



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Department of Public
Health
Health Service
Executive
Dr Steevens' Hospital
Dublin 8, D08 W2A8

(01) 635 2145

To South County Dublin County Council

6th October 2021

Re: Public submission for South Dublin County Council Development Plan 2022-2028

From: Public Health Team CHO7 team (South Dublin, Kildare, West Wicklow area)

In this submission to the Development Plan for South County Dublin we in Public Health are highlighting some priority areas that are important for the health and wellbeing of the area's population. Our recommendations are based on Public Health observations as well as national policies and scientific evidence.

Under Medical Officer of Health Legislation¹ the Department of Public Health, Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow, has responsibility for identifying the health needs for the population we serve in the South County Dublin area.

A key government framework on which this submission is based is *Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025*², in which the four major goals are as follows:

- Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- Reduce health inequalities
- Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
- Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland

From a Public Health perspective, these issues are of the highest importance in future planning for the population of South County Dublin

Housing and Infrastructure

The population of south county Dublin is an area of high population growth and is projected to increase by 14.07% over the strategy period³. This population growth will come with the need for quality housing and improvements in infrastructure.

It is important to ensure adequate housing, with a focus on ensuring the provision of social housing. This should be considered in the context of the growth of the wider community and its infrastructure. The provision of housing is an important social determinant of health and we welcome any measures which address housing segregation.

Adequate social infrastructure will also be required to accommodate the projected level of growth within the area. Planning for facilities such as transport, schools, childcare, health services, grocery shops, community & green spaces is essential for the health, wellbeing and social development of the area.

Transport and travel

The quality of life of those residing in south county Dublin could be further improved by integrating land-use planning with transportation in the area. Reducing the need to travel long distances by private car and increasing the use of sustainable and healthy alternatives would bring multiple health benefits to the community, as well as benefiting the environment.

A model shift away from the car to walking or cycling is required. In order to do this, pedestrian and cycle facilities need to be dramatically improved. This would enable people to cycle from the furthest reaches of South County Dublin to the city centre. A portion of the councils transport budget should be allocated to providing a comprehensive network of safe, well-lit footpaths and segregated cycle lanes.

Pedestrian and cycle facilities are sustainable modes of travel that promote physical health, reduce traffic congestion and of course, would benefit the environment.

Public transport provision should also be improved, and systems should be appropriately integrated. Capacity on Luas, bus and dart services remains an issue, negatively reinforcing use of private cars over public transport. The frequency of Luas, dart and bus services should be increased to encourage their use over private cars and bicycle storage facilities should be improved.

Climate change and the environment

The National Climate Action Plan⁴ recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption. It is recognised that a fundamental behavioural change and societal transformation is required, and South Dublin County Council should take a leadership role in influencing and promoting this behaviour change. We suggest that communities be better informed, engaged and supported in the protection and improvement of the environment.

In addition to fundamental societal transformation and behavioural change, sustained policy implementation by South Dublin County Council is essential. Sustainability and emission reduction should be considered in all development, policies and procedures.

Ample recreational green space should also be provided for the community. This is in line with the WHO's recommendations around urban green spaces⁵. Green, biodiverse spaces should be co-designed with communities to reflect local needs, and there should be at least one within walking distance from people's homes. This is important in enabling people to live an active lifestyle, and will have a positive effect on health and wellbeing⁶. Proposed parks should incorporate planting of deciduous trees which will enhance air quality, and plans should not be limited to formal playground and sports facilities. A recent report by the Geological Survey of Ireland found that that given the projected rise in sea level, flooding will increase dramatically in Dublin in the coming years^{7, 8}. Increased provision of green spaces would be a positive step towards mitigating climate impact.

Health promotion

Rising levels of overweight and obesity are placing an increasing burden on individuals and society. Currently, in Ireland, six in ten adults and one in four children are overweight or obese⁹. The environment in which we live impacts on the choices that we make, and South Dublin County Council should endeavour to create environments that make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Opportunities for physical activity should be at the centre of the development of the built environment and, as previously mentioned, all development should promote cycling and walking. Initiatives such as Parkrun should continue to be supported, as well as other community based programmes which support healthy lifestyles.

We are happy to note that the council plans to control fast food outlets. We strongly support this proposal. Development proposals should ensure that choices of healthy food options are equally available and the proliferation of fast food outlets should be prevented. Healthier food options should be promoted as outlined in government policy¹⁰.

These suggestions are not exhaustive, but are some of the broad issues which we believe should be considered and incorporated into the South County Dublin Development Plan 2022–2028. We are happy to provide further information, evidence and guidance.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Maria Deery MCRN 410809, SpR Public Health Medicine
Dr Cale Lawlor MCRN 427293, Senior Medical Officer Public Health
Dr Lucinda Ryan MCRN 017402, SpR Public Health Medicine
Dr Fionnuala Cooney MCRN 01464, Director of Public Health CH07
Dr Ruth Mc Dermott MCRN 016416, Specialist in Public Health Medicine
Dr Christopher Carroll MCRN 403023, Specialist in Public Health Medicine

Contact for Public Health CH07

Dr Maria Deery: maria.deery2@hse.ie, 087 768 3238

References

1. <https://www.hse.ie/moh>
2. HSE. Healthy Ireland 2013-2025. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/>
3. <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/regionalpopulationprojections/>
4. National Climate Action Plan 2019. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ccb2e0-the-climate-action-plan-2019/>
5. WHO Urban Green Spaces: A brief for action 2017
https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/342289/Urban-Green-Spaces_EN_WHO_web3.pdf%3Fua=1
6. WHO Urban Green Spaces and Health, A review of evidence 2016
https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/321971/Urban-green-spaces-and-health-review-evidence.pdf
7. Geological Survey of Ireland 2019 <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/events-and-news/news/Pages/Potential-flooding-areas-in-Dublin-projected-by-2100.aspx>
8. Climate Central: Land projected to be below sea level by 2050
https://coastal.climatecentral.org/map/8/100.6166/13.2746/?theme=sea_level_rise&map_type=year&basemap=road_map&contiguous=true&elevation_model=best_available&forecast_year=2050&pathway=ssp3rcp70&percentile=p50&refresh=true&return_level=return_level_1&rl_model=gtsr&slr_model=ipcc_2021_med
9. HSE. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/ncps/obesity/>
10. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/da7f19-eat-well/>