

## Greenlight for €80m housing development

Eoghan Dalton Reports

An Bord Pleanála has overruled the advice of its own inspector and granted permission for a major housing development in Waterford City. The board has granted planning permission for an €80m site by Jackie Greene Construction to build 199 houses and 44 apartments as well as crèche in Knockboy, on a nine hectare site around 5km from the city centre.



The inspector had concluded that the development would seriously injure the residential amenities of the areas for existing and future occupants due to poor site layout and design. She claimed a street containing 11 houses within the proposed development was in an area zoned for open space. The inspector also considered eight “pocket parks” in front of the apartments were substandard and did not provide a safe recreational space, especially for young children.

However, the board did not accept the inspector’s findings as it believed the plans would provide a satisfactory arrangement and amount of open space to serve all elements of the proposed development.

The board said, subject to a number of planning conditions, the development would be acceptable in terms of pedestrian and traffic safety as well as convenience and public health.

Permission for the project was granted under the new fast-track planning process for strategic housing developments which removes the need for developers to first seek approval from the local council.

A total of 21 third party submissions were made on the project with many claiming the development was premature because of the lack of amenities and physical infrastructure in the area including roads, drainage, schools and recreational areas.

They also claimed apartments were unsuitable for the Knockboy area and pointed out there were boarded up units in other estates in the locality. The development was also opposed by a majority of local councillors who claimed its density and scale was too high and unsuitable for the area, while residents would also be highly dependent on transport by car.

Council management had supported the development being granted planning permission subject to certain conditions. An Bord Pleanála imposed the condition that proposed gates to nine apartment blocks should be omitted from the scheme. Planning permission for a 285-unit development on the same site had been refused by An Bord Pleanála in December 2017 on the grounds that it was not necessary to ensure the continuity of housing supply in Waterford city as well as the predominance of large three and four-bedroom houses.