

Senior Executive Officer  
Forward Planning Section,  
Land Use Planning & Transportation Department,  
County Hall,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 2

15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**RE: SUBMISSION TO SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT COUNTY  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION & SITE CONTEXT**

We, McGill Planning Ltd., 45 Herbert Lane, Dublin 2, are instructed by our client, Shannon Homes, Block 1, Millbank, Laraghcon, Lucan, Co. Dublin, to make this submission to the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan.

Our clients are the owners of a significant 3.8ha site comprising the former Good Counsel Institutional lands, at Taylors Lane and Edmondstown Road, Ballyboden, Dublin 16.

### **Site Introduction**

The site contains a former institutional building on its western side and a former pitch and putt course on its eastern side. In addition, there are some smaller buildings on the western boundary of the site, fronting onto Edmondstown Road. There are mature trees within the site and along the boundaries. To the south of the site there is a mill run/watercourse. A watermain runs through the northern portion of the site.

Taylor's Lane bounds the site to the north, while Edmondstown Road bounds the site to the west. Lands to the east and south are in private ownership. The site to the south is currently under construction and it is being developed as a HSE Primary Care Centre.

There is vehicular access into the site from the Edmondstown Road and a separate pedestrian gate in the north western corner of the site adjacent to a roundabout junction. Taylors Lane (R113), Ballyboden Road (R113) and Edmondstown Road intersect at the roundabout. The signalised junction of Edmondstown Road and Scholarstown Road is immediately west of the site.



### **Extant Planning Permission**

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020 our client was granted planning permission by An Bord Pleanála for a significant Build to Sell residential development comprising a total of 496 apartments.

The overall development description is as follows:

- Demolition of existing former Institutional buildings and associated outbuildings (circa 5,231 square metres).
- Construction of 496 number residential units within three number apartment/duplex blocks (over basement car parks) ranging in height from two to seven storeys and comprising of
  - 36 number one-bedroom,
  - 391 number two-bedroom,
  - 69 number three-bedroom
  - all with associated private balconies/terraces to the north/south/east/west elevations,
- Block A is six to seven storeys in height and consists of 152 number units in two number L-shaped buildings along with a creche and two retail units,
- Block B consists of three number six to seven storey buildings with 141 number units, plus six number two storey duplex units in two buildings providing a total of 147 number units,
- Block C is five to six storeys in height and consists of 197 number units plus a community room all in one building,
- Provision of a new public park along Taylor's Lane,

- Provision of 372 number car parking spaces and 1,144 number cycle parking spaces,
- Revised vehicular access from Edmondstown Road and an emergency vehicular access off Taylor's Lane along with provision of pedestrian accesses to the site,
- Road improvement works along Edmondstown Road including the existing junction of Scholarstown Road / Edmondstown Road,
- All associated development works, substations, bin stores and landscaping required.





In granting permission the following positive aspects of the site and the development proposal were noted:

- The site is subject to zoning objective RES the objective of which is “to protect and /or improve residential amenity”, in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016-2022. The proposal to provide residential units, creche and a two retail units commercial development is acceptable in principle, having regard to the zoning objective.
- This site lies within the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) as defined in the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) 2013-2031 for the Eastern & Midland Region. A key objective of the RSES is to achieve compact growth targets of 50% of all new homes within or contiguous to the built-up area of Dublin city and suburbs.
- Within Dublin City and Suburbs, the RSES support the consolidation and re-intensification of infill/brownfield sites to provide high density and people intensive uses within the existing built up area and ensure that the development of future development areas is co-ordinated with the delivery of key water and public transport infrastructure.
- The site lies within the category of an ‘Intermediate Urban Location’ as defined in the 2020 Section 28 Apartment Guidelines, given its location within approximately 130m to the 15b Bus Route, which is a frequent bus service. The site is also served by numerous other bus routes.
- The proposed density (141.7 units/ha) was considered appropriate given the clear instruction in national policy to increase residential density at appropriate locations to ensure the efficient use of zoned and serviced land.
- The 5-7 storey height across the 3 apartment buildings proposed was considered appropriate at this site given the lack of sensitive receptors immediately adjacent which gives the opportunity to develop residential buildings of scale that do not create amenity issues for existing residents, whilst also ensuring there is a strong urban edge to all roads around and within the site.
- The proposed height range was also considered to accord with SPPR3 of the Building Heights Guidelines given:
  - (i) The site has good accessibility to public transport.
  - (ii) The lack of sensitive built environment receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site, which allows the site to create its own character.
  - (iii) The development also provides for permeability through the site.
  - (iv) The development will create a distinctive development on the site and will form a positive addition and new landmark for the area.
  - (v) The development includes for a generous public park which will reduce the visual impact of increased height on the site.
  - (vi) The proposed materials and variety in architectural detailing will contribute to the creation of a positive addition to the streetscape.
  - (vii) The submitted Daylight/Sunlight Assessment which concludes that there will be no negative impact on surrounding residential properties.

The ABP Inspector's Report concluded the following:

*"The provision of a higher density residential development at this location is desirable having regard to its location within the Dublin Metropolitan Area, its proximity to public transport service and the existing high quality pedestrian and cycle infrastructure facilities. In addition, the site is located in an area with a wide range of social infrastructure facilities. The height, bulk and massing, detailed design and layout of the scheme are acceptable. I am also satisfied that the development would not have any significant adverse impacts on the amenities of the surrounding area. The future occupiers of the scheme will also benefit from a high standard of internal amenity and the proposal will contribute significantly to the public realm."*

### **3.0 SUBMISSION**

Our client welcomes the provision of a new County Development Plan to guide the future development of the County over the coming 6 years.

#### **General Commentary**

We note and welcome the retention of the Residential Zoning (Objective RES To protect and/or improve residential amenity) on our client's landholding, on Map 11 of the Draft Development Plan.

We also acknowledge the designation of the NTA Greater Dublin Cycle Network Plan along the Ballyboden Way/Road directly adjoining our client's site, along with the Road Improvement Objective for Stocking Lane/Ballyboden Road.

The proposal to roll out a comprehensive network of cycle lanes in the wider area over the coming years including a cross-County link between Rathfarnham and Citywest and the completion of the Dodder Valley Greenway, is also welcomed.

We concur with the view stated in Chapter 12 (p. 492) that the delivery of Bus Connects will result in a significant improvement in bus services in the area including the introduction of orbital services S4, S6 and S8 which will connect the area with Tallaght, Liffey Valley, UCD, Blackrock and Dun Laoghaire. Several additional spine routes are also proposed.

Orbital Route 8 between Tallaght and Dun Laoghaire via Sandyford will operate along Taylor's Lane, past our client's development, whilst the A1 (Beaumont - City Centre - Knocklyon) and A2 (Airport - City Centre - Ballinteer - Dundrum) Spine Routes will also operate along Knocklyon Road and Grange Road respectively, both within 1km/10 mins walk of the site.

In tandem with these public transport and general accessibility improvements, Chapter 12 of the Draft Development Plan states that the Housing Objective for the Templeogue/Walkinstown/Rathfarnham/Firhouse Neighbourhood where our client's site is

located, will be to support the “consolidation of existing residential areas within this neighbourhood area in a manner which protects amenities and underpins existing and planned physical and community infrastructure.” (p. 491)

New housing in the area will also be expected to be “designed in a manner which facilitates the needs of a diverse range of people, providing a balance in terms of unit mix and tenure types.”

We note that these criteria are all achieved in the permitted residential scheme on our client’s site, which will significantly improve the overall mix of residential types, sizes and tenures in the Ballyboden area, currently dominated by large, 3-5 bed semi-detached and detached housing. Furthermore this is achieved on a large development site, well set back from existing residential properties with no impact in terms of overshadowing or overlooking, whilst respecting the established amenities and character of the area.

