

**SUBMISSION OF OPINION
FOR THE
ORAL HEARING ON THE 13/05/2009**

**IN RELATION TO

THE PROPOSED 'INDAVER',
INCINERATOR COMPLEX
AT
RINGASKIDDY,
CO. CORK.**

BRIEF: To examine the affect, if any, on residential property values within the greater area of the proposed development.

INSTRUCTED BY: Mr. Joe Noonan of Noonan Linehan Carroll Coffey, Solicitors, 54 North Main Street, Cork.

PREPARED BY: Mr. Andrew Moore M.I.A.V.I of ANDREW MOORE & CO., 25 Paul Street, Cork.

I am principal of Andrew Moore & Co, a member firm of the I.A.V.I., based in Cork City.

I am a qualified member of the I.A.V.I with over thirty years of trading experience.

I have been involved in the residential market in the greater Cork area for over 20 years.

THE BRIEF: **To examine the affect, if any, on residential property values within the greater area of the proposed development.**

My role in this study was:

- 1) To establish, if any impact would en-sue from such a complex being constructed.
- 2) To identify the nature, if any, of such an impact if it arose.
- 3) To offer an opinion and overview in relation to same.

The brief was distinct and clear and no analysis or comment of endorsement or criticism is presumed to this stated purpose.

APPROACH

The subject matter is very broad, as such I have chosen to restrict my approach to confined areas. I have chosen the following **methodology**.

- a) I have carried out a questionnaire study with a specific number of professionals in the residential market. Analysed, same and concluded.
- b) I have carried out an overview and reply in part, to evidence on property values as submitted primarily, or as secondary supporting evidence.
- c) I am most familiar with the area in question and I confirm having re-visited same and spoke with many residents of the greater area.
- d) I have examined a number of documents and reports to include the following.

The documents and reports which I have examined included:

- An Environmental impact statement (E.1.5) prepared for Indaver.
- Evidence of Ria Lyden Engineer of Arup Consulting Engineers, with particular reference to her opinion on related property values.
- Evidence of impact on property values of Poolbeg thermal treatment plant, prepared on behalf of Dublin City Council. Prepared by Marie Hunt, Chartered Surveyor and submitted as supporting evidence.
- Cork County Council Managers reports on proceedings of meetings with members of the Cork Council in relation to Indaver proposals, and the outcome of same. Report on Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006. Report of Paul Murphy Senior Planner. (Concluded that the proposal is materially contrary to the Cork City County Development Plan 2003). Documents relating to the planning submission etc.
- Selected one or specific headings for further consideration.

INDAVERS SUBMISSION BY RIA LYDEN

I only chose to deal with this report in a synoptic manner and with due respect to Miz Lyden and her statement of evidence.

‘I note that her expertise is as an engineer and not as a valuer’.

In part she quotes some secondary information, the source of which is not identified, from a report on clean air in England.

It Stated:

‘During the proposal, planning and construction stages for an incinerator (as for any large industrial project) there is a short-term impact on property values in the immediate vicinity. Much of this is a result of uncertainty while deliberations continue. Once the facility is operational, property values have been shown to recover’.

I don’t agree with or understand how this conclusion has been reached, or how it is supported. It is 3rd hand information, its reference is thousands of miles away and does not reflect, or relate to the site in question.

In the course of one short and typical paragraph 4.2, there is extended use of vague qualifications, they include, *‘may be short term, precautionary nature, unlikely, likely, perceived belief, mis-information, more likely etc’.*

Their continual usage undermines the content and confirms the vagueness of the opinion as tendered.

In relation to VISUAL IMPACT

1) Cork County Architects Department, planning report, Stated:

'It will visually dominate the landscape from both the water and from the populated and historic areas of Cobh and Monkstown.

Photomontages indicate that the building will have a visual impact from virtually the entire harbour area and particularly from entering the harbour and from Cobh (cathedral) and Monkstown and adjacent areas. The angular nature of the proposal and absolute scale of this impact and the fact that it breaks the skyline will be hugely negative'.

2) The non-technical summary. Indaver report Stated:

- *The impact of the facility on views to hand, will be significant, permanent and negative.*
- *The view from the water will be significant, permanent and neutral.*
- *The views from Ringaskiddy, Monkstown and Cobh will be moderate, permanent, neutral and negative.*
- *The views from further out such as Carrabinny and Aghada, they will be slight, permanent and neutral or negative.*

The montages provided reinforce the visual enormity of the complex. Extending to some 23,390 square metres and un-paralleled in size it will be deflected only by the visual impact of the stack (90-70 od) and the visual impact of the roof line which will in fact break the natural contour of the scope and indeed the skyline itself.

3) Miz Lyden stated in paragraph 6.1

'The development will have a moderate visual impact on tourist views'.

This obviously completely disagrees with the county architect's observation but more interestingly is at odds with and contrary to the opinion as stated in the non-technical survey, submitted by **Indaver**.

Despite what Miz Lyden stated in her evidence she appears to be in disagreement with both the Cork County Architects and her employers ARUP who wrote the original non-technical summary.

Supporting Evidence

Miz Lyden submitted another document supporting her evidence, it was a study on **'Impact on the property values of Poolbeg Thermal Treatment Plant'**, prepared on behalf of Dublin City Council, April 2007.

It was prepared by Marie Hunt Chartered Surveyor. There in it **stated:**
'Property values can be reduced by perception that a risk exists, whether or not the perception is real or rational.'

