



COAKLEY O'NEILL
town planning


Submission to

Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 - 2028

Prepared in October 2021 on behalf of
Kevin O'Leary Group

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd., NSC Campus, Mahon, Cork, are instructed by our clients, Kevin O'Leary Group, to make this submission to the draft Cork City Development Plan, 2022. Our clients very much welcome the new Plan and it is hoped that the points raised in this submission will be of benefit to the Planning Authority in the preparation of same.
- 1.2 The purpose of this submission is to highlight the importance of the provision of necessary services and facilities within residential neighbourhoods so as to create vibrant and sustainable communities within the City. In doing so, we submit that our clients' site at South Douglas Road should be fully zoned as 'ZO 09 Neighbourhood and Local Centres.'

2.0 LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 Our clients lands are located on the South Douglas Road and have been in commercial use since the late 1970s, formerly as a petrol station and currently as a retail convenience store, cafe, offices, bookstore, and other motor related uses. There are no residential uses on the site, although the immediate area is characterised by suburban type housing estates. Also adjoining the site on the opposite side of the Road, are a number of local commercial uses.
- 2.2 The South Douglas Road is a key distributor route into the city and serves the surrounding established residential areas. There are a number of schools, sporting clubs and a general series of amenities within the area. The area is served by a number of bus routes which are regular services providing access to the city centre.



Figure 1: Subject Site



3.0 PLANNING POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

- 3.1 **National Planning Framework (NPF)** provides the strategic policy context for this submission and advises:

*A major new policy emphasis on **renewing and developing existing settlements** will be required, rather than continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns out into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and smaller villages. 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.*

- 3.2 Section 2.6 of the NPF notes that the physical format of urban development in Ireland is one of the country's greatest national development challenges. Compact growth of urban areas is therefore supported, and Table 2.1 sets out a target that 30% of all new housing outside of cities will be within existing urban footprints. Section 4.5 states:

The National Planning Framework targets a significant proportion of future urban development on infill/brownfield development sites within the built footprint of existing urban areas. This is applicable to all scales of settlement, from the largest city, to the smallest village.

An increase in the proportion of more compact forms of growth in the development of settlements of all sizes, from the largest city to the smallest village, has the potential to make a transformational difference. It can bring new life and footfall, contribute to the viability of services, shops and public transport, increase housing supply and enable more people to be closer to employment and recreational opportunities, as well as to walk or cycle more and use the car less.

- 3.3 National policy is thus directed at making better use of under-utilised land and support for compact growth in existing cities, towns and villages. In this respect, **National Policy Objective 6** seeks to:

***Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale** as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.*

- 3.4 In addition, **National Policy Objective 11** states:

There will be a presumption in favour of development that encourages more people, jobs and activity within existing urban areas, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

Retail Planning Guidelines, 2012

3.5 The RPGs outline a number of strategic policy objectives, which seek to accommodate retail development in a way that is efficient, equitable and sustainable. Central to the RPGs is the importance of the statutory development plan process with the key objectives of the Guidelines being that retail development is plan led.

3.6 Also critical to the planning framework established is the importance of designated retail centres which are seen as the optimum locations for new retail development. On this basis, planning authorities are advised to have regard to the changing role of such centres and the value of maintaining retailing when preparing development plans and retail strategies. Among the matters to be included in plans are the following:

2. Outline **the level and form of retailing activity appropriate** to the various components of the settlement hierarchy in that core strategy; see district centres below;
3. Define, by way of a map, the **boundaries of the core shopping areas** of city and town centres and also location of any district centres (See Section 3.4);
6. **Identify sites** which can accommodate the needs of modern retail formats in a way that maintains the essential character of the shopping area;

Current Cork City Development Plan 2015 - 2021

3.7 During the preparation of the 2015 Cork City Development, the part of our clients' site which was subject to a retail planning permission was zoned as a local retail centre and has operated as such since. The remainder of the site is zoned for residential uses.

3.8 The current Cork City Development Plan advises that local and neighbourhood retail centres have an important role in the community by providing important top-up and day-to-day shopping and retail service requirements and serving the needs of those without access to a car, particularly the elderly. Paragraph 4.21 advises that:

The Cork City Council will support and facilitate the designation of new and/ or the expansion of existing neighbourhood centres where significant additional population growth is planned or where a demonstrable gap in existing provision is identified.

