

SUBMISSION TO DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

Coláiste Muire, College Road, Ennis

Sisters of Mercy

Issue: A

Customer Project Number: 6857

Customer Document Number:



Document Sign Off

SUBMISSION TO DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

Coláiste Muire, Harmony Row Ennis

Sisters of Mercy
Issue A

File No: 6857

CURRENT ISSUE					
Issue No: A	Date: 21.03.22	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	Paddy Coleman		Mandy Coleman	
Signature	Authorised Electronically				
Date	21.03.22	21.03.22		21.03.22	

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



1.0 INTRODUCTION

P. Coleman & Associates, Architects, Engineers and Planners have been appointed by Board of Management of Coláiste Muire to prepare a submission to the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (Draft Plan) with specific reference to the land-use zoning and policy objectives proposed for Ennis town. Our Clients are seeking to i) amend an area of proposed 'Mixed Use' zoning specifically 'Opportunity Site - OP11' on part of the subject property and classify it as 'Community' to complement the current and proposed zoning of the remainder of the property and ii) remove the proposed pedestrian route for the general public shown from Harmony Row to College Road through the school property. 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 property and its context.

Section 3: Current Planning Context

This section outlines the current zoning and policy objectives for the subject property.

Section 4: Proposed Planning Context in Draft Plan

This section outlines the proposed land use zoning and policy objectives for the subject property as defined in the Draft Plan.

Section 5: Requested Amendments

This section sets out the case to i) amend an area of proposed 'Mixed Use' 'OP11' zoning objective on part of the subject property and classify it as 'Community' to complement the current and proposed zoning of the remainder of the property and ii) remove the proposed pedestrian route for the general public shown from Harmony Row to College Road through the school property.

Section 6: Conclusion

This section summarises our case as outlined in this submission.

2. SUBJECT SITE

2.1 The Site

The subject property is located in the town of Ennis on the western side of the River Fergus and forms part of the Coláiste Muire school complex. The school is a secondary level school for girls with a student population of approximately 950 and staff numbers of 80.

The school property contains the main school buildings which are characterised by a mixture of various designs and heights, Danlann an Chlair theatre, car-parking areas, open space, 2 outdoor basketball courts, 2 outdoor tennis courts and sports hall.

There are three vehicle and pedestrian accesses to the subject property from College Road and one only pedestrian access and one vehicle and pedestrian access from Harmony Row to the subject property.

