

Cork City Development Plan 2022 -2028 - Submission

The Magazine Rd & Surrounding Areas Residents Association wish to make the following submission to the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028. Our submission is based on our experience of living close to the city centre, UCC, hospitals, schools, shops and places of worship. We are determined with the support of City Council and its services to maintain a sustainable community.

Planning:

Delivering homes and successful neighbourhoods:

In the previous Development Plan, the only reference to Student Accommodation (page 74, Chapter 6, Objective 6.5) states that any change from student accommodation shall require planning permission. The Plan entirely failed to deal with the conversion of family homes into student accommodation. This unmonitored and uncontrolled conversion of single-family homes into high occupancy student accommodation has had serious detrimental effects on our neighbourhood/community.

The previous Development Plan (page 251, Chapter 16, Section 16.77) also states that houses suitable for family accommodation shall not be sub-divided and converted into flats. This is exactly what is happening in this area, with landlords buying up residential properties sub-dividing rooms and building extensions in rear gardens and subsequently becoming multi occupancy dwellings(flats). A house built to support two adults and several children, now houses from 6 to 12 young adults. The streets in our neighbourhood are narrow and the houses are almost all terraced houses, closely packed together with long narrow gardens. Magazine Road and the surrounding area was high-density before it ever became trendy in an urban context. The high occupancy in these converted family homes is unsustainable with respect to rubbish/litter, noise and parking.

Furthermore a distinction must be made between the actions of the permanent population and those of the transient population of students. The permanent population are actively engaged in the community, looking out for their neighbours, sending their children to the local schools, patronising local services such as doctors and places of worship, attending local community groups and maintaining their houses and gardens.

The transient student population do not integrate in any positive way with the local community.

The relatively recent development, whereby landlords let their properties cheaply on a weekly basis over the summer, using AirBnB and equivalents, has resulted in the area becoming a hub of drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour(this can be verified by an Garda Síochána).

In the interest of sustainable communities:

1. The new Plan must include a policies and objectives to correct the serious imbalance of student accommodation in what are essentially residential properties e.g areas around UCC campus. In the Magazine Rd, Glasheen Road and College Road areas there is a total over concentration of student

accommodation. No future conversion of family houses into student accommodation should be allowed.

2. The short-term letting of properties during the summer must be banned in the interests of fairness to permanent residents, who have to suffer a “revolving door” of large groups of strangers moving into houses next to them, sometimes on a weekly basis, purely for the purposes of alcohol and drug-fuelled parties.
3. The New Plan must include a policy, whereby a change of residential property to rental, thus a commercial enterprise should require planning permission to ensure the restriction in 1. above can be applied.
4. The New Plan must include a policy of supporting the needs of a particular area in the planning process and allow for community engagement/consultation with the Planning Dept. for change of use within a residential area.
5. The New Plan must include policies ensuring robust enforcement of its planning laws.
6. The New Plan must include policies where families find it attractive to live and raise their children in the area including the support of the existing services such as schools, Community Centres, Health services etc.
7. The new Plan must include the encouragement of home ownership as this provides not only a more sustainable community but a stable environment to promote a sense of place and shared responsibility.

The New Plan must include a major regeneration plan for this historical part of the city:

City Centre & Suburbs: Ten years ago this area would have been classed/designated as a residential suburb of the city but today with the huge growth of the city and UCC, the area is now seen as an extension of both. With over 22,000 students attending UCC and increasing year on year, University staff, the Bons Secours Hospital staff and patients, the area has as big a daily footfall as the city centre itself.

The new Development Plan needs to reflect this situation. We believe the area should be treated similarly in terms of the provision of policies and services:

1. In the interest of promoting a sustainable community through home ownership and other policies providing favourable conditions for this to succeed.
2. In the interest of improving the the physical environment around UCC and enhancing the image of the neighbourhood.
3. In the interest of high quality public realm and the protection of front and rear garden amenity space.
4. In the interest of the regeneration of communities/neighbourhoods.
5. In the interest of the environment and heritage around the UCC Campus.
6. Enhance the experience of those living close to UCC and of visitors to UCC itself.
7. Combat antisocial behaviour and enhance the sense of security for existing residents.
8. In the interest of ensuring a high quality residential area.

