

HRA PLANNING
Chartered Town Planning Consultants

**Submission on
Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029**

On behalf of:
Transmoor Limited

March 2022



HRA | PLANNING
chartered town planning consultants

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING | ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING | MASTERPLANNING



Title:	21065 Newhall House Development Plan Submission	
Project:	Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023 - 2029	
Prepared by:	 	
Signed:	Cathal McMullan	Approved by: Mary Hughes (Director)
Date:	March 2022	
Issue:	Issue 1	
<p>© Copyright HRA PLANNING DAC. All rights reserved. This report has been prepared for the exclusive use of the commissioning party and unless otherwise agreed in writing by HRA Planning, no other party may copy, reproduce, distribute, make use of, or rely on the contents of the report. No liability is accepted by HRA PLANNING for any use of this report, other than for the purposes for which it was originally prepared and provided. Opinions and information provided in this report are on the bases of HRA PLANNING using due skill, care and diligence in the preparation of the same and no explicit warranty is provided as to their accuracy. It should be noted and is expressly stated that no independent verification of any of the documents or information supplied to HRA PLANNING has been made.</p>		

TABLE of CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT	1
2.1	Site Location	1
2.2	Features & Structures of Significance.....	3
3.0	THE FUTURE OF NEWHALL ESTATE	5
4.0	NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE DRAFT PLAN	6
5.0	PROMOTING INTEGRATED TOURISM AT NEWHALL ESTATE	8
6.0	THE REQUEST	10

1.0 INTRODUCTION

HRA PLANNING Chartered Town Planning Consultants has been retained by Transmoor Limited (our client) to prepare this submission to Clare County Council in respect of the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029.

This submission relates to Newhall Estate Lands, a 149 hectares land parcel situated in Clarecastle, within the south western extremity of the settlement boundary of Ennis. Approximately 0.86 hectares of these lands are zoned as 'existing residential', with the zoning focused on the 15 no. bedroom mansion and outbuildings. The remaining lands (124.26 hectares) are largely zoned for agricultural purposes, although circa 21.72 hectares of land are unzoned and located outside of the Ennis Plan boundary.

The Estate was recently acquired by a local family. Whilst the Estate, particularly the mansion house and outbuildings are in a poor state of disrepair and require significant financial investment, it is the ambition of the owners to restore the property to its former glory.

To facilitate the restoration of Newhall Estate for tourism and associated purposes, and to attract the necessary financial investment required, Newhall Estate must be statutorily recognised in the Draft Clare Development Plan 2023 – 2029 (Draft Plan) and the associated Ennis Municipal District Plan. Specifically, it is requested that

