

**SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF
CLARECASTLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT C.L.G.
& ITS AFFILIATES
CLARECASTLE TIDY TOWNS AND CLARECASTLE HISTORY,
HERITAGE AND WILDLIFE COMMITTEE**



**TO THE
DRAFT CLARE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2023-2029**



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01 | SUMMARY

This document refers to the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 (the Draft Plan) and is submitted on behalf of the Clarecastle Community Development CLG (CCD CLG) and its affiliates the Clarecastle Tidy Towns and Clarecastle History, Heritage and Wildlife Committee.

CCD CLG is an active community group brought together in response to historic missed opportunities for investment in Clarecastle. Over the ten years since its establishment, the CCD CLG has, with its affiliates, been responsible for numerous improvements to the built environment of the village and substantial community gains.

The CCD CLG was established to look towards key strategic and local issues that pertain to the Draft Plan: as such, this submission:

- Sets out CCD CLG expectations of Clare County Council leadership in the development of the forthcoming Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan (EE LAP), suggesting that Clarecastle is afforded prominence within that plan as a separately considered settlement with its own spatial plan.
- Reaffirm the commitment of the CCD CLG and its affiliate local groups to the ongoing improvement of Clarecastle and partnership with Clare County Council; and
- Acknowledges that the identification of the Roche (Ireland) Ltd. lands at Clarecastle as a strategic opportunity site in the Ennis 2040 strategy and its consequent mixed use zoning designation in the Draft Plan are positives for the employment generation potential of the village but must be allied to wider strategic plans for the future through the EE LAP.



02 | CLARECASTLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT C.L.G.

The Clarecastle Community Development CLG (CCD CLG) was established to provide a voice for a community being left behind as a result of missed development opportunities that would benefit their village. At the time of its establishment, there had been a 17-year lapse in Tidy Towns participation and Clarecastle was characterised by dereliction, closed shops, and damaged roads and footpaths. The neglect of the historically significant quays of the Port of Clare typified a village that featured unfinished developments, inadequate maintenance and unsightly hoardings.

Since its inception the CLG CCD has been instrumental in harnessing the power of the local community in addressing these deficiencies. We have engaged in extensive local consultation since 2012 through public meetings with 50+ community organisations and local businesses. Through this engagement 12 key projects were identified in 2012 that included:



CCD CLG and its affiliates have an impressive record of leadership and delivery, with nine of the identified projects delivered. The new Clarecastle Community Amenity Company, partnering with the local GAA Club and Roche (Ireland) Ltd., has impressive plans to deliver a community astro turf facility. The Community Hub and Youth Space Centre will be explored during the community wide consultation



phase of a Community Plan that will set out a new community development model embracing wider community participation, inclusivity, diversity, sustainability - reflecting the needs of an ever-changing Clarecastle.

As well as planning shovel ready projects and actively seeking funding and investment for their delivery, the CCD CLG and its affiliates have actively promoted the historic importance of the village and promoted the many heritage assets to which the village is home. This has included the recognition of the central importance of the village to the naming of the county, the development of a draft heritage trail map and the preservation of the history and biodiversity of Clarecastle and Ballylea.



Above all, the CCD CLG recognises the importance of strategic planning in safeguarding the future of a vibrant and vital village in the face of a growing population, challenging local employment conditions following the closure of the Roche (Ireland) Ltd. site in 2020 and in the context of social and community infrastructure needs. As recently as 2020 it has canvassed Clare County Council for the development of a Clarecastle Development Plan underpinned by a three stranded approach to public realm planning, community engagement, and the remediation and reuse of the Roche site.



03 | A CHANGING CLARECASTLE

Clarecastle is changing and will continue to do so. The population has increased by 18% since 2002, with significant growth expected in line with national planning policy reflected by the Draft Plan. Housing development is ongoing with 160 new dwellings added to the village in the last five years giving a home to an increasingly diverse community. The closure of the Roche (Ireland) Ltd. FDI site in 2020 has been a major blow to the village with the loss of a c.€20-30 million payroll from the local economy and significant corporate social responsibility funding to community and voluntary organisations.

It is important to strategically plan for the next decade to ensure the village benefits from the good growth it needs. Alignment with the Ennis 2040 economic plan through the identification of the Roche (Ireland) Ltd. lands as a strategic opportunity site is important. So too is the mixed-use land zoning assigned in the Draft Plan to the Opportunity Site that will enable the development of new employment generating uses in a spatially crucial location between the village centre and the potential scenic and heritage attraction of the quays of the Port of Clare.

The context for positive change in the village is set by the local and national planning policy framework that has relevance to Clarecastle across multiple tiers that include:

- The National Planning Framework: Project Ireland 2040 features strengthened rural economies and communities as one of ten strategic objectives. The Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development funds provide a mechanism for implementing change, relevant at the scale of Clarecastle as a neighborhood within the urban settlement of Ennis and also at the scale of Clarecastle as an independent large village in the county. A long-term infrastructural objective of the plan is substantially delivering the Atlantic Corridor, a high quality road network connecting Cork, Limerick, Galway and Sligo.



Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025: This policy aims to transform the economies and communities of Rural Ireland through eight key ambitions, which include, amongst others: supporting employment and careers in rural areas, revitalising rural towns and villages, enhancing participation, leadership and resilience in Rural Communities and supporting the sustainability of our Islands and coastal communities.

- Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Town: This policy sets out a community-led process for towns to revitalise and develop under a designated Town Centre First Plan, developed between the local communities and the local authority. It aims to enhance the spatial character of Irish towns and conserve and adapt them for future use.
- The Southern Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy: The RSES sets out a strategy for an expected population growth of c.400,000 by 2040. Key aspects of the RSES vision include economic prosperity, expanded growth and development in suitable locations and transforming the Southern Region into one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and livable regions. This site is located in the Mid- West sub-region, in close proximity to the 'Key Town'- designated Ennis and adjacent to the Limerick/Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan. The RSES recognises the national and international importance of the Shannon Estuary, its potential to attract multinational development and the significant work that has been undertaken to progress its promotion



and development. The SIFP for Shannon Estuary references the Port of Clarecastle in the context of the Shannon Estuary and the linkage of the site from the estuary.

- Ennis 2040 - An Economic and Spatial Strategy: The Ennis 2040 plan has the strategic objectives of defining Ennis as an attractive place for investment, Ireland's first climate adaptive town, an accessible place of quality, and a 10-minute town. It seeks to achieve that through 9 transformational projects, of which the Roche opportunity site is one. It notes the possibility for phasing to provide flexibility in the Roche site plan for future uses and activities. It states that 'It will be important to continue the Employment/Enterprise Park use of this site while also maintaining certain parameters such as existing building heights, the wastewater treatment plant and other key infrastructural aspects. In addition, the waterfront portion could deliver a mixed recreation-led scheme with visitor accommodation, permanent residential, water activities and a strong walking/cycling link along the River Fergus'. Plans within Ennis 2040 pertaining to the Clareabbey Wetlands Opportunity Site are of particular relevance to the village too.
- Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029: Clarecastle is defined as a Large Village in the Clare County Development Plan. It is also an architectural conservation area. Development plan objectives for Clarecastle include its development as a centre for tourism activity and the upgrading of its wastewater treatment facilities. It is defined as a neighbourhood in the Ennis Municipal District Settlement Plan of the CDP. The Roche Site is identified in the draft county development plan as a Transformational and Opportunity Site (TS 7) (OP19). The preparing of a masterplan for the site to guide and facilitate the redevelopment is a key





objective of the Council for Clarecastle. The enhancement of the physical environment including cycle ways, cycle trail head facilities, walkways and the quayside area are also objectives.

Clarecastle is also included in a number of regional spatial initiatives that includes the River Fergus Walk/Cycleway under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2020 – Measure 2. The ORIS scheme provides funding for the development, promotion and maintenance of outdoor amenities such as trails, walkways, cycleways, and blueways. The funding announced under Measure 2 of the scheme provides funding of €200,000 for the development of a universally accessible walkway/cycleway connecting the outskirts of Ennis to the outskirts of Clarecastle.

In the context of these plans, as well as National and Regional economic strategies relevant to the growth of Clarecastle (including Enterprise 2025: Ireland’s National Enterprise Policy 2015-25; IDA Driving Recovery and Sustainable Growth 2021-2024; and the Atlantic Economic Corridor) it is obvious that a rare opportunity presents itself to develop a long-term, unified spatial, economic and community plan for the village.

The preparation of such a plan should leverage the proactive, grassroots engagement of the community represented by the CCD CLG under the leadership of Clare County County to identify a real, transformational and viable vision for the future of the village. This vision would draw together the many foregoing influences on the future of the village in a way that secures its future within the wider Ennis urban area while maintaining its unique riverside village identity.



04 | SUGGESTED CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE ENNIS AND ENVIRONS LOCAL AREA PLAN

The unified plan suggested above needs to ensure that these various components are in place. In anticipation of a forthcoming Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan, the CCD CLG suggests that the unified plan should be developed as a distinct character area within this LAP that recognises both the interdependent relationship between the town and the village and the distinct character of Clarecastle with its historic quays.

The CCD CLG suggests that Clare County Council amends the Draft Plan to include a commitment to develop a comprehensive plan for the village of Clarecastle as a component of the forthcoming Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan, and that the outline contents of this plan are enshrined as including:

- Baseline Settlement Study
- SWOT/ SCOT analysis
- Mobility Management & Transport
- Public Realm
- Heritage
- Tourism
- Green & Blue Infrastructure
- Implementation & Phasing
- Funding Opportunities
- Economic Merits of the Plan

The settlement hierarchy diagram of the National Planning Framework (reproduced below) illustrates the various components that sustain our towns and villages.

This submission suggests that the model for such a plan exists within the Clare County Council Administrative Area in the Killaloe-Ballina Town Enhancement and Mobility Plan. Including the Clarecastle Community Plan within the statutory EE LAP would provide the leadership and commitment the historic village requires to become an exemplar of good growth.