9. To create a better balance of living space.

Services

1. A robust policing and enforcement of the Cork City Council Bye-Laws 2019 on the segregation, storage and presentation of household waste.
2. Parking including entitlements and conditions on obtaining resident parking permits - proposals given to the Chief Executive earlier this year need to be included. Students should not be able to obtain resident parking permits as they neither use or need their cars during the week. Permanent residents, who need their cars on a daily basis bringing their children to/from school, doctors visits, driving to/from work, large family shopping trips should be the only residents allowed park in the area.
3. City Council to work with An Garda Síochána on the policing of the area with an emphasis placed on combating anti-social behaviour and illegal after hours parking resulting in restrictions to Emergency Services accessing some areas.

The Development Plan must recognise that with the Government's policy of Strategic Developments supporting the construction of high quality PBSAs to accommodate young people attending third level colleges, there has to be a change to City Council's policy on residential properties. In theory, with the big increase in PBSAs there should be less need for residential properties being purchased by landlords. However, there will always be landlords who will offer cheap accommodation with substandard conditions and no health and safety controls. There will also be a ready market of student tenants who are attending UCC for the drug and drink fuelled partying, which is not tolerated in PBSAs. This cannot be tolerated in a residential community. Permanent residents have rights also.

The new Development Plan therefore must include:

Licensing of landlords and NCT type inspection of properties before they are passed fit for purpose to be rented in the private rental sector.

The right of a resident to be furnished with the names and contact details of the landlords of rented properties in their immediate vicinity, by the City Council as a matter of course. Currently residents have no means of contacting a landlord about a dangerous situation arising in a house next to them, be it public safety or anti-social behaviour, if they do not personally know the landlord. Gardai refuse to pass on this information, even when a resident's life is made a living hell by the tenants next door.

Present policy has resulted in an exodus of residents in areas around UCC with a large part of College Rd now having no residents or families living there. Residents have been forced to sell because of the complete lack of control and management of these multi-occupancy rented properties. There is no monitoring by City Council for compliance on existing planning criteria and it is left to residents to do the policing, which is unacceptable.

The unprecedented scale of anti-social behaviour in the area this summer has disgraced both UCC and Cork city both nationally and internationally. Such behaviour is the direct consequence of the lack of planning by Cork City Council in the area resulting in the occupancy of these streets by students.

While we would support the PBSA policy in principle, it must not all be concentrated in and around residential areas. Planning approval must include the requirement that these PBSAs be designed and constructed in such a way as to integrate with the existing character of an area e.g. former Riordan's Joinery site Bandon Rd is an example of where there is absolutely no integration into the character of the area.

The new Development Plan must include a policy of City Council working in partnership with UCC in the major regeneration plan required for the area including a funding partnership.

It must include UCC being required to look outside their present campus area when developing into the future. They need to look at a second campus well away from the present site. In discussions and publications, the university promotes an active environment policy. However, with all the new development taking place on the present campus they are eroding the living edge and the greening of not just the site itself but the entire surrounding areas. Along with using up the greening of their site they are bringing more and more people into an area that is already bursting at the seams during college terms. They must accept and be held accountable for the condition of the environment, not just their campus but of the area in general. To promote their environmental policies and targets they must actively encourage their students to use public transport. Many students drive to our area on Sunday afternoons and the cars are parked up until the following Friday when they drive home again. They reside in rented properties no more than a five or ten minute walk to/from UCC.

Conclusion: The New Development Plan must recognise the historical and residential nature of this unique area of the city and it must include objectives/policies to reinforce the building of a strong sustainable community with a mix of long and short term residents. City Council must recognise that their neglect and poor planning strategy has resulted in a large swathe of residential areas around UCC becoming student ghettos which are completely out of control with respect to law and order. A drastic and immediate intervention is required to rescue the area and deliver on the promise of sustainable communities.

The Plan must show the commitment by City Council and also UCC to a major regeneration of the area.

We trust that our submission will be given serious consideration when drafting this new Development Plan.

Aidan Cahill,
Secretary,

Magazine Road and Surrounding Areas Residents Association.

