

Planning Department,
Cork City Council,
City Hall,
Anglesea Street,
Cork,
T12 T997.

Monday, 4th October 2021
[By Online Consultation Portal]

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 IN RELATION TO LANDS AT CARRIGALINE ROAD, ARDARRIG, DOUGLAS, CO. CORK.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

On behalf of our Client, the Department of Education, we have been requested to make this submission in respect of the above referenced lands comprising the c. 3.97 ha Ardarrig Site, Carrigaline Road, Douglas, Co. Cork. The submission is made on foot of the public display of the *Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*. This submission relates specifically to the lands at Ardarrig and we understand that the Department will be making a more general submission addressing the entire Draft Development Plan separately. The *Draft Plan* is currently on public display until 4th October 2021.

The purpose of this submission is to seek the addition of a *Specific Local Objective (SLO)* on the site in the *Development Plan* to allow for the delivery of education facilities at this location. We note that the proposed zoning is Objective 16 (Open Space), which aims;

'to protect, retain and provide for passive and active recreational uses, open space, green networks, natural areas and amenity facilities.'

We note that education use on the site would be considered as a non-conforming use under the *Draft Plan*. The additional SLO requested in this instance would note that it is an objective of Cork City Council;

'to encourage the retention and development of the lands adjoining the Douglas Garda Station for educational, recreational and community uses.'

The rationale for seeking the change of the zoning designation of the lands is set out below. We reiterate that the Department of Education is fully committed to delivering a contemporary educational campus on this site, comprising a post-primary school with related facilities, utilising a design that is appropriate to its suburban context.

TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANTS

The Department and its design team have been in discussions with Cork County Council regarding the future development of these lands over a number of years and have been recently engaging with Cork City Council in relation to this objective. The issues arising as part of this process have also informed this submission, which is outlined in greater detail below.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

The subject site, which is largely vacant, is situated on the Carrigaline Road (R855-0), south-west of the Fingerpost Roundabout in Douglas. It represents a parcel of elevated lands with extensive mature tree cover. The site is bounded by Maryborough Woods to the south and a Rectory and two private dwellings to the north-west. There is also extensive mature tree cover on the roadside boundary and also running along the southern boundary with Maryborough Woods. The site is currently quite overgrown with extensive evidence of scrub. Ground levels are set well above the adjacent Carrigaline Road rising very steeply up from the same.



Figure 2.0 – Aerial view of the subject site. It is important to note that while figure 2.0 shows the lands in ownership of the Department of Education, the entire site is not earmarked for the development of the school. [Source: Google Earth, annotated by Tom Phillips + Associates, 2021].

The site is situated within a school catchment area that is experiencing consistently high demand for schools' provision, which is likely to continue into the future. The Draft Development Plan projects a population increase of 6,852 people (13% population increase) for the South East suburbs where this school catchment lies. It is considered an excellent site to meet this demand in locational and accessibility terms. As described below, however, the proposed *Draft Development Plan* zoning of the site (Objective 16) does not allow for accommodation of a modern educational facility. This facility is required to meet the needs of a growing urban population in this area, as outlined in this submission.



In addition, we note that there are inherent conflicts on a number of fronts in seeking to deliver public open space with a requirement to be publicly accessible in what will be a school environment. This level of public access gives rise to significant concerns particularly in relation to the security and well-being of both the general public and the school population from an anti-social behaviour perspective. We believe however that this could be suitably assessed and agreed in a planning application context.

We note that the proposed zoning designation is likely arising due to the current zoning designation for open space provision, under the *Cork County Development Plan 2014-2020*. Importantly however, education uses are ‘open for consideration’ under that *Plan*. Permission has previously been refused for a post-primary school and a public park on this site by Cork County Council on the basis of the Cork City and County Boundary Change. The Planner’s Report¹ noted that;

“given that the subject site is sited on land that will come within the jurisdiction of Cork City Council on 31/05/2009, there is a further lack of clarity regarding Cork City Council’s willingness to take on the responsibilities with respect to the open space to the east of the school site vis a vis maintenance, public liability etc, nor is there any clarity regarding whether Cork City Council would work in partnership with applicant in terms of future management of this land.”

