



Ms Audrey Taylor, Case Officer
Planning Department
Dublin City Council
Civic Offices, Wood Quay
Dublin 8

Teresa Hackett, Chairperson
Grand Canal Dock Residents Association

Email: gcdresidentsassociation@gmail.com

30th October 2020

**Re: Third party observation - Planning Reference WEBDSDZ1649/20
Installation of double-sided 'Digipanel' outside 1 Hanover Quay, Grand Canal Dock**

Dear Ms Taylor,

Grand Canal Dock Residents Association (GCDRA) is devoted to enhancing the quality of life for its members and all the residents in the Grand Canal Dock area. As people who are living in the area, we are working to create the community in this designated high-density population zone. GCDRA is represented on the Docklands Oversight and Consultative Forum, a statutory body that advises Dublin City Council and its strategic policy committees in relation to the Docklands.

GCDRA wishes to lodge its objection to the above proposal for the installation of a double-sided 'Digipanel' outside 1 Hanover Quay, Grand Canal Dock, Dublin 2.

We will highlight three key concerns:

- Pedestrian safety and pavement clutter.
- Inappropriate nature of the signage and visual clutter.
- Negative impact on Hanover Quay and the local community.

Pedestrian safety and pavement clutter

1.1 The installation of a digipanel would increase congestion and impede pedestrian access to the footpath.

1.2 The location of the proposed signage is near a busy street corner, being directly in front of a commercial bar/restaurant premises (former HQ restaurant), beside the entrance to over 200 residential apartments, and close to another restaurant, Herbstreet.

1.3 The outside seating area at the former HQ restaurant, a sun-trap in the evenings, was popular all year round resulting in congestion at peak times when pedestrians had to step out

into the road. We understand that this outdoor seating amenity will be retained by the incoming business, JD Wetherspoon plc¹.

1.4 In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor restaurant spaces have become more important and their use is set to increase. For example, the National Framework for Living with COVID-19 Levels 3 and 4 permit only outdoor dining. To accommodate social distancing requirements, outdoor spaces are typically more spread out, and will be more heavily used even in colder weather. Introducing a large sign taking up space on the nearby footpath would work against efforts to adhere to public health guidelines on physical distancing.

1.5 Wheelchair users, who already have to carefully plan their route around the area because of the lack of dished footpaths at some junctions and car park entrances, will be further negatively impacted by another unnecessary pavement obstruction.

1.6 The proposed signage contradicts Dublin City Council's Public Realm Masterplan for the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock SDZ Planning Scheme (2014)² that sets out:

To provide wider more pleasant footpaths for comfortable walking and to create possibilities for informal amenities such as seating, outdoor café areas etc.

1.7 It also contradicts DCC's implementation guide for the Public Realm Masterplan (2018)³ that states:

Universal design principles will apply to all designs and works to the public realm in the SDZ area. Footpaths should be as wide as possible and clear of obstructions, with street furniture etc located in the footpath build out zones where possible.

1.8 It also fails to meet the policy on outdoor advertising for the Inner City and Docklands in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022⁴ that sets out how structures “*must not obstruct or endanger road users or pedestrians, nor impede free pedestrian movement and accessibility of the footpath or roadway*” (SC22).

1.9 In summary, the addition of the proposed signage at this site will increase congestion, and will be unhelpful in efforts to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines on physical distancing. It will cause safety issues by forcing people to step out onto the road, and will impede the enjoyment of the neighbourhood by wheelchair users. It will create an unnecessary obstacle on the footpath without bringing any functionality or benefit to residents. It runs contrary to DCC's Public Realm Masterplan for Grand Canal Dock, and the Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022.

¹ Planning Application Reference: DSDZ2202/20

² www.dublindocklands.ie/sites/default/files/Planning/Public%20Relam/The%20Public%20Realm%20Plan%20for%20the%20SDZ%20of%20North%20Lotts%20and%20Docklands.pdf

³ www.dublindocklands.ie/sites/default/files/Planning/Public%20Relam/Docklands%20SDZ%20Public%20Realm%20Implementation%20Guide%2020180606.pdf

⁴ www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2020-08/written-statement-volume-1.pdf

Inappropriate nature of the signage and visual clutter

1.10 The installation of a large, advertising panel would be entirely inappropriate for the location, and in opposition to previous planning decisions regarding illuminated lighting.

