



## DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029  
Planning Department, Clare County Council  
New Road, Ennis, Co Clare, V95 DXP2

Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
[By Email: [devplan@clarecoco.ie](mailto:devplan@clarecoco.ie)]

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: SUBMISSION TO DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

#### 1.1 Purpose & Scope of Submission

The Planning Partnership, McHale Retail Park, Castlebar, Co. Mayo, have been retained by the Scarriff Town Team, Market Square, Scarriff, Co. Clare, to prepare a submission in relation to the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, and as it relates to Scarriff. In the first instance, we note and welcome the commitment in the *Draft Plan* that *"The Council will work with the Scarriff Town Team and other community groups for the betterment of place making, public realm and quality of life in Scarriff/Tuamgraney"* and *Objective SF05* of the *Draft Retail Strategy* to *"Support Scarriff Town Team and Tidy Town Team."*

#### 1.2 Summary of Submission

In short, the Town Team are seeking to improve car parking facilities in the centre of the town, to act as a catalyst for wider benefits, as follows:

1. The Town Team have identified the Fire Station site as a suitable location for a primary new car park serving the town centre (along with an additional secondary parking location);
2. This would require the relocation of the existing Fire Station to an edge of centre location, which would also provide opportunities for enhanced fire service infrastructure for the catchment area;
3. Primarily however, the relocation would facilitate the creation of a modern, purpose built car park in a planned manner in a central and accessible location;
4. This would benefit existing residents, businesses and visitors, whilst encouraging additional trips to the town, driving economic and recreational activity for the benefit of all in the town and its hinterland;
5. The provision of modern facilities would allow for modern infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging facilities, along with provision for high quality cycle parking areas;
6. At present, parking in the town is constrained in scale and somewhat ad hoc in nature;
7. The primary parking area is located in the Market Square, which represents a significant opportunity cost in terms of the potential of the square;
8. The development of a new parking facility would enable the reimagining of the Market Square, in terms of optimising the footprint of parking therein and allowing for the creation of a pocket park, urban plaza, or another form or forms of public realm amenity;
9. Whilst the cost implications of these proposals would be considerable, they are nonetheless merited, in terms of setting a level of ambition for Scarriff into the medium and long term. The Development plan should reflect this level of ambition accordingly;
10. In relation to Scarriff and its role in the County Settlement Strategy, the Town Team also note that the town should be elevated in terms of population and other targets. The bypass of Killaloe along with growing tourism in the area will necessitate additional infrastructure, housing and services.

## 2.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### 2.1 Draft Development Plan

We note as follows a number of relevant extracts from the Draft Plan regarding Scarriff:

*"Scarriff/Tuamgraney is recognised as one of the main service centres in East Clare. The opportunity exists to **allow these complementary settlements to expand to improve the range of services available to residents of both settlements and to visitors to the area.** This Plan proposes that significant service provision will continue to be directed towards the more established town centre of Scarriff..."*

*Scarriff/Tuamgraney are served by a wide range of commercial, retail, community, education and amenity services and, whilst there is considerable focus on Ennis and Limerick city in the region, **enhancement of the employment and retail offer of Scarriff/Tuamgraney would help to strengthen the settlements as one of the main service providers in the east of the County.***

*General Objectives –Scarriff and Tuamgraney*

- *To ensure that serviced linked settlements of Scarriff/Tuamgraney is a driver of growth and prosperity for their catchment, by **consolidating their administrative, retail and service bases, protecting and enhancing their distinctive town centre characteristics and natural landscape settings, and maximising their role for sub-regional growth.***
- *To promote consolidation through brownfield reuse/redevelopment and to address vacancy and the under utilisation of the existing building stock whilst also **promoting compact growth to support existing services and encourage the development of new services, whilst retaining the existing character;***

*The town provides a range of local services meeting the day to day needs of its catchment population. It has a good range of small scale convenience provision supported by a range of services. However, the centre has a limited range of comparison shopping outlets which results in retail leakage to other settlements in the area (e.g. Killaloe, Ennis and Limerick City). The following are the objectives for retail development in Scarriff:*

- ***To support the town as an important centre for the provision of convenience goods and retail services;***
- *To encourage the provision (where not already provided) of good quality convenience outlets capable of supporting a main food shopping trip in the town centre;*
- *To support the provision of non-bulky goods outlets in the town centre where these are aimed at meeting the needs of the local catchment population."*

[Our Emphasis]

In order for the town to achieve the above objectives, it is necessary for it to be adequately served in terms of infrastructure, including car parking infrastructure, which is not the case presently.

The Planning Authority are therefore requested to designate the subject site (see Figure 1 & 2 below) with a specific local objective for a new car park, along with allied objectives in terms of a new Fire Station site, and an urban realm upgrade objective for the Market Square.

An additional secondary parking area is also proposed, for longer term and larger vehicle parking to serve the town.

We also reiterate that 'car parking' provision would have considerable potential in terms of delivery of overall sustainable transport and mobility objectives, in that a modern purpose built facility could incorporate enhanced facilities for all, whether in terms of cycle or disabled parking, etc.

