

MEETING OF DÚN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL

9th June 2025

Item No 7.

Report submitted in accordance with Part XI, Section 179(3) of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 (as amended), Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), and Section 138 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

Proposed Development of St. Michaels Square and Environs, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin within the Curtilage of a Protected Structure

PC/PKS/01/25

In accordance with Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended (PDR)), Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (the Council) gave notice of the proposed development, in the Irish Times on the 11th of March 2025. Plans and particulars of the proposed development were made available for inspection from the 11th of March 2025 to the 9th of April 2025 at the Planning Department, County Hall, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire, and the Council Offices, Dundrum and on the DLR Consultation Hub, on the Council's website <https://www.dlrcoco.ie/>.

Submissions and observations with regards to the proposed development could be made up to and including the 25th of April 2025.

<https://dlrcoco.citizenspace.com/parks/proposed-development-st-michaels-church-square-env/>

1. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

The following report is a summary of the main features of the proposed development of St. Michaels Square and Environs, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin within the Curtilage of a Protected Structure, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin within the Curtilage of a Protected Structure as a more inclusive and attractive public space.

The site is located in central Dun Laoghaire. It is a prominent and strategic site sitting at the junction of Marine Road and George's Street. It is bounded by the Church to the north, Marine Road to the east, George's Street to the south and the EBS building to the west. The site, as outlined on the Site Location Plan, is approximately 0.049 Hectares.

It is proposed to create a public square at the corner of the Marine Road /Georges Street junction adjacent to St. Michaels Church. This is a placemaking project to improve accessibility, the general appearance of the streetscape and to assist in the regeneration of Dun Laoghaire Town.

It will also help to strengthen the link between the Seafront and Town as well compliment Myrtle square as an opposing bookend on George's Street.

The general upgrade works will include new surface treatment, bespoke seating, public lighting, soft landscaping, etc.

2. ZONING AND OBJECTIVES IN THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028

2.1 Context:

The site is located in the centre of Dun Laoghaire Town with many retail units, office space and residents in close proximity. The site is directly adjacent to St. Michaels Church on Marine Road. The Interim Urban Framework Plan has set out a clear and coherent vision to assist and guide the ongoing development that will contribute to the physical regeneration of Dún Laoghaire Town.

2.2 Zoning:

The site zoning is Objective MTC – To protect, provide for and-or improve major town centre facilities. Under this zoning objective Open Space and Cultural Use is ‘permitted in principle’ and the development of a civic plaza would also be entirely consistent with this zoning.

2.3 Policy:

The development of St Michaels Square and Environs will tie in with the relevant national and regional policy and the following specific policies as outlined in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Policy ST4: Accessibility

It is Council policy to support suitable access for people with disabilities, including improvements to buildings, streets and public spaces

Policy ST6: Footways and Pedestrian Routes

The Council will continue to maintain and expand the footway and pedestrian route network to provide for accessible pedestrian routes within the County in accordance with best accessibility practice.

Policy ST10: Street Lighting

It is Council policy to provide and maintain street lighting on the public road/footway/cycleways throughout the County in accordance with commonly accepted best practice.

Policy RET4: Major Town Centres

It is a Policy Objective of the Council to maintain the two Major Town Centres – Dún Laoghaire and Dundrum – as the primary retail centres in the County and to support their evolving multifunctional role. The vitality of the towns will be enhanced by their mixed-use nature. In addition to retail, these centres must include community, cultural, civic, leisure, restaurants, bars and cafes, entertainment, employment and residential uses. Development shall be designed to enhance the creation of a sense of place

Tree and Urban Forestry Strategy 2024-2030

“It is Council policy to implement the objectives and policies of the Tree Strategy for the County – “A Climate for Trees-Tree Strategy 2024-2030” – to ensure that tree cover in the County is managed and developed to optimise the environmental, climatic and educational benefits which derive from an ‘urban forest’”.

Policy E16: Sustainable Drainage Systems

It is Council policy to ensure that all development proposals incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS).

Policy EI14: Air and Noise Pollution

It is Council policy to implement the provisions of National and EU Directives on air and noise pollution and other relevant legislative requirements in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate

Policy EI 15: Light Pollution:

It is Council policy objective to ensure that the design of external lighting schemes minimise the incidence of light spillage or pollution in the immediate surrounding environment and has due regard to the residential amenity of surrounding areas.

Policy CC5: Limiting Emissions of Greenhouse Gases

It is Council policy to support National and International initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases.

