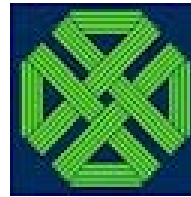


Connolly Barracks Longford Town Development Feasibility Study



Prepared by
Midland Regional Authority



On behalf of
Longford County Council and Longford Town Council



December 2010



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Executive Summary

The significant importance of Connolly Barracks to the town and county is of Longford together with its strategic location cannot be underestimated. The present underutilisation of the barracks needs to be addressed and given the currently provision of ongoing development relating to education and training within the complex there is a need to harness this potential. This can be ensured through the maximisation of the barrack’s potential as a place for use by the whole of society by allowing the barracks to function in a continuous and dynamic manner. Through the shaping of a number of integrated and interlinked ‘Zones of Development’ within the complex this functionality will be achieved.

The formulation and application of a working vision will be of major benefit to ensure the successful implementation of this study, and therefore, the following vision is proposed:

To ensure the encouragement and promotion of an active and dynamic vibrant urban space that is fully integrated into the existing urban environment that can be utilised by the community as a whole.

To ensure this it is necessary to undertake a development feasibility study that considers the barracks continuous and dynamic use. The structuring of the complex into a number of integrated and interlinked ‘Zones of Development’ will enable this. The undertaking of strategic economic analysis of the development costs associated with delivering maximum functionality will assist the decision-making process. Given the barracks strategic location the proposed multifunctional development has significant potential.

Through stakeholder, community and public consultation, site analysis and appraisal there is the opportunity to arrange the site into a number of ‘Zones of Development’. The development of these zones will allow for life-long living and learning in an integrated and secure urban environment for all ages of the town’s population.

Central to the maximisation of the potential development opportunities for the complex is the assessment of ‘best practice’ application and examples. The undertaking of this provides the foundation for exploring and delivering the workings of the integrated development zones of the barracks.

The land uses adjacent to Connolly Barracks represent uses compatible to the future rejuvenation and utilisation of the complex. Overall, the surrounding land uses could successfully integrate with the regeneration and development of the Barracks, making the Longford town and environs area a more pleasant, vibrant, attractive and active place. This potential to supplement and consolidate the healthy economic, social and sustainable environmental growth of Longford town is welcomed.

Given the urgent need to rejuvenate this strategic site a key recommendation of this study is for Longford Town Council and Longford County Council to secure the future of the Connolly Barracks site by agreeing a lease /purchase arrangement with the Department of Defence.

Overall, it is essential that the implementation for this development feasibility analysis and assessment be undertaken to ensure the multi-functional dynamic use of the complex for the benefit of all of Longford.

Section 1 Purpose and Approach

1.1 The Need for this Study

Connolly Barracks is of significant importance to the town and county of Longford. It is strategically located within Longford Town with ease of access. The barracks is being significantly underutilised since the transfer of Irish Army military operations to Athlone in 2009. Currently the complex provides services and facilities for the ongoing development of education and training and, given the existing urban fabric of the barracks, this should be development and enhanced. This can be achieved through ensuring the maximisation of the barrack's potential as a place for use by the whole of society.

To ensure this it is necessary to undertake a development feasibility study that considers the barracks continuous and dynamic use. The structuring of the complex into a number of integrated and interlinked 'Zones of Development' will enable this. It is necessary to provide a strategic economic analysis of the development costs that will assist the decision-making process.

1.2 Proposed Vision

To ensure the successful implementation of this study the formulation and application of a working vision is of major benefit. In drawing up this vision it is necessary to have consideration for the complete functionality of the entire barracks complex particularly in an integrate manner. It is important the all elements of society are given regard to thus ensuring a dynamic use of the complex.

Therefore, based on these requirements the following is the proposed vision:

To ensure the encouragement and promotion of an active and dynamic vibrant urban space that is fully integrated into the existing urban environment that can be utilised by the community as a whole.

This is a working vision for application throughout the development of the complex with the need ongoing review and revision as required.

1.3 Study Methodology

The overall study methodology for this project is centred on an achievable and evidence-based approach that incorporates quantitative and qualitative analysis. In addition, the assessment of 'best practice' application and examples were central to the development of the potential development opportunities. Both strategic spatial planning and economic analysis together with a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis were applied in the preparation of this study particularly in terms of viability determination. The application of Geographical Information System (GIS) analysis was central to the data analysis and visualisation outputs.

An integral element of the study methodology was the engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, the community and the public ensuring important engagement which focused on not only the education and social dimensions but also economic, environmental and other important considerations. This study has actively encouraged the in-depth exchange of views and knowledge, giving rise to integrated analysis and allowing for a more considered decision-making/recommendation approach. A number of submissions were received, the contents of which have been incorporated into this study.

