

FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL PLANNING REPORT

Initiation of procedure pursuant to Part XI of the Local Government Planning and Development Acts 2000-2016 and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001-2017.

INTRODUCTION:

The Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department (Parks Planning Section) is the proposing Department for a development by Fingal County Council of a redesign to The Green in Malahide Town Centre.

HISTORY:

Planning History:-

None relevant on the lands or adjoining public footpaths.

NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT:

Proposed redesign of the existing hexagonally shaped park with 'X' plan intersecting pathways to provide for upgraded version of the existing in the form of an entry plaza with raised planting beds/seating, wider pathways through the park and around the edges of the park, an eastern performance/multifunctional space at the interface with the marina, improved hard landscaping materials, mounded forms with terracing to eastern part of park for informal play and seating, rationalisation of street furniture and new tree planting.

The proposal does not involve the removal of any existing car parking spaces.

ZONING:

Fingal County Development Plan 2017 - 2023.

The application site is affected by the Zoning Objective OS – Open Space, *'Preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities.*

The proposed use is a redesign of the existing public open space to provide for soft and hard landscaping. This is permitted in principle within the zoning objective zoning of the lands

Section 1.4 Strategic Vision of the Development Plan 2017 – 2022.

The strategic vision for the County is to:-

Protect Green Infrastructure and enhance Fingal's natural resources of clean water, biodiversity, nature conservation areas, landscape, coastline, greenbelts, parks and open spaces, and agricultural land.

Section 1.5 Main Aims of the Development Plan 2017 – 2022.

2. Provide for the future wellbeing of the residents of the County by:

- *Protecting and improving the quality of the built and natural environments.*

Design of Public Open Spaces

Open spaces must be designed to a high specification. Great emphasis must be placed on the quality of open space and details of the proposed landscaping, hard and soft, of these spaces will be required at the planning application stage. Public open spaces should be overlooked and designed in such a way that anti-social behaviour is reduced through passive surveillance. Potential for anti-social behaviour associated with open spaces and associated screen planting must be designed out.

Objective PM60

Ensure public open space is accessible, and designed so that passive surveillance is provided.

Objective PM61

Ensure permeability and connections between public open spaces including connections between new and existing spaces, in consultation to include residents.

Objective PM62

Provide multifunctional open spaces at locations deemed appropriate providing for both passive and active uses.

Objective MALAHIDE 5

Implement and progress the Public Realm Strategy for Malahide, including measures related to car-parking, in order to facilitate a vibrant retail, commercial and residential core.

8.4 Green Infrastructure and Planning.

Parks, Open Space and Recreation Theme

Objective GI26

Maximise the use and potential of existing parks, open space and recreational provision, both passive and active, by integrating existing facilities with proposals for new development and by seeking to upgrade existing facilities where appropriate.

Map based objectives.

Indicative cycle/pedestrian route along the southern side of the park.

The north-eastern part of the park is indicated as being within a pNHA for Malahide Estuary (pNHA000205). It is noted that the part of the park within the Malahide Estuary pNHA is considered a mapping error.

Malahide Public Realm Strategy – December 2013.

Section 5 – Public Realm Projects.

- Destination (D7) Facilities – Provide sheltered meeting place(s) for residents and tourists.
- Streetscape (S4) – The Green at the Marina – Develop a landscape plan and usage strategy for Marina Green – Maximise and capture the opportunities which exist as this village centre location, with coastal views, etc.
- Movement (M3) – Cycle Lanes - Make provision for cycle lanes through the village particularly along the Coast Road and from Seabury/ Yellow Walls Road. *
- Movement (M4) – Cycle Racks - Provide bike racks at suitable locations within the village including Marina Green, Malahide Library, Supervalu, etc.

