

Submission to the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022 – 2028

Holiday Homes and Serviced Sites at Gortnadullagh, Sheen Falls Country Club, Kenmare

Client: Demasta Limited February 2022

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Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Submission

This submission has been prepared on behalf of Demasta Limited in response to Kerry County Council's invitation for submissions to the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028. This submission responds to the Council's draft policies that impact lands at Gortnadullagh, Sheen Falls Country Club, Kenmare in the ownership of our client. The lands are partially zoned Rural General and partially zoned Rural Secondary Secondary Special Amenity Area in the Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021. There is no zoning objective identified in the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028. It should be noted that our client's lands have an extant permission for the overall development of 90 no. holiday homes at Sheen Falls Lodge Estate (Kerry County Council Reference 04/4475, as extended by 21/930 and as amended by 21/930 and as extended by 04/94475, 04/994475 and 04/984475 refers). This submission principally relates to the units referred to as Mountain View and Forest View.

The subject lands are within walking and cycling distance of Kenmare Town which offers a range of local services and facilities to cater for a range of needs. Notwithstanding the above, our client is committed to investigating the potential for greater connectivity infrastructure from the Sheen Falls estate to the town centre.

A treatment plant with capacity to service the overall permitted development has been completed and the development has the benefit of a connection to the public mains.

1.2 Submission Request

Having regard to policy objective KCDP 5-21 of the Draft Plan which directs that "...holiday / second homes shall be located in established settlements in towns or villages and not in the rural landscape" and the serviced nature of the subject lands which are within walking and cycling distance of Kenmare Town Centre, our client would welcome an amendment to the wording of Sections 5.4 of the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028 to allow provisions for 'serviced clusters' of existing or permitted holiday home developments in rural areas to be modified to accommodate permanent homes as an alternative to one-off housing. Only holiday homes that meet the required space standards including private open space will be deemed suitable for this change of use. We request that Sheen Falls is added to Table 5.1 Settlements where clusters of residential development may be considered.

An Bóthar Buí	Faha
An Chillín Liath	Finuge
An Gleann	Glencar
Asdee	Glenflesk
Aughacasla	Headford

Baile na nGall	Inch			
Ballyfinnane	Kells			
Beaufort	Kilgobnet			
Bonane	Kilmoyley			
Boolteens	Knockanure			
Camp	Lauragh			
Castlecove	Lisselton			
Chapeltown	Lyreacrompane			
Clogher	Scartaglin			
Cordal	Stradbally			
Cromane	Tahilla			
Currans	Templenoe			
Currow	The Spa			
Dún Chaoin	Tuosist			
Sheen Falls [Mountain View, Forest View]				

Planning Considerations

The lands subject to this submission are located to the south-east of Kenmare Town at Gortnadullagh, Sheen Falls Country Club, Kenmare and comprise a mix of existing holiday homes permitted by Kerry County Council Reference 04/4475, as amended by 21/930 and as extended by 04/94475, 04/994475 and 04/984475 and vacant serviced lands.

Kenmare is designated as a Regional Town in the Draft Kerry County Development Plan. Regional Towns are described as

"Towns which provide a housing, employment, or service function. The category is broad and ranges from large commuter towns to more peripheral towns."

The Core Strategy estimates Kenmare will grow by 261 no. persons during the lifetime of the forthcoming Development Plan, with a target delivery of 204 no. residential units. However, the lands subject to this submission are not located within the settlement boundary of the Kenmare Functional Area Local Area Plan 2010-2016 and would therefore contribute to the:

"...remaining population growth of 5,070 [which] is allocated to other towns in the County and **the rural area.** This will ensure that development in these towns is commensurate with the scale of these towns and the provision of additional employment." [Emphasis added].

The serviced lands subject to this submission are readily available to be developed and present the opportunity to deliver much needed permanent housing in accordance with the core strategy and policy objectives of the Draft Kerry County Development Plan. The hinterlands of Kenmare Town play an integral role in supporting the viability of local services and facilities. As noted previously, an extant permission for the development of 90 no. holiday homes pertains to a portion of our client's lands. Our client considers that the Mountain View and Forest View portion of this development are the most suitable for permanent occupation given their size, private open space provision and location.

