

Hacketstown Skerries

*Local Area Plan May 2009
Amendment to the 2007 LAP*



Hacketstown Skerries Local Area Plan

Adopted by Council on the 11th May 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Local Area Plan sets out the development strategy for the development of these residentially zoned lands at Hacketstown, Skerries. The plan aims to provide a well-designed residential community, forming the southern edge of Skerries. The 2005-2011 County Development Plan delineates an area of circa 16 hectares (39.52 acres) zoned RS1, for which this Local Area Plan has been prepared. The net development area is c. 14.5 hectares (c.36 acres)

The LAP proposes two residential sectors. One, within an 800 metre walk band of the railway station, where higher densities are considered appropriate and within which an average net 42 units per hectare (17 units per acre) are proposed. The second extends from the 800 metre to just beyond the 1km walk band of the railway station where an average net density of 37 units per hectare (15 units per acre) is proposed. The total unit number within the plan lands is approximately 600.

A high standard of urban design shall be required to ensure the creation of a high quality environment with a definite sense of place. Following the adoption of this local area plan and prior to the submission of any planning application(s)/or applications for consent, an urban design plan and landscape plan for this area shall be prepared, by a qualified, experienced urban designer/landscape architect and shall be submitted to and agreed with the Planning Authority. This agreed plan shall then form the blueprint for the future development of this area.

The significant differential in ground levels allows for a variety in housing types and heights. Building heights will vary within the plan lands. Specific controls have been included to ensure that development will not exceed the existing ridge heights of properties at Hillside, Cabra Hill and along Golf Links Road.

The LAP includes a local services area, providing for the day to day needs of the new residential community. The buildings within the services area shall architecturally define a civic plaza, creating an attractive meeting space in the heart of the new community. The plaza shall provide for a pedestrian priority through route, connecting residential development within the plan lands to proposed amenities.

A 5 acre site for a primary school is reserved on the adjoining green belt lands immediately to the east of the plan lands, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Science.

7.4 acres of Class 1 public open space is proposed off-site, on the greenbelt zoned lands, immediately to the east of the plan lands and adjacent to the reserved primary school site.

The Traffic Impact Assessment carried out for the Hacketstown LAP 2007 has been reviewed, by Traffic Consultants and determined that scope exists to facilitate the initial 1-200 unit phase to proceed without the construction of the Southern Relief Road where the cumulative impact of other major developments, i.e the proposed developments at the Ballast Pitt and at Townparks St1 lands originally included in the original TIA, are unlikely to proceed in the current climate. The provision of the Southern Relief Road will be necessary to accommodate the development proposed in phases 2&3 of the LAP.

The local area plan incorporates a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, throughout the plan lands, connecting to the local centre, reserved school site and public open space. These internal routes will connect to a proposed pedestrian route parallel and to the east of the existing railway right-of-way, providing a direct

pedestrian route to the train station, local schools and onward to the town centre.

At least two children's playground shall be provided in each of the residential sectors, at the developers' expense.

The recommendations of the archaeological assessment of the plan lands have been incorporated into the LAP.

Phase 1: 1-200 units. **Upgrade Golf Links Road from Millers lane junction to the entrance to the plan lands;**
Signalise junction at Millers Lane;
Development of upgraded pedestrian walkway along the eastern side of the railway line to the plan lands from Skerries Railway Bridge;
Development of ecological corridor;
Completion of at least one children's playground and Provision of pro -rata child care facilities.
Provision of pro-rata Class 2 public open space.
.....
Prior to the commencement of any housing development in Phase 2, the Southern Relief Road, shall be completed in its entirety;

This LAP has been screened for both Strategic Environmental Assessment under SEA Regulations and Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. The Planning Authority, in consultation with the Environmental Authorities and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are satisfied that the LAP does not require an Environmental Report nor a full Appropriate Assessment Report.

The S.E.A Screening Assessment together with the Planning Authority's Screening Statement and Screening for Appropriate Assessment are appended to this LAP.

VISION STATEMENT

This Local Area Plan sets out the development strategy for the development of these residentially zoned lands at Hacketstown, Skerries. The 2005-2011 County Development Plan delineates an area of circa 16 hectares (39.52 acres) zoned RS1, for which this Local Area Plan has been prepared. The LAP seeks to provide a new residential community, with a distinct identity and sense of place, living in well designed, comfortable, efficient homes with a range of house types set within an attractive landscaped environment, permeable for pedestrians and vehicles, linked to the town centre, protecting existing residential amenity, created with an emphasis on protecting and enhancing the built and natural heritage of the lands, for the benefit of the whole community, ensuring the proper planning and development of the area.

This Local Area Plan shall remain in force for a period of six years.

1.0 EXISTING LAP

The existing LAP for Hacketstown was adopted by the Council on the 11th June 2007. The LAP provides for the development of a total of 600 no. residential units at an average density of 39 units per hectare in 3no. phase of 200 housing units and includes core provisions of an Urban Square with local service provision; on-site Class 2 Public Open Space and off-site Class 1 Public Open Space together with a reserved site for a new primary school adjoining the plan lands to the east. A Traffic Impact Assessment was carried out to assist the preparation of the LAP. Taking the impact of the proposed development, together with the cumulative impact of other major developments proposed around the town, the TIA and subsequently the adopted LAP required the construction of a proposed Southern Relief Road for Skerries, in advance of any occupation or selling of any residential units within the plan lands.

1.1 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO EXISTING LAP

The proposed amendment is to permit the development, occupation and selling of Phase 1(1-200 units) of the Hacketstown Local Area Plan, prior to the construction of the Skerries Southern Relief Road and subject to specific traffic management measures, so as to provide a range of housing accommodation, including sheltered housing for the elderly and an appropriate mix of private and public housing to meet local housing needs at Hacketstown, Skerries.

The Traffic Impact Assessment carried out for the Hacketstown LAP has been reviewed, by Traffic Consultants and determined that scope exists to facilitate the initial 1-200 unit phase to proceed without the construction of the Southern Relief Road where the cumulative impact of other major developments, i.e. the proposed developments at the Ballast Pitt and at Townparks St1 lands, originally included in the original TIA, are unlikely to proceed in the current climate.

The adopted LAP in requiring the construction of the Southern Relief Road, in advance of any occupation or selling of housing within the Hacketstown lands, places a significant restriction on the development of the Council owned housing lands at Hacketstown, which is one of the few areas of the County that is not currently restricted in the short to medium term by Water Services capacity constraints. There is considerable pressure on the Council to implement its Housing Programme to meet local housing needs.

2.0. PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 National Spatial Strategy

Skerries is located on a National Transportation Corridor and within the Dublin & Mid East Region in the National Spatial Strategy.

2.2 Regional Context

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2004-2016 identifies Skerries within the 'Hinterland' area along a designated Transportation Corridor. Skerries is a major town with access to public transport and is therefore considered to be an appropriate location for residential development. However, Skerries is not designated as a development centre and as such has a limited capacity for growth. Currently the population of Skerries is c.11,000.

2.3 Transport 21

The 10 year National Transport Plan announced by Government in November '05 provides for the electrification of the northern main rail line as far as Balbriggan and the construction of Metro North linking Dublin City centre with Swords via Dublin Airport. Fingal County Council will work with public transport providers to promote and facilitate the delivery of those elements in Transport 21 for improvements to the public transport network specifically the extension of the Dart to Skerries and Balbriggan and the construction of Metro North to Swords.

2.4 County Development Plan 2005-2011

Under the 2005-2011 County Development Plan, the plan lands are zoned objective RS1 where the stated objective is:

'To provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved local area plans and subject to the necessary social and physical infrastructure' and the vision statement associated with this objective seeks:

'To ensure the provision of high quality new residential environments with good layout and design, with adequate public transport and cycle links and within walking distance of community facilities; to provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet household needs; and to promote balanced communities'.

- Lands to the east and south east are zoned Objective GB 'to protect and provide for a green belt to demarcate the urban and rural area and provide for agriculture and amenity in a manner that protects the physical and visual amenity of the area.' Lands to the west are zoned Objective RU 'To protect and provide for the development of agriculture and rural amenity'. Lands to the southwest are zoned Objective OS 'To preserve and provide for open space and recreational amenities'.
- The high quality of the landscape at this location is reflected in the landscape designations contained within the County Development Plan. The plan area is located within the designated Coastal Character Area and 'The Coastal Corridor' indicated in the County Development Plan. The Coastal Character Area comprises the eastern part of the County and contains a number of important beaches, islands and headlands, which together create a sensitive and nationally important landscape of high amenity and landscape value. The Coastal Corridor is considered to be of intrinsic natural and high amenity value. It is particularly vulnerable to visual intrusion.

- The subject lands are also located within the designated Landscape Group 5, 'The Skerries Hinterland'. This is a large and important landscape comprising the coastline and the adjoining elevated land of which the subject land forms part.
- The subject lands are also designated as a 'Sensitive Landscape'. It is an objective of the Council to protect sensitive landscapes from inappropriate development and to reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place.
- Local objective No.52 relates to the adjoining green belt lands to the west of the plan lands which seeks 'to facilitate the development of a nursing home, daycare centre and meals on wheels facility for the elderly, whilst preserving the open aspect of the site'.
- Policy TP 12 and Objective TO9. Requires a reservation providing for additional rail tracks facilitating the electrification of the Dublin- Belfast rail line as far as Balbriggan. It is anticipated that this reservation will be required along the western side of the rail line, outside the plan lands.
- The plan lands coincides with the southern development boundary for Skerries, indicated in the County Development Plan 2005-2011.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF LOCALITY

The plan lands form the southern development boundary to Skerries as defined in the County Development Plan. The plan lands comprise circa 16 hectares (39.52acres) of residentially zoned land. The main Dublin-Belfast railway line bounds the lands to the west, a pedestrian right-of-way (in the ownership of Iarnród Éireann) runs between the railway line and the entire western boundary of the plan lands. A limestone quarry is situated to the west of the railway line. A narrow county road, Golf-Links Road, forms the eastern and southern boundary. A well established housing development, Hillside, bounds the plan lands to the north. Included within the plan lands are four detached residential properties and a farmyard complex. The plan lands are currently used for both grazing and tillage. 10 KV ESB lines traverses the plan lands along its northern and southern boundaries.

4.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ANALYSIS

The subject lands are undulating, rising sharply to the north and to the south from a central valley/stream, affording sea views from the northern ridge and short distance views of the surrounding countryside. Land levels rise from 14mOD at the stream to 28mOD at the highest northern point and 26mOD at the highest southern point. The lands are not highly visible from distant views, being for the most part contained by the surrounding higher ground to the west and north, but are visible from the Rush-Skerries coast road to the east and from minor county roads to the south. Having regard to the 'sensitive landscape' designation of the plan lands in the County Development Plan, a visual impact assessment of proposed development shall form part of the Urban Design Plan, required to be prepared for the entire plan lands.

5.0 TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

5.1 Road Access and Traffic Management

A Traffic Impact Assessment was carried out to assist the preparation of the adopted Hacketstown LAP 2007. It looked at the cumulative impact of proposed developments at Barnageeragh, The Ballast Pit, Townparks ST1 lands, the designated site for a nursing /day care centre on lands to the east of the plan lands in addition to the proposed development on the Hacketstown LAP lands. It concluded that the Dublin Road/Miller's Lane roundabout junction will reach saturation when all developments are in place with long queues and delays predicted at peak travel periods. It recommended the provision of a southern relief road, linking the Rush – Skerries Road to the Lusk Road, thereby providing an alternative access to Skerries, which is currently restricted by the narrowness of the rail bridge access to the town. The proposed Southern Relief Road has subsequently been adopted by variation, into the County Development Plan by Variation No.30 in October 2008.

A revised Traffic Impact Assessment, assuming that development at the Ballast Pit and Townparks St1 lands will not occur in the short term, makes the following recommendations:

1. The initial Phase 1 [1-200] housing units can be catered for on the existing road network in the short term, from a capacity viewpoint.
2. The Golf Links Road-Shenick Road junction should be signalised and improvement works will be required to the Golf Links Road from this signalised junction to the entrance to the plan lands.
3. Upgrade the existing pedestrian/cycle walkway along the eastern side of the railway from Skerries Railway Bridge to the plan lands.
4. Provide the Southern Relief Road to cater for further development with the plan lands. Golf Links Road to Millers Lane should then be severed for vehicular traffic at Cabra Hill.
5. The planning and construction of the Southern Relief Road should precede or parallel the detailed planning, phasing and construction of the proposed further development of the plan lands.

A traffic management plan shall be devised and undertaken by the Council for the Golf Links Road between Millers Lane and Baldogan Cross Roads.

5.2 Proposed Site Access:

A singular vehicular access to the plan lands will be from Golf Links Road in the short to medium term. Golf Links Road will be upgraded along the frontage of the plan lands, allowing for vehicular access to the plan lands. In tandem with further phases of development within the plan lands, access to the plan lands will be from the proposed Southern Relief Road. In the longer term, i.e. for-phases 2 and 3, there will be two vehicular access points; one to the north and one to the south of the plan lands. A residential through road is proposed, connecting both access points. This road shall be designed as a traffic-calmed route. With the development of phases 2 and 3, it is proposed to cul-de-sac Golf Links Road at Cabra Hill, thereby redirecting vehicular traffic onto the Southern Relief Road, allowing only pedestrian and cyclists access to the plan lands from the Millers Lane direction, thus improving the residential amenity of this area. This shall not take place unless and until it is approved by statutory procedure under Section 38 of the Road Traffic Act 1994.

