

Our Ref: 29S.JA0039
P.A.Reg.Ref:

Your Ref:



An
Bord
Pleanála

Cllr. Ciarán Cuffe
50 Montpelier Hill
Stoneybatter
Dublin 7
07 F8H2

22nd February 2018

Re: Development of a new civic plaza and ancillary traffic management measures at College Green, Dublin 2.

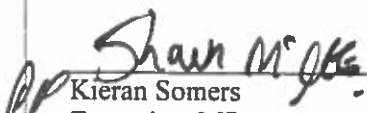
Dear Sir,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it or approved it with conditions.

Please quote the above mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,


Kieran Somers
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737107

EI02

Kieran Somers

From: David Curran
Sent: Wednesday 21 February 2018 16:33
To: Kieran Somers
Subject: FW: Additional Submission Re. Development of a new civic plaza and ancillary traffic management measures at College Green, PL29S.JA0039
Attachments: Ciaran Cuffe Submission on College Green 21Feb18.docx - Shortcut.docx

From: Bord
Sent: Wednesday 21 February 2018 16:33
To: SIDS <sids@pleanala.ie>; David Curran <D.Curran@pleanala.ie>
Subject: FW: Additional Submission Re. Development of a new civic plaza and ancillary traffic management measures at College Green, PL29S.JA0039

From: Ciaran Cuffe [<mailto:ciaran.cuffe@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday 21 February 2018 16:20
To: Bord <bord@pleanala.ie>
Cc: Cllr Patrick Costello <patrick.costello@dublincity.ie>; Claireanne Byrne <claire.byrne@dublincity.ie>; Gavin Nugent <press@greenparty.ie>
Subject: Additional Submission Re. Development of a new civic plaza and ancillary traffic management measures at College Green, PL29S.JA0039

Madam/Sir,

Please find attached my further submission on the College Green Plaza proposal. (PL29S.JA0039)

I ask that you acknowledge receipt of same.

All the best,

Ciarán

Councillor Ciarán Cuffe 087 265 2075
Green Party : Comhaontas Glas North Inner City Ward
50 Montpelier Hill, Stoneybatter D07 F8H2
Cuirim Fáilte Roimh Ghaeilge - Irish Welcome
www.CiaranCuffe.ie
Oifigeach Poiblí Ainmnithe faoin Acht um Bristocaireacht a Rialáil 2015
Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

Councillor Ciarán Cuffe
Green Party : Comhaontas Glas North Inner City Ward
50 Montpelier Hill, Stoneybatter D07 F8H2
Cuirim Fáilte Roimh Ghaeilge - Irish Welcome
www.CiaranCuffe.ie
Oifigeach Poiblí Ainmnithe faoin Acht um Brústocalraíocht a Rialáil 2015
Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015

21st February 2018

The Secretary
An Bord Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1

Re. Development of a new civic plaza and ancillary traffic management measures at College Green, PL29S.JA0039

Madam/Sir,

Further to mine of 30th June 2017, I note that you have given additional time to respond to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (E.I.A.R) and submissions received.

As stated previously I strongly welcome and support the proposal for a car-free plaza at College Green. This represents the return of a civic space to the people of Dublin after a century of dominance by motorised traffic. This is a golden opportunity to enhance the city and encourage families, residents, visitors and shoppers to linger and enjoy the city. It also has the potential to reduce air and noise pollution in the city centre.

My detailed views are contained hereunder.

Pedestrians, Universal Design and catering for the needs of persons with disabilities

It is crucial that best practice is followed to ensure that clear and recognisable boundaries are in place between fully pedestrianised parts of the plaza, bike paths, and areas that allow for vehicular traffic. The views of the National Council for the Blind and other Civil Society organisations should inform the detailed design.

It is also crucial that the opportunity is taken to move closer to Universal Access with routes that may be more heavily used by both pedestrians and wheelchair users in the environs of the plaza including Anglesea Street, Bedford Row, Crown Alley etc.

It is important that pedestrians are afforded comfortable time to cross streets adjacent to the proposed plaza, and the waiting times are not unduly long. It may be appropriate to have raised entries to some of the side-street junctions that will ensure the pedestrian can dominate any traffic conflict situation.

The needs of children and the elderly should inform the detailed design.

Seating

It is noted that a small amount of seating is being proposed within the plaza. It may be appropriate to increase this so that older people and those who wish to take a rest, or enjoy the plaza while seated are facilitated.

