

**CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS**

*Submission to Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028*

On behalf of  
Speardale Limited

by  
Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

October 2021

No. 21708

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**Document Control Sheet**

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## 1.0 Introduction

This submission to the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 has been prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds in accordance with section 12(2)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

This submission is made on behalf of our client, Speardale Limited, and relates to their lands adjacent to The Commons Inn, Commons Road, Cork which forms part of Cork City administrative area.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

Our clients have a large landholding on the Commons Road as outlined in blue below. This land is partially located within a Landscape Preservation Zone in the current Cork City Development Plan. The Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 proposes to retain this part of the site within the same landscape preservation zoning.

This submission requests that this land be included within the ***Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood*** Zoning in the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 for the following reasons:

- There is an acute need for residential development within the city area.
- The site provides an opportunity to deliver a consolidated residential development close to Blackpool District Centre and Cork City Centre.
- The residential zoning of the site is appropriate against the considerations set out in the National Development Plan Guidelines that are relevant to proper planning and sustainable development.
- Specifically, the residential zoning of this site is consistent with the sequential approach to land use zoning.
- Cork City Council must prioritise the development of lands such as the subject site that are serviced, accessible and deliverable within the short term in the emerging Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028.
- We do not believe that the site, or at least the full extent of the site, should be included within a Landscape Preservation Zone and this opinion is supported by specialised inputs to this submission prepared by County Tree Care Ltd Arborists; Flynn Furney Ecologists and Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Landscape Architects.
- Our review has confirmed that part of the Landscape Preservation Zone to the south of the river is suitable for development. This site can be developed while safeguarding the assets relevant to the Landscape Preservation Zone and delivering the site specific objective The subject site has the capacity to facilitate public walkaways and access, achieving site specific objectives including the delivery of a linear park and an amenity route through the site.

### 3.0 Site Location and Development Context

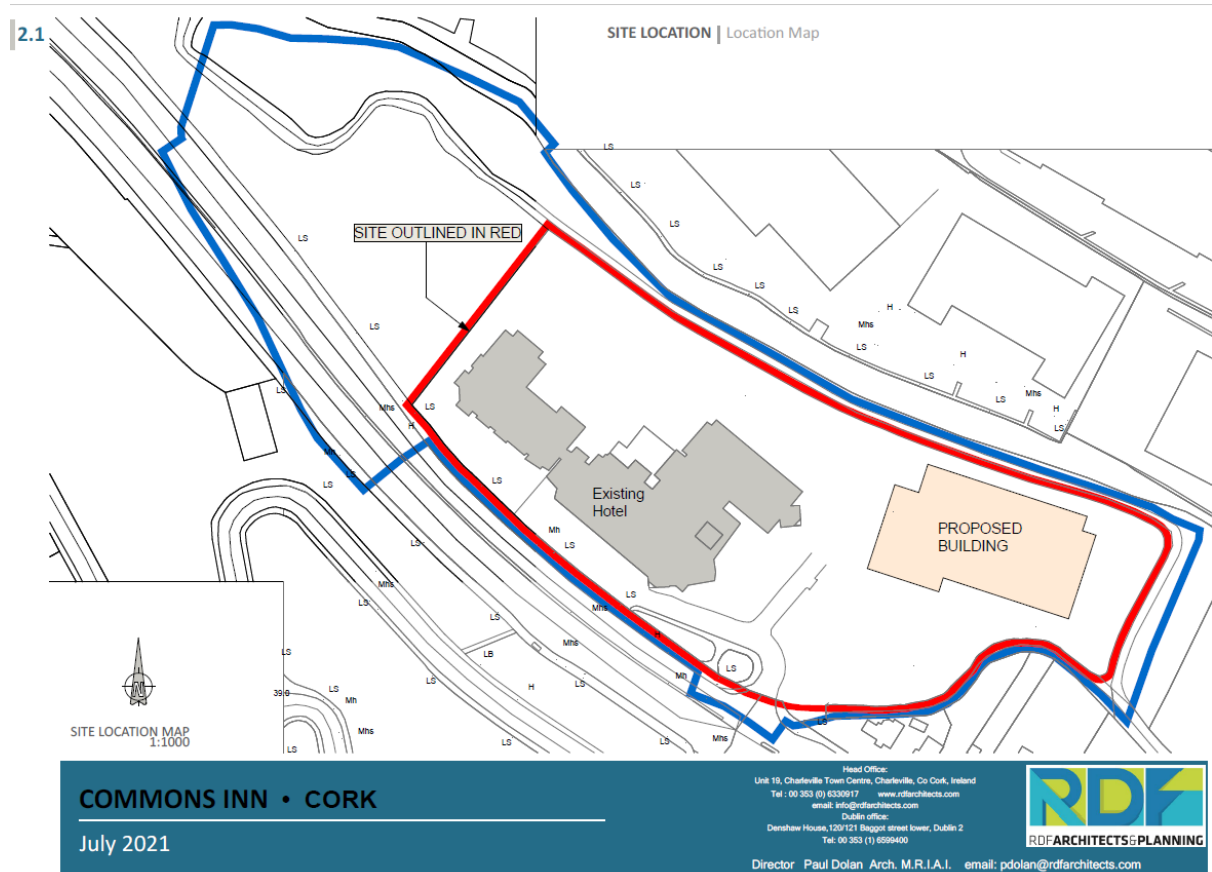
Our client's land holding is located north of Commons Road, adjacent and west to The Commons Inn Hotel. Our client also owns the hotel. The site is situated to the north of Cork City Centre.

The lands are bound by the Commons Road (N20) to the south, Old Mallow Road to the west, Northpoint Business Park to the north and The Commons Inn hotel to the east. The River Bride runs through the land.

The area surrounding the site is characterised by a mixture of residential, commercial and light industrial land uses. The North Point Business Park is one of the largest industrial areas within Cork City and is predominantly located to the north of River Bride.

The N20 is a National Road and one of the main through routes to Cork City. The N20 connects Cork City to Limerick City through Mallow. The N20 is one of the busiest routes in the city.

**Figure 1:** Overall Client Landholding outlined in Blue



**Figure 2: Aerial Image of Clients Site**



The site is highly accessible. There is a continuous footpath network connecting along the Commons Road and pedestrian access can be easily achieved to the site. Vehicular access can be achieved through the Commons Inn hotel, which is also owned by our client. The nearest bus stop is located in front of the site. This stop serves the 215-bus route. The 215 runs from Cloghroe (Coolflugh Terminus) to Mahon Point (Jacobs Island) via city centre. Services depart every 30 minutes from Cloghroe between 06:30am to 11:30pm Monday to Saturday and on Sundays from 08:30am to 11:30pm.

The outbound route runs from Mahon Point – Patrick Street Route to Cloghroe via the city centre. Services depart every 30mins from Mahon Point between 6:35am to 11:35pm Monday to Saturday and Sundays from 8:00am to 11:30pm.



**Figure 2: Site Location Context**



#### **4.0 Current Planning Policy Context**

##### **4.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a key national planning policy document, providing a broad planning framework for development and population growth in Ireland. The NPF provides a series of contextual planning objectives, taking into account the future long term population growth and development needs of Ireland to 2040.

Our client's site at Commons Road would be defined as a Tier 1 site in the NPF approach to land zoning as land contiguous to existing development that is 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 and for which there is service capacity available and is therefore ready to accommodate new development.

The development of our client's site would be fully consistent with a number of key National Policy Objectives (NPO's) that will deliver the NPF's overarching objective of compact growth, including the following specific objectives:

- NPO 2a – A target of 50% of future population and employment growth will be focused in the existing five cities and their suburbs
- NPO 3a – Deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements.
- NPO 3b – Deliver at least half (50%) of all new homes that are targeted in the five Cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford, within their existing built-up footprints

- NPO 4 – Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.
- NPO 33 – Prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location.

#### **4.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) 2020**

The RSES prioritises the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location. To achieve compact growth, the RSES prioritises housing and employment development in locations within and contiguous to existing city footprints where it can be served by public transport, walking and cycling.

The RSES promotes the development of sustainable compact settlements within the 10-minute city and town concepts, whereby a range of community facilities and services are accessible in short walking and cycling timeframes from homes or are accessible by high quality public transport services by connecting people to larger scaled settlements delivering these services.

The RSES sets a population target of 283,669 for Cork City and suburbs by 2031. In accordance with the objectives of the NPF, to promote the consolidation of Cork City and suburbs, a target of a minimum of 50% of all new homes should be within the built-up footprint in Cork and 30% in other metropolitan settlements.

The RSES contains a Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) for Cork. The MASP seeks to:

*“Promote the Cork Metropolitan Area as a cohesive metropolitan employment and property market where population and employment growth is integrated with: (i) the city centre as the primary location at the heart of the metropolitan area and region reinforced by; (ii) the continued regeneration, consolidation and infrastructure led growth of the city centre, Cork City Docklands, Tivoli and suburban areas; (iii) active land management initiatives to enable future infrastructure led expansion of the city and suburbs (to be assessed by Core Strategy initiatives); and, (iv) the regeneration, consolidation and infrastructure led growth of metropolitan towns and other strategic employment locations in a sustainable manner”.*

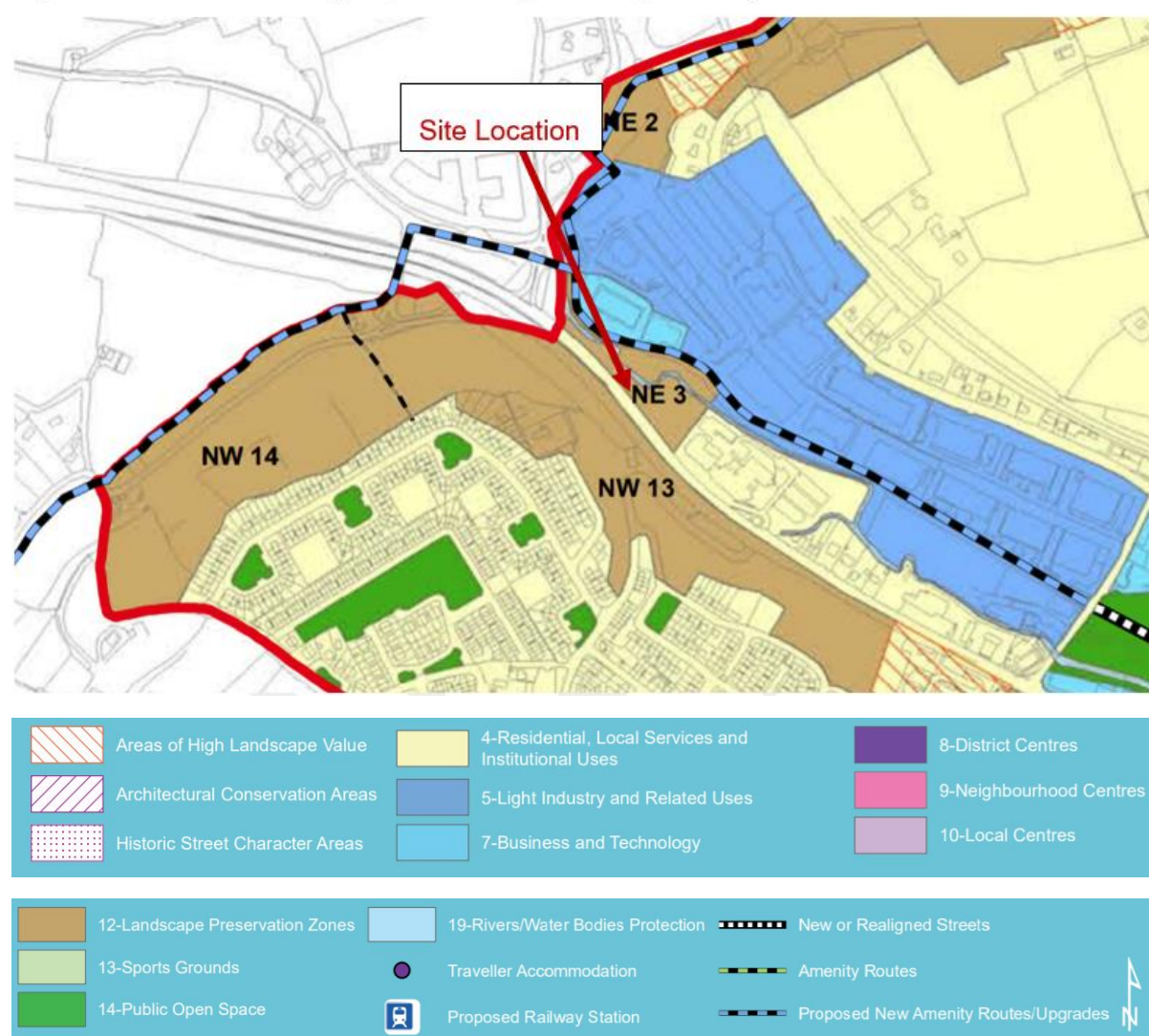
#### **4.3 Existing Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021**

The subject site is zoned as ‘ZO 12 - Landscape Preservation Zones’ within the current Cork City Development Plan with an objective *“To preserve and enhance the special landscape and visual character of landscape preservation zones. There will be a presumption against development within these zones, with development only open for consideration where it achieves the specific objectives set out in Chapter 10, Table 10.2”.*

Paragraph 15.19 goes on to say that *“These areas have been identified due to their sensitive landscape character and are deemed to be in need of special protection due to their special amenity value, which derives from their distinct topography, tree cover, setting to historic structure or other landscape character. Many of these sites have limited or no development potential due to their landscape character and development will be limited in scope and character to the specific objectives for each site set out in Chapter 10”.*



**Figure 3:** Land use zoning as per existing Cork City Development Plan



The current Development Plan states that these Landscape Preservation Zones (LPZ) have limited or no development potential due to their landscape character.