1.4 Structure of Study

This study undertakes a logical approach in setting out the development feasibility of Connolly Barracks and the following is the structure and outline of the sections, which represent the sequential stages and components of the study:

- Section 2, sets out the analysis and appraisal of the barracks with particular consideration of the historical context, site description, available access and infrastructure services, adjacent land uses and a site SWOT analysis.
- Section 3 explores and analyses the various integrated development zone types for the complex so as to maximise the barracks' development potential. The proposed use, specific function and best practice application and examples are examined for each of the zone types.
- Section 4 details a strategic economic analysis of the development costs of each of the zone types. This costing analysis provides a costing for both refurbishment of existing buildings and new building construction. In addition, other costings relating to non-building type is set out.
- A summary of the key study findings together with realistic and achievable recommendations are provided in Section 5 which brings together the evidence-based approach adopted in the preparation and formulation of this report.

Section 2 Site Analysis and Appraisal

2.1 Historical Context

Located north of the River Camlin Connolly Barracks was founded in the late 18th century. Formerly known as the cavalry Barracks, the barracks was renamed The Sean Connolly Barracks in 1922. The barracks encompasses the original town marketplace and market house together with the former Longford Castle. Other significant buildings within the barracks complex are the Butter Market Building, the HQ Building (former Military Barrack and original Officers' Mess), the Officers' Mess (former Military Infirmary) and the Signal Stores (former Military Prison). The preservation of these buildings is an absolute requirement of any proposed development and associated future use.

The barracks was home to the 4th Cavalry Squadron of the Irish Army until its transfer to Custume Barracks, Athlone in 2009, as previously mentioned.

2.2 Site Description

The study area is characterised by its historical context (buildings from 18th/19th century through to late 20th century), with the built form steeped in local and national history. The total site area is approximately 5 hectares (5.36 hectares) with approximately half the eastern portion of the complex being green field in type with no development except for a helipad. There is significant advantage in retaining a portion of this green area as open space use, with the potential to enhance the character and utilise the beauty of the Camlin River by encouraging the natural growth of native flora and fauna and incorporating a public river walkway. This area would also act as a de facto riparian strip in accordance with objective FLO13 of the Longford Town Development Plan 2009-2015.

Within the western portion of the complex the area is currently occupied by the Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Numerous buildings of a military and market function are located within the central to eastern portion of the site.

The topology of the site is generally flat allowing for ease of any future refurbishment and development.

2.3 Access and Services

The study lands benefit from a strategic location with very close proximity to Longford town and environs and alongside a major shopping centre, a cinema, a mix of services/facilities in the town centre and industrial development area. While access, both vehicular and pedestrian is currently possible into the barracks off Bridge/Church Street and Battery Road, there is an evident lack of connectivity between the complex and the environs to the north and south. It is recommended that future connections are facilitated between the residential area (Battery Court) north of the barracks, through the lands and linking into the retail area and town centre to the south. These may take the form of dedicated cycle and pedestrian routes, providing a sustainable solution to local connectivity, although provision could also be made for restricted vehicular utilisation (perhaps using the Shared Space concept).

It is widely recognised that a deficit currently exists in the provision of water services infrastructure in the town, an issue which the local statutory plans, the Longford Town Development Plan 2009-2015 (Longford Town Council, 2009) and the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015 (Longford County Council, 2009) seek to address through augmentation and upgrade of existing infrastructure and provision of new infrastructure. Longford County Council are presently facilitating an upgrade and expansion programme of

Connolly Barracks Strategic Location within Longford Town and Environs



the existing Waste Water Treatment Works to serve a P.E. of 30,000, including outfall to the River Shannon and constructing of a new sludge hub centre on the side of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works.

In recognition of the above, it is considered that over the adopted statutory plan period, water supply and waste water services will be improved. However, the future utilisation and rejuvenation of the Connolly Barracks lands should be phased in accordance with infrastructural upgrade and improvement works, pending further study of the requirements of any such future uses at the Barracks.

2.4 Adjacent Land Uses

Given the obvious potential for future development/utilisation based upon key factors not least the centrality and ease of access of the lands, it is necessary to consider the adjacent land use context.