The key issue facing our client is the lack of demand for high quality holiday homes (second homes) in this location. Our client recognises the acute shortage of permanent residential homes in the surrounding area and is cognisant of recently published government guidance including Our Rural Future and Housing for All, trends emerging from Covid 19 and the underutilised nature of their serviced lands. The serviced lands are easily accessible to Kenmare Town by walking and cycling (c. 9 no. minutes). The established regional town of Kenmare offers a range of local services and facilities that cater for the needs of a range of households including 'downsizers', first time buyers or returning emigrants.

Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 was published in March 2021 as a roadmap for recovery from Covid-19 and outlines how rural Ireland can respond to the consequential economic, social, cultural and environment conditions now faced by a significant proportion of the

population. Our Rural Future directs that "…a flexible approach is required to address the needs of different rural areas in a meaningful way…seeks to adopt a more holistic and place-based approach to rural development than heretofore, in order to ensure tailored responses to different requirements at local level." The Draft Plan has considered the contents of Our Rural Future and includes Policy Objective KCDP 5-3 which aims to:

"Support the initiatives and policies contained in "Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025', to sustainably strengthen economic activity and employment in rural areas."

The Draft Plan² refers to the 'Kerry Hub Network' and identities the economic benefits of remote-based working through investment in infrastructure and technology in co-working hubs such as the Kenmare Enterprise Hub (Kenmare) noting that such developments '…can contribute significantly to the local economy and reduce the need to commute'.

Economic activity and employment are intrinsically linked to the supply and demand of suitable residential units in appropriate and accessible locations. A key deliverable of Our Rural Future is to support remote working from rural areas to enable more people to live and work in rural areas. The Development Plan needs to recognise the need to deliver homes near to places of work is not limited to existing built up areas. Policy measure no. 90 of Our Rural Future is to:

"Update the Rural Housing Guidelines for planning authorities, to address rural housing in a broader rural development and settlement context."

Whilst the Development Plan objectives state that Kerry County Council will facilitate and support national and regional planning policies as set out in KCDP 5-3, 5-4 and 5-7, Kerry County Council has the ability to take a more proactive approach to address the acute shortage of permanent homes in rural areas of Kerry. There is an opportunity for permanent homes to be delivered and/or retrofitted in lieu of holiday homes throughout the county, such as on the lands subject to this submission.

Section 5.4 of the Draft Plan refers to Cluster Developments in Village Settlements where it is stated that:

"It is the policy of the Council to encourage people who wish to reside in the countryside to live in villages or small village settlements where services are available. As an alternative to one-off housing, it is an objective of this plan to permit clusters of housing served by individual wastewater treatment systems in the small villages and small village settlements listed in Table 5.1 where there is no wastewater infrastructure or no plans for such infrastructure."

While we welcome sustainable development in rural areas through the principle of clustered development, the Draft Development Plan fails to acknowledge that there are existing serviced sites available to be developed for permanent housing. It is our opinion that such lands should be prioritised and facilitated in advance of any 'new' clusters of houses on un-serviced lands in the interests of proper planning. The lands subject to this submission have existing services including Irish Water water supply and has the benefit of its own treatment plant. The development has been partially completed for holiday use however there is a lack of demand for such units which are more akin to permanent homes. As such, we request that Sheen Falls is added to Table 5.1 of the Draft

¹ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025, Page 24.

² Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028, Page 149.

Plan which identifies the location of 'clusters' to '...facilitate a small number of additional dwellings and/or small enterprises to consolidate the existing pattern of development around these focal points and utilise existing services in the area." The suggested amendment to Table 5.1 to include Sheen Falls would be consistent with KCDP5-9 which aims to:

"Facilitate the development of small-scale residential cluster developments in villages and small village settlements listed in Table 5.1 served by individual onsite wastewater treatment systems where there are no plans to provide a capital wastewater scheme and where the design, layout and scale of the residential cluster is commensurate with the scale and layout of the existing settlement." [Emphasis added]

The Draft Development Plan understands that the quantum of holiday homes exceeds the resident population in many areas of Kerry, including the surrounding area of Kenmare where c. 20-30% of the total housing stock is holiday homes³. This increases up to more than 50% nearer the town centre. Policy objective KCDP 5-21 directs that the council will:

"Ensure that holiday/ second homes shall be located in established settlements in towns or villages and not in the rural landscape."