Objective 10.5 seeks “To preserve and enhance the character and visual amenity of Landscape Preservation Zones through the control of development. Development will be considered only where it safeguards the value and sensitivity of the particular landscape and achieves the respective site-specific objectives, as set out in Table 10.2”.

The site has a site-specific local objective ‘NE3’ that is “to re-establish the River as a key element of the valley floor by providing a linear park with new tree coverage and linked spaces”.

**Figure 5:** Extract of Schedule of Objectives applying to Landscape Preservation Zones

NE3	Bride Valley (3)	A,B,C,D,E (from train)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To re-establish the River as a key element of the valley floor by providing a linear park with publicly accessible riverside walk with new tree coverage and linked spaces.</li> </ul>
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**Figure 6:** Extract of relevant Landscape Assets Categories applicable for the site

Ref	Assets Category
<b>A</b>	<b>Topography</b> - ridges, escarpments, slopes
<b>B</b>	<b>Water / River Corridors</b> - rivers, estuary, harbour, The Lough, Atlantic Pond, Docklands, Port of Cork
<b>C</b>	<b>Tree Canopy</b> - Areas with existing woodlands or significant tree groups, or areas with potential for new woodlands.
<b>D</b>	<b>Ecology</b> - areas which provide a habitat for wild flora and fauna.
<b>E</b>	<b>Visually Important Land</b> (including Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value, Potential Vantage Points and Locally Important Views)

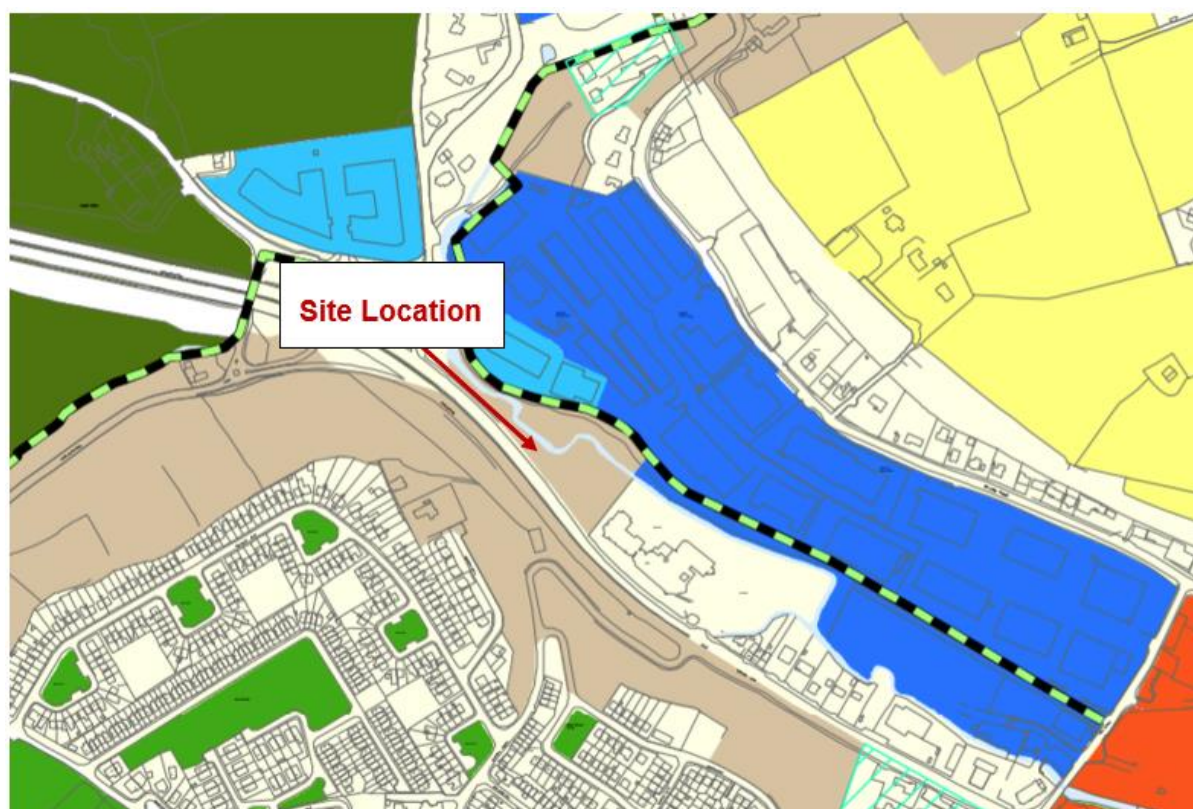
#### 4.4 Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028

The subject site is within 'ZO18 - Landscape Preservation Zones' in the draft Development Plan, with the objective *"To preserve and enhance the special landscape and visual character of Landscape Preservation Zones"*.

Objective 6.12 seeks *"To preserve and enhance the character and visual amenity of Landscape Preservation Zones through the careful management of development. Development will be considered only where it safeguards the value and sensitivity of the particular landscape and achieves the respective site-specific objectives, as set out in Tables 6.6 – 6.10"*.

It is noted that lands to either side of the Landscape Preservation Zone are zoned ZO 01 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood.

**Figure 7:** Draft Cork City Development Plan Zoning Map 04







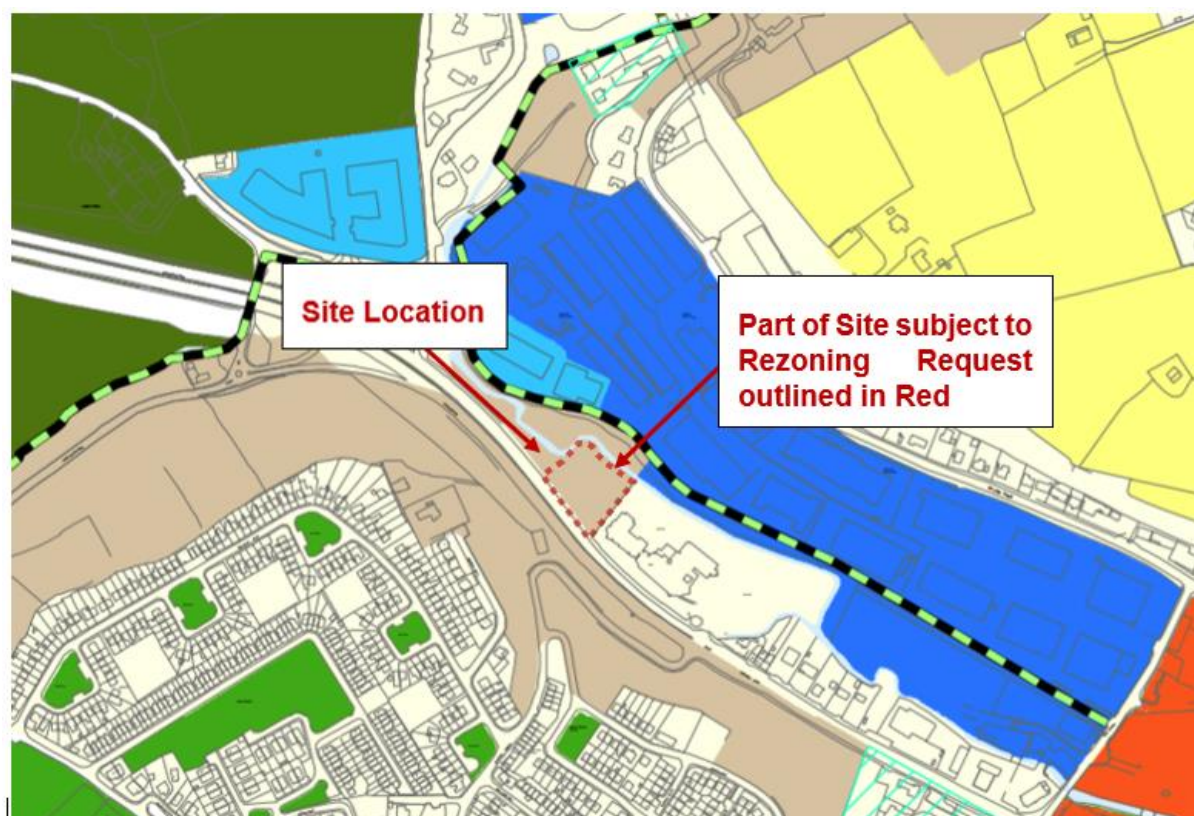
## 5.0 Our Clients Case for the Zoning of their Site for Development

This submission requests that land within the ownership of Speardale Limited be rezoned to **Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood** in the emerging Development Plan, the relevant objective (ZO1) for these zones being *“to protect and provide for residential uses and amenities, local services and community, institutional, educational and civic uses”*.

We do not believe that the entire rezoning of the Landscape Preservation Zone to Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood Zoning is necessary or required. It is requested that the site is partially rezoned with the remainder of it remaining within a landscape preservation zone.

This would be appropriate to the shape and narrowness of parts of the site that is bisected by the River Bride and constraints relevant to other parts of the Landscape Preservation Zone that have been identified in specialist assessments included with this submission.

**Figure 8:** Part of Site Subject to Rezoning Request outlined in Red



The rezoning of part of our clients site is fully consistent with the National Development Plan Guidelines as outlined below.

### 5.1 Need

The Draft Cork Joint Housing strategy estimates that the total housing demand over the plan period is determined to be 17,118 households or 2,853 households per annum.

As a location that can prioritise walking, cycling and public transport access, our client's site at the Commons Road is appropriate to facilitate the development of sustainable neighbourhood development. Our client's site is very well situated to benefit from existing and

proposed public infrastructure and accessibility to Cork City Centre. The site provides an opportunity to deliver high quality homes as a sustainable extension to existing development in the area to help meet an acute housing need in the city.

The land to the southside of the river and north of the Commons Road has been identified as suitable for development. We believe the site should be zoned as Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood to help address the housing need within Cork City. Having regard to the above, the acute need for housing in this area must be prioritised.

This submission demonstrates that part of the Landscape Preservation Zone is suitable for development and could be developed such that the assets relevant to the Landscape Preservation are protected.

## **5.2 Policy Context**

The residential development of our client's site would be consistent with the relevant national, regional and local planning policies and guidance as demonstrated within this submission. The subject site is located in a strategic location that is capable of contributing to much needed housing.

National policies prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location. The NPF seeks that 50% of the future population will be accommodated within the cities and their suburban areas to curtail the adverse impacts of sprawling urban areas.

The residential development of this site would positively contribute to the fifteen-minute city/walkable neighbourhood concept whereby a range of facilities and services such as employment, local shops and neighbourhood infrastructure are accessible within a 15-minute walk or cycle or trip using public transport.

## **5.3 Capacity of Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure**

Our client's site would be categorised within the Tier 1 – serviced zoned land category defined within the National Planning Framework as 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.

Regarding roads infrastructure, there is potential to access our client's site from the Commons Inn Hotel which is also owned by the client.