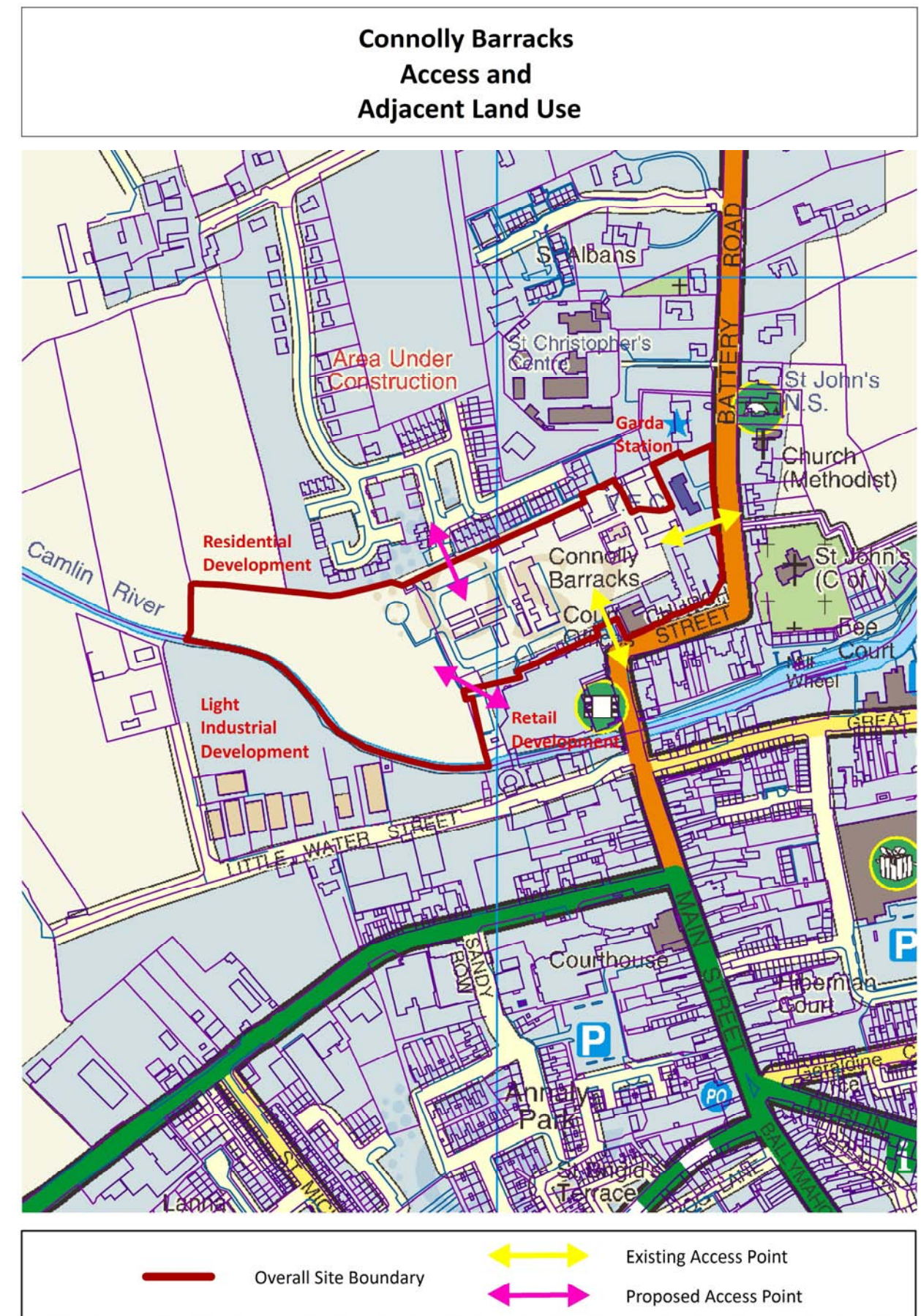
To the north there is an extensive residential development scheme, 'Battery Court', which encompasses both completed and unfinished dwelling units of varying mixes and styles. This residential area is isolated from the central core of Longford Town, primarily owing to the Connolly Barracks lands. These lands could greatly benefit their surrounding environs, by providing future linkages between Longford Town Centre and Battery Court. The future utilisation of the barracks represents an opportunity to enhance the connectivity, accessibility and overall permeability of the area, integrating a significant residential area with the recently completed shopping centre and cinema (south of the study lands), and with the wider Longford town core.

The area to the south encompasses Longford Town Centre, a recently completed but as yet unoccupied shopping centre (awaiting an anchor tenant) and operational cinema (Omniplex), at Bridge Street, between Main Street and Church Street, and a crèche/montessori on Church Street to the south-west. There is also a multi-storey car park located in close proximity (just north of Little Water Street), ensuring opportunities for vehicular access to town centre facilities.

To the east, the lands are bound by Battery Road, along which St. John's Church (of Ireland) is located, coupled with a Garda station with associated parking and telecommunications antennae. There is an entrance to St. Christopher's Services further north along Battery Road, where intellectually disabled persons are supported and assisted. Further north along the eastern side of Battery Road is the Methodist Church and the Masonic Lodge.

