

SUBMISSION TO

DRAFT OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

ON BEHALF OF

MR. TOM McNAMARA

IN RELATION TO LANDS AT

CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE

PREPARED BY

Forward Planning Section,
Planning Department,
Offaly County Council,
Áras an Chontae
Charleville Road,
Tullamore,
Co. Offaly

7th October 2020

**RE: SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT OFFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN,
2021-27 IN RELATION TO LANDS AT CHARLEVILLE ROAD, TULLAMORE.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Introduction

On behalf of our client Mr. Tom McNamara, McGill Planning Limited, wish to make this submission to the Draft Stage for the Offaly County Development Plan, 2021-27.

The submission is made in relation to c.9.5 ha (c23.5 acres) of land that is, in the majority, zoned Residential under the current Tullamore Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-16 (as extended to 2020). A small portion of the landholding at the south-eastern corner is zoned Business/Employment.

However, under the current Draft County Development Plan, 2021-27 the lands are proposed to be rezoned to “Strategic Residential Reserve” and will not be considered for development under the life of the new Plan.

Our client, who has recently purchased and assembled this landholding is preparing to submit a planning application for residential development on these lands in the near future. He is opposed to the rezoning and effective sterilisation of these lands in the Draft County Development Plan for the foreseeable future.

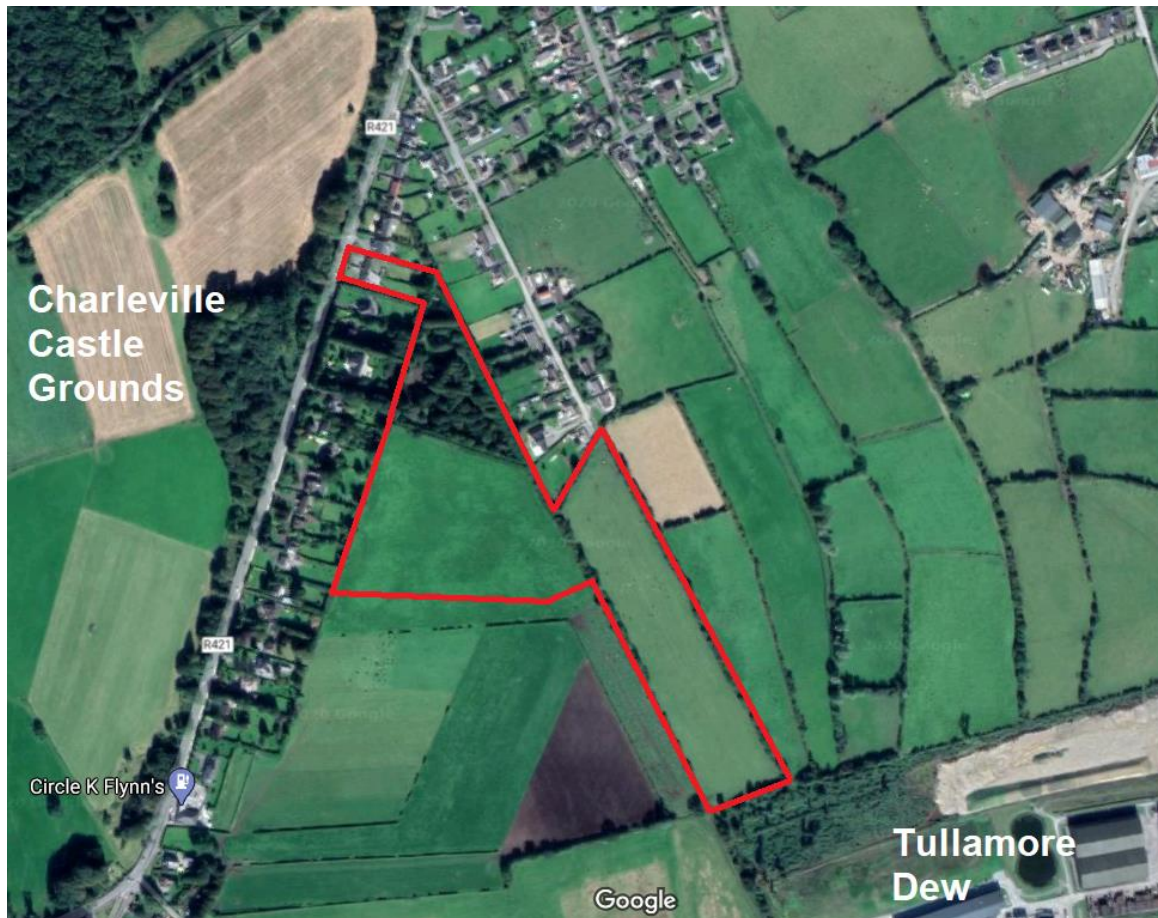
Charleville Road is a long established, residential area within Tullamore. Our client’s land assembly, for the first time, opens up the available and serviceable lands directly to the rear of the Charleville Road properties to provide for a suitably sized residential scheme which would be designed to respect and integrate with the existing character of the area.

