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Additional Information
SD22A/0347 28/6/23

South Dublin County Council
Planning Department
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24
D24 A3XC

Date: 28th June 2023

RE: REPSONSE TO REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN RESPECT OF A PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 42 UNITS AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS AT A 2.9 HECTARE SITE TO THE EAST OF STONEY HILL ROAD, RATHCOOLE, INCLUDING PART OF STONEY HILL ROAD AND THE ROADWAY AT THE EASTERN SIDE OF RATHCOOLE PARK

REG. REF: SD22A/0347

Dear Sir/Madam,

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On behalf of the applicant, Romeville Developments Limited, we refer to the above referenced planning application and a request for additional information (12 Items) from South Dublin County Council dated 26th October 2022. We enclose herewith a response to the request for additional information.
- 1.2 Due to the nature of the request for additional information, Virtus on behalf of the applicant requested a meeting with South Dublin County Council to seek clarification on a number of items on the request, before a formal response was made. It is considered that a meeting would have been beneficial to both the applicant team and SDCC. In this regard, we wish to express our disappointment that a meeting could not be facilitated by South Dublin County Council to contribute to a more informed decision making process.

2.0 Enclosures

2.1 The following enclosures are included with this response:

- 6 no. copies of this Cover Letter

1

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- 6 no. copies of a Masterplan Drawing (Dwg. No. (P)020)) by Wilson Hill Architects, in response to Item 1
- 6 no. copies of Architectural Drawings and Drawing Register by Wilson Hill Architects, in response to Item 2
- 6 no. copies of a Letter by Aecom, dated 14th April 2023, in response to Item 4 and Item 9
- 6 no. copies of Civil Engineering and Roads Drawings and Document Issue and Archive Record by Aecom, in response to Item 4 and Item 9
- 6 no copies of Landscaping Drawings and Assessments in response to Items 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 by Doyle and O'Troithigh
- 6 no. copies of Sustainable Urban Drainage Hydrogeological Assessment in response to Item 4 (iv, a) and Memorandum / Statement in response to item 10, by Enviroguide
- 6 no. copies of Technical Note in response to Item 11, by Malone O' Regan

3.0 Background and Context

Context

- 3.1 Planning permission is being sought by the applicant and landowner, Romeville Developments Ltd., for a housing development of 42 no. 3 bedroom units and all associated infrastructure and services, following demolition of an existing property and outbuilding, on land to the east of Stoney Hill Road, Rathcoole.
- 3.2 The subject planning application site ('subject site') is zoned RES-N in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028, where residential development is permitted in principle. The subject site is also, in part, zoned RU, where open space is permitted in principle. The subject site forms part of a wider landholding that cumulatively has Strategic Housing Development (SHD) planning permission for 204 no. residential units (151 no. houses, 53 no. apartments), childcare facility and associated site works, following demolition of existing buildings (Ref. ABP-307698-20).

SHD High Court Judgement

- 3.3 In January 2021, the High Court granted leave for judicial review of the SHD planning permission on the subject site. A decision to quash the planning permission, on two grounds, was made by the High Court in June 2023. These two grounds relate to density and loss of hedgerows. On density, this issue is fully resolved in this Phase 1 application

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with the proposed density being within the density range for such sites. This is described more fully below.

3.4 In relation to hedgerows, we provide a detailed assessment of this issue below.

Hedgerows

3.5 In terms of hedgerows, according to the High Court Judgement, the SHD proposal resulted in a material contravention under G2 Objective 1, G2 Objective 2, and G2 Objective 3 of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2016 – 2022. It is of material importance to note that whilst the judgement was made under the 2016 – 2022 Development Plan, the operative County Development Plan is now the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 and as such these specific objectives are no longer relevant.

3.6 It is respectfully submitted that the development now proposed does not materially contravene hedgerow related objectives in the current County Development Plan. We provide a commentary on each relevant reference to 'hedgerow' in the current County Development Plan at Appendix 1.

3.7 Related to the above, we respectfully submit that a single policy or objective of the Development Plan cannot be read in isolation from other policies or objectives in a Development Plan. A global approach to the Development Plan must be taken and a balance struck between often competing and contradictory policies and objectives, as naturally appear in every Development Plan, taking into account the overall aim of the Development Plan, the particular characteristics of the site, and other key and relevant considerations.

3.8 We also wish to specifically draw attention to the significant positive biodiversity benefit that the proposed development will deliver in the short term, compared to the current biodiversity value on the site. We note the following in particular:

- Existing hedgerows to be removed on the site have been surveyed and have been confirmed as being of 'low' ecological value.
- The existing hedgerows are largely considered unmanaged, allowing for potential for invasive species if not regularly maintained. Retained and augmented hedgerows as part of a wider scheme will feature appropriate maintenance and

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managed of the hedgerows in an ecological sense. We note the following commentary at 4.3 of the arborist's report submitted with the planning application:

"Most of these hedgerows have not received much maintenance in recent years and have been allowed to grow out wide with scrub species such as Bramble encroaching out. In some areas, the quality of the hedges has also been affected due to this lapsed management and grazing livestock".

3.9 We also wish to draw particular attention to 'area based' calculations of proposed removal and proposed retained hedgerow:

▪ Area of tree and hedgerow existing on site	=	1,742 sq.m.
▪ Area of tree and hedgerow for removal	=	792 sq.m.
▪ Area of tree and hedgerow for retention	=	950 sq.m.