1.11 Hanover Quay is a residential area with a mix of office space served by cafes, restaurants, grocery outlets and independent local businesses. It is neither a “high visibility retail area”, nor an area of “heavy, slow moving traffic” that characterise the location of other ‘digipanel’ in Dublin⁵.

1.12 There is currently no commercial advertising on Hanover Quay or in the surrounding streets. The introduction of commercial advertising would be a significant and unwelcome departure from the character of the area, and the vision for its development.

1.13 When Dublin Docklands Development Authority developed Grand Canal Square, an €8 million project designed by international landscape architect, Martha Schwartz, the vision for the area was to become a key cultural destination for Docklands and the city⁶. The Docklands SDZ sets out the vision “to create a world class sustainable maritime quarter with a distinctive Dublin character, where family, community, visitors and the economy can prosper together”, and “supported by exemplary social and physical infrastructure and a quality public realm integrated with the wider city”⁷. Consequently, the presence of commercial advertising is not contemplated in planning documents for the area, nor in guidance on the design of relevant street furniture.

1.14 Further, there is no commercial illuminated signage on Hanover Quay. Previous applications for illuminated signage have been denied. In 2015, an application by Allied Irish Banks for an external illuminated sign was denied “in the interests of visual amenity”⁸. In 2019, an application by Boojum Hanover Quay for internally illuminated signage was denied because it was considered “garish and detracts from the visual amenities of the building and of the conservation area”⁹. It is worth noting that Boojum’s proposed signage panel measured 1200mm x 800mm, whereas the proposed structure for the digipanel is much larger, with an overall height of 2.882m, a depth of 0.255m and a width of 1.438m.

1.15 JCDecaux boasts “Consistent exposure - 24/7 and unlike other media, it cannot be switched off”¹⁰ for its outdoor advertising products. While this may be appropriate in a setting that consists primarily of passing footfall or traffic, such a level of intrusion is entirely inappropriate in a residential area. An illuminated, day-and-night, constantly changing digital advertising screen would be highly intrusive, especially for the hundreds of residents overlooking the double-sided panel.

⁵ <https://www.jcdecaux.ie/republic-ireland/digital#digipanel>

⁶ <http://www.dublindocklands.ie/living-docklands/things-do/sightseeing/grand-canal-square>

⁷ <http://www.dublindocklands.ie/about-us/dublin-docklands-sdz/docklands-sdz/vision-and-themes>

⁸ Allied Irish Banks Plc (2015) Reference DSDZ3879/14

⁹ Boojum Hanover Quay Limited (2019) Reference DSDZ2728/19

¹⁰ <https://www.jcdecaux.ie/republic-ireland/why-advertise-outdoor#always>

1.16 If permitted, the sign would become a permanent fixture on this location, and would establish commercial advertising as an accepted use. Without doubt, it would encourage similar planning applications in the area, as well as the use of illuminated signage on buildings. The visual amenity of the area would be quickly undermined, and the vision and character gradually eroded.

1.17 In summary, the installation of the signage would damage the visual amenity of the area, and the vision of Dublin City Council for its development. It would be highly intrusive for residents, especially those overlooking the proposed location. It would go against previous decisions on illuminated signage on Hanover Quay, and by establishing commercial advertising as a use on the proposed site, it would encourage similar applications in the area.

Negative impact on Hanover Quay and the local community

1.18 Hanover Quay is first and foremost a place that our members call home. The quality of the public realm matters. The visual amenity of the area matters. Streetscapes that encourage pedestrian movement, the use of high-quality materials and well-designed street furniture enhance the lives of residents, and promote a sense of neighbourhood and pride in our growing community.

1.19 We strongly object to any part of our neighbourhood being handed over to the advertising industry for commercial gain. Apart from the physical intrusion of the digipanel, the presence of commercial advertising in an area designed for leisure, cultural activities and relaxation by residents, office workers and visitors alike is unacceptable.

For the reasons above, this application should be refused.

Yours sincerely

Teresa Hackett, Chairperson
Grand Canal Dock Residents Association