

Windmill Road/High Street

Submission to the Draft Cork City Development Plan
on behalf of Sinead Keohane

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1. Introduction

This submission to the Draft Cork City Development Plan has been prepared by McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants on behalf of our client Sinead Keohane, who owns lands designated as an “Area of High Value Landscape”, at Windmill Road/High Street, Cork.

We request that the Draft City Development Plan is amended to remove the designation of “Area of High Value Landscape”. We submit that the designation is not appropriate for the land in question and prohibits possible sensitive in-fill development, which would be of benefit to the general area and provide for much needed housing in Cork City.

The submission is set out as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Site Location
3. Planning Policy Context
4. Rationale for Submission Request
5. Recommendations
6. Conclusion

2. Site Location

The site comprises approximately 0.53 ha, bounded with high stone walls along both, High Street on the northern site boundary and Windmill Road on the southern boundary. Adjacent to the western boundary are the grounds and buildings of the former Reparation Convent. The site contains one large detached dwelling house and extensive garden area with mature trees along its periphery. The site is gently sloping upwards in southern direction.

The area is part of the inner suburbs of Cork City, within the administrative area of Cork City South Central. The city centre is within 10 min walking distance. The Douglas Street neighbourhood and its services is in approximately 250 m. Please see figure 1 for the overall site context.

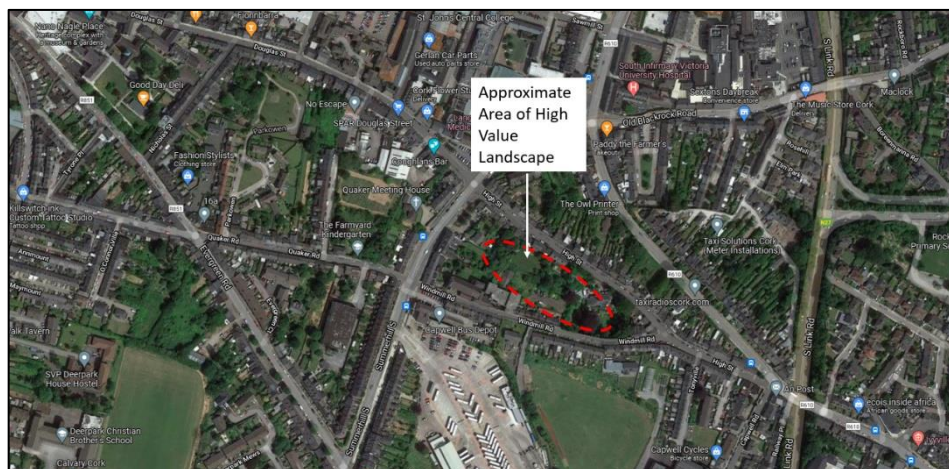


Figure 1: Site Location in overall context (base map: Google maps)

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 Existing Zoning in the Cork City Development Plan 2015

The subject site is zoned “4 – Residential, Local Services and Institutional Uses” and designated as an “Area of High Value Landscape”. The streetscape on High Street and part of Windmill Road is identified as a “Historic Street Character Area”.

3.2 Proposed Zoning in the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022

The subject site is zoned “ZO 01 Sustainable Res Neighbourhoods” and designated an “Area of High Value Landscape”, as indicated in Volume 2 of the Draft Cork City Plan, please see Figure 2.

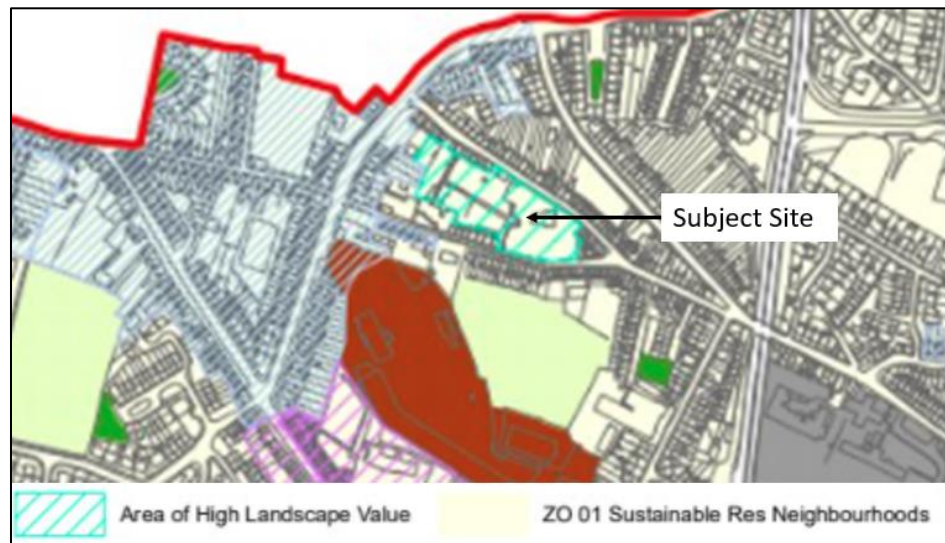


Figure 2: Mapped Objectives of Subject Site of the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 (Volume 2, Map 03)

3.2.1 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods

The applicable policy for this zoning provides for:

ZO 01 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods

Zoning Objective 1: To protect and provide for residential uses and amenities, local services and community, institutional, educational and civic uses.

The zoning objectives ZO 1.1 – ZO 1.7 further specify the provision and protection of residential uses and residential amenity, where development will be resisted that does not support the primary objective of the zone. Open space is included as a primary use of this zone together with residential uses, creches, schools, home-based economic activity and places of public worship. Regarding green areas, ZO 1.7 further provides for:

“there will be a presumption against development on all open space in residential estates including any green area or public amenity area that formed part of an executed planning permission for development and was identified for the purposes of recreation or amenity open space, including land which has been habitually used as public open space. Such lands shall be protected for recreation, open space and amenity purposes.”