It is vital that our client’s lands are zoned Residential in the next Plan in order to facilitate this forthcoming planning application.

The planning authority are therefore requested to zone these lands to “Existing Residential” or “New Residential” (including the rezoning of the small portion of the site at the south-east corner (c.0.85 ha) from Business/Employment to Residential).

Site Context

The lands are located to the east of Charleville Road on the south-western approach to the town.

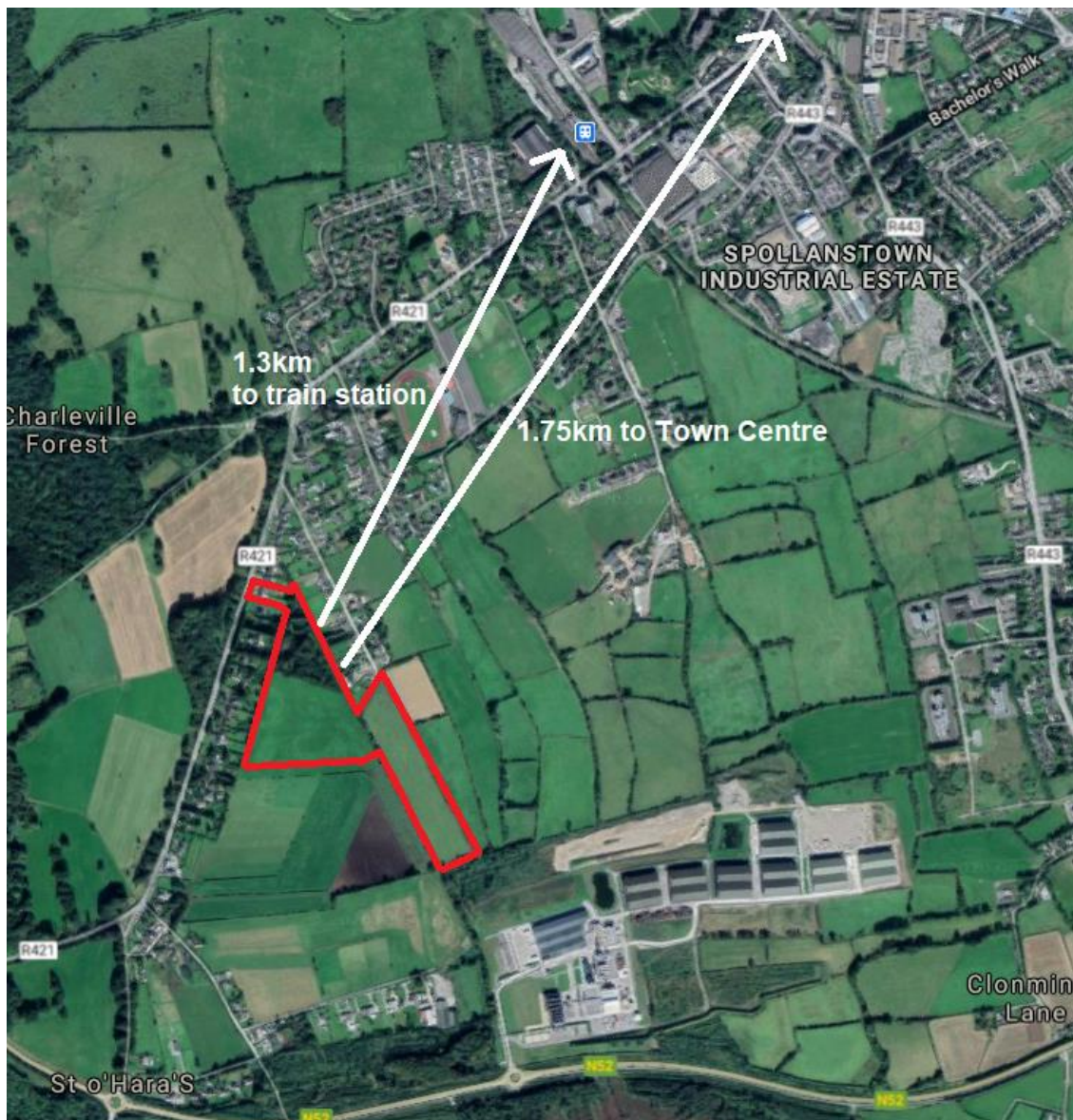


West of Charleville Road is the Charleville Demesne enclosed by a high boundary wall.