The refusal from Cork County Council was later appealed to An Bord Pleanála² by the Minister for Education. The Board upheld the decision made by Cork County Council again noting that there was;

“a lack of clarity regarding the access to delivery of and future maintenance and responsibility for the active amenity space on the school site.”

The rationale for this submission on the *Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* is outlined below in further detail in sections 4 and 5.

3.0 PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION WITH CORK CITY COUNCIL

A Pre-Application Consultation took place with Cork City Council on Friday 16th April 2021. In attendance were senior planning and roads department staff from Cork City Council, as well as representatives from the Department of Education and the design team.

The proposed development, consisting of a post-primary school, was discussed in detail and provided the team with the opportunity to resolve and clarify any items prior to submission of the application, which is scheduled for lodgement before the end of the year. Previous reasons for refusal were the primary concerns discussed, alongside engineering and access items. We note that the potential for rezoning of the site in such a way to restrict the delivery of an education facility at this location was not raised by Cork City Council personnel during the meeting. As the Pre-Application Consultation provided further clarification on previous reasons for refusal, it has since informed the forthcoming, revised proposed development.

¹ Cork County Council Reg. Ref 18/6246, Planner’s Report dated 29/05/2009.

² An Bord Pleanála Ref. 304733.

4.0 PROPOSED ZONING OBJECTIVE

As previously noted, under the *Cork County Development Plan 2014-2020*, the site is zoned as 'Open Space' with education uses being open for consideration. The *Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* has retained the open space zoning and has removed 'education' as a use being 'open for consideration' by the local authority. Therefore, the development of a school is not a 'permitted in principle' use under this zoning objective.

The *Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028* also notes the following in respect of the development of new schools;

3.61 - "A key consideration in planning for sustainable, diverse and inclusive neighbourhoods is the need to provide for the needs of children at all stages of their development. The successful delivery of compact growth and creating a more liveable city, will necessitate provision of more childcare, education, passive and active recreation and community infrastructure in-step with growth. Cork City Council is committed to working with stakeholders to provide for the needs of children." [Our Emphasis]

3.69 - "The above projections represent a starting point and demographic changes within the existing population cohort may reduce the requirement. Nevertheless, the level of potential need must be planned for in order to meet the future educational needs of the City. A full appraisal by the Department of Education of the expansion capacity of existing schools or the potential to co-locate schools as part of a campus remains ongoing." [Our Emphasis]

3.70 - "The Department undertakes annual reviews of school place requirements which take account of the rate of housing delivery, child benefit data and existing school enrolments. Where data indicates that additional provision is required at primary or post-primary level, the delivery of additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools
- **Provision of a new school or schools"** [Our Emphasis]

3.72 - "The Development Plan carries forward the sites zoned for new schools throughout the City and has instilled flexibility within the zoning objectives for residential areas to enable the delivery of new schools or expansion of existing schools should the need arise and subject to compliance with other policy objectives within the Development Plan." [Our Emphasis]

3.74 - "In accordance with the "The Provision of Schools & the Planning System a Code of Practice for Planning Authorities" (2008), Cork City Council will continue to work closely with the Department of Education to plan for new schools or the expansion of existing school within the catchments of proposed growth." [Our Emphasis]



It is submitted that the proposed use of the subject lands for a school provision is wholly in keeping with the intent and spirit of the above policies outlined in the *Draft Plan* and we note that it is an objective for Cork City Council to continue to work closely with the Department of Education to plan for new schools. It is the opinion of the Department of Education that delivery of a school at this location is critical at this location to meet the current catchment demands. This is outlined further below.

