

HOPE CASTLE & ANNEXE BUILDINGS CASTLEBLAYNEY

- Options Appraisal -



prepared for

Monaghan County Council

by

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and

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Executive Summary

- Economic viability is a central tenet in good conservation practice – if an historic building does not fulfil a useful purpose, it is unlikely to be maintained and preserved.
- The Lough Muckno demesne is a designed landscape of national cultural significance – one of the finest created in Ireland.
- Both the Hope Castle and the stable buildings (Annex) are buildings of significant architectural merit.
- The Hope Castle building was originally designed in neo-classical style but was later altered significantly by the Hope family, and the enlarged and altered house lacked the sophistication of the earlier design. The house, as it now remains, coincides closely in terms of size to the footprint of the original house.
- The Annex was also altered and elaborated when it came into the possession of the Hope family.
- Due to the severity of the fires that damaged both buildings, there will be a greater degree of freedom in the design for their adaptation and reuse.
- Current users of the parklands include casual users and those engaging in specific activities.
- Castleblayney is a small, rural, town with limited amenities and infrastructure but an engaged community.
- The nearest cities are well over an hour away (Belfast, Dublin, Derry).
- Monaghan currently has a low level of tourism and also a very low level of accommodation that might stimulate tourism.
- The county's strengths are in the area of outdoor activities, although geographically it falls within the tourism agencies' *Ireland's Ancient East* brand proposition.
- There is a need for a destination-level tourist attraction/product to stimulate tourism in the county, although the potential for a renovated historic house to fulfil this requirement has little support.

- Our recommendation is to take a phased approach to the work, starting with minimal work to make good both buildings, with the aims of developing the Annex as the base of an adventure centre with accompanying accommodation, and of developing Hope Castle as a country inn/restaurant with function rooms and/or bedrooms.
- This further development depends on a suitably-qualified operator coming forward as a result of advertising for expressions of interest.
- In the interim, minimal work on the buildings will ensure that they can be put to some basic use as a backdrop for community and other events, as well as contributing to the overall attractiveness of the parkland.
- A broad view of the Lough Muckno demesne as a whole should be considered - integrating the history, facilities and infrastructure within a more strategic framework in order to deliver the optimum result for the community and area in the long run.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Located within the significant and historic designed landscape of Lough Muckno, both Hope Castle and the former coach house, now the Annex Building, are buildings of cultural importance. They encapsulate a history that spans approximately two hundred and fifty years, although the site itself stretches further back to the building of the original Blarney Castle in the 17th Century. Their history is also intrinsically linked with the town of Castleblayney, within which it is located and which expanded around the Parkland, although it dates back to the time of St. Maoldóid who had a church by the lake. This is discussed in more detail in the site assessment in Section 2.

In a similar manner to many other houses of this nature in Ireland, the buildings have been repurposed for a variety of uses over their lifetime, as the timeline of owners below in Table 1.1 demonstrates:

Table 1.1: Timeline of Owners

1607 -	1784 -	1853 -	1900-1904	1919-1921	1932-1937	1942-1970s	1980 - Now
Sir Edward Blayney	Andrew Thomas Blayney	Henry Thomas Hope	Duke of Connaught	Military Barracks	Monaghan County Hospital	Franciscan Order Convent	County Council

One of the consequences of Ireland’s history and relatively small population is that there is an abundance of historic buildings around the country, many of them in disrepair and/or in need of occupation. Finding practical uses for old buildings is a recognised issue for state and private sector alike.

“The financial burden of day-to-day maintenance, conservation, and restoration of historic houses is now a major problem...Major restoration and conservation works are frequently beyond reach unless capital is raised through the sale of contents or of land. When the latter is resorted to it often compromises the cultural heritage value of the house and/or estate.”¹

¹ A Future for Irish Historic Houses, T. Dooley.

1.2 Current Context

Although a Local Authority, and therefore in receipt of public money, Monaghan County Council is no different to other owners of historic buildings in that it carries the financial and regulatory burden for the preservation, care and maintenance of the listed buildings in its property portfolio. Unlike private owners, however, a Local Authority has to balance these costs against a wide range of other expenditure, such as roads, housing and water. In addition, the level of funding it has available depends on a variety of factors, including rates returns. A quick review of Local Authority finances indicates that Monaghan Co. Co. is not particularly highly resourced and, therefore, is unlikely to be in a position to underwrite its heritage assets to the same degree as other Local Authorities do, for example Dublin or Kerry².

Since coming into County Council ownership, there have been several efforts made to find practical uses for the Hope Castle and Annex buildings. Most recently, Hope Castle was functioning under lease as a small hotel and restaurant, which suffered an arson attack in winter 2010, leaving it derelict since. The Annex, which has operated as a hostel and refugee centre, likewise suffered an arson attack and has been derelict since.

The surrounding Lough Muckno Parkland has continued to be developed and maintained by the Council and by the active participation of the Community Partnership. It continues to experience a high degree of use by the local community, by anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts, and is held in high regard - as evidenced by the strong response to the public consultation that formed part of this project.

In early 2017, Monaghan County Council commissioned CHL Consulting Company Ltd. and Howley Hayes Conservation Architects to undertake an Options Appraisal for the two derelict buildings of Hope Castle and the Annex in order to explore options for the viable use of both buildings, including both commercial and community/public use. The aims of the appraisal were:

- to explore a range of options for the re-use of both buildings;
- to identify the most viable preferred options for the future use of both buildings;
- to explain why other options were not selected;

² www.localauthorityfinances.com - Monaghan County Council's budget was €53.1 million in 2017.

- to outline the 'next steps' required to progress with the development of the recommended options;
- to identify possible sources of funding.

As considerable repair work is required in order to make the buildings functional, this is also factored into the Appraisal, as is the broader context of the Parkland and conservation 'best practice'.

Finally, the Appraisal presented here would not have been complete without the active input from the local community, local business operators and a variety of County Council staff, for which we would like to express our gratitude.

2. HOPE CASTLE AND THE ANNEXE BUILDINGS

2.1 Overview

Hope Castle Demesne, formerly known as Castle Blayney, is a cultural landscape of considerable significance. The estate was laid out during the late eighteenth century in what is known as the *natural style* and was later modified by the eminent English landscape architect W S Gilpin during the early nineteenth century.

Figure 1: Aerial Photograph of Lough Muckno 2013



Natural style landscapes evolved during the mid-eighteenth century as a reaction to the formal geometrical layouts of the previous century that were particularly popular in the gardens of France and Holland. In the design of natural style landscapes the aim was to seek out existing areas of natural beauty within which nature would be embellished subtly, rather than being controlled into strict geometrical patterns that were clearly man made. Seeking the *genius loci* (or spirit of the place) was the principal concept used in laying out designed landscapes of this type that were created to provide both an attractive setting for the house and a sequence of beautiful views from within the house.

The varied topography of Ireland with its loughs, lakes, mountains and rivers offered excellent opportunities for the creation of natural style designed landscapes, that were planted copiously and interlaced with serpentine pathways leading to key vantage points often marked by follies or ornamental garden buildings. Wrapping around the southern shore of the picturesque Lough Muckno and occupying some of the islands, the Castle Blayney demesne is one of the finest created in Ireland – providing a designed landscape of national cultural significance.

A promising young architect Robert Woodgate, who was formerly a pupil of the great English architect John Soane, designed the house in the neo-classical style. Woodgate was to die young leaving his early promise unrealised. During the mid-nineteenth century Woodgate's design, which was much influenced by his celebrated master, was altered significantly when it was doubled in size by the wealthy Hope family. Original interiors that had survived these changes were lost during further extensive alterations carried out in the 1980s. The enlarged house lacked the sophistication of the earlier design and following a serious fire in 2010 much of the later extension on the south side was demolished. What remains coincides closely to the footprint of the earlier house, albeit behind much altered facades of inferior architectural merit.

Figure 2: Castle Blayney c. 1800

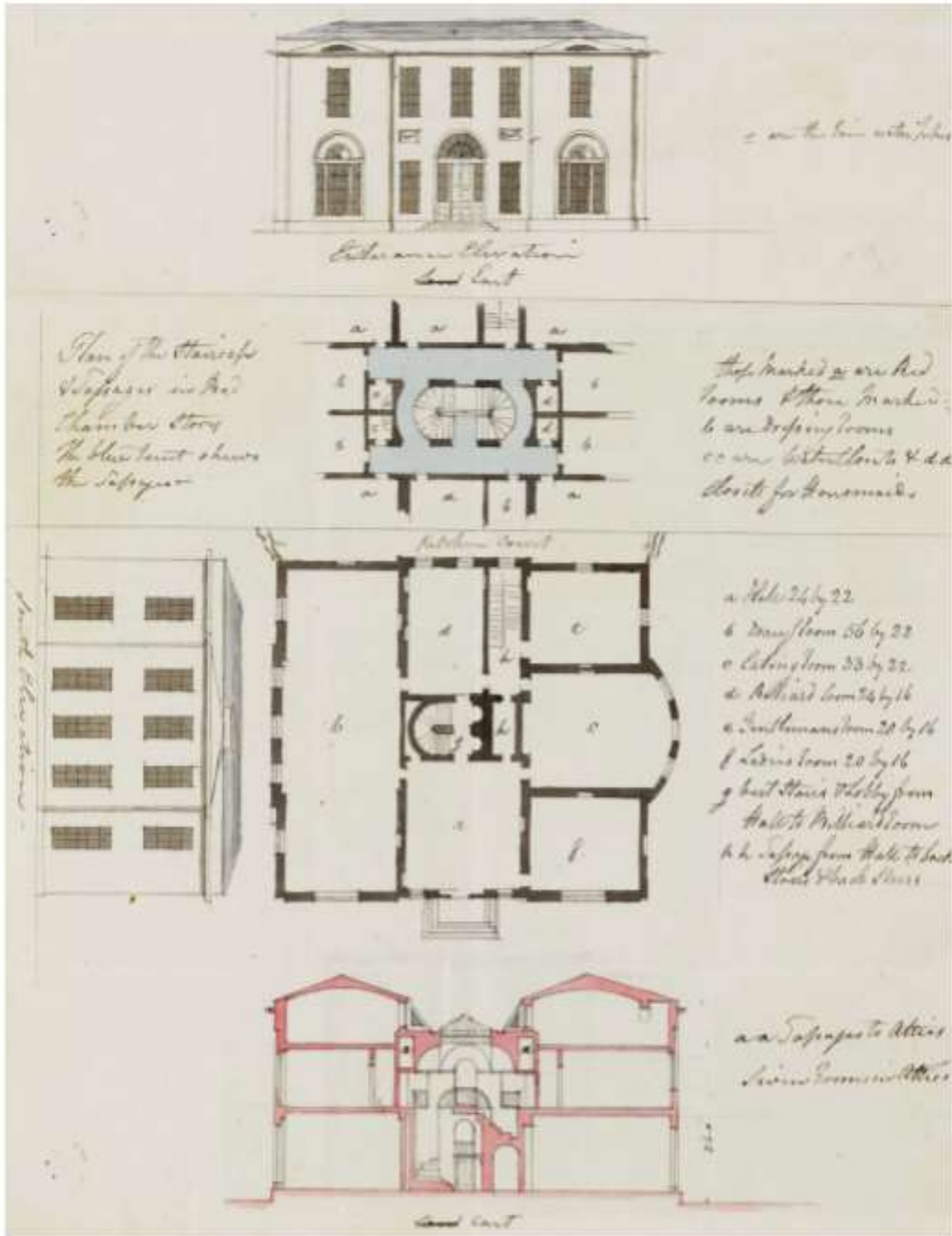


Figure 3: Hope Castle Plans



There are also a number of impressive outbuildings within the demesne including:

- the twin lodges at the gateway leading directly from the market square to the adjoining and attractive town of Castle Blayney;
- a large garden temple;
- a temple-style south gate lodge;
- and a large stable complex laid out as a formal courtyard.

