

# **SUBMISSION TO DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029**

**Site at Main Street, Clarecastle, Co. Clare.**

**Padraig & John Meaney**

Issue: A

**Customer Project Number: 6814**

**Customer Document Number:**

# Document Sign Off

## SUBMISSION TO DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

Site at Main Street, Clarecastle, Co. Clare.

Padraig & John Meaney  
Issue A

File No: 6814

CURRENT ISSUE					
Issue No: A	Date: 20.03.22	Reason for issue: Submission to Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029			
Sign Off	Originator	Checker	Reviewer	Approver	Customer Approval (if required)
Print Name	Mandy Coleman	Joe Hanrahan		Mandy Coleman	
Signature	<b>Authorised Electronically</b>				
Date	20.03.22	20.03.22		20.03.22	

PREVIOUS ISSUES							
Issue No	Date	Originator	Checker	Reviewer	Approver	Customer	Reason for issue



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

P. Coleman & Associates have been appointed by Pádraig & John Meaney to prepare a submission to the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Draft Plan) with specific reference to the land-use zoning proposed for the settlement of Ennis which includes the village of Clarecastle. We are seeking to amend an area of proposed '*Open Space*' zoning and classify it as '*Mixed Use*'. The site is located within the village area of Clarecastle. Development of this site is highly desirable as it is a specific objective to facilitate the regeneration of vacant or underutilised sites. We respectfully request that the Planning Authority take account of this submission.

The submission will be outlined as follows:-

### **Section 2: Subject Site**

This section provides a description of the site, its context, and the relevant planning history.

### **Section 3: Planning Policy Framework**

This section outlines the proposed national and regional planning policies guiding the Draft Plan and current zoning for the subject site.

### **Section 4: Zoning Objective of the Draft Plan**

This section outlines the proposed land use zoning for the subject site as defined in the Draft Plan.

### **Section 5: Requested Amendments**

This section sets out the case for the rezoning of part of the proposed '*Open Space*' zoning to '*Mixed Use*'.

### **Section 6: Conclusion**

This section summarises our case for the change to the '*Mixed Use*' zoning objective on part of the subject site.

## 2. SUBJECT SITE

### 2.1 The Site

The subject site measures 0.25 hectares and is located on the Main Street in Clarecastle. The subject site consist of a vacant site with no buildings or structures. A Site Location map showing the full extent of the site is outlined in Figures 1 and 2 below.



**Figure 1 – Site Location Map**

The subject site has significant road frontage on the Main Street in Clarecastle with an existing access point.

The site is bound to the north by R458, to the south by vacant land and existing housing, to the west by housing and to the east by the River Fergus.

The property is positioned on the southern side of the R458 and within an area where reduced traffic speeds apply commensurate with urban areas. The R458 no longer functions as a strategic national route and therefore does not dissect and severe the village in the same manner it once did. Therefore, the settlement footprint on both sides of the road must be borne into consideration in terms of how it functions and the local service provision.



**Figure 2 – Aerial Image of Site outlined in red**

## **2.2 Site Context**

The subject site can be regarded as a vacant infill site located adjacent to/contiguous with the existing buildings on Main Street and the River Fergus. There is a continuous footpath running along the northern perimeter of the site. Whilst the subject site is outside the village 'Mixed Use' zoned lands, it is positioned directly adjacent to it, and performs and functions as part of the existing village settlement. The subject site benefits from good access to amenities within easy walking distance.

The subject site is located in a visually prominent position on approach to the village from the East. A well designed mixed use development can provide an attractive landmark riverside development for the village. The subject site, which currently has no use, would become a commercially viable development which would more importantly provide valuable extra housing as part of a mixed use scheme.

The subject site is in a unique location where lands are available to help the growth of the village by extending the existing 'Mixed Use' zoning boundaries. We would suggest that by allowing the village to grow and radiate out to the river boundary rather than extending it further at the Ennis side would allow for the concentration for services and compact growth.

Clarecastle has a unique opportunity for expanding the village centre through the inclusion of the subject site for development. It is clear that the village is lacking in retail and commercial opportunities and this issue needs to be addressed if the village is to grow.

### 2.3 Planning History

The following planning history relates to subject site.

Planning Ref	Applicant	Description	Decision
91/638	PJ Meaney	Construct 9 no. dwellinghouses, access road and ancillary services at Main Street, Clarecastle.	Granted by ABP following first party appeal

**Table 1 – Planning History of Subject Site**

The following section outlines the key national and regional planning policies which support the proposed zoning request for the site and the current local level planning policies for the residential zoning of the subject site.

## 3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

### 3.1 National Planning Context

#### 3.1.1 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country up to the year 2040. The framework guides public and private investment to create and promote opportunities for the population and to protect and enhance the environment, including villages to cities and every settlement in between.

The framework specifically indicates the need for better use of under-utilised land and buildings "including 'infill', 'Brownfield' and publicly-owned sites and vacant and underoccupied buildings, with higher housing and job densities, better serviced by existing facilities and public transport" (extract taken from: Section 2.2 Overview of the NPF Strategy Compact Growth, Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework, 2018, p.28).



