

CUNNANE STRATTON REYNOLDS

Town Clerk
Naas Town Council
Áras Chill Dara
Devoy Park
Naas
County Kildare

Thursday, 9th July 2009
[by email]

Dear Sir or Madam

NAAS TOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW

Please find below a submission made on the Naas Town Development Plan 2011-2017 Issues Paper by Cunnane Stratton Reynolds on behalf of Tesco Ireland Ltd Gresham House, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

We trust that you will give due consideration to this submission and request a notification of its receipt by the Council.

Yours faithfully



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Introduction

As a substantial landowner and business within the Naas Town area Tesco Ireland are key stakeholders in the area. One of a number of Tesco owned sites is along Sallins Road in the town as shown in Figure 1 below. Tesco will continue to contribute greatly to the local economy in the coming months and years when the country endeavours to free itself of the current economic recession. Achieving this involves the careful consideration of strategic planning issues. It is within this context that this submission is made

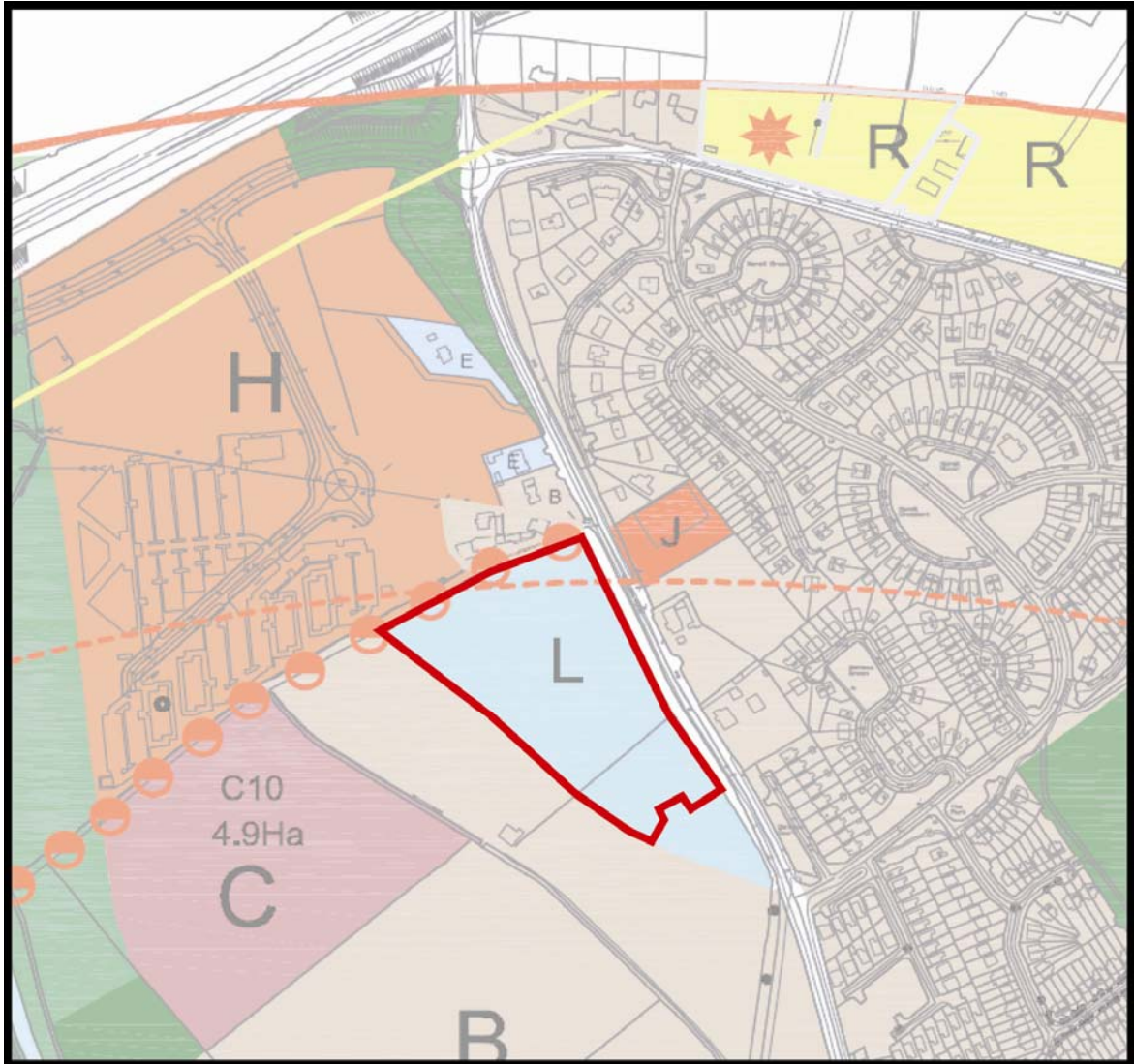


Figure 1
Location of Tesco Ireland Site at Sallins

Existing Development Inertia

It is submitted that the Naas Town Plan 2005-2011 was formulated within a period of unprecedented national growth characterised by exponential demographic increases and economic advancement that was reflected at both the regional and local level. The existing Naas Town Plan was thus informed by, and therefore provided policy responses to, the socio-demographic trends and development pressures associated with a pattern of urban expansion. As such, the underlying objectives of the existing plan centre on accommodating a projected continuation of this pattern in a sustainable fashion.