3.2.2 Areas of High Value Landscape

The policy for Areas of High Value Landscape is intended to typically apply to primary landscape assets (Topography, River Corridor, Tree Cover) (Section 6.21), displaying an intrinsic landscape character and special amenity value (Section 6.22).

3.2.3 Typographical Error in Table 6.8

It should be noted that there is a major typographical error in Table 6.8 of the written statement of the Draft City Plan where there is a reference to a landscape preservation zone (LPZ) which is identified as “SW 10, High Street/Convalescent Home (former Reparation Convent) / Villa”, although there is no corresponding landscape preservation zone on any of the zoning maps. A similar error is found in the current City Plan 2015-2021 under Ref. SW11 again with no corresponding zone on the zoning maps.

This error was originally made in the initial draft of the 2009 Draft City Plan where our clients’ lands were incorrectly shown as SW11 on the draft zoning map and on Table 10.2 of the written statement. When inquiries were made to the Planning Policy Unit no explanation could be provided as to why lands with no intrinsic landscape value could be designated as an LPZ. A formal request under the Freedom of Information Act could find no report recommending the draft zoning objective or no minute of a meeting where a decision was made to amend the zoning in the draft plan. While the mapping error was subsequently removed in the adopted version of the 2009 City Plan the corresponding entry in Table 10.2 was never removed and this error remained uncorrected in the 2015 City Plan and the current draft of the 2022 City Plan. We formally request that the reference to “SW 10, High Street/Convalescent Home (former Reparation Convent) / Villa” be removed from Table 6.8 in the Amended Draft of the City Plan.

3.3 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) provides the high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development in Ireland until 2040. It is linked to the National Development Plan 2018, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and the applicable County and City Development Plans.

The NPF has a new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements, instead of continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns into the countryside. *“The target is for at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites”* (NPF 2018, page 11). Compact growth is therefore the first of the ten national strategic outcomes of the NPF.

In order to facilitate this new policy, **National Policy Objective 35** provides for:

“Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights.”

3.4 Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study

This study accompanies the Draft City Development Plan and responds to the adaptive challenge to deliver compact growth as provided for in the NPF.

The subject site is part of the South Link Road Corridor Inner Urban Suburbs of Cork. The study concludes that *“the city centre forms part of the immediate context to the city fringe, which also makes this area more appropriate to dense forms of development”* (Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study 2021, page 123). The target density of the City fringe is between 50 – 100 dwellings per hectare, see figure 3.

	DENSITY				
	FAR		Dwellings per hectare		
	Prevailing	Target	Prevailing	Target*	
				Lower	Upper
FRINGE/CORRIDOR/CENTRE	1.0 - 3.5	2.5 - 4+	25 - 100+	50	150
City fringe / corridor	1.5 - 3.5	2.5 - 4.5	25 - 100	50	150
Mahon	0.5 - 3.5	1 - 4	10 - 40	50	120
Blackpool	0.5 - 3.0	1 - 4	0 - 40	50	120
Wilton	0.5 - 3.5	1 - 4	10 - 25	50	120

* Assuming resiled scheme

Figure 3: Density targets (Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study 2021, page 123)

4. Rationale for Submission Request

We submit that the subject site should not be designated an “Area of High Value Landscape”, as proposed in the draft Cork City Development Plan.

In view of the applicable national policy and the Cork City Urban Density, Building Height and Tall Building Study 2021, the aim of providing in-fill development and higher density on suitable sites, requires that such development is facilitated, rather than hindered, as is the case with the “Area of High Value Landscape” designation.

The contribution of the subject site to the historic streetscape relies predominately on the historic wall and trees located on the periphery of the site. Besides, its amenity contribution is exclusively reserved for the private enjoyment of the occupants of the existing villa.

The applicable land zoning policy “ZO 01 Sustainable Res Neighbourhoods”, provides the authority with the necessary policy objective to provide amenity open space as part of a possible planning permission, facilitating sensitive infill development and ensuring the continued care and preservation of certain valuable trees.

The active management of trees and tree cover that could be stipulated as part of the development management process would afford more protection to privately owned trees, including timely replacement plans, and would be a more nuanced approach than the instrument of “High Value Landscape”. With the latter, the authority has no act or part in ensuring the continued active management of the trees or tree cover and furthermore it prevents that the area can provide an appropriate quantum of development.

Such policy furthermore is a disincentive for other landowners, to plant and allow trees to develop on their sites, as arbitrary designations could prevent development in the future.

Planning permission for infill development on these lands was recently granted by An Bord Pleanála under ABP-305890-19. The permitted plans and particulars include provision for a landscape plan which will ensure that there will be no adverse impact on the urban landscape or on the character of the adjoining streetscape.

The Board’s decision confirms that the impact on landscape can be most appropriately addressed at the development management stage as the assessment of a detailed planning application allows the appropriate balance to be struck between the need for sustainable infill development and the desire to retain the character of the urban landscape.

5. Conclusion

We submit that the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 should have full regard to national and regional policy which advocates compact development through the delivery of at least 40% of all new residential units on infill or brownfield sites.

The subject site in Windmill Road / High Street can make a valuable contribution to providing in-fill development in an area near the City Centre, while also retaining individual trees and boundary features where appropriate.

We therefore submit, that the designation of "Area of High Value Landscape" should now be removed from the subject site in the Amended Draft of the Cork City Development Plan as any further development of the site will most appropriately be controlled by planning conditions

We thank you for the opportunity to engage with the Council in relation to these matters and request that due consideration will be given to the issues raised herein.