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04 October 2021

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Re: Submission to Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 - 2028
Zoning Submission – Blarney GAA Club Grounds, Castle Close Road, Shean Lower, Blarney, Co. Cork.

Dear Sir/ Madam

We act on behalf of Blarney GAA Club who wish to make a submission in response to Cork City Councils invitation for submissions to the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022 (Draft CDP). This submission is in response to the Councils draft policies and objectives for the settlement of Blarney. Specifically, this submission requests that the Blarney GAA Grounds to the south of the town centre be identified for future 'mixed-use' development in the 2022-2028 Cork City Development Plan and be afforded a new ZO-05 mixed-use zoning objective.

01 BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Blarney GAA club was founded in 1884 and has a long and established tradition as a successful GAA club and a valuable community asset. The club has contributed many players to successful inter-county teams over the years and currently accommodates approximately 550 no. members ¹ ranging in ages from under 5's to adult players and elderly members. The club purchased the lands at their current home at Castle Close Road in 1957 ² where they have been operating ever since.

The grounds of approximately 2.6 hectares in area, currently consist of a 1 no. full-sized playing pitch, a smaller all-weather pitch, ball wall and clubhouse. Due to the scale of the demand for additional playing pitches the club has leased lands for a second playing pitch to the northeast of their grounds in recent years. Although this has proved to have been a positive move for the club it has always been considered a temporary solution to the growing demands for additional facilities the club faces. The secondary pitch is not immediately adjacent to the primary club grounds and there are no dressing rooms and limited car parking facilities which it shares with a local recycling point and the Clogheenmilcon Sanctuary Recreational Walk. The secondary grounds main pedestrian access is via a gated entrance near the junction of the R617 to the north. This represents an approximate distance of 700 metres via road from the existing clubhouse/dressing rooms which is particularly challenging

¹ www.blarneygaa.ie/about/

² www.blarneygaa.ie/history

when maneuvering underage teams between the two locations. An overview of the existing context of the clubs' operations is illustrated in figure 1.1 as shown



Figure 1.1 Existing Context of Blarney GAA clubs' current operations

It has become increasingly apparent that with the consistent growth of Blarney GAA at underage level and the increasingly popularity of girls and ladies' sports, that the club has outgrown its current location and require larger and higher quality facilities. The current shortage of playing pitches and facilities has placed unsustainable pressures on the resources of the club and its members which has hindered the growth of the club and its ability to serve the local community. This has resulted in unfortunate incidents whereby pitches have been unavailable for teams to train and play matches and the club has had to concede home advantage in underage games due to a lack of playing facilities. Unfortunately, there is no scope to expand the existing facilities at Blarney GAA any further given the constraints of the area.

Blarney GAA Club are currently exploring several options for the potential future relocation of the clubs' grounds to other sites in the town. The club agrees with the Planning Authority and specifically paragraph 10.261 of the Draft CDP, which recognises the importance of Blarney GAA grounds as an important recreational asset, and that the clubs' grounds should remain within the town of Blarney.

For the club to proceed with future plans to relocate to another site in the town, it is necessary for the current grounds at Castle Close Road to be re-zoned for appropriate uses. Given the sites location to the edge of Blarney town centre and short walking distance to all areas of the town, we consider that the site is an appropriate location for future mixed-use development (Zoning Objective ZO-05). Future mixed-use development at this location would cater for the needs of the projected future population of Blarney, contribute to a compact settlement and facilitate Blarney GAA club advance with plans for the relocation of their operations to another site in the town.

02 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Blarney has been categorised as an 'Urban Town' (along with Tower, Glanmire and Ballincollig) in the settlement hierarchy of the forthcoming Cork City Development Plan. Table 2.2 of the Core Strategy of the Draft CDP states that it is a target for Blarneys population is to grow to 5,581 no people by 2028, representing a 131% increase from 2016 census figures.

This population growth does not include the future delivery of the Stoneview and Ringwood Urban Expansion Areas (UEA's) which are both in the parish of Blarney and identified as tier 3 residential lands³. The delivery of both UEA's is seen as long-term aspiration for the Planning Authority with Stoneview referenced in the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) as a key growth centre on the expanded Cork suburban rail network. Regarding future growth in Blarney the RSES has targeted a residential yield of 3,555 no. additional residential units by 2031. Of these units approximately 2,600 no. will be delivered at Stoneview.

Given Cork City's future average household size of circa 2.5 persons per household⁴ it can be estimated that a population increase in excess of 8,900 no. people will be accommodated in Blarney in the coming years.