The stable building has also been much altered and like the house was burnt in recent years.

Figure 4: Hope Castle Building



Figure 5: Stable Building



2.2 Site Assessment

Notwithstanding the serious damage to the house, the surviving superstructure within the burnt-out shell of the house continues to provide focus and meaning to the surrounding landscape. As the successful restoration of other seriously fire damaged buildings such as Powerscourt and the West Wing of Russborough have demonstrated, the shell can be restored to once again provide a useful and economically viable purpose.

The stable building is also a structure of significant architectural merit, like the house it has also been altered significantly and late burnt. It consists of a U-shaped block with a pedimented central range rising to two storeys, constructed of squared limestone rubble with sandstone and brick trim. Around 1865, the Hope family added a grandiose, pedimented gateway entrance that was linked to the two side ranges with elaborate railings, fully enclosing the courtyard. This fine building should be restored to a new economically viable use as an important component of the historic demesne.

Due to the serious fires that have damaged both the house and the stables building there will be a much greater freedom in the design for their adaptation and reuse as so much of the interior historic fabric of the buildings has been lost. The exteriors of the surviving part of the house together with the stables should be carefully conserved using the original details most of which survive. This will maintain their visual importance to the preservation and presentation of the historic landscape.

One of the twin gate lodges has been restored in recent years and plans to restore and find an appropriate new use for the matching gate lodge are welcome and will provide another very positive step in the conservation of the wider demesne. Other ornamental structures within the demesne should also be preserved and repaired – including the garden temple, the south lodge, the walled garden, the mill-like building behind the stables (the purpose of which is not obvious) and the ice houses. Even if some of these ancillary buildings are no longer within the estate lands owned by the council, they are all (or should be) protected structures, being an integral part of the original larger demesne.

Economic viability is a central tenet in good conservation practice – if an historic building does not fulfil a useful purpose it is unlikely to be maintained and preserved. The size and arrangement of both the house and stables offer a range of possibilities for potential alteration, extension and reuse. Restoring these and the other estate buildings will preserve essential historic elements, without which the significance of the demesne

would be considerably diminished. Providing a new and viable use for the buildings will also ensure their long term future while improving the amenities and tacit security within the demesne. Sympathetic uses for the buildings might consider – café, bar, restaurant, function rooms, boutique hotel, short-let holiday accommodation and community use that would provide valuable amenities for both locals and visitors alike. This will not only improve the facilities and amenities of the town and surrounding county, but will preserve an important cultural landscape of national importance.

2.3 Social Significance

There is an interesting social history associated with the house mainly relating to the Hope family, which owned the estate and enlarged the house during the second half of the nineteenth century. Thomas Henry Hope was a wealthy banker and member of parliament who bought Castleblayney in 1853. His father Thomas Hope was an accomplished author and interior designer. The family, which originated from Scotland, was active in Holland during the eighteenth century when it amassed a great fortune in shipping and banking, the proceeds of which were used to amass a considerable art collection. A famous diamond once owned by Louis XIV of France was re-cut with the largest section purchased by the Hope family. The Hope Diamond, as it became known, weighs 45.5 carats and is considered to be one of the most famous jewels in the world. It is now in the National Museum of Natural History in Washington.

Castleblayney was also renamed after the family, becoming Hope Castle, following which it was enlarged and remodelled in what the architectural historian Kevin Mulligan has described as:

“a frivolous kind of Italianate classicism. This is most apparent in the cresting along the roof-line – fanciful scrollwork above the parapets with urns and ball finials that is neither Elizabethan nor Jacobean. All the details were tricked out in stucco, including vermiculated quoins and moulded window architraves with straight entablatures and bracketed cills. The segmental pediment on the south elevation retains a flamboyant cartouche branded with the initials of Mr and Mrs Hope.”

Between 1900 and 1904 the Duke of Connaught, Queen Victoria's son, lived in Hope Castle while he was Commander in Forces in Ireland. An order of nuns occupied the house between 1943 and 1974, following which the estate was purchased by Monaghan County Council. During the 1980s the house was leased to a hotelier who operated a

small hotel and a popular bar and restaurant in the premises up until it was destroyed by an arson attack in 2010, since when the building has remained ruined and empty.

Figure 6: Historic Photographs



2.4 Current Users

Although the buildings are no longer in use, due to their condition, the parkland is much used and has received investment and attention over the years. The pathways and grounds are well-maintained, with active support from the County Council and the efforts of the Community Partnership. There is a well-used playground for children and a small number of places for RVs.

Although the town is relatively small – as we will review in the next Section – the level of footfall in the parklands is considerable. A counter system, used over a number of years at the main entrance, indicated the following levels of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Table 2.1: Traffic at Hope Castle

	2013	2014
Pedestrian traffic	109,265	132,988
Vehicular traffic	25,812	40,902

As would be expected from primarily community-based usage, Sunday and mid to late afternoons were the busiest periods.

The parklands are also much used by specific activity groups, including water-skiing, multi-activity adventure centre, golf and angling. Indeed, Lough Muckno has developed a reputation over the years for water-based activities and is one of the few places in Ireland to host water-skiing and to still hold a positive reputation for angling.

2.5 A Conservation Perspective

Cultural Significance is a concept, which helps in estimating the value of historic places. The places that are likely to be of greatest significance are those that help to provide an understanding of the past, or which will enrich the present, and will be of value to future generations. Significance is the means by which the cultural importance of a place and its component parts can be measured and compared. Assessing significance can help guide the policies and proposals for the management and future use of an historic building or place, which will respect, preserve and enhance the cultural importance of the site. This can assist in the identification of aspects and areas of a place where only the minimum of changes should be considered, and areas where the significance and character of the place could be enhanced by change.

The assessment of the significance of the constituent parts of the Hope Castle Demesne, designed landscape setting and surviving historic buildings, is based on an understanding of its history, phases of development and changes throughout time, using the relevant system of categorisation as set out in Part IV (Architectural Heritage) of the *2000 Planning & Development Act*. While the designed landscape that survives within the Hope Castle Demesne is of national significance, the house and stable yard fall within the lower category of regional significance. Neither structure is of high architectural merit and neither survives in an intact state of preservation, and in the hierarchy of Irish Country Houses, Hope Castle would be well down the list.

However, both the house and the stables are highly significant in their contribution to the historic designed landscape of the Hope Demesne. The main purpose of restoring the house will be to maintain the central focus of the historic designed landscape and equally to offer views of that landscape from the house. If the house can fulfil a short term residential use, as a guest house or boutique hotel, so much the better as this will replicate its original intended purpose as a residence. Short let, holiday use would be equally relevant and appropriate to the stables, or annex, as this would help to provide tacit security for the building while generating income to finance on-going maintenance. Conserving and restoring the surviving external shells of both the house and the annex to respect the original design, detail and materials of the building exteriors as modified by the Hope Family, will preserve the significance of an important historic designed landscape. It will also provide great potential for the exciting and economically viable reuse of two badly damaged historic buildings.

As a result of the beautiful landscape setting of the buildings, there is a high probability that following restoration and alteration, both would become popular destinations for both short term stays for visitors and local use of the restaurant and bar. If this use can operate profitably, the council will benefit from a useful income to help fund the on-going maintenance of the estate, while preserving one of the most remarkable local authority-owned public parks outside the greater Dublin area.

3. MARKET ASSESSMENT AND DEMAND POTENTIAL

In considering options for any site, it is vital to evaluate the broader market environment in which any business at the site would be operating. This includes looking at the profile and economic conditions of the broader area as well as the specific characteristics of the site itself. We will address these in this Section, before moving on to assess comparator sites in Section 4.

Although the history and current activities of Lough Muckno, and its buildings lend themselves most naturally to uses that relate to tourism and hospitality³, the brief for this Options Appraisal specifically mentioned the need to consider non-tourism options as well. As a result, the market assessment presented here also includes aspects of Monaghan's economic, community and business environment.

3.1 Summary Area Profile of County Monaghan

Monaghan is one of Ireland's smallest counties, with a population of just over 61,000⁴. It has experienced modest population growth in the last five years of 1.5%, below the average of 3.8%. This suggests there is a trend towards moving out of the county, primarily in search of employment – something experienced by many predominantly rural counties in Ireland. The current average age of the population in the County is 37, indicating a population in need of long-term employment prospects, and family-related infrastructure and amenities.

The largest town in the County is Monaghan (population 7,678), followed by Carrickmacross (5,032) and Castleblayney (3,607).

3.1.1 Location and Access

As a county with a significant border with Northern Ireland, businesses in Monaghan have a considerable degree of reliance on, and connection with, the Northern Irish market. Indeed, as Table 3.1 illustrates, the major cities of Derry and Belfast are as close if not closer to Castleblayney than Dublin is.

³ A fact that is further supported by the local community itself which, in its Enterprising Town Award application to Bank of Ireland, identified tourism as the town's USP.

⁴ 61,380 according to Census 2016

Table 3.1: Distances to Castleblayney from Key Urban Centres

Urban Centre	Distance (hour/mins drive)	Distance (kms)
Belfast	1hr 15mins	107
Dublin	1hr 23mins	110
Derry	1hr 53mins	129

Figure 7: Location of Monaghan



In terms of the main road network, Monaghan can be accessed via the M1 from Dublin, with the journey to Castleblayney from the M1 Junction 17 exit at Dundalk being approximately 25mins. Castleblayney is also on the main Dublin-Derry N2 route. These distances indicate a number of points.

Firstly, Castleblayney is easy enough to access by those who wish to do so.

But, secondly, there are larger urban centres on these two road networks, with greater infrastructure and amenities, with which Castleblayney is in competition.

3.1.2 Economic Environment

Monaghan was particularly badly affected during the economic recession but has recovered well, with unemployment rates now in the region of 13% - a similar level to the national average and a considerable drop from a high of 20% in 2011.⁵

The dominant industries in Monaghan are commerce, agriculture/forestry/fishing and manufacturing, which account for over half of employment in the county⁶. The Agri-food business, in particular, has been identified as a core strength for the County, with top employers including Manor Farm, Monaghan Mushrooms, Kerry Foods, AIBP Beef and Silver Hill, among others.⁷

As elsewhere in the country, there is a strong emphasis on stimulating entrepreneurship in the County and there are currently a number of Enterprise Centres in Monaghan, including six run by the not-for-profit Enterprising Monaghan⁸, Castleblayney Enterprise Centre, Egish Food Park and a number of areas of land zoned within each town to cater for future industrial and enterprise needs⁹.

The evidence is, from research and consultation, that the need for enterprise spaces in the county is well catered for but with high occupancy levels, suggesting that additional spaces may be desirable.

Castleblayney itself has a determined business community, as evidenced not only by the community-run Enterprise Centre but also by a variety of other initiatives such as the Regeneration Committee, the introduction of Town Vouchers, the My Town My Dream competition and the REDZ funded activity. A listing of the town's current businesses, 22% of whom are in hospitality and entertainment, and 28% in retail, is included in the Appendices along with a breakdown of the town's top employers.