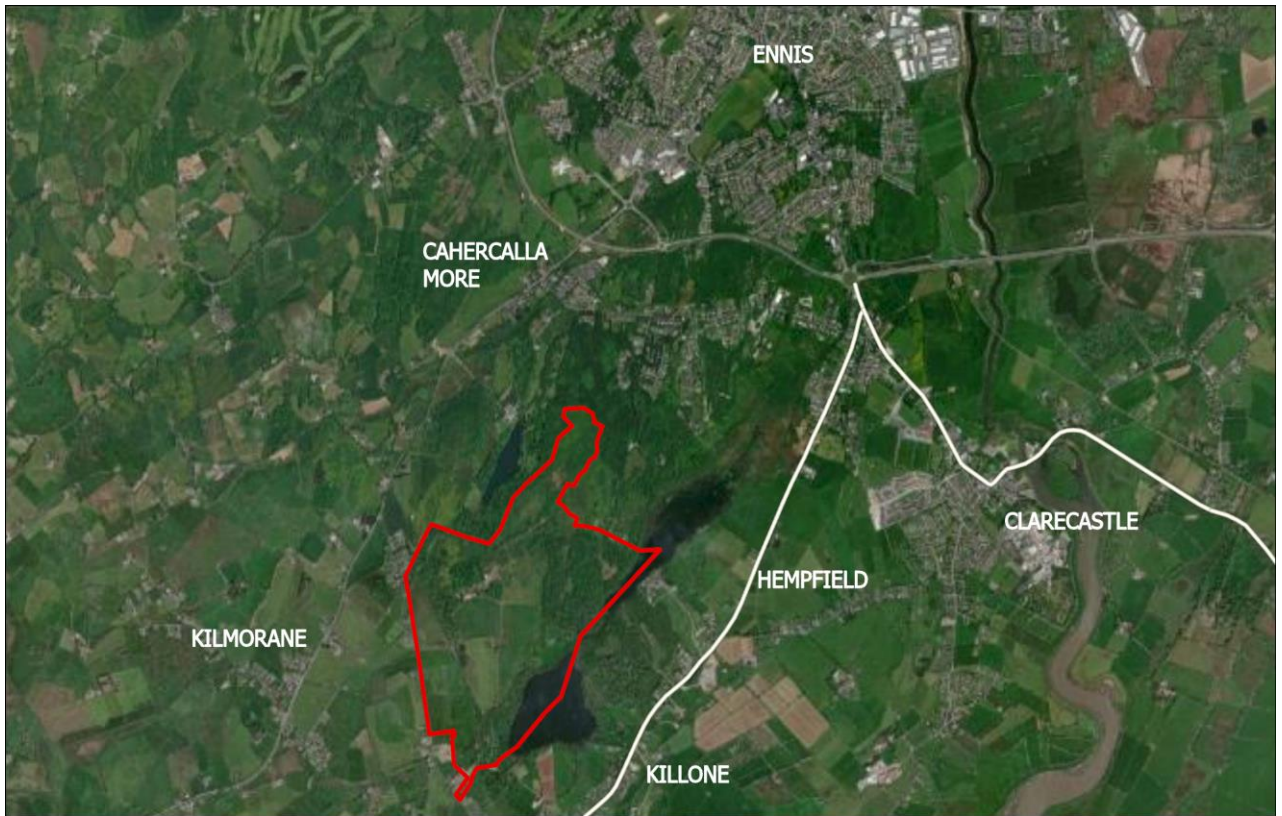
- Newhall Estate is recognised as an 'opportunity site' specifically relating to its potential for heritage and biodiversity, based tourism.
- In support of identifying the site as an 'opportunity site' it is further requested that Newhall Estate is appropriately zoned for tourism purposes with ancillary enterprise uses, sensitive to the heritage and biodiversity status of the Estate.







The reasons and considerations supporting this request are set out in detail in this submission and it is requested that Clare County Council take this submission into consideration in the preparation of a new Development Plan for Clare County.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Site Location

The subject lands comprising 148 hectares falls within the south western extremity of the defined development boundary for Ennis. Located c.4.5 km west of Clarecastle, the land is nestled between the townlands of Kilmorane to the west and Hempfield to the east as illustrated in Figure 1.0. The northern boundary of the site follows the existing treeline edge of Ballybeg Woods with the eastern boundary identified by Ballybeg and Killene Lough. The southern boundary of the subject site is defined by a small cluster of residential developments and the western boundary by a rural road which connects the R473 and the N68.



-  Extent of Landholding
-  Regional Roads
-  National Roads
-  Existing Residential
-  Agriculture
-  Water Bodies



HRA | PLANNING
chartered town planning consultants

Figure 1.0 - Site Location in Context

Whilst the majority of the land is undeveloped and is used for agricultural purposes, the landholding does comprise many buildings and features of architectural, cultural and heritage significance including:

- Two protected structures; Newhall House and Killone Augustinian Convent;
- A National Recorded Monument; St. Johns Well;
- Two linked lakes (Killene Lough & Ballybeg Lough);
- Outhouses;
- Gated lodges;
- A walled garden; and
- Woodland and Parkland area.

Access to Newhall House and the Estate is facilitated via two entry points with access to the north by a private laneway from Kilmorane Heights, a secondary road from the N68. The second entrance to the estate is from the southern tertiary road which connects the R473 to the Buncraggy junction. Killone Abbey and Saint Johns Well are signposted from this tertiary road as tourism points of interest.

2.2 Features & Structures of Significance

The 125 hectares estate is centred around an 18th century 15 no. bedroom mansion of some 1,394sqm. The Estate also comprises Killone Abbey built in the 1180s and a national monument, St. John’s Well, two linked lakes, outhouses, gate lodges, walled garden, woodlands and parklands.



Figure 1.0 Newhall House

"A detached seven-bay two-storey red brick house, c. 1765, with three storey lower wing to rear on an L-shaped plan possibly incorporating fabric of earlier building, c. 1650."¹



Figure 2.0 The Gate Lodges

The Gate Lodges flank the entrance to the house and fall within the defined curtilage of Newhall House, which is also a protected structure.

