

Pre-Draft Old Connaught Consultation Submission Una Power – Green Party Representative

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Preamble

On the 19th of February I held a meeting with residents from the areas of Old Connaught, North Bray and Shankill to discuss the Old Connaught LAP Consultation. Much of this document stems from recommendations and discussion that arose that night.

This is not a comprehensive document plan for the area. However, it aims to recommend that the Draft LAP be contextualised in relation to neighbouring areas as well as the existing community, to be inclusive of all stakeholders such as local community groups, pertinent Departments, and transport officials.

Recommendation 1: More inclusive and simple presentation of Local Area Plan

When the second phase of the consultation on the Draft Local Area Plan for Old Connaught opens, we recommend that several open evenings are held for those concerned with the plan.

We recommend that these not simply be conducted in a question and answer format, where plans are available to view and Council Officials in place to answer queries, but that a presentation is made on the different aspects of the plan. The presentation would make clear what the vision is for the area, what the views and roles of key stakeholders – Department of Education, TII etc – are, and outline a prospective timeline for work.

We feel that this would help residents and concerned parties to fully grasp and engage with the LAP, as the presentation would prompt greater awareness, and encourage a more informed consultation process.

Recommendation 2: Sustainable transport & pedestrian priority

Avoiding creating another car dependent commuter suburb must be at the core of this Local Area Plan.

Already, the surrounding areas of Shankill and Bray are suffering from extreme congestion, as are the nearby M50, M11 and N11. The Wilford Roundabout and the Dublin Road - Old Connaught Avenue crossroad are both subject to heavy congestion as people leave the M50 heading to Bray.

Recommendations for a more sustainable approach would be:

Putting in place a Luas line prior to housing:

In the papers issued for this consultation a map shows a proposed Luas line for the area. We recommend that, first and foremost, that the proposed line and where it terminates is clearly identified (For example: will there be a spur to Fassaroe?) and that a timeline and projected cost is put forward before planning permission is sought. With a proposed 2000

residential units entering the area, a Luas line would be necessary for this area and its creation shouldn't come after the area is developed.

Furthermore, we recommend that the LAP outlines how a Luas line would operate along the Old Connaught Avenue flyover and consider how to ensure traffic and the Luas will avoid blocking one another.

We also recommend that any Luas station created in the area prioritises safe and secure parking for bicycles to encourage people to not drive to the stations.

Pedestrian priority and segregated cycle ways:

Mobile infrastructure must be to the fore of all road planning in this area. For healthy, vibrant communities, being able to move freely on foot, bike, or by wheelchair/mobility scooter is a must.

We recommend that all roads have a segregated cycle lane and walkways to encourage people to avoid car use. This would also have the benefit of allowing those who can't drive – young people and those unable to hold licences – to move around without a reliance on cars. Particularly for any sports club, civic space or school entering the area, it would help reduce peak time congestion.

We also recommend that a whole-of-area assessment is taken into cycling and walking infrastructure, covering Shankill and Bray. The Old Connaught area will not operate in isolation and given the relatively short distances, proper cycling and walking infrastructure should help connect these communities without increasing car traffic in the area.

Bus routes:

We recommend that DLRCC work with the NTA, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann to identify the bus needs of this area in terms of its projected population growth. Proposed bus routes should be identified in the LAP and a clear projection for roll-out to be done in conjunction with phased development.

This plan should be complementary to the Luas plan.

Creation of a new flyover:

We recommend the creation of a vehicular flyover at the County Brook which is inclusive of segregated cycling lanes and pedestrian paths.

Traffic impact assessment:

We recommend that a traffic impact assessment is undertaken for the areas surrounding Old Connaught, and that DLRCC work with Wicklow County Council on this. Particular attention should be given to ensuring that new slip roads to the M50 do not encourage traffic to come through the Old Connaught area from further afield to enter the motorway.

Car-sharing communities

We recommend that the LAP include plans for car-sharing communities to reduce the number of cars operating in the area and allowing people to reduce car ownership costs¹.

Recommendation 3: Community Focused Housing

We recognise that Dublin has a growing population. This submission recommends that all housing is created with mixed needs in mind.

Long-term rental:

Where rental units are created, we recommend that medium to long term leases are offered to new residents. Given that this Local Area Plan covers what is currently not a high density area, the creation of secure tenancies would help to establish a new community and bring a sense of identity to the area.

Mixed needs housing:

Throughout a person's life, their accommodation needs can change greatly – from initial years of work, to building a family, to downsizing for later life, what we need of a house is ever evolving.

We recommend that planning permission for housing in this area is conditional on the creation of mixed life-stage housing, ensuring that affordable and adequate housing is available to those in the community no matter what their current needs.

This would require a certain percentage of housing be built to accommodate for the needs of the elderly and those with reduced mobility, ensuring that those looking to downsize would have options in the community where they live.

Space for new housing styles:

We recommend that a study be conducted into the provision of space for different housing styles in this area – co-operative housing², co-owned housing³, and cost rental housing⁴.

These styles of housing would allow for shared resource communities to flourish, reducing resource consumption, and could, in the case of cost rental, provide secure and affordable

¹ See more <https://carsharing.org/>

² See <http://www.cooperativehousing.ie/> for examples

³ See <https://www.lilac.coop/> as an example

⁴ See Green Party policy: <https://www.greenparty.ie/campaigns/cost-rental/>

long term tenancy such as in Austria⁵. Given the growing number of life-long renters in Ireland, it is vitally important that we provide non-market options to protect renters into retirement age.