Charleville Road leads into Tullamore Town Centre c.1.75 km to the north-east with Tullamore train station located within 15mins walk of the site.

There are significant recreational resources in the area including Tullamore Harriers Athletic Club, Charleville Castle Grounds, Tullamore Golf Club, Tullamore Rugby Club, Tullamore Hockey Club, and Tullamore Equestrian Centre. There are also a number of schools proximate to the site including Scoil Mhuire located across from the train station at Kilcruatin.

A complete public footpath network is in place along Charleville Road connecting the site to the town centre and local services.



The landscape of the site is of a flat character, with some trees and hedgerows. None of the trees on site are subject to any Tree Preservation Orders.

The site does not contain, nor is located adjacent to, any Protected Structures or Architectural Conservation Areas. The site is not subject to any protected views or prospects.

The lands are not within any predicted flood risk zones.

The site can readily be connected to water services and other utilities as provided along Charleville Road to the west.



Road access can be provided within a future development proposal via the two bungalows along Charleville Road that form part of the site. A potential secondary access is also possible via St. Coleman's Terrace to the northeast.



In short, the lands are suitable and readily available for immediate residential development subject to planning permission.

Tullamore Town Development Plan 2014-20

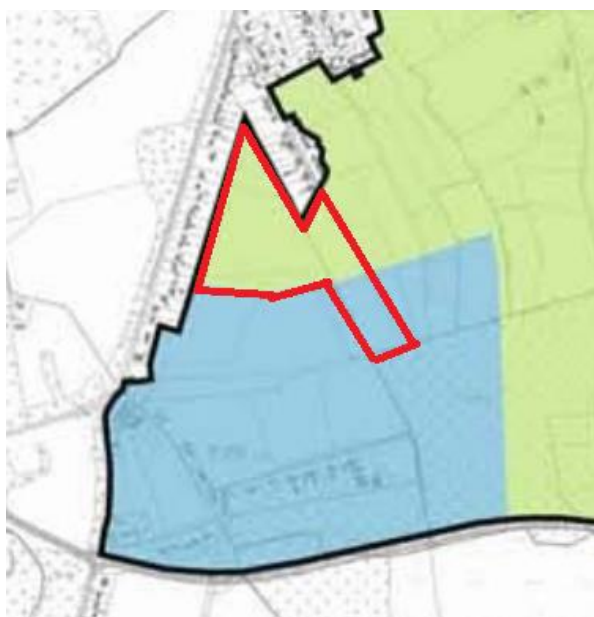
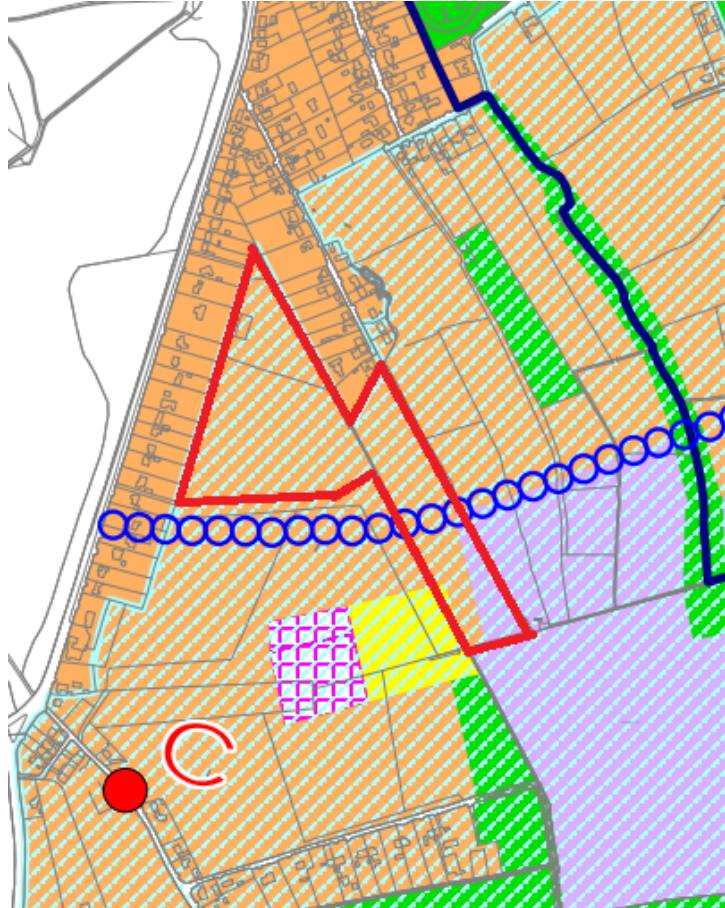
Under the current Town Development Plan the lands in the majority are zoned Residential and are located within the Tullamore Southern Environs Masterplan Area. A small portion of the landholding at the south-eastern corner is zoned Business/Employment.

