

LAND PLANNING & DESIGN

CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS

Lands Between Leixlip Road, Cooldrinagh Lane
and the M4 including the former Tara Co-Op
Lucan, Co. Dublin

Landscape and Visual Analysis

Prepared for
Tara Co-Op

by
Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

September 2021

3 Molesworth Place, Dublin 2

Tel: 01 661 0419

Fax: 01 661 0431

Email: info@csrlandplan.ie

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2	EXISTING RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT.....	3
2.1	South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022	3
2.2	Draft South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028	11
2.3	Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023.....	14
2.4	Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023.....	16
2.5	Summary of Planning Policy Section	18
3	LANDSCAPE BASELINE: Description of the Lands and Environs.....	19
3.1	Summary of Landscape Characteristics and Values	23
3.1.1	Conservation Values	23
3.1.2	Enhancement Values	23
4	ANALYSIS.....	25

1 INTRODUCTION

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal was prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds on behalf of the landowners of Tara Park, Leixlip. Its purpose is to inform development ideas for the lands in the context of landscape and visual sensitivities. It is informed by a desktop study and a survey of the site and its receiving environment in July 2021. The report identifies and discusses the landscape and visual constraints and opportunities concerning lands at Tara Park and Leixlip Road, Lucan, Co Dublin.

2 EXISTING RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

The following statutory plans are referenced in this section, owing to their relevance to the site location and its proposed development:

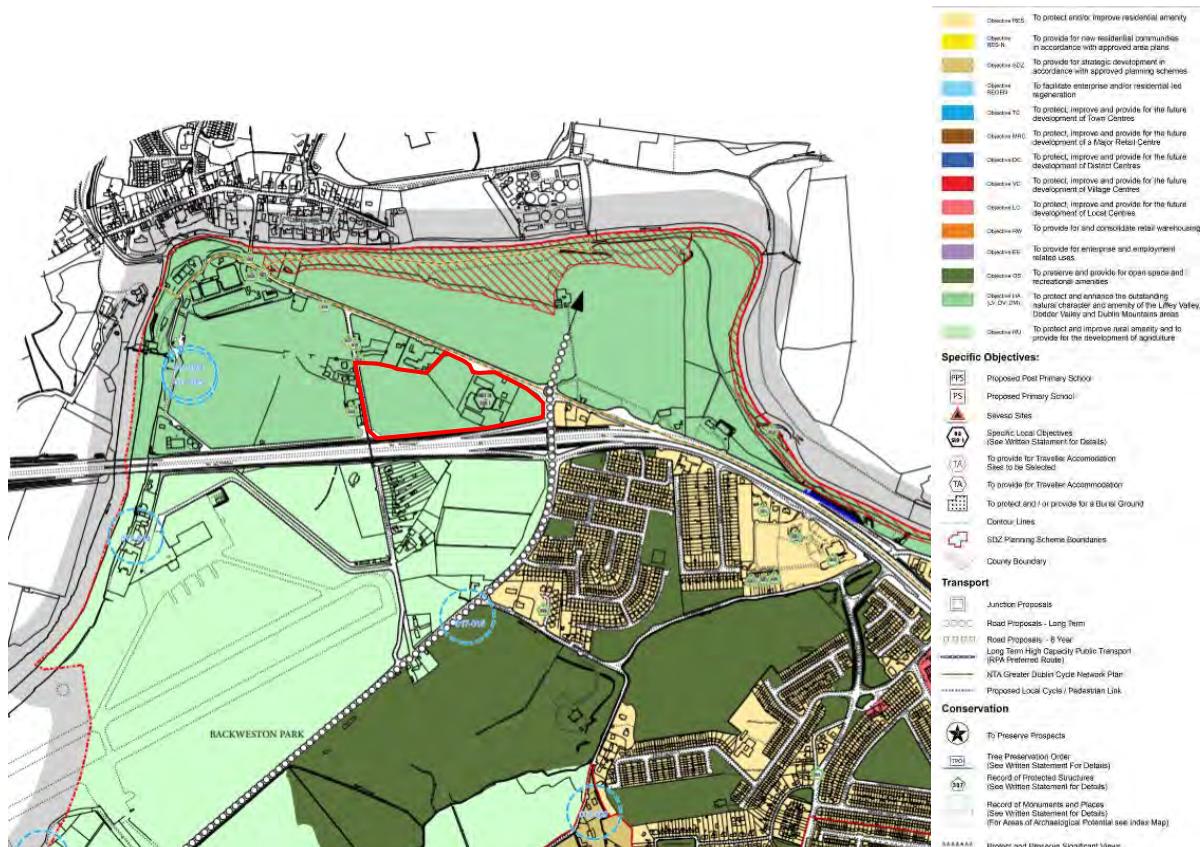
- South Dublin Development Plan 2016-2022,
- Draft South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028 and
- Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023
- Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

2.1 South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022

The subject lands falls within the jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council, and as such the current South Dublin Development Plan 2016-2022 (hereafter referred to as the Development Plan) is applicable. The Development Plan contains a number of policies and objectives relating to landscape and protected views and prospects as well as zoning objectives.

Zoning

Figure 1: Land use Zoning Map (Source: SDCC)



The subject lands lie within the 'High Amenity' Zoning area as per the development plan, with the objective;

"To protect and enhance the outstanding natural character and amenity of the Liffey Valley, Dodder Valley and Dublin Mountains areas".

River Valleys & Natural Conservation

Sites of national and international biodiversity value are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHA). These are protected under law and through the planning system. However, they account for only a small proportion of the County's Green Infrastructure.

The lands lies close to the River Liffey to the North, East and West. The River Rye is a tributary of River Liffey, joining at Leixlip, to the north-west of the subject site.

The Development Plan HCL Policy 10 Liffey Valley & Dodder Valley states;

"It is the policy of the Council to protect and enhance the visual, recreational, environmental, ecological, geological and amenity value of the Liffey Valley and Dodder Valley, as key elements of the County's Green Infrastructure network."

Relevant Objectives;

HCL10 Objective 1: *To restrict development within areas designated with Zoning Objective 'HA – LV' (To protect and enhance the outstanding character and amenity of the Liffey Valley) and 'HA – DV' (To protect and enhance the outstanding character and amenity of the Dodder Valley) and ensure that new development is related to the area's amenity potential and is designed and sited to minimise environmental and visual impacts.*

HCL10 Objective 2: *To ensure that development within the Liffey Valley and Dodder Valley will not prejudice the future creation and development of uninterrupted and coherent parklands including local and regional networks of walking and cycling routes.*

HCL10 Objective 3: *To ensure that development proposals within the Liffey Valley and Dodder Valley, including local and regional networks of walking and cycling routes, maximise the opportunities for enhancement of existing ecological features and protects and incorporates high value natural heritage features including watercourses, wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, mature trees, hedgerows and ditches, as part of the County's Green Infrastructure network.*

HCL10 Objective 7: *Within areas designated 'High Amenity – Liffey Valley' and 'High Amenity – Dodder Valley' non-residential development will only be permitted where it: Relates to the area's amenity potential or to its use for agriculture or recreational purposes, including recreational buildings; or Comprises the redevelopment of or extensions to existing commercial or civic uses or development of new commercial or civic uses within an existing established area of commercial or civic activity; and Preserves the amenity value of the river valley including its landscape value, views or vistas of the river valley and its biodiversity value.*

A specific local objective is attached to the 'Tara Park" site

HCL10 SLO 1: *To facilitate the redevelopment and regeneration of the site of the former Tara Co-Op with a replacement development of a scale, design and layout appropriate to its prominent location in the Liffey Valley "HALV" and in proximity to the M4 and the Lucan/Leixlip urban areas. Any such development shall be subject to an environmental management plan in relation to remediation of any contaminated land and should not compromise the important geomorphic and archaeological heritage of the site, and adjacent sites. Additionally it should not compromise the vistas or landscape amenity or biodiversity of the Liffey Valley.*

Architectural / Archaeological Heritage

The SDDP chapter on Heritage, Conservation and Landscapes sets-out a range of policies and objectives to protect and conserve the built, cultural and natural heritage of the county. With regards to the land in consideration, there are no protected monuments, archaeology or built heritage affected by the development although some from the distinctive character of Cooldrinagh Lane to the west.

