



Dublin City Council

Comhairle Cathrach Bhaile Átha Cliath

Metro North – Oral Hearing

Proof of Evidence of

Mr. Dick Gleeson, City Planner

In respect of

- An Bord Pleanála's Letter of 14th March 2009 to Dublin City Council
- Planning Issues

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Dick Gleeson. I hold a BA from NUI Maynooth, a H.Dip in Town Planning from U.C.D. and am a member of the I.P.I. As Dublin City Planner I head up the professional side of the City Planning Department where I have overall responsibilities for strategic and local planning and for development management.
- 1.2 I have served on several juries for city centre architectural competitions including the competition for the Spire and am a member of the Board of Temple Bar Properties, Cultural Trust, The Grangegorman Development Agency and the Academy of Urbanism.

2.0 Strategic Planning Context

- 2.1 As has been indicated in Section 2 of the Planning Authority's submission in relation to this application, the development of Metro North is promoted and supported by a range of planning policies from national to local level. At a more strategic level this includes the National Spatial Strategy, the National Development Plan, the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area, Transport 21 and Platform for Change. At the more local level, Metro North is supported by the Dublin City Development Plan and is consistent with the objectives contained in the Phibsborough/Mountjoy Local Area Plan and the Parnell Square Framework Plan.
- 2.2 Dublin is currently in the process of building a successful City Region that can deliver economic success, a high quality of life for all citizens, a powerful engine for the Republic as a whole, and perform effectively in a highly competitive international arena.
- 2.3 Successful city regions combine an effective core at the heart of the region with a coherent regional spatial structure incorporating a network of polycentric higher order urban centres, supported by economic strategies, density policies and an integrated public transport network. Synergies and interconnections between the regional core and the outer urban centres are critical.
- 2.4 Dublin's Inner City, the regional core, had contracted greatly by the mid 1980's and geographically was aligned with the two Inner City retail cores and the Georgian City to the South-East. Extensive urban regeneration over the last 20 years has seen this area greatly expand eastwards towards Docklands and The Point and westwards towards Heuston. While there is still a great level of unevenness across this extended area, and much needs to be achieved in terms of consolidation, the Inner City is developing cohesiveness and connectivity.

- 2.5 The City Council has mapped a network of local character areas and an evolving eco-system of economic engines, specialisms and cultural clusters which inhabit and are continuing to colonise this network. While the mapping of local character areas celebrates diversity and local identity, Legible Dublin is tackling the challenge of unity. In the context of the review of the current Development Plan, these character areas are being re-evaluated. However, a strategic framework of key public spaces and the (walking) routes that connect them will generate legibility in the urban structure and achieve the twin objectives of (A) a public realm of international standing and (B) making Dublin a great walking city. The corridor of the Liffey is a central spine and critically important in delivering this public realm network. An integrated and efficient public transport network is a critical infrastructure required to service this complex and extended Inner City. In rail terms this network can be seen to include higher density corridors extending out into the region and penetrating the core and a network of light rail connecting all significant locations within the extended Inner City.
- 2.6 In terms of providing a strategic network serving the Inner City and the region a number of critical planned pieces of the jigsaw are missing. Metro North will connect the northern arc of the Dublin City Region and the airport with the interconnector at Stephens Green and with the DART and mainline rail systems. A second layer of light rail, QBC, and local bus services will support this primary network in the Inner City and outer urban areas.
- 2.7 Spatial economic strategies are emerging to support and develop existing Regional Planning Guidelines and integrate and exploit the public transport rationale. Existing and new economic specialisms including education, finance, digital services, law, retail, tourism, media, advertising, cultural services and medical campuses will continue to locate and cluster right across the extended Inner City.
- 2.8 Three economic corridors are proposed to strategically link the region with its Inner City core;
- (a) The Northern Corridor will connect with the North City region and will develop from the spine and corridor infrastructure of Metro North. It will serve the Dublin City Region's main Airport, linking its 27 million passengers with the extended City Region and providing a platform to exploit the economic potential of the Airport zone. Metro North will also link with Swords, an urban centre with an increasingly important scale and economic profile in the City Region. This Northern Corridor also integrates the important Dublin City University (DCU) campus within the City Region and helps build and consolidate a sustainable future for Ballymun, the biggest regeneration project in the state. The Metro North route through the North Inner City will help to achieve a number of economic objectives for the area. The regeneration of O'Connell Street will be consolidated and a

range of strategies to address the long-standing imbalance between the North and South Inner City will be strategically underpinned. The route will also connect major cultural and institutional uses within the wider Dublin area, such as the cultural facilities in Parnell Square, the Mater Hospital, DCU etc.

