



Forward Planning Department
Clare County Council
New Road
Ennis
Co Clare

10th November 2020



enclosures

Dear Forward Planning Department,

Submission to draft County Development Plan 2022 to 2027
Site at Sli an Fearghus, Clarecastle, grid reference; E555,250, N674,184

We wish to submit the following observations for the consideration by Clare County Council, this is a strategic submission and whilst we understand that 'zoning' is not current in the process, consideration must be made towards the designation of these lands to enable proper strategy to progress.

In the case of this submission the ability to implement strategy will rely on rezoning of the subject lands to revert the designated use of the above located brownfield site from the current designation of 'Greenspace' to 'mixed use' in the upcoming CDP 2022 to 2027.

Such consideration is in order that several pillars of strategy in the wider sense to which this site is key might then be considered, the two considerations go hand in glove.

The change on this site from 'residential' to 'open space' reversed planning consent for development of the subject brownfield site which was granted after proper due process but now lapsed, the decision to change zoning has stalled strategic progress and created inertia preventing the initiation of appropriate strategies that could otherwise have progressed.

Our rationale for this submission is to enable implementation of several strategies, initiatives and priorities embodied in the current and proposed CDP which we detail below.

In addition, adequately completing the existing estate resolves the resident's problems caused by the inertia zoning designation of 'open space' on a brownfield site with potential.

We enclose

- OSI map indicating the site and surrounding sites in question.
- Map projecting the site as a hub critical to assisting action of the strategies embodied in the current and potentially future development plans in the vicinity.

Our thesis for this application is that appropriate sustainable development of this nodal site can provide the links to integrate surrounding objectives thereby facilitating and promoting jobs and tourism not just on the site itself but on the soon to be vacated Roche site to the immediate South with a proper access corridor.



Such change will substantially contribute to the strategies outlined in the current and future County Development plans in the locality and County and add vitality to the village of Clarecastle itself.

We therefore submit that this location when appropriately developed as mixed use is appropriate to the future strategic planning of the wider locality and is key to the long term sustainability of the vacated Roche site.

To structure our submission, this document is divided into the following sections:

1. Comments on the County Development plan 2017 – 2022
2. Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for Shannon Estuary SIFP
3. Other Considerations:
 - a. Flood Risk
 - b. Barrage
 - c. Adjacent zoning
 - d. River walkway
 - e. Watersports and leisure
 - f. Infrastructure
4. Clarecastle community council strategy

Section 1 - County Development plan 2017 – 2022

Current CDP strategies

Section 3a of the current CDP makes the following statements about Clarecastle:

2.12.1 Priorities for Clarecastle

The Council will be guided by the following strategic aims:

- *To encourage the use of vacant and under-utilised brownfield properties in the village core for appropriate uses.*
- *To promote the development of sustainable tourism products in the area, in particular the quay and associated river estuary amenity.*
- *To enhance connectivity between residential areas and community areas.*
- *To harness recreational opportunities presented by the development of green infrastructure, especially along the River Fergus linking Clarecastle to Ennis.*
- *To support and encourage the enhancement of the physical environment including cycle ways, cycle trail head facilities, walkways and the quayside area.*
- *To seek to facilitate the redevelopment/continued use of Roche (Ireland) site.*
- *To welcome any assessment of the barrage during the lifetime of the plan.*

The current CDP also repeats the following strategies and subsets:

3.6.1 Priorities for Clarecastle

- *To encourage the use of vacant and under-utilised brownfield properties in the village core for appropriate uses.*

The subject site consists of phase 2 of the Sli an Fearghas development which was curtailed due to the change in the current CDP from 'residential' to 'greenspace' following the financial crash in 2008.

Previously, the full site had Planning permission for development for 44 houses in two phases. Phase 1 consisting of 22 units was complete forming the current extant estate, phase 2 had commenced with site strip to reduced levels and drainage services installed when the financial crash in 2009 stopped progress.

The proposed Ennis to Clarecastle Quay River walk key strategy was to pass through the site along the river bank section of the site and was to have been implemented as part of the development, under the current zoning designation this is unlikely to be meaningfully facilitated.

Therefore, the site as it stands falls in the category of '*vacant and under-utilised brownfield*' which historically had the benefit of full planning permission for development.

Reverting the site to its previous residential development zoning status will '*encourage the use*' as envisioned in this strategy.

The site itself is better zoned towards "Mixed use" since it is perfectly located to facilitate the next item, sustainable tourism, development enables completion to high standard of this section of the river walk and can provide pedestrian access direct from the village, bridge and the castle to the Quay and also embodies potential for access to the currently closed Clarecastle Railway station as a direct route from the Roche site.

3.6.1 Priorities for Clarecastle

- *To promote the development of sustainable tourism products in the area, in particular the quay and associated river estuary amenity.* (N.B. - our underline.)