Figure 2: NIAH Extract of Protected Structures (blue) and Record of Monuments and Places (in red)



Relevant Policy & Objectives:

HCL Policy 3 Protected Structures: *"It is the policy of the Council to conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of Protected Structures and to carefully consider any proposals for development that would affect the special character or appearance of a Protected Structure including its historic curtilage, both directly and indirectly".*

HCL3 Objective 1: *To ensure the protection of all structures (or parts of structures) and the immediate surroundings including the curtilage and attendant grounds of structures contained in the Record of Protected Structures.*

Landscape

The Development Plan includes the following policies and objectives relating to Landscape character:

'It is the policy of the Council to preserve and enhance the character of the County's landscapes particularly areas that have been deemed to have a medium to high Landscape Value or medium to high Landscape Sensitivity and to ensure that landscape considerations are an important factor in the management of development.'

HCL7 Objective 1: *'To protect and enhance the landscape character of the County by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the landscape, taking full cognisance of the Landscape Character Assessment of South Dublin County (2015).'*

HCL7 Objective 2: *'To ensure that development is assessed against Landscape Character, Landscape Values and Landscape Sensitivity as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment for South Dublin County (2015) in accordance with Government Guidance on Landscape Character Assessment and the National Landscape Strategy.'*

Views and Prospects

Section 9.2.1 of the Development Plan refers to Views and Prospects. Scenic views are distinguished as views for protection and preservation and are marked on the Development Plan map.

Generally, there are no views and prospects from the lands or towards the lands.

Green infrastructure

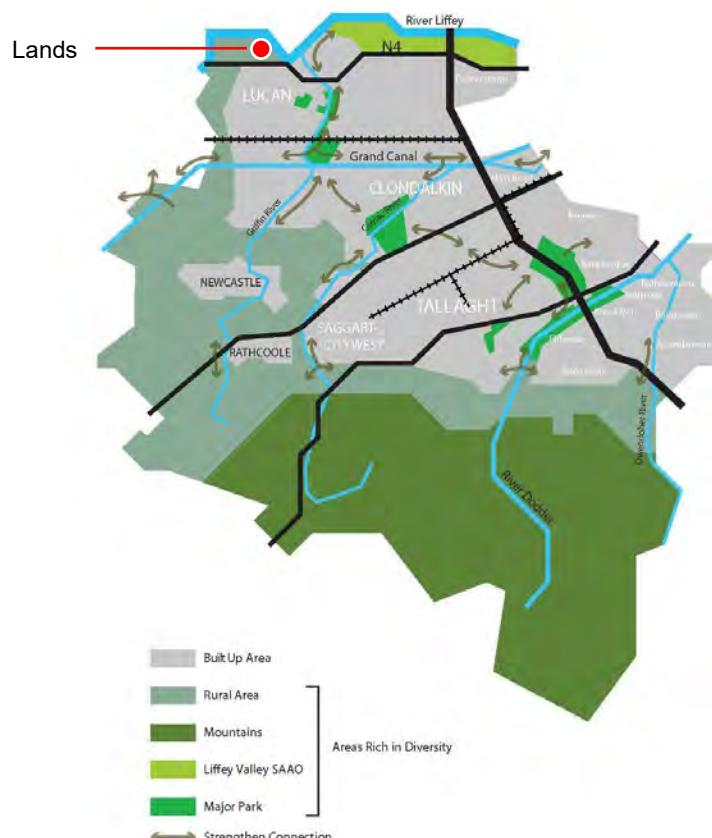
The term Green Infrastructure is described in the Plan as an interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, greenways, parks and conservation lands, forests and other open spaces that adjoin and are threaded through urban areas. The following objectives are contained in the Plan:

G1 Objective 1: *'To establish a coherent, integrated and evolving Green Infrastructure network across South Dublin County with parks, open spaces, hedgerows, grasslands, protected areas, and rivers and streams forming the strategic links and to integrate the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy throughout all relevant Council plans, such as Local Area Plans and other approved plans.'*

G1 Objective 2: *'To prepare and implement a South Dublin County Green Infrastructure Strategy during the lifetime of this plan that will form the basis for the identification, protection, enhancement and management of the Green Infrastructure network within the County.'*

The Plan notes that the County's Green Infrastructure network comprises an interconnected network of green spaces that possess a broad range of ecological elements including *inter alia*: core areas such as the County's three Natura 2000 sites; proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), the Liffey Valley, Dodder River Valleys and the Grand Canal; and individual elements such as watercourses, parks, hedgerows/ tree-lines and sustainable drainage features in park lands.

Figure 3: South Dublin County Council Strategic Green Infrastructure network (Source: SDCC)



A number of objectives are listed in the Plan as follows:

G2 Objective 1: *'To reduce fragmentation of the Green Infrastructure network and strengthen ecological links between urban areas, Natura 2000 sites, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, parks and open spaces and the wider regional Green Infrastructure network.'*

G2 Objective 2: *'To protect and enhance the biodiversity value and ecological function of the Green Infrastructure network.'*

G2 Objective 9: *'To preserve, protect and augment trees, groups of trees, woodlands and hedgerows within the County by increasing tree canopy coverage using locally native species and by incorporating them within design proposals and supporting their integration into the Green Infrastructure network.'*

G2 Objective 10: *'To promote a network of paths and cycle tracks to enhance accessibility to the Green Infrastructure network, while ensuring that the design and operation of the routes responds to the ecological needs of each site.'*

G2 Objective 11: *'To incorporate appropriate elements of Green Infrastructure e.g. new tree planting, grass verges, planters etc. into existing areas of hard infrastructure wherever possible, thereby integrating these areas of existing urban environment into the overall Green Infrastructure network.'*

G2 Objective 12: *'To seek to control and manage non-native invasive species and to develop strategies with relevant stakeholders to assist in the control of these species throughout the County.'*

G2 Objective 13: *'To seek to prevent the loss of woodlands, hedgerows, aquatic habitats and wetlands wherever possible including requiring a programme to monitor and restrict the spread of invasive species such as those located along the River Dodder.'*

A separate policy and list of objectives exist relating to watercourses:

Green Infrastructure Policy 3 Watercourses Network:

'It is the policy of the Council to promote the natural, historical and amenity value of the County's watercourses; to address the long term management and protection of these corridors and to strengthen links at a regional level.'

G3 Objective 1: *'To promote the natural, historical and amenity value of the County's watercourses and address the long term management and protection of these corridors in the South Dublin Green Infrastructure Strategy.'*

G3 Objective 2: *'To maintain a biodiversity protection zone of not less than 10 metres from the top of the bank of all watercourses in the County, with the full extent of the protection zone to be determined on a case by case basis by the Planning Authority, based on site specific characteristics and sensitivities. Strategic Green Routes and Trails identified in the South Dublin Tourism Strategy, 2015; the Greater Dublin Area Strategic Cycle Network; and other government plans or programmes will be open for consideration within the biodiversity protection zone, subject to appropriate safeguards and assessments, as these routes increase the accessibility of the Green Infrastructure network.'*

G3 Objective 3: *'To ensure the protection, improvement or restoration of riverine floodplains and to promote strategic measures to accommodate flooding at appropriate locations, to protect ground and surface water quality and build resilience to climate change.'*

G3 Objective 5: *'To restrict the encroachment of development on watercourses, and provide for protection measures to watercourses and their banks, including but not limited to: the*

prevention of pollution of the watercourse, the protection of the river bank from erosion, the retention and/or provision of wildlife corridors and the protection from light spill in sensitive locations, including during construction of permitted development.'

Enterprise and Employment Objectives

Section 4.3.3 of The Plan contain policies which relate to Enterprise and Employment, which include the following objectives:

ET3 Objective 4: 'To direct light industry and logistics uses to enterprise and employment zones that are proximate to the strategic and national road network.'

ET3 Objective 5: 'To ensure that all business parks and industrial areas are designed to the highest architectural and landscaping standards and that natural site features, such as watercourses, trees and hedgerows are retained and enhanced as an integral part of the scheme.'