Pedestrians should be treated as royalty in the transport hierarchy in the city centre. For far too often they have been treated as the underdogs. They should be given the opportunity to breathe, to dance, and to sit and linger in this reimagined civic space.

Bike Lanes and Parking

It is important that the proposed bike paths align with desire lines entering and exiting the plaza, and that the speed of cyclists does not represent a danger to other users of the plaza that may include toddlers and the infirm. It is also important that cycling is encouraged.

It is important that any guidance signage discourages speeding by motorised vehicles and encourages sustainable transport modes such as cycling.

It is worth considering rubber infill fillers in tram tracks at key junctions to reduce the risk of cyclist injuries. In order to inform this action it would be important that accident data for cycling injuries is obtained from the Luas contractors, the Local Authority, Cycling bodies, the Road Safety Authority, the Health and Safety Authority, An Garda Síochána, Hospitals, and other relevant bodies.

Given the high levels of growth in cycling in recent years it would be important that a significant amount of bike parking is provided on or close to the plaza, and that the bicycle lanes are wide enough to cater for the increasing demand for such facilities over time.

Buses

I note the concerns of Dublin Bus in their submission. Their suggestion that an eastbound bus lane be incorporated into the plaza would significantly change the use and appearance of the proposed plaza. It would increase noise and severance and reduce air quality in the plaza. Instead of being a calm quiet pedestrian zone it would change the character of the plaza to that of being a traffic island and would reduce the child-friendly nature of the space. The addition of a west-east bus lane would occupy the sunnier northern side of the proposed plaza and significantly detract from the nature of the plaza.

I note that significant redesign of Dublin Bus routes through the #BusConnects project has not been published at the time of writing. This has the capacity to address any perceived shortcomings that may be attributed to the pedestrianisation of part of College Green.

While noting that Dublin Bus is strongly advocating that bus routes which currently pass eastwards through College Green should be rerouted northwards via Parliament Street it seems that Dublin Bus have not yet taken the opportunity to consider more transformative route changes that may be apparent through the #BusConnects review. It seems unfortunate that Dublin Bus reference a commitment by Transport for London to add 250 zero emission buses to their fleet by 2020 and yet give no similar commitment for their own fleet.

I also note that a pedestrian journey from the northern footpath on Bachelors Walk from the mid-point of the quay-front between the Ha'penny Bridge and O'Connell Bridge appears to be seven minutes in duration or 550m in distance. This would appear to be one alternative for current routes. Such a route

diversion may involve a re-routing of bus routes from being inbound on Dame Street to being inbound via Winetavern Street and Bachelors Walk which may also add a short additional journey time.

However it must be noted that this does not take into account the possibility of alighting at a terminus on Dame Street adjacent to the College Green plaza. It also does not take into account the possibility of bus routes accessing the city centre via the Luas alignment on Dawson Street and the Luas alignment on Grafton Street Lower and College Green.

It is noted that some traffic delays have occurred in recent weeks since the opening of the Luas Cross City service. It is important to note that public transport has a major role to play in meeting the needs of those who wish to access the city centre. It is important that trams are not stuck in traffic, and it is also crucial that buses continue to play a crucial role in moving people around, across, into, and through the city.

It may be opportune to consider a one-way system for buses southwards from Dame Street via Church Lane, westwards via Saint Andrew Street and northwards via Trinity Street to rejoin Dame Street as an alternative to the bus turn-around situated entirely on Dame Street.

Taxis

Taxi services have an important role to play in transport provision in the city. It is important that taxi drivers and their representative organisations are invited to comment on and make suggestions for the future flows of traffic in the area. It is also crucial that the needs of the taxi industry feed into any proposed traffic management measures that may be imposed by way of condition in the Board's decision.

It would appear unwise to facilitate undue amounts of taxi traffic on College Green and College Street during morning peak hours, particularly if they are not carrying passengers.

Cars

It is important that private cars can continue to access hotels and car parks located in the environs of College Green. However it is important to note that for far too long private cars have dominated the transport hierarchy in the city centre.

It is noted that several car parks in major cities have been converted to other uses in recent years. The head office of the French newspaper 'Liberation' for example were located within a former multi-story car park in Paris city centre with the journalists' desks artfully arranged on what were once car access ramps. Perhaps over time as the city is further pedestrianised nearby car parks may be converted to other uses.

It is important that adequate parking for drivers with disabilities is provided near to the plaza. There may be a role for multi-story car parks to take the lead in providing this service.