## **5.4 Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities**

The Development Plan Guidelines state that consideration must be given to the future availability of, or the capacity to provide supporting infrastructure, such as community facilities, healthcare, schools, public open space, retail and other service provision and public transport when allocating land for development.

Our clients' lands at Commons Road are well located with convenient access to community facilities and services including the following:

- Schools including Railway Children School;
- Northpoint Business Park
- Shopping facilities in Blackpool Retail Park
- Sports and Leisure Facilities including the Glen Resource and Sports Centre, Mayfield Sports Complex, Leeds AFC, Glen Rovers GAA club and Delaney's GAA Club;
- Amenity areas and open spaces – the Glen Park

- Access to the open countryside

The major employment centres of North Point Business Park, City North Business Park, Blackpool Retail Park and Shopping Centre and Kilbarry Business Park are all within close proximity of the site and are well connected by public transport.

### **5.5 Compliance with Sequential Approach and Compact Growth**

Our client's site at Commons Road is contiguous to zoned lands and surrounded by established development to the north, east and south of the site. As indicated above, the site is very accessible, proximate to services and facilities that support residential development. The nearest bus stop is located in the vicinity of the site to travel towards the city centre.

Our client's site is sequentially preferable to more peripheral zoned sites throughout Cork City and the concept of compact growth. The site as it is surrounded by development must be considered as an infill development opportunity.

The opportunities presented by such sites must be maximised in accordance with overarching national planning policies and objectives.

### **5.6 Review of Landscape Assets in the Landscape Preservation Zone (LPZ)**

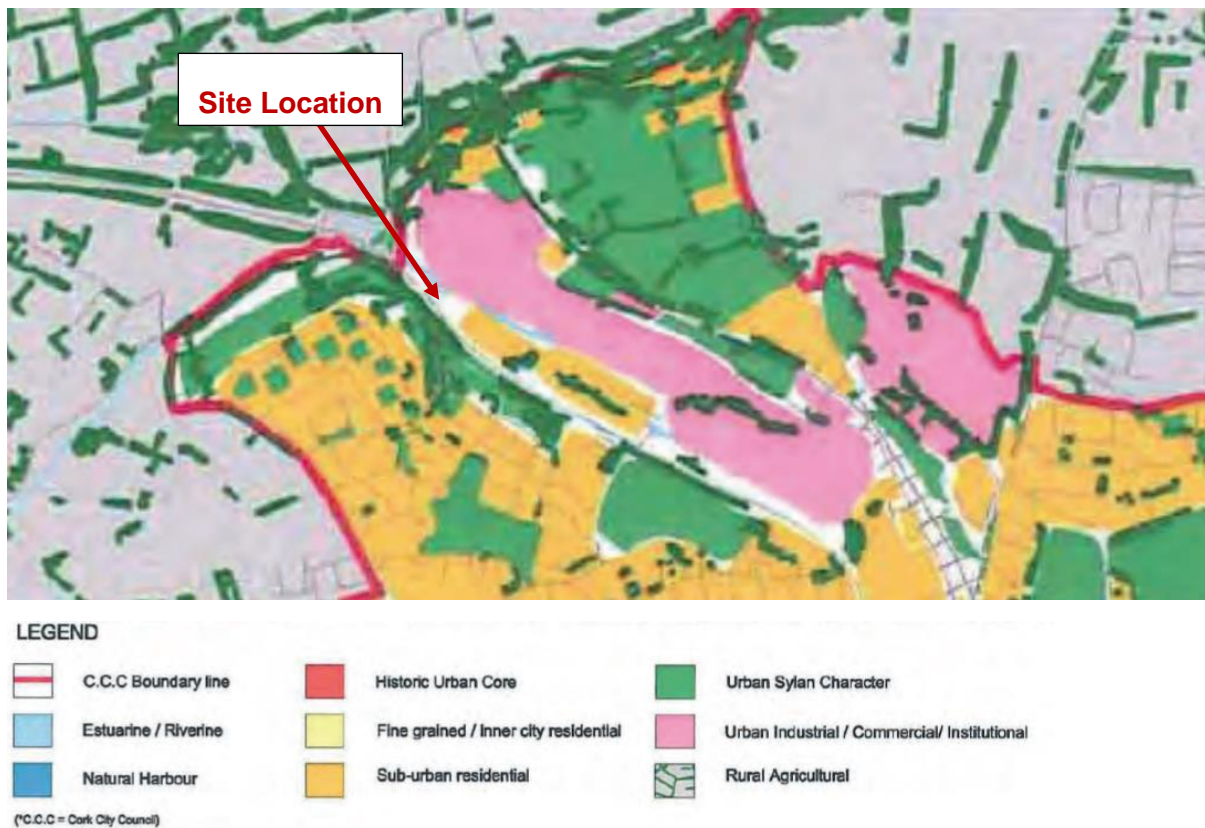
We will be demonstrating the case, that the proposed rezoning of our client's site to **Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood** can effectively safeguard the value and sensitivity of the existing LPZ and also achieve site specific objectives as set out in Table 10.2 of the development plan. This submission is supported by a comprehensive Landscape Assessment Report prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds Landscape Architects who visited the site in September 2021 (see Appendix A).

The Landscape Assessment concludes that *"Analysis of the key landscape issues relating to the site finds that the NE3 site has the capacity to accommodate re-zoning of the part of the site for development without giving rise to adverse landscape effects"*.

The methodology of the Cork City Landscape Study 2008 consisted of a Landscape Character Assessment; an Analysis of the Key Landscape Elements; and the identification of Key Landscape Assets and Formulation of Policy Recommendations. Upon which, 8 no. Landscape Character Areas were identified within the city. The study also identified key landscape assets within the city. The following image is an extract of the Conceptual Landscape Structure Plan identifying the Key Landscape Assets.



**Figure 9:** Extract of Conceptual Landscape Structure Plan Identifying Key Landscape Assets



It is unclear if the subject site falls within any character area from the above map.

The zoning objective for the subject site indicates that Landscape Preservation Zones (LPZ), are areas in need of special protection as their character and amenity value is considered to be highly sensitive to development and as such have limited or no development potential. Typically the landscape character of LPZs combines distinctive landscape assets such as topography / slope, tree cover, setting to historic structures / other types of open spaces and other landscape assets.

The subject sites is subjected to site specific objective ref: NE3 Landscape Preservation Zone, with Landscape Assets identified on-site as follows:

- A: Topography;
- B: Water / River Corridors;
- C: Tree Canopy;
- D: Ecology and
- E: Visually Important Land.

The suitability of the site to be included within the Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood Zoning is considered against these five assets below.

### **5.6.1 Topography**

Due to the River Bride, the lands are sloping towards the river. The subject site is gradually sloping northwards towards the bank of the river and towards the Northpoint Business Park. The lands are low-lying and not prominent in the landscape.

### **5.5.2 Water / River Corridors**

The River Bride meanders through the land holding. The River Bride bisects the larger land holding from a culvert on the north-west, running east and exiting at the east corner of the lands. Due to narrowness and the sloping nature of the site, most of the north-western half of the land holding is unsuitable for development. The subject site is mostly riparian in nature, is flat and has capacity for change.

It is a policy of the Cork City Council that proposals for development in waterside locations dedicate a minimum of 15 metres from the top of the riverbank to preserve its natural heritage and biodiversity value, provide ecological corridors for the movement of species, provide recreational amenities and public walkways and access.

The subject site through an appropriate design response can add recreational value and ecological diversification through further planting and maintenance. The subject site has the capacity to facilitate public walkways and access, achieving site specific objectives.

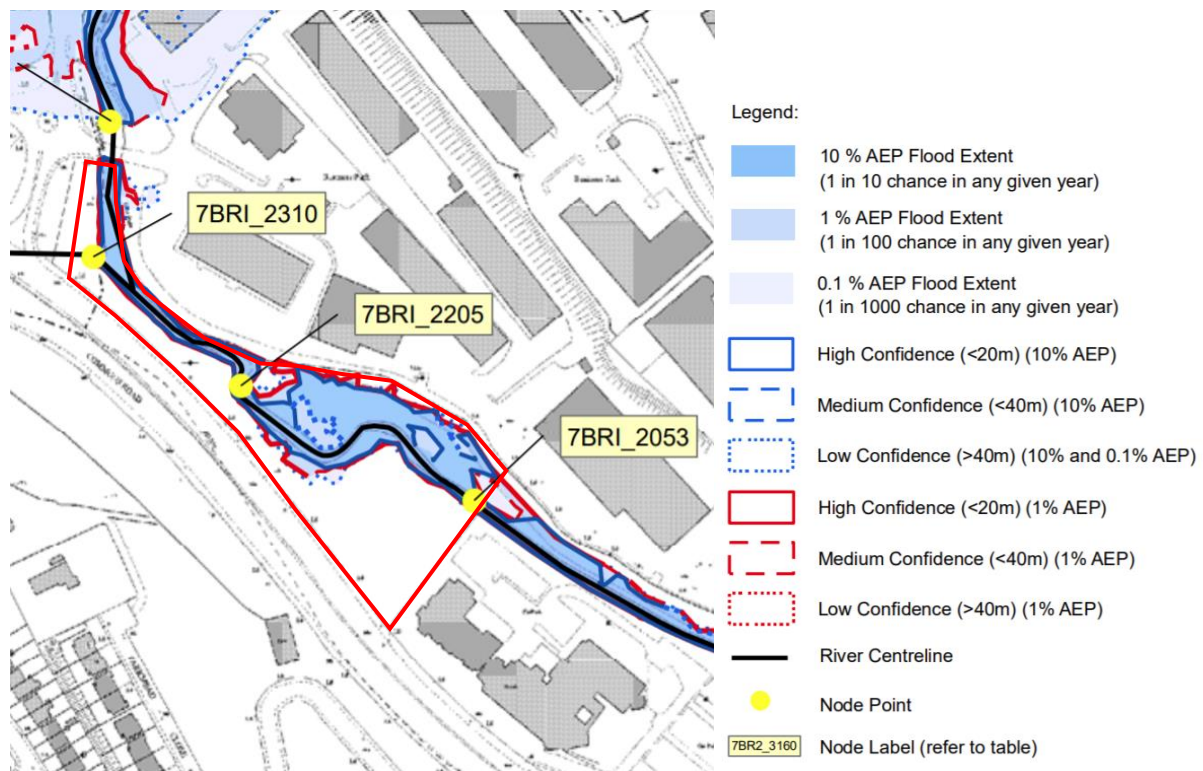
Relevant Objective:

*Objective 10.9 River and Waterway Corridors: To protect and maintain the integrity and maximise the potential of the natural heritage and biodiversity value of the River Lee and its associated watercourses.*

*To promote an integrated approach to the future development of the River Lee so that it includes all aspects of use e.g. recreation, maritime history and economic factors  
Development proposals in river corridors shall:*

- a. Dedicate a minimum of 10m from the waters edge in channelized rivers for amenity, biodiversity and walkway purposes;*
- b. Dedicate a minimum of 15m from the top of the bank in non- channelized rivers for amenity, biodiversity and walkway purposes;*
- c. Preserve the biodiversity value of the site subject to Ecological Assessment by a suitably qualified Ecologist;*
- d. Shall not involve landfilling, diverting, culverting or realignment of river and stream corridors;*
- e. Shall not have a negative effect on the distinctive character and appearance of the waterway corridor and the specific characteristics and landscape elements of the individual site and its context.*

**Figure 10:** OPW Flood Extent Map (Figure No: M7/UA/EXT/CURS/001) (Source: OPW)



In terms of flooding the subject site has no record of flooding. The map above from the OPW shows that the site lies outside flood zones.

### 5.5.3 Tree Canopy

The subject site is a scrub land with overgrown vegetation. There is no extensive woodland within the site except a small group of trees to the south-eastern portion of the site. The site has the capacity for new woodland areas and tree canopy. An Arboricultural Assessment of the site was carried out by County Tree Care Ltd, who are qualified in Arboriculture and Horticulture (see Appendix B).

It is evident that the site's vegetation was developed through natural selection and regeneration and the report notes that through human intervention the site's woodland capacity can be increased and diversified with future development on site. While the requested re-zoning of our clients site will lead to the loss of naturally regenerated willow scrub and a few Lombardy poplar specimen trees as showing in the arborist's report the Landscape Assessment confirms that there will be opportunity to provide tree planting along the north-western edge of the site and any further natural regeneration across the rest of the N3 site will not be impacted.