### **Building Heights & Public Transport Accessibility**

We welcome the provision of comprehensive policy and guidance in the Draft Plan in relation to Building Height (and Density) as required under NPO 13 of the *National Planning Framework* (2018), and SPPR1 of the *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines* (2018).

We note proposed Policy QDP8 Objective 2 which states the following:

*In accordance with NPO35, SPPR1 and SPPR3, to proactively consider increased building heights on lands zoned Regeneration (Regen), Major Retail Centre (MRC), District Centre (DC), Local Centre (LC), Town Centre (TC) and New Residential (Res-N) and on sites demonstrated as having the capacity to accommodate increased densities in line with the locational criteria of Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018) and the Urban Design Manual – Best Practice Guidelines (2009), where it is clearly demonstrated by means of an urban design analysis carried out in accordance with the provisions of the South Dublin County’s Building Height and Density Guide that it is contextually appropriate to do so.*

This is considered a sensible policy to support the development management of applications of increased height and density.

It is worth noting that the permission on our client’s site was subject to such a comprehensive analysis of compliance with national policy and was found to be a suitable location and size for the quantum, density and height of residential development permitted.

We also note the Building Height and Density Guide (BHDG) which will form the toolkit for assessing proposals for increased building height and density within the County going forward and based on a design and performance basis as recommended in national policy.

**However we would question the locational criteria outlined the BHDG which is considered contrary to the national guidelines, and indeed also Policy QDP8 of the Draft Plan.**

In seeking to comply with SPPR 3 of the Building Heights Guidelines, the BHDG states that only those locations “*within c. 1200m of existing Multiple Transport Nodes*” within the County will be the focus for increased development densities and building heights going forward.

“Node” refers to an interchange where 2 or more public transport modes can be sourced. In this regard 18 of the BHDG refers to “*public transport interchange or node...*”

These nodes are specifically highlighted in the BHDG as “*Tallaght, Adamstown, Clonburris, Naas Road, and to a lesser extent Fortunestown given LUAS is main transport network and existing bus service does not serve the western part of the settlement.*”

Section 2.2 of the Guidelines go on to state that “*outside of these areas will be generally considered less appropriate locations for significantly increased scales of development.*”

This sharp distinction between “*multiple transport node*” locations and other locations in the county many of which are well served by a single mode of public transport (in particular frequent public bus routes) is unreasonable, overly restrictive and is not in accordance with national policy.

The strict requirement that only lands within 1,200m of multi-modal public transport nodes will be suitable for higher densities/heights is in fact contrary to both the *Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2018* and to the associated Guidelines, *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, 2020*.

As noted in Chapter 1 of the Draft Development Plan, SDCC are required to have regard to and to apply these guidelines in carrying out their functions.

Having reviewed both Guidelines, we can find no reference to proximity to multiple public transport nodes/interchanges as being a minimum requirement for determining a site’s appropriateness for increased development densities and building heights.

SPPR1 of the Building Heights Guidelines, simply refers to “*locations with good public transport accessibility*”. It does not state the need for accessibility to multiple transport nodes.

Section 3.2 of the Building Heights Guidelines refers to sites being “*well served by public transport*” also having the potential for “*good links to other modes of public transport*”. Proximity to a single mode of frequent public transport is the primary requirement, with the potential to link in with other modes of public transport being desirable (either via the mode that serves the site, or by other means (e.g. cycling)) but is by no means essential.

The 2020 Apartment Guidelines provide further instruction. Paragraph 4.2 defines three types of urban locations for higher density residential development- Central/Accessible Urban Locations, Intermediate Urban Locations and Peripheral/Less Accessible Urban Locations.

These are the “*locational criteria*” as stated in Policy QDP8 Objective 2 of the Draft Plan.