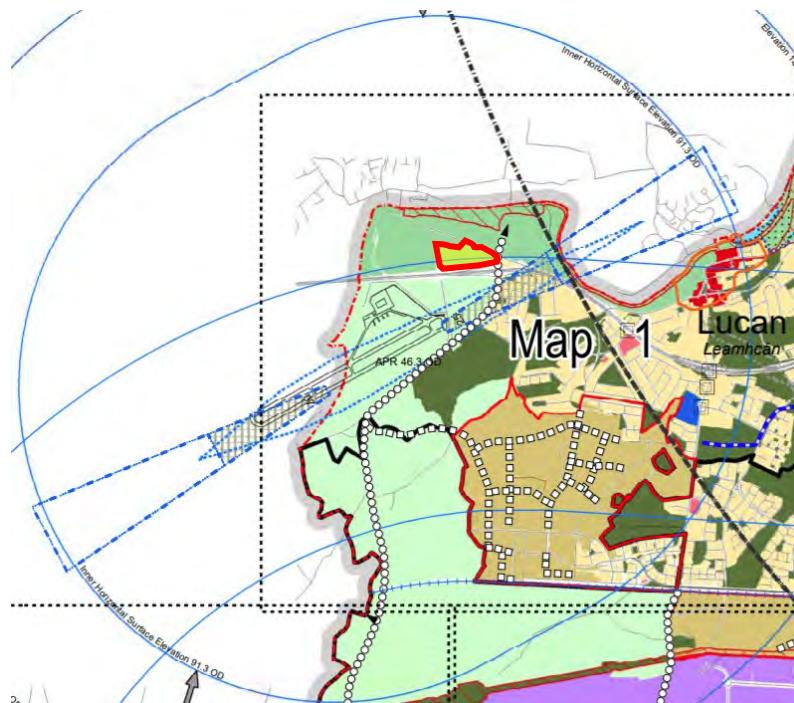
ET3 Objective 6: 'To ensure that business parks and industrial areas are designed to promote walking, cycling and public transport.'

Aerodrome

The lands lie in close proximity to Weston Aerodrome, which consists of one runway. The safeguarding requirements in the vicinity of civil aerodromes are principally set out as 'International Standards and Recommended Practices' within 'Annex 14 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation', which is published by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the Irish Aviation Authority Guidance Material on Aerodrome Annex 14 Surfaces (2015).

For each runway length category, the ICAO sets out different safeguarding requirements in the form of three-dimensional geometric shapes 'Obstacle Limitation Surfaces', which define the airspace and provide a framework for limiting the heights and/or closeness of any objects or structures on or in the vicinity of the aerodrome (with further variations depending on whether its runways have 'instrument' status or not). In general, any new objects should not penetrate the 'Obstacle Limitation Surfaces' and any existing objects which penetrate the 'Obstacle Limitation Surfaces' should ideally be removed.

Figure 4: Weston Aerodrome Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (Source: SDCC)



Relevant Objectives:

E9 Objective 2: *To maintain the airspace around the aerodrome free from obstacles so as to facilitate aircraft operations to be conducted safely, including restricting development in the environs of the aerodrome. The airspace is defined by the Obstacle Limitations Surfaces, prepared and mapped on the Development Plan map in accordance with the ICAO Standards and the Irish Aviation Authority 'Guidance Material on Aerodrome Annex 14 Surfaces' (2015).*

IE9 Objective 3: *To prohibit and restrict development in the environs of Weston Aerodrome in the following ways:*

- a) *By prohibiting development within the immediately adjacent approach areas to reduce the slight risk to persons on the ground and the increased risk to occupants of an aircraft in the event of the aircraft accidentally touching down outside the aerodrome boundary while taking off or approaching to land, except whereby development could not reasonably expect to increase the number of people working or congregating in or at the property (this may include development such as the extension of an existing dwelling or a change of building use).*
- b) *By applying height restrictions to development in the environs of the Aerodrome.*
- c) *By eliminating potential sources of interference with the operation of electronic navigation aids.*
- d) *By obviating possible hazards to aircraft through the generation of smoke, dust or fumes which may reduce visibility.*
- e) *By controlling and assessing the locations of any activities which may be an attraction to birds.*
- f) *By limiting the extent, height and type of external lighting to avoid confusing pilots in the interpretation of aeronautical lights or cause dazzle or glare. The extent of the restriction necessary in any particular instance depends on its purpose. In some cases, more than one purpose may have to be served in which case a combination of the restrictions to satisfy all the purposes to be served will be necessary.*

IE9 Objective 4: *To limit residential development and other land uses impacted by noise, such as nursing homes, schools, hospitals, and conference centres within the Noise Significant Area Boundary delineated for Weston Aerodrome, subject to an appropriate noise assessment and mitigation measures to protect residential amenity.*

Landscape Character

South Dublin County Council Landscape Character Assessment (hereafter referred to as the Assessment) contains five Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The site is located within the Urban South Dublin LCA and is abutting the Liffey Valley LCA.

Urban South Dublin LCA 5

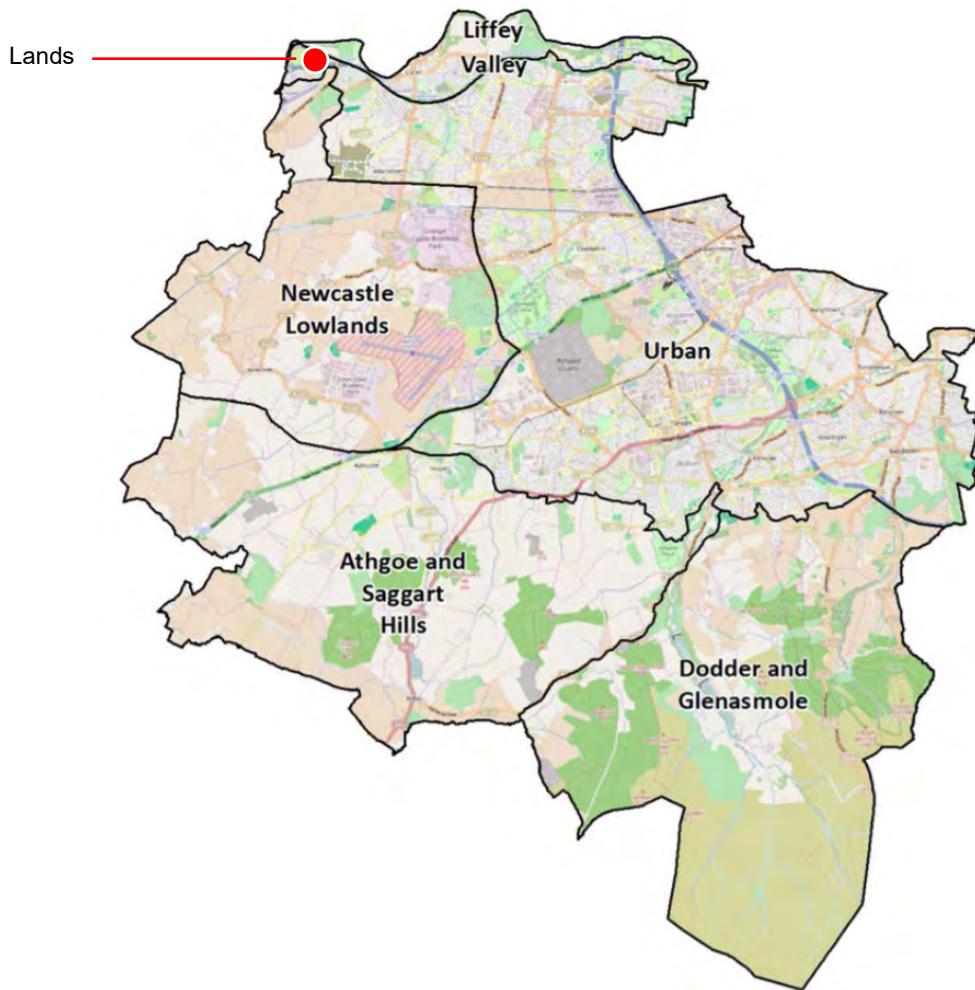
A Landscape Character Assessment of South Dublin was completed in 2015. The proposed site is located within 'Landscape Character Area 5 - Suburban South Dublin'. The built-up nature of the area is noted and the presence of major transport routes, housing areas, grassy spaces, industrial areas and parks, as well as the backdrop of rural and upland views. In general prospects of the Liffey River Valley, Dublin Mountains and to the rural hinterland are to be preserved however no specific viewpoints or scenic routes are identified in close proximity to or relevant to the site.

The views out to the Dublin Mountains and rural hinterland are of particular importance here. Key mitigation measures cited in the write up of the character area are that;

- *Grassland and other amenity area open spaces should be managed for the dual benefits of public access and biodiversity.*

- Tree and shrub planting should be an integral component of amenity grasslands (schools recreational grounds, golf courses and playing fields).
- The development of green infrastructure to connect different habitats within the urban context.
- Tree planting on streets and open spaces – particularly on ‘miscellaneous’ open space in housing areas- to improve their character.
- Enhance connectivity between open spaces as a means of enhancing biodiversity while providing off road connections for pedestrian and cyclists.
- Proposed developments should be audited for their impact on views particularly those to the rural hinterland of the county (2015 p.90).

