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Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report for Barnhill Local Area Plan

February 2019

Appendix 1



Fingal Development Plan 2017 - 2023

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STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) – SCREENING REPORT FOR DRAFT BARNHILL LOCAL AREA PLAN

1.0 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The requirement to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment stems from the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) which states: 'The objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development...'

The Directive was introduced into Irish Law in 2004, through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans & Programmes) Regulations S.I. No. 435 OF 2004, and the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations S.I. No. 436 OF 2004. The Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 (S.I No.201 of 2011), amended the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

Article 14A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, requires a determination as to whether the implementation of the local area plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment where the targeted population is less than 5000 persons. The relevant criteria to be taken account of in determining whether or not a local area plan would have significant effects on the environment is set out in Schedule 2A of the Regulations.

2.0 SITE LOCATION

Barnhill is located approximately 3km from Blanchardstown Town Centre, 4.1km from Blanchardstown Main Street and 12.4 km from O'Connell Street, Dublin. The lands are situated directly south of the Dunboyne to Clonsilla Rail Line, west of the Royal Canal and the Dublin-Maynooth Railway Line and east of the R149. The lands are flat, in agricultural use and characterised by field boundaries comprised of hedging and native tree species. There are circa 9 no. residential houses and 1 no. small industrial land use building complex located within the boundaries of the proposed LAP. A small stream runs in a west to east direction

on the southern part of the lands to a lake in Luttrellstown Demesne which drains into the River Liffey.

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

The Fingal Development Plan came into effect in March 2017 and was subject to an Appropriate Assessment, a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The Development Plan is a county level plan sitting within a hierarchy of land use plans below plans at regional and national level, which in turn are informed by European legislation. The Development Plan is consistent with the policies and objectives of plans above it within the hierarchy. The Barnhill lands, comprising approximately 45.64 hectares of land, are zoned within the Development Plan with the objective to:

RA – 'Provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved local area plans and subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure'.

Development Plan Map Based Objectives

There is an indicative road proposal traversing the land in a north-south direction linking the Ongar Road with the Lucan-Clonee Road R149 and south to the N4.

Local Objective 125 - Ensure the provision of pedestrian access between Barberstown/Barnhill and the Hansfield SDZ by means of a new pedestrian bridge integrated with adjoining development including the Hansfield rail station.

Development Plan Written Statement relating to Barnhill

- Construction of houses on these lands will be dependent on the delivery of the proposed new road and bridge over the railway
- Ensure the provision of pedestrian access between Barberstown/Barnhill and the Hansfield SDZ by means of a new pedestrian overbridge integrated with adjoining development including the proposed Hansfield rail station.
- Adoption of the Local Area Plan shall be dependent on the rail station at Hansfield being open, accessible and serviced by train

Landscape Character

The lands are located within Landscape Character Type 'River Valleys/Canal'. This Character Type is categorised as having a high value due to the visual and recreation qualities contained therein. A number of institutional and private demesnes e.g. Luttrellstown Demesne, along the valley edges maintain a rural and wooded character to the area.

Archaeology/Architectural Heritage

There are no recorded archaeological monuments in the Record of Monuments and Places located on the lands.

Protected Structures close to lands

944a – Royal Canal – Ashtown to St. Catherine's Park (Leixlip), Co. Dublin, Late 18th century man-made canal, including the tow paths, the canal channel with its stone and earth banks, and the canal locks (10th, 11th and 12th Lock)

711 – Pakenham Bridge – Late 18th Century single-arched stone road bridge over the Royal Canal

712 – Barnhill Bridge – Mid 19th Century stone road bridge with single arch over former Dublin –Little Pace Railway Line.

Natural Heritage

There are no Natura 2000 sites within the Barnhill LAP lands. The nearest designated site within 15km is the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC in Leixlip which is approximately 3km to the south-west and situated upstream of Barnhill LAP. Glenasmole Valley SAC is approximately 15km away within South Dublin. There is no direct pathway to either site given the location of Glenasmole and the fact that the Rye Water is upstream of the LAP lands. The nearest SPA to the site is South Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary SPA approximately 14km downstream of the site.