3.10 Finally, the significant new planting of trees, woodland mix, Miyawaki planting, wildflower meadows and other ecological and biodiversity measures is hugely significant and extensive as part of the proposal:

- Proposed Miyawaki planting (mini woodland) = 740 sq.m.
- Proposed New specimen trees = 408 sq.m.
- Proposed Woodland mix = 1,884 sq.m.
- Proposed Woodland edge = 305 sq.m.
- Proposed Waterside planting/aquatics = 413 sq.m.
- Proposed wildflower mix (dry meadow) = 3,000 sq.m
- Proposed wetland meadow mix = 939 sq.m
- Proposed naturalised bulbs = 383 sq.m

Density

3.11 Density was addressed in detail in the Planning Statement submitted with the planning application. The response to the request for additional information does not change the site area nor unit numbers and as such there is no change in the development density. The key points on density are set out below.

3.12 There are a number of factors which influence the development density on the site, including the following:

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- (i) The application site is the first phase of the wider development area (subject to separate planning permission) and which is following the precedent set by the granted SHD permission. The built form on this part (i.e. the part now subject to this planning application) of the SHD site was one of more traditional two storey housing.
- (ii) The sloping nature of the site and the requirement to integrate development with the topography of the site, having regard to potential negative visual impact;
- (iii) The existence of mature trees and hedgerows and the desire to retain these insofar as is possible and practicable;
- (iv) Restrictions on building height due to the site being within the catchment of Casement Aerodrome; and
- (v) The nature and character of the existing surrounding development which is dominated by traditional two storey housing.

3.13 The net density of development should be calculated in accordance with Appendix A of the Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009), which provides the following guidance on the calculation of net densities:

"A net site density measure is a more refined estimate than a gross site density measure and includes only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses. These will include:

- *access roads within the site;*
- *private garden space;*
- *car parking areas;*
- *incidental open space and landscaping;*
- *children's play areas where these are to be provided.*

It therefore excludes:

- *major and local distributor roads;*
- *primary schools, churches, local shopping etc.;*
- *open spaces serving a wider area; and*
- *significant landscape buffer strips".*

3.14 Based on the above, the following is the net site area for the purposes of density calculation:

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▪ Gross site area:	29,076 sq.m
▪ Minus RU zoned lands and Stoney Hill Road lands within red line:	- 14,902 sq.m
Remaining (net) site area:	14,174 sq.m (1.417 ha)

3.15 This provides for a net density of 30 units per hectare.

3.16 It is noted that a higher development density is achievable on other parts of the wider lands, subject to separate planning permission.

3.17 Were the site to be considered an edge of centre site to a small town/village for the purposes of the Sustainable Residential Development Guidelines (2009), for edge of centre sites in 'smaller villages', the Guidelines state that:

"The emphasis will be on achieving successful transition from central areas to areas at the edge of the smaller town or village concerned. Development of such sites tend to be predominantly residential in character and given the transitional nature of such sites, densities to a range of 20-35 dwellings per hectare will be appropriate including a wide variety of housing types from detached dwellings to terraced and apartment style accommodation".

3.18 The development density of this Phase 1 application clearly falls within that density range.

4.0 Amendments to Proposed Development

4.1 Having considered the request for additional information with the design team, the following are the key adjustments which have been made to the proposed development:

- (i) Boundary walls at key locations have been increased in height to 1.8 metres to ensure privacy
- (ii) A review of the landscaping strategy now allows for new soft landscaping (planting (trees and plants)), hard landscaping (pavements and surfaces), boundary treatments (fencing) and play and exercise equipment.
- (iii) A reconsideration of the SUDs strategy now allows for a combination of swales, filter drains, a pond and a stormtech attenuation tank to attenuate the overland flow catchment and surface water generated from the development. For

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hardstanding areas, features such as permeable paving, water butts, grasscrete and filter drains are incorporated. Tree pits are incorporated where possible.

4.2 No amendments have been made to the number of units proposed.

5.0 Response to Request for Further Information

5.1 We provide a response below to each item raised on the request for further information.

Item 1 - RES-N Lands

5.2 The request reads as follows:

"The preparation of a wider masterplan for the landholding and future phases is requested, to allow SDCC to assess whether or not this development would prejudice future development on the adjoining lands. The applicant is requested to submit such a masterplan.

Note: The preceding decision currently under judicial review is not assumed or used as precedent for this development, so as not to compromise the standing of this assessment pending the conclusion of that review".

5.3 We enclose a Masterplan. This Masterplan demonstrates how future phases of development on the RES-N zoned lands could be delivered. Whilst it is accepted that the previous decision by An Bord Pleanála to grant permission for the overall RES-N landholding is currently under judicial review, it is considered that this permission still forms a planning precedent and is informative as to what will be considered an acceptable layout on the overall lands. The Masterplan follows the key principles established in the previous decision.

5.4 We wish to highlight in the strongest possible terms that none of the adjoining land outside the control of the applicant is zoned for residential purposes and therefore is unlikely to come forward for development in the short to medium term.

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Item 2 - Layout

5.5 The request reads as follows:

“The applicant is requested to reconsider the following aspects of the scheme layout:

- (a) *The applicant should consider alterations to the east and west ends of each block to provide wraparound units and west/east-facing mid block units, minimising instances where gardens side/back onto the street, and maximising active frontage onto streets and open spaces.*
- (b) *The submitted site section shows that the garden walls would not be tall enough to ensure privacy at some points along the central street.*
- (c) *Additional site sections or landscape details should specify the proposed boundary treatment between the rear gardens, specifically whether larger retaining walls are being utilised to step down the hill”.*

5.6 In relation to item (a), the proposed scheme includes dual frontage wrap-around units (units L2, F3, F4), to the east and west ends of block as illustrated on the proposed site layout plan 2227-(P)107A – Proposed Site Layout Plan. The photomontage included on the 'Proposed Central Avenue Details' drawing (P)350, and extract included below, illustrates the wrap around units along the central street where they maximise the active frontage.