⁵ CSO

⁶ CSO

⁷ Monaghan LEO

⁸ Ballybay, Clones, Emyvale, C:Tek in Carrickmacross, and M:Tek I & II in Monaghan.

⁹ Monaghan LEO

3.2 Analysis of Tourism Demand

Tourism is a buoyant sector of the Irish economy, with growth of almost 11% in foreign exchange revenue in 2016. Britain remains the main source market for Ireland, accounting for almost 42%, or 3.6 million, of overseas visitors – a factor that is of concern given the economic uncertainty that surrounds Brexit. In addition, the domestic market accounted for 10 million trips, and there were a further 1.4 million Northern Irish visitors to the Republic in 2016.

However, tourists continue to find specific part of the country attractive while being less interested in others, with Dublin being the primary destination by far, as can be seen by the regional breakdown of tourism in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Regional Distribution of Visitors, 2016¹⁰

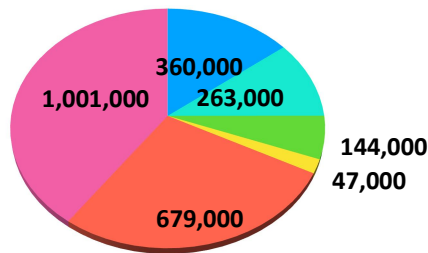
Region	Volume (000s) – Total Tourism	Value (€m)
Dublin	7,403	2,353
Mid East (Kildare/Meath/Wicklow)	1,367	388
Midlands (Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath)	645	144
South East	2,368	531
South West	4,169	1,288
Mid West	2,041	562
West	3,421	926
Border	2,495	592

3.2.1 Tourism in Monaghan and the Border Counties

The domestic market is a primary source market for tourism operators in the border counties. However, the Northern Ireland market plays a significantly greater role in these counties than it does for the country as a whole. Over a quarter of visitors to the border counties come from Northern Ireland, and a further 14% from Britain, which means that **two in every five visitors to the Region come from a ST£ market** – an important factor, given the economic uncertainty in Britain.

¹⁰ Tourism Facts 2016, Fáilte Ireland

Chart 1: Tourism Numbers to the Border Counties, 2016¹¹



■ Britain ■ M. Europe ■ Nth. America ■ Other ■ N. Ireland ■ Domestic

More specifically, of the six counties that comprise the Border counties¹², Leitrim and Monaghan are the lowest performing, in tourism terms, with 57,000 and 65,000 overseas visitors respectively, and 110,000 domestic visitors combined, in 2015¹³. For comparison, Donegal attracted 289,000 overseas visitors, Sligo 186,000 and Cavan 144,000, the same year. **However, for a town the size of Castleblayney, even a small increase in market share would make a significant economic difference.**

Other key characteristics of the tourism market to the Region are as follows.

- Visiting for a holiday or to see friends/relatives are the dominant reasons for travel, accounting for 58% and 33% of all overseas tourists in the Region.
- June to August accounts for 47% of the overseas tourism market.
- There is low hotel usage – only 32% use a hotel during their visit.
- There is a high level of repeat business, with 53% of overseas tourists on a return visit.

From the perspective of national tourism branding and positioning, Monaghan is part of Ireland’s Ancient East, with a focus on heritage. Within this overarching brand, two themes have been identified as particularly relevant for Monaghan - A Tale of Two Worlds and Sacred Ireland.

¹¹ Tourism Facts 2016, Fáilte Ireland

¹² Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Monaghan, Cavan & Louth

¹³ Regional Tourism Performance in 2015, Fáilte Ireland. Please note no data is included for Northern Irish visitors.

3.3 Assessing the Supply Side of the Tourism Market

Monaghan Tourism lists over 60 tourism businesses on its database, including a wide variety of activities, attractions, accommodation and other things to do and see. In considering potential options for Hope Castle, it is important to ensure that any tourism use/activity would add to the existing supply of tourism activities rather than duplicating one that already exists. And, ideally, it would fill a gap in the market, attracting additional business.

3.3.1 Accommodation

Accommodation is a key requirement in developing a tourism destination and, specifically, in increasing the number of higher-value staying visitors. It is also important in supporting the business community, facilitating meetings and providing overnight accommodation. This is particularly true of hotel accommodation, which is the most popular form of accommodation for visitors and also supports a variety of other activities as well as providing a stimulus for the local economy in which it operates. This is well articulated in a short report from Fáilte Ireland - *The Benefits of Tourist Accommodation* - which is included in the Appendix for reference.

Monaghan's hotel bed capacity is one of the lowest in the country, accounting for only 1% of national capacity. For comparison, while Leitrim and Longford have less hotel beds (737 and 146 respectively), Louth has 1,450, Sligo has 2,682 and Donegal has 6,859. There are also no hostels or caravan & camping parks listed with Fáilte Ireland in Monaghan.

Table 3.3: Accommodation Capacity in Monaghan, 2017

Accommodation	Premises	Rooms
5* Hotel	-	-
4* Hotel	4	213
3* Hotel	4	124
2* Hotel	1	13
1* Hotel	-	-
Hotels Total	9	350
Guesthouses	3	40
Self-Catering**	11	34

Source: Fáilte Ireland Accommodation Statistics, 2017

**May be understated as much self-catering accommodation is now offered directly through sites such as Airbnb.

Although tourist hotels play an important role in local economies, Monaghan’s level of hotel bed capacity is particularly low, with only nine hotels registered in the county.

3.3.2 Activities and Attractions in Monaghan

However, Monaghan offers visitors a wide range of things to do and see. The tourism database contains almost 60 various activities and attractions, as summarised in Table 3.4, and it is evident that the county has a particular strength in outdoor activities.

Table 3.4: Tourism Providers in County Monaghan¹⁴

Activity/Attraction	Number of Venues/Providers
Visitor Attraction	12
Walking	9
Outdoor Adventure	9
Golf/Pitch & Putt	7
Equestrian	4
Cycling	3
Angling (guides/boat hire - not locations)	2
Other Indoor Leisure	8
Spa	4
Other	3

Monaghan does also have a considerable number of visitor attractions but the majority of them are small in terms of demand. Table 3.5 lists those that are currently attracting over 1,000 visitors per annum - the most notable of which is Monaghan County Museum - as well as listing the top national visitor attractions for comparison. At a national level, the majority of attractions are located in Dublin and several are family-focused, indicating the strength of the domestic family market (Tayto Park, in County Meath, is the seventh most-visited attraction nationwide, despite not being open all year).

¹⁴ From Tourism Officer database

Table 3.5: Top Heritage Attractions in Monaghan, 2016

Top Monaghan Visitor Attractions	Visitor Numbers
Monaghan County Museum	27,582
Carrickmacross Lace Gallery	3,063
Wildlife and Heritage Centre	1,300
Patrick Kavanagh Centre	5,050
Carrickmacross Workhouse	1,000
Top National Visitor Attractions	Visitor Numbers
Guinness Storehouse	1,647,408
Cliffs of Moher Experience	1,4227,166
Dublin Zoo	1,143,908
National Aquatic Centre	1,037,992

Source: Fáilte Ireland Visitor Attractions Survey, 2016

Monaghan's strengths appear to be in the area of outdoor activities. Although it has a number of visitor attractions, only Monaghan County Museum is attracting a reasonable level of demand - which might suggest a gap for a visitor attraction of scale, but only if it were in a position to compete well at a national level.

3.3.3 Heritage Houses in Ireland

Given its history, it is no surprise that Ireland as a country has a wealth of historic houses. Indeed, one of the most common challenges that tourism has had to face over the recent decades is how to sustain these buildings - either by supporting the owners who continue to live in them or by finding a new use for those that are in state care. A quick look through the list of top attractions from Fáilte Ireland reveals a number that are performing well as tourism attractions - as Table 3.6 shows.

However, the same Table also illustrates that many are only attracting very small numbers. King House, for example, with a location off the main tourism trail, attracts less than 15,000 visitors per annum.

Table 3.6: Restored Heritage House Visitor Attractions

Restored Heritage Houses	Visitor Numbers
Castletown House and Parkland, Kildare	547,324
Emo Court and Gardens, Laois	293,056
Westport House, Mayo	145,784
Wells House and Gardens, Wexford	130,239
Belvedere House and Gardens, Westmeath	127,837
Glebe House and Gallery, Donegal	25,467
King House, Roscommon	14,785
Abbeyleix Heritage House, Laois	5,639
Cappoquin House and Gardens, Waterford	1,100

One of the common factors in the popularity of the top attractions is the availability of large open parklands or gardens for walking. Many visitors to Emo and Castletown¹⁵, for example, are visitors who don't visit the house but are regular users of the grounds. However, when exploring this possibility for a similar proposition in Monaghan, as one tourism agency official put it during consultation,

“Ireland doesn't need another restored heritage house.”

And indeed there is no evidence that this is a particular gap in the market from a national tourism perspective, although from a county perspective there is an obvious need for some type of destination attraction to bring a greater volume of tourists to Castleblayney.

¹⁵ Consultation with OPW officials at both sites.

3.4 Summary Findings of Market Review

- 1) Castleblayney is a small town with a population of just over 3,600, located on the main Dublin-Derry road and almost half an hour from the M1 Dublin-Belfast road. It is located well over an hour's drive from any major urban hub. This suggests that while it is relatively accessible, it is in competition with much larger commercial centres on these main arteries.
- 2) Entrepreneurship is well-supported in the County, and there may be scope for further workspaces as current supply is experiencing high-occupancy.
- 3) Castleblayney's business community is well-engaged in town developments - a good base for future growth.
- 4) There is a higher dependency on ST£ markets for tourism to the Border Counties - Northern Ireland in particular.
- 5) Of the six Border Counties, Leitrim and Monaghan are the lowest performing in tourism terms. And tourism, at a national level, continues to favour Dublin in particular, and the South West and West.
- 6) Monaghan falls within the *Ireland's Ancient East* brand, and the supporting themes of *A Tale of Two Worlds* and *Sacred Ireland* have been identified as the most relevant for the County.
- 7) The County has a very limited supply of accommodation, especially hotels - of which there are only nine.
- 8) The County has a particular strength in outdoor activities and lacks a destination-level visitor attraction.

4. COMPARATORS

Given that this is an Options Appraisal, selecting comparators to review for examples of good practice is not straightforward as we are still in the process of identifying potential uses and therefore the spectrum is very broad. However, considering the wider context of the buildings in Lough Muckno, there are a number of factors that we can take as a basis for identifying relevant comparators.

- An historic building/buildings in a natural environment.
- A mixed-use site, i.e. a variety of activities happening in the one location.
- A requirement, or opportunity, for renovation, i.e. the original site needed redevelopment before it could be fully utilised.
- A requirement to ensure continued access to the grounds by the local community.
- A site that was, or is, in public ownership.

On this basis, three comparators have been chosen for review - each of which matches the factors listed above. A number of other exemplars are also briefly mentioned subsequently.

4.1 Lough Key, Co. Roscommon

Lough Key Forest Park is now in its tenth year of operation and attracted 70,000 visitors in 2016. **It has many similarities with Lough Muckno and is an excellent example of a nature-based, multi-activity site that is in public ownership but which is managed as a private enterprise.**

The site dates back to the 12th Century when Castle Island was the residence for the Kings of Moylurg. Rockingham House, later built by the King family who were granted the land under Cromwell, was destroyed by fire in the 1950s, and the state took ownership after that. In a further similarity with Lough Muckno, the Parkland is one of significance, commissioned by famous landscaper John Sutherland in the 19th Century. A number of historical and archaeological sites remain in the Parkland and can be discovered by visitors.