The Royal Canal corridor is a proposed NHA (pNHA) and borders the proposed LAP lands to the east.

4.0 PROPOSED LOCAL AREA PLAN

The Barnhill LAP will be a statutory plan under sections 19 and 20 of the Planning and Development Acts. It will provide a local framework for development at project level and a vision for the future of the area which is to create a place to live that is appealing, distinctive and sustainable, with minimal impact on the surrounding environment. The local area plan sits under the Fingal Development Plan in the hierarchy of land use plans and is informed by the policies and objectives of the Development Plan. It is envisaged that Barnhill will develop as a sustainable community comprised of circa 900-1150 new homes, community, leisure and educational facilities based around an identifiable and accessible new centre which will form the heart of the area. The area will benefit from a strong urban identity anchored by the mixed-use supporting hub, integrated amenities and benefitting from both good permeability and quality public transport options.

The level of development proposed is unlikely to be developed over the lifetime of the LAP (6 years or any extended period) but the LAP outlines the optimal sustainable development strategy for the area in tandem with the timely delivery of the necessary physical and social infrastructure, in particular improvements to water services and roads.

5.0 STATUTORY CONSULTATION

In accordance with Article 13A (4) of the regulations, as amended, the relevant Environmental Authorities were consulted at pre-draft stage in relation to the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan.

- ✓ Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government
- ✓ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- ✓ Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- ✓ Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- ✓ Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- ✓ Irish Water

Response from the Environmental Authorities

Following consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the relevant government departments and adjoining Local Authorities, two responses were received, one from the EPA and the other from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

EPA

A number of key aspects should be taken into account in preparing the Plan:

- Support and encourage increased use of public transport services
- Consider providing adequate walking/cycling links to support non-vehicular transport where possible
- Noise /air quality considerations
- Protect important areas of biodiversity (including associated ecological linkages) including designated sites
- Incorporate the Fingal Green Infrastructure Strategy, as appropriate
- Take into account climate adaptation and climate mitigation measures
- Support the provision of adequate and appropriate critical service infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, waste etc.)
- Protect, maintain and seek to improve water quality in the Plan area, where appropriate.
- Take into consideration all national/regional plans as appropriate.
- SEA consultation should also be conducted with the other prescribed bodies and adjoining local authorities as relevant.
- The recommendations in the EPA publication 'State of the Environment Report – Ireland's Environment 2016 – An Assessment (EPA, 2016) should be considered when preparing the Draft LAP.

Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

- The Plan should take account of the Biodiversity Convention, the Ramsar Convention, the EC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC), the EC Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147 EC), the Wildlife Acts of 1976 to 2012, and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2015. The Planning Authority should also refer to the relevant circular letters which have been circulated to Local Authorities.
- The Plan should include a natural heritage section.
- The proposed Plan should recognise that protected species also occur outside designated sites and should take note of the National Biodiversity Plan and the need to protect the County's biodiversity.
- The Plan should include provisions to encourage the management of features of the landscape and trees/hedgerows which are of major importance to wild fauna and flora such as bats and birds.
- It is important that the proposed Plan should recognise the importance of wetland habitats and ensure that such sites are protected.
- Flood plains, if present, should be identified in the Plan and left undeveloped to allow for the protection of these valuable habitats and provide areas for flood water retention.

- Ground and surface waters should be protected from pollution and the Planning Authority should ensure that adequate sewage treatment facilities are or will be in place prior to any development proposed in the Plan. The Planning Authority should also ensure that adequate water supplies are present prior to development.
- In making provision at plan level for transport, including reserving lands and integrating or upgrading routes, this should be based on information on ecological constraints, and should allow sufficient flexibility for impacts to be avoided or mitigated.
- The Plan should have a policy to protect against the accidental introduction of alien invasive species during development.
- Riparian corridors should be protected.
- Care should be taken to ensure that green infrastructure involves greening existing infrastructure rather than adding built infrastructure to existing biodiversity corridors.
- It is recommended that the natural heritage section of the Plan should also contain a policy on implementing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020.
- Consultation should also be conducted with the other prescribed bodies and adjoining local authorities as relevant

As part of the preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan a number of studies were carried out. These included a strategic flood risk assessment of the Plan lands, a SUDS strategy for the lands and a flora and fauna study (ecological assessment). On foot of these studies and a more detailed understanding of the capacity of the lands for development, the targeted population reduced from 4000 persons as indicated in the pre-draft consultation, to a projected range of 2,600 to 3,350 persons. Taking account of this reduction in population to significantly below the mandatory threshold for SEA, and the developing policies and objectives of the Draft LAP, which accord with government policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the environmental authorities, the Planning Authority is of the view that the implementation of the Plan would not have significant effects on the environment and can be screened out for SEA.

