



Dublin Chamber Submission on the Park West- Cherry Orchard Draft Local Area Plan

July 2019

Dublin Chamber welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Local Area Plan for Park West - Cherry Orchard. As the representative body for business in the Greater Dublin Area, the Chamber has a cross-sectoral membership of 1,300 firms employing 300,000 people. We are committed to improving the city's business environment and quality of life in tandem.

Local Area Plans (LAPs) enable the development of an area to happen in a co-ordinated and sustainable manner and the Chamber agrees that the Park West – Cherry Orchard area is in need of both enhanced development and regeneration.

The area has 46 hectares of land available for development and a total of eight greenfield sites have been identified. The plan proposes to deliver between 2,000-2,700 new residential units alongside new mixed use and commercial development.

In previous submissions in regards to LAP's and SDZ's the Chamber has emphasised the need for long-term planning and joined up thinking in the Dublin Region. The Chamber draws particular attention to the current and future demographic pressures facing the Greater Dublin Area, and argues that these trends should inform policy on residential capacity and transport provision within Dublin City. With specific reference to the Cherry Orchard – Park West LAP project, Dublin Chamber advocates greater density to meet urban housing demand, investment in public and sustainable transport and smart planning including place-making, and public realm, recreational and economic development to address historic deficits.

Cherry Orchard - Park West Development Strategy

The Cherry Orchard - Park West LAP sets out Dublin City Council's blueprint of how to maximise the potential from this area. Dublin Chamber stresses the importance of an emphasis on ensuring density, accessible transport, and green spaces while creating a sustainable and attractive community, while also addressing existing historic deficits.

Plans for urban development in the area have been in existence since 2002 but were halted due to the economic crash. This has resulted in some sections of the development becoming isolated from local amenities and unconnected to transport facilities. The LAP covers an area of approximately 267.51 hectares and is currently comprised of 61.2% house/bungalow accommodation and 36.6% apartments. However, there is a stark divergence between Cherry Orchard and Park West with all the residents of the Park West living in apartments.

A feature of the LAP is how to address the impenetrable barriers that have led to the isolation of the community. The M50, main railway line and Grand Canal all have a significant presence in and on the area and its current structure. To the north of the area the Wheatfield and Cloverhill prison and the Cherry Orchard Hospital provide an additional barrier. The impact of these landmarks on the area has resulted in the creation of an isolated, under-developed pocket that is badly in need of regeneration.

The LAP also identifies specific planning issues with Park West. The main issue being transport connections and a lack of sense of community in the area. In particular, the main railway line isolates the two business parks and the small residential area from the main part of Cherry Orchard. Similarly, the Grand Canal creates a barrier on the southern side and the M50 to the west.

A significant proportion of the area in the LAP has previously been identified in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-22 as a Strategic and Development Regeneration Area (SDRA).¹ The new plans provided under the LAP seek to address the historic imbalance and lack of public amenities in the area. There are significant existing deficits in regards to childcare facilities, public spaces, a main street and shopping facilities that all need to be addressed for the redevelopment of this area.

Dublin Chamber welcomes the strong emphasis on place-making and public realm in the LAP. This is essential in the redevelopment of the area and in addressing historic deficits. In comparison to the residential areas the business park is well maintained with open green spaces and high quality artwork. This showcases the ability of public realm to transform a space and the effectiveness of planning when done well and delivered. There are also several key recreational sites in the area such as the Cherry Orchard Park, Cherry Orchard football club and Le Fanu Park which is just outside the LAP.

The Chamber notes that in preparation of this draft LAP that the Project team met with a range of stakeholders, including local community groups, however the voice of the business community in Cherry Orchard - Park West is absent from the initial consultation. Within the designated LAP area is the Park West Business Campus and the Aspect Hotel, and bordering the area is the Park West Industrial Estate which has a significant presence in the area. Consideration should have been given to the business perspective as large employers and users of the area.

The LAP points to a notable imbalance in housing in the area. Only 26.5% of the households in Cherry Orchard – Park West are owner occupied, compared to 49.8% in the City as a whole. This is further affected by the significant percentage of people renting from the Dublin City Council which stands at 37.1% of households. This imbalance in the local housing market creates an imbalance in the community, putting additional strains on local social support services and has a significant economic impact on the area. Working towards a balanced housing mix needs to be at the forefront of the development strategy, it is a recognised tool for economic regeneration and for creating a balanced economic profile in an area.