'Some studies carried out in Europe, based on solicited opinions only, show negative findings regarding perceptions of what impact detrimental conditions have on residential markets and there is no doubt but that if a polling exercise was conducted in Dublin at present, similar results would be found due to a lack of knowledge about the thermal treatment process. This type of analysis purports to document adverse impacts on property values, yet it lacks any rigorous statistical evidence based on actual transactions and it is little more than an opinion poll. For this reason we have had regard to both statistical and anecdotal information in agreeing our results.'

'The resulting statistical data coupled with evidence from other similar plants internationally shows no measurable impact (positive or negative) from plants being located close to residential property. It appears that for a four to eight week period immediately following construction of a plant, residential values sometimes fall off precipitously but then quickly return to normal once it becomes clear that there are no long-term physical effects. However, there appear to be no long-term value impacts.'

It sets out to support the afore mentioned with statistical graphs on house price trends 2002 – 2007. The thrust of the argument supporting the stated opinion is entirely based on resulting statistical data and that any reports which were not in agreement, were dismissed as being based on perceived and irrational fears.

The statistical methodology used is very narrow in context, easily abused and easily countered I could with comfort, counter-balance and I believe negate, this stated opinion, but the constraints of time, must be respected.

The dismissive thrust and tone as in 'perceived irrational fears' and its contemptuous phrase-ology is I believe, not deemed worthy of comment.

Another main example or prop of support to the opinion tendered was the comparison between the proposed Incinerator complex and 'the wind farm'. I will not take any of the hearings valuable time by perusing this point. As a valuer I do not see a wind farm and an incinerator complex of this magnitude, to be comparative, be it in size, scale, function or most importantly impact.

The latter part of this supporting data stated:

(Page 8, paragraphs 2 & 3)

- 1) *'To date, there appears to have been no negative impact on either residential property values or on the volume of transactions in the neighbourhoods that are in closest proximity to the proposed thermal treatment plant at Poolbeg'.*
- 2) *'It should be noted that for the value impact study to have validity, the impact must be analysed over a long period of time'.*

In my opinion these two statements contradict one another.

‘Facility will not affect property prices or tourism’.

This was the banner headline in the Examiner newspaper across four columns, as stated by Miz Lyden to the oral hearing. It continued:

‘There may be short-term impacts on adjoining assets and properties, but that may be to the precautionary nature of people who may be reluctant to purchase at time of construction. It is unlikely that the proposed facility will impact on property prices other than during this period. It is more likely that once the facility is operational, impact on property prices would be eliminated.’

I find it alarming that such certainty of opinion and belief which in my opinion is un-supported in the submission can be published in such a seemingly factual manner. It is an unqualified opinion and on my qualified research, runs contrary to the stated opinions of the combined qualified Valuer’s of the area.

The Cork Area Strategic Plan 2000 – 2020 Page 27 Stated:

‘The natural environment and in particular spectacular harbour area are without comparison elsewhere in Europe. Protecting this asset and the social and cultural assets in all there manifestations is therefore vital to the future success of the area’.

From reading this plan I was particularly drawn to the effect on Cobh itself. This historic and architectural gem has been devastated in recent decades by commercial closures and environmental negligence. The planners of previous centuries did it proud, the concerns of today are real and not perceived. The nature of the gentle and steep gradients that prevail will result in a huge section of the community having a constant view of the proposed complex. To presume that this proposed development will not impact on the value of their properties is I now conclude an un-supportable stance.

An acute indicator of how Cobh has suffered is the announcement this week of confirmation that hundreds of thousands has been spent, not on cleaning up the toxic mess in Haulbowline, but on a report into the proposed costs of making this site, safe and use-able.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE PROFILE:

To assist in reaching a conclusion of opinion I sought to achieve a broad base of consensus from the bodies of professional valuers. With this in mind I offer the following analysis and data.

- It was completed by 14 qualified Valuer's (11 = I.A.V.I, 3 = P.A.V.I) who were specifically targeted for there expertise.
- They were of mixed gender, all being senior residential negotiators, most of them being principals with an average of 30 years experience each.
- Twelve of the 14 are based on or within the confines of the South Mall being the centre of commerce for the county and 2 are based in Cobh.
- All live within 10 miles of the proposed complex.
- Each questionnaire was carried out in person but no opinion beyond the stated questions, was encouraged or sought.

QUESTIONNAIRE

It is proposed that an incinerator, a massive industrial complex, will be built in Ringaskiddy.

- 1) Would you personally choose to live close or within sight of the proposed complex.
- 2) As a valuer, do you feel such a complex would impact on property values, within the greater hinterland.
- 3) If it did impact, would it be negative or positive.
- 4) If you were to use one word to describe the impact if any, on property values, would any of the following words be appropriate:

a) Improve

b) Enhance

c) Diminish

d) Decimate

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULT:

- 1) 14/14 (100%) Would not choose to live within sight of the proposed development.
- 2) 14/14 (100%) Felt that the proposed development would have an impact on property values.
- 3) 14/14 (100%) Felt that the impact would be negative.
- 4) 12/14 (85%) Felt that the 'diminution' of value was the appropriate term.
- 5) 2/14 (15%) Felt that 'decimation' of value was the appropriate term.

CONCLUSION

While I did not partake in the questionnaire, my own concluded opinion was tightly sealed and reinforced by the nature of collective yet individual consensus of the assembled experts. These are the professionals in the area in question, and unanimity and strength of opinion was most revealing. There is no question; if this proposal proceeds it will have a serious and negative impact on property values.

From a property Valuer's perspective, it will only be assessed in the fashion of blight on all our houses.'