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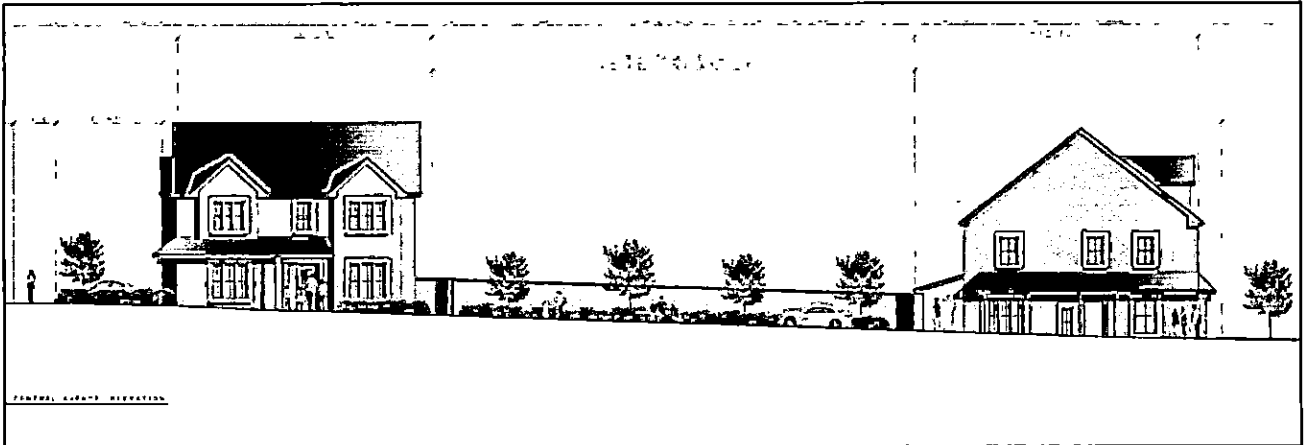


Figure 1: Extract from Wilson Hill Architects Dwg. No. P350

- 5.7 In relation to item (b), the submitted site section (Wilson Hill Architects Dwg. No. (P)312A) has been amended to show the garden walls are all to be 1.8 metres tall to ensure privacy at some points along the central street.
- 5.8 In relation to Item (c), please refer to accompanying landscape details specifying boundary wall treatment between the rear gardens.

Item 3 – Public Realm

- 5.9 The request reads as follows:

“There are concerns with the lack of information submitted in relation to the landscape scheme for the proposed development. The applicant is requested to provide detailed landscape design for the proposed development. The applicant shall provide a fully detailed landscape plan with full works specification, that accords with the specifications and requirements of the Council’s Public Realm Section. The applicant shall provide the following additional information:

- i. *The applicant shall submit a comprehensive Landscape Design Rationale, the objective of this report is to describe the proposed landscape and external works as part of this proposed housing development.*

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- ii. *The applicant is requested to submit a fully detailed Planting Plan to accompany the landscape proposals for the entire development. The applicant should propose native species where possible to encourage biodiversity and support pollinators within the landscape.*
- iii. *The landscape Plan shall include hard and soft landscape details; including levels, sections and elevations, detailed design of SUDs features including swales and integrated/bio-retention tree pits.*
- iv. *Significantly reduce the impacts of the development on existing green infrastructure within and adjacent to the proposed development site*
- v. *Demonstrate how natural SUDs features can be incorporated into the design of the proposed Development*
- vi. *Submit green infrastructure proposals and a green infrastructure plan that will mitigate and compensate for the impact of the proposed development on this existing site and show connections to the wider GI Network. These proposals should include additional landscaping, SUDs measures (such as permeable paving, green roofs, filtration planting, above ground attenuation ponds etc) and planting for carbon sequestration and pollination to support the local Bat population.*
- vii. *The applicant shall provide play and recreation opportunities for children and teenagers as appropriate to the scale and character of proposed development. Proposals shall be submitted in the form of a Proposed Play Rationale and Layout Plan (separate to, but related to the Landscape Masterplan), using Nature-based Solutions. The Layout Plan shall comprise the following:-*
 - *showing types of play and play area(s),*
 - *target age groups,*
 - *landform (included levels and contours) and boundaries,*
 - *gates and planting,*
 - *design and construction details of play opportunities and facilities in respect of landform, planting, boundaries, equipment and safety surface.*
 - *All play equipment and ancillaries shall conform to European Standards EN 1176 and EN 1177 Playground equipment and surfacing, and to BS/EN standards 2017/18 for Playground Installations for HIC (Head Injury Criterion) and CFH (Critical Fall Height)".*

5.10 Please refer to the landscaping drawings, reports and specifications by Doyle + O'Troithigh, in response to Item 3.

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Item 4 - SUDs

5.11 The request reads as follows:

"The use of an underground tank under public open space is not supported by County Development Plan policy. The development should utilise natural SUDs to the extent that underground storage is not needed, if possible. The SUDs layout should reflect the pre-existing water flows on site, and greenfield run-off rates should be achieved, and the direction of run-off maintained where this is appropriate.