Section 6 – Making it Happen

- Destination (D7) Facilities - This project was identified as critical for the youth within Malahide, although recognised as being of potential benefit to all residents and visitors. Working with the schools, youth clubs and key stakeholders of Malahide will remain a priority to ensure that the issues as a

result of such a deficit in community facilities and village infrastructure are addressed. (long term project)

- Streetscape (S4) Advance a landscape plan and usage strategy for Marina Green. Concept plan included in Strategy – on foot of Young Designers Projects. Design Competition may be appropriate way to advance project. (Medium - Long term project)
- Movement (M3) - The advancement of this project may be developed in conjunction with Swords-Sutton Cycle network and Fingal Coastal Walk.*
- Movement (M4) - On-going/phased implementation. Fingal Arts Office will assist in the advancement of the schools projects for bike racks as a form of street art – 2014.

Appendix 1 - 3 differing types of bin identified with The Green.

Appendix 4 - Four different types of lighting in the area.

SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION:

The site is a hexagonally shaped flat public open space which is located on the north-eastern part of the town centre of Malahide. The park is bounded on three sides by the built form of Malahide, while the eastern side generally is open to the marina and the estuary. The street to the south and west of the park is known as 'The Green' and is fronted by 2 - 5 storey development. To the north is the Malahide Marina development, a four storey series of apartment blocks with private open space which accesses directly onto the park. Public parking is located along the southern and western boundaries of the park. Within the park are two main footpaths which intersect in the centre of the space. A public sculpture known as the 'Ammonite' is located at this intersection with an associated area of hard standing. A wide walkway is located along the eastern boundary of the park with the marina/estuary. This walkway narrows considerably at the interface with the fishermans cottage in the south-eastern part of the park. Moderate amounts of semi-mature tree planting are interspersed through the park with shrub planting evident in the central and eastern sections. The remainder of the park is laid out in grass. The character of the space is an urban park.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

- The Transportation Section by report dated 11th August 2017 request bicycle parking and provision of more benches.

- The Operations Section by report dated 11th August 2017 request that provision is made within the design for cycle paths along the southern and eastern part of the park as part of the Sutton to Malahide and Coastal Greenway routes.
- Biodiversity Officer report is noted.
- Arts Officer indicates no objections (verbal report)

APPRAISAL:

The proposed development would involve upgrading works to an existing park which has few features and does not utilise a high quality palette of materials or provide attractive public realm for users. The proposal does not appear to significantly amend the function of the park, instead maintaining desire lines and edge routes and providing for more active locations at the south-west and north-eastern ends of the park.

The proposed entrance plaza, being south-west facing has significant potential to become a public gathering space. The presence of benches in this location is welcome. The proposed bench design should be amended to include raised backs to provide seating usable by the elderly at this location. Natural stone is to be used in this location. No details of the stone are provided. It is considered that colours reflecting native Irish stone should be used. In addition any bubble or corderoy paving in this location should be of similar colour to the stone in order to avoid conflict.

The proposed north-eastern area is to function as a multi-use/potential performance space. It would provide greater interface with the marina and estuary. The proposed design would re-order the park, creating active areas at both ends, with a quieter central area for picnics, sunbathing etc. The sloped design to the northern and eastern part of the park along with the stepped benches would allow for a level of informal play.

All of the trees west of the existing ammonite sculpture are proposed to be retained. These represent the most mature trees in the park. The trees to be removed are small and of lesser value and all will be replaced. Shrub planting is to be removed along the eastern part of the park proximate to the marina and cottage. This will improve passive observation and is considered appropriate. Shrub planting is proposed along the north-western park boundary. This should be low in nature. No indication of tree or shrub species has been given.

The relocation of the ammonite sculpture to the western part of the park is considered acceptable. The Arts Officer notes no objection to this proposal.