Figure 5: Landscape Character Areas in South Dublin County (Source: SDCC)



Liffey Valley LCA 1

Due to the close proximity to the LCA 1 Liffey Valley, the landscape character assessment to LCA 1 is referred to below. Generally, the view of the valley and rural hinterland are of particular importance here. Key mitigation measures cited in the write up of the character area are that;

- Overall, the LCA is in good to moderate condition. The habitats and river areas, particularly around the Strawberry Beds, retain a rural sense despite the proximity of the M50. This rural character contrasts with the more active urban character that comprises much of the rest of the LCA.
- The historical settlements of Lucan and Palmerstown combined with a number of large houses and their parklands increases landscape interest and diversity.

- The views into the river valley and across the ridges to the north are attractive features, provide a landscape setting and context and contribute significantly to the distinctive character of this landscape. It is an interesting, diverse LCA and the landform generally creates an intimate and enclosed landscape that offers occasional rather than consistent views to the river such as at river crossings or from the slopes of the valley.
- The habitats, in particular mature trees and alluvial woodland, add further interest and screening opportunities.
- Noise associated with the major transport corridors can detract from the rural character around the Strawberry Beds

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Character Sensitivity and Capacity

	Landscape Sensitivity	Visual Sensitivity	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Landscape Capacity
LCA 5 Urban South Dublin	<p><i>Please note, the urbanised areas of South Dublin County was not assessed in detail as this would require a finer scale assessment, normally undertaken as a townscape character assessment.</i></p> <p>(Note: The Assessment sets out a summary of key characteristics, values, forces for change, condition and mitigation measures however more detailed analysis is required)</p>				
LCA 1 Liffey Valley	Medium High - High	Medium High - High	High	High	Negligible to none. Key Characteristics of the landscape are highly vulnerable to development. Development would result in a significant change in Landscape character and should be avoided if possible.

2.2 Draft South Dublin Development Plan 2022-2028

South Dublin County Council commenced a review of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022 on the 31st of July 2020 and the Council is expected to create a new South Dublin County Development Plan for the period 2022 to 2028 over the next two years.

The Draft County Development Plan 2022-2028 (*hereafter referred to as Draft Plan*) is now available online and the public are invited to get involved and give views on the Draft Plan. Stage 2 of the development plan and public consultation process commenced on the 7th July 2021 and will run up to and including the 15th of September 2021.

Most of the policies and objectives in relation to the subject site has remained the same. Only items that have changed or amended in the Draft Plan are presented here.

Specific Local Objective

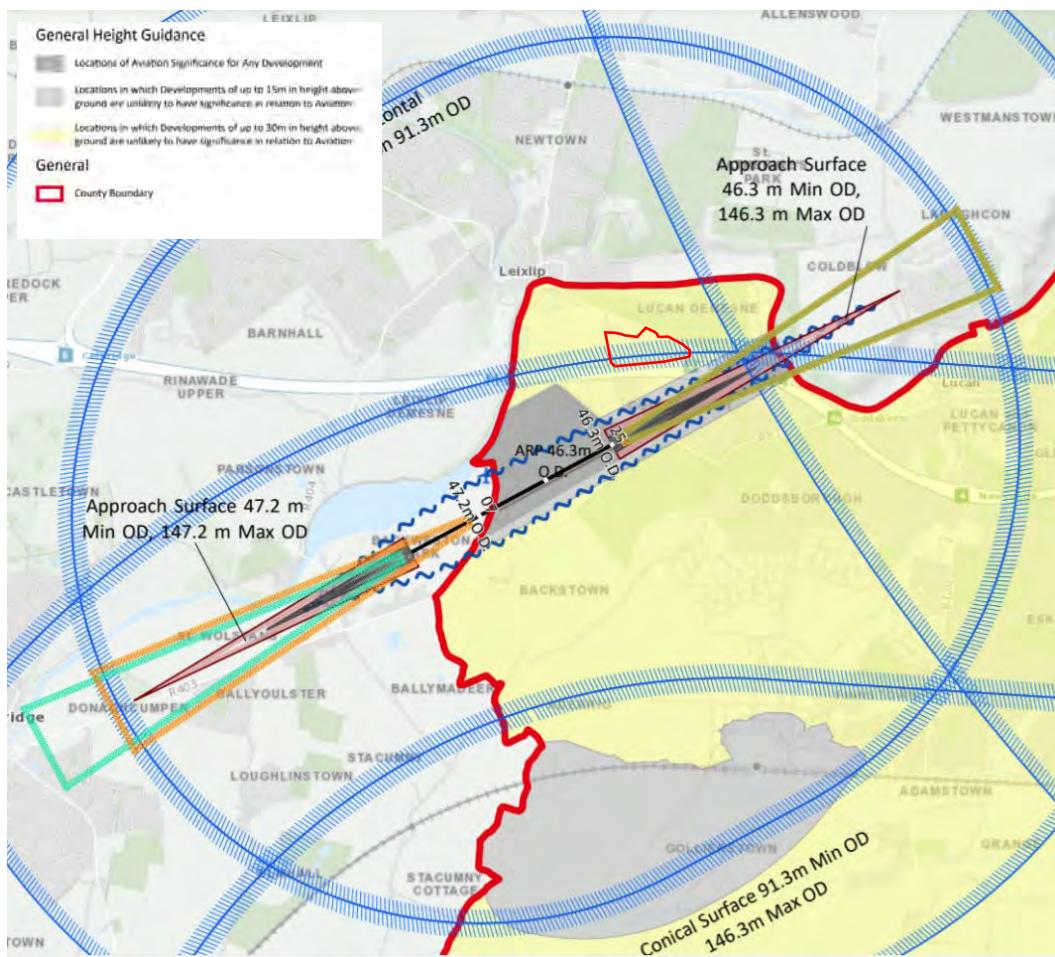
A Specific Local Objective (HCL10 SLO 1) is attached to the Tara Park site in the current Development Plan, which has been removed in the Draft Plan. The HCL 10 SLO 1 is a specific local objective to the site that related the appropriate redevelopment and regeneration of the Tara Co-Op with a replacement development that responded to local character, amenity and biodiversity value of Liffey River Valley.

The HCO10 SLO 1 is no longer attached to the site in the Draft Plan.

Building Height

Due to the close proximity to the Weston Aerodrome, there are development limitations in the vicinity for aviation and public safety. The subject site lies within 'yellow' zone where '*Developments of up to 30m in height above ground are unlikely to have significance in relation to aviation*'.

Figure 6: Weston Aerodrome General Height Guidance for developments



Liffey Valley

The Landscape and Visual Amenity of Liffey Valley has been strengthened in the new Draft Plan.

Relevant Policy & Objectives:

Policy NCBH7: Liffey River Valley and Special Amenity Area Order, states;

Protect and enhance the special amenity value of the Liffey Valley, including its landscape, visual, recreational, ecological, geological, and built heritage value, as a key element of the County's Green Infrastructure network and implement the provisions of the Liffey Valley Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO).

NCBH7 Objective 1: *To restrict development within areas designated with Zoning Objective 'HA – LV' (To protect and enhance the outstanding character and amenity of the Liffey Valley) and to ensure that new development:*

- *does not significantly impact on built or cultural heritage assets, on sensitive habitats, species, or ecosystem services,*
- *is related to the area's amenity potential,*
- *is designed and sited to minimise environmental and visual impacts,*
- *and enhances the County's green infrastructure network.*

NCBH7 Objective 3: *To improve and extend the Liffey Valley Special Amenity Area Order along the Liffey Valley area in South Dublin from the border with Dublin City administrative area*

to Kildare County and promote its tourism potential subject to the protection of its biodiversity and ecological value.

NCBH7 Objective 4: *To facilitate and support the development of the Liffey Valley (Zoning Objective 'HA – LV') as an interconnected green space and park in collaboration with Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, Kildare County Council, the OPW and other State agencies, existing landowners, community groups and sectoral and commercial interests in accordance with the Ministerial Order for the Liffey Valley SAAO by:*

- *Carrying out a study of the lands that comprise Liffey Valley inclusive of the Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO) and adjacent lands;*
- *Investigating and determining, as part of the study, viable and appropriate uses to support and facilitate the development of a Regional Park (Liffey Valley Park), with particular emphasis on enhancing the recreation, amenity value and accessibility of the area while protecting the valley's biodiversity and enhancing the green infrastructure network;*
- *Identifying and designating, as part of the study, possible future new pedestrian routes and footbridge locations in accordance with 'Towards a Liffey Valley Park' (2007) or any superseding plan, including potential permissive access routes.*

Universal accessibility for all should be balanced with ensuring that environmental and built heritage sensitivities are not negatively impacted upon.

