

Submission on the draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

Submitted by Walsh Group on behalf of the principals of Walsh Group and
Cadogan's Strand Limited.

October 4th, 2021



Summary of Amendment Proposed by Walsh Group and Cadogan’s Strand Limited

Zoning Proposal & Draft Plan Map	Map 04 & 10
Proposed Update	Amend Maps 04 & 10 to change 0.75 hectares of land zoned Landscape Preservation Zone (NW13) in the draft Cork City Development Plan, 2022-2028 to ZO 02 New Residential Neighbourhood.
Comments	<p>The lands are owned by the principals of Walsh Group and Cadogan’s Strand Limited and a draft apartment scheme has been prepared with a view to delivering development on these serviced lands in the short term.</p> <p>This submission is made in the context of concerns regarding the prospects of the City Council delivering housing and employment within the lifetime of the Plan without harnessing alternative private sector supported initiatives on sustainably located, serviced lands.</p> <p>This submission also has regard to, and adopts much of the same rationale used by the City Council in bringing forward ‘Variations’ to the existing Cork City Development Plan, 2015.</p> <p>Additional commentary is provided in the main body of this submission.</p>

Specific Rezoning Proposal:

Change 0.75 hectares (hachured red in the zoning map below) of the 1.77 ha in the ownership of the principals of Walsh Group and Cadogan’s Strand Limited from **Landscape Preservation Zone (NW13) in the Cork City Development Plan, 2022-2028 to ZO 02 New Residential Neighbourhood.**



Figure 1: Extract from Map 04 & 10 Of the draft City Development Plan 2022-2028

1.0 Introduction

This submission is lodged on behalf of the principals of Walsh Group and Cadogan's Strand Limited (hereinafter referred to as "the Group"). The Group welcomes this opportunity to respond to Cork City Council's Draft City Development Plan, 2022-2028.

2.0 Context

The importance of the next Cork City Development Plan for the future development of Cork cannot be understated in light of:

- the critically important role identified for Cork in the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy;
- the pro-Cork planning and political environment that, for now, at least, prevails;
- the increasingly perilous state of national finances;
- the length and complexity of the planning and development consent process combined with the greatly increased number of (successful) third party judicial challenges of An Bord Pleanála decisions; and
- the inevitable future cutbacks in expenditure for public projects and the competition that is likely to arise between projects for the increasingly limited available national funding.

In this context, it is imperative that the adopted City Development Plan is a progressive and sustainable Plan that can, and will, be **delivered**.

A general concern is that this draft Plan for Cork City, which at 210,000 population remains a small city, comprises eight documents, totaling 1368 pages, including a main written statement of 555 pages. It is feared that Tony Robbin's quote that "Complexity is the enemy of execution", will work against the delivery of the plan's key objectives.

It is also of concern to the Group that the plan is overly reliant on the City Centre and Docklands for the delivery of a significant quantum of the City's future growth

and development. Notwithstanding the proposed new measures including tax penalties for vacant/derelict properties, the fact remains that the "Living over the Shop" project of the 1990s, even with tax relief, was of limited success. The proposed new measures do not inspire private sector confidence because the multiplicity of challenges arising from planning, building regulations, fire requirements, rates, existing tenancies and other costs, that all contributed to the said project's lack of success, have not gone away.

The **Docklands project**, which the City Council has actively promoted since 1998 when it prepared the City Docks' Integrated Area Plan as a submission to central government for urban renewal tax incentives remains, despite recently promised funding, a source of concern as it is still a medium to long term project/aspiration. The Group considers that in the **23 years** since the Integrated Area Plan was launched the major impediments to development remain substantially the same as they were in 1998: road connectivity including the provision of bridges; public transport provision; pedestrian connectivity; land contamination; ongoing Seveso activity; ground level/flood risk challenges; and the need for the relocation of a multiplicity of operating commercial businesses to alternative locations which have not yet been made available in adequate supply.

It is questionable whether lands in Docklands can be considered 'Tier 1' when significant road, bridge and public transport infrastructure is necessary to facilitate development. Do these Tier 1 lands meet the definition as set out in Appendix 3 of the National Planning Framework entitled "A Methodology for a Tiered Approach to Land Zoning":

"This zoning comprises lands that are able to **connect to existing development services, i.e. road and footpath access** including public lighting, foul sewer drainage, surface water drainage and water supply, **for which there is service capacity available**, and can therefore accommodate new development (emphases added)".

