



### **Chairman's comment**

*It is some time since we brought out LINK. We hope you find the format and content of this issue to your liking. We would welcome constructive feedback.*

*Communication with our members is maintained through our Road Representatives and public meetings. We maintain contact with all our Public Representatives whose help and advice we draw on constantly. All planning applications and developments in the area are monitored by a designated Planning Officer and communicated to members where relevant. Environmental matters too are monitored. The committee meets*

*once a month and reviews all these activities.*

*The RRA is a voluntary organisation whose work is varied and interesting. If you feel you have anything to contribute we would love to hear from you. Contact details are inside this issue. Our Annual General Meeting will be in March 2008 when a new committee will be elected.*

*We welcome all new residents to the area and wish everyone a very happy Christmas.*

**John McSweeney**

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## **Rathgar - where to?**

As members know, the Association sets as its main objective the protection of Rathgar as a community and a neighbourhood. It seeks to achieve this through the preservation of what is good and, where there are gaps, an orderly and sympathetic solution

Over a great number of years the Committee of the Association has been working towards seeking a reality for this and has sought to have Rathgar's special status recognised specifically, by the City Fathers.

*(Continued from front page)*

Dublin City Council's Development Plan 2005 -2011 places emphasis on the preservation of heritage within the city.

"Dublin city has many historic villages which serve as vibrant neighbourhood centres and which often comprise a rich heritage of architectural features, village streetscapes and/or have historic and cultural significance. Dublin City Council believes it is important to identify these villages within the city so as to promote the neighbourhood centres while retaining and enhancing the character of the villages, their architectural features and their streetscapes." **(DCC Development Plan 2005-2011 Historic Villages chap. 10.3.5)**

Encouraged by such a clear planning objective and by our local area councillors, a subcommittee of the Association has had a number of meetings with the area managers of the City Council with a view to exploring how best to put together an answer to the question "Rathgar – where to?". A point has now been reached in discussions where the Association is receiving positive encouragement to proceed with a study.

It is expected that the study will focus on how best to ensure that a proper integration of community and village can be maintained in a sustained way for the future. The study will cover Rathgar as a business centre serving local needs, how best to maintain and conserve the great built heritage of the area (some 85% of the Rathgar area is Zone 2 (architectural conservation area) in the DCC Development Plan), transport and movement of people through the area, the use and adequacy of public open spaces, urban design and development standards and community infrastructure.

**The study will be a joint endeavour between all interested parties in the area, the Association and Dublin City Council. A consultative process will be available for all to take part in and all Rathgar households will receive detailed information on the subject accompanied by a questionnaire asking for their views.**

The City Council has indicated that funding will be available to retain professional advice.

It is hoped that the process to arrive at a Plan will be put in place over the coming months and that the final Plan will be a template for all who have an involvement in Rathgar over the coming years.

***Paddy Marron, Vice Chairman***

## **Rathgar... *in the News***

It was a surprise to read recently in the Irish Times of the decision by the Redemptorist Order to redevelop over a 2 year period, 8 acres of their grounds at Marianella, Orwell Road, for 300 homes, a public park and a new monastery. This will be a considerable development and will be in partnership with a yet to be decided on property developer who will, we are assured, have a record of professionalism and expertise. The Redemptorists themselves will be remaining on-site and will be committed to ensuring high quality and timely delivery of the overall project. We wish them well and look forward to our continuing good relationship with them.

Another significant Rathgar institution is Saint Luke's hospital. It was sad to see that front line diagnostic and treatment facilities for cancer patients are to be transferred on a phased basis to a newly designated "Centre of Excellence" at the St. James' hospital campus. This is in accordance with the National Cancer Plan and is due to be completed by 2011. At present St Luke's houses a major radiotherapy centre and the installation of 2 linear accelerators in 2000 would seem to have emphasised that fact. It is hoped that the hospital will remain and have some significant role in the care of cancer patients. Also the extensive grounds at St. Luke's must represent an attractive target for property developers.

Superquinn are currently rebuilding and developing a new store in Rathgar on the sites of the Furniture Shop and Orwell Motors. It is planned to open this store in the first half of 2008. The store is for pedestrian shoppers as planning permission only provides for parking off-street for seven cars. In addition there will be a development of 11 apartments with off-street car parking for 15 cars.

Other developments in the Rathgar area both current and for which planning permission has been received include:

**The 108 Pub** Rebuild pub. Develop 5 apts. No parking. Presently under appeal.

**The Orwell Nursing Home:** 5 New blocks on existing site. Off-street parking (32 cars).

**The Orwell Lodge:** 5 apts. and 2 x 3 storey houses with off-street parking (12 cars).

**Orwell Bank, Orwell Park :** 13 apts. and 8 town houses in blocks 4 storeys high. Off-street car parking for 38 cars.

**Mill Hill Retirement Home, Orwell Park:** Completed in 1,2 and 3 storeys for 37 apts. with off-street car parking (25 cars).