The Southern Environs Area extends to c.322 ha and is located north of the N52 by-pass and between the R421 Charleville Road to the west and the railway line to the east. 154 ha of the Masterplan area (48%) is zoned Residential.




Underlying the masterplan designation is the following objectives:

- Facilitate the sustainable phased expansion of the town into the masterplan areas in a coherent manner
- Providing a suitable quantum of lands for residential use that will help meet the expansion requirements of the town.
- Residential development will be required to demonstrate a high quality of design
- Require high quality design whose style respects local character
- Providing a variety of “appropriately located densities” to be determined within each Masterplan.
- Promote high quality urban layouts which take cognisance of urban structure and grain.

- Promote connectivity to the Railway Station.
- Ensure that pedestrian and cyclist movements are catered for.



Legend

-  First Sequence/Phase
-  Second Sequence/Phase
-  Third Sequence/Phase

With development of the masterplan lands to be progressed on a phased basis, it is also noted that the majority of our client's landholding is located within the designated First Phasing Sequence and could readily be delivered first and independently of the adjoining masterplan lands to the south and east.

Draft County Development Plan 2021-2027

The current Draft County Development Plan has been prepared in advance of a new Local Area Plan for Tullamore. Objective CSO-04 of the Draft Plan states that *"during the transition period between adoption of this County Development Plan and the adoption of the Local Area Plans for Tullamore and Birr, the objectives (including zoning objectives), policies and standards in this County Development Plan shall apply to Tullamore and Birr."*

The Draft Plan acknowledges Tullamore as the county town and the administrative centre of the County and its designation under the 2019 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) as a "Key Town".

Key Towns are defined as *"large economically active service and / or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres."*

Section 2.4.5 of the Core Strategy of the Draft County Plan seeks to *"develop the designated Key Town of Tullamore of sufficient scale and quality to be a driver of regional growth, investment and prosperity"*.

Section 2.4.6 states the need for Tullamore to build a *"critical mass"* of population.

Objective SSP-07 states that *"it is Council policy to require sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in Tullamore by consolidating the built-up footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of town centre infill and brownfield sites, and encouraging regeneration of underutilised, vacant and derelict lands for residential development and mixed use to facilitate population growth."*

Despite the strong policy support for continued growth within Tullamore it is evident from the Zoning Map that the amount of the land to be zoned for residential development in the town during the life of the next Plan will be significantly less than was the case in the current Town Plan.

Whereas the Town Plan had zoned 89ha of land for residential development, Table 2.2. (Core Strategy Table) of the current Draft Plan indicates that only 43 ha of land is required to provide the housing target to 2027.

This reflects the significantly reduced population target of c.19,460 by 2027 compared to the 24,500 population target by 2022 identified in the 2010 Town Plan.

As a result, the majority of lands previously zoned for residential development in the town, including our client's lands, are proposed to be rezoned to "*Strategic Residential Reserve*" and are not supported for development during the life of the next Development Plan.

Furthermore, Section 12.4.4 of the Draft Plan states that the zoning of land as Strategic Residential Reserve will not infer any prior commitment regarding their future zoning in any subsequent development plans. In other words, the lands could be dezoned in the future.

Justification for Retaining the Residential Zoning on our Client's Land

Our client, a long established businessman and developer in the town, is surprised at the proposal to rezone and sterilise his landholding at Charleville Road, which is located within a well-established and mature residential area.