The site being located between the Quay and the main road and being immediately adjacent to the river has the potential to fully embrace and facilitate this priority.

Appropriate development of this site opens to potential for direct access to the quay from the R458 thereby solving the current access bottleneck and dangerous junction in Quay road and alleviating the legitimate concerns of residents that amplified traffic movements could otherwise create.

Sustainable tourism requires adequate facilities for tourists, this site together with its adjoining site containing historical bonded warehouses are situated at the head of the estuary and are the ideal location for appropriate tourist facilities to be created, this also ties into the stated ambitions of the proposed CDP as a key pillar of sustainability.

The strategy to create a tourism hub at this location ties into all the ambitions of the CDP without negatively impacting existing residents.

- *To enhance connectivity between residential areas and community areas.*

As above noted, the development of the Sli an Fearghas vacant site with new connectivity will ensure proper access and provide for all to access the community spaces without detracting from residential amenity on Quay road or the existing Sli An Fearghas estate and as noted above maintains long term potential for Clarecastle Railway station to reopen.

- *To harness recreational opportunities presented by the development of green infrastructure, especially along the River Fergus linking Clarecastle to Ennis.*

The provision of a river walkway from Ennis to the Estuary along the river Fergus is a key strategy of both Clare County Council and Clarecastle Community Council as well as being a rational objective towards a number of other key strategies in the CDP.

These are clear visions which have widespread benefits for the vitality and sustainability of the locality and region, however, without action they will remain but a dream (ref: N.Mandela). The 'action' of developing the subject site will be a key implementation of the joint vision and strategy for leisure facilities along the Fergus River.

- *To support and encourage the enhancement of the physical environment including cycle ways, cycle trail head facilities, walkways and the quayside area.*

As detailed above this strategy can be assisted by appropriate development of the Sli an Fearghas site and is an appropriate 'trail head' location at the confluence of several transport routes.

- *To seek to facilitate the redevelopment/ continued use of Roche (Ireland) site*

The Roche site is subject to current planning application reference 20/240 which seeks to establish permission to decommission the site and return it to green field.

The Roche site is currently zoned as 'industry' and has good sustainable infrastructure in place to allow some form of development once Roche have vacated. However, access to the former Syntax, now Roche, site is constrained to vehicular movement via the streets of the congested village and residential areas with difficult junctions as is noted in the submissions as part of planning application reference 20420.

Rezoning of the subject site back to mixed use will, with appropriate adjoining consents and design, allow the direct connectivity between the R458 and the industry zoned lands thereby alleviating any perceived access difficulties of new incoming industry.

As a key strategy in the upcoming CDP this would underpin future employment and vitality for the village and environs whilst alleviating current access concerns noted in observations to Roches current application.

Further details in relation to the future development of Clarecastle, will be set out in the forthcoming Local Area Plan.

Previous representations to forward planning by the respondents in relation to the proposed local plan have been deferred due to lack of the stated LAP. The opportunity to now redress the lack of the LAP now presents with this submission.

N.B. A pre planning enquiry for this site resulted in a meeting with representatives of Forward Planning and local councillors with expectation of the local plan being initiated, the submission was met with some enthusiasm.

Site briefs for lands that have been identified for future development are set out below

The site referenced MU4 North of the subject site and on the North side of the R458 was retained as mixed use in the last CDP. Objectively this site has somewhat more constrictions to the zoned use than the subject site since it cannot meaningfully contribute to many of the strategies noted above due to its 'cul de sac' nature and lack of connectivity. The MU4 site has not been developed during the course of the current CDP despite considerable infrastructure already in place and is currently considered by many to be a detriment to the visual and economic amenity of the village.

Proper zoning the subject site to similar status as the MU4 site will allow for critical development mass across both sites North and South of the R458 thereby creating a proper gateway aspect to the village's amenity and sustainability and the strategy to join up Ennis to the Estuary by a walkway can be implemented and underwrites the investments in infrastructure already in place.

Section 2

Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for the Shannon Estuary (SIFP)

The key objective of the SIFP is to research and develop an integrated approach to facilitating economic growth and promoting environmental management within and adjacent to the Shannon Estuary. The SIFP states:

“The Framework area therefore encompasses both the marine area of the Estuary and its fringe lands. Both are key resources, and provide space and location for development, stretching from the Shannon Bridge in Limerick City, to the first bridge in Clarecastle, along the Limerick and Clare shorelines, past Foynes and Moneypoint, towards Loop Head in Clare and Kerry Head in North Kerry”.

The subject site lies at the NE extremity of the Fergus Estuary tributary of the Shannon estuary and lies at the first available crossing point of the Estuary heading into County Clare and beyond, essentially this is the North Eastern extremity of the SIFP area and an important node or trailhead on the tourist route.

