

Local Area Meeting Councillor Transcripts

This document contains transcript of councillor statements, at Dec 11th Local Area Committee Meeting, so that local residents of Balrothery, can be informed as to how much value they place in representing the views of those that elected them.

Contents

Local Area Meeting Councillor Transcripts	1
Introduction	2
Against the Proposed Development	2
1) Cllr. Tony Murphy (Independent):	2
2) Cllr. Eugene Coppinger (Anti Austerity Alliance):	3
3) Cllr. J.P. Browne (Fine Gael):.....	3
4) Cllr. Barry Martin (People Before Profit):	4
5) Cllr. Grainne Maguire (Independent):	4
For the Proposed Development.....	5
1) Cllr. Philip Lynam (Sinn Féin):	5
2) Cllr. Justin Sinnott (Independent):.....	5
3) Cllr. Duncan Smith (Labour)	6
4) Cllr. Joe Newman (Independent):	7
5) Cllr. Paul Mulville (Independent):	7
6) Cllr. Brian Dennehy (Fianna Fáil):.....	8
7) Cllr. Adrian Henchy (Fianna Fáil):.....	8
8) Cllr. Anne Devitt (Independent):.....	9
9) Cllr. Ken Farrell (Labour Party):.....	10
10) Cllr. David O'Connor (Independent):	11
11) Cllr. Malachy Quinn (Sinn Féin):	12

Introduction

Unfortunately, due to being unable to secure the vote of local Fianna Fáil Cllr. Brian Dennehy, we could not have secured a majority on this issue at the Local Area Committee, though without them we could have forced a tie and potentially a win through the Cathaoirleach and also at the full council meeting which is due to vote on this on the 12th of January 2015. However, unknown to us, Sinn Féin Councillor Malachy Quinn changed his position and so the hope of even a split vote slipped out of view, on the day.

We were also, quite disappointed with Balbriggan Councillor David O'Connor who refused to engage with us through our email correspondence and refused to meet with the committee in the run up to the meeting. At least in the case of Labour councillors, we knew where we stood.

All the above said, we want to hugely thank Councillors Tony Murphy, J.P. Browne, Grainne Maguire and Barry Martin in the Balbriggan Ward and Councillor Eugene Coppinger in the Swords Ward for their support, the strong arguments made on the day and most importantly for representing our views. They will have ours at the next election regardless of today's vote because they were the only councillors that listened to us.

Against the Proposed Development

1) Cllr. Tony Murphy (Independent):



I think what we have here today, is a sensitive debate. Everyone is acutely aware of the situation with extended housing lists and people on housing lists for extended periods of time; but not withstanding that, I think that, if the local authority has within its gift, to arrest some of the issues around housing lists we needn't get into a knee-jerk situation and have a look around the county for areas where we can build houses, it has to be well planned so it doesn't impact on areas, maybe what we have like here in Balrothery. And from the outset I want to say, having been at a public meeting held by the people of Balrothery, they are not against

social housing being delivered into Balrothery and that's a very, very clear statement. At that meeting it was made clear to me that there are underlying issues that have maybe brought this to the fore in the sense that Balrothery, over the last 10 or 12 years, has had a tremendous amount of development delivered and the people of Balrothery feel they haven't had the proper amenities, road infrastructure, delivered on the back of all the development that has been put into Balrothery. They have no playground, lack of foot paths; lack of safe crossing points for children going to school and the village had just grown and expanded and here we have, a parcel of land that is zoned for planning, there is no doubt, it's zoned for housing, there's no disagreement about that but that parcel of land lends itself to be, probably the last part of green space, if I could call it that, in the confines of the village that exists, as it is today as the village of Balrothery expands and is being developed; and there is another anomaly that is causing an issue there also is the fact that, with the

planning regulation; and it's allowable! Although I think it's distinctly wrong, where you have permissions being granted, and green space allocations being delivered in other areas, outside of the area where that development is taking place and that to me is wrong; because the area the development is taking place is the area that is distinctly losing that green space. So here lies an issue where the people of Balrothery feel that; as this planning anomaly exists within the planning regulation, and Balrothery develops as it will though time, that this is the last piece of green space, within the confines that will be distinctly more relevant and more important to the community of Balrothery, as the village develops and grows. So I myself, having had serious representation from the people of Balrothery on this will not be supporting this motion.

