



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

28 March 2022,

**Re: Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029
Observations by Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to the publication of the draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, the Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon respectfully request that Clare County Council takes into consideration this submission in finalising the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

The following submission has taken into account, the provisions of the draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, the role of the County Development Plan in the facilitation and preservation of *the arts and culture* in County Clare, and other statutory provisions and guidance including the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and the 'Draft Development Plan Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2021'.

1.0 The Role and Function of the Arts Council /An Chomhairle Ealaíon

The Arts Council / An Chomhairle Ealaíon is the Irish government agency for developing the arts, which operates as an autonomous body under the aegis of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The Arts Council works to create central place for the *Arts* in Irish life and works in partnership with artists, arts organisations and public policy makers to fulfil this role.

The Arts Council is guided by its own strategy '**Making Great Art Work, 2016 - 2025**' which sets forth the framework on how the Arts Council intends to progress the development of the arts in Ireland to 2025. The Arts Council has prepared an [Architecture Policy 'Championing Architecture'](#) which advocates a design led approach to development of public space and the built environment. In addition to that, The Arts Council has prepared a guiding [Spatial Policy 'Place, Space & People'](#) which provides a framework for the greater integration of arts and culture into land use planning. The Spatial Policy details the Arts Council's key role as a Prescribed Body in the Irish Planning System and sets out the

aim of the Arts Council to work collaboratively with national, regional and local authorities to embed arts and culture more authoritatively into spatial planning and development.

The Arts Council submits that the provision of cultural and arts infrastructure, like any social capital, requires forward planning and foresight commensurate with identification of need and tangible outputs. The observations raised by the Arts Council seek to ensure that arts and cultural needs of an area will be sufficiently planned for over the six year plan period. The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) sets the basis for spatial planning for arts and culture and in this regard, specific reference is made to Section 10(2)(b) that Act which sets the following objective to be included in the Development Plan each Development Plan to include objectives for:

- *the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population;*

(Underline emphasis added)

Further contextual background on the Arts Council's interest and approach to spatial planning and details on our guiding strategy 'Making Great Art Work', Spatial Policy and Architecture Policy are provided on the Arts Council's website under the 'Prescribed Body -Planning' webpage. This can be accessed by clicking on the following link: <https://www.arts council.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Strategic-development/Prescribed-Body---Planning/>.

2.0 Development Plan Considerations

The provision of arts and culture can contribute toward community and societal development in a number of ways including; creative placemaking which can create a distinctive sense of place; creation of stronger communities by providing spaces which enable informal social engagement; and enhance the physical and economic value of an area by creating high-quality and engaging places and spaces.

Therefore, planning for arts and culture means more than the development of tangible infrastructure and services. Arts and culture can create vibrant places to live and create social cohesion through festivals and events, community, cultural activity, tourism interest and local identity and association with a particular place. For effective provision, given how arts and culture integrates across policy areas, requires articulation in the Development Plan that is complementary to the County's Arts Plan.

Our recent experiences with the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that arts and culture are essential to the community well-being of the county. The pandemic highlighted the importance of providing high-quality public spaces to allow for unhindered formal and informal community engagement. The importance of provision of functional indoor and outdoor spaces which can provide for a diversity of activity including 'arts and culture' is now an imperative consideration in the formulation of Development Plans and spatial landuse and community planning.

3.0 Observations on the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Arts Council welcomes that the draft Development Plan makes provisions for the development of arts and culture infrastructure in the County, which is specifically referenced in *Chapter 10 Sustainable Communities* and *Chapter 16 Architectural, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage* as well as the recognition given to the arts and culture sector to “*enhance the quality of life, promote social inclusion, attract visitors, create employment*” in the County as stated in Section 10.11.

The Arts Council welcomes also, the intentions of Appendix 9 which sets out a specific implementation and monitoring framework for key objectives of the draft plan based on key performance indicators, and the fact that this approach is directly applicable to the provision of ‘Arts and Culture’ development during the life of the plan through – the monitoring of new arts and culture events, and the number of workspaces/hubs and display facilities in the county.

That said, the Arts Council considers that the arts and culture provisions in the Development Plan could be further enhanced through a number of measures, including, greater synergy between the County Arts Plan spatial objectives and the Development Plan objectives, providing arts and cultural community spaces beyond the development of ‘*workspaces/hubs and display facilities*’, and establishing an evidence based approach to the provision of arts and culture infrastructure in the County. These matters are considered in greater detail below.

3.1 Recognition of and Synergy between the County Development Plan and the County Arts Plan 2019-2023

The *Clare County Arts Development Plan 2019-2023* sets out the strategic framework for the development and enhancement of arts and culture in County Clare. Under Strategic Priority 3 “*Foster continued development of the arts and artists*”, the Arts Plan sets out the objective to “*Work to develop appropriate physical spaces for the arts to include studio space, performing spaces, exhibition spaces, recording spaces and creative hubs countywide to meet the needs of artists and communities.*”

The Arts Council would recommend that the finalised Development Plan, include a specific policy objective(s) which acknowledges the role of the County Arts Development Plan 2019-2023 and supports the implementation of Strategic Priority 3.

3.2 Value and Function of Arts and Culture in Planning

The Arts Council supports the provisions of Objective CDP 10.9 which seeks to facilitate the development of arts and culture programmes and activities in the county and sets out “*to support and to seek investment for the development of a network of workspaces/hubs and display facilities for visual arts works throughout the County for artists, artistic organisations and community groups.*”

That said, the Arts Council submits that in response to the spatial considerations discussed earlier in this submission, planning for arts and culture goes beyond *supporting* the development of ‘*workspaces/hubs and display facilities*’. The provision of quality space for arts and culture in the urban environment has become an increasingly important part of community infrastructure. The provision of

such spaces can contribute to placemaking, enhance the aesthetics of the public realm and can facilitate engagement of people and communities.

The Arts Council would therefore recommend that the Development Plan include objectives which recognises art and culture as an increasingly important part of community infrastructure and **seek to facilitate the provision of high quality indoor and outdoor spaces that can enable formal and informal community engagement with arts and culture**. The Arts Council would encourage the local authority to set out a monitoring and implementation framework for the provision of such spaces over the plan period.

3.3 Formulation of a Spatial Framework

The Arts Council would recommend that specific policy objectives for the provision of community facilities, including provision of certain arts and culture infrastructure is informed by an evidence based needs assessment. The Arts Council is mindful that this 'evidence-based approach' is recommended in the draft Development Plan Guidelines prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (August 2021) which states, *the development plan process should, at the initial stages provide, and ultimately be based on an evidence-based approach to the determination of requirements for new social, community and cultural facilities*".

The Arts Council would recommend that the provision of arts and culture infrastructure over the plan period is based on an evidence based approach. For example, the Arts Council's research and development investment into Shannon under the Creative Places programme is an important component of this spatial consideration, already identified by the local authority as an area that would benefit from greater investment into arts and cultural provision.

For further evidence based decision making, a county register of arts and cultural assets could be established, to include infrastructure such as arts centres, artists' studios, museums, heritage buildings, townscapes or public spaces and locations which either individually or collectively, contribute to access to, and/or provision of arts and culture infrastructure. The information could be mapped spatially which could identify the distribution/concentration of arts and cultural assets across the county. This information could then be used to identify locations where there is a need to provide arts and cultural investment and/or infrastructure in the county.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission in due course.

Yours faithfully



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