



PRESS RELEASE FROM SAMRA – Tuesday 24th September 2024

Sandymount residents call on An Bord Pleanála to refuse Dublin Port's plan to industrialise land beside Dublin Bay's UNESCO Biosphere

Alternative location for trailer terminal needed

The Sandymount and Merrion Residents Association (SAMRA) is calling on An Bord Pleanála to refuse planning permission to allow the Dublin Port Company build a 24/7 Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) container trailer terminal on a 13-acre site beside Dublin Bay's UNESCO Biosphere.

The call is contained in SAMRA's 87-page Planning Observation Report submitted to An Bord Pleanála today (24th September 2024) regarding the planning application (ref. PA29N.320250) lodged by the Dublin Port Company in July 2024 for the third part of its €1.1 billion port expansion plan.

SAMRA says the area earmarked for the trailer terminal on the south side of the Poolbeg Peninsula is entirely unsuitable for this purpose and an alternative location should be used.

The terminal will have unacceptably tall (5.5 meters) and contextually insensitive prison-like retaining walls and fencing that will border environmentally sensitive areas on three sides; the Irishtown Nature Reserve (east), the coastal park, and the shoreline and bay which are part of Dublin Bay UNESCO designated biosphere (south) and the proposed Port Park and wildflower meadow, and the homes for 10,000 residents under construction at Glass Bottle (west). (See illustration attached)

It says that locating the terminal between these environmentally sensitive areas, the Dublin Port Company is disregarding the importance of the area for the wider community and its UNESCO status.

SAMRA wants the trailer terminal located in a less environmentally sensitive area on the port campus and for the lands to be absorbed into the Irishtown Nature Reserve and used for community facilities such as playing pitches.

“Dublin is the only capital city in the world that adjoins a UNESCO designated biosphere. To locate heavy industry directly beside this rare and internationally important environment is indefensible by any measure”, said David Turner, Chairman of SAMRA.

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Dublin Port plans to use the area designated for the trailer park for up to 10 years as a construction compound to service the overall port expansion project before converting it into a trailer terminal. This use will involve excessive HGV activity in the area creating noise, dust and light pollution from the 15 metre (circa 4 storeys high) lights which will be on permanently at night around the trailer terminal.

Sandymount Strand holds the largest concentration of post-breeding terns in Ireland, attracting birds from colonies across Ireland and further afield, making it one of the most important tern staging-sites in North-West Europe (Burke et al., 2020). The safeguarding of the passage populations of Roseate Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern, as well as the breeding population of Common Tern are listed as a conservation objective for the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (NPWS 2015b).

There is also concern in relation to the impact of the development on the bat roosts and bat habitat in the surrounding area, and the brent geese that winter along shoreline.

SAMRA recognises that there are some positive community gains from the Dublin Port Company's expansion plan such as the Marine Village along the Liffey.

However, it says that locating the trailer yard is a substantial community loss for generations and possibly forever.

SAMRA is also concerned about the contaminated nature of the lands. According to the planning application the location for the trailer terminal "*is the location of a former municipal waste site which may have potential engineering/geotechnical issues with settlement and associated methane gas release*" (Section 4.4.2.5 of EIAR Chapter 4 'Assessment of Alternatives'). The site also contains asbestos at shallow levels and heavy metals, from previous land uses (Environmental Impact Assessment Report Appendix 8.3). These issues should rule out excavation works and suggest a compelling argument for the lands to be returned to nature.

In its report SAMRA also highlights that the expansion plan relies on vehicles to move goods around the port and beyond. It says there should be less emphasis on individual movements and a greater emphasis on public transport to move goods and people (10,000 will live in the Glass Bottle development) using rail and Luas. There needs to be more long term joined up thinking in relation to transport and climate action policies.

SAMRA said An Bord Pleanála faced a generational decision and called on it to take into account the unique environmental sensitivity of the area in its decision and ask the Dublin Port Company to seek alternative locations on its extensive campus for the trailer terminal.

Ends

