

Chairperson's Report to AGM 2023

February 2022 to February 2023

2022: An overview

The past year was Imagine Dundrum's seventh year working for the best possible future for Dundrum Village and one of its busiest years. The Group came together in 2016, in the belief that it was timely and essential that an active local group would work for a new vision for our urban village of Dundrum and its future, in the light of imminent redevelopment and to pursue the provision of a new modern library and Civic Centre for Dundrum.

Our core value has been and continues to be the belief that local people must have a voice in what happens to their community, and a say in shaping its future. The past year has challenged the community of Dundrum, and the community has responded.

The Hammerson-Allianz planning application absorbed much of the effort and energy of Imagine Dundrum for a significant part of the year, and that work is outlined below. Imagine Dundrum also engaged in a range of activities to improve the fabric of the Village and enhance the quality of the local environment.

Eleven meetings of the full group were held in 2022, along with an extensive series of meetings of sub-groups working on specific projects.

The Hammerson-Allianz Planning Application

In October 2021, Hammerson-Allianz announced its intention to apply for 884 apartments on the site of the Old Shopping Centre, Dundrum Village. That announcement prompted Imagine Dundrum's intensive work on the Planning Application, which continued until the Imagine Dundrum submission to An Bord Pleanála was lodged in May 2022.

The initial Opinion of An Bord Pleanála following pre-planning meetings with Hammerson-Allianz was published in January 2022, and with it the reports and recommendations of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Council planners on the pre-planning submissions from Hammerson-Allianz. What did they say? These documents were studied in detail by Imagine Dundrum. Imagine Dundrum was hugely dismayed and shocked by the content of the Planning Application and its implications for Dundrum Village. It was immediately clear that the local community must be fully informed of what was proposed.

Imagine Dundrum decided that a professional planner would be required in order to scrutinise the formal planning application as soon as it was lodged, and to assist and support the group in making their formal observations to An Bord Pleanála on the Planning Application in the most robust and well-argued way. A sub-committee was formed to engage a planning consultant, and to lead the engagement with the person selected through the process. Brendan Buck, Planning Consultant, was proposed by the sub-committee and approved by the group.

In the five weeks following the lodging of the formal Planning Application by Hammerson-Allianz on April 5th, (the period allowed within which the public must lodge observations) Imagine Dundrum undertook an extensive programme of work in order to alert and inform the local community about the Application, make professional planning advice available to the community, and support local residents in making their own observations.

In the course of the five-week period allowed, the key activities included:

- Extensive local door to door work aimed at informing local residents about the Planning Application
- Poster campaign
- Videos of the proposed development
- Multiple mail-outs, news releases and contact with journalists, articles in the PPN E-zine and Panorama magazine
- Meeting with local businesses
- Meetings with Residents Associations
- Major public meeting attended by almost 500 people
- Drop-in 'clinic' providing expert information and guidance on making observations
- Social media messaging
- Positive support from local residents with media, IT, and planning expertise
- Support for residents on the process of making observations, including courier service for residents who could not access An Bord Pleanála themselves
- Extensive programme of Heritage Walks to highlight the key heritage features of the Village and implications of the Development proposals for their future
- Intensive work on the 107 page Imagine Dundrum submission in collaboration with planning consultant Brendan Buck.

705 observations were made to An Bord Pleanála by the closing date in May. The ABP decision was scheduled for July 25th but as of February 2023 is still awaited.

Follow-up work

It was decided to take steps to prepare for a possible Judicial Review (JR) should the Hammerson-Allianz application be approved by An Bord Pleanála. Contact was made with several residents groups in the wider Dublin Area who had embarked on Judicial Review proceedings, in order to learn from their experience. In addition, a solicitor's firm with expertise in pursuing JR proceedings was approached, and commissioned to undertake a JR on our behalf, should the need arise.

Decision to form a Company Limited by Guarantee

Imagine Dundrum decided in February 2022 to form as a Company Limited by Guarantee. Extensive work was undertaken to progress this decision, and the Company was formed and registered with the Companies Office, with the company name "Imagine Dundrum Community Placemakers Ltd."

