

Councillor Nial Ring BA, FCCA, LIB, Dip. FSL.

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An Bord Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
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19th August 2021

Re: CASE NUMBER: TA29N.310860 – Holy Cross College, Clonliffe Road and Drumcondra Road, Dublin 3.

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make the following submission/observation on the above SHD Application and also formally request an Oral hearing on this application.

Ba mhaith liom an aighneacht/an bharúil seo a leanas a dhéanamh ar an iarratas SHD thuas.

HOLY CROSS/CLONLIFFE COLLEGE BACKGROUND.

Clonliffe or Holy Cross College has been part of this community since its foundation in 1854 and has been a place of learning since then, with strong educational links to UCD, St.Patrick's Training College (now DCU), All Hallows (now (DCU) and Maynooth College. It also included the Mater Dei Institution of Education until the latter's closure in 2016 to facilitate a homeless hub, operated by Crosscare.

Significantly, in 2018 when it was announced that the College would be closed by the Archdiocese and sold to the GAA, the Archdiocese, in a statement confirmed that, inter alia “ social, affordable and private housing” would be created. Will this happen under this proposal – I think not!

FIRST MEETING ON THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

In c. March 2019 I attended a meeting in Croke Park, at which initial plans for the development of the College lands were revealed. At that time, the housing element comprised of c.1,100 residential units and I clearly recall questioning the number of units being planned. Indeed the overall feeling within the room was that of shock and concern at the sheer volume of units being proposed.

At that meeting I, and the vast majority of attendees who spoke, also expressed strong reservations about the Build to Rent concept and the fact that the development was being financed by a Dutch Pension Fund.

The point was also made that this area consists of a small, close knit community, including my own extended family, living for generations in modest homes, an area and community which is now under threat from this high rise development.

THE CURRENT PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Fast forward two years or so and we see that all has changed, changed utterly and it would be no exaggeration to say that in this case “a terrible beauty is born” – beauty being in the eye of the beholder, i.e. the architects, the developer and the Dutch Pension fund of course!

From just over 1,000 units to over 1,600 units is appalling enough, but the mix is even more revealing. 33% or 504 studios (I refuse to call a small box an apartment) , 37% one bedroom apartments, 26% two bedroom apartments, and 3% three bedroom apartments.

Having regard to the educational establishments in close proximity to the site (DCU at St. Pats, at All Hallows and its main campus only 3km away, TU Dublin less than 3km away at Grangegorman and Trinity College the same) it is clear that the vast majority of units may be targeted at the student market, in particular the so called “studio apartments” and the one bedroom apartments which, together make up 70% of the proposed numbers. How could this, in any way, contribute to a sustainable, long term community?.

The proposed development, comprising over 1,600 units in the mix stated above, would have a dramatic and negative effect on the local community’s quality of

life from many perspectives. Not only would it more than double the housing units in the immediate area but it would also add significantly to traffic in the area and above all, the sheer height and density would have a dramatic effect on the landscape of the area, dwarfing as it would the surrounding houses. Visually, its impact will be no less dramatic or acceptable.

The very nature of the proposed development is clearly incongruent with, and out of character with, the existing neighbourhood. The built to rent concept, the scale and density of the development, the proposed scale and heights, as well as the total disregard for the local community who were not consulted or informed about the development in any meaningful way, must be taken into account in the Bord's deliberations on this application. A meeting over two years ago with current follow up information meetings at which the size and scale of the proposal radically changed can only be regarded as strange at the very least, if not downright misleading and treating the community with an unacceptable level of contempt (as is also evident in the next section of this submission – Community Gain)

COMMUNITY GAIN.

The developer made much of the fact that locals would, in the future, be able to walk through the development and enjoy the facilities and surrounding natural greenery etc. within the lands. The fact is that locals have always enjoyed the lands at Holy Cross College with unrestricted access to the grounds for walking, cycling, playing etc. When I say “always” of course that is up to recently when the gates at Clonliffe Road were closed to locals. Any so called community gain would, in fact, merely equate to being “allowed” do what we have always done.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT.

Two entrances for 500 cars is proposed. However, not alone will this cause traffic and parking problems for any resident in the proposed complex, but will have a severe knock on effect in the surrounding streets, particularly on the Clonliffe Road side.

One traffic management proposal I noted was the proposal to stop traffic coming North along Drumcondra Road (out of town) from turning right into the complex. The impact of this proposal need to be fully examined as it is also

proposed that there be no way of driving from the Clonliffe Road entrance, through the complex, and out the Drumcondra Road entrance.

BUILD TO RENT.

It would be remiss of me not to expand on my own views on the Build to Rent concept being proposed in the development. This concept is an anathema to me and I, like so much of the community, am against the idea of a scheme which excludes any possibility of a young person/couple being able to get on to the property ladder. The idea of a non-resident pension fund owning block after block of apartment in the city must be resisted. The impact on the local community, of not only the proposed building, but on the long term sustainability of this neighbourhood has to be considered carefully. Build to Rent would, by its very nature, attract a transient population which, according to studies carried out, impact very negatively on the overall social fabric of an area.

OVERALL.

I was born and raised in this area and now I am lucky enough not only to work in the area, but I am privileged to be a public representative for an area in which I have friends, family and many ties. This development, as proposed, would, in my view, impact extremely on the area and on the community. Please take the above into consideration when deliberating on this application. The sheer scale of this development would set a dangerous precedent and herald a fundamental change in the way we treat and respect people, neighbourhoods and communities. My neighbourhood, my community and my family deserve better!

ORAL HEARING.

I believe the concerns and worries of the local community are such that an Oral Hearing is necessary in order that the Bord may fully understand and appreciate the issues involved in the proposal and, therefore, I am requesting same and have made a payment of €70 as required.

Cuir an méid thuas san áireamh le do thoil agus sibh ag plé an iarratais seo.

Le dea ghuí

Cllr. Nial Ring