5.0 DEMAND FOR A SCHOOL AT THIS LOCATION

The Department of Education notes the genuine need for educational facilities in Douglas, which is summarised below;

“Cork Educate Together Secondary School (ETSS) opened in 2016, with an enrolment of 45 students. It has grown incrementally, and its September 2021 enrolment is 370 students.

The decision to establish the school was taken in 2013, following an assessment of the increased requirement for post-primary school places in the two adjoining School Planning Areas of Carrigaline and South Suburbs of Cork City.

Between both areas, a projected requirement was identified for a potential additional c. 2,500 extra post-primary students in the combined school planning areas. In order to meet this projected requirement, two post-primary schools were established in 2016, namely Cork ETSS and Edmund Rice College, Carrigaline.

Cork ETSS is in temporary accommodation pending the provision of its permanent facilities. Edmund Rice College is in its permanent newly built school for over three years. It was possible to progress it to construction without delay as the site was provided by the school patron.” [Our Emphasis]

Furthermore, the Department has noted the following;

“Cork ETSS is currently located in interim accommodation (leased accommodation) at Griffith College, Wellington Rd, Cork, which is outside the catchment area they were set up to serve. They have been located here for the last number of years. The school’s first year intake level is restricted to 60 pupils due to the accommodation which is available and likely to be available for the next year or two.” [Our Emphasis]

It is clear from the information provided by the Department above that the demand for a school at this location is at an all-time high, as enrolment numbers increase, the capacity for pupils in pre-existing post-primary schools decreases. The pupils attending the school have been in temporary accommodation for a number of years, removed from their catchment, which is not in the spirit of sustainable development and associated commuting patterns.

The limit on the capacity of the existing school due to the temporary nature of their accommodation is also a cause for concern, particularly when assessed against projected demand in the area, in the coming years.

6.0 PROPOSED SPECIFIC LOCAL OBJECTIVE

It is requested that the entire site be allocated a *Specific Local Objective (SLO)*, which would be –

‘to encourage the retention and development of the lands adjoining the Douglas Garda Station for educational, recreational and community uses.’

This is considered the most appropriate SLO to facilitate the provision of a new school development in the Cork City Council administrative area, while also allowing the Local Authority to deliver a public open space at this location.

The Carrigaline Road site is already acknowledged by Cork County Council as being an appropriate location for a new school development, as evidenced by educational uses being open for consideration on the previous land zoning. The ability to deliver the school is, however, severely compromised by the requirement to reconcile this new development with the requirements of the new Objective 16 zoning designation.

We note that an SLO of this nature has been utilised elsewhere by other local authorities. For example, both the Current and Draft *Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plans* note under Objective F (Open Space) the following;

“Where lands zoned F are to be developed then: Not more than 40% of the land in terms of the built form and surface car parking combined shall be developed upon. Any built form to be developed shall be of a high standard of design including quality finishes and materials...

Said space shall be provided and laid out in a manner designed to optimise public patronage of the residual open space and/or to protect existing sporting and recreational facilities which may be available for community use.” [Our Emphasis]

In summary, therefore, on Objective F zoned lands, new development can only occur on 40% of the lands with the remaining 60% being ‘...set aside for publicly accessible passive open space or playing fields.’ This 60% area must be laid out in a manner designed to ‘optimise public patronage’ and may be available ‘for community use’.

We note that the current layout of the site, as seen by Cork City Council during pre-application consultation discussions, required c. 50% of the wider landholding to be reserved for the school and associated facilities. The Department are satisfied that a similar arrangement under the SLO with Cork City Council could be made, allocating 50% of the site for development of the school and the remaining 50% to be set aside for publicly accessible, passive open space.