The applicant is requested to submit the following:

- (i) *A drawing to show how surface water shall be attenuated to greenfield run off rates.*
- (ii) *Submit a drawing to show what SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) are proposed. Examples of SuDS include permeable paving, filter drain, bio-retention tree pits, rains gardens, swales or other such SuDS.*
- (iii) *SUDs Management - The applicant is requested to submit a comprehensive SUDs Management Plan to demonstrate that the proposed SUDs features have reduced the rate of run off into the existing surface water drainage network. A maintenance plan should also be included as a demonstration of how the system will function following implementation.*
- (iv) *Additional natural SUDs features should be incorporated into the proposed drainage system for the development such as bio-retention/constructed tree pits, permeable paving, green roofs, filtration planting, filter strip etc. In addition, the applicant should provide the following:*
 - a. *Demonstrate how the proposed SUDs scheme has been designed to incorporate and adhere to the natural route of groundwater through and out of the site.*
 - b. *Demonstrate how the proposed natural SUDs features will be incorporated and work within the drainage design for the proposed development.*
 - c. *Tree pits incorporating SUDs features should include a deep cellular water storage/attenuation area below the surface which acts as a soak away allowing surface water to infiltrate into the ground*
 - d. *It is unclear how much attenuation in total is provided by the proposed bioretention tree pits for the development. The applicant shall submit a report and drawing showing how much surface water attenuation in m3 is provided for the development.*

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- e. *It is unclear how much attenuation in total is provided by the proposed bioretention tree pits for the development. The applicant shall submit a report and drawing showing how much surface water attenuation in m3 is provided for the development.*
- f. *The applicant is requested to refer to the recently published 'SDCC Sustainable Drainage Explanatory, Design and Evaluation Guide 2022' for acceptable SUDS tree pit details.*
- g. *The applicant is requested to submit a Landscape and SUDS Management and Maintenance Plan including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas and proposed SUDS features for the approval of the Public Realm Section.*
- h. *Underground attenuation tanks are only permitted in exceptional circumstances and where all other natural SUDS measures have been utilised. If all other methods have been utilised and it is demonstrated that underground attenuation is required, it cannot be proposed under public open space areas and such areas will not be taken in charge by Public Realm. SUDS measures are only accepted as an element of public open space where they are natural in form and integrate well into the open space landscape supporting a wider amenity and biodiversity function".*

5.12 Please refer to the enclosed letter from Aecom, dated 14th April 2023 and landscaping drawings, reports and specifications by Doyle + O'Troithigh, and in response to Item 4.

5.13 We further refer to the enclosed report (Sustainable Urban Drainage Hydrogeological Assessment) from Enviroguide Item 4(iv) part (a).

Item 5 – Green Infrastructure

5.14 The request reads as follows:

"The applicant is requested to submit a Green Infrastructure Plan which shall be submitted as part of the suite of Landscape Plans that are required for a development. The Green infrastructure Plans should include the following information:

- *Site location plan showing the development site in the context of the wider GI as shown on the Council's GI Plan for the County.*
- *Site survey and analysis, identifying existing GI Infrastructure and key assets within the site.*

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- *Indicate how the development proposals link to and enhance the wider GI Network of the County.*
- *Proposed GI protection, enhancement and restoration proposals as part of the landscape plan, where appropriate, for the site.*
- *Proposals for identification and control of invasive species where appropriate, for the site”.*

5.15 Please refer to the landscaping drawings, reports and specifications by Doyle + O’Troithigh, in response to Item 5.

Item 6 – Green Space Factor

5.16 The request reads as follows:

“A Green Space Factor (GSF) Worksheet shall be submitted by the applicant for the proposed development detailing how they have achieved the appropriate the minimum Green Space Factor (GSF) scoring established by their land use zoning. Minimum required scores for different land use zonings are as follows:

<i>RES-N</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<i>RU</i>	<i>0.7</i>

Developers can improve their green factor score by retaining existing landscape features and incorporating new landscape features and GI interventions. Completed Green Space Factor (GSF) worksheets should be submitted to SDCC with the Green Infrastructure Plan and Landscape Plan for a proposed development. Please obtain a worksheet from SDCC Public Realm”.

5.17 Please refer to the landscaping drawings, reports (completed SDCC Green Space Factor (GSF) Worksheet) and specifications by Doyle + O’Troithigh, in response to Item 6.

Item 7 – Street Trees

5.18 The request reads as follows:

“Street trees shall be provided fully in Public Realm areas and not within private or management company driveways and include SUDS features. All streets should be tree lined and include SUDs tree pits. DMURs requires street trees every 14-20 m along

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streets, and this has not been achieved. A specific street tree planting plan should be submitted for agreement with the Public Realm”.

- 5.19 Please refer to the landscaping drawings, reports and specifications by Doyle + O'Troithigh, in response to Item 7.
- 5.20 Tree pits have been incorporated throughout the development where possible. Please refer to drawing Aecom 60659192-ACM-01-00-DR-CE-10-0520 for further details.

Item 8 – Maintenance of Hedgerows at Higher Altitudes

- 5.21 The request reads as follows:

“Policy NCBH11 Objective 5 of the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 reads: To ensure that intact hedgerows / trees will be maintained above the 120m contour line within the County ensuring that the strong rural character will not be diluted and that important heritage features and potential wildlife corridors are protected.

It may be necessary for the proposed blocks to be broken up to allow for maintenance of the existing hedgerows, or significant mitigation measures employed. Noting that the proposed development includes removal of some hedgerows, the applicant is requested to set out how they are complying with policy NCBH11 Objective 5 of the County Development Plan”.

- 5.22 Please refer to the landscaping drawings, reports and specifications by Doyle + O'Troithigh, in response to Item 8.

Item 9 - Roads

- 5.23 The request reads as follows:

“a. The applicant shall submit a revised layout of not less than 1:200 scale, showing the amendments to the public road lining to facilitate turning into and out of the development. The works are to be undertaken by the applicant/developer and at their own expense.

b. The applicant is requested to submit a revised layout not less than 1:100 scale showing the car parking and pedestrian routes within the development. The number of parking spaces shall be limited to a ration of 1.6 per 3-bedroom dwelling.

