

Forward Planning Unit,
Development Plan Review,
Louth County Council, Town Hall,
Crowe Street, Dundalk,
Co. Louth
A91 W20C.

23rd December 2020

RE: Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 – lands at the former JP Castle Builders Yard and Cash & Carry Site, Castle Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Dear Sir/Madam,

1. Introduction

I, Lorraine Scully, wish to make a submission to Louth County Council regarding the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. The submission relates to the former JP Castle Builders yard and the Cash & Carry site and its adjoining lands at Castle Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth.

This written submission is made in response to an invitation for comments from interested parties by Louth County Council. This submission is being made within the specified timeframe for submissions i.e., 23rd December 2020, as set out on the Draft Development Plan's website.

2. Site Location

The site that is subject to this submission comprises the former JP Castle Builders Yard, Cash & Carry site and its adjoining, undeveloped lands. It is accessed from Castle Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth. The lands extend to approximately 1.0 hectares and are bound to the north by vacant land and the rear of properties at Castle Road, to the east by Scoil Naisiunta Realt na Mara, to the south by the rear of residences at Mill Street and to the west by the rear of residences at Castle Road.

It is noted that there is a current planning application pertaining to part of the lands (Reg. Ref. 20/661) which the Planning Authority have requested Further Information on (dated 19th October 2020).

The Cash & Carry premises and the former JP Castle Builders yards are no longer in operation and are currently vacant.



Figure 1 – Lands subject to Submission (approximate extent of lands outlined in red)

3. Grounds of Submission

The subject lands are proposed to be zoned Objective A2 – New Residential under the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. However, given the significant constraints and environmental as well as engineering issues that negatively affect the subject lands, it is respectfully considered that they would be more suited to be zoned ‘G1 – Community Facilities’ under the new Development Plan.

Objective G1 – Community Facility seeks:

“To provide for and protect civic, religious, community, education, health care and social infrastructure”.

The Guidance for this zoning objective seeks to facilitate the provision of community, educational, health, institutional, and religious facilities and to safeguard their future provision.

Permitted Use

Allotments, Cemetery, Childcare Facility, Community Facility, Crematorium, Education Facility (Primary or Second Level), Education Facility (Third Level or Training Centre), E- Charging Facility, Health Care Centre, Healthcare Practitioner, Hospital, Nursing Home, Park/Playgrounds, Place of Worship, Recreational/Amenity Open Space, Recreational/Sports Facility, Recycling Facility (Civic & Amenity), Utilities.

Open for Consideration

Bring Banks, Car Park, Cycleway/Walkway trails, Funeral Home/Mortuary, Residential Institution, Retirement Village, Sheltered Accommodation, Telecommunications Structures, Training Centre.

