

# IMAGINE DUNDRUM

## Open Meeting and Community Conversation

June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017



[www.imagedundrum.ie](http://www.imagedundrum.ie)

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## BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

Imagine Dundrum is a voluntary working group of local residents from across the wider Dundrum area, formed in early 2016 in response to the imminent redevelopment of Dundrum Village, and the County Council's proposed Local Area Plan for Dundrum.

The group is determined to promote a community-focused vision for the renewal of Dundrum's core built environment, and to work with the County Council, public representatives, the new developers and all interested local organisations, businesses and individuals, to ensure that the future Dundrum remains a place with its own unique character and heritage, where we all feel happy to live, work and belong.

*This report is a record of Imagine Dundrum's first public meeting, which had two main aims: to introduce the group and its thinking to a wider audience than previously, and to gather the views and ideas of as many local residents as possible, by means of a 'community conversation' – small group discussions organised around three key questions, which formed the second part of the programme for the meeting.*

*Two guest speakers were invited to contribute to the evening: Des Keogh, a well-known and much-loved actor and broadcaster living in Dundrum, and Professor Mary Corcoran of Maynooth, known for her sociological studies of Irish suburban life. Members of the Imagine Dundrum group presented: the work of the group to date; the history of Dundrum; fundamental design principles for the new Dundrum; and illustrative drawings showing how these principles might be implemented in the new development.*

*Attendance at the meeting exceeded expectations, with around 160 participants freely contributing their ideas and concerns for Dundrum. This report summarises the results of their conversations, and will be widely disseminated as a reference document, and as a strong statement of local feeling – both hopeful and apprehensive - about the future of our home place, and of the needs and wishes of the local population.*

***This large gathering of local people gave their strong support to Imagine Dundrum's proposals, welcoming the possibilities involved in the new development, and agreeing on the need for a proper balance between residential, commercial and civic elements. They agreed that the newly-built Dundrum must respect and reflect the heritage of the historic Village, and be a fully 'connected' physical environment supporting pedestrians and cyclists and linking to public transport. Further, it should provide a focus for strengthening civic and community life, and demonstrate best practice in environmentally sustainable development.***

***The meeting called on the developer, Hammerson, and Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to engage actively with the local community to ensure that plans for future development in Dundrum will reflect community needs and wishes and so can aspire to local community support.***

***Thanks*** are due to Taney Parish for its ongoing support and for the use of its main hall for the meeting; our two guest speakers; facilitator Winifred Jeffers, who oversaw the group discussion process; photographer Terry Haughton; and the whole team of hardworking Imagine Dundrum members and volunteer helpers who made the event such a success. And of course the enthusiastic and participative audience, who provided food for thought and much of the material for this report.

## **Introduction to the meeting**

On behalf of Imagine Dundrum, Anne Colgan welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced the members of the Imagine Dundrum group, and outlined the evening's programme and its purpose.

### **The context**

Anne explained that the context for the meeting was the imminent redevelopment of Dundrum Village, following the acquisition in 2016 of the old Shopping Centre site and adjoining land by UK-based developers Hammerson, who also purchased the existing 'Dundrum Town Centre' and several other Dublin retail centres as part of "Project Jewel", in partnership with Allianz Insurance.

She stressed that what is now at stake is the fate and future of a historic village which is both a local community hub and in many ways a 'heartland' for people over a much broader area of South Dublin. The development will not take place on a greenfield site, but the heart of a unique built environment, which, despite recent neglect, means a great deal to local people, and which is the focal point of a substantial settled community. So this is not a matter of designing buildings, but of significantly shaping a community – a task made even more important and sensitive by the likelihood that housing will form a significant proportion of the new development.

Whereas the previous developer's 2007/08 plans for large-scale retail expansion in Dundrum Village were inappropriate in style and scale, there is an opportunity now to create a truly attractive, welcoming and thriving place, with successful independent businesses and housing for all generations, which will remain uniquely and recognisably Dundrum, and environment which will strengthen, rather than diminish, the strong sense of place and community that already exists.

To this end, one of the hopes and aims of Imagine Dundrum is to see substantial public space created in the new development, and a new civic building which will be at the heart of community life.

### **The work of Imagine Dundrum to date**

Wendy Cox, of the Imagine Dundrum group, gave a rapid overview of the group's activities and progress to date.

Most recently, the group were proud of the fact that the Imagine Dundrum website had gone live at [www.imaginedundrum.ie](http://www.imaginedundrum.ie), and all those attending the meeting were urged to seek further information there.

The group came about when a number of local individuals came together to share their concerns about the potentially huge changes coming to Dundrum, which – for good or ill – will shape the village environment and impact on local people for generations to come. Adopting the name 'Imagine Dundrum', the group decided to work together pro-actively to shape a response to the impending redevelopment, and to ensure that a strong community voice was heard in the forthcoming planning processes.