The importance of the subject site as stated in the SIFP above underpins the ability of the site and its key location to support the strategies in the plan by development of appropriate facilities upon it and its connectivity via the historical river access to the estuary itself from and to the Port of Clare.

Section 3

Other considerations:

Flood risk

Part of the subject site was erroneously included in CFAMS as being at flooding risk from both tidal and fluvial events.

The CFAMS assessment was carried out before erection of the substantial flood berm by the OPW which now bounds the site on the river side and essentially not only protects the subject site but its intention is to protect the entire village of Clarecastle.

The site if developed will have the same finished floor levels as the surrounding houses and premises on Barrack street which have no history of flooding apart from the basement in the post office which cause may not be due to the river levels directly, rather perhaps caused by surcharge from surface run off.

Appropriate design of any development on the site including adequate provisions on a river walkway can mitigate against accelerated climate change flood events adding flooding resilience to the village itself.

The river level at Station 27068 ‘Clarecastle Bridge’ has recorded a maximum surcharge above OD of 4.2M (staff reading 6.228) and it is noted that this is below the average level of the site in subject currently reduced to formation in brownfield status.

Therefore, the site is not at risk from fluvial or tidal flooding events in the current 100 year predictions. The potential strategy for additional flood protection cannot be realised without proper development.

Barrage

Our proposal now included into the current CDP to relocate the existing barrage downstream to an appropriate location between high ground has the potential to invigorate the quay and the port of Clare and presents a unique opportunity for Clarecastle and Ennis to recover the historical connection with the river Fergus, this is a key strategy that can be initiated.

The subject site is ideally located to integrate into and assist initiatives to improve local amenity for tourism and leisure which are fundamental pillars of both the CDP and the Clarecastle Community plan as part of the overarching strategy for the vicinity.

My previous submission to the Council provided a vision for the potential to create a marina at Clarecastle if my proposal for relocating the barrage was implemented, the subject site could be integral to such initiative with any interim appropriate development of the site and reinstating the historical rationale for the port of Clare.

We refer to a development at Amble in the UK where their strategy for development completely invigorated a struggling town left derelict due to lost industry. Details of this can be found at <https://www.coblequay.co.uk/>. With appropriate development a similar success could be initiated for Clarecastle.

Adjacent mixed-use zoned site

The old ex bonded warehouses immediately to the South of the subject site are currently underutilised and are essentially undevelopable due to the restricted access and dangerous junctions on Quay road.

These substantial stone buildings and high stone enclosures which were part of the historical infrastructure of the port of Clare are an important aspect of the commercial, architectural and archaeological heritage of the port and the village, however, because they are constrained by access and therefore cannot be rationally utilised they are falling into disrepair and are without purpose.

The warehouse buildings and the larger part of the site have great potential to create a number of tourist or leisure related developments such as heritage centre, art gallery, performance space and tourism facilities all complimentary to the proper sustainable planning development of the area as laid out in the current CDP and assisting the pillars of the Clarecastle Community strategies.

Supporting a development led strategy for proper access creates joined up potential to create an exciting vibrant addition to the sustainability of Clarecastle and the longer viability for future development on the Roche site beyond.

River walkway

The ambitions embodied in the CDP and the Clarecastle community plan to facilitate a leisure corridor along the river Fergus stretching from Ennis to the Estuary is a strategy that is both logical and achievable provided that owners are facilitated to action the plan through appropriate development.

The subject site forms a nodal gateway or trailhead on the corridor route at a sensible location being the historical first crossing point at the head of the tidal estuary at the Port of Clare and the village of Clarecastle with the castle itself on the opposite bank.

Appropriate development of the subject site has exiting potential to facilitate and invigorate the leisure corridor and enhance the important nodal location providing direct access to the historical quay and port all of which add vitality to Clarecastle itself.

Watersports and leisure.

Currently the site provides temporary ad hoc storage for the Fergus currach club which has country wide success in the sport having won last year's rowing cup and is an integral partner for the annual Clarecastle regatta.

Appropriate development of the site could provide long term facilities for the club together with direct access to the river and providing a long term sustainable home for this important leisure club.

In the event that the Barrage relocation comes to fruition, the site is ideally located to add to the recovery of the river facilities by the community that the new barrage could create.

Infrastructure

Sewage treatment has been a perennial problem for increased development of Clarecastle however, Irish water have initiated plans to resolve this impediment soon, the project status on the IW website states:

"Irish Water plans to deliver an improvement to the wastewater network in Clarecastle. Wastewater from the public sewer network in Clarecastle is currently discharged untreated into the River Fergus and the Shannon Estuary. The discharge of untreated wastewater is unacceptable, threatens water quality and detracts from the amenity value of the River Fergus and the greater Shannon Estuary".