Referenced below (Section 4.5 Achieving Urban Infill/ Brownfield Development, Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework, 2018, p.65):

*4.5 Achieving Urban Infill/Brownfield Development*

*The NPF targets a significant proportion of future urban development of infill/brownfield development sites within the built footprint of existing urban areas. This is applicable to all scale of settlement, from the largest city, to the smallest village.*

*“To enable brownfield development, planning policies and standards need to be flexible, focusing on design led and performance-based outcomes, rather than specifying absolute requirements in all cases. .... planning standards should be flexibly applied in response to well-designed development proposals that can achieve urban infill and brownfield development objectives in settlements of all sizes. ... general restrictions on building height or general restrictions... should be replaced by performance-based criteria ... e.g. city/town centre, public transport hub, inner suburban, public transport corridor, outer suburban, town, village etc”*

By applying this policy to the subject site it is proposed that re-zoning to allow a small design-led development would align with the overarching purpose and intention set out in the NPF.

This ‘compact growth’ strategy is designed to counter the prevailing situation whereby the fastest growing areas are at the edges of and outside the cities and towns. This results in

- A constant process of infrastructure and services catch-up in building new roads, new schools, services and amenities and a struggle to bring jobs and homes together, meaning that there are remarkably high levels of car dependence and that it is difficult to provide good public transport;
- A gradual process of run-down of city and town centre and established suburban areas as jobs, retail and housing move out, leaving behind declining school enrolments, empty buildings and a lack of sufficient people to create strong and vibrant places, both day and night;
- Most development takes the form of greenfield sprawl that extends the physical footprint of urban areas, and when it is the principal form of development, this works against the creation of attractive, liveable, high quality urban places in which people are increasingly wishing to live, work and invest.

The various polices in the NPF are structured under National Policy Objectives (NPOs). The key NPO’s of relevance to this submission are as follows:-

*National Policy Objective 3a* seeks to deliver at least 40% of all new homes nationally, within the built-up footprint of existing settlements.



*National Policy Objective 5* seeks to develop cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality to compete internationally and be drivers of national and regional growth, investment and prosperity.

*National Policy Objective 6* relating to increased residential population and employment in urban areas;

*National Policy Objective 7* Reversing the stagnation or decline of many smaller urban centres, by identifying and establishing new roles and functions and enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities and

- Encouraging population growth in strong employment and service centres of all sizes, supported by employment growth;
- In more self-contained settlements of all sizes, supporting a continuation of balanced population and employment growth.

*National Policy Objective 11* which favours development that can encourage more people to live and work in existing settlements;

*National Policy Objective 27* which prioritises walking and cycling accessibility to existing and proposed development;

*National Policy Objective 33* relating to provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development;

*National Policy Objective 35* relating to increased residential density in settlements.

Also of relevance Appendix 3 of the NPF which sets out a tiered approach to zoning of lands. In summary:-

- i. Serviced lands should be identified;
- ii. Serviceable lands should be identified;
- iii. Contiguous lands should be identified

We submit that the NPF sets out a clear policy direction for the use of continuous sequential sites and the tiered approach to the zoning of lands. Of particular relevance appendix 3 states that Tier 1 serviced zoned lands '*will generally require the lands to (be) within the footprint of or spatially sequential within the identified settlement*'.

### **3.1.2 Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines**

The most relevant Ministerial Guidelines to the proposed development are outlined below:-

- Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (May 2009),
- Adopted Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007),
- Draft Ministerial Guidelines on Development Plans for Planning Authorities (2021)



### 3.1.2.1 Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (May 2009),

The role of the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Development in Urban Areas is to ensure the sustainable delivery of new development throughout the country. The Guidelines focus on the provision of sustainable residential development, including the promotion of layouts that:-

- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and minimise the need to use cars;
- Are easy to access for all users and to find one's way around;
- Promote the efficient use of land and of energy, and minimise greenhouse gas emissions;
- Provide a mix of land uses to minimise transport demand.

### 3.1.2.2 Adopted Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007)

These Guidelines on Development Plans are the adopted guidelines that are currently in place until such time as the current guidelines which are in draft form are adopted.

The Adopted Guidelines advise that development plans should anticipate future needs on an objective basis (Overview on Page 3) with needs driven assessments of future development requirements including the amount of land that needs to be zoned for particular purposes. It is stated that zoning that is not responsive to or justifiable by reference to reasonable needs, or that substantially exceeds such needs is not consistent with established principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

Part 4.4 refers to the mandatory objective of zoning land. It is stated in Section 10(2)(2) of the 2000 Act, as amended, mandates a development plan to include objectives for:-

*'the zoning of land for the use solely or primarily of particular areas for particular purposes (whether residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, as open space or otherwise, or a mixture of these uses) and to such extent as the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in the opinion of the planning authority, requires to be indicated'.*

Section 4.4 also states that development plans perform an important task in setting out the framework within which the development needs of the economy, and society in general, can be responded to while maintaining, and where possible, improving the environment.

It is further stated in section 4.5 that *'following the approach set out, a development plan should ensure that enough land will be available to meet anticipated development requirements and will be developed in a sequential and co-ordinated manner. This will avoid, for example, a situation where housing estates are built beyond the outer edges of existing built-up areas while intervening lands lie undeveloped resulting in deficiencies in terms of footpaths, lighting, drainage or adequate roads infrastructure'.* The suitability of these lands and the availability of infrastructure is identified and assessed below.