3.9 Paragraph 7.2 of the Plan advises that sustainable, inclusive neighbourhoods serve as focal points for the surrounding community with a range of services and facilities and that creating sustainable neighbourhoods requires sustainable densities that make the necessary facilities and services viable. Objective 7.2, addressing the creation of 'Sustainable Neighbourhoods', refers:

To support the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods which allow access to services and facilities for all users and to foster a sense of community and a sense of place.

Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 – 2028

- 3.10 In the draft Cork City Development Plan, 2022 the site is to have two zoning objectives; 'ZO 01 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods' to the west and east of the site and 'ZO 09 Neighbourhood and Local Centres' in the centre of the site.

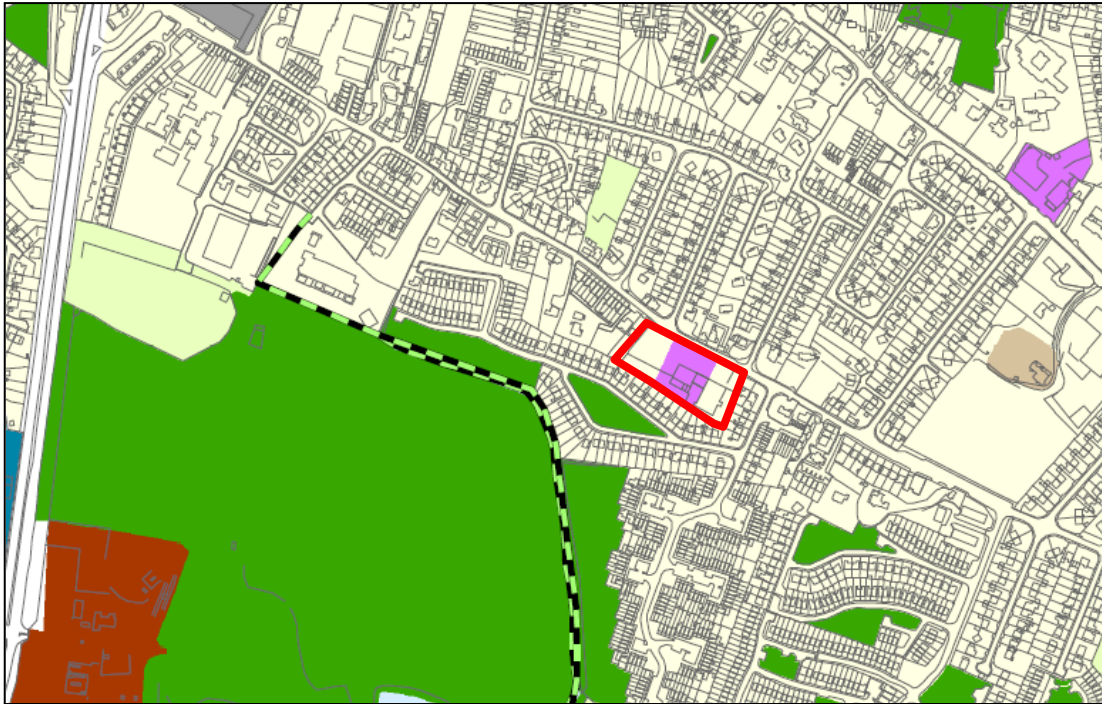


Figure 2: Proposed zoning of the subject site (generally outlined in red) as per Map 07 in the draft Plan, 2022.

ZO 01 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods' zoning objective is outlined in section 12.23 and as follows:

The provision and protection of residential uses and residential amenity is a central objective of this zoning. This zone covers large areas of Cork City's built-up area, including inner-city and outer suburban neighbourhoods. While they are predominantly residential in character these areas are not homogenous in terms of land uses and include a mix of uses. The vision for sustainable residential development in Cork City is one of sustainable residential neighbourhoods where a range of residential accommodation, open space, local services and community facilities are available within easy reach of residents.