The project status is 'planned' with the following actions:

- *Installation of new pumps and associated equipment at the existing Quay Road Pumping Station*
- *New sewage main (approx. 1,900m rising main) to transfer sewage from existing Quay Road Pumping Station for treatment at existing Clareabbey Wastewater Treatment Plant*
- *The existing outfall will continue to be used as a storm overflow*

The subject site has sewage and surface water infrastructure already constructed as part of the previously granted development which is fully connected to the proposed upgrade.

Rezoning to allow the development of the subject site underpins the investment in infrastructure outlined above.

Section 4
Clarecastle Community Development CLG (CCDL)

CCDL as set up in 2012 to promote rejuvenation of the village following completion of the M18 which bypassed the village providing it with an opportunity to recover its historical vitality diminished by traffic volumes over the years and to generally improve the village environment through a suite of positive initiatives.

After widespread consultation and a public meeting a list of priority projects were identified which promoted several physical strategies through a number of initiatives including public funding some of which have already largely been initiated and which have already substantially improved the village, these include:

- 1) Street rejuvenation scheme:
 - a) landscaping,
 - b) approach roads,
 - c) building colour façade scheme,
 - d) footpath refurbishment
- 2) Signage:
 - a) Orientation, directional & interpretive signage programme, including themed roundabouts.
- 3) Development of active & sustainable community infrastructure supporting “Green” credentials:
 - a) green corridors and walks ,
 - b) cycle ways
 - c) heritage & Biodiversity trails,
 - d) Shannon Estuary way
 - e) Fergus river walk from Ennis to Clarecastle
- 4) Regeneration programme
 - a) Improving existing derelict stock
 - b) integrating derelict /unoccupied sites into village fabric

The subject site has potential to support all the above strategies and provide substantive fiscal inputs to achieving the improvements to the physical infrastructure and aesthetic of the village in the main through the nodal location which can create pedestrian and vehicular permeability as well as creating an aesthetic and colourful entrance to the village.

Conclusion

The subject site despite its current seemingly ineffective position in the village and current zoning status creates deep inertia limiting the principle ambitions of many planning strategies in the locality.

Proper development of the subject site by change to 'mixed development' would allow and invigorate development to create a hub and trailhead for proper access to the quay, historical warehouses and the adjacent Roche vacant site thereby facilitating and realising the visions embodied in the CDP and CCCD for Clarecastle.

This change in zoning status could occur without any negative impacts on the existing residents whilst creating local employment opportunities and sustainable vitality for the locality whilst alleviating current access restrictions and improving the amenity of the village.

A proper strategy for the subject and adjacent sites as 'mixed use' is the catalyst to enable multiple pillars of sustainability to be realised for Clarecastle and the locality.