Crucially in the context of this submission, in addition to the above, when considering the suitability of specific land for development, within the process of preparing zoning objectives in making a development plan, the members are restricted to considering the proper planning and sustainable development of the area to which the development plan relates, statutory obligations and Government policy. Matters typically relevant to ‘the proper planning and sustainable development’ of an area, inter alia, include:

- 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.

### *3.1.2.3 Draft Ministerial Guidelines on Development Plans for Planning Authorities (2021)*

Section 1.5 of the draft Guidelines states that the development plan is now at the heart of a plan-led system whereby public capital investment programmes and priorities are aligned to support the adopted development strategy. The reverse is also set out later in the draft guidelines. This principle has been established through Project Ireland 2040 comprising both the NPF as the State’s national spatial development strategy and the National Development Plan (NDP) as the capital investment is intended to ensure a co-ordinated approach to investment in public infrastructure in a way that ties in with national and local spatial priorities. The development plan must therefore reflect and respond to programmed significant national infrastructural investment by the State.

Section 1.7 identifies Guiding Principles for the production of development plans including the following:-

- A vision for the area;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- A strategic balanced approach;
- The integration of sustainable development and climate change priorities;
- The structured management of change;

## **3.2 Regional Planning Context**

The Southern Regional Assembly published the ‘*Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region*’ (RSES) on 31<sup>st</sup>. January, 2020. It is a 12-year, strategy development framework providing for the future physical, economic, and social development of the Southern Region. It includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) to guide the future development of the Regions three main cities and metropolitan areas, Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford and strategies for Key Towns including Ennis Town (which includes Clarecastle). It seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – NPF.



Fourteen 'Key Town's, including Ennis, are identified in the RSES. They each play a critical roll in underpinning the RSES and ensuring a consolidated spread of growth beyond the cities of the sub-regional level.

Six of the Key Towns have a very significant population scale, Kilkenny City, Ennis, Carlow, Tralee, Wexford and Clonmel. The RSES states:-

*'These Key Towns are self-sustaining regional drivers and have a comparable structure to the five regional growth centres identified in the NPF. Given their considerable scope for growth, it is envisaged that local authorities should plan for population growth of more than 30% by 2040'*

Accordingly, Regional Policy Objective 11 refers growth in the Key Towns, including Ennis as follows:-

*'a. Local Authorities are supported in targeting growth of more than 30% for each Key Town subject to capacity analysis and sustainable criteria under Section 3.3 A Tailored Approach, RPO 3 Local Authority Core Strategies and the sustainable requirements under the following sub sections of RPO 11 Key Towns The appropriate level of growth is to be determined by the Core Strategy of Development Plans'.*

Active land management, sustainable compact growth, placemaking and climate change adaptation and mitigation are key objectives of both the NPF and the RSES. In order to create vibrant and sustainable towns and villages it is essential to sustain and enhance the residential population in town and village centres. Residential uses in the town centre, when combined with retail, commercial and civic uses, bring about high levels of human interaction and form an essential element of the vitality of a town. Residents in town and village centres enjoy a high quality of life and convenient access to both employment opportunities and a range of amenities. Residential uses in town and village centres also enhance economic growth by contributing to the vibrancy of settlements, making them more attractive locations for new business development and job creation.

### **3.3 Local Planning Context**

The subject site is located within the functional area of Clare County Council and the relevant policy document is the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (CCDP).

According to the Settlement Strategy, the Settlement Plan Policy Objective for Ennis & Clarecastle is to ensure that Ennis and Clarecastle, designed as a Hub town in the National Spatial Strategy (now superseded) as the county town at the top of the settlement hierarchy;

- a) is a driver of economic and regional prosperity by harnessing its strategic location strong urban structure, retail service and accommodation base as well as its competitive advantages,



- b) a vibrant culturally rich town with a revitalised town centre strong economic growth balanced with enhanced social inclusion sustainable neighbourhoods and a high level of environmental quality ensuring an excellent quality of life is achieved and
- c) a local area plan for Ennis and its Environs during the lifetime of the CCDP

The CCDP recognises that town and village centre infill and or underutilised sites offer excellent development opportunities in key locations and can be suitable for either commercial or residential development or a mixture of uses. The development of infill and or underutilised sites in town and village centres has the potential to significantly contribute to the overall appearance of the surrounding area whilst also ensuring vitality and the beneficial use of town centre lands.

Volume 3(a) of the CCDP refers to Ennis Municipal District Written Statement and Maps and it is of note that the village of Clarecastle which is located c.3km south of the town centre of Ennis is included within the urban boundaries of the Ennis Settlement Plan. Section 1.1 of this Plan includes: Clarecastle has a strong village core, extensive sports facilities and important architectural and heritage assets including the historic pier, numerous protected structures and monastic archaeology. Therefore, while Clarecastle is associated with the town of Ennis, it retains its own identity

Section 2.12 refers to Clarecastle Village and a list of priorities for strategic aims are given. This includes: To enhance connectivity between residential areas and community areas.

Section 2.12.2 New Housing in Clarecastle sets out the overall strategy for the provision of housing. Site briefs for development of lands that have been identified for future development are set out.

