

**Submission on Stage 3 Material Amendments**

**Draft South Dublin County Development  
Plan 2022 – 2028**

**On behalf of:  
Equinix (Ireland) Ltd.**



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## 1 Executive Summary

We, Brock McClure Planning & Development Consultants, 63 York Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin are instructed by our client **Equinix (Ireland) Ltd, Unit 6 & 7 Kilcarbery Business Park, Nangor Road, Dublin 22**, to make this submission to South Dublin County Council in response to the proposed Material Alterations to the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, which are currently on public display.

Our client specifically wishes to comment on the following items:

1. **Data centres are considered an essential component of the Irish economy contributing to the ICT infrastructure network.**

Our client's data centres contribute to the emerging digital infrastructure that helps to support a strong Irish economy through its enterprise, skills and innovation sectors. The land use contributes to Ireland's economic development with the job multiplier effects extending well beyond the actual infrastructure and support high technology construction sector.

*A proposed ban on data centre development in South Dublin would have significant long-term economic implications on the ICT and high-tech construction sectors.*

2. **Data centre development is supported in national planning policy.**

*The zoning restrictions are contrary to the strategic planning context, in particular the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).*

3. **Section 13.1-- Land Use Zoning Objectives Table 13.10 (Amendment Ref 13.3, Page no. 512) – Amend Table 13.10– Amend the zoning objective 'EE' that removes data centre from 'open for consideration' uses to 'not permitted' uses.**

We submit that the removal of 'data centre' as an 'open for consideration' land use on EE zoned lands is unfounded and short-sighted. The restriction will limit the development potential of these zoned lands and have long lasting effects in subsequent development plans.

*We request that data centre should remain listed as an 'open for consideration' use under the 'EE' zoning objective and that future applications for data centre development shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the site suitability and merits of the application.*

4. *We request that any live applications for data centres and associated or ancillary development currently before South Dublin County Council or An Bord Pleanála are exempted from the zoning restrictions imposed by the material amendments.*

## 2 Introduction

### Company Profile

Equinix owns and operates a network of 220+ International Business Exchange™ (IBX®) data centers located in 63 major metropolitan areas around the world facilitating efficient interconnection. In Ireland, Equinix operates data centres in Northwest Business Park (2no.), Blanchardstown, Citywest and Kilcarbery Business Park, the latter being hubs for 175+ companies.

The Equinix Dublin metro International Business Exchange™ (IBX®) data centres consist of four buildings with approximately 130,000 square feet (12,000+ square meters) of colocation space. The Dublin colocation facilities enable customers to be part of a highly connected digital ecosystem, including INEX, the Irish Internet exchange. Hundreds of technology companies have moved to set up a base in Dublin over the last two decades, attracted by its business-friendly environment. This has enabled the city to become a leading player in the global technology sector. The four sites in Dublin have become the gateway to the United States as U.S. based content companies must host EU customer data within Europe.

Equinix has implemented various renewable energy technologies and sustainability practices on its data centre platform. In 2015, the company made a long-term pledge to power all its data centre sites with clean and renewable energy. Equinix recently announced their Science Based Targets (SBT) as a metric for measuring their Global carbon footprint in line with Paris Climate Agreement. It is a target to be carbon neutral across their global footprint in the next ten years by 2030. This aligns with their signing up to the Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact (European initiative) in March 2021, and aligns with a broader EU goal for Climate action under the European Green deal and Europe fit for the digital age.

Having regard to the Applicant's involvement in the area and extensive knowledge within the sector, it is evident that they are committed to the delivery of the highest quality ICT infrastructure in South Dublin. We note that permission was recently granted to our client by South Dublin County Council for a data centre in Profile Park.

### Site Zoning

The Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028 is the first Development Plan for South Dublin that lists Data Centre as a defined land-use.

Previous Development Plans did not list Data Centre as a defined land use and data centre applications made within the jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council relied upon surrounding precedent cases and land-uses of similar scale and type to justify their provision.

The inclusion of 'Data Centre' within the Draft Plan published at Stage 2 is a welcome addition to the defined land uses, as it clearly outlined the land-use zoning objectives in which data centres would be recognised as being 'open for consideration'.

Under the Stage 2 Draft Plan, Data Centre use was 'open for consideration' within the following land-use zonings:

- EE;
- REGEN; and
- MRC

Our client did not make a submission on the Stage 2 Draft Plan as no relevant issues were raised at that time.

However, Amendment References 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3 of the proposed Stage 3 Material Alterations to the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, propose to remove 'data centre' from the 'open for consideration' land uses section under the EE, REGEN and MRC zoning objectives, to 'not permitted' land uses.