The barracks is bound to the east and south-east by the Camlin River, a tributary of the River Shannon, which is separated from the main study area by a large area of green open space. There is a vehicular crossing point along the bridge at Bridge Street, with additional pedestrian crossing provided alongside (as part of a public realm area associated with the Longford Town Centre shopping centre scheme). There is an industrial development area to the south-east located along Little Water Street.

The overall site is generally bound by a high coarse rubble stone wall with defensive wire above.



2.5 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a strategic method used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats associated with a project or proposal. Identification of SWOT analysis is essential because subsequent steps in the process of planning for achievement of the selected objective may be derived from the SWOT analysis.

A SWOT involves specifying the objective of a study and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieve that specific objective. With regard to this study the primary objective is to ensure the maximisation of the barrack's potential through ensuring a continuous and dynamic use. Therefore, based on this the following sets out the particular identified SWOT of the barracks that need careful consideration in the provision of the development zones' multi-functionality:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic location within close proximity to Longford Town and Environs; • Good provision of infrastructure and transport services; • Existence of significant historical buildings; • Current provision of ongoing development of education and training; • Existing internal and external urban form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous use incompatibility; • Irregularity of site complex; • Poor site accessibility; • Building refurbishment and new building work required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to achieve continuous and dynamic multi-functionality ensuring a pleasant, vibrant, attractive and active place; • Can provide for life-long living and learning; • Application of best practice examples; • Compatibility with adjacent land uses; • Achievement of greater improved site accessibility thus increasing permeability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty resulting from the current economic climate; • Lack of future demand for the identified potential uses; • Lack of required development funding; • Non-provision of overall ownership and direction to ensure vision.

It is apparent that the continuous use of Connolly Barracks represents an opportunity to enhance and harness the potential of the area, and the future utilisation of the complex should provide for a holistic approach to the proper planning and coordinated development of the wider environs, vis-à-vis pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and public transport opportunities. This would add to the commercial viability of the retail centre, while enhancing the attractiveness of the town centre area, and improve the overall standard of living of future occupants including those in the residential areas to the north.

The Connolly Barracks lands reflect a viable avenue through which to assimilate a more balanced and integrated community, with the opportunity to greatly improve accessibility and permeability. This would serve to augment the interaction between the local community and the commercial core in Longford town.

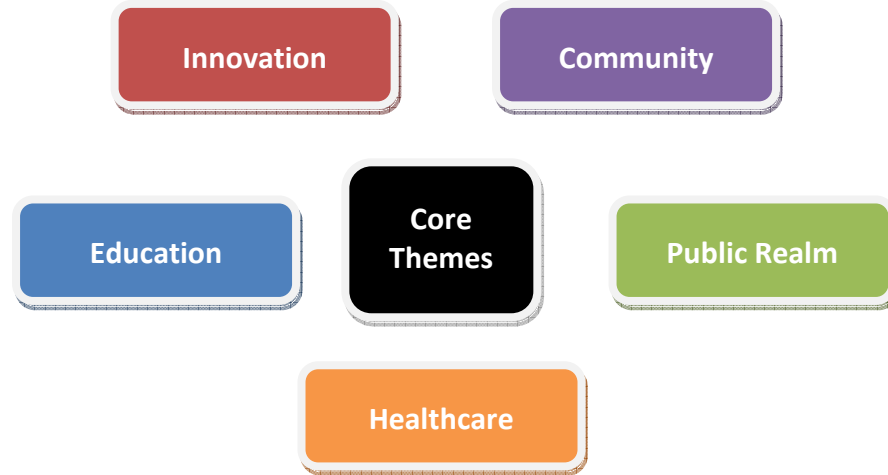
Section 3 Development Potential

3.1 Overview

Given the strategic location of Connolly Barracks within Longford Town, there is significant multifunctional development potential for the site. The site is within walking distance of the town centre, the new shopping centre and other town retail facilities, residential areas and other mixed use facilities and this proximity advantage should be maximised in the formulation of the various appropriate uses.

