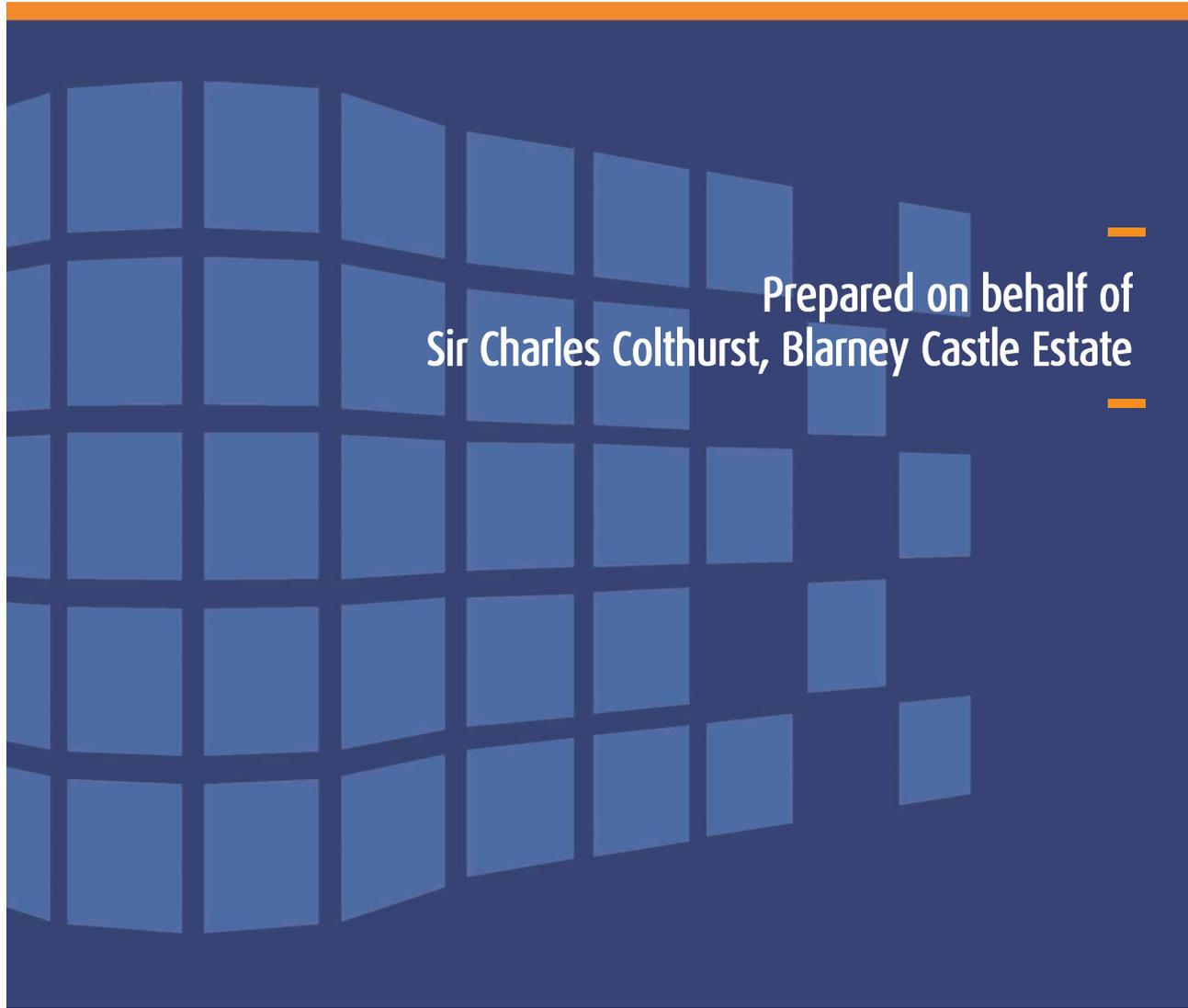


Review of Cork City Development Plan

Submission to Issues Paper – with reference to Blarney

August 2020



Prepared on behalf of
Sir Charles Colthurst, Blarney Castle Estate

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1 Introduction & Context

Sir Charles Colthurst, Blarney Castle Estate (BCE), has appointed McCutcheon Halley, to make the following submission to the Cork City Development Plan review process. As the town of Blarney has moved from the administrative boundary of Cork County Council to Cork City Council, there is a real opportunity to review its strategic objectives and consider how Blarney can best contribute to the economic growth of Cork City.

Blarney Castle Estate and Blarney have had an international cultural significance for well over 100 years. The landownership outline of the Estate and its direct relationship with the town is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Blarney Castle Estate landholding.



The unique heritage character of Blarney is one of Cork's most significant and valuable tourism resources. Its full value and potential have not been realised in the current planning policy context, or in terms of implementation objectives. There is a need for the forthcoming City Development Plan to set a strong planning framework for potential significant growth of Blarney as a tourism asset; review the appropriateness of Blarney's strategic population targets; and strengthening objectives to enhance the heritage character of the town.

Blarney is Cork's most significant tourism asset on an international stage. Historically the Castle itself has been the main tourist attraction. However, in recent years BCE has invested considerably in the Castle Gardens. The Gardens now offer a significant attraction and are one of the most visited gardens in Ireland.

In a normal year Blarney Castle has in the region of 500,000 visitors per annum and most of those visitors are from overseas. Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on international tourism in Ireland. Attractions, such as Blarney Castle, which attract a high proportion of overseas visitors have been impacted particularly badly by travel restrictions associated with Covid-19. For overseas tourism to recover effectively in the next few years there will be a need for a concerted effort by all relevant stakeholders. It is also more important than ever that the intrinsic value of tourism attractions to overseas visitors are protected and enhanced.

Blarney has long been a jewel in the crown of tourism attractions in Cork and Ireland, but the planning policy framework for the town has not provided sufficient protection, or incentives, to maximise the potential of the asset. Enhancing the appeal and tourism potential of Blarney will have far reaching benefits for Cork's tourism industry and ensure synergistic benefits to other attractions, including Cork City centre.

With strong commercial and marketing initiatives; a supportive planning policy context; and co-operation and support from key agencies and stakeholders (such as Fáilte Ireland, and Cork City Council) there is potential in the short term to kick-start the recovery of international tourism, and in the longer term to increase the number of visitors to Cork's primary tourism assets, including Blarney Castle, and encourage a longer dwell time in Cork. The economic spin off benefits in terms of employment and expenditure of such a growth are considerable.

When tourists come to Blarney Castle their experience does not end with a visit to the castle, it includes interactions with the town, the landscape and the community, including other tourism retail units (such as Blarney Woollen Mills). Most visitors to Blarney are 'short-stay' coming for only a day, or a few hours on a round trip of Ireland's key tourism attractions. The challenge facing Blarney is to increase the number of visitors and encourage people to spend more of their holiday time in the town by enhancing its heritage value, amenities, and recreational opportunities.

As well as being one of Cork's most significant tourism assets, Blarney is targeted for substantial population growth, given its proximity to the Cork Suburban Rail Network. The 2017 Blarney Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan (2017 LAP) has a strategic objective for Blarney to accommodate critical population growth and act as service and employment centres within Cork Gateway, providing high levels of community facilities and amenities, with infrastructure capacity and high quality and integrated public transport facilities. The town has a population growth target of 5,096 people from 2011 to 2022. This is a 209% increase on 2011 population – an enormous growth for any settlement to absorb within such a brief time and particularly challenging for a settlement of such heritage and tourism significance.

If the strategic growth targets for Blarney are to be retained and not to irrevocably damage the heritage of the town it is vital there is a clear strategy to develop the town in a manner which maximises its community benefits and enhances the cultural and heritage value of the town.

2 Existing Planning Policy Context

The National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) supports the growth of the three cities in the Southern Region and their respective county towns to drive population and economic growth in the region. The NPF also recognises that Ireland’s tourism has a critical role to play in the country’s economic strength. The NPF notes that housing development in the South West area (Cork and Kerry) should be based on employment growth, higher densities, access to amenities and sustainable transport modes, in order to avoid long-distance commuting patterns and quality of life impacts. The NPF also emphasises that in the context of the larger towns in the South West Regional area there should be:

“...tailoring policy approaches to capitalise quality of life and sectoral strengths, such as agri-food, energy, tourism and the marine...” (NPF, p.46)

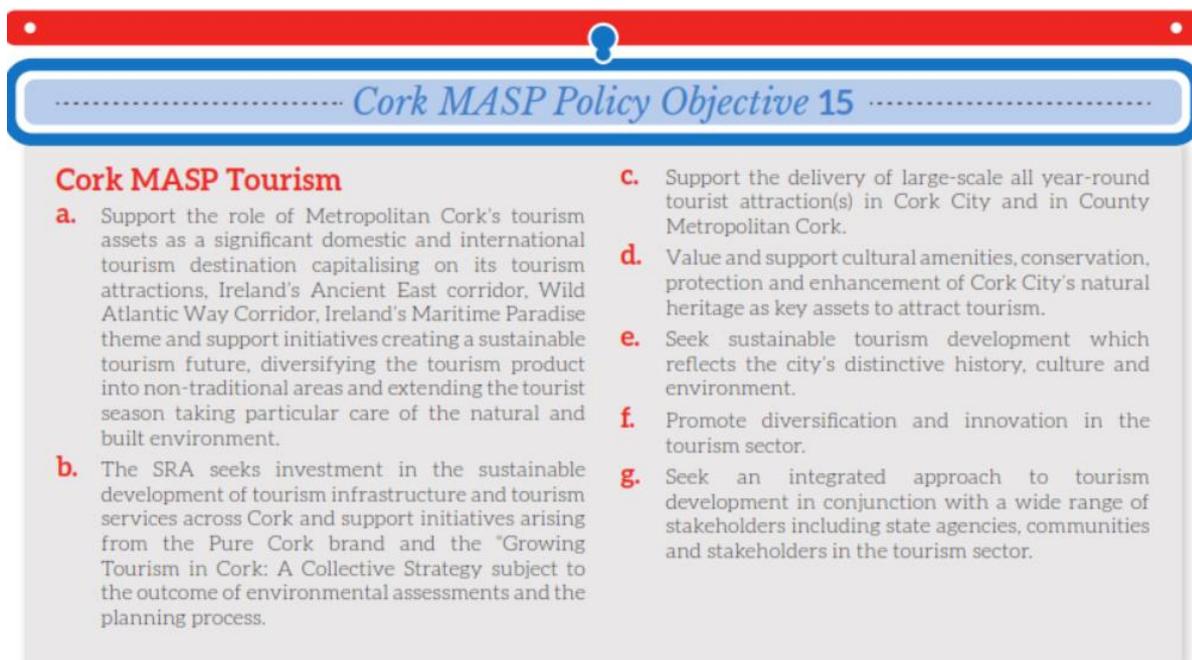
The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) recognises Blarney Castle as one of the most significant attraction and destination in the South West, contributing to the wealth of natural, cultural and heritage assets of national importance within the Region. The RSES also notes that Blarney has a role to play in the sustainable growth of Metropolitan Cork, as a Metropolitan Town located on the suburban rail network. It notes that the development of new commuter rail stations in Metropolitan Cork, including the delivery of a new station at Blarney / Stoneview, is one of the transport priorities for Cork Metropolitan Area. The RSES enablers for the development of Cork Metropolitan area include:

Progressing the sustainable development of new areas for housing, especially those on public transport corridors such as Monard and urban expansion areas on the rail corridor such as at Carrigtwohill, Middleton, Cobh and Blarney.

Protecting built and natural assets. (RSES, Extract from Key Enablers, p. 243)

Blarney falls within the Cork Metropolitan Area and the RSES includes the Cork Metropolitan Area Strategy (Cork MASP). As well as setting objectives for the population growth of Metropolitan Cork, the Cork MASP includes objectives to diversity and drive the role of vibrant tourism in the region, Policy Objective 15 of the Cork MASP sets out the vision for tourism, see Figure 2.

Figure 2: Cork MASP Policy Objective 15



The graphic for Cork MASP Policy Objective 15 is presented in a blue-bordered box with a red header bar. The title 'Cork MASP Policy Objective 15' is centered at the top in a blue serif font. Below the title, the heading 'Cork MASP Tourism' is written in a bold red font. The objective is detailed in seven bullet points, labeled 'a' through 'g', each followed by a descriptive paragraph in a grey font.

Cork MASP Policy Objective 15

Cork MASP Tourism

- a.** Support the role of Metropolitan Cork’s tourism assets as a significant domestic and international tourism destination capitalising on its tourism attractions, Ireland’s Ancient East corridor, Wild Atlantic Way Corridor, Ireland’s Maritime Paradise theme and support initiatives creating a sustainable tourism future, diversifying the tourism product into non-traditional areas and extending the tourist season taking particular care of the natural and built environment.
- b.** The SRA seeks investment in the sustainable development of tourism infrastructure and tourism services across Cork and support initiatives arising from the Pure Cork brand and the “Growing Tourism in Cork: A Collective Strategy subject to the outcome of environmental assessments and the planning process.
- c.** Support the delivery of large-scale all year-round tourist attraction(s) in Cork City and in County Metropolitan Cork.
- d.** Value and support cultural amenities, conservation, protection and enhancement of Cork City’s natural heritage as key assets to attract tourism.
- e.** Seek sustainable tourism development which reflects the city’s distinctive history, culture and environment.
- f.** Promote diversification and innovation in the tourism sector.
- g.** Seek an integrated approach to tourism development in conjunction with a wide range of stakeholders including state agencies, communities and stakeholders in the tourism sector.

The tourism policy objective aims to support the role of Metropolitan Cork’s tourism assets as a significant domestic and international tourism destination, taking particular care of the natural and built environment. It

aims to value and support cultural amenities, conservation, protection, and enhancement of Cork City's natural heritage as key assets to attract tourism.

The 2014 Cork County Development Plan (2014 CDP) identifies Blarney as one of the 9 'Metropolitan Towns' within Cork Gateway. The strategic aim for Metropolitan Towns is for critical population growth, service, and employment centres, providing high levels of community facilities and amenities, with infrastructure capacity high quality and integrated public transport connections. It states that the Metropolitan Towns should be the location of choice for most people, especially with an urban employment focus.

The 2014 CDP allocated a population target for Blarney of 7,533 by 2022. As noted in section 1, this amounted to a growth of over 5,000 people from 2011 to 2022 (a 209% increase). Much of the targeted population growth was envisaged to be in Stoneview, but the 2017 Blarney and Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan (2017 LAP) also zoned a new residential development area at Ringwood, in addition to residential lands zoned to the west of the existing town (BL-R-2; BL-R-3 and BL-R-18). BCE submit that this level of population growth conflicts with the objective to protect and enhance the town as a key tourism asset and that the scale of targeted growth should be reviewed.

In terms of employment, over 33ha of lands are zoned to the east of Blarney for the further development of Blarney Business Park. Sizeable portions of the Blarney Business Park are visible from the top of Blarney Castle and from key views within the Castle Gardens. Recent developments in the Blarney Business Park have had a negative impact on views from the Castle and grounds and BCE has sought to mitigate these impacts through enhanced landscaping and changes to the colour of the building cladding (see Section 4).

The 2014 CDP states that the sustainable development and promotion of successful and well managed tourism industry is critical to the economy of Cork. Blarney Castle is identified as a key tourist attraction of national importance and the 2014 CDP Objective TO 201 is to:

Protect and conserve those natural, built, and cultural heritage features that form resources on which the County's tourist industry is based. These features will include areas of important landscape, coastal scenery, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures, including archaeological sites, cultural sites including battlefields, the Gaeltacht areas, arts and cultural sites and the traditional form and appearance of many built up areas.

The 2017 LAP references that tourism is a significant industry in Blarney as it contains one of the principle tourist attractions in Ireland, Blarney Castle. It recognises that the industry relies on the quality and attractiveness of the built and natural heritage of the local area, stating that:

"It is important therefore, that future development initiatives within the vicinity of the Castle do not compromise the tourism and actively seek to enhance this important sector of the local economy.

The tourism offer has expanded in recent times and now includes Blarney House and the wider estate and gardens. As a result of this growth, there is a need to have regard to the impacts of proposed developments on both Blarney Castle and the wider Blarney Estate. Future development initiatives within the vicinity of the Estate should not compromise the landscape and heritage character of the area on which the local tourism economy relies. (2017 LAP, p. 54)

There is an inherent tension in the current policy context for Blarney. The town is identified for considerable strategic population growth, with a target to roughly triple in size, and strong growth in employment, including further development of the Blarney Business Park. At the same time, national, regional, and local planning policy is to protect our important tourism assets, such as Blarney Castle and Gardens, including the landscape and heritage character area within which they are set.

If the strategic growth targets for Blarney are not to irrevocably damage the heritage of the town and its existing tourism assets, it is vital that there is a clear strategy to develop the town in a manner which maximises its community benefits and enhances the cultural and heritage value of the town.

This submission requests that the forthcoming City Development Plan reviews the appropriateness of the population growth target for Blarney; provides a stronger planning policy context to protect the landscape and heritage setting of Blarney Castle; and addresses the dichotomy in existing policy and zoning policies. We request that the objectives are included in the City Development Plan to prioritise the development of community and tourism facilities; ensure the protection of the existing tourism and cultural assets; and enhance the tourism potential of the town. The following general objectives are suggested:

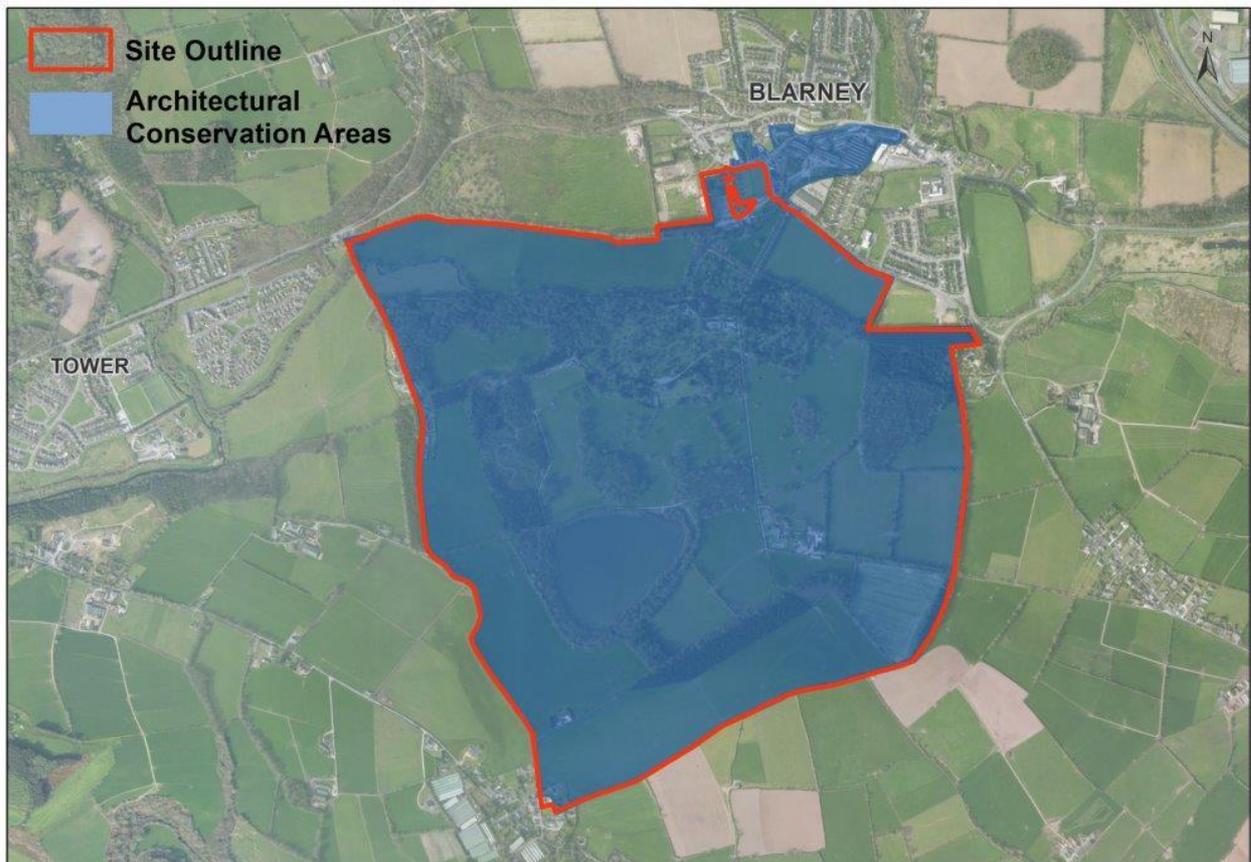
- Cork City Council will work with relevant stakeholders, including Fáilte Ireland, Blarney Castle Estate, Blarney Woollen Mills, the local business community, Bus Eireann, Irish Rail, Port of Cork (Cruise operations) and others to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance the tourism potential of the town and promote tourism synergies between Blarney and Cork City centre. As part of the strategy the Council will review the potential for improvements to the streetscape, the development of attractive feature gateways and an effective movement strategy into and through the town.
- The tourism assets of Blarney will be protected and developed through the enhancement of existing facilities, enhancing the public realm to develop an appropriate tourism landscape, and facilitating the development of additional tourism activities.

In addition to these objectives, specific policies are needed to protect and enhance the Cultural Heritage of Blarney in the context of the current strong population growth targets, as discussed in section 3 of this submission. There is also a need to ensure that development takes place in the right locations within the town and does not compromise the potential of Blarney to offer enhanced tourism related activities, as discussed further in section 5.

3 Cultural Heritage

The cultural and heritage significance of Blarney Castle and the town was recognised in the 2014 Cork County Development Plan (2014 CDP) through the designation of Blarney Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Blarney Architectural Conservation Area



The attached report by Southgate Associates, in association with Dr Colin Rynn UCC ‘*Historic Landscape Characterisation – Blarney Castle, Estate and Town*’, highlights that the cultural value of Blarney is not restricted to the boundary of its architectural heritage, but is much more significant and almost intangible.

The report concludes that the Historic Landscape Characterisation is not concerned exclusively with sites or monuments, but to the generic landscape character of the whole area of Blarney Estate and town. It emphasises that, in the case of Blarney, simple protection of the Historic Landscape Characterisation is not enough, and that further enhancement is required. Accordingly, the report includes 8 recommendations to support enhancement of the public realm and these are summarised within this submission. The full report is provided as an appendix and is an integral part of this submission.

The recommendations of this report are that there is a need to protect and enhance the Historic Landscape Character of Blarney and of the Gateways into the town, through the development of a strategy which includes:

- i. Policy to ensure improvements to the public realm are cognizant of the historic character of Blarney Estate and Town.
- ii. Policy to enhance the existing historic significance of Blarney Town, Estate and Castle.
- iii. Policy to protect the dilution of the historic character of the area, by preventing the attrition of the accumulation of small insensitive changes.

- iv. Policy and zonings for new developments or changes in land use to consider impacts on the historic character of the landscape as a matter of precedence.
- v. Policy to develop a Town Design Statement for Blarney, drawn up in consultation with stakeholders and the public.
- vi. Policy to reinforce the ACA by a statement of character of the area, with a list of requirements specific to the architecture and character of Blarney, for inclusion in the LAP.
- vii. Policy to give precedence to the legibility of the visual appearance and the tangibility of the historical and mythical character of the area.
- viii. Policy to enhance the historic character and socio-economic values of heritage through conservation-led regeneration initiatives

BCE requests that the forthcoming City Development Plan provides a policy objective for Blarney to protect and enhance its landscape character in line with the recommendations outlined in the accompanying Historic Landscape Characterisation report.

4 Landscape and Visual Impact

4.1 Viewsheds

We attach a Landscape and Visual Assessment Report prepared on behalf of Blarney Castle Estate in conjunction with Forestbird Designs. The report considers the significance and sensitivity of views to and from Blarney Castle. It also proposes mitigation measures to protect the visual integrity of Blarney Castle Estate and makes recommendations on how the planning context and development strategy for Blarney could strengthen the heritage policy protection for Blarney, create a vision for the enhancement of its key assets and adopt a proactive approach to developing the potential of the town.

A considerable proportion of lands already zoned for development have potential negative impacts on the landscape setting of Blarney Castle and important views for the Castle Tower and this is discussed with the landscape report.

Photograph 1 depicts the view from Castle looking north west, to the lands zoned in the 2017 LAP as BL-R-18 and B-X-01.

Photograph 2 depicts the view from the Castle looking north east, to the lands zoned as Ringwood - area for new Residential development.

Photograph 3 depicts the view looking east, to Blarney Business Park.

Photograph 1: View from Blarney Castle – looking north, to lands zoned BL-R-18 and BL- X-01



Photograph 2: View from Blarney Castle – looking north east, to lands zoned at Ringwood.



Photograph 3: View from Blarney Castle – looking east, to Blarney Business Park



As noted in the Visual Assessment Report the views from the Castle are an essential part of the visitor experience, with the current vista providing the sense of a town nestled within an attractive wooded valley. Visitors to Blarney Castle can spend 30 to 40 minutes at the top of the Castle as they wait to 'kiss the Blarney Stone'. During this time, the panoramic views from the top of the Castle are absorbed and much photographed. It is the images and videos from the top of the Castle that appear on many social media networks and tourism reviews of Blarney, which are an intrinsic part of attracting new and repeat tourists into the area. We submit that there is a need for more explicit policy protection of the views from the Castle and that a visual impact assessment of views from Blarney Castle should be a requirement for all development proposals within the viewshed of the Castle.

Accordingly, we request that the following policy is included for any lands zoned within the viewshed of Blarney Castle.

- Development proposals will require a visual impact assessment of views from Blarney Castle and will provide appropriate landscape / mitigation measures to protect the character of important views from the Castle.

4.2 Woodland Protection

Blarney and its environs benefit from many areas of woodland, much of it managed by BCE. The woodlands provide considerable value to the landscape character of the area, softening and providing screening of developments that have occurred in recent decades. The woodland areas have an intrinsic value and are often under threat by development proposals.

BCE submit that the forthcoming Development Plan should provide enhanced protection for woodlands in Blarney and its environs and that developments close to established woodlands should be required to prepare a woodland impact assessment report as part of their planning application process.

5 General Zoning Objectives

BCE understand that in accordance with section 11(2) (bc) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), that requests or proposals for zoning of particular land for any purpose shall not be considered at this stage of the review process.

This submission does not include any proposals for zoning of any particular land but asks that the review process considers the appropriateness of zoning lands for residential development within important viewsheds of Blarney Castle. Further, the submission requests that any zonings within viewsheds of Blarney Castle and the grounds include an objective for development proposals to require a visual impact assessment of views from the Castle and its Gardens and to provide appropriate landscape / mitigation measures to protect the character of important views (as discussed in Section 4).

The lands currently zoned BL-R-18 form part of a primary view from the Castle looking west (see Photograph 1) and BCE request that the appropriateness of zoning this portion of land for residential development is reviewed. This is an important gateway entrance to Blarney and view of Blarney Castle when arriving from the west. Expansion of the town centre into an area characterised by a sylvan landscape would be injurious to the designation of Scenic Route 39. Within the zoned lands, screening of such development is unrealistic.

The lands currently zoned BL-X-02 (also visible in Photograph 1) provide for a mix of tourism and potentially residential uses. Again, BCE request that the appropriateness of this zoning is reviewed in the context of the need to further develop tourism services and facilities in the town. It is submitted that the lands are most appropriate for the development of a hotel, leisure centre and associated tourism uses. Any development on the lands should be subject to a visual impact assessment on the views of and from Blarney Castle and be required to provide appropriate landscape mitigation measures to protect the character of important views of the Castle as you enter the town, and from the top of the Castle.

The lands currently zoned BL-B-01, 02 and 03 form the Blarney Business Park and form part of the primary view from the Castle looking east (See Photograph 3). Any development within these lands should be the subject of a visual impact assessment on views from Blarney Castle and appropriate mitigation measures applied to protect the character of views from the top of the Castle.

Figure 3 outlines the existing zoning objectives for Blarney in the context of Blarney Castle Estate and the Castle. Many of the lands zoned or proposed for zoning have a potential direct impact on the landscape setting of the Castle and important vistas from its iconic Tower and 'kissing stone'.

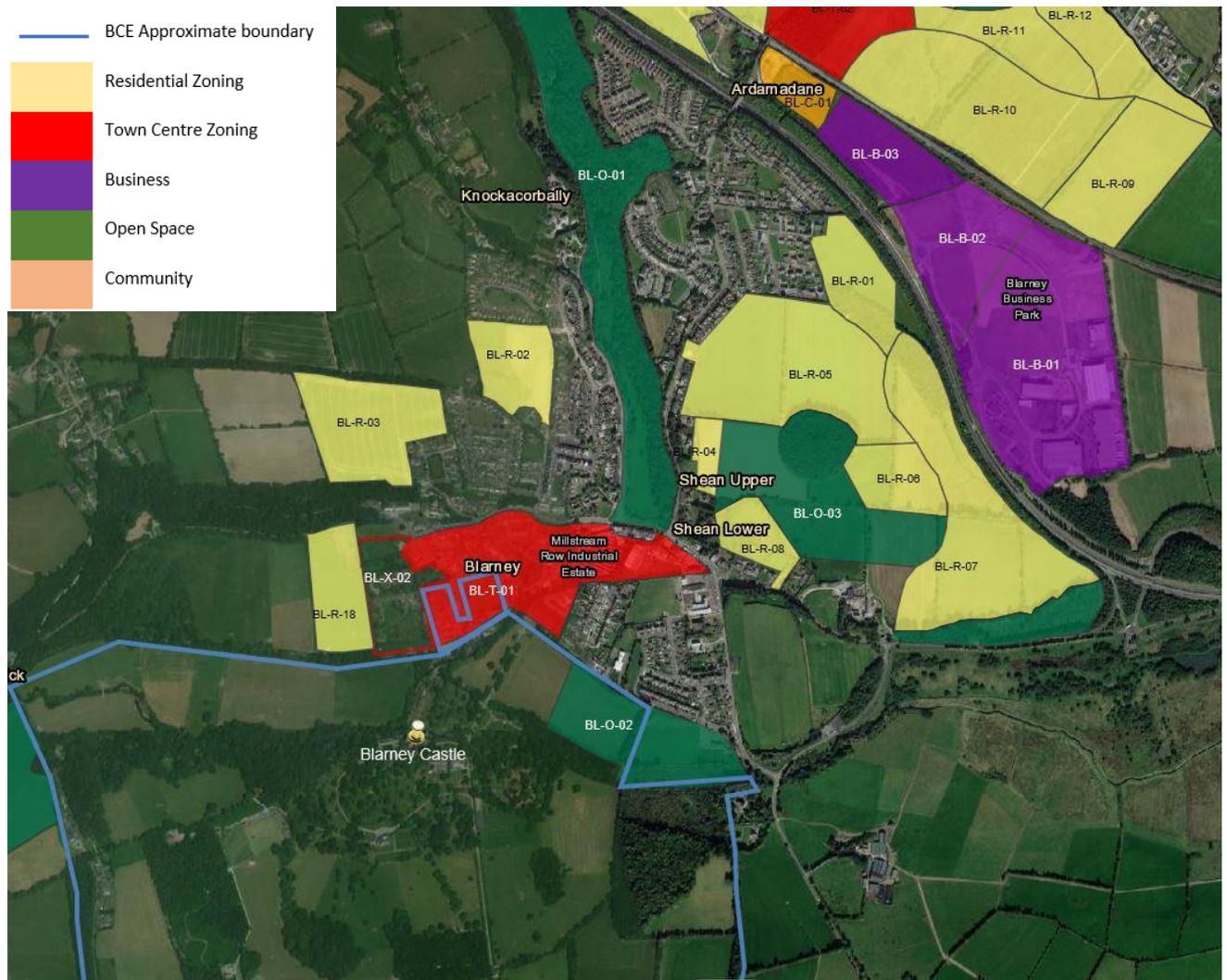
Blarney Castle Estate is concerned about the capacity of the town to absorb the proposed level of population growth without compromising the unique values of the town and requests that the review process re-evaluates the appropriate scale of population growth targeted to Blarney.

There are several existing constraints within the town in terms of community services and facilities which must be addressed by any proposals for further residential development, specifically:

- **Recreation & Amenity facilities:** The provision of recreation and amenity facilities are of importance to the residential community and to the encouraging tourist to stay and spend time in the town. Blarney has a strong sporting community, including Blarney GAA, Blarney United FC; Blarney Cycling Club and Blarney Running Club (Happy Feet). The protection and enhancement of recreation and amenity facilities should be a critical component of the growth strategy for the town.
- **Walking and Cycling:** In addition to recreation and amenity facilities within the town, there is potential to enhance accessibility for both locals and tourists through the development of walking and cycling trails. The wider Muskerry environs are extremely popular for cyclists in the wider Cork area, with high levels of weekend cycling on local roads. Dedicated pedestrian and cycling trails linking with Blarney would have considerable amenity value and potential economic spin-offs in terms of enhanced tourism attraction. The Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) proposals a series of cycling

routes connecting Blarney with Tower and Cork City. BCE welcome these proposed routes and request that their implementation is prioritised during the lifetime of the forthcoming Development Plan.

Figure 3: Existing & Proposed Zoning in Blarney



BCE request that the review process for the City Development Plan:

- Reviews the appropriateness of the scale of population growth targeted for Blarney.
- Considers the appropriateness of existing zoning provisions in the context of objectives to protect and enhance the town’s cultural and tourism assets, including Blarney Castle and Gardens.
- Includes objectives to develop the town’s amenities, services, and facilities to an appropriate level in line with projected population growth and providing an enhanced tourism offering.

6 Movement Strategy & Public Realm

Both the 2011 and the 2017 Local Area Plans for Blarney included an objective to create a Traffic and Transportation Strategy for the town. However, no progress has been made on this strategy and the town remains beset by difficulties for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicle, particularly during the tourism season.

BCE supports the objective to develop a movement strategy for Blarney and requests that it is carried forward to the City Development Plan. BCE submits that an objective should include a commitment to engage with key stakeholders and provide a clearer remit in terms of the need to develop a strategy which addresses the tourism requirements of Blarney town, both in terms of movement strategy, leisure routes and creating a public realm which includes an appropriate heritage landscape.

Blarney Castle Estate commissioned MHL Consulting Engineers to undertake a preliminary assessment of a movement strategy for the core of the town, and key access points for tourism traffic to access the Castle. Drawing numbers BC-PD-D01 and BC-PD-D02 attached provides preliminary recommendations on an improved movement strategy for Blarney.

This strategy proposes the provision of a new roundabout, at the entrance to the lands currently zoned BL-X-01, which would provide access to the development site and provide direct access to the Castle for coach traffic, without the need for coaches to travel through the town square. The strategy also proposes removing some parking spaces around the town square to improve pedestrian safety and facility easier traffic flow. Some alternative parking could potentially be provided with lands owned by Blarney Castle Estate. As noted in section 4, the lands zoned for BL-X-01 could also include a requirement to provide additional parking for the town square.

The concept of the movement strategy design is to develop a public realm in the heart of Blarney, which gives priority to pedestrians and creates a heritage landscape appropriate to the status of the town square. Public realm finishes would be to the highest standard, enhancing the visitor experience of Blarney. In addition, pedestrian flows would be encouraged to ensure that there are synergistic economic benefits to other tourism businesses in the town from the large number of visitors attracted by the Castle.

BCE request that the forthcoming CDP includes an objective to:

- *Prepare a detailed Traffic, Transportation and Public Realm Strategy for Blarney, in collaboration with key stakeholders*

It is submitted that this plan should address:

- The merits of introducing a one-way system in Blarney,
- The need for junction improvements and road widening on key approach roads, including the creation of a roundabout junction from U-15 into the rear of Blarney Castle car park.
- The need to create a tourism landscape within the movement and public realm strategy, including the development of entrance gateways consists with the public realm design palette.
- The need to encourage tourist pedestrian permeability through Blarney to increase the economic benefit to the town core.
- The provision of a network of designated walking and cycling routes to provide safe, convenient, and pleasant connectivity between the town's main residential areas, schools, the town centre and the railway station complex.
- The potential to provide appropriate linkages to develop leisure walking and cycling in the wider environs.
- The need to enhance provision for bicycles in the town.

7 Submission Request

Blarney town is unique in terms of its significance as one of the region's principle tourism attractions; its cultural and heritage value; and the considerable population growth targeted on the settlement by 2022. Without skilful planning and a considered strategy, the essence of Blarney and its attraction at an international level could be irrevocably lost. It is critical that during the forthcoming City Development Plan period, when there is likely to be substantial pressure for growth in Metropolitan Cork, that the planning framework for the town takes the opportunity to manage growth, while also enhancing the tourism and heritage potential of Blarney.

BCE request that the forthcoming Cork City Development Plan (CCiDP) takes full account of the cultural and heritage value of the town, and its tourism potential and that:

1. **Population Targets:** the appropriateness of the population targets allocated to Blarney are reviewed in light of the towns heritage and tourism significance.
2. **Strategic Vision:** the strategic Vision for Blarney retains and enhances the emphasis on the importance of the town functioning as one of the principle tourist attractions in the region.
3. **Tourism Potential:** a specific objective is included within the CCiDP to promote the heritage and tourism potential of Blarney in a proactive manner by engaging with Fáilte Ireland, key tourism providers and the business community. The following objectives are suggested:

“Cork City Council will work with relevant stakeholders, including Fáilte Ireland; Blarney Castle Estate; Blarney Woollen Mills; the local business community; Bus Eireann; Irish Rail; Port of Cork (Cruise Operations); and Cork City Council, to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance the tourism potential of the town. As part of the strategy the Council will review the potential for improvements to the streetscape; the development of attractive feature gateways and an effective movement strategy for tourist visitors into and through the town.”

The tourism assets of Blarney will be protected and developed through the enhancement of existing facilities, enhancing the public realm to develop an appropriate tourism landscape, and facilitating the development of additional tourism activities.

4. **Historic Landscape Characterisation:** that the CCiDP recognises the importance of Blarney's Historic Landscape Characterisation and that objectives are included to protect and enhance the historic public realm. Eight policy recommendations are outlined in the attached report 'Historic Landscape Characterisation', which in summary address the need for:
 - a. Policy to ensure improvements to the public realm are cognizant of the historic character of Blarney Estate and Town.
 - b. Policy to enhance the existing historic significance of Blarney Town, Estate and Castle.
 - c. Policy to protect the dilution of the historic character of the area, by preventing the attrition of the accumulation of small insensitive changes.
 - d. Policy and zonings for new developments or changes in land use to consider impacts on the historic character of the landscape as a matter of precedence.
 - e. Policy to develop a Town Design Statement for Blarney, drawn up in consultation with stakeholders and the public.
 - f. Policy to reinforce the ACA by a statement of character of the area, with a list of requirements specific to the architecture and character of Blarney, for inclusion in the CCiDP.
 - g. Policy to give precedence to the legibility of the visual appearance and the tangibility of the historical and mythical character of the area.
 - h. Policy to enhance the historic character and socio-economic values of heritage through conservation-led regeneration initiatives.

5. **Landscape & Visual Impact:** the CCiDP includes objectives to protect the landscape setting and important views of and from Blarney Castle and Gardens.
6. **Woodland Protection:** the CCiDP should provide enhanced protection for woodlands in Blarney and its environs and that developments close to established woodlands should be required to prepare a woodland impact assessment report as part of their planning application process.
7. **Zoning Review:** the CCiDP reviews the appropriateness of existing zoning provisions in the context of objectives to protect and enhance the towns cultural and tourism assets, including Blarney Castle and Garden.
8. **Services and Amenities:** Includes objectives to develop the town's amenities, services, and facilities to an appropriate level in line with projected population growth and providing an enhanced tourism offering.
9. **Movement Strategy and Public Realm:** that the CCiDP prepare a detailed Traffic, Transportation and Public Realm Strategy for Blarney, in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Attachments:

1. Historic Landscape Characterisation – Blarney Castle, Estate and Town: Southgate Associates with Dr Colin Rynne UCC, August 2020
2. Blarney Castle and Estate – Landscape & Visual Assessment Report: McCutcheon Halley and Forestbird Design, August 2020
3. MHL Drawing numbers BC-PD-D01 and BC-PD-D02

Notes:
 Do not Scale from drawing.
 For any comments, queries or discrepancies please contact the design office.
 Preliminary Design Only.

- Legend:**
-  Pedestrian Desire Line
 -  Existing Kerb Line
 -  Proposed Bus route
 -  Proposed Road Surface/Parking
 -  Proposed Granite Kerbing and Slab Paving Footpath
 -  Proposed Green Area
 -  Proposed cobble lock raised table junction for shared surface at pedestrian priority zone
 -  Proposed Single Sided Public Light Columns - Siteco SL10 Midi Plus LED Lanterns (113W) @ 10m Mounting Height
 -  Proposed White Beam (Sorbus Aria) Semi-Mature Tree
 -  Proposed Landscaping
 -  Existing Tree
 -  Proposed Stone Benches
 -  Proposed Bus Shelter
 -  Proposed Buff Coloured Tactile Paving
 -  Proposed Cycle Stands and route

Rev.	By.	Date.	Description.

Drawing Status: **For Discussion**

Project: **Submission to Draft LAP Blarney Macroom**

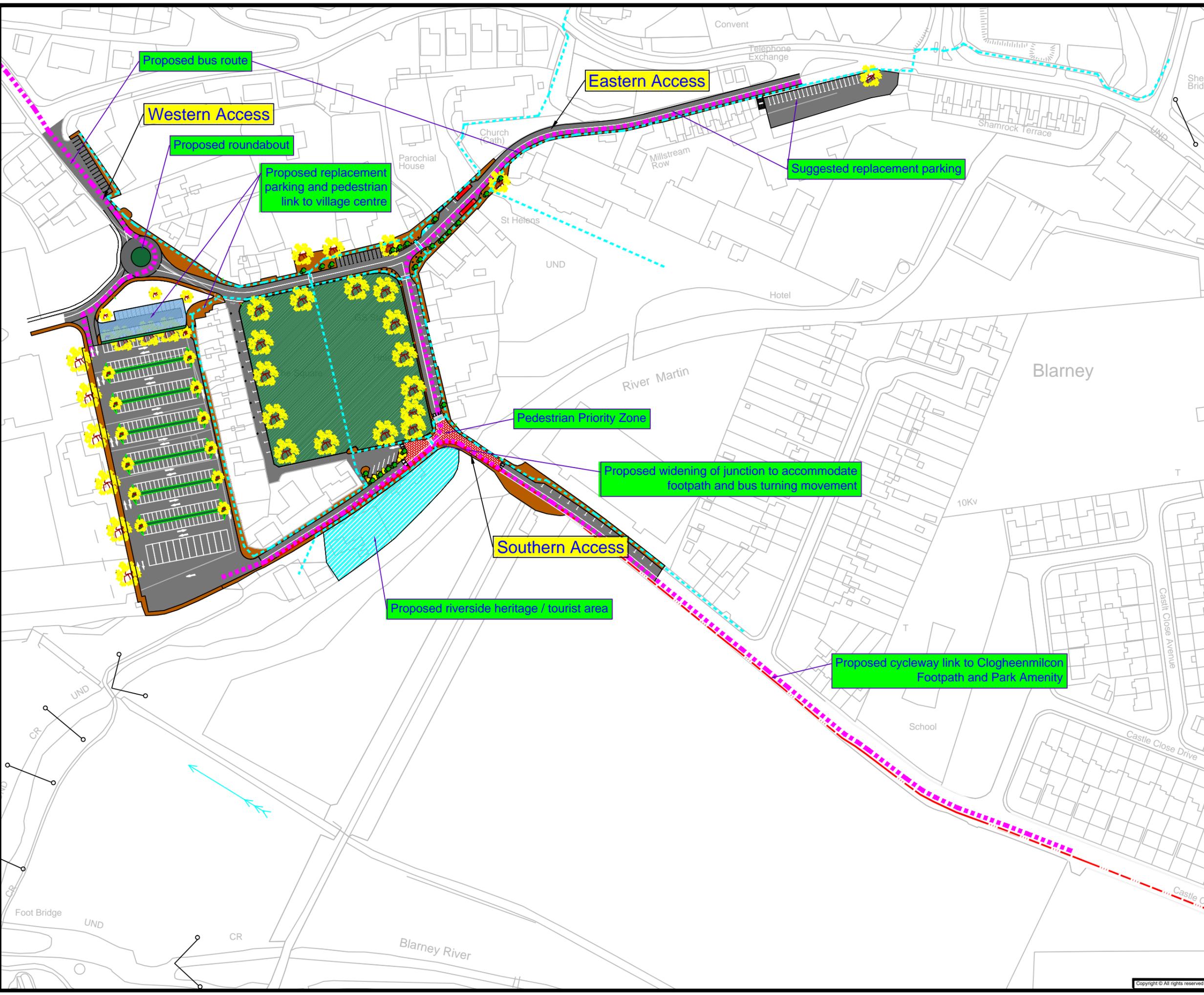
Drawing Title: **Overall site layout**

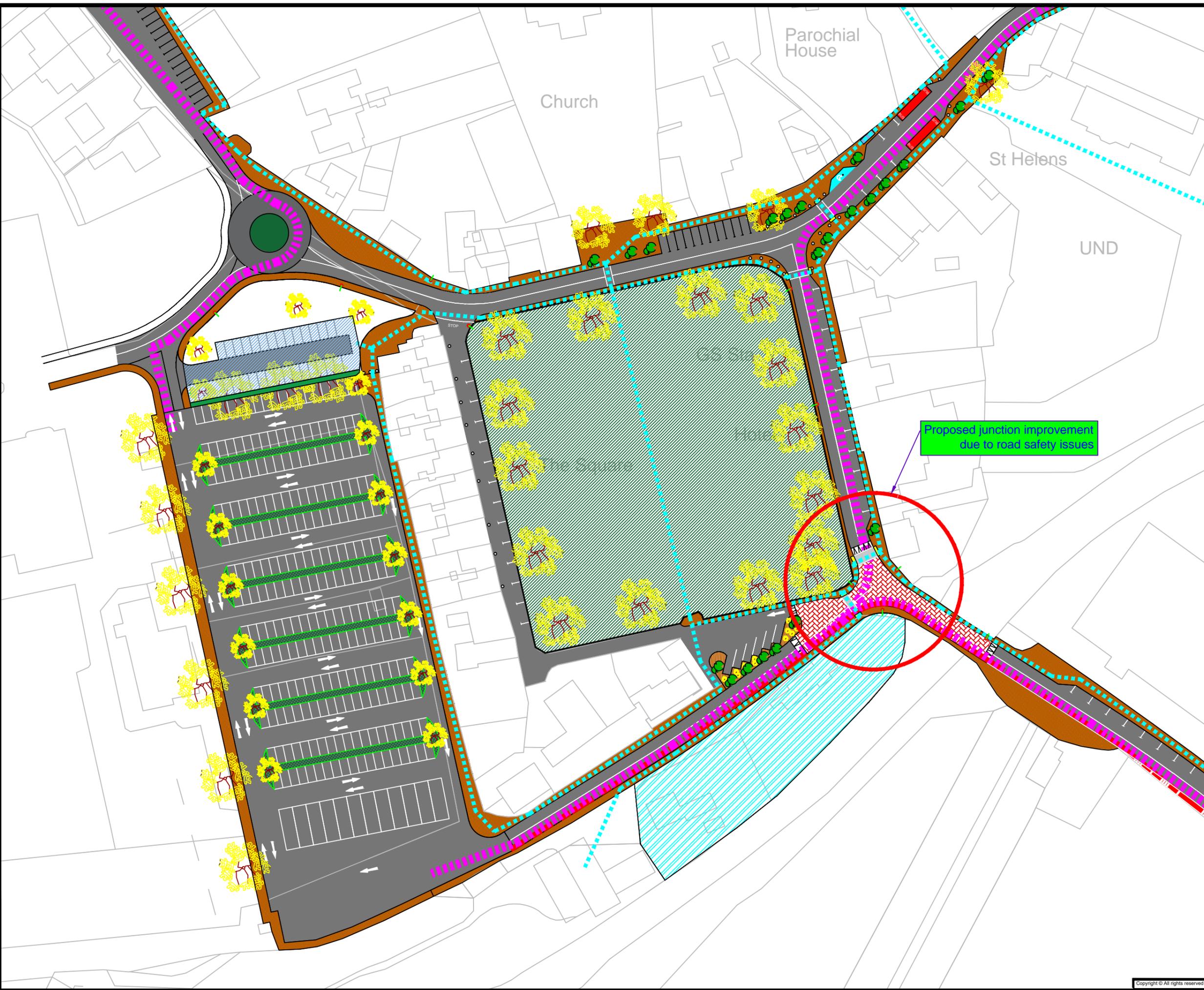
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Job No. 16091TM Drawing No. BC-PD-D01 Revision.





- Notes:**
 Do not Scale from drawing.
 For any comments, queries or discrepancies please contact the design office.
 Preliminary Design Only.
- Legend:**
- Pedestrian Desire Line
 - Existing Kerb Line
 - Proposed Bus route
 - Proposed Road Surface/Parking
 - Proposed Granite Kerbing and Slab Paving Footpath
 - Proposed Green Area
 - Proposed cobble lock raised table junction for shared surface at pedestrian priority zone
 - Proposed Single Sided Public Light Columns - Siteco SL10 Midi Plus LED Lanterns (113W) @ 10m Mounting Height
 - Proposed White Beam (Sorbus Aria) Semi-Mature Tree
 - Proposed Landscaping
 - Existing Tree
 - Proposed Stone Benches
 - Proposed Bus Shelter
 - Proposed Buff Coloured Tactile Paving
 - Proposed Cycle Stands and route

Proposed junction improvement due to road safety issues

Rev.	By.	Date.	Description.

Drawing Status: **For Discussion**

Project: **Submission to Draft LAP Blarney Macroom**

Drawing Title: **Preliminary Design 'The Square'**

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 1:1000 @ A3

Job No. 16091TM Drawing No. BC-PD-D02 Revision.

Blarney Castle and Estate

Landscape & Visual Assessment Report – August 2020



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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report considers the significance and sensitivity of views to and from Blarney Castle Estate. The report also proposes mitigation measures to ensure the visual integrity of Blarney Castle Estate and makes recommendations on how the planning context and development strategy for the town could strengthen the heritage policy protection for Blarney; create a vision for the enhancement of its key assets and develop a proactive approach to develop the potential of the town.

Blarney Castle Estate is a premier tourist destination and a site of national heritage importance. The setting and valuable views to and from the Castle and its demesne are fundamental to both its heritage significance and its tourism value. The protection of the setting and views requires a strong planning policy context. Having carried out an analysis of the significance and sensitivity of the viewshed character of Blarney Castle, this report details a number of practical mitigation actions that can be taken to ensure the visual integrity of Blarney Castle. In addition recommendations are made to strengthen the policy context, to provide more additional policy protection for the viewshed character and to develop the tourism potential of the town.

Planning Context

The current planning policy framework for Blarney Castle is defined by the 2014 Cork County Development Plan (2014 CDP) and the 2017 Blarney Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan (2017 LAP). Blarney became part of Cork City Council's extended administrative area in 2019 and the future planning policy framework will be set by the 2022 Cork City Development Plan and any subsequent Local Area Plans.

Blarney is defined as a Metropolitan Town in the 2014 CDP. The national and regional planning policy framework is for significant compact growth, largely based on the proposed new development area of Stoneview, which is to be served by a new railway station. The county and local planning policy targets strong population growth for Blarney but also recognises the importance of its local tourism economy and the need to ensure that development initiatives in the vicinity of the Castle do not comprise this important tourism asset.

Notwithstanding the protective planning policy context, there is no policy objective to provide any protection for the views out from Blarney Castle and the estate. There are also areas zoned for development within Blarney which have the potential to impact negatively on the setting of Blarney Castle and its viewshed.

Landscape & Visual Assessment

A Landscape and Visual Assessment was carried out to identify the sensitivities, opportunities, and threats to the Blarney Castle Estate in an effort to sustain a level of National Significance as a tourism amenity. Primary and Secondary View Receptors were identified both within and outside of the estate. The Primary Receptors identify viewpoints where modifications within the viewshed would impact the perception of the estate at a national level. These receptors are shown on figure ES.1 and listed below:

- 1A – View from the Castle Tower (Keep)
- 1B – View from Blarney House
- 3A – View from Scenic Route 39 (R617), the Road from Killarney
- 3B - View from the Town Square and Blarney Woollen Mills River Walk

Figure ES.1: Primary View Receptors and the visual corridors of greatest impact.



Proposed Landscape Mitigation Measures

The following landscape mitigation measures are proposed within the report to protect and enhance the visual context of Blarney Castle Estate.

- M1 – Landscape buffers and architectural presentation to the Western Gateway Lands (X-02).
- M2 – Consolidation of the Town Centre to the Western Gateway Lands (X-02).
- M3 – Consolidation of residential development to the Sunberry Lands (R-03).
- M4 – Village design scheme at the site access junction.
- M5 – Retention of the woodland character to the hillside at Blarney Lake.
- M6 – Eastern gateway development and landscaping to the diversion road.

A full description and photographs of these elements are illustrated in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

In addition to the practical landscaping mitigation actions proposed, two further measures are recommended to protect the visual integrity of Blarney Castle Estate as a national heritage asset and tourism amenity:

1. That the policy context is strengthened to provide explicit protection for views **from** the Castle and to provide an appropriate gateway to the heritage core of Blarney.
2. To develop the heritage and tourism potential of Blarney in a pro-active manner by Cork City Council leading a forum involving key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance the tourism potential of the town.

1 Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of Blarney Castle Estate, by McCutcheon Halley and Forestbird Design. The report considers the significance and sensitivity of views to and from Blarney Castle. It undertakes a review of the policy context and incorporates a landscape and visual assessment to identify priority views and the sensitivity of such views; and proposes mitigation measures to ensure the visual integrity of Blarney Castle and estate.

The report also makes recommendations on how the planning context and development strategy for the town could strengthen the heritage policy protection for Blarney; create a vision for the enhancement of its key assets and developing a pro-active approach to developing the potential of the town.

2 Heritage Significance

Blarney Castle Estate is premier tourist destination and a site of national heritage importance. The Castle is listed as a protected structure (RPS 00382 – Tower House and Bawn) in the 2014 Cork County Development Plan. The Castle is also listed as a protected national monument¹. Other protected structures within the estate are RPS 00379 - Blarney Ornamental Tower; and RPS 00380 - Blarney Castle Country House.

As noted in ‘Blarney Castle and Demesne Conservation Plan’ (BCDCP)², Blarney Castle is one of the most important tower houses, and one of the largest, in Ireland. The two phased tower house together with the Queen Anne house is an exceptional example of the architectural fusion tradition and the presence of the nineteenth century Scottish Baronial house (RPS 00380) on the site displays a unique architectural continuum. The BCDCP notes:

“Originally the seat of the McCarthys in Munster, the Castle and the famous Blarney stone has been an internationally renowned tourist destination for well over two hundred years. The landscape setting for these and other buildings within the estate is of national importance in its own right, containing a high degree of intactness and legibility which has survived since the eighteenth century.”

The BCDCP highlighted the importance of the setting of the Castle to its cultural and heritage significance. It noted that the estate is subject to factors which may have negative impacts on the Castle, including potential impact of future development in its vicinity.

The conservation vision for Blarney Castle and demesne involves ensuring the protection, long-term survival, and enhancement of the estate, while benefiting from opportunities that exist to enhance the value of the heritage and tourism asset.

In achieving this vision Blarney Castle Estate can influence the quality of repair, maintenance, conservation, and development works that are undertaken within its demesne. However, the protection of its setting and valuable views to and from the Castle and its demesne require a strong planning policy context.

¹ National Monuments Service: CO061-117; CO062-177001

² Prepared by John Cronin & Associates in 2004

3 Tourism Significance

3.1 Tourism Context

Blarney Castle is a major international tourism attraction and is recognised in the 2014 Cork County Development Plan as a key tourism attraction (8.3.2). The tourism aspect of the Castle dates back to the eighteenth century (3.2 BCDCP).

Blarney Castle and the famous benefits of kissing the Blarney Stone are internationally renowned, to the extent that the word 'blarney' has become common parlance for flattering talk. The history of the Castle and its legends attract many tourists, nonetheless the quality of visitors' experience and formal tourist guide reviews are critical to maintaining and increasing the tourism potential of Blarney Castle. Many of the most popular tour guide books advise tourists to admire the views and stunning scenery after climbing to the top of the Castle and while waiting in line to kiss the Blarney Stone. These reviews and the word of mouth experience of visitors are vital to ensure Blarney Castle maintains and further develops its standing as one of Ireland's premier tourist attractions.

Blarney Castle is one of the most important tourism destinations in the South West and plays a key role in attracting visitors to the region. According to Fáilte Ireland statistics, the Castle has consistently been the 2nd most popular tourism attraction in the region³ and the 4th most popular attraction outside of Dublin. In 2019 visitors to Blarney Castle were in the region of 500,000 and the Castle is one of the most important tourist attractions for the South West region in terms of drawing national and international tourists into the region. The impacts of Covid-19 have had a devastating impact on the tourism season of 2020, making it critical that the inherent value of Blarney Castle is protected and enhanced as part of the efforts to restart the tourism industry in the short to medium term.

Notwithstanding Blarney Castle's success as a tourism attraction, there is considerable potential to increase tourism numbers to the Castle and to the South West Region. The top tourist attractions in Ireland (Guinness Storehouse and Dublin Zoo) both attract more than 1 million visitors a year. Fáilte Ireland, Planning Authorities, and key tourism providers, working together, should develop a strategy to grow the number of visitors extending their stay in Ireland and exploring areas and attractions beyond Dublin. Protecting and enhancing the visitor experience of the primary tourist attraction is a vital element in any such strategy.

3.2 Tourism Links

Fáilte Ireland has increasingly developed the concept of marketing tourism routes as a destination, such as 'Ireland's Ancient East' and the 'Wild Atlantic Way'. Private tour companies also offer tourism routes as a key marketing strategy.

Blarney Castle was included as a destination for the new tourist route 'Ireland's Ancient East' by Fáilte Ireland. This route was launched to compete with the popular established route, the 'Wild Atlantic Way'. Blarney Castle is advantageous in its location in that, although it is included in Ireland's Ancient East, it is also located near the start of the Wild Atlantic Way in Kinsale (36.5 Kilometres). Visitors traversing the Wild Atlantic Way can easily access the Castle due to its close proximity and popularity as a tourist destination.

Blarney Castle is a prime destination for many tour operators such as *CIE Tours* and *Paddywagon Tours*. The Castle is listed on the Paddywagon tour website as the 2nd most popular tour from Cork and the 3rd most popular tour for Dublin. CIE Tours include Blarney Castle as a destination in the majority of their tours around

³ Fáilte Ireland: Visitors to Tourist Attractions 2009-2013.

Ireland. Despite not being located on the Wild Atlantic Way, CIE Tours visit Blarney Castle on their Wild Atlantic Way tour of Ireland. The inclusion of Blarney Castle in a large amount of tours highlights the importance of the Castle as a tourist destination.

Both public and private marketing strategies and associated tourism routes influencing not only the number of visitors to an attraction, but also the access routes to and from sites. Critically, the strong links between Blarney and Killarney mean that many visitors approach the town and Castle from the R617 to the West. The significance of other access routes to the Castle are discussed further in section 6.

4 Planning Policy

4.1 National and Regional Level

The National Planning Framework 2040 (NPF) supports the growth of the three cities in the Southern Region (Cork, Limerick and Waterford) and their respective county towns to drive population and economic growth in the region. The NPF also recognises that Ireland’s tourism has a critical role to play in the country’s economic strength. The NPF notes that housing development in the South West area (Cork and Kerry) should be based on employment growth, higher densities, access to amenities and sustainable transport modes, in order to avoid long-distance commuting patterns and quality of life impacts. The NPF also emphasises that in the context of the larger towns in the South West Regional area there should be:

“...tailoring policy approaches to capitalise quality of life and sectoral strengths, such as agri-food, energy, tourism and the marine...” (NPF, p.46)

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) recognises Blarney Castle as one of the most significant attraction and destination in the South West, contributing to the wealth of natural, cultural and heritage assets of national importance within the Region. The RSES also notes that Blarney has a role to play in the sustainable growth of Metropolitan Cork, as a Metropolitan Town located on the suburban rail network. It notes that the development of new commuter rail stations in Metropolitan Cork, including the delivery of a new station at Blarney / Stoneview, is one of the transport priorities for Cork Metropolitan Area. The RSES enablers for the development of Cork Metropolitan area include:

Progressing the sustainable development of new areas for housing, especially those on public transport corridors such as Monard and urban expansion areas on the rail corridor such as at Carrigtwohill, Middleton, Cobh and Blarney.

Protecting built and natural assets. (RSES, Extract from Key Enablers, p. 243)

Blarney falls within the Cork Metropolitan Area and the RSES includes the Cork Metropolitan Area Strategy (Cork MASP). As well as setting objectives for the population growth of Metropolitan Cork, the Cork MASP includes objectives to diversity and drive the role of vibrant tourism in the region, Policy Objective 15 of the Cork MASP sets out the vision for tourism, see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Cork MASP Policy Objective 15

The graphic for Cork MASP Policy Objective 15 is presented in a blue-bordered box with a red header bar. The title 'Cork MASP Policy Objective 15' is centered at the top in a blue serif font. Below the title, the heading 'Cork MASP Tourism' is written in red. The objective is detailed in six numbered points (a-f) in a grey box. Points a and b are on the left, while c, d, e, and f are on the right. The text is in a black sans-serif font.

Cork MASP Policy Objective 15

Cork MASP Tourism

- a.** Support the role of Metropolitan Cork’s tourism assets as a significant domestic and international tourism destination capitalising on its tourism attractions, Ireland’s Ancient East corridor, Wild Atlantic Way Corridor, Ireland’s Maritime Paradise theme and support initiatives creating a sustainable tourism future, diversifying the tourism product into non-traditional areas and extending the tourist season taking particular care of the natural and built environment.
- b.** The SRA seeks investment in the sustainable development of tourism infrastructure and tourism services across Cork and support initiatives arising from the Pure Cork brand and the ‘Growing Tourism in Cork: A Collective Strategy’ subject to the outcome of environmental assessments and the planning process.
- c.** Support the delivery of large-scale all year-round tourist attraction(s) in Cork City and in County Metropolitan Cork.
- d.** Value and support cultural amenities, conservation, protection and enhancement of Cork City’s natural heritage as key assets to attract tourism.
- e.** Seek sustainable tourism development which reflects the city’s distinctive history, culture and environment.
- f.** Promote diversification and innovation in the tourism sector.
- g.** Seek an integrated approach to tourism development in conjunction with a wide range of stakeholders including state agencies, communities and stakeholders in the tourism sector.

The tourism policy objective aims to support the role of Metropolitan Cork's tourism assets as a significant domestic and international tourism destination, taking particular care of the natural and built environment. It aims to value and support cultural amenities, conservation, protection, and enhancement of Cork City's natural heritage as key assets to attract tourism.

4.2 Cork County Development Plan 2014

The 2014 Cork County Development Plan (2014 CDP) identifies Blarney as one of the 9 'Metropolitan Towns' within Cork Gateway. The strategic aim for Metropolitan Towns is for critical population growth, service, and employment centres, providing high levels of community facilities and amenities, with infrastructure capacity high quality and integrated public transport connections. It states that the Metropolitan Towns should be the location of choice for most people, especially with an urban employment focus.

The 2014 CDP allocated a population target for Blarney of 7,533 by 2022. As noted in section 1, this amounted to a growth of over 5,000 people from 2011 to 2022 (a 209% increase). Much of the targeted population growth was envisaged to be in Stoneview, but the 2017 Blarney and Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan (2017 LAP) also zoned a new residential development area at Ringwood, in addition to residential lands zoned to the west of the existing town (BL-R-2; BL-R-3 and BL-R-18).

In terms of employment, over 33ha of lands are zoned to the east of Blarney for the further development of Blarney Business Park. Sizeable portions of the Blarney Business Park are visible from the top of Blarney Castle and from key views within the Castle Gardens. Recent developments in the Blarney Business Park have had a negative impact on views from the Castle and grounds and BCE has sought to mitigate these impacts through seeking enhanced landscaping and changes to the colour of the building cladding during the planning process.

The 2014 CDP states that the sustainable development and promotion of successful and well managed tourism industry is critical to the economy of Cork. Blarney Castle is identified as a key tourist attraction of national importance and the 2014 CDP Objective TO 201 is to:

Protect and conserve those natural, built, and cultural heritage features that form resources on which the County's tourist industry is based. These features will include areas of important landscape, coastal scenery, areas of important wildlife interest, historic buildings and structures, including archaeological sites, cultural sites including battlefields, the Gaeltacht areas, arts and cultural sites and the traditional form and appearance of many built up areas.

The 2014 CDP indicates that development in the vicinity of key tourist attractions should be appropriate and complementary to the tourism asset.

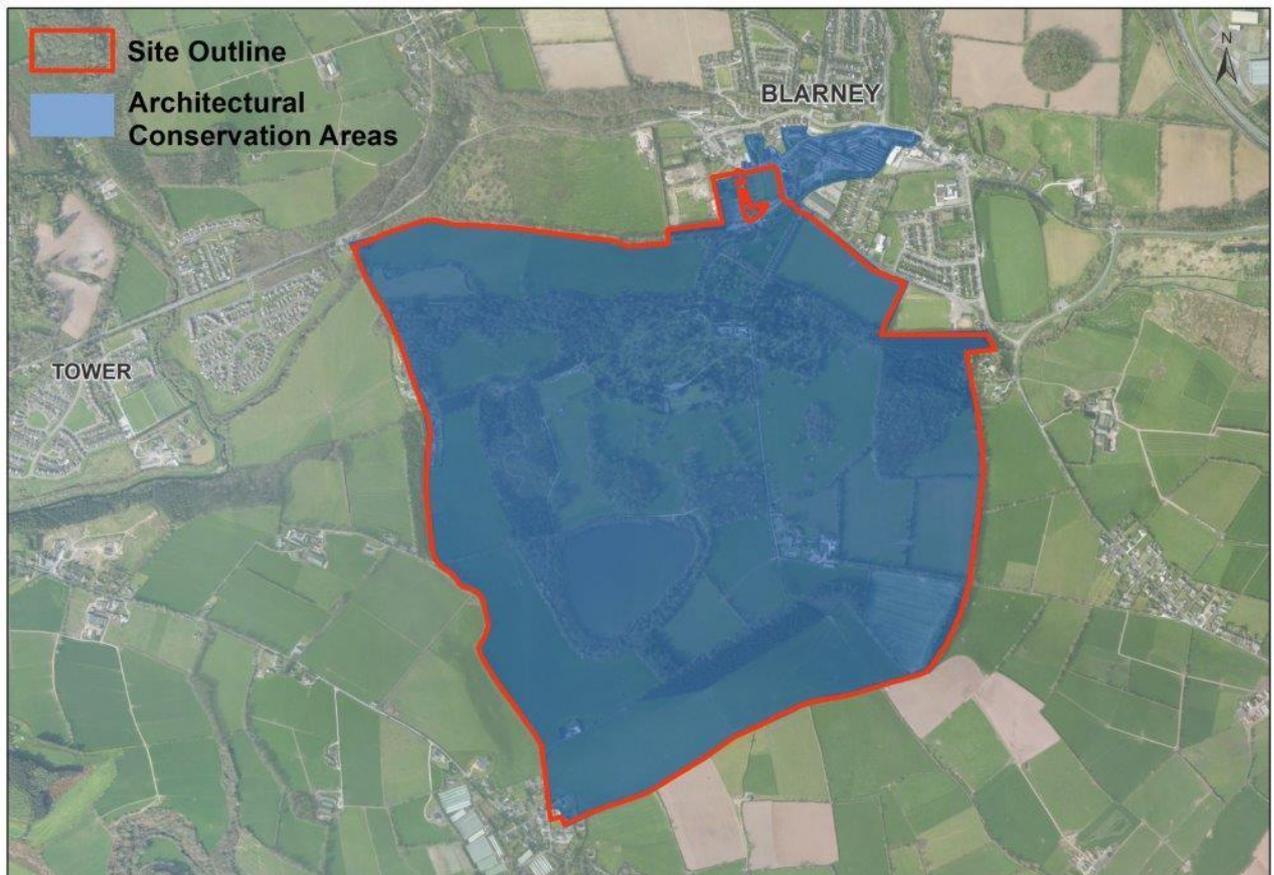
The importance of Cork rich and diverse heritage is highlighted in the 2014 CDP. It is noted that the protection of our heritage not only has environmental benefits and benefits for the quality of life of the people of Cork, but that it also brings economic benefits by providing attractive towns, villages and countryside for visitors to enjoy. The 2014 CDP includes a number of objectives to protect built heritage, including Objective HE 4-1: Record of Protected Structures, which seeks to protect all structures that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, including the protection of the setting of such structures.

Objective HE 4-5: Architectural Conservation Areas, also seeks to conserve and enhance the special character of the Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) designated in the plan. The objective includes specific aims to protect and enhance the character of ACAs, including the aim to:

“Ensure new development within or adjacent to an ACA respects the established character of the area and contributes positively in terms of design, scale, setting and material finishes to the ACA.” (p.197)

Blarney Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) was formally adopted as an ACA in the 2014 Cork County Development Plan. The Blarney ACA consists of Blarney Castle, its grounds, Blarney Square, and other historic areas of Blarney town centre, as outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Blarney Architectural Conservation Area



In addition to policy protection of ACAs, objective HE 4-6: ‘Design and Landscaping of New Buildings’ aims to encourage new buildings that respect the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms and that fit appropriately in the landscape.

The 2014 CDP also establishes objectives that aim to protect the landscape; important scenic routes, views and prospects. Chapter 13 ‘Green Infrastructure & Environment’ notes that environmental assets, both urban and rural, can deliver a wider range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Several objectives are established to highlight the importance of the protection, management, and development of these assets. Of most relevance in this instance are the objectives to protect landscape character, important views & prospects, and scenic routes.

Landscape Character

Objective G1 6-1: Landscape seeks to protect the visual and scenic amenities of the built and natural environment. It notes that landscape issues will be important in land-use proposals and that, notwithstanding a pro-active view of development, new development should respect the environment and heritage. The objective states that new development must meet high standards of siting and design.

Views & Prospects

Objective G1 7-1: General Views and Prospects seeks to protect the character of views of historical or cultural significance. The objective states that the Planning Authority will seek to:

“Preserve the character of all important views and prospects, particularly sea views, river or lake views, views of unspoilt mountains, upland or coastal landscapes, views of historical or cultural significance (including buildings and townscapes) and views of natural beauty as recognised in the Draft Landscape Strategy.” (p.212)

Section 6 of this report describes and appraises the importance of various viewpoints to and from the Castle.

Scenic Route

Objective GI 7-2 aims to protect the character of views and prospects obtained from travelling along a scenic route. Blarney Castle and the Estate is an important view from designated scenic route S39 (Volume 2, 5.2) which runs from Clogheen through to Blarney.

2014 CDP Summary

The 2014 CDP provide strong policy support to promote sustainable development, which protects valuable assets to Cork County in terms of our heritage, cultural and tourist economy. The Plan reflects national policy in recognising the significance of our built heritage and the importance of protecting the setting, character, and views and prospects of key assets.

4.3 Blarney Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017

The Blarney Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 (2017 LAP) provides the local planning context and zoning objectives for Blarney.

Figure 1 outlines the existing zoning objectives for Blarney in the context of Blarney Castle Estate and the Castle. Many of the lands zoned or proposed for zoning have a potential direct impact on the landscape setting of the Castle and important vistas from its iconic Tower and ‘kissing stone’.

The lands currently zoned BL-R-18, residential development form part of an important primary view from the Castle looking west (see Figure 6.3.1). The lands currently zoned BL-X-02 (also visible in Figure 6.3.1) provide for a mix of tourism and potentially residential uses

Blarney Castle Estate is concerned about the capacity of the town to absorb the proposed level of population growth without compromising the unique values of the town.

The 2017 LAP also references that tourism is a significant industry in Blarney as it contains one of the principle tourist attractions in Ireland, Blarney Castle. It recognises that the industry relies on the quality and attractiveness of the built and natural heritage of the local area, stating that:

“It is important therefore, that future development initiatives within the vicinity of the Castle do not compromise the tourism and actively seek to enhance this important sector of the local economy.

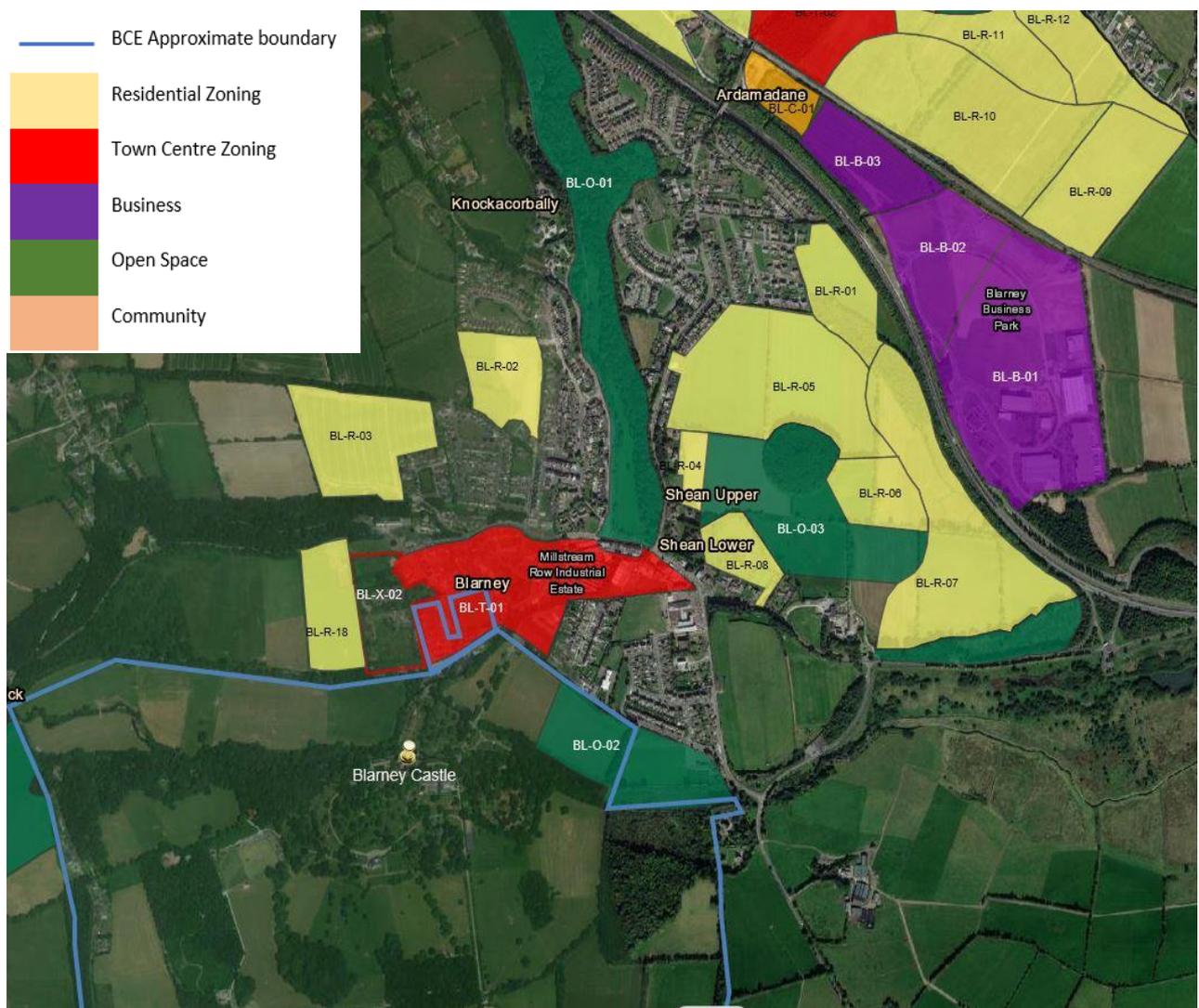
The tourism offer has expanded in recent times and now includes Blarney House and the wider estate and gardens. As a result of this growth, there is a need to have regard to the impacts of proposed developments on both Blarney Castle and the wider Blarney Estate. Future development initiatives within the vicinity of the Estate should not compromise the

landscape and heritage character of the area on which the local tourism economy relies.
(2017 LAP, p. 54)

There is an inherent tension in the current policy context for Blarney. The town is identified for considerable strategic population growth, with a target to roughly triple in size, and strong growth in employment, including further development of the Blarney Business Park. At the same time, national, regional, and local planning policy is to protect our important tourism assets, such as Blarney Castle and Gardens, including the landscape and heritage character area within which they are set.

If the strategic growth targets for Blarney are not to irrevocably damage the heritage of the town and its existing tourism assets, it is vital that there is a clear strategy to develop the town in a manner which maximises its community benefits and enhances the cultural and heritage value of the town.

Figure 1 – Blarney Castle Estate: Planning Context



5 Planning History

The importance of protecting the setting and context of Blarney Castle and Estate has been consistently recognised in context of planning history associated with adjacent lands.

The earliest relevant planning application (148/67) was granted in 1967 on part of the lands now zoned as X-02. This permission consisted of a building to facilitate the construction and storage of Roma caravans. Planning Authority reports on the application raised concern with the proposed layout of the roof as it would have a negative visual impact on Blarney Castle from the R617 road and would also have a negative impact on views from the Castle. It was recommended that the roof be split to lessen the visual impact of the proposed building on the Castle.

The former Blarney Park Hotel Site (now also incorporated into the X-02 lands) has been the subject of two major planning application in recent years. The first in 2012 (12/05084) was for retention and completion of the demolition of the former Blarney Park Hotel complex and for the development of a single store discount foodstore. Permission for the demolition works was granted, however the proposal for the food discount store was refused on four grounds, including lack of overall master-planning for the site and because:

“...the Planning Authority is not satisfied that it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed development, if permitted, would not have a detrimental impact on the character and setting of Blarney Castle and Estate...”

and

“The proposed development site adjoins Blarney Castle Estate and is in close proximity to Blarney Tower House and Bawn which is a Protected Structure (RPS No. 00382) as identified in the Cork County Development Plan 2009 (as amended). Having regard to the proximity of the proposed development site to the aforementioned Protected Structure and in the absence of an appropriately detailed and comprehensive landscape and conservation assessment, it is considered that the proposed development could have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Protected Structure....”

A revised proposal for a single-storey foods store; additional retail units and a funeral home was submitted in 2014 (14/4015). This application was withdrawn after Cork County Council had issued a further information request identifying concerns with the proposals, including:

- That the proposal did not contribute to a properly integrated town centre development.
- That the proposal needed to demonstrate in a revised design statement that it would not compromise the visual setting of Blarney Castle and the estate.
- That greater consideration should be given to the views between the site and the Castle and that there was a need to ensure that the development did not block views to the Castle.

In recent years, planning permissions have been granted for additional warehousing development in the Blarney Business Park. Some of the warehousing units have had a significant negative impact on the view from the Castle Tower looking east. BCE has sought to mitigate these impacts through seeking enhanced landscaping and changes to the colour of the building cladding during the planning application process.

6 Visual Sensitivity

6.1 Foreword

As a key component of national tourist infrastructure, Blarney Castle is the type of destination that is greatly influenced by context. Its attraction lies in heritage and culture, with the surrounding landscape setting the stage.

Forestbird Design (a fully qualified Landscape Architectural practice and Full Member of the Irish Landscape Institute) has been engaged to carry out a landscape and visual assessment to identify priority views and the sensitivity of such views, as pertinent to the tourist amenity. It analyses existing viewshed character and provides guidelines to evolve viewshed lands, as seen in the context of tourism amenity and town character.

6.2 Methodology

This report is an assessment of what constitutes the tourism amenity of Blarney Castle and its relationship to the town of Blarney. It does not assess impact on or of a development or potential development, as would typify an Environmental Impact Statement. But, to ensure pertinent and equitable review, the methodology does follow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines for Visual Assessment and the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government (DOE) Guidelines on Landscape Assessment.

The assessment method for this report undertakes a 2-step process. The first step involves reviewing the site and identifying the key receptor areas within the grounds and their relationship to the greater landscape. The second step involves reviewing areas beyond the Castle grounds (ca. 5km radius) and their relationship to Blarney Castle and town. The external receptors were determined by review of statutory documents for any sensitive locations and included nearby Scenic Routes, Protected Structures, public facilities, walking routes, public roads and future development lands. Each location was visited and reviewed relative to Blarney Castle and how this relationship impacts the character of the town.

6.3 Visual Receptor Audience

As a tourist amenity with around 500,000 visitors in 2019, the visual relationship to and from the Castle is different than if the site was a private historic home or an undeveloped ruin in the landscape. The visitor numbers result in two distinct types of audiences, active and passive. The impact on both types must be considered.

Active audiences are those who specifically seek out the Castle. Most of these are tourism visitors, arriving by coach, car, motorbike, and bicycle. Many are infrequent or first-time visitors, whereby first impressions have a significant impact on the amenity experience. Within this group, awareness of context is more acute. They are anticipating an atmosphere and, upon arrival, are actively looking for the Castle. National bodies and local authorities would also be considered active audiences, as this amenity is a reflection of their cultural inventory and puts in a spotlight their ability to manage the environs of such amenity and they will actively work to present this in a positive light.

Passive audiences are typically those who live in the town or pass through it without the aim of visiting the Castle. Although they may periodically be engaged with the Castle (visits, events, etc.) and the visual magnitude of it may have great significance on them (town character, shop economy, etc.), the amenity is still the backdrop to their daily lives.

6.3.1 Tourist Expectations

In order to assess the sensitivity of the amenity, the expectations of the visitor must be accounted for. From a visual perspective, the top tourist attractions in Ireland are quite different. Museums and breweries have a strong focus on internal presentation, national parks focus on pristine natural beauty, while castles focus on presentation of the structures and their setting.

Blarney Castle is as much about folklore as it is the structures themselves. Visitors anticipate a setting that wows and transports them. Visually, they want the feeling of a countryside castle set in splendid environs, presiding over a tidy village.

6.3.2 Local Expectations

The modern identity of Blarney town is inextricably linked to Blarney Castle and complemented by the Woollen Mills. The character and benefits of these amenities go hand in hand with periodic hordes of visitors and car parking woes. Visually, local expectations of the Castle include a positive and clutter-free presentation of the estate and the site entry, plus visitor car parking that does not detract from day-to-day use of the town centre. Many homes have a view of the Castle and this should not be degraded.

6.4 Views from Blarney Castle Site

The grounds at Blarney Castle have been cultivated as a 'landscaped park' since the 1700's (refer *Blarney Castle and Demesne Conservation Plan 2004*). With the significant landscape improvements to the estate in recent years, this assessment accepts the premise that the estate landscape will be retained in its entirety and any alterations will be to enhance this scope and character. Visually and in terms of landscape character, the Blarney Castle demesne can be placed in a special landscape category, as it contains an above-average diversity of landscape settings. It contains mature parkland, woodlands (both deciduous and coniferous), a river landscape, a large lake landscape, rock outcrops and links to a town. It is unusual to find all of these elements clustered into one estate. For this reason, it is important to ensure the character of the different landscape settings throughout the estate are kept intact or enhanced. It is the full package that catapults Blarney Castle into the ranks of national significance.

Figure 6.1 illustrates the amenity context of Blarney Castle. This map is not a direct reflection of the ownership lands or the historic curtilage, but rather the modern extent to which the Castle and grounds are experienced from a visitor standpoint. Views from within the site carry varying degrees of significance. To differentiate between the levels of significance, views have been categorised into Primary View Receptors and Secondary View Receptors. Tertiary view receptors have been left out of this report to highlight the priority views.

Primary View Receptors contain the most impressionable views, characterising the Blarney Castle experience. These views are highly influenced by activities beyond the site boundary and would be considered the most sensitive views. They are the types of views that make the visit unique and give it national significance. Changes within these viewsheds would impact the quality of the amenity.

Secondary View Receptors contain key visual representatives of site character, but do not carry the same national significance as primary receptors. They are important to the overall tourist offering and any changes within these viewsheds could impact the quality of the amenity.

Figure 6.1 - Plan View of the extent of the tourism amenity element of Blarney Castle, with key View Receptors identified.



Figure 6.2 - Image of the viewpoint at the top of the tower (keep).



This receptor signifies the arrival to the top of the tower after climbing the tower steps and is the first open-air view from the tower. It is typical for the queue to reach this far, so viewing duration can last several minutes. Nearly every visitor with a photography interest will take a picture from this receptor.

Figure 6.3.1 - View from the Castle Tower (no. 1A), looking north towards town and described as View Receptor 1A1.



This is the view photographed by visitors in Figure 6.2.

Primary View Receptor no. 1A1 – View from Castle Tower (Keep) Looking North

Primary View Receptor no. 1A1 – View from Castle Tower (Keep) Looking North

A significant part of the tourism experience is climbing the Castle Tower and kissing the Blarney Stone. A major part of this journey is the ascent, with arrival at the top of the tower. Upon reaching the top, the visitor typically stops to catch their breath and soak in the expansive view over the town (refer Figure 6.2). It is a significant moment of the tour and probably the most critical view of the amenity experience (refer Figure 6.3.1). The view from the Castle Tower is 360 degrees, but it is the view towards Blarney town that carries the greatest impact.

Primary View Receptor no. 1A1 – Analysis

This receptor provides a comprehensive view over the town. The foreground is composed of mature parkland trees and the River Martin. The church and the woollen mills are clearly identifiable to the town centre, the density of which is reduced by the presence of the central green. Beyond the town centre basin, a dense cluster of residential estates populates the background hillside. To the east, the developed lands have a defined terminus, giving way to a pastoral landscape. However, with the expansion at Blarney Business Park and proposed development at Stoneview, the agricultural backdrop will evolve into an urban backdrop. This would dilute the quality of the view from the tower. To the west, the extent of the town centre is less defined. The school buildings have a recognisable historic architectural character and would have traditionally signified the extent of development, transitioning to a belt of mature woodland. However, the middleground between the Castle and the school consists of a derelict hotel site and an industrial warehouse and yard. These are out of character with the town centre architecture and fail to provide a distinct village fringe. The aesthetic of these land uses and poor transition to the adjacent rural countryside negatively impact the landscape perception of the town of Blarney.

Figure 6.3.2 – View from the Castle Tower (no. 1A), looking east towards town and the northern hillsides of Cork City. It is described as View Receptor 1A2. This is the view photographed by visitors after having kissed the stone, prior to descending the keep.



Primary View Receptor no. 1A2 – View from Castle Tower (Keep) Looking East

After kissing the stone, visitors linger along the eastern ramparts taking in views and discussing the experience they just had. The view context changes and having kissed the stone, visitors have a clearer mental space in which to take in the scenery. This viewshed (refer Figure 6.3.2) includes a greater extent of the garden at close range and a broad spectrum of long range views, which span from Blarney Business Park to the northern ridgeline of Cork City.

Primary View Receptor no. 1A2 – Analysis

Looking towards town, the foreground presents an idyllic parkland scene of mature demesne trees. Blarney town occupies the middleground. The Woollen Mills are visible to the left and the southern part of town appears tidy and framed in vegetation. The grassy hill topped by trees at Ring Wood makes a desirable landscape backdrop to the town. In recent years however, expansion of the Blarney Business Park has risen above intermediate terrain and become a noticeable feature to the background. These are warehouse structures whose size and cladding materials detract from the setting of the town and give the impression of urban sprawl. This is unfortunate, as the hills of Killumney screen the business parks and industrial development along the N20 at Cork City. Going forward, development on greenfield sites within view of the Castle keep need to incorporate screen tree planting buffers. As the viewer pans to the right, Cork City's northern ridgeline is visible. The Water Tower and the Apple complex are standout features. Further development along the ridgeline needs to consider the presentation of Cork city to Blarney visitors (many of whom have never visited the city). Ridgeline development should consist of iconic structures and not standard housing developments.

Figure 6.4 – View south from Blarney House



Primary View Receptor no. 1B – View from Blarney House

Blarney House is a significant 19th century manor house. Located to the centre of the estate, it has limited visibility from external lands. It serves a different purpose than the Castle, in that visitor numbers are reduced and the house plays host to special functions. It is an important feature of the site and commands a significant view south towards Blarney Lake. Views to the east, west and north are generally of the demesne landscape with only filtered views of external lands. The view south extends for 1km across a formal parkland setting leading to the lake and is backed by a wooded hillside.

Primary View Receptor no. 1B – Analysis

This receptor provides an idealised setting for the manor house with an appearance unaffected by modern times. The view towards the lake is framed by thick stands of mature trees, creating a broad parkland corridor. Without the perimeter trees, modern development would be visible to the southwest. The hillside to the back of the lake is a mix of broadleaf trees and commercial coniferous woodland rising to the ridgeline. The dichotomy between the two types of woodland is strong, but it does not detract from the pastoral landscape. Such uncompromised views at a tourist venue are rare in Ireland, thus warranting a high level of significance.

Figure 6.5 – View along the entry walk, approaching the Castle.



Secondary View Receptor no. 2A – View from the Site Entry Approaching the Castle

Another element that sets Blarney Castle apart from many other castle visits is the visitor requirement to pass through the landscape in order to reach the structure. This component also indicates how important landscape setting is to the amenity. The journey is more than 300m and is a significant part of the experience. The entire walk carries equal importance in terms of view receptor location (Figure 6.5). The view south along the entry walk meanders through a parkland setting with a strong influence from the river. During this journey, the Castle Tower perched on the rock outcrop draws the visitor forward.

Secondary View Receptor no. 2A – Analysis

There is very little awareness of the town or other built environment when walking along the entry path. The focus is on the Castle Tower and the surrounding demesne landscape. Quality of the peripheral areas can influence the journey. River quality is noticeable, as is the quality and use of the adjacent pastures opposite the river. A wild or agricultural landscape is ideal for these areas, whereas a built or engineered environment would be undesirable.

Figure 6.6 – View along the River Bank Walk, near the Icehouse, looking north.



Secondary View Receptor no. 2B – The River Bank Walk is part of the primary loop walk leading to the Icehouse, Fern Garden and Lake Walk. The walk follows the River Martin with views north across the river (Figure 6.6). It is intended as a serene transition from the heavily trafficked area around the Castle, encompassing a less formal woodland setting. This area has been continuously wooded for more than 200 years.

Secondary View Receptor no. 2B – Analysis

This is the most accessible woodland walk for visitors to the site and the primary route for reaching one of the highlight gardens, the Fern Garden. These amenities rely on a peaceful setting to set their scene. Existing views include open visual access to the river and across pastureland. The R617 is screened from view, but minor traffic noise is audible from this road. The industrial and former hotel lands west of the town are visible from this walk, but there is minimal noise from these sites. Although visually filtered, the character of these developed lands is still in contrast to the adjacent pastures and woodland. There is potential for activity or land uses north of the river to impact the character of this receptor.

Figure 6.7 – View from Lime Avenue (the demesne road) at the Rock Close access path, looking north.



Secondary View Receptor no. 2C – The Rock Close has been a landscape feature for more than a century and is one of the highlights of the tour. The close is located in a hollow, so views out and potential impact on the character of this area is limited. But, part of the experience of this area is the transition from Lime Avenue (historic demesne road), which carries an equal degree of significance and has a greater visibility to and from external lands (Figure 6.7).

Secondary View Receptor no. 2C – Analysis

The Lime Avenue and Rock Close represent tourist amenities that have been around for centuries and provide links to landscape features from a different era. Their historic qualities cannot be instantly recreated and they rely on an uncluttered setting. At the north end of the Lime tree allée, the gate house defines the extent of the estate. Trees form the backdrop to this view corridor. The simplicity of this view should be retained, in an effort to emphasise the historic character of the avenue.

Figure 6.8 – View from the north bank of Blarney Lake, looking north towards Blarney House.



Figure 6.9 – View from the north bank of Blarney Lake, looking south.



Secondary View Receptor no. 2D – Blarney Lake lies at the southern end of the tourist amenity lands. The lake is a Proposed Natural Heritage Area, which makes it significant for fauna and habitat. It plays a significant role in the setting of Blarney House (refer Figure 6.8 and View Receptor 1B) and is sought out by those looking for a peaceful retreat. Lakes of this size that are associated with a historic tourist amenity are rare in Cork. It is large enough that pedestrians on the opposite side of the lake are not visible, but the rural residences to the west are visible (Figure 6.9).

Secondary View Receptor no. 2D – Analysis

The lake is permanent with little fluctuation in water level. Rural development has occurred to the west end, but the hillside to the back of the lake is free of development, consisting of a mix of broadleaf trees and commercial coniferous woodland rising to the ridgeline. The dichotomy between the two types of woodland is strong, but it does not detract from the pastoral landscape. It is anticipated that at some point in the future, the commercial woodland will be felled. A programme to ensure continuation of a positive aesthetic is important. Consideration is also given to the potential of the lake area evolving as an amenity.

6.5 Views from Blarney Castle Environs

Views of Blarney Castle from the surrounding area are numerous. The top of the Castle is visible from most approach roads, surrounding hillsides and public spaces within the town. This assessment focuses on the key View Receptors from the public realm and how the Castle is to be presented to ensure its continuity as a tourist amenity of national significance.

Most visitors coming to Blarney Castle arrive via two distinctly different road networks. The R617 from the west receives tourists en route from Co. Kerry and those via Ballincollig. The R617 from the east is a short link connected to the N20 Cork-Limerick dual carriageway and receives those en route from Cork City, Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford. Most vehicles arriving via the Old Blarney Road from Cork City would be local residents.

Those arriving on the R617 from the west will have been travelling on regional roads for a quarter of an hour or more. The final 3km will have been along Scenic Route 39 (R617), culminating in a winding tree-lined road as they approach Blarney town. Visitors quickly reach the historic town centre.

Those arriving on the R617 from the east will have been travelling on a busy dual carriageway (N20). The link from the N20 to Blarney town centre last only a few minutes, along a broad straight road. Arrivals to town from this end are greeted by modern housing and services before transitioning to the historic town centre.

Tourist activity within the town centre is primarily limited to the north and east sides of the village square, the road up to the church, the link to the Woollen Mills and the short river walk back to the Castle. The castle tower rises above the tree canopies as viewed from these locations, but much of the grounds are obscured. The road to site entrance at the southeast corner of the square does not present itself as a distinct feature.

Views towards Blarney Castle from outside the grounds have also been broken down into Primary and Secondary View Receptors. Priority has been given to viewpoints that set the scene and provide the first impressions of the amenity.

Figure 6.10 – View from Scenic Route 39 (receptor no. 3A), looking southeast towards Blarney Castle.



Primary View Receptor no. 3A – Because of the Scenic Route status and the number of visitors arriving on tours from Co. Kerry, views from the R617 on the approach to Blarney Town are considered primary views. Figure 6.10 illustrates the typical view where a continuous hedgerow lines the road and filtered views across pastureland present the Castle Tower rising above the mixed woodland canopy. This receptor is also significant because it is the gateway to Blarney town.

Primary View Receptor no. 3A – Analysis

This approach creates a bucolic setting; an idealised venue where the historic castle rises above the village and is surrounded by lush countryside. This first impression enhances the experience of the Castle and is a necessary component in achieving national tourism significance. Of equal importance, this approach has the ability to create the setting for the historic town centre. Despite the initial positive framework, the arrival to town is diluted by the gap in hedgerow and industrial activity at the town gateway (Figure 6.11a and 6.11b). This point of arrival is the one opportunity to achieve a gateway indicative of a historic town and it currently falls short of that.

A sizeable portion of lands in this view have been zoned for residential development BL-B-18. The appropriateness of residential zoning BL-R-18 is questioned in the context of the importance of the gateway entrance to Blarney and view of Blarney Castle when arriving from the west. Expansion of the town centre into an area characterised by a sylvan landscape would also be injurious to the designation of Scenic Route 39. Within the zoned lands, screening of such development is unrealistic.

Figure 6.11a – View from Scenic Route 39 (receptor no. 3A), approaching Blarney town.



Figure 6.11b – View from Scenic Route 39 (receptor no. 3A), looking towards Blarney Castle across the X-02 lands



Figure 6.12 – View of the junction leading to the site entry (no. 3B), as viewed from the River Walk from Blarney Woollen Mills. The lack of footpath or identifying features impacts the initial pedestrian impression.



Primary View Receptor no. 3B – The access road to the visitor entry and car park is visible from two key town centre locations; the town square and the river walk from Blarney Woollen Mills. These routes would be on the walking tour of most visitors to Blarney. The eastern flank of the square is active with shops, eateries, hotel, and pedestrian activity. The river walk is the primary thoroughfare for users between the Woollen Mills and the Castle. Despite being different enterprises, the two are inherently linked and visually linked by the river and stone bridge.

Primary View Receptor no. 3B – Analysis

With the Square, the river walk and the old railway buildings there is opportunity for linking these close-knit tourist and amenity elements. Access to the Castle over the past 5 years has been improved with Blarney Castle Estate car park upgrades and designated pedestrian paths on the Castle side of the road. Unfortunately, the crossing between the Castle and Woollen Mills is ill-defined and visitors are confused by the lack of connectivity with the Square. The sheer numbers of users, quite often migrating in large groups, call for some sort of hierarchy. An urban design study addressing the confluence of these amenities with the public road needs to be carried out, with solutions subsequently implemented to enhance pedestrian safety, townscape improvements and cultural interpretation.

Figure 6.13 – View from the R617 (Fig. 4A), as arriving from the N20.



Secondary View Receptor no. 4A – The eastern approach along the R617 takes the user off the dual carriageway and onto a modern, orderly regional road. The road parallels the Clogheenmilcon Walk, providing a positive natural environment and atmosphere of active use. The castle tower is periodically visible, but at this distance one must know the direction and what to look for. Blarney has primarily developed east and northward. The option exists to divert castle traffic prior to entering the developed portion of town. The road diversion leads users through a more rural setting. If staying on the main road, users travel through modern environs before any sense of Blarney Castle or the historic town centre are perceived.

Secondary View Receptor no. 4A – Analysis

Despite being a modern, fast road, the eastern end of the R617 along the Clogheenmilcon Walk provides a positive first impression. Beyond the diversion junction, the main road is tidy and orderly, but very modern, giving little indication of the historic character ahead. Development of the town slowly increases in density, making visitors uncertain of where the town begins. Local modifications to this approach would have little impact on the existing visual setting of the Castle. If taking the diversion road, a reduced degree of modern development is passed before one enters the historic town core. There is opportunity, over time, to provide a natural gateway along this route, similar to the character provided by the eastern approach (receptor 3A).

Identification of the receptors above and analysis of their character and existing quality coupled with the existing planning framework results in a Sensitivity Diagram (Figure 6.14). This diagram illustrates the boundaries of the tourism amenity at Blarney Castle and the areas beyond the boundary that have most impact on views and character of the Primary View Receptors. Special consideration should be given to these areas when developing, modifying, or enhancing.

Figure 6.14 – Sensitivity Diagram



6.6 Proposed Mitigation Measures

To ensure the visual integrity of Blarney Castle as a national tourism amenity, the following mitigation measures are recommended. These measures have evolved from the visual and landscape character analysis and are proposed to ensure the significance of the amenity is not diluted in terms of visual or character context.

M1 – Landscape Measures to the Western Gateway Lands

The former hotel site and current light industry site are zoned for an array of town centre uses (Objective no. BL-X-02). These lands have importance to both Castle Tower views and Scenic Route traffic, which means there is no “back of house” to development here. Any development should have significant landscape buffers to the north, west and south and any structures should be architecturally presentable to all four sides. Figure 6.15 illustrates local precedence and figure 6.16 illustrates the changes vegetation removal or addition can have.

M2 – Town Centre Consolidation to the Western Gateway Lands

Development of the BL-X-02 lands should create a defined edge to the town centre. Architectural scale and materials should be compatible with the appearance of the existing town centre. Density should be increased relative to the town centre, as precedent perimeter development has done. Large car parking areas should not be visible from the Castle Tower.

The appropriateness of residential zoning BL-R-18 is questioned in the context of the importance of the gateway entrance to Blarney and view of Blarney Castle when arriving from the west. Expansion of the town centre into an area characterised by a sylvan landscape would also be injurious to the designation of Scenic Route 39. Within the zoned lands, screening of such development is unrealistic. It is considered that these lands are not suitable for development, other than open space / recreational uses.

M3 – Residential Development Consolidation to the Sunberry Lands

To the west of the residential estates and above the school, the Sunberry lands are identified for residential development. In continuing consolidation of the town centre, these lands also need to be considered to create a clearly defined western edge to the upper residential estates. As viewed from the Castle Tower, development here should appear dense and linked to the town and not appear as urban sprawl. Consideration should be given to the scale and context of the existing school structures as a defining edge. Refer Figure 6.17.

M4 – Site Access Enhancement

The junction of the Square with the river walk and the site entry road should be enhanced with an identifiable village design scheme and made pedestrian friendly. The aim is to make the entrance recognisable from multiple points in the town and provide continuity. Refer Figure 6.18

M5 – Retention of the Woodland Character of the Hillside at Blarney Lake

Retain and enhance the woodland character of the hillside as viewed from Blarney House. Do not allow development to enter this viewshed. Manage the future commercial woodland removal to ensure a continuous positive aesthetic is retained and encourage replanting with a permanent mixed native woodland (refer receptor 1B).

M6 – Eastern Gateway Development

Blarney Castle visitors should be diverted away from the R617 by means of a feature gateway and the diversion road enhanced to create a countryside setting as one approaches the town centre. Refer Figure 6.19.

Figure 6.15 – View of woodland buffer along the R617, 1.5km to the west of X-02, screening the Willison Park residential development. A similar vegetated buffer should be incorporated into X-02.



Figure 6.16 – The same view from Blarney Castle Tower as photographed in 2010 and 2015. The removal of the evergreen tree buffer has substantially opened views of the X-02 site at a most sensitive location.

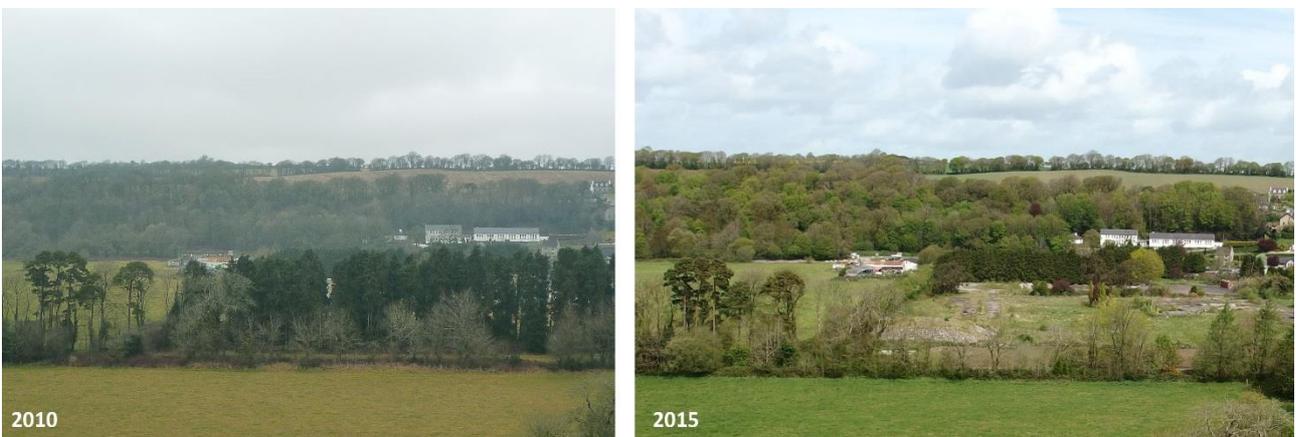


Figure 6.17 – View of the Sunberry Lands as viewed from the Castle Tower. Any future development should consolidate the existing residential estates and transition to a woodland perimeter.



Figure 6.18 – Aerial view of the junction proposed for village enhancement.

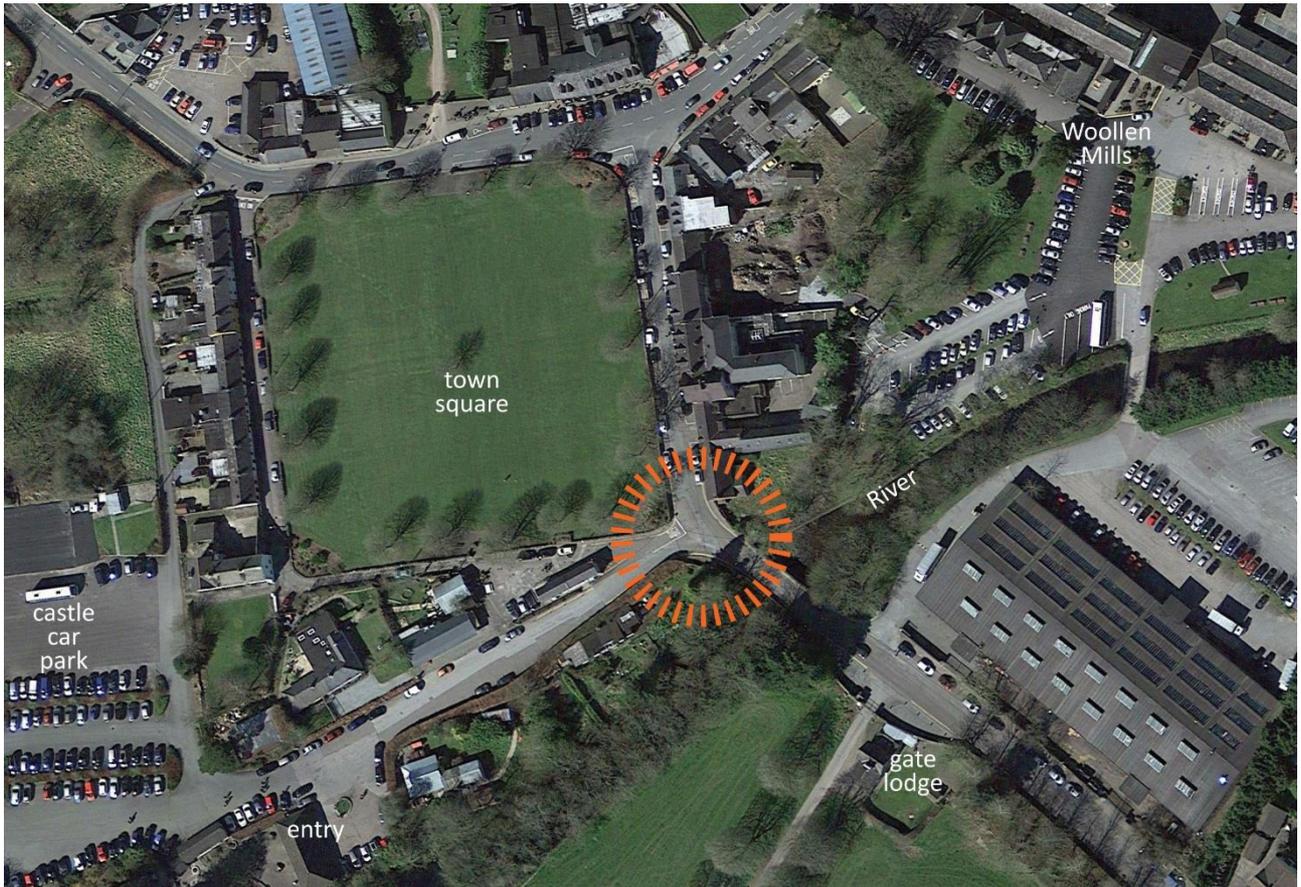


Figure 6.19 – Aerial view of the diversion route proposed for enhancement, with a gateway feature identified.



7 Conclusions

Blarney Castle Estate is a site of national importance in terms of both heritage and tourism. Protection of the landscape character, setting and views to and from the site is necessary to maintain and enhance the value of this asset. The current planning framework has recognised the architectural and heritage significance of Blarney through the designation of an Architectural Conservation Area and providing policy objectives to protect the setting and views of the Castle. However, these objectives conflict with targets for strong population growth and zoning provisions which could have a significant negative impact on the setting of and views from Blarney Castle and Gardens.

The planning context and development strategy for the town should build on this by strengthening the policy protection, creating a vision for the enhancement of its key assets, and developing a pro-active approach to developing the heritage and tourism potential of Blarney.

This report outlines the significance and sensitivity of the viewshed character of Blarney Castle and the importance of protecting and enhancing existing views. The report details a number of practical mitigation actions that can be taken to ensure the visual integrity of Blarney Castle as a national tourism amenity. In addition, the following measures are recommended:

- The planning policy context is strengthened to ensure the protection of important views from Blarney Castle Estate, in particular the protected structures of the Castle and Blarney House.
- That an objective is developed to promote the heritage and tourism potential of Blarney in a proactive manner by engaging with Fáilte Ireland, key tourism providers and the business community. Blarney Castle Estate would welcome the opportunity to engage with Cork City Council and other relevant stakeholders to help achieve the vision for enhancing the potential of Blarney and its core heritage and tourism assets.
- That a series of mitigation measures, as suggested within the report are undertaken to protect and enhance the visual landscape character of Blarney Castle, given its status as one of the City's most important tourism assets.



HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

On

Blarney Castle, Estate and Village

For

Charles Colthurst

Prepared by: Emma Baume, FIEI

Revised August 2020

*This report has been revised in the context of the Review of the
Cork City Council Development Plan*

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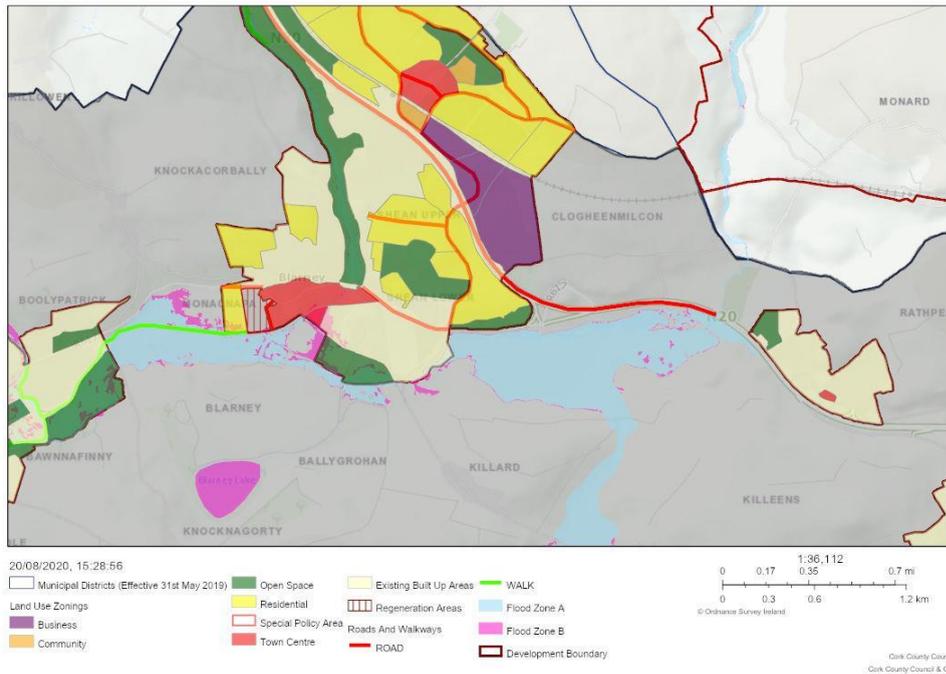
1. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Historic Landscape Characterisation (hereafter HLC) Study was commissioned by Charles Colthurst, owner of the Blarney Castle Estate, in response to the review of Cork City Development Plan. The existing planning context for Blarney includes significant population growth for the town. It is feared that development inappropriate to the historic character of the area would negatively effect the appeal of Blarney which would have a knock-on negative affect on the local economy. As one of Ireland’s most popular tourist attractions and as a village which contains some of the most significant industrial heritage sites nationally, there is an argument to be made that the historic significance of Blarney has been neglected and under-promoted in the public realm at Blarney. There is now an opportunity at underpin, strengthen and promote the area on the back of its unique historic and folkloric character in accordance with heritage guidelines set out in the Cork County Development Plan.

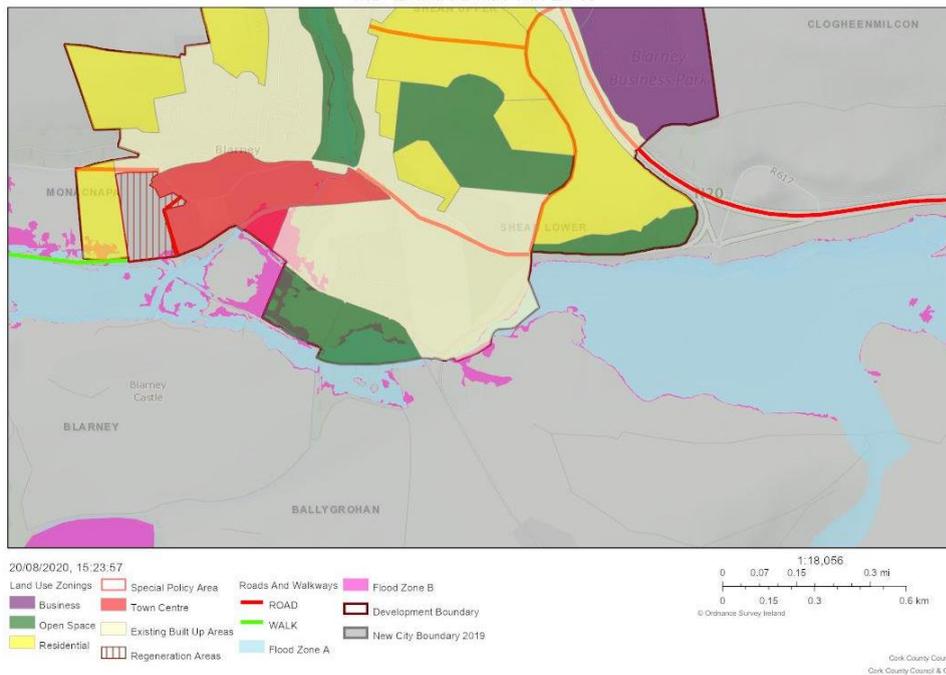
This HLC is designed to work in tandem with the “Blarney Castle and Estate Landscape and Visual Assessment Report” by McCutcheon Halley/ Forestbird. The Landscape and Visual Assessment is primarily is concerned with the significance and sensitivity of views in particular to and from the estate. HLC takes a broad scope taking into account the overall landscape surrounding the estate and Blarney town including its archaeological, historical value in addition to the significance of ritual, folklore and myth of the internationally significant phenomenon of the Blarney Stone and the socio-economic benefits and activities based on these. Land use, agricultural and ecological significances do not form part of this report.

It will be argued that Blarney's Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ICH) is the foundation upon which the success of the area rests. Blarney is one of Ireland's leading tourist destinations and is one of the most popular and visited sites outside of Dublin City with over 365,000 visitors recorded in 2013 (this compares with Bunratty Castle with 285,000 visitors in 2012 and Ludlow Castle in the UK with 100,000 visitors in the same year). Blarney unlike the other examples cited above has an international reputation, has been used as a national symbol when promoting Irish tourism for over a century and its unique attraction in the form of the myth and legend of the Blarney Stone. There are however no provisions for the protection or safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in local planning policies which leaves this important element of this particular landscape very vulnerable.

MD Local Area Plan 2017



MD Local Area Plan 2017



Extracts from the Blarney Macroom Municipal District Local Area Plan Review showing zoning and proposed residential development areas in relation to Blarney Castle and Blarney Industrial Archaeology complex adopted 21-08-2017.

Historic Landscape Characterisation Studies are based on the premise that landscape itself is a primary influence on our heritage, being the place which simultaneously influences human activity and is the record of it. It is this record which gives the landscape its historical depth and character and therefore value. Drawing on a various disciplines such as archaeology, geography, ethnology (folklore) and architecture, Historic Landscape Characterisation aims to document the character of a landscape so that it will be valued as a social resource and managed appropriately as cultural capital.

HLC is essentially a desk-based “vertical” form of landscape survey, being principally map-based, which seeks to explore the degree of visible time-depth in the present-day landscape. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) on the other hand offers a “horizontal” view, describing the landscape as it appears when standing on the ground, which is achieved through both desk-based assessment and observations made during field survey. Consequently, LCA offers an evaluation of the landscape based upon its contemporary form and appearance. The HLC identifies historic significance in terms of archaeology and built heritage but importantly also considers the intangible cultural value which in the case of Blarney is a primary influencer on the landscape and is the main driver for the economic activities in the area. The protection and enhancement of these features will require a planning approach which recognizes the importance of ICH and while encouraging appropriate development simultaneously encourages the reinforcement and promotion of the identity and value of the Blarney landscape in all its forms tangible and intangible.

HLC provides an accessible platform for assessing sensitivities to and capacities for change in the human dimension of landscape. With increasing frequency, HLC is being used as one of the main evidential sources in Landscape Characterisation Assessment projects that are informing long-term planning for management and

conservation of the historic environment, with particular regards to assessing potential for residential zoning , the creation of Local Development Frameworks and contributing to planning policy.

Information contained within the HLC is also relevant to stakeholders such as local residents, land-owners, land estate managers, commercial developers, policy makers and others whose plans might result in landscape change. It will also be of interest to individuals or groups who are simply interested in the development of the historic landscape.

This report is intended to function alongside other documents designed to strengthen policies to ensure that the landscape is managed in such a way as to retain its historic character and integrity while allowing the village to be improved and to develop its full potential in terms of socioeconomic activities, a place of residence and tourist attraction.

The purpose of this Blarney HLC is to provide objective assessment of historic land use around the Blarney Estate and Village and to assess its significance in terms of its tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the vulnerability of same. It is hoped that this assessment will inform direction and guidance on how the wider Blarney landscape can be managed in respect of its historic character and sustainability in the long term and opportunities to strengthen its reputation, appeal and the tourism based local economy.

A relatively short time scale meant that public consultation was limited and this report could benefit from further detailed analysis from further local interaction with the public both resident and visiting to discuss sense of belonging, identity etc. and also in terms of collection of data such as oral history as a resource for the

enhancement of the area. This may also be captured by a Village Design Statement (see recommendations in Section 6 below).

Within this text the scope of the study is defined, the significances are assessed, vulnerabilities identified and policy recommendations are offered to not only preserve but enhance and reinforce these significances for the local community, visitors and socioeconomic activities which are connected to the historic landscape. This Historic Characterisation Study (HLC) is considered to be the first of many steps in proactively protecting and promoting the internationally significant landscape of Blarney Castle, Estate and town.

2. METHODOLOGY

Emma Baume, Heritage Consultant/ Associate Director of Southgate Associates and Dr. Colin Rynne of UCC, Industrial and Built Heritage archaeologist, compiled this study. The information gathered for this HLC is predominantly desktop based referencing previous studies, the Heritage Council Guidelines for Historic Landscape Characterisation and HLCs carried out in Ireland and the UK.

Sources used:

Cartographic Sources

Archaeological Reports

Conservation Report for Blarney Estate

Local Planning Documents

Heritage Funding Documents

Academic Research

International Guidelines for Cultural Protection Policies

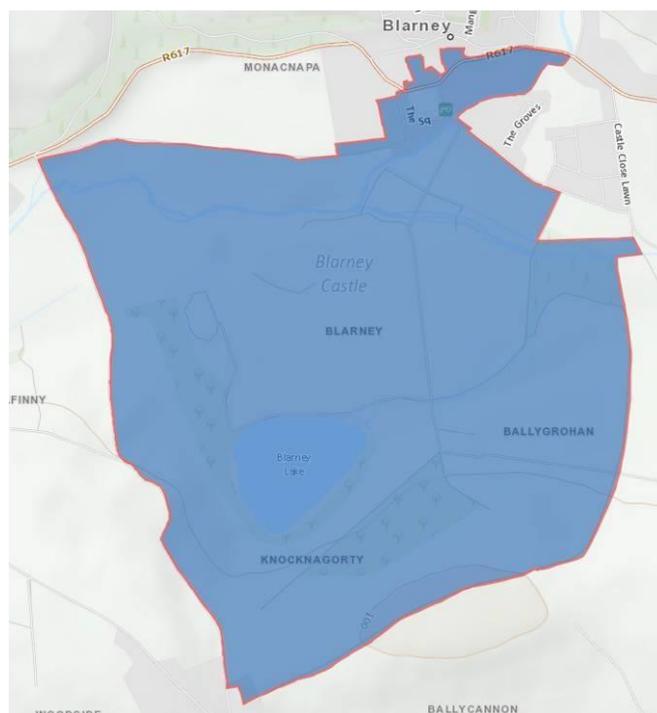
There was no public consultation carried out for the purpose and scale of this study.

3. CULTURAL PROTECTION POLICIES

3.1 Current Planning Protections

The archaeology and built heritage of the area are protected under the National Monuments Acts and part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (see table below).

The most recent County Development Plan for Cork County was published in 2014. Within it there are outline policies for the protection for significant heritage which includes archaeology, built heritage, ecology, settings, views etc. The significance of Blarney Village is acknowledged by the assignment of the Blarney Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) which protects the architectural character of the village.



Extent of Blarney ACA

Blarney Castle Woods (Proposed 1039), Blarney Lake (1798) and Blarney Bog (1857) are also on the Proposed Natural Heritage Areas list. In addition, Blarney Castle and Woods is part of Scenic route S39 which is considered “high/Very High” in landscape value.

The Blarney Local Area plan (2015) also sets out planning policies and guidelines for development surrounding Blarney Town protecting the setting of the castle and character of the village.

The overall heritage protection policies for Cork County Council is “to conserve, enhance, protect and manage Cork County’s natural, architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage as key social, economic and cultural assets which are an integral part of the sustainable development for the County and safeguard this valuable, and in many instances, non-renewable resource through proper management, sensitive enhancement and appropriate development while also promoting understanding of and sustainable access to it for all. Recognize the important role that the arts and cultural can play in making a place an attractive area to live, work and enjoy” Cork County Development Plan 2014.

It goes on to state how “Heritage is our history, language, folklore, customs and traditions. It is these special elements of our landscape that make us feel connected to our home place and County. Protection...also brings economic benefits to the Country by providing attractive towns, villages and countryside for visitors to enjoy” (12.1.1 Cork County Development Plan 2014-2020). Archaeology is protected by the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), buildings and landscapes are protected under the Planning and Development Acts and natural heritage is protected by Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 and Wildlife Acts 1976 and the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000-2010. Policies relevant to the proposed re-zoning around Blarney are quoted here:

Archaeological Heritage

- County Development Plan Objective HE 3-1: Protection of Archaeological Sites
safeguard sites and settings, features and objects of archaeological interest generally.

- County Development Plan Objective HE 3-4 Industrial and Post Medieval Archaeology
Protect and preserve the archaeological value of industrial and post medieval archaeology such as mills, limekilns, bridges...dwellings. Proposals for refurbishment, works to or redevelopment/ conversion of these sites should be subject to careful assessment.
The Development Plan also states: “Whilst some of these are Archaeological Monuments and/or Protected Structures the base majority have no such protection and are consequently very vulnerable items of our heritage”.

- 12.3.20 Cork county Council has an important role to play in **promoting initiatives aimed at raising awareness of archaeological heritage.**

Interpretation and local economy

- 12.3.21 ...there is considerable potential for interpretation and recreation and contribution to the local economy through tourism. A long term goal is to develop a management plan... for the archaeology of County Cork which would include an evaluation of the Historic Character Assessment of Cork County.

Historic Landscapes

- 12.4.10 Many non-structural elements, such as historic gardens, stonewalls, ditches and street furniture contribute to our built heritage. Carelessness and lack of awareness can result in the loss of these elements.

- 12.4.11 An absence of a tradition of “best practice” for the conservation of historic landscapes and their associated features, means that appraisal and surveying are essential in considering development proposals for sensitive areas. A lack of understanding into the elements that form an integral part of the designed landscapes can mean that these features are vulnerable.

Development in Significant Areas and Village Design Statements

- County Development Plan Objective HE-4-6 Design and landscaping of New Buildings a) Encourage new buildings that respect the character, pattern and tradition of existing places, materials and built forms that fit appropriately into the landscape.

- 12.4.27 The Council consider village design statements to be an important tool in improving the architectural and visual amenities of the county’s town and villages and will continue where possible to facilitate local groups in the preparation of such statements.

- County Development Plan Objective HE 4-7: Village Design Statements and Local Area Plans Facilitate the preparation and implementation of village design statements and other community led projects to enhance village environments whilst ensuring that such initiatives are consistent with Local Area Plan policy.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

- County Cork has a rich and diverse cultural heritage which is a significant economic asset to the County...This **plan aims to encourage the further development of these cultural assets, increase local awareness of our heritage and cultural identity and promote the cultural tourism industry.**
- Cork County council recognizes the importance of our folklore and oral cultural heritage of the people of County Cork and to future generations. The Council will aim to work with groups in gathering, recording preserving and *promoting* folklore and oral cultural heritage in the County.
- County Development Plan Objective HE 5-1 Cultural Heritage. Protect and *promote* the cultural heritage of County Cork as an important economic asset.

Blarney as an attraction is more than the sum of its archaeological, architectural and scenic parts and represents an important point of identity for Irish Diaspora (especially in the US) and a romantic focal point of the Irish “spirit”, myth and legend i.e. the intangible culture. The policies which have been put in place by the County Council could be interpreted as too vague to provide adequate protection for the ICH of places such as Blarney.

Currently there are no policies in place to protect the intangible cultural heritage and setting (including views) of the Castle and Estate. Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage including UNESCO recommendations is discussed below in Section 3 Cultural Context. As highlighted in the McCutcheon Halley Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) there are also 3 areas zoned for development within Blarney which have the potential to impact negatively on the historic landscape and historic “feeling” of the town. The purposes of this document is to identify the significances,

the vulnerabilities and recommend steps to both protect and enhance the cultural assets of the area.

3.2 Background and Benefits of Historic Landscape Characterisation

3.2.1 Background

One of the major influences on the emergence of HLC is the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, Florence 2000), which Ireland has ratified. The Convention defines ‘landscape’ as: ‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.’ This definition of landscape is now included in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010.

“Landscape” has a large number of aspects and facets which contribute to its character and therefore and requires inter-disciplinary study. The aspect most familiar to the general public (and to planners and politicians) is usually the scenic one, which is captured reasonably well by Landscape Characterisation Assessment (LCA). However, understanding how landscape character and ecology have been influenced by historic patterns of socioeconomic activity is a specialised perspective. The cultural/ historic elements often need to be considered separately to add a “time-depth” dimension which is the purpose of Historic Landscape Characterisation.

In 2006 the Heritage Council called for the promotion of Landscape Characterisation Assessments (LCA) for the whole country, with Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) forming an integral part of the process. It was also recommended that a National Landscape Classification be commissioned. This has yet to be carried out. The Heritage Council reiterated this proposal in 2010 as part of its submission to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht’s National Landscape Strategy (NLS).

The importance of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is reflected in two major international obligations:

1. its contribution to general landscape conservation following Ireland's ratification of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and,
2. in the context of the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

3.2.2 Benefits of Historic Landscape Characterisation

Blarney Castle is one of the most famous and popular tourist attractions in Ireland today, with 365,000 visitors recorded in 2013, retaining its place high on Fáilte Ireland's 'Visitors to Top Fee-Charging Visitor Attractions' list, published in July, 2014. (Fáilteireland.ie, July, 2014)

The Conservation Plan drawn up by John Cronin *et al* in 2004 rightly sets out policies with the aims of preserving the significance of Blarney Castle, the site, setting, archaeology, architecture, archaeology, ecology and important landscape features however, the Intangible Cultural Heritage which is the foundation of the appeal of the Blarney landscape is not mentioned. This HLC will address this by including the importance of the intangible cultural heritage (i.e. oral cultural in the area with special regard for the Legend of the Blarney Stone) ensuring that the significances and experience of the area are protected and also enhanced in the long term.

HLC is not just intended to promote understanding of the archaeological and historical character of places, but also to explain how characteristics both tangible (monuments, views, natural habitats) and intangible (folklore, craft, song etc) need to be taken into account within a bigger picture of land use change, this is especially pertinent to the future development in and around Blarney Village where both industrial and medieval archaeology and folklore play a very prominent role in the

activities and identity of the community and visitors. By informing decisions about future change in the light of a long term view of historic change, HLC can enhance the quality and sustainability of new development and land management. This avoids policies and decisions which are reacting to specific pressures that focus on particular areas or aspects of the environment and instead incorporates safeguarding against the loss of understanding/ valuing of the significances of an area in an acknowledgment of the character of an area being more than the sum of its parts and suggests steps towards the enhancement of same.

3.3 Aims of this HLC

1. To identify heritage issues which may have been missed in the drafting of Regional, County and Local Development Plans, specifically Intangible Cultural Heritage;
2. To highlight the importance of the Blarney landscape as more than the sum of its archaeological components and offer a broader view of the significance of the landscape to include the previous landscape uses, industrial history, social history, myth and legend unique to the area;
3. to provide recommendations on how to improve public awareness, appreciation and understanding of historic landscape as a key part of people's sense of place, belonging and identity. It is hoped that a HLC will contribute to people's quality of life (both local and visiting) by promoting the understanding of the distinctiveness and significance of the character of a local environment;
4. to ensuring that new development and land use respects, maintains, and enhances the historic/ folkloric qualities of the Blarney landscape that people value, whether at international, national, regional or local level.

5. Initiate the compiling of useful documents such as Village Design Statement and Design Guidelines for Development within the historic landscape of Blarney.

A HLC will be very useful in assisting development of design guidelines for a wide range of developments from expansion of settlements and one-off rural housing, land use changes, other major infrastructural changes in addition to upgrading of public realm and promoting of tourism. It will also draw attention to the consideration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (IHC) which is especially pertinent when discussing the regeneration or development of small towns and villages such as Blarney. Much of the upgrading of small villages across Ireland while addressing important issues such as upgrading the public realm often remove elements of character associated with oral history resulting in the loss of the historic character and patina of the streetscape both tangibly and intangibly and also miss out on the opportunity to promote what is distinctive about the place. During these upgrades opportunities are often lost to promote and highlight unique aspects of historic places.

This particular HLC for Blarney is relatively small in scale focusing on the Blarney Estate, Blarney Village and its immediate surroundings. While this report may have several purposes its primary reason for its commissioning is to identify the tangible and intangible significances of the landscape as an entity and to consider the cumulative effect of individual components such as archaeology, history, views, oral tradition etc surrounding Blarney Castle, Estate, Village and environs so that any future development will enhance the distinctive character of the area. There must be an understanding of how individual and possibly small insignificant changes around Blarney may cumulatively have an adverse affect on the cultural heritage significance of the area.

The potential benefits of HLC can manifest through a wide range of different applications:

- Strategic planning
- Development management (Village Design Statements etc)
- Conservation management
- Outreach and education
- Academic research
- Increasing the public understanding of historic landscape

(Lambrick *et al*, 13)

3.4 Scope of the Blarney Historic Landscape Characterisation Study

The Scope of this report is to consider the historic landscape in its entirety, as a whole and consider the historic landscape as a sum of several parts (archaeological, architectural, historical, mythological, folkloric and natural). It assesses ways in which these significances can be protected and enhanced and eventually recommends policies designed to do that.

The focus of this HLC is the defined geographically by the Blarney Estate, Blarney Village and it's environs and includes views from which the castle can be seen and the main visitor approach from Cork city to Blarney Castle.

Blarney Castle Estate is situated within a Landscape Character Type defined as "Broad Fertile Lowland Valley" and the Landscape Character Area is "Wooded Valley of Low Hills and Scattered Settlement Clusters as defined by the Cork County Council Landscape Characterization.

This report does not include but would be enhanced by including consultation with the local community and with visitors. This report does not contain recommendations with regard to the ecology of the site information about which is contained in the Conservation Report carried out by John Cronin in 2004. A more detailed analysis of land use is also not included in this report.

3.5 Overall Rationale for this Historic Landscape Characterisation Study

Historic Characterisation typically covers the whole of an area quite rapidly in order to support ... management, enjoyment, protection and planning” (Historic England www.historicengland.co.uk/research/approaches/research-methods/characterisation-2/). This Characterisation Study is intended to compliment Landscape Visual Assessment carried out by McCutcheon Halley and other landscape assessments, the Cork County Rural Design Guide, Cork County Council Guidelines for the Management and Development of Architectural Conservation Areas and the County County Development Plan. The report was commissioned by the owner of Blarney Castle and Estate, Charles Colthurst, to assess the cultural heritage of Blarney and it’s environs in light of the proposed re-zoning of parts of the town so as to be able to protect and enhance the historic character of the area by highlighting the areas significance and vulnerabilities so as to inform the zoning and design of future developments in the area which could respect and build on the historic and cultural character of the area (i.e. choice of siting, density, scale, layout, proportions, choice of materials, naming etc.)

4. CULTURAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF THE BLARNEY LANDSCAPE

The purpose of this section is to define the characteristics of the Blarney Landscape which makes it unique and significant. The historic landscape components of Blarney village, castle and estate, in terms of historic landscape characterization (HLC), comprise the following:

(i) Settlement patterns (as pertaining to the palimpsest landscape of the planned workers' settlements associated with eighteenth-century linen and cotton, and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century woollen industries).

(ii) Industrial complexes: Mahony's Woollen mills.

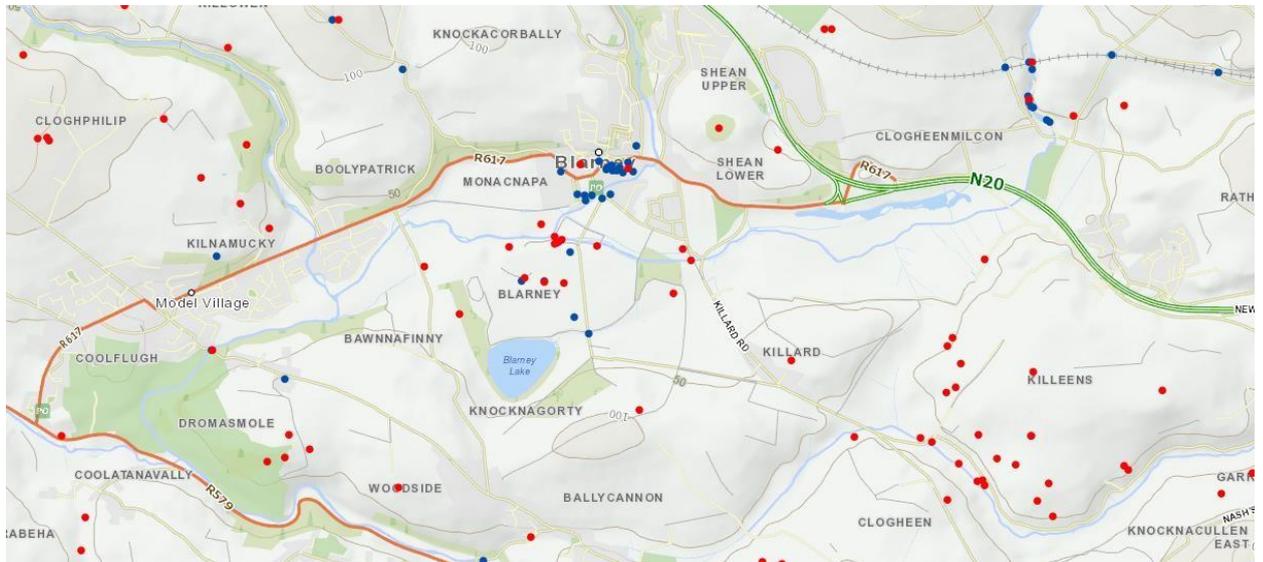
(iii) Tourism: In essence Blarney castle and the tourist rituals associated with it, from at least the eighteenth century onwards.

(iv) Communication networks: The Cork and Muskerry Light Railway, built to facilitate tourism based on the castle.

Other influences on the physical development and survival of these specific landscape components are non-conceptual, and include:

- Patterns of exchange, trade and consumption
- Status and power
- Designed ornamental landscapes
- Tenorial structure

- Sense of place (or values and perception: how, for example, do local people and visitors appear to perceive Blarney?)



Extract from the National Monuments Section Historic Environment View. Red dots signify archaeological heritage; blue dots signify architectural heritage.

However, as the word 'Blarney' has come to symbolize and embody a notionalized, romanticized idea of Ireland, physically expressed in one object, the Blarney Stone, the wider cultural context of Blarney castle and its environs has largely been obscured. As will be seen below, the castle and the embryonic industrial village combine complex facets of both *historic* and *relic* landscapes, in which the castle (essentially a relic landscape), has made an extraordinary contribution to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century of Blarney itself. For future planning purposes it is essential that the *time depth* or temporal dimension of Blarney's historic landscape development be properly understood. In industrial archaeological terms the Woollen mills industrial complex and the workers' housing to the north of it are, for example, of national significance. Blarney Castle, it is clear, is not the only site of national archaeological importance in the study area, yet the woollen mills would never have been repurposed if the castle had not been an international tourist attraction.

4.1 Cultural Heritage of Blarney Castle and its immediate environs: a built heritage audit

4.1.1 Blarney Castle: Recent scholarship identifies five principal phases in the physical development of the castle, beginning with the construction of a four-storey tower during the chieftainship of Cormac ‘Laidir’ mac Taidgh (1461-1495), sometime in the 1480s. During the second main phase in early sixteenth century, the original tower was extended, possibly during the tenure of Cormac Óg Láidir mac Cormaic (1501-1536), with the addition of the present five-storey tower block. A multi-storey gatehouse was also added to the south-east corner of the structure, along with two fireplaces. In the third phase of development, during which the complex was modified to meet the requirements of genteel living required of the renaissance gentleman, the medieval open spaces were modified to admit more light, while the essentially defensive aspects of the castle became increasingly secondary to the creation of more comfortable living spaces. During the first half of the seventeenth century – the fourth phase in the castle’s development- the first floor becomes one of the main living spaces. The insertion of an elaborate fireplace, similar to the manor house at Monkstown, Co. Cork would appear to confirm this, as also does the addition of an oriel window, which are rare in Irish tower houses. Shortly before the Cromwellian reconquest of the 1650s, a purpose-built manor house (the ‘new stone house’) had been built beside the castle. The basic footprint of this structure appears to have been occupied by that of the neo-Gothic structure which succeeded it on the same site (see below). Indeed, the only surviving features of the ‘new stone house’, appear to be the two turrets, or defensible towers, at the north and north-west (Lyttleton 2011).

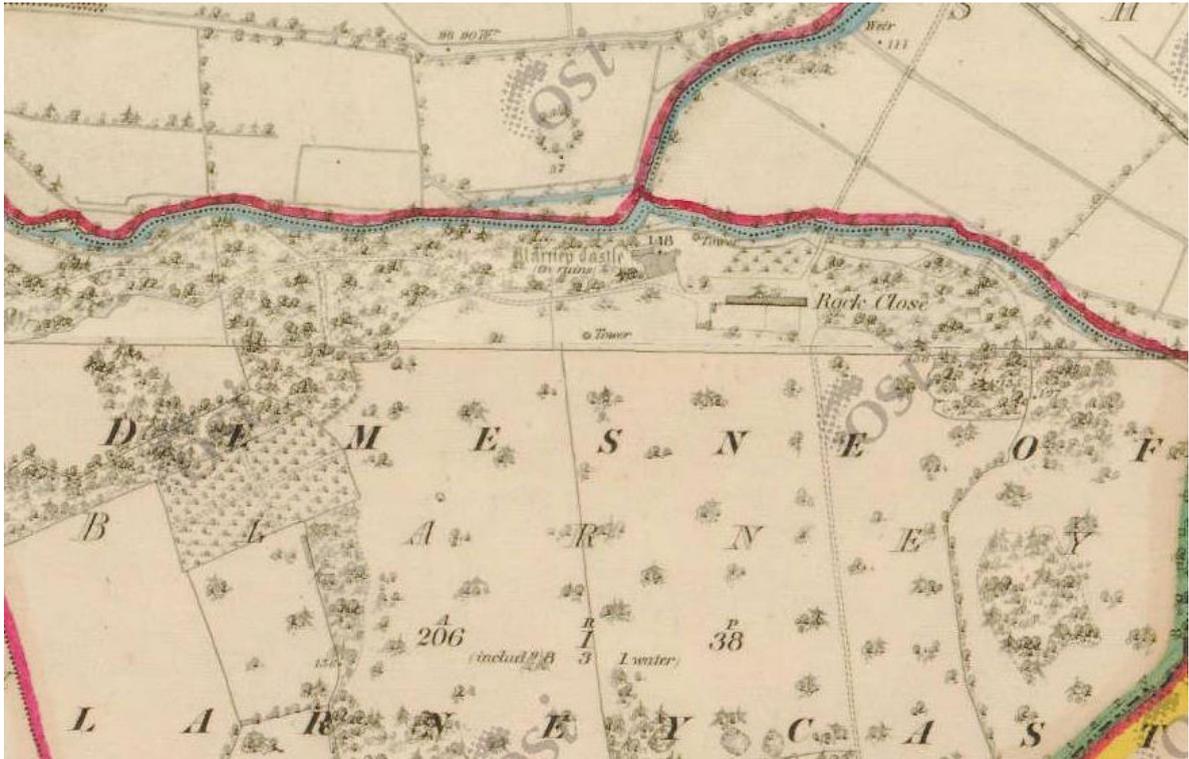
However, by the 1650s the castle complex was no longer the principal residence of the McCarthys. The family had become the earls of Clancarty and had become, more conveniently from their perspective, ensconced at their castle at Macroom, Co. Cork. In the fifth a final phase of the castle’s development as an elite residence, the earliest

recorded neo-Gothic elite residence in Ireland, a four storey house with decorative corner towers, was erected on the site of the mid-seventeenth century manor house. Only few ivy covered facades of this building survived the gutting of the building in an accidental fire of 1820 (Lyttleton 2011).

Built heritage appraisal: one of the most important castles of the tower house type in Ireland. The site and its associations are of international significance.

4.1.2 Blarney Castle Demesne: In the aftermath of the Williamite war (1689-91, the McCarthy's Blarney estate was confiscated, and was eventually sold to Sir James Jefferyes, in 1703. Jefferyes' grandson, James St John Jefferyes went on to substantially develop the 1401-acre estate, by erecting the neo-Gothic mansion house (probably in the mid-eighteenth century) and though the creation an industrial village nearby (see below). The development of Blarney demesne parklands dates to St John Jefferyes' management of the estate. The elaborate landscape garden, which became known as the 'Rock Close' was first laid out in this period, and survives substantially unchanged, along with two folly towers, 'The Keeper's Watchtower' and the 'Lookout Tower'. However, after the destruction of the family residence by fire in 1820, the Jefferyes family moved to Inishera House in east Cork, and by 1824 the castle ground were already neglected, only to be revived when the estate passed, through marriage, to the Colthurst family in 1846. In 1874 the Colthurst family elected to return to Blarney and built the present and still current Colthurst family home, a scotch-Baronial mansion a few years later.

Built heritage appraisal: an important designed ornamental landscape of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which is of regional significance.



First Edition OS Map extract showing Blarney Castle and Demesne c. 1840s



Extract from First Edition Map c. 1840s showing Blarney Village prior to major development of mills.

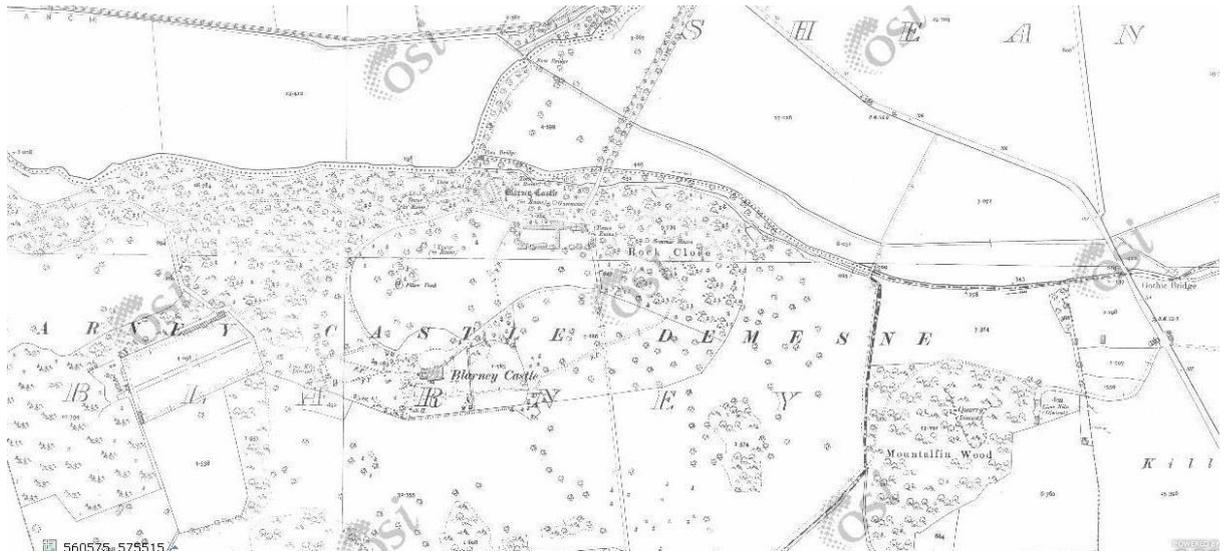
4.2 The development of Blarney village and associated industrial settlements

4.2.1 The linen industry: John Jefferyes inherited the Blarney estate upon his father's death in 1739, and almost immediately took on the role of the 'improving landlord', hoping to maximize the profits available from his estates. Earlier, county Cork landlords such as Sir Richard Cox at Dunmanway (1735) and Thomas Adderley at Inishannon, were already involved in the creation of textile villages, based on the processing of locally grown flax into linen. Thomas Adderley had even made the bold step of encouraging Ulster linen weavers to settle at Inishannon and provided workers' housing for them. The growth of the Cork industry was such that landlord-sponsored bleach textile villages were already in existence at Blarney, Doneraile, Clonakilty, Macroom and at other locations before 1770s (Rynne 2006). To this end St John Jefferyes created a planned village settlement near Blarney Castle, laid out around a 'village green', in 1765, complete with linen mill, upwards of twenty-five weavers' cottages, a bleach mill and bleach green. Large finishing works outside Ulster, indeed, as at Blarney had hitherto been quite rare: smaller bleachyards which bleached yarn only were more typical of the Drogheda and Cork industries. Regardless of size, a bleach green required a constant supply of clean water and an extensive area over which long webs of cloth could be spread. Perhaps the main locational consideration, however, was the availability of water-power from the River Martin, to power wash mills and beetling engines, processes involved in the finishing of linen cloth. Competition for good water powered sites was already forcing mechanized industries out of urban centres, where existing natural watercourses had already become congested with water-powered installations. The Blarney settlement which as Arthur Young noted in 1776 had twenty-five houses for weavers' families with four looms in

each, all provided by St John Jefferyes, was thus very much at forefront of similar developments in contemporary east central Scotland and Yorkshire (Young 1780, O'Mahoney 1984). In 1787, the first multi-storey cotton spinning mill in county Cork was built just to the north-east of the Blarney industrial settlement, some five years after that at Balbriggan completed in 1782 by Baron Hamilton. These new mills required increase horsepower to turn their waterwheels, and thus more reliable and powerful sources of hydraulic energy: immediate proximity to the import trans-atlantic shipping port at Cork was probably also important. The relative success of the eighteenth-century Blarney linen and cotton industries, also encouraged the establishment of linen and cloth printing works. Blarney along with Glasheen village on the western outskirts of Cork city was one of two such works in county Cork. Some seventy printers on linen, cotton along with fifteen cotton and calico printers are thought to have operated in eighteenth-century Ireland, which include Leixlip, county Kildare, Ballsbridge, Dublin, Belfast, Stratford-on-Slaney, county Wicklow, and Mosney, county Meath (Longfield 1955, 1981).

However, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, the severe economic recession which followed it, along with increasing competition with cotton (whose mechanized spinning proved easier than that of linen and which was now providing viable alternative to linen), the Blarney linen village experience an irreversible decline. Thomas Crofton Croker observed that within six years of the end of the Napoleonic wars (i.e. 1821), that village had been almost abandoned and that many of the houses were ruinous.

Built heritage appraisal: an important, eighteenth-century industrial settlement, with substantial remains and village green intact. **Regionally significant.**



Extract from 2nd Edition OS Map showing Blarney Castle and Demesne

4.2.3 The woollen industry: In 1815 the Mahony brothers of Cork city had brought over a specialist from the Yorkshire woollen industry to set up a steam-powered worsted factory near Cork. In 1824 Martin Mahony moved his Cork city-based woollen manufacturing business to Deaves' former cotton mill at Blarney, which he converted for the mechanical spinning of woollen and worsted yarns. Mahony's woollen mills at Blarney were the largest in Ireland for the greater part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On present evidence Mahony's mills were the first to use power looms in Ireland for weaving woollen cloth, having purchased them at the Great Exhibition in London in 1852 (Bielenberg 1991). Indeed, only from the late 1850s onwards, did their use become more frequent in the Irish woollen industry, and other mills established subsequently, such as the Athlone woollen mills, built in 1859, appear to have used them from the outset (Rynne 2006).

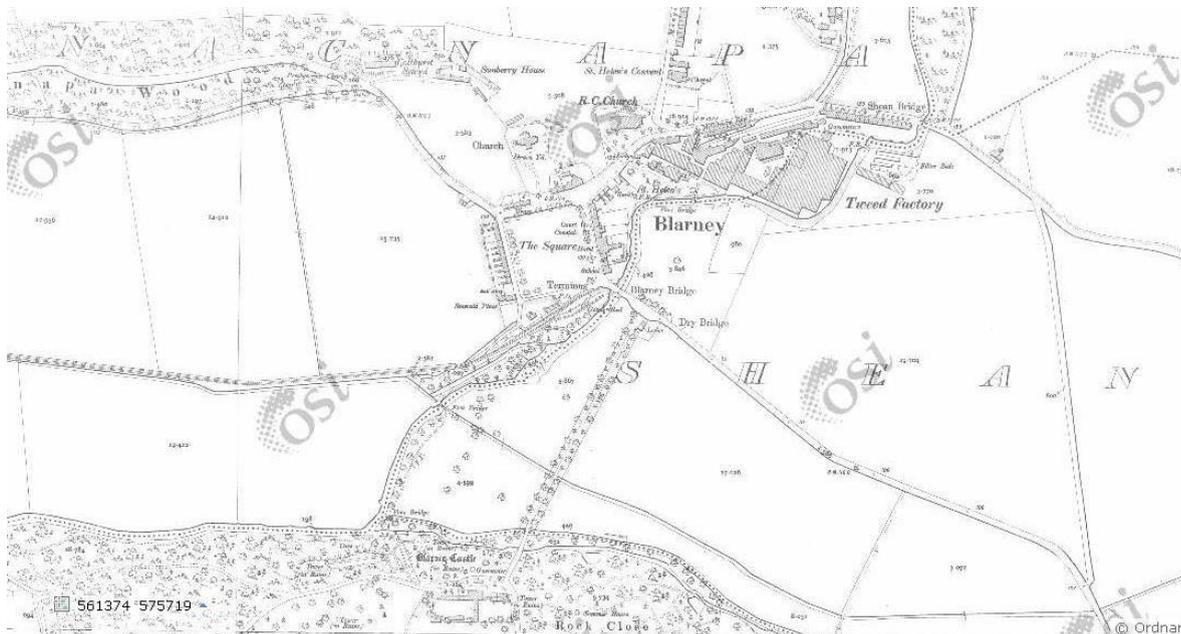
Mahony's quickly expanded operations on the site and by the end of the 1840s were operating

5, 638 spindles. By the 1860s this was the largest integrated mill (i.e. where all processes involved in the spinning, weaving and finishing of woollen cloth were undertaken on the same premises) of its type in Ireland. By 1889 the mills were powered by three steam engines and three water turbines, with a combined power of 550hp (Bielenberg 1991, 37-8). The mills were largely destroyed by fire in 1869, but were rebuilt and expanded in 1870, yet in the process were not fireproofed: the surviving three storey spinning mill of 1870 has wooden floors supported by cast iron columns.

By the early 1890s Mahony's employed some 700 people in their Blarney mills, which had become the largest woollen mill in Ireland, and whose scale of operations was on par with the contemporary Yorkshire woollen industry. From at least the 1860s onwards the company began to build worker's housing to the north of the main mill complex, on a scale thus far only matched by linen mills such as Bessbrook, Co. Armagh and the cotton mills at Portlaw, Co. Waterford. Mahoney's built six large terraces of houses and one small one to the north of the main mill complex, along with St Helen's Roman Catholic church. The longest terrace, Mangerton Terrace, has 24 houses, most of which are still occupied, in addition to the Telephone, Muskerry, Shamrock and Millstream terraces. Many of the houses have the distinctive, curved 'Portlaw' or 'Belfast truss' roofs, which suggests that their construction was influenced by the Malcomson's workers' settlement at Portlaw, Co. Waterford. Each house is also of the two-up, two-down variety (O'Brien 2004).

Built heritage appraisal: This the largest Irish nineteenth-century woollen mill, with substantial remains of the industrial complex, along with the company workers' houses of the 1860s-1880s, many of which are still occupied. This is also the first mill to use power looms. In industrial terms this industrial complex, along with its well preserved workers' housing, is of **national significance**.

Group value built heritage appraisal of Blarney industrial village: The survival of the eighteenth-century linen worker's village settlement, and the later woollen industry and its settlement is a unique association in Ireland, which is of **national significance**.



Extract from 2nd Edition OS Map Note extensive development of Mills and Light Railway line and station.

4.3 The Cork and Muskerry Light Railway 1887-1934

The increasing importance of Blarney as a tourist destination in the late nineteenth century led to the creation of a light railway link from the city of Cork to Blarney. Indeed, while Blarney was already served by a Great Southern and Western station from the 1840s, a direct link with Cork accommodated and channelled tourists from Atlantic liners from Cobh, via Cork, directly to the grounds of Blarney Castle. The light railway, popularly known as the 'Muskerry Tram', the Cork and Muskerry Light Railway was the city's first line built to the Irish narrow gauge of 3ft. The creation of this and other cheaply constructed light railways throughout rural Ireland was made possible by the Tramways and Public Expenses (Ireland) Act of 1883 (Rynne 1999). The act enabled tramway companies to obtain part or all of the finance to construct a line, the

principal beneficiaries in the greater Cork area being the Cork and Muskerry Light Railway and the Schull and Skibbereen line (Prideaux 1981, 6).

Tourism provided the impetus for the Cork and Muskerry scheme, the line providing a link between the city and Blarney Castle then, as now, one of the main visitor attractions in the Cork area. Work on the 8.5m mile stretch between Cork and Blarney began early in 1887, the contract being awarded to the Irish railway contractor, Robert Worthington (Jenkins 1993, 10-11). The Cork-Blarney section of the line was opened in 1887, with further sections being opened as far as Coachford in the following year and to Donoughmore in 1893 (ibid., 14-16).

The Cork terminus of the line was located at Bishop's Marsh, one of the last remaining islands of the River Lee's two main channels, and crossed the south channel via a small bridge leading to Western Road. For its first four miles the line acted to all intents and purposes as a tramway, before continuing across country as a normal railway. The upper face of the line on Western Road was laid flush with the roadway, and was set some 3ft in from the footpath on the left-hand side, whilst the line itself was single after emerging from the Bishop's Marsh terminus (now the site of Jury's River Lee Hotel).

The C & MLR, like its counterpart the Cork Blackrock and Passage Railway below), was amongst the first victims of the motor omnibus in the Cork area. The Southern Motorways omnibus company was operating buses on the Western Road in the 1920s, and by the early 1930s motor vehicles had already taken away most of the passenger traffic. In December 1934 the Great Southern Railway Company closed the line for the last time. Substantial remains of the Blarney terminus of the C & MLR, survive within the castle grounds, which largely accounts for their high degree of preservation. Individual buildings were simply re-used for other purposes.

Built heritage appraisal: The substantial surviving remains of the Blarney terminus of this line are of **regional significance**.

4.4 Natural Heritage

Blarney is located within the Broad Fertile Lowland Valleys character type as outlined by the County Development Plan 2014. It is an area of high landscape value and high landscape sensitivity. The land cover is primarily of fertile regularly shaped fields with mature broad leaf woodland and hedgerows. While natural heritage is outside of the scope of this report it is worth noting that the County Development Plan has designated the valley of the River Bride as a Scenic Landscape. Objective GI 6-2 Draft Landscape Policy of the Development Plan is to “ensure that the management of development throughout the County will have regard for the value of the landscape, its character, distinctiveness and sensitivity”. There are two Proposed Natural Heritage areas which lie within the geographical scope of the report. These include:

- Blarney Castle Woods (site code 1039) which are located to the South-West of the village centre within the Blarney Estate and are bound to the North by the Blarney River and to the South by Estate parklands.
- Blarney Bog (site code 1837)
- Blarney Lake (site code 1798)

Blarney also has aesthetic value as a scenic area, visual attractiveness as well as its historical and archaeological significances. This is covered in more detail in McCutcheon Halley Landscape Visual Assessment.

4.5 Intangible Cultural Heritage – the Legend of the Blarney Stone

The Blarney Stone phenomenon: the origins of a tourist ritual

The kissing of the Blarney is essentially a tourist ritual of no great antiquity, which on present evidence cannot be dated before the second half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, for most of the eighteenth century the castle was better known for its impressive landscaping by the Jefferyes family and for the views of the locality afforded by its battlements. Most surviving accounts before the early 19th century do not mention the stone at all (Williams 2011). It seems likely, therefore, that the popularity of the ritual began only in the early nineteenth century, and shortly after achieved international renown. By the 1830s some confusion arose as to which stone visitors were expected to kiss, although the enduring tradition has favoured that located at base of a machicolation in the castle's south wall. Despite recent comments on the 'authenticity' of this stone by Samuel and Hamlyn (2000), the archaeological evidence does not support this, although ultimately whether this was the original stone or not somewhat misses the point. Doubtless visitors were interested less in historical veracity than in the performance of a conventionalized act, which they could later recount to their family and friends.

As with most good myths and legends there are several theories behind the origin of the legend. Whether or not these stories are true and indeed if the origin of the legend of the Stone is ever discovered the truth of these could in fact be regarded as unimportant and the mystery of the origin as part of the attraction - it is the colour, ritual and the mystical legend that is the important part of the ICH of the Blarney landscape.

One theory is that the stone was Jacob's Pillow, brought to Ireland by the prophet Jeremiah. Another version states that its identity was revealed to the McCarthy family by a witch saved from drowning. It was also said to be the deathbed pillow of St Columba on the island of Iona. (www.blarneycastle.ie accessed December 2015)

Others say it may be a stone brought back to Ireland from the Crusades – the 'Stone of Ezel' behind which David hid on Jonathan's advice when he fled from his enemy, Saul. A few claim it was the stone that gushed water when struck by Moses.

Another variant is that Cormac MacCarthy, King of Munster, sent five thousand men to support Robert the Bruce in his defeat of the English at Bannockburn in 1314, a portion of the historic Stone was given by the Scots in gratitude.

Other versions of the story names the stone of Scone, the British Coronation Stone situated in Edinburgh or part of the Lia Fáil ("The Stone of Destiny") upon which the High King of Ireland was crowned. These Sovereignty Stone tales may be a nod to the Blarney Stone being the sovereignty stone of the McCarthy clan. O'Leary (2014) suggests that the stone is in fact the stone which was originally the inauguration ceremony which took place at Guynes Castle a few miles to the West (also known as Capels Hole) and may have been moved as part of the changeover of power between the Gaelic aristocrats and British colonialists. The act of kissing would have been a surrogate for kissing the feet of a king as an act of submission.

There also exists a tale where Cormac 'Liadir' McCarthy the builder of Blarney Castle Towerhouse was involved in a law suit, he appealed to the goddess Clíona for assistance, She instructed him to kiss the first stone he saw in the morning before going to defend himself in court, he duly did and pleaded his case with such eloquence that he won. This places this story in the 14th century. Another version of this describes how Cormac MacCarthy held its castle in 1602, and concluded an

armistice with Carew, the Lord President, on condition of surrendering the fort to the English garrison. Day after day his lordship looked for the fulfilment of terms, but received nothing but soft speeches, till he became the laughing stock of Elizabeth's ministers, and the dupe of the lord of Blarney. (Knowles, 2001, p145)

Another legend suggests that Queen Elizabeth I requested Cormac Teige McCarthy, the Lord of Blarney, be deprived of his traditional land rights. Cormac travelled to see the queen, but was certain he would not persuade her to change her mind as he wasn't an effective speaker. He met an old woman on the way who told him that anyone who kissed a particular stone in Blarney Castle would be given the gift of eloquent speech. Cormac went on to persuade the queen that he should not be deprived of his land (www.irishindeed.com/page.htm?pg=BLARNEYSTONE Accessed December 14th 2015).

What Blarney is known for throughout the world is not the castle but the term Blarney meaning persuasive talk, sweet speech, flattering eloquence and so forth, it has also been adapted by American thieves as slang for picking a lock (O'Leary, 2014, 5). William Henry Hurlbert wrote in 1888 that the legend of the stone seemed to be less than a hundred years old at that time, suggesting the tradition began late in the 18th century. (*Hurlbert, William Henry (1888). Ireland Under Coercion: The Diary of an American (2nd ed.). Houghton Mifflin. p. 232.*)

This association with speech and flattery may be a colonial contortion of how Blarney was one of Ireland's last schools of Gaelic poetry (*Dámhscól na Blárann*) owing to the patronage of the MacCarthys to the last of Ireland's bards or *filí* in Munster. Indeed, a poem from the 17th century by Aengus nan-Aor who satirises the MacCarthys as lacking as patrons (O'Leary, 2014, 6).. "Flattery (*bladmahd*) I got for food, In great Muskerry of mac Diarmada, So that my chest dried up from thirst." (O'Daly 1852, 65).

The establishment of the Blarney Stone as a tourist attraction and the origin of the ritual of kissing the stone

Folklore is the vital component when considering the Blarney landscape, the development of the 19th century tradition of kissing the stone and its development as one of Irelands earliest tourism centers was generated through the establishment of the myth and ritual of kissing the stone to acquire the gift of eloquence. As stated above the archaeology is regionally significant however it is the oral culture, the Intangible Cultural Heritage which has established the castle and stone as internationally significant. The question then is posed when did the tradition of kissing the stone first arise?



The Blarney Stone

It is believed that Blarney began its role as a tourist attraction under the auspices of Sir James Jeffreys, the then Governor of Cork, who bought the the land in 1701. Prior to his arrival Blarney had fallen into a state of wilderness as reported by Corkery and Samuel Lewis who described it as “an impenetrable wilderness and the last receptacle for wolves in this part of the country” (Lewis, 1837, 61). This was after all buildings with the exception of the Castle had been leveled by Cromwellian forces. In addition to establishing an English-styled village and 13 mills built for protestant planters around the linen and cotton industry, James Jeffreys essentially rebuilt the Estate and upgraded the Demesne at Blarney by establishing Italian style landscapes and ornamental gardens and an arboretum with walks throughout. In 1797 a visitor to the Blarney estate described gardens and specifically the Rock Close as “a wonderful specimen of what taste & money can accomplish, whole mountains moved & piled together in happy combination the ewe & ash shooting from the hearts throw their spread [sic] arms across the devious wilderness.” (Cited by Lyttleton, J., 2011, Ch. 1, p. 18)

In James Jeffreies report of works at the Blarney Estate in 1776 there is no mention of the Stone which would suggest the tradition had not yet emerged. It has been suggested that the Blarney Stone is in fact an inauguration stone of the McCarthy clan which has been relocated from its original position at Gynes Castle which was situated a few miles to the West of Blarney Castle and its this status which may have been the origin of the ritual of kissing the stone.

Richard Milliken (1767-1815) a Cork based poet, appears to have got the ball rolling when he composed the famous and satirical poem “The Groves of Blarney” published c. 1800 which placed Blarney in the public eye and began to attract visitors. “The castle with its splendidly adorned gardens with statues and picturesque pseudo-megaliths, were a showpiece in the eighteenth century, admired by painters and poets” (Stephenson, n.d). There is evidence to suggest however that

Millikens poem was in fact a burlesque satire being someone who resented the “cult of the picturesque” while also having a colonial “dig” at the bardic tradition which had only shortly before been squashed by colonial presence.

Where Fr. Prout found the idea of kissing the stone is uncertain, he may have picked it up from an older folk tale of the area or may have simply made it up to attract tourists. The Rock Close was always associated with a druidic cult, witches and fairies which was influenced the creation of the “wishing steps” or “Witches Steps” (as recorded by Croker 1824) which tied in with the romantic sensibilities of the time. Kissing the stone may have been an extension of this kind of activity. By the time Crofton Croker wrote about Blarney in his “Researches in the South of Ireland” published in 1824 the ritual of kissing the stone had been established –.

“but to a curious superstition it [Blarney] is perhaps more indebted for celebrity. A stone in the highest part of the castle wall is pointed out to visitors, which is supposed to give whoever kisses it the peculiar knowledge of deviating from veracity with unblushing countenance whenever it may be convenient – hence the well known phrase of “Blarney”.



Wishing steps at Blarney

Visitors are invited to ascend and descend the steps with their eyes closed to have a wish granted by a witch who in exchange for wish granting takes embers from the fires at Blarney for her own fire.

Vital to the further promotion of Blarney is the addition of the important last verse to Millikens poem added by Fr. Francis Sylvester Mahony (a.k.a. Father Prout) a Cork-born humorist (and friend of Dickens and Thackeray) who could be responsible for making Blarney the International visitors attraction it is today. In his "Reliques of Father Prout" published in 1836 he enthusiastically promotes the kissing of the

Blarney Stone:

There is a stone there, that whoever kisses,
Oh! he never misses to grow eloquent.
'Tis he may clamber, to a lady's chamber,
Or become a member of Parliament.
A clever spouter he'll sure turn out, or
An out-and-outer to be let alone.
Don't hope to hinder him, or to bewilder him.
Sure he's a pilgrim from the Blarney Stone.

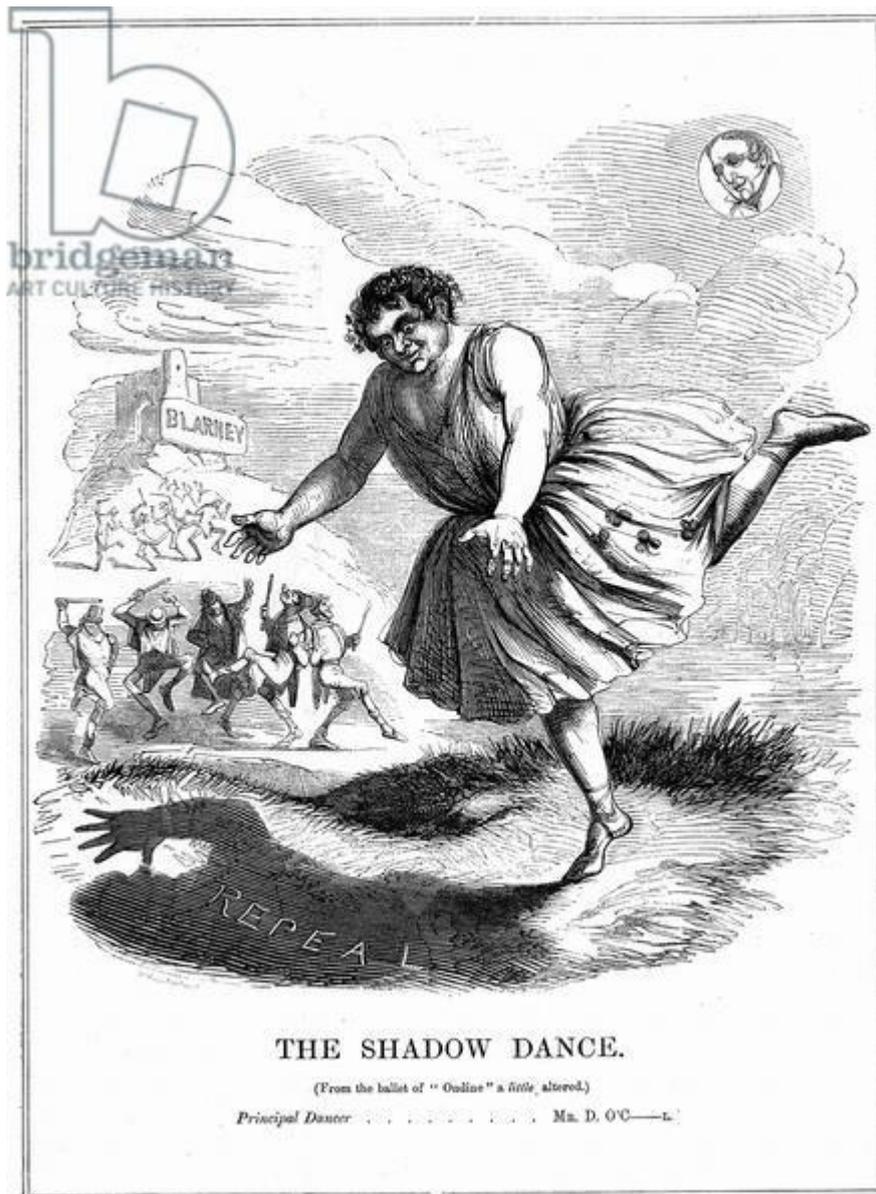
Blarney had established its international reputation as a tourist attraction associated with the ritual of kissing by 1841 when a Mr and Mrs S.C. Hall in which they say:

“Few places in Ireland are more familiar to English ears than Blarney; the notoriety is attributable, first to the marvelous qualities of its famous “stone”, and next to the extensive popularity of the song “The groves of Blarney, they are so charming”(Hall S.C and Hall A. M, 1841, Ireland its Scenery and Character, p47)



Kissing the Blarney Stone 1897.

Indeed Blarneys fame had become so mainstream in England as to have been referenced in a cartoon published by Punch in London in 1843, entitled 'The Shadow Dance', which depicts Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) 'The Liberator', (an Irish politician and leader of the Repeal movement against the union with Britain), "*as a man of little substance, but with the gift of words, having kissed the Blarney stone.*"



By the late nineteenth century, tourists arriving into Cobh on American cruise liners already had the Blarney Stone on their sightseeing itineraries. A light railway system, the Cork and Muskerry Light Railway (C & MR), which became commonly known as the 'Blarney Tram' or the 'Muskerry Tram', was constructed (1887) to bring day-trippers and tourists to Blarney from Cork City and beyond. Interestingly, in 1888 a reconstruction of the Castle was a feature of the Irish exhibition at the Olympia in London, and subsequently at the Chicago World Columbian Exposition in 1893. (Lyttleton, 2011)

So it is clear while it was initially the establishment of fashionable ornamental landscaping, picturesque grounds and panoramic views from the Castle walls which attracted early tourists to Blarney, and while these would have been subject to fashion it was the ritual and story behind kissing the stone which has cemented its popularity and longevity as a visitors attraction.

As a testament to the power of the legend of the stone, in the 1930s an Irish-American Syndicate offered Sir George Colthurst £100,000 to borrow the stone and take it to exhibit it in America and Canada for 1 year. Sir George in an interview mentioned how this was not a unique proposition and he had received similar offers. The Stone was already receiving approx 2000 visitors per annum at that stage. A local councillor stated "it is one of the oldest, most famous things in Ireland" so by the 1930s the Blarney Stone was famous not only in the UK but also in the US.

5. ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

The significance and success of Blarney is not based just visual or archaeological/ built heritage aspects. It is the combination of culture, visual aspects and meaning which are central to the understanding of landscapes which function as documents and living achieves. (Schazzosi, 2004) The mixed landuses of the Blarney village, estate and castle (industrial, agricultural, defensive residential, touristic) have organically developed through time forming the landscape as we know it today and giving it its unique historic character. Blarney village has retained much of its 19th century industrial form and character and the estate retains its formal gardens, relict survivals in the form of the designed gardens, and continuous occupation in the form of the castle, Queen Anne house and Scots Baronial 19th century country house.



Preliminary analysis of landuse at Blarney

What is considered valuable by the local community is what is protected and that which survives and therefore defines their sense of place. Tourism has been an element of this local economy for almost 2 centuries and has shaped how the community operates. The combined resources of tourism and linen/wool

manufacture have influenced the layout and operation of the village. The relationship between the historical and mythic has shaped the area and developed its distinctive character.

The interaction between the castle, estate and village has scope for considerable development in terms of a visitors' experience. The relationships between the estate and village while originally very strong are less evident today and this could be improved by improving public realm and providing more information within the public realm in the form of signage etc.

Cultural Heritage Significances of the Blarney Historic Landscape

Significant Cultural Heritage	Type of Cultural Heritage	Protection	Level of Significance
Tower house and bawn	Archaeological/ Built Heritage	National Monuments Act & Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000.	National
18 th century Queen Anne House	Archaeological/ Built Heritage	National Monuments Act & Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000.	Regional
Victorian Country House	Built Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00380) NIAH Regionally Significant.	Regional
Ice House	Built Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00382) (RPS 00454)	Local
Bridge	Built Heritage	Part IV of the	Local

		Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00378)	
Ornamental Tower	Built Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00383) & Architectural Conservation Area	Local
Pseudo-Dolmen and Rock	Landscape Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00383) & Architectural Conservation Area	Local
Rock Close including elements such as Pseudo Dolmen and tree ring	Landscape Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00383) & Architectural Conservation Area	Local
3 Lime Kilns,	Built Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00383) & Architectural Conservation Area	Local
Quarry	Archaeological	National	Local

		Monuments Acts	
An Enclosure	Archaeological	National Monuments Acts	Local
Woolen Mills Industrial Complex	Built Heritage & Industrial Heritage	Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (RPS 00383) & Architectural Conservation Area	National
Blarney Bleach Green and associated industrial housing	Built Heritage & Industrial Heritage	Architectural Conservation Area	National
Legend of the Blarney Stone	Intangible Cultural Heritage	Not Protected	International
Ritual of Kissing the Blarney Stone	Intangible Cultural Heritage	Not Protected	International

*Note Planning and Development Act 200 protection extends to the structures and their curtilage which would incorporate much of the estate.

5.1 Archaeological and Architectural continuum

It is important to note that in the case of the Blarney Estate and Village that these buildings are considered to be a mix of regional and national significance however as a *collection* of residential structures spanning 6 centuries they could be considered as a group to be of **national significance** showing continuous occupation from the 14th century. There is a continuum of architectural styles from towerhouse, to

enlarged towerhouse, Queen Anne residence, Scots Baronial Country House, with industrial housing attached to the estate this is a rare collection to have one site still surviving.

5.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage – the Legend of the Blarney Stone

“‘Blarney’, a liminal contradiction, can be both putative and dubious, both a physical place and a fable of the mind, and both an archaic poetic centre and modern ‘plastic-paddyland’” (O’Leary, 2014, p1)

While the archaeology and built heritage of the area may be of regional and national significance, Blarney itself is of major International Significance in terms of its international reputation as a premiere tourist attraction in Ireland and has a higher profile internationally than most other tourist attractions in Ireland including some of Irelands UNESCO Heritage Sites.

As indicated above while Blarney Castle is one of Irelands largest tower houses it is not of international archaeological significance. It is not the castle that has earned it is international reputation but rather its fame is due to the legend that surrounds the castle and the Blarney Stone.

“but to a curious superstition it [Blarney] is perhaps more indebted for celebrity. A stone in the highest part of the castle wall is pointed out to visitors, which is supposed to give whoever kisses it the peculiar knowledge of deviating from veracity with unblushing countenance” (Croker, 1824)

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is defined by UNESCO as “cultural expressions that have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity”.

(UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, is the only specialized agency within the United Nations system with a specific mandate in culture). This sense of identity and the feeling of belonging (to a country, a tradition, a way of life) is an emotional response and is recognised as important the world over. While not necessarily linked to their economic value, the two often go hand in hand as in the case of Blarney.

Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects, it includes inherited traditions and living expressions and includes oral traditions, rituals, social practices, performing arts, festive events, knowledge (skills, medicines etc) and crafts. In the case of Blarney the strongest elements of ICH is the legend surrounding the stone (oral tradition) and the ritual of kissing it.

Due to its mode of transmission ICH is considered an “inclusive” phenomenon which encourages a sense of identity, responsibility and social cohesion. It is in this arena where Blarneys strongest significances lie with Irish diaspora traveling there to experience what is regarded as a unique Irish phenomenon where myth and legend imbue the archaeology with another layer of special meaning.

Blarneys importance is as a symbol of “Irish-ness”, it meets an expectation of foreign visitors of romanticized history and landscape, tradition, lineage and continuity which satisfies a basic need for identification with, and belonging to, a culture especially amongst emigrants diaspora and their descendants. The Victorian landscape and indeed the Victorian phenomenon of visiting the Stone harks back to a time of mass emigration from Ireland during the mid 19th century, and arguably satisfies the expectations of a diaspora or romanticised sense of “old Ireland” - that little has changed since their ancestors left Ireland for the US in the mid-19th century. For tourists who are not associated with the diaspora, Blarney also holds significance by representing “Irish-ness” as an untainted natural landscape, green, clean, non-

industrial countryside. This is especially interesting considering that in the 19th century Blarney was one of Irelands first factory centred settlements and the Castle and Estate were set within a thriving industrial centre.

Intangible cultural heritage as defined by UNESCO has the following attributes of value:

- **Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time:** intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part;
- **Inclusive:** we may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practised by others. Whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are intangible cultural heritage: they have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future. Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. It contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large;
- **Representative:** intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities;

- **Community-based:** intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.

5.3 Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

Intangible Cultural Heritage is considered especially fragile because, unlike monuments, it depends wholly on people for its perpetuation. Aside from being a source of identity and a community “binder”, an understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

UNESCO has succeeded in the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which strengthens new policies in the cultural heritage sphere. The Convention adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003 is the first international treaty to provide a legal, administrative and financial framework to safeguard ICH. At a national level, this Convention calls for the safeguarding of the ICH present on a state’s territory. It also requests that each State identify and define such heritage with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organization to work towards sustainable development.

As with all forms of cultural expression ICH is under contestant change and evolution however there are identified threats:

1. many expressions and manifestations are under pressure and threat from globalization (i.e. the over-reaching influence of western capitalism driven by philosophies based on infinite economic growth) which will result in cultural homogenization.

2. Lack of understanding, support and appreciation. It ICH is not actively nurtured we risk it being lost forever or becoming frozen, used for the wrong reasons and irrelevant to the present.

Supporting ICH preserves it and strengthens it for future generations and sustains it allowing it to change and adapt. While Blarney Castle will stand for potentially hundreds of years with or without the influence of human beings the ICH surrounding the Blarney Stone phenomenon is wholly dependent on human transmission, as an example when Professor Kelly was excavating New Grange passage tomb there was only one reference in passing to the winter solstice in the oral culture of the community i.e. the ICH of the site had been all but lost from lack of transmission. In addition to tangible cultural heritage, ICH requires protection at a policy level to inform development etc. in the area.

Safeguarding ICH requires different measures from those used to preserve archaeology, monuments, sites and natural spaces. It needs to be kept alive through practice, celebration, continuing relevance and the passing from one generation to the next.

How is this relevant to Blarney? The perpetuation of the Legend of the Blarney Stone is intrinsically linked with its role as a tourist attraction. In the context of the process of attrition on the historic character of Blarney through inappropriate development which does not enhance the significant character of the area would decrease its appeal as a destination and numbers of visitors would reduce. It would lose its importance to both locals and visitors alike as a source of pride, identity, belonging and the celebration of myth and legend. The safeguarding of Blarneys ICH depends on the local community valuing the character of their area their active protecting and enhancement of it, the most common and powerful way is through the planning policies of the Local Authority.

With regard to the touristic value it is important that a balance is reached.

“Safeguarding ICH is also an important source of economic development, though not necessarily through income-raising activities but by ensuring its vitality and viability”. This specifically refers to initiatives identifying and documenting heritage through collecting, research, promotion, revitalizing/ enhancement, and transmission of it all contribute to its survival through it being valued and relevant. Activities such as tourism can be a tool to it’s revitalization however care must be taken so as not to reduce its meaning to a purely economic one. While the ritual of kissing the Blarney Stone started as a touristic exercise the oral traditions around it and also the Woolen Mills remains to be officially collected and celebrated.

Article 4 of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organisation) prescribes the protection of natural, artistic, archaeological and cultural heritage, to allow ... folklore to survive and flourish, rather than causing [it] to degenerate and become standardised.

Cultural wealth is one of the principal motivations for travel. Tourists seek to engage with unique cultural experiences such as kissing the Blarney Stone. ICH is a vital component of maintaining cultural diversity in the climate of ever expanding globalization and is important for the maintenance of a sense of identity and cohesion within communities in addition to respect for other communities and ways of life. Blarney is a point of attraction for precisely this reason, it is a unique expression of activity/ ritual associated with a unique legend which is distinctive to Blarney itself and is not to be found elsewhere in Ireland or indeed the world. In this way it exemplifies how ICH exists both in the traditional and contemporary life of a community as not only is the Blarney Stone and its legend a source of identity but also is the foundation of much of the economic activity in the area. The responsible

promotion of living heritage for tourism purposes can generate employment, slow down rural flight migration and nurture a sense of civic pride in communities.

Tourism can be a powerful incentive for the preservation and enhancement of Intangible Cultural Heritage however it must be thoughtfully managed if it is to flourish in an increasingly globalised world. This is important both on an individual, local planning policy and national scale. Co-operation between communities, local authorities and the tourism and heritage sectors, built on a genuine appreciation for the aspirations and values of all parties can ensure successful and meaningful survival. The purpose of outlining the significance of the ICH of Blarney in a planning perspective is to highlight how inappropriate development, insensitive to the historic character of the area would erode the sense of physical beauty but also change how the area operates and erode the sense of uniqueness of the place, civic pride and perpetuation of a mysterious ritual which is the primary attraction to Blarney.

6. LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section assesses attributes such as sensitivity, significance, and pressures of change to inform future management. The historical and cultural significance of the Blarney area has been outlined above. In this section recommendations are outlined which not only protect but *enhance and underpin* the significance of the area so that informed change will reinforce the cultural strengths of the area with associated civic and economic advantages. The aim behind these recommendations is for the proactive management of the historic character of the Blarney area. This is done by understanding the complexity of an area including the significance and vulnerability of the Cultural Heritage of Blarney (as outlined above).

Article 2.7 of The Blarney Macroregion LAP states: “Part of this Municipal District in particular the main town of Blarney is located within “Metropolitan Cork”, which

(together with Cork City) is considered to be a “single market in terms of housing and jobs”. Here, it is important that the adequacy of the supply of land for housing is considered at a Strategic Planning Area level rather than at an industrial main settlement level because of the local physical and infrastructure limitations that apply to different towns.”

It is important in the light of planning framework that the cultural significance of the Blarney area not just the Castle and Estate are highlighted.

Types of change	How these changes are likely to impinge on key historic features and relationships that underpin the historic character of the area affected.	Robustness/ fragility of features/ relationships to change anticipated (Robust, Fragile, Very Fragile)
Agricultural improvements	Changes to agricultural activity are unlikely to affect the historic character of the area provided there is no major changes in scale and infrastructural changes associated	Robust
Re-zoning - Commercial	Changes to the zoning around the Estate and Village has the potential for major negative impact on the historic character of the area. Zoning which restricts the type of new development and strengthening of existing retail core of the village would positively impact on the historic character of the area. Zoning which allows for increased development in the area could threaten and undermine the historic character of the area. The impacts of knock-on changes such as traffic patterns and congestions around development must also be considered.	Very Fragile
Rezoning - Civic	The development and siting of local	Very fragile

	community educational/ healthcare/ leisure facilities again should be considered in the light of the historic character of the area especially when considering increased traffic flow etc.	
Conservation works to built heritage/ archaeology	Conservation projects will not have a negative impact on the historic character of the area and would enhance the historic character of the area.	Robust
Rezoning - Housing Developments	Increased housing developments could potentially negatively impact the historic grain and patina of the Estate and Village depending on scale and design. Secondary activity resulting from an increase in local population must be considered.	Very Fragile
Improvements to Public Realm	Changes to the public realm would affect the historic character of the area both negatively and positively depending on the design, choice of materials, siting etc. Careful planning in this regard in creating awareness could result in a positive underpinning of the historic character of the area through signage etc	Very Fragile
Synergistic effects i.e. the accumulation of smaller actions such as a combination of public realm, repeated one-off housing, inappropriate retail	Synergistic effects erode the historic character of the area over time. Protection of the "setting" of the castle is important. The landscape setting is the cradle in which the castle is nestled and changes in the landscape will affect the historic character of the area. Indirect effects are also relevant i.e. changes in land use for example changes in traffic patterns, increased traffic etc resulting in congestion etc.	Very Fragile

Table2. Cultural Heritage elements and vulnerabilities to change

Socio-economic and community values – employment patterns, population mix and commercial uses can all affect the historic character of an area both positively and negatively. Tourism is a special economic value to which relies on the historic landscape character as in the case of Blarney. Historic character also part of the visitors intuitive appreciation of places and contributes to an areas touristic value in a more subtle way. Sensitive areas tend not to change much (e.g. the castle itself), less unusual areas do change and while they may not be important they often contain local distinctiveness and a strong community sense of place. Incidents must be avoided where areas that have already been subject to large scale and rapid recent change having lost much of their historic character are vulnerable to further change with loss of any remaining historic character.

The majority of development is managed through the development management process at county level with most major developments requiring a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which includes Heritage Impact Statements. The existing policies and guidelines provide a framework for consistent decision making. It is hoped that this document would provide further information to inform policies and guidelines in the Blarney area paying due regard to the tangible historical and especially intangible cultural heritage which has heretofore been overlooked in planning policy.

Change can be insidious in urban areas through supply of amenities (electricity, broadband, lighting etc) and well intentioned improvements to public realm. These may lead to the loss of the historic patina of a street or area. Examples of this can be seen in Kilkenny City where old street signage was replaced with new less visually appropriate signs and in Buttevant where the 19th century carved stone street features which marked plot boundaries were removed from the footpaths in the

new scheme resulting in the loss of a certain amount of historic street “feel” at a subconscious level. Improvements in the urban realm at Blarney have heretofore been minimal (see appendix 1) and do not support the international significance of the village, estate and castle. Additions of street furniture, signage, pavement renewals etc. should communicate this regard through choice of design, material etc. Measures to induce change and promote conservation need not be mutually exclusive and may indeed be used to support the enhancing of the historic public realm.

Recommendation 1. That policies be put in place whereby improvements to public realm are carried out cognizant of the historic character of Blarney Estate and Village and that all improvements be designed in such a manner as to enhance and support this historic character, this would influence the choice of street furniture, lighting, railings, seating, signage, litter bins, paving (cobbling) etc. Public Realm upgrades should take into account the high number of pedestrians in particular during tourist season and provisions should be made for high volumes of pedestrian traffic.



Recommendation 2: Consideration could also be given to enhancing the historic significances of Blarney Village, Estate and Castle. This can take the form of on-street information, tourist trails through the village, smart phone apps, festivals etc. The approach to Blarney could be greatly enhanced whereby the experience of Blarney is built up from the approach from a distance away, this can be

communicated through signage which conveys the historic significance from the motorway, other routeways and the entrance to the village



Signage supporting historic significance



Signage for Blarney does not promote the historic character of the area.

It must be born in mind that countless incremental changes, carried out without fully understanding impacts on a wider perspective over time deplete the historic character of an area at an almost subconscious level. It is this which should be avoided at Blarney given its international cultural significance. The assignment of Blarney as an Architectural Conservation Area is a very positive step in safeguarding the architectural character of the area however it could be argued that Blarneys significance and character is not defined by and reaches beyond the ACA.

Recommendation 2. That the “feeling” of the historic character of the area be protected through policies which prevent the attrition of the accumulation of small insensitive changes on the historic character of the area which dilute the historic feeling of an area (e.g. Retail developments, housing settlements, one off housing etc).

Alternations to existing structures that are not designed sympathetically to the historic character of the area would have a negative effect on the experience or

impression of the historic' folkloric character of the area i.e. the physical removal or addition of features – either within the estate or village.

Recommendation 3. That policies be put in place whereby the removal of local structures and/or features or the addition to existing structures and features are carried out in a manner which enhances the historic/ folkloric character of the area. It is suggested that consultation with local residents be carried out to identify these (this can be part of a Village Design Statement or somesuch).

Change can also be overt, alterations or changes or intrusions on the landscape can affect how a place is perceived. Blarney is also a semi-rural area where major changes to agricultural practices or wholesale change due to re-zoning of land use would negatively impact on the character of the area.

Recommendation 4. That policies and zoning be put in place where developments or changes in land use consider impacts on the historic character of the landscape (in particular the approach to the village centre and castle) as matter of precedence. Where additional housing developments are proposed that these be designed in such as way as to keep the historic core of Blarney village distinct with a clear separate identity and avoid blending new developments into the historic area.

Development and the promotion of the historic character of the area need not be mutually exclusive. However development requires an understanding of significances, a sensitivity and creativity in design. There are guidelines in place for the Architectural Conservation Area however a design guide which acknowledges intangible cultural heritage and locally important areas/landmarks is required.

Recommendation 5. A Village Design Statement be drawn up specifically for Blarney with consultation with stakeholders and the public. Additionally that a Design Guide for Public and Private Development be produced for example by an interdisciplinary team of the Architecture, Folklore and Archaeology Departments at UCC on behalf of the Local Authority to create specific guidelines assist and inform developers and investors on how to sensitively develop within the historic landscape around Blarney. This should be produced in the short-term future to coincide with the launch of the revised Local Area Plan.

Recommendation 6. That the Architectural Conservation Area be reinforced by a Statement of Character of the area with a list of requirements specific to the architecture and character of Blarney be drawn up for inclusion in the Local Area Development Plan

One of the important elements of the historic and mythic landscape around Blarney is the perception of the place as one of history, myth, legend, story, archaeology and continuity and ancient presence. This is what draws visitors to Blarney. It is a place to wonder at or to seek a sense of identity for many who visit.

Recommendation 7. Precedence should be given to the legibility of the visual appearance and the tangibility of the historical and mythical character of the area. Proactive steps should be taken to promote the unique historic character of Blarney Castle, Estate and Village in both publicly and privately owned areas within the public realm.

The main economic activities and employment of the area are based around retail and tourism, the industry relies on the quality and attractiveness of the built heritage and natural landscape of the Blarney Area.

Recommendation 8. Opportunities to enhance historic character and socioeconomic values of heritage through conservation-led regeneration/ initiatives should be encouraged.

The historic landscape is constantly evolving and is subject to change from both human and non-human influences. The basis behind these recommendations is to manage change effectively through more informed planning and sympathetic design to support the following:

1. quality of life in the area generally,
2. habitat preservation,
3. sustainable long term tourism economy,
4. knowledge and understanding of sense of place, civic pride etc.

These recommendations are addressing potential gaps in the current planning and development policies outlined in the Cork County Development Plan with particular regard to Intangible Cultural Heritage and an overall consideration of the historic landscape as a whole interactive entity.

Integration with other guidance and frameworks

This Historic Landscape Characterization Study is designed to integrate with other documents outlining guidance and frameworks such as:

- The Cork County Development Plan
- Cork Rural Design Guide
- Guidelines for the Management and Development in Architectural Conservation Areas
- Preserving our Placenames Heritage in the Naming of New Developments
- Blarney Electoral Area Local Area Plan

□ Proposed Blarney-Macroon Municipal District Local Area Plan

It is suggested that a Blarney Village Design Statement would also be of use. This would be a consultative process with the local population and outline design guidelines and policies for private and public interventions and development including upgrading of public realm without the loss of distinctiveness of the village.

7. CONCLUSION

“Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) identifies the contribution of the past to the landscape.” – The Heritage Council

Blarney Estate and Village is located 8km to the North West of Cork City on the N20 road to Limerick. The village is set in a wooded river valley and is an attractive 18th century designed village and 19th century industrial landscape and retains much of its Late Georgian/ Victorian character. It has international cultural significance being one of Irelands premiere tourist attractions and contains visitor amenities such as retail outlets, hotels and leisure facilities. The heritage value of Blarney has always been recognized with previous Development Plans deflecting away significant growth to protect the towns qualities as the principle tourist attraction in the region. Despite this however there are few policies to protect the significant Industrial Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage and views associated with Blarney Castle and there is a notable lack of promotion of the historic significances of Blarney Estate and Village in the public realm given its international reputation as a visitors’ attraction. Despite its international significance there are no provisions for the enhancement of Blarney’s significance in the Blarney-Macroom Local Area Plan Review, the vision for Blarney appears to place an emphasis on developing the town as a commuter town and there are no proposals for the enhancement of the cultural and touristic strengths of the area.

To help address this, this Historic Landscape Characterisation is not concerned exclusively with particular sites or monuments, although these do of course contribute to character, but considers the generic landscape character of the whole of the area of Blarney Estate and Village. It contributes to practical landscape management by considering how monuments and folklore are related, their

significance as an entity and how these – tangible and intangible - are vulnerable to inappropriate developments and how they can be preserved and enhanced for the benefit of the local community and visitors alike.

Blarney is a complex landscape consisting of several components which originally evolved separately and now operate together bound by the legend of the Blarney Stone to form the characteristic historic landscape dedicated almost entirely to being an internationally significant visitor's attraction. As mentioned above Blarney Castle, Estate and village are regionally significant, that is that they are not internationally outstanding per se, it is their siting in the context of 600 years of continuous occupation, Industrial Heritage and most importantly the Legend of the Stone which pulls the landscape into an historic area of international significance, a place of pilgrimage which is of vital significance to a sense of place and the economic activities of the area. Romanticism of the past and of "Irish-ness" has led to the establishment of Blarney as a major place of appeal to visitors and it is the "romanticism" which requires protection in every aspect.

This Historic Characterisation Landscape Study proposes a number of recommendations which could be considered an addendum to the Blarney Estate Conservation Report written in 2004, and the Blarney Castle and Estate Landscape Visual Assessment Report 2020. It is hoped it will contribute to the proposed planning framework for Blarney to be set out in the cork City Development Plan. This study suggests that the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is the foundation of the success and distinctive character of Blarney and its environs however there are no policies set out for its protection or enhancement which is intrinsically linked to the retention and enhancement of the historic "feeling" and visual appeal of the area. Developments which will affect the aesthetic appeal of Blarney as an historic area will also have

negative impact on the perpetuation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and ultimately tourism.

The proposed opening of a rail system between Blarney and Cork City means that the area by virtue of its rural location, historic character and proximity to the City is prime for further development. This is reflected in the proposed re-zoning of the area for residential use and areas outlined for residential development in the 2015 Blarney-Macroom District Municipal Local Area Plan Review. In 2008 Blarney was identified as a “Developing Area” by a Government initiative which identified areas which were strategically important and were earmarked for development within 5-10 years of that report with the Cork County Development Plan of 2008 estimating an increase of 5000 people in just over 10 years. There are valid concerns that expansion will have a negative impact on the historic character of the historic significance of Blarney which is already lacking enhancement.

Cork County Development Plan 2014 recognises the need to protect the historic character of the Village in proximity to the Estate and Castle through “careful management of new development and to reinforce the importance of this area to the County’s tourism industry” (Blarney Electoral Area Local Area Plan, p29). However, there are no provisions for the protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage (the primary driver of Blarneys international reputation), views and reinforcement of Blarneys cultural significances within the public realm is negligible.

In the case of Blarney protecting significance is not enough, enhancement is required. The recommendations above outline ways in which the ICH or the “essence” of Blarney will not only be safeguarded but be underpinned and promoted by future development proposals. It is vital that future planning and development are cognizant of the importance of the cultural significance of the area both tangible

and intangible¹ and every proposal should be examined framed by that perspective so as not to dilute the historic character.

It is our recommendation that a Village Design Statement be carried out and a Design Guide for Public and Private Development be developed to ensure that any future re-zoning and development will be carried out informed by a full understanding of the significance of Blarney’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage and thereby protect and enhance both the historic character of the area and its tourism based local economy.

“It seems the timelessness [Blarney] might have hoped to portray for the tourist industry cannot be walled within the grounds of the estate anymore – it has hopped the wall” (O’Leary, 2012, 55)

Southgate Associates

August 2020

¹ archaeological, industrial, architectural and intangible in the form of the Legend of the Stone and the ritual of kissing the stone

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9. . Photographs

To illustrate the need for the promotion and strengthening of the heritage
significance of Blarney in the Public Realm



Main approach into Blarney town from the South via Blarney Road from Shankeil Cork City. Not all visitors to Blarney come by coach, while this is the secondary approach to Blarney it should not be underestimated how many visitors come by this route. The village and castle are indicated here by a small brown sign on the fingerpost.



Approach to Blarney from the South . This sign does not indicate to or promote the heritage value of Blarney village and estate.



By comparison, signage such as this underpins the cultural significances of their respective areas.



Enclosed Green at the heart of Blarney Village. While this is well maintained there is no clear promotion of the industrial heritage which was responsible for the founding of the village. There is also no pathways or seating within the green itself.



North side of the central green in the village. Note appropriate historic lamp-posts. Paving is not conducive to walking around the exterior of the green (there are no paths within the green either).



North side of the central green at the entrance to the Church of the Resurrection. Note historically appropriate cobbling style paving, lighting and seating. Whilst this is an ideal spot there is no information here promoting the heritage significance of Blarney village.



View from the North looking along the East side of the central green.



Tourist office and entrance to Blarney Woollen Mills.



Main approach to Blarney Village. The castle is indicated by a small brown sign on the fingerpost.

Signage does not promote the heritage significance of Blarney.



Main approach to Blarney village centre. Note historically appropriate bollards and cobbles. Sign on the building is the only reference to the significant industrial heritage in the public realm.



Information promoting the heritage significance of the village, estate and castle is poor on this only information plaque.



Main entrance to the Castle. Paving is poor and pedestrians are required to walk on the road. This is the main tourist access to visit the castle. At this point for the highest footfall in the village here is no information promoting, strengthening or enhancing the historic significance of this area.



Main entrance for visitors to the castle. Note the lack of paving for pedestrians. A cobble surface leaving the right of way for cars v pedestrians vague, removing the prioritisation of vehicles over pedestrians would improve safety considerably in addition to enhancing the historic aesthetic.



Primary approach to Blarney from the N20. Blarney Castle is indicated by large brown heritage signage with an additional sign on the roundabout.



Primary route to Blarney village. Signage does not promote the heritage significance of the village, estate or castle.

