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Senior Executive Officer,  
Planning and Strategic Infrastructure Department,  
Fingal County Council,  
County Hall,  
Swords,  
Fingal,  
County Dublin.

5<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**Re: Proposed Variation to Fingal Development Plan 2011-2017- Lands at Ballymun, Finglas, D11.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The National Transport Authority (“the Authority”) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed variation to the Fingal Development Plan, with respect to the lands at Ballymun, Finglas, Dublin 11.

The Authority has significant concerns over the variation of the Development Plan as proposed by Fingal County Council. The proposed variation could result in substantial impact on the existing strategic and local transport network, both in relation to the subject site at Ballymun, and also potentially at other locations across the Local Authority area.

It is the opinion of the Authority that it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed variation, which would allow for a 6,000sq.m+ of retail at lands at Ballymun, has adequately addressed the statutory guidance set out in the DOECLG Retail Planning Guidelines (2012), or the DOECLG Spatial Planning and National Road (2012).

The proposed type of development is not specifically defined in the current Retail Planning Guidelines. The guidelines impose a 6,000sq.m gross floorspace cap on retail warehousing units, due to the potential impact of larger units on the surrounding road network and the potential for local monopolies. The guidelines do however state that single outline retail warehouses addressing a regional, if not national catchment, may be considered in larger cities including Dublin, these sites would have to satisfy the location criteria:

- (*the site*) is in accordance with the Planning Guidelines on Spatial Planning and National Roads, in that the proposal can demonstrate that the development will not adversely affect the efficiency of the national road network and key junctions and interchanges, and that it can be demonstrated that traffic volumes can be accommodated within the design assumptions for such roads, taking account of the opportunities for encouraging a modal shift towards more sustainable travel modes;
- will be served by existing or planned public transport services.

The DOECLG guidance on Spatial Planning and National Roads promotes an evidence based, integrated approach for identifying and supporting development proposals on or near national roads. The document also sets out a clear presumption against large scale retail centres being located adjacent to or close to existing, new or planned national roads.

The proposed Variation is not directly accessed off the National Road Network; however the proposed access will be immediately adjacent to the Ballymun Interchange of the M50. In this regard the Authority would consider that the Variation should address the criteria set out in Section 2.6 of the guidance document, which puts forwards the considerations for a less restrictive policy position in the case of developments of national and regional strategic importance. Section 2.6 of the document stipulates the criteria which must be addressed, namely:

- (1) the relevance and appropriateness of proposed development in supporting the aims and objectives of the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines;
- (2) the requirements of other planning guidelines issued under section 28 of the Act including the Retail Planning Guidelines, which include a general presumption against large retail centres being located adjacent or close to existing, new or planned national roads, including motorways;
- (3) the nature of proposed development and the volume of traffic to be generated by it,
- (4) any implications for the safety, capacity and efficient operation of national roads;
- (5) any plans for future upgrades of national roads and other transport infrastructure/services;
- (6) the suitability of the location compared to alternative locations;
- (7) the pattern of existing development in the area;
- (8) satisfactory details of the proposed demand management measures;
- (9) acceptable funding and delivery proposals for any road improvements required, and,
- (10) the precedent that could be created for cumulative development in the area and the potential implications for the national road network.

It is also important to note that Section 2.7 of the Spatial Planning and National Roads guidance document outlines the requirements for the assessment of development close to interchanges. This is to ensure that such development *'can be catered for by the design assumptions underpinning such junctions and interchanges, thereby avoiding potentially compromising the capacity and efficiency of the national road / associated junctions, and possibly leading to the premature and unacceptable reduction in the level of service available to the road users'*.

The Authority considers that the supporting information, in particular the Transport Assessment prepared by the Local Authority for this proposed Variation is not comprehensive enough, and does not fully assess the impact of the proposed use, or the potential mitigation measures which may be required to facilitate such a development at the proposed location. The Authority consider a full assessment of these issues as a key requirement of an evidence based, integrated approach for identifying and supporting development proposals on or near national roads, as set out in the DOECLG guidance documents.

In addition to the overriding issues set out above, the Authority is concerned that the proposed variation is not specifically limited to the site in question, and would have significant concerns over the change of the permitted use class matrix for Retail Warehousing to include 'Retail Warehouse Club'. This in effect would allow the development of 'Retail Warehouse Club' on any Retail Warehouse zoned lands, and associated with this a revised commercial car parking standards at 1 space per 20 sq m GFA. This could act to significantly undermine investments made in town and district centres which aim to support the use of modes other than the private car.

### **Conclusion**

The Authority would conclude that the Variation as proposed is premature, pending the resolution of the issues outlined above. In particular, a more comprehensive assessment for the proposal must be undertaken, taking into account the strategic impact of such a development, and outlining any mitigation measures which should be directly linked to any such development. In addition, the parameters of the variation, in terms of the potential ramifications for development elsewhere in the county as a result of the changes in the permitted use class matrix for Retail Warehousing, need to be clearly set down as part any revised Variation. The Authority would recommend, and welcome, that any revised assessment of the proposed Variation is undertaken in consultation with the Authority and the National Roads Authority (NRA).

I trust that the views and recommendations of the Authority will be taken into consideration in relation to the proposed variation of the Development Plan.

Yours sincerely,



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**Hugh Creegan**  
Director of Planning, Investment and Taxi Regulation