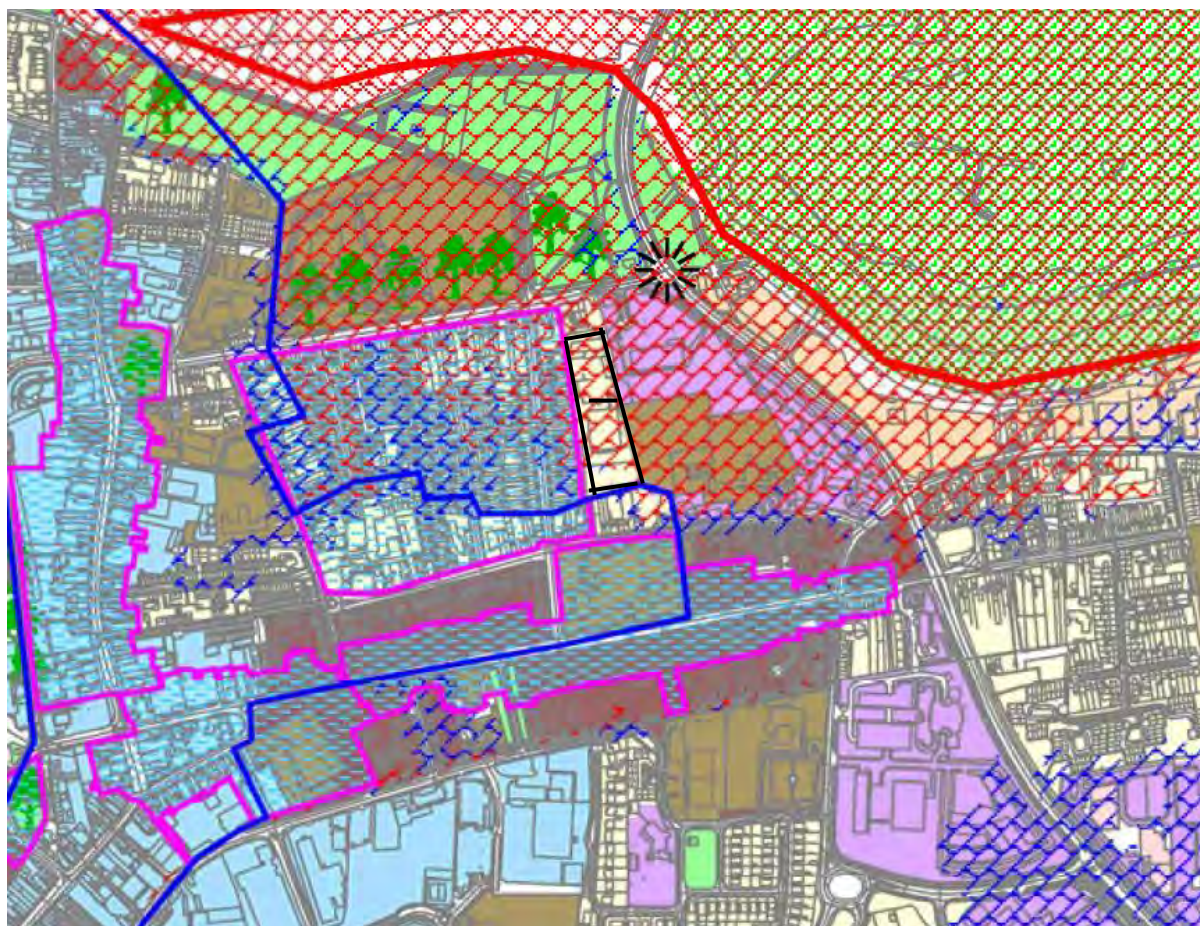


Figure 2 – Proposed Land Use Zoning Map (subject lands outlined in black)

The rationale for this shall now be outlined.

Proximity to Existing Community Facilities

The subject lands directly abut the Realt na Mara national school, whose entrance is located on Mill Street. The Realt na Mara serves this local community and has done for generations. While the school provides excellent educational facilities, many of this takes place in a building that has been in operation for a significant period of time. A new ASU unit was recently opened in order to specifically provide for the educational needs of autistic children, which is a wonderful new facility for the area. However, it is likely that the existing school may look expand with more modern facilities in the near future, particularly in light of the projected growth in population for Dundalk, which will place increased demand on school places.

It is noted that the Realt na Mara school does not currently own or have direct access onto playing pitches for various recreational sports (GAA, soccer, rugby, hockey or athletics) although it does have some hard-standing yard. It is considered that the rezoning of the subject lands to Objective 'G1 – Community Facilities', could facilitate the expansion of additional facilities for Realt na Mara National School, which would be of strategic benefit to the school and the local community.

While such a development could primarily be used by the school, a broader vision for the lands should be maintained with the lands potentially serving the local community in terms of a sports and recreation facility, which is lacking in the area.

Flood Risk Zone

The lands are located within Flood Risk Zone A, as identified on the land use zoning map proposed in the Draft Development Plan. It is noted that these lands have flooded previously and under the latest planning application on the lands (Reg. Ref. 20/661), the Planning Authority are not satisfied that a residential development proposed for the site will not give rise to further flood risk.