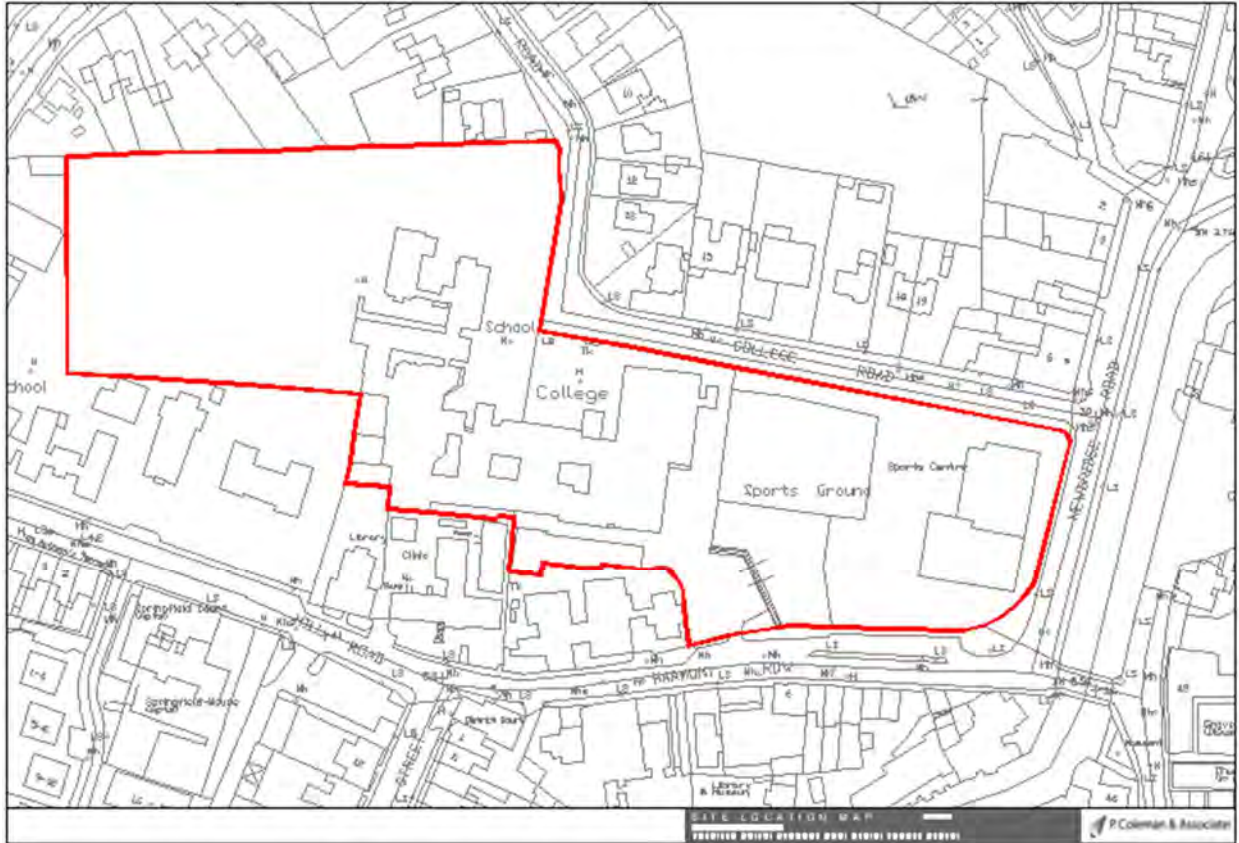


Figure 1 – Site Location Map – Property outlined in Red



Figure 2 – Aerial Image - Property outlined in red.



2.2 Site Context

The subject property is bound to the north by College Road which consists of residential properties, to the west by Clarecare to the south by Harmony Row which consists of the County Library and offices and to the east by Lifford Road. The property is delineated along the southern, northern and eastern boundaries by a stone wall with mature tree coverage.

Harmony Row is a busy route serving Ennis Community College, HSE Clinic, Clare County Library, Hostel, offices and the town centre via the Club Bridge. A traffic island on Harmony Row provides a lay by for set down and loading.

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 Current Local Planning Context

The subject property is within the Ennis Settlement boundary and has two zoning objectives as follows:-

- *'Community'* zoning on all building areas, open space, sports hall and 2 basketball courts and 1 tennis court.
- *'Mixed Use - Opportunity Site Specifically OP11'* on the staff car-park, open space and 1 tennis court.

In addition, a proposed pedestrian route is shown through our Clients property from College Road to Harmony Row.

The subject property is also located within the Town Centre Area and within an Architectural Conservation Area.