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**Information:** Initially the group undertook research and discussion, developing its ideas about the future of Dundrum in the context of the current planning frameworks, and then produced a series of documents for information and communication:

- an explanatory leaflet;
- a Vision Statement linking Imagine Dundrum's thinking to that underlying the DLR County Development Plan 2016-22;
- a discussion document on the concept of a new civic/ community/ cultural centre for Dundrum;
- a list of fundamental design principles for the redevelopment of the Village area;
- a set of illustrative architectural drawings to accompany them.

**Making connections and building support locally:** the group made contact at an early stage, first with County Councillors and relevant County Planning officials, and later with the three constituency TDs. In summer 2016 they met with representatives from a wide range of local residents' associations, resulting in an information/ communication network, which continues to expand.

In 2017, Imagine Dundrum invited representatives of local businesses, churches, and other significant locally-based organisations to a meeting to exchange information and view. In addition, a number of expert individuals provided invaluable information and advice. So by mid-2017, Imagine Dundrum was well grounded in the local community, and ready to extend its reach and support base further through its new website and the planned public meeting.

**Engaging with the developers:** this was seen as a priority and in autumn 2016, initial contact was made with Hammerson's new MD for Ireland, Simon Betty. In early 2017 three members of the group had an introductory meeting with Ed Dobbs, Development Manager for Dundrum. Subsequently Imagine Dundrum was invited to the Dublin launch of Hammerson's new sustainability strategy, *Becoming Net Positive*. The documentation accompanying this launch emphasises Hammerson's commitment to local communities and to consultation with them, and so it is hoped that this will be followed through as their concept plans for Dundrum (now being developed by UK architects Faulkner Brown) evolve.

**Illuminating Dundrum's past and present:** at the time of the June meeting, group members had begun preparing materials on the history of Dundrum village and on the current population profile of Dundrum and its environs, and were hoping to be able to present these to Hammerson at a more substantial meeting in the relatively near future.

**Most recently, Imagine Dundrum held discussions with local Councillors and approached the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Manager and Chief Planner on two important matters: first, seeking – in the absence of a Local Area Plan for Dundrum – a 'master plan' or updated urban design framework to guide all new development; and, second, proposals to preserve the integrity of the village area by designation as an Architectural Conservation Area. They also highlighted the need for a civic and community centre in the heart of the new Dundrum.**

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## Why We Love Dundrum: a Citizen's Reflections

### Des Keogh

*Des Keogh is an Irish actor with a long and distinguished career on stage, film, television and radio. One of his best-loved radio programmes was the long-running 'Music for Middlebrows'. He and his wife, distinguished violinist Geraldine O'Grady, have lived in Dundrum for 50 years.*

*He won rousing applause at the open meeting for this short speech.*

My wife Geraldine and I have been living in the Dundrum area for fifty years. We bought our bungalow in Highfield Park in 1967 and, though we have since travelled widely, we have never for a moment wanted to live anywhere else. Dundrum is Home and to us it will always be 'The Village'. There have, of course, been many changes over the years, as reflected in a poem I came across in a lovely book called *Gateway to the Mountains* with text by Christopher Ryan and paintings by Olivia Hayes. This poem was penned by an unnamed village resident in the early 1980s-

*O Dundrum, how I love you, but you make me sad inside,  
As I walk from Uncle Tom's Cabin on the road to Stepside.  
It's the rail bridge gone for ever  
It's the sound of the old steam train,  
It's the wave from the driver and fireman,  
That has caused this terrible pain.*

*O Dundrum, how I love you - you are getting very old,  
Your graveyard on the Churchtown Road is now completely closed.  
The sloping hills where our dear ones sleep,  
The river Slang running by their feet,  
The rising sun- the wind- the sleet,  
No more shall rouse them from their immortal sleep.*

The above is a little sad perhaps because tonight is not a night for sadness or for dwelling on days gone by. Rather is it a night for hope, enthusiasm and looking forward. There are bright days ahead and we can make a difference with the inspired leadership of 'Imagine Dundrum'.

I have had the temerity to add an extra verse to the poem just quoted-

*O Dundrum, how I love you - I've been here fifty years,  
And gradually I've seen you change and shed a few salt tears,  
But now, my fellow-villagers, let us join in this refrain:  
May Dundrum, our long-time home, become  
**A Village Once Again!***

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## Urban Design: What makes a good place to live?