The Planning System and Flood Risk Guidelines (2009) sets out the planning and engineering guidance regarding flood risk and developments. Section 3.1 of the Guidelines state:

“Development should only be permitted in areas at risk of flooding when there are no alternative, reasonable sites available in areas at lower risk that also meet the objectives of proper planning and sustainable development.

Where development is necessary in areas at risk of flooding an appropriate land use should be selected.

*A **precautionary approach** should be applied, where necessary, to reflect uncertainties in flooding datasets and risk assessment techniques and the ability to predict the future climate and performance of existing flood defences. Development should be designed with careful consideration to possible changes in flood risk, including the effects of climate change and/or coastal erosion so that future occupants are not subject to unacceptable risk”.*

It is respectfully submitted that given the lands are within Flood Zone A, then it is not within the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, or in accordance with national planning guidance, to allow for the development of residential use on the lands. Thus, it is submitted that the zoning of the lands should be amended from ‘A2 New Residential’ to ‘G1 – Community Facilities’, which can be developed as a more appropriate recreational use that is in accordance with the Planning System and Flood Risk Guidelines (2009).

Drainage Considerations

It is noted that there are significant constraints on the local foul and surface water network on Castle Road, which would negate against the construction of a large residential development on the subject lands. This has come to the fore in the most recent planning application on the lands, which proposed connecting to an existing combined sewer. Similar to the flood risk issue, the Planning Authority have raised serious concern with this and requested Further Information on it. It is also noted that planning permission was previously refused under Reg. Ref. 14/208 for an extension to the existing cash & carry building with the 2 reasons for refusal relating to drainage issues.

It is respectfully submitted that the development of the lands for community facilities use as opposed to residential use would avoid this issue from arising and provide for a more sustainable form of development that can actually be delivered.

Traffic Considerations

There are serious constraints on providing safe means of vehicular access to the subject lands from Castle Road if the lands are to serve a large residential development. It is submitted that

any significantly scaled residential development on the lands would result in a large increase in traffic accidents and involving pedestrians/cyclists. There are already two extremely dangerous intersections along Castle Road at Seatown/Mill Street and St Mary's Road. Many near fatal traffic incidences have occurred here despite the existence of traffic lights on one of the junctions and steel pedestrian railings had to be installed on another junction.

It is also important to acknowledge the fact that the existing entrance from Castle Road also serves as the sole entrance to the rear of the houses along this side of Castle Road and is used for parking and deliveries. The ownership of the actual entrance is a shared right of way and not under the control of the Cash & Carry site and thus the ability of any owner of that land to carry out any works along the entrance is uncertain.

However, by rezoning the lands for community facilities, these issues can be avoided as it would result in a far lower level of activity and access can be primarily from the existing Realt na Mara school on Mill Street.

Protection of Residential Amenities

It is respectfully considered that any future development of the subject lands needs to ensure that residential amenities of the surrounding area is protected. This is even more important given the fact that they are situated within an Architectural Conservation Area and there is a National Monument adjoining the site.

The current zoning for the site could facilitate a high-density, high-rise residential scheme, similar to what was proposed under Reg. Ref. 20/661, which is completely inappropriate for this sensitive area and which was effectively acknowledged by the Planning Authority in their assessment of that planning application.

Environmental Considerations

It is noted that the site adjoins an ACA and the Franciscan Tower is a national monument and within an zone of archaeological interest. Furthermore, bats, which are a protected species, are known to roost at the tower. It is submitted that the proposed rezoning of these lands would be more appropriate and more environmentally sensitive than a large-scale residential development.

4. Conclusion

As stated, this submission relates to lands at the former JP Castle Builders Yard and Cash & Carry site, Castle Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth that extend to approximately 1.0 hectares. The subject lands are proposed to be zoned Objective A2 – New Residential under the Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. However, given the significant constraints and environmental as well as engineering issues that negatively affect the subject lands, as well as to ensure the protection of existing residential amenities, it is respectfully considered that they would be more suited to be zoned 'G1 – Community Facilities' under the new Development Plan.

It is respectfully requested that Louth County Council take into account this submission when adopting the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.