Lough Key Activity Park was set up as a joint venture between Coillte and Roscommon County Council, who established Moylurg Rockingham Ltd. to operate the park as a commercial private entity. It was co-funded by the Government and the EU through the

tourism capital grants scheme.

Lough Key has continued to expand over the ten years of operation and now offers a cluster of free and paid attractions against a natural backdrop:

- 800 acres of parkland with walking and cycling trails, and picnic areas;
- Boda Borg indoor team challenge;
- Lough Key Experience - self-guided history and nature tour, including tree-canopy walk;
- Orienteering and Wheel-o (wheelchair orienteering);
- Adventure Play Kingdom - one of the country's top children's playgrounds;
- 50 berth marina;
- visitor centre that acts as an orientation point and also offers cafe, shop, take-away, meeting room hire;
- Private operators offering activities on-site: Zipit (high ziplines), Lough Key Boats (lake tours), Electric Bike hire, Woodland Segway.

County Roscommon has a very limited accommodation base, with only five hotels in the County (400 hotel beds) but there is a caravan and camping park with 46 landscaped pitches and three large tent sites at Lough Key itself, open from Easter to September.

Given the wide range of activities available, Lough Key attracts a wide range of clients, including families, hen and stage parties, corporate groups and general outdoor enthusiasts.

There are a lot of similarities between Lough Key and Lough Muckno, and the latter provides a good example of how a site can be developed over time to offer a range of complimentary activities, with any buildings on-site developing within this holistic vision.

Figure 8: Lough Key Forest Park

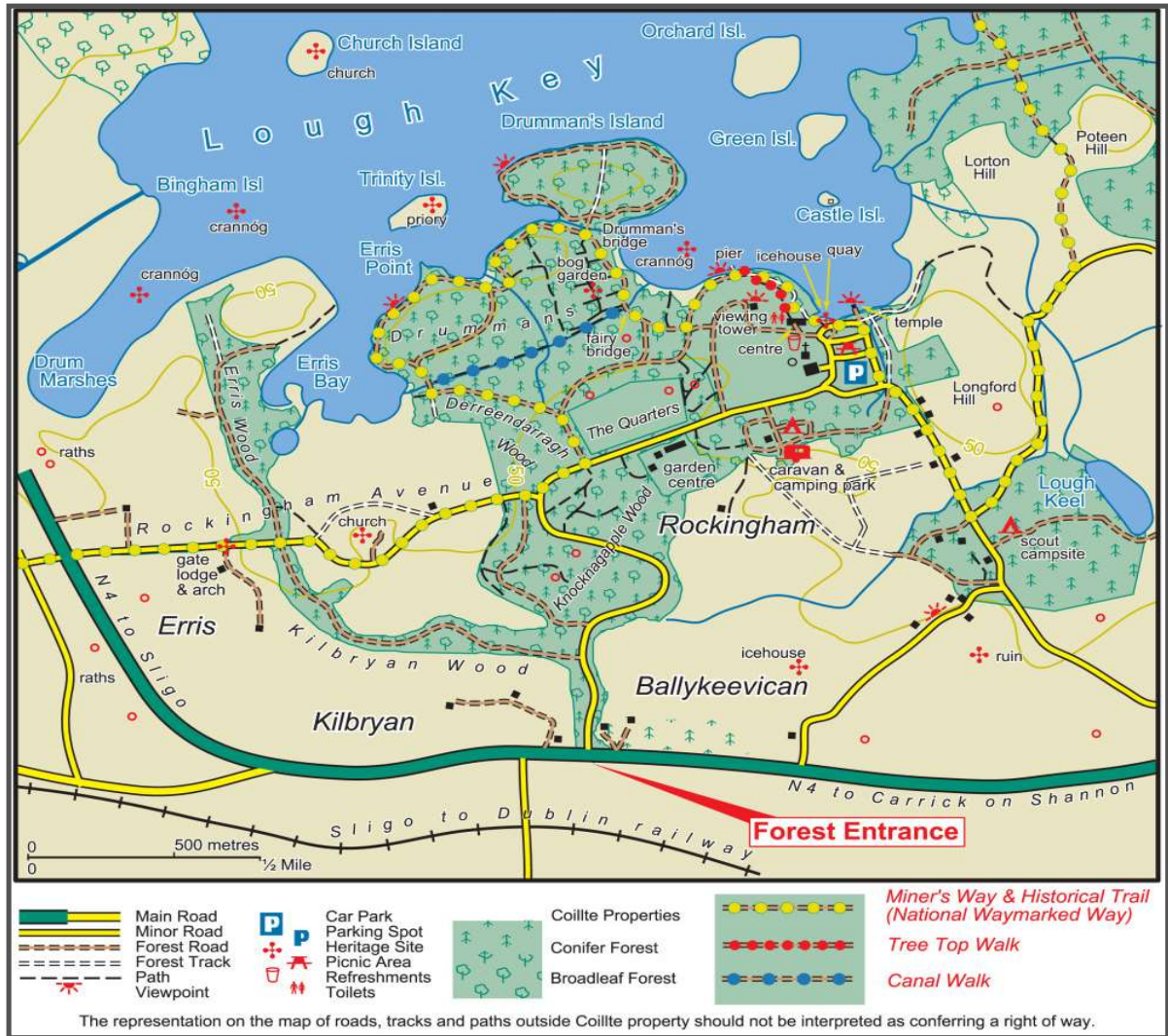


Figure 9: Lough Key Forest Park

FOLLOW LOUGH KEY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING?

CORPORATE TEAMBUILDING

STAG / HEN PARTY

SCHOOL TOUR

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

4.2 Red Stables, Dublin

Located in St. Anne's Park, Dublin 3, the historic stables - which are protected structures - were originally part of the Ardilaun Estate owned by the Guinness family from 1835. The estate was acquired by Dublin Corporation in 1939 and opened for public use.

In preparing the stable buildings for a new use (they were being used as a car depot and offices), the principle of 'minimum intervention' was adopted by the City Architects Division who are responsible for the redesign. Refurbishment works included replacing all damaged materials and overhauling existing fittings as required, renewing all plumbed and wired systems, introducing a new heating system, and matching original materials as closely as possible. New builds included the kitchen and tea room, which use contemporary materials but are built to fit with the general form of the complex.

Dublin City Council opened the Red Stables in 2006 and it is now home to a number of functions.

- It functions primarily as a series of subsidised workspaces for visual artists, selected through an open competition administered by the Council. Their provision was part of the 2006-2009 Council's Arts Service Plan.
- Olive's Room is a daytime cafe operated by Moloughney's. It also offers venue hire and catering for small on-site functions, e.g. weddings for up to 50.
- Markets: Regular Farmers Market and Cottage Market.

The Red Stables are being developed gradually, with a primary purpose in mind, i.e. artists' workspaces, and a secondary purpose of providing facilities for visitors to the Park.

**Figures 10 & 11:
Retaining the Original Character of the Coach Houses
while Providing for a Modern Kitchen & Cafe**



4.3 Crom Estate, Co. Fermanagh

Crom Castle is the property of the Earl of Erne and is not open to the public, but the estate was given to the National Trust in 1987 and is now operated within its portfolio of properties. Since changing hands, the Crom Estate has seen a gradual increase in its visitor experiences, all of which are very much focused on encourage greater use of the natural environment. It currently offers:

- walking trails;
- fishing;
- boat hire;
- bird watching;
- seven self-catering cottages in the restored farmyard courtyard (see image *below*);
- glamping pods in the renovated pig houses (see image *right*);
- camp site;
- weddings and venue hire;
- tea rooms;
- active volunteer programme.



In Crom accommodation is an integrated offering for visitors engaging with the outdoor environment of the Estate.

4.4 Other Relevant Illustrations



Innovation in accommodation is continually growing, and increasingly marrying the environment in which it's located with the needs of consumers.

These examples show how size does not have to restrict the offering of accommodation, and how glamping and dormitory accommodation is no longer to be considered a low-budget option.

Top: Langford Fivehead is a 15th Century manor house that offers a fine dining restaurant and six bedrooms.



Centre: The highly-popular Bubble Domes at Finn Lough, Co. Fermanagh - making the most of the outdoors.

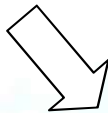
Below: High-end dormitory accommodation at the luxurious Crosshaven House, Co. Cork, harnessing the nautical theme of the area.



Single purpose venues are also becoming increasingly common, as owners of smaller venues find that they can successfully tap into a particular niche in the market and fully cater for its needs.

Right: Ballymagarvey, Co. Meath, caters almost exclusively for the wedding market.

Below: Kilkenny Design Craft Yard.





Privately-owned, Westport House is a good example of a multi-use site, where the House and grounds become a playground for a wide variety of family-focused activities.



Westport House

300 years of Irish history at one of Ireland's best loved **heritage attractions**.



Pirate Adventure Park

A treasure trove of family fun and winner of **Best Family Visitor Attraction** in Ireland.



Camping and Caravans

One of Ireland's premier **caravan and camping** destinations!



Birds of Prey Centre

A unique opportunity to get up close & personal with magnificent **birds of prey**.



Westport Train Tour

Hop on board our fully-enclosed, **guided train tour** and experience the story of this West of Ireland town throughout the last 300 years.



Even **buildings that may appear beyond repair can be repurposed**, retaining their outer character while modernising the interior to provide new spaces for new uses.

Above: Powerscourt House, Co. Wicklow, was almost destroyed inside by fire but now provides modern retail and dining opportunities, and is the heart of a thriving visitor experience that includes the formal gardens, a garden centre and venue hire



5. IDENTIFICATION OF OPTIONS

A wide variety of potential options have presented themselves for consideration during research and consultation, and these have been further supported by our review of comparators in Ireland and elsewhere. Furthermore, a site of the location, scale and nature of Lough Muckno does lend itself to many uses that can be further enhanced by the buildings in the parkland. These include options that are inherently connected with the nature of the site, such as accommodation and leisure, as well as those that don't necessarily have an intrinsic link to the site but which make use of the buildings and space available, such as weddings, workshops and spaces for public and private events, and commercial office use.

Demolition of one or both buildings was also mooted as a cost-effective option by a few. However, we do not consider this a viable solution for a number of reasons. Firstly, the parkland is one of the top historic designed landscapes in Ireland and the buildings are an integral part of that landscape. The demolition of the buildings would constitute a loss of heritage to the country. Secondly, as it currently stands the buildings would have to go through a process of delisting before planning permission for demolition could be granted. This is unlikely to be considered favourably by the Dept. of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and would attract negative publicity from The Heritage Council, An Taisce and local historians. Finally, the demolition of the buildings, while offering a financial saving in the short-term, would not offer any long-term benefit to the local economy.

We will therefore focus our attention on options that we consider to offer viable use of the buildings, as outlined in the brief. Broadly speaking, these options can be categorised along the following lines:

- Leisure
- Community/Education
- Commercial/Retail
- Residential
- Sale

In order to identify the best options for Monaghan County Council to consider for Hope Castle and the Annex - and taking account of the context, market and comparator review already presented - we will consider a number of perspectives.

- Firstly, we will broadly assess the market value of the categories above.
- Secondly, we will assess individual options using a standard Multi-Criteria Analysis.

