

The purpose of this submission (herein attached) is to seek designation of the subject lands to Specific Local Objective (SLO) for 'serviced sites' within the Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. The land in control of West End Properties Ltd. represents a parcel of land which is fully serviced and is significantly surrounded by Existing Residential community and open space.





Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027
Forward Planning Section
Offaly County Council
Áras an Chontae
Charleville Road
Tullamore
County Offaly

17th September 2020[www.offaly.ie/occ_mini_websites/CDP]

DRAFT OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: SUBMISSION TO THE DRAFT OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-2027
IN RESPECT OF LAND AT HEATHER GROVE, KILCOURSEY, CLARA, CO. OFFALY

West End Properties Ltd. – Site Specific Zoning Submission in regards to the Consideration of a
Specific Local Objective Designation to Land at Heather Grove, Kilcoursey, Clara, Co. Offaly

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Planning Partnership, The Bank Building, 52 Oliver Plunkett Street, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath are instructed by *West End Properties Ltd.*, details at **Appendix A** for Data Protection purposes, to prepare a submission on the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027* in relation to lands located at Heather Grove, Kilcoursey, Clara, Co. Offaly.

The purpose of this submission is to seek designation of the subject lands to *Specific Local Objective (SLO)* for 'serviced sites' within the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027*. The land in control of West End Properties Ltd. represents a parcel of land which is fully serviced and is significantly surrounded by *Existing Residential* community and open space.

The lands in control of West End Properties Ltd. represents a significant parcel of land very much associated with Clara Town, its future development potential, and its ability to significantly and crucially play a part in counter-balancing demands for once-off housing on lands which are not serviced and need motorised vehicular transportation for work, education and/or to purchase their essentials.

Regard should be had to the very relevant Planning Register Refence **06/905**, which granted permission for 126 no. houses that would have led to substantial housing development, specifically in this location. This indicates that Offaly Co. Co. has taken account of the importance of these lands in terms of residential development, previously within Clara Town. Providing an *SLO* to the subject land for *National Planning Framework* objectives as referenced further herein will be promoting the most sustainable planning and development of the subject lands by presenting an appropriate alternative to less sustainable 'urban generated' rural single site housing. The proposed *SLO* will also preclude the previous high-density proposals previously granted but never commenced other than the ground and site works that commenced.

It should also be noted importantly that, the subject lands have been identified under the *Derelict Sites Act 1990* where the site has been cleared of site development huts and securely fenced but

where the lands in an unused state have attracted uninvited occupants over the recent passage of time. The promotion and re-use of the lands for serviced sites will provide the opportunity for active development to ensure and support the removal of those occupants not currently invited on the lands.