¹ Newhall House, Summary description. Vol. 4 Draft Clare Dev. Plan 2023 – 2029. Pg. 62



Figure 2.0 The Stables

Situated to in a courtyard layout, these two storey outhouses and stables are located to the east of the house.



Figure 3.0 The Abbey

"Detached ruins of a 13th century Augustinian convent built by Donal Mór O'Brien, consisting of a nave chancel, domestic building, subterranean vault and an enclosed graveyard. Nearby St. John's Well and Pilgrim Altars."



Figure 4.0 Killene Lake

To the north east of the Abbey at the edge of the lake lies St. John's (The Baptist) well. This is a holy well and altar and is said to cure ailments of the eyes.



Figure 5.0 The Holy Well

The landholding also comprises of two linked lakes; Ballybeg Lough and Killene Lough. Ballybeg Lough flows into Clareabbey Stream and ultimately joins the River Fergus, which is part of the Lower River Shannon SAC.

The Estate is a significant architectural, cultural and heritage asset in Co. Clare and has enormous potential from a cultural, social and economic perspective. The features and structures of significance require significant investment and protection from further degradation.

Recently acquired by new owners, there is a commitment to restore the Estate to its former glory. Such restoration requires significant financial investment and even when restored the property will require a significant fund to facilitate its continuous upkeep and maintenance.

3.0 THE FUTURE OF NEWHALL ESTATE

The ambition is to develop Newhall Estate as a sustainable and well-managed year-round, high-quality tourism product that generates economic benefits for not only the Estate but also for the wider county. The intention is to open Newhall Estate on a commercial basis, particularly to those who have a purposeful interest in Irish Folklore and heritage. It is proposed that:

- The mansion house will be sympathetically restored to provide boutique private accommodation for those with an interest in the assets on the estate;
- The stables will be renovated for short term residential use, accommodating those attending programmes and activities on the estate;
- The 3.2 hectares Walled Garden will be restored to its former glory in association with national and international horticultural associations to become a destination for avid gardeners;
- The outbuildings will be converted into a small, local distillery to create bespoke Irish Whiskey and blends of branded Spirits, with a focus on teaching the craft and Newhall history to interested groups;
- Attractions will include guided tours of Kilone Abbey and other historical features; fishing on the lakes; walking trails within the ancient Irish woods; and folklore weekends with a focus on promoting and informing parties on folklore, wildlife and ways of ancient Ireland;
- An annual Celtic Arts Festival is hosted on the Estate to highlight Irish Culture and encourage tourists to visit from across the globe.

A move to more theme based and special interest tourism is recognised in Ireland. The project has a number of strategic aims which closely correlate with the tourism objectives set out in the Draft County Development Plan. Specifically, these aims seek to:

- Facilitate Newhall Estate and maximise the potential of Kilone Abbey, St. John's Well and the lakes for tourism;
- Develop a strong, year-round, high-quality integrated tourism product;
- Capitalise on the distinct tourist attractions that Newhall Estate has to offer including natural, built and cultural heritage, scenic landscapes and natural amenities and offer a unique visiting experience; and

- Utilise and promote Shannon Airport as the primary transport hub in attracting foreign business.

The product is aimed at the 'Culturally Curious' tourist, described as a visitor that is well travelled and wants to discover the hidden stories and get under the skin of a destination. They are generally socially responsible, environmentally conscious and health conscious, and are independent sightseers who rarely travel in a family group.

Tourism based on the heritage, cultural and biodiversity assets of Newhall Estate can provide an additional opportunity to increase the length of time visitors stay in the County, as well as reinforcing cultural identity by creating revenue to conserve built heritage and support cultural heritage into the future.

Once restored, Newhall Estate needs to create revenue to facilitate the continuous conservation of the built heritage and to support its cultural heritage. Without a self-sustaining revenue stream, restoration of the Estate will remain a dream.

4.0 NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE DRAFT PLAN

The significance of Newhall Estate is recognised in the Draft Plan with the identification of two of its most significant assets as protected structures, namely Newhall House and Killone Augustinian Convent. However, it is submitted that the significance of Newhall Estate is not in its individual structures and buildings, but rather is in the sum of its parts. Cumulatively, the individual buildings and features within the Estate create a synergy and context which is special and unique and cannot be easily replicated. The Estate warrants a holistic approach to its consideration and a designation that seeks to protect as well as promote its worth.