### Professor Mary P. Corcoran, University of Maynooth

*Mary Corcoran is Professor and Head of Department of Sociology at Maynooth University, with research interests primarily in urban sociology, public culture and the sociology of migration. A former Taoiseach's nominee to the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF), she serves as a member of the Local Community Development Committee, South Dublin County Council, and is a member and vice-chairperson of the Board of the Childhood Development Initiative. She lives in South Dublin.*

Professor Corcoran first congratulated the Imagine Dundrum group on their initiative in responding to the imminent redevelopment of Dundrum village, and their aim of ensuring that the community's voice is heard in the planning process. She saw this as a contrast with 2007/08, when local people felt at a loss in the face of the previous developer's inappropriate plans for Dundrum village.

Her contribution to the discussion was based on her sociological research on life in Irish suburban settings, the 'middle landscape' which is neither city nor country, but where so many people actually live nowadays. A survey she and colleagues carried out, which resulted in a book, *Suburban Affiliations: social relations in the Greater Dublin area (2010)*, involved over 800 survey interviews and many focus groups with residents of Leixlip, Lucan, Ratoath in County Meath (for some time the fastest growing village in Leinster), and the new Mullingar estates to which many Dublin-based workers and their families had moved. Key findings of this research were:

- Residents of these new suburbs, even after a short time living there, had developed a strong sense of place, and of belonging. Where there was a surviving older local village area, they saw this as the centre of their area, and valued its specific history and character.
- They had high levels of 'social capital', including well-developed relationships with neighbours and friends. In most cases they could name 5 or 6 individuals who could be relied on for help in an emergency.
- There was strong civic and social engagement among those surveyed: for instance, 48% of residents surveyed in Leixlip were members of a local organisation of some kind (the GAA and residents associations featured strongly).

The overall conclusion from this study and others was that the Irish suburban places which are judged good to live in are those where people have a real sense of *belonging*. This is not the traditional belonging of being born and living all one's life in a place, but an 'elective belonging', which involves people putting time and effort into the life of their community, and in turn benefiting from that community's strength and support.

Dundrum, as an older suburb, mostly developed from the 1960s onward, shares the same social characteristics and inter-connectedness of these newer suburbs, and also has the advantages of fast transport links to the city centre and ease of access to the Dublin Mountains.

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Looking at Dundrum with these research studies in mind suggests, first, that local people's strong sense of belonging to Dundrum is a powerful motivating factor for the current campaign, and, second, that the value they put on the specific physical identity of its old buildings and streetscape fuels their determination to protect the historic Village area.

In conclusion, Professor Corcoran praised the campaign's model of community-led 're-imagining' of Dundrum, and urged Imagine Dundrum to respond to the increasing diversity of the local population by ensuring its proposals are inclusive of such groups as people with disabilities, 'new communities', and the new variety of family and household types.

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## Imagine Dundrum presentations

### 1. Valuing our Village heritage – John Lennon

John Lennon, a local historian with an incomparable knowledge of the area and its inhabitants over centuries, gave a short illustrated talk outlining the history of Dundrum from medieval times, with an emphasis on how the village of today was shaped in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with the coming of the railway and the development of local industries.

His maps and historic photographs emphasised the continuity of Dundrum as a physical place since that time, and highlighted the mainly Victorian village streetscape still prominent today, which – with its schools, churches, shops and services, is the much-loved environment and visual context for the lives of so many local citizens.

He concluded by asking the developers to honour Dundrum's heritage, and be aware that what they build now will shape the lives of its inhabitants for generations to come

*[A longer version of John's talk, with illustrations, will be published in autumn 2017.]*

### 2. Principles for the new development – Wendy Cox

Wendy outlined the seven fundamental design and principles developed by Imagine Dundrum, which resonate with those in the *DLR County Development Plan 2016-2022 Chapter*. Imagine Dundrum has a vision of a future Dundrum as

***An authentic and recognisable place, reflecting its unique history and heritage, and a place which is thriving, attractive and recognisable for all in the local community, those who work here, and our many visitors.***

To achieve this, Imagine Dundrum wants to see:

- **A thriving Dundrum Main Street**, that respects the character and streetscape of the Old Main Street, the local historical and cultural landmarks, and maintains a style and scale of building in tune with the character of the Village.
- **A proper balance between residential, commercial and public/civic spaces**, both on the Main Street and in the overall development, restoring the original qualities of Dundrum Village.
- As an integral part of Dundrum's redevelopment, **a substantial public focal point providing for cultural, community and civic uses**, which will strengthen community life and ensure its sustainability.
- **A connected environment** with easy movement between its different parts, offering open and green areas, clear walking and cycle routes, reduced traffic movements, and smooth links to public transport.
- **A Village where small and medium-sized local, independent businesses are encouraged and provided for**, to ensure authenticity in the commercial landscape, and a thriving day and evening social and commercial community.
- **A Dundrum Village that is inclusive, open and accessible to all**, including older people, children and young people, people with disabilities and the widest range of residents and visitors. *AND*
- **A sustainable, future proofed Village** showcasing the highest environmental and energy efficient standards in its design, construction and maintenance.