Finally, we will consider the architectural recommendations, bearing in mind the historic nature of the site and the fact that the buildings have been listed for heritage protection.

5.1 Initial Market Assessment of Category Options

Table 5.1: Market Assessment of Option Categories

Category/Sector	Assessment	Comments on Market Value
Leisure , e.g. - Accommodation - Adventure Centre - Cultural/Artistic/Crafts Hub & Workspaces - Recording Studio - Dining (day/evening)	With a low population level in the immediate area and low levels of tourism, there would be insufficient demand to create sustainable leisure businesses that relied on passing trade. In addition, our review found little evidence of sufficient demand for cultural/artistic spaces. Leisure options that could attract additional consumers to the area specifically for their offering, e.g. upmarket dining, accommodation, adventure centre, could work.	Hotel room occupancy rates are traditionally lower in the region than in other parts of the country. However, individual businesses can buck the trend, e.g. Castle Leslie report 90% room occupancy year round.
Community/Education , e.g. - Meeting spaces - Dundalk IT outreach - Primary school	While there is a limited opportunity for third level outreach courses, this would be difficult to realise given the size of the population and previous experiences of a similar project in Drogheda (which has a much greater population base). It would be unlikely to operate as a stand-alone and would need additional activities to support its viability. Alternative sites would be more suitable for primary school requirements. There is already sufficient community space available.	N/A

Category/Sector	Assessment	Comments on Market Value
Commercial/Retail , e.g. - Privately-rented offices - Incubation/enterprise start-ups - Public sector offices - Retail outlet, such as Avoca	<p>There are a considerable number of enterprise start-up and rentable office spaces within the county and good demand for these, although no evidence that demand is currently exceeding capacity.</p> <p>Monaghan County Council is one of the few local authorities in the country that wasn't provided with new offices in recent decades and that could be a sustainable option for the buildings, as has happened with historic buildings elsewhere in the country.</p> <p>There is insufficient population to support the development of a large destination retail centre.</p>	<p>Prime grade office rents in Ulster/Connaught are currently estimated at €148 per sq m.</p> <p>Retail rents are showing strong growth but most specifically in shopping centres and in prime city-centre locations.</p> <p><i>(Source: SCSl)</i></p>
Residential , e.g. - private housing for rent or sale - community housing	<p>The property market in Monaghan does not show evidence of an under-supply but sale and rental prices have been increasing strongly and ahead of nearby counties such as Donegal, Leitrim and Cavan - indicating reasonable demand.</p>	<p>Average house prices have increased by over 12% in the last year to an average of €163,719. Average rents have increased by almost 10% in the last year to an average of €696. (These are still at the lower end of national averages).</p> <p><i>(Source: DAFT Insights into the Irish Property Market)</i></p>
Sale	<p>Given the buoyancy of the tourism and property markets at a national level, it appears there would be an opportunity for sale of the buildings for either leisure or residential use.</p>	See above.

From a market value perspective, the opportunities to develop and/or sell the buildings for residential or leisure accommodation/activity use appear strongest. However, this is not the sole criteria to be used in identifying the most suitable options for the site and therefore we will proceed to a more detailed Multi-Criteria Analysis that takes into account other County Council objectives.

5.2 The Multi-Criteria Analysis

As some of the options proposed for the site are not mutually exclusive – i.e. they can operate alongside each other - the MCA undertaken here provides a comparative analysis that will inform the final selection and prioritisation of options for each building. It has been developed with input from the earlier-presented findings of the market analysis, our consultations with key stakeholders and the community, and our experience on other projects. At a later stage, if a detailed business plan is being developed for any of the specific options, a cost-benefit analysis may also be required.

The Public Spending Code recommends that an MCA be carried out (at a minimum) for projects between €5 million and €20 million, and this analysis can be quantitative, qualitative or a mixture of both, depending on the factors to be assessed.

“MCA enables projects to be assessed against more than one objective. It is also worth noting that the application of MCA is not restricted to situations where the aim is to find only the single most appropriate option to follow through. MCA is particularly useful when it can offer a quick and cost effective way of short listing projects and comparing them against strategic objectives in a structured way.”¹⁶

There are a number of steps involved in undertaking an MCA, and these, along with the detailed MCA matrix, the accompanying notes and an explanation of the Options, are included in the Appendix. It is important to note that while an MCA is informed by professional experience and knowledge, it is nevertheless subjective and the prioritisation reflects the relative importance of options rather than absolute values.

It is not possible to evaluate every single individual option that could be considered for Hope Castle and the Annex but there is sufficient consensus – between our review as presented here so far and the consultation process – to allow us to consider seven primary options in the MCA for each building, along with the options of sale and demolition, as detailed in the Appendix. The prioritised top results are presented below in Table 5.2.

¹⁶ 2016 Common Appraisal Framework, Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport

Table 5.2: MCA Summary Results

Top Options for Hope Castle
Country Inn with Bedrooms
Restaurant with function & meeting rooms
Minimum Option
Boutique Hotel
Sale
Top Options for the Annex
Adventure Centre HQ with accommodation
Budget Accommodation
Self-Catering Accommodation
Minimum Option

Leisure options have scored highest for both buildings, although they rated less favourably when viewed from a market value perspective. This is because they rate highly against a number of other objectives, including,

- 'fit' with the character of the buildings and the area, and
- potential to attract additional business to the town, stimulating the local economy.

It is also interesting to note from the detailed MCA in the Appendix that the top options for the Annex scored higher than those for Hope Castle, indicating the somewhat better potential to develop a sustainable business there.

5.3 Architectural Recommendations

Best conservation practice would be to restore the main portion of the house where the walls still stand. It would not be considered good conservation practice to try to rebuild the missing south wing as this could only be done with a considerable degree of conjecture. A new contemporary south wing could be added, if designed to a high standard to sit sensitively alongside the restored house.

In the restoration of the house the original rooms should where possible be recreated with whatever evidence survives of original historic details. The main purpose is, however, not to create exact replicas of what was there before, but to recreate the

original room layouts with their Georgian proportions and the splendid views of the demesne that will be enjoyed from them. If funds are not available in the short term for the re-roofing and restoration of the house, it should at least be tidied up and consolidated as an urgent temporary measure to prevent further deterioration. If this work is not carried out promptly the eventual restoration costs will be considerably higher. In the short term, the house should be consolidated and ground floor apertures made secure to allow the unsightly metal fence to be removed that currently detract from the house and its relationship with the landscape. Overtime the former pleasure garden to the east of the house could also be restored.

In a project such as this, where two historic buildings and protected structures are badly damaged and at risk, **it is prudent to take a pragmatic approach and instigate the restoration, adaptation and reuse, works in manageable steps**, as outlined in the following section on Order of Magnitude of Costs. Rather than waiting for the requisite funding to complete the long term vision for the buildings, that may take some considerable time to secure, it is prudent to break the work down into smaller and more manageable steps.

Each of the steps could be implemented in line with the financial success of the operation, to minimise risk of over stretching the ambition to a level that is not financially sustainable. For both the house and annex the most important phase is the first – to tidy up, secure and re-present the structures. This is not only the least expensive phase, but symbolically the most important as it quite literally ‘*stops the rot*’ and transforms the building from ‘*derelict ruin*’ to ‘*work in progress*’.

If actioned promptly, the value of this initial phase will represent by far the best value for money of any phase as the longer the buildings are left to deteriorate, the more expensive they will be to restore.

5.4 Order of Magnitude of Costs

This order of magnitude of costs presents outline budget costs for the various steps considered above, ranging from the minimal to the optimum. We propose a sequence of seven steps for each building starting from:

- 1) Clean, sweep, consolidate & secure;
- 2) Construct roof & rainwater disposal;
- 3) Insert external doors and windows;

- 4) Construct floors and staircases;
- 5) Install partitions, ceilings & building services;
- 6) Complete finishes & fit out;
- 7) Landscaping.

Costs are based on average-high meter square rates for the restoration of a historic buildings following fire damage. They assume that there is no serious structural damage to the historic masonry and that internal finishes will be of a mid-range rather than a high end specification. In the house, the meter square rates used are average across the range of potential functions, - for example community or office use would be less than restaurant, inn or boutique hotel use. While in the annex craft centre and wellness use would be less than budget or self-catering accommodation. For the castle we are assuming a modest extension of 10% of the existing floor area, for the annex we are assuming a 20% extension.

The buildings could be made usable during stage (5), and stages (5), (6) and (7) could be phased to suit available funding. Completing each building in a single phase should, however, be more competitive on price.

Table 5.3: Order of Magnitude of Costs for Hope Castle

Hope Castle	Areas	Costs €
Basement:	375m ² x 3,000	
Ground:	390m ² x 3,000	
First:	320m ² x 3,000	
Second:	320m ² x 3,000	4,215,000
New Extension (10%):	140m ² x 2,000	280,000
Total:	1,545m²	4,495,000

Table 5.3: Order of Magnitude of Costs for Annex Building

Annex	Areas	Costs €
Ground:	636 m ² x 2,500	
First:	570 m ² x 2,500	3,015,000
New Extension (20%):	120 m ² x 2,000	240,000
Total:	1,326 m²	3,255,000

The overall costs for restoring and extending both buildings to optimum use are, therefore, in the region of €7,750,000.

A **minimal option** would be as follows:

Remove damaged roof, floors and debris;

Consolidate masonry;

Secure ground floor apertures;

Remove security railings;

Remove all plant growth;

Tidy up immediate setting

- Hope Castle: €250,000
- Annex: €150,000
- Add Viewing Gallery & Stairs to House: €100,000

(All prices quoted exclude VAT & design team fees)

Following the completion of stage (1) the future of the two buildings would have been secured at modest cost and the overall historic landscape would gain immediate aesthetic benefit in the replacement of two derelict eyesores being transformed into two attractive preserved ruins. This was the case in Powerscourt, Co Wicklow, for many years following the serious fire that gutted the house in the 1970s. Today it is roofed, floored, fenestrated and serviced to provide a wide range of restaurant, retail and venue functions. While the internal linings and decorative features have not been restored, the spaces can be enjoyed along with the important views of the surrounding designed landscape from the house.

As an interim stage, while still a consolidated ruin, the house could be used for interpretive purposes by installing temporary metal staircases and galleries to give access to the upper windows from where the historic designed landscape can be understood and enjoyed. A short term use of the house for this purpose, which could be procured at modest cost, creates an immediate purpose for the house as a viewing gallery and prospect point. A visitor attraction of this type reinforces the meaning and significance of the house while drawing in members of the public who will better appreciate its qualities.