(i) The minimum width of footpaths shall be 1.8m wide to aid mobility impaired users.

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- (ii) *Footpath layout shall provide adequate connectivity around the development and to footpaths on the main road.*
- (iii) *The applicant shall submit a revised layout of not less than 1:200 scale, showing a main access road of 6.0m in width - if it is to become the main distributor road to residential zoned lands to the east of the development. Alternatively the applicant may wish to display alternative access options via a masterplan of the adjoining lands”.*

5.24 Please refer to an enclosed letter from Aecom, dated 14th April, and drawings in response to Item 9

Item 10 – Ecological Impact

5.25 The request reads as follows:

- a. The applicant is requested to provide an explanatory statement indicated how the development will comply with the proposed mitigation measures contained in the Ecological Impact Assessment, and showing consistency in the application particulars. In particular the applicant should show how the proposed public lighting would accord with the proposed measures for bat-friendly lighting in the EclA.*
- b. The applicant is requested to supplement the Ecological Impact Assessment with examination and analysis of potential impacts of (i) the proposed development and of (ii) the requested masterplan on the Rathcoole Woodlands”.*

5.26 Please refer to the focused memorandum / statement by Enviroguide in response to Item 10.

Item 11 – EIA Screening

5.27 The request reads as follows:

“The applicant is requested to provide a supplementary note to the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, which should show due consideration of the potential for a hydrological connection through or from the application site to the Rathcoole Woodlands. Additionally, the applicant should show, insofar as is possible, that the proposed development and strategy for serving that development, would not impact on the wider development of the ‘RES-N’ lands in such a way as to compromise environmentally sensitive receptors in the area”.

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5.28 Please refer to focused technical note by Malone O' Regan in response to Item 10.

6 Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1 It is respectfully submitted this this response to the notification of request for additional information appropriately addresses the Items raised by Planning Department, Public Realm Department, Parks Department and Drainage Department.
- 6.2 The proposed development will introduce high quality housing on a residentially zoned site sustainably, efficiently and in accordance with all the relevant policies, objectives and standards in the County Development Plan 2022-2028. This is clearly demonstrated in this planning application and supporting documentation and this AI response.
- 6.3 Approval of this planning application will give the applicant the opportunity to develop the subject site and landholding for housing and associated facilities. Refusal of this planning application is likely to result in the subject site and landholding remaining undeveloped in the short to medium term and a loss of high quality housing and facilities to those in drastic need of a home.
- 6.4 Having regard to all of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the Council accepts this AI response and approves this planning application.

Yours faithfully,

Robert Keran

Robert Keran, BSc Spatial Planning, BA (Law), LLB, MIPI, MPMI

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APPENDIX 1

Commentary on relevant references to 'hedgerow' in the South Dublin County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (commentary in red)

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3.3.6 Protection of Trees and Hedgerows

Trees contribute greatly to visual amenity by creating a setting for buildings and softening and greening streetscapes in built-up areas and by adding significant visual interest in more rural areas. Hedgerows often mark historic field patterns and townland boundaries and significantly enhance the landscape character of rural areas. Trees and hedgerows also perform a vital role as wildlife habitats, biodiversity corridors and essential green elements in the County's green infrastructure network. They have a further crucial role in carbon sequestration (capturing and storing carbon), contributing to the alleviation of climate change.

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) allows Planning Authorities to make provision for the preservation of any tree, trees, group of trees or woodlands by way of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) where it is carried out in the interest of expediency, amenity, or the environment. There is a total of four TPOs registered within the County, which are listed in Table 3.3 and identified on the Development Plan land-use zoning maps.

The general importance of maintaining and providing trees and hedgerows in appropriate settings is fully acknowledged. It is noted that none of the trees or hedgerows on the site are subject to protection under the Act. It is furthermore noted that the hedgerows scheduled for retention shall be bolstered with additional hedgerow planting of similar species and feature specimen trees to fully compliment, reinforce and provide a greater longevity into the future.

Policy NCBH11: Tree Preservation Orders and Other Tree / Hedgerow Protections - Review Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) within the County and maintain the conservation value of trees and groups of trees that are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order while also recognising the value of and protecting trees and hedgerows which are not subject to a TPO.

As noted above, none of the trees or hedgerows on the site are subject to protection under the Act.

NCBH11 Objective 3: *To protect and retain existing trees, hedgerows, and woodlands which are of amenity and / or biodiversity and / or carbon sequestration value and / or contribute to landscape character and ensure that proper provision is made for their protection and management taking into account Living with Trees: South Dublin County Council's Tree Management Policy (2015-2020) or any superseding document and to ensure that where retention is not possible that a high value biodiversity provision is secured as part of the phasing of any development to protect the amenity of the area.*

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All hedgerows to be removed have been allocated a 'low' (the lowest category) value in the arboricultural impact assessment¹ submitted with the planning application – below for clarity.