5.3 Cycle/Pedestrian Access

The local area plan incorporates a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, throughout the plan lands, connecting to the local centre, reserved school site and public open space. These internal routes will connect to a proposed pedestrian route parallel and to the east of the existing railway right-of-way, providing a direct pedestrian route to the train station, local schools and onward to the town centre. It is an objective of the plan to ensure that all pedestrian/cycle routes, shall be directly overlooked by residential development to ensure a high degree of informal supervision. The cycle and pedestrian ways indicated on the plan map are indicative only. The precise location of these routes will be determined at planning application/planning consent stage. It is an objective of this plan that no pedestrian, cyclist or vehicular access be made through the existing public open space at Hillside housing estate.

5.4 Railside Walkway

It is an objective of this LAP to provide for a new pedestrian route to the east of the railway line as indicated on the LAP map. To reduce the potential disamenity on the existing properties at Hillside, it is recommended that the proposed railside walk connect to the existing right-of-way at a point south of Hillside where the differential in ground levels is not pronounced. That section of the right-of-way from the roundabout at the railway bridge to the proposed connection point, shall be widened, surfaced and adequately lit, in the interests of pedestrian safety and amenity. This will necessitate the removal of the existing hedgerow boundary along the public open space to the west of Hillside and the planting of a new hedgerow, along the newly established boundary with the open space. The boundary treatment will be finalised following consultation with Hillside Residents' Association and will seek to minimise the erosion of the existing open space in the estate.

6.0 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

6.1 Train Service

The plan lands are within walking distance of Skerries train station, with regular commuter trains to Dublin City. Approximately 40% of the plan lands are within an 800m walkband of the train station, the remainder lies within c.1 km. The proposed pedestrian routes will facilitate direct pedestrian access to the train station.

6.2 Additional Rail Tracks

It is an objective of the County Development Plan that lands shall be reserved to provide for additional rail tracks along the Dublin- Belfast rail-line (County Development Plan: policy TP 12 and objective T09). It is anticipated that this reservation will be required along the western side of the rail line and therefore outside the plan lands.

6.3 Bus Service

Dublin Bus provides a regular No.33 bus service from Skerries to the City Centre, via Rush whilst the No.33A operates between Skerries and Swords. The proposed Southern Relief Road could provide an alternative bus route from Skerries to Lusk.

6.4 Local Feeder Bus

The Council will promote and facilitate the provision of a local feeder bus similar to that operating in Balbriggan. This service should be operational, prior to the occupation of phases 2 and 3 of the plan lands. The Council will request Dublin-Bus to re-route the No. 33 bus along the Southern Relief Road to serve the plan lands, when it is completed.

7.0 LAYOUT AND URBAN FORM

The plan lands form a contained parcel of development land, bound to the east by the railway line and to the west by Golf Links Road, defining the southern extremity of the settlement of Skerries, as outlined in the County Development Plan. The undulating nature of the site presents both challenges and opportunities to realise the optimal development of the plan lands.

The local area plan map indicates the main elements within the LAP including inter- alia: two residential sectors with differing residential densities related to walking distance from the train station, main access road, indicative access points, reserved sites for a local service area, including community facilities and a primary school, pedestrian and cycling routes and designated class 1 public open space.

It is a specific objective of this LAP that following the adoption of this local area plan and prior to the submission of any planning application(s),/or applications for planning consent, an Urban Design Plan, including a Landscape Plan for this area shall be prepared, by qualified and experienced urban designers and landscape architects and shall be submitted to and agreed with the Planning Authority. This agreed plan shall then form the blueprint for the future development of this area and shall include the following principles:

7.1 Urban Design Principles comprise the following:

- A high standard of urban design shall be required to ensure the creation of a high quality environment with a definite sense of place physically linked with the adjoining development.
- The public realm shall be characterised by a high standard of design, quality finishes and treatments, including hard and soft landscaping.
- The layout, form, scale and massing of development within the plan lands shall ensure that the impact on views from the coast road and on the visual amenities at this coastal location is mitigated.
- The development of the plan lands shall acknowledge and respect, the existing topography whilst balancing amounts of cut and fill in so far as in practicable.
- The layout of the proposed development will be based upon the provision of two sectors or residential cells. Each sector will have limited access points from a local distributor.
- Street frontage buildings shall be designed to provide strong corner definition such that gables are avoided and the front elevation definition shall be continued to the side elevation thereby ensuring a 'seamless' transition at corners and junctions.
- Dual aspect shall be incorporated into the design of all apartment /residential blocks.
- The two main access roads leading to the main urban square shall be designed as a tree-lined, hard and soft landscaped urban street, accommodating footpaths and cyclepaths and shall be overlooked by attractive well-designed buildings.

- Pedestrian bridges/vehicular bridge(s) over the stream shall be aesthetically pleasing, safe and inviting, designed to a high architectural specification. The pedestrian bridges shall not be less than 3 metres in width.
- High standard of elevational detail is required on building elevations that front of main routes, the stream valley, open space and the pedestrian route parallel to the railway line.
- Design solutions to be varied significantly throughout the site ensuring the avoidance of monotonous repetition of a limited number of buildings and dwelling types.
- An urban square, defined by quality designed buildings, will provide a visual and physical focal point, at the heart of the new residential community.
- The provision of high quality public open space in line with standards as set out in the County Development Plan. Class 1 open space shall be provided on the green belt zoned lands to the east of the plan lands as indicated on the plan map. A network of safe and attractively design pedestrian and cycling routes will be provided throughout the plan lands.
- The layout will include passive surveillance to discourage anti-social behaviour.
- Traffic calming will be an integral feature of the layout.
- Carparking will be provided in accordance with Development Plan standards. Car parking will be clearly delineated for each residential unit and shall be integral part of the design concept for apartment development.
- Surface Water Attenuation area(s) SuDS shall be incorporated as a design feature within the plan lands.
- All boundary treatment where appropriate and required shall be carefully designed and provided for in all planning applications/ planning consents in accordance with the designation of the plan lands as a designated sensitive landscape.
- Existing mature trees shall be protected and incorporated into the development in so far as is practicable, particularly along the riparian strip/ecological corridor and the railway line. In addition the hedgerow on the southern side of the established public open space at Hillside housing estate shall be protected and reinforced with additional buffer planting.
- It is an objective of the Planning Authority to ensure that development proposals immediately adjoining existing development shall provide for the protection of existing residential amenities and shall have particular regard to minimising overlooking and visual intrusion.
- Private and public areas will be clearly delineated. Private areas will be protected from undue overlooking and public areas will be easily accessible and overlooked by housing.

- It is an objective of this plan that developers shall take adequate and measures to minimise the impact of traffic, noise and dust, on residential amenity during construction phases.
- Design proposals to incorporate measures which mitigate both the impact of railway noise and air pollution on the residential population.
- Residential developments shall have adequate waste storage space designated for 3 waste streams- residual waste(grey bin), dry recycables (green bin), organic waste (brown bin) and shall comply with Fingal County Council's Guidelines on the Provision of Waste and Recycling Bins for Residential Developments.
- All development shall be carried out in accordance with the highest environmental standards, having regard to water and air quality, noise standards and the protection of flora and fauna.

7.2 LAYOUT AND DESIGN PARAMETERS FOR EACH RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

7.2.1 Higher Density Sector

The DOEHLG's "Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas- Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2008", recommends higher residential densities on sites in close proximity to proposed or existing public transport corridors. This development sector lies within an 800m walkband of Skerries train station, this is considered a reasonable walking distance to the train station, accordingly higher density development in the region of an average net 42 units per hectare (17 units per acre) is proposed. Whilst this is below the recommended minimum density in the Guidelines for sites 'proximate to public transport corridors', it is considered to be an appropriate density for this edge of town transition site, adjoining greenbelt and agricultural lands.

Development within this area shall comprise a mix of housing types. The significant differential in ground levels allows for a variety in housing types and heights. The lower ground levels adjacent to the stream (i.e. between the riparian strip/ecological corridor and the 19m- contour level) are considered suitable primarily for 3 storey (c.10m. in height) apartments/ residential blocks, without causing any negative impact on the existing residential amenities of the adjoining development at Hillside. (The 19m contour line is some 65m distant from the nearest site boundary at No.26 Hillside Gardens). Development above the 19m contour shall be limited to two storeys and/or split level (c.8.0m in height) and shall ensure that ridge heights do not exceed the nearest existing ridge height at Hillside. In particular, development immediately adjoining the existing development at Hillside shall ensure that ridge heights respect the corresponding ridge heights at Hillside. This may limit development to single storey only at particular locations. Consideration shall be given to allowing some excavation of existing ground levels, subject to a balance between cut and fill. Only one 4 storey building shall be located on the plan lands and this shall be the landmark building located between the 16m-18m contour.

Housing shall overlook the stream, public open spaces and shall address the new pedestrian route proposed to the east of the railway line. Development along the northern boundary with Hillside and Cabra Hill shall ensure the protection of existing residential amenities from overshadowing, overlooking and visual intrusion. Attractive pedestrian routes shall be incorporated within this sector, along the stream, connecting to the local

services centre and to the new pedestrian route east of the railway line. At least two children's playgrounds shall be provided within this sector, at the developers' expense. At least one playground shall be fully equipped and available for use, prior to the occupation of any housing constructed in the sector.

7.2.2 Lower Density Sector

This sector extends from the 800m to just beyond the 1km walkband of the train station. Lower density development in the region of an average 37units per hectare (15 units per acre) is proposed. Development within this area shall comprise a mix of housing types. The significant differential in ground levels allows for a variety in housing types and heights. The lower ground levels (i.e. between the riparian strip/ecological corridor to the 19m- contour level) are considered suitable for 3 storey (c.10m. in height) apartments/residential blocks, which can be absorbed by the surrounding landscape without causing any undue disamenity nor visual impact on adjoining development.

Special care shall be taken to protect the existing residential amenity and setting of the existing vernacular cottage located south of the stream. Development above the 19m contour, north of the stream shall be limited to two storeys and/or split level (c.8.0m in height) and shall ensure in particular that the ridge height or top roof shall not exceed 26m OD adjacent to the existing cottages at Cabra Hill. Development south of the 19m contour, south of the stream shall also be limited to two storeys (c.8.0m in height) but shall not exceed 31.5m OD south of the stream. In particular, development in the vicinity of the dwelling known as 'Corinna', shall not exceed 30m OD. This may limit development to single storey only, at particular locations.

Consideration shall be given to allowing some excavation of existing ground levels, subject to a balance between cut and fill. Housing shall overlook the main distributor and local roads, the stream and public open spaces. Development along the boundary with existing dwellings shall ensure the protection of existing residential amenities from overshadowing, overlooking and visual intrusion.

This sector incorporates a local services area located to the north of the stream. The local service area providing for the day to day needs of the new community will architecturally define a civic plaza. Attractive pedestrian walkways shall be incorporated within the sector along the stream, connecting to the local services area and public open spaces. At least two children's playgrounds shall be provided within this sector, at the developers' expense, At least one playground shall be fully equipped and available for use, prior to the occupation of any housing constructed in the sector.

7.2.3 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

There are 4 no. existing dwellings /residential properties and a farm complex within this sector. In the event of these properties becoming available for development (with the exception of the vernacular cottage; it is policy of the planning authority to retain vernacular cottages) the planning authority will encourage quality designed residential development fronting Golf Links Road. Access to these sites shall be taken off the internal access road within the plan lands in so far as is practicable and not directly off the improved Golf Links Road.

8.0 RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

The DOEHLG's "Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas- Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2008", recommends higher residential densities on sites in close proximity to proposed or existing public transport corridors. This local area plan proposes two residential sectors. Within the 800m walkband of the train station a higher residential density of 42 units per hectare (17 units per acre) is proposed and within the 800m and 1km walkband of the train station a lower residential density of 37 units per hectare (15 per acre) is proposed. The overall net development area is c.36 acres. The average net density across the plan lands is 39 per hectare (c.16 per acre), resulting in approximately 600 residential units.

9.0 HOUSING MIX

Homes should be adaptable over time to meet changing household needs, in accordance with the DoEHLG's sustainable housing objectives. It is an objective of this LAP to promote the development of a wide housing choice in terms of tenure, house size and type (i.e. apartments/ houses/ multi-unit buildings) to ensure the development of a balanced community structure within the expanding town of Skerries and to enable people to trade-up/down within the town. It is envisaged that within the LAP there will be a mix of apartments, town houses- terraced/duplex, semi-detached and detached dwellings. The Council's Housing Department shall consider the provision of Sheltered Housing within the LAP lands, to meet the needs of the elderly in Skerries. The location and number of sheltered housing units shall be determined by the Housing Department in consultation with the Skerries Sheltered Housing Committee, prior to planning application or consent stage.

- One bed units shall be limited to a maximum of 5% of the total provision.
- Two bed units shall be limited to a maximum of 20% of the total provision.
- Three bed units shall be a minimum of 50% of the total provision.
- Four + bed units: the minimum number of 4+ beds shall be determined at planning application/consent stage.

10.0 SOCIAL & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Social and Affordable housing shall be delivered in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Strategy as adopted by the Fingal Development Plan 2005 - 2011. The social and affordable housing shall be delivered jointly by Fingal County Council, private developers and the voluntary housing sector. In order to promote and facilitate social integration it is an objective of the Council to ensure that social and affordable housing is spread throughout the Plan lands, this may include land swaps between the Council lands and the privately owned lands within the LAP lands.