NCBH7 Objective 5: *To ensure that development proposals within the Liffey Valley, including local and regional networks of walking and cycling routes*

- *avoid impacts on the Valley's sensitive landscape character and ecological network,*
- *maximise opportunities for enhancement of existing features,*
- *protect and incorporate natural and built heritage features as part of the County's Green Infrastructure network,*
- *do not prejudice the future creation and development of interconnected public parklands.*

NCBH7 Objective 7: *To work in collaboration with the owners of lands along the length of the river to seek to provide appropriate public access.*

Landscape Character

The subject site still remains in the South Urban Dublin LCA 5 as per the Draft Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) – Appendix 9. All the sensitivities and constraints remain the same as identified before in this report under Section 2.1 (Landscape Character) and summarised under Table 6.

Views and Prospects

The views and prospects remain the same – that is to protect the views towards the Dublin Mountains and River valleys, in this case particularly the Liffey Valley.

Green Infrastructure

There are efforts made to strengthen the Green Infrastructure & Network in the County. The Draft Plan reflects the current development plan policies.

Relevant Policies & Objectives:

Policy GI1: Overarching Protect, enhance and further develop a multifunctional GI network, using an ecosystem services approach, protecting, enhancing and further developing the identified interconnected network of parks, open spaces, natural features, protected areas, and

rivers and streams that provide a shared space for amenity and recreation, biodiversity protection, water quality, flood management and adaptation to climate change.

GI1 Objective 4: To require development to incorporate GI as an integral part of the design and layout concept for all development in the County including but not restricted to residential, commercial and mixed use through the explicit identification of GI as part of a landscape plan, identifying environmental assets and including proposals which protect, manage and enhance GI resources providing links to local and countywide GI networks

GI1 Objective 5: Continue to liaise with adjoining local authorities to ensure the protection and enhancement of cross county GI corridors.

Policy GI7: Landscape, Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage Protect, conserve and enhance landscape, natural, cultural and built heritage features, and support the objectives and actions of the County Heritage Plan.

GI7 Objective 1: To protect, conserve and enhance natural, built and cultural heritage features and restrict development that would have a negative impact on these assets in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 3 Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage of this Development Plan.

GI7 Objective 2: To protect and enhance the landscape character of the County by ensuring that development retains, protects and, where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the landscape, in accordance with the provisions of South Dublin's Landscape Character Assessment and the provisions of Chapter 3 Natural, Cultural and Built Heritage of this Development Plan.

2.3 Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023

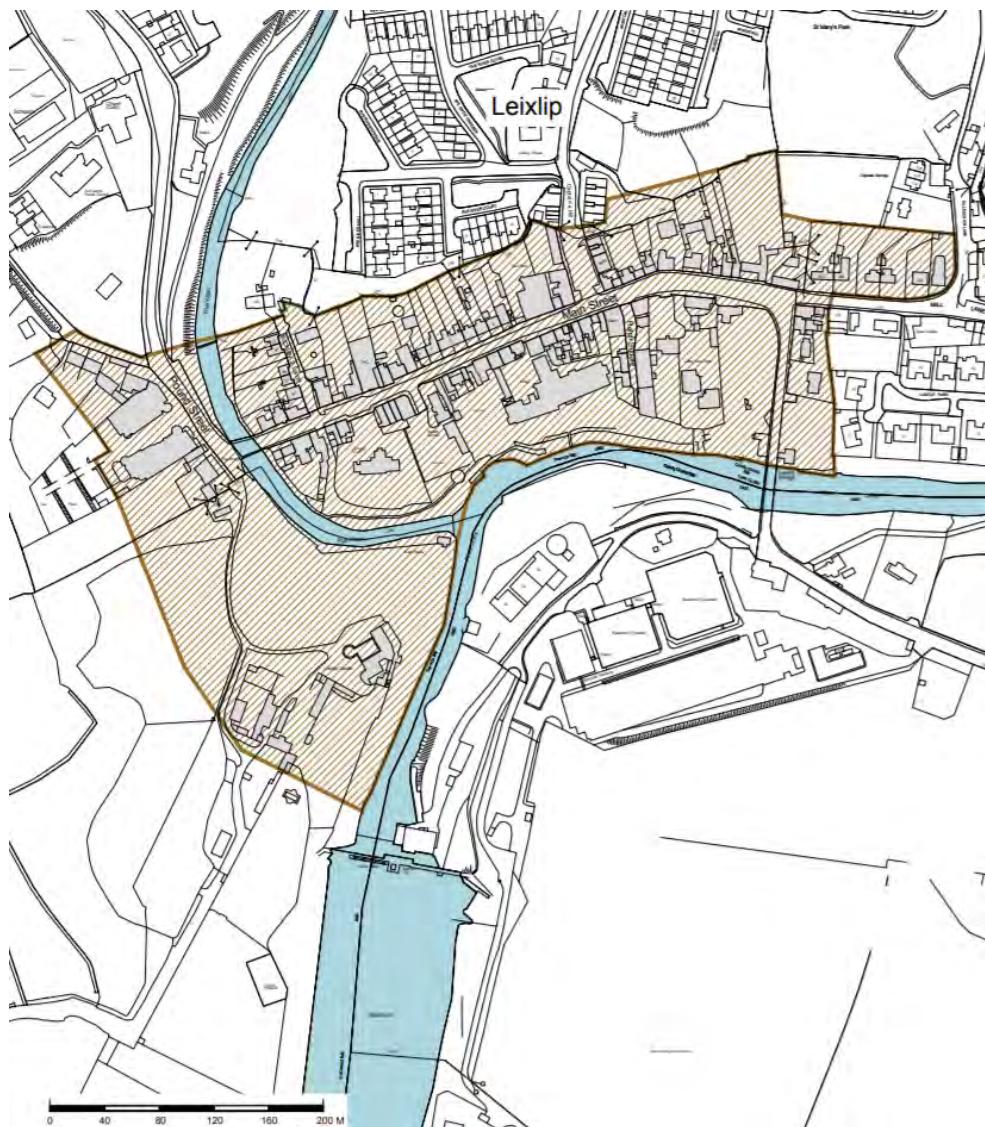
Due to the land's close proximity to the Kildare County Council boundary, Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (hereafter referred to as KCDP), its relevant policies and objectives, sensitivities and constraints for outlined below.

Archaeology & Architectural Heritage

AH 1: *Manage development in a manner that protects and conserves the archaeological heritage of the county, avoids adverse impacts on sites, monuments, features or objects of significant historical or archaeological interest and secures the preservation in-situ or by record of all sites and features of historical and archaeological interest. The Council will favour preservation in – situ in accordance with the recommendation of the Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (1999) or any superseding national policy.*

AH 4: *Ensure that development in the vicinity of a site of archaeological interest is not detrimental to the character of the archaeological site or its setting by reason of its location, scale, bulk or detailing and to ensure that such proposed developments are subject to an archaeological assessment. Such an assessment will seek to ensure that the development can be sited and designed in such a way as to avoid impacting on archaeological heritage that is of significant interest including previously unknown sites, features and objects.*

Figure 7: Leixlip Architectural Character Area (Source: KCDP)



Water Corridors (Rivers and Canals) (Areas of High Amenity)

WC 6: Support and promote an extension of the proposed Special Amenity Area Order for the Liffey Valley from Lucan to Leixlip (which is envisaged by the Dublin Local Authorities) to other parts of the Valley within County Kildare.

Landscape Character

The site sits in close proximity to “Northern Lowlands” Landscape Character Area. According to Council’s Landscape Character Area study, such lowlands are deemed “Class 1 Low Sensitivity,” which is described as being; “Areas with the capacity to generally accommodate a wide range of uses without significant adverse effects on the appearance or character of the area.”

In terms of landscape impact the site does not fall within the geographical area of this LCA. The only impact if any is visual impact.

Relevant Policy and Objectives:

LL 2: Continue to permit development that can utilise existing structures, settlement areas and infrastructure, whilst taking account of the visual absorption opportunities provided by existing topography and vegetation.