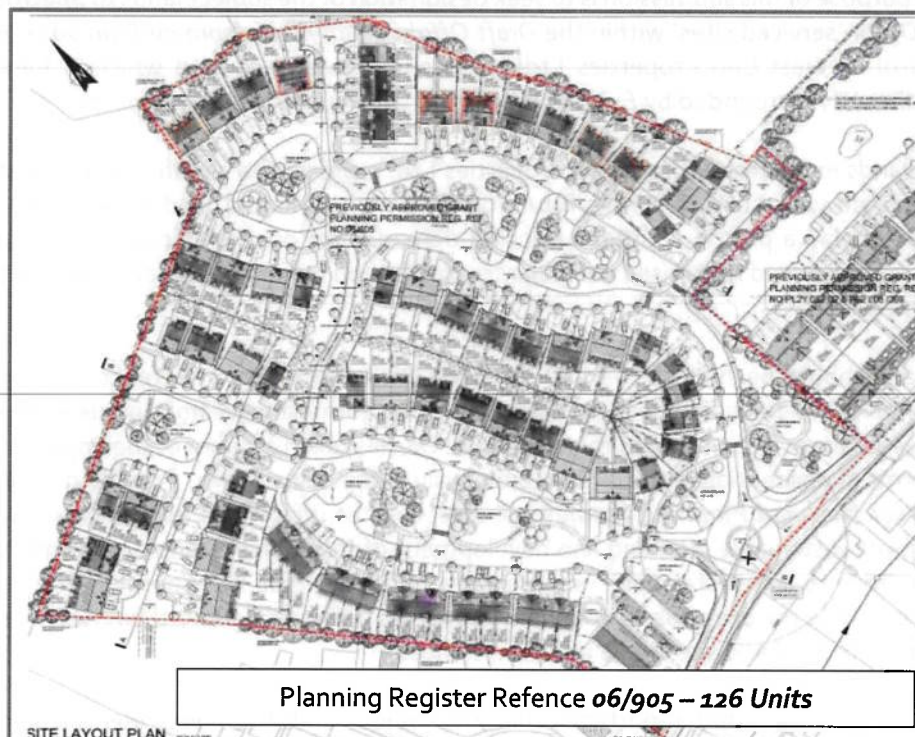
1.1 Executive Summary

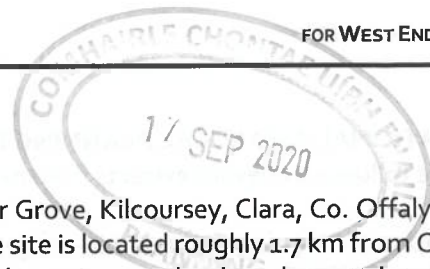
Clara is designated in the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027* as a 'Town' settlement. Accordingly, **National Policy Objective 18b** of the **National Planning Framework: Project Ireland 2040** states the following:

Develop a programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages' with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their homes and live in small towns and villages.

In this regard and whilst acknowledging the lands may not be suitable for a specific zoning, they potentially require a **Specific Local Objective** to facilitate **Policy Objective 18b** of the NPF to attract people to build their own homes in a small town with existing residential communities in the surrounding area and appropriate infrastructure which services these lands. This will support, by provision of an alternative means of site supply, the reduction of the possibility from building one-off rural housing elsewhere in the catchment area of Clara and create an opportunity to extend the existing supporting infrastructure locally, such as the footpath network, to the existing established residential areas. The location and extent of the subject land, which is in the ownership of West end Properties Ltd. is identified within **Figure 1.1**, below.

Due to the size and the existing services provided by the site, and to support the *strategic aim* listed above, we are seeking on behalf of West End Properties, a **Specific Local Objective (SLO)** for the subject land to allow people to build their own homes within a town, on land which is well serviced and reducing one-off housing occurring in the Clara area.





1.2 Site Location and Description

The subject land is located in Clara Town at Heather Grove, Kilcoursey, Clara, Co. Offaly. The land extends to an area of approximately 5.29 Ha and the site is located roughly 1.7 km from Clara Town Centre. The Clara Golf Driving Range, Clara GAA Club, 2 primary schools and a petrol station with a small shop are located within close proximity of the land area.

Figure 1.1: Aerial Image of the Subject Land at Heather Grove, Kilcoursey, Clara, Co. Offaly



Source: ESRI ArcGIS, Annotated and Reproduced under Licence No.: AR0114720 by The Planning Partnership September 2020

2.0 NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The following relevant extracts from national and local policy support the current submission.

National Planning Framework - Project Ireland 2040

NPO 6:

Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.

NPO 11:

In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

NPO 15:

Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of area that are under strong urban influence to avoid over development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.

NPO 18b:

Develop a programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages' with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages.

NPO 27:

Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design for our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments, and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027: Draft Stage Clara Town Plan

1.5 Strategic Aims for Clara

3: Deliver high quality housing of sufficient scale, mix tenure sequence and density, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate social and physical infrastructure.

4: Promote permeable, healthy neighbourhoods that focus on place making and a sense of well-being to ensure Clara is an attractive place to live and work.

6: Provision of ecological connectivity and walking and cycling infrastructure throughout the town which links all the Green Infrastructure available to residents in Clara, Clara Bog, Eiscir Riada, River Brosna, the Goodbody Reservoir and the disused Clara – Banagher railway line.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly) 2019-2031

PRO 4.78 (Page 97)

Development Plans should support the development of a 'New Homes in Small Towns and Villages' initiative which would augment the delivery of actions by local authorities, Irish Water, communities and other stakeholders in the provision of service and serviced

sites to create 'build your own home' opportunities within the existing footprint of rural settlements to provide new homes to meet housing demand.

