



Frank Pentony
Director of Services
Development Plan Review
Forward Planning Unit
Louth County Council
Town Hall, Crowe Street,
Dundalk, Co Louth.
A91 W20C

17th December 2020

RE: Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

**Submission on behalf of Olan McNeece in relation to lands at
Ballydonnell, Baltray, Co. Louth**

Dear Mr Pentony,

With reference to the above, and further to your invitation to the public to make submissions in respect of the Draft County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 for County Louth, please note that we have been appointed by Olan McNeece to make this submission on his behalf.

Please find attached contact details for our client separately as directed.

Please note that our client owns a plot of land circa 1Ha, at Ballydonnell, Baltray, Co. Louth and this is identified in figures 1 and 2 below.

Background:

- The subject lands were included within the settlement boundary of a Local Area Plan for Termonfeckin and Baltray before they were treated as separate settlements. The Termonfeckin / Baltray Local Area Plan (as it was known) identified the site as zoned for residential development at that time.
- Our client, an experienced developer who had recently completed the highly regarded Roschoill Development in Drogheda, acquired this zoned land in 2004.
- Planning Permission was granted on 1.06Ha in 2007, (Planning Ref: 07/1398) for a detached two storey dwelling with attic accommodation and associated site works to serve 2 additional houses. The grant of permission included outline permission for the 2 additional houses. There were no third-party objections and no appeal.
- A single detached property was constructed but never completed (due to the financial downturn at that time) on foot of this permission together with the site development works for the future development of the remaining two sites. These works included

construction of a new entrance, access road, public lighting, landscaping, boundary walls, access road, footpaths, and drainage.

- Work ceased on the project early 2011 and apart from maintenance, no progress has been made due to there being no viable market for the product and the restrictions that now exist with respect to occupancy as the site was de-zoned during the county development plan and Local Area Plan review processes.
- The development was defined as an unfinished housing scheme and was therefore included in the Unfinished Housing Development Survey carried out in 2011 by LCC on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- This site is one of two unfinished housing developments located in Ballydonnell, Baltray, Co. Louth – the second development is located directly opposite the McNeece scheme on land to the east of the road, Planning Ref: 06884