2) Cllr. Eugene Coppinger (Anti Austerity Alliance):



Ok, Councillor Murphy has mentioned some of the points, particularly about the green space. One of the questions I have firstly, is the submissions were sent into the housing department, is that normal practice? I would have thought, shouldn't have gone into planning? Is there something different about this? The schools in the area; like this area has grown from a village into almost a town now at this stage. The schools are oversubscribed as it is and adding, even a small number of houses now, there's a 3 year waiting list so what are the people who move into the new houses going to do? They're going to add to the list, going to make things a lot worse. There's no public

park in the area, no community centre. It lacks, as the county manager has agreed, it lacks facilities; the council have accepted that; so why build more houses in an area that lacks facilities, it's just bad planning! We've seen it already in other areas, where you just heap houses upon houses, without proper facilities, without a proper plan and that's the case here, it's clearly the case here. I will also not be supporting these housing going in this particular area at this time. Obviously we do need houses and it's welcome that there are plans to build houses but you cannot put houses in an area that is not suitable and this area is not suitable at the moment; it doesn't have the facilities

3) Cllr. J.P. Browne (Fine Gael):



Firstly, I want to thank the executive for a very comprehensive report, a lot of detail contained within. I don't want to repeat what's already been said, I have met with numerous residential associations as well as the community association of Balrothery on numerous occasions they have expressed their opinions and concerns. Looking at the plans, we are all aware that there is a housing crisis in Fingal, as well as the rest of the country, however before further development takes place; I do believe facilities and amenities have to be

tackled first. The executive has said that you have written to educational boards and you're looking at the community garden. There's an awful lot of "We can do this" but I believe that has to be put in place before any development goes forward into Balrothery. Since 1998, I believe there are over 400 new units within the town of Balrothery, facilities are severely lacking, they appear to be remaining stagnant, there's no park, there is a 3 year waiting list for the school; I know a number of young children who have to go to neighbouring towns to go to school so to put more houses in an area which is already; is not prepared to take these extra people, it's just I don't believe it's right in the current circumstances. Now as I said, we are all aware of the housing crisis and we're all supportive of houses being built but I believe it has to be under the right circumstances and again, I don't think I can support this proposal.

4) Cllr. Barry Martin (People Before Profit):



For me, I'm going to be against this proposal, and for the reasons that many councillors have said before, I don't think this is; and to address councillor Smith's issue, this is not an issue of social housing, it's an issue of development and building sustainable communities, and it has to be a holistic process so if you're on the left and your serious about building communities, and your serious about housing, you've got to look at the systemic reasons why we are in a housing crisis and why are communities without essential local amenities and the facts are that we completely left the provision of housing in private hands and they were never held accountable, they

were allowed to build thousands of houses in Fingal and weren't made contribute adequately to proper amenities and proper community infrastructure and so if you are serious about tackling development and social housing development in communities, we want to do it properly and building 9 houses in that part of Balrothery isn't going to solve the housing crisis and it isn't going to solve bad development and we have to be realistic and sustainable so I will be against this proposal. When you're looking at it, the people who are in private houses or social houses, are the same people who are going to be in the same community so, it's an issue of development and not social housing. We have a housing crisis and the way to address it is to make developers build social housing. We have to take a look at why we are in a housing crisis and why there has been such a lack of local community infrastructure. Thank you.

5) Cllr. Grainne Maguire (Independent):