PRO 4.83 (Page 97)

Support the consolidation of the town and village network to ensure that development proceeds sustainably and at an appropriate scale, level and pace in line with the core strategies of the County Development Plans.

Guiding Principles for the creation of healthy and attractive places (Page 205)

- Public open spaces to have good connectivity and be accessible by safe, secure walking and cycling routes

PRO 9.10 (Page 206)

In planning for the creation of healthy and attractive places, there is a need to provide alternatives to the car and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces.

Planning for recreation and open space (Page 207)

Facilitate a sufficient supply of good quality sports and recreation facilities, including networks for walking, cycling and other activities and shall maximise the multiple use of such facilities by encouraging the co-location of services between sports providers, schools, colleges and other community facilities.

RPO 9.14 (Page 207)

Local Authorities shall seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

3.0 OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2003-2009

The subject land previously had a zoning objective for **Residential** use within the *Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009*, which is indicated in **Figure 3.1**, below. Since the 2003-2009 Offaly County Development Plan, the subject lands have not been provided any zoning objective, which has allowed the land to become vacant, used as a dumping area, and consequentially identified in December 2019 as a **Derelict Site**. This has had a negative effect on the neighbouring area as unsocial activity has occurred on the site which has led to a site-hut being set alight, indicated in **Image 3.1**, below.

Clara is designated as a **Town** within the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027*, which states the following:

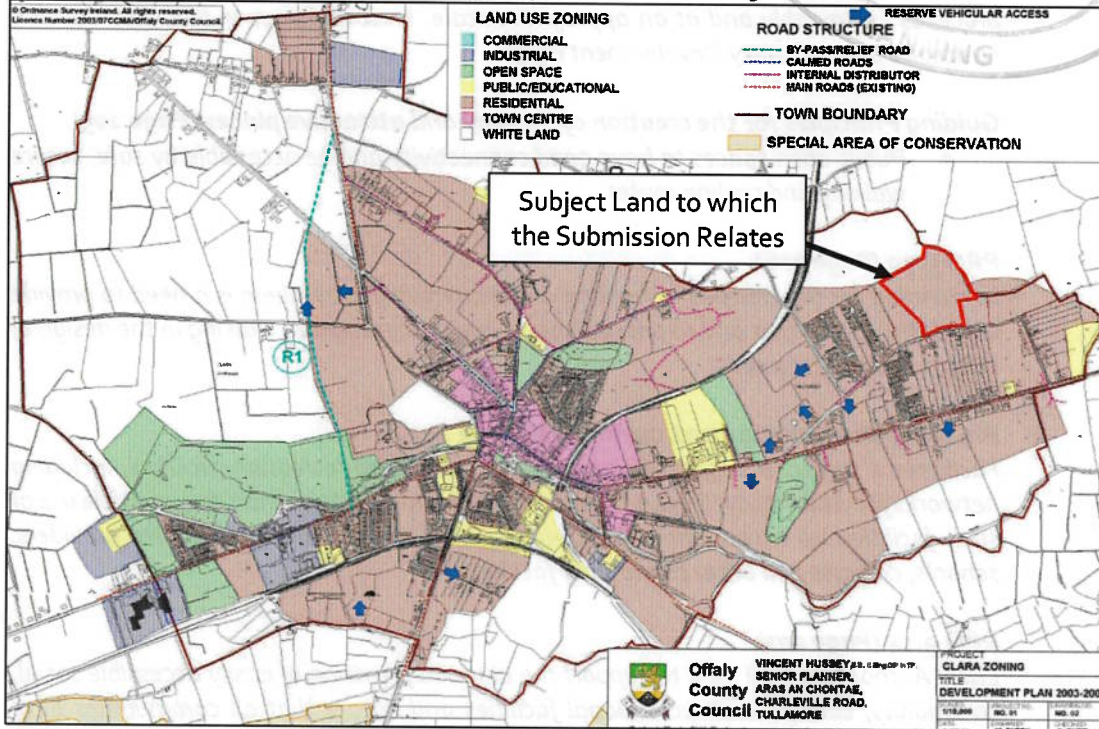
The towns have a local service and employment function. There is a need to promote regeneration and revitalisation of towns and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for the surrounding rural areas. Those in proximity to the larger urban centres have experienced significant growth and urban generated pressures and require the levels of growth to be managed and to ensure that there is a requisite service level for the existing population.