Similar questions might arise in respect of other Tier 1 lands identified in the draft City Plan.

Appendix 3 of the National Planning Framework also includes the following statement:

“Current development or area plans may include zoned lands that cannot be serviced during the life of a development or area plan by reference to the infrastructural assessment of the planning authority. This means that they cannot be categorised as either Tier 1 lands or Tier 2 lands per the above and therefore are not developable within the plan period. **Such lands should not be zoned for development or included within a development plan core strategy for calculation purposes**” (Emphasis added).

The Group’s concerns in respect of the short-term delivery of Docklands are acknowledged in the Office of the Planning Regulator’s detailed submission to the Issues Paper (Our City – Our Future) in which the OPR indicates, inter alia, that in drafting a new City Plan the City should give consideration to:

“scenario planning and resilience measures in devising the development plan, by explicitly considering the **uncertainties in facilitating development of the aforementioned strategic areas**. For example, in the event that the **infrastructural needs of certain strategic areas, such as the Cork City Docks**, cannot feasibly be met in the short term, what **alternative areas will be developed consistent with compact growth targets, under the NPF and RSES**, to ensure delivery of the core strategy over the proposed plan period?” (emphases added) (Ref. Bullet 3, Page 10, OPR Pre-Draft Plan Submission, August 21st, 2020).

This submission for lands off Common’s Road, Blackpool is made in the context of the Group’s concerns associated with the delivery of draft plan objectives within the lifetime of the Plan. The Group asks the City Council to ensure that all reasonable sustainable development opportunities are pursued in order for Cork City to have any prospect of playing the role envisaged for the City in the National Planning Framework. It is vital that the power of the private sector is harnessed to

secure the delivery of the level of compact urban development identified for Cork in the National Planning Framework and to address the current housing deficit.

3.0 Rezoning Proposal

This submission seeks the rezoning of lands at Blackstone Bridge from Landscape Preservation Zone to Residential, Local Services and Institutional Uses. Specifically, this document is made in respect of 1.77 hectares outlined blue in Figure 1, below, and seeks to:

Change 0.75 hectares (hachured red in the zoning map below) of the 1.77 ha in the ownership of the principals of Walsh Group and Cadogan’s Strand Limited from **Landscape Preservation Zone (NW13) in the Cork City Development Plan, 2022-2028 to ZO 02 New Residential Neighbourhood.**



Figure 1: Extract from Map 04 & 10 of the draft City Development Plan 2022-2028

The Landscape Preservation Zone numbers are not annotated in the current draft Plan maps, unlike the 2015 City Plan maps, so it is assumed that the NW13 objective applies to 8.21 hectares, as before. On this basis, the proposed rezoning requires 0.75 hectares or 9.1% of the total NW13 area.

3.1 Planning History and Policy Evolution

The subject site was refused permission twice by Cork City Council under **T.P.05/29371** for 25 dwellings in April, 2005 and **T.P.05/30372** for 12 three storey dwellings in February, 2006. These applications were solely refused on grounds of being contrary to the landscape preservation zone objectives. The refusals sought to protect the character of, what was then referred to as, the ‘**Commons Ridge Zone**’ which was designated in the Cork City Development Plan, 2004. Based on the City Council Engineering reports, the City Council were generally satisfied that, subject to further consideration, all engineering issues arising in those applications, including traffic, sanitary services, storm water and ESB pylons, could be addressed; at no stage were infrastructure issues considered reasons for refusal of permission.

The planning and sustainable development context has changed considerably since 2006:

- i) there was a Cork City Boundary Extension in May 31st, 2019;
- ii) the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which included a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan, was adopted in January 31st, 2020; and
- iii) the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy was adopted by National Transport Authority (NTA) in February 2020.

Recent City Plan Variations, e.g., Variation No. 7, are, in part, a response to the national, and local, housing crisis; housing is now a high priority and all reasonable options should be taken to ensure delivery on sustainably located lands.

