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Re: Racecourse Park Baldoyle JP06F.311315

A chairde,

I refer to the above application and wish to make the following observations.

The development of this Park is very welcome and overdue. I urge the Board to approve the proposal subject to some improvements in the following areas.

1. Car Parking

The application proposes a big increase in car parking provision in the area to 161 spaces, plus the use of a further area of the park as overflow car parking. The capacity of this overflow area isn't given. It is stated simply to be for busy summer days.

The rationale provided for the car parking is as follows:

“There is a small car park located at the Red Arches road next to the derelict marketing suite, but it is rarely used. Most people tend to park along the Red Arches road and along the Grange road when using the park. This is particularly problematic during soccer matches, when large numbers of cars are parked along the main road and on the footpath. The nearest car park on the Portmarnock side is the train station car park. More car parking will have to be provided, not only to cater for sports pitches related traffic but also for future visitors that are likely to be attracted by a wider range of recreational facilities in the park.”

No calculations have been provided to come up with the estimated 161 car space requirement or the unstated overflow space requirement. It is about twice the capacity of the nearby Racecourse Shopping Centre car park.

The “overflow area” is to be fenced off from the rest of the park. It's not clear what use it will have other than car parking, particularly as it will be fenced.

The proposed approach here is in direct contrast to that being taken in the adjoining Local Area Plan, where the explicit intention is to avoid overprovision of car parking:

“TM 25

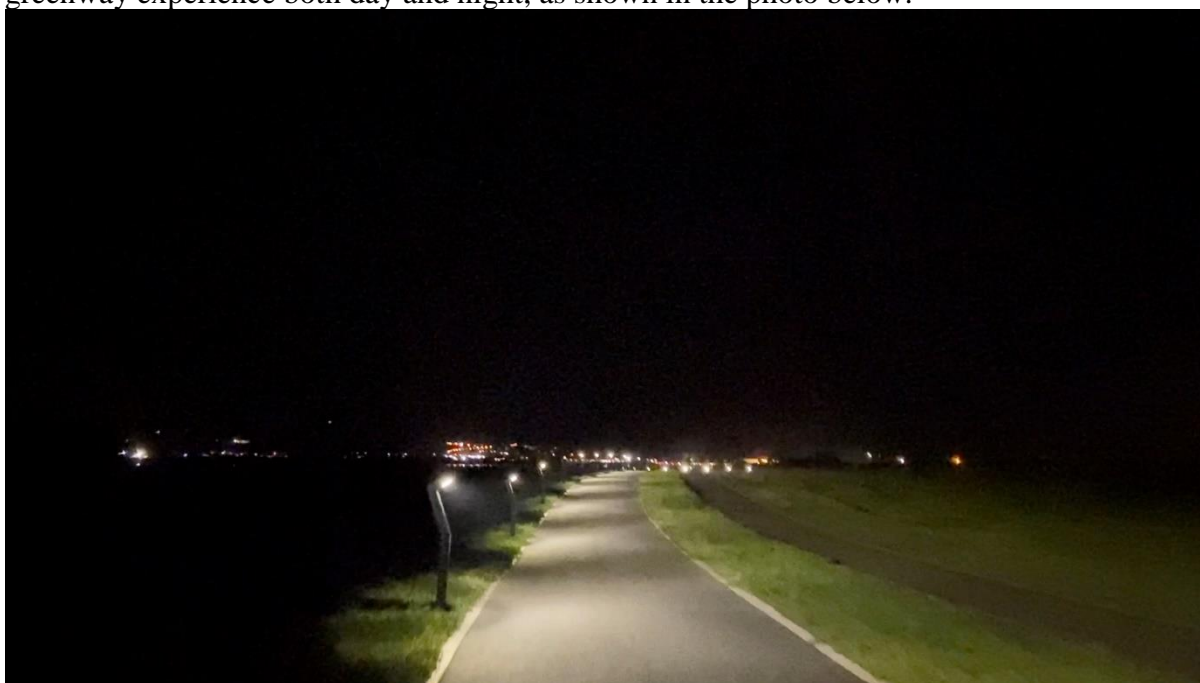
“As development progresses, require that car parking standards within the LAP lands are reviewed in parallel with improvements in public transport services with the aim of implementing reduced levels of car parking which would reflect the strategic nature of the LAP adjacent to public transport.”

It is striking that extensive car parking provision is proposed as a solution to a problem of cars parking on the road when an existing car park is rarely used. The Council seems to be attempting to solve car parking problems with infrastructure alone and no management.

The vast majority of users of the park will come from within walking and cycling distances and overprovision of car parking will only encourage the use of cars to access the park, diminishing the amenity value of a substantial part of the park itself. It would be contrary to the established practice and policy of both the Council and the Board in considering car parking provision in the adjoining residential area.