(Page 46 of the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027*).

The subject site is a perfect area for regeneration and revitalisation as it has the appropriate infrastructure to support the surrounding rural area by allowing people to develop their own homes and reducing unsocial activity to occur on the subject site. This will also have a positive impact on the residential neighbouring areas as people will feel safer by preventing unsocial behaviour taking

place on the subject site and providing a cleaner environment due to the dumping which is currently being carried out on the site.

Figure 3.1: Residential Land Use Zoning Objective for the Subject Land



Source: Clara Zoning Map extracted from the *Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009*

Image 3.1: Photograph of the Site-Hut that has been set alight



Source: Photograph taken by The Planning Partnership on 24th January 2020.

As indicated in **Image 3.1**, above, there has been frequent dumping on the subject site and the site-hut as pre-existed prior to the clearing of the site was partially burnt out. The fencing and hoardings associated with its status as a development site from the previous successful planning application were until recent works to clear and upgrade the site presented a poor external image to the site.

Image 3.2: Negative Effects of the Subject Site on the Surrounding Area



Source: Photograph taken by The Planning Partnership on 24th January 2020.

In **Image 3.2**, above, shows that the subject site is adjacent to a residential area with power lines and street lighting indicating how well the subject is serviced. However, there is currently a negative presence of the subject site on this location making the area feel unwelcomed and unsafe for children to walk from one housing estate to another.

Image 3.3: Broken Connection between the Footpath due to the Subject Site



Source: Photograph taken by The Planning Partnership on 24th January 2020.

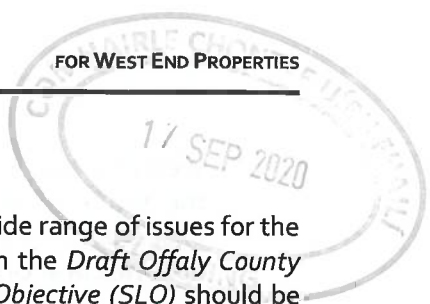
Indicated in **Image 3.3**, above, the established footpath is disconnected due no development on the subject site. The road is very narrow making it unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists to use, making the motor vehicle to be the dominant transportation use in this area. By allowing residential development to occur in this location, the footpath will be fully connected, increasing active transportation for all users in a safe and friendly environment.

The following imagery presents the Site Resolution Works undertaken by the landowner West End Properties to enable the site to be removed from the Derelict Sites Register of Offaly County Council and as would be supportive of greater active land management of the property in association with the presented Specific Local Objective presenting the lands available for 'serviced sites' as a viable and more sustainable alternative to single site (unserviced) once-off urban generated rural housing.

Images - Site Resolution Works – Boundary and Clearance



Source: West End Properties 20th March 2020



4.0 PROPOSED ZONING FOR THE SUBJECT LANDS

Taking into consideration that the subject lands are serviced, causing a wide range of issues for the surrounding neighbourhood areas and as currently un-zoned land within the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027*, we herein present that a *Specific Local Objective (SLO)* should be placed on the land. This *SLO* will be in compliance with the *National Policy Objective 18b* to encourage people to build their own homes ‘serviced sites’ within proximity to a town and where the land is well serviced.

We present that the subject land is not intended to undermine the natural area which surrounds Clara Town, but to create opportunity to attract people to the town, present a viable sustainable alternative to once-off housing from occurring within the catchment area of Clara and to extend the existing services as include footpath provision to the subject site including the adjacent residential area. Ultimately the residential development of the Heather Grove Area will provide better opportunities to consolidate and encourage development within the current development plan boundaries in a sustainable manner, consolidation and strengthening opportunities being experienced in tandem.

