COMHAIRLE CONTAE FHINE GALL

FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

FINGAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

TUESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER 2022

Sheet 3 Fingal Central

Motion from Councillor Darragh Butler : 82127

Coolquay

That Fingal County Council resolves that the lands outlined in red on the attached map at Coolquay be re-zoned from Objective 'RU' Rural to 'RV' Rural Village in order that they may be considered in a subsequent Local Area Plan (LAP) for Coolquay.

REPORT:
The content of this motion which seeks the rezoning of RU lands measuring 30.5 ha (86.4 acres) to RV, located to the west of Coolquay Rural Village, is noted.

The extensive range of lands are west of the existing village boundary, stretching to the boundary with County Meath and are currently mainly undeveloped.

It should be noted that in the context of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment that was carried out to inform this plan, the proposed lands are partly affected by Flood Zone A and B.

Fingal's Rural villages are important rural assets providing a viable alternative housing experience to the open countryside with the advantages of a rural setting. A key aim of the Draft Plan is the need to control expansion to prevent excessive development so as to protect the unique identity of these villages.

These villages will be allowed to grow to support sustainable development in the context of the Council's Core Strategy. The draft Plan seeks that villages, such as Coolquay, grows with appropriate residential, social and community uses, without resulting in growth beyond local need or creating unsustainable commuting patterns.

The allocation of housing unit numbers for the entire County area has been thoroughly analysed and addressed in the context of the Core Strategy, which demonstrates that Fingal County Council has over and above the required quantum of residential units over the plan period within its administrative area. The allocation of growth within the Rural Villages represents a fair and equitable allocation based on:

- The evidence-based approach adopted in the Core Strategy, where Fingal has a significant and sufficient quantum of zoned land to meet the HST targets for the Development Plan period.
- The capacity of the rural villages to accommodate growth without compromising their essential character, and
- The strong need to avoid any further suburbanisation of the Fingal rural villages.

A key objective for Fingal's Rural Villages is the consolidation and strengthening of the viability of the village core. The Rural Settlement Strategy is not applicable to the Rural Villages and settlement is open to all. As such the RV zoning offers an alternative to one-off housing in the countryside.

Considerable development opportunity continues to exist within Coolquay Rural Village. There is sufficient zoned land to meet the needs of the population and housing targets set by the Ministerial Guidelines and the NPF for the Development Plan period.

In particular it is noted that this motion essentially seeks to more than double the size of the existing RV zoning (currently 26.4 ha) and extend it over the old N2, which functions as a natural boundary to the village. Coolquay village, as is, comprises a number of individual dwellings, some local businesses and the national school. It is very much rural in nature and the numbers proposed in the Core Strategy are commensurate with the existing pattern and type of development. Furthermore, given the lack of public wastewater facilities in the area, the additional zoning would result in reliance on individual wastewater treatment systems, which increase risks to the groundwater and is generally unsustainable.

The draft Plan includes provision for a LAP for Coolquay village. The function of a LAP is to take a detailed look at a specific area, identifying and analysing the various issues of relevance, before establishing and setting out principles for the future development of the area. The adoption of a LAP is a reserved function of the elected members.

In this regard the LAP will be tasked with examining numerous issues including the phasing and delivery of infrastructure, provision of high-quality residential development, as an appropriate scale, provision open space and recreational amenities, and ensuring successfully integration with existing properties in the area.

Preparation of the LAP will also require consultation with State agencies including the Department of Education, Irish Water and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Environmental issues arising will be assessed by way of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment which occur in tandem with the LAP process.

Furthermore, it is important to note the recent opinion of the Chief Executive for a strategic housing development (SHD021-21 and ABP-314360-22) on lands at in Coolquay. This report prepared under Section 8 (5)(a) of the Planning Act considers that a development of 173 units, mainly within the existing RV zoning, is contrary to the local, regional and national policy and would therefore not be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Specifically, this detailed assessment found the proposed development which is not founded in a Local Area Plan or Masterplan which would not accord with Objective SSO2a of the Fingal County Development Plan as varied in June 2020, which envisages permission in principle on lands where there is a Local Area Plan or Masterplan in place. Furthermore, the report finds the proposed development would also not accord with Objective SS02b to focus new development where infrastructural capacity is readily available, along an existing or proposed high quality public transport corridor, in a phased manner alongside the delivery of appropriate physical and social infrastructure.

The proposal would result in development of the village beyond its assimilative capacity as articulated in national, regional, county, and local policy. The development, if permitted, would negatively impact on the character of the village, place excessive pressure on local services, contribute to unsustainable travel patterns, would not be commensurate with the existing built environment and would contribute to the excessive growth of Coolquay Village in a short period of time which would undermine the rural village character of Coolquay and that of the surrounding countryside.

The above opinion demonstrates the risk of allowing large scale development without the provision of the LAP and without due consideration for the receiving environment and the provision of the required physical and social infrastructure.

To zone a further 30.5 ha (86.4 acres) without due consideration would further undermine the rural village character of Coolquay and that of the surrounding countryside.

Lastly, it is important to note, the Council is fully committed to the continued protection of the agricultural sector and the preservation of agricultural land within the County in accordance with the RU zoning objective and vision and supportive policy and objectives set out in Chapter 7 of the Draft Plan relating to the rural economy. Accordingly, it is recommended that the lands should not be rezoned from RU to RV.

The inclusion in the Draft Plan of zoning objectives facilitating the provision of additional housing without due regard the existing environment at Coolquay and to the Core Strategy and its approach is contrary to national and regional direction and to the provisions of the Draft Plan relating to the protection of agricultural lands and as such, would be contrary to proper planning and sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATION:
No change to the Draft Plan.