### **3.3.1 Zoning**

The subject site is within the Ennis Settlement boundary and is zoned as 'Open Space' in the Ennis Municipal District Plan - Volume 3a of the CCDP.

The 'Open Space' zoning objective states as follows:-

*"It is intended that lands zoned open space will be retained as undeveloped open space, mainly for passive open space related activities. The open space/park areas could contain active play facilities such as children's play areas but these would only be a small component of the overall areas involved".*



**Figure 3 – Land Use Zoning Map Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023**

### **3.3.2 Designations**

The subject site is located within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

### **3.4 Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

The village of Clarecastle is identified in the Settlement Hierarchy in the Draft Plan as Large Village – Tier 1. The Draft Plan refers to Clarecastle’s proximity to the County Town of Ennis, as well as to Shannon and Limerick has contributed to its growth over recent years, making it an important residential and employment centre. Clarecastle has a strong village core, extensive sports facilities and important architectural and heritage assets including the historic pier, numerous protected structures, and monastic archaeology.

#### **3.4.1 Zoning**

The Draft Plan proposes no change to the existing ‘Open Space’ zoning objective on the subject site – See Figure 4 below.

#### **3.4.2 Designations**

The subject site is located within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).



**Figure 4 – Proposed zoning map Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.**

### **3.4.3 Policy Objectives**

Relevant policy objectives from the Draft Plan are outlined as follows:-

#### ***CDP 4.7 – Large Villages***

*It is an objective of Clare County Council:*

- a) To promote the consolidation of the existing large villages through brownfield reuse/redevelopment and through compact growth within the appropriate land use zoning and/or the areas identified for village growth;*
- b) To ensure that future growth is incremental and balanced in nature, and is relative and appropriate to the scale, size and character of the villages and to seek to achieve centre out compact growth;*
- c) To work with the relevant bodies and to seek investment for the timely and sustainable delivery of holistic infrastructure, to enhance the levels of amenity and design quality and to regenerate and rejuvenate the large villages throughout the County;*
- d) To seek investment in the sustainable development of a ‘New Homes in Small Towns and Villages’ initiative in the County and the provision of services and serviced sites to create “build your own home” opportunities within the existing footprint of large villages; and*
- e) To ensure that in the case of any development/reuse or redevelopment where connection to an existing wastewater treatment plant is not possible, the provision of a private waste water treatment system will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposed system meets standards set out within EU and national legislation and guidance.*



### **CDP5.3 - Living in our Towns and Villages**

*It is an objective of the Development Plan:*

- a) To encourage the reuse of upper floors above commercial premises for residential accommodation;*
- b) To promote the retention of town centre residential units and to discourage their subdivision into smaller units or conversion into non-residential uses;*
- c) To encourage the development of new residential accommodation in or adjoining town centres and to ensure that such developments provide a range of accommodation types and tenures and a high level of residential amenity;*
- d) To support the procurement of vacant town centre residential property by Clare County Council to ensure its continued use for residential purposes into the future; and*
- e) To support opportunities for the delivery of serviced sites for housing within towns and villages*

### **CDP 7.8 – Large Villages**

*It is an objective of Clare County Council:*

To encourage the retention of existing retail services and facilitate retail development within designated village centres, where it is appropriate to its location and catchment

### **CDP 16.5 – Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs)**

*It is an objective of Clare County Council:*

- a) To ensure that new developments within or adjacent to an ACA respect the established character context of the area and contribute positively to the ACA in terms of design, scale, setting and material finishes;*
- b) To protect from demolition or removal and nonsympathetic alterations, existing buildings, structures, groups of structures, sites, landscapes and features such as street furniture and paving, which are considered to be intrinsic elements of the special character of the ACA;*
- c) To ensure that all new signage, lighting, advertising and utilities to buildings within an ACA are designed, constructed and located in a manner that does not detract from and is complementary to the character of the ACA; and*
- d) To ensure that external colour schemes in ACAs enhance the character and amenities of the area and reflect traditional colour schemes*

### **CDP17.1 – Town and Village Centre Vibrancy**

*It is an objective of the Development Plan:*

- a) To support the development of the national “Town Centre First” principle to aid in the development and coordination of regeneration, revitalisation and growth in vibrancy of our towns and villages.*
- b) To carry out public realm enhancement works as well as retail health checks, vacant site and derelict site surveys and other essential research and analysis to inform the actions required to support town and village centre renewal and development projects across County Clare*



**CDP17.11 – Town and Village Centre Infill Development.**

*It is an objective of Clare County Council:*

- a) To encourage and support the redevelopment of infill sites in town and village centres for residential, commercial or a mixture of uses; and*
- b) To provide guidance to potential developers to support the reuse of key town and village centre infill sites.*

It is an aim of the Draft Plan to encourage greater levels of residential occupancy in town and village centres across the County. In order to achieve this aim it is important to ensure that town and village centres are attractive, family-friendly places with a mix of accommodation types and tenures and to encourage the reuse of upper floors above commercial premises in the town centres for residential accommodation. The Draft Plan identifies that within the towns and villages across County Clare there are brownfield and infill site redevelopment opportunities. Subject to the site specific issues and adequate infrastructural capacity there is the potential to provide a greater mix of units and higher densities on these sites in order to achieve sustainable compact growth. The Draft Plan also identifies that in accordance with the National Guidelines on Urban Development and Building Height (2018) there may also be opportunities for taller building heights in order to promote a more efficient use of available and accessible lands.