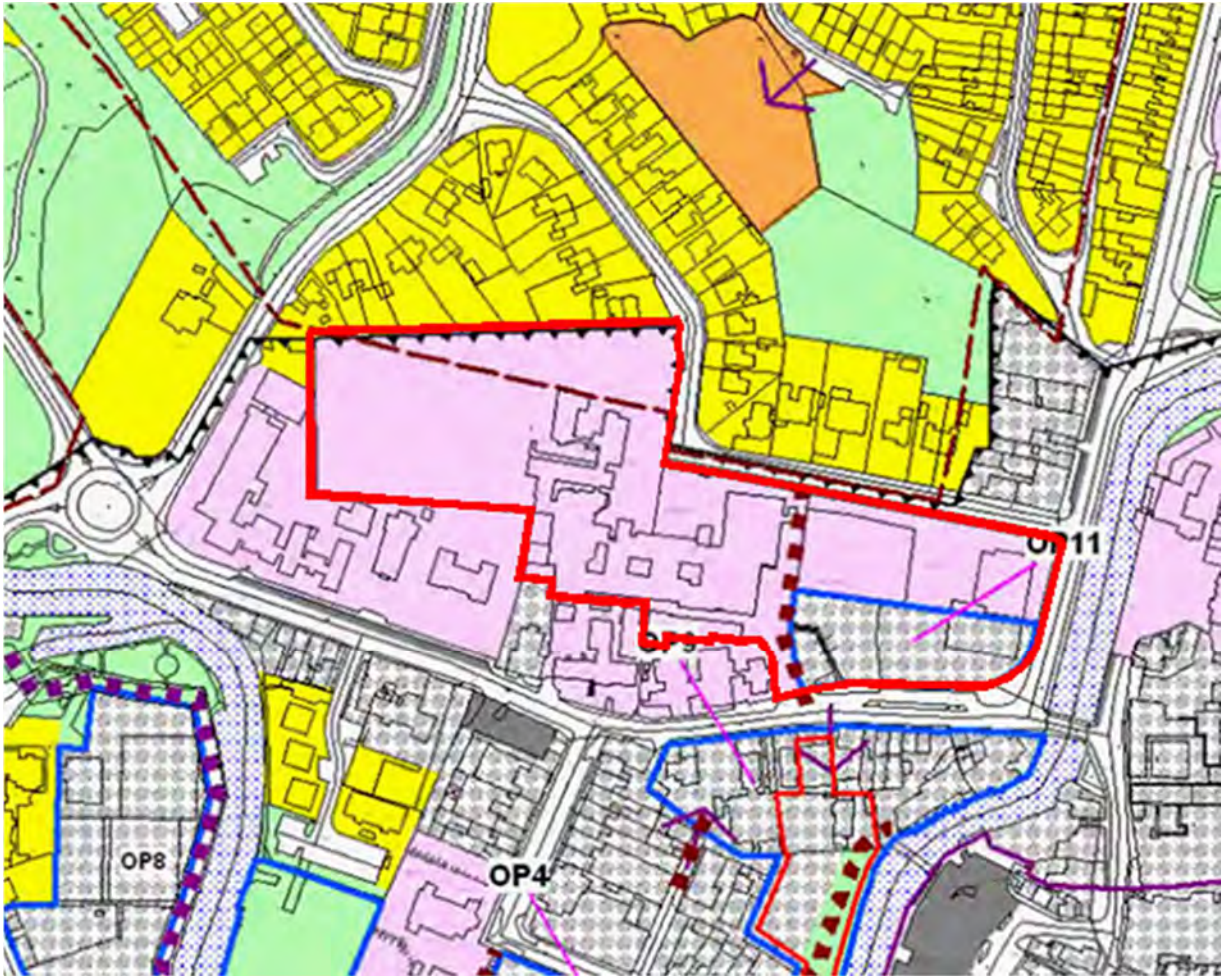


Figure 5 – Land Use Zoning Map Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The 'Mixed Use' zoning has the following stated objective:-

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.

The 'Community' zoning has the following stated objective:

The development of lands for community uses shall be taken to include the use of lands for community, civic, health services, public or educational uses including the provision of schools, community halls, healthcare facilities and any other facility that is intended to provide some form of community service. A service may be delivered by either a public, community or private body.



The 'OP11' site has the following stated objective:-

This site is positioned at a principal gateway to the Town. This site is considered suitable for the provision of parking which is convenient to the Town Centre with excellent pedestrian linkage to Abbey Street and O' Connell Square via Club Bridge and the pedestrian bridge at the Rowan Tree Hostel. There is existing parking on part of this site which is currently used by staff at the school. However, potential exists for the development of shared/additional parking facilities which could be made available for public use, subject to the agreement of the school. The zoning of this site as Mixed Use, which may accommodate carparking, does not restrict the future use of the lands for educational purposes.

The site is located in Flood Zones A and B and a Flood Risk Assessment shall be required as part of any planning application made on this site. A Construction Method Statement will be required detailing how surfacewater run-off will be controlled during construction and drainage plans for long-term surfacewater disposal shall also be submitted.

Development on this site must be carried out in full compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive. Due to the proximity of the site to the River Fergus, which forms part of the Lower River Shannon SAC, it will be necessary for future development proposals to demonstrate that any on-site development will not lead to an increase in the ambient light levels beyond the perimeter of the development footprint (demonstrated via a Light Spill Modelling Study). Existing tree-lines on the perimeter of the site must be retained as part of a Landscape Management Plan

4.0 DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029 (Draft Plan)

The Draft Plan proposes no change to the existing zoning objectives on the subject property. The proposed pedestrian route through the subject property is also unchanged. See Figure 6 below.