Should the Draft Development Plan be amended to include ‘data centre’ as a ‘not permitted’ use on EE, REGEN and MRC lands it would represent a blanket ban on data centre development that conflicts with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

We ask the Council to retain ‘data centre’ within the ‘open for consideration’ land uses under the EE zoning objective. This will give Area Planners the scope and flexibility to assess and evaluate data centre applications on their merits and site-specific characteristics.

### **3 Submission on Amendments**

#### **3.1 Data Centre Development and the Irish Economy**

A Data Centre is a centralised computer server system designed to provide information storage, management and distribution functions to individuals and businesses. With ever increasing levels of online activity requiring large volumes of data, the global demand for data storage is growing rapidly.

A significant rise in the number of people working remotely within the last 18 months has given rise to an increasing demand for data storage and transfer daily, making data centres a key industry for the rapidly digitising world we live in. On this basis, data centres are considered an essential component of the Irish economy contributing to the ICT infrastructure network.

Our client's data centres contribute to the emerging digital infrastructure that helps to support a strong Irish economy through its enterprise, skills and innovation sectors. The land use contributes to Ireland's economic development with the job multiplier effects extending well beyond the actual infrastructure and support high technology construction sector.

#### **We hereby state:**

*A proposed ban on data centre development in South Dublin would have significant long-term economic implications on the ICT and high-tech construction sectors.*

#### **3.2 Proposed Material Amendments and Conflict with National Policy**

We submit that the amendments represent a 'blanket ban' on data centre development within the jurisdiction of South Dublin County Council and would contradict the development context that has been established within South County Dublin in the last 15 years, particularly at Profile Park, Grangecastle, and City West, which have all been subject of several successful grants of permissions for data centre development.

The lands at Profile Park, Grangecastle, and City West are primarily zoned 'EE' under the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028. Should the proposed amendment Ref. 13.3 to remove data centre from 'open for consideration' uses to 'not permitted' uses be accepted, it would severely limit the future development potential of these areas, particularly Profile Park, which has become an established hub for data centre development in Ireland.

Moreover, the removal of data centre use is contrary to the strategic planning context, in particular the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

#### **Government Statement on The Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy (2018)**

The Statement contributes to the Strategic Policy Framework and confirms the Government's desire for a plan-led approach to data centres.

It outlines that Data Centres are central to the digital economy and that they contribute to enterprise and regional policy objectives and are strategically important element of Ireland's future economic prospects. The statement acknowledges that data centres pose considerable challenges to the future planning and operation of Ireland's power system, in terms of renewable energy policy/objectives, generation adequacy including maintaining local and regional security of electricity supply, community acceptance and electricity customer costs. Government intends to take steps to mitigate these so that Ireland optimises the benefits that these strategically important investments bring.

### Project Ireland - National Planning Framework (2040)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. The NPF sets out that the Eastern and Midland part of Ireland will, by 2040, be a Region of around 2.85 million people, at least half a million more than today. The Council is obliged to prepare a County Development Plan that is in accordance with National Planning Policy.

Under the National Strategic Outcome 5 – A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills, Ireland is being prompted as a suitable international destination for ICT infrastructure.

*“Ireland is very attractive in terms of international digital connectivity, climatic factors and current and future renewable energy sources for the development of international digital infrastructures, such as **data centres**. This sector underpins Ireland’s international position as a location for ICT and creates added benefits in relation to establishing a threshold of demand for sustained development of renewable energy sources. There is also greater scope to recycle waste heat from data centres for productive use, which may be off-site.”*

A key aim of the NPF is: *“Promotion of Ireland as a sustainable international destination for ICT infrastructures such as data centres and associated economic activities.”*

### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2019-2031)

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (RSES) provides a:

- *Spatial Strategy - To manage future growth and ensure the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, study, visit and invest in.*
- *Economic Strategy - That builds on our strengths to sustain a strong economy and support the creation of quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.*
- *Metropolitan Strategy - To ensure a supply of strategic development areas for the sustainable growth and continued success and competitiveness of the Dublin Metropolitan Area.*
- *Investment Framework - To prioritise the delivery of key enabling infrastructure and services by government and state agencies.*
- *Climate Action Strategy - To accelerate climate action, ensure a clean and healthy environment and to promote sustainable transport and strategic green infrastructure.*

Our client’s site located at Profile Park, South Dublin is identified as falling within the Dublin Region of the RSES. The Growth Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region is to:

- *Support the continued growth of Dublin as our national economic engine.*
- *Deliver sustainable growth to the Metropolitan area.*
- *Target growth to regional growth centres of Athlone, Drogheda and Dundalk*
- *Support vibrant rural areas with a network of towns and villages*
- *Facilitate the collaboration and growth of the Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor*
- *Embed a network of Key Towns through the region to deliver sustainable regional development*
- *Support the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable region.*

One of the Guiding Principles for Investment Prioritisation in Placemaking for Enterprise Development is to **“Align to national strategy and approach for data centres – right location for use and energy demand.”**

RPO 8.25 of the RSES states that Local Authorities shall:

- *Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan.*
- *Facilitate enhanced international fibre communications links, including full interconnection between the fibre networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.*
- *Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of a high-quality ICT network throughout the Region in order to achieve balanced social and economic development, whilst protecting the amenities of urban and rural areas.*
- *Support the national objective to promote Ireland as a sustainable international destination for ICT infrastructures such as **data centres** and associated economic activities at appropriate locations.*
- *Promote Dublin as a demonstrator of 5G information and communication technology.*

Removal of the use from the open for consideration uses is therefore inconsistent with the economic and spatial strategy for the Greater Dublin Region, as outlined in the above national policy.

We hereby state:

*The zoning restrictions are contrary to the strategic planning context, in particular the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).*

**3.3 Amendment to EE Zoning Matrix**

We note that it is proposed to remove ‘Data Centre’ as an ‘open for consideration use under Amendment Ref.13.3 Page no. 512 - Amend Table 13.10 – Amend the zoning objective ‘EE’ to remove data centre from ‘open for consideration’ uses to ‘not permitted’ uses.

Data Centre was originally listed as an ‘open for consideration’ land use on EE zoned lands within the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 Stage 2 and was removed under Stage 3 Material Amendments following the passing of a motion made by the Councillors on the 1 March 2022 (Motion No. 90 refers):

*“To reject the CE recommendation of No change and ban data centres by moving Data Centre to Not Permitted under all zoning. Reason: It has become even more clear since the last Development Plan discussions that there is no more capacity for further data centres in the South Dublin area.”*

The motion went onto state: *“EirGrid operate and manage the electricity grid so they are best placed to assess whether a Data Centre or any other large electricity user should be granted a grid connection.”*

EirGrid and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities are the competent authorities when dealing with grid capacity issues and utility services. It must be noted at this point that the Commission for Regulation of Utilities **did not recommend a moratorium** on data centres in their 2021 publication entitled ‘Direction to the System Operators related to Data Centre grid connection processing’ (CRU/21/124). Moreover, the SDCC Chief Executive recommended that the motion should **not be** adopted.

EE Zoning Matrix

The EE zoning objective seeks: *“To provide for enterprise and employment related uses.”* No changes are proposed to the objective. The amendments relate to the removal of ‘data centre use’ from the open for consideration uses materially amended by the SDCC Councillors. We contest this removal and add that no rationale has been provided to justify this proposed significant alteration.

EE Zoning	SDCC Draft Development Plan 2022-2028 – Stage 2 Draft	SDCC Draft Development Plan 2022-2028 – Stage 3 Proposed Material Amendments
<b>Permitted in Principle</b>	Abattoir, Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Boarding Kennels, Enterprise Centre, Fuel Depot, Heavy Vehicle Park, Home Based Economic Activities, Industry General, Industry-Light, Industry-Special, Office-Based Industry, Office less than 100 sq.m, Open Space, Petrol Station, Public Services, Recycling Facility, Refuse Transfer Station, Science and Technology Based Enterprises, Scrap Yard, Service Garage, Shop-Local, Transport Depot, Traveller Accommodation, Warehousing, Wholesale Outlet.	Abattoir, Advertisements and Advertising Structures, Boarding Kennels, Enterprise Centre, Fuel Depot, Heavy Vehicle Park, Home Based Economic Activities, Industry General, Industry-Light, Industry-Special, Office-Based Industry, Office less than 100 sq.m, Open Space, Petrol Station, Public Services, Recycling Facility, Refuse Transfer Station, Science and Technology Based Enterprises, Scrap Yard, Service Garage, Shop-Local, Transport Depot, Traveller Accommodation, Warehousing, Wholesale Outlet.