11.0 ARCHAEOLOGY

Fingal County Council commissioned Archaeological Development Services Ltd. to prepare an archaeological assessment of the plan lands. The initial assessment comprised a desk based study and field walking to identify any known or potential archaeological sites and the potential impact of any future development within the plan lands on the archaeological resource. The assessment revealed three potential archaeological sites, a possible circular enclosure and two possible pre-mid 18th century buildings. The assessment suggested that the LAP consider restricting the building heights of any future development on the plan lands, to limit any visual impact on the two windmills

DU005-027/028, located to the north of the plan lands. The assessment recommended a geophysical survey of the plan lands be undertaken to ascertain the location, nature and extent of the potential sites and other previously unknown sub-surface archaeological deposits.

The subsequent geophysical survey revealed predominantly natural responses and located particular areas of potential archaeological interest such as a possible enclosure ditch, which may continue outside the development area (in the western section of the plan lands, south of stream-housing area) and remains of a boundary wall or stone field division (southern section of plan lands in vicinity of proposed distributor road). While other potential archaeological anomalies were identified, no further structural remains were identified. The geophysical report states that the interpretations are speculative and recommended further investigation through archaeological test trenching, in consultation with the DoEHLG to confirm the geophysical results.

Accordingly, twenty-one test trenches were excavated across all identified anomalies. Four of these trenches revealed features of archaeological potential. The subsequent report recommends further archaeological investigations to determine the function and if possible a date for these features. The location of these features are indicated in the Archaeological Testing report.

Accordingly, it is an objective of this LAP that the required archaeological investigation under licence and in consultation with the DoEHLG be carried to inform and to assist the preparation of the urban design plan. The results from further investigations will allow for a targeted mitigation strategy to be developed in consultation with the DoEHLG involving either preservation in situ by avoidance and by design or by preservation by record, which may involve full or partial excavation.

Archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping at site clearance stage of development is also likely to be required by the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. This will have to be carried out by a suitably qualified archaeologist under licence to the Department and the National Museum of Ireland. An adequate amount of time should be reserved in the ground-works phase of the construction programme for the resolution of any further archaeological remains that may be uncovered during the works. Developers shall make provision to allow for and fund, whatever archaeological work may be needed on the site if any remains are noted after topsoil removal.

12.0 RECREATION, AMENITY AND OPEN SPACE

12.1 Passive/Recreational Amenity Spaces

It is an objective of the plan to retain and further develop the central stream valley. This will assist in the retention of existing biodiversity within the plan lands and provide for recreational uses for the new residential community. A riparian strip/ecological corridor of not less than 10metres in width shall be provided along both sides of this stream valley giving a total ecological corridor of not less than 20metres. This stream valley as an amenity space shall be accessible by the general public and overlooked by high quality frontage buildings. It is an objective of this plan to include pedestrian routes along the perimeter of this stream valley and pedestrian overbridges allowing pedestrian accessibility to this amenity space. This area shall be provided and developed at the developers' expense and shall be kept free of development. The pedestrian bridges over the stream shall form an attractive design feature within the development and shall be designed to a high architectural design and shall not be less than 3 metres in width.

12.2 Public Open Space

High quality public open space shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the County Development Plan in order to meet the amenity requirements of future residents within the plan lands. A maximum Class 1 provision and a minimum Class 2 provision as per County Development Plan Standards shall be provided to serve the plan lands. Based on these requirements, 2.9 ha.(7.4 acres) of Class 1 public open space and 0.74 ha.(1.84 acres) of Class 2 public open space is required.

Class 1 open space shall be provided on the green belt zoned lands, to the east of the plan lands as shown on the LAP map. It will be located within walking distance for the residents of the LAP lands, adjoining the reserved primary school site and close to the local services area. It is a specific objective of this LAP that no planning permissions / nor planning consents shall be obtained on the LAP lands until the planning authority is satisfied that all Class 1 public open space lands are available to serve the development area. The Class 2 open space requirement shall be creatively incorporated into the layout of the residential sector. All Class 2 open space areas shall be overlooked by residential units in the interests of residential amenity and maximising the level of informal supervision. These areas shall be provided and developed at the developers' expense and dedicated as public open space and shall be kept free of development. At least two children's playgrounds shall be provided within each residential sector, at the developers' expense, At least one playground shall be fully equipped and available for use, prior to the occupation of any housing constructed in either sector.

12.3 Private Open Space

Private open space for the residential sector shall be provided in accordance with County Development Plan standards.

13.0 LOCAL SERVICE PROVISION

A local services area of c.1.5 acs.is proposed to the north of the stream, straddling both the higher and lower density sectors as defined by the 800m walkband. In order to achieve a high standard of design and to create a sense of place and enclosure, higher density development will be permitted within the local services centre. This centre will serve the day to day needs of the new and adjoining residential communities. The buildings within the services area shall architecturally define a civic plaza, creating an attractive meeting space in the heart of the new community. The plaza shall provide for a pedestrian priority through route, connecting residential development within the plan lands to proposed amenities. e.g primary school, public open space. Typical uses envisaged are; doctor/dentist surgeries, pharmacy, a small local supermarket, limited to a maximum of 500 sq.m net retail floor area, delicatessen, crèche, community resource meeting room, restaurant/café and recreational facilities. A residential component is envisaged within the local services area. The combination of mixed uses, including residential will encourage vitality and vibrancy within this urban space.

14.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

There is a wide variety of recreational, social, community and sports facilities in Skerries, which will also serve the new residential community at Hacketstown. Facilities include rugby, soccer, G.A.A., bowls, hockey, golf, sailing club and the Skerries Mill Complex, providing active recreational pursuits. A municipal Swimming Pool Facility is proposed as part of the future development of the Ballast Pit site, located 1.5km to the north of the plan lands.

15.0 EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

The Department of Education and Science has requested that a 5 acre site be reserved for a primary school to serve the developing residential community. Accordingly, it is proposed to reserve the required 5 acre site for a primary school on the adjoining green belt zoned lands to the east of the plan lands, where the topography is considered more suitable for this purpose. Educational use is permitted in principle under this zoning objective, subject to the proviso that it is located proximate to a local village or urban centre. The proposed school site will be located adjacent to the proposed local services area. A schools building programme on the reserved site shall be advanced in the context of the demand for school places to be determined by the Department of Education and Science. The Council's Community, Recreation and Amenities Department will actively engage with the DoES using the Fingal School's Model with a view to achieving the delivery of the school building during the Phase 1 build -out of these LAP lands.

16.0 WATER SERVICES

16.1 Foul Sewer

The subject lands are within the catchment of the proposed Balbriggan/Skerries Waste Water Drainage Scheme. This scheme is being implemented on a phased basis. Phases 1 and 2 involved constructing a new Wastewater Treatment Plant at Barnageeragh and its expansion to cater for a population equivalent of 70,000, completed in 2008. Phase 3 involves the upgrading of the sewer network in Skerries and is due for completion in 2011/2012. Whilst there is currently some spare capacity in the existing network, prior to the proposed upgrade, an assessment is required to confirm this for the initial phase of the Local Area Plan. Further development should not be advanced without further assessment at each phase.

16.2 Surface Water

Where the topography of the land allows the existing watercourse will be availed of to drain the subject lands. The 100 year flood plain of the water course must be delineated and no development shall be permitted within this area. Overland flood routing, to minimise the risk of buildings flooding, will be incorporated into the layout design for the development. Sediment and water pollution control plans shall be put in place prior to the commencement of any development.

In order to protect, improve and enhance the natural character of the water course, and promote access, walkways and other recreational uses of associated public open spaces, a 10metre riparian corridor must be maintained both sides of the watercourse, measured from the top of the bank. The finished floor level of all dwellings should be a minimum of 500mm above the highest flood level of the stream.

Culverting of the stream will not be permitted in accordance with policy UTP22 of the County Development plan which aims to 'restrict, where feasible, the use of culverts on watercourses in the County'. The surface water system for the proposed site must be designed in accordance with the Greater Dublin Regional Code of Practice for Drainage Works.

The GSDS (Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study) policy document, adopted by Fingal County Council includes a set of drainage criteria which aims to minimise the impact of urbanisation. One objective of this document is to ensure that all new development incorporates a storm water management plan, with the aim of replicating the runoff character-

istics of the greenfield site. To mimic natural catchment processes as closely as possible, a “treatment train” approach is required. The storm water management plan should comprise of a series of features which incrementally reduce pollution, flow rates and volumes of runoff.

The design of these facilities must be in accordance with Fingal County Council’s requirements, which preclude their location within water course riparian corridors. Attenuation tanks or similar structural devices are not acceptable.

16.3 Water Supply

In the long term, increased demand within the County is to be met by the planned expansion of Leixlip Water Treatment Plant which is due for completion in 2011. The achievement of this timescale is intrinsically important for the provision of capacity for this and other significant developments. In addition the existing 15” AC water main which serves the town of Skerries is expected to be upgraded to a 500mm dia. water main by 2011. The full implementation of all 3 phases of the LAP will require an expansion of the local water supply network, which will require detailed modelling and analysis to ensure an adequate level of service for the existing and proposed development. For the initial phase 1 of the LAP, no water supply capacity constraints are envisaged.

16.4 Water Framework Directive

The development of the plan lands will ensure compliance with the Water Framework Directive and the recommendations of the draft River Basin Management Plan for the Eastern River Basin District.

17.0 PUBLIC UTILITIES

17.1 Telecommunications

All telecommunications infrastructure, serving the plan lands shall be undergrounded as part of the development of the Local Area Plan lands.

17.2 Electricity Supply

Two 10 KV ESB supply cables traverse the plan lands along its northern and southern boundaries. These lines shall either be relocated off site or undergrounded as part of the development of the lands. All future services shall be undergrounded.

17.3 Gas Supply

Skerries is currently serviced by 4 bar medium pressure domestic natural gas supply. It is anticipated that this service can be extended to service the plan lands.

17.4 Broadband

Broadband can be delivered via telephone lines, cable TV connections and wireless. It is an objective of this LAP to facilitate the roll-out of broadband services within the LAP lands.

18.0 BIODIVERSITY

The County Development Plan aims to protect, conserve, and enhance the county's natural heritage including its biodiversity and there are a range of policies and objectives included in the Development Plan in this regard. In order to ensure that these policies and objectives are achieved in this local area plan context, an ecological assessment of habitats shall be undertaken, in order to identify features of ecological significance and to make recommendations in relation to the protection, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, in advance of and to inform and assist the preparation of the Urban Design and Landscape Plan. This assessment shall be carried out by a suitably qualified professional, in consultation with the local authority, at the developers' expense.

19.0 SUSTAINABILITY AND BUILDING DESIGN

Buildings have considerable environmental impact, for example through operational energy, transportation of people between them, raw materials consumed by the building and use of land. Building design will reflect national sustainability and energy conservation policies and contribute to the creation of appropriate urban form within the development.

In their life cycle, energy is used in buildings in a number of different ways:

- In construction
- In operation, for lighting, heating and power
- For demolition, recycling and disposal

The importance of implementing more sustainable design in construction has been identified as a key part of supporting sustainable development overall. Increasing levels of building construction creates increased greenhouse gas emission which has in turn been linked to changes in climate and global warming. By far the biggest contribution to greenhouse gases is in emissions of carbon dioxide. The building sector is a major energy consumer, accounting for approximately 40% of total energy consumption, of which residential development accounts for 25% (SEI 2005).

There are many examples of buildings and technologies that demonstrate the feasibility and viability of achieving substantial reductions in CO₂ emissions from developments via good design, choice of construction method and location close to existing public transport interchanges.

19.1 Building Energy Ratings

Fingal County Council is committed as a priority to encouraging more sustainable development through energy-end-use-efficiency, and increasing the use of renewable energy in all new building projects. This will be achieved by improving the requirements as set out in Part L of the Building Regulations 2007 i.e.:

All dwellings to achieve a minimum BER (Building Energy Rating) of A3
All non domestic buildings to achieve a minimum BER (Building Energy Rating) of B2.

These targets will be reviewed and revised by Fingal County Council in 2010.

It is an objective of Fingal County Council to promote sustainability as part of future developments within the LAP area and throughout the county. The Council encourages superior energy design and technological practices in all developments. It is the policy of the Council to improve qualitative standards of sustainable design in proposed developments.

20.0 CONSTRUCTION WASTE MANAGEMENT

Developer(s) shall be required to submit a construction programme setting out a planned programme for the management/recovery/disposal of construction/demolition waste material generated at the site during the excavation and construction phases of development, in accordance with the relevant national waste management legislation, at planning application stage. Developers shall ensure that all waste is removed from the plan lands by approved waste disposal contractors to approved waste disposal facilities. In addition, it is an objective of this plan that developers shall take adequate measures to minimise the impacts of traffic noise and dust during construction phases.

21.0 PHASING

It is envisaged that development of the plan lands shall take place over a 5-6 year period, subject to economic conditions. The development of the plan lands shall be undertaken on a phased basis. Phase 1 shall permit the development of 200 housing units, prior to the development of the Southern Relief Road. The Leixlip Water Treatment Plant and the Skerries foul drainage network will not be complete until 2011, accordingly no occupancy of dwellings in phases 2 and 3 within the plan lands, shall take place until this infrastructure is completed.

