



Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017

Proposed Variation

Lands at Ballycoolin, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

February 2014

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – SCREENING

REPORT PURSUANT TO THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2001- 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

As part of the preparation of the Ballycoolin Variation the planning authority must consider whether the proposed Variation requires SEA. The Planning Authority has had regard to the requirements of the following in the preparation of the SEA Screening Assessment and in the preparation of the proposed Variation.

- S.I. No. 200 of 2011 (amending S.I. No. 435 of 2004)
- S.I. No. 201 of 2011 (amending S.I. No. 436 of 2004)
- DoECLG Circular PSSP6/2011 re *‘Further Transposition of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)’*.
- DoECLG Circular (Circular PL 9 of 2013) *‘Article 8 (Decision Making) of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as amended’*
- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011(S.I No.201 of 2011), amending the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 436 of 2004).

The assessment is based on the criteria set down in the SEA Guidelines and Annex II of the SEA Directive for determining the likely significance of environmental effects. The Planning and Development Strategic Environmental Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 2011(S.I No.201 of 2011) Article 13k requires that where a planning authority proposes to make a variation to a development plan it shall consider whether or not the proposed variation would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, taking into account relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A.

2.0 SITE LOCATION

This site comprises approximately 16.4 hectares of land in North-West Blanchardstown located approximately 2.5km from Blanchardstown Centre. The site adjoins to the north Ballycoolin Road/Rosemount Business Park. To the west it adjoins Snugborough Road/ IDA industrial park. To the south it adjoins ‘Open Space’ lands/National Sports Campus/ National Aquatic Centre. The Tolka River Valley and James Connolly Hospital are further south.

The land-bank is zoned ‘RU’- ‘Protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture and rural-related enterprise, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage.’

There are a number of built structures on site:

- Agricultural out-buildings
- Farmhouse

There is a Local Objective on the lands - LO 482 – Prepare a study on the optimum use of lands and the provision of employment-creating sites along the metro West route.

3.0 PROPOSED VARIATION

This variation is to allow for the change in zoning of land, zoned ‘RU’ (Rural)- ‘Protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture and rural-related enterprise, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage’ to

‘HT’ (High Technology) – ‘Provide for office, research and development and high technology/high technology manufacturing type employment in a high quality built and landscaped environment’.

4.0 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance environmental effects of the Plan. The following section of the report will assess the variation of Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017 against the criteria set out in Schedule 2A.

4.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VARIATION OF THE FINGAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011-2017 HAVING REGARD TO:

The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.

The proposed variation relates to the provisions of the Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017. The objective of the County Development Plans is to set out the legal framework for the development of the county. Development Plans guide capital investment (public and private sector), including capital projects by the local authority itself. Development plans provide the strategic framework and policy context for all local planning decisions over the specified period of the plan. It is considered that the proposed variation in having regard to the site’s location would set a more sustainable framework for high end employment projects in Fingal.

The degree to which the variation influences other plans or programmes including those in the hierarchy.

The Development Plan is part of the National Framework/hierarchy of land use and spatial plans, including the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines. The Development Plan is also informed by plans and strategies of the Government and other public agencies in general. Development Plans influence lower level land use plans, namely Local Area Plans and planning applications.

The variation as proposed is positioned at the lower end of the hierarchy and will influence positively any future planning applications on site. Such applications will have due regard to the robust objectives and policies contained within the Development Plan. As such the variation will contribute to the positive development of the area.

The relevance of the variation for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with the view of promoting sustainable development.

The adopted statutory Plan is the guiding document for development within the area until 2017 and it underwent a detailed SEA in accordance with the SEA Directive (2001/42/EEC). This process allowed for consideration at length of the environmental implications of the Plan's implementation. The land is zoned 'RU'- 'Protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture and rural-related enterprise, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage.' The purpose of this variation is to establish a land-use framework for the sustainable development of the area in a co-ordinated and coherent manner prior to the lands being developed. The variation sought, which seeks to rezone the lands to a 'HT'(High Technology) land use, will conform to the principles, objectives and policies of the Development Plan in relation to environmental considerations and therefore will have a strong emphasis on promoting the sustainable development of the area.

Environmental problems relevant to the variation.