As noted above, the lands are ideal for residential development of a similar character to the area and our client intends to lodge a planning application presently.

It is acknowledged that the planning authority is required to re-examine the quantum of zoned residential land in the town as a result of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES).

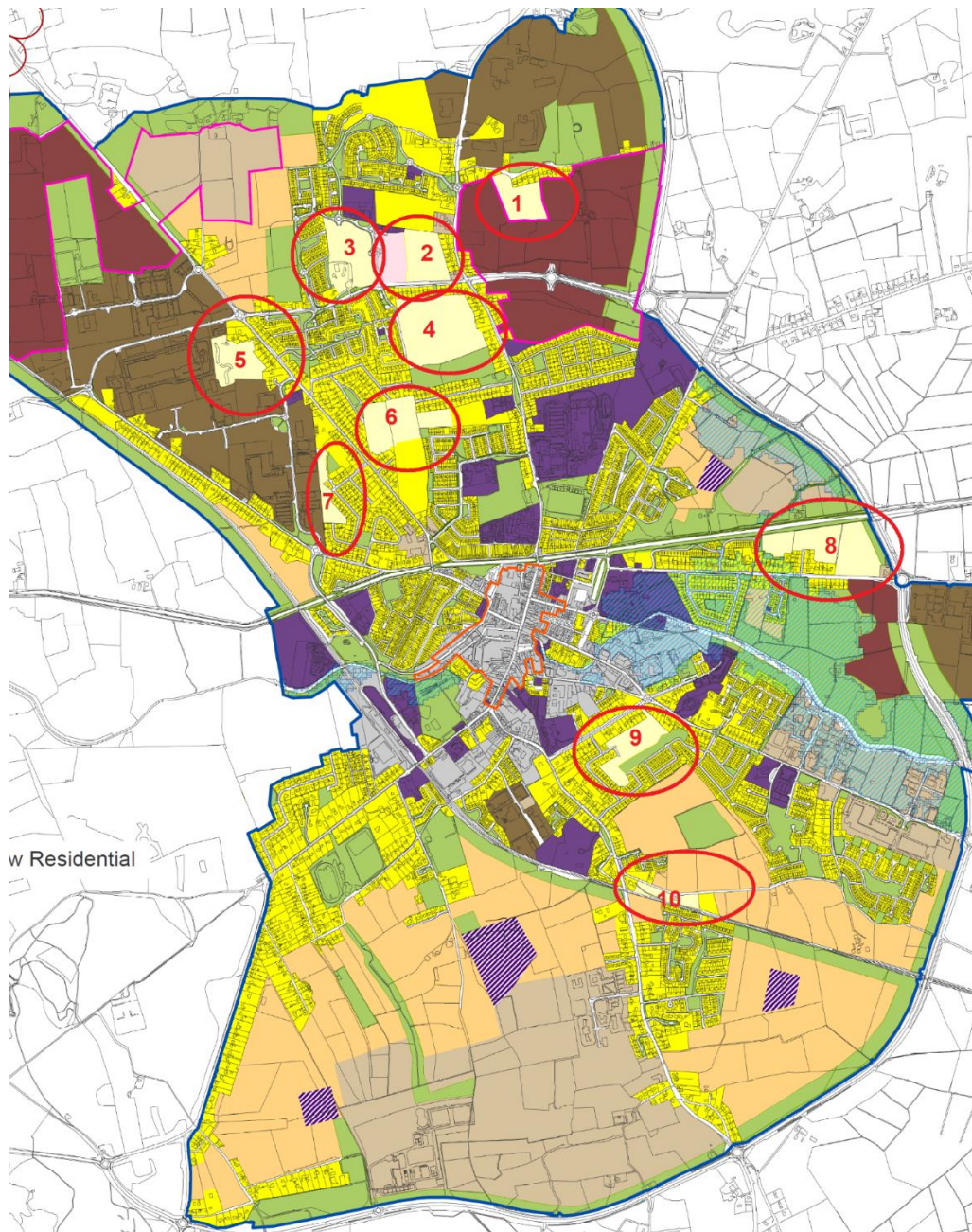
Nevertheless, we contend that our client's landholding should be reconsidered and be zoned Residential in the next County Development Plan and forthcoming LAP.