Now I just want to thank everybody for their contributions. As like other councillors, I have met with a lot of the residents associations, I've met the Community Council, and, it's a very difficult issue because you're dealing with people that elected you to represent them and if they're putting forward their issues, their concerns, whilst their concern isn't directly the building of the 9 houses, there is a connection to it. As a local authority, we need to be showing an example, that we are



trying our best to solve the housing crisis but we need to look at the whole picture, we can't just take out a development plan and look at all the zoned housing areas and build housing on it. We need to develop the community, to develop proper living facilities with schools; it's a whole bigger issue than we have discussed here then around the building of the 9 houses. I know the issue today, is the building of the 9 houses, but, we've got to be mindful that people are living in these communities and they want to make their homes there, they want to raise their families there. And if we keep building on zoned land which has

been zoned for how many x amount of years, things have changed over the years. We have got to be mindful of the people that are living there. But we also have to be mindful that people need housing. There is a huge bigger issue, and unfortunately, I won't be supporting it, at this present time but I take on board every single, observation and contribution that people have made because people, nobody here is against social housing, nobody here is against the fact that we have a housing crisis but I think this has just highlighted something that, we have got to look at the bigger picture. I would like to ask if the manager would like to come in and address some of the issues.

For the Proposed Development

1) Cllr. Philip Lynam (Sinn Féin):



Thank you Cathaoirleach, ah I just want to voice as a few people were saying there, we do have a massive housing crisis across the 4 council areas, am on that basis I support the building of houses but I do want to emphasise that if anything is going in like this, we don't want a concrete jungle again. We do want amenities that should be there, and proper traffic calming in place and that goes across Fingal for any building I support.

2) Cllr. Justin Sinnott (Independent):



Just a couple of questions on the plan itself, I just have, I just noticed in terms of car park spaces, 11 seems very little for 9 houses and secondly, in terms of, can I ask why their proposal is just for 2 bedroom houses? And in terms of the size, I know it says it appears to meet the minimum room sizes, am is that the very minimum because they just seem quite small houses. On the issue itself, I'll be supporting this, am I suppose the issues that the residents committees and submissions have raised could probably be applied to any development or any proposed development within Fingal, I mean in my end of the county which is high density, ah in Santry and Meakstown, we have all these

issues, and I'd like to think if a piece of land became available for social housing, notwithstanding those issues that, I'd support it because it's the right thing to do. We have a housing crisis; the plan is to build 20,000 houses. If we can't agree to build 9 houses now, you can forget about us or agreeing to build 20,000 houses across this county. Am, I fully appreciate the issues that have been raised and I fully respect the councillors who have spoken before me and they've all raised absolutely bonafide reasons why not to support this, for example, the school places issue is clearly huge and in Swords here, we've seen the development the last decade, with during the boom times, we seen places like Boromhe and Ridgewood develop hugely but the lack of school places is there, it's across Swords, its across Dublin! Am, so while the issue of bad planning and the issues of facilities and services is absolutely essential and it's something every single councillor here is going to fight for, I think for us to turn down, you know, 9 much needed houses, for me, I think, I'd feel very difficult on one hand to argue for more social housing and argue and to fight against the homeless crisis and at the same time not support this, for me its ah, for me, it would be very difficult, so ah, I will support it.

3) Cllr. Duncan Smith (Labour)



Am, I'd like to thank the manager for his report, again I wasn't asked to meet the residents but I did receive a number of emails and I was in correspondence with them and ah, again as councillor Sinnott said some of the issues that ah, are issues that could be raised by any number of estates across the north county, Dublin City Council, South Dublin and any city and parish town, ah a small town village in Ireland. Am, they are valid concerns, some are valid concerns in many ways but they are concerns that we can address, in the next local area plan, and in the next development plan and there certainly would be an appetite amongst all the councillors in Balbriggan and through this are

committee to address those concerns am but it's been mentioned here by everyone that we are in a housing crisis, CRISIS! AND THIS IS THE FIRST time we've had a chance to VOTE TO BUILD A PAULTRY FEW HOUSES, NINE! NINE HOUSES! And we're saying no, our or councillors here are saying no. Councillors on the LEFT! Who've worked on the LEFT! are saying no. I mean this is, this is a shocking indictment if this goes, if this pushed today and it goes against, ah this motion as it's proposed. We'll have no hope of tackling the housing crisis and I for one won't be able to look any of my constituents in the face, or in the eyes, who are contacting me on a daily basis, who are in temporary accommodation with very bleak prospects. We have an opportunity now to provide some housing for 9, for 9 people on that list and we should, we should, we should take it and we should have a bit of courage, and we should also be on that work with the local residents in Balrothery towards addressing the valid concerns they have, through the next area plan development plan, thank you.

