



Development Plan Review,
Planning Department,
Clare County Council,
New Road,
Ennis,
Co. Clare
V95 DXP2



13 November 2020

Re: Issues Paper – Clare County Development Plan 2022 - 2028

Dear Sir/Madam

The Department of Education and Skills welcomes this opportunity to engage with Clare County Council in the preparation of the Clare County Development Plan 2022 - 2028. The population growth projected in the National Planning Framework combined with its focus on compact growth and sustainable development requires a collaborative engagement between this Department and planning authorities in order to support the provision of additional and enhanced education facilities in our communities.

In considering potential emerging and future education accommodation requirements, this Department will work with Clare County Council to identify projected population growth to a circa ten-year horizon in order to make sufficient provision for the planning and construction of school and other education accommodation where necessary.

In existing developed areas, in particular, this Department will seek to protect opportunities for potential longer-term requirements in order to ensure that sustainable communities can be supported with appropriate education provision throughout the lifetime of the National Planning Framework.

As more specific population and housing growth figures become available, this Department will analyse these in the context of existing and planned school provision in order to identify potential additional school and other education accommodation requirements. An opportunity to engage on this matter at an early stage of the Council's process of drafting the new Plan would be welcome.

In the interim, the Department wishes to make the following observations:

1. This Department requests that the Clare County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 would be explicit in its support for the provision of school accommodation, including the development of new schools and the expansion or alteration of existing ones.



That the Clare County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 would include policy objectives on both the provision of new schools and the protection of existing schools and the development of wider infrastructure and amenities objectives within the Plan to support both categories of school serving your communities.

2. It is noted that the current Clare County Development Plan contains a community land use zoning objective which includes schools as a use that is permitted in principle. This Department requests that Clare County Council considers the continued use of such a land use zoning objective where appropriate.
3. This Department notes that the Issues Paper states that the County Development Plan will be consistent with national and regional policies, guidelines and objectives. One of these objectives is Compact Growth, which is identified as growth that will occur within the existing “built-up” footprint of cities, towns and settlements through the development of brownfield, infill and regeneration sites. While this objective is fully supported by the Department of Education, such population growth within the existing “built-up” footprint of towns and other settlements has the potential to upset the balance of use relative to education provision in the area. The absence of specific school site provision in such locations can significantly challenge the delivery of required school places associated with intensified residential development. It is, therefore, critical that explicit provision for school development to meet that projected population growth be made in existing “built-up” areas.
4. The inclusion of buffer zones and land use designations that support education development adjacent to existing and established schools (where required to facilitate potential future expansion) will be critical in meeting school accommodation requirements arising in existing “built-up” areas. In some instances, such provision may present the only viable solution for the provision of school places to meet the needs of the local community.
5. Support for urban-design schools, as per the DES guidelines, in established areas would be welcomed. In particular, measures to facilitate reduced requirements for onsite parking and set-down and to support access to off-site public amenities and facilities is essential to achieving the delivery of schools in the urban carbon-neutral model promoted in the NPF.
6. In some instances this Department is experiencing challenges in acquiring school sites to meet current requirements where neither zoning provision nor a relevant objective for school provision exists. In that context, it is critical that any school sites required to meet current needs or planned population growth, as may be identified by this Department, should be explicitly supported by means of an appropriate zoning provision and/or by a Specific Local Objective on the subject site in the relevant Plan.



7. The proposed development of sites which have already been identified by this Department for school provision to meet immediate school place requirements should also be explicitly supported by means of an appropriate zoning and/or by a Specific Local Objective on the subject sites in the relevant Plan.
8. The Department requests that Clare County Council would actively facilitate the principle of permitting schools, both permanent and temporary in as many zoning categories as possible.
9. The DES' current Technical Guidance Documents on school site identification and suitability assessment (TGD 25 and TGD 27) can be used to inform the selection of proposed school sites and are available on www.education.ie. Revised guidelines for schools designed for urban sites will be published by the Department in 2020 and Clare County Council should monitor the Department's website as guidelines for school developments may be updated from time to time.
10. Clare County Council should consider potential synergies with adjacent public (and commercial) facilities in the proposed siting of schools or vice versa, particularly opportunities to locate schools adjacent to open space or recreation amenities, childcare provision and/or other community facilities.
11. That the capacity of existing schools and any planned schools, as published by the Department, be considered as "supporting infrastructure and facilities" and given high priority in Clare County Council's assessment of the suitability of specific lands for residential development.
12. Where a designated school site forms part of a wider development area or plan that is being implemented incrementally, or divided into phases by the developer(s), then the Department requests that the granting of permission for any part or phase of that wider development be contingent upon the full consideration and provision of infrastructure and services to the school site as part of that development and such infrastructure and services must be specified to the standards and capacity required for the future school provision at that location.

This Department would appreciate an opportunity to meet with Council officials to discuss educational provision in the Plan and I would appreciate if the relevant official could liaise with myself at Statutory_plans@education.gov.ie, phone 057 9324474 with a view to arranging same.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Hanlon
Statutory Plans,
Forward Planning Section