- Phase 1: 1-200 units.** Upgrade Golf Links Road from Millers lane junction to the entrance to the plan lands;
Signalise junction at Millers Lane;
Development of upgraded pedestrian walkway along the eastern side of the railway line to the plan lands from Skerries Railway Bridge;
Development of ecological corridor;
Completion of at least one children’s playground and
Provision of pro -rata child care facilities.
Provision of pro-rata Class 2 public open space.
.....
Prior to the commencement of any housing development in Phase 2, the Southern Relief Road, shall be completed in its entirety;
.....
- Phase 2: 201 – 400 units** Completion of local services area;
Development of the Civic Space;
Completion of at least three childrens’ playgrounds;
Development of class 1 public open space;
Provision of pro- rata childcare facilities.
Provision of pro-rata Class 2 public open space.
- Phase 3: 401- 600 units.** Completion of all housing units, local services area, childrens’ playgrounds, public open spaces and
Provision of pro-rata child care facilities.

Re: Primary School Site

A schools building programme on the reserved site shall be advanced in the context of the demand for school places to be determined by the Department of Education and Science. The Council’s Community, Recreation and Amenities Department will actively engage with the DoES using the Fingal School’s Model with a view to achieving the delivery of the school building during the Phase 1 build –out of these LAP lands.

Re; Traffic Management

Prior to the commencement of any development in the plan lands, a Traffic Management Plan shall be undertaken by the Council for the Golf Links Road from its junction with Miller's Lane along its length to Baldongan Cross. The Traffic Management Plan shall include all appropriate traffic calming and traffic safety measures, in particular, any requirements for traffic signalisation at the entrances to i)Downside Housing Estate; ii) the plan lands; and iii) at the railway bridge on Golf Links Road.

22.0 E.I.A REQUIREMENT

This local area plan has a target residential development potential of 600 units. Accordingly an E.I.A will be required to be submitted in accordance with Schedule 5 Part 2 10 (b) (i) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 for 'Infrastructure Projects'. This will require co-operation between landowners. The E.I.A shall be submitted with all planning applications and/or applications for planning consent.

23.0 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

All local areas plans with populations of less than 10,000 are required to be screened for significant environmental effects pursuant to Schedule 2A of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004. The planning authority has carried out this screening process and having consulted with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Environmental Protection Agency, the planning authority is satisfied that this local area plan is unlikely to have any significant environmental effect on the environment. Accordingly, the planning authority considers that SEA is not required for the implementation of the Hacketstown Amended Local Area Plan. The SEA Screening Assessment and Screening Statement is appended to the local area plan.

24.0 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC requires that all land use plans be screened to determine whether the proposed development would affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites located in the vicinity of the proposed development. The nearest Natura 2000 site to the plan lands are the islands off Skerries. The planning authority has carried out this screening process and having consulted with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the DoEHLG is satisfied that the proposed development will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. The Appropriate Assessment Screening is appended to the Local Area Plan.

25.0 MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Following the adoption of this LAP:

- An Urban Design Plan including a Landscape Plan [UDLP] for the entire plan lands shall be prepared by qualified and experienced urban designers and shall be submitted to and agreed with the Planning Authority prior to any applications for permission or applications for planning consent. All archaeological testing and proposed mitigation, if necessary, shall be agreed with DoEHLG; similarly, an ecological assessment of the plan lands shall be carried out to assist the preparation of UDLP. The preparation of the UDLP shall require co-operation between landowners and the agreed plan shall form the blue print for the development of the plan lands.

- The design of the Southern Relief Road shall be prepared and the necessary planning consents obtained.
- An E.I.A for the development of the entire plan lands shall be prepared and submitted with all planning applications and/or applications for planning consents.
- A planning application/application for consent for site development works shall be submitted and obtained, prior to the submission of any planning applications/applications for consent for housing development.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SEA Screening Statement -Hacketstown Draft Local Area Plan –Amendment to the Hacketstown LAP 2007

INTRODUCTION:

Fingal County Council is preparing a local area plan for lands at Hacketstown, Skerries. This draft LAP proposes amendments to the phasing proposals in the adopted LAP for Hacketstown 2007. As part of the preparation of the local area plan, the planning authority must consider whether the Hacketstown Local Area Plan requires SEA. The assessment of this issue is based in the criteria set down in the SEA Guidelines and Annex II of the SEA Directive for determining the likely significance of environmental effects. The guidelines require screening for SEA to be carried out for all local area plans where the population of the area of the local area plan is 10,000 persons or less. Where the population of an LAP is 10,000 or more, an SEA Environmental Report must be prepared. The estimated population for the proposed Local Area Plan at Hacketstown is c.1, 800 persons; therefore SEA is not mandatory.

PROPOSED LOCAL AREA PLAN:

The Local area plan comprises an area of 16 hectares located at the southern edge of Skerries, defining the town development boundary. The Dublin- Belfast railway line forms western boundary to the plan lands. The net development area is 14.5 hectares (c.36acs.) resulting in an average net density of c.39 units per hectare (c.16 per acre). The local area plan provides for c.600 residential units equating to approximately 1,800 additional population to the town of Skerries. Within the LAP provision is made for a local services area together with civic plaza, providing for the day to day needs of the new residential community; a primary school and public open spaces. Pedestrian and cycling routes are proposed throughout the plan lands and connecting to a proposed railside walkway, providing a direct pedestrian route to Skerries train station.

A Traffic Impact Assessment was carried out to assist the preparation of the adopted Hacketstown LAP 2007. It looked at the cumulative impact of proposed developments at Barnageeragh, The Ballast Pit, Townparks ST1 lands, the designated site for a nursing /day care centre on lands to the east of the plan lands in addition to the proposed development on the Hacketstown LAP lands. It concluded that the Dublin Road/Miller's Lane roundabout junction will reach saturation when all developments are in place with long queues and delays predicted at peak travel periods. It recommended the provision of a southern relief road, linking the Rush – Skerries Road to the Lusk Road, thereby providing an alternative access to Skerries, which is currently restricted by the narrowness of the rail bridge access to the town. The proposed Southern Relief Road has subsequently been adopted into the County Development Plan by Variation No.30 in October 2008.

A revised traffic impact assessment carried out for the proposed amendment to the LAP 2007, determined that scope exists to facilitate the initial 1-200 unit phase to proceed without the construction of the Southern Relief Road where the cumulative impact of other major developments, originally included in the original TIA, are not now proceeding in the current climate. The revised TIA recommends that the Golf Links Road-Shenick Road junction should be signalised and improvement works will be required to the Golf Links Road from this signalised junction to the entrance to the plan lands. It further recommends the upgrading of the existing pedestrian/cycle walkway along the eastern side of the railway from Skerries Railway Bridge to the plan lands. The provision of the Southern Relief Road will be necessary to accommodate the development proposed phases 2&3 of the LAP.

SCHEDULE 2A SCREENING ASSESSMENT

The LAP has been screened under Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

The local area plan has been assessed viz. the likely significant effects on the environment having regard to the following:

- (i) The characteristics of the plan and
- (ii) The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected.

RESPONSE FROM ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITIES

The submission received from the DoEHLG, states that the phasing of the development of the lands within the Hacketstown LAP, to allow housing development to proceed in advance of the construction of the southern relief road, is unlikely to have any significant effect on the architectural heritage of the locality beyond that consequent on the adoption of the plan itself.

The submission received from the DCENR states that the status objectives as set out in the Water Framework Directive, should not be compromised as a result of the proposed amended LAP and the Waste Water Treatment Plant capacity must be sufficient to take and treat the increased loadings.

The submission received from the EPA states that it is a matter for the Competent Authority to determine whether or not the implementation of the proposed Amendment would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. It further suggests a number of issues which should be considered during the preparation of the amended plan and where appropriate included as objectives/policies of the amended plan. These issues include:

Adapting to climate change; reversing environmental degradation; mainstreaming environmental considerations; water quality/water framework directive; water supply; waste water treatment; water conservation; ground water protection; flood prevention and management; provide for the enhancement of local feature of biodiversity value where opportunities arise; energy conservation; provide for traffic management measures to reduce potential for traffic congestion and associated vehicular emissions.

The local area plan includes specific objectives to attenuate surface water, prevent water pollution and flooding, provide for extensions to the existing foul and water supply networks, retain and augment the central stream valley and controls to mitigate the visual impacts of development on the landscape. It also provides for local services and recreational facilities; the enhancement of local biodiversity; energy efficient homes and ease of access to public transport.

The planning authority is satisfied that the screening assessment has demonstrated that the LAP is unlikely to have any significant environmental effect on the environment. A copy of the planning authority's screening assessment is appended to this statement.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION:

The subject lands are zoned for residential use under the 2005-2011 County Development Plan. The planning authority considers that SEA is not required in this case, on the basis of the assessments carried out having regard to the nature and characteristics of the lands and overall quantum of development proposed within the plan lands. The characteristics of the likely effects relate to traffic volumes, foul drainage, surface water drainage, water supply, landscape and visual amenities.

Re. Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume in the area will inevitably increase as a result of the proposed development. The Traffic Impact Assessment carried out for the Hacketstown LAP 2007 has been reviewed, by Traffic Consultants and determined that scope exists to facilitate the initial 1-200 unit phase to proceed without the construction of the Southern Relief Road where the cumulative impact of other major developments i.e. proposed developments at the Ballast Pitt and TownParks ST1 lands, originally included in the original TIA, are not now proceeding in the current climate. The revised TIA recommends specific traffic management measures with the development of phase 1. The revised TIA indicates that the provision of the Southern Relief Road will be necessary to accommodate the development proposed phases 2&3 of the LAP. The Southern Relief Road will provide an alternative access to Skerries, which is currently restricted by the narrowness of the rail bridge access to the town for all vehicular traffic including HGVs and buses. This road proposal will include the upgrading of part of the Golf Links Road, along the frontage of the LAP lands, allowing for vehicular access to the plan lands. The TIA further recommends in conjunction with the construction of the Southern Relief Road, severing Golf Links Road at Cabra Hill, allowing only pedestrian and cyclists access to the plan lands from the Millers Lane direction, thereby redirecting vehicular traffic away from the restricted junction at Millers Lane/ Shenick Road and improving the residential amenity of this area. The proposed Southern Relief Road when completed, will cater for the cumulative increase in traffic volumes from all proposed and permitted developments in Skerries, including those arising from the amended Hacketstown LAP.

Re. Foul Drainage

The unit numbers will increase demand on the foul drainage system. The local area plan will include objectives for the necessary extensions to and upgrading of the existing network. All foul drainage will connect to the treatment plant at Barnageeragh. The proposed increased demand for foul drainage is not considered likely to result in significant environmental effects.

Re. Surface Water Drainage

Where the topography of the land allows existing watercourse will be availed of to drain the subject lands. A storm water management system, following the principle of Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) and in compliance with the recommendations of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) shall be implemented. Overland flood routing to minimise the risk of buildings flooding shall be incorporated into the layout design for the development. Sediment and water pollution control plans shall be put in place prior to the commencement of any development. The proposed increase in demand for surface water drainage is not considered likely to result in significant environmental effects.

Re. Water Supply

The unit numbers will increase demand for water supply. The water supply will be augmented from the Leixlip Water Treatment Plant. The configuration of the water mains will be the subject of detailed modelling and analysis so as to ensure an adequate level of service for the proposed development. The proposed increase in demand for water supply is not considered likely to result in significant environmental effects.

Re. Landscape and Visual Amenities

The entire plan lands are designated 'sensitive landscape' in the County Development Plan. The subject lands are undulating, rising sharply to the north and south from a central valley/stream. The development of these lands will significantly alter the existing

landscape. The local area plan includes objectives in particular with regard to building heights, protection of existing trees and the incorporation of the existing stream with a riparian strip/ecological corridor, as an ecological asset, to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed residential development. The proposed development is therefore not considered to result in significant environmental effects.

CONCLUSION

The Planning Authority, having assessed the characteristics and the effects of those characteristics of the LAP in terms of the likely significance of environmental effects, considers that SEA is not required for the implementation of the Hacketstown Local Area Plan – Amendment to the Hacketstown Local Area Plan 2007.

APPENDIX B

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING DOCUMENT



Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall

Fingal County Council



Appendix B

**Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan
Skerries, Co. Dublin**

**Screening Assessment as required under Article
6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive
92/43/EEC)**

23 February 2009

1. Introduction

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) requires that all plans and projects must be screened for potential impact on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). This process aims to establish whether a full Appropriate Assessment as required by Article 6 of the Directive is required in any particular case. This report presents a screening assessment for a draft local area plan in respect of lands at Hacketstown, Skerries, Co. Dublin. It has been prepared by the Planning Department of Fingal County Council in accordance with Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08 issued on 15th February 2008 by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

1.1 Background - The Habitats and Birds Directives

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the EU. Under the Directive member States are obliged to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which contain habitats or species considered important for protection and conservation in a European Union context. The Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds), is concerned with the long-term protection and management of all wild bird species and their habitats in the EU. Among other things, the Directive requires that Special Protection Areas (SPAs) be established to protect migratory species and species which are rare, vulnerable, in danger of extinction, or otherwise require special attention. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas, designated under the Birds Directive, form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000.

The Habitats Directive sets out a unified system for the protection and management of SACs and SPAs. Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Directive set out key elements of the system of protection including the requirement for Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects (see Appendix I). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an appropriate assessment of any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on an SAC or SPA. The recent ECJ ruling against Ireland in Case 418/04 EC Commission V Ireland found that Ireland had incorrectly transposed the Habitats Directive by not providing explicitly for appropriate assessment of land use plans, (as opposed to projects), in the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997. The effect of the judgement is that there is now a requirement for screening and possible appropriate assessment of all land-use plans, including local area plans.