The proposed design does not specifically provide for designated cycle lanes through the park. It is noted from the Development Plan that a section of the Greater Dublin

Cycle Network is located along the street to the south of the park. The route is also incorrectly identified as routing through numerous urban blocks to the north, eventually terminating at the northernmost tip of the marina peninsula. It is noted that a cycle scheme from Sutton to Malahide is currently at design stage and has not as yet been finalised. This route is intended to connect with the proposed Broadmeadow Cycle Route around Bisset's Strand. The route of the scheme in the area proximate to The Green may be on-street due to the low speed, urban nature of the streets in the area, however it is considered that space remains available in the event of a cycle route being required proximate to the park. It is not considered appropriate to require a north-eastern route along the edge of the park as this is not an identified cycle route.

The proposal would have significant benefits in terms of rationalising the many different forms of public lighting and street furniture within the park and surrounding footpaths. The proposed re-design would not provide for a community/meeting building within the park as contained in the Public Realm Strategy for Malahide, however the design does not preclude such a facility being provided at a later stage. It is noted that there is a dearth of seating in the central part of the park along the main walkway. While such seating may not be considered necessary at this stage, it is considered in the interest of cohesive design to request that a suitable type of bench be identified by the Landscape Architects should it be needed in the future.

The proposal would comply with all of the relevant policies within the Development Plan 2017 -2023 and aside from the provision of the community youth building, would be in compliance with the Malahide Public Realm Strategy.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

A report dated 10th July 2017 for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening has been provided by Scott Cawley. The Malahide Estuary SAC and SPA are located directly to the north-east of the site and do not overlap with the site. The park does not contain any habitats which are listed on Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive. It is also noted that no fauna species for which the European sites were designated are likely to use the park, therefore loss of habitat is not a consideration for significant effects on European sites.

It is noted that water quality is cited as an existing pressure within the estuary, namely from surface water run-off. These mostly related to industrial and agricultural practices. The works would involve hard and soft landscaping. The existing surface water drainage network will not be altered and construction impacts in the form of siltation of the estuary would be reduced through use of silt and pollutant control

The report concludes that there was no possibility of any significant effects on any European sites arising from the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and that Appropriate Assessment is not required in this instance.

The proposal has been assessed by the Biodiversity Officer who concurs with the conclusions of the report. Given the nature and location of the proposed development it will not affect Natura 2000 sites and therefore a full Appropriate Assessment is not required in this case.

Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

A memo dated 13th March 2017 by the Planning Department is on file indicating that Article 120 and Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and having regard to the limited area of the site which is within a proposed Natural Heritage Area, the existing land use, being a grassed and paved area within an urban park and the limited potential for pollution generation as a result of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal would not have significant effects on the environment and would not require an EIAR. It is noted that the part of Malahide Estuary pNHA within the park is not relevant and appears to be a mapping error.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Department have no objection to the proposed new landscaping works to The Green. In the interest of ensuring compliance with the Malahide Public Realm Strategy, it is considered that the following conditions should be required:-

1. Detail the location of cycle racks, with consideration given to a local schools competition for the design of a number of the racks. This could involve the Arts Officer.
2. Detailing of the species of trees and shrubs to be utilised, with low habit shrubs to be planted along the northern interface of the park with The Marina development.
3. Provision of seating with backrests at the entrance plaza. This could take the form of amendment to the existing bench design rather than replacement with a standard bench.

4. Identification of a suitable type of bench with backrest by the design consultants for use within the park in the event that such benches are required in the future.
5. In order to comply with the Malahide Public Realm Strategy the following shall be undertaken:-
 - a) Use of one type of lighting mode/design throughout the park and adjoining footpaths in order to comply with the Public Realm Strategy
 - b) Use of Irish stone or similar.
 - c) Any use of blister paving, corderoy paving or other paving required to comply with pedestrian safety or other legislation shall be of similar colour to the stone used in the relevant area.
 - d) No pedestrian barriers are to be erected to or within the south-western plaza.
6. Prior to the commencement of works, agreement shall be reached with the Transportation Section to rationalise signage and notices in the vicinity of The Green and the agreed rationalisation shall take place prior to completion of the park redesign.
7. Measures to ensure contamination of the estuary from construction works shall be agreed with the Heritage Officer prior to the commencement of development.