Within the Draft Plan Newhall Estate is largely located within the south western extremity of the Ennis Plan boundary (See Figure 6.0). Approximately 0.86 hectares of these lands are zoned as 'existing residential', with the zoning focused on the 15 no. bedroom mansion and outbuildings. The remaining lands (124.26 hectares) are largely zoned for agricultural purposes, although circa 21.72 hectares of land are unzoned and located outside of the Ennis Plan boundary.

Notwithstanding the zoning provisions as presented in the Draft Plan, there are a number of policy provisions which may hinder future tourism development on the land. Whilst Objective CDP 9.4(b) seeks to permit tourism-related developments outside of settlements where there is a clear need for the specific location and the benefits to the local community are balanced with any potential environmental impact, the landuse zoning matrix does not support hotel use or short-term tourist accommodation in respect of 'Agricultural' zoning. Further, the Draft Plan makes it clear that it is an objective of the Development Plan that new tourist accommodation is located in towns and villages and in close proximity to services and amenities. Although, the Draft Plan does recognise that some forms of tourism developments, due to their scale or nature, may require a

location outside of settlements, it is submitted that the agricultural zoning on the subject land hinders such provision.

Whilst agri-tourism and agri-business uses are open for consideration on agriculture zoned land, they are not permitted in existing residential zoned areas.