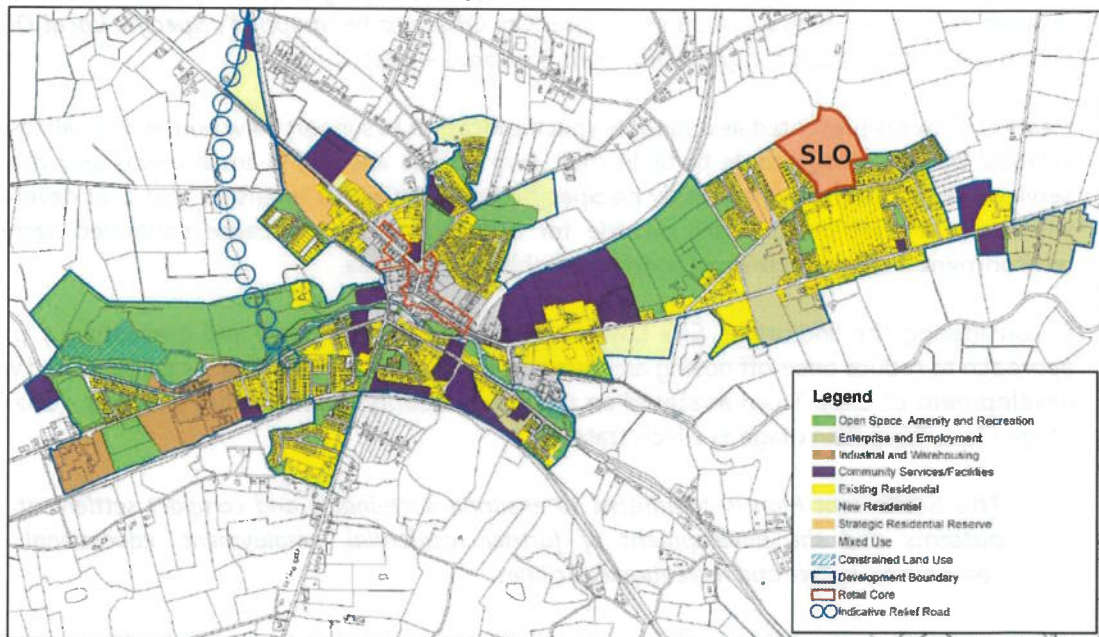
We respectfully submit that the presence of a ‘*specific local objective*’ will restrict unnecessary and unwanted overdevelopment and ensure that the proposed development does not undermine the projections and objectives of the Development Plan *Core Strategy*.

Recommendation: - We suggest *Plan and Site-Specific Plan objectives* such as, follows:
Protect and enhance the sustainable development of Clara Town.

Develop the site in accordance with the policies of the National Planning Framework 2040 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, with the aim to create new homes in small towns and villages to allow people to build their own homes in these areas and preventing one off housing.

To support and extend existing infrastructural provision providing best use of available lands and economic use of resources as promotes cycle paths and amenity use of the lands known as Heather Grove – towards Clara Town Centre which would integrate with the wider community.

Figure 4.1: Proposed Specific Local Objective



Source: Clara Zoning Map extracted from the *Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027: Draft Stage Clara Town Plan*, reproduced and annotated by The Planning Partnership under OS Licence No.: AR0114720

West End Properties has developed an indicative 'Site Layout' proposal which is intended to express the future residential development of the lands as can advance the planning authorities understanding of the requirements and intentions of the landowner accordingly to request a *Specific Local Objective* as indicated in Figure 4.2, below.

Figure 4.2: Indicative Site Layout Proposal for the Heather Grove Area



Source: West End Properties Ltd.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In summary, this submission is made to encourage and highlight the subject lands availability as located at Heather Grove, Kilcoursey, Clara, Co. Offaly to be 'mapped'; *Specific Local Objective* within the *Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027*.

Heather Grove is presented as a suitable specific location to support 'new homes in small towns and villages' by attracting people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages on serviced sites, but there is currently no *Specific Local Objective* to ensure that over development will occur or that the site will provide for active uses as may cause continued detrimental environmental effects to the surrounding neighbourhood area.

