



View of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, over the boundary wall on the right is the laneway.

Foreword

In January 2011, Sergeant Martin O'Sullivan of Roxboro Garda Station contacted me in my capacity as Chairperson of the Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance (BWRA) with a request that the BWRA start a petition to extinguish the right-of-way between Beechgrove Avenue and Our Lady of Lourdes Church / Childers Road.

Sergeant O'Sullivan informed me that the Gardaí were experiencing a lot of problems at night with youths engaged in 'joy' riding and other anti-social activities using the right-of way as an escape route when pursued by the Gardaí.

Indeed, there are other problems with the laneway in question, with youths congregating at night to drink, take drugs and torment residents for their own entertainment. A number of residents have expressed to us that they find the situation intolerable and feel like moving out. I am personally aware of a serious incident that went unreported because the victim feared reprisal.

The laneway is also used to illegally dump rubbish in back gardens of derelict council-owned properties and in the laneway itself; recently a three-piece suite of furniture was dumped and burnt out in the laneway. I agreed to take Sergeant O'Sullivan's proposal to our Committee for further discussion.

Our Committee discussed the matter at length. It was felt that simply extinguishing the right-of-way would not eliminate all of the problems; it would also deny use of the right-of way to legitimate pedestrians because of the actions of a minority. It was agreed that we should first consult with the residents of Beechgrove Avenue to ascertain how they felt about any proposed extinguishment. Opinion regarding extinguishment of the right-of-way was divided so we presented residents with an alternative proposal, which was well received.

Our next port of call was a visit to Fr. Damien Ryan, the Parish Priest of Our Lady of Lourdes. Our PRO, Cathal McCarthy, and I, visited Fr. Ryan on 7th February 2011 and outlined the BWRA' s proposal to him. Fr. Ryan informed us of the ongoing problems he has with youths gathering at the Church at night to drink alcohol. He told us that mass goers had been stoned by such youths and that he himself had bottles and stones thrown at him when he asked them to move on and while he welcomed our proposal he felt that youths would continue to gather in front of the church.

On learning of Fr. Ryan's difficulties we revised our plans and we now believe that our proposal will greatly improve the quality of life for all concerned. I would like to thank the BWRA committee members for their contributions and efforts in producing this proposal. The full implementation of our proposal would undoubtedly eliminate the facilitation of anti-social and criminal behaviour, as described above, and restore confidence and stability to the immediate area. We have a right to live in a safe and secure environment while awaiting regeneration.

Proposal

There can be no doubt that the present physical lay out of the Church lane facilitates the ongoing anti-social and criminal behaviour, therefore, we propose that the following essential works be carried out:

Demolition of Existing Boundary Wall

The immediate demolition of the boundary wall that separates Our Lady of Lourdes Church grounds from the path. The proposed wall to be demolished is denoted in red on the next page.

People would be considerably less inclined towards illegal dumping and other anti-social and criminal activities if they didn't have a wall to hide behind.

Day Time Only Access

The installation of a decorative security gate at the top of the steps in Beechgrove Avenue. The proposed location of new day-time-only-access gate is denoted in blue on the next page.

The gate would open at 8.30pm and be locked at an agreed time. Mr. Joseph Lynch of 16 Beechgrove Avenue has agreed to be a key holder.

Such a system is not unprecedented; a similar day-time-only-access gate has been used for a public right-of-way between Wickham St. and Upper Gerald-Griffin St.

The Installation of a security gate with day-time-only access would eliminate the area as an escape route for 'joy' riders and other anti-social elements when being pursued by the Gardaí

Installation of Bollards

Bollards to prevent vehicular access should be installed at the existing access to the lane at the front of the Church. The proposed location for the bollards is denoted in green on the next page.

In recent weeks a stolen car was driven into this access area and was burnt-out. The bollards would prevent vehicular access and would be necessary once the wall was demolished.

Installation of Street Lighting

The installation of seven streetlights. The locations of the proposed streetlights are indicated in yellow on the next page. These streetlights should be 7.5 metres high with a 500-watt tungsten halogen lamp and would require a special Light Head to prevent light pollution to the rear gardens of adjacent homes. A description of the Light Head is given on the next page.

It is a proven fact that a well-lit area is a deterrent to anti-social and criminal behaviour. The installation of the streetlights should deter gangs from congregating on front of the Church at night.



Funding

As the area where the proposed works need to be carried out is in the legal remit of the Limerick Southside Regeneration Agency, funding for our proposal should be available from their Social Inclusion Minor Capital Projects funds. Expenditure on such projects is defined by the Agency as follows:

"Minor Capital Project Expenditure involves General Estate upkeep and other Physical Works required to maintain a reasonable quality of life and environment for residents while awaiting the Regeneration Programme to be implemented fully."

Furthermore, the *Functions of the Agency* as set out in the *Limerick Southside Regeneration (Establishment) Order 2007*, states:

- 5. (1) (a) It shall be the general duty of the Agency to secure
 - (i) the social and economic regeneration of the Southside Area, on a sustainable basis; and
 - (ii) improvements in the physical environment of the Southside Area.
 - (2) Without prejudice to sub-article (1), the Agency may do all such things, including the incurring of expenditure and, with the Minister's consent, the borrowing of money, which appear to it to be requisite, advantageous or incidental to, or which appears to it to facilitate the performance of its functions.

Conclusion

The implementation in full of our proposal would certainly deter those engaged in anti-social and criminal behaviour from the immediate area and improve the quality of life of the affected residents, encouraging them to stay.

Our proposal is concerned with altering the physical layout of the area to end the facilitation of anti-social and criminal behaviour in the vicinity of the Church Lane. Indeed, if the area were adequately policed to begin with it wouldn't be an issue at all.

Altering the mindset of those that have made our proposal necessary is another matter. For our part, the BWRA is in the process of developing an outreach programme. We intend to start a number of environmental projects, which will run throughout the spring and summer months. It is our hope that those who are presently involved in causing trouble might be encouraged along a different path and contribute positively to the Community.

Contact Details:

Matt Collins (Chairperson): 087 65 77 063

Martin Woodland (Secretary): 087 28 74 924

Cathal McCarthy (PRO): 087 29 29 676

Post: Chairperson, BWRA, c/o 24 Clarina Avenue, Ballinacurra Weston, Limerick.

E-Mail: WestonAlliance@gmail.com

Web: www.LimerickRegeneration.org/BallinacurraWeston.html



A view of the Church Lane from Hyde/Childers road where the proposed bollards should be located.

About Us

The Ballinacurra Weston Residents' Alliance (BWRA) was formed in May 2010 and is the only independent residents' group in the designated regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston.

The BWRA is representative of both homeowners and tenants living in the immediate regeneration area and was formed to ensure that all residents have their rights upheld during the regeneration process. So far we represent 90% of households in the immediate regeneration area.

We are an active organisation:

- We write letters on behalf of our members, highlighting their individual problems to the relevant agency.
- We highlight areas of concern to our Community; environmental issues like illegal dumping, health & safety issues such as rat infestations and unsecured vacant houses, and security problems regarding anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- The BWRA is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Umbrella Group
- The BWRA is a member of *Limerick Regeneration Watch*; as such the BWRA is allied with the Moyross Residents' Alliance, the Weston Gardens Residents' Association and individual residents' in St. Mary's Park and Southill.

The Officer Board of the BWRA is made up as follows: Matt Collins (Chair), Stephen Corbett (Vice-Chair) Martin Woodland (Secretary), Angela Collins (Treasurer) and Cathal McCarthy (PRO).

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Produced by the Ballinacurra Weston Residents Alliance