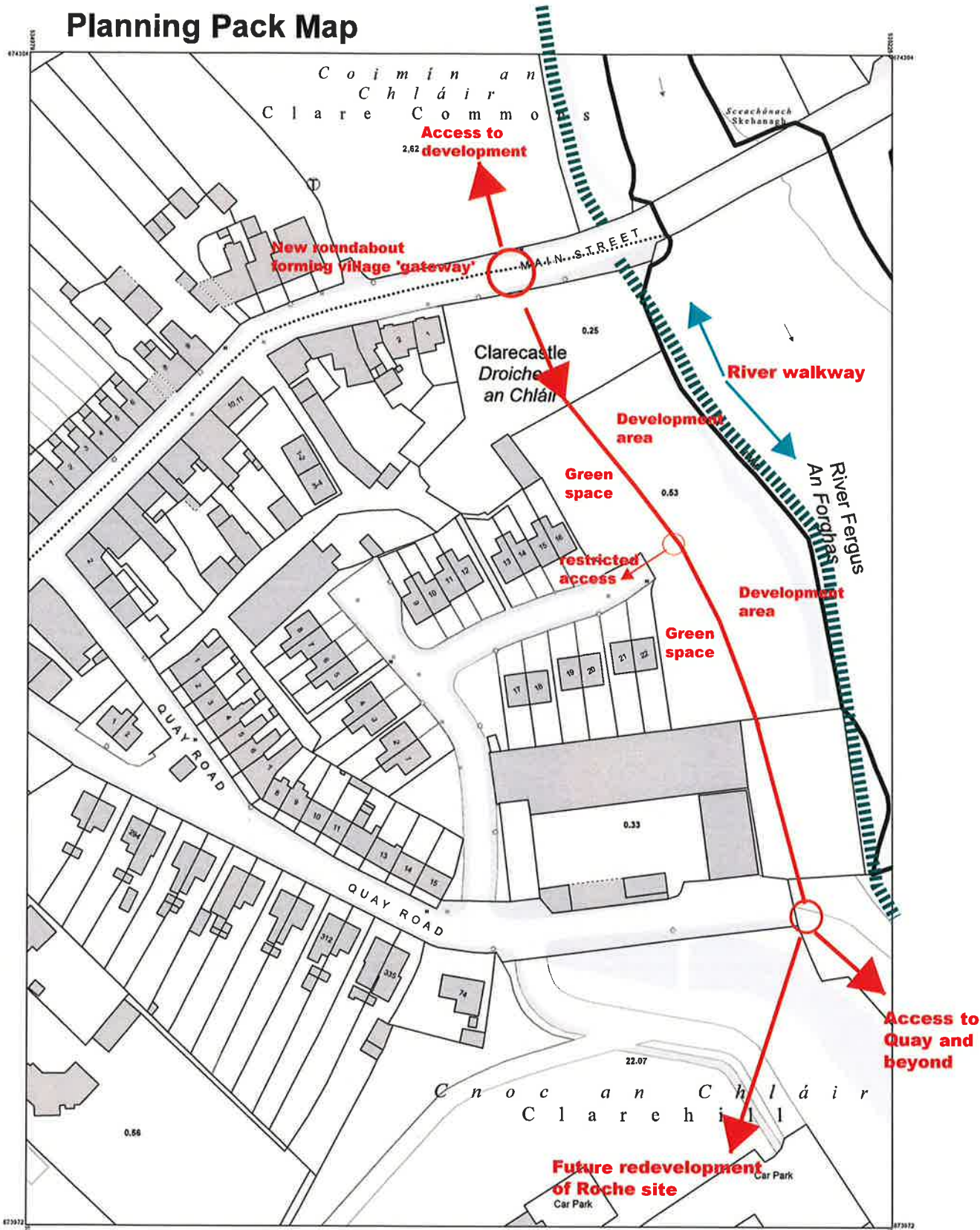
In short this site is the potential 'Clar' to bridge the sustainable future of both the village and the vacated Roche site.

Should you have any comments or queries on the above submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Fergus Merriman MSCSI MRICS EurBE
Chartered Building Surveyor
Registered Building Surveyor B0069 under the Building Control Act 2007

Planning Pack Map



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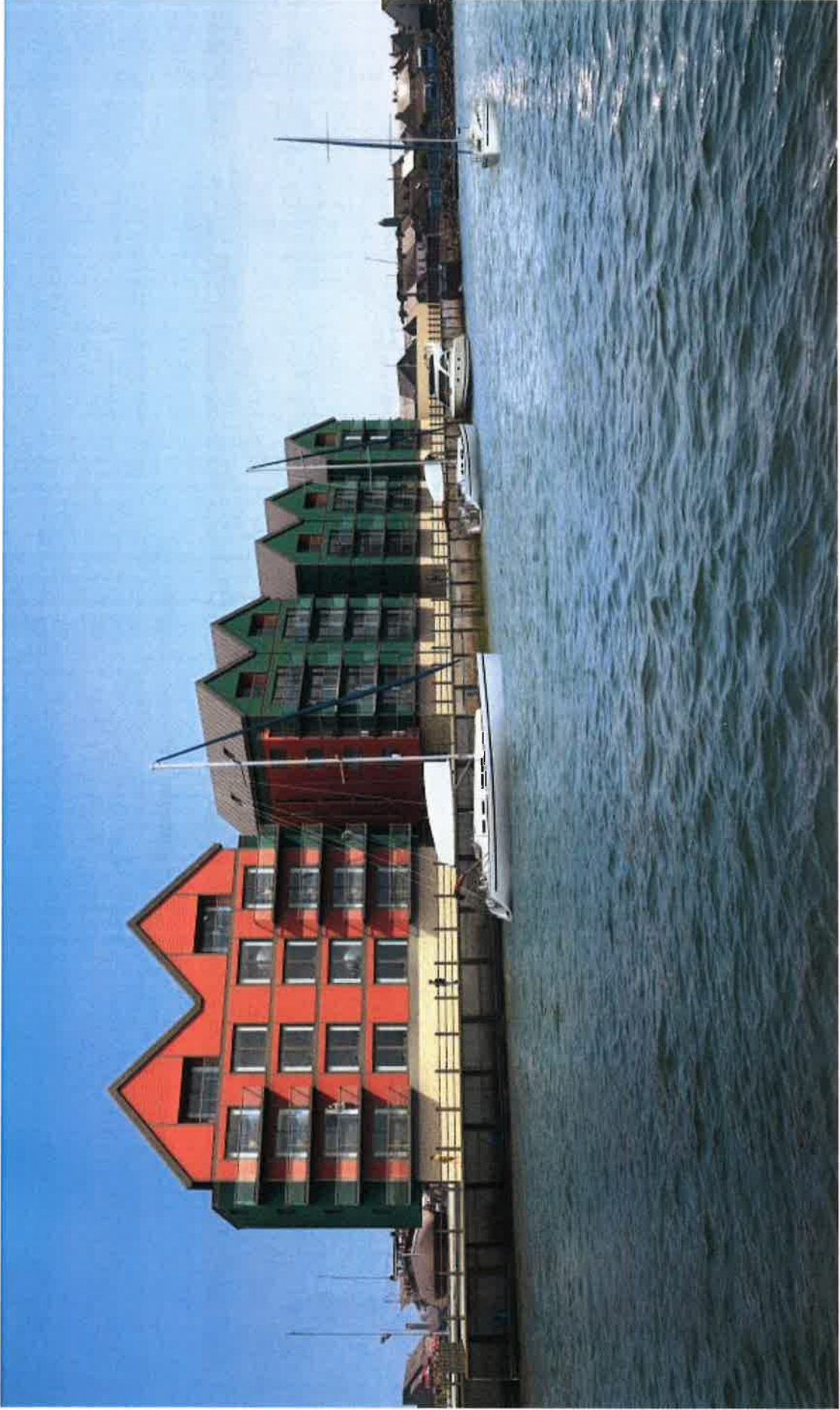
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Sample Development – riverside view