- (b) The Southern Economic Corridor builds on the new partnership between University of Dublin, Trinity College and University College Dublin aimed at developing the economic potential of an entrepreneurial ecology focused on 3rd and 4th level research. This alliance between two of the City's top universities will have a spatial policy expression which will be developed in the current review of the City Development Plan. While Trinity is already integrated with the DART corridor, additional rail infrastructure will develop interconnection with the UCD campus, link with the green line and connect with the business cluster at Sandyford.
- (c) The Western Corridor will develop, expand and upgrade the existing infrastructure of the Naas Road, Grand Canal and Kildare rail line, and will tie into Heuston. The potential for redevelopment of large tracts of underutilised industrial lands combined with a sequence of dense new urban settlements along the Kildare line, e.g. Adamstown and Clonburris, means that the interconnector can deliver greater benefits in terms of interfacing with Inner City.

2.9 The provision of a new transport network with key station locations will significantly improve access to areas of the City that previously may have suffered an element of dislocation, providing a fast and efficient link between the north side and the south side of the City and, by virtue of interchanges both planned and existing, with the wider City Region. This will help to consolidate the Inner City in terms of retail, leisure and employment destinations such as the Grafton Street area, Trinity College, O'Connell Street and Parnell Square. Through the interconnection with the Luas Red line at O'Connell Bridge, the civic spine will be connected with the National Museum at Collins Barracks, the Pheonix Park, the Heuston Gateway and beyond.

3.0 Urban Design and Public Realm

- 3.1 Metro North represents one of the most significant insertions into the cityscape and as such urban design issues are of extreme importance. It is the Planning Authority's opinion that Metro North has the potential, through excellence of design and the use of high quality materials, to provide a positive contribution to the urban design and public realm of the City.
- 3.2 it is considered vitally important that the design of the stations contributes architecturally to the City. This is of particular importance

in relation to the Inner City stations which are located in such sensitive areas as Parnell Square, O'Connell Bridge and St. Stephen's Green. Considerable investment by the City Council has taken place in these areas in order to improve and maintain the civic spine. It is also considered vital that the stations at Mater, Drumcondra, Griffith Avenue, DCU and Ballymun are carefully considered insertions into existing streetscapes. Section 8 of the Planning Authority's submission deals with specific design issues in relation to the proposed stations and suggested conditions. Following Dublin City Council's submission, consultation was undertaken with the RPA in relation to the specific issues set out in the submission.

- 3.3 In relation to public realm infrastructure, Section 8 of the Planning Authority's submission deals with the City Council's requirements in relation to the public realm and suggested conditions. This includes the need to respect existing public realm infrastructure and, in the case of monuments and archaeological issues, to provide for agreed method statements to be produced between the RPA and Dublin City Council. Again, consultation was undertaken with the RPA in relation to the specific issues set out in the submission.

4.0 Consultations subsequent to submission

- 4.1 Subsequent to the submission of the Planning Authority's comments to An Bord Pleanála, a significant number of meetings have taken place between the Railway Procurement Agency and a number of Departments within the City Council including Planning, Architecture, Archaeology, Conservation, Roads and Traffic, Engineering, Drainage, Water Services, Parks and Biodiversity. The purpose of these meetings was for the RPA to attempt to address the issues raised in the 74 no. conditions requested by the Planning Authority. As was indicated by Mr. Rory O'Connor in his evidence of 22nd April 2009, an agreed position has been reached in relation to these conditions, submitted to the Bord as Appendix 1 of Mr O'Connor's evidence.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 In planning terms and in terms of the development of the City Region into the future, the development of Metro North is seen as a key piece of infrastructure, physically, economically and socially. The Planning Authority is of the opinion that Metro North will bring significant long term benefits to the City and its population in terms of the provision of a world class piece of key infrastructure that will help to address the transport challenges of an expanding City Region. In economic terms, Metro North will provide the City Region with the ability to better compete with other global locations. In social terms Metro North will benefit the population of Dublin through the provision of safe, reliable and quick access between the city centre and airport and a number of key cultural and institutional uses in between.