Our client would welcome an amendment to Sections 5.4 of the Draft Development Plan to allow provisions for existing or permitted holiday home developments in rural areas to be modified to accommodate permanent homes. This would allow a concentration of holiday homes in Kenmare to be directed towards the town centre and alleviate pressure in the rural landscape.

KCDP 4-27 of the Draft Plan states that Kerry County Council will:

"Promote the development of vacant residential and regeneration sites in all development centres in the County, **as appropriate**, in accordance with the provisions of Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland." [Emphasis added].

The above policy objective overlooks the capacity of vacant and underutilised holiday homes to be reconsidered in the response to the provisions of Housing for All. Housing for All⁴ directs that:

"To build housing, we need land. This land needs to be serviced with transport, utilities and other infrastructure. Recent reports by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) highlighted dysfunctional aspects of our system of urban development, land management and housing. The report called for **a 'whole of system'** approach to bridge the gap between supply and demand. Housing for All provides this approach." [Emphasis added].

Furthermore, in reference to addressing vacancy and the efficient use of existing stock, Housing for All stipulates that:⁵

"Incentivise the refurbishment and extension of vacant properties in towns or villages, for example, through energy retrofit supports and the Urban

³ Map 5.2 of the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028, Page 80.

⁴ Housing for All, Page 23.

⁵ Ibid, Page 26

Regeneration Development Fund (URDF)/ Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) and other mechanisms."

Holiday homes are seasonal and consequently vacant for large proportions of the year, in many cases this results in an unsustainable pattern of development. We submit that the delivery of permanent homes on lands on the outskirts of Kenmare Town would represent a more sustainable form of development on these lands. The delivery of high quality residential dwellings in close proximity to Kenmare Town would contribute to alleviating one of the key challenges facing rural areas identified in Our Rural Future⁶.

"The ongoing challenge of young people moving from rural areas and not returning to live there means a loss of talent and potential entrepreneurs in rural communities. It deprives rural areas of a cohort who could act as key contributors to society, to their communities and to the local economy. One of the best ways to retain young people in rural areas and to attract graduates back to rural Ireland, is to create quality jobs throughout the regions, with career opportunities and progression pathways. The increase in remote working facilities, accelerated by the impact of COVID-19, has demonstrated the possibility for many young people to pursue a career while continuing to live within their local area, regardless of where their employer is headquartered." [Emphasis added].

We reiterate that economic growth and employment have a substantial correlation with the supply of suitable housing. In order to attract people to reside in rural areas and support the economic growth and employment then housing needs to be delivered. The National Planning Framework sets a target for at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites therefore, 60% of all new housing will continue to be delivered at the edge of settlements and in rural areas.

In reference to the Preservation of the Irish Language, the Development Plan recognises the effect of holiday homes stating⁷:

"In some rural ED's over 50% of the housing stock comprises of holiday homes. The pressures of such development and associated migration of non-Irish speakers have the potential to affect the viability of the Irish language."

Not only does the proliferation of holiday homes and second homes have the potential for a detrimental impact on Gaeltacht areas but can impact the holistic viability of rural towns and villages in general, particularly where a significant percentage of the units are essentially vacant properties for a portion of the year. In this regard, Housing for All states that⁸:

"Many areas of cities and towns and villages of all sizes face the blight of vacant properties, which, if brought back into use, could add real vibrancy to towns of all sizes around the country, and new accommodation in both urban and rural areas."

Draft Policy Objective KCDP 5-7 aims to "Facilitate and support the objectives and actions of "Housing for All, a New Housing Plan for Ireland in relation to policy initiatives for rural housing". It is

⁶ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025, Page 27.

⁷ Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028, Page 114.

⁸ Housing for All, Page 104.

evident that there is a greater opportunity for the forthcoming Development Plan to achieve a balanced approach to the availability of holiday homes by providing for measures to combat against holiday homes in rural areas which are more appropriately suited to accommodate permanent homes. The Development Plan must therefore proactively address the gap between permanent housing supply and demand for holiday homes (or lack thereof). Holiday and second homes add increased pressures on the supply of affordable housing, including towns and hinterlands such as Kenmare and are less likely to contribute to the local economy at a constant level throughout the year. The forthcoming Development Plan needs to provide clear direction on the supply of primary permanent homes versus holiday homes to ensure a sustainable pattern of development can be achieved through delivering appropriate tenure in the right places.

