

6th December 2022

Petition No: P00002/22 “homelessness is cancer..... blocked-up houses are not a cure”.

Petition Text

I live in St. Patricks Park an estate of 41 houses approximately half were private as tenants bought out the houses over the years. In 2007 Kildare county council came to the estate and informed residents that they needed to demolish some houses to gain access to a field adjoining our estate owned by them. The houses were to be social houses many agreed with this including me, but homeowners objected as they did not want any new roads going through the estate that would devalue their houses. Kildare County Council (KCC) decided they would buy up all the homeowners and they did. I thought KCC was acting crazy as they already had an entrance to the field at one end of the estate. it then came to my attention that KCC had given full planning permission to a private developer for 300 houses in our area and he had no proper access and I thought KCC was planning to give access through our estate. I challenged KCC on this and it became public then KCC put a press release on Kildare FM local radio stating they had withdrawn permission from the developer and would not be giving any further planning permission that land was sold later. Now fifteen years later we are left with all the blocked-up houses KCC bought. Now KCC say the reason for the project was because of antisocial behaviour which I feel is nonsense. Their reasons for this project has changed so many times as well as their plans.

Statement by David Creighton, Senior Architect, Kildare County Council

I joined Kildare County Council in September 2008. I have been the Senior Architect in the Housing Department since 2014.

St. Patrick's Park is a local authority estate constructed in a number of phases from the late 1970's. Originally remote from the centre of Rathangan, the town has now developed out to and beyond St. Patrick's Park. Kildare County Council has also developed social housing on lands in its ownership at Beechgrove, closer to the town centre and owns land zoned for housing between both St. Patrick's Park and Beechgrove (refer to the Rathangan Small Town Land Use Zoning Map 2023-2029 included with the supporting information).

There are currently no proposals to develop the existing adjoining lands in Kildare County Council's ownership zoned for housing between St. Patrick's Park and Beechgrove.

With reference to development of adjoining private lands a search of planning applications in the vicinity identifies the following:

Planning Ref: 06-2517: Application by Dundian Limited for 272 residential units, creche and retail units. This application does not make reference to access through St. Patrick's Park or lands in Kildare County Council ownership. This application does not appear to have progressed and may have been superseded by application Ref 06-2667 below.

Planning Ref: 06-2667 - Application by Dundian Limited for 250 residential units, creche and retail units. This application does not make reference to access through St. Patrick's Park or lands in Kildare County Council ownership. A site location map and a site plan are included with the supporting information which shows the location of the proposed development and the proposed site layout. The proposed site layout does not indicate any connection to St. Patrick's Park or to the adjacent lands in Kildare County Council's ownership.

Planning Ref: 14-1036 – Extension application to extend the duration of application ref 06-2667. This extension application was refused.

The supporting information includes Land Use Zoning Maps for Rathangan between 2002 and 2023. It can be seen that from the 2017 – 2023 Land Use Zoning Map for Rathangan the lands included in the site referred to in planning application Ref 06-2667 is no longer zoned for residential purposes. This is also the case for the Land Use Zoning Map included in the Draft County Development Plan 2023-2029.

The reference in the petition to *'it then came to my attention that KCC had given full planning permission to a private developer for 300 houses in our area and he had no proper access and I thought KCC was planning to give access through our estate. I challenged KCC on this and it became public then KCC put a press release on Kildare FM local radio stating they had withdrawn permission from the developer and would not be giving any further planning permission that land was sold later'*. This statement does not appear to be substantiated by the planning application information set out above and further information in relation to this claim should be provided. Kildare County Council would not have the power to withdraw a planning permission once granted and from the information available in connection with Planning Application 06-2667 it appears as if this planning permission expired, and the applicant was not successful in having the permission extended.

The completed estate at St. Patrick's Park suffers from poor overall estate design, a lack of passive surveillance, inadequate public open space and insecure back lane access. One of the key drivers for the RWS is the provision of good quality public open space which is well overlooked. We anticipate that the provision of a well-designed public open space will serve as a popular and well-used recreation and meeting space for all residents of the estate. This will foster a sense of community, cohesion and an awareness of place and inclusion."