<b>Open for Consideration</b>	Agriculture, Allotments, Car Park, Childcare Facilities, Concrete/Asphalt Plant in or adjacent to a Quarry, <u>Data Centre</u> , Garden Centre, Hotel/Hostel, Industry-Extractive, Motor Sales Outlet, Nightclub, Offices 100 sq.m - 1,000 sq.m, Offices over 1,000 sq.m, Public House, Refuse Landfill/Tip, Restaurant/Café, Retail Warehouse, Social Club, Sports Club/Facility, Stadium, Veterinary Surgery	Agriculture, Allotments, Car Park, Childcare Facilities, Concrete/Asphalt Plant in or adjacent to a Quarry, <del>Data Centre</del> , Garden Centre, Hotel/Hostel, Industry-Extractive, Motor Sales Outlet, Nightclub, Offices 100 sq.m - 1,000 sq.m, Offices over 1,000 sq.m, Public House, Refuse Landfill/Tip, Restaurant/Café, Retail Warehouse, Social Club, Sports Club/Facility, Stadium, Veterinary Surgery.
<b>Not Permitted</b>	Aerodrome/Airfield, Bed & Breakfast, Betting Office, Camp Site, Caravan Park-Residential, Cemetery, Community Centre, Conference Centre, Crematorium, Cultural Use, Doctor/Dentist, Education, Embassy, Funeral Home, Guest House, Health Centre, Hospital, Housing for Older People, Live-Work Units, Nursing Home, Off-Licence, Outdoor Entertainment Park, Place of Worship, Primary Health Care Centre, Recreational Facility, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Home, Rural Industry-Food, ShopMajor Sales Outlet, Shop-Neighbourhood, Wind Farm, Work-Live Units.	Aerodrome/Airfield, Bed & Breakfast, Betting Office, Camp Site, Caravan Park-Residential, Cemetery, Community Centre, Conference Centre, Crematorium, Cultural Use, <del>Data Centre</del> , Doctor/Dentist, Education, Embassy, Funeral Home, Guest House, Health Centre, Hospital, Housing for Older People, Live-Work Units, Nursing Home, Off-Licence, Outdoor Entertainment Park, Place of Worship, Primary Health Care Centre, Recreational Facility, Residential, Residential Institution, Retirement Home, Rural Industry-Food, ShopMajor Sales Outlet, Shop-Neighbourhood, Wind Farm, Work-Live Units.

Table 1 -EE Zoning Matrix (Draft Development Plan Stage 2 and Proposed Material Amendments to Draft Development Plan Stage 3)

We note that Industry General, Industry-Light, Industry-Special and Office-Based Industry uses are permitted in principle under the EE zoning objective under both the Stage 2 and Stage 3 Draft Plan zoning matrices. These uses present a similar intensity of land use and are generally comparable in scale.

The following table summarises relevant planning policy pertaining to EE Zoned lands as set out in the existing Plan and Draft Plan (Stage 2 and Stage 3):

South Dublin County Council Development Plan (2016-2022) - Existing Plan	South Draft Dublin County Council Development Plan (2022-2028) - Stage 2/Stage 3 Draft Plan
<p>Economic and Tourism Policy ET Enterprise and Employment (EE):</p> <p><i>“It is the policy of the Council to support and facilitate enterprise and employment uses (high-tech manufacturing, light industry, research and development, food science and associated uses) in business parks and industrial areas.”</i></p>	<p>EDE1 Objective 5: (Stage 2)</p> <p><i>“To support the implementation of the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan to support the objectives for the South – West Corridor and the area within the M50 by the:</i></p> <p><i>Promotion of high tech, manufacturing and research and development in Grange Castle Business Park and Citywest.</i></p> <p><i>Intensification of industrial lands and mixed-use development at Naas Road/Ballymount and in Tallaght Town Centre/Cookstown while ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, the sustainability of existing businesses and employment.”</i></p>
<p>ET3 Objective 2:</p> <p><i>“To prioritise high tech manufacturing, research and development and associated uses in the established Business and Technology Cluster to the west of the County (Grange Castle and Citywest areas) to maximise the value of higher order infrastructure and services that are required to support large scale strategic investment.”</i></p>	<p>EDE7 Objective 1: (Stage 2)</p> <p><i>“To ensure that, insofar as possible, space extensive enterprise is located on lands which are outside the M50 and which do not compromise labour intensive opportunity on zoned lands adjacent to public transport.”</i></p>
	<p>Amend EDE7 Objective 2, bullet points 3 and 4 as follows: (Stage 3)</p> <p><i>“To require that space extensive enterprises demonstrate the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The appropriateness of the site for the proposed use having regard to EDE7 Objective 1;</i></li> <li>- <i>Strong energy efficiency measures to reduce their carbon footprint in support of national targets towards a net zero carbon economy, including renewable energy generation;</i></li> <li>- <i>Maximise on site renewable energy generation to ensure as far as possible 100% powered by renewable energy, where on site demand cannot be met in this way, provide evidence of engagement with power purchase agreements in Ireland (PPA);</i></li> <li>- <i>Sufficient capacity within the relevant water and, wastewater and electricity networks to accommodate the use proposed;</i></li> <li>- <i>Measures to support the just transition to a circular economy;</i></li> <li>- <i>Measures to facilitate district heating or heat networks where excess heat is produced;</i></li> <li>- <i>A high-quality design approach to buildings which reduces the massing and visual impact;</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A comprehensive understanding of employment once operational;</li> <li>- A comprehensive understanding of levels of traffic to and from the site at construction and operation stage;</li> <li>- Provide evidence of sign up to the Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact.”</li> </ul>
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*Table 2 – Policy Extracts (Existing Plan, Draft Development Plan Stage 2 and Proposed Material Amendments to Draft Development Plan Stage 3)*