1.2 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening has been undertaken in fulfilment of the requirements of the Habitats Directive and taking into account the Department of the

Environment, Heritage and Local Government's Circular Letter to all planning authorities dated 15th February 2008 which states the following in relation to the screening stage of Appropriate Assessment:

"Any draft land use plan (development plans, local area plans, regional planning guidelines, schemes for strategic development zones) or amendment/variation to it proposed under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) must be screened for any potential impact on areas designated as Natura 2000 sites (normally called Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs)). This screening should be based on any ecological information available to the authority and an adequate description of the plan and its likely environmental impacts. This should take into account any policies that will set the terms for future development. Up to date maps of Natura 2000 sites, or areas proposed for designation, are available on www.npws.ie. The results of the screening should be recorded and made available to the public.

In any case where, following screening, it is found that the draft plan or amendment may have an impact on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site or that such an impact cannot be ruled out, adopting a precautionary approach, an appropriate assessment of the plan must be carried out and in any case where a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would not otherwise be required, it must also be carried out."

2. Methodology

Screening has been undertaken in accordance with the European Commission's Guidance on Appropriate Assessment (European Commission, 2001) which comprises the following steps:

1. Description of the Plan
2. Identification of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected by the Plan
3. Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts likely to result from the Plan
4. Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified on the conservation objectives of the site(s)
5. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant impacts on conservation objectives

3. Description of the Hacketstown Local Area Plan

3.1 Description of the Draft Local Area Plan Lands

The draft local area plan lands (Figure 1) cover an area of circa 16 ha which is zoned RS1 in the Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011. This zoning aims to provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved local area plans and subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure. The lands are undulating rising sharply to the north and south from a central valley with a stream running through it. Land levels rise from 14m OD at the stream to 28m OD at the highest northern point and 26m OD at

the highest southern point. The lands are designated “sensitive landscape”, and are part of the Coastal Character Area as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment contained in the Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011

3.2 Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan 2009

The Draft Local Area Plan sets out the development strategy for the development of the residentially zoned lands at Hacketstown, Skerries. The plan lands comprise an area of circa 16 hectares, located at the southern edge of Skerries, defining the town development boundary (Figure 1). The Dublin-Belfast railway line forms the western boundary to the plan lands. Golf Links Road, a narrow county road forms the eastern and southern boundaries. There are a number of single dwellings located within the southern section of the plan lands. Existing, circa 1970’s housing developments are located immediately to the north at “Hillside” and to the north east at “Downside”. Lands to the east and south are zoned green belt and to the west are zoned agricultural. Skerries Golf Club is located to the south west. The Skerries-Rush Regional Road R129 is located further to the east of the plan lands. Access to the plan lands is along Golf Links Road, which will be required to be upgraded.

The current population of Skerries is circa 11,000. The proposed LAP provides for circa 600 dwelling units, amounting to an additional population of 1,800.

Foul drainage from the plan lands will connect to the new Waste Water Treatment Plant at Barnageeragh. This is a secondary treatment WWTP to serve Skerries and Balbriggan, with a design capacity for 70,000 p.e. with UV disinfection.

Development within the plan lands will require the implementation of a storm water management system, following the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS).

The plan lands will be served by the Leixlip Water Treatment Plant. For the initial Phase 1 of the LAP no water supply capacity constraints are envisaged. The full implementation of the Draft Hacketstown LAP will require an expansion of the local water supply network, which will require detailed modelling and analysis to ensure an adequate level of service for the existing and proposed development. This will take place following the planned expansion of the Leixlip Water Treatment Plant which is due for completion in 2011 and is designed to cater for the growing water supply demands of the Greater Dublin Area.

3.3 Existing Hacketstown LAP 2007

The existing LAP for Hacketstown was adopted by Fingal County Council on the 11th June 2007. The Council owns approximately half the lands with the remainder in private ownership. The LAP provides for the development of a total of 600 no. residential units at an average density of 39 units per hectare and includes core provisions of an Urban Square with local service provision;

on-site Class 2 Public Open Space and off-site Class 1 Public Open Space together with a reserved site for a new primary school adjoining the plan lands to the east. As part of the preparation of the LAP a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), of the proposed development together with the cumulative impact of other major developments proposed around the town, was undertaken. The adopted LAP required the construction of a proposed Southern Relief Road for Skerries, in advance of any occupation or sale of any residential units within the plan lands.

3.4 Rationale for the Draft Hacketstown LAP 2009

The Draft Hacketstown LAP 2009 amends the Hacketstown LAP 2007 to permit the development, occupation and selling of residential units in Phase 1 (1-200 units) of the Plan prior to the construction of the Skerries Southern Relief Road. This is subject to specific traffic management measures, so as to provide a range of housing accommodation, including sheltered housing for the elderly and an appropriate mix of private and public housing to meet local housing needs at Hacketstown, Skerries.

The Traffic Impact Assessment carried out for the Hacketstown LAP 2007 has been reviewed, by Traffic Consultants to determine if scope exists to facilitate the initial 1-200 unit phase to proceed without the construction of the Southern Relief Road in circumstances where the cumulative impact of other major developments, included in the TIA prepared for the 2007 LAP, are not now proceeding in the current climate.

The Hacketstown LAP 2007, in requiring the construction of the Southern Relief Road in advance of any occupation or selling of housing within the Hacketstown lands, places a significant restriction on the development of the Council owned housing lands at Hacketstown. This is one of the few areas of the County that is not currently restricted in the short to medium term by Water Services capacity constraints. There is considerable pressure on the Council to implement its Housing Programme to meet local housing needs.

4. Identification of Natura 2000 sites

A list of Natura 2000 sites which could potentially be affected by the Plan has been compiled (Figure 2), and a short description of each site is presented below. All sites within a 15 km radius from the site have been included. Skerries Islands SPA the nearest Natura 2000 site to Hacketstown located between 1.8 km and 3 km from the plan lands. Further detail on each site is included in the National Parks and Wildlife Service's Site Synopses in Appendix II.

4.1 Skerries Islands SPA

Skerries Islands are a group of three small islands situated off the coast at Skerries lying between 0.5km and 1.5km from the coast, and between 1.8km and 3km from the lands at Hacketstown. The group includes Shenick's Island,

St. Patrick's Island and Colt Island. Shenick's Island is accessible on foot from the mainland at low tide. The Islands are important for both breeding seabirds and wintering waterbirds, with internationally important numbers of Pale-bellied Brent Goose regularly recorded together with nationally important numbers of species such as Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone.

4.2 Lambay island SAC and SPA

Lambay Island lies approximately 4km off the coast at Portrane, Co. Dublin and is approximately 10km from the lands at Hacketstown. It is inhabited, privately owned and accessible by boat from Rogerstown Quay. The island has good examples of vegetated sea cliffs, a habitat listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive. These cliffs host internationally and nationally important populations of a range of breeding seabirds. A number of wintering waterbirds also occur on the Island. Lambay also supports a population of Grey Seal, a species listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

4.3 Rogerstown Estuary SAC and SPA

Rogerstown Estuary is located approximately 6.5 km south of the lands at Hacketstown. It is both an SAC and an SPA because of the range of estuarine habitats which occur there and the bird life these habitats support. Habitats of importance include mudflats, sand dunes and saltmarsh. Rogerstown is also an important winter waterfowl site and supports a population of Pale-bellied Brent Goose of international importance and has nationally important populations of a further 16 species.

4.4 Rockabill Island SPA

Rockabill consists of two small islets lying approximately 7 km off the coast at Skerries, Co. Dublin and approximately 8km from the lands at Hacketstown. Rockabill is one of the most important tern colonies in Europe, with significant numbers of Roseate Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern, all of which are listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive. Rockabill is also designated as a Refuge for Fauna under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2000.

4.5 Malahide Estuary SAC and Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA

Malahide Estuary SAC and Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA are located approximately 10km south of the lands at Hacketstown. The SAC and SPA comprise an estuarine system with a range of habitats including mudflats, sand dunes and saltmarshes. The Estuary provides feeding and roosting sites for a wide range of wintering waterbirds. The site supports a Brent Goose population of international importance together with nationally important populations of a number of other species.

4.6 River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA

This site in Co. Meath which lies approximately 10 km north of the lands at Hacketstown comprises the estuary of the River Nanny and sections of the shoreline north and south of the estuary. The site is of conservation interest as a wetland hosting populations of a range of waterbirds, a number of which occur in nationally important numbers

5. Identification of potential impacts to Natura 2000 sites and assessment of significance

There will be no direct impacts from the implementation of the LAP on any Natura 2000 site. The likelihood of any indirect impacts to nearby Natura 2000 sites also needs to be considered. Given the nature of the residential development which will occur as a result of the implementation of the Draft Local Area Plan indirect impacts could derive from:

- impacts to water from foul sewerage from the site which could affect nearby Natura 2000 sites
- impacts to water from surface water flows from the site which could affect nearby Natura 2000 sites
- disturbance impacts to a Natura 2000 site resulting from the increased population generated as a result of Plan implementation.

5.1. Foul Sewerage

There will be no impact on local watercourses from foul sewerage all of which will be directed to the Barnageeragh Water Treatment Plant with subsequent discharge of treated water to the Irish Sea.

5.2. Surface Water

The implementation of the Plan could potentially give rise to surface water impacts to the stream running through the site. All small watercourses in this area flow into the Irish Sea south of Skerries. The Draft Plan includes a requirement for a 10m riparian corridor which must be maintained on both sides of the watercourse, together with a requirement for the development of stormwater management plans for all new developments. These Plans will be required to replicate the runoff characteristics of the green field site and will comprise a series of facilities and features designed to reduce pollution, flow rates and volumes of runoff from the site. The design of these facilities must meet Fingal County Council's requirements which, among other things, preclude their location within watercourse riparian corridors. These measures and requirements for future development will ensure that there will be no significant impacts on watercourses from surface water flows as a result of the implementation of the Draft Local Area Plan.

5.3. Disturbance Impacts

If any disturbance impacts occur, they are most likely to occur close to the Draft Local Area Plan lands and could potentially affect Skerries Islands SPA which is located 1.8 km from Hacketstown. The growth in population along the Fingal coast has increased the potential for disturbance to birds along the

coast. However in the case of Skerries Islands their offshore location and comparative inaccessibility greatly reduces the potential for disturbance. Although Shenick's Island is accessible on foot for short periods at low tide access is difficult and dangerous. As a result Shenick's Island has not been subject to increasing disturbance as a result of an increasing local population (J. Roe, Birdwatch Ireland Fingal Branch, pers. comm.). This means that there is no likelihood of significant disturbance as a result of the implementation of the Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan.

6. Conclusion

A screening process in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive was carried out to determine whether a full appropriate assessment is required for the Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan. All Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the site were considered. It was concluded that the LAP will not result in any significant impact to any of these sites. A finding of no significant effects report is presented in Appendix III in accordance with the EU Commission's methodological guidance (European Commission, 2001).

7. References

European Commission (2001) 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).

Crowe, O. (2005) Ireland's Wetlands and their Waterbirds: Status and Distribution. Birdwatch Ireland, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow

**DRAFT HACKETSTOWN
Local Area Plan
Amendment To Hacketstown
Local Area Plan 2007**

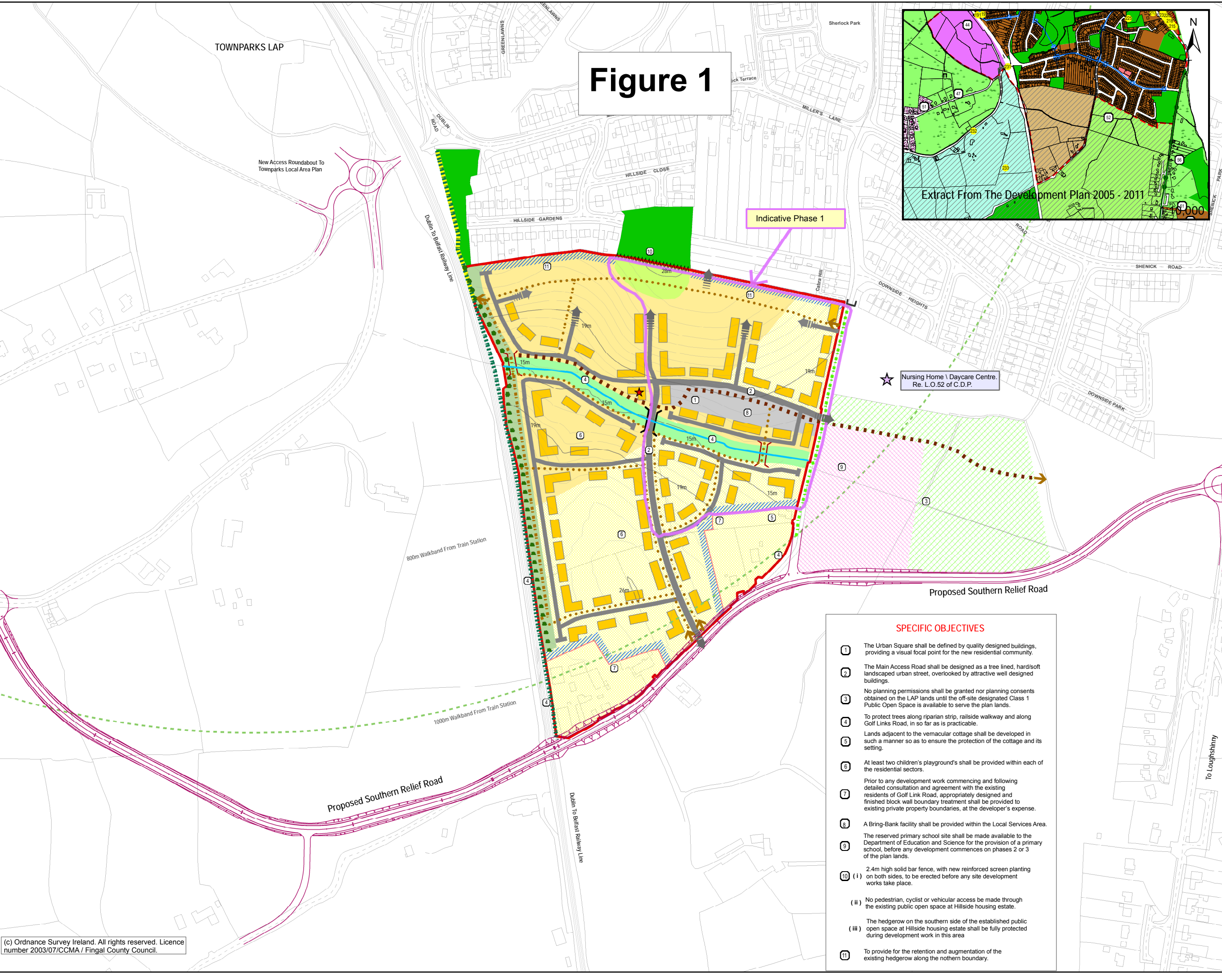
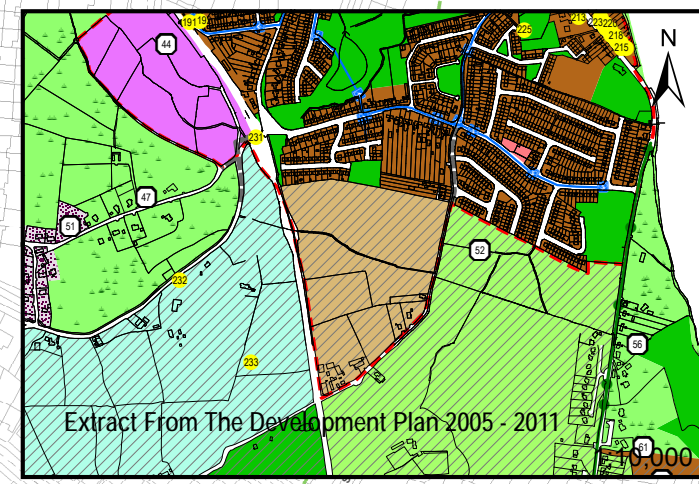
LEGEND

- Outline Of LAP Lands
- Lower Density Development
- Higher Density Development
- Local Services Area / Urban Square
- Reserved Primary School Site
- Proposed Class 1 Public Open Space
- Proposed Class 2 Public Open Space
- Existing Public Open Space
- Frontage Development
- Riparian Strip / Ecological Corridor
- Railside Buffer Strip
- Landmark Building
- Indicative Route Of Proposed Southern Relief Road
- Sensitive Treatment At Interface With Existing Development
- Screening Fence - See Specific Objective 10
- Existing Stream
- Road Improvements Including Construction Of New Footpath/Cyclepath Along Golf Links Rd.
- Pedestrian Priority Route
- Existing Right Of Way
- Widening And Upgrade Of Existing R.O.W.
- Indicative Cycle / Pedestrian Routes
- New Railside Walkway
- Retention Of Existing Hedgerow / Trees
- Existing Property Boundaries
- Main Access Road
- Secondary Road
- Vehicular Bridge
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Indicative Vehicular Access
- Indicative Pedestrian Access
- Cul - De - Sac at Cabra Hill, on completion of Southern Relief Road & Subject To Statutory Process

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- A** Prior to the submission of any planning applications or applications for consent, an Urban Design Plan and Landscape Plan, prepared by appropriately qualified persons shall be agreed with the planning authority.
- B** The Phasing of housing in the plan lands shall be in accordance with section 21.0 of the written text

Figure 1



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- ① The Urban Square shall be defined by quality designed buildings, providing a visual focal point for the new residential community.
- ② The Main Access Road shall be designed as a tree lined, hard/soft landscaped urban street, overlooked by attractive well designed buildings.
- ③ No planning permissions shall be granted nor planning consents obtained on the LAP lands until the off-site designated Class 1 Public Open Space is available to serve the plan lands.
- ④ To protect trees along riparian strip, railside walkway and along Golf Links Road, in so far as is practicable.
- ⑤ Lands adjacent to the vernacular cottage shall be developed in such a manner so as to ensure the protection of the cottage and its setting.
- ⑥ At least two children's playground's shall be provided within each of the residential sectors.
- ⑦ Prior to any development work commencing and following detailed consultation and agreement with the existing residents of Golf Link Road, appropriately designed and finished block wall boundary treatment shall be provided to existing private property boundaries, at the developer's expense.
- ⑧ A Bring-Bank facility shall be provided within the Local Services Area.
- ⑨ The reserved primary school site shall be made available to the Department of Education and Science for the provision of a primary school, before any development commences on phases 2 or 3 of the plan lands.
- ⑩ (i) 2.4m high solid bar fence, with new reinforced screen planting on both sides, to be erected before any site development works take place.
- (ii) No pedestrian, cyclist or vehicular access be made through the existing public open space at Hillside housing estate.
- (iii) The hedgerow on the southern side of the established public open space at Hillside housing estate shall be fully protected during development work in this area
- ⑪ To provide for the retention and augmentation of the existing hedgerow along the northern boundary.

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Hacketstown Local Area Plan

Fig 2

Legend

 LAP Outline

 County

Natura 2000 Sites



Malahide Estuary SAC and Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA

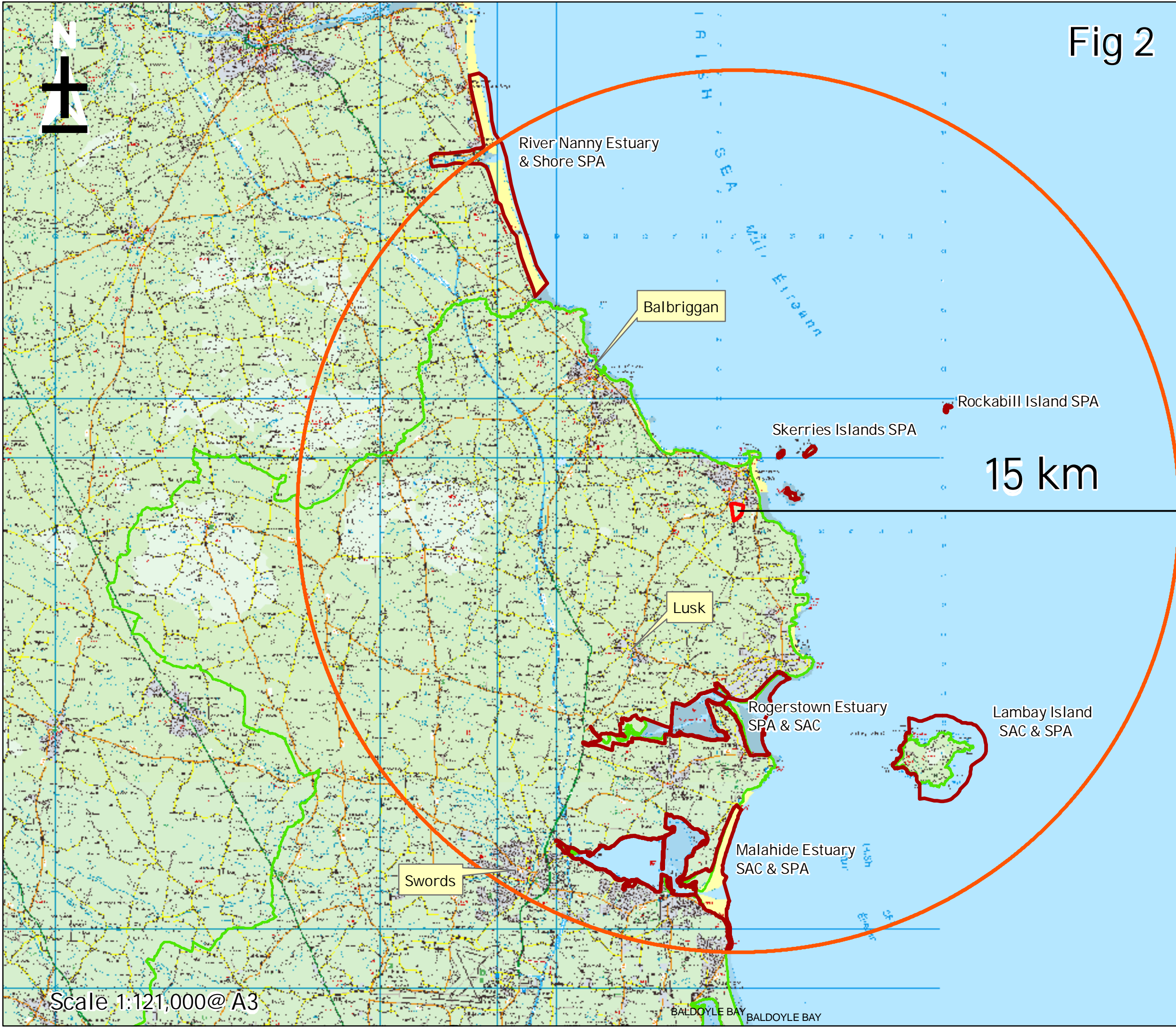
Lambay Island SAC and SPA

Rockabill Island SPA

Rogerstown Estuary SPA and SAC

River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA

Skerries Islands SPA



15 km



Fingal County Council
Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall

Planning Department
County Hall, Main St,
Swords, Co. Dublin

Director of Services: Gilbert Power

Senior Planner: Peter Byrne

Prepared by: G. Clabby Drawn by: C.C

Date: February 2009 Scale: 1:121,000 @A3

Scale 1:121,000@ A3

Appendix I

Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive

3. Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications 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.

4. 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 a 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.

Appendix II

National Parks and Wildlife Service Site Synopses

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME : ROGERSTOWN ESTUARY

SITE CODE : 000208

Rogerstown estuary is situated about 2 km north of Donabate. It is a relatively small, narrow estuary separated from the sea by a sand and shingle bar. The estuary is divided by a causeway and narrow bridge, built in the 1840s to carry the Dublin-Belfast railway line. The site contains good examples of a number of habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

The estuary drains almost completely at low tide. The intertidal flats of the outer estuary are mainly of sands, with soft muds in the north-west sector and along the southern shore. Associated with these muds are stands of Cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*). Green algae (mainly *Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are widespread and form dense mats in the more sheltered areas. The intertidal angiosperm, Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*), grows profusely in places beneath the algal mats. The Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) is common in the outer estuary and large Mussel beds (*Mytilus edulis*) occur at the outlet to the sea.

The area of intertidal flats in the inner estuary is reduced as a result of the local authority refuse tip on the north shore. The sediments are mostly muds, which are very soft in places. Cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*) is widespread in parts, and in summer, dense green algal mats grow on the muds. In the extreme inner part, the estuary narrows to a tidal river.

Saltmarsh fringes parts of the estuary, especially the southern shores and parts of the outer sand spit. Common plant species of the saltmarsh include Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*). Salt meadows and wet brackish fields occur along the tidal river. Low sand hills occur on the outer spit, including some small areas of fixed dunes and *Ammophila* dunes. Fine sandy beaches and intertidal sandflats occur at the outer part of the estuary.

Two plant species, which are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occur within the site: Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*) occurs on the sand spit and Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) occurs in the saline fields of the inner estuary. This species has declined apparently due to reclamation and embankment of lands fringing estuaries. Another rare species, Green-veined Orchid (*Orchis morio*), occurs in the sandy areas of the outer estuary.

Rogerstown Estuary is an important waterfowl site, with Brent Geese having a population of international importance (1176). A further 16 species have populations of national importance: Greylag Goose (186), Shelduck (785), Teal (584), Pintail (30), Shoveler (69), Oystercatcher (1028), Ringed Plover (152), Golden Plover (1813), Grey Plover (245), Lapwing (4056), Knot (2076), Dunlin (2625), Sanderling (57),

Black-tailed Godwit (272), Curlew (1549), Redshank (732) and Greenshank (22) (All counts are average peaks over four winters 1994/95 - 1997/98). The presence of a significant population of Golden Plover is of note and this species is listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. The estuary is a regular staging post for autumn migrants, especially Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank.

Little Tern has bred at the outer sand spit, but much of the nesting area has now been washed away as a result of erosion. The maximum number of pairs recorded was 17 in 1991. Ringed Plover breed in the same area.

The outer part of the estuary has been designated a statutory Nature Reserve and a Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive. The inner estuary has been damaged by the refuse tip which covers 40 hectares of mudflat.

This site is an good example of an estuarine system, with all typical habitats represented, including several listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Rogerstown is an internationally important waterfowl site and has been a breeding site for Little Terns. The presence within the site of three rare plant species adds to its importance.