## 2.2 Draft Retail Strategy

We note that the Draft Retail Strategy also contains particularly relevant analysis, including as follows (derived from Shopper Surveys):

*"...the joint most common factors determining the preference in shopping location across convenience and comparison categories are convenience and choice (variety). **When considering grocery shopping, the convenient location of the shopping destination, and the access to sufficient parking facilities trump the choice (variety) in products provided at that location. This is in line with the data on frequency of grocery shopping, with the frequency warranting efficient and convenient access to shopping locations.***

*Key Insights... - **Respondents' overall preference, and apparent dependency on personal car transport for shopping reflects the importance of parking** (ease of parking, parking costs, proximity of parking to shops) and accessibility (convenient access, quality of roads, safe passage for pedestrians/cyclists, accessibility assistance for disabled patrons) in choice of shopping location."*

[Our Emphasis]

The above illustrates the critical role of car parking provision in towns. Whilst car parking is not typically envisaged as a feature of 'urban regeneration' etc. it is a most necessary prerequisite for such to happen.

Furthermore, it is within the control of the County Council to deliver this infrastructure and as such there is an onus on the Council to create the conditions to stimulate development and redevelopment in the town.

## 2.3 Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

We note this publication, which sets out high level policies and objectives for rural parts of the Country, which would include areas such as Scarriff.

The strategy notes for instance that:

*"**Local Authorities play a leading role in the regeneration and revitalisation of our rural towns and villages. Working directly with communities and local businesses, they are central to creating the conditions to improve the attractiveness of town and village centres, stimulate business and support residential development.**"*

*They do this through a range of measures including **improvements in the public realm, the provision of civic amenities**, the acquisition of strategic sites for development, including through the judicious use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, and the provision of a variety of services.*

***Enabling the population of rural towns and villages to grow, as well as supporting new businesses and services, will require appropriate investment in infrastructure to support this growth.**"*

[Our Emphasis]

## 2.4 Town Centre First

We also note this publication, which sets out high level policies and objectives for Town Centres, and a move to a more Town Centre focused approach to development nationally. Relevant extracts include as follows:

*"Regardless of the level of vibrancy of each of our towns, they all continue to face an array of challenges to their ongoing function and purpose. **There is a need to reverse the pattern of stagnation or decline of many towns, which may require the identification and establishment of new roles and new functions, the enhancement of local infrastructure and amenities or a greater emphasis on services, hospitality and social interaction.***

***Public spaces, which include public streets, squares, parks and gardens, have an important role and function within the social and economic life of communities, and the attractiveness of the town centre.** These public spaces are vital for town centres, providing visual amenity and spaces within which people can rest and interact (including for cultural events). They improve the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors. They provide important benefits and help to create local attachments, which are at the heart of a sense of community*

*In some cases, **these spaces have lost their traditional function as civic/cultural spaces and many are now used as parking areas. The dominance of vehicles within the public realm has contributed to the decline of many town centres, making them unattractive places in which to live or visit for extended periods. Our towns can also present significant access challenges for people with disabilities.***

*These concerns have been further highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought into sharp focus the quality of the public realm, the narrowness of footpaths on many streets and the lack of available outdoor spaces in which people can safely interact.*

*Whilst many urban centres in Ireland are, at present, dependent on cars for day-to-day activities, their dominance within towns has had a major impact on their liveability, their attractiveness to visitors and on the quality of the public realm environment. **A balance needs to be struck by carefully managing vehicle movement so as to ensure that streets are accessible places that are not dominated by cars and car parking.***

*The Town Centre First policy can encourage and support local communities to be creative and ambitious in developing a public realm that is welcoming to all, is safe, is easy to access for all modes of travel (particularly walking), has low noise and air pollution levels and provides the community with things to do, places to sit and relax, and attractive views. We must also use this opportunity to adapt towns and public spaces to fully cater for persons with a disability or limited mobility."*

[Our Emphasis]

The provision of adequate car parking is essential, and the standard of parking spaces, and services for other modes and levels of mobility is also crucial.

Therefore, there can be no expectation of material improvements in the public realm in Scarriff in the absence of a modern dedicated parking area, to relieve pressure on the existing Market Square, thus creating possibilities for its enhancement as a multifunctional space (including an element of parking) and to encourage growth in the town centre.

## 2.5 The Principal Site in Question

Figures 1 & 2 below illustrate the primary location identified by the Scarriff Town Team for the development of a new car park in the town.

Figure 1: Scarriff Draft Zoning Map (Site Outlined in Red – Boundaries Approx.)



Source: Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Figure 2: Scarriff Aerial Map (Site Outlined in Red – Boundaries Approx.)