Section 5.7 Holiday/ Second Homes of the Draft Development Plan stipulates that:

"In order to underpin the basis for sustainable long-term economic development of the County, particularly in the rural areas, holiday home developments shall be concentrated in and adjacent to existing towns, villages and small village settlements thereby minimising the impact on the open landscape. Such developments should respect the existing fabric of the settlement, both in scale and design. The level and scale of development permitted shall relate to the availability of infrastructure and services and the scale of the existing settlement. It is the policy for the Council that one-off holiday / second homes will not be permitted in rural areas."

To this effect, Objective KCDP 5-21 of the Kerry County Development Plan states that it is a policy to:

"Ensure that holiday / second homes shall be located in established settlements in towns or villages and not in the rural landscape."

On a similar note, Our Rural Future⁹ states that:

"...the needs of these different types of rural areas varies, and seeks to adopt a more tailored, place-based approach to their development in order to ensure appropriate and effective responses to different requirements at local level."

The Government's objective is to achieve the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging local economic growth, arresting decline, and ensuring that rural Ireland continues to be a vibrant and lived-in place, meeting the needs of all communities" [Emphasis added].

There is an opportunity for the Draft Plan to allow provisions for the repurposing of lands in the rural landscape that were previously identified for holiday/ second homes where it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for such accommodation. This would further support Section 5.4 of the Draft Plan referenced above.

The constructed and permitted large homes at Sheen Falls that are currently restricted by planning conditions to occupation as holiday homes only present a significant opportunity to contribute to the prevailing housing shortage by providing much needed family dwelling homes in close proximity to Kenmare Town. The occupation of these properties throughout the entirety of the year would support local businesses and contribute to the available labour force in the Kenmare Area. The

 $^{^{9}}$ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025, Page 19.

prioritisation of permanent homes in this location represents the proper planning and sustainable development of Kenmare in accordance with the National Planning Framework, Our Rural Future and Housing for All.

Request

Section 02 of this submission outlines the pertinent issues arising from the restriction on our client's lands to occupation as holiday homes. From our review of the Draft Development Plan, it is evident that there are no policies that would support the delivery of holiday homes within the rural landscape. The completion of the development permitted under Kerry County Council Reference 04/4475, as amended by 21/930 and as extended by 04/94475, 04/994475 and 04/984475 would not in our opinion represent the most efficient use of these serviced lands.