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME : MALAHIDE ESTUARY

SITE CODE : 000205

Malahide Estuary is situated immediately north of Malahide and east of Swords. It is the estuary of the River Broadmeadow. The site is divided by a railway viaduct built in the 1800s.

The outer part of the estuary is mostly cut off from the sea by a large sand spit, known as "the island". The outer estuary drains almost completely at low tide, exposing sand and mud flats. There is a large bed of Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii* and *Z. angustifolium*) in the north section of the outer estuary, along with Tassel Weed (*Ruppia maritima*) and extensive mats of green algae (*Enteromorpha* spp., *Ulva lactuca*). Cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*) is also widespread in this sheltered part of the estuary.

The dune spit has a well developed outer dune ridge dominated by Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*). The dry areas of the stabilised dunes have a dense covering of Burnet Rose (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and species such as Yellow Wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), Field Gentian (*Gentianella amarella*), Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Carlina Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*) and Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*). Much of the interior of the spit is taken up by a golf course. The inner stony shore has frequent Sea-holly (*Eryngium maritimum*). Well-developed saltmarshes occur at the tip of the spit. Atlantic salt meadow is the principle type and is characterised by species such as Sea Purslane (*Halimolobos portulacoides*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*). Elsewhere in the outer estuary, a small area of Mediterranean salt meadow occurs which is characterised by the presence of Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*). Below the salt marshes there are good examples of pioneering Glasswort swards and other annual species, typified by *Salicornia dolichostachya* and Annual Sea-blite (*Suaeda maritima*).

The inner estuary does not drain at low tide apart from the extreme inner part. Here, patches of saltmarsh and salt meadows occur, with Sea Aster, Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) and Sea Clubrush (*Scirpus maritimus*). Tassel Weed (*Ruppia maritima*) occurs in one of the channels.

The site includes a fine area of rocky shore south-east of Malahide and extending towards Portmarnock. This represents the only continuous section through the fossiliferous Lower Carboniferous rocks in the Dublin Basin, and is the type locality for several species of fossil coral.

The estuary is an important wintering bird site and holds an internationally important population of Brent Geese and nationally important populations of a further 15 species. Average maximum counts during the 1995/96-1997/98 period were Brent

Geese 1217; Great Crested Grebe 52; Mute Swan 106; Shelduck 471; Pochard 200; Goldeneye 333; Red-breasted Merganser 116; Oystercatcher 1228; Golden Plover 2123; Grey Plover 190; Redshank 454; Wigeon 50; Teal 78; Ringed Plover 106; Knot 858; Dunlin 1474; Greenshank 38; Pintail 53; Black-tailed Godwit 345; Bar-tailed Godwit 99. The high numbers of diving birds reflects the lagoon-type nature of the inner estuary.

The estuary also attracts migrant species such as Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank and Little Stint. Breeding birds of the site include Ringed Plover, Shelduck and Mallard. Up to the 1950s there was a major tern colony at the southern end of the island and the habitat remains suitable for these birds.

The inner part of the estuary is heavily used for water sports. A section of the outer estuary has recently been infilled for a marina and housing development.

This site is a fine example of an estuarine system with all the main habitats represented. The site is important ornithologically, with a population of Brent Geese of international significance.

3.10.2001

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LAMBAY ISLAND

SITE CODE: 000204

Lambay Island is a large (250 ha.) inhabited island lying 4 km off Portrane on the north Co. Dublin coast. It is privately owned and is accessible by boat from Rogerstown Quay.

The island rises to 127 m and is surrounded by steep cliffs on the north, east and south slopes. These cliffs contain good diversity in height, slope and aspect. The west shore is low-lying and the land slopes gently eastwards to the summit in the centre of the island. The underlying geology is very varied, but is dominated by igneous rocks (of andesitic type) and ash. Also present are shales and limestones of Silurian origin, limestone conglomerates, and shales from the Old Red Sandstone era. The bedrock is exposed on the fringing cliffs and in rocky outcrops; elsewhere it is overlain by varying depths of glacial drift.

Most of the western third of the island is intensively farmed (mostly pasture), and there are small areas of parkland, deciduous and coniferous woodland, buildings, walled gardens and the harbour. Much of the rest of the island is a mixture of less intensively grazed land, rocky outcrops, patches of Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), and cliff slopes with typical maritime vegetation e.g. Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene maritima*), Rock Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia rupicola*) and Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*). Some sheltered gullies have small areas of scrub woodland dominated by Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). Vegetated sea cliffs are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.

Lambay supports the only colony of Grey Seals on the east coast. Although it is a long established breeding site for this species, it remains relatively small (45-60 individuals) probably because of the restricted area suitable for breeding. A herd of Fallow Deer (up to c. 80) roams the higher parts of the island, and a small number of wallabies (c. 10) survive in a feral state. This island may also hold the last Irish population of the Ship Rat, a species listed in the vertebrate Red Data Book.

Lambay Island is internationally important for its breeding seabirds. The most numerous species is the Guillemot, with almost 52,000 individuals on the cliffs. Razorbills (3,646 individuals), Kittiwakes (5,102 individuals), Herring Gulls (2,500 pairs), Cormorants (605 pairs), Shags (1,164 pairs), Puffins (235 pairs), and small numbers of Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls also breed (all figures from 1995). Between 1991 and 1995 Fulmar numbers varied between 573-737 pairs. There is a small colony (<100 pairs) of the nocturnal Manx Shearwater on the island and up to 20 pairs of Common Terns have bred in recent years. A few Black Guillemots have been recorded on Lambay, but it is not clear if they breed. A pair of Peregrines are known to breed on the island.

In winter the most notable bird species on Lambay Island is the Greylag Goose with numbers peaking at 1,000, though in recent winters there has been a decline to 400-700 individuals. There is also a small wintering flock of Barnacle Geese (up to 50), and recently Brent Geese (up to 100) have started to occur regularly. Small numbers of Great Northern Diver and Red-throated Diver are also present in winter.

An intensive survey of the natural history of Lambay Island was carried out in 1906 and published in the Irish Naturalist. A similar, comparative survey has been carried out in the early 1990's and it is hoped this will be published soon. With this background, Lambay is an excellent site for studies of marine biology, terrestrial fauna and flora, geology, geomorphology and ecology.

The island has been maintained as a wildlife sanctuary by its owners and no threats are envisaged should the present land use continue. Rodents may be causing some damage to the populations of burrow-nesting sea-birds.

Lambay Island has good examples of vegetated sea cliffs, a habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, and these cliffs hold internationally important populations of sea-birds. The site is also of conservation for the population of Grey Seal, a species listed on Annex II of this directive, that it supports.

8.11.2001

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: SKERRIES ISLANDS SPA

SITE CODE: 004122

The Skerries Islands are a group of three small uninhabited islands situated between 0.5 km and 1.5 km off the north Dublin coast. Shenick Island and St. Patrick's Island are of similar size, with Colt Island being somewhat smaller. Shenick Island is of most interest geologically, being composed of Ordovician volcanic siltstones and shales on the boundary between the Carboniferous and the Silurian. All are low-lying islands, with maximum heights from 8 m to 13 m above sea level. There are the remains of a Martello Tower on Shenick Island and an early christian church on St. Patrick's.

St Patrick's Island and Colt Island have low cliffs, while Shenick Island has more extensive expanses of intertidal rocky shore and sand flats. Shenick also has a shingle bar and is connected to the mainland at low tides. The vegetation of the islands is dominated by rank grasses, brambles and species such as hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). The seas surrounding the islands, to a distance of 200 m, are included in the site.

The islands are of importance for both breeding seabirds and wintering waterfowl. A survey of breeding seabirds on St Patrick's Island, the main seabird island, in 1999 recorded the following: Fulmar (10 pairs), Cormorant (558 pairs), Shag (100 pairs), Lesser Black-backed Gull (1 pair), Herring Gull (150 pairs) and Great Black-backed Gull (50 pairs). Shenick Island has breeding Fulmars (25 pairs in 1999), Herring Gulls (120 pairs in 1996) and Great Black-backed Gulls (25 pairs in 1996). Large gulls also breed on Colt Island but there has been no census in recent years. The Cormorant population, which was only established in the early 1990s, is of National Importance and when taken together with the nearby associated colonies on Lambay and Ireland's Eye, this group comprises about 35% of the total Irish population and is of International Importance. The Shag population is also of National Importance as are the Herring Gull and Great Black-backed Gull populations. Other breeding birds include Shelduck, Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher (several pairs of each).

In winter, the islands regularly support a range of waterfowl species. The following counts are the average annual peaks over the five winters 1995/96 to 1999/00: Cormorant (391), Brent Goose (242), Wigeon (205), Mallard (240), Oystercatcher (463), Ringed Plover (66), Golden Plover (240), Grey Plover (15), Lapwing (238), Purple Sandpiper (46), Dunlin (42), Snipe (27), Curlew (327), Turnstone (242), Black-headed Gull (110), Herring Gull (560), Great Black-backed Gull (250). The Brent Goose population is of International Importance, while the populations of Cormorants, Purple Sandpiper and Turnstone are of National Importance. The islands are also a regular wintering site for Short-eared Owls, with several recorded in most winters.

The birds of the Skerries Islands have been monitored regularly since the 1980s. Shenick Island became a BirdWatch Ireland Reserve in 1987 and some management for the benefit of the birds has taken place.

The Skerries Islands SPA is of high ornithological importance for both breeding seabirds and wintering waterfowl, with six species having populations of National Importance. In addition there is an internationally important population of Brent Goose. Golden Plover and Short-eared Owl, EU Birds Directive Annex I species, occur regularly in winter.

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ROGERSTOWN ESTUARY SPA

SITE CODE: 004015

Rogerstown estuary is situated about 2 km north of Donabate in north County Dublin. It is a relatively small, funnel shaped estuary separated from the sea by a sand and shingle peninsula and extending eastwards beyond the low water mark to include an area of shallow marine water. The estuary receives the waters of the Ballyboghil and Ballough rivers, both of which flow through intensive agricultural catchments. The estuary has a wide salinity range, from near full sea water to near full fresh water. The estuary is divided by a causeway and narrow bridge, built in the 1840s to carry the Dublin-Belfast railway line. The site contains good examples of a number of estuarine and coastal habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

At low tide extensive intertidal sand and mud flats are exposed and these provide the main food resource for the wintering waterfowl. The intertidal flats of the estuary are mainly of sands, with soft muds in the north-west sector and along the southern shore. Associated with these muds are stands of Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*). Green algae (mainly *Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are widespread and form dense mats in the more sheltered areas. The intertidal vascular plant Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*) grows profusely in places beneath the algal mats and is grazed by herbivorous waterfowl (notably Brent Geese and Wigeon). The Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) is common in the outer estuary and large Mussel beds (*Mytilus edulis*) occur at the outlet to the sea.

Salt marsh fringes parts of the estuary, especially its southern shores. Common plant species of the saltmarsh include Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*).

Rogerstown Estuary is an important winter waterfowl site and supports a population of Pale-bellied Brent Goose of international importance (1194 - all counts given are average peaks over the five winters 1996/97 – 2000/01). A further 14 species have populations of national importance as follows: Greylag Goose 87, Shelduck 78, Shoveler 72, Oystercatcher 1794, Ringed Plover 188, Grey Plover 343, Knot 2159, Sanderling 89, Dunlin 3128, Redshank 674, Lapwing 2166, Black-tailed Godwit 212, Greenshank 26 and Turnstone 188. The Greylag Geese are part of a larger population which spends most of the winter on Lambay Island. Other species which occur regularly in significant numbers include Wigeon 411, Teal 379, Mallard 267, Red-breasted Merganser 22, Golden Plover 159 and Curlew 245. The numbers of Golden Plover and Lapwing can at times be considerably higher than the averages given above. The presence of Golden Plover is of note as this species is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Large numbers of gulls, mostly Herring, Great Black-backed and Black-headed, are attracted to the area, partly due to the presence of an adjacent local authority landfill site.

Some of the wader species also occur on passage, notably Black-tailed Godwit with numbers often exceeding 300 in April. The estuary is a regular staging post for scarce migrants, especially in autumn when Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank may be seen. Shelduck breed within the site.

Rogerstown Estuary is an important link in the chain of estuaries on the east coast. It supports an internationally important population of Brent Goose and a further 14 species in numbers of national importance. Bird populations have been well-monitored since the 1980s and the site is counted at monthly intervals each winter (September to March) as part of the Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS). The site is a statutory Nature Reserve and a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the E.U. Habitats Directive.

10.11.2003

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ROCKABILL SPA

SITE CODE: 004014

Rockabill consists of two small, low-lying, granitic islets situated *c.* 7 km off the Co. Dublin coast. The islands are separated by a narrow channel though are connected at low spring tides. The main island, known as the Lighthouse Island, is vegetated by a scrubby sward of Tree Mallow (*Lavatera arborea*), with a range of other maritime species such as Sea Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene maritima*), Sorrel (*Rumex* spp.), Common Scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), Orache (*Atriplex* spp.) and Rock Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia rupicola*). Some exotic plants are present, notably Hedge Veronica (*Hebe x franciscana*) and Hottentot-fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*). The smaller island, known as the Bill, is very exposed and is sparsely vegetated. A lighthouse, manned until 1989, is situated on the main island.