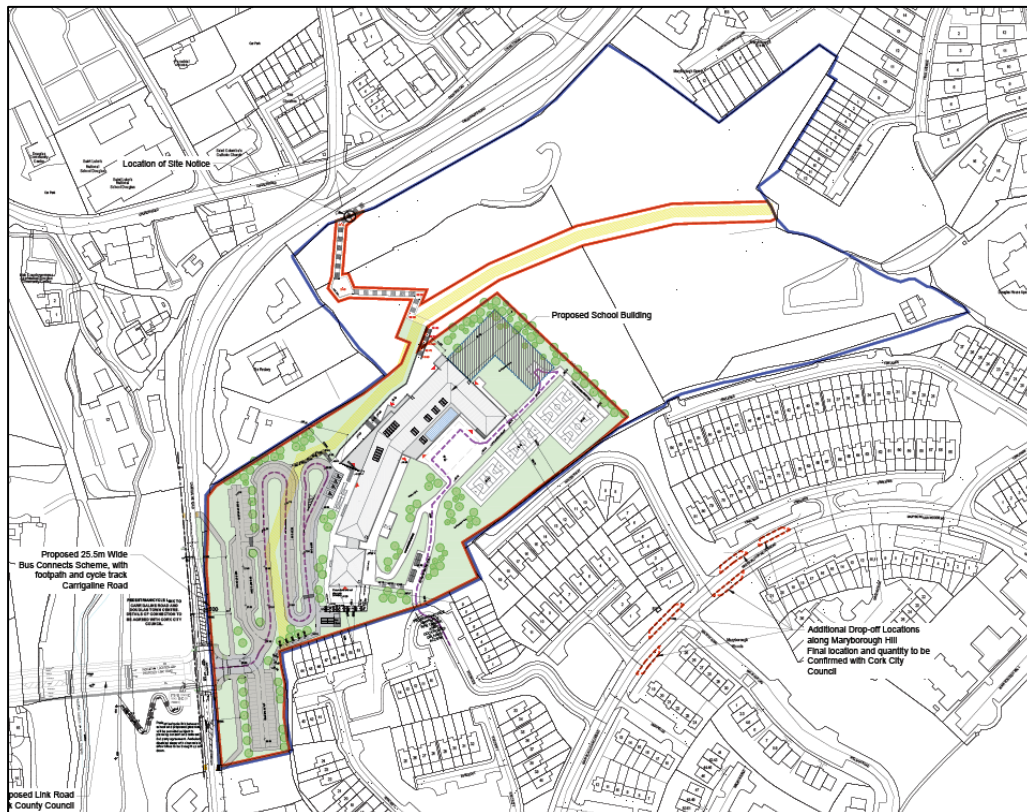


Figure 6.0 – Indicative site layout, not yet formally finalised, prepared by Reddy A+U

The Department intends to deliver an educational use on the site, that will also provide a facility that will be generally made available to the wider community (outside of school hours) once built, for night classes or other uses to be agreed, thereby delivering major planning and community gain.

7.0 CONCLUSION

As noted above, the Department of Education is committed to the delivery of a new school on the subject site. As described above, however, the proposed open space zoning objective (Objective 16) is not compatible with the delivery of a sustainable and appropriately designed contemporary urban educational campus. The restrictions on permitted uses inherent in the zoning objective renders this an inappropriate zoning for the successful delivery of a new school, which is vital at this location.

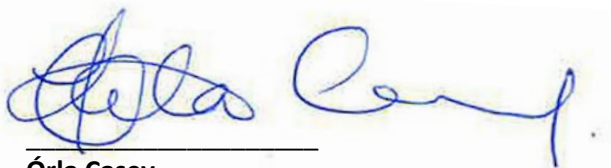
The provision of new educational facilities, as would be permitted in principle under the proposed SLO at this location, would facilitate the delivery of an urgently needed education facility at an appropriate scale and quantum needed to serve the catchment. It would also meet the policy requirements underpinning the open space objective in terms of setting lands aside for future provision of an open space facility, that would be a significant planning gain for the use of the wider community.

We would therefore request the following:

- The addition of a *Specific Local Objective* to the zoning of this site to include educational, recreational and community uses.

We look forward to acknowledgement of receipt of this submission in due course. Please revert with any queries to the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



Órla Casey
Senior Planner
Tom Phillips + Associates

Encl.