Policy UD3: Public Realm Design

All development, whether in existing or in new areas, should positively contribute to an enhanced public realm and should demonstrate that the highest quality in public realm design is achieved. This will include detailed consideration

Policy UD7: Urban Tree Planting:

It is Council policy to increase the tree canopy cover throughout the County in accordance with the provisions of 'A Climate for trees: Tree Strategy 2024-2030 for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

3. NATURE AND EXTENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The nature and extent of the proposed development is outlined below. This description of the proposed works should be read in conjunction with the supporting drawings and reports. The proposed development will fundamentally alter the streetscape, greening and softening, encouraging biodiversity and creating a more inclusive, new civic space in a central location in the town.

Existing arrangement

Currently the Church space at the junction of Marine Road and Georges Street is dilapidated in appearance, is underused and does not provide for any meaningful civic congregation. There is a change of level directly off Georges Street which creates an awkward and unnecessary obstacle. At present there are 3 steps across the opening and a temporary, timber ramp to facilitate universal access. The lower area has suffered from haphazard, illegal car parking which adds to the hostility and sense of the neglected nature of the site.

This project aims to develop the space in collaboration with St Michael's Church authorities as part of an overall greening strategy for Dún Laoghaire Town. The development of this space is an opportunity to reimagine an important node in the urban grain and to provide a green refuge for congregation, reflection and relaxation. The overarching aim is to create a space that addresses both Georges Street and the Church in a manner that is accessible for all.

Proposal

The proposal includes for level access off Georges Street into an accessible and inclusive seating/congregation space at the upper level. This entry point will be pinched to create a defined threshold, framed with specimen trees and ornamental planting. The raised planters will be at seating height (approx. 450mm high) to anchor the space and take account of the south facing aspect. A bespoke, free standing mesh fencing will enclose the space and be used to grow climbing plants. The fence will secure the ROW access in the lower area and help to green the

expansive gable wall of the EBS building. Allowance is being made for discreet, ornamental lighting, power points for events and a socket for a Christmas tree. A new set of steps leading from the upper level to the lower level with handrails either side is proposed.

The existing planting in the lower area including the large, native Oak tree and groundcover will be retained as part of this proposal. Further seating, tree and ornamental planting will be provided at the lower level while allowing space for two hearses to park when required. There is a right of way to the rear of the properties fronting onto Georges Street Lower which will be maintained and managed with a new gate. The haphazard car parking will be removed through the inclusion of street furniture, planting and bollards and space for hearse parking only will be retained. A brass, cruciform motif is to be inlaid into the surface centred at the main entrance to the church. The existing step and ramp at the entrance will be removed and replaced with level access through revised finished ground levels improving accessibility and inclusiveness.

The surfacing, colours and organic shapes take inspiration from the stained-glass windows of the church. The surface of the square is proposed to be an exposed aggregate concrete to reflect the quality of the concrete and fine craftsmanship within the church and to match exposed concrete used in public realm schemes elsewhere in the town. A 1.2m high metal railing will run from the gable of the EBS premises through the proposed soft landscape area, break as it crosses the entrance off George's Street, run through the opposite, proposed soft landscape area and then straddle the top of the existing, low, curved wall with a consistent 1.2m height and finally drop off the wall to finish as a 1.2m high railing terminating before the access for hearse parking. This subtle railing detail will act to re-establish a stronger definition between the proposed space and the streetscape.

Climate Considerations:

The climate related impacts of these facilities have been strongly assessed throughout the design process against the National Policy on Climate Action and more specifically, the dlr Climate Change Action Plan 2024-2029. It is consistent with the greening of Dun Laoghaire vision which seeks to achieve a low carbon, climate resilient and sustainable town with place-making through greening at its core. The space seeks to communicate awareness of climate change through interpretation or other means. The project aligns with the DLR Climate Change Action Plan 2019-2024 by incorporating the following actions/initiatives.

- The removal of the haphazard parking spaces at St. Michaels Square (Transport)
- Management of the rainfall runoff and use of the rainfall to add the greening through rain gardens and other SUDS measures (Flood Resilience)
- The planting of trees and ornamental planting to enhance biodiversity and sequester carbon (Nature Based Solutions)

Community Engagement:

St Michaels Square & Environs is being developed for the local community, businesses and it is hoped that these facilities will empower local stakeholders further to take climate action.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

The Council carried out a preliminary examination of the proposal in accordance with Article 120(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Based on the nature, size and location of the development, the Council considered on the basis that there was significant and realistic doubt regarding the likelihood of significant effects on the environment. Consequently, and in accordance with Article 120(1)(b)(ii) of the Regulations (as amended), the Council caused an EIA screening report to be prepared (by CAAS Ltd) based on the information that is specified in Schedule

7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended for the purposes of a screening determination.

Taking account of the findings of the EIA Screening Report, the Council has determined that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development for the reasons set out in the EIA Determination. As a result, the proposal does not need to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment, and no Environmental Impact Assessment Report needs to be prepared for it.

5. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT:

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) and Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended the Council caused CAAS Ltd to undertake Appropriate Assessment screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the European Sites, if the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site(s). As required under Regulation 42(7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, the County Council has made a determination following screening that an Appropriate Assessment is not required. The proposed development is not directly, connected with or necessary to the management of sites as European sites and it can be concluded, on the basis, of objective information, that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects is not likely to have a significant effect on the European sites identified and listed in the AA Screening Report prepared by CAAS Ltd. This determination is based on information supplied by CAAS Ltd detailed in the Report. From this AA screening exercise, it has been determined that no significant likely effects may arise on any European sites as a result of the proposed development in combination with other plans and projects, through surface water, land and air, and groundwater pathways. This assessment was undertaken in the absence of mitigation measures. The project screened out for Appropriate Assessment based on the location of the works, the nature and the scale of the works.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PROPER PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

It is considered that the drawings and detailed proposals will significantly improve the visual amenities of the area and the public realm works will improve public access for all. It is an important improvement to the civic space and aligns with the placemaking visions for the area as envisaged in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028 and the Dun Laoghaire Urban Framework Plan.

An EIA screening has been carried out and it has been determined that an EIAR is not required, as there is no real likelihood of significant environmental effects.

AA screening has been carried out and has concluded that an AA is not required as the proposal will not have a significant effect on any European sites, individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

In conclusion, the proposed development is acceptable in principle and accords with the provisions of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

7. INTERNAL REPORTS

Architects Department

Architects have no issues with the proposal (21.05.2025)

Community and Cultural Development

No objection. (07.02.2025)

Forward Planning Infrastructure

No objections. (07.02.2025)

Infrastructure and Climate Change – Capital Projects

No objection. (17.02.2025)

Transportation and Planning

No objections (04.03.2025) - To be consulted at detailed design.

Climate Change Coordinator

No objection (10.02.2025)

Infrastructure and Climate Change – Environment Enforcement

No objection (07.02.2025) -Guidance on waste generated noted.

Infrastructure and Climate Change – Estates Officer

Climate change have no objection (10.02.2025)

Housing Department

No comments/objections from Housing. (07.02.2025)

Community & Cultural Development – Biodiversity Officer

No objections (13.02.2025)

Infrastructure and Climate Change – Road Maintenance

No objections. (28.02.2025) - To be consulted at detailed design.

Infrastructure and Climate Change – Traffic and Road Safety

No objection to the proposed development. (31.02.2025)

Drainage and Planning (Department)

No objection to the scheme (07.02.2025) – Comments will be addressed at detail design.

Planning Department

No objections (14.02.2025)

Infrastructure and Climate Change – Active Travel

No objections (21.05.2025)

Parks Department

No objection (19.02.2025)

8. **STATUTORY BODIES/ORGANISATIONS**

The proposed development was notified to relevant prescribed statutory bodies in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended (PDR). There was 1 submission from the Department of Transport, Marine Survey Office (Admin @seafarers.ie) Their comment was. No objections Survey Office DOT”

9. **SUBMISSIONS/OBSERVATIONS**

In accordance with Part 8, Article 81 of the PDR the Council gave notice of the proposed development in the Irish Times newspaper, on the 11th of March 2025, indicating that submissions and observations would be accepted up to and including the 25th of April 2025. Site Notices, in the prescribed format, was also erected on the site and maintained in place for the prescribed period.

A total of 47 submissions were received, 37 via the consultation hub, 10 via e-mail parksconsultations@dlrcoco.ie. There was 1 repeat submission through email. Of the 46 submissions, 42 were generally in favour (91.3%) of the development and 4 were not in favour (8.7%). Of the 42 in favour, 32 people were strongly behind the proposal and 22 had specific requests, opinions and elements of the scheme they wanted conveyed or clarified.

The submissions (and the detail pertinent to the respective submissions) are duly noted and have been assessed. A summary of the issues raised by members of the public with the responses of the Chief Executive thereto are set out below: -

Observations/Comments/Issues	Chief Executive's Response
Support the Proposed Development:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The majority of submissions note that the redevelopment at St. Michaels Square & Environs is very positive for the town of Dun Laoghaire, and for the people who live, work and visit• Many submissions note the importance of enhancing this prominent area of public realm as it connects the main thoroughfare of the town and is one of the main central seating points in the town• Many of the submissions welcome the enhancement and addition of planting and improved inclusive accessibility• Many submissions express that this is a much-needed development of the areas as it is a dead space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Chief Executive notes and welcomes the depth and breadth of observations and comments on the proposed development and acknowledges the high level of engagement and feedback from the community and local stakeholders.