### 5.5.4 Ecology

Flynn Furney Ecologist have prepared a rezoning appraisal assessment that accompanies this submission (Appendix C). This appraisal aims to determine whether the proposed rezoning has the potential to significantly impact upon the conservation objectives and overall integrity of any Natura 2000 sites and to ascertain if the specific objectives for the site as outlined above can be achieved.

The assessment is based upon a desk study and field work carried out by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants ecologists.

The assessment concludes that no impacts to any Natura 2000 sites are likely as a result of the proposed rezoning. Local loss of scrub habitat would be associated with a removal of local habitat suitable for non-SCI species of this site, including resident birds as well as small mammals. It is noted that the loss of this habitat at a county scale would be deemed low and efforts could be made to compensate for this loss, pending successful rezoning, through compensatory planting in any proposed development at design stage.

Adverse impacts to protected species would be avoided through the retention of natural habitat, and a riparian and grassland buffer zone along the river. The potential impacts of the proposed rezoning have been assessed and no potential direct or indirect impacts upon the Qualifying Interests of any European site have been identified. It is therefore concluded that the proposed rezoning, either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects, does not have the potential to significantly affect any European site, in light of their conservation objectives. Therefore, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment would not be deemed not to be required.

### **5.5.5 Visually Important Lands**

The lands are low lying when compared to the road and the neighbouring developments. The site can be described as a gateway site to Cork City. The site is located in a prominent location north of the N20. Currently, the site is overgrown and unmanaged and does not add to the visual quality of the area.

As noted within the Landscape Assessment, Protected Landscape and Townscape View LT 24A: View from N20 Commons Road Inbound to woodland on Commons Ridge must also be considered. It is proposed that development of the re-zoned parcel would not significantly impact the view of the woodland along the ridge. This would also apply to users of the N20 approach road.

### **5.5.6 Summary**

The site is gradually sloping. The site is effectively riparian in nature. There is no evidence of flooding and the site lies outside the flood zone. The existing vegetation is a result of natural colonisation. There are no extensive tree groups and canopy within the site. The site has capacity to achieve greater ecological value, currently the site has developed through natural regeneration. The site low-lying compared to the surrounding landscape and is not visually prominent.

**Table 1:** Summary of Suitability against landscape assets

<b>Landscape Asset Category</b>	<b>Summary of assessment</b>
Topography	Low lying lands and valley type
Water / River Corridor	Riparian in nature. Outside Flood Zone
Tree Canopy	No existing extensive tree group located within the site
Ecology	<p>Loss of this habitat deemed low and efforts could be made to compensate for this loss, pending successful rezoning, through compensatory planting in any proposed development at design stage.</p> <p>Adverse impacts to protected species would be avoided through the retention of natural habitat, and a riparian and grassland buffer zone along the river. The potential impacts</p>

	of the proposed rezoning have been assessed and no potential direct or indirect impacts upon the Qualifying Interests of any European site have been identified
Visually Important Land	Low lying and visually obscure. proposed that development of the re-zoned parcel would not significantly impact the view of the woodland along the ridge

The site has capacity in the form of development at the location and as a gateway site, the site is even more attractive for residential development. An attractive landmark development at this location will add to the visual qualities of the area and act as a gateway into Cork City.

As per our assessment and individual professional inputs include with this submission, we can conclude that the site has potential to accommodate change in the form of development. The most appropriate use at this location is considered to be 'residential', which is reflective of the immediate land use zonings and character.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Speardale Limited welcome the opportunity to participate in the development plan making process. It is requested that the content of this submission be given careful consideration during the preparation of the Cork City Development Plan 2022.

Our clients' site would make efficient use of existing and committed infrastructure in the area including public transport and services. In terms of physical suitability, there are no known constraints that deems the site unsuitable for development.

In summary, the submission requests that our clients' lands at Commons Road be zoned as ***Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood*** in the emerging Cork City Development Plan 2022.

Our client would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the above recommendations in further detail with Cork City Council.

If any further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact us.



## **Appendix A** CSR Landscape Report

# **CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS** **LAND PLANNING & DESIGN**

**Submission to Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028**

**Landscape Report**

PROJECT NO. 21708

September 2021



# LAND PLANNING & DESIGN

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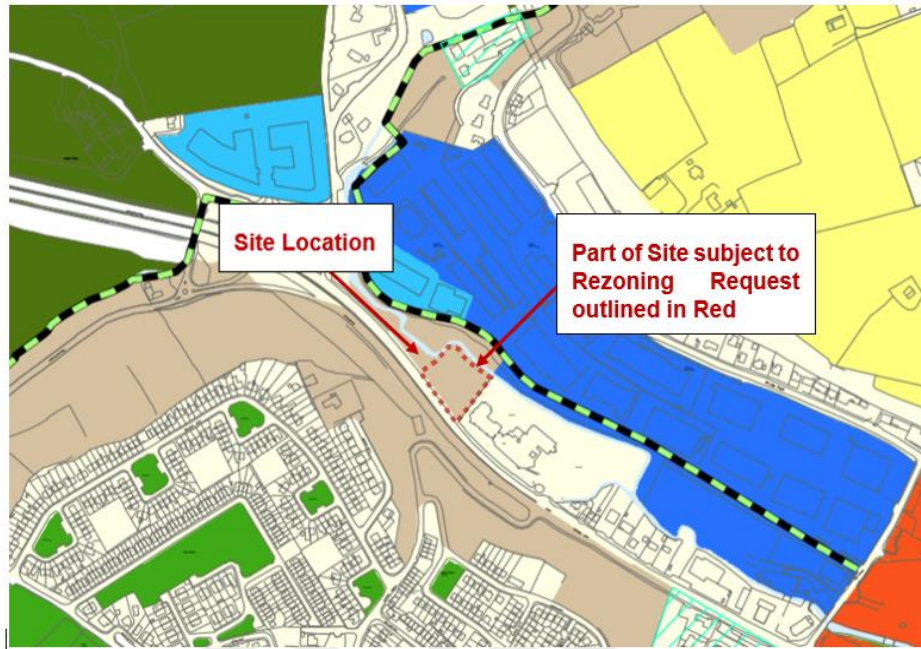


Plate 1 Site Location – Part of NE3 site subject to Re-zoning Request outlined in Red

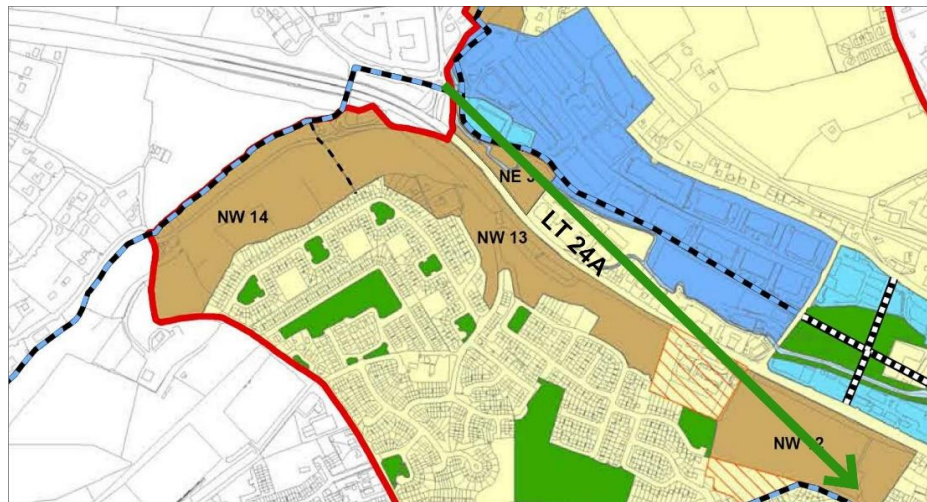


Plate 2 Cork County Council Development Plan Extract showing Landscape Preservation Zones in light brown hatch and Protected View LT 24A

## Introduction & Context

Site NE3 is located adjacent to the Commons Inn hotel on the Commons Road (N20) to the north of Blackpool, Cork.

It is located within a Landscape Preservation Zone. This report is prepared in support of a submission which requests that it be re-zoned **Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood** in the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028.





Photograph 1 – View south-east along the local valley onto the NE3 lands



Photograph 2 – View south-east across the NE3 site



Photograph 2 – View south-east along the N20 just northwest of the Commons Inn hotel

## Site and Local Area Character

The locality has a mixed-use character in a valley landscape which rises away to either side of the Bride River and the N20 Cork to Limerick Road. The subject site is located between the river and N20.

The subject site is traversed by the River Bride which winds its way along the local valley floor at this location. The south-eastern part of the site is relatively flat and wide and becomes narrow with steeper topography at the north-western extremity.

The site has some naturally re-generated vegetation including pioneer species such as willow and alder along with more open areas of grass and bramble. These are described in detail in ecology and arboricultural reports which accompany this submission.

The surrounding area is characterised by the N20 road infrastructure corridor, the North Point and West Link business / retail parks to the north of the N20 and the significant housing areas to the south of the N20 which are separated and screened by a tree-covered escarpment which runs along the N20.





Photograph 4 – View south-east along the N20 approach to Cork City at North Point Business Park



Photograph 5 – View south-east along the N20 approach to Cork City at North Point Business Park



Photograph 6 – Narrow north-western part of site with steep gradients to either side of river course

## Site and Local Area Character

## Key Landscape Considerations

The subject site is zoned as ‘ZO 12 - Landscape Preservation Zones’ with the objective *“To preserve and enhance the special landscape and visual character of landscape preservation zones. There will be a presumption against development within these zones, with development only open for consideration where it achieves the specific objectives set out in Chapter 10, Table 10.2”*.

Paragraph 15.19 goes on to say that *“These areas have been identified due to their sensitive landscape character and are deemed to be in need of special protection due to their special amenity value, which derives from their distinct topography, tree cover, setting to historic structure or other landscape character. Many of these sites have limited or no development potential due to their landscape character and development will be limited in scope and character to the specific objectives for each site set out in Chapter 10”*.

Objective 10.5 states *‘Landscape Preservation Zones To preserve and enhance the character and visual amenity of Landscape Preservation Zones through the control of development. Development will be considered only where it safeguards to the value and sensitivity of the particular landscape and achieves the respective site specific objectives, as set out in Table 10.2’*.

The larger land holding carries a Site Specific Local Objective ‘NE3’ that is *“to re-establish the River as a key element of the valley floor by providing a linear park with new tree coverage and linked spaces”*.

Protected Landscape and Townscape View LT24A from N20 Commons Road Inbound to woodland on Commons Ridge must also be considered.





Photograph 7 – View south-east along the valley representing Protected View LT 24A



Plate 3 – Re-zoned site showing potential for planting along the north-western boundary

## Proposed Re-Zoning – Analysis of Key Landscape Issues

Landscape Preservation Zone - Asset Categories which apply to the site:-

### A Topography – ridges escarpments, slopes:

**Comment:** The site is located on the valley floor and positioned on a slightly lower level than the N20 road and the adjoining North Point Business Park.

### B Water / River Corridor – rivers, estuary, harbour:

**Comment:** The Bride River runs through the site but is excluded from the lands proposed for re-zoning.

### C Tree Canopy – Areas with existing woodlands or significant tree groups, or areas with potential for new woodlands:

**Comment:** Re-zoning of the land will lead to the loss of naturally regenerated willow scrub and a few Lombardy poplar specimen trees as showing in the arborist's report. The plan opposite illustrates that there will be opportunity to provide tree planting along the north-western edge of the site and any further natural re-generation across the rest of the N3 site will not be impacted.

### D Ecology – areas which provide a habitat for wild flora and fauna:

**Comment:** The ecological survey does not highlight any sensitive habitats or species of flora or fauna.

### E Visually Important Land – (including Views and Prospects of Special Amenity Value, Potential Vantage Points and Locally Important Views):

Protected Landscape and Townscape View LT 24A: View from N20 Commons Road Inbound to woodland on Commons Ridge must also be considered

**Comment:** Photograph 7 opposite is representative of View LT24 showing the view south-eastward along the local valley corridor. The NE3 site is located to the left of the N20 and the woodland on the Commons Ridge is visible to the right.