6.0 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, sets out the criteria for determining the likely significant effects of implementing

the Plan on the environment. The following section of the report will assess the proposed Plan against the criteria set out in Schedule 2A.

6.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL AREA PLAN HAVING REGARD TO:

The degree to which the proposed LAP 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 LAP sits below county level in a hierarchy of plans which set out the framework for the development of the country, region and county. The LAP provides the local framework and policy context for planning applications and decision making over the specified period of the plan within the lands identified in the Fingal Development Plan (FDP). The purpose of the LAP is to actively facilitate and accommodate the requirements of the Fingal Development Plan's policies and objectives in more detail at local level. The LAP in having regard to the site's location on existing zoned land, proximate to the Dunboyne-Clonsilla rail line and Hansfield railway station, to a proposed cycle way along the Royal Canal and the Greater Blanchardstown cycle network, with close accessibility to the existing motorway/national road network would set a sustainable framework for the development of the area.

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

The Local Area Plan is part of the National hierarchy of land use and spatial plans, including the National Planning Framework, the Regional Planning Guidelines/RSES and the County Development Plan. It is also informed by plans and strategies of the Government and other public agencies in general, such as The Retail Guidelines and The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, Nov 2009. Development Plans influence lower level land use plans, namely Local Area Plans and these in turn influence decisions on planning applications i.e projects, within the identified plan lands. The LAP will have minimal influence on other plans or programmes as the policy context is set within the higher level County Development Plan which itself was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

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

The proposed development lands are zoned for residential generating uses. The provision of an LAP here will aid in the delivery of a sustainable form of development.

The adopted Fingal Development Plan is the guiding document for development within the county until 2023 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 'RA'- which seeks 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'* in the FDP 2017-2023. The vision for this zoning objective is 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. Provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet household needs and to promote balanced communities.'*

The Development Plan sets out the role of LAPs and states that they *'seek to provide the optimal development framework to ensure the protection and enhancement of the existing areas, key features and the environment within an area, while providing for a high quality living environment through the use of robust urban design principles'*.

The purpose of this LAP is to establish a sustainable land- use framework, in a co-ordinated and coherent manner at local level, prior to the lands being developed. The development will conform to the principles, objectives and policies of the Development Plan in relation to environmental considerations. It will have a strong emphasis on promoting the sustainable development of the area, in particular, through the requirement for a Green Infrastructure Masterplan clearly outlining how the built form within the lands will take cognisance of the local environment. The proposed plan provides for active open space, passive open space where the lands are prone to flooding and where green links can be optimised, the protection of wildlife corridors and the promotion of green links.

The location of the plan lands beside a railway station at Hansfield and the Royal Canal will ensure that more sustainable forms of transport provide real

alternatives to the car reducing climate change impacts and promoting more healthy lifestyles. Other objectives within the proposed plan require sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to be incorporated into the plan and the Green Infrastructure Masterplan to ensure water quality and reduce surface water runoff. Development on the plan lands will connect to mains drainage, subject to connection agreements with Irish Water and appropriate phasing where necessary.

Environmental problems relevant to the LAP

There are no overarching environmental problems relevant to the plan lands.