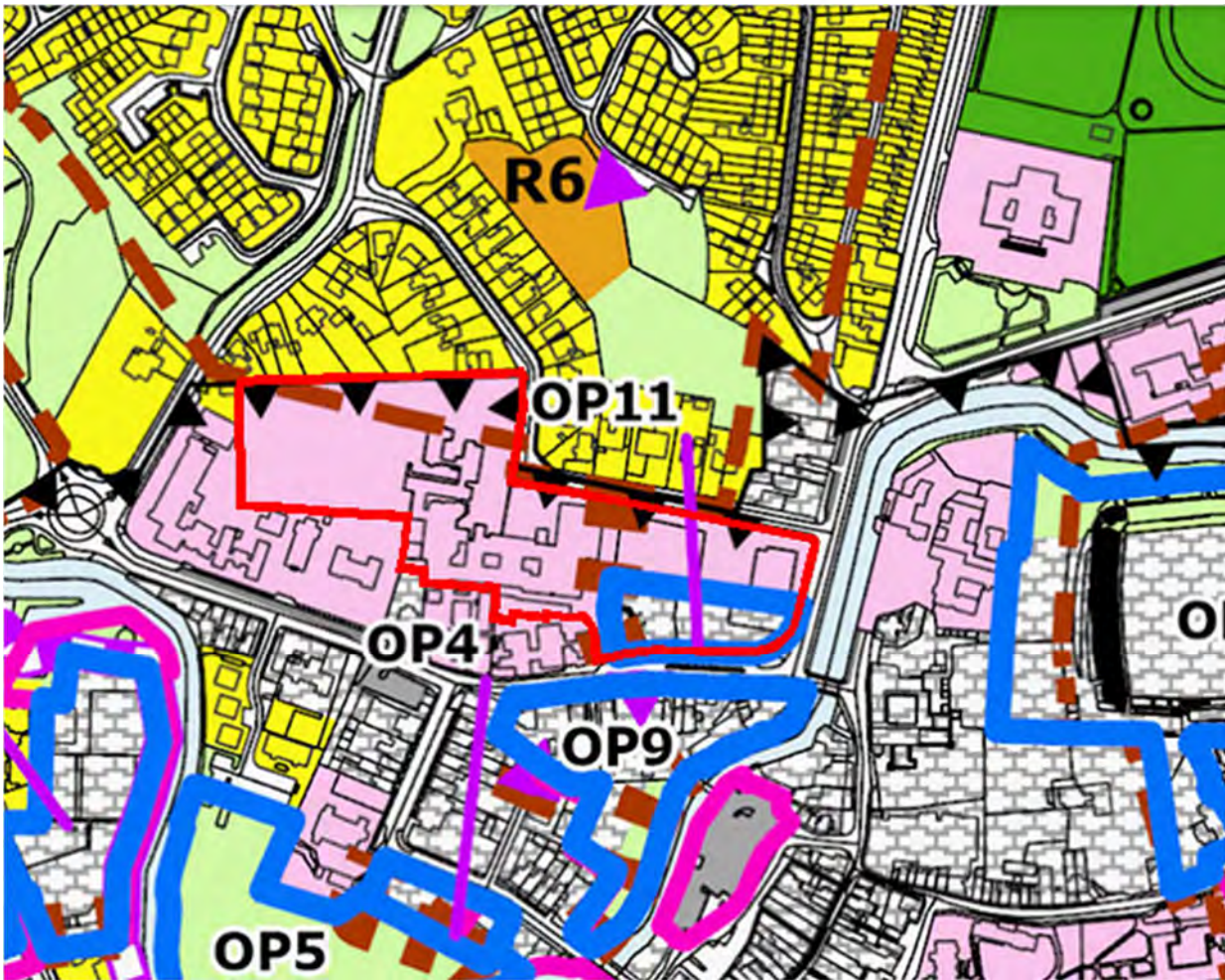


Figure 6 – Zoning map Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

5.0 REQUESTED AMENDMENT

1. Remove 'Mixed Use & Opportunity Site' zoning objective 'OP11' on part of subject property and included within 'Community' zoning for remainder of site.
2. Remove proposed Pedestrian Route for the general public from College Road through school property to Harmony Row.

5.1 Remove 'Opportunity Site' zoning objective 'OP11' on part of subject property and include within 'Community' zoning for remainder of site.