We set out our reasons and justification as follows:

1. It is unreasonable and unsustainable to rezone our client's lands to Residential Reserve

It is evident from the Draft Development Plan Zoning Map that the vast majority of the lands rezoned to Strategic Reserve are located in the southern half of the town in the Charleville and Spollenstown areas, and the lands that retain a Residential zoning for development under the next Plan are located in the northern and eastern sides of the town.

We refer to the zoning map extract below onto which we have identified 10 pockets of land zoned for Residential development. 7 of these are in the northern half of the town north of the Grand Canal with 3 are in the eastern half between the Canal and railway.



None of the lands in the Charleville and Spollenstown areas in the southern portion of the town are zoned Residential. Instead, all of these are proposed to be rezoned Strategic Reserve and will not be considered for development during the life of the next Plan.

Whilst it is acknowledged there is an LAP yet to be adopted for the town following the adoption of the County Plan, there is nevertheless a clear strategy emerging at this stage that the future growth strategy for the town is to only facilitate residential development in the northern and eastern areas of the town outside the town centre and that the southern portion of the town south of the railway line is to see little or no development.

To restrict any new residential zoning from the southern area of the town is considered short-sighted and unsustainable.

Whilst the revised population targets for Offaly and Tullamore imposed by the NPF and RSES are significantly lower than those which underpinned the previous Regional Planning Guidelines, the resulting reduced quantum of residential zoned land should not be disproportionately located on the northern and eastern parts of the town.

Development outside the town centre and edge of centre locations should be distributed evenly so that new communities have reasonable access to the town centre, public transport, schools and other social infrastructure.

An overconcentration of development in the northern portion of the town will have knock on impacts in terms of traffic congestion, loss of green space, and demand for services.

It is acknowledged that the development of the broader Southern Environs Masterplan lands in Spollenstown will require significant infrastructural investment in the future, and the amalgamation of disparate land holdings to bring forward co-ordinated and comprehensive development.

However our client's landholding should not be considered within that long term perspective given the specific context within which it is located with part of the site providing a new access potential from Charleville Road which can facilitate a medium sized residential development on these lands in the short term and which can integrate with existing development and utilise existing physical infrastructure in the area.

2. Our client fully intends to develop these lands in the short term

Our client is a developer and has assembled the current site through 3 separate land purchases in recent times. He now intends to progress a planning application on the lands for residential development.

To this end he has engaged local architectural firm, Kenny Lyons Architects, to prepare a scheme for the overall landholding and which is intended to be submitted for a planning application in the coming months.

It is therefore critical that these lands remain zoned for residential development during the life of the forthcoming plan to allow a planning application to be successful and for development to progress.

It is important that the planning authority therefore review our client's lands in an exclusive manner compared to the rest of the Southern Environs lands, given his clear intention to develop in the short term and help achieve the critical mass of population for the town going forward.

3. Our client's lands are fully serviceable in the short term and can facilitate immediate development.

Section 2.1.5 of the Draft Development Plan states that lands identified as strategic reserve are to be considered for development in future Development Plans *“when service infrastructure may become available.”*

Section 12.4.4 of the Draft Development Plan states that strategic reserve lands *“are not currently and not proposed to be sufficiently serviced to support development within the lifetime of this Plan. These lands are not developable within this plan period.”*

Whilst the development of the broader Southern Environs lands across Spollenstown, will need significant physical investment in terms of roads and water services, our clients lands are not impeded in the short term as there is the ability to connect directly to water services and other utilities as provided along Charleville Road and St. Colman's Terrace.

As noted above road access to Charleville Road can be provided via the two bungalow sites along Charleville Road which are part of the land-holding. A potential secondary access is also possible via St. Coleman's Terrace to the northeast.

Full connections to water services, electricity, telecoms, broadband etc along Charleville Road/St. Colman's Terrace is available without any dependency on the provision of major new infrastructure to service the future development lands in Spollenstown further east.

Previously a successful pre-connection enquiry was issued by Irish Water in relation to a potential residential development on a portion of this landholding as per below:

Jason Redmond
5 Lismard Court,
Portlaoise,
Co.Laois.

20 August 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Customer Reference No 9109473770 pre-connection enquiry - Subject to contract | Contract denied
Connection for 33 no. single domestic houses

Irish Water has reviewed your pre-connection enquiry in relation to water and wastewater connections at Charleville road, Tullamore, Co.Offaly. Based upon the details that you have provided with your pre-connection enquiry and on the capacity currently available in the network(s), as assessed by Irish Water, we wish to advise you that, subject to a valid connection agreement being put in place, your proposed connection to the Irish Water network(s) can be facilitated.