The RSES states that one of the key infrastructure priorities for the town going forward is;

'Investment in infrastructure and services (physical, social and recreational) to improve quality of life for communities.'

Paragraph 10.261 of the Draft CDP recognises the current deficiency in terms of cultural facilities in Tower and specifically references Blarney GAA club as *'the only active recreational facility of significance'* in the town.

"There is a lack of an appropriate range of cultural facilities in Blarney and Tower. The provision of such facilities should be considered as part of development proposals in the town centre. In addition, Blarney GAA club is the only active recreational facility of significance in the town, and it is considered important that this complex remains within the town."

The subject lands are identified as being within zoning objective ZO-17 'Sports Grounds and Facilities' in the Draft CDP which aims:

"To protect, retain and enhance the range and quality of sports facilities and grounds."

Regarding 'Mixed-Use Development' zoning objective ZO-05 it is an objective of the Planning Authority:

"To provide and promote a mix of residential and other uses to ensure the creation of a vibrant and sustainable urban area."

³ Tier 1 comprises serviced zoned lands that is sufficiently serviced to accommodate new development. Tier 2 lands are serviceable zoned lands that are not currently fully serviced but have the potential to become fully serviced within the life of the Plan. Tier 3, which are strategic lands necessary for long-term planning of infrastructure, given the ambition growth target set out in the NPF, but also provide for substitution of Tier 1 or Tier 2 lands that do not come forward for development within this Plan period, where appropriate.

⁴ Refer to page 320 of Draft CDP

Regarding the ZO-05 zoning objective, paragraphs ZO 5.1 and ZO 5.2 state as follows:

ZO 5.1 – *"This zoning objective facilitates the development of a dynamic mix of uses which will interact with each other creating a vibrant urban area with residential, employment and other uses. A vertical and horizontal mix of uses should occur where feasible, including active ground floor uses and a vibrant street frontage on principle streets."*

ZO 5.2 – *"The range of permissible uses within this zone includes residential, general offices, local services, conference centre, education, hospital, hotel, commercial leisure, cultural uses, civic institutions, childcare services, local medical facilities, business and technology / research uses and community and civic uses. The range and scale of uses proposed must be commensurate to the scale of the zone."*

03 ASSESSMENT

03.1 Suitability of Site to Accommodate Future Mixed-Use Development

Notwithstanding the requirement of Blarney GAA club to relocate to another site, we consider the future delivery of mixed-use development at the subject lands is consistent with the sustainable growth of the settlement. Blarney GAA grounds are situated within the established footprint of Blarney. There are already a variety of uses in the sites immediate context including the 'Castle Close Drive' and 'The Groves' residential developments, Scoil Chroí Íosa primary school and Scoil Mhuire gan Smal secondary school and Blarney Woolen Mills, all within a short few minutes' walk. Blarney town centre provides a further diversification of town centre uses is also within 5-10 minutes walking distance from the site. The grounds also occupy a prominent position at the junction of the L2794 and Castle Close Road on the southern approach road to the town centre and there exists an opportunity to provide landmark development at the site which is reflective if the sites existing context.

The subject site is approximately 5-10 minutes walking distance from the R617 which is situated on the 215 no. Cloghroe -Jacobs Island bus route (via Blackpool, City Centre and Mahon) which operates two services per hour at present. The 215 route is identified in CMATS as being on the 'Core Radial Bus Network' in BusConnects where significant improvements in frequencies are expected with most of these routes expected to operate at a frequency of 15 minutes or better.

Future mixed-use development at the site will also benefit from upgrades to the wider cyclist/pedestrian network through measures identified in CMATS. This includes the upgrade of Castle Close Road and various other routes around Blarney as primary, secondary and green cycle routes in the Metropolitan Cycle Network.