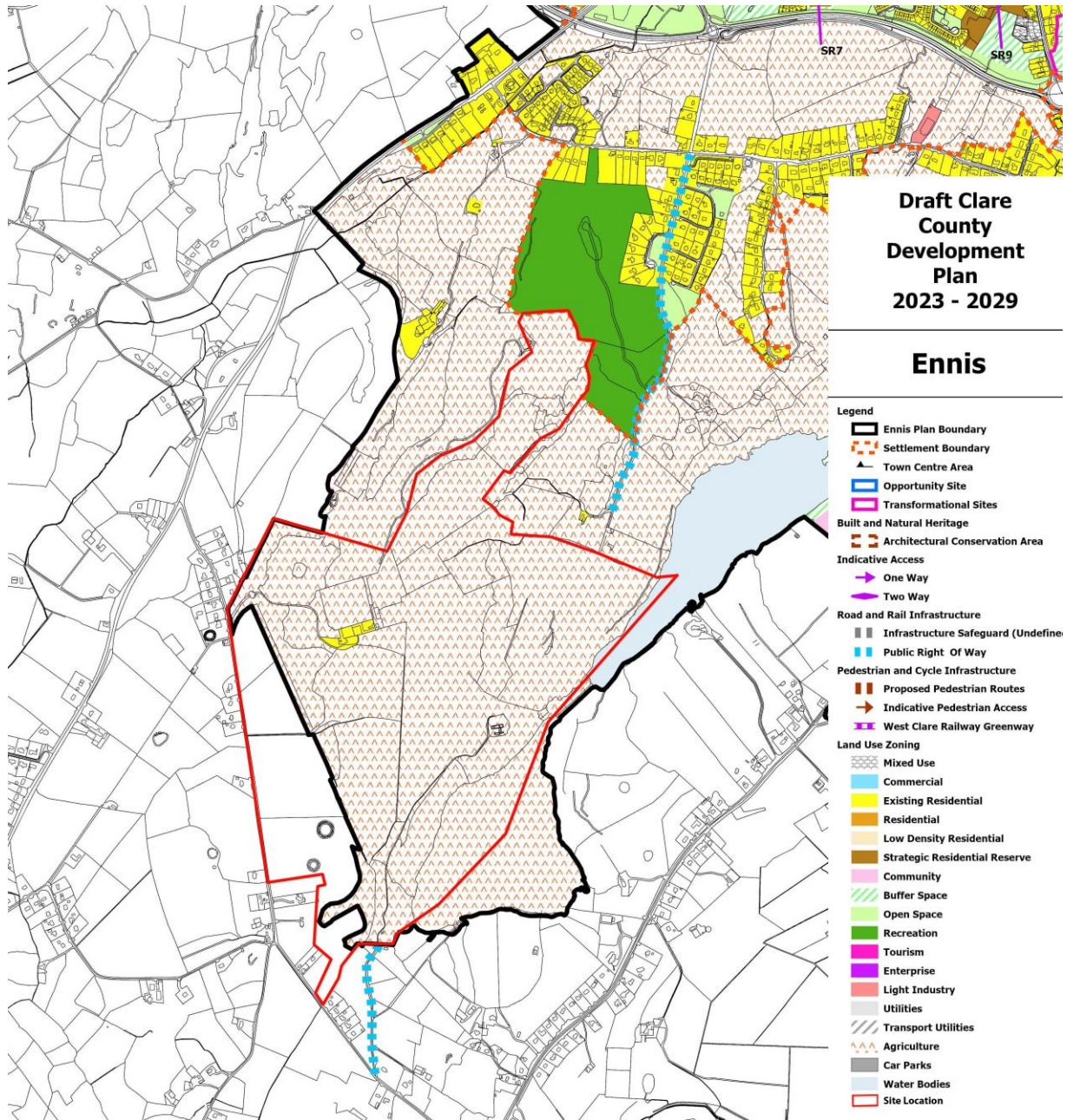


Figure 6.0 Subject Land in Context of Zoning in Draft Plan

While County Clare is one of the leading tourist counties in Ireland, a stronger year-round product must be developed. The Draft Plan identifies the need to ensure that tourism growth is spread beyond established destinations and larger towns to rural areas. Specifically, the Draft Plan seeks "to promote Ennis as both a tourist destination and as a tourism hub for the wider tourism product in County Clare" (Objective CDP 9.21(a)). It also seeks "to expand the nature and extent of tourist accommodation in the Ennis and Environs area, including camping, glamping, and motor home facilities"

(Objective CDP 9.21(b)). Opening Newhall Estate for tourist related purposes can contribute to this objective and contribute to the wider tourism product in County Clare.

5.0 PROMOTING INTEGRATED TOURISM AT NEWHALL ESTATE

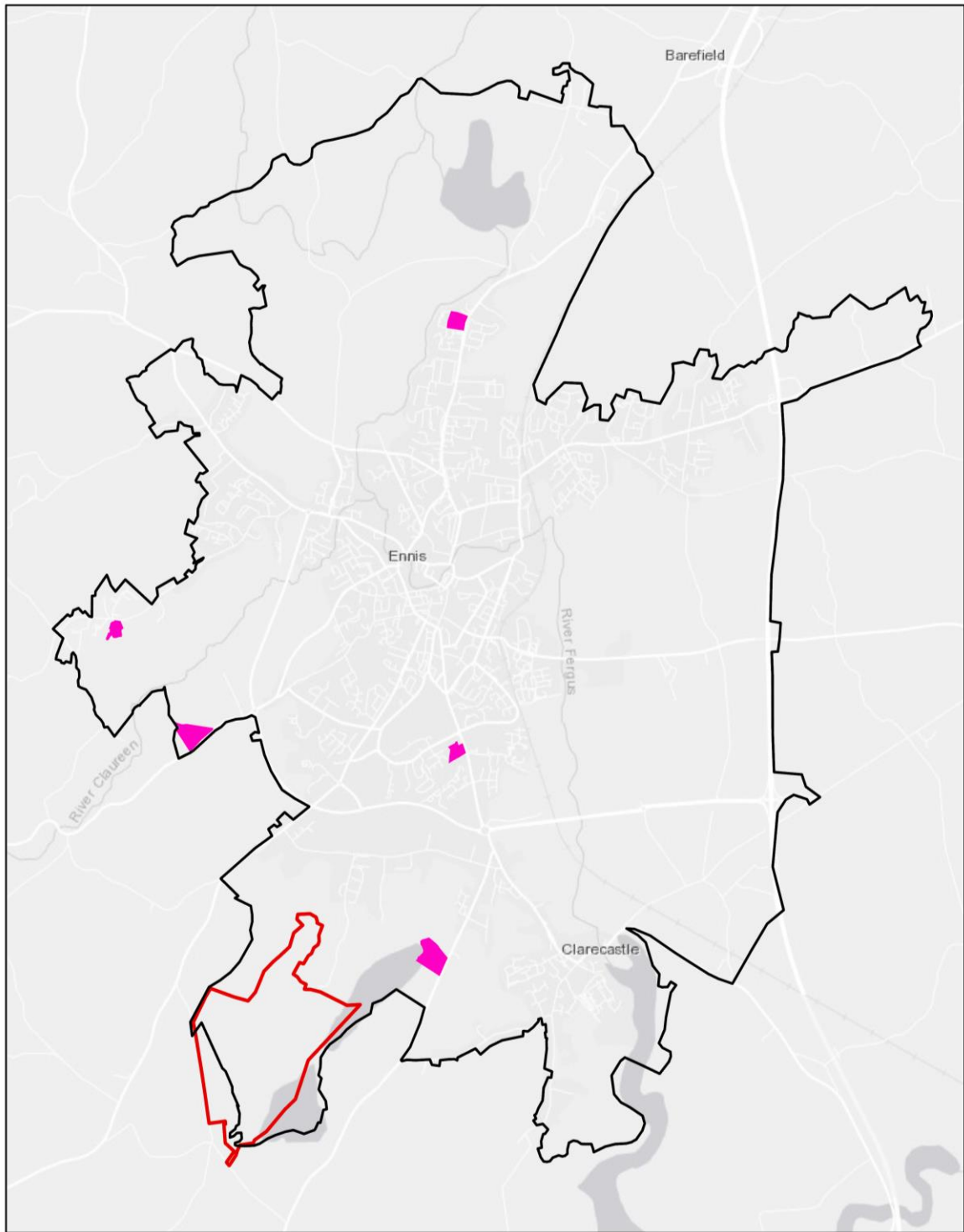
The County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 identifies 'Culturally Curious' tourists as one of the key markets for the County. The Strategy recognises that the County has an extremely rich and varied culture and heritage, and this culturally curious market can provide an additional opportunity to increase the length of time visitors stay in the County, as well as reinforcing Clare's cultural identity by creating revenue to conserve its built heritage and support its cultural heritage.