The rationale for changing part of the existing ‘Open Space’ zoning within the subject site to ‘Mixed Use’ is set out in Section 5 below.

**5.0 REQUESTED AMENDMENT**

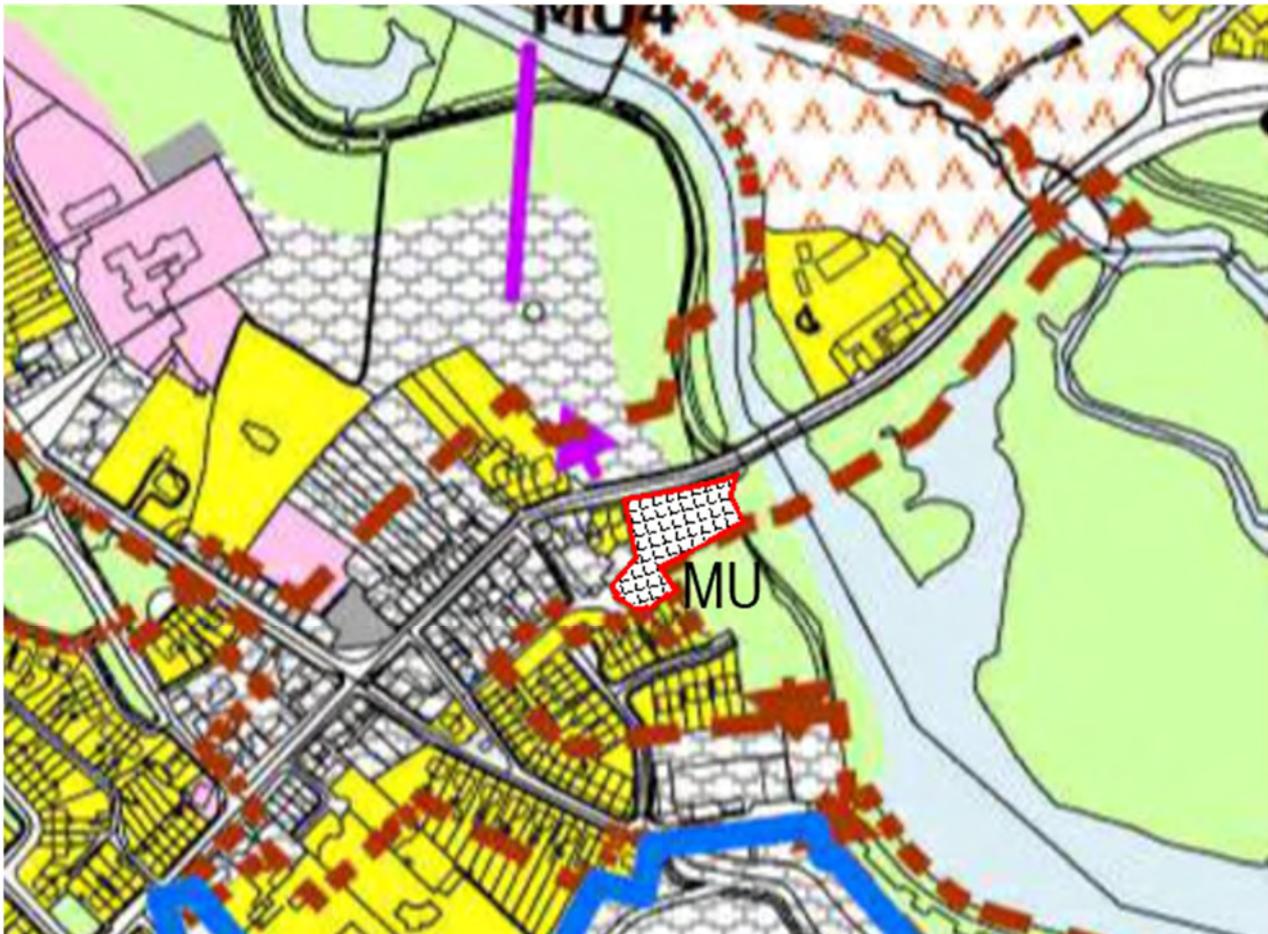
**5.1 Change Proposed ‘Open Space’ zoning on subject site to ‘Mixed Use’**

It is requested that the subject site be zoned as ‘Mixed use’ as shown in Figure 5 below.

The ‘Mixed Use’ zoning objective states as follows:-

*“The use of land for ‘mixed use’ developments shall include the use of land for a range of uses, making provision, where appropriate, for primary and secondary uses e.g. commercial/retail development as the primary use with residential development as a secondary use. Secondary uses will be considered by the local authority having regard to the particular character of the given area.*

*On lands that have been zoned ‘mixed-use’ in or near town or village centres, a diverse range of day and evening uses is encouraged and an over-concentration of any one use will not normally be permitted”.*



**Figure 5 – Draft Zoning Map showing ‘Mixed Use’ and ‘Open Space’ zoning objectives proposed for subject site.**

There are a number of material considerations put forward for consideration by our Clients which, it is submitted, will need to be considered by the Planning Authority, including the Planning history, land use zoning history, and pattern of development in the area; the need for compact and sustainable growth; sequential approach to development and environmental considerations the existence of infrastructure such as water supply, sewers, electricity, fibre cable, roads and amenities.