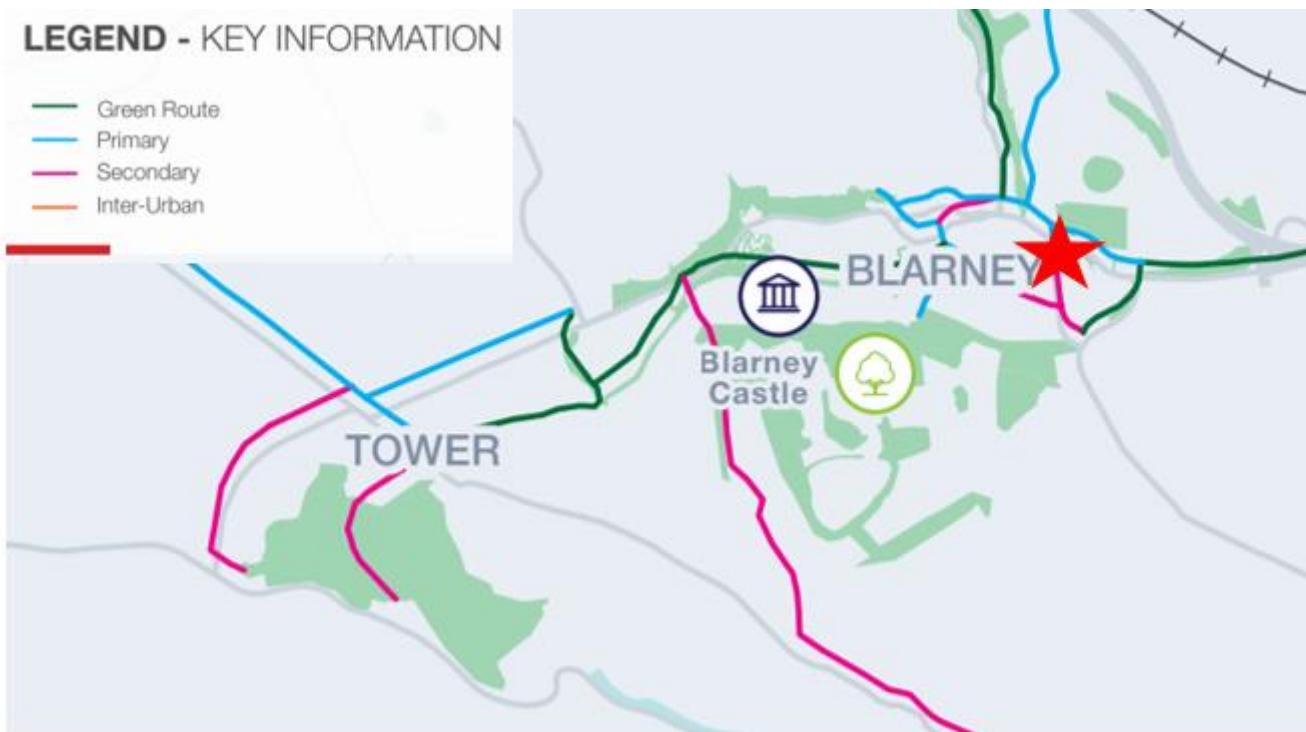


Figure 1.2 Site Location (Red Star) relative to future cycle network upgrades identified in CMATS

This results that any future mixed-use development at the site is ideally placed to benefit from future public transport and pedestrian/cyclist upgrades in Blarney and contribute to a more compact urban settlement.

We note from previous discussions that the Planning Authority queried the feasibility of a suitable access arrangement to the site, appropriate for mixed-use development. MHL & Associates have been appointed and reviewed the sites' location in its local and wider contexts and are confident that appropriate access and traffic management procedures can be delivered as part of any future mixed-use scheme in accordance with principles in DMURS.

03.2 Other Mixed-Use Developments in Blarney

We note that there are current proposals being assessed by An Bord Pleanála for the redevelopment of the former Blarney Park Hotel and adjoining lands to the west of the town. These lands are categorised as '*ZO-04 Long Term Strategic Regeneration*' in the Draft CDP and future development of the site is seen in strategic importance or the future growth of Blarney. Due to separate land ownerships at the site, separate planning applications were submitted regarding the development of the northern (20/39502 & ABP Reference: PL28.308670) and southern (20/39597 & ABP Reference: PL28.309152) areas of the site.

Cork City Council refused permission for both developments on multiple grounds in late 2020 and Blarney GAA Club fully support the redevelopment of the former Blarney Park Hotel site and adjoining lands and acknowledge that when realised, the site will serve as significant asset for Blarney. It is considered that future mixed-use development at the current Blarney GAA grounds will not impact the future delivery or viability of the ZO-04 lands. Given the future population and growth projections for Blarney during the lifetime of the Draft CDP and beyond, it is considered that there is a need to