In the case of a wastewater connection, the Irish Water feasibility assessment does not extend to confirming that a gravity connection for your development is achievable. Therefore, you are advised that a suitably sized pumping station may be required to be installed by you on your site.

The existing foul sewer is located close to St. Colmans Terrace. A new sewer would need to be extended approx. 300m along the R421 towards this proposed development as a working gravity sewer in order to facilitate this proposed connection.

The development will be subject to Irish Water's Quality Assurance Requirements for Design and Field Inspections therefore the Developer/Agent will be required to submit their detailed design of the water services infrastructure prior to the development commencing. Design submissions can be made to cdsdesignqa@water.ie and please Cc. corhealy@water.ie, early engagement is encouraged.

The overall Quality Assurance requirements will be incorporated into a Self Lay Agreement as part of the Connection Offer from Irish Water. For more information on the Self Lay Agreement please go to the following link:
<https://www.water.ie/connections/information/connection-charges/>

The design & construction of the new proposed water and wastewater infrastructure shall be in accordance with the Irish Water Codes of Practice and Standard Details. These are available from the Irish Water website. Please note there is a requirement for wayleaves in estate roads to be provided in favour of Irish Water as part of the Self-Lay Connection Agreement.

All infrastructure should be designed and installed in accordance with the Irish Water Codes of Practice and Standard Details. A design proposal for the water and/or wastewater infrastructure should be submitted to Irish Water for assessment. Prior to submitting your planning application, you are required to submit these detailed design proposals to Irish Water for review.

You are advised that this correspondence does not constitute an offer in whole or in part to provide a connection to any Irish Water infrastructure and is provided subject to a connection agreement being signed at a later date.

A connection agreement can be applied for by completing the connection application form available at www.water.ie/connections. Irish Water's current charges for water and wastewater connections are set out in the Water Charges Plan as approved by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities.

If you have any further questions, please contact Cormac Healy from the design team on 0949043347 or email corhealy@water.ie. For further information, visit www.water.ie/connections

Yours sincerely,

Maria O'Dwyer
Connections and Developer Services

Stiúrthóirí / Directors: Mike Quinn (Chairman), Jerry Grant, Cathal Merley, Brendan Murphy, Michael G. O'Sullivan
Oifig Chláraithe / Registered Office: Tracth Colm, 24-26 Sliod Thalbóid, Baile Átha Cliath 1, D01 NP86 / Colm House, 24-26 Talbot Street, Dublin 1, D01 NP86
Is cuideachta ghlinn hálachta ainmnithe atá faoi theorainn saoirseann é Uisce Éireann / Irish Water is a designated utility company, limited by shares.
Uimhir Chláraithe in Éirinn / Registered in Ireland No.: 530963



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Éire

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www.water.ie

4. Zoning and development of our client’s land will help achieve the Strategic Objectives of the Draft Development Plan

It is our contention that the zoning of these lands for residential development during the life of the next Development Plan can help achieve the Strategic Objectives of the County Development Plan as follows:

Draft Plan Strategic Objectives	How Development of the Subject Lands Can Accord with each Objective
<p><i>Plan for a population increase in County Offaly during the plan period of 9,239 persons.</i></p> <p><i>Direct a significant proportion of the county’s development and population growth into Tullamore a Key Town as designated in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy in order to build up its critical mass and fulfil its role as a key growth driver of the county and midland region.</i></p>	<p>The development of the subject lands will help achieve the overall population target for Tullamore and allow for a better distribution of population between the northern, eastern, and southern areas of the town.</p>
<p><i>Consolidate settlements by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl. This will be achieved through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/ brownfield/ underutilised sites within the existing built-up footprint of all settlements in accordance with the principle of Compact Growth set out in the National Planning Framework.</i></p>	<p>Development of the subject lands can fully integrate with the existing residential areas adjoining providing for a more compact urban layout in the Charleville area improving the linear settlement layout and present.</p>
<p><i>Ensure better alignment between the location of population growth and employment growth. This will allow settlements to become more self-sustaining, sustainable, and balanced rather than based on long distance commuter driven activity.</i></p>	<p>The development of the site for residential to provide for continued population growth in the southern portion of the town will be proximate to a number of employment centres in the town such as Srah, Spollenstown and Central Business Parks.</p>
<p><i>Reduce car dependency and increase the use of sustainable mobility such as walking, cycling and public transport through planning for and encouraging integrated transportation and landuse.</i></p> <p><i>Achieve transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. This</i></p>	<p>Development of these lands located within an established residential area proximate to local services and public transport provides an opportunity to develop a new community with sustainable modal usage including walking and cycling.</p>