## Proposed Re-Zoning – Analysis of Key Landscape Issues

The three tall trees in the middle distance show the approximate location of the boundary between NE3 lands and the Commons Inn Hotel. The proposed re-zoning would apply to the area of the site in front of the poplar trees as shown on Plate 3 opposite. It is proposed that development of the re-zoned parcel would not significantly impact the view of the woodland along the ridge. This would also apply to users of the N20 approach road.

### Conclusion:

The site has the potential to be partially developed while safeguarding the assets relevant to the Landscape Preservation Zone



## **Appendix B** County Tree Care Ltd Arboricultural Assessment

# County Tree Care Ltd

## QUALIFIED ARBORISTS

Qualified in Arboriculture & Horticulture



HYDRO HILL,  
TOWER, CO. CORK.

TEL: 021 4383762  
MOBILE: 087 3328019

[www.countytreecare.ie](http://www.countytreecare.ie)  
Email: [info@countytreecare.ie](mailto:info@countytreecare.ie)

---

**Project Name :**

Arboricultural Assessment of a site on the Commons Rd, Cork city

---

Date : 16/09/21

---

**Prepared For :**

Cunnane Stratton Reynolds,  
Copley Hall,  
Cotters St,  
Cork

---

**Prepared by :**

George Earle, *Dip Arb, TechArbA, Cert Hort*

County Tree Care Ltd,

Tower,

Co.Cork

Tel : 021 4385618

Mob : 087 3328019

Email : [info@countytreecare.ie](mailto:info@countytreecare.ie)

Web : [www.countytreecare.ie](http://www.countytreecare.ie)

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## Appendix 1

### 1.1 : Client Brief

County Tree Care Ltd was asked by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds to carry out an arboricultural assessment at a site on the Commons Road, Cork. The aim was to survey and assess the site from an arboricultural perspective. Noting any tree of significance and detailing any groups of trees that have importance. With the details obtained to prepare an Arboricultural Assessment that can be used to make sound decisions relating to design and construction of any new development.

### 1.2 : Description of site

It is a riparian site of just under 4ac. Located North of Cork city on the outskirts of Blackpool. It is situated as a pocket of land currently not in use and densely overgrown with different species of vegetation. Located between the Commons bar site to the South, the N20 to the West, Westlink business pk to the East and North. The River Bride is running through the site from North east and exiting at the South east corner.

### 1.3 : Methodology

The assessment methodology follows the recommendations contained within BS : 5837 (2012), Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Any tree surgery work to be carried out must follow Industry Best Practice BS : 3998 (2010). The analysis of the trees was undertaken using the VTA method as developed by Mattheck and Breloer (1994).

### 1.4 : Limitations of the survey

This report should be regarded as a preliminary assessment of the trees and the overall site.

Any tree whether it has visible weakness or not, will fail if the force applied exceeds the strength of the tree or its parts. The details within this survey are based on the condition of the trees during the survey period only. No invasive or destructive evaluation techniques were used and all findings are based on the knowledge and expertise of the undersigned. Trees are living organisms that are subject to the stresses of climatic extremes and attack from decay fungi and injurious diseases. There is no warranty or guarantee, expressed or implied, that problems or deficiencies of the trees in this survey may not arise in the future. By examining the trees, rating their likelihood of causing damage and injury and recommending action to abate the hazard, we act to reduce but not eliminate the risks associated with the trees.

George Earle, County Tree Care Ltd





### 1.5 : Relevant Legislation

There are no Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) on any of the trees on this site. However under Section 37 of the Forestry Act : 1946, it is illegal to uproot any tree over ten years old or to cut down any tree of any age ( including trees which form part of a hedgerow ), unless a Felling Notice has been lodged at the Garda Station nearest to the trees at least 21 days before felling commences. A felling license can be obtained by contacting the Dept of Agriculture, forestry section. The requirement for a felling licence for the uprooting or cutting down of trees does not apply where :

- The tree in question is a hazel, apple, plum, damson, pear or cherry tree grown for the value of its fruit
- The tree in question is less than 100ft or 30m from a dwelling other than a wall or temporary structure
- The tree in question is standing in a County or other Borough or an urban district that is within the boundaries of a town council, or city council area
- The tree is considered dangerous and hazardous

Other exceptions apply in the case of local authority road construction, road safety and electricity supply operations. The Act is administered by the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food . The Felling Section of the Forest Service is based in Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford (053-9160200 or 1890-200223) Trees may contain bats. Bats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Act 1976 and Schedule 1 of the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997. Professional advice from a licenced surveyor should be sought prior to any works commencing on trees



### 1.6 : Terminology

**Arboricultural Comments** : Refers to the tree's condition and suitability for the site

**Common name** : Most widely used non botanical name

**Co-dominant stems** : Two branches assuming the role of leading stems. When growing close together may form a weak attachment (included bark) at their point of contact. Trees with this defect may be in danger of splitting at this weak attachment.

**Included Bark** : Pattern of development at branch junctions where bark is turned inward rather than pushed out

**Crown spread** : Measured in meters north, south, east, west

**Decay Fungi** : Refers to those species of fungi which degrade living wood and which may, depending on the degree of degradation, render the tree structurally unsound

**Defects** : Refers to cracks, storm damage and any other damage mechanical or biological

**Girth** : Diameter of the trunk (millimetres) at 1.5m above grade level. MS inserted after this measurement means multi-stemmed

**Genus & Species** : Refers to the botanical name for the tree

**Height** : Measured in meters given to the nearest .5m

**Monitor** : Refers to trees which need to be re-surveyed on a yearly basis to assess their condition. This timescale may be sooner where works or adverse weather conditions have impacted negatively on the trees

**Overhaul** : A reference to standard tree surgery work which consists of the removal of deadwood, crossing branches and balancing of the crown where appropriate

**Recommendations** : Indicates surgery work necessary for the retention or, where necessary, removal of the tree

**Major deadwood** : Dead branch/limb that is between 150mm – 250mm in diameter

**Moderate deadwood** : Dead branch/limb that is between 100mm – 150mm in diameter

**Minor deadwood** : Dead branch/limb that is between 50mm – 100mm in diameter

**Basal Cavity** : Cavity or opening located at the lower region of the tree at ground level

**Stem Cavity** : Cavity or opening located on the main stem/trunk of the tree

**RPA** : Root Protection Area, calculated as a circle with a radius of 12 times the diameter of the stem of the tree measured @ 1.5m. The RPA is then represented in m<sup>2</sup>

**ERC** estimated remaining contribution that the tree can make if retained



### Terminology Continued

**Tree no :** Refers to numbered tag fixed to tree during survey. There were no trees tagged during this assessment.

**Age :** Age cannot be exact unless invasive drilling technique are used. Therefore an estimate is given and categorised as

- Young (Y) - < 15 years old
- Early Mature (EM) -15-25 years old
- Mature (MA) – Tree has reached full maturity, over 25 years old
- Over Mature (OM) – Tree is over mature and showing signs of decline

### Physiological Condition and Comments based on a three tier system :

- Good = Good health and vigour displayed
- Fair = Healthy and reasonable vigour
- Poor = Showing signs of decline, disease or decay

### BS 5837 : 2012 determines four retention categories following assessment

#### Retention Category (RC)

- Category **A** : Trees whose retention is most desirable. Those of high quality and in such condition to make a substantial contribution
- Category **B** : Trees whose retention is desirable. Those of moderate quality and value so as to make a significant contribution
- Category **C** : Trees which could be retained. Those of low quality and value, but can make a contribution until new planting is established.
- For trees in categories A to C there are further subcategories (1,2,3)
- Subcategories 1,2 and 3 are intended to reflect arboricultural and landscape qualities and cultural values, respectively.
- Category **U** : Trees for removal. Trees that should be removed for reasons of sound arboricultural management





### Appendix 2



Image A1



Image A2



Image A3



Image A4



Image A5



Image A6

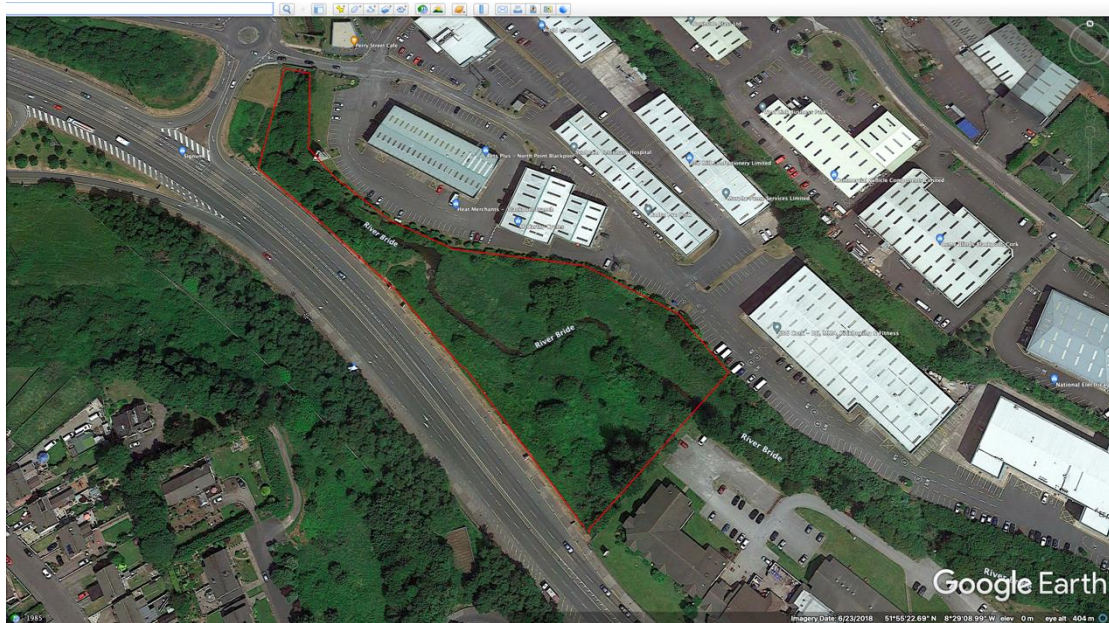


Image A7



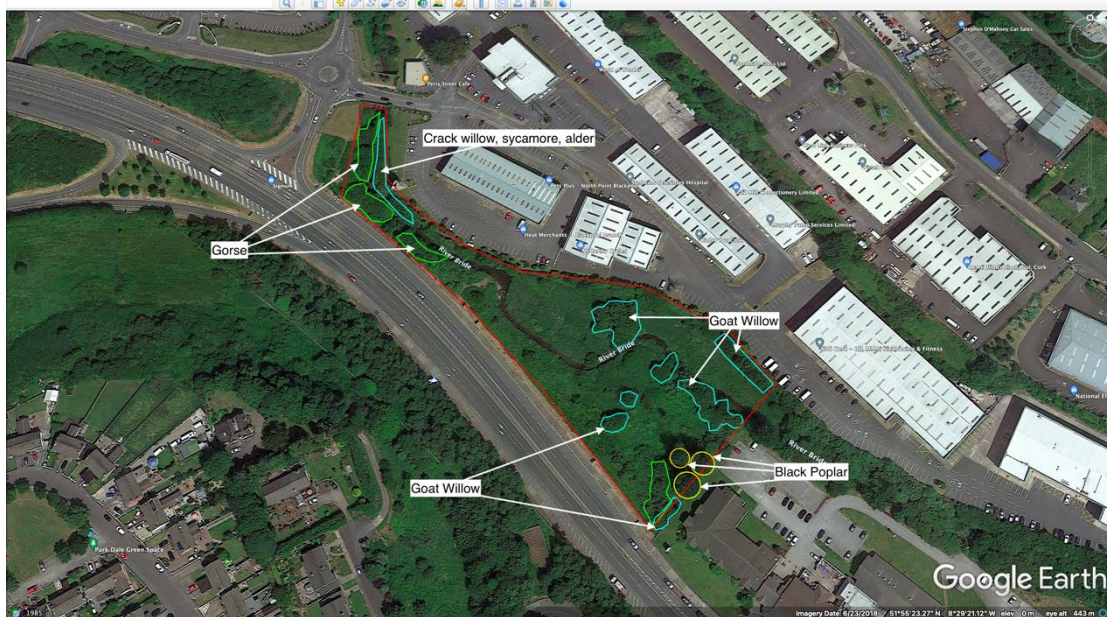


Image A8

Image A1 : Dense field layer of honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)

Image A2 : Water runoff from Westlink Industrial Park on the East of the site

Image A3 : Dense growth of willow species on the South-eastern section

Image A4 : Dense reed grass on the South-eastern section

Image A5 : Dense growth of gorse on the North section of the site

Image A6 : Black poplars 10m from the Commons Inn on the South boundary

Image A7 : Aerial photograph showing site outline

Image A8 : Aerial photograph showing individual tree groups



### Arboricultural Assessment

#### Topography

The site is located next to the Commons Inn pub on the outskirts of the Northside of the city. It is approximately 4 acres in size. The site is riparian in nature. It has the River Bride dissecting it from a culvert on the North-east, running South and exiting at the South-east corner. The river divides temporarily approximately 60m from the South boundary line. Here the ground is seen to be wetter in nature and the vegetation changes to reflect that. It is receiving overflow water runoff from the carpark in the industrial estate on the East and the reed grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) is dense in this location indicating water logged ground conditions. There is also a proliferation of grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) along both sides of the river bank. The diversion of the river would also indicate that the soil changes at this point as it is softer and more prone to erosion.