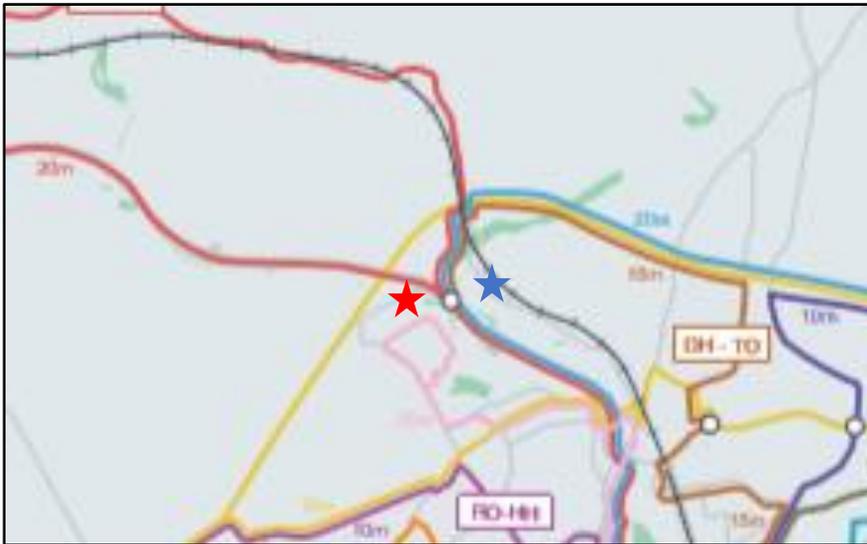


Figure 2: Red Star - Site in Context of CMATS Bus Routes; Blue Star 2019 Variation No. 7 – Lands at Boland’s Mills.

The subject lands are close to and of equal distance from Blackpool as lands rezoned by the City Council under a recent Variation of the City Plan at the former Boland’s Mills’ Site commenced on October 31st, 2019 (Blue Star, Figure 2, above). In providing justification for the suite of rezoned lands in Variation Number 7, which included a change from “Sports Grounds” to Residential on the South Douglas Road, the City Council made the following general points:

- (The rezonings will) facilitate an orderly redevelopment of the subject lands for social housing/residential uses and related uses as per the residential lands that are adjacent to all sites;
- The proposed variations would also accord with National, Regional and local planning policies;
- The sites are located within existing built-up areas (specifically brownfield and infill sites);
- (The sites are) located adjacent to or close to existing public transport links, cycle links and local community services and centres; and
- The proposed variations would help cater for social housing need in the particular areas as well as providing a degree of more consistent and cohesive land development uses.

In the justification for the rezoning of the Former Boland’s Mills’ site on Mallow Road from “Light Industry and Related Uses” to “Residential” the City Council made the following key points:

- There is a substantial **shortfall** in the available stock of social housing to match need in the **Blackpool area** of the city;
- The site is located within the existing built-up area of the city and is within a **10 minute walk of services** such as a convenience store and petrol station and an Entertainment Centre;
- It is within a 5 minute walk of a bus stop on Old Mallow Road with access to the city centre; and
- Blackpool Shopping Centre is also easily **accessible by foot or bicycle**.

4.0 Conclusion

All of the **general and specific points** made by the City Council in Variation No. 7 can, similarly, be made in respect of the lands which are the subject of this request. The Group has engaged Architects who have prepared a preliminary scheme for the site which has due regard to the landscape sensitivity of the area and could provide up to 126 apartments in 3 blocks.

It should also be noted that the Group has had discussions with the ESB regarding the relocation of the Kilbarry – J180 38KV Line and agreed a strategy, in the event that these lands are developed as proposed herein.

In addition to the merits set out above, in respect of Variation Number 7, this scheme can facilitate the provision of:

- A high-quality landmark gateway at the entrance to the City that would enhance rather than detract from the landscape value of the area;
- A c.1.02-hectare pocket park which might be transferred or ceded to the City Council as a local amenity;
- Sustainable use of serviced land, fronted by a footpath, that is in close proximity to the multiple public transport, cycling and walking routes identified in Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (See Figure 2 above); and
- Development of urgently needed residential units, at a time of housing crisis, in a sustainable location near Blackpool Village which has all services and facilities.



Figure 3: Draft Layout of Proposed Apartment Units





View 1



View 2





View 3

Typical Floor Plan

