

Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029,

Planning Department, Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 DXP2 1/3/2022

Re/ Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

Dear Sir/Madam,

I refer to the above-mentioned draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and would like to make the following submission on behalf of the Samaritans of Ennis & Clare, a registered charity.

The Samaritans centre is located on the Kilrush Road – see map 1 below on which I have indicated the boundaries of our site in red for ease of reference. Photos of the front of our centre and of the vehicular access to the side are also provided for your information.

Map 1 – Location of Samaritans on Kilrush Road with site boundaries outlined in red

Samaritan Centre: view from Kilrush Road

Samaritan Centre: view from Kilrush Road showing vehicular access

located at western side of building and portion of car park at rear.

The car park extends across the entire rear area of the building.

The centre is used as part of a network of Samaritan centres across Ireland providing 24-hour 365 days a year emotional support to people who are in need of such support and who may be experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts that may lead to suicide. Emotional support is provided at the Ennis centre through phone, e-mail and face to face contact. The centre is normally open to face to face callers from 10 am to 10 pm every day although this service has had to be stopped during the Covid pandemic. The centre is also the base for approx. 100 volunteers who come and go throughout each week to keep the centre operational.

The Samaritans purchased the premises on the Kilrush Road in 1983 and moved into the building in January 1984. An extension was added in 1990. There is a front and rear access door to the building for use of volunteers/callers.

The centre is well suited to our purposes. It is only a short walk from the town centre and close to public car parking. The centre also has a large private car park at the back (which can be seen from map 1 and photo 2). This ensures that volunteers have a free place to park when on duty/attending meetings. This car park is also used by face to face callers to the centre. The rear access door to our building, leading off the car park, gives privacy to both volunteers and face to face callers entering the premises.

We note that that the draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 has included the Samaritan premises/site as part of a site designated as ‘Opportunity Site 0P1. This follows on from a similar designation

Sunville, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Samaritans of Ennis and Clare is a charity registered in Ireland (20167691) and incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (620104). Our registered office is located at Sunville, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare. V95V004. The directors of Samaritans of Ennis & Clare are as follows: N Courtney, B Cunningham, M Lynch, M Mac Mahon, R O’Shea, C Reddy, M Whittaker, P White.



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in the existing plan. It is also noted that the Sunville site is part of a wider strategic transformational site identified in Ennis 2040 An Economic & Spatial Strategy and that this Strategy is to be given statutory recognition in the new Development Plan.

We acknowledge the Council's wish for a comprehensive re-development of the area. We have concerns in principle about our inclusion in the Opportunity Site, however, because the building/site we own and occupy particularly suits our needs for the reasons we have set out above and we are unclear what the future might hold by being included in such a zoning.

Notwithstanding this and totally without prejudice, we would of course be willing to look at any proposals that might be forthcoming with respect to the overall development of any 'Opportunity Site' at this location if such proposals were in the interests of the town, took our specific needs into account and were of a nature that would not interfere with the charitable purposes for which we were established.

As it stands at the moment we have particular concerns about the proposal to provide an access at this location as shown on extract from map 2 below taken from the draft County Plan, volume 3, Ennis Municipal District.

It is noted that the access would not alone link into the opportunity site but also likely provide the main connection route between the Kilrush Road and the Drumbiggle Road.

Map 2: Extract from map of Ennis: Ennis Municipal District Settlement Plans Vol 3a

The 'indicative access' shown on the map above runs directly through our building/vehicular access and car park.

We understand that the access shown is 'indicative' only. We also understand that any route through here could not go ahead without our consent, unless the Council were to pursue a C.P.O. This would be unlikely given that there appear to be other suitable options available. Nevertheless the access as it stands is via our property.

We do note, however, that the access to the general area is different from that shown on the Ennis 2020 - An Economic & Spatial Strategy where the indicative access is shown much further to the west: see map from page 181 of strategy set out below.

Extract from Ennis 2040 – An Economic & Spatial Strategy: Former Ennis National School

It is not clear from the Plan exactly what the Council has in mind in relation to the Samaritans site, apart from the indicative access mentioned above. It may be that the Council favours the possibility of redeveloping the entire Opportunity Site (including our building) for a comprehensive modern development and will be encouraging developers to try to put together packages of this nature. Other options you may be considering are that our development might be incorporated in some way into a new overall scheme or lastly that it would remain separate from development to the rear and side as it is today but with some linkage.

In any event, if the Council pursues its proposal to include our premises/site in the Opportunity Site we would like the Council to note the following –

- While we own the premises/site, any decisions regarding same is subject to the consent of Trustees of the Building whose decisions would be guided by our charitable purposes.

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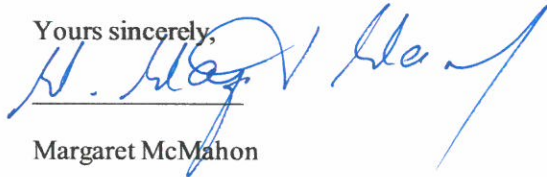
Company Limited by Guarantee

- The centre we occupy is very suitable to our needs for the reasons I have set out in this submission. We have no existing need on our own part to re-locate from these premises or to be incorporated into a bigger development scheme at this location.
- We are a charity who depends entirely on charitable donations and our own fundraising efforts within County Clare for monies to keep the centre operational from year to year. We have limited resources having regard to these circumstances.
- The nature the Samaritan 24-hour 365 days a week service means that we could not afford to be closed for any extended period of time while other premises are located/developed.
- We are concerned that it may be very difficult to acquire an alternative structure in a suitable town centre location with private car parking that would suit our specific needs in a similar way to our present situation.

Requests:

1. With respect to the principle of the inclusion of our site/building in the Opportunity Site, I request the Council to take account of our concerns as set out above
2. In relation to the particular objective regarding the access, I request that the 'indicative access' be relocated clear of our site.
3. I request that our concerns be taken on board in relation to any public or private development proposals that may emerge in the future arising from the provisions of any final adopted plan.

Yours sincerely,



Margaret McMahon

Director

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