Generally, the site is low ground where the river has cut through it over time. Sloping upwards on the West to the roadside and to the East to the industrial park. There is a flat section in the centre that occupies the largest area in m<sup>2</sup>. This is approximately 60m from the South boundary fence line and to the West of the river.

#### Plant species, vegetation/flora

There is a large diversity of vegetation on the site. Ranging from field layer species such as ivy (*Hedera helix*), honey suckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). Understorey species comprise of a large amount of gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) in the Northern part of the site and dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) in the Southern part of the site. Small trees are mainly of mixed willow (*Salix sp*) varieties predominantly interspersed with sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and black poplar (*Populus nigra*).

There are 8no. large black poplars located on the South boundary fence line. They are growing as a group and 3no. on the West side of the group are the largest at approximately 22m in height. The remaining 5no. trees are slightly smaller at approximately 18m in height. These trees are native and are fast growing trees that have light timber in the context of weight.

The species location on the site is interesting because the different species are growing in swaths. To the North there is a large swath of gorse (*Ulex sp*) and on the West side of the river bank growing from the North-east corner for approximately 100m going Southwards. This is dense and impenetrable for the most part. There is a mixture of bramble (*Rubus sp*) and nettle (*Urtica dioica*) towards the rivers edge. On the East side of the river on the North side of the site for approximately 100m there is a large mix of dense small trees such as grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), goat willow (*Salix caprea*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), saplings of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and alder (*Alnus glutinosa*).



### **Arboricultural Assessment continued**

Towards the South located under the poplar trees there are minor appearances of pioneering species such as hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Under these is a dense understorey of dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and under that is a thick ground layer of ivy (*Hedera helix*). These species are indicative of the dark shade that the poplar trees are casting on the ground. The ivy has spread in a large area and has engulfed all small trees and the stems of the poplars to a height of approximately 15m.

There is a large goat willow (*Salix caprea*) located under the poplars and this is engulfed with ivy and honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). The honeysuckle has taken over the large flat area of the site that exists just West of the river and almost 60m North of the Southern boundary. This is a very impressive example of a dominant species that has been left unchecked. A weed is defined as a plant growing somewhere that is not wanted. Honeysuckle is found in the wild in hedgerows and different cultivars can be found in garden centres. However, this is an extremely dense section of honeysuckle that has taken over and the root system of this plant will be extensive.

In the South as in the Northern section there is a dense growth of willow that is reflective of the wetter section of ground. This group of willow is located 20m from the Southern boundary line on the Eastern boundary, and again 30m from the Southern boundary line approximately 30m in from the Eastern boundary.

It is interesting how in the Northern part of the site as the water funnels in from the culvert with force, that you see a proliferation of growth of all kinds of vegetation and this gets less dense as the water is dispersed and absorbed by the ground. Again, in the Southern section on the East as water runoff from the Westlink industrial estate enters the site and added to the divergence of the river, you see a burst of growth of a variety of species. All indicating nutrient and supportive soil conditions for plant growth.

### **Hazards / Obstructions**

Poplar is a brittle wood. Historically they have been known to lose branches in high winds and there are plenty of examples of the tops of these trees breaking and causing damage. It would be a concern that the poplars located on the site are in such close proximity to the Commons Inn pub. These trees are situated only 10m from the nearest part of the building which is the bedroom section. The trees are mature, high and unmanaged. It is advised that as soon as is practicable plans should be made for a reduction in the height of all of these trees. Work should be carried out by a qualified and insured Arborist company and done to BS 3998 : 2010 standards.

# County Tree Care Ltd

**QUALIFIED ARBORISTS**

Qualified in Arboriculture & Horticulture



HYDRO HILL,  
TOWER, CO. CORK.

TEL: 021 4383762  
MOBILE: 087 3328019

[www.countytreecare.ie](http://www.countytreecare.ie)  
Email: [info@countytreecare.ie](mailto:info@countytreecare.ie)

## Overview

The site is not in use and is unmanaged. It has been colonised mainly through natural regeneration. Species present such as sycamore, alder and ash in the South appear sporadically in places as saplings. The structure of the naturally developing vegetation on the site is determined primarily by the availability of local seed sources as well as the site conditions. The existing natural regeneration is dominated by willow species with prolific gorse regeneration in some areas of the site. These species are all native pioneer species associated with the process of colonisation. The site could also be influenced in the future by human intervention (planting). The soil conditions will limit the species that can thrive on the site and choice of species for planting may be limited to appropriate species that can survive the conditions.

## Conclusions

The entirety of the site's flora is represented with a mixture of invasive pioneering species, none representing vegetation of any significance. There is an extremely dense field layer of bramble, honeysuckle, nettle and ivy. Above which grows an understorey of dogwood, gorse and willow through to the selfseeded poplars that are growing on the South boundary, all of which by definition can be classified as weeds. A woodland is considered as a large number of trees growing as a group and there is no such group on the site. At present there are wet ground conditions that are reflected by the species that have inhabited the area. These same ground conditions and dense proliferation of the field and understorey layer make the possibility of development of any woodland highly unlikely.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone, email or post. The details are below.

County Tree Care Ltd

George Earle *Dip Arb, TechArbA, Cert Hort*

Hydro Hill,  
Kilnamucky,  
Tower,  
Cork

Email : [countytreecare@gmail.com](mailto:countytreecare@gmail.com)



# County Tree Care Ltd

## QUALIFIED ARBORISTS

Qualified in Arboriculture & Horticulture



HYDRO HILL,  
TOWER, CO. CORK.

TEL: 021 4383762  
MOBILE: 087 3328019

[www.countytreecare.ie](http://www.countytreecare.ie)  
Email: [info@countytreecare.ie](mailto:info@countytreecare.ie)

## **Appendix C** Flynn Furney Rezoning Appraisal



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## Rezoning Appraisal – Blackpool, Cork.

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Report No.: BRZ-FF-01

Re: Rezoning of Lands in Blackpool, Cork.

Date: 01/10/2021

By: Simon Furney, Senior Ecologist MCIEEM, MIFM  
Usna Keating, Ecologist, BSc MSc MRes  
Olivia Keaoghan BSc MSc

Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd.  
Ballynagaragh  
Kilbrittain  
Co. Cork

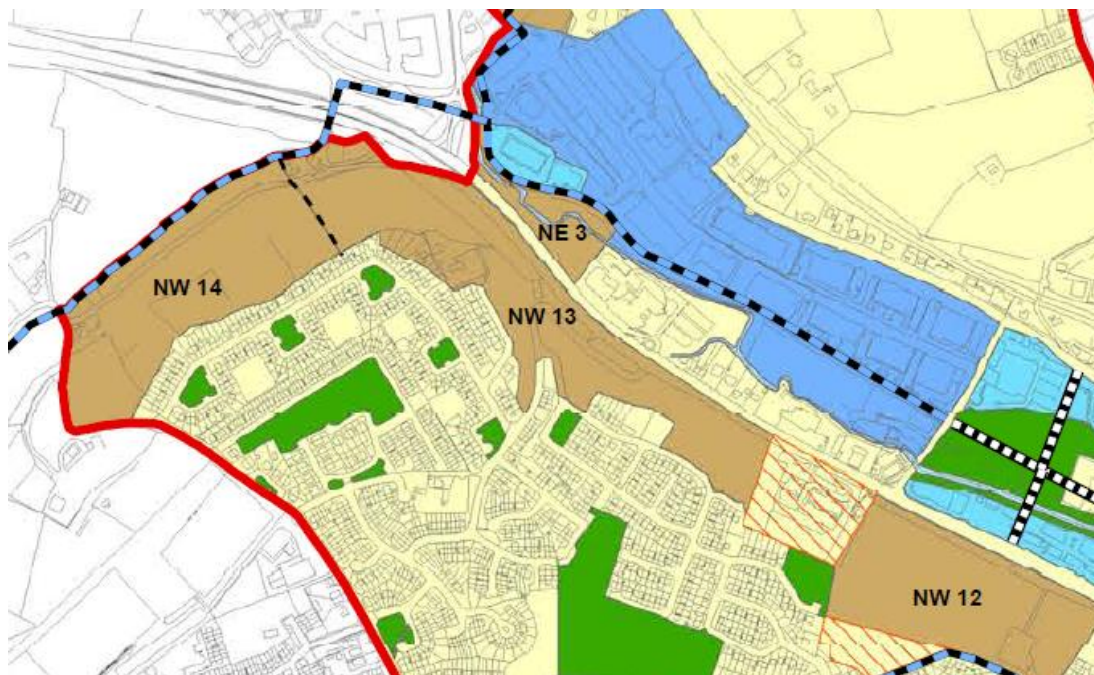
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# 1 Introduction

This rezoning appraisal submission relates to a site located between the N20 and North Business Park, Cork in what is predominantly an industrial area. The site is currently within a Landscape Preservation Zone (NE3 below), the adopted Development Plan policies seek to “*Preserve and enhance the special landscape and visual character of landscape preservation zones. There will be a presumption against development within these zones, with development only open for consideration where it achieves the specific objectives*”.



The particular features of the Bride Valley Landscape Preservation Zone (which the site forms part) are set out below:

- A - Topography - ridges, escarpments, slopes
- B - Water / River Corridors - rivers, estuary, harbour, The Lough, Atlantic Pond, Docklands, Port of Cork
- C - Tree Canopy - Areas with existing woodlands or significant tree groups, or areas with potential for new woodlands.
- D - Ecology - areas which provide a habitat for wild flora and fauna.

This document should be read in conjunction with ‘Submission to the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028’ prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds, on behalf of Speardale Ltd. The submission requests that the site is rezoned to Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood.



This appraisal document aims to determine whether the proposed rezoning has the potential to significantly impact upon the conservation objectives and overall integrity of any Natura 2000 sites and to ascertain if the specific objectives outlined above can be achieved. Ecologically sensitive sites that may be influenced by any development are also considered.

This assessment is based upon a desk study and field work carried out by Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants ecologists. Flynn Furney are members of the The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

This report has been completed to provide information regarding the ecological status of the proposed site of rezoning. The report includes a general ecological assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed rezoning on the ecology of the surrounding area, including designated sites. This report has been completed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct a review of existing land zoning for the site, in which, rezoning and subsequent development is being proposed. It was determined that the format of an Appropriate Assessment Screening would help determine the effects of rezoning this land on the designated sites identified.

## 1.1 Proposal

The proposal is that the site is partially rezoned from Landscape Preservation Zone to Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood. . See Submission to Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 prepared by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds

## 1.2 Site Location

The site is located immediately adjacent to the N20 to the southwest. This road is a dual carriageway and is known as the Commons Road or new Mallow Road. The North Business park and access roads are located to the north and north west. The Commons Inn hotel and associated grounds are located to the southeast. The River Bride runs through the site and is ultimately a tributary of the River Lee North Channel within the city.