The rezoning of the subject site is a logical extension and natural extension of the village of Clarecastle. The site is fully serviced.

### **5.2 Principle of Mixed Use Development.**

The subject site is ideally suited to a mixture of uses including office, retail, residential, tourist accommodation.

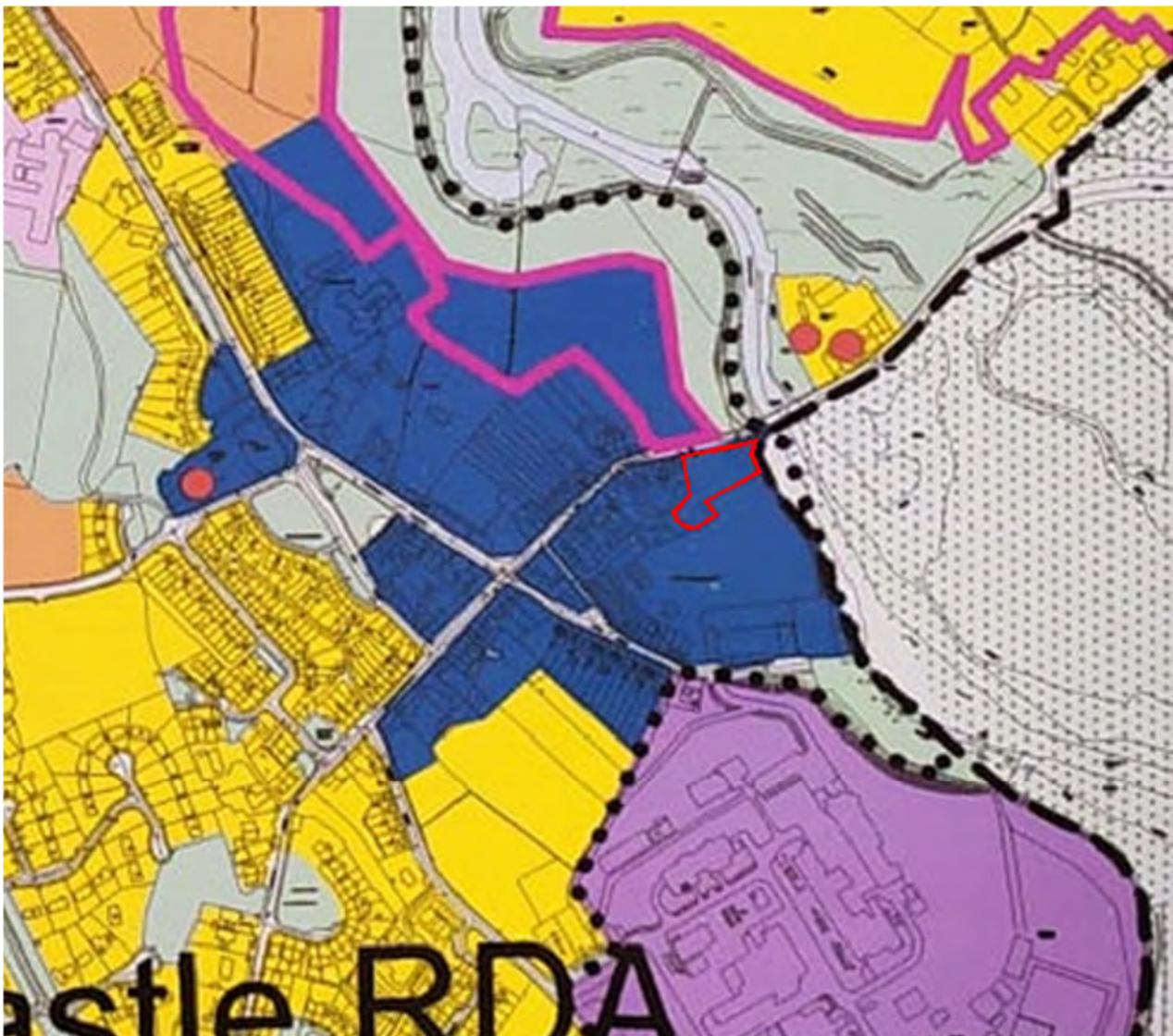
The principle of developing this land was deemed acceptable in 1993 when permission was granted by An Bord Pleanála under Planning Permission Ref: P91/638 (ABP Ref: PL. 3/5/89221) for development of 9 no. dwelling houses, access road and ancillary services.

The subject site was also previously zoned for ‘Commercial’ use under the Ennis & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 (See Figure 6 below) which demonstrates, the Authority have previously been supportive of development at this location.

The proposed rezoning of the site for ‘Mixed Use’ will provide for commercial, retail and residential development with a landmark development which will respect and enhance the character of the village and represents a key opportunity and substantial planning gain for the village of Clarecastle.