2. Lighting

The application provides for 6m high lighting poles. This was the Council’s proposal also for the lighting along the greenway between Baldoyle and Portmarnock on the east of the Park, in JP06F.300840. In that application the Board’s Inspector established that the provision of bollard lighting would only be about 10% more expensive and recommended the use of bollard lighting as it would be far more sympathetic to both the landscape and to biodiversity. The Board agreed, imposing the appropriate condition and the Council did a good job of sourcing attractive bollard lights. The result is very positive, offering a very pleasant greenway experience both day and night, as shown in the photo below.



I urge the Inspector handling this application to inspect the area both before and after dark to see the positive result of the condition in the greenway application and I urge the Board to impose a similar condition in this application.

3. Safety of bridges in winter

I note that it is proposed to provide steel bridges. The existing greenway bridge across the Moyne River forms a very slippery layer of ice on frosty nights. The Council to date has not, despite requests, been willing to include this location or other pedestrian bridges in its gritting programme. I urge the Board to either specify a surface that will not be slippery in all weather conditions, or to require gritting as part of the ongoing maintenance of these bridges. Please see photo below of the Moyne River greenway bridge.

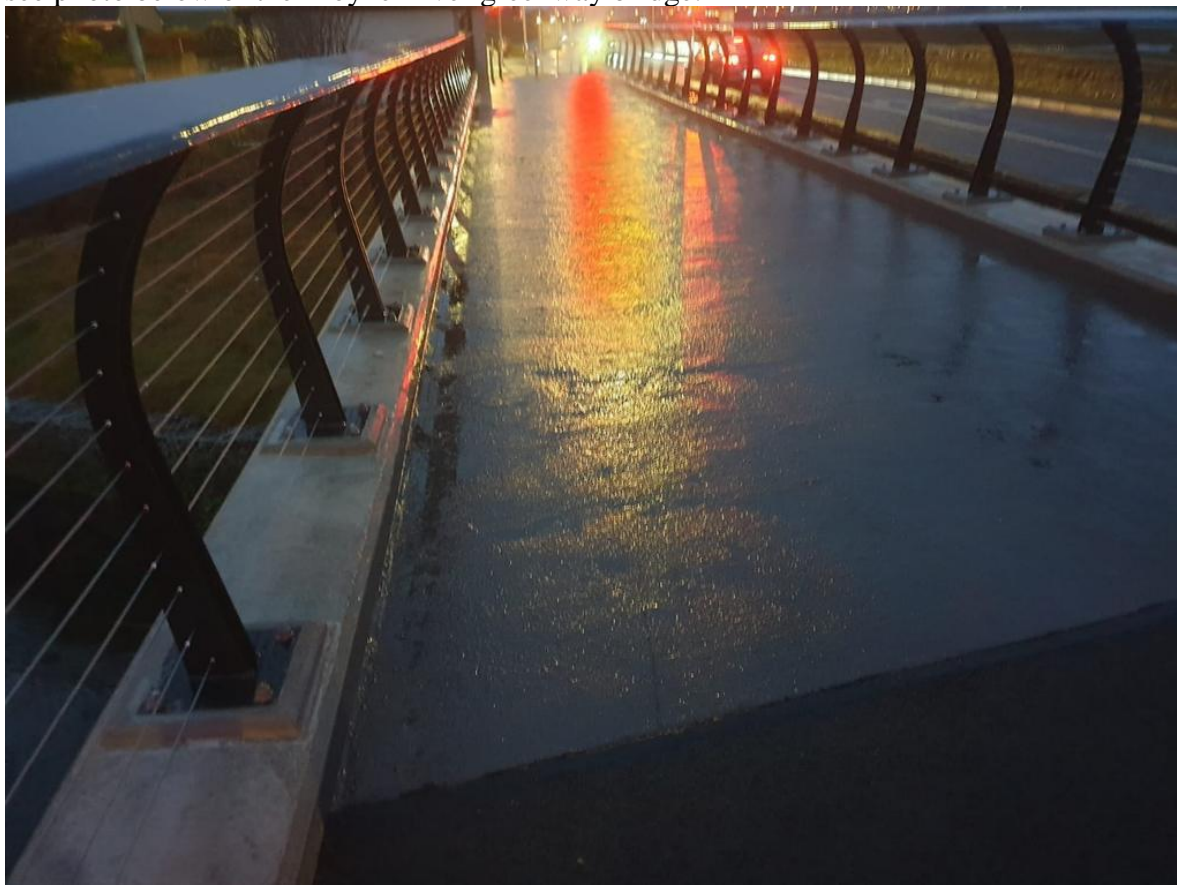


Photo: Alan Downey

4. Steel “arches”

The steel boxes proposed for the Grange Road access to the park provide an inappropriately industrial feel to the park entrance and would not improve with age. Planting of semi-mature trees and high-quality landscaping would be a much better use of resources.

In summary, the plans for the Racecourse Park are very welcome and subject to some important changes including those outlined above, I urge the Board to approve the application.

Best regards,

Cllr. David Healy