Sample development – landside view



Sample Development – riverside view



Sample development – landside view

Proposal for the Development of Clarecastle Marina

A Vision for Clarecastle



Executive Summary.

The Port of Clarecastle has been virtually idle since the late 1960's due to a combination of economic factors including lack of investment and vision. The mainstay employer in the region, Roche Ireland, has declared cessation of operations at Clarecastle, together these factors promote examination of new strategies for investment, employment and growth.

This proposal outlines a new vision and strategy for the economy of the port, town and region through a number of connected initiatives designed to stimulate long term growth and stability in:

Tourism

Sports

Arts

Industry and commerce,

Employment

Community, environment and lifestyle choices

Integral to this strategy is the nodal location of the Clarecastle port site. The existing geography, community and environmental factors, together with first class road, rail, air and sea connections, place Clarecastle in a unique position second to none on the Atlantic seaboard.

The vision incorporates synergies with:

County Development plan, Local Development plan, Shannon Estuary plan, National Development plan

Climate change, sea level change, flooding relief and the environment.

Commerce and Employment.

Arts and Community.

Together these form a platform for successful growth and development from a single relatively modest capital investment.

Objective 1

To seek local or government funding totalling €300,000.00 to develop this project from concept through to full planning approval.

Objective 2

Following planning grant and statutory consents, to secure funding through Government and private sector to develop the project in various stages.

Objective 3

To promote the initiative both nationally and internationally as an exemplar project of how public / private collaboration can achieve enhanced results from public spending to combat the effects of climate change and in addition to allow investment and growth of local economies.

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Section 1. The overall project.

1.1 Downstream barrage and lock gates

Construction of 'hydroactive' tidal barrage incorporating tidal pump turbines and lock formed in new structure situated between existing natural higher ground on each side of the river below the Roche site will-

Protect the greater Ennis basin from tidal influence,

Generate energy,

Allow shipping and fish to pass

Actively control river levels to prevent flooding from tide or storm rainfall.

During normal conditions turbines in the barrage generate energy from river and bi tidal flows, these are connected to the local 4MW substation immediately adjacent which currently serves the Roche site and has spare capacity to export or import energy.

During storm flood or tidal surge events the barrage closes and the new marina basin acts to attenuate the river flow while water is allowed to rise to a set point, if the attenuation pond peaks, the turbines are energised to pump out any excess water to sea to actively prevent surcharge beyond predetermined levels. The pumps will each have the capacity to pump 50 cusecs = 40,000,000 gallons of water per hour with provision made for additional turbines to be added to meet future need at minimum additional cost.

Current flood flows are equivalent to 90 cusecs so two pumps would be the minimum requirement.

Dredging and deepening of the existing natural basin upstream of the new barrage between the existing berms, quays and the castle form the required attenuation pond of some 15 hectares in extent and provides 'room for the river' on the half tide principle of around 2,500,000 cubic metres which may be required in the event of abnormal flooding or pump failure without surcharge of the existing berms.

The barrage will incorporate a lock structure to facilitate movement of shipping with a capacity to accommodate substantial vessels visiting the quay.

Overall costs are yet to be determined and are subject to detail investigation and design.

Government funding for this stage exists under capital flood and climate change relief project monies pre-allocated in budget as part of CFRAMS and the Shannon Foynes development funds but not as yet allocated to this project.

