet the standards required of the public consultation process

The majority of the consultation process for BusConnects took place virtually through the Covid-19 pandemic, presenting a significant barrier to participation for less tech-literate segments of the local community. This is a clear failure to meet the standards of public engagement required under the relevant legislation, industry best practice, and common decency.

The public consultations took place in March 2020 – at a time when Covid-19 was newly arrived and landowners were unable to attend in-person meetings, and newly getting to grips with virtual technologies. The second took place in December 2020 at a time when most people were extremely cautious about meeting in person, in particular given the Christmas period and the spike in Covid-19 case numbers at that time. For the NTA to have restricted public consultations to these two periods alone was extremely disingenuous, and in effect a near-complete circumvention of the spirit of the public consultation process.

A letter drop in Summer 2020 requesting access to properties to undertake more detailed surveys was also very clearly inadequate, given guidance in place at the time restricted landowners from allowing anyone on to their properties.

b. The public consultation process was deliberately obfuscated

At any given point in time, there were 3-4 corridor schemes under public consultation. This had the effect of obfuscating the process for local residents and concerned parties, and resulting in a

confusing set of circumstances which made engagement difficult. As noted above, running this consultation through the Covid-19 pandemic was extremely unhelpful.

c. The CPO notification process was inadequate

More recently, the communication around the Compulsory Purchase Order notices has been highly unsatisfactory. Speaking for my own case, the notice was a crumpled, half-stapled sheaf with several loose pages. It was not in an addressed envelope, and was wet from having been only partially inserted into the letterbox. I was lucky to have noticed that the communication was an important one, but I am sure others would not have noticed this.

3) The design of the Bus Corridor Scheme will negatively impact not just the immediate vicinity of the corridor, but a far wider zone

The proposed bus corridor will result in no expansion of Terenure Cross – nor should it given this is the central business hub of the village and the core of the community. However, this will result in a bottleneck for traffic which will render the road widening elsewhere completely ineffective.

To take an example: For Terenure Road West, traffic already routinely stretches from Terenure village to the KCR. Complicating an existing bottleneck at Terenure Cross will result in further tailbacks on tributary roads far beyond their current levels. In the case of the Terenure Road West tailback, this could easily stretch in future through the KCR and on to Kimmage Road West and Fortfield Road.

4) The scheme would result in irreparable damage to the heritage of the local area, and to the local community

Terenure Road East is lined with numerous beautiful trees on both sides, as well as period architectural structures. Expansion of the road would result in permanent destruction of the aesthetic of the local area.

The impact on local businesses of removing parking spaces in the centre of Terenure village will be profound. While local businesses within easy access of parking along Terenure Road North, Rathfarnham Road and Terenure Cross have historically been successful, businesses on Terenure Road West – which has the benefit of only two on-street parking spaces) opposite Hannaville Road – have historically been far less successful with numerous examples of firms going out of business due to lack of footfall. The removal of crucial parking spaces along Rathfarnham Road between Cormac Terrace and Terenure Cross will have a significant negative impact for the large number of enterprises around Terenure Cross which rely on high-volume, short-stay footfall e.g. coffee shops, cafés, barbers, banks, bike shops.

These negative impacts will not be reversed in the future even when the need for a rail system is recognised and implemented.

5) The scheme would severely impact the quality of life for residents of affected properties, and considerable destruction to property value

As noted above, Terenure Road East is lined with numerous beautiful trees on both sides. In my own case, I have two very large trees, c.40m in height, which act as a sound barrier from the noise of passing traffic and provide a significant degree of visual privacy. Granting planning permission to this scheme would result in removal of these two trees, which are a feature of my property, and result in expansion of the road some 20 metres closer to my bedroom window. This would severely impact my enjoyment of my property given the noise pollution, as well as the upper decks of buses now passing within metres of my house and with a clear line of sight into my sleeping quarters. I attach a photograph taken from the window of the main bedroom of the house to illustrate this point.

Figure 1. View from bedroom window