The commercial core of Clarecastle is in parts struggling and having regarding to the recent closure of the Roche Pharmaceutical plant site, it is our Clients’ opinion that any proposed zoning plan for Clarecastle village should include for a mix of commercial, retail and housing to support and sustain it.

The rezoning sought will provide a natural infill development of the village



**Figure 6 – Previous Zoning as per Ennis & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 (as varied)**  
Source: Ennis & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014



### **5.3 Delivery of Development.**

The recently published Draft Development Plan Guidelines clearly state that “*planning authorities should approach the development plan with a clear focus on the delivery of expected development outcomes*”.

The site is not reliant on the provision of major new infrastructure and, being in single ownership, is free from complex legal ownership arrangements involving multiple parties that will delay other sites being progressed for development.

Our Clients are fully aware of the challenge facing the Planning Authority in relation to the reclassification and rezoning of land within the Ennis & Environs area. Our Clients are requesting to only have a portion of their land zoned as ‘*Mixed Use*’.

### **5.4 Planning for Compact Growth**

The NPF seeks to achieve more compact and sustainable growth through consolidation, a greater share of future development within the existing built footprint of settlements, to include new homes, businesses and amenities. The NPF sets national targets for brownfield/infill housing development in settlements (30%) to support the regeneration of existing urban areas. NPF compact growth objectives together with Town Centres first principals are focused on the reuse of previously developed buildings and land and building up ‘infill’ sites, especially those that are centrally located in settlements at all scales.

The subject site adjoins the village Mixed Use Zoning of Clarecastle, within walking distance of services and facilities.

In accordance with at ‘*Methodology for a Tiered Approach to Landuse Zoning*’ as set out in the Draft Plan, the subject site can be classified as potential Tier 1 Zoned Land. This means that the site has most of the infrastructure necessary to ensure that development of the site can take place in the short term. Refer to Figure 7 below which identifies the village of Clarecastle as being within Tier 1. Tier 1 lands are serviced, and in general, part of or contiguous to the built-up footprint of an area. Zoning the subject site for ‘*Mixed use*’ would facilitate utilisation of serviced land within the existing settlement boundary without the need for settlement expansion.

**Table 3.1 Settlement Hierarchy in County Clare**

<b>Key Town</b> Ennis
<b>Metropolitan Area</b> (Key component of the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan) Shannon SDZ Sixmilebridge (Small Town) Athlunkard, Bunratty, Clonlara, Parteen, Ballycannon North, Meelick (Large Villages) Ardnacrusha, Cratloe, O'Briensbridge (Small Villages)
<b>Service Towns</b> Ennistymon/Lahinch, Kilrush/Cappa, Scarriff/Tuamgraney
<b>Small Towns</b> Kilkee, Killaloe, Lisdoonvarna, Miltown Malbay, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Tulla
<b>Large Villages</b> <b>Tier 1</b> Ballyvaughan, <b>Clarecastle</b> , Corofin, Crusheen, Doonbeg, Feakle, Inagh, Kilkishen, Mountshannon, Mullagh, Quilty, Quin, Whitegate, Liscannor, Kilfenora and Killimer <b>Tier 2</b> Kiladysert, Kilmihil
<b>Small Villages</b> Barefield, Bridgetown, Broadford, Carrigaholt, Cooraclare, Doolin, Kilmaley, Kilmurry, Labasheeda, Lissycasey, Ballinruan, Ballyea, Ballynacally, Bellharbour, Bodyke, Boston, Caher, Carron, Clooney, Connolly, Cranny, Creagh,

**Figure 7- Settlement Hierarchy in County Clare - Clarecastle – Tier 1**

**Source: Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.**

From a consolidated spatial development perspective, the subject site is well positioned within the established development envelope of the village. It is not positioned on a peripheral edge that would suggest a 'fragmented expansion' of the village settlement. The River Fergus east of the subject property defines the physical limitation of the settlement and any expansion of it. Moreover, the subject property is connected to the village by the existing pedestrian footpath that extends along the R458.

In addition the zoning of the subject site would provide consistency with the proposed extension of the 'Mixed Use' zoning objective to the lands to the north of the R458..

It is considered that the identification of the subject site for 'Mixed Use' development, by its inclusion within the Clarecastle village and by virtue of the supporting level of infrastructure and local services would in principle, contribute positively towards the 'moderate sustainable growth' model advocated by National Policy. The inclusion of the subject site with the zoning for the village of Clarecastle would not result in an expansion of the settlement as it is merely seeking the consolidated use of an infill underutilized site within the established village envelope. The inclusion of the subject site would therefore be consistent with the principle of the Core Strategy and normal development management considerations regarding pedestrian accessibility and connectivity to existing services.



### **5.5 Sequential Approach to Development**

The NPF strategy incorporates National Strategic Objectives which seek to tackle the damaging and inefficient pattern of urban sprawl through favouring compact forms of development that focus on consolidating the footprint of our existing settlements with new development. The location of zoned lands and sites within the settlement must be consistent with sequential development patterns, town centre first principles, proximity to services and facilities and the need to reduce carbon emissions.

