

PASSAGE WEST

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Town Hall,
Passage West,
Co. Cork, Ireland.

Halla na Bhaile,
An Phasáiste,
Co. Chorcaí, Éire.

TOWN COUNCIL

Comhairle Baile an Phasáiste

Port of Cork
Custom House Street
Cork

Correspondence Address:
Town Clerk, Passage West Town
Council, c/o Personnel Department,
Cork County Council, County Library
Building, Carrigrohane Road, Cork.

March 12th 2010

Re: Submission to Port of Cork

Following the questions and answer session with the Port of Cork representatives at the offices of Passage West Town Council on February 4th 2010, the Members of Passage West Town Council met in Special Meeting to formulate an overall view on the Ports' activity in seeking to relocate their activities.

Members of the Town Council are very critical of the contact and process to date by the Port of Cork in this matter, and all agreed that the process cannot be considered or called a public consultation process. Members conveyed that there was a real absence of information from the Port of Cork, leaving the Town Council in an invidious position of making a submission to the Port, as invited by the Port, without details of what they are submitting about. Members expressed that the process engaged by the Port of Cork was a PR exercise rather than a consultation process.

Members noted that the Port of Cork is examining 12 sites and the Port has stated they have 5 favoured sites: Marino Point, Dog Nose Bank, and 3 at Ringaskiddy – ADM, Quarter Ramp, Oyster Bank. While Members recognise that the planning process has not yet begun, the Port clearly outlined that these 12 sites were being assessed against a range of criteria. Consequently, the Members were surprised and disappointed that the Port did not provide specific information particularly with regard to the process by which the Port arrived at identifying its 5 favoured sites. Given the An Bord Pleanála views as outlined in their decision to refuse the Port permission to develop a container terminal at the Oyster Bank, Ringaskiddy, the Town Council asks why the Port did not address any of the An Bord Pleanála issues.

The issues of particular concern to Passage West Town Council arising from the possible relocation of the Port to the lower harbour include:

Visual impact

Waterside cranes for the purposes of ship loading and unloading would be an expected component of most port developments. The onshore storage of containers

would also be an expected element of container terminal operation. The visual impact of such a development is absolutely unacceptable.

Noise impact

Operations at the Port of Cork's container facility at Tivoli has had long associations with noise issues. Noise impact from port activities at either the Marino Point or Ringaskiddy sites would impose significant new negative effects on residents of Passage West and Monkstown. Primary schools are located close to the water in both settlements and, in the case of Passage West, the Star of the Sea National School is little more than 500 metres from the Marino Point site. The noise associated with port operations and particularly the operation of a container terminal, would make teaching and learning untenable.

Furthermore, as noise is magnified over the water after dark, the effects and impacts on residents would be exponentially worse at night. This is not acceptable.

Constraints on Development

It is widely recognised by Cork local authorities that development of the town centre of Passage West is an important goal. Both the Cork County Development Plan and the Carrigaline Electoral Area Local Area Plan have a particular objective towards redevelopment of the Royal Victoria Dockyard which lies merely 600 metres across the water from the existing jetty at Marino Point. Passage West Town Council believes that any development by the Port of Cork of the site at Marino Point would negatively impact on the attractiveness and viability of improving and developing the town centre, thereby destroying any chance of establishing a true civic and commercial town centre in Passage West.

Impact and loss of amenity value and activities in the Lower Harbour

Cork harbour is the playground of large numbers of people who enjoy water and shore-based activities throughout the areas around Passage West and Monkstown. The Town Council considers that development by the Port of facilities at Marino Point or Ringaskiddy would detrimentally affect users of the water in these areas and would represent an unacceptable change and interference to the recreation and amenity value of the harbour to these current users. The harbour is enjoyed by clubs such as Passage West Yawl Rowing Club, Monkstown Bay Sailing Club, Monkstown & Cork Harbour Rowing Club and Passage West Angling. The slipway at Monkstown is the most widely used slipway on the western side of the Lower Harbour. The Passage West Boat-Owners Association is in ongoing discussion with the relevant authorities with regard to improving water access from Passage West. Government funding of almost €1 million was invested by Cork County Council during October/November 2009 in upgrading the old railway line from Passage West to Hop Island. The success of this upgrade and the ongoing popularity of the waterside footpath through Glenbrook and Monkstown make Passage West/Monkstown one of South Cork's most popular destination for weekend walking.