Suggestions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Bench for Imogen Stuart (1927-2024) who's work features prominently at the entrance to St. Michaels Church• I would like engagement with the Garda on the anti-social activities in this area• If bollards are needed, please ensure high quality ones• A water feature in the middle of the square.• Like to see amenities such as a drinking fountain installed.• More focus on housing and the provision of infrastructure for housing, before considering any other "nice to have" developments• Adequate seating and a pedestal for buskers to play in this area• More lighting, visibility is the key issue• A display with weather forecast and sea water temp might be nice to include to connect the town to the seaside setting• Planting of roses, bamboos, fruit trees and herbs included• There should be plenty of bins• Recommend a permanent Christmas tree• Native planting expressed in the planting design• Inclusion of sockets for winter lighting and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A discreet plaque will be considered for Imogen Stuart.• The local policing forum will be informed of the development, and we will engage with the Gardai regarding patrols and increased presence in this area.• High quality retractable bollards will be installed• There is no water feature included in the design as the space is compact, and water features could become problematic in terms of long-term maintenance.• A refill bottle station is located a short walk to Myrtle Square.• This comment is outside the scope of St. Michaels Square & Environs Redevelopment.• There will be adequate seating and an area for busking will be considered.• Lighting will be enhanced and sight lines will be retained to increase visibility and a sense of personal safety• This idea will be incorporated at detailed design.• The provision of planting will be expanded in the redevelopment of the area.• There are existing bins in the adjacent street scape.• We will consider replacing a cut Christmas tree with a planted evergreen specimen tree.• There will be a mix of native planting in the planting plan design.• Electricity points for outdoor seasonal events will be incorporated.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be a wheelchair and mobility aid access to make the public space accessible to all • Concern that the historical integrity is being compromised due to the introduction of contemporary materials, the height of the green mesh wall and planting. Recommendation to lower height of green wall, lower planting and include evergreen climbers • Undertake a heritage impact assessment to evaluate how changes might affect the character of the protected structure and its setting • Request for artwork for the EBS gable wall which is a constant target for graffiti • Engage with the local Tidy Towns regarding planting, maintenance, water, bins shed access anti-social behaviour, Garda camera and concerns raised in their submission • Retention of the curved wall for seating • Could the public phone box be removed or rotated 90 degrees, so it no longer blocks 50% of the pedestrian space of the footpath • We suggest the area marked with crucifix is more inclusive of all religions and includes either non or all common religious symbols • Nothing to be attached to the EBS Branch. Nothing to be blocking the Branch window 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing steps into the space from Georges Street will be eliminated, creating a flush universal access with inclusive and accessible seating. Access to St. Michaels Church will be by the Marine Road foot path. We are incorporating inclusive and accessible seating with arm rests. Permeability through the area will be retained. The ramp and steps at the church entrance will be replaced with flush universal access. • We propose to use appropriate details and materials that will complement the modernist church setting. The green wall will eliminate anti-social behaviour, doubling as a security fence and biodiversity haven. Sight lines will be retained. • We referred this project to DLR Architects Department for comment. The Conservation Officer had no issue with the proposal. • We will engage with the property owner/Tidy Towns & EBS regarding Artwork for the gable wall. • We will engage with Tidy Towns regarding the points highlighted. Sight lines will be retained and the screened off area will have no public access. • St. Michaels has been designed in coordination with the Living Streets Project. An appropriate low railing will replace seating on the curved wall . • The Public Phone box is outside the red line of the project boundary, point noted. • This area is retained and in the ownership of St. Michaels Church • The project will not interfere with the property wall or obscure views of the branch window.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garda camera view will not be obscured. Blind spot in the corner where the Tidy Towns have their shed will be obscured from view by the free standing greenwall. • The site should be built out to define the junction and eliminate the open space. • A signboard for religious services. A short history of the church. • Edge detail to planting. • Sculpture of St. Michael. • Free parking for church goers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will not interfere with the Garda Camera. The free standing greenwall will double as a security fence to control access to the rear of the church and the businesses. • This proposal is outside the parameters of the agreement with the Church. • A digital board is to be delivered as part of the scheme which could display this info. • This will be incorporated in the design. • There is a sculpture of St. Michael over the main entrance into the church. • There will be parking only for hearses and wedding cars.
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10. **RECOMMENDATION:**

The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the provisions of the 2022 - 2028 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan and with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. In accordance with section 179(4)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, the proposed development may be carried out as recommended in the Chief Executive's Report, unless the Elected Members, by resolution, decides to vary or modify the development otherwise than as recommended, or decides not to proceed with the development.

Subject to the above, Members are hereby notified in accordance with Section 138 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended, of the intention to proceed with the proposed development subject to the following conditions and variations:

1. that all internal department conditions be addressed during the detailed design and construction phases.

Mary Ruane, Director of Community & Cultural Development Department

Appendix A – List of Persons Who Put in Submissions/Observations

Appendix B – Site Location Map & General Arrangement Drawing