The site is a mosaic of habitats which is due to the topography of the site. The area to the north of the river is low and wet. There is a large build up of detritus in predominately wetland plant species. Standing water was evident when this detritus and vegetation was stepped down. The ground here feels soft underneath but ground investigations will be required. The river banks show a good depth of soil with clay evident in places. The river in this location also contains some deep pools. This ground dominates this side of the river and only rises towards the pallisade fence bounding the business park. The ground to the west of the river is similar in nature but rises towards the area immediately adjacent

to the hotel. This ground is dominated by scrub and feels firm underfoot and does not appear to be subject to flooding.



Figure 1: Satellite imagery showing site location and survey extents.

### 1.3 General Construction Considerations

The River Bride running through the site is a key consideration in any potential development of the site. The Blackpool Flood Relief scheme, currently under consideration, is also located downstream. A flood risk assessment would be required to ascertain any affects a development of any kind may have on areas downstream.

The river itself would require protection measures through buffer zones during any construction activities and the operational use of any development.

### 1.4 Utilities

Any utilities required including stormwater run-off would need to be cognisant of sensitive ecological receptors such as the River Bride.

## 2 Background to Screening for Appropriate Assessment

### 2.1 Designated Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature in Ireland include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and:
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs).
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)
- proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)

SPA's and SAC's form the *Natura 2000* network of sites. It is these sites that are of relevance to the screening process for this Appropriate Assessment. SPA's and SAC's are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. SPA's and SAC's are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended.

### 2.2 Legislative context

The methodology for this screening statement is clearly set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (Oxford Brookes University, 2001). This report and contributory fieldwork were carried out in accordance with guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009, amended February 2010).

The process is given in Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and is commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' (which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment). The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 - 2019 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011) as amended. Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the

site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."

Article 6(4) of the same directive states: If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

It is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project to provide the relevant information (ecological surveys, research, analysis etc.) for submission to the 'competent national authority'. If satisfied that the information is complete and objective, the competent authority will use this information to screen the project, i.e. to determine if an AA is required and to carry out the AA, if one is deemed necessary. The competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

The appropriate assessment process has four stages. Each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site, there is no requirement to proceed further. The four stages are:

1. Screening to determine if an appropriate assessment is required
2. Appropriate assessment
3. Consideration of alternative solutions
4. Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/Derogation

### 2.3 Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

This report provides stage one: Screening for Appropriate Assessment. It aims to establish whether a plan or project is likely to have an effect on any Natura 2000 sites. The study is based on a preliminary impact assessment using both publicly available data and data collected during site visits and ecological surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could significantly impact any Natura 2000 sites, and if so an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required. The



need to apply the precautionary principle in making any key decisions in relation to the tests of AA has been confirmed by European Court of Justice case law. Therefore, where significant effects are likely, possible or uncertain at screening stage, AA will be required.

## 3 Ecological Assessment

### 3.1 Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out as part of this screening process. This included a review of available literature on the site and its immediate environs. Sources of information included the National Parks and Wildlife Service databases on protected sites and species data, and from the Environmental Protection Agency on designated sites.

### 3.2 Data used to carry out the assessment

The following sources of data were employed:

- Environmental Protection Agency Envision Database
- EPA Maps (to identify watercourses, and Natura 2000 site boundaries)
- NPWS protected species database and online mapping
- NPWS protected species database and online mapping.

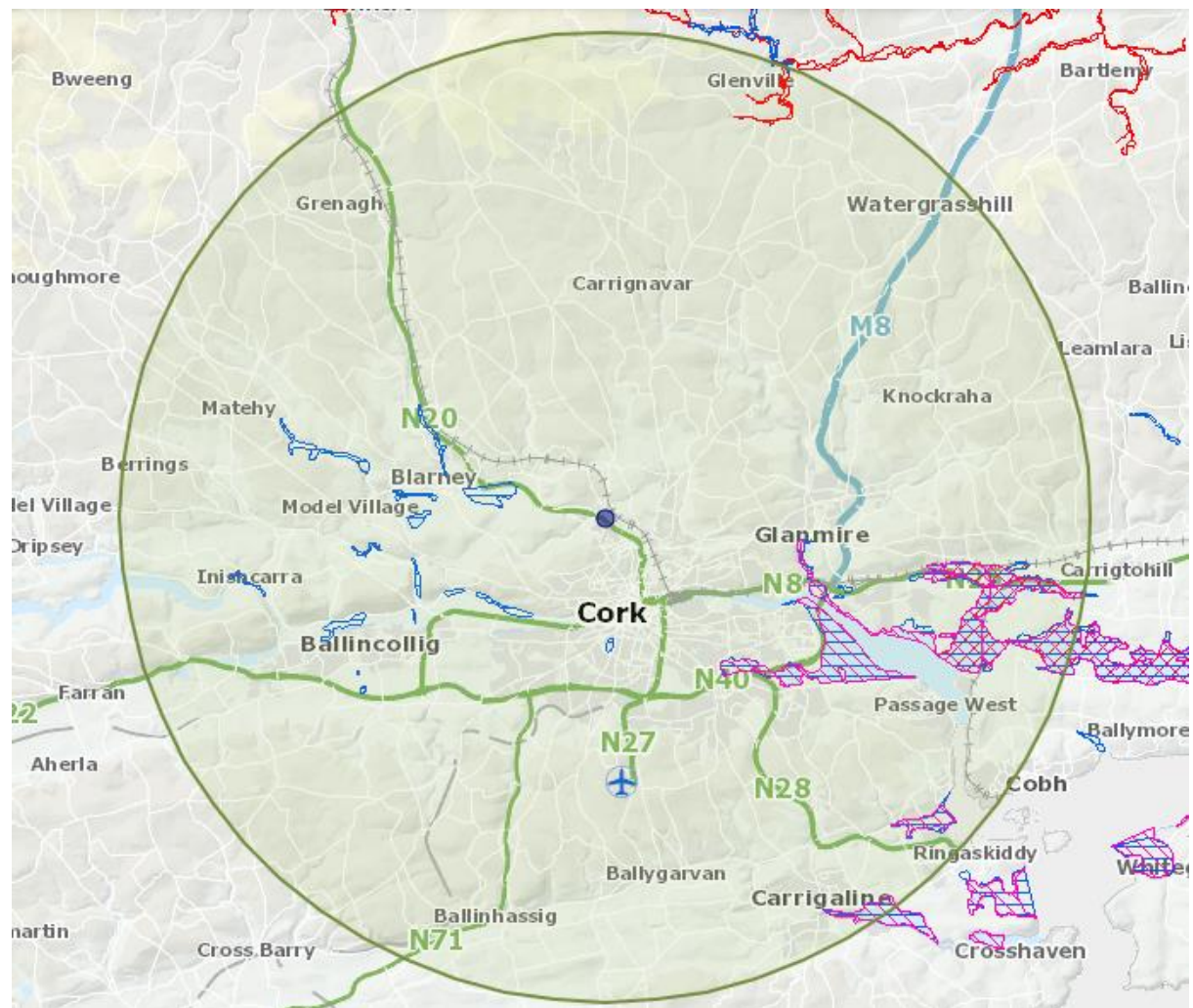
An ecological walkover survey was carried out in September 2021 (Sections 3.5 to 3.9 below).

### 3.3 Stakeholder Consultation

To date, no ecological consultations have taken place.

### 3.4 Designated Sites Within 15km of the Proposed Works

All designated Natura sites connected to or within 15km of the proposed works were considered during the desktop study stage in order to assess the potential for significant effects upon their Qualifying Interests / Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives. This stage of the process is used to determine whether any of the Natura sites may be 'screened out'. That is, that they can be regarded as not being relevant to the process, having no potential to be significantly affected or impacted upon. The site location relative to Natura 2000 sites (SPAs and SACs) are shown in Figure 2. All designated sites within 15km of the proposed works are listed in Table 1.



**Figure 2:** Protected Sites including Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) within 15km are indicated in the green circle. The blue dot shows the site location. Cork Harbour SPA is shown in purple, and Blackwater River SAC and Great Island Channel SAC are shown in red.

**Table 1: Qualifying interests and Species of Conservation Interest of designated sites within 15km of proposed works**

Site Type	Site Code	Site Name	Distance To (m)	Qualifying Interests (* denotes a priority habitat)	Conservation Objectives	Assessment
SAC	001058	Great Island Channel SAC	10023.79	<b>Habitats</b> 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae)	<a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/C0001058.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/C0001058.pdf</a>	No Impact. No QI's in site footprint.
SPA	004030	Cork Harbour SPA	5678.49	<b>Birds</b> A056 Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) A149 Dunlin ( <i>Calidris alpina</i> ) A140 Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) A050 Wigeon ( <i>Anas penelope</i> ) A028 Grey Heron ( <i>Ardea cinerea</i> ) A069 Red-breasted Merganser ( <i>Mergus serrator</i> ) A142 Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ) A130 Oystercatcher ( <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> ) A141 Grey Plover ( <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ) A052 Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> ) A054 Pintail ( <i>Anas acuta</i> ) A157 Bar-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa lapponica</i> ) A162 Redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> ) A183 Lesser Black-backed Gull ( <i>Larus fuscus</i> ) A179 Black-headed Gull ( <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> ) A004 Little Grebe ( <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> ) A160 Curlew ( <i>Numenius arquata</i> ) A182 Common Gull ( <i>Larus canus</i> ) A048 Shelduck ( <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> ) A017 Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> ) A193 Common Tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ) A005 Great Crested Grebe ( <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> ) A156 Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> ) <b>Habitats</b> Wetlands	<a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/C0004030.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/C0004030.pdf</a>	No Impact. No roost or feeding sites affected.

Site Type	Site Code	Site Name	Distance To (m)	Qualifying Interests (* denotes a priority habitat)	Conservation Objectives	Assessment
		Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC	13089.53	Habitats 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows (Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles 91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* Species 1096 Brook Lamprey ( <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ) 1106 Salmon ( <i>Salmo salar</i> ) 1421 Killarney Fern ( <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> ) 1095 Sea Lamprey ( <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> ) 1355 Otter ( <i>Lutra lutra</i> ) 1103 Twaite Shad ( <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> ) 1092 White-clawed Crayfish ( <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> ) 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel ( <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> ) 1099 River Lamprey ( <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> )	<a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/C0002170.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/C0002170.pdf</a>	No Impact. No connectivity

### 3.5 Field Surveys

The field surveys were carried out on the 30th of September 2021. Baseline ecological conditions were assessed. Where applicable, the habitat types and species usage was recorded (Smith et al. 2011; Scannell and Synnott, 1987). Habitats were classified and dominant plant species noted according to the guidelines given by the JNCC (2010) with reference to Smith et al. (2011) & Scannell and Synnott



(1987), where applicable. Habitats in the immediate footprint of works were classified according to Fossitt (2000).

### 3.6 Habitats Description

The area is surrounded by an urban setting dominated by artificial surfaces, i.e. road and kerb (BL3). The area is surrounded by industrial buildings and local shops (BL3). All proposed rezoning will be taking place in areas of scrub, woodland and grassland habitat, which is bisected by a river (The Bride River) (Figure 2).

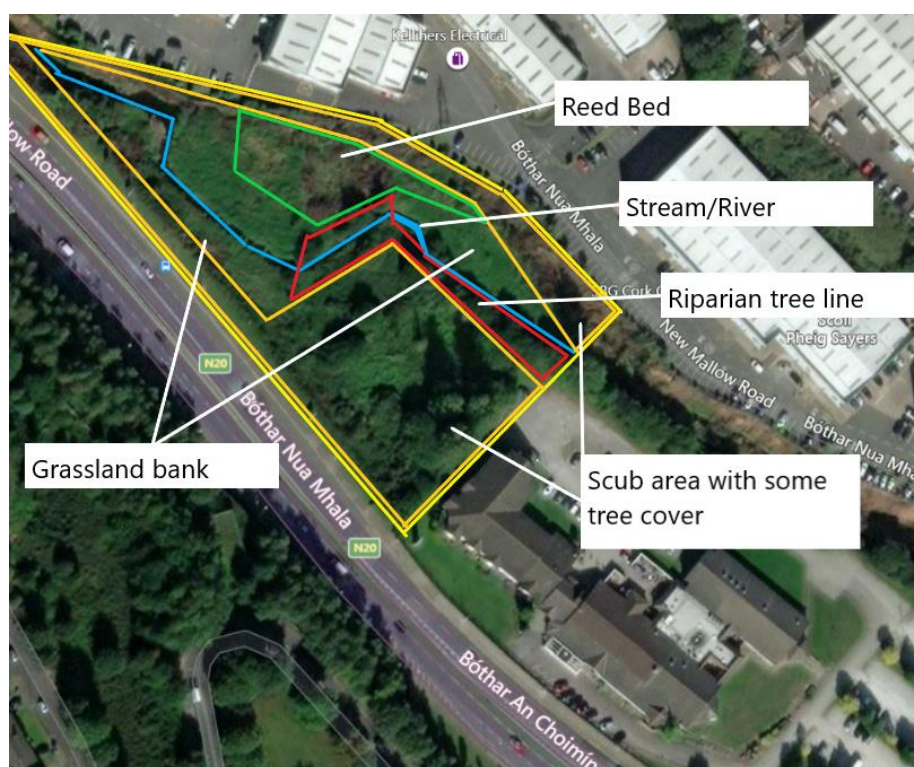


Figure 2: Habitat map showing area for proposed rezoning.