SPPR DPG 7 of the Draft Development Plan Guidelines state that,

*“Planning authorities shall adopt a sequential approach when zoning lands for development, whereby the most spatially centrally located development sites in settlements are prioritized for development first, with more spatially peripherally located development sites being zoned subsequently”.*

The sequential approach as set out in the DoEHLG Development Plan Guidelines specifies that zoning shall extend outwards from the centre of an urban area, with undeveloped lands closest to the core and public transport routes being given preference, encouraging infill opportunities, and that areas to be zoned shall be contiguous to existing zoned development lands and that any exception must be clearly justified in the written statement of the development plan. Suitably located infill serviced sites should be prioritised in advance of proposing any development on greenfield lands. Providing for a ‘Mixed use’ zoning objective on the subject site would represent a sequential approach to development which would form a natural continuation of development under the sequential development principle in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the provisions of the Draft Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities (SPPR DPG 7).

We note from the Draft Plan there appears to be very little lands proposed to be zoned to facilitate commercial, retail and tourism uses within the Village. It is our view that the amount of proposed zoned land for the above uses in the village is deficient for the lifetime of the plan i.e. up to 2029.

### **5.6 Open Space Zoning**

We submit that the ‘Open Space’ zoning is not a viable zoning for the subject site. There are only two permitted uses identified in the Zoning Matrix on this zoning objective which are ‘Golf Course/Pitch and Putt Course’ and ‘Open Space’. It is submitted that these uses are all non-viable uses for our Clients and the subject site. Without a viable use being permitted within the zoning objective, the subject site could end up becoming an unmaintained vacant underutilised site which would become an eyesore at this strategically importance location at the entrance to the village.



It is our Clients opinion that there is already an exceptionally large provision of land proposed to be zoned as *'Open Space'* in this general location, where it is reasonable to assume, could address more than sufficiently, any land requirement necessary to provide for open space and active/passive recreational amenities, without the necessity to include the full extent of the subject site as an additional provision.

It is however, appropriate to retain an element of the *'Open Space'* zoning objective along the banks of the river in conjunction with the land to north of the R458 and lands to the south of the subject lands around the Roche Site. This would provide for an open space buffer along the banks of the river. In the interests of community gain, it is envisaged that an open space buffer between the *'Mixed Use'* proposed zoning on the subject site and lands to the north of the R458 would be an appropriate response to the surrounding context. Through forward planning and carefully considered connections there is the potential that the combined open space lands could gradually become a high-quality village level green space/public park which can benefit the wider walking and cycling network and contribute to the health and well-being of the population. This quality of amenity could help to frame the direct future development towards compact growth, and to prevent further urban sprawl.

If the subject site remains zoned for *'Open Space'* it is extremely likely that the site will have no active function and will create a divide between the village and the River bank. There is enough adequate provision of open space proposed along the river bank.

The *'Open Space'* zoning objective on this serviced site holds no merit particularly and represents a gross under-utilisation of urban served land.

### **5.7 Visual Impact**

As previously noted, the subject site is located in a visually prominent position on approach to the village from the East (See Figure 8 below).

### **5.9 Availability**

The subject site is available for development during the Draft Plan period. Our Client previously submitted expressions of interest to Clare County Council in 2016 and 2020 for Tender for the Sale of Houses/and or Land for Social Housing to Clare County Council.



**Figure 8 – Image of subject site on approach from East**

A well designed mixed use development can provide an attractive landmark riverside development for the village. Over the years the subject site was left unattended and unmaintained and became very overgrown and provided an unsightly visual appearance to the village on approach from the east – refer to Google image photos below.



Figure 9 – Street View Image – June 2009



Figure 10 – Street View Image – June 2017



**Figure 11 – Street View Image – June 2018**

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Having regard to the location of the subject site adjacent to the village zoned lands, and having regard to the potential of the lands to contribute toward the Core Strategy and Strategic Settlement Objectives set out in the Draft Plan, it is respectfully requested that the subject site is appropriately identified and designed as part the *'Mixed Use'* village landuse zoning designation. The detailed merits of this request have been set out in this submission and are based on material evidence on material evidence based planning considerations including inter-alia;

- The ability of the development of the subject site to consolidate the established village form;
- Availability of infrastructure to facilitate village development;
- Proximity and connectively between the site and existing local services and resources;

Our Client requests the above submission be kindly considered in the preparation of the Draft Plan and that the subject site be zoned as *'Mixed Use'*.

Zoning the subject site for the above uses inherently complies with the overarching policies and NPOs of the NPF to encourage *'compact growth'* and to accommodate part of the population increase projected for Ennis and Clarecastle in appropriate locations.

The extension of the *'Mixed Use'* zoning of the village to include the subject site is considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area for the following reasons:-

- Will provide an opportunity for a mixed use development which can provide for a substantial improvement to the streetscape at the entrance to the village.
- It will eliminate the derelict and unsightly nature of the subject site which is a highly desirable aspect from a visual point of view.



- Consolidate the development of the village with the bridge/river forming the natural boundary of the village settlement boundary.

The rezoning of the subject site will ensure that the future growth of the village will take place in a sustainable and consolidated manner in accordance with National, Regional and Local Policy.

The subject site has no function as '*Open Space*' and represents an appropriate location for the provision of much needed commercial, retail and residential provision that will support the provision of a sustainable settlement in Clarecastle.