

The Draft Master Plan for South Dublin County Council owned lands in Rathcoole –The Housing Development and Rathcoole Woodlands

The Plan

One of the components of the South Dublin County Council (SDCC) Draft Master Plan for Rathcoole is the provision of 250 houses of mixed tenure; 100 affordable, 100 social and 50 private (**Figure 1**). The total area in question is 10 hectare.

The land is currently a pioneer deciduous Semi-Natural Woodland of predominantly willow and downy birch trees with **11,950** mature trees exceeding 4 m in height, and **73,190** immature trees with a height up to 4 m¹ (**Figure 2, Photograph 1**). It is a prime example of re-wilding and of natural succession in the development of Woodland from abandoned agricultural land.

Land Ownership and Planning

Rathcoole Woodlands is zoned Objective Res-N –to provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved area plans - under the County Development Plan 2016-2022 (**Figure 3**). It is owned by SDCC who also own Rathcoole Park (**Figure 4**). It was bought in the 70s by the then Council, under a compulsory purchase order. The Woodlands has been zoned residential for at least the last 3 development plans. It has never been the subject of a planning application. A planning application was made by Romeville Developments for the land adjacent to the Woodland, but this was withdrawn (**Figure 5**).

Evidence for Need

The national policy (Rebuilding Ireland Plan) is to develop all publically owned lands in light of the homeless and housing crisis. The Council launched an expression of interest portal for affordable housing in September 2019. Of the 2140 expressions of interest received for the three areas advertised, 1,831 expressed an interest for Rathcoole with 831 being first preferences. The other 2 areas were Killinarden and Clonburris. This has been widely publicised in local media.

Next Steps

When the plan was presented at the Council Meeting of July 8th, 2019, the next steps included:

- Advance design & costing for Killinarden & Rathcoole to enable affordability decision and proceed to JV stage (*JV = Joint Venture, Killinarden has been approved*)
- Establish market interest in line with Affordable Scheme of Priorities (*Portal Launched*)
- Agree level of financial support from DHPLG (*Funding obtained – Serviced Sites Fund*)

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report on the Rathcoole Master Plan was due to be carried out in Q1 2020. The PEA report will help determine the scope, timing and need for an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). The PEA/EclA will in turn help inform the need for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in terms of whether the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. Following completion of traffic and ecology assessments, a report on the site will be brought to a monthly **Council Meeting**.

What are the benefits and impacts for Rathcoole? What are we losing? What are we gaining? What are your thoughts? What other options are there? What will you do?

¹ Ronan Mac Diarmada & Associates (2020, unpublished) Rathcoole Woodland - Review of Existing Woodland. 11pp

Figure 1 Draft Master Plan for South Dublin County Council owned lands in Rathcoole, July 2019.



Figure 2 The Woodland with the withdrawn Romeville Planning Application indicated.





Photograph 1 The Woodland.

Figure 3 The planning zones from South Dublin County Development Plan 2016- 2022 with: Woodland (SDCC land) outlined in red, GAA owned lands outlined in pink, and Department of Education (Dept. Ed.) land outlined in blue.