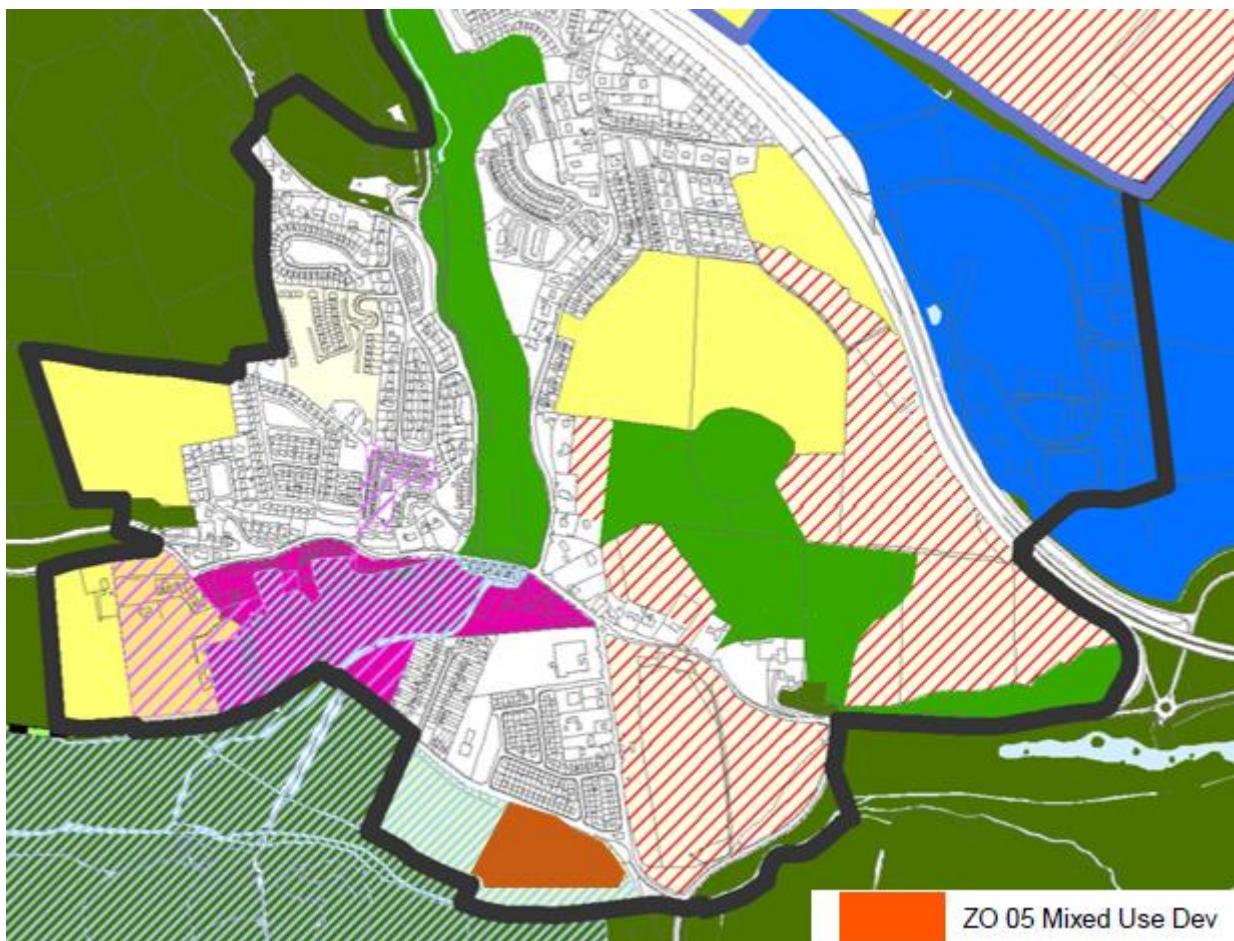
deliver a further diversification of mixed-uses in the town and it is unsustainable for the future expansion of mixed-uses in Blarney being reliant on the delivery of the former Blarney Park Hotel site alone.

It is considered that the future delivery of both the Blarney Park Hotel lands and the existing Blarney GAA grounds for future mixed -use development (ZO-04 and ZO-05) will create a more balanced settlement and consolidate the existing town centre

04 REQUEST

It is a growing concern for the members of Blarney GAA club that the demand for the existing facilities and resources which are already at capacity, will be overwhelmed by future increases in population at the settlement. As a core institution of the local community, Blarney GAA club wants to provide future residents of Blarney with facilities which are reflective of the scale of the settlement and assist in providing valuable social and recreational infrastructure. In order to achieve this a new home for the club is needed which will have the requisite space to cater for the club's future needs. This is not possible at the clubs current restricted premises.

The current Blarney GAA grounds are well placed to accommodate mixed-use development being within short walking distance to the town centre and the variety of uses already in the site's vicinity. This submission requests that the Blarney GAA grounds at Castle Close Road be identified with a new





'ZO-05' mixed-use zoning objective in the Draft CDP which will facilitate the club in relocating to a more appropriate site in the town during the lifetime of the 2022-2028 Plan.

Figure 1.3 Proposed Zoning Map

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Harry Walsh
HW Planning