

Good news for Malahide neighbours



Arlene Harris

When one owner was refused planning for a mews house, his architect suggested a bigger plan

Everyone knows it's important to get on with your neighbours. But while getting along with each other is good for morale – and the odd loan of a cup of sugar – a happy neighbourhood can also be beneficial to the re-development, maintenance and general upkeep of your property and, indeed, the local environs.

When architect Darragh Lynch was approached by a homeowner in Co Dublin regarding a project which had been refused by the planning authorities, he and the client's immediate neighbours set about putting their heads together to see if they could come up with an alternative collaboration.

"One of six neighbours applied for planning permission to build a mews house in his back garden in Malahide and was refused," says Lynch, a UCD graduate. "Because of this refusal, there was a general consensus that planning would not be possible but another neighbour approached me to confirm if this would be the case."

"After reviewing the reasons for refusal, my advice was that it would be possible to get planning but co-operation from adjoining neighbours would be very helpful and very quickly there was a group of six who were all interested in exploring the possibility of what might actually get the planning go-ahead."

All of the neighbours had access to a rear mews lane but because of the planning refusal they all believed it wasn't possible to develop the rear of their own gardens.

The architect, who spent part of his early career in London and then worked in India for four years on development projects, drew up plans for a generic house type as part of an overall masterplan for the mews houses, each measuring 150 sq m with three bedrooms.

Co-ordinated

Each house had a different layout to suit the needs of the individual client but were all similar so would form a co-ordinated street elevation.

"I suggested [to the neighbours] that I design an overall masterplan which included the rear of all of the six houses," he says.

"This involved a number of meetings to agree the overall strategy for the project and the scope and scale of the plan. I discussed this with the local authority and they were broadly positive and highlighted the areas of concern which would need to be addressed."

"Further meetings were required to agree the roads and parks details. We then engaged individually with each client to design the details of each separate house and completed the planning applications."

"The inspiration [for the individual designs] came from listening to the clients and understanding what problem they were trying to solve. It was also important to understand who was going to be using



the finished building and what kind of space was needed. After that it was a process of doing the drawings and looking at it over and over until the solutions started to make sense."

The project took two years from start to finish and when the plans were submitted, there were some local objections but all six houses were given planning permission by an Bord Pleanála.

Of course it wasn't plain sailing from start to finish, but Lynch says the group worked well together to iron out any problems.

"There were lots of glitches along the way, in fact at each stage there were serious challenges and difficult decisions to be made," he admits.

"However, there was also more to be gained by collaborating together rather than working individually. For example, the width of the access lane had to be widened as part of Fingal's requirements and everyone had to lose some space from the back of their garden to facilitate this."

"Negotiating this individually would have been almost impossible. However, working as a group the decision was made quite quickly because everyone was focused on a common goal. The group were terrific to work with – they took the time to understand where I was coming from and then pushed back to try to get the best possible solution to the different variables. When the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, you know you are getting close to a good solution."

"So, not only was this an interesting and enjoyable process, it also provided our clients with a range of options for developing their site and is an excellent example of how working together can help people get more out of the planning process."

Strength in numbers

Strength in numbers was very evident in this case and the founder of DLA (Darragh Lynch Architects) says working on a collaborative project proved to be beneficial all round.

"Although it was a slower process because things have to be taken one step at a time and everyone needs a bit more time to make decisions and some aspects of the work are more expensive, other aspects do benefit from an economy of scale [surveys, photomontages, drainage design, etc]."

"Fingal were very helpful and supportive of the scheme as it would have been easier for them if it was a single application – but that wouldn't have addressed the needs of the different stakeholders."

"So while the process was more time consuming than a regular planning application, we achieved a much better result by working in collaboration."

"The local authority had more certainty about the outcome, and adjustments to boundaries were made to solve common problems which would have been almost impossible without a group ethic."

Following the Malahide group scheme, Lynch is working on two more collaborative projects and is interested in working

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PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN BETSON

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on others, saying he enjoys being challenged to help people most in need of a solution.

"I enjoy making architecture for people who really need it," he says.

"Trying to come up with good solutions to the housing crisis is something I spend a lot of time on. I am also engaged with making sustainable solutions to building projects."

"I always try to make the right thing from the right things so that it is comfortable and efficient but also in balance with our global resources."

Innovative

So, with that in mind, the innovative architect says no one should be afraid to voice their dream design as while it may seem outlandish to a homeowner, architects like Lynch will revel in the prospect of making those dreams come true.

"Making a change to your house is something you may do once in 20 years but architects do it every day," he says. "So it makes sense to invest, not just the money but the time into doing it right."

"I always encourage my clients to dream the dream and have as broad an ambition for the project as possible – because if you have a good idea, there are lots of different ways to realise it. If you censor yourself from the beginning, there is no way you are going to get what you want."

"Architects are good at imagining dreams and turning them into reality." darraghylynch.ie

What so
€43

10 Carbe
Griffith



Spacious three
terraced house
refurbishment
(1,163 sq ft) of

8 Cherry
Delgany,



Three-bedroom
scheme dating
About 102 sq m
living space.

35 The V
Adare, C

Four-bedroom
190 sq m (2,041
adjoining the five
hotel.
Asking: €420,000
Sold: €430,000
Difference: 2%
Agent: O'Connell
Murphy

6 Balrea
Trim Ro



Large and luxu
room house in
setting, standin
hectare (.75 of

6 Clarind
Dún Lao

Large well pro
two-bedroom
the first floor of
block in Dún La
Recently fitted
Service charge
€1,900 a year.

Asking: €375,000
Sold: €420,000
Difference: 12%
Agent: Wyse &

Prices from
Property Price
January 2019