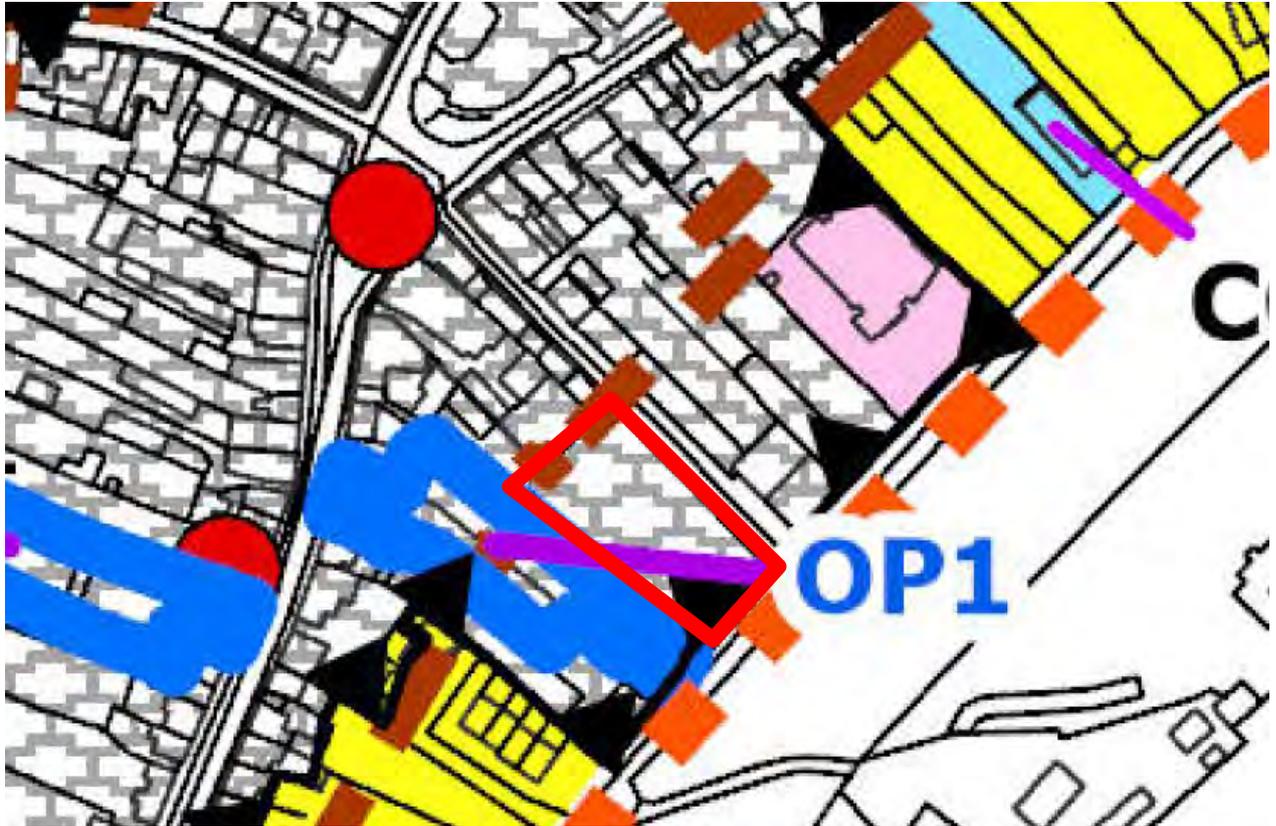


Source: GeoHive

### 2.6 Secondary Parking

Figure 3 & 4 below illustrate the secondary location identified by the Scarriff Town Team for the development of additional parking in the town, in this case directed to a) longer term / all day parking for workers in the town, and b) bus / coach parking for group visits, both of which are of significant importance for Scarriff and likely to be required as a result of the promotion of Inis Cealtra, etc.

Figure 3: Scarriff Draft Zoning Map (Site Outlined in Red – Boundaries Approx.)



Source: Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Figure 4: Scarriff Aerial Map (Site Outlined in Red – Boundaries Approx.)



Source: GeoHive

## 2.7 Ancillary Objectives

As noted above, allied to the designation of the subject site as a location for the provision of a public car park, we submit that it would be appropriate that the Development Plan included additional objectives as follows:

1. To identify a location for a new Fire Station site, or the inclusion of an objective to undertake a site location review;
2. To carry out a Market Square regeneration Masterplan, in consultation with residents and business owners, to seek to enhance the public realm in the area. For the avoidance of doubt, any such Masterplan would be anticipated to require the maintenance of a reasonable level of car parking in the area, to ensure that existing businesses and residents are not impacted by any regeneration plans;
3. There is a rapidly increasing need for high quality electric vehicle parking, both for residents, shoppers, workers and visitors in the town, and the County in general. The Development Plan should include tangible objectives to increase the roll out of charging infrastructure, and the Council should directly invest in same in addition to the private sector; and,
4. Scarriff, whilst smaller in population to the other designated Service Towns, is nonetheless an important settlement in the County. As such its allocation in terms of housing / zoning projections is considered to be inadequate and such would undermine the potential of the town in the long term. As a designated Service Town, Scarriff should be earmarked for a similar level of growth as the other settlements at this level, for instance at least that of Ennistymon/Lahinch which currently has a housing target almost double that of Scarriff.

## 3.0 CONCLUSION

We trust the above is of interest and will be considered by the Planning Authority and look forward to the publication of the *Clare Development Plan 2023-2029* in due course.

Should you have any queries or require any further information in relation to the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



**Fintan Morrin**

**Associate**

**The Planning Partnership**