¹<https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Planning/DublinCityDevelopmentPlan/Written%20Statement%20Volume%201.pdf>

Population Density

Dublin Chamber is a strong advocate for the economic, social and environmental benefits of urban density. Failure to achieve adequate population density in urban areas is a significant contributor to Ireland's current housing, public transport and infrastructure problems. The scarcity of sites available for new large-scale residential development in Dublin City places a heavy onus on planners to make the most effective possible use of remaining opportunities. The case for high density is particularly acute for Cherry Orchard - Park West due to the close proximity to public transport and the availability of significant greenfield sites for development.

Dublin Chamber supports the National Planning Framework (NPF) in which the priority is compact growth. To achieve this, 50% of all future population and jobs growth must take place within the existing 'footprint' of cities and their suburbs. The population of Dublin City and its suburbs is set to grow by 20-25% to 1.41m people by 2040, however, residential output remains far below what is required to meet even current demand.

The LAP outlines that eight identified sites have the potential to deliver between 2,000 and 2,700 new residential units. Dublin Chamber advocates for the higher figure, providing potential capacity for a further 1,400 people in Cherry Orchard - Park West. The Chamber is concerned by the low numbers of homes planned for the area. The Chamber also notes that the area has unique issues which constrain development due to the permeability of the site and existing historic planning deficits. However, the planned upgrade to the DART and close proximity to the train station would seem a missed opportunity for density given the general requirement to meet urban housing demand while reducing urban-sprawl.

The LAP also makes reference to potential infill development sites outside of the eight identified sites that could be used to deliver additional housing provision. The Chamber believes that more consideration needs to be given to the development of these smaller sites to ensure density and for the maximum potential of this area to be realised.

On balance, Dublin Chamber believes that the LAP is not sufficiently ambitious with respect to housing capacity given the scale of the challenges facing the capital city region. Moreover, the Chamber, at a minimum, strongly advocate for the higher housing figure noted in the LAP of 2,700 residential units.

Transport Infrastructure

In Cherry Orchard - Park West a combination of low-density development, unsafe, non-existent cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and infrequent public transport means that many people have no choice but to travel to work by car. As traffic worsens, it leads to ever longer commuting times, undermining both business productivity and quality of life.

Dublin Chamber advocates that future population growth and housing development in the LAP will need to occur in sustainable compact locations that are well integrated with public transport. The Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020 document puts

forward a target of reducing car based commuting from 65% to 45% nationally by 2020.² We are at a significant distance from meeting that figure, but developments such as this LAP need to take into account the residential access to public transport as their main means of travel.

Dublin Chamber welcomes the emphasis throughout the document on the need for land use to be linked to transport. The plans for the area prioritise walking, cycling and public transport as the first option for travel. This is vital in ensuring the long term sustainability of the area and moving away from the primacy of the private car as the main means of transport.

To facilitate other development and future additional demands in the area upgrades are needed to the transport infrastructure. The area already experiences congestion at peak traffic times and the LAP has identified the need for a new north-south road link between the Ballyfermot Road and the railway station. Lands have also been identified for a future public roadway to act as a strategic crossing point over the railway line. This would further link the two communities together.

The Cherry Orchard - Park West area is a prime location for high density development due to the public transport infrastructure already in place. However there are necessary changes and required to ensure these transport links will be able to facilitate future demand. The sites located in Cherry Orchard are all within reach of a number of bus routes, including the 76, 76a, 79, 79a, 40, 140 and 18, however only the 18 and 860 serve the Park West side. The area will be well served in the future by BusConnects as it is set to be included along the Liffey Valley to City Centre Core Bus Corridor.³ It is also currently served by the train line, but there are plans in the proposed DART Expansion programme to upgrade the services at Cherry Orchard - Park West to fast, high frequency, electrified services. Dublin Chamber is concerned however that these plans will not be progressed due to the need to have high density development in the area to have a critical mass of population to support the delivery of such a service.

Meanwhile, the area is also served by way of the LUAS Red Line with Kylemore and Inchicore stops just over 2km from the LAP. The NPF and the Greater Dublin Transport Strategy make reference to the future plans to expand the LUAS line to Lucan along the Ballyfermot Road. This route will also need high density development and critical potential passenger numbers to be progressed.