Hedge No.1B (c.36m removal) – C2 Category
Hedge No.2A (c.90m removal) – C2 Category
Hedge No.4 (c.44m removal) – C2 Category
Hedge No.5 (c.11m removal) – C2 Category

It is noted that, as per the above objective, and even though the value of the hedgerows is low, extensive mitigation by way of new planting is included as part of the development. Given the sloping nature of the site, in a north-south direction, along with the fact that access to Stoney Hill Road is restricted to key 'entry' points due to levels and constraints, an east-west development arrangement through the site is considered to be the most appropriate design response. The hedgerow arrangements current form runs largely in a north-south orientation and it is considered inevitable, in order to provide any form of logical residential development on the site, that some hedgerow loss within the core of the site lands will be required. Notwithstanding the above, every effort has been made to retain hedgerow runs where possible as part of the long-term strategy of the site (where levels, hedgerow condition and where long-term suitability allows). The landscape scheme as put forward fully incorporates Green Infrastructure as an integral part of the design and has ensured a '**high value biodiversity provision**' is proposed to '**protect the amenity of the area**' which include:

- Interconnecting retention ponds which shall support emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation along with buffer grass strips which will offer excellent opportunities for the provision of wildlife habitats, provide a visual appeal in the landscape and a new intervention in terms of supporting and enhancing the green infrastructure of the site.
- Bolstering of existing Green Infrastructure by the use of Miyawaki forest, wetland planting, native shrubs and recognizing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in plant selection.
- Adopting suitable species for wet wildflower meadows as well as species enriched dry meadow grass land; many of which incorporate a rich tapestry of naturalised bulbs suited to the site's conditions.
- Connecting spaces within and beyond the site lands with ecological value

¹ *An Arboricultural Assessment of the Tree and Hedge Vegetation on Lands for Development at 'Stoney Hill Road', Rathcoole, Co. Dublin.*

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- Incorporating SUDs tree pits and bioretention tree pits within the streetscape with the detail provided capturing the commentary received previously from SDCC's Parks and Public Realm department in terms of design.
- Capturing a diverse mix of parkland trees within the open space which shall provide a high biodiversity provision in the long term and enhance the overall visual amenity.

NCBH11 Objective 4: *To protect the hedgerows of the County, acknowledging their role as wildlife habitats, biodiversity corridors, links within the County's green infrastructure network, their visual amenity and landscape character value and their significance as demarcations of historic field patterns and townland boundaries. (Refer also to Chapter 4: Green Infrastructure).*

This is a general, non-site-specific objective. It reflects the general objective to retain trees and hedgerows. It is submitted that it does not equate to a requirement to retain all trees and hedgerows in all cases. This objective must be read with others in the Development Plan, including NCBH11 Objective 3.

The sites hedgerows have been fully acknowledged as important links within the green infrastructure networks. A green infrastructure plan has been enclosed which aims to mitigate and compensate for the impact of the proposed development on the existing site along with showing connections to the wider GI networks. These specifically include:

- Additional SuDS measures have been included as part of the re-design of the landscape scheme. The SuDS measures as included in the scheme include a network of interconnecting retention ponds, SuDs tree pits and bio-retention tree pits, conveyance swales, filter drains and permeable paving.
-
- Bolstering of existing Green Infrastructure by the use of Miyawaki forest, wetland planting, native shrubs and recognizing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in plant selection.
- Adopting suitable species for wet wildflower meadows as well as species enriched dry meadow grass land.
- Connecting spaces within and beyond the site lands with ecological value
- Addition of active and passive recreational spaces such as kick about areas, natural play, exercise zone and seating.

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- Protect feature hedgerows and augment as necessary with suitable native species.

NCBH11 Objective 5: *To ensure that intact hedgerows / trees will be maintained above the 120m contour line within the County ensuring that the strong rural character will not be diluted, and that important heritage features and potential wildlife corridors are protected.*

The Objective requires important heritage features and potential wildlife corridors will be protected. As set out previously, all trees and hedgerows to be removed are of low quality and as such are not important in this context.

It is noted that there is some fragmentation of existing hedgerows and with some exhibiting more ornamental species at this location. The hedgerows are therefore not fully 'intact' as referred to in the objective. The hedgerows scheduled for protection and retention as part of the wider scheme have been considered individually on their condition and their overall enhancement and protection to ensure longevity in the future; specifically noting:

- The western hedgerow, some 61 linear metres, along Stoney Hill Road which will be bolstered with additional hedgerow planting of similar species to allow longevity in the future.
- The southern hedgerow, some 126 linear metres, running in an east-west arrangement shall be retained and augmented where necessary. It is furthermore envisaged that a woodland planting mix with native elements, a Miyawaki forest planting arrangement and wildflower meadows shall be planted adjacent these hedgerows with a view to increasing the overall sites biodiversity as well as rationalizing the 'shape' of the existing hedgerows so that they translate well in the new landscape setting.
- The eastern hedgerow (in-part), some 40 linear metres, running in a north-south direction through the proposed open space shall be retained. It is proposed that this hedgerow will be infilled as necessary with species of a similar nature along with feature specimen trees to fully compliment and reinforce the hedgerow arrangement.

Chapter 4: Green Infrastructure **Policy GI1: Overarching**

Protect, enhance, and further develop a multifunctional GI network, using an ecosystem services approach, protecting, enhancing and further developing the identified interconnected network of parks, open spaces, natural features, protected areas, and rivers and streams that

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provide a shared space for amenity and recreation, biodiversity protection, water quality, flood management and adaptation to climate change.

The landscape scheme as put forward incorporates Green Infrastructure as an integral part of the overall design and as specifically required under GI1 Objective 4. Refer to drawing no. GI-01-PP ('Green Infrastructure') which illustrates the full assessment of assessment of South Dublin County Council's Development Plan 2022-2028 and its requirements. Refer also to landscape Plans (LP-01-PP to LP-04-PP inclusive) which together with the Green Infrastructure Plan collectively illustrate the proposed Green Infrastructure Protection, enhancement and restoration proposals as part of the landscape plan, where appropriate for the site. This approach specifically strives to enhance connectivity between the open spaces, enhance corridors links and biodiversity value, promotes connectivity with the wider regional GI network and improves pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.