Focus on the affordable:

With the average house price increasing year on year in Dublin and North Wicklow, it is imperative that greater focus is placed on creating social and affordable housing so that those on lower and middle incomes would be able to access the property market. It is recommended that the Draft LAP outline potential ways for ensuring that the housing built in this area is affordable to those who need it.

Energy efficiency:

We recommend that planning be offered under strict energy rating guidelines and that all housing built in the area come with solar panelling to reduce the energy needs of the residents.

Recommendation 4: Community Enterprise Planning

When creating a new community, we must be mindful of where these new residents are set to work. The LAP consultation seeks recommendations on the creation of a new town centre. This town centre should be a commercial and social hub, not just a residential hub. Considering this, we recommend that the Draft LAP include a review of where it is envisioned the community in this area will work and how they will get there.

We recommend that a jobs plan for the area is created for the LAP. This is an opportunity for us to create a new, local economic hub and put a centre of life into the community. With growing commuter problems across Ireland, it is recommended that we ensure the new town in Old Connaught functions to reduce the travel need for its residence.

We also recommend the creation of civic community workspaces, with room for 20-30 desks⁶⁷. These workspaces would be available to rent at a low cost to local residents who are:

- a) Able to work remotely, but do not wish to work from home
- b) Are starting up a local business and need office space
- c) People who are involved with NGOs and community organisations – with possibility of free spaces for this category

These spaces would also offer meeting rooms. We recommend that the Council conducts research into the viability of such spaces as being run by the Council.

⁵ For more details see <http://cuffestreet.blogspot.com/2018/12/quality-housing-dublin-can-learn-lot.html>

⁶ Example of Tech Shared Space & Incubator for Start-ups: <https://thehatchlab.ie/>

⁷ Example of Co-Working spaces: http://abec.ie/coworking-space/?fbclid=IwAR26s1ce3vMwhqq_CyZSy8InPedK1XS3tVCpDzZQ4CZlgEm37kBQlJnJpus

Recommendation 5: Educational forward planning

We recommend that as part of the Draft LAP the Department of Education provide a plan for local schooling in the area, with a mind to any projected population growth.

Currently Dublin and North Wicklow are seeing oversubscription of many schools. We recommend that schools be developed in the area to cater for the needs of the new community and that the Department for Education makes a commitment to build the necessary schools, through site and planning permission and through ring-fencing necessary funding before permission for residential builds can be granted.

We also recommend that these schools are linked to residential areas by safe mobile infrastructure to allow children to travel to school without need of a car. This would help reduce car congestion associated with schools while also making streets safer for students.

Recommendation 6: Sports Facilities

Already sports pitches in the areas of Killiney, Shankill and Bray are at capacity, with local football and GAA clubs operating out of several locations due to lack of free pitches. Obviously, this isn't an ideal situation, particularly for families whose members may belong to one club but end up travelling across to different areas to train.

We recommend that the Draft LAP for Old Connaught include the creation of dedicated community sports grounds that cater to a variety of sporting needs as well as the creation of a community sports hall. It is also recommended that installation of these facilities be done before housing is built to ensure that new residents have local amenities and don't have to travel further afield.

We also recommend that the Council consult with local sports clubs to get an understanding of the sporting needs in the area.

Recommendation 7: Community facilities:

Having a civic space at the heart of the community is a must. Developing a not for profit centre, such as Shanganagh Park House, to facilitate community activities and meetings is an integral piece of creating a strong community.

We also recommend that the creation of spaces for childcare centres and crèches be part of the LAP. Currently there are long waiting lists for oversubscribed crèches and the costs to parents is continuing to rise⁸. The creation of dedicated spaces could reduce costs and waiting lists.

⁸ See <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/health-family/parenting/women-on-childcare-costs-i-m-trying-to-stick-it-out-1.3617963>

The LAP should identify what the childcare needs of the area will be over the next few decades and outline how these needs will be met. Childcare facilities should be created to open in line with residents moving into area.

The LAP should also identify potential areas for parks and community gardens which will be accessible across the area. As residential units are created on a phased basis, recreational spaces must be created in conjunction with them.

Finally, we recommend that responsibility for community facilities be identified in the plan.

Recommendation 8: Natural and built heritage

Old Connaught is home to some wonderful natural and built heritage, and this must be respected in the design of any new community. Areas such as Ballyman Glen are of particular importance to local biodiversity.

We recommend that DLRCC's biodiversity officer is consulted in the creation of a draft LAP to determine how best to protect and support wildlife and natural ecosystems in any residential or commercial developments in the area. Given the declining numbers of pollinators in Ireland⁹, as well as bird life such as swifts¹⁰, special care should be given to ensure that any built areas encourage and protect such species.

We also recommend that a survey be conducted of trees in the area. In the planning process preservation of trees should be a priority in order to conserve habitats and natural heritage in the area.

The LAP should also include the identification of green spaces that will be left as designated nature areas.

There are several historical buildings in the area, but unfortunately a number have fallen into dereliction, such as Jubilee Hall. A survey should be carried out on all vacant historical buildings and a plan put in place to bring them back into use as part of the LAP.

Summary:

This local area plan is an opportunity to develop a sustainable, vibrant community. We recommend that the approach to developing this LAP be done in a joined-up manner, by working with local and national stakeholders and Wicklow County Council at the earliest opportunity to ensure that any development in this area is respectful of the already existing community and the communities around it.

⁹ See <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/irish-bumblebee-population-in-decline-1.3495040>

¹⁰ see <https://www.birdwatchireland.ie/OurWork/ResearchSurveys/SwiftConservationProject/tabid/1389/Default.aspx>