The locations are summarised as follows:

**1) Central and/or Accessible Urban Locations**

- *Such locations are generally suitable for small- to large-scale (will vary subject to location) and higher density development (will also vary), that may wholly comprise apartments, including:*
- *Sites within walking distance (i.e. up to 15 minutes or 1,000-1,500m), of principal city centres, or significant employment locations, that may include hospitals and third-level institutions;*
- *Sites within reasonable walking distance (i.e. up to 10 minutes or 800-1,000m) to/from high capacity urban public transport stops (such as DART or Luas); **and***
- *Sites within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 5 minutes or 400-500m) to/from high frequency (i.e. min 10 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services.*

*The range of locations outlined above is not exhaustive and will require local assessment that further considers these and other relevant planning factors.*

**2) Intermediate Urban Locations**

*Such locations are generally suitable for smaller-scale (**will vary subject to location**), **higher density development** that may wholly comprise apartments, or alternatively, **medium-high density residential development of any scale** that includes apartments to some extent (will also vary, but broadly **>45 dwellings per hectare net**), including:*

- *Sites within or close to i.e. within reasonable walking distance (i.e. up to 10 minutes or 800-1,000m), of principal town or suburban centres or employment locations, that may include hospitals and third level institutions;*
- *Sites within walking distance (i.e. **between 10-15 minutes or 1,000-1,500m**) of **high capacity urban public transport stops (such as DART, commuter rail or Luas)** or within reasonable walking distance (i.e. **between 5-10 minutes or up to 1,000m**) of **high frequency (i.e. min 10 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services** or where such services can be provided;*
- *Sites within easy walking distance (i.e. up to 5 minutes or 400-500m) of **reasonably frequent (min 15 minute peak hour frequency) urban bus services.***

*The range of locations is not exhaustive and will require local assessment that further considers these and other relevant planning factors.*

**3) Peripheral and/or Less Accessible Urban Locations**

*Such locations are generally suitable for limited, very small-scale (will vary subject to location), higher density development that may wholly comprise apartments, or*

*residential development of any scale that will include a minority of apartments at low-medium densities (will also vary, but broadly <45 dwellings per hectare net.*

Intermediate Urban locations are stated in the national guidance as being appropriate for higher density development. Locations can be defined as Intermediate once within 1.5km walking distance of a DART/Luas/Rail; 1km of high frequency urban bus services, or within 500m of a reasonably frequent (15 min peak frequency) urban bus service.

The Guidelines do not state that an Intermediate Urban site must be located proximate to two or more of these public transport modes, or multiple transport nodes, in order to be considered appropriate for higher density development.

However this is what is stated in the BHDG as drafted.

The locational requirement of the BHDG excludes significant residential areas of the county that have established social and physical infrastructure in place, are well served by public transport (e.g. frequent bus services) and which may include large vacant sites capable and suitable for residential development of a higher density and building height.

The permissions on our client's site at Taylor's Lane and the nearby Ardstone development at Scholarstown Road (590 units – Ref. ABP-305878-19) are cases in point. Both are large sites located within the built up area of the City (inside the M50) and both clearly represent Intermediate Urban Locations given the location beside frequent 15/15B Dublin bus services.

However, despite their location, size and proximity to the city centre (c.6km), neither site would now qualify under the draft BHDG criteria for higher density and increased building heights. This is despite the fact that other lands in the County, at Adamstown and Citywest for instance over twice the distance from the City Centre would qualify.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

The planning authority are asked to revise the overly restrictive locational criteria for increased density and building height (i.e. locations within c. 1200m of existing Multiple Transport Nodes) outlined in the BHDG, which is contrary to the *National Planning Framework (2018)*, *Urban Development and Building Height Guidelines (2018)*, the *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, (2020)*.

In line with Policy QDP8 of the Draft Plan it is requested that the locational criteria for increased density and building height, noted on pages 11, 13 and 29 of the BHG, be revised to reflect the locational criteria for "Central and/or Accessible Urban locations" and "Intermediate Urban Locations" as outlined in the *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, (2020)*.

Yours faithfully,



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