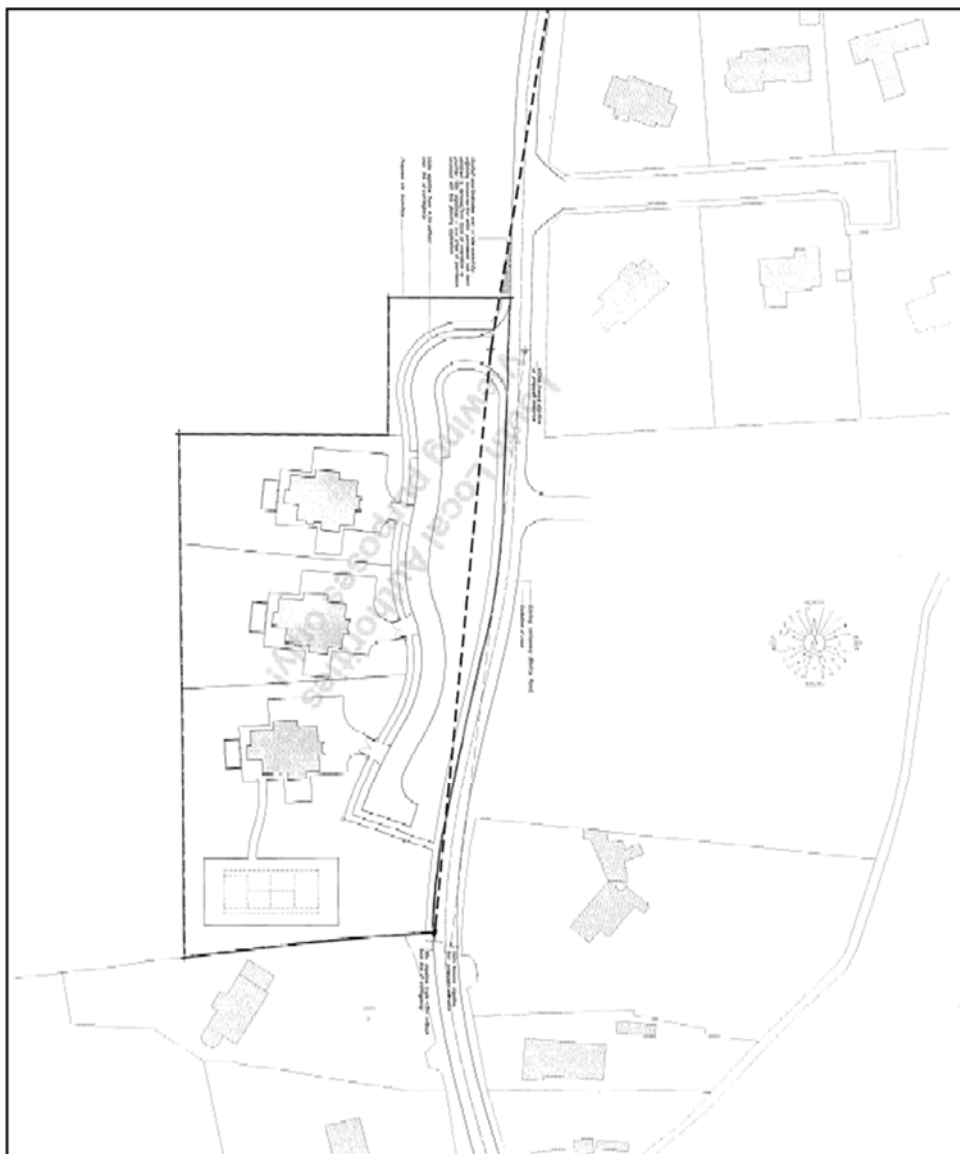


Figure 1 – Approved Site Layout Plan as per Planning Ref: 071398

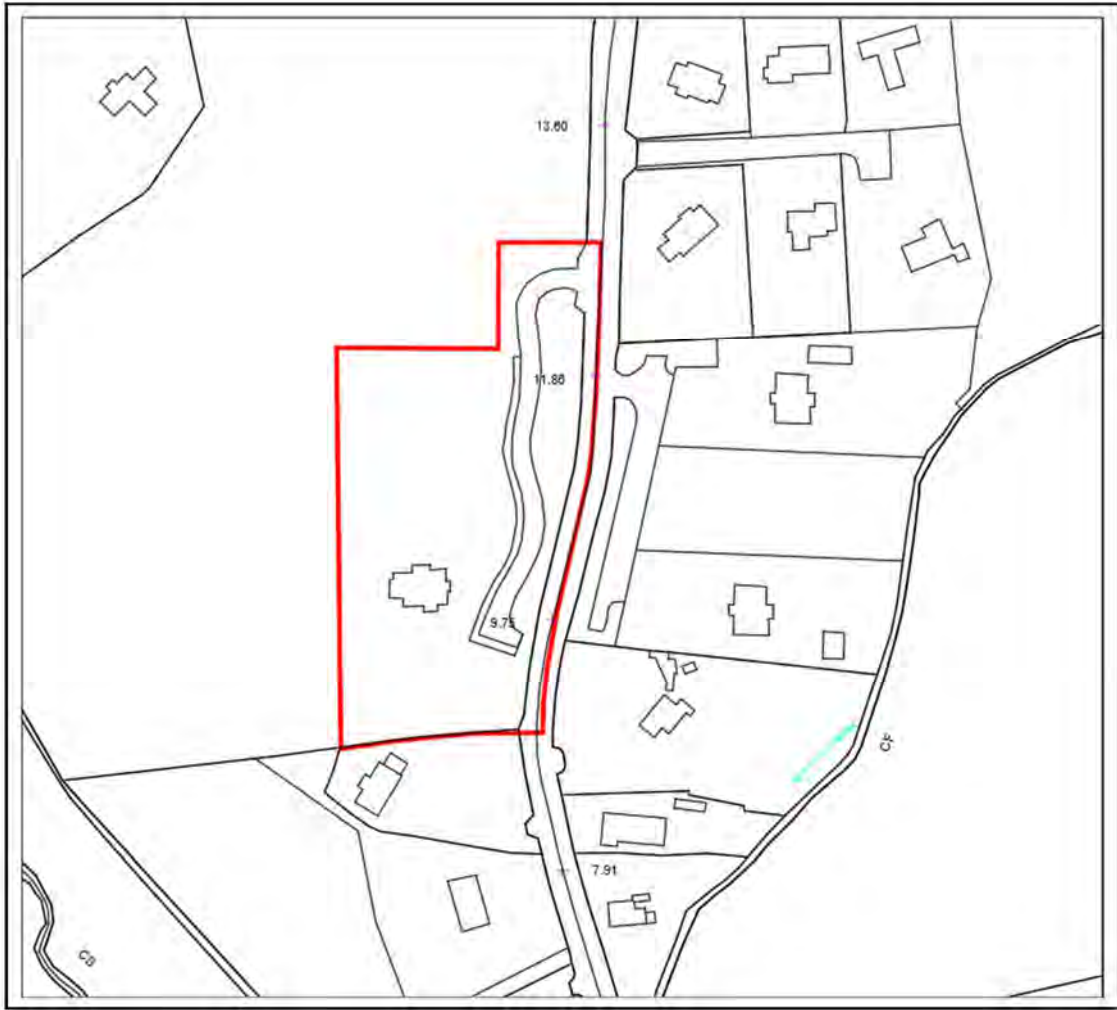


Figure 2 – Approved Site Boundary (1.057Ha) as per Planning Ref: 071398

Requested Changes

There are numerous examples of this type of unfinished housing scheme built on lands that, perhaps un-necessarily, had been zoned for residential use early in the 2000's when there was little or no restriction on land use zoning. This type of low-density peripheral land use management has rightly been dispensed with and such zoning is generally not provided for.