**Dartry House, Orwell Park:** 66 apts. in blocks of 4 storeys. Off-street parking (129 cars) (under appeal).

**These developments will have a major impact on our area, not least of which will be to add an incremental 600 cars to the existing congestion in Rathgar, Orwell Road and Orwell Park. Development and traffic on this scale will add significantly to the carbon footprint in the Rathgar area.**

## ***Planning Overview***

Although planning has always been central in the affairs of residents' associations, it has become increasingly more central as development pressures have mounted. 50 years ago a residents' association planning officer might have had a relatively quiet time but the late eighties and early nineties changed that.

The early nineties saw an increasing level of planning activities, with 2,500 planning applications annually in the Dublin Corporation area. Today 5,000 + applications are now received in the Dublin South East area alone. This puts into perspective how the role of planning has increased in the every day business of residents' associations.

The basis of the current planning legislation goes back to the 1963 Planning Act with various amendments up to 2000. These changes were put in place to streamline the process and reduce delays.

Today anyone making a planning application has to post a site notice with an accurate description of the development. This must be accompanied by a notice in a local or national newspaper. All relevant documents and drawings must be lodged with the local authority, within a specific time frame.

The local authority must give a decision on a valid application, within eight weeks. That decision can be a refusal, a grant, a grant with special conditions or a request for additional information. Additional information must be submitted within six months. A refusal can be made at this stage or further clarification sought. The local authority planners have then five weeks to make a decision.

Planning legislation also stipulates that any third party comments or objections must be submitted within five weeks of the application lodgement date. A fee of €20 is required.

In making its decision, the local council's planners will have reference to the zoning of the area. Different zonings will have different objectives with a range of acceptable and unacceptable uses. But beware of zonings where uses state "open for consideration".

The planners will be guided by the objectives in the local council's current development plan (drawn up every 5 years). They are required to adjudicate on planning applications within its guidelines. Guidelines interpretation is often a matter for conjecture and dispute resulting in many decisions being appealed to An Board Pleanala.

Development plans also recognise areas of special interest or status, not least "conservation areas". These are deemed to have special and unique character deserving of recognition and a degree of protection. There are a number of these areas in Rathgar. Rathgar also has many individual buildings listed for protection.

Approval by a local authority of a planning application, may be appealed by a 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>

party to An Bord Pleanala. This must be done within 4 weeks of the decision and must contain all the data relating to the development. A 3<sup>rd</sup> party can not appeal a decision without having objected to the original application.

Once with An Bord Pleanala, the application is considered anew by an inspector who will adjudicate on the appeal and present it to An Bord. An Bord Pleanala is not obliged to accept the recommendations of its own inspectors. Nor is An Bord necessarily constrained by the guidelines or limitations of the local council's development plan.

An Bord Pleanala's guidelines require it to adjudicate within an 18 week period. The reality, at the moment, is that its workload has pushed out this period in many cases.

The fee for a 3<sup>rd</sup> party appeal is currently €220. That of a 1<sup>st</sup> party appeal is €660.

In addition, any interested observer may make a comment on an appeal at a cost of €50. If an original appeal is withdrawn, any observations lapse automatically. Observers are not required to have made prior submission to the local authority.

Another facet of the planning process which residents and residents' associations are faced with is the principle of "exempted development". In many cases this turns out to be seriously disruptive and divisive in neighbourhoods because of overlooking and overshadowing.

Another legacy from the 1963 planning act is the practice of granting "retention" of unauthorised developments.

These two areas of the planning laws result in a considerable number of complaints to the enforcement section of Dublin City Council. The process of enforcement is time consuming and produces, regrettably, little effective results.

Planning and development issues can affect an area in a very significant way. More often than not they may have been the catalyst for the formation of a residents' association. For a residents' association, dealing with these issues now consumes considerable resources, both in terms of money and time.

This is likely to continue to be the case. It behoves everyone to get actively involved and take a real, positive and proactive interest in improving their area, in protecting it from unacceptable developments and adverse environmental impacts.

Down the years, the Rathgar Residents' Association has become recognized as having a strong voice, not to be dismissed lightly. This is due to the determined work and efforts of its members. This must continue to be the case to ensure that the future of our area is protected.