ZO 09 Neighbourhood and Local Centres zoning objective is outlined under objective 7.30 and as follows:

To support, promote and protect Neighbourhood and Local Centres which play an important role in the local shopping role for residents and provide a range of essential day to day services and facilities. It is also aimed to support and facilitate the designation of new Neighbourhood and Local Centres where significant additional population growth is planned or where a demonstrable

gap in existing provision is identified, subject to the protection of residential amenities of the surrounding area and that they are adequately served by sustainable transport. Proposals should demonstrate the appropriateness of the site by means of a Sequential Test, demonstrate retail impact and provide for a mix of uses appropriate to the scale of the centre.

- 3.11 It is noted that under the zoning 'ZO 01 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods' ZO 1.5 states that;

*Where it can be suitably justified, **the expansion of zoned Neighbourhood and Local Centres is open for consideration in this zone** provided they meet the criteria for such centres set out in Chapter 7 Economy and Employment.*

- 3.12 In Chapter 7 'Economy and Employment' and in relation to Neighbourhood and Local Centres, the draft Plan states;

*These types of centres as providing shopping at the most local level, through a mixture of neighbourhood shops in suburban areas, and village stores or post-offices in rural areas. They are included at Level 4 of the Retail Hierarchy and generally comprise a small group of shops, typically a newsagent, small supermarket or general grocery store, sub-post office and other small shops of local nature serving a small, localised catchment population. They are identified in the zoning maps included in Volume 2. **Neighbourhood and local centres are generally anchored by a small or medium sized convenience store and tend to include a number of smaller, associated local service units that enhance the overall appeal of the centre in terms of service provision and design. It is essential that they are mixed-use centres incorporating a range of local services.** In assessing applications for new centres, the Council will have regard to the proximity of nearby alternative retail facilities and the vitality and viability of these centres, the design quality of the proposed centre and its mix of uses, ensuring that the centre is not overtly dominated by one particular unit or use. This should be demonstrated through the submission of a Retail Impact Assessment (see details below).*

4.0 DISCUSSION AND SUBMISSION

4.1 As acknowledged in the current City Development Plan, it is an established planning principle that healthy town and retail centres are the fulcrum around which successful urban settlement structures operate.

4.2 Listed in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES), and among the key enablers to transform the region, is the following objective:

***Revitalising our urban areas and spaces** through creative and regenerative place-making, to deliver on Compact Growth and Housing Need, and provide new vitality for City and Town Centres.*

4.3 Therefore, it is clear that the promotion of compact, consolidated urban centres is a cornerstone of land use policies informing the context through which the preparation of the new statutory plan for Cork City should be finalised.

4.4 Importantly in the context of this submission, the NPF advises that planning to accommodate employment growth at regional, metropolitan, and local level should include consideration of current employment locations, land take and infrastructure dependency. The RSES also includes further principles to be considered including support for existing location-based strengths and synergies, the availability of 'ready to go' property solutions, and local ambition.

4.5 The identification and realisation of suitable opportunities within urban settlements to accommodate new development must therefore, in our view, become a core part of the strategy to ensure the delivery of the ambitious national growth targets set out for Cork City.

4.6 The Retail Planning Guidelines advise Planning Authorities that during the preparation of new development plans they should define, by way of a map, the boundaries of the core shopping areas of city and town centres and also the location of any retail centres.

4.7 **We submit that our clients site on South Douglas Road should be fully zoned as Neighbourhood and Local Centre** as it better reflects the nature of existing uses on the ground. This zoning would aid the centre to properly fulfil their function as important service providers for residents in the immediate vicinity.

4.8 A key characteristic of retailing in this area is a leakage of population for convenience shopping. While this is reasonable to expect that a large number of people will travel to the Douglas Shopping Centres for their weekly shop, such shopping should by its nature be more localised. Indeed, the leakage of significant convenience shopping is contrary to national and local planning policy, which seeks to reduce unsustainable travel patterns and develop and consolidate existing urban centres as effective service providers.

4.9 With regard to this, Paragraph 4.21 of the current Development Plan advises that:

The Cork City Council will support and facilitate the designation of new and/ or the expansion of existing neighbourhood centres where significant additional population growth is planned or where a demonstrable gap in existing provision is identified.