1.2 400 berth Marina

The new attenuation pond formed by the barrage creates an extensive body of 'level controlled' water eminently suitable to create a marina development of up to 400 berths plus additional 100 uncontrolled community moorings upstream.

Existing studies by the Irish Marine Institute have identified the considerable potential for such facilities particularly on the West coast of the county. Failte Ireland states that the country has "not yet exploited its full potential for marine tourism".

Ireland has over 9,000Km of coastline, one of the longest in Europe, yet has one of the lowest percentages of boat ownership per capita with a ratio of only 1 boat per 172 persons compared to UK = 1:98, France and Italy = 1:66, Netherlands = 1:30, USA = 1:16, Scandinavia = 1:7.

The shortfall in Ireland indicates the large potential to expand marine tourism not just from increased Irish boat ownership but from attracting foreign boat owners to berth in new environments not yet explored. Facts already recognised in Local, County and National development plans. (*ref: Clare CoCo Development Plan 2011 - 2017, Strategic integrated Framework Plan for Shannon Estuary*)

Cronin Millar Consulting Engineers for a number of existing national marina developments have prepared an initial analysis indicating the excellent potential for success of a 400 berth marina at the site due to the factors indicated above.

Kenneth Farrell former Commodore of Iniscealtra sailing club has confirmed the local demand for facilities

and the attractiveness of Shannon Estuary to boaters.

The Marine institute advise the average spend per berth across Ireland is between €9 and €10,000 per annum with a total countrywide spend in excess of €34M added to which overseas visiting yachts add around €192 per night spent in the local community.

The resulting potential compensated direct revenue is in excess of €2M per annum to the community and the creation of around 120 full time local jobs. The additional footfall created by the project potentially adds an additional circa €12M per annum to the local economy. *(based on Bord Failte figures)*



1.3 Estuary, wildlife and river cruise attractions

As part of the development of water based tourism the existing redundant barrage upstream will be removed, once again allowing river traffic access the historical quays area of Ennis due to the controlled river water level, restoring lost local access to the river.

Leisure boats and water taxi's plying between Ennis and Clarecastle will create an important tourist attraction, potentially adding a further €500,000 revenue and some 20 direct jobs to the area, with substantial spin offs to existing businesses and hotels due to this unique addition to the tourist experience of the region.

The 'calming' of the river between Clarecastle and Ennis created by the attenuation pond and new barrage effectively enables leisure use of the currently unsafe fast flowing waters, the tide raises and falls some 4M currently which will be reduced to 2M in order to control the river fluctuations.

1.4 Retail outlet opportunities.

In order to safeguard downstream marine ecology it is proposed the dredged material from the basin is to be disposed of by pumping on to existing adjacent lands, creating potential new development opportunities and the space for the ancillary support services to the marina itself.

Lands largely in the ownership of Clare County Council to the East of the River Fergus are currently sterilised as an attenuation flood relief zone in the County Development Plan during events when existing berm's are overtopped by waters .

Since the river levels are proposed to be controlled actively the new increased attenuation created by the new barrage, these lands, around 400Ha, can safely be returned as future development potential with an uplift in value in the order of €20M , greatly enhancing potential for the long term growth and stability of Ennis.

Creating this new area of reclaimed lands opens up the a wide variety of opportunities for private investors to generate a number of different commercial enterprises both diverse and compatible with the marina development, including but not limited to:

Arts and Craft village.

Supermarket,

Shipping mall, marine supplies, boat repair yard and servicing.

Retail village

It is estimated this will create some 70 construction jobs at an estimated cost of 23 million euro and has potential to create some 90 full time jobs.

1.5 Hotel opportunity.

The marketing focus for the marina will be to attract predominantly boat and yacht owners from the Dublin, UK, and European markets. It will allow them a 'unique safe harbour 'on the West coast of Ireland, with direct access to the Atlantic and River Shannon.

The need for a Hilton/Marriot class of hotel has been identified by G1 Architecture based in 133 Great Suffolk St, London SE1. Their initial research has shown that the area of Clarecastle, with a 400 berth marina can sustain a 400 bedroom hotel at an approximate investment cost in the region of 240 million Euros, while also creating some 240 full time jobs.

The major employer in the locality is the chemical company Roche, located in the village of Clarecastle, and situated on some 42 acres of land adjacent to the estuary.

Half of the present workforce of 240 people will shortly have been made redundant and by the end of 2018 this plant is scheduled to close.

Preliminary discussions are already taking place between Roche and the 'promoters' with the view, that once the plant closes, the existing operation will be returned to a green field site. This is Roche's intention. It would make an ideal location for a hotel development.

These talks will be ongoing and Roche itself may become a partner in a JV venture with the hotel developers.