Seveso restrictions leading to restrictions in Passage West

Between 1979 and 2002, IFI manufactured ammonia and urea on the same site at Marino Point in which the Port of Cork now expresses interest. This type of industrial activity incurred Seveso restrictions which resulted in significant constraints on development in Passage West. Proposed new residential and commercial developments, particularly in the town centre of Passage West, were consequently

both delayed and refused. These restrictions further compounded the failure of Passage West town centre to thrive even during the more prosperous times of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Passage West Town Council therefore strictly opposes any development, including storage of bulk liquids or any other material which might impose Seveso or any other restrictions on the development of normal residential and commercial activity as would be expected in any town.

Safety issues from storing hazardous; toxic; flammable or dangerous bulk liquids or materials

Residents of Passage West and Monkstown have conveyed to the Town Council their great fears of safety hazards which might arise from the transport, loading/unloading and/or storage of hazardous; toxic; flammable or dangerous bulk liquids or materials at either the proposed Marino Point or Ringaskiddy sites. They note that there is no emergency plan in place for the protection and/or evacuation of either Passage West or Monkstown. The Town Council and local residents state that the suggested sites are too close to our large population, and pose an unacceptable risk to safety of large numbers of people in the event of an incident occurring.

Devaluation of Property

The Town Council submits that development by the Port of sites at Marino Point and Ringaskiddy would negatively impact on the valuation of houses, and it has been put to the Town Council by local residents that, based on an average house valuation in the area of €250,000, a 10% reduction in value due to Port activities would lead to a €45,000,000 claim for loss by local residents.

Effect on fishing

Members wish to point out the effect on important fishing grounds in the lower harbour and that Port activities cannot be allowed to relocate and damage these. Of particular value in the Passage West/Monkstown context are the fishing grounds in the West Passage between Glenbrook and Monkstown which attract large participation in shore-based fishing all year round.

Special Protection Areas & Special Areas of Conservation

Belvelly Channel has been designated under European law as a Special Area of Conservation while Monkstown Creek has similarly been designated as a Special Protection Area. The range of threats which would be posed to the wildbird value of both of these areas by Port activities at either Marino Point or Ringaskiddy would be considerable, detrimental and potentially devastating. Constant noise from container movement, increased nighttime lighting and shipping activity would all have an ongoing and potentially negative effect. Spills or explosions would destroy the ecological value of these unique areas. While the engineering of a container or bulk terminal is relatively straightforward, ecologically designated areas cannot be recreated with such ease or over a similar timeframe.

Tidal processes if reclamation proposed

Should the proposed Port relocation involve land reclamation, Members fear that changes in local tidal movements would have negative knock-on effects leading to increased sedimentation and reduced water depths in other areas.

Light Pollution

Members agreed that the Port relocation would significantly increase existing light pollution in the Lower Harbour. This would be detrimental to the residential, recreational, visual and ecological value of the Lower Harbour.

Dust

Passage West has had a long and negative association with the effects of dust from port-related bulk loading and unloading activities. Should the ADM jetty site as identified by the Port of Cork be developed for bulk loading and unloading, Passage West Town Council fears that Monkstown may be subject to similar problems. Dust has a tremendously negative effect on residential amenity and is detrimental to health. Neither is acceptable to Passage West Town Council.

Effect of shipping movement

The Town Council is concerned that increased shipping movements arising from a move by the Port of Cork to Marino Point in particular would cause structural damage to quay walls, houses and other buildings. The Town Council notes that the quay walls between Passage West and Monkstown are already in poor condition and that many of the buildings in both settlements closest to the waterfront are of considerable age and of recognised architectural value. Local residents also fear that turning of ships in the constraints of the river adjacent to Marino Point could have a negative and unacceptable effect on existing moorings and could potentially cause flooding.

The Members note the Ports' previous assessment of the Marino Point site as follows:

“Following a technical review of the options, it was decided that Marino Point should not be investigated further at this stage. This is because of the perceived difficulty in overcoming the environmental designations in addition to other issues such as poor navigation and poor road access.”

(www.portofcork.ie)

Views on developing Ringaskiddy have already been outlined by Passage West Town Council in its submissions to An Bord Pleanála both before and during the Oral Hearing relating to the Port of Cork proposed container terminal development at the Oyster Bank.

In conclusion, Passage West Town Council has received significant level of contact from local residents very concerned at the Port expressing its favour for sites at Marino Point and Ringaskiddy. The Town Council therefore opposes relocation of Port activities to these sites.

Yours faithfully,



Niall O'Keeffe
Town Clerk