The Naas Town Plan 2005-2011 zoned the subject lands for Zoning Objective L (*to provide for new leisure and amenity facilities in the town*). There are only two other sites zoned for L (Leisure) in the existing Town Development Plan. These are namely the entrance to Naas Race Course and the Cinema beside Maudlins Hotel, both on the Dublin Road. Only one of these, the relatively new Storm cinema, has been brought forward for development. This was previously a brownfield site. The other Zoning Objective L sites (including the subject site) are greenfield sites and remain undeveloped.

Whilst this may have been an appropriate zoning objective for the subject lands in a buoyant economic market experiencing significant development pressures, it is submitted that neither the existing Naas Town Plan 2005-2011 nor the preceding Naas Town Council Development Plan 1999-2004 has facilitated the development of these lands for leisure uses. Thus, despite the strategic location of the subject site proximate to existing residential and commercial development, and its position on a key radial route from the town centre, these lands remain undeveloped. In effect, the designation of the lands for Objective L zoning is excessively prescriptive and has passively hindered the Council's ability to unlock their development potential for the benefit of Naas. Therefore, it is contended that maintaining the zoning of these lands for leisure purposes will encumber future efforts by the Council to proactively respond to the new development challenges presented by the current economic downturn.

New Challenges

As noted in the Town Manager's introduction to the Issues Paper:

The last decade has seen significant changes in Naas and in County Kildare. We are now in a period where new challenges are presented by the current economic downturn.

Meeting these new challenges in a manner that promotes the ongoing proper planning and sustainable development of the town requires planning provisions that enable the Council to proactively respond to the evolving social, economic and political climate. It is submitted that the emerging trend of economic contraction, and the associated reduction in development pressure, offers a unique opportunity to advance the consolidation of Naas.

The Way Forward

Since the adoption of the Naas Town Plan 2005-2011, a new public swimming pool has opened in the town (Kildare Leisure on Caragh Road), a number of new hotels with associated sport/leisure facilities have been constructed within Naas and its environs, and the Moat Theatre has re-established itself as a thriving centre of cultural activity. In addition, the failure to develop the subject lands for sport/leisure purposes over the lifetime of the current and preceding town development plans demonstrates the adequacy in supply of sporting/leisure facilities within the town. Such existing facilities cover a wide range of sporting activities including, the nearby Martial Arts, Badmington and Volleyball clubs at St Mary's College on the Sallins Road, the Hockey Club facility on the nearby Caragh Road and the tennis facilities in Oldtown. With a population of approximately 23,000 people, Naas is thus experiencing an over-supply of sport and leisure facilities.

Also, it is noted that there are extensive areas of land contiguous to the subject site that are currently zoned in the Naas Town Plan 2005-2011 as Zoning Objective F: Open Space & Amenity, and Zoning Objective M: Green Belt/Future Park. Lands zoned Objective F and Objective M currently provide an extensive 'green corridor' linking the town centre with agricultural lands north of the M7 motorway. It is submitted that such an expansive greenbelt provides more than adequate 'green infrastructure' to cater for the passive recreational needs of the town's residents and delineate the extent of development lands. Thus, it is contended that retaining the restrictive zoning of the subject site for leisure purposes would hinder the future nucleation of Naas by maintaining a parcel of undeveloped (and feasibly undevelopable) land distant to the greenbelt that effectively disconnects adjacent residential landuses on either side of the Sallins Road and thereby weakens the town's suburban structure. In contrast to this, it is submitted that facilitating the development of these lands through amending their current zoning would further the consolidation of Naas.

Consolidating Naas in a manner that enhances its attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit necessitates a considered response to the landuse requirements of a thriving nucleated settlement. Central to this is the appropriate zoning of lands in a sequential manner that facilitates the ordered expansion of the town in a fashion that maximises the use of existing infrastructural capacity and enables an ease of integration between new development and the surrounding built environment.