4) Cllr. Joe Newman (Independent):



I will be supporting the motion for a number of reasons. One, I've been out there, I've had a look around, I drove out and I'm fairly familiar with the area, and eh, I am opposed to bad planning and bad design and eh, I'm sure as most other councillors are here. I've had a look around and I've been up where there is more development going on, further on and up that road and in the future there is going to be, there can be a huge amount of problems there if it's not addressed in the early stages. So I would urge the powers that be, the council to ensure that any further

development in that area, takes into consideration, proper design and proper development. I think the ah, 9 houses were brought down now, not 10; to me looks quite well, fits well in the area, I think it will benefit the estates on both sides. It's on a main road so it's not a good space for putting a playground in. We're only talking about 30 people. I do echo councillor Sinnott's concerns about car spaces because I've been up to Boru Court recently, it's a social housing estate and if you go up there on a weekend, you can't see the houses with the amount of cars that's in front of them. So while we have social housing, they shouldn't be built in such a way that they they're built so small and don't have proper parking facilities. Those people need cars going to work the same as everyone else so I would just urge that when you are doing the social housing, that it's taken into consideration. I think that the youth facilities needs to be addressed but that can be addressed whether the estate goes there or not. The school facilities can be addressed whether it goes there or not. The community centre can be addressed as well, whether the estate goes ahead of not, and as regards the archaeological site, I'm sure there are already houses out there, built within that same area, so I presume that was all taken into consideration in relation to that time. So just on the basis of that, I think it's a good development in a good area. The other Issues I would ah, I'm support it on the basis that the council will engage fully with the residents to provide them with all the other facilities there, that they're so concerned about and I think that will go a long way to alleviate their concerns.

5) Cllr. Paul Mulville (Independent):



Thanks am, just to say am, thanks to the residents who have gotten in touch with us and they've been very engaged and I have told them I'd be supporting this proposal, we have an urgent housing crisis and we need council housing to be built and as councillor Newman said, you have to engage with them now to make sure all the different issues they've raised are addressed in the future and just some particular things about the report there, that the residents said in their response to it. In terms of that green space there you have which is in Knightswood I believe. I mean, why is that on the map

when it won't be accessible from the housing development? It just seems to be a bit misleading, and the whole issue with the green space was mentioned in it as well, green space was supposed to be put in Ringfort and was put elsewhere, we should get some clarification on that. And am, also in

terms of the school, I mean if as you understand it, the school that's, planning permission won't provide new spaces, so I mean that's it, it says in the report here that there's planning permission in but it won't be providing new spaces available, so I think those clarifications should be addressed and we have to make sure that hopefully, have lost more of council housing built, that we get these reports in, that they don't have things like this that could be seen as misleading. Thanks.

6) Cllr. Brian Dennehy (Fianna Fáil):



Like my fellow councillors, I see the big dilemma on what should be a joyous occasion of us passing the first 10 social houses since we've been elected. I'm left with a big quandary, I've met with the residents, I've researched all the documentation, that has been supplied with them and everything but I ah, with the housing crisis outside, I'd find that myself a hypocrite, to vote down the first 9 houses that come before us, where we could actually reduce the waiting list. Am eh, Balrothery, ok it's suffering from the bad development that has happened over the years, I don't think the 9 houses are going to resolve the issues there. Am the planning permission has been granted for the extension on the school, it's going from 1300 square meters to an additional 1000 square meters. But am, at the currently, there is planning permission in the council at the moment being assessed for 50 odd houses with green space being allocated; it's in Balrothery, sorry, with the green space being proposed to be allocated in northwest Balbriggan. Now if its, if we decide as a council that, that has to stop, and green spaces like that, have to be allocated in Balrothery, I'm sure the residents would see this and we've stopped the madness that happened in the past and I think that would more than compensate for the green space we are losing in this area. Am, I presume by our next council meeting, when we'll actually be voting finally on this, we'll have a decision on that matter like. Therefore I would be supporting this motion today.

