

Mount Congreve Estate & Gardens
Avenue Car Park & Ancillary Works
Part 8 Planning Proposal – April 2023



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Revision No.	Prepared by	Checked	Approved	Date	Status
-	PF	RM	RM	11/04/2023	Final

1. Introduction

Extensive upgrading and improvement works have been carried out at Mount Congreve Estate and Gardens over the period 2021 to 2022, all aimed at enhancing the offer available and developing a tourist destination capable of attracting up to 150,000 visitors annually.

The improvements undertaken to date include a combination of the following:

- Renovations and up-grades of Mount Congreve House to secure its long-term future and provide for public access.
- Creation of a new retails/café offering within the East Courtyard of the House.
- Enhancement of the grounds and existing paths to facilitating improved accessibility and increased visitor numbers.
- Installation of a new wastewater treatment facility capable of accommodating 150,000 visitors/annum.
- Installation of a new water supply and treatment facility capable of accommodating 150,000 visitors/annum.
- Installation of a woodland children’s playground.
- Upgrading of the existing car parking facilities.

The construction of a new 200 space car park was included in the original scope of works and was part of the 2019 Part 8 Planning that was approved, however following consultation with the Office of Public Works (OPW) during 2022, they were not in favour of its proposed location and commissioned an independent Historic Landscape Assessment (HLA) report to be. This assessment recommended that the new Car Park be reduced in size to 70/75 spaces and be relocated parallel to the main avenue/access to the house.

Figure 1.1 below shows the originally intended location for the car park as per the 2019 Part 8 Proposal and Figure 1.2 shows the current proposed location.



Figure 1.1 – Original proposed location as per 2019 Part 8