It is submitted that rezoning the subject lands for residential use would allow the redevelopment of this historically undeveloped, yet strategically located site, in a manner commensurate with a sequential approach to future landuses in the town. Residential use of these lands would facilitate their seamless integration with adjoining existing residential lands and adjacent residentially zoned sites, thereby maintaining the strong suburban structure of the area and optimising the use of existing infrastructural capacity.

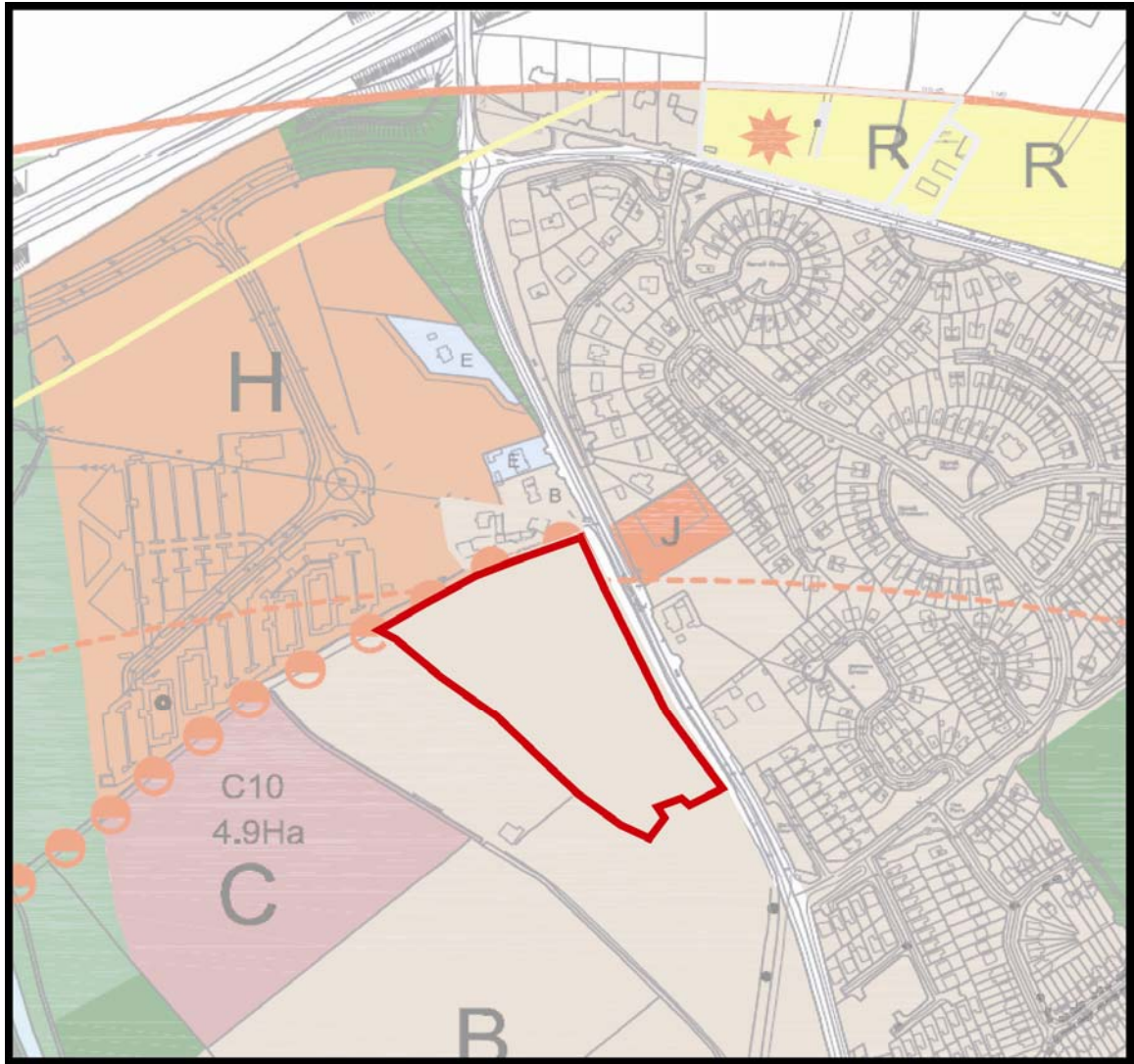


Figure 3
Recommended Rezoning of the Subject Site
(from leisure to residential)

Conclusion

Responding to the new challenges presented by a depressed economic climate requires a proactive approach to unlocking the potential of undeveloped lands proximate to the town centre. Key to this is a review of existing landuse zoning provisions, and where necessary, their amendment to facilitate the consolidation of Naas through the sequential development of suitably located sites. It is submitted that rezoning the subject lands from leisure to residential use would reinforce the ordered nucleated development of Naas, optimise use of existing infrastructural capacity and enable the effective integration of the site with contiguous residential areas.