- 4.10 We submit that such a gap was comprehensively demonstrated and confirmed by the grant of planning permission which issued from both the City Council and An Bord Pleanála at our clients' site on the South Douglas Road under Appeal Case Ref: PL 28.239122, with the Board inspector's report noting:

I draw the Board's attention to the zoning map (9), which indicates an under provision of local centres in the immediate area to serve a catchment area of 400m walking distance. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that a new local centre to serve the needs of the immediate residential environment is in accordance with the development plan policies and could be acceptable at the site.

- 4.11 In this context, we ask the City Council to note section 4.11.6 of the *Retail Planning Guidelines 2012*, which states the following in relation to local retailing:

*Local retail units such as corner shops or shops located in local or neighbourhood centres serving local residential districts perform an important function in urban areas. **Where a planning authority can substantiate the local importance of such units in defined local centres, they should safeguard them in development plans, through appropriate land-use zoning.** Development management decisions should support the provision of such units, particularly where they encompass both food-stores and important non-food outlets such as retail pharmacies and have significant social and economic functions in improving access to local facilities especially for the elderly and persons with mobility impairments, families with small children, and those without access to private transport.*

- 4.12 Additionally, we refer the City Council to the following guidance set out in Section 8.14 of the Department of Environment's *Development Management Guidelines*:

Any decision of the Board should be carefully examined by the planning authority to see whether it raises any policy issues in relation to the development plan particularly where the decision of the planning authority has been reversed.

- 4.13 Our clients' lands have several sustainable development attributes that render them suitable for local retail development. While there are three existing local centres in the wider area, none have the capacity to expand the range of local services available. The subject site at South Douglas Road does have this capacity, is topographically flat and has significant areas under-utilised
- 4.14 In addition to this physical capacity to expand, the lands are located within an existing built up residential urban area. They are zoned and have access to all required public services.

- 4.15 They are brownfield and have been in commercial use for over 30 years. They do not contain any protected structures and are not subject to special conservation, ecological, architectural or landscape designations.
- 4.16 Their location is highly sustainable being in close proximity to existing services, employment centres and public transport.
- 4.17 Given their location within a residential area, the consolidation and development of appropriately scaled retail centre uses is appropriate from a land use and transportation point of view in that it will encourage multi-purpose trips and deliver an efficient and appropriate use of underutilised part brownfield land.
- 4.18 The sustainability of the lands is further highlighted by the traffic and transportation implications arising. They are adequately served by public transport, being located on a green route.
- 4.19 The centre serves a substantial residential population within walking distance and thus provides for localised access to local services, reducing the need for local residents to travel further to more distant local centres.
- 4.20 Finally, it is of note that the proposed zoning objectives do not follow legal boundaries, or any boundaries for that matter. They spilt the site into three separate areas without any recognition of its layout or operation of the site. They have no regard to the interactions that occur on the site, nor their interrelations.
- 4.20 On all of these grounds, our clients full site warrants consideration as a Local Retail Centre serving the surrounding residential communities.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Our clients very much welcome the new Cork City Development Plan. It is hoped that the points raised in this submission will be of benefit to the City Council in the final preparation of same.
- 5.2 The purpose of this submission is to highlight the importance of the provision of necessary services and facilities within residential neighbourhoods so as to create communities within the City.
- 5.3 In doing so, we submit that our clients site should be fully zoned as Neighbourhood and Local Centres so as to better reflect the nature of existing uses on the ground and allow this existing local centre to properly fulfil its function as an important service provider for residents in the immediate vicinity.
- 5.4 On all of these grounds, our clients site presents a strong credible case for the western and eastern parts of the site to be rezoned from 'ZO 01 Sustainable Residential Neighbourhoods' to 'ZO 09 Neighbourhood and Local Centres'
- 5.5 It is trusted that the submission will be seen as a constructive and productive contribution to the preparation of the final Plan, and, in this regard, we respectfully ask that it is given favourable consideration.
- 5.6 Please refer all correspondence on this matter to Alannah Hurley, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd., NSC Campus, Mahon, Cork.