In the case of the McNeece lands, this developer acquired zoned land and then sought permission to develop and then developed accordingly. The economic downturn that led to a collapse in banking, lending, construction, and population growth brought the development to an untimely halt before the scheme could be realised. A significant investment was made by the developer in good faith on foot of the zoning, and every effort was made at that time to develop a small but high-quality scheme for which there had been high demand as an alternative to building in the open countryside.

Currently the land is not zoned, and should the developer wish to complete the scheme, it will be subject to local needs requirements and significant limitation on occupancy. A person who might want to develop a house on the subject lands as part of this scheme would need to be living in the local area (but not Termonfeckin or Baltray) for a period of 18 years and not already own a house. Effectively this limits the potential occupancy of houses on the subject lands to children of rural dwellers within 6 km of the lands. In this case, there is no motivation or

rationale for such a person to move to the serviced and partially developed subject site when they can build closer to home.

The national development plan and the subsequent Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy support making best use of serviced lands and for infill developments on brownfield sites. A number of National and Regional policy objects are relevant in this regard, including:

National Policy Objective 15
Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.
National Policy Objective 18a
To support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.
National Policy Objective 18b
Develop a programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages' with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages.
National Policy Objective 35
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.

Section 9.3 of the Regional Authority's RSES states that one of the key elements of the NPF relates to the need for compact growth, with development being focussed within and close to existing built-up areas. A vital element of this approach is the regeneration of infill and brownfield sites. We believe that the subject lands, being partially developed fall within this definition of brownfield/infill. We contend that making best use of these serviced sites should be encouraged and incentivised in the new county plan.

We would respectfully suggest that these unfinished housing developments to be zoned as Existing Residential A1, and that the Land Use Zoning Map for the settlement of Baltray be amended as per Figure 3 below. This would encourage their completion without undue restriction on occupancy.

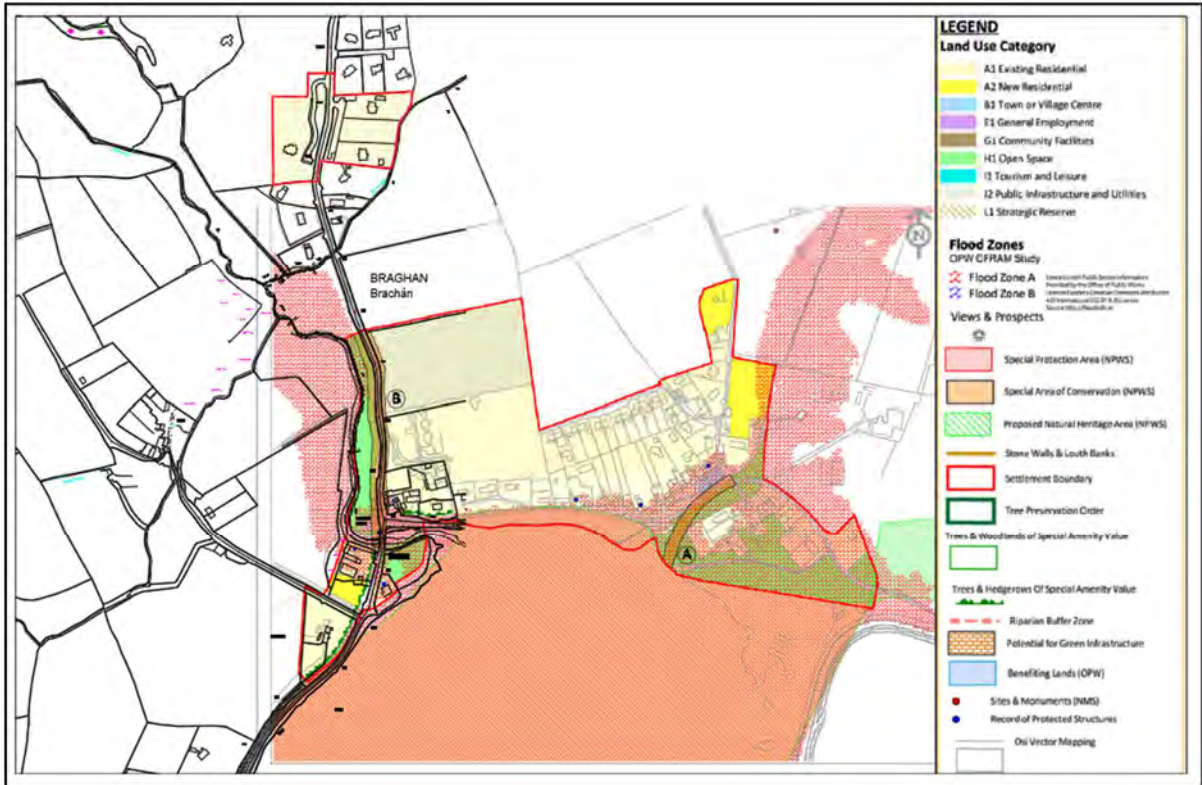


Figure 3 – Proposed Amended Draft Land Use Zoning Map for Baltray

We hope and trust that you will take the foregoing into consideration and that the relevant changes will be made to the Draft County Plan in order to support and incentivise the completion of this unfinished housing development.

Prepared by

Brian Hughes
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 Chartered Engineer