Reducing the Number of Options for Further Consideration:

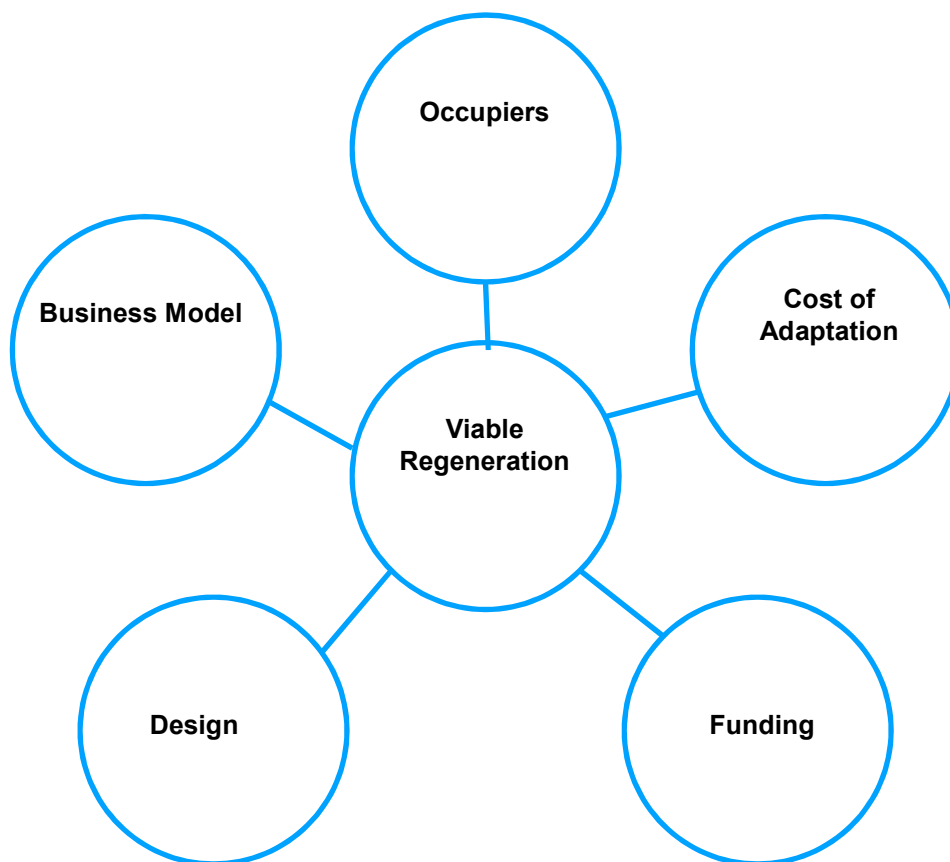
At this stage of the assessment we can see that some options appear to have better potential and 'fit' with the surroundings than others. Therefore only those that are considered to have the best potential are carried forward into the final analysis. This does not mean that there is no potential for the discarded options but it does indicate that the ability to bring them to viable fruition is not as strong.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 Strategic Approach to Refining the Options

The successful regeneration of historic buildings relies on a wide variety of factors, not all of which are relevant during an initial Options Appraisal but all of which need to be considered in the final delivery. These are illustrated below.

Figure 12: Key Determinants of Successful Regeneration¹⁷



The previous assessments have been useful in reducing and refining the list of options, but they miss a number of factors that are essential in making a final recommendation with regard to the best options for Monaghan County Council’s approach to further development of Hope Castle and the Annex Building.

¹⁷ Adapted from English Heritage

These are:

- the potential to maximise the use of, and return from, both buildings by providing for multiple/inter-connected uses on site;
- the developer/business model;
- availability of funding.

By integrating the factors above with the previous assessment results, we have the opportunity to take a more strategic approach to the repurposing/redevelopment of the two buildings. Table 6.1 layers these additional factors onto the top options.

Table 6.1: Additional Commentary on Top-Scoring Options

Top Options – Annex Building	Additional Commentary
AB1. Adventure Centre HQ with accommodation	No synergy with proposed uses of Hope Castle but could integrate higher-end hostel and self-catering accommodation under one operation. Adult adventure (e.g. hens, corporate) would provide additional business for a restaurant/country inn option in the Hope Castle building.
AB2. Budget Accommodation	Could be integrated with, and serviced by, a restaurant/accommodation option in Hope Castle or by an adventure operator located elsewhere in the Parkland.
AB3. Self-Catering Accommodation	Could be integrated with, and serviced by, a restaurant/accommodation option in Hope Castle.
AB7. Minimum Option	<p>Could be linked with a minimum approach to Hope Castle or used as the first phase of a longer-term approach that includes further development along the lines of one of the other options.</p> <p>This would require ongoing maintenance by the County Council if it were selected as a 'stand-alone' option.</p>
HC2. Country Inn with Bedrooms	<p>Could integrate with a self-catering option in the Annex, for private events particularly, e.g. weddings.</p> <p>Could also integrate with adult activity at an adventure centre based in the Annex.</p>
HC3. Restaurant with function/meeting rooms	Could support accommodation in the Annex Building and also facilitate adult groups at an adventure centre based in the Annex (e.g. corporate team building, hens/stags).

Top Options – Hope Castle

HC7. Minimum Option	<p>Could be linked with a minimum approach to the Annex or used as the first phase of a longer-term approach that includes further development along the lines of one of the other options.</p> <p>This would require ongoing maintenance by the County Council if it were selected as a 'stand-alone' option.</p>
HC1. Boutique Hotel	<p>Could integrate with a self-catering option in the Annex, for private events particularly, e.g. weddings.</p>
HC5. Sale	<p>The eventual use/s of the buildings would have to be carefully negotiated and assessed in advance of any sale to ensure their alignment with the area and the objectives of the County Council.</p>

This more strategic approach to the options allows us to propose three final options for consideration.

The Minimum Option, which we consider an essential step in any further development and in order to prevent further deterioration, is not being proposed as a final solution in its own right as it will necessitate ongoing financial commitment on the part of Monaghan County Council.

Likewise, the option to sell the buildings is not being proposed as a final solution - although if a suitable buyer can be found, it does present a cost-effective option in an environment where there is limit to the availability of public funding to subsidise the ongoing redevelopment of historic buildings.

OPTION A – AN INTEGRATED ACCOMMODATION OFFERING (HC1/HC2 and AB3)	
<p>Overview:</p> <p>It is becoming increasingly common now to find a mixture of accommodation types on one site and to also find accommodation spread out across a number of buildings but serviced from a main building. Given that shortage of accommodation is a concern for the area, and that differing types of accommodation options have scored well in the MCA, one option is to combine these – offering guesthouse/hotel accommodation in Hope Castle, with self-catering accommodation in the Annex.</p>	
<p>Work Required:</p> <p>The minimal work outlined in Option A would have to be carried out as a prelude to advertising for an operator to manage the two buildings, under lease. It is recommended that further work on the buildings would be carried out in co-operation with the selected operator.</p>	
<p>Strengths:</p> <p>This option would bring additional traffic into the area, provide additional employment opportunities offer additional facilities for the community (e.g. dining, function room). It would also provide some return, from the lease, to the Council on investment in redevelopment.</p>	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <p>This option would require careful management by Council in the initial stages and might limit public access to the areas immediately surrounding the buildings. Given the current size of Hope Castle and of the tourism market in the County, careful attention would have to be given in advance to the business plan of any potential operator.</p>
<p>Commentary on Operations/Management:</p> <p>This Option envisages the management of both buildings within a single operation. Hope Castle would operate as a guesthouse, preferably with a restaurant, and the Annex would provide additional accommodation capacity for the guesthouse, or could be occupied on a self-catering basis. This type of combined accommodation offering is operated successfully elsewhere - e.g. Castle Leslie. It would be prudent to seek expressions of interest and/or tenders from operators prior to completing restoration works so that prospective operators can advise on the fit-out requirement and ensure that any building works are compatible with operational requirements.</p>	

Potential Sources of Funding:

The building restoration works would have to be undertaken by the Council, who will have to source funding. Funding may come from building insurance receipts, grant support from the Heritage Council (unlikely to be substantial) and under the Structures at Risk Fund.

Prospective operators should be required to fund the fit-out and furnishing. It is likely that the dividing line between the Council's commitment and that of the operator will be the subject of negotiation. An operator who invests in the building is also likely to require a long lease of, say, 25 years, with provision for recognition of their undepreciated investment in the fit-out of the building in the event of early termination.

OPTION B – AN ADVENTURE CENTRE WITH ACCOMMODATION IN THE ANNEX (AB1)

Overview:

This option was the highest scoring of all options in the two MCAs and it is clear that outdoor activities are a core strength of Lough Muckno and that a number of outdoor operators, most recently Muckno Adventure, have been successfully operating in the area, despite constraints in terms of facilities.

Work Required:

The minimal work outlined the architectural recommendations in Section 5.3 would have to be carried out as a prelude to advertising for an operator to manage the centre and its accommodation, under lease. It is recommended that further work on the buildings would be carried out in co-operation with the selected operator.

Strengths:

This option would enhance existing activities in the area, would attract additional business and potentially offer additional local employment. It would also add to the facilities available for the community and provide some return, from the lease, to the Council.

Weaknesses:

Those that apply to Option A are also of some limited concern here.

Commentary on Operations/Management:

This business should be run by a specialist adventure centre operator. Interest has already been expressed by Muckno Adventure who were operating out of the water-ski centre until it was closed recently for health and safety reasons. As under Option A, a tendering process should be initiated, with the selected prospective operator being involved in the specification of building fit-out.

Potential Sources of Funding:

The funding of the restoration work would be the same as in the other options. The prospective operator should fund the fit-out, including specialist equipment, and LEADER funding may be available to support this.

**OPTION C – COUNTRY INN WITH FUNCTION/MEETING ROOMS OR BEDROOMS
IN HOPE CASTLE (HC2/HC3)**

Overview:

A country inn that would offer both a daytime café-type menu as well as evening dining would provide a welcome additional facility for current users of the Parkland as well as attracting staying visitors. The provision of a function room and meeting room/rooms would allow the venue to cater for smaller weddings – a good fit with the surroundings – as well as for corporate meetings, Council functions, etc. But the provision of bedrooms, rather than meeting rooms, would be an ideal solution as accommodation is much needed in the area.

Work Required:

The minimal work outlined in Section 5.3 would have to be carried out as a prelude to advertising for an operator, under lease. It is recommended that further work on the building would be carried out in co-operation with the selected operator.

Strengths:

It would be a welcome addition in the Community, would provide some much-needed accommodation and would encourage more visitors to use Lough Muckno. It would also provide a return to the Council.

Weaknesses:

The dining option would potentially compete with other dining alternatives in the area. However, our review suggests there is sufficient scope for another high-end restaurant and the provision of bedrooms would facilitate staying visitors.

Commentary on Operations/Management:

The Council would advertise for expressions of interest for the running of a restaurant/bar and function room/meeting rooms under lease, with the option of bedrooms. A decision on whether the accommodation option would be pursued further at this stage or at a second stage would be based on the quality of operators coming forward as a result of the advertisement. It would be prudent to seek expressions of interest and/or tenders from operators prior to completing restoration works so that prospective operators can advise on the fit-out requirement and ensure that any building works are compatible with operational requirements.

Potential Sources of Funding:

The building restoration works would have to be undertaken by the Council, drawing on the funding sources identified for Option A. Prospective operators should be required to fund the fit-out and furnishing. It is likely that the dividing line between the Council's commitment and that of the operator will be the subject of negotiation. An operator who invests in the building is also likely to require a reasonably long lease, with provision for recognition of their undepreciated investment in the fit-out of the building in the event of early termination. If the option to develop accommodation is considered during the negotiation of the lease, then a longer term lease would be expected.

6.2 Final Recommendations and Next Steps

Having taken all previous assessment into account, our final recommendations for next steps are presented below. Please review more detailed notes in Section 6.1, as they pertain to the individual steps below.