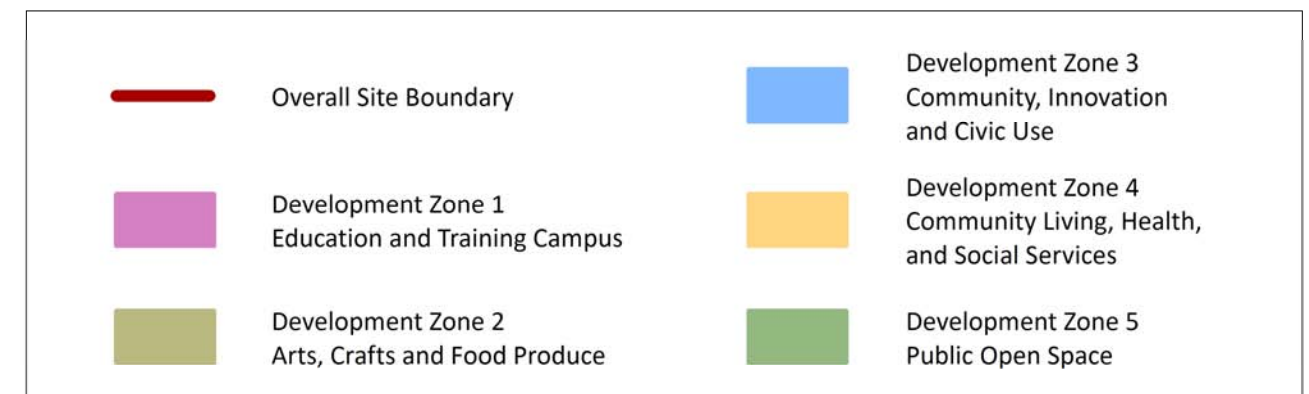
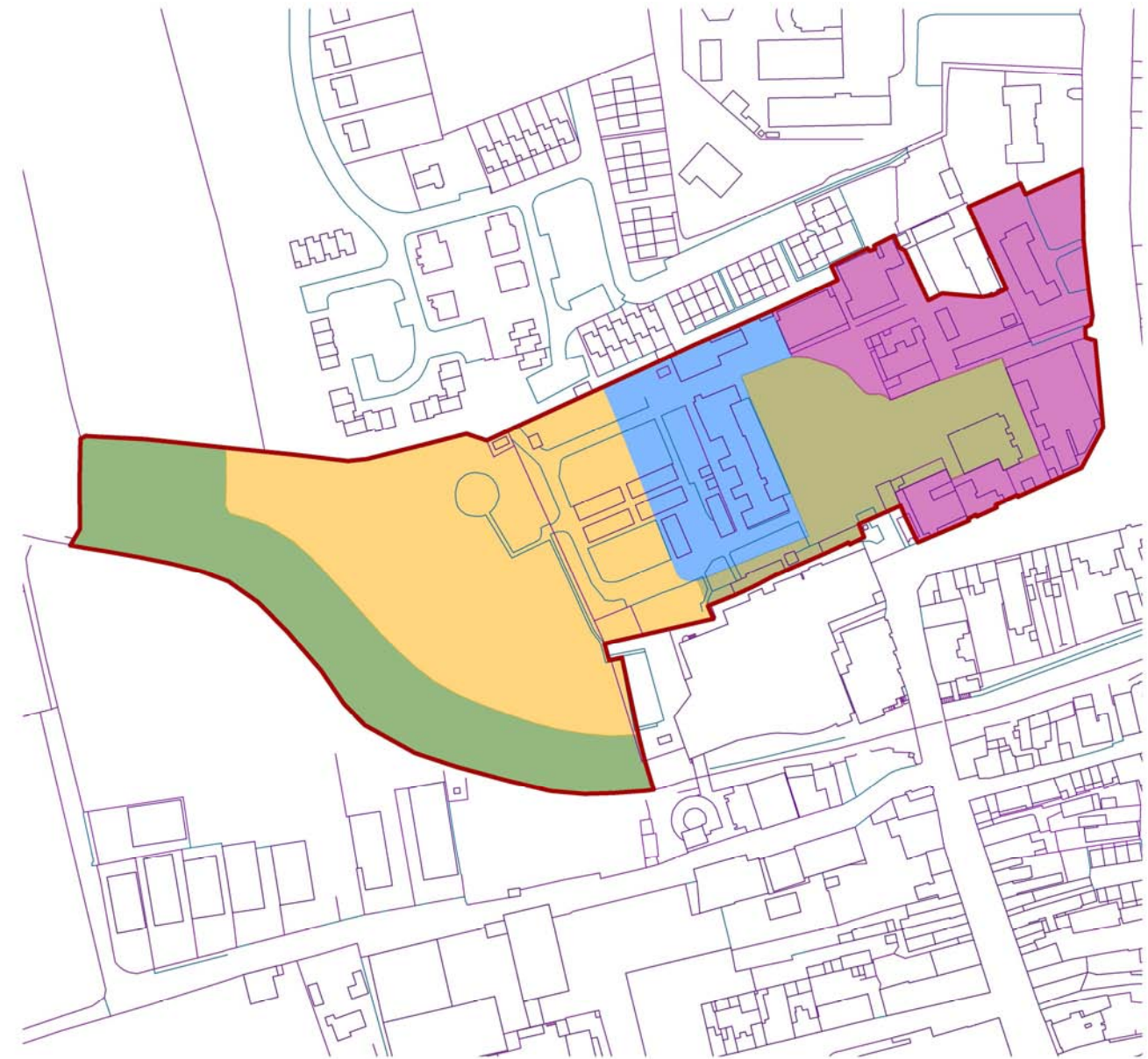
The undertaking of the stakeholder, community and public consultation, as previously discussed, formed the basis for identifying and defining the appropriate site uses. The existing presence and operation of the Longford County Vocational Education Committee regarding the provision of numerous adult and further education and training services throughout the county should be harnessed and built on. In addition, the historical building form can provide a basis for future use, layout and design.

