

**Proposed 43 Unit Social Housing Development
Sycamore Avenue, Rathbane, Limerick**

Appendix A

**DESIGN & DELIVERY SERVICES
SUBMISSION RESPONSES**

Part 8 Planning Ref: 18/8007

The following are responses prepared by Design & Delivery Services on behalf of the Local Authority to various issues, themes, and concerns commonly arising across received submissions and observations:

RESPONSES TO COMMON SUBMISSION ITEMS:

Response 1.0 - Traffic Impacts:

The development which proposes the construction of 43 new social housing units at Sycamore Avenue, Rathbane envisages the provision of 76 additional parking spaces catering for new resident and visitor requirements as part of the development. Given that the level of car ownership in the social housing context can be expected to be lower than average, the quantum of additional parking spaces provided is anticipated to more than adequately service development driven demand. This is important in ensuring that the new development does not contribute an additional parking burden on the existing infrastructure. Additionally, the vast majority of new spaces are provided on-street allowing greater efficiency and flexibility by virtue of shared usage potential.

Current thinking on urban living envisages a people-first approach which aims to reduce the requirement for, and the associated impacts of, traffic on city streets and neighborhoods. Ensuring convenient access to good public transport systems is the first priority, which helps to negate the absolute necessity for car ownership. Rathbane is strategically well located with optional bus services crossing Childers Road nearby at Roxboro and Hyde Road (both less than 10 minutes walk away) and connecting into the city centre. Rathbane is also well serviced with national schools and retail facilities close by. Located less than 2km from the city centre, walking and cycling are both viable and healthier means of sustainable people movement.

Current thinking on urban road and street design centres on narrowing vehicular carriageways in order to promote lower travel speeds thus making the road environment safer for more vulnerable road user groups. While the addition of 43 residential units to Sycamore Avenue would not in itself be considered to have a detrimental impact on the carrying capacity of the existing internal road infrastructure, the issue is one of an over burdened car subscription as compared to what the infrastructure can comfortably handle. This is something that can be examined by way of parking controls however the proposed development will not contribute to the current parking constraints.

It is important to note that while the development proposes to expand the physical boundaries of (and the quantity of units located within the physical boundaries of), the existing residential development, the additional 43 units are distributed across a significantly greater quantum of space than that previously occupied by the 39 demolished units originally located within the confines of the estate boundary. The addition of the 43 units across a larger footprint therefore represents a reduction in density from that historically prevalent on the corresponding part of the site.

On the basis of the limited increase in overall unit provision, thresholds necessitating the completion of traffic studies have not been exceeded. The development proposal, having been reviewed by engineering consultants and the Local Authority Roads Department alike, has been deemed sufficient without necessity for junction improvement works.

The ancillary burden of construction stage traffic can be managed by implementation of a development-specific construction stage traffic and parking management plan to be agreed by the Local Authority. Such a plan will be developed by the contractor to minimise the impact of construction stage traffic impacts on existing access routes and infrastructure.

Response 2.0 - Open Space Provision:

The development proposes the provision of two designated zones of public open space. One is a formal / structured hard and soft landscaped area located in the footprint of the open space area initially envisaged as part of the original development. The second is an area of open green space (facilitating games purpose) located south of the proposed development. The development comprises an outward looking arrangement of residential units seeking to positively overlook all public realm areas and development boundaries. This promotes a high degree of passive surveillance inadvertently deterring anti-social behavioural activities in public zones.

A circuitous access route links with Sycamore Avenue at two locations opening up further development lands to the rear of no.s. 86 to 91. Development is strategically arranged such that the rear boundaries of all property (new and existing) are sealed / secured by way of other private open space backing up there to. The circuitous route links both public open spaces while transforming into a pedestrian prioritized shared surface area as it traverses the more formally landscaped open space zone proposed between no.s 57 and 86.

Development off Sycamore Avenue is principally proposed in areas currently lying open but historically the site of multi-storey residential accommodation demolished due to their substandard construction form. While the two areas in question principally facilitate recreational activity thereon, they are effectively inadvertent or residual open spaces and lack positive engagement with surrounding residences. In that regard, they present opportunities for illegal dumping (as frequently evidenced) and environments synonymous with anti-social behavioral activities where adjoining properties are exposed to negative attention.

The proposal seeks to provide structured public amenity spaces which are actively overlooked by building frontage thus facilitating safe community integration and play zones with a high level of active supervision in close proximity to both new and existing development.

