COMHAIRLE CONTAE FHINE GALL

FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Fingal Development Plan 2017 - 2023

Tuesday, 27th September 2016

Motion from Councillor Anne Devitt: brazil farm sheet *3668. AI028945

That the land outlined on the attached map be zoned RA to provide for new residential community in accordance with approved LAP and subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure in the new Draft Fingal Development Plan 2017-2023

REPORT:
It is noted that no map accompanied this motion. It is noted that the submission on these lands identified lands with an overall area of c.21.7 ha. The lands are not contiguous to the development boundary of Swords but are at a remove and separated by strategic Greenbelt lands.

This motion seeks to rezone the lands to the west of Swords at the L2030, from 'GB' to 'RA'. The lands are strategically located within the strategic Greenbelt area surrounding Swords and there is a large scale glasshouse operation currently located onsite. The subject lands are detached and separated from the existing development boundary of Swords.

The Rural Settlement Strategy in the Draft Development Plan recognises the need to provide for housing for the rural community but limits the amount of housing in the open countryside and provides for alternative options within the rural / greenbelt areas either in the villages or in rural clusters as a more sustainable and suitable location for rural generated housing.

The *Ministerial Planning Guidelines on Development Plans*, issued under Section 28 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, state that *'zoning that is not responsive to or justifiable by reference to reasonable needs, or that substantially exceeds such needs, is not consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.'* The Guidelines also make clear that in order to support public confidence in the planning system and the Development Plan process, decisions to zone land must be clearly justified on the basis of established need and must support the aims and strategy of the plan taking the following specific matters into account:

- Need
- Policy Context
- Capacity of Water, Drainage and Roads Infrastructure
- Supporting Infrastructure and Facilities
- Physical Suitability
- Sequential Approach
- Environmental and Heritage policy, including conservation of habitats and other sensitive areas.

This motion is seeking to rezone lands to allow residential development in a designated Greenbelt area, and it cannot be justified based on the specific issues outlined above, whilst significant residential zoned lands (Objective 'RA', 'RS' and 'ME") remain undeveloped in the vicinity of the subject lands.

There is a lack of an evidence based need or planning rationale for these lands to be zoned for residential development, therefore, the inclusion of the proposed zoning would conflict with the policy and guidance outlined above.

Such a development pattern would result in deficiencies in terms of the provision of basic infrastructure and public services, in addition to unsustainable travel patterns and a poor quality, fragmented rural environment and the erosion of an important Greenbelt area.

The *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010* introduced the requirement for an evidence based 'Core Strategy' to be provided in Development Plans. The Core Strategy identifies the quantum and location of development for the plan period that is consistent with the regionally defined population targets and settlement hierarchy, and, which reflects the availability of existing services, planned investment, sequential development and environmental requirements. The Core Strategy sets out the specific population targets and housing requirements across the County and the elements of the settlement hierarchy thereby act as a clear framework for amendments to existing zonings. The Core Strategy must demonstrate that the development objectives in the Development Plan are consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines.

Based on the evidence-based approach adopted in the Core Strategy for the County, it is clear that Fingal has a significant and sufficient quantum of zoned land to meet the RPG targets for the Development Plan period. This motion proposes the rezoning of GB zoned land in the strategic greenbelt area surrounding Swords. Such a change in designation would result in the erosion of

the rural character of this area and the degradation of the Greenbelt at this location.

The Greenbelt surrounding Swords is one of the most critical in the County having regard to the close proximity of other settlements. Any encroachment into this strategic Greenbelt area would result in coalescence and the loss of definition between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, the Council is fully committed to the continued protection of the Greenbelt and to allow for any additional housing in this area would seriously undermine the long standing Greenbelt policy of the Council and would be contrary to the zoning objective and vision to protect Greenbelts as set out in the Draft Plan.

There is therefore no justifiable need to rezone any additional greenbelt lands to provide for additional housing in this area, whilst such a large area of 'RA' and 'RS' zoned lands remains undeveloped in the vicinity. Such a change in designation would result in the erosion of the greenbelt in this area and would contribute to a significant diminution of the area's landscape value at this location.

To rezone these lands from Objective 'GB' to Objective 'RA' at this time would facilitate the un-coordinated, ad hoc provision of unsustainable urban generated housing detached from existing designated settlements for which there is no evidence-based need or planning rationale and would result in an amended Core Strategy that would be contrary to the *National Spatial Strategy* and *Regional Planning Guidelines.* Furthermore, to give consideration to rezoning additional residential lands at the outskirts of Swords, detached from existing development not allowing for the consolidation of existing zoned lands more centrally located to be developed in a sequential manner, is contrary to proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

In summary, this motion seeks to rezone 21.7 ha's of GB zoned horticultural lands to RA at Brazil. Based on similar densities to those within the adjoining Rathingle area, this would accommodate an additional 716 residential units. This would be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area for the following reasons:

- Best planning practise dictates a sequential approach for zoning new development lands. In this regard, areas to be zoned should be contiguous to existing zoned development lands. Zoning of this land would lead to the "doughnut" effect. There are already substantial undeveloped RA and RS zoned lands within the development boundary of Swords and throughout the County. There is no coherent evidence based need to zone these lands,

detached and separated from the development boundary of Swords, for development.

- Zoning of this site would allow for piecemeal development and shift the emphasis of consolidation away from Swords. This undermines the key strategic vision of the Draft Plan which seeks to consolidate existing urban areas including their existing social and physical infrastructure, services and facilities and would promote lower density development and agglomerations across greenfield sites that are more difficult to serve by such infrastructure, services and facilities.

- The Greenbelt surrounding Swords is one of the most critical in the County. Any encroachment into this strategic greenbelt area would result in the loss of definition between urban and rural areas. The Council is fully committed to the continued protection of the greenbelt and to allow for any additional housing in this area would seriously undermine the long standing Greenbelt policy of the Council

RECOMMENDATION:
It is recommended that no change is made.