LO 1: *Have regard to the Landscape Sensitivity Factors in the vicinity of sites in the consideration of any significant development proposals.*

LO 4: *Protect the visual and scenic amenities of County Kildare's built and natural environment.*

LO 5: *Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly upland, river, canal views, views across the Curragh, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty.*

Protected Structures

PS 1: *Conserve and protect buildings, structures and sites contained on the Record of Protected Structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest.*

PS 2: *Protect the curtilage of protected structures or proposed protected structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development within the curtilage or attendant grounds of a protected structure which would adversely impact on the special character of the protected structure including cause loss of or damage to the special character of the protected structure and loss of or damage to, any structures of architectural heritage value within the curtilage of the protected structure. Any proposed development within the curtilage and/or attendant grounds must demonstrate that it is part of an overall strategy for the future conservation of the entire built heritage complex and contributes positively to that aim.*

PS 3: *Require that new works will not obscure views of principal elevations of protected structures.*

Green Infrastructure

GI 1: *Ensure the protection, enhancement and maintenance of Green Infrastructure and recognise the health benefits as well as the economic, social, environmental and physical value of green spaces through the integration of Green Infrastructure (GI) planning and development in the planning process.*

GI 16: *Encourage the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows as part of new developments using native plants of local provenance.*

Scenic Routes and Protected Views

The views of the River Liffey are protected views as identified on the development plan. The viewpoint is *RL 1 Views from Leixlip Bridge, Leixlip, as listed in the development plan*. It is general guidance then any development should not detract from the setting of the view or impact negatively of the visual amenity.

Relevant Policy:

SR 1: *"Protect views from designated scenic routes by avoiding any development that could disrupt the vistas or disproportionately impact on the landscape character of the area, thereby affecting the scenic and amenity value of the views."*

2.4 Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

Lands within Fingal Council lies to the north east of the lands and to the north of Liffey River. There is a physical barrier between the land and Fingal in the form of River Liffey.

There is a visual connection to Fingal.

Zoning

The lands north of the Liffey River is zoned as 'high Amenity' that is to 'Protect and enhance high amenity areas.'

This zoning reflective of the zoning in the South Dublin County lands on the southside of river Liffey.

Figure 8: Land Use Zoning as per Fingal Development Plan



The lands north of the Liffey is also zoned as 'Highly Sensitive Landscape' as per Green Infrastructure Map 1.

Relevant Objectives;

Objective GI06 Resist development that would fragment or prejudice the County's strategic green infrastructure network.

Landscape Character

The lands north of the Liffey falls within the 'River Valleys & Canal' Landscape Character Types. This landscape character type is also categorised 'Highly Sensitive' to development.

The following 'Principles of Development' are noted that are relevant to the subject site. This would also define the potential development of the site.

Principles for Development:

- *Skylines, horizon and ridgelines should be protected from development.*
- *Sites with natural boundaries should be chosen, rather than elevated or open parts of fields. The form of new developments should be kept simple and they should be sited within existing shelter planting or within the contours of the land to minimise visual impact.*

- *The character of the coastal visual compartments should be retained by preventing intrusive developments on headlands, promontories and coastal lands within the compartments. The coastal skyline should be protected from intrusive development.*

Views and Prospects

The County contains many vantage points from which views and prospects of great natural beauty, particularly towards the Liffey Valley and Dublin Mountains from the south of Fingal County. Any development on the subject site should not impact upon the natural qualities of the view and block long-distance prospects.

The two closest 'Prospect' identified in the development plan that are closest to the site are Lower Road and Westmanstown Road. The Lower Road Viewpoint is about 1.35 km east of the site and the viewpoint is predominantly looking at the Liffey Valley and its setting. Westmanstown Road viewpoint is about 1.75 km north-east of the site and there are panoramic views towards Lucan, Liffey Valley and Dublin Mountains.

The parkland setting of the Liffey and the vegetation of St. Catherine's Park effectively screen the site. There is no evidence of the existing development seen from these viewpoints.

Relevant Policies:

Objective NH40 Protect views and prospects that contribute to the character of the landscape, particularly those identified in the Development Plan, from inappropriate development.

2.5 Summary of Planning Policy Section

- The lands lie within the jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council.
- The lands lie within the vicinity of Fingal jurisdiction and Kildare County.
- The lands are zoned as 'High Amenity' zoning as per Development Plan.
- The lands fall within the geographical area of Landscape Character Area 5 – South Urban Dublin and borders with LCA 3 Liffey Valley as per the 2015 Landscape Character Assessment and Draft Landscape Character Assessment for South Dublin.
- The lands lie in the vicinity of 'River Valley & Canals' Landscape Character Areas as per Fingal Landscape Character Assessment.
- Protected View is SR 1 from Leixlip Bridge towards the Liffey Valley is the closest protected viewpoint. There are other prospects within Fingal, but there is no evidence of the existing lands visible from these viewpoints. The general guidance is that the visual amenity of the Liffey Valley and the character should not be affected by inappropriate development.
- The lands are also in proximity of Liffey Valley Proposed Natural Heritage Areas and River Rye / Carton House Demesne Special Area of Conservation. Any development should not affect the quality of these protected landscapes.
- The current SDDP includes guidance for development within the 'High Amenity' area that is complementary to the objectives of the classification – use, spatial arrangement, visually, access etc, and notes preference for development within existing established commercial areas.
- There is a specific local objective in the current Development Plan for the appropriate redevelopment of the Tara Co-Op site.

Whilst development on the Tara Co-Op site and the wider lands should respect and respond to the character of the nearby Liffey Valley and complement the uses of the river valley, it is not actually within the assessed character area of the Liffey Valley. Its character is acknowledged as being part of the South Urban Dublin LCA. Its zoning as High Amenity as part of the Liffey Valley is therefore an anomaly. Nonetheless any development should be sensitively designed in terms of its wider setting and to enhance the ecological value of the area.

3 LANDSCAPE BASELINE: Description of the Lands and Environs

The existing site and its environs are described below in terms of:

- Location and Overview
- Access, Site Boundaries, Vegetation and Topography
- Wider Landscape Character
- Visibility
- Landscape Character & Visual Amenity

Location and Overview

The lands are located approximately 1km from Leixlip Village. The lands can be divided into a large agricultural field to the west fronting on to Cooldrinagh Lane, and a smaller field in tillage fronting Leixlip Road. A central site occupied by the former Tara Coop industrial buildings, and a smaller triangle of land at the M4 junction / Leixlip Road to the east. The Tara Park site can be accessed from Leixlip Road to the north. Currently, the Tara Park is a partly functional warehouse park with 13 no. companies accommodated within the site. There are 3 no. large warehouses and 5-6 smaller warehouse / shelters within the site.

Figure 9: Site and immediate surroundings (site boundary in red)



Access, Site Boundaries, Vegetation and Topography

The Tara Coop site has been largely in commercial but private use and there is currently no general public access to it. The site is accessed through the main gate to Leixlip Road. The site is bounded on all four sides with metal security fencing. There is some evidence of planting all around the boundary to screen the site.

In general the fields of the wider lands are bounded by hedgerows with occasional trees.

The lands and surroundings are mainly flat slightly sloping northwards towards the river. There is a large drop in level to the south, beyond the site boundary along the motorway. The motorway embankment is well furnished with maturing trees.



(left to right) **Plate 1 & 2:** Tara Park and entrance from Leixlip Road



(left to right) **Plate 3 & 4:** Metal railing along Leixlip Road and metal mesh fence and vegetation along the western boundary of Tara Park lands.



(left to right) **Plate 5 & 6:** Becketts Hotel and Clondrinagh Terrace, heritage structures creating distinctive character to Cooldrinagh Lane

Wider Landscape Character

The site lies in a triangle of land formed by Leixlip Road (R148) and the M4, less than 100m from the link to exit 5 junction on the M4. The southern side of the R148 is characterised by a number of large commercial uses interspersed with agricultural uses.

To the north the site is bounded by Leixlip Road travelling east to west to Leixlip Village. To the south lies the new M4 corridor, lying in a low cutting. To the east and west lie agricultural fields. Approximately 120m west of Tara Park lies the Springfield Hotel. Further west adjacent the bridge crossing the Liffey into Leixlip lies the Salmon Leap pub, an old coaching inn, and to the rear of this a large land holding partially occupied by the Leixlip Drinking Water Treatment Plant – although mostly hidden it does have a very industrial character.

The wider landscape is influenced by the Liffey River and the Valley characteristics, with extensive parkland fields and woods to the north to the River Liffey itself. Trees are generally mature and high however south of the Leixlip road this landscape is broken by the commercial premises of the Tara Coop site and the Water Treatment Plan, the adjacent M4 and motorway junction. The nearby hotel retains good tree cover and in terms of character, scale and use is complementary to the wider landscape character.

Leixlip village is located about 1km to the west of the site. The village is very picturesque due to its historical character and the setting of the village along the Liffey Valley. The valley character area type is quite strong at this location. Leixlip Road is the main approach to the village from the M4 and Dublin.