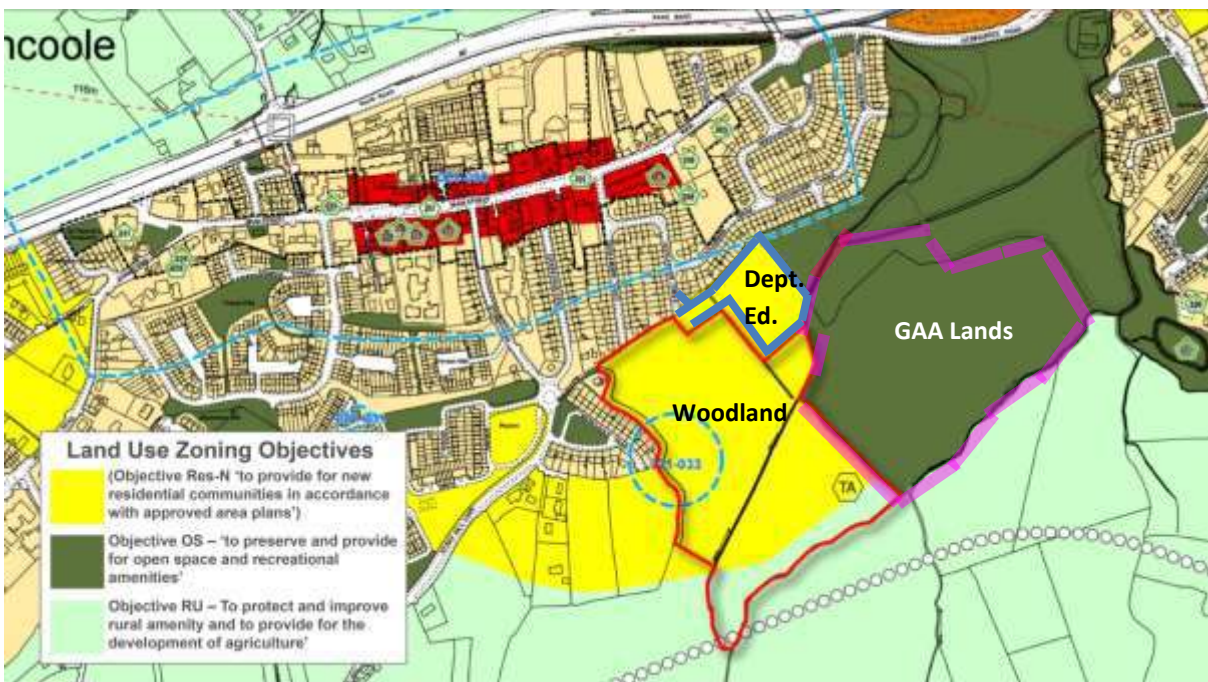


Figure 4 Land ownership for the Draft Master Plan with Residential Development indicated.

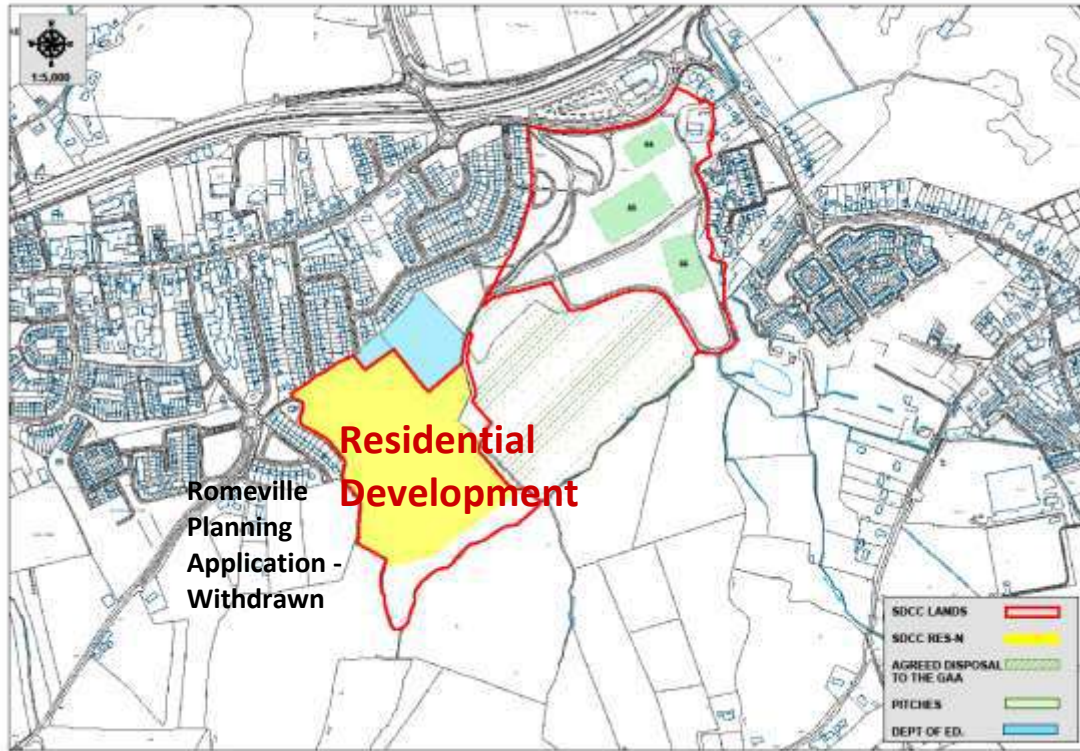


Figure 5 (A) Planning applications submitted to SDCC by Romeville Developments but withdrawn; purple (phase 1= 99 houses) and yellow (phase 2 = 98 houses) and (B) future envisaged development extract from 'Local Area Plan' submitted by Romeville Developments with the addition of Woodland\SDCC land superimposed in yellow.