### **3. Possibilities for the future – Eamon Regan**

Eamon presented some of the architectural drawings he had produced for Imagine Dundrum, and explained how they illustrate some of these principles

They included:

- (a) a drawing of a new civic plaza (roughly where the old Shopping Centre is now) opening onto the Main Street and with a civic/ community building as a focal point;
- (b) a view of the redeveloped West side of the Main Street featuring a modest building height, with shops at street level and housing units over them ('living over the shop');
- (c) a cross-section of the whole development, showing the low-rise Main Street at one side, with height gradually increasing to finally match other buildings adjoining the bypass;
- (d) an overview of the whole site at first floor level, showing an innovative park built over the bypass and linking to Sweetmount Park;
- (e) a view of a housing court inside the development; and
- (f) a possible design for facades of the Main Street shops/ housing.

He pointed out the principle in all these designs of 'low-rise, high density', which can allow for a considerable amount of innovative housing (built to good environmental standards, and including 'green roofs'), to be incorporated into the new development. There would therefore be no need for inappropriate and 'alien' high rise buildings in styles unrelated to the existing strong architectural character of Dundrum Village.

*[The first two drawings are reproduced at the end of the report. The full set can be found on the Imagine Dundrum website.]*

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## **Findings from the Community Conversations (1)**

### ***Why is Dundrum important to you?***

This was the first question the small groups were asked to discuss, and it was deliberately a very open question. Approximately 70 responses were recorded, and the main themes that emerged are listed below in order of frequency, and with a selection of quotations (exactly as recorded) to illustrate each theme:

#### **1. Local people have a strong and personal sense of attachment to Dundrum: “it’s our home town!”.**

The largest number of responses to this question linked the participant’s personal history to Dundrum itself in a very positive way, often describing strong family connections and the importance of place in individual’s life histories.

- I was born, bred, educated, fed and entertained in Dundrum – we owe it!
- I grew up here, my parents, siblings, nieces and nephews are all here
- I was married here
- We live here, and so do our children and grandchildren
- It’s our home. It’s beautiful!

#### **2. Dundrum is seen by locals as a special place, a village with a unique history and character, especially in its buildings: ‘Keep our village!’.**

Many comments simply stressed the need to retain the village scale and ‘feel’, while other contributions named more specific aspects of Dundrum which are valued:

- Keep the spirit of Dundrum!
- There’s a lovely village feel – keep it!
- Its unique and historic character – we love it!
- It’s open, not enclosed by big buildings
- We love the small shops and the village streetscape
- We like the library, cottages, and heritage houses

Some see it as still a living, thriving community:

- People live and work there, and run small businesses there

However, others commented on what has been lost from the core village over the last 10 years, mentioning the disappearance of the bookshop, the hardware store, the veterinary practice, and the much smaller number of people living on the Main Street:

- There are now a lot of vacancies and a lack of diversity of shops and uses
- The Main Street seems like a place to pass through, drive through rather

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### **3. Dundrum is important to local people because of its good or excellent facilities, which are easy to access.**

There was a range of enthusiastic contributions, covering both specific and general aspects of Dundrum and its immediate surroundings:

#### *General*

- Walkability and ease of access to everything
- Variety of community services and facilities available
- Family friendly area

#### *Specifics*

- We love our churches and our schools
- Good educational facilities
- Availability of work
- Airfield Farm – we love it!
- Our library
- Good (public) transport links – the Luas
- Good local businesses

However, there was also one comment pointing out a major gap:

- No sports fields or children's playgrounds

### **4. Dundrum is perceived and valued as a community by those who live here: “[it has] a sense of place and community”.**

Almost all the comments on the theme of community, illuminated the different ways in which people currently feel a positive sense of belonging:

- A welcoming atmosphere
- A sense of place and community
- The community spirit and cooperation
- It's a living community
- 'A sense of community - knowing the builder, the baker etc.
- We come to Dundrum Village to meet our friends and neighbours

However, one or two reflected on a weakened sense of community in recent years:

- Historically the Main Street was a liveable community with families

### **5. Dundrum is important as a hub or 'heartland': “It's 'town' to all the surrounding suburbs”.**

Several people commented positively on this aspect of Dundrum :

- Dundrum connects all the estates around it
- It's a focal point [for the wider area] and integrates the area
- It's a hub connecting us all – we need to strengthen that!
- It's where we come ...to meet friends and do our business
- It's the focus for the hinterland, and for Churchtown, Ballinteer and Kilmacud

**6. Finally, local people clearly value and enjoy Dundrum's location.**

- It's a gateway to the mountains and the sea
- Easy access to the city centre and to the mountains
- It's near the mountains, light and airy

**Other contributions:**

A small number of responses to the question, 'Why is Dundrum important to you?' did not fit the above categories but were interesting because they reflected differing views on recent changes, and a mix of anxiety and hope about what will happen next.