The wider area is surrounding by some historical demesnes, namely Lucan Demesne and Leixlip Demesne. The built heritage of these demesnes remains and is evident in the landscape in the form stone walls, arches and gates, and local milestone / milepost.



(left to right) **Plate 7 & 8:** Setting of Leixlip Village & Leixlip Bridge and view of the valley from the bridge



(left to right) **Plate 9 & 10:** Stone walls and lined trees along Leixlip Road, and the river valley



(left to right) **Plate 11 & 12:** Hotel uses in the immediate surroundings.

Visibility

Despite the large structures still present on the Tara Coop site the parkland trees in the wider landscape screens the site from most public places. However, there are some views from the R403 elevated road over M4 motorway and some localised short distance views from Leixlip Road as it passes the site.

Longer-distance views for example, across the river valley, show little visibility of the existing structures on these lands due to the intervening mature tree cover and due to topography. There are some views available from elevated lands, but the views are localised or only visible from gaps in vegetation. The uses of these lands including Tara Park is well established over the years and is well screened or hidden. There are very limited long-distance views towards the lands and the existing development on site has little or no impact on the landscape character although new appropriate uses could contribute positively to the wider character both in built form, materiality and new vegetation.

Views from medium distance



(left to right) **Plate 13 & 14:** View from east from roundabout and view from west from Springfield



(left to right) **Plate 15 & 16:** View from pedestrian bridge over M4 and view from R403 bridge

Landscape Character and Visual Amenity

There are five different landscape character areas within 2 kms radius of the lands. Potential development of the lands would only affect the geographical area of LCA 5 Urban South Dublin and indirectly the LCA Liffey Valley of South Dublin. The lands are well screened and further landscape works would enhance the capacity of the landscape eliminating any potential visual impact on the other three landscape character areas. The area is strongly influenced by Liffey river.



(left to right) **Plate 17 & 18:** View from Catherine Park towards the site and Liffey Valley Plains as seen from Leixlip Road

The landscape character of the lands and surroundings is mixed and can be defined by;

- The strong River Liffey Valley landscape character of the area
- Historical setting of the Leixlip village along the unspoilt river Liffey
- Historical Demesnes in ruins or in-function scattered in the landscape.
- The local landscape characteristics of stone walls, materials and architectural style.
- Limited access to the site due to the private ownership and limited landscape resources within the site.
- Limited views from short/medium/long distance across the majority of the site area.

3.1 Summary of Landscape Characteristics and Values

The values and characteristics of the lands are listed below and can be categorised in two ways – values which should be conserved, and those that provide opportunity for enhancement. These values are summarised below:

3.1.1 Conservation Values

The values to be conserved indicate those aspects of the receiving environment which are valued and sensitive and could be negatively impacted on by the proposed development. These include:

- Recognition of the wider area's cultural, built and natural significance/heritage, ecological features, highly sensitive landscape character, and designated sites in policy.
- Retention or enhancement of high amenity landscape character of Liffey River Valley
- The relationship between the historical built environment in terms of views, boundary treatments and landscape character.
- The historical remains and character in the wider area.
- The parkland landscape character of the wider landscape – simple large elements – woods, fields and built elements.
- Key location on approaches to Leixlip.

3.1.2 Enhancement Values

The enhancement values reflect change that is occurring in the landscape and its inherent robustness - this includes the site's location on the edge of an urban area.

These include:

- Poor visual and built condition of the Tara Park site internally and where visible on the Leixlip Road
- Existing long standing industrial use of Tara Park with limited accessibility.
- Local specific objective supportive of appropriate redevelopment .
- Location on Regional Road a short distance from the M4 Junction 5 – ensuring easy access without extensive disruption. The junction itself changes the landscape character.
- Generally good landscape capacity given existing brown field use, mature hedgerows and extensive woodland in the wider landscape i.e. a robust setting which can accommodate development within existing and potentially new tree cover – the existing development at Tara Park is not visible in the wider landscape.
- Ambiguity of extent of High Amenity zoning, which includes existing commercial lands south of Leixlip Road, and the LCA Liffey Valley which terminates at the Leixlip Road. Land south of this road is within the LCA Urban South Dublin which is a more appropriate representation of its current character and influences.

4 ANALYSIS

The lands consist of the former Tara Co-op brownfield or disused industrial site and the adjacent agriculture fields in a triangle of land formed by the M4, Leixlip Road and the Irish Water infrastructure on the River Liffey to the west.

The lands and the landscape could clearly benefit from redevelopment of the former Tara Coop site and associated appropriate development on surrounding lands that did not intrude on the conservation values identified in the wider landscape. Such development could potentially be a beneficial addition to the landscape particularly locally on Leixlip Road.

The triangular area of land described above and the land in question is zoned as "*High Amenity*" i.e. "*To protect and enhance the outstanding natural character and amenity of the Liffey Valley, Dodder Valley and Dublin Mountains areas*".

However the lands are significantly developed with the former Tara Coop buildings, the Leixlip Water Treatment Plant and the Springfield and Beckett Hotel, as well as the M4 to the south and Junction 5 interchange to the east and Leixlip Road itself connecting west to the town. Existing built or non-agriculture development comprises over 50% of the land (within the triangle) area, and all of the Tara Coop site. This is recognised by the South Dublin Landscape Character Assessment where this triangle of land is excluded from the Liffey Valley Character Area which more reflects the high quality and sensitive landscape of the Liffey Valley, and instead this land is included within the Urban South Dublin Landscape Character Area reflecting a more built-up character.

The benefits of redevelopment of the Tara Coop lands are recognised in the current Development Plan by a specific local objective on the site (HCL10 SLO 1):

"To facilitate the redevelopment and regeneration of the site of the former Tara Co-Op with a replacement development of a scale, design and layout appropriate to its prominent location in the Liffey Valley "HALV" and in proximity to the M4 and the Lucan/Leixlip urban areas. Any such development shall be subject to an environmental management plan in relation to remediation of any contaminated land and should not compromise the important geomorphic and archaeological heritage of the site, and adjacent sites. Additionally it should not compromise the vistas or landscape amenity or biodiversity of the Liffey Valley."

Notwithstanding the need for development to contribute positively to the wider landscape and noting the sensitivity of the more undeveloped or natural river corridor character, there is clearly an anomaly across policies and guidance documents where local objectives to develop or redevelop the Tara Coop lands and appropriate adjacent areas, and existing tourism and infrastructural uses in this area, are in conflict with zoning policy whereby lands between Leixlip Road and the M4 are included in the High Amenity Zoning. This High Amenity zoning in turn does not reflect the SDCC Landscape Character Assessment which classifies this area as part of Urban South Dublin, not the Liffey Valley.

"Urban South Dublin" has much higher landscape capacity to absorb development and our analysis above indicates this would be the case through these lands.

This anomaly can be rectified by realigning the High Amenity zoning with the Liffey Valley LCA.

Recommendation

Realign the High Amenity Zoning around all or some of the triangle of land described by Leixlip Road, the M4 and the River Liffey to reflect the Landscape Character Assessment and the Liffey Valley LCA1.

Concerns about proximity to the Liffey Valley and /or High Amenity area can be addressed by localised objectives as already applied with a high design standard and response to landscape constraints. Typical guidance that might apply includes:

Landscape Constraints

Any development on site should not degrade the landscape, visual and amenity value of the Liffey Valley.

The use, setting, built form / height, design and materials should complement the character of the area.

Redevelopment should improve the existing brownfield nature of Tara Coop and adjacent lands to a robust landscape and ecologically beneficial design that improves the Green Infrastructure and Network.

Land Uses

Uses that complement the location and wider setting / LCA / High Amenity area

- Hotel / Lodge / Tourism
- Recreational / Sports and related
- Motorway services
- Offices, Conference Centre
- Residential – Apartments rather than housing

Design Intent

A landscape informed development strategy that:

- Follows enhanced biodiversity and ecological design principals, incorporating a quality, ecological friendly and aesthetically pleasing design into the High Value landscape – adding value and benefit.
- Makes a positive contribution to the Leixlip Road corridor/approaches to Leixlip and the character of this route / location close to the M4 junction – elevation, perimeter treatments etc.

Built Form

The form should be contained with the site/lands and designed to allow generous landscape treatments to perimeter, Leixlip Road frontage and within blocks

- Avoid large footprint buildings which will be difficult to screen / integrate into wider landscape
- Preference for blocks with landscape treatment / trees between elements and to perimeter allowing easier integration / composition in the wider landscape.
- A more generous land take beyond brownfield lands can allow a better spread/integration of development and integration of substantial landscape areas

Height

The existing buildings suggest typical heights and other local developments – Springfield Hotel and Water Treatment plant suggest precedent heights. The constraints of the nearby airfield also suggest limits on heights. In general heights should not exceed the natural landscape components e.g. Mature Parkland trees which are the dominant landscape element.