Response 3.0 - Development Form:

The development proposal comprises a mix of two and three-storey development. Of the 43 units, 14 units are two-storey houses. These are typically located within those terraces located immediately off Sycamore Avenue and which most directly relate to the existing two-storey built context. The preceding development (now demolished) coinciding with these locations, comprised 39 units in three-storey, duplex type arrangement. At end-of-terrace node points (corners / intersections), where the public elevation needs to publicly address more than one direction, duplex type units, over three floors, are utilized to ensure that the living spaces of upper and lower units can be alternatively configured to positively overlook both directions. This ensures the elimination of blank gables and associated blind spots or secluded zones that can become susceptible to anti-social behavioral activities.

The development comprises 6 of these three-storey, duplex units (12 units in total) distributed throughout the development at node points. The remaining 17 units comprising three-storey houses are arranged within those new terraces most remote from existing dwellings. These terraces are located such as to overlook the adjoining railway line and Old Christians facilities.

While the three-storey units are located at the southern end of the development, the prevalence of existing long back gardens mitigates against overlooking and overshadowing of existing properties. The three-storey corner duplex units are also organized such that upper level habitable rooms are focused toward the public elevations. It is noteworthy that the preceding development within these principled areas was of a comparative building height and duplex make-up.

In terms of security, the development arrangement is such that the rear boundaries of all property (new and existing) are sealed / secured by way of other private open space backing up there to.

Response 4.0 - Social Atmosphere:

In response to the housing crisis currently being experienced across Ireland, but most pronounced in the larger urban centres, this development proposes the construction of 43 new social housing units comprising a variety of unit types (two and three bedroomed). Such is the need for additional social housing units, that all avenues available to the Local Authority for the provision of Social Housing are being pursued. Direct provision by means of new-build house construction is one such approach.

Arising from past experiences of constructing large, mono-tenure, social housing developments comprising hundreds of units (in excess of 1,100 units constructed at locations in both Moyross & Southill) on the periphery of the city, the Local Authority will now only consider, in very limited situations, construction of mono-tenure developments of greater than 50 units. One such scheme, comprising 81 social housing units, has recently been completed at Lord Edward Street.

The addition of 43 social housing units within the context of a large, established residential neighbourhood (circa 170 existing units at Rathbane) is not considered to represent an unsettling social factor when appropriate integration measures are incorporated.

Issues arising within the Rathbane area are linked to the nature of the existing open spaces. Illegal dumping / burning and youth congregation are prevalent particularly on the residual greens where previous units were demolished. Such areas are not well integrated within the overall development layout and their secluded nature means that their safeguarding is heavily reliant on a few immediate neighbours. Individuals can be intimidated by or fear confronting uncomfortable situations whereas community's standing together can be a powerful deterrent in stamping out unacceptable public behaviour. The adjoining redundant rail line is another secluded access / egress route past Rathbane and also a source of illegal dumping and other anti-social activity. The rail line acts a hidden conduit for under-cover access to rear gardens backing up to the rail line and the undeveloped lands to the south of Rathbane where there is further evidence of anti-social activity.

The development proposal seeks to reconcile two problematic public areas by reconfiguring their use and relationship within the overall context of the development. This will be achieved by focusing movement through both areas and ensuring a high degree of passive surveillance from adjoining units. Structured public amenity spaces actively overlooked by building frontage will facilitate community integration and safe play zones for both new and existing parts of the development. The new development is strategically configured to positively overlook the rail line and other site boundaries to provide passive monitoring of activity on this unused line. Careful consideration has been given to the elimination of cul-de-sacs as part of the design layout. Experience indicates that such layouts can be difficult to police and can generate unease among occupying residents who are unable to avail of optional means of approach and egress from their property.

Construction stage nuisance can be managed by implementation of development specific construction stage management plans agreed by the Local Authority. Waste management controls can be implemented to manage the potential impacts of dirt and debris, arising on foot of the construction activity, on the existing development. Appropriate traffic management plans can be implemented to minimise the impact of construction stage traffic on existing access routes and infrastructure. Noise monitoring controls and working time restrictions appropriate to a residential context can be implemented for management of noise related pollution.

To minimise the duration of the build programme (and construction nuisance correspondingly), a design-build construction approach is envisaged in respect of the proposed development. This strategy will allow contractors greater flexibility to adopt off-site prefabricated construction techniques which can afford greater quality control, quicker installation programmes and reduced levels of on-site activity.