- I like the positive changes (Luas, 'Town Centre')
- Dundrum has positively absorbed change
- [The changes have given me] work-life balance

On the other hand:

- [We've experienced] the death of the Main Street

**Looking forward:**

- **Memories of Dundrum as it was, and hopes for what it could be**
- **We need planning for a good future for our area**

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## **Findings from the Community Conversations (2)**

### ***Dundrum now: issues and things that need to change***

Just over 80 responses were recorded. After responding to Q 1 by explaining what they appreciated about Dundrum, participants now focused on day-to-day problems, many of them to do with navigating the area, particularly as a pedestrian.

Many contributors expressed disappointment about the recent deterioration of the Main Street, but also showed a clear sense of how improvements in the public realm, and provision of a good mix of housing and other uses in the new development, could restore the village area to its former vibrant self, as a “destination in its own right”.

Five main themes emerged, covering a wide range of issues, and are outlined below with illustrative quotations (exactly as recorded).

#### **1. Traffic and parking issues in general: “Too much traffic!”**

This was a major issue for many people, and similar sentiments were expressed in many of the comments made:

- Too much traffic already – don’t build more retail!
- Traffic causes difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists
- It’s not pedestrian-friendly
- Poor [provision of] pedestrian crossings
- Traffic problems are constant round Dundrum Town Centre, especially Xmas & sale times
- Lack of parking for workers there (DTC) causes problems across a wide area

However, when comments touched on the issue of possible pedestrianisation of the Main Street, there was no unanimity, with some participants strongly in favour, others equally strongly opposed! (NB the Council has no plans at present for pedestrianisation.)

#### **2. The look of Dundrum now: “the Main Street looks neglected”.**

A variety of comments expressed the feelings of many local people at the way the environment of the Main Street has been allowed to deteriorate over the last decade (over a period when the new Dundrum Town Centre has been yielding substantial revenues for DLR County, as several pointed out!). Some implied regret at lax planning in the past, compounding problems of visual incoherence by allowing new buildings to be set well back from the Main Street – including the Old Shopping Centre and Permanent TSB – so that car parks are effectively part of the streetscape.

- The Main Street looks neglected
- Are the old buildings being deliberately left to decay?
- Empty units on the Main Street
- Horrible plastic signs on beautiful historic buildings
- The village area is untidy, it’s not well maintained, and doesn’t look good for visitors on their way to the DTC

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- The visual dominance of the old Shopping Centre and its car park
- The entrance to Dundrum [ i.e. area round the Luas bridge] is very poor– this needs to be reconfigured and beautified
- Landscaping around Dundrum is abysmal, compared to other parts of DLR County

### **3. A poor pedestrian experience: “Dundrum is fragmented by roads with busy traffic.”**

As described in previous comments, heavy traffic along many roads in Dundrum, along with the poor look and ‘feel’ of the village area, both contribute to the poor pedestrian experience noted by several participants.

A further significant dimension, mentioned by several participants, is the **physical fragmentation of the whole area**, where busy roads with inadequate crossing places separate parts of Dundrum from other parts near by. In places, the pedestrian crossings provided seriously disadvantage pedestrians in order to prioritise the movement of motor traffic.

- Dundrum is fragmented by roads with busy traffic
- The roads are busy, and hard to cross
- The bypass cuts off / ‘dissects’ the Sweetmount area and the library
- The area under the Luas bridge is ‘a dead space’, ‘hostile’ to pedestrians
- The Main Street is lacking in life, just a corridor or highway to the DTC
- There’s a lack of adequate footpaths, and no seating anywhere
- We need pedestrian walkways linking all the different parts of Dundrum

### **4. What’s missing from Dundrum now? A great deal!**

A great variety of contributions add up to a fairly comprehensive list of what is lacking in Dundrum now. In specifying these items, participants contributed practical ideas for improvements, mainly in the public realm, some of which would fill gaps in the provision of amenities, while others would provide a strong social and civic focus to the locality (and hence a stronger and more sustainable community).