1.6 Sustaining existing businesses.

Since 2008, over 28 retail outlets in the Town of Ennis have closed with the associated job losses.

The village of Clarecastle has a redundant development which began in 2006, situated on 8 acres of land on the edge of the village which is in the inertia of receivership.

The proposed marine and associated developments in Clarecastle will have a positive impact, not only in Clarecastle itself, but will extend to all of the environs including Ennis and Bunratty.

One of the key components of this proposal, with the removal of the existing upstream barrage, will be to allow for the development of 'river taxis' which will connect the marina in Clarecastle to the centre of Ennis, similar to river activities that can be found in London and Paris. Sustaining existing jobs in these locations, and creating opportunities for private investment to not only look at reopening existing retail outlets, but create new and vibrant floating attractions would be unique from a tourism perspective.

1.7 Re-opening of Clarecastle railway station.

Presently, there are ten trains a day that connect the town of Ennis to Galway and Limerick.

In 2005, according to an article that featured in the 'Irish Traveller', stated that a parcel of land close to Skehanagh Bridge was to be rezoned by the County Council and the Ennis Town Council with a view of providing a new railway station servicing the village of Clarecastle.

The site identified, comprises of nine acres of land and the overall proposal included the development of 100 car parking spaces, and was part of the Western Corridor development plan.



The above picture is of the now abandoned Clarecastle railway station which was first opened in 1865 by the Great eastern Railway, and closed on 1967.

Given the size and scope of the overall development plan for Clarecastle. The reopening of this station would be a major asset as it would immediately allow 'connectivity' not only to the Western Corridor, but via Limerick, access by rail to the whole country, creating a further 10 full time jobs.

1.8 Re-opening access to the upper Fergus for migratory fish species.

The once lucrative salmon fishing industry will be reinvigorated, as fish restricted from passing through the existing barrier are once more allowed access to the upper Fergus River to spawn.

1.9 Shannon Airport.

Shannon Airport has vast growth potential. The strategy for the development of tourism in Clarecastle, has the potential to attract thousands of additional visitors every year through the airport.

Considering Shannon Airport has the longest runway in Ireland, measuring 3,199 meters and was designed to accommodate the space shuttle; of the three major airports in Ireland, Dublin, Cork and Shannon, it has the poorest passenger numbers. In 2015 passenger numbers rose to 1,714,872 - according to the airport – the first year since 2010 that it has exceeded 1.7 million.

2015 saw Dublin Airport achieve record passenger numbers, clocking over 23.5 million passengers in the first 11 months of the year.

Meanwhile, Cork Airport forecast growth of 8pc in 2016 - a figure which would deliver 2.2 million passengers (up from 2.14m in 2014)

Shannon airport is an ideal gateway providing access to Clarecastle and beyond and will benefit by increased footfall from tourists, boat owners and visitors to the marina adding resilience to the area.

Section 2. The Panel.

2.1 Project promoters.

Fergus Merriman – Merriman Solutions Chartered Building Surveyors and Project Managers.

Ronan Connolly - Connolly, O'Neill Solicitors and Director of RCEH Trust Company Ltd.

Emelyn Heaps - Owner/operator, Renaissance Resorts and Clare Resorts.

Kieran O'Regan - Financial advisor - former regional director AIB (39 years)

2.2 Panel of experts for investigation and design

To instigate the vision a scoping study is proposed to:

Design the barrage and infrastructure required

Assess and confirm commercial interests

Carry out environmental, ecological and archaeological studies

Engage with the local community to take account of local interests

Resulting in obtaining the requisite approvals to proceed with phase one.

Appropriate professionals required include:

Marine & Consulting Engineers -

Environmental & Wildlife Consultants -

Planning Consultants -

Archaeological Consultants -

Tourism and business consultants -

Project Managers -

Cronin Millar Consulting Engineers

Minouge & Associates.

Sean O'Riordan & Associates

John Spain Associates

TVAS Ireland Ltd

Renaissance Resorts.

Merriman Solutions CBS

Vision one will achieve:

Infrastructure design

Environmental impact study

Foreshore lease and Planning approval

Acquisition of the above consents will enable the project to proceed to secure funding partners followed by tender and construction.

Section 3. Implementation.

- 3.1 Works and cost centres.
- 3.2 EIS requirements
- 3.3 Consultation requirements.
- 3.4 Design of barrage & pump turbines
- 3.5 Design of Marina
- 3.6 M&F design
- 3.7 Planning documentation
- 3.8 Planning approval.

Section 4. Financial requirements for implementation.

- 4.1 Overall funding requirements for phase one have been assessed at €300,000 subject to Government inputs and level of support committed.

Section 5. Funding source post planning.

- 5.1 The assessment of funding requirements will wholly depend upon the results of the implementation study and the level of government funding guaranteed.