In addition to a single residential farmhouse, the land area comprises of a number of open fields and buildings given over to an agriculture use. The site does not form part of any proposed Natural Heritage Area, Special Area of Conservation or other similar designated area. There are no recorded monuments or Zone of Archaeological Importance located within the site. There are no protected views or prospects listed on site in the Development Plan. There are no

protected structures on site. The land, however, has a designation 'Highly Sensitive Landscape' in the Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017. The Development Management process will take this issue on board in assessing any future applications for development on site. In particular, regard will be had for the following Objectives contained within the Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017:

Objective LC01

Ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to the character, value and sensitivity of a landscape when determining a planning application.

Objective LC04

Ensure that new development does not impinge in any significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of highly sensitive areas and does not detract from the scenic value of the area. New development in highly sensitive areas shall not be permitted if it:

- Causes unacceptable visual harm
- Introduces incongruous landscape elements
- Causes the disturbance or loss of (i) landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness, (ii) historic elements that contribute significantly to landscape character and quality such as field or road patterns, (iii) vegetation which is a characteristic of that landscape type and (iv) the visual condition of landscape elements.

Objective LC06

Protect skylines and ridgelines from development.

Objective LC07

Require any necessary assessments, including visual impact assessments, to be prepared prior to approving developments in highly sensitive areas.

Objective GI39

Protect areas of high landscape quality including Special Amenity Areas, High Amenity zoned lands, and Highly Sensitive Landscapes identified on the Development Plan Green Infrastructure Maps.

An ecological assessment was commissioned to determine the habitats and species present on the lands. The report was prepared by Biosphere Environmental Services. The report's conclusion is as follows:

"The ecological interest within this site is confined to the strip of old woodland and connected hedgerow. The wood is planted, broad-leaved woodland comprising native and non-native species. There are a substantial number of mature trees. However, the understorey and ground layers are poor in structure and diversity, which may reflect

past management and especially cattle usage for shelter. The woodland is now a remnant and of relatively small size (just less than 0.5 ha). No rare woodland plant species would be expected. Overall, taking into account the age of the trees and the associated fauna, the woodland is rated as of 'Local' ecological and conservation importance. While the hedgerow which runs to the southeast of the wood (and only a short section, c.50 m, is within the study site) has low intrinsic value, it does provide a corridor to the woodland. Badger, a legally protected species (Wildlife Acts 1976 & 2000), occurs on site. The present level of activity of badgers was difficult to determine due to the frequency of rabbits but the sett may be used by a badger group that also uses other woodland stands in the area (possibly as far as Connolly Hospital). Bat species are likely to be associated with the woodland – all Irish bat species are protected under the Wildlife Act (1976) and Wildlife Amendment Act (2000). Also, all Irish bats are listed in Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The birds which occur on site are all widespread species of the countryside and none is of high conservation value (i.e. Birds Directive Annex I or Red-listed after Lynas et al. 2007). Kestrel and Starling are Amber listed species (i.e. of Moderate Conservation Concern), though both species are still widespread in County Dublin. In conclusion, the woodland strip within the site is considered to have local conservation importance and supports protected species, notably badger and possibly bat species.”

In order to protect and preserve the small woodland and connected hedgerow, the Variation proposes to insert a new Specific Objective on the lands “*Protect and preserve Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows.*”

The relevance of the variation for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).

Development Plans inform and structure land use policies at the county level, which in turn provides a basis for day-to-day planning decisions. The plan is a platform for objectives for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment, including waste management, water protection and biodiversity protection legislation. The draft variation seeks to amend the existing Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017. This variation will comply with the principles, objectives and policies contained within the existing Development Plan re waste management, water protection and biodiversity etc, which in turn comply with all Community legislation on the environment.

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT:

The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.

It is considered that the characteristics of the effects will increase the likelihood of Fingal developing in a sustainable manner over the lifetime of the plan (2011-2017). The probability frequency of effects will be dependent on the extent of development likely to be undertaken during the lifetime of the plan. Development by its nature often has a long duration and the effects can be difficult to reverse.

The development of the land for a 'High Technology' use will result in the creation of additional traffic levels in the area, with increased noise and air quality issues. Substantial expenditure is underway on the surrounding road network. The M2-N3 link road has been opened and Mulhuddart Interchange has been completed. Both these developments have improved traffic flow in the site area. The Development Management process in addition will ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are provided to mitigate for any adverse noise and air quality effects identified.

Fingal County Council is confident that the traffic generated by the development both during construction and during normal operation can be accommodated on the existing road network. The Planning Authority is satisfied that the traffic levels accruing will not generate strategic negative environmental issues.