- 1) **Start with minimum ‘make good’ steps for both buildings:** This will prevent further deterioration, create a more attractive asset in the parkland and enhance the appeal of the buildings as investment opportunities. If sufficient funds can be sourced to carry out the minimal restoration work identified in Section 5.4, then the buildings could be put to ‘meanwhile use’ - simple community events, a background for outdoor weddings, etc., - while awaiting further funding and development. These might also provide a small income.
- 2) **Work towards Option B for the Annex:** Advertise for expressions of interest for the development and operation of an adventure centre with up-market hostel and self-catering accommodation in the Annex, working with potential partners to establish viability, building requirements and business plan before carrying out any further structural works. The role of a garden can be considered in this context.
- 3) **Work towards Option C for Hope Castle:** Advertise for expressions of interest for the development and operation of a country inn with function rooms/bedrooms for Hope Castle, ensuring expert legal advice on leasing before tendering for an operator and only considering operators with a definite track record in the provision of tourist accommodation. Fit-out, etc., should only be done once an operator has been selected and a business plan is in place.
- 4) **Proceed with the work on the two buildings on a phased basis:** By taking small steps towards final solutions, it allows for gradual expenditure and the opportunity to scale development according to market response.
- 5) **Focus on the development of Lough Muckno as an integrated destination:** Incorporate interpretation of other historic sites, the landscape and facilities/activities, and consider other forms of on-site accommodation, e.g. glamping/camping. This presents the best long-term opportunity for the town and will form a more sustainable base for any commercial activity in the buildings.

- 6) **Gradually build the profile of the area:** Review the usage, demand and performance of the parkland and activities within the parkland on an annual basis with a view to further development of the buildings.

- 7) If it is not considered in the initial stages, **accommodation can be considered as a later development** of Hope Castle, once the profile of the site has improved, with the option of a sensitively-designed modern extension to provide additional capacity.

- 8) **Facilitate and encourage co-operation** between eventual occupants/operators of the buildings and the Community Partnership to develop Lough Muckno as an integrated destination and to incorporate minimal interpretation as appropriate throughout the buildings and parkland.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Listing of Businesses in Castleblayney

A1. LISTINGS OF BUSINESSES IN CASTLEBLAYNEY

FASHION

Akinson's Menswear
Kiva's Boutique
La Buton Boutique
Liz Christy Handwoven in Ireland
Me-Me Boutique
Monchichi Children's Boutique
Shoe City
Tavey's Menswear

HEALTH & BEAUTY

Addictions Beauty Salon
Coyle's Pharmacy
Clipper's Barber Shop
Good2Go
Hair Creations
Leavy's Pharmacy
McKeever's Chemist
Ocean's Hair & Beauty Salon
Picasso Hair & Beauty
Pixie's Hair Salon/Beauty World
Rayell's Unisex Hair Salon
The Barber Shop
The Blayney Barber
The Corner Pharmacy
Vision Hair Salon

SERVICES

AES Security
Blayney Dry Cleaners
BML Mechanics
Burns Bros
Carville Tools
Monaghan Hire
RB Coogans
SM Security

FOOD/DRINK

Apache Pizza
Barney's Take Away
Centra
Eamon Byrne Butchers
Kirks Seafood
La Traviata
Lins Takeaway
Peking Inn
Quinn's Butchers
Shortt's Butchers
SuperValu
Watter's Londis

HOME & GIFTS

Brendan Hughes Gift Shop
Budz Flowers
Churchview Flowers & Garden Centre
Idealz
Irwin Tiles
John Flanagan's
Katie's
King's Forge Glass
Mc Mahon Paints & Wallpaper
R.B Coogan
The Jeweller
The Post Office Gift Shop

SPORTS & LEISURE

Concra Woods Pro Shop
Declan Loughman Sports
Gillian Oliver Physiotherapy Clinic
Lakeside Angling
Muckno Adventure
The Glencarn Hotel Leisure Centre

RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS

Conlon's Café
Cozy Café
Eileen's Tea Rooms
Royal Jade
The Glencarn Hotel
The Old Coach Inn
The View Restaurant, Concra Woods

FUELS

Carragher's XL Shop/Blayney Service Station
Today's Local
Top Oil, Tullynahinera
Watters Topaz

PHONES/COMPUTERS/OFFICE

McArdle Office Supplies
PC Repairs
Vodafone

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

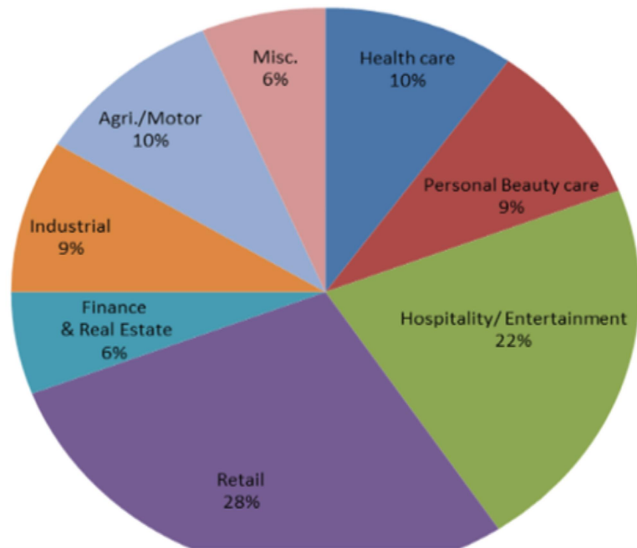
Gr8
Iontas Theatre

MISCELLANEOUS

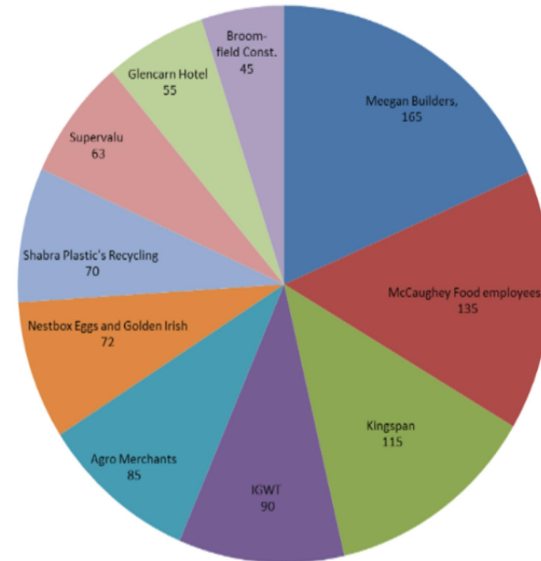
Dan Hughes
EJ Hughes
Mulligan's Newsagents
Paws Pet Shop
Shabra Plastics Factory Shop
The Mascot

*list correct at the time of print. For updated lists, check out www.castleblayney.ie

Castleblayney Traders



Top 10 Business Employers in Castleblayney



Appendix 2:

Consultation Feedback

A2. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

The public consultation took the form of an 'open house', in order to provide the maximum opportunity for quality engagement with the community. Large panels showing historic and current images of the buildings were displayed in the Gate Lodge for the open session in order to provide context. And feedback questionnaires were available for the public to pick up to either complete on-site or take away and return later. There was also the opportunity to talk to either CHL or Howley Hayes Architects and there was such interest that there was no break in discussions during the three hours. Ninety questionnaires were completed on the day.

The public consultation period also continued over many weeks, with almost fifty further questionnaires being downloaded from the County Council website and returned by post or by email to CHL. It is clear that there is much public interest in, and support for, the project, and that the buildings and parkland are highly valued by the community.

Key feedback from the public consultation is provided below:

- Generally, the community are very proud of the place and recognise it as a valuable local amenity. They are broadly very supportive of the project.
- There was surprise to learn that the historic designed landscape was so important and although most recognised that the house is not a particularly significant from an architectural perspective, there were some who considered it to be of greater merit than is justified
- There is some concern about *how* the project will develop - based on the history of mismanagement and the unexpected demolition of part of Hope Castle (this is the public perspective). As a result, there is a desire that plans for the buildings will be presented publicly before being acted on.
- There is also general agreement that the park remain open to public access no matter what options are agreed for the buildings, although there is an understanding that if any commercial operator comes into the buildings, there may be a need for some of the ground immediately around the buildings to be 'sectioned off' in some way.

- There is broad support for the restoration of the buildings, with many recommending the reinstatement of the section of the Castle that was demolished. It was felt that renovating the buildings would make the parkland as a whole more attractive and that rebuilding the demolished section of the Castle would make it more likely that a commercial operator would be interested.
- Of those suggesting a purpose for the buildings, some form of boutique hotel/guesthouse and restaurant with function space (especially as a wedding venue) were common suggestions for the Castle, and self-catering/hostel/adventure centre for the Annexe. Those putting forward these proposals felt that they were sound ideas last time but managed badly.
- There is also some support for restoring the buildings as visitor attractions.
- The lack of accommodation space in the town for the corporate sector, golfers, anglers, etc., was a common theme in feedback from those with businesses in the town.
- Most felt that the buildings should remain in Council ownership and be leased to a private operator who could make a commercial return on them.
- Some felt that the Council maintaining ownership would ensure the site would remain a community amenity and that any profits from operations that might run there would remain locally.
- There was almost unanimity about the Council not managing any business that might operate in the buildings. There were suggestions that any lease/terms of agreement with an operator should be carefully thought out this time around, and only operators with a clear track record considered but that a degree of flexibility about arrangements in the parkland might be required in order to make a business viable.

There were also a number of *specific* recommendations from a small minority. These included using the buildings to provide space for:

- cultural development;
- arts/crafts studios;
- wellness (e.g. yoga);
- football team training (similar to Carton House).

And a number of very **specific, considered and detailed proposals** were also submitted in relation to the management and operation of commercial activities in the buildings, including one from Castleblayney Community Enterprise and one from Muckno Adventure. These warrant careful consideration as part of our work.

Although it was clearly stated that the project brief relates to the buildings and not the parkland, some suggestions gathered during the public consultation related to an overall approach to both landscape and buildings, and are worth mentioning here. They were mainly relating to:

- providing camping, caravanning and glamping in the parklands;
- restoring the former formal gardens surrounding the house;
- creating beaches at the lakeside to enhance the overall area.

Finally, a number of concerns were aired about the current management of the site and buildings, including the fact that the buildings are currently an eye-sore, and that the park remains open at night and is subject to ongoing vandalism.

Appendix 3:

Multi-Criteria Analysis and Notes

A3. MULTI-CRITERIA ANALYSIS AND NOTES

A3.1 Steps for Multi-Criteria Analysis

- 1) Identify the options to be considered. In the case of Hope Castle and the Annex Buildings, these include the range of uses and activities that have surfaced during discussions, consultation and research.
- 2) Identify the factors against which they need to be assessed. These are derived from the objectives identified for the project by Monaghan County Council as well as the needs of the community.
- 3) Select a scoring system. In the case of options that can be readily quantified, this is more straightforward as it involves comparing various data sets. However, in the case of this project, the options cannot be quantified in the same manner and therefore a more qualitative approach is used.
- 4) Weight factors to reflect the relative importance of certain factors versus others.
- 5) Combine the scores to provide an overall rating of each option.
- 6) Test for sensitivity. In the case of qualitative assessments in particular, it is important to ensure a variety of input to ensure a balanced assessment has been undertaken.
- 7) Examine the results and present for discussion.

A3.2 Explanation of Evaluation Criteria and Weightings Used

- 1) 'Fit' with the character of the buildings: Is the proposed option appropriate given the history, appearance and protected nature of the buildings? Weight: x2
- 2) 'Fit' with the character of the parkland and town: Does the proposed option align with the historic designed landscape in which the buildings are situated and their proximity to the town? Weight: x2
- 3) Allows public access: Will the proposed option allow for public access to the buildings?