A mix of lower building heights with some higher elements to 15-20m would seem reasonable, and keep structure generally within the screening capacity of the wider landscape

Building heights and their visibility (and building form and materials) is not about hiding the development but creating a composition that integrates new built development appropriately in and complements the wider landscape.

Materials

Contemporary, modern – glass steel, wood

Summary

The key guiding element is selecting an intended use which will then inform a design strategy to reflect the evolving principles above.

Figure 10: Landscape Character Areas and site location

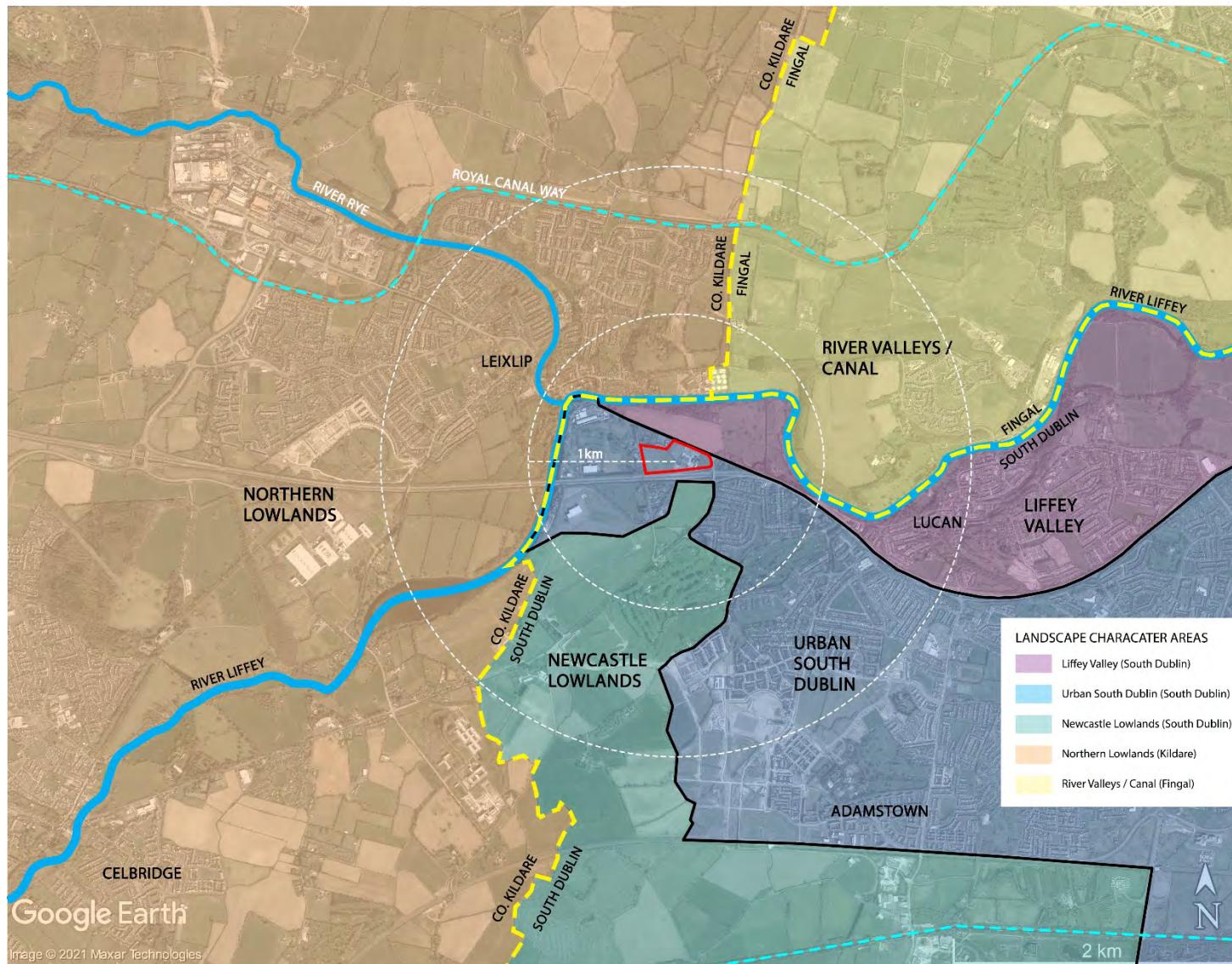


Figure 11: Land uses in the wider landscape area and site location

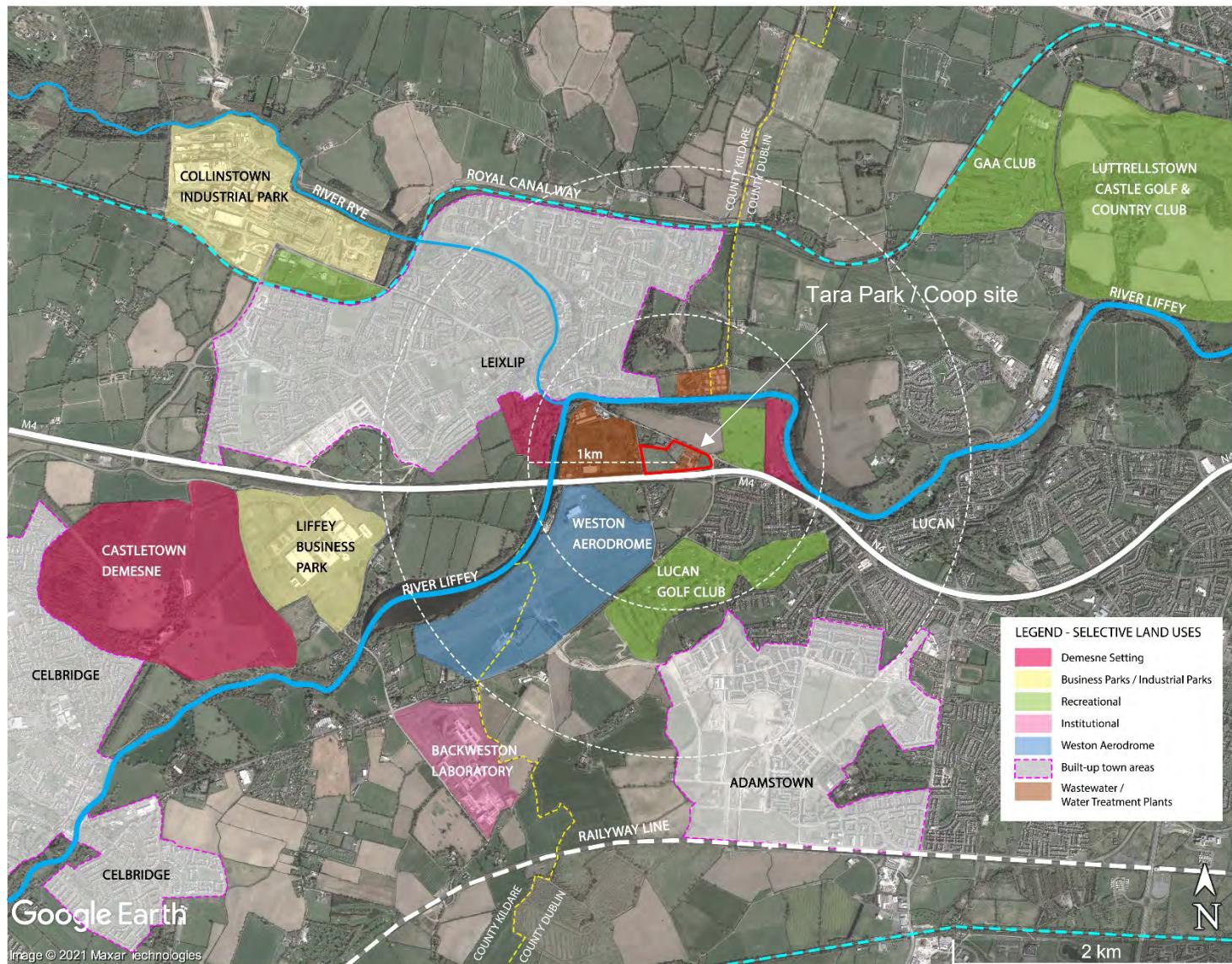


Figure 12: Landscape Constraints Drawing