The right development in the Cherry Orchard - Park West area would help support the case for both expanding the DART service and extending the Luas Red Line to the area. These projects will not be feasible based on the number of units planned for Cherry Orchard - Park West alone. Plans to introduce a designated car parking facility near the train station are referenced briefly in the LAP but Dublin Chamber maintains this should be a key project. A 'Park and Ride' facility for the area would significantly improve potential passenger numbers and reduce congestion coming into the city. Similarly enhanced cycling and pedestrian infrastructure near the station would improve levels of uptake. The area currently has limited cycling infrastructure which has significant scope for further improvements in the coming

² http://www.smartertravel.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/2012_12_27_Smarter_Travel_english_PN_WEB%5B1%5D.pdf

³ <https://www.busconnects.ie/media/1585/7-busconnects-cbc-liffey-valley-to-city-centre-040119-fa.pdf>

years. The LAP also suggests an additional pedestrian and cycle connection over the Canal, this would better link the LAP lands to the underutilised greenway.

The further expansion of the DublinBikes scheme out to Cherry Orchard - Park West would also benefit the area significantly in providing sustainable public transport. It would provide vital linkages to the current LUAS stops and the train station, and users could take advantage of the LAP's close proximity to the greenway.

Brownfield Regeneration

Dublin Chamber is a strong advocate for brownfield regeneration and recognises that the redevelopment of these sites for mixed residential use will be critical to meeting the goals of high density development and compact growth within Dublin City.

The NPF makes reference to the need to relocate less intensive land uses outside of the M50. The LAP area adjoins the Park West Industrial Park and reference is made in the document, in line with the Dublin City Development Plan, to undertake a detailed examination of these zoned lands to determine the potential for alternative uses such as residential.

Sites, such as the Park West Industrial Park, with existing and/or planned enhancement of public transport links need to be prioritised for brownfield regeneration. The Chamber supports the DCC in this objective and urges the planners to be more ambitious in their plans for the redevelopment of Cherry Orchard - Park West.

Business Opportunities

Dublin Chamber notes that currently the community is poorly served in terms of retail facilities with poor spatial planning reinforcing this issue. There is no noticeable hub or centre in the area. There are dedicated retail spaces in Park West in the form of ground floor retail units however the LAP notes the high vacancy rate. Retail units in the vicinity of the train station also remain vacant showing the lack of footfall in the area and lack of use of the train station.

In the last phase of development in the area there was very limited construction of community facilities, such as the local church, the Cherry Orchard Equine Education and Training Centre and St. Ultan's primary school. These are the current natural focal points for the area.

The creation of a 'new town', 'central hub' and 'main street' is identified as a key priority in the LAP and the Dublin City Development Plan identified the adequate and appropriate retail provision in Cherry Orchard as a key policy (RD18).⁴ There is recognition that there are key historic deficits with regards to the layout and planning of the area that is currently hindering development and contributes to issues in the community. Dublin Chamber is of the view that in order for high density development to be effective there needs to be a strong emphasis on place making and public realm. Areas in the city like Grand Canal Dock have successfully

⁴<https://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Planning/DublinCityDevelopmentPlan/Written%20Statement%20Volume%201.pdf>

delivered high density while also delivering retail facilities and creating focal points for the community.

The Chamber maintains that a strong economic centre or hub is vital for the success of the area. This needs to be delivered through the creation of a local neighbourhood and focal point in Cherry Orchard and in proximity to the train station. The LAP outlines plans for a main street with a mix of uses and a new civic space which will connect to the rail station.

The business park and the adjacent institutions would also benefit from the enhanced retail offerings. Both are significant employers with staff traveling to the area from various parts of the city during the day.

Dublin Chamber also welcomes the plans to build a social enterprise hub in the LAP area. This would provide facilities for training in the community and a place for local start-up enterprises to grow. These facilities are vital to kick starting the local economy and ensuring there are adequate facilities and hubs within the community that historically have been lacking.

Recommendations

Dublin Chamber welcomes the overall Draft Local Area Plan for Cherry Orchard - Park West, it is a significant step in the right direction to redevelop this community and take advantage of the significant development opportunities in the area. The Chamber reiterates its position in relation to the consolidation and sustainable use of land in urban areas, prioritising investment on those already well served by public transport links. This is vital if Dublin is to avoid repeating the mistakes of past planning which have led to an unwelcome level of urban sprawl.

The focus on building in this area, whether it be residential or commercial, needs to be on density and sustainability. This includes:

- Further development and investment in public transport facilities to concentrate on high frequency rail and bus.
- Additional physical infrastructure to improve permeability of the LAP area.
- High density residential units with a focus on balanced mix of tenure.
- Ambitious targets for brownfield regeneration when existing infrastructure can support residential growth.
- Enhanced community and retail facilities, creating a focus point and central hub for the area.