- Lack of cycling facilities
- No park or playground
- No mature trees on the Main Street
- No-one living in the centre of the village - it’s dead at night
- No-one ‘living over the shop’
- No central place to meet, indoors or out
- Nowhere to hang out
- No Health Centre in the centre of the village (lots of older people and young families here)
- No hotel
- No cafes with outdoor seating on Main Street
- No local shops (*missing shops listed: hardware, bookshop, haberdashery...*)
- No public space with seating
- No civic or community space

## **5. Housing issues: lack of diversity; inappropriate high-rise apartments.**

The comments recorded here covered two separate but linked themes: (a) lack of housing options, the other (b) disrespect for the local character and heritage of Dundrum, evidenced by the apparent ease with which inappropriate tall apartment blocks have been allowed close to the core area of Dundrum Village.

### *Lack of housing options:*

- Not enough family homes here, too many apartments
- Housing here is too expensive
- No-one is living above the shop
- Lack of diversity of housing types/ lack of options: one- and two-bed dwellings needed for older people

### *Inappropriate high-rise apartment building around the village area:*

- Developers have been allowed to build high rise apartment blocks all around the area
- Is there a limit to high rise development?
- We need better planning regulations [to restrict high-rise development near the village]

## **6. Other comments**

One person commented that **high rents** were resulting in the closing of small shops and businesses.

Another felt the village area lacks the feel of a '**destination in its own right**' which it could and should be.

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## Findings from the Community Conversations (3)

### *Dundrum in the future: what would make it a really great place to live?*

This third question produced more responses in total than either of the other two, and many of them were more complex, combining different aspects of the desirable future Dundrum to sketch a picture of a whole, rather than listing individual items or issues. As a result, it was harder to quantify the proportions of comments on different themes. While most comments are grouped below according to their main theme (in descending order of frequency), a number have been gathered into a 'general' category which is described in Section 1 below.

In many respects, the responses mirrored the problems listed in the comments on the previous question. For example, where a poor pedestrian experience was highlighted in answer to Q 2, elements of design to rectify this were outlined here. And ideas for the future transformation of the Main Street followed logically from the specific matters listed as the most negative aspects of its present state.

NB While most responses concentrated just on the Main Street and old Shopping Centre site, or the potential civic/ community/ cultural centre in the new development, others referred to a wider area, including the Dundrum Town Centre, Ballally Luas station etc. For this exercise, 'Dundrum' was not defined too narrowly, to encourage comments on the wider area and not just the redevelopment site and Main Street.

### **1. Imagining a future Dundrum village area, redeveloped but still recognisably itself, and successful integrating old and new.**

One person's comment summed up a shared feeling that Dundrum must continue to be itself, even though in a new form. Despite the danger of the wrong outcome, Dundrum has the potential to

***"return to being a real place people want to come to, not an artificial, commercial, high-rise, anonymous place, but somewhere green and nature-filled... A place to linger, rest, and relax. It can be vibrant and alive in its own right, not a has-been, random street."***

Hopes for the future Dundrum included:

- Put the heart back into Dundrum!
- Dundrum should be alive!
- It can be a flagship village with a green economy
- Preserve Dundrum's history and keep the character and scale of the village
- Citizen input into the design
- Unique, good architecture, attractive buildings, local materials
- Public spaces well maintained
- All areas connected
- An improved civic and social focus
- Make [it] a place in its own right, not a second Dundrum Town Centre!

## **2. Main Street – at the heart of the village**

Many contributions concerned Dundrum's Main Street, and there was strong agreement on the need to revivify it, while not destroying its unique character:

- Bring life back to the street
- [Dundrum needs] people living on the street
- Keep the village 'feel'
- Link the pedestrians and the businesses on the street
- Keep the integrity of the street
- Create a continuous and more diverse streetscape, filling the gap where the old Shopping Centre car park is
- Rehabilitate the area between the church and the (Barton Road junction) roundabout

Imagining what the Main Street could be, people suggested:

- A pretty Main Street with cafes, independent shops, outdoor seating
- The greening of the Main Street!
- Mature trees all along the street
- Reduce or eliminate traffic; minimise through traffic
- Take down all the ugly shop fronts and restore the old houses
- Traditional shop fronts
- Wider footpaths
- More refuse bins

## **3. Shopping on the Main Street and in the new development**

The ideal expressed by many contributors was for a variety of small-scale, local businesses, including specialised and artisan-based shops as well as those providing practical necessities:

- Bespoke small businesses
- Small artisan shops, not just multiples
- Encourage local businesses
- 'Proper shops', practical shops, not just coffee shops and clothes boutiques.
- Hardware, greengrocers, haberdashery,

## **4. Getting around – thoughts on traffic, walking, cycling**

In general, the hope was for a fresh and properly planned approach to moving around in Dundrum, which would prioritise walking and cycling, and plan for a major reduction in car parking in the village core:

- A coherent traffic plan
- A people-friendly, pedestrian-friendly place
- A focus on cycling and walking
- Off-street parking; underground parking; accessible parking