Several live applications and extant permissions exist on EE zoned lands within Profile Park Business Park and Grangeacastle. Data centre use has therefore been long established and is supported under the current national and local planning policy context.

Should ‘data centre’ be listed as a ‘not permitted’ use on EE zoned lands as per the proposed amendments to the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 , it would severely limit the future development potential of these areas which have been subject to grants of permissions for a variety of data centre applications from a number of multinational corporations, and have become established locations within Ireland for the location of data centre facilities. Data centre use complements the pattern of development at Profile Park which prescribes large industrial and commercial development. The proposed restrictions would mean that any future development relating to data centres would constitute a non-conforming use, despite the established pattern of development in EE zoned areas already facilitating data centre development.

The site has been identified by the Applicant as being suitable for the proposed use due to its location in a Business Park, well removed from residential development and the availability of necessary services and utilities.

It is widely acknowledged that data centres and their ancillary structures and equipment are space extensive uses requiring large areas of land. Profile Park having regard to its excellent infrastructure provision and strategic location in South Dublin has been specifically designed and marketed as ‘Ireland’s Datacentre Cluster’.

By retaining ‘data centre’ as an ‘open for consideration’ land use on lands zoned EE per the Draft South Dublin County Development Plan Stage 2, it will allow flexibility for data centre applications to be lodged these zoned lands, and for each application to be assessed on a case by case basis. We submit that Objective EDE7 is a notably robust policy which would require applicants for new Data Centres to demonstrate that the proposal is suitable for the site and delivers tangible energy efficiency measures. This policy would ensure that new projects are rigorously assessed by the Planning Authority and is the appropriate tool in planning policy terms for the consideration of this issue. A blanket ban on the land use is unequivocally not in accordance with the principles of proper planning and should not form part of the final County Development Plan.

**We hereby propose that:**

*We request that data centre should remain listed as an ‘open for consideration’ use under the ‘EE’ zoning objective and that future applications for data centre development shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the site suitability and merits of the application.*

**3.4 Protection of Live Applications**

We note that several applications for Data Centre developments are currently in the planning system with South Dublin County Council and/or are with An Bord Pleanála for consideration. Should the proposed material amendment 13.3 to move ‘data centre’ from an ‘open for consideration’ land use to a ‘not permitted’ land use under the Land Use Zoning Matrix for EE zoned lands, be accepted, that protection be given to these live applications.

Permission was recently granted to our client by South Dublin County Council for a data centre in Profile Park. Ref. SD21A/0186 refers.

We hereby propose that:

*We request that any live applications for data centres and associated or ancillary development currently before South Dublin County Council or An Bord Pleanála are exempted from the zoning restrictions imposed by the material amendments.*

## 4 Conclusion and Recommendations

Data centres are considered an essential component of the Irish economy contributing to the ICT infrastructure network.

We submit that data centre use shall be reinstated to EE zoning matrix, having regard to the national planning policy context that supports data centre development and the established pattern of development at Profile Park, South Dublin.

We note that the Commission for Regulation of Utilities did not recommend a moratorium on data centre development. Furthermore, the proposed ban on data centre development was not recommended by the Chief Executive of South Dublin.

The proposed material amendments contradict national policy and conflict with the central tenets of proper planning and sustainable development.

We submit, Policy EDE7 Objective 2, when implemented correctly and strictly adhered to by the Planning Authority, would adequately mitigate against the Councillors' concerns negating the need to impose a ban on data centre provision.

On the basis of the above submission, we ask that the following amendments are made to the Material Alterations:

- 1. We request that data centre should remain listed as an 'open for consideration' use under the 'EE' zoning objective and that future applications for data centre development shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the site suitability and merits of the application.*
- 2. We request that any live applications for data centres and associated or ancillary development currently before South Dublin County Council or An Bord Pleanála are exempted from the zoning restrictions imposed by the material amendments.*