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News

Flagship DIT site to proceed if planning granted

Tim O'Brien

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THE FLAGSHIP regeneration project for the 30-hectare Grangegorman site in Dublin's north inner city will definitely go ahead if the project gets planning permission, a Bord Pleanála hearing was told yesterday.

Michael Hand, chief executive of the Grangegorman Development Agency, told the planning hearing much had been said about the recent decision of the Government to postpone funding for the project.

But Mr Hand said exchequer funding for the redevelopment would amount to 20 per cent of the development, and quoted Minister for Education Ruairí Quinn to the effect that the "Government is committed to the long-term funding of this project".

In the meantime he said there were "multiple" avenues of funding that could be tapped to begin the project, which included the relocation of constituent colleges of Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT); establishing a range of Health Service Executive healthcare facilities on site; and creating a new urban quarter.

Mr Hand told inquiry inspector Ruairí Somers these funding avenues included the sale of existing DIT college premises; savings mad by DIT in relocating; philanthropy; and the sale of assets.

He said a new hospital was already under construction on the border of the site and was expected to open in 2012, while a number of existing buildings on site could be used to transfer DIT colleges from early next year. While he said this was subject to the project receiving planning approval, he told Mr Somers there was no doubt "the project will move ahead if the application is successful".

The proposed Grangegorman redevelopment involves relocating DIT, which is based in 39 locations across the city, to the new campus, bounded by Constitution Hill and the North Circular Road.

It also involves redevelopment of HSE facilities for the elderly, as well as childcare. Also included is a new urban quarter, which would rejuvenate the entire area in Dublin's north inner city.

Mr Hand told the inquiry the site has a 200-year heritage of institutional use and is situated just 1.3km from O'Connell Street. The "quantum of development" envisaged was 380,000sq m of educational, healthcare and public facilities, he said.

Integrating the campus with the city is to be a key aspect of the plan with the promotion of cycling, walking and public transport, the inquiry was told.

Fixed elements of the plan include the development of St Brendan's Way, a wide pedestrian boulevard leading across the site from Constitution Hill to the North Circular Road, while a "Serpentine" walk will offer a "more tranquil route", DIT planner and Grangegorman Development Agency member Terry Prendergast told the inquiry.

She said "green fingers" would offer public landscaped routes into the city.

Ms Prendergast said the development zone would have “two hearts”, one for the health and academic elements, and one for the arts and social facilities.

The inquiry is expected to continue next week.

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