It is considered therefore that there will be no significant negative effects of a strategic nature upon the implementation of the variation.

The cumulative nature of the effects.

No notable cumulative negative effects are anticipated as a result of this variation.

It is considered that the proposed variation given the site's location would set a more sustainable framework for high end employment projects in the County. Any cumulative effects will increase the likelihood of the county developing in a sustainable manner over the lifetime of the plan (2011-2017).

The transboundary nature of the effects.

It is not anticipated the Plan will have any transboundary effects.

The risk to human health and the environment.

The implementation of the variation is not likely to result in any risks to human health or the environment. Development Plans inform and structure land use policies at the county level, which in turn provides a basis for day-to-day planning decisions. The development plan is therefore of relevance for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment, including waste management, water protection and human health legislation. The development management process will ensure that any development on the land adheres to legislation and has a neutral or positive effect to human health and the environment.

The magnitude and special extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be effected).

The effects are considered localised only i.e. the site lands and immediate environs. Given the characteristics of the surrounding area and zonings involved, i.e. 'GE' -General Employment and 'OS' - Open Space, the numbers of people likely to be effected, if any, would be considered small.

The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:

a) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.

The site does not form part of any proposed Natural Heritage Area, Special Area of Conservation or other similar designated area. There are no recorded monuments or Zone of Archaeological Importance located within the site. There are no protected views or prospects listed on site in the Development Plan. There are no protected structures on site. The site comprises of open fields with hedging and contains no special

b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit value.

It is anticipated that environmental quality standards will not be exceeded and that the value of the area will not be limited as a result of the proposed variation.

An environmental impact identified with the variation is surface water run-off. The implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) are required within any future development of the lands to restrict surface water runoff in accordance with Fingal County Council's storm water management policy in line with the requirements of the 'Greater Dublin Region code of Practice for Drainage Works, Version 6.0, April 2006, Section 16. The maximum permitted discharge from any new development of the site will be restricted to that of a greenfield site.

c) intensive land use.

As noted, the site does not form part of any proposed Natural Heritage Area, Special Area of Conservation or other similar designated area. The site comprises of open fields with small woodland/hedging. In order to protect and preserve the small woodland and connected hedgerow, the Variation proposes to insert a new Specific Objective on the lands “*Protect and preserve Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows.*”

Effects on areas or landscapes, which have a recognised national, community or internal protection status.

As noted above, there are no features within the site boundary which have a recognised European and/or international protection status. Nevertheless the Development Management process will have regard for the protection of the interconnected networks of green infrastructure in the County by adhering to the following Green Infrastructure Objectives contained within the Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017:

Objective GI07

Resist development that would fragment or prejudice the County’s strategic green infrastructure network.

Objective GI08

Seek a net gain in green infrastructure through the protection and enhancement of existing assets, through the provision of new green infrastructure as an integral part of the planning process, and by taking forward priority projects including those indicated on the Development Plan green infrastructure maps during the lifetime of the Development Plan.

5.0 PRELIMINARY SCREENING CONCLUSION (prior to consultation):

The Planning Authority concluded that the development would not have a strategic environmental effect on the area and considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required in respect of the variation to change the zoning of this area from ‘RU’ to ‘HT’.