*Philip O'Reilly, Planning Officer*

**Contact the Rathgar Residents Association Committee on local issues or to become more involved with the Association, via the website or by post to RRA PO Box No. 9574 Dublin 6.**

**Residents of Rathgar wishing to join the RRA should contact the Hon. Secretary via the above website or by post.**

## ***ENVIRONMENT MATTERS***

The quality of life of every resident of Rathgar is affected by the quality of our environment and therefore maintaining and improving our environment is of concern to everyone.

Environment covers a broad range of issues, including traffic, parking, air quality, littering, graffiti, anti-social behaviour and the state of local roads, pavements and gullies. Recycling and Bring Centres are also matters which require constant monitoring and improvement.

For most of the above, the statutory bodies charged with responsibility for dealing with problems that may arise are the various departments of Dublin City Council and An Garda Síochána.

2007 was a mixed year for the area. Green Bin collections changed from once to twice monthly, while the mix of services at Herzog Bring Centre, in the heart of the village, was reduced following representations by residents close to the Centre. It is now essentially a bottle, plastic and paper recycling centre, with other services provided at Gulistan Bring Centre in Rathmines. With the addition of wooden fence cladding recently, the appearance of the Herzog Bring Centre is also much improved.

As in the rest of Dublin, graffiti and illegal postering on lampposts has increased considerably in recent years. The RRA had some success in removing graffiti during the year, but vigilance by residents is vital. Dublin City Council and the RRA should be notified of any new occurrences. DCC can be contacted by email: [waste.management@dublincity.ie](mailto:waste.management@dublincity.ie); by post : Graffiti Removal Section, Waste Management Services, 68-71 Marrowbone Lane, Dublin 8; by telephone: DCC Customer Services 01 222 2222 or Martin Daly 01 2224254.

Anti-social behaviour has mainly consisted of juvenile drinking and some late night rowdyism, but there have been instances of more criminal activity such as the vandalism of cars at Rathdown Motors in Terenure and conmen posing as handymen preying on elderly residents. If you notice any suspicious activity, please contact Terenure Garda Station 01 - 666 6400 where Insp. Hilliard and his team will be happy to hear from you.

After the unprecedented rainfall last July and August, many Rathgar roads experienced flooding and in some cases blocked gullies, which worsened the flooding. The RRA has made strong representations to Dublin City Council and local TDs and Councillors on this issue and we expect an improvement in 2008.

Traffic flows through the village of Rathgar have increased and parking, or the lack of it, is an issue on some roads. The RRA Committee welcomes suggestions from members. The subject of underground parking, first proposed a few years ago to Dublin City Council, is back on the agenda. The RRA would also welcome the provision of more cycle lanes.

Rathgar is a beautiful residential area with many historic, protected structures. Our unique built environment must not be compromised for short-term economic interest. With almost 500 members, you, through your Residents' Association are in a strong position to influence the public policy that is shaping the area into the future.

*.Martin Joyce, RRA Committee*

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### ***Life in Rathgar; a view from two young teenagers***

#### **The Good Things about Living in Rathgar.**

I love living in Rathgar, everyone is really friendly and I recognise lots of people in and around the area.

My parents grew up here and I love hearing their stories about growing up in Rathgar.

There is a good tennis club which I am a member of. There are some good shops in the village including Worldwide Kids and Xtra-vision and The Bookshop which we all love going to and good restaurants to eat in.

The pedestrian lights really make a difference all around Rathgar. The Luas is within walking distance and the buses are near.

There is a good park close by where I love to walk my dog. I have lots of family and cousins living within walking distance which is nice. Lots of our friends live near and it is a very safe neighbourhood.

#### **The Bad Things about Living In Rathgar**

I like living in Rathgar but I have some suggestions on how the area could be improved.

There aren't very many places for teenagers to go and eat. I would suggest having somewhere like Eddie Rockets where we could sit and talk and eat! For some of the guys it would be useful for them to have somewhere to skateboard in a park. The LUAS is within walking distance but it would be better if it was a bit closer for some people. It is hard to cross between The 108 and Comans so I think it would be good to have a pedestrian crossing there. To have a cinema would also be very convenient.

Parking is very bad in Rathgar, there is nowhere to stop. It would be good to be able to park for even 15 minutes outside Spar.

## **The Villager**

*From the first school days to present ways  
the granite steps have always greeted,  
my arrival to the grass I graze;  
this throne where I'm forever seated.  
Beyond the door; the family's resting,  
while up the road, the business booming.  
All my needs in this little nesting,  
little village, so unassuming.*

*Mizzoni's chips have students stopping,  
while Coman's bar keeps elders smiling.  
The deli caters lunchtime shopping  
- our custom keeps their business thriving.  
This little village that entertains  
all its residents to dusk from dawn,  
will feed my youth into old age  
that's why I call this village home.*

*R. McSweeney*