Objective 1: *To establish a coherent, integrated, and evolving GI Network across South Dublin County with parks, open spaces, hedgerows, trees including public street trees and native mini woodlands (Miyawaki-Style), grasslands, protected areas and rivers and streams and other green and blue assets forming strategic links and to integrate and incorporate the objectives of the GI Strategy throughout all relevant land use plans and development in the County.*

Refer to above in respect of Policy GI1.

Policy GI2: Biodiversity

Strengthen the existing Green Infrastructure (GI) network and ensure all new developments contribute towards GI, in order to protect and enhance biodiversity across the County as part of South Dublin County Council's commitment to the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2025 and the South Dublin County Council Biodiversity Action Plan, 2020-2026, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Eastern and Midlands Region Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

Refer to above in respect of Policy GI1.

GI2 Objective 2: *To protect and enhance the biodiversity and ecological value of the existing GI network by protecting where feasible (and mitigating where removal is unavoidable) existing ecological features including tree stands, woodlands, hedgerows and watercourses in all new developments as an essential part of the design and construction process, such proactive approach to include provision to inspect development sites post construction to ensure hedgerow coverage has been protected as per the plan.*

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Refer to above in respect of Policy GI1.

GI2 Objective 5: *To protect and enhance the County's hedgerow network, in particular hedgerows that form townland, parish and barony boundaries recognising their historic and cultural importance in addition to their ecological importance and increase hedgerow coverage using locally native species including a commitment for no net loss of hedgerows on any development site and to take a proactive approach to protection and enforcement.*

The proposed development includes an enhancement of the hedgerows on the site. Existing hedgerows of low ecological value are being removed.

As described in the arborist's report, mitigation and new planting is significant:

"The loss of the above tree and hedge vegetation is to be mitigated against within the landscaping of this completed development with the use of trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants, bulbs and hedging. See project landscape architects plans and schedules for detail on this replanting.

The following is a list of some of the main elements of these mitigation measures:

- *Infilling and augmenting of existing hedgerows.*
- *Developing new compensatory 'native' woodlands where space allows and merging them with the existing hedgerows.*
- *Planting of semi-mature trees, with many flowering varieties which are beneficial for pollinators.*
- *Planting diverse meadow mixes, including naturalized bulb planting and managing key grass area zones as meadows in particular along the linear park to the south.*
- *As part of the hedgerow removal works, topsoil from the hedge banks are to be salvaged and stored separately. This material shall be reused in the forming of berms for the new native hedgerows".*

GI5 Objective 3: *To ensure compliance with the South Dublin Climate Change Action Plan and the provisions of the Council's Tree Management Strategy.*

- *Increase the County's tree canopy cover by promoting annual planting, maintenance preservation and enhancement of trees, woodlands and hedgerows within the County using locally native species and supporting their integration into new development.*

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- *Identify suitable sites for new urban trees including Miyawaki style mini woodlands, where feasible.*
- *Support the implementation of a co-ordinated regional approach to the maintenance of trees and support the work of the Regional Steering Group on Tree Management to which South Dublin County Council is a participant.*
- *Promote the establishment of tree trails in public parks across the County.*
- *Promote the planting of new woodlands and forestry within appropriate open space and park locations within the County.*
- *To plant "pocket forests" in tracts of open grassland to act as an oasis for biodiversity.*
- *To recognise the value of mature trees in terms of carbon sequestration and amenity over saplings.*

In relation to the first bullet point of GI5 Objective 3 above (as it relates to hedgerows), the proposed development will contribute positively to this by the planting of new trees including site specific woodland blocks.

To support the South Dublin Climate Change Action Plan and the provisions of the Council's Tree Management Strategy; the following focused interventions have been proposed:

- Planting a diverse range of specimen tree planting; both in streetscape scenarios with SuDS interventions and in the wider parkland landscape.
- Proposing a mini urban woodland in the form of Miyawaki Style planting of some 740 sq.m. This could also be considered in this instance a "pocket forest" in an open grassland to act as an oasis for biodiversity' as referenced above.
- Ensuring the proposed landscape is maintained satisfactorily to ensure a successful establishment.
- In terms of the 'tree trails' noted above, the proposed pathway linkages through the open spaces and their juxtaposition with proposed and existing tree and hedgerow planting could easily be adopted as a 'tree trail' informative and interpretive intervention.

Policy GI6: Human Health and Wellbeing

Improve the accessibility and recreational amenity of the County's GI in order to enhance human health and wellbeing while protecting the natural environment within which the recreation occurs.

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GI6 Objective 9: *To investigate the potential to plant hedgerows along roads to help mitigate noise and air pollution, and to increase visual amenity and enhance biodiversity.*

The proposed development will contribute positively to this by the planting of new trees and woodland blocks.

7.8.1 Design of Urban Roads and Streets

Policy SM5: *Street and Road Design Ensure that streets and roads within the County are designed to balance the needs of all road users and promote placemaking, sustainable movement and road safety providing a street environment that prioritises active travel and public transport.*

SM5 Objective 5: *To design new roads and streets to incorporate green infrastructure elements such as planting of native trees, hedgerows, and pollinator species in medians and on roadside verges, as appropriate to the location.*

The proposed development will contribute positively to this by the planting of new trees and woodland blocks along new internal roads and routes, where appropriate.