- 4) Opportunity for community enterprise: Will the proposed option allow for local business involvement?
- 5) Will attract additional business to the town: Will the proposed option encourage traffic to the town? Weight: x2
- 6) Additionality: Will the proposed option be additional to other services/facilities in the immediate area, i.e. not displace existing business?
- 7) Evidence of need: Has the need for the proposed option been clearly demonstrated? Weight: x2
- 8) Simplicity of delivery: Is the option simple to deliver in organisational terms for Monaghan County Council?
- 9) Financially sustainable in the medium term: Will the proposed option be able to sustain itself without recourse to County Council, or other, subsidies? Weight: x3
- 10) Cost-effectiveness: In terms of capital costs, how cost-effective is the proposed option to deliver for the County Council? Weight: x3
- 11) Availability of operator: Can a potential operator be readily identified for the proposed option?
- 12) Potential for funding availability: Can a funding source/funder be readily identified for the proposed option?

A3.3 Scoring and Weighting

Each option is scored 1-5, with 1 being weak/low/no evidence and 5 being strong/high/evidence exists.

Weights have been applied – as indicated in the previous notes - to criteria that has been identified as particularly important.

Options Evaluated in the MCA

Hope Castle	The Annex Building
<p>HC1. Boutique Hotel: Small hotel with modern extension, offering up-market accommodation and dining as well as function facilities for weddings, etc.</p>	<p>AB1. Adventure Centre HQ with accommodation: headquarters to include key facilities, e.g. reception/office, toilets, showers, lunch room, games room, storage and communal kitchen; accommodation to include mix of dormitories and self-catering accommodation, possibly supplemented with caravanning/camping/ glamping elsewhere in the park.</p>
<p>HC2. Country Inn with Bedrooms: Cafe/Bar/Restaurant with small number of bedrooms.</p>	<p>AB2. Budget Accommodation: Basic hostel accommodation to support activities elsewhere in the park and/or in the vicinity of Castleblayney.</p>
<p>HC3. Restaurant with function & meeting rooms: Cafe/Bar/Restaurant also offering function space (e.g. for weddings), meeting rooms and/or offices.</p>	<p>AB3. Self-Catering Accommodation: Could operate in a number of different ways, e.g. community scheme operating through Airbnb, commercial operator offering high-spec rentals, family-friendly self-catering to supplement activities in the area.</p>
<p>HC4. Visitor Attraction: Restore the Castle as an historic visitor attraction that tells the story of the buildings and area.</p>	<p>AB4. Start-up/Commercial Spaces: Expansion of C.C.E.'s activities to include further provision of spaces and conference/training facilities.</p>
<p>HC5. Commercial Offices: Keep the historic shell of the building but develop and lease the inside as modern offices to commercial business interests or through the C.C.E.</p>	<p>AB5. Wellness/arts & crafts Studios & Retail: Provision of studio spaces for artists and crafts people, with potential to develop Artist in Residence programmes with Iontas (which would require small amount of accommodation); also space for community wellness (Pilates, Yoga), associated retail and cafe.</p>
<p>HC6. Local Authority/Agency Offices: Keep the historic shell of the building to provide new office accommodation for Monaghan County Council or other local/regional agency.</p>	<p>AB6. Educational Use: Either premises for Gaelscoil Lorgan and/or out-reach educational facility via Dundalk IT.</p>
<p>HC7. Minimum Option: Clean up, restore roofs and floors, and provide minimum interpretation of the history.</p>	<p>AB7. Minimum Option: Clean up, restore roofs and floors, and provide minimum interpretation of the history.</p>

Hope Castle Multi-Criteria Analysis

Evaluation Criteria / Options	Fit' with the character of the building	Fit' with the character of the building - weighted score	Fit' with the character of the parkland and town	Fit' with the character of the parkland and town-weighted score	Allows public access	Opportunity for community enterprise	Will attract additional business to the town
Boutique Hotel with extension	4	8	5	10	4	2	4
Country Inn with Bedrooms	5	10	5	10	4	2	4
Restaurant with function space/meeting rooms/offices	4	8	5	10	4	3	3
Commercial office use	3	6	3	6	1	3	2
Local Authority/Agency office use	3	6	3	6	2	1	1
Visitor Attraction	4	8	4	8	5	3	2
Minimum option - clean up, replace rooves & floors, add minimum interpretation and maintain in good repair as part of parkland	5	10	5	10	5	1	1
Sale	3	6	3	6	0	0	3
MAX	5	10	5	10	5	5	5

*Hope Castle & Annex Buildings, Castleblayney
- Options Appraisal -*

April, 2018

<i>Evaluation Criteria /</i>	<i>Options</i>	<i>Will attract additional business to the town - weighted score</i>	<i>Additionality</i>	<i>Evidence of need</i>	<i>Evidence of need - weighted score</i>	<i>Simplicity of delivery</i>
	Boutique Hotel with extension	8	4	5	10	1
	Country Inn with Bedrooms	8	4	5	10	1
	Restaurant with function space/meeting rooms/offices	6	3	3	6	1
	Commercial office use	4	2	1	2	3
	Local Authority/Agency office use	2	2	1	2	3
	Visitor Attraction	4	4	3	6	1
	Minimum option - clean up, replace rooves & floors, add minimum interpretation and maintain in good repair as part of parkland	2	5	5	10	5
	Sale	6	3	2	4	4
	MAX	10	5	5	10	5

**Hope Castle & Annex Buildings, Castleblayney
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Evaluation Criteria / Options	Financially sustainable in the medium term	Financially sustainable in the medium term - weighted score	Cost-Effectiveness	Cost-effectiveness - weighted score	Potential availability of operator	Potential availability of funding	TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE
Boutique Hotel with extension	3	9	1	3	1	3	63
Country Inn with Bedrooms	3	9	1	3	1	3	65
Restaurant with function space/meeting rooms/offices	3	9	3	9	3	3	65
Commercial office use	2	6	3	9	3	2	47
Local Authority/Agency office use	2	6	3	9	3	1	43
Visitor Attraction	1	3	4	12	1	1	56
Minimum option - clean up, replace rooves & floors, add minimum interpretation and maintain in good repair as part of parkland	2	6	2	6	3	1	64
Sale	5	15	4	12	3	4	63
MAX	5	15	5	10	5	5	95

Annexe Buildings Multi-Criteria Analysis

Evaluation Criteria / Options	Fit' with the character of the building	Fit' with the character of the building - weighted score	Fit' with the character of the parkland and town	Fit' with the character of the parkland and town-weighted score	Allows public access	Opportunity for community enterprise	Will attract additional business to the town	Will attract additional business to the town - weighted score
Adventure Centre HQ with accomodation	4	8	5	10	4	4	5	10
Budget accommodation only	4	8	5	10	3	2	5	10
Self-Catering Accommodation	4	8	5	10	3	2	5	10
Educational use	3	6	3	6	2	2	1	2
Start-up/Commercial Spaces	3	6	2	4	2	4	2	4
Wellness/arts & crafts studios and associated retail	4	8	3	6	4	4	2	4
Minimum option - clean up, replace rooves & floors, add minimum interpretation and maintain in good repair as part of parkland and for basic community use	5	10	5	10	5	1	1	2
Sale	3	6	3	6	0	0	3	6
MAX	5	10	5	10	5	5	5	10

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Evaluation Criteria / Options	Additionality	Evidence of need	<i>Evidence of need - weighted score</i>	Simplicity of delivery	Financially sustainable in the medium term	<i>Financially sustainable in the medium term - weighted score</i>
Adventure Centre HQ with accomodation	4	5	10	3	4	12
Budget accommodation only	4	5	10	3	3	9
Self-Catering Accommodation	3	3	6	2	4	12
Educational use	3	3	6	3	1	3
Start-up/Commercial Spaces	2	2	4	3	3	9
Wellness/arts & crafts studios and associated retail	3	2	4	2	1	3
Minimum option - clean up, replace rooves & floors, add minimum interpretation and maintain in good repair as part of parkland and for basic community use	1	5	10	5	2	6
Sale	3	2	4	4	2	6
MAX	5	5	10	5	5	15

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Evaluation Criteria / Options	Cost-Effectiveness	Cost-Effectiveness - weighted score	Potential availability of operator	Potential availability of funding	TOTAL WEIGHTED SCORE
Adventure Centre HQ with accomodation	3	9	5	3	82
Budget accommodation only	3	9	3	2	73
Self-Catering Accommodation	3	9	2	2	69
Educational use	2	6	1	2	42
Start-up/Commercial Spaces	2	6	5	3	52
Wellness/arts & crafts studios and associated retail	2	6	3	1	48
Minimum option - clean up, replace rooves & floors, add minimum interpretation and maintain in good repair as part of parkland and for basic community use	2	6	5	1	62
Sale	2	6	3	4	48
MAX	5	10	5	5	95

Appendix 4:

The Benefits of Tourist Accommodation

A4. THE BENEFITS OF TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation rarely dictates a holiday destination (other than resort hotels) but it is an essential component of tourism infrastructure. A destination cannot hope to grow without sufficient accommodation to convert passing visitors and day-trippers into more valuable staying visitors. And hotels, in particular, enhance the appeal of a destination, facilitating the bundling of activities and attractions for visitors.

In addition, the Survey of Overseas Travellers shows that of the average €530 spent by overseas tourists, only 31% is spent on accommodation, as shown in Table 6.1, with the remainder going on other goods and services in the economy.

Table A4.1: Breakdown of Expenditure by Overseas Tourists

	€	%
Accommodation	163	31
Food and Drink	176	33
Entertainment and Sightseeing	39	7
Transport	68	13
Shopping	72	14
Miscellaneous other	12	2
Total	529	100
<i>Non-accommodation items</i>	366	69

Source: Derived from Fáilte Ireland's Survey of Overseas Expenditure

Hotels, provided they are sustainably developed in line with evidenced demand, also provide a range of other benefits for their local communities, as a recent paper¹⁸ by Fáilte Ireland succinctly outlines.

- **Hotels provide real commercial and economic opportunities for other businesses in the area** from whom they need goods and services. These businesses include food and drink producers, furniture suppliers, laundry services and specialist services such as technology. *'The Ireland Hotel Industry Survey 2015*

¹⁸ Wider Benefits of Tourist Accommodation, 2017

shows that the average Irish hotel generates operating expenses of about €42,000 per room, which are equivalent to more than 75% of hotel revenues.'

- **Tourism is a very labour-intensive sector**, with every €1million in tourist expenditure supporting 29 jobs in the Irish economy¹⁹, and hotels provide valuable employment and skills training opportunities in the areas in which they operate. These are particularly important in providing employment opportunities to first-time job market entrants and minority groups. And *'personnel costs in the accommodation sector are equivalent to 37% of turnover (compared) to 7% in the IT sector (and) 14% in the retail sector.'*
- This additional value in terms of direct provision of goods/services and employment has a **secondary benefit to the local and wider economy**, as the income that the hotel provides to suppliers and employees is spent elsewhere, providing downstream benefits. An EY report for HOTREC²⁰ estimates that every €1 earned in the hospitality sector in Ireland generates another €1.26 elsewhere in the economy.
- **Hotels are significant contributors to local authorities**, paying an average of €1,500 per room in commercial rates²¹.

¹⁹ Fáilte Ireland

²⁰ The Hospitality Sector in Europe, September 2013

²¹ Irish Hotels Federation



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