An Ecological Assessment was carried out by consultant ecologist Brian Keeley. This concluded that *no habitats within the Barnhill land protected under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) were recorded within the site. None of the recorded plant species within the Barnhill lands are listed in the Flora Protection Order (1999) and The Irish Red Data Book.*

Ecological considerations for the development of the Barnhill lands were noted as follows:

- Protection of the Royal Canal
- Protection of the hedgerow along the Royal Canal boundary
- Protection of the stream passing through the lands
- Provision of protection for otters along the stream
- Protection of bat fauna by appropriate surveys and mitigation
- Protection of bird fauna by appropriate timing of any vegetation clearance
- Consideration of incorporation of vegetation into the final site layout to protect the connectivity of the lands with other adjoining lands for bird and mammal species

The above considerations were taken account of in the formulation of objectives and policies of the proposed plan. While the plan does not contain any national natural heritage designations it is adjacent to the Royal Canal which is a proposed Natural Heritage Area. The plan incorporates objectives to ensure that the boundary hedgerow adjacent to the canal is protected from development.

There are no recorded monuments or Zone of Archaeological Importance located within the site. There are no protected structures on the lands.

In relation to Natura 2000 sites there are three sites in total, two SACs and one SPA located within 15km of the lands. None of the Natura 2000 sites are located within the boundaries of the Plan lands, therefore no direct impacts will occur through land take or fragmentation of habitats. The nearest site, the Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC is located approximately 2.97km away. This Special Area of Conservation is situated on the River Rye upstream from where any outflows from the LAP lands occur. Negative impacts on this site and equally on Glenasmole SAC in South Dublin are therefore highly unlikely by virtue of distance from Barnhill and the absence of source-pathway-receptors.

The Liffey River discharges into Dublin Bay through the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA. Given the configuration of the SPA boundary this Natura 2000 site is within the 15km boundary as the crow flies whilst its pathway to the subject lands is in excess of 17 km from the Barnhill lands. The River Liffey has the potential to act as a pathway where pollutants from the subject lands may enter the SPA. However, in accordance with the Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023 measures to prevent water pollution will be incorporated into any development proposals on the lands. In line with international best practice, the implementation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs) are required within any future development of the lands to restrict surface water runoff in accordance with the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study and 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. The implementation of sustainable urban drainage on the LAP lands will ensure that the developed lands will not cause pollution within the Liffey River Catchment or further exacerbate downstream flooding and will improve water quality, therefore ensuring the protection of the downstream South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA. The Development Management process will also take these issues on board in assessing any future applications for development on site.

An Appropriate Assessment screening has been undertaken for the plan lands and the need for a full appropriate assessment has been screened out.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment carried out for the plan lands has indicated a significant amount of flooding for the 1 in 1000 year flood with climate change. On foot of the identification of the flood plain, the proposed plan has ensured that none of the lands prone to flooding are included within the development area. These lands have been identified for passive open space and wild meadows/wetlands.

Traffic generation will be local and it is not anticipated that traffic levels accruing will generate strategic or environmental issues, particularly given the location of the lands adjacent to a railway station and future cycleway along the Royal Canal. Provision has been made through the Part 8 process to allow for access to the lands via a new over bridge of the Dunboyne –Clonsilla rail line to ensure that there are adequate linkages to the existing urban road network to the north including appropriate cycle and public transport infrastructure.

The relevance of the LAP 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. Local Area Plans inform and structure land use policies in order to provide a basis for day-to-day planning decisions with an area designated for development. The Local Area 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 Barnhill LAP 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.

6.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE LAP:

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

The lands within the LAP are zoned for development and are currently in agricultural use with some limited residential and commercial use. The lands are likely to be developed out within a ten year period or shorter, the lifetime of the LAP being 6 years unless extended to a maximum of 10 years. While it is considered that the effects of development on the lands will be long term and largely irreversible the characteristics of the effects will ensure that the area develops, at a strategic and local level, in a sustainable manner.

The cumulative nature of the effects.

The proposed development of the lands at Barnhill will extend the residential and urban area of the wider Blanchardstown settlement as set out in the Core Strategy of the Fingal Development Plan. The cumulative nature of the effects of the core strategy was assessed as part of the preparation of the Fingal Development Plan in 2017. The Barnhill lands will provide for an additional approximately 900-1150 residential units and accompanying infrastructure to the Blanchardstown area. The main effects of this will be the increased population. The proposed plan takes account of the needs of this increased population by ensuring adequate facilities and infrastructure including open space and sustainable transport infrastructure and also includes for protection of the natural heritage through a cohesive green infrastructure network.

There is no potential for cumulative and in combination impacts on any Natura 2000 Site, in particular having regard to the proposed Local Area Plan and the site's location distant from any Natura 2000 site where a pathway exists.

The proposed plan has ensured, through appropriate layout, that any flooding in the area will not be exacerbated and that the 1:1000 flood plain will be sterilised from development and riparian corridors protected.

The transboundary nature of the effects.

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

The risk to human health and the environment.

There are a small number of residential houses located on the lands. In the short term, during the construction period, minor negative impacts arising from noise and dust may exist. However, through best practice measures these should be kept to a minimum. The lands are considered to be at a sufficient distance from larger established residential development so as not to have any significant adverse impacts on those areas.

Noise arising from proximity of residential units to the railway line could have an impact on human health if not properly addressed. The LAP has included objectives, on foot of recommendations from the Environmental Health Officer, to ensure that, through layout, design and use of appropriate materials noise will be within an acceptable level.

Having regard to the above, the implementation of the LAP is not likely to result in any risks to human health or the environment. The LAP will inform and structure land use policies existing at the county level through the Development Plan but implemented through this lower tier plan and providing a basis for day-to-day planning decisions. The LAP is therefore of utmost importance 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 the LAP objectives and policies 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 subject land and immediate downstream environs. The lands themselves consist of approximately 45 hectares but the actual area identified for development is significantly less than this. The population most likely to be effected are those already living within the plan lands. As there are only nine houses within the lands the population is small. Development is on-going in the lands to the north, separated by the railway line, and it may be that there is a new population living on those lands prior to development taking place on the Barnhill lands. Best practice measures in line with environmental health legislation will ensure that the effects on this population will be limited.

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

a) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.

The subject land does not form part of any proposed Natural Heritage Area, or Natura 2000 site. The nearest pNHA (Royal Canal) lies outside of the lands but runs along the eastern boundary of the lands. The nearest SAC/SPA lies 2.7km to the south-west of the lands. There are no recorded monuments or Zone of Archaeological Importance located within the site. There are no protected structures on site. The subject land comprises of agricultural fields/undeveloped land.

The hedgerow along the Royal Canal and the canal itself has been identified in the ecological study as having natural heritage value. Given its location to the

east of the lands, slightly removed from the more dense areas of proposed development, combined with policies and objectives in the plan for its protection, it is considered that the natural and cultural heritage of the plan lands are adequately protected.

b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit value.

It is anticipated that environmental quality standards and limits will not be exceeded as a result of the LAP.

c) intensive land use.

The site comprises of undeveloped agricultural land and is zoned 'RA' in the Fingal Development Plan which seeks 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 vision for this zoning objective is 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. Provide an appropriate mix of house sizes, types and tenures in order to meet household needs and to promote balanced communities.'*

The proposed land use will change the agricultural and rural nature of the existing lands from a rural landscape to a predominantly urban one. However, the plan has included strong green infrastructure objectives on foot of the fauna and flora study and the strategic flood risk assessment so as to protect the most vulnerable areas.

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

As noted above, there are no features within the site boundary which have a recognised National, European Union or International landscape protection status.

7.0 SCREENING OUTCOME

The Planning Authority is satisfied that the policies and objectives contained within the LAP will ensure that the lands will be developed in a sustainable and

environmentally sound manner. The Planning Authority is satisfied that the implementation of the LAP will not have a significant effect on the environment for the reasons set out in the screening above and in particular based on:

- The level within the hierarchy where the LAP sits below the Fingal Development Plan which was itself subject to both SEA and AA
- The Incorporation of the feedback from the environmental authorities into the policies and objectives of the plan
- The incorporation of the recommendations of the strategic flood risk assessment for the plan lands, the sustainable urban drainage study and the flora and fauna study
- The reduced population target which it is anticipated will live within the plan lands
- The size and location of the plan lands, having particular cognisance of its location beside a railway station and cycle network both proposed and existing
- The location of the plan lands relative to pathways to Natura sites

In view of the foregoing, it is considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required in respect of the LAP.

8.0 DETERMINATION

Based on this screening assessment and previous consultation with the prescribed environmental authorities the Planning Authority is satisfied that the implementation of the LAP will not have significant effects on the environment and that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required in respect of the proposed LAP at Barnhill.