8.7.5 Quality of Public Open Space

COS5 Objective 8: *To ensure the design of parks and public open space areas is of high quality; to provide a pleasant setting, accommodate use by people of all ages and abilities, to support life-long activity and good health and well-being by the provision of a balanced mix of active and passive recreation and access to, or view of, nature, ensuring that the design considers:*

- *provision of an appropriate mix of hard and soft surfaced areas;*
- *enhancement of biodiversity and existing trees and hedgerows;*
- *incorporation of water courses, other natural features, and existing built heritage into the design of parks and open spaces as appropriate;*
- *provision of new planting, landscape features and appropriate site furniture including a variety of accessible, well located, and designed seating.*

In relation to the third second point of COS5 Objective 8 above (as it relates to hedgerows), the proposed development will contribute positively to this by the planting of new trees and woodland blocks, together with augmenting and protection of existing hedgerows, resulting in an overall enhancement of biodiversity on the site.

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12.4.2 Green Infrastructure and Development Management

All planning applications shall demonstrate how they contribute to the protection or enhancement of Green Infrastructure in the County through the provision of green infrastructure elements as part of the application submission, having regard to the following:

- *In the case of small-scale developments this may consist of a simple landscape plan which includes objectives to protect or restore existing on-site GI assets, provides for connection to local or primary GI corridors or includes elements which allow the site to act as a local steppingstone;*
- *Where the development site is located within or close to a Core or Corridor the development should, at a minimum, protect any existing GI assets and enhance same (for example, not breaking a GI Corridor but enhancing same with a connecting piece of planting, retaining hedgerows or woodlands);*
- *The characteristics and assets of the proximate GI Core, Corridor or Stepping-stone should be reflected within proposed development, for example continuation of hedgerows, tree planting, waterways;*
- *Development should seek to enhance or restore features that act as ecological corridors, particularly water features, hedgerows, tree lines, areas of un-cultivated land. These, or some element of them, should be incorporated into the proposed development to create pathways for wildlife and / or increase amenity value;*
- *Development sites which are not located proximate to designated GI Cores or Corridors should identify the nearest designated GI Core, Corridor or Steppingstone and make provision for GI interventions on the site which could eventually provide a link to local Steppingstones, Cores or Corridors;*
- *Developers should be aware that ecological corridors can also act to quickly spread non-native invasive species. Therefore, identification and control of invasive species site should be included in planning applications and the GI Plan.*

Regardless of development size or type, applicants must submit an overall site summary quantifying and detailing the following:

- *tree and hedgerow removal;*
- *tree and hedgerow retention;*
- *new tree and hedgerow planting.*

This information will be submitted in a digital format agreed with the Council to allow amalgamation and reporting on tree and hedgerow cover within the County over time.

The Green Infrastructure Plan (GI-01-PP) provides the supporting information as required. A digital map can be provided in the format prepared by the Consulting Landscape Architect to the Council to allow for amalgamation and reporting on tree and hedgerow cover within the

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County. It notes that Rathcoole is located on a Primary GI Corridor as well as being close to the Camac River Corridor. Some of the site-specific GI interventions include:

- The landscape proposals as noted previously aim to enhance and augment the hedgerows scheduled for protection and retention as part of the wider scheme. It is furthermore envisaged that a woodland planting mix with native elements, a Miyawaki forest planting arrangement and wildflower meadows shall be planted adjacent these hedgerows with a view to increasing the overall sites biodiversity as well as rationalizing the 'shape' of the existing hedgerows so that they translate well in the new landscape setting.
- New SuDS features including interconnecting retention ponds which shall support emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation along with buffer grass strips which will offer excellent opportunities for the provision of wildlife habitats, provide a visual appeal in the landscape and a new intervention in terms of supporting and enhancing the green infrastructure of the site.
- Further additional SuDS features, specific to the site include:
 - o SuDS tree pits and Bio-retention tree pits. These proposed pits are located in the streetscape; and the details as provided have captured commentary received previously from SDCC Parks Department in terms of design. The tree pits aim to attenuate surface water run off by exploiting the soil/stone mix which is contained within the underground tree pit.
 - o Conveyance swales or Grass Swales – these offer shallow open depressions within the open grassed zones in the order of 250-300mm depth. The grass swales promote the conveyance of storm water at a slower, controlled rate and acts a filter medium removing pollutants and allowing stormwater infiltration.
 - o Filter Drains – these are shallow excavations filled with stone that create temporary subsurface storage of stormwater runoff which are used to filter and convey stormwater to downstream SuDS components. It is proposed that the filter drain is installed along the edge of road network to the south of the scheme where they will integrate well with the adjoining open-space. The stone finish will be finished with a geotextile and topsoil arrangement which will support a grass finish.

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- Permeable paving – paving designed to allow low percolation or infiltration of stormwater through the surface into the soil below where the water is naturally filtered and pollutants are removed.
 - Other SuDS features including porous asphalt in home zone areas, rainwater butts, grasscrete for the temporary turning head and a stormtech attenuation tank.
- Bolstering of existing Green Infrastructure by the use of Miyawaki forest, wetland planting, native shrubs and recognizing the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in plant selection.
 - Adopting suitable species for wet wildflower meadows as well as species enriched dry meadow grass land; many of which incorporate a rich tapestry of naturalised bulbs suited to the site's conditions.
 - Connecting spaces within and beyond the site lands with ecological value
 - Incorporating SUDs tree pits and bioretention tree pits within the streetscape with the detail provided capturing the commentary received previously from SDCC's Parks and Public Realm department in terms of design.
 - Capturing a diverse mix of parkland trees within the open space which still provide a high biodiversity provision in the long terms and enhance the overall visual amenity.

As part of the application, an 'Invasive Plant Review' was carried out and no concerning invasive species were noted. As a follow-on intervention an invasive plant review can be carried out on an annual basis alongside with landscape maintenance review.