Section 3.0 of this report has already set out the ambition for the Estate, to promote its assets of cultural, heritage and architectural significance in a sensitive and integrated manner for the tourist sector. Newhall Estate presents a significant integrated tourism opportunity for the town of Ennis, which can benefit from its close proximity to Shannon International Airport, motorway and national road networks, rail and bus links.

The Draft Plan currently zones 5 no. sites for tourism purposes with the land specifically identified on the land use zoning map for tourism development. In total circa 45 hectares has been zoned for such purposes. The Draft Plan states that land zoned for tourism development shall be used for a range of structures and activities which are primarily designed to facilitate tourism development and where uses are mainly directed at servicing tourists/holiday makers and visiting members of the public.

The closest land to the subject site, zoned for tourism purposes, is land identified as TOU1 located on the Killadysert Road (R473) northeast of the subject lands. The Draft Plan considers that the site presents an opportunity for community and tourism development which complements its location directly adjacent to Ballybeg Lough. Adopting a similar approach, Newhall Estate has the benefit of adjoining and accommodating two lakes including Killene Lough & Ballybeg Lough and can offer greater historical and cultural diversity in developing a tourist offer / product. Yet Newhall Estate has not been afforded a tourism zoning.

It is very clear from the zoning provisions in the Draft Plan that land zoned for tourism purposes will be considered for tourist related development in the first instance. These are the sites promoted for tourist projects in the Draft Plan, in contrast to other lands, including Newhall Estate. In order to ensure equal status to lands and afford adequate opportunity for tourist development on the Newhall Estate lands, it is requested that the subject lands are identified as a Strategic Opportunity Site and specifically zoned for tourist uses.



-  Ennis Plan Boundary (c. 4,135 ha)
-  Tourism Land Use Zoning (c. 44.72 ha)
-  Extent of Landholding (c. 149.39 ha)



HRA | PLANNING
chartered town planning consultants

Figure 7.0 Extent of Existing 'Tourism' zoning in Draft Plan relative to Site

6.0 THE REQUEST

To facilitate the restoration of Newhall Estate for tourism and associated purposes, and to attract the necessary financial investment required, Newhall Estate must be statutorily recognised in the Draft Clare Development Plan 2023 – 2029 (Draft Plan) and the associated Ennis Municipal District Plan. Specifically, it is requested that

- Newhall Estate is recognised as an 'opportunity site' specifically relating to its potential for heritage and biodiversity, based tourism.
- In support of identifying the site as an 'opportunity site' it is further requested that Newhall Estate is appropriately zoned for tourism purposes with ancillary enterprise uses, sensitive to the heritage and biodiversity status of the Estate.