<p><i>should be facilitated through reducing the need to travel, by integrating land use and sustainable modes of transport, and by reducing the use of non-renewable resources. In line with this, promote active and healthy lifestyles through increased opportunities for walking, cycling and active sport recreation.</i></p>	
<p><i>Provide high quality housing of a sufficient scale, mix, tenure, sequence, and density, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate infrastructure, services and amenities.</i></p>	<p>Again, the potential to tap into existing physical services provides the opportunity to develop a new residential extension to the Charleville community and broaden the range of unit types and develop the character of the area.</p>
<p><i>Make more efficient use of key resources such as land, water, energy, waste, and transportation infrastructure</i></p>	<p>The utilisation of zoned, serviceable land adjacent an existing residential area is considered a sustainable use of land and preferable to continued urban sprawl and urban generated rural housing.</p>

5. Zoning and development of our client’s land can help provide a viable alternative to urban generated rural housing in the County.

The Draft Development Plan notes that a significant majority of housing planning permissions in County Offaly has been in rural areas with 34% of housing units granted during the life of the previous Development Plan being one-off houses in the open countryside:

“Development sprawl at every settlement level has manifested as scattered development, ‘leapfrogging’ and linear patterns of ribbon development, which has made it costly to align and invest in infrastructure delivery, has hampered an effective response to climate change, compounded issues such as congestion and pollution, increased commuting times and has had an overall negative impact on people’s health and wellbeing.”

The planning response to counteract excessive rural housing is to make urban locations more attractive places to live for those seeking to build in the countryside.

Whilst this is a challenge faced by smaller towns and villages, the larger towns in the County including Tullamore also have a role to play.

A large proportion of the rural housing demand is urban generated – i.e. people whose working and social life is in Tullamore, but who desire to live in a large, family house that is typically unavailable or permitted within the development boundary of the town.

A general minimum residential density of 35 units per ha is applied to future residential development in Tullamore. However we would suggest that a more nuanced approach is needed and that a number of locations be specifically identified for lower density residential development in order to satisfy the underlying demand for housing on large sites which is at present satisfied by people building in the countryside outside the town.

Such an approach is allowed for in limited circumstances in the Sustainable Residential Development Urban Areas Guidelines (2009) and has been employed by other local authorities.

One example is the Kilkenny City Development Plan 2014-2020, which identified specific existing low density locations at the edge of the city where additional adjoining vacant lands were zoned for low density at not more than 10 units per ha (4 per acre) on average and with new development required to have regard to the existing character of the area.

The Charleville Road area is an existing low density area and is typified by large houses on generous sites.

The zoning of our client's lands provides the opportunity to continue the development of the Charleville Road area for such housing typologies which in turn will provide a viable and more sustainable alternative to urban generated rural housing and will allow residents to live closer to the town, employment and services, and to be less car dependent.

At the same time, it will provide for the consolidation of the Charleville Road area and allow for more compact urban growth within the Southern Environs of the town.

Conclusion

On behalf of our client we request that the planning authority reconsider the draft proposal to rezone our client's land-holding to Strategic Reserve in the forthcoming Development Plan.

Instead the planning authority is requested to zone the land to "Existing Residential" as already pertains to the existing two bungalows on the site and all of the existing properties along Charleville Road at present. Alternatively, the local authority are requested to zone the land to "New Residential".

As per Section 12.4.2 of the Draft Development Plan the Existing Residential zoning allows for the enhancement of the quality and character of the existing Charleville Road residential area and for additional development the type of which our client proposes for the lands and would be appropriate to the character and pattern of development in the area.

Our client's landholding, being predominantly located between the existing residences on Charleville Road and St. Coleman's Terrace is considered suitable for this zoning and our client intends to progress a residential planning application on these lands shortly.

The lands do not rely on the long term delivery of significant physical infrastructure as applies to the other more extensive lands in Spollenstown to the east. Access to Charleville Road and local services is readily available.

We trust that the planning authority will consider the above submission and our client's request to zone the lands for Existing Residential/New Residential in the forthcoming County Development Plan.

Yours Sincerely,



Trevor Sadler

McGill Planning Limited