Community involvement

In addition to the extensive community engagement to maximise local response to the Hammerson-Allianz Planning Application, Imagine Dundrum continued to engage with the local community on an ongoing basis, including through newsletters to our rapidly-growing mailing list in August, September and November.

Imagine Dundrum took a stall at the Dundrum Arts and Cultural Festival in June 2022, where the group had the opportunity to meet with local residents and families, publicise our work, invite membership of our mailing list and undertake fundraising. Imagine Dundrum was similarly facilitated by Airfield Farmers Market, and the Ludford Resident Association Family Day.

The strong linkages with the Irish Architectural Foundation were further developed through engagements with a number of IAF projects.

Advocating for the Civic Campus

A key objective of Imagine Dundrum and rationale for its founding has been the provision of a Civic Centre including a new modern library for Dundrum. This objective has been pursued since 2016, with a good degree of success, in the decision by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown to pursue this, and their success in securing initial Government funding for a master plan for the Civic Centre.

In June 2022, Imagine Dundrum made an extensive submission to DLR County Council, setting out the case for a Civic Campus as a partnership with the Dublin Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Education and Training Board (DDLETB) to develop a shared campus on Main Street Dundrum. We await a response to this proposal.

Meetings with local TDs

Imagine Dundrum met with our local TDs, Minister Catherine Martin, Minister for State Josepha Madigan, and Neale Richmond T.D., inviting their support for the Imagine Dundrum stance on the Hammerson-Allianz proposed development, and also asking their support for the Civic Campus concept.

Continuing to examine best practice in placemaking

Imagine Dundrum has continued to invest in examining best practice in all aspects of town and village development relevant to the future of Dundrum. Members examined key policy documents including the national policy document *Heritage Ireland 2030* and *Places for People*, the most recent National Architecture Policy.

November webinar

In November, Imagine Dundrum organised our third webinar titled 'Building Dundrum's Best Future: how new thinking about heritage and environmental sustainability can help create the Dundrum of tomorrow'. Deirdre Black, Heritage Officer, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council, spoke about *Heritage: People and Place through Time*, and Dr. Philip Crowe, UCD School of Architecture, spoke on the theme of *Future Proof: Building a More Resilient Dundrum*. The webinar was chaired by Dr Paula Russell, from the UCD School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy. Imagine Dundrum is very grateful to the speakers and the Chair for their generous contributions of time and expertise.

The webinar attracted a large attendance. Its success was a tribute to the organising team, and the attendance reflected the work of group members in publicising the event. It can now be viewed on the Imagine Dundrum website.

Improving Main Street

During 2022, Imagine Dundrum took several initiatives aimed at improving Main Street. These included:

- Continuing engagement with Hammerson- Allianz seeking improvements in the condition of buildings on Main Street owned by the company
- Securing a grant, for the third time, to install Christmas lights in the Village.

MANAGING OUR BUSINESS

Involvement in the Public Participation Network (PPN)

Imagine Dundrum is a member of the DLR PPN. and provides information about activities and opportunities that can be of value to us. Members of the group took part in a number of workshops and trainings run by the PPN on matters of interest to Imagine Dundrum.

Successful grant applications

Imagine Dundrum made successful grant applications, which have resulted in most helpful finance for our work. We are grateful to Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Community Department, Arts Department and Local Enterprise Office for the grant funding. The group was also successful in securing grant funding from the Capital Credit Union, for which we are extremely grateful.

Our website and Facebook page

Our website, and our Facebook page continue to be an important communication tools for our work. Sincere thanks to the volunteers helping with our communications.

GDPR compliance, and lobbying registration

These important facets of our work are well looked after and ensure our compliance with these governance requirements.

Thanks and appreciation

Thanks to all the Imagine Dundrum team for another effective and very significant year's work and for their many investments in the work, which are too numerous to record.

We also wish to thank the Chief Executive of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, and the Directors and members of staff for their most helpful support during the year. Thanks also to the Dundrum Ward Councillors for their support throughout the year.