Rockabill has a long history of nesting by terns and it is now one of the most important tern colonies in Europe. Intensive wardening, management and monitoring since the 1980s has seen the colony grow significantly. In 1999, it held 611 pairs of Roseate Tern, 610 pairs of Common Tern and 89 pairs of Arctic Tern. All three species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The Roseate population represents approximately 75% of the entire north-west European population. The Common Tern population is one of the largest in Ireland, accounting for more than 30% of the national total. The Arctic Tern population, while relatively small, is still of national importance. Sandwich Tern nested up to the 1930s but apparently not since.

The terns nest amongst the scrubby vegetation and increasingly so in the nest boxes which are provided as part of the BirdWatch Ireland/National Parks and Wildlife Service conservation programme. Large gull species are discouraged from nesting on the islands for the benefit of the terns, and visitors to the islands are strictly controlled. Detailed research is carried out each year, including studies on breeding behaviour, productivity and feeding. A ringing programme has been in operation since the 1980s and this has produced important information on the movement of the birds in an international context.

Rockabill also supports a nationally important population of Black Guillemot (34 pairs in 1999) and a small colony of Kittiwake (111 pairs in 1999). Both of these species are monitored annually and most of the chicks produced are ringed. Rockabill is also a good location for the observation of bird migration.

Owing to its international and national importance, Rockabill is a designated Refuge for Fauna. As long as the conservation programme continues, and especially wardening throughout the entire season, there are no apparent threats to the nesting seabirds. However, the on-going research on the biology and ecology of the terns is crucial for a proper understanding of the needs of the birds over the long-term.

8.2.2004

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: RIVER NANNY ESTUARY AND SHORE SPA

SITE CODE: 004158

The site comprises the estuary of the River Nanny and sections of the shoreline to the north and south of the estuary (c. 3 km in length). The estuarine channel, which extends inland for almost 2 km, is narrow and well sheltered. Sediments are muddy in character and edged by saltmarsh and freshwater marsh/wet grassland. The saltmarsh is best developed in the eastern portion of the estuarine channel, with species such as Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) occurring. Further up the estuary, the marsh habitats support species such as Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacorus*). The shoreline, which is approximately 500 m in width to the low tide mark, comprises beach and intertidal habitats. It is a well-exposed shore, with coarse sand sediments. The well-developed beaches, which are backed in places by clay cliffs, provide high tide roosts for the birds. The village of Laytown occurs in the northern side of the River Nanny estuary.

This site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Knot, Sanderling, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

This is an important site for wintering waders, with nationally important populations of Golden Plover (1,759), Oystercatcher (1,014), Ringed Plover (185), Knot (1,140) and Sanderling (240) present (all figures are average peaks for the 5 year period 1995/96-1999/2000). The populations of Knot and Sanderling are of particular note as they represent approximately 4% of their respective national totals. Black-headed Gull (926) and Herring Gull (609) also occur here in significant numbers. A range of other waterbirds also occurs, including Cormorant (35), Brent Goose (145), Mallard (76), Grey Plover (55), Lapwing (1,087), Dunlin (721), Bar-tailed Godwit (59), Curlew (107), Redshank (150), Turnstone (59), Common Gull (66) and Great Black-backed Gull (70). The site is of most importance as a roost area for the birds but the intertidal flats also provide feeding habitat. Many of the birds also utilise the intertidal areas and beaches further to the north and south, and also the fields above the shore.

The main threat to the wintering birds is increased levels of disturbance by beach users.

This site is of ornithological importance as it supports five species of wintering waterbirds in numbers of national significance. Two species using the site, Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LAMBAY ISLAND SPA

SITE CODE: 004069

Lambay Island lies approximately 4 km off the north Dublin coastline and is separated from it by a channel of 10-13 m in depth. East of Lambay the water deepens rapidly into the Irish Sea basin. The island, which rises to 127 m, has an area of 250 ha above high tide mark. The underlying geology is very varied, but is dominated by volcanic igneous rocks (of andesitic type) and ash; also present are shales, limestones and limestone conglomerates. The soils are generally shallow and are derived from glacial tills of Irish Sea origin. The shallow soils are peaty on high exposed ground and above the cliffs. The island is well raised above sea-level, with about two-thirds above the 50 m contour. On the western side of the island the land rises gently from a bedrock shoreline. Cobble storm beaches are associated with this shore and at low tide sandflats are exposed within the harbour and below a section of the rocky shore. The northern, eastern and most of the southern shorelines consist of steep cliffs varying from about 15 m to 50 m. These are backed by vegetated slopes along most of their length. Several small streams occur. The seas to a distance of 500 m from the base of the cliffs are included within the site for the benefit of the seabirds.

The predominant landuse on the island nowadays is grazing for cattle. Most of the central and eastern part of the island was improved for grazing in the 1950s and is now semi-improved pasture, interspersed with outcropping rock, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The cliff slopes have a typical maritime vegetation, with such species as Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene maritima*), Rock Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia rupicola*) and Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*). Some sheltered gullies have small areas of scrub woodland dominated by Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The low-lying western third is more fertile and is used for grazing and silage production. The habitations, which comprise a castle, cottages and farm complex, occur in the western sector.

Lambay Island is internationally important for its breeding seabirds and is of particular note for its diversity, with 12 species breeding regularly. A survey in 1999 showed that it had internationally important populations of Cormorant (675 pairs), Shag (1,122 pairs), Razorbill (4,337 individuals) and Guillemot (59,824 individuals). A further five species have populations of national importance: Fulmar (635 pairs), Lesser Black-backed Gull (309 pairs), Herring Gull (1,806 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (193 pairs) and Kittiwake (4,091 pairs). The island also supports the largest colony of Puffin (265 individuals) on the east coast and has the only known east coast colony of Manx Shearwaters (<50 pairs). Several pairs of Black Guillemot breed. The populations of Cormorant, Shag, Herring Gull and Guillemot are the largest in Ireland.

Lambay is a traditional nesting site for Peregrine (1 pair); this is a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. It also supports the largest colony of breeding

Oystercatcher (20-25 pairs) on the east coast. Several pairs of Ringed Plover and Shelduck breed, as well as Raven and a variety of passerines such as Stonechat, Whitethroat and Reed Bunting.

In winter, Lambay supports a nationally important population of Greylag Goose (311 – average maximum for winters 1995/96-1999/00). Up to the mid 1990s, a Barnacle Goose flock wintered on the island (the only such flock in eastern Ireland) but these have since abandoned the site. Brent Geese now winter regularly (55), as well as Oystercatcher (155), Purple Sandpiper (9), Curlew (189) and Turnstone (32). Large numbers of gulls frequent the island during the winter. Several seabird species, notably Fulmar, Shag and Guillemot, regularly visit the breeding cliffs during winter.

Lambay supports the only breeding colony of Grey Seal on the east coast. Although it is a long established site for this species, it remains relatively small (45-60 individuals) probably because of the restricted area suitable for breeding. A herd of Fallow Deer (up to *c.* 80) roams the island. Lambay may also hold the last Irish population of the Ship Rat, a species that is listed in the Irish Red Data Book.

The birds of Lambay have been well documented since the mid 1850s. Of particular importance was an intensive survey of the natural history of Lambay Island, which included detailed information on the birds, carried out in 1906. Since the 1980s, the birds have been well monitored, with regular censuses of both breeding and wintering birds.

Lambay has essentially been maintained as a wildlife sanctuary by its owners since the early 20th century and the policy of preservation of wildlife continues. Rats may be causing some damage to the populations of burrow-nesting sea-birds. As Lambay is close to major shipping lanes, oil pollution is always a threat.

Lambay is an internationally important seabird colony and one of the top seabird sites in Ireland. Four species have populations of international importance and a further five have populations of national importance. In addition to the seabirds, it also supports a nationally important population of Greylag Goose. The site is also of conservation for the population of Grey Seal, a species that is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BROADMEADOW/SWORDS ESTUARY SPA

SITE CODE: 004025

This site is situated in north Co. Dublin, between the towns of Malahide and Swords. It is the estuary of the River Broadmeadow, a substantial river which drains a mainly agricultural, though increasingly urbanised, catchment. A railway viaduct, built in the 1800s, crosses the site and has led to the inner estuary becoming lagoonal in character and only partly tidal. Much of the outer part of the estuary is well-sheltered from the sea by a large sand spit, known as "The Island". This spit is now mostly converted to golf-course. The outer part empties almost completely at low tide and there are extensive intertidal flats exposed. The site extends eastwards to the rocky shore at Robswalls.

Substantial stands of eelgrass (both *Zostera noltii* and *Z. angustifolia*) occur in the sheltered part of the outer estuary, along with Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*). Green algae, mostly *Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*, are frequent on the sheltered flats. Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) is well established in the outer estuary and also in the innermost part of the site. The intertidal flats support a typical macro-invertebrate fauna, with polychaete worms (*Arenicola marina* and *Hediste diversicolor*), bivalves such as *Cerastoderma edule*, *Macoma balthica* and *Scrobicularia plana*, the small gastropod *Hydrobia ulvae* and the crustacean *Corophium volutator*.

Salt marshes, which provide important roosts during high tide, occur in parts of the outer estuary and in the extreme inner part of the inner estuary. These are characterised by such species as Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*).

This site is of high importance for wintering waterfowl and supports a particularly good diversity of species. It has an internationally important population of Brent Goose (956) or 4.8% of the national total (figures given here and below are average maximum counts for the five winters 1995/96-1999/00) and nationally important populations of a further 12 species as follows: Shelduck (439), Pintail (58), Goldeneye (215), Red-breasted Merganser (105), Oystercatcher (1,493), Golden Plover (1,843), Grey Plover (201), Knot (915), Dunlin (1,594), Black-tailed Godwit (409), Redshank (581) and Greenshank (38). A range of other species occur in numbers of regional importance, including Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swan, Pochard, Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew and Turnstone. The high numbers of diving ducks reflects the lagoon-type nature of the inner estuary, and this is one of the few sites in eastern Ireland where substantial numbers of Goldeneye can be found.

The estuary also attracts on a regular basis migrant wader species such as Ruff, Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Green Sandpiper and Little Stint. These occur mainly in autumn, though occasionally in spring and winter.

Breeding birds of the site include Ringed Plover, Shelduck and Mallard. Up to the 1950s there was a major tern colony at the southern end of Malahide Island. Grey Herons breed nearby and feed regularly within the site.

The inner part of the estuary is heavily used for water sports, which causes disturbance to the bird populations. A section of the outer estuary has recently been in-filled for a marina and housing development.

Broadmeadow/Swords Estuary SPA is a fine example of an estuarine system, providing both feeding and roosting areas for a range of wintering waterfowl. The lagoonal nature of the inner estuary is of particular value as it increases the diversity of birds which occur. The site is of high conservation importance, with an internationally important population of Brent Goose and nationally important populations of a further 12 species. Three of the species which occur regularly (Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Ruff) are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

Appendix III

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT

Name of Project of Plan	Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan
Name and location of Natura 2000 site(s)	Skerries Islands SPA Lambay Island SAC and SPA Rogerstown Estuary SAC and SPA Rockabill Island SPA Malahide Estuary SAC and Brodameadow/Swords Estuary SPA River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA
Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site(s)	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site?	No
The assessment of significant effects	
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site(s)	No direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site will occur. A number of indirect impacts were considered including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. foul sewerage impacts on watercourses b. surface water flows to watercourses c. disturbance impacts from increased population Possible impacts on Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Local Area Plan lands were considered.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	There will be no foul sewerage impacts to local watercourses or the Irish Sea because all foul sewerage will be treated at the Barnageeragh Water Treatment Plant. The Draft Plan includes a 10m riparian corridor which must be maintained on both sides of the watercourse, together with a requirement for the development of stormwater management plans for all new developments. These requirements will ensure that there will be no significant impacts on watercourses from surface water flows as a result of the implementation of the Draft Plan and therefore no impacts to Natura 2000 sites. The potential for disturbance as a result of the implementation of the Plan is greatest for the Natura 2000 site nearest to the plan lands, namely Skerries Island SPA. However, given their offshore location and comparative inaccessibility it is concluded that there is no

	likelihood of significant disturbance to birds as a result of the implementation of the Draft Plan.		
List of agencies consulted	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government		
Response to consultation	No conservation issues, in addition to those under consideration, were raised.		
Data collected to carry out assessment			
Who carried out the assessment	Sources of data	Level of assessment completed	Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed
Fingal County Council	NPWS database of designated sites at www.npws.ie IWebs data from Crowe (2005)	Desktop study including site visit	Planning Public Counter, Fingal County Council, Main Street, Swords, Co. Dublin. Also available on www.fingalcoco.ie
Overall conclusions			
<p>No direct impacts on Natura 2000 sites will occur as a result of the implementation of the Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan. A number of indirect impacts were identified which could potentially give rise to impacts to Natura 2000 sites. These included impacts to water from foul sewerage and surface water, and disturbance impacts from increased population. All Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Local Area Plan lands were assessed. It was concluded that there will be no foul sewerage impacts because all foul sewerage will be treated in the Barnageeragh Water Treatment Plant. It was concluded that there will be no significant impacts on watercourses because of the Draft Plan's requirement for a 10m riparian corridor on both sides of the stream flowing through the site and the requirement for stormwater management plans incorporating SUDS for all developments. In relation to disturbance impacts, it was concluded that impacts were only likely to affect Skerries Islands SPA because this site is nearest to the plan lands. However, given the offshore location of Skerries Islands SPA, their distance from the plan lands and their relative inaccessibility any disturbance impacts were not considered significant. It is therefore concluded that the Draft Hacketstown Local Area Plan will not give rise to any significant impacts to Natura 2000 sites.</p>			



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