But when it came to specific suggestions, there could be opposing views:

- High-level walkways linking parts of Dundrum, to help people move around
- Underground connecting walkways

- Pedestrianise the village!
- Don't pedestrianise it – local businesses will suffer

## **5. Facilities for children and young people; sports facilities**

It was widely recognised that children's and young people's needs are not catered for in Dundrum at present, and that, in an area with so many young families, this major lack must be addressed. There were many suggestions:

- Children need a playground
- A skate park
- Youth café (with pool tables)
- Safe facilities for teenagers
- Space for sports
- Outdoor gym/ exercise equipment
- Outdoor table tennis

## **6. Housing**

There was considerable agreement that providing new housing in Dundrum would in itself substantially rejuvenate the Village area, as long as it was affordable housing mainly intended for families and older people:

- Bring residents back into the village, especially families!
- A village buzz, with people living there.
- A range of accommodation, suitable for all ages including older people
- 2 storey housing for families, not just high-rise apartments
- Affordable housing and inclusivity
- A balance between living and business

## **7. Environmental sustainability and 'future-proofing'**

The opportunities provided by such a major development, at a time when (unlike 2007/8) environmentally-aware and sustainable building technologies are becoming mainstream, were emphasised by several contributors:

- Dundrum could be a flagship green development
- Future-proof Dundrum; respond to environmental concerns
- [let's have] green energy, a local energy co-op
- Solar energy, selling electricity back to the grid

Many wanted a substantial planting programme to bring natural greenery back into the village:

- Trees, green spaces
- Trees please, and green rooftops
- Landscaping, green rooftops

## **8. Arts, culture and creativity**

The population of Dundrum now has the potential to support creativity in a range of arts and crafts, and would appreciate a museum of local history to local people could donate objects and documents about life in Dundrum many years ago:

- An exhibition space
- A crafts courtyard
- Something like Design Yard idea
- Street art (DLR County Council has funding for public art)
- A museum of local history or a heritage centre
- Commission music for the outdoor plaza

## **9. Public/ communal space**

It was widely recognised that Dundrum has to date lacked open spaces and public seating, so the new development is the perfect opportunity to provide them, and create a much more enjoyable built environment which will strengthen social interaction:

- We need communal space, indoors as well as outdoors
- A central plaza which would be a meeting place
- A large open plaza for markets etc
- Somewhere just to sit, breathe, relax, linger
- A civic space with seats, playgrounds, market place...
- A bandstand (for music) and seating
- An off-street community area with trees, seats, a fountain – visually interesting and safe.

## **10. A purpose-built civic and community centre**

There was near-unanimous support for the demand for a new civic and community centre, which could also house cultural activities, in the new Dundrum.

- Dundrum badly needs a civic and cultural centre
- We need a proper civic centre, belonging to the community
- A proper civic centre and community spaces
- A civic/ community space as the focal point of the new development
- We need significant public space for cultural and family activities

And, since much of this would have to be funded by the County Council, there was a practical suggestion, based on the strong case for a re-allocation of Council resources:

- Use the revenue from Dundrum Town Centre!

### **Other possibilities:**

- A kindergarten or small school – there's a growing population of small children in the area
- A hotel - a 'bijou' hotel with garden courtyard, catering for business travel, wedding receptions after local church ceremony, small conferences, and visitors to local residents
- A new library
- A grandstand/ bandstand with uses such as outdoor music, dancing and choirs at the annual Dundrum Festival

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## Conclusion

### Closing remarks

Drawing the meeting to a close, Anne Colgan thanked participants for coming in such large numbers, and for contributing so enthusiastically to the conversation. The two main aims of the evening – raising awareness about the changes coming to Dundrum, and listening to the views and concerns of local people – had both been achieved, and the event had demonstrated the huge value local people place on their village, past and present, and their strong commitment to securing the best possible future for it.

The meeting had produced a rich collection of ideas and views about the future, which were a major contribution to the campaign's project of imagining the future Dundrum together as a community, and of advocating for that future. And she was confident that these ideas, and the demonstrable strength of local involvement, will have significant influence on all those who will be making decisions about the future of Dundrum.

### Next steps

Looking forward, Anne outlined how the campaign planned to build on the outcomes of the meeting, starting straightaway with a request to everyone present to sign a statement of support for Imagine Dundrum's 7 principles (*see p.9 above*) as a means of providing concrete evidence of local support.

Once the report of the meeting is complete, Imagine Dundrum intends to send copies to all participants, as well as to a wide range of contacts, including local representatives, Council officials, and the developer.

Further ahead, a critical point in the process will arise when Hammerson lodges its formal planning application for the development of the village site. Whether or not the proposals meet Imagine Dundrum's expectations, the group plans to respond quickly in the limited time allowed. As a priority, another open meeting will be called, to scrutinise the proposals together and prepare a response rooted in the views of the community.

Finally, Anne warmly thanked everyone involved in planning and running the meeting, and most of all the participants themselves, who had made it such a success.

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### General conclusions

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the outcomes of the Open Meeting:

- The high attendance proved the **strength of local feeling and commitment** to the future of Dundrum village.
- The strong endorsement by the meeting of the **principles and ideas put forward by Imagine Dundrum** gives validity to its campaign and ways of working.
- Contributions to the discussion showed a **strong sense of attachment to Dundrum Village as a special place**, with its own specific history and many social and family bonds and networks, as well as an appreciation of what is good about the village even now (ease of access, closeness to the mountains, transport links).

*Imagine Dundrum: report of Open Meeting, June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017*

- There was also a keen **perception of Dundrum as the important second major centre for the whole County**, as well as of the way Dundrum Village functions as the ‘heartland’ and ‘hub’ for people across a wide surrounding area.
- This sense of belonging to a home place that really matters, and has the potential to be a really great living and working environment, fuels the determination of many participants to ensure that **the forthcoming redevelopment should not be allowed to obliterate Dundrum’s unique character**.
- While concern and a sense of loss were expressed about its present neglected overall state there were also many positive and practical suggestions offered for **restoring the Main Street to full thriving commercial and social life**.
- Other negative aspects which received considerable attention were the current **physical fragmentation of the Village**, especially by busy road junctions, and the **poor experience of pedestrians and cyclists**. Resolving these requires an overall plan to restore connectedness, while prioritising movement on foot and by bike as part of a coherent traffic management strategy.
- There was considerable agreement among participants on **what is missing in Dundrum at present, and what could and should be provided within a redeveloped Village**, for which the developer and the County Council both have responsibility: small independent businesses including artisan shops; facilities for children, young people and families; meeting spaces; places to sit and just ‘belong’; green space and generous landscaping; spaces for art and culture; and affordable housing for all generations. All will contribute to **a strengthened and sustainable local community**.
- Contributions confirmed the importance of developing the new Dundrum with **environmental sustainability** – ‘future-proofing’ Dundrum – **as a touchstone for all aspects of the design and building process**.
- Finally, many participants called for a **centrally-placed civic and community centre for Dundrum**, thus strongly endorsing Imagine Dundrum’s own proposal. Such a centre would reflect Dundrum’s status as the second major centre of the County, and its role as the natural heart of the large and growing area around it.

***It’s our home town – it’s beautiful.***

***There’s a lovely village feel – keep it!***

***Put the heart back into Dundrum!***

***It can be a flagship village, with a green economy.***

***It has the potential to return to being a real place people want to come to...vibrant and alive in its own right.***

**Appendix 1: OPEN MEETING PROGRAMME**

***WELCOME TO A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION!***

- **Welcome and introductions; purpose & plan for the meeting** Anne Colgan
- **Imagine Dundrum's work to date** Wendy Cox
- **Setting the scene for our conversation:**
  - \* *Why we love Dundrum: a citizen's reflections* Mr Des Keogh
  - \* *Urban design: what makes a good place to live?* Prof. Mary P. Corcoran
  - \* *Valuing our Village heritage* John Lennon
  - \* *Principles and possibilities for the future* Wendy Cox and Eamon Regan

10 minute break

- **Introducing the conversation: Future Dundrum - views, ideas and dreams**  
Facilitator: Winifred Jeffers
- **Questions**
  1. *Why is Dundrum important to you?*
  2. *Name one thing about the way Dundrum is NOW that bothers you, and that you wish was different.*
  3. *Imagine the Dundrum of the FUTURE, and name one or two things that would make it a really great place to live.*
- **Feedback from conversations**
- **Open discussion** Imagine Dundrum group
- **Next steps, and close of meeting** Anne Colgan

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**Appendix 2: IDEAS FOR DUNDRUM'S FUTURE: ILLUSTRATIVE DRAWINGS**



**(1) Main Street, looking South (with existing buildings on left)**



**(2) 'Market Square opening onto Main Street, with a new civic/community/ cultural building as its focal point**

*The full set of illustrative drawings is on the website [www.imaginedundrum.ie](http://www.imaginedundrum.ie)*

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**Appendix 3: SNAPSHOTS FROM THE OPEN MEETING**



*The hall is full as the meeting gets under way*



*Applause for the opening presentations*

*Imagine Dundrum: report of Open Meeting, June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017*



*Small group conversations – the heart of the meeting*



*An attentive audience as the meeting concludes*

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