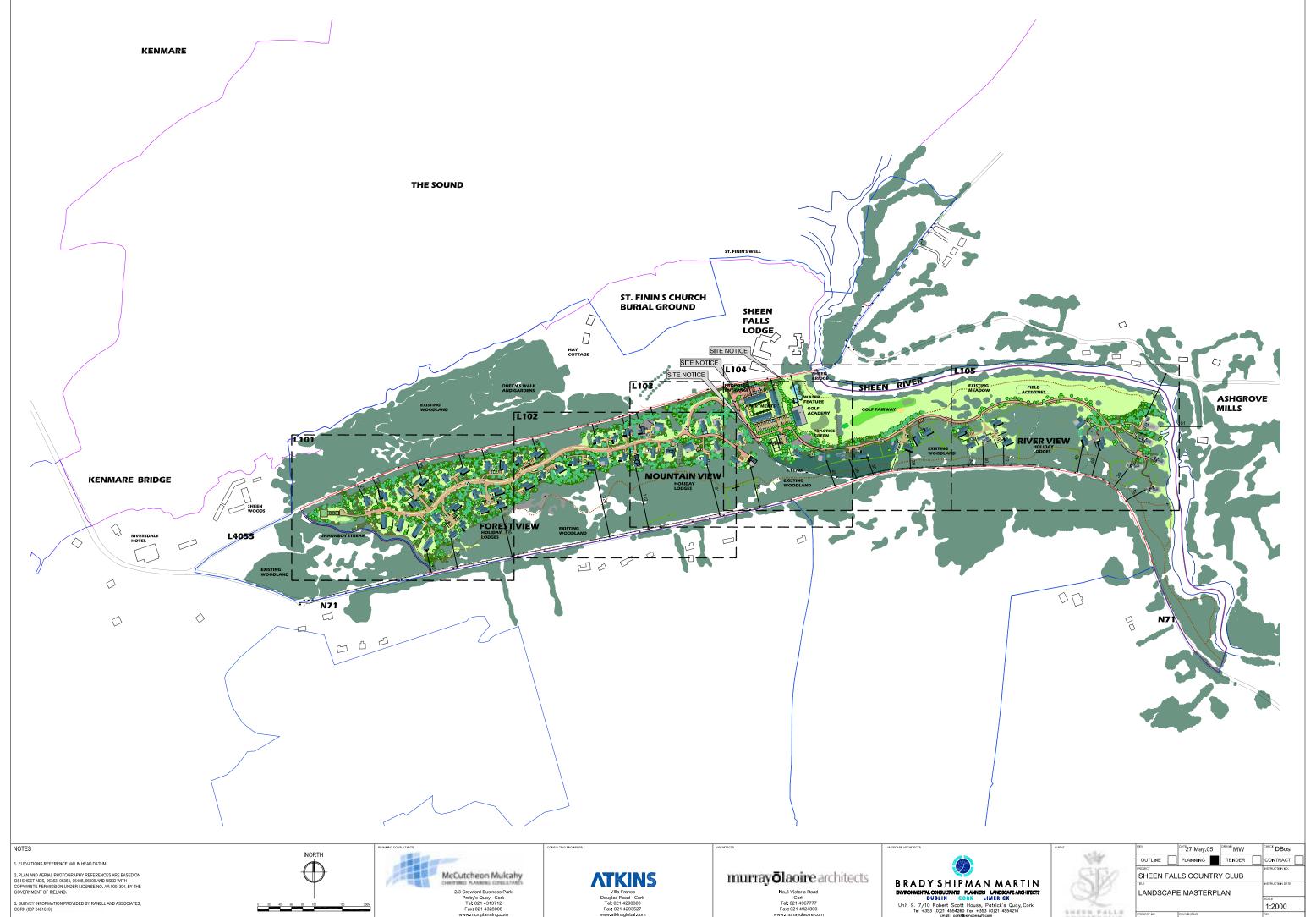
Our client would welcome an amendment to the wording of Section 5.4 of the Draft Development Plan to include for existing 'serviced clusters' which states:

"It is the policy of the Council to encourage people who wish to reside in the countryside to live in villages or small village settlements where services are available. As an alternative to one-off housing, it is an objective of this plan to permit clusters of housing served by individual wastewater treatment systems in the small villages and small village settlements listed in Table 5.1 where there is no wastewater infrastructure or no plans for such infrastructure."

An amendment to the above extract of the Draft Development Plan would allow provisions for appropriate existing or permitted holiday home developments in rural areas to be modified to accommodate permanent homes as an alternative to one-off housing. This would allow a concentration of holiday homes in Kenmare to be directed towards the town centre and alleviate pressure in the rural landscape.

There is an opportunity for the Draft Plan to make provisions for the repurposing of serviced lands in the rural landscape that were previously identified or developed for holiday/ second homes. We submit that where it can be demonstrated that there is no market demand for such holiday accommodation and a high quality of residential amenity can be achieved that Kerry County Council should be amenable to the consideration of the principle of permanent housing.

The occupation of these properties throughout the entirety of the year would support local businesses and contribute to the available labour force in the Kenmare Area. The prioritisation of permanent homes in this location represents the proper planning and sustainable development of Kenmare in accordance with the National Planning Framework, Our Rural Future and Housing for All.

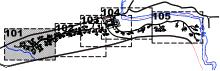


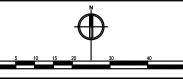
ΒR	ADY SHIPMAN MARTIN			
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PLANNING	A	15.DEC.04	-	COUNTRY CLUB	Date 15
PLANNING - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	В	27,MAY,05	-	**LANDSCAPE LAYOUT	Job No.
				FOREST VIEW WEST	4440
					DUBL
				P. Commission	Unit 9.
				BRADY SHIPMAN MARTIN MERCHANDERS	Tel +3 Email:



