



Submission to Draft Cork City Development Plan On behalf of Blarney Castle Estate

4th October 2021

BLARNEY CASTLE VIEWSHED

The McCutcheon Halley and Southgate reports describe the visual context and heritage relationship of the castle to the site. On a larger scale, the Blarney Castle viewshed can be broken down into three distinctly different types of views. The aerial image Figure L2 illustrates the dividing lines between the 3 viewsheds. The types of views are:

- 1) Estate Views – 180 degree panorama across the parkland demesne and historic house, with the lake and distant green ridges as the backdrop. Character: *Demesne Landscape, Rural*.
- 2) Townscape Views – 100 degree view over the ‘old’ town with the Woolen Mills and central quad. Residential housing emanates from town, beyond intermediate ridgelines, in a moderately dense configuration. Character: *Urban Activity, Contained Pattern*.
- 3) Rural Landscape Views – 80 degree view to the northwest dominated by mature wooded hillsides and a verdant meadow with the river flowing through it. Defined by the dense woodland to the west and school house to the north. Character: *Rural, Picturesque*.



Figure L2 – Aerial image with “x” demarcating the location of the castle tower, where 360 degree views are afforded, identifying the zones of the 3 primary viewsheds. The castle tower is the proposed location of the **Strategic Viewing Location** designation.



Figure L3 – View from the castle tower across the Rural Landscape View as it intersects with the Townscape View. In terms of solidifying the visual landscape character, the orange dashed line identifies the Desired extent of town centre expansion. The yellow dashed line identifies an acceptable town centre extension with definitive parameters on edge treatment. Numbers 1-5 are described in the text below.

The interface between the Rural and Townscape landscapes is currently undefined, as a result of modern demolitions and temporary land uses. The Blarney National School provides a clear transition point between the rural and townscape characterisations. Consequently, it is fairly evident how the surrounding lands can positively influence views from the castle tower. We recommend consideration of the following treatment of specific areas.

Parcel 1) Well able to accommodate town centre expansion with front of house architecture facing the castle.

Parcel 2) Able to accommodate a degree of residential development with the aim of consolidating the upper developed areas. Parameters such as elevation limits and mature tree offsets must be part of the zoning parameters.

Parcel 3) As there is strong visibility to Scenic Route no.39 and visual expansion into the perceived rural landscape, this parcel would ideally become green space (woodland, green amenity or agriculture). However, given recent land uses, development of this parcel could be with defined parameters. It would require a strong landscape buffer to the south to protect tower views. It would also require a western boundary finish that clearly presents itself as the edge of a tidy town. “Back of house” uses to this boundary would result in an unacceptable negative impact to the Scenic Route.

Parcel 4) Historically, this land would have been broken down into smaller parcels (refer OS 6-inch map). This parcel appears to be visually linked to the woodland to the west and not to the town centre. Development on this portion of ground would exhibit suburban sprawl. To retain the sylvan character of the view receptor, development here should be avoided. If unable to avoid, extreme development measures would need to be implemented, protecting existing trees and limiting development to a narrow band accompanied by extensive tree planting.

Parcel 5) This area clearly forms part of the Rural Landscape. Existing derelict development should be removed and the parcel returned to agricultural land. Structural development here would be detrimental to the character of the viewshed. If used as amenity, this parcel should be void of lighting and void of car parking, limiting paths and visible fencing.



Recommended Development Plan Modifications:

- 1) *The Blarney Castle Tower should be designated a Strategic Viewing Location.*
- 2) *Limit the extent of zoned land to Area 1*
- 3) *If Areas 2 and 3 remain zoned, they should be accompanied by parameters to allow the greatest potential integration with the rural landscape. Such text might address:*
 - Area 2 – Extent of development to be limited by the 72 contour and consider mature trees on adjacent land in accordance with national guidelines on Root Protection Area, incorporating such areas as biodiversity corridors.*
 - Area 3 – This parcel shall incorporate a broad landscape buffer to the south and a sensitive presentation to the west towards the rural landscape and designated Scenic Route no.39, illustrating a defined edge to the town centre.*

There is a framework in which Blarney can grow without compromising its' most valuable asset - the castle grounds, cultural history and associated inspiring landscape that separates the town from Tower. Your consideration in understanding what provides the parameters for the Blarney landscape setting and consequently limiting zoned lands as outlined above would be appreciated.

Kind Regards,

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Principal



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