Our Client is seeking to ensure, through this submission, that the proposal to zone part of the subject property as an 'Opportunity Site' with specific objective 'OP11' which seeks for the creation of a public car-park is not adopted in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. Our Client is seeking to have the zoning objective of 'Community' applied to the full school complex for the following reasons:-



- 1) The existing car-park on the site provides parking for staff, students, visitors to the school and the adjoining Clarecare staff and the full capacity of this car-park is required to provide for these parking needs. Our Client is concerned that if the car-park becomes a public car-park the current school users of the car-park may find it difficult to get parking.
- 2) Child protection is a primary concern of the school management. A public access route through the school grounds would be to create an unacceptable high risk in relation to child protection.
- 3) The proposed 'OP11' site contains part of the existing school car parking area and also includes part of the open space green area and basketball court/tennis court which is part of the sports/recreational facilities associated with the school. Our Client is seeking to ensure that the existing recreational/open space and car parking facilities associated with the school are fully protected.
- 4) Our Client is concerned that there would be a serious health and safety risk for the students if a public car park was developed within the school grounds.
- 5) Developing this area as a public car-park would greatly reduce the school's options for any redevelopment/expansion which may be required in the future. The last extension to the school consisted of a third floor being constructed on the existing school due to the lack of available space on the school site.
- 6) The creation of public car-parking within the grounds of the school would interfere with operation of the school with members of the general public going and coming at various times throughout the day and night. The continuous use of a public car park would be a serious risk to students and staff going to and from school and during lunch hour and during outdoor activities.
- 7) There is the issue of liability – who would be responsible in the event of accidents? Who would develop the car-park and operate it? These are all questions which are of a serious concern to our Client.

While the location of the proposed car-park is strategic from the point of view of access to the town centre, our Client strongly objects to the proposed zoning of this portion of the school site for a public car-park. Our Client wishes to retain the use of the subject site for staff/student car-parking and for recreational/sports facilities associated with the school and have no intention of allowing a public car-park to be permitted on the school property.



5.2 Remove proposed Pedestrian Route for the general public from College Road through school property to Harmony Row.

Our Client strongly objects to the proposal to provide a pedestrian access route for the general public through the school property. The school property is not in public ownership and our Client has serious concerns regarding the opening up of a public pedestrian route through a school facility for the following reasons:-

- 1) The creation of a pedestrian route would interfere with the running of the school and could create a distraction for students and teachers in classrooms many of which have windows facing onto the proposed pedestrian route.
- 2) A liability issue arises by opening up the school to the general public for pedestrian access. The school cannot take any responsibility/liability for pedestrians who are not directly associated with the school. There are serious insurance issues for our Clients with this proposal.
- 3) A public access route through the school grounds would separate the majority of the sporting facilities from the main school building. It would generate mixing of the general public with the students on site which would be a health and safety issue.
- 4) Currently there are access gates at both sides of the school used by students and staff at Harmony Row and College Road. Our Clients would also lose the facility of being able to secure the property by closing the gates for whatever reason should the need arise if this access route would become a public thoroughfare.

Our Client is totally opposed to the proposal to provide a pedestrian access for the general public through the school property for the general public.

5.3 Other issues

Our Client has ongoing concerns regarding the safety of students and staff crossing from the school over Harmony Row. This is a highly trafficked area and the provision of a traffic management plan to include a pedestrian crossing would be welcomed by the school to ensure the safety of its students and staff. While we note there is a pedestrian crossing at the County Clinic this does not facilitate the majority of the school's students and staff who are crossing at Harmony Row to access the Library or to gain access to the town centre.



6.0 CONCLUSION

Our Client requests that the proposed 'OP11' zoning objective for the car-parking area proposed on the school property be eliminated and the 'Community' zoning objective be retained over the full extent of the school property in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

In addition, our Client is strongly opposed the proposal for a pedestrian access route, open to the general public, through the school property as it would interfere with running of the school and create a serious liability issue for them and they seek to have this proposal removed. Severance of the property introduces serious operational matters for the school, limits the school expansion in the future and introduces chaos in the operation of the school. The tendency in many schools in Ireland and in other countries is to have secure school enclosures to allow schools to deal with many of the security and unsavoury aspects of society and to protect children while in the care of their school.

Our Client requests that the Planning Authority kindly consider and adopt the above submission in the preparation of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.