#### Scrub WS1

The site of proposed rezoning is bordered by scrub habitat, which comprises Bramble, Gorse, Willow, Dogwood, Buddleia and Hawthorn. Old Man's Beard is prevalent throughout much of the scrub area. Localised trees exist along this boundary on the northern side of the site, which include young Ash, Willow, Dog Rose, and Buddleia, with Ivy cover locally.

#### Treelines WN5/WL2

A riparian tree line follows the course of the river along its southern side and encompasses Alder, Elder and Willow. In other areas the river is bordered by grassland vegetation. The eastern site border encompasses some large mature ivy-covered Poplar, interspersed with Bramble scrub.

**Reed bed / Wetland Complex FS1**

This wet area had wet and muddy soils and areas of standing water. Plant species included Juncus, Hairy Willow Herb, Common Burr Reed, and Marshwort. This area has suitability for amphibians.

**Grassland Area GS1/GS4**

Some poorly drained and dry grassland areas exist on the western side of the site adjacent to the river. These areas were dominated by Canary Reed Grass, Nettle, Marsh Woundwort, patches of Cow Parsley with local areas of Bindweed.

### 3.7 Mammal Activity

No protected mammal species, or their signs were identified during the course of this survey. Otter (*Lutra lutra*) are recorded using the River Bride and may frequent the site where salmonid activity was evident. It is likely that Otter utilize this area for resting and foraging. No holts were identified during the detailed site walkover. Impacts on Otter from proposed rezoning are possible, but could be precluded provided an adequate buffer zone along the river corridor is retained.

The river corridor is likely to be used as a foraging corridor by bats. Low bat roost potential was noted in the mature Poplar trees bordering the eastern side of the area proposed for rezoning. Proposed removal of any of these trees should ensure no harm to bats, in the unlikely event of bats being present. It is noteworthy that poplar typically have low suitability for bats, but the ivy cover on these trees may provide cover for temporary roost areas at certain times of the year.

Impacts on bats from proposed rezoning are possible, but could be mitigated provided an adequate buffer zone along the river corridor is retained and no additional light spillage onto the riparian corridor occurs.

### 3.8 Breeding Birds

A dedicated bird survey was not carried out. Bird species recorded during the site walk over were mainly associated with scrub and trees. These species incorporated Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Magpie (*Pica pica*), Great Tit (*Parus major*) and Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*). Some banks along the river were noted to have suitability for Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), but no nesting burrows were identified. There is potential for Kingfisher to use the river corridor. The scrub will offer nesting potential for song birds. Habitat loss for bird species, associated with proposed rezoning and

site development could be mitigated for in the landscape plan, which should ensure retention of habitat where possible.

### 3.9 Fish

High levels of salmonid activity were noted in the river area, and pools, and glide areas. The river bed quality was in good condition with suitable resting and spawning areas identified. Impacts on fish from proposed rezoning are possible, but could be precluded provided an adequate buffer zone along the river corridor is retained.

### 3.10 Invasive Alien Plant Species (IAPS)

The Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000, contain a number of provisions relating to IAPS, covering several sections and subsections of the Acts. It is prohibited, without licence, to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state, in any place in the State, any species of flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of invasive flora listed on the Third Schedule.

Articles 49 and 50 of the aforementioned Acts set out the legal implications associated with alien invasive species and Schedule 3 of the regulations lists non-native species subject to the restrictions of Articles 49 and 50.

Under Article 49 and 50 of these Regulations, which refer to invasive species, it is an offence to:

- Plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of invasive species.
- Keep the plants in possession for the purpose of sale, breeding, reproduction, propagation, distribution, introduction or release.
- Keep anything from which the plant can be reproduced, or propagated from, without a granted licence.
- Keep any vector material - including infested soil, seeds or plant fragments from a contaminated site, for the purposes of breeding, distribution, introduction or release.

*It is important to note that if an invasive species, listed in Schedule 3 of the 2011 Regulations, has been positively identified on a works site it is not an option to do nothing i.e. action of some form must be taken to address the invasive species in order to comply with environmental legislation (the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477). Invasive species listed on the third schedule were not identified within the area being proposed for rezoning.*

Old Man's Beard (*Clematis vitalba*) and *Buddleia* were recorded on-site but are not listed on the third schedule. Any construction or disturbance of these may cause their spread and therefore biosecurity measures to prevent this should be considered if any development was approved.

### **3.11 Habitat Disturbance**

The extent of disturbance will be determined during the development of any plans considered for the site. Disturbance to the river corridor and riparian zones should be avoided. It is likely that the main disturbance to the site would be to the scrub and woody habitat adjacent to the hotel. This is likely to affect mainly nesting birds. This may be mitigated against through landscaping plans including planting of hedgerows, tree planting, installation of nest boxes and invasive species management. Other areas of the site may be protected to maintain the river corridor and its environs.

### **3.12 Water Pollution**

No significant risks to the aquatic environment are presented by the proposed rezoning, provided an adequate riparian buffer is retained. Any pollution risk and appropriate protection measures would be determined during the development of plans considered for the site.

### **3.13 Survey Limitations**

The timing of surveying were considered optimal for completion of this report.



## 4 Article 6(3) Screening Assessment

This screening assessment questionnaire (EC, 2001) is used to assess whether this project has the potential to impact upon Natura 2000 sites (Table 2, 3)

### 4.1 Article 6(3) Assessment Criteria

#### Description of any Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Site.

Any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans or projects, are detailed in the Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Assessment of Likely Impacts**

ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY IMPACTS	
Size and scale	Works are occurring in an urban area of existing artificial surfaces and amenity grassland. The site surveyed is approximately 1.06 ha, comprising riparian habitat and scrub. The raised ground beside the hotel is 0.35ha.
land-take	No works will take place within the boundary of any Natura 2000 site so land-take is nil.
Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;	The nearest Natura site is 5.7km away and is not directly connected to the works area. Given no instream works or consequences on the watercourses is envisaged, no effects on the species of conservation interest of this site (Cork Harbour SPA) are anticipated. Blarney Bog (proposed NHA) is located 2.7km to the west and lies on a tributary of the River Bride upstream of the site. No impacts on Blarney Bog are envisaged from rezoning, as this site is upstream of proposed rezoning.
Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);	No material (water or sediment) will be abstracted from a Natura site during the construction or operation of the site. Therefore, there will be no impact of resource requirements on any Natura 2000 site.
emissions (disposal to land, water or air);	The principle risks posed from the proposed project relate to contamination of surface waters from sediment, hydrocarbon spillages or from sewage. No emissions are predicted that will adversely impact upon the local environment or any Natura 2000 sites.
Excavation requirements;	Excavation is required outside of any designated site.

Transportation requirements;	No access requirements are necessary other than existing road infrastructure. No impact on Natura 2000 sites from transportation requirements are anticipated.
Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.;	As yet unknown.
Timing of works	As yet unknown.
Cumulative or In-combination Impacts with other Projects and Plans	Due to the unsuitability of this habitat to the species of conservation interest of surrounding Natura 2000 sites, and the distance from Natura 2000 sites, there will be no impact of these works individually, or no impact of any cumulative or in combination effects of this project with other projects or plans, on any surrounding Natura sites.

## 4.2 Description of any Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Sites

Any likely changes to the Natura 2000 site are described in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Likely changes to the Nature 2000 site**

Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Site	
Reduction of habitat area	No works will take place within the boundary of any Natura 2000 site. Local loss of scrub is likely.
Disturbance to key species	Of the Species of Conservation Interest for Cork Harbour SPA, which are shown in Table 1, it is noteworthy that these species are primarily gulls and waterfowl. These species can inhabit and utilize various habitats for foraging and breeding. However, the habitat available to these species, provided by the site, is unsuitable for breeding by these species due its urban setting, habitat type, small field size and high level of predation risk. These SCI bird species typically nest on islands, upland bogs, coastal shorelines, and wetland habitats. Gull species may also nest in/on buildings. Under some management, e.g. following grass mowing, the site may be of temporary use to some SCI species, for foraging and resting. Development of this piece of land would not have any adverse impacts on any SCI species of Cork Harbour SPA. The reason for this is that a high suitability and availability of land for foraging exists in the surrounding landscape. The opportunities provided by the site for these SCI species is deemed negligible and low. The site area is unsuitable for key species of conservation interest in the surrounding Natura 2000

	sites. Additional disturbance impacts to SCI in the adjacent SPA species as a result of rezoning is unlikely due the existence of high levels of anthropogenic activity in the area.
Habitat or species fragmentation	No habitat loss or fragmentation will occur.
Reduction in species density	No reduction anticipated (See Disturbance to key species).
Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.);	No changes anticipated.
Climate change	No changes anticipated.
Likelihood of Interference with the key relationships that define the structure and function of the Natura 2000 Site as a whole:	It is considered that there will be no long term residual impacts from the proposed works upon the key relationships that define any Natura 2000 sites.
Description of the individual elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.	Works associated with this project will not give rise to impacts to any Natura 2000 sites given distance and a general lack of connectivity between the proposed works areas and designated sites.
Description of any Likely Significant Impacts or Indeterminate Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Site	Based on a consideration of the likely impacts arising from the proposed works using the works methodologies provided, no significant impacts are anticipated on any Natura 2000 site as a result of the proposed development.

#### 4.3 Findings of Designated Site Screening Assessment

**Name of project or plan:** Commons Road - Rezoning Application to support the development of the site.

**Name and location of Natura 2000 Site:** Outside of any Natura 2000 sites

**Description of project or plan:** Successful rezoning would facilitate efforts to secure planning permission for the development of residential activities such as car parking.

**Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?:** No

**Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?** No

**Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site:**

The proposed project is not anticipated to have an effect on any Natura 2000 sites. Due to the nature of the works, and the existing urban residential and commercial setting, no individual or cumulative impacts are envisaged.

**Explain why these effects are not considered significant**

- There is a lack of connectivity to Natura sites within 15km.
- No qualifying interests of any Natura 2000 site are envisaged to be affected as the site area is largely unsuitable for these species.
- No in combination effects are anticipated given the nature of the development.

**Direct impacts upon the Natura 2000 Sites:** None anticipated

**Indirect impacts upon the Natura 2000 Site:** None anticipated

## 4.4 Overall Conclusions

**Level of assessment completed**

- Desk Study
- Site visit
- JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Assessment
- Fossitt Level III Habitat Recording

In conclusion, no impacts to any Natura 2000 sites are likely as a result of the proposed rezoning. Local loss of scrub habitat would be associated with a removal of local habitat suitable for non-SCI species of this site, including resident birds as well as small mammals. The loss of this habitat at a county scale would be deemed low. Efforts could be made to compensate for this loss, pending successful rezoning, through compensatory planting in any proposed development at design stage. Adverse impacts to protected species would be avoided through the retention of natural habitat, and a riparian and grassland buffer zone along the river. The potential impacts of the proposed rezoning have been assessed and no potential direct or indirect impacts upon the Qualifying Interests of any European site have been identified. It is therefore concluded that the proposed rezoning, either alone or in combination with other plans and/or projects, does not have the potential to significantly affect any European site, in light of their conservation objectives. Therefore, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment would not be deemed not to be required.



Consideration of any development will have to take into account protected species that frequent the site. This includes otters and bat species. This will be achieved through the protection of the riparian corridor and environs.

## 5 Photos



Surveying through wetland complex/reedbed.



River Bride with grass banks.



Dense scrub area of site.



Grass and scrub area on north-western part of site.



River surrounded by riparian cover.

## 6 References

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