The formulation of the barracks' prospective enhancement is based on the consideration and provision of number of core themes drawn from the vision, illustrated as follows:



In determining the barracks' development potential there is the opportunity to arrange the site into a number of integrated development zones. It is essential to provide ease of movement within these zones and also to external areas, particularly those north and south of the site. In total of five 'Zones of Development' have been determined with the vision being for the encouragement and promotion of an active and dynamic vibrant urban space fully integrated into the existing urban environment. Given the overall site area of approximately 5 hectares, the facilitation of these identified zones of development can be successfully achieved.

**Connolly Barracks
Overall Zones of Development**



3.2 Zones of Development

The following sets out the five 'Zones of Development' together with the proposed use, specific function and supporting best practice approaches:

Zone 1 Education and Training Campus

Potential Use: Provision of adult and further education and training services and facilities providing linkages to third-level and further education.

Potential Function: This zone will provide for and enable the ongoing development of education and training. Building on the existing full-time and part-time courses offered by the VEC, it is envisaged to provide opportunities focusing on early school leavers, unemployed adults, apprenticeship/up-skilling, out-reach, community education, hobby courses. The promotion of education and training within arts, crafts and food produce is recommended. Many of the courses offered will be certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

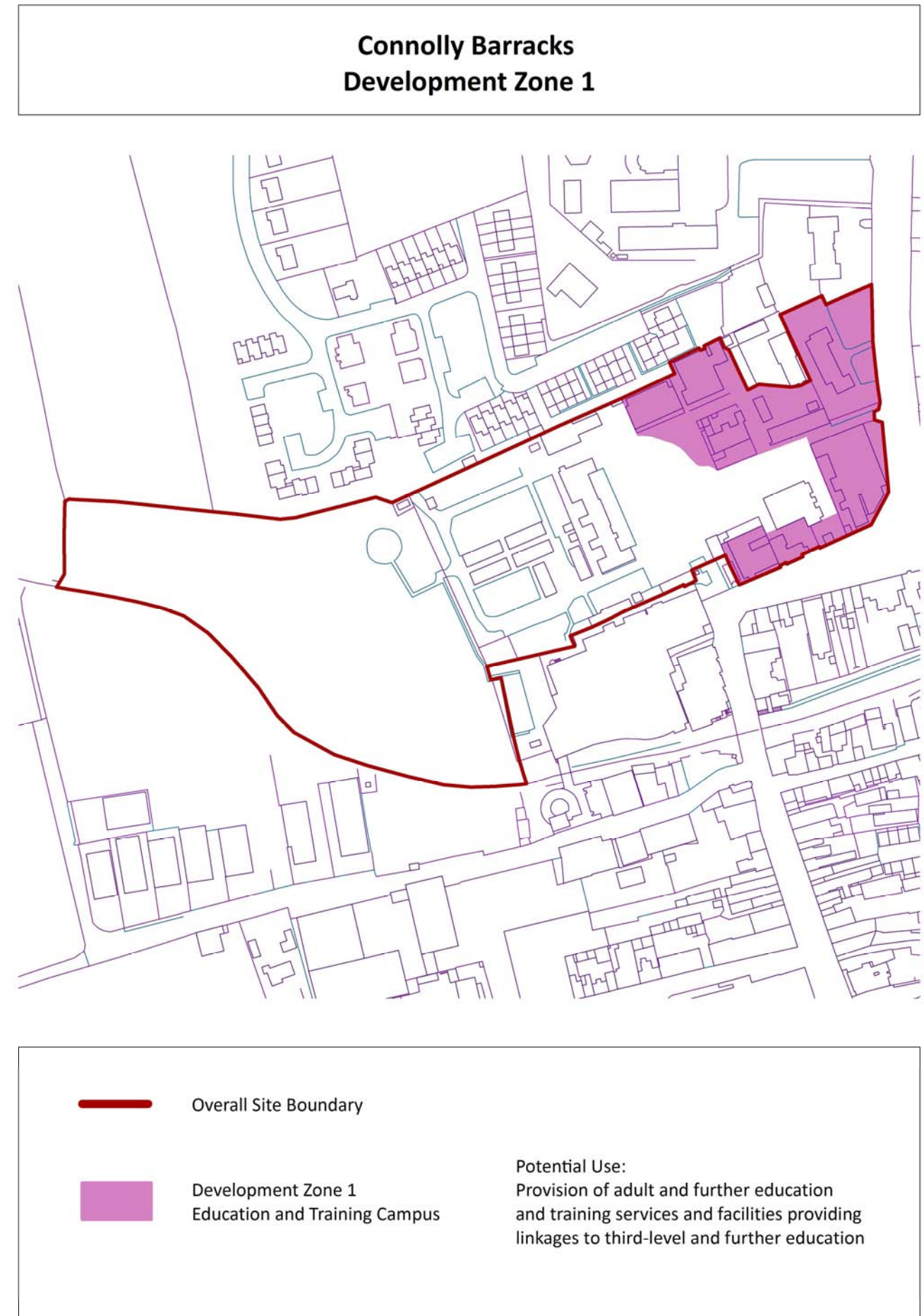
The particularly focus of this zone is centred on the VEC's core values and therefore is a person-centred approach, with a commitment to lifelong learning maximising the potential of students and staff, facilitating staff development and support, overall providing an environment that supports and promotes growth, development and a partnership approach.