Materials

On the issue of the construction and finishes within the plaza I request that the Board satisfy that the plaza surfaces will be able to withstand the maximum loadings that may be imposed on it. I note that in the case of the pedestrian improvement works on Patrick Street in Cork City by the distinguished Catalan architect, Beth Gali that some of the works have deteriorated since their construction and would be important that they be designed to withstand occasional significant loadings from vehicles that may use the space for loading/unloading and festivals.

Lighting

There are many options available for lighting that can carefully illuminate the proposed plaza and show the Protected Structures at their best. A combination of high and low-level lighting may be appropriate for the plaza.

Signage

Dublin city centre has suffered from an over-supply of poor quality signage in the recent past. It is hoped that Transport Infrastructure Ireland can be dissuaded from maximising their rather blunt signage in the vicinity of the Luas alignment. It is noted that since the cross-city Luas opened TII have placed signage encouraging cyclists to dismount in the vicinity of the Luas tracks. This unfortunately conveys an impression that cyclist are banned from the Luas tracks which is not the case. Instead it would be appropriate to remind vehicles to slow down and give space to both cyclists and pedestrians. It is also important that an attractive aesthetic is used in designing and coordinating all signs within the plaza and environs.

Utility Boxes

TII and the Local Authority have created an astonishing amount of visual clutter in the form of over ground cabinets that house public lighting, traffic control, electricity supply and other utilities. The Board has an important role in breaking down the Balkanisation or silo-mentality that appears to exist both between utilities and even internally in some organisations. It seems absurd that different utility providers cannot share the same cabinet. It is strongly recommended that the Board condition the combination of services either below ground or in single cabinets that may be compartmentalised into separate services.

Plaza Management and programming

It is crucial that the new civic space is carefully managed and programmed. This will involve coordination and management by the Local Authority, the transport agencies, An Garda Síochána, Cultural and other agencies.

It is hoped that adjoining businesses will be allowed to place some tables and chairs in the plaza or at the plaza's edge. The serving of some food and drinks adjacent to or on the plaza should be encouraged but would have to be carefully licensed or permitted to ensure that inappropriate activities do not occur. Such activities are often at the heart of public life in other European Squares. It is also important that such activities do not privatise the use of the space.

Security

Following terrorist incidents in other European countries it is recommended that barriers or bollards are put in place that prevent vehicles entering the plaza at speed. The design of such barriers should reflect Universal Access criteria and be in keeping with the overall plaza design.

Air Quality and Noise

It is important that any changes in air quality or noise do not lead to a breach of air quality or noise standards in the areas affected by the College Green Plaza project. More real-time sampling and monitoring appears to be needed in inner city areas.

Luas Support Poles

That the Local Authority liaise with Transport Infrastructure Ireland with a view to removing the Overhead Conductor System Poles that have recently been erected within the College Green Plaza curtilage and replacing same with direct attachment of the supporting cable system to the buildings in their vicinity.

Support poles for the Luas Cross-City project have been placed in close proximity to several important buildings in the City Centre. One of these poles is placed on the footpath adjacent to the Bank of Ireland on College Green and would seem to conflict with principles of Universal Design. Members of the public with visual impairments may be at risk of walking into these poles. I note that these pavements have a high footfall.

In addition, the placement of these poles directly in front of Protected Structures is a poor reflection of their listed status. Aesthetically it contrasts with the high level of design consideration given to the plaza itself. The solution may be to attach the support wires directly to eye-bolts or a similar fixing attached to the buildings themselves using chemical anchors or other appropriate fixings. I note that in the case of tram lines running through the Place Royale in Brussels in Belgium there is no evidence of support poles.

Old House of Parliament (now Bank of Ireland)

It is noted that the Board has no power to change existing uses adjacent to the plaza. However this observer feels it is no longer appropriate for a banking institution to occupy the former Houses of Parliament on College Green. The building could be handed over to the state in return for the Irish state's bailout of the bank during the Irish banking crisis. It would be more appropriate for a cultural institution such a community or arts facility to occupy the space. The building could be used for Civic or State receptions, visiting exhibitions or as a location for civic marriages. The plaza should facilitate this.

In conclusion is a welcome development that the pedestrian is finally being given some breathing room and space to linger in the heart of the city.

I have previously paid the €50 observation fee. I ask that you acknowledge this further submission in writing,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "CIARÁN CUFFE". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Councillor Ciarán Cuffe