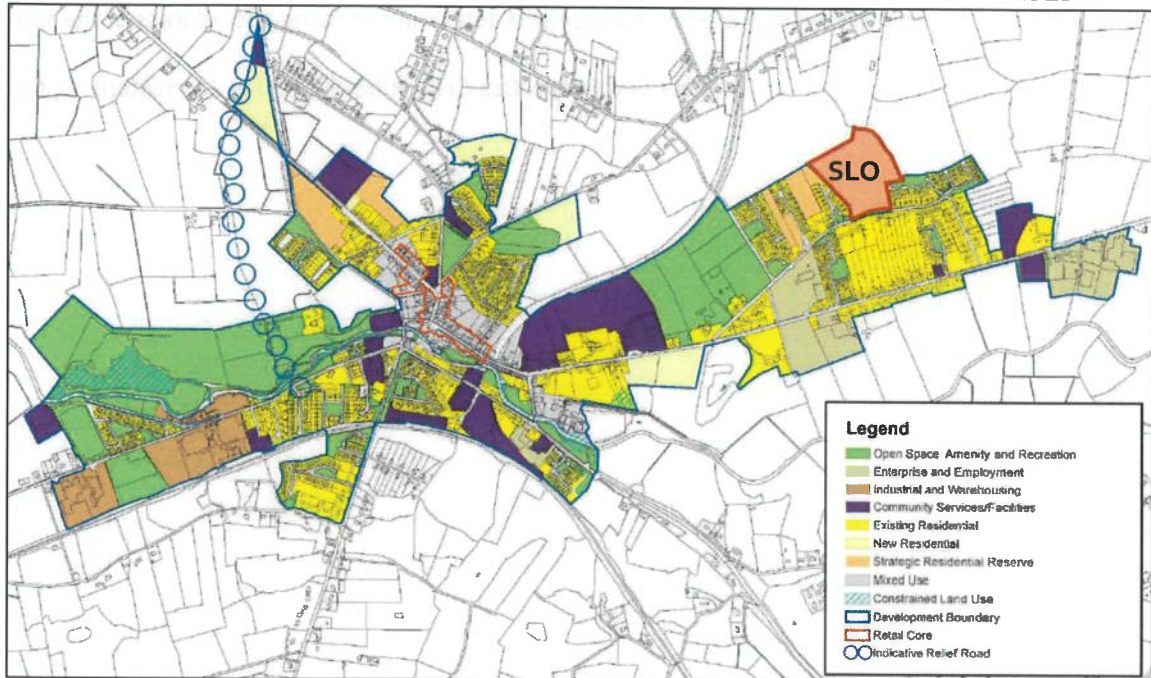
In considering the 'indicative' Site Layout plan of the subject lands and presenting a 'plan led' approach to reduce once-off hosing and increase population density objectives associated with the development of Clara Town as stated on the *Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027: Draft Stage Clara Town Plan* (page 2) which states:

This Settlement Plan is committed to ensuring sustainable and compact settlement patterns and the development of further residential, employment, educational, community, leisure and recreational facilities.

We respectfully present that such a proposal will not undermine the natural setting surrounding Clara as it will create a compact settlement neighbourhood area, increase residential development

activity in a sustainable manner and reduce the negative effects the site currently projects onto the neighbouring community.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS TO DRAFT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ITEMISED



Source: Clara Zoning Map extracted from the *Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027: Draft Stage Clara Town Plan*, reproduced and annotated by The Planning Partnership under OS Licence No.: AR0114720

To ensure the plan-led development of the subject lands, a site-specific objective is proposed as follows:

Recommendation: - We suggest *Plan and Site-Specific Plan objectives* such as, follows:
Protect and enhance the sustainable development of Clara Town.

Develop the site in accordance with the policies of the National Planning Framework 2040 and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, with the aim to create new homes in small towns and villages to allow people to build their own homes in these areas and preventing one off housing.

To support and extend existing infrastructural provision providing best use of available lands and economic use of resources as promotes cycle paths and amenity use of the lands known as Heather Grove – towards Clara Town Centre which would integrate with the wider community.

It is respectfully contended that by providing Heather Grove, Kilcoursey with this ***Specific Local Objective*** for the development of serviced sites within Clara Town, it will enable the best use of urban lands and most economic use of infrastructural investment and counterbalance demands for once-off housing developments. We look forward to your consideration of same and trust if there are any outstanding items you might refer back to ourselves.

Yours faithfully


Mark Brindley
 Principal
 The Planning Partnership



APPENDIX A The provisions of the Data Protection Act

The following provides the requisite details of the name and address of the submission:

West End Properties Ltd., Hibernia House, Monasterevin, Co. Kildare

