

Minutes of meeting with City Council Planners 6th June 2018

Proposed Variation(Student Accommodation) to the City Development Plan 2015

Attendees:

City Council:

Mr Pat Ledwidge, Director of Services Planning & Development and Ms Gwen Jordan, Executive Planner.

Councillors:

Mary Shields, Thomas Moloney John Buttimer, Henry Cremin and Fergal Dennehy

Residents Committee:

Catherine Clancy, Rose Walsh, Aisling Sisk Janice Walsh and Aidan Cahill.

Mardyke Residents: Mr David Swinburn

Cllr Buttimer opened proceedings and thanked Gwen Jordan for facilitating the meeting and stated that councillors must have any submissions in by Fri 8th June.

Pat Ledwidge stated that submissions should not be by volume but straight to the point.

Catherine Clancy stated that she was delighted that the residents association had been given the opportunity to attend and explain their submission. She went on to highlight the residents concerns at living in high density student accommodation and that there had been no student plan in the original 2015 City Development Plan. She explained how our submission was put together along with photographs to highlight the current situation with a view to the future needs for student accommodation. She stated that student accommodation in a residential area must be treated differently from other areas and that in our area two thirds of houses have been converted into ad-hoc student developments and any further proposed development in the area must bear this in mind. Catherine then went through our own submission in detail and highlighted the various issues that need to be addressed for future student accommodation and PBSA planning applications in particular. She concluded by stating that the Variation should address not just PBSA but also the existing stock of ad-hoc conversions and also that contributions from developments should be used in our area.

Gwen Jordan stated that PBSA differs from the existing situation. The majority of present student accommodation is multi occupancy that was originally single occupancy and that there is no distinction in Ireland between both and that there should be. The purpose of the Variation is to take students out of rental houses and into PBSA. Management Plans, Maintenance, Open Spaces etc. are all to be part of the new Variation.

Cllr John Buttimer asked was present density taken into account when planning decisions made.

Cllr Mary Shields asked are there restrictions on houses being split up

Gwen Jordan replied that there are no such restrictions and Government would have to pass new laws to make planning approval a necessity when changing a dwelling from single to multi occupancy.

Pat Ledwidge stated the City Council would be in a position to pass some by laws to restrict this practice but it would still require government to pass new laws.

Aisling Sisk highlighted this issue with photographs of two properties in our area advertised as 10 bedroom houses which were originally 3 bedroom houses.

Cllr Henry Cremin stated that Health and Safety issues need to be covered in any new Variation and highlighted the new Dorgans Rd complex and footpath as an example of where health and safety had not been given serious consideration.

Catherine Clancy stated that all rented properties should be registered with RTB and there must be an inspection system in place to cover the ad-hoc student accommodation. Gwen Jordan & Pat Ledwidge explained that City Council Planning do not have control over occupancy levels increasing over a number of years in these type of student accommodation.

Discussions then moved on to parking issues and all the associated serious problems related to student parking, which included the issuing of parking permits to students, illegal parking after hours, the difficulties residents have in securing parking in their own area following return from business or work especially as they cannot open up their front gardens to create driveways because the area is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area. Cllr Mary Shields suggested that all students in CIT and UCC be informed by their colleges that no parking or permits are available for students in areas in and around the colleges and that this would encourage them to leave their cars at home. The availability of permits to students was heavily criticised and Cllr John Buttimer stated that there needed to be coordination between City Council depts so that all are on the one wavelength.

Catherine Clancy suggested that all existing houses accommodating ten or more students come under the rules of PBSA schemes and that strong policing of policy was required rather than leaving it to residents groups to complain.

Cllr John Buttimer asked that preferred sites similar to Our Ladys Hospital and Carrigrohane Rd be designated solely for PBSA but Pat Ledwidge replied that sites cannot be zoned specifically for PBSA as some developers may not want to build PBSA on a particular site. Cllr John Buttimer then asked what difference this variation will make to residents and Gwen Jordan replied that it was City Council's response to the shortage of student accommodation now and into the future and that the intention long term is to have the majority of students in PBSA, at present just 10% of students are in PBSA. Catherine Clancy said the variation needed to set and raise the present standards and that it was vital these standards include the public realm of areas in all future PBSA.

David Swinburn stated that there were 28 owner occupied houses ten years ago in Mardyke Walk and now there was just one remaining with many properties falling into disrepair.

The meeting then concluded and the residents and councillors thanked both City Council Planning Officials for giving time to listen to the many concerns and suggestions and hoped that these could be covered in the proposed variation.