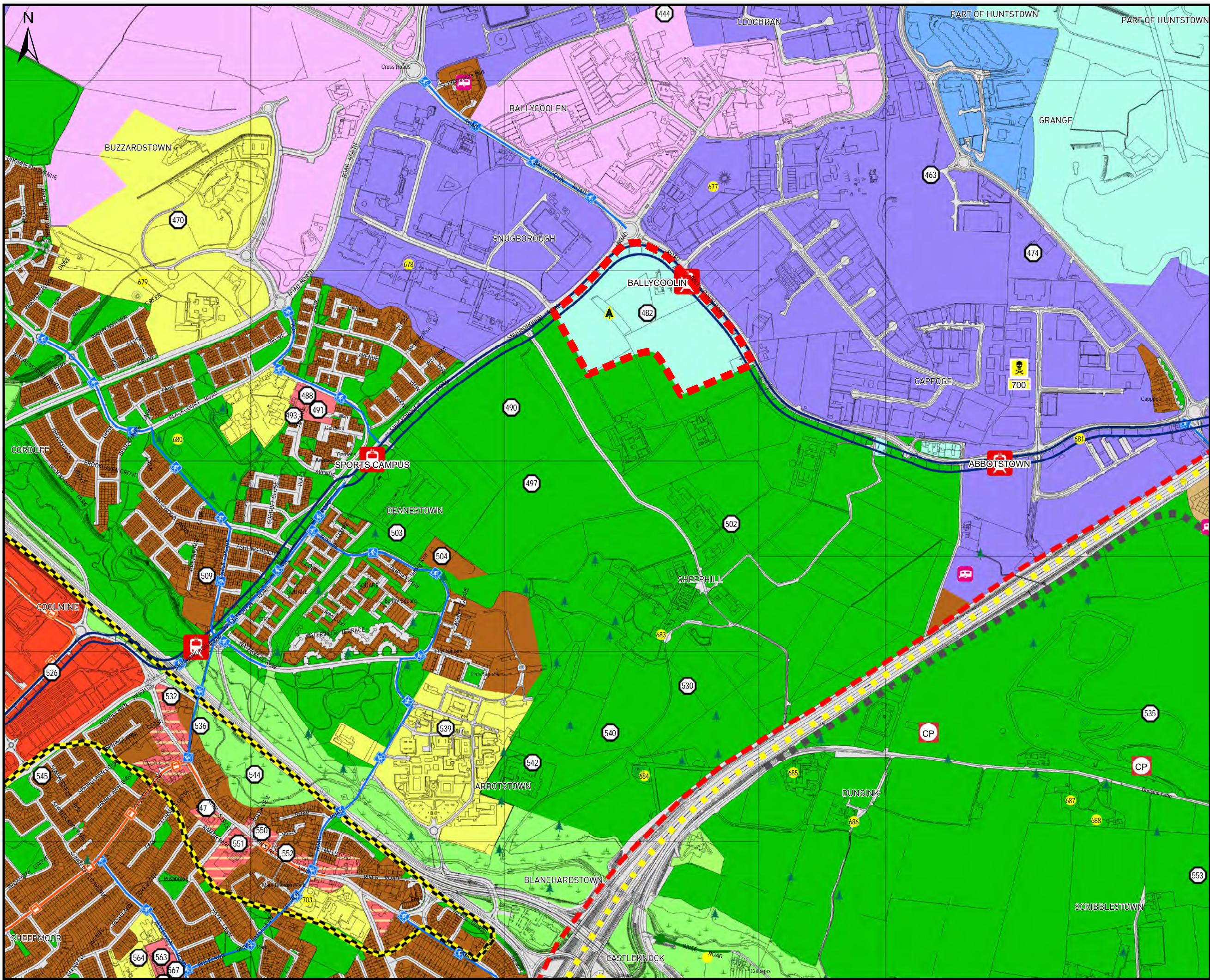
6.0 CONSULTATION

Under the SEA Regulations (S.I. No. 436 of 2004), as amended by (S.I. No. 201 of 2011), prior to making a final determination on whether the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment, notice was given by Fingal County Council to the following environmental authorities:

- ✓ The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
- ✓ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- ✓ The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
- ✓ The Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.
- ✓ The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The notice stated that Fingal County Council has prepared a preliminary SEA screening for the Ballycoolin Variation and requested submissions or observations in relation to whether the plan would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The Screening Statement has been updated taking on board views and comments received from the environmental authorities. There is no change to the Preliminary Screening Conclusion. The Planning Authority is satisfied that the development will not have a strategic environmental effect on the area and considers that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required in respect of the variation to change the zoning from 'RU' to 'HT'.




**Proposed Variation
 to Lands at
 Ballycoolin, Dublin 15**







Proposed Change of Zoning
 From RU to HT
FROM

RU- Rural
 Protect and promote in a balanced way, the development of agriculture and rural related enterprise, biodiversity, the rural landscape, and the built and cultural heritage.

TO
HT- High Technology
 Provide for office, research and development and high technology /high technology manufacturing type employment in a high quality built and landscaped environment.

Insert New Objective

 Protect & preserve Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

- Legend**
-  Outline of Proposed Variation Lands (Area = 16.4ha)
 -  Proposed Metro Line
 -  Proposed Metro Stop
 -  Seveso Site
 -  Protected Structure
 -  Local Objective 482: Prepare a study on the optimum use of lands and the provision of employment -creating sites along the Metro West route.

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