Background the Proposed Development

In July 2011 Kildare County Council received confirmation of approval in principle and a provisional budget for a Remedial Works Scheme (RWS) in St. Patrick's Park, Rathangan. This approval followed a submission by Kildare County Council foot of a call from the then Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for applications from Local Authority's under the RWS. St. Patrick's Park was selected by Kildare County Council as a suitable estate due to the poor design of the estate, the lack of good quality public open space and the overall condition of the estate at the time. Photographs are attached which show the condition of parts of the estate from 2010. The photographs show the evidence of anti-social behaviour that existed at the time.

The approval received in July 2011 acknowledged the intention to purchase existing private dwellings within the estate should they become available to purchase. A number of private owners had expressed an interest in selling their dwellings and Kildare County Council acquired these dwellings where there was an intention to incorporate those dwellings into the RWS. No private owners were coerced into selling their properties. There are still a number of private owners in the upper part of the estate. All private dwellings purchased by Kildare County Council were purchased on the basis of the open market valuation at the time of purchase.

Initial proposals to remediate the estate included the demolition of a significant number of dwellings, almost the entire southern section of the estate, and the building of a new perimeter block of housing to the south overlooking a new public open space. Various design options were discussed with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Design proposals have changed over time to reflect budget constraints and a desire to reduce the number of existing dwellings to be demolished while retaining the objective of addressing the poor design of the estate. The proposals for the development of the estate are included in the supporting information in the form of a presentation given to the elected members of the Kildare/Newbridge Municipal District.

There is no current proposal to provide road access through St. Patricks Park to the adjoining lands in Kildare County Council's ownership. A single controlled gated access point is proposed to address the ongoing removal of existing fencing and uncontrolled access to the adjoining lands from the back lane which is resulting in anti-social behaviour and environmental issues.

Since receiving approval in principle for the RWS in 2011 Kildare County Council has carried out a number of improvement works to the estate. These include:

1. Demolition of 5 vacant and damaged dwellings that had suffered significantly from anti-social behaviour. Photographs have been provided in the supporting information to verify this. The impact of anti-social behaviour in the estate at

the time was a contribution factor to St. Patrick's Park being selected for inclusion in the RWS. The inclusion of St. Patricks Park in the RWS followed a site visit from an inspector from the Department.

2. Substantial surface water remediation works to address localised flooding in the estate.
3. Refurbishment and energy upgrade works to 34 occupied and vacant units in the upper part of the estate. This has been referred to as Phase 1 of the RWS and was completed in late 2019.
4. The installation of new perimeter fencing

These works have significantly improved the overall appearance of the estate to that seen in 2010, prior to receiving approval under the RWS.

A Part 8 (Planning Permission) application was launched on 4th November 2022 for Phases 2 & 3 of the RWS. Existing and proposed site plans for the proposed Part 8 development are included with the supporting information.

The proposed development includes the following:

- Demolition of 15 units (12 in the centre of the estate)
- Construction of 7 new units at key locations within the estate.
- Refurbishment and energy efficiency upgrade works to 17 vacant units
- Refurbishment and energy efficiency upgrade works to 8 occupied units.
- The provision of landscaped and overlooked public open space.

Public workshop meetings were held with local residents in Rathangan Library in March 2020, just prior to Covid 19 lockdown to present the proposals above and a number of amendments have been made to reflect comments received at that time.

A briefing on the proposed Part 8 was given to the elected members of the Kildare Newbridge Municipal District on 21st September 2022. Following that briefing an information leaflet was distributed to residents in the estate which included an invitation to attend public workshop meetings in Rathangan Library on 12th October 2022. A number of residents attend those meetings and feedback on the proposed development was positive. The petitioner was unable to attend so a private meeting was subsequently arranged for petitioner and another individual in Kildare County Council offices.

The 1.5 hr meeting held with petitioner is one of 4 private meetings held with a small group of local residents from St. Patrick's Park, including petitioner over the past

number of years. 3 meetings were held in Kildare County Council offices in Naas and a further meeting was held on site in St. Patricks Park.

One to one meetings were held with residents in Kildare County Council offices at the outset of the scheme.

A public meeting was held at Rathangan Community Centre at the early stages of the development.

In addition to these meetings there has been a number of leaflet drops updating residents on the proposed development of St. Patrick's Park.

Nine supporting documents are attached.

David Creighton
Senior Architect
On behalf of Kildare County Council