7) Cllr. Adrian Henchy (Fianna Fáil):



Thank you, thank you. Just to thank the Manager for the comprehensive report and indeed probably a lot of what I'd say, has already been said by a number of the other councillors here today is, for me it's the biggest crisis facing both out area and the country at the moment, in terms of housing and again there's a lot of lib comments on a daily basis indeed, political, that maybe it should be added into our constitution, that everyone should have an entitlement to a house. And am, so for me that far outweighs any argument that trumps anything there, you know on a daily basis here, we have families that are desperately looking to get housing, am and that's applying right across am, Fingal so again, I think the, the 9 houses, it is a start and where here now, nearly 6 months and this is the first, you know and when we met first, would have been something that we would have all, really first been aware of, so I think it's, I

hope that this isn't the pace of housing development and housing proposals and I hope going forward, we can see a lot more of this but certainly from my point of view, I'll be supporting my manager today.

8) Cllr. Anne Devitt (Independent):

I'd like to thank the manager for report we've been given and I'd like to thank the residents for the



engagement they have taken into this process but I think there is a little bit of misunderstanding perhaps maybe with some of the newer councillors and maybe with the residents when we went out on display to discuss this proposal, to public proposal. There was not whether we build or not build houses on this site. This is a residential site owned by the county council, zoned for residential development. The engagement was to find out what their opinion was on the plan that had been put before them and in fairness they have done that and the council have responded to it. Am but what I'd like to say I'm stunned but I'm

not surprised that the members of the left, who's political parties have been banging the drum correctly, that we have a housing crisis and are using waffle and fig leaves because they are unable to make a decision which they think will be unpopular with the residents, instead of leading the residents and showing them how, they can resolve their problems, and provide essential houses, they come in here, and Councillor Martin, I am actually am surprised, I thought you had more moxy than that, you would waffle here and say how developers somewhere some place should build social housing but I'm certainly not going to vote for social housing because, I don't like the shape or I don't like the look of the site or that we can find someplace else for them. WE HAVE RESIDENTIAL LAND HERE, WE HAVE reduced the number of houses, from 10 to 9 because of the layout and the enquiries that came in from people, the land is clearly unsuitable, if anyone goes to look at it, it's clearly unsuitable for a playground, it's clearly unsuitable for a community garden. You'll have all the residents with back gardens backed on to that SCREAMING AT US, to put a fences and wires and all sorts of things in order to stop people jumping across from what could be open space into their back garden. So the council is right, this is not suitable, this is not a green space, it never was a green space. There may be need for greater community development; there is a community centre up there that I saw yesterday which appears to be closed, or maybe it has a crèche inside it but it certainly doesn't appear to have much activity going on it. A playground that seemed to be locked up. There's quite a few open spaces, I accept that a couple of them are not suitable, but visually there are there and my understanding is that there is a tennis, tennis court within that region and there's football fields within that region, and I do understand that some of our newer councillors don't understand the policy in relation to class 1 open space, where it is off site because if you put class 1 open space into that local area plan, you will have such a low concentration of houses that you won't be able to even support the facilities that are there, Balrothery is a very nice development. Let's not pretend it is a concrete jungle, it is not a concrete jungle, people are living very nicely there, very well supported shops, pubs etc. This, we are going to be asked, this is the first

time we have been asked to build houses on this new council, we're going to be asked again and again and again. Residents, existing residents will think of reasons why there shouldn't be social housing beside them and why they should be beside somebody else and that's the nature of us, we don't like change but we the councillors have a responsibility, not to just to the people who have voted for us but to the people who will be moving into those areas and to the people, who badly need houses, we are representatives of all the people, not just the people with houses. We represent the people without houses as well and this is the chance for the left to stand up and vote for what their leaders are telling them that the people want, otherwise they are useless empty words. And Councillor Martin, I've very surprised at you, I thought you had more in than that.

9) Cllr. Ken Farrell (Labour Party):



Thank you Chairperson, I must say that I'm astounded and disgusted in some ways with regard to some of the comments made about my colleagues here. I had the pleasure of working with Joe Higgins, I would wonder what position, Deputy Higgins would take, if he was in this chamber now. I WOULD WONDER, what position DEPUTY Boyd Barrett would take if they were in this chamber now. I know what position they'd take because as far as I was concerned, over the years, having known them particularly Deputy Higgins, Deputy Higgins would have always stood up for what was right and for what right here is, housing people who are badly in

need of housing. People from Balbriggan, people from Balrothery, people from Skerries, people from Rush and Lusk. Now I took some heart in Deputy Martin's remarks over in Malahide, when he said he was a radical councillor, that he was standing up, and I had great admiration for him knowing over the years, the number of people who stood up against travellers, saying that he was standing up for travellers rights, if we fell at the first hurdle today, and by the way, the residents here, are quite mild, the residents here are quite fair, in a lot of the comments that they made, so I can understand completely with the residents there but no matter where we go, to build a social house, never mind a traveller halting site, we will be confronted with this same argument, if not a lot, lot worse. I must say I'm really taken back by some people I would have expected, to stand up here for what is right. THE BIGGEST CRISIS WE HAVE IN THEIR OPINION, MIGHT BE the water charges but in MY OPIONION, IT'S THE PROBLEM OF THE HOMELESS and the problem of the need to house people in social housing. And where I have said, I'm going to put forward a motion, which might try Balrothery and resolve other problems in the area, and we can do that collectively as a group, I give a commitment here to Balrothery, that we will look forward to working for amenities that they, that we as a council, can provide. But I must say that, I'm a long time in the council and I have been shocked, I thought that myself and other people who are of the further left would be the first to stand up, regardless of what opposition here. I think that the position that they took was they hoped that they could be in favour with the residents and that people like me take the heavy eight and the blame on an issue like this. I don't like falling out with Residents but I do have a different opinion. If I

was the only councillors in this council, that said it was right to house people in this place, I would stand up and I would say that and I'm not afraid to do that and over the years as you know Councillor Martin and eh, Councillor Coppinger, you don't always get elected by doing what's seen to be popular at a particular time. You get elected if you're seen to have a principle and seen to be right. Now I'll put forward a motion here, here, here, I'm hoping the members can support it but as I said, we will be facing a lot of resistance in the future. Councillors, for once, be brave and vote for this proposal here today. Thank you.

10) Cllr. David O'Connor (Independent):



I'll be brief because most of what needs to be said has been said by both sides. Ah, Councillor Farrell had finished up on an optimistic note. I'd try to move along that optimistic note, I've served Balrothery for 15 and a half years and without a doubt, they've been the sleeping giant and they did take a hit that area with 157 houses, with very little facilities put in, am, there's a great gang up in Ringfort, I've been dealing with them since they moved in and helped some of them to move in. There's a great gang in Rosepark. They have a fantastic tidy towns committee there. We've been working with them, the council and councillor level or whatever but they are heartily sick of looking at that palisade fence, they are heartily sick of looking

at the speeding coming down from the cross of the cage. We've done some stuff, am eh, traffic monitoring and speed readers and all that kind of carry on; we still have an issue, we still have cars crashing into the wall at the bottom of the road. Councillor May McKeown and myself tried to evangel a land owner across from the school, to donate land for school and two pitches on the basis of, that they could build eh, 5 and 6 story luxury houses in Balrothery. We got to within that... of getting it passed, at the development plan last time around. And, that's just one of the things, I'm hearing what Councillor Coppinger is saying and others am, we have it within our gift, starting in January, February, when the development plan rolls in to rezone land, in the area, as green space and for a new school. Now, I don't know where, just at the moment, the whole, with the department of education, whether it's possible to build a new school but there's 400 kids in that school. I would love to see them have a school like Rolestown, where they don't have to load the children in a bus to bring them over to the cricket ground or the Balbriggan ground for their recreation, that's how tight it is in Balrothery. There's a great gang of people down in Balrothery, I salute the work of the now, very much invigorated and revived Community Council I mightn't agree with everything or the diagnosis they have of everything going on but there is work to be done in Balrothery, but not at losing 9 houses. I'll be voting for this.

11) Cllr. Malachy Quinn (Sinn Féin):



Made no contribution but voted for the development, having previously said he would support us and vote against it. It was the 2nd U-turn that Councillor Quinn performed during this issue.

Note* there were some further comments from council management and back and forth with councillors. If you wish, you can watch the full proceedings at this link:

http://www.fingalcoco.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/154728