This zone will have the potential to function as the location for the newly proposed VEC Headquarters resulting from the amalgamation of the existing Longford, Roscommon and Leitrim VEC centres.

Best Practice: County Monaghan VEC Multi-User Education Campus

The development of this innovative proposal, announced in November 2009, is proposed for the former Military Barracks in Monaghan Town which is in the ownership of County Monaghan VEC This proposed campus consisting is the consist of a Gaelscoil, Gael Choláiste, Institute of Further Education and provision for an additional primary school. The new campus will facilitate shared services and resources thus ensuring greater administration efficiency and effectiveness.

The campus development project will involve the demolition of the existing barracks, construction of the Further Education College, primary and post-primary schools and the development of on-site facilities and services.



Zone 2 **Arts, Crafts and Food Produce**

Potential Use: Provision for the making and development of local arts, crafts and food produce.

Potential Function: The functionality of this zone will allow for the promotion of local arts, crafts and food produce to be harnessed and developed. It will provide the opportunity for crafts people, artists and food producers to work in a vibrant environment sharing knowledge and experiences with each other. The activities of this zone will be closely related to the education and training available in Zone 1, with there being an ability for integration, cooperation and progression.

In addition, there will be the ability for visitors to come and view the skills of these people with the opportunity for the sale of the various goods, paintings, foods, etc produced.

Within the central section of this zone there is the ability to provide a share space that can be used for a market area, seating areas, surface car parking and bicycle parking.

Best Practice: The Estate Yard Castlecomer, County Kilkenny

This Estate Yard was formerly the farmyard, stables and kitchen gardens which provided the fresh produce for the Wandesforde family and associated tenants and works on the estate during the 1700's. The Estate Yard and stables are now home to some of Ireland's top crafts people and artists. The Yard allows for visitors to view the various hand-crafted work and meet the makers in person. There are ongoing plans afoot to continue with the restorations of the stables thus encouraging the attraction of crafts people and artists. In addition, the Estate Yard is adjacent to attractive woodland walks, fishing lakes and playground.



**Connolly Barracks
Development Zone 2**



— Overall Site Boundary

■ Development Zone 2
Arts, Crafts and Food Produce

Potential Use:
Provision for the making and development
of local arts, crafts and food produce

Zone 3 **Community, Innovation and Civic Use**

Potential Use: Provision of community facilities together with potential for innovation and opportunity development and civil defence facilities for training and transport/equipment storage.

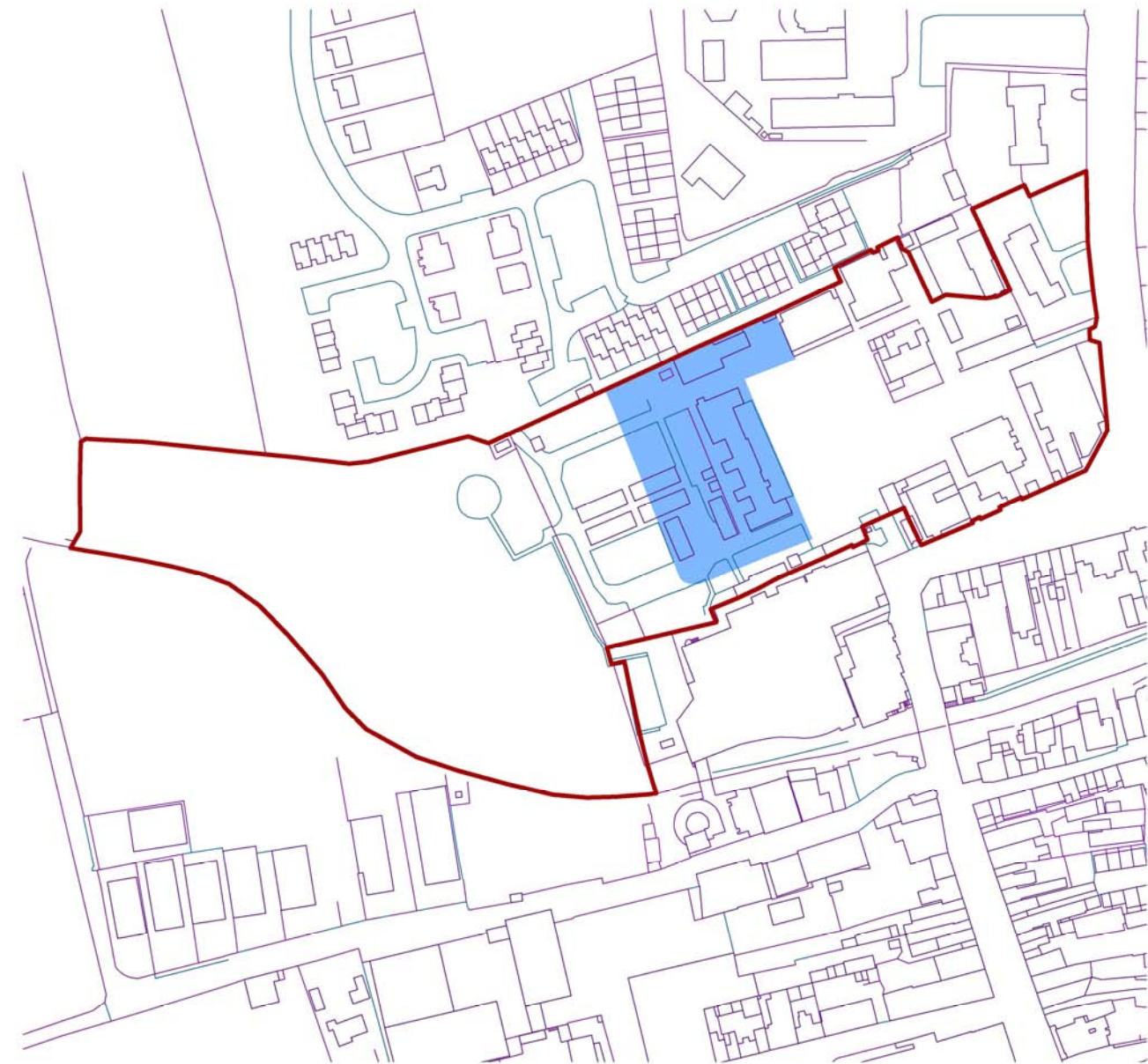
Potential Function: This zone will allow for the creation and operation of an interactive science and technology exhibition space, linked particularly to innovation development and the arts, crafts and food produce sectors. This will encourage ever-changing approaches to knowledge understanding and appreciation particularly for children, young people and young adults. of commercial office activity with the opportunity for local businesses and enterprises to development and thrive. A range of temporary exhibitions, workshops and performances promoting the heritage and culture of Longford. Specific regard will be had to supporting the educational curriculum etc.



Of central focus will be the provision of an incubation centre through a serviced-office facility to harness the development of innovation with a particular emphasis on clean energy development and professional services opportunities. This will enable new start-up innovation businesses to avail of small office unit sizes and also benefitting from the added advantages of shared knowledge, resources and equipment. The development of this incubation centre will allow the encouragement of professional networking opportunities and access to business consultancy and mentoring support, thus resulting in the accelerated development of start-up businesses. It is envisaged that the further commercialisation of the arts, crafts and food produce sectors established in Zone 2 can be accommodated within this zone. There will be the opportunity to enable various community user-groups to avail of meeting space within this zone.

The illustration overleaf provides an indicative use of the HQ building floor space, which reflects the opportunity for a dynamic and vibrant space within this building, including incubation and office space, exhibition space, and space to store historical artefacts.

In addition, facilities for civil defence training and transport/equipment storage will be provided for. The civil defence provide training in various areas including first aid, search and rescue, fire fighting, boating techniques, radiation monitoring, radio communications and welfare provision. This availability of a dedicated training area will greatly enhance the services provided by the civil defence. The transport/equipment of the civil defence can be stored within existing buildings.

**Connolly Barracks
Development Zone 3**



	Overall Site Boundary	Potential Use: Provision of community facilities together with innovation potential and opportunity development and civil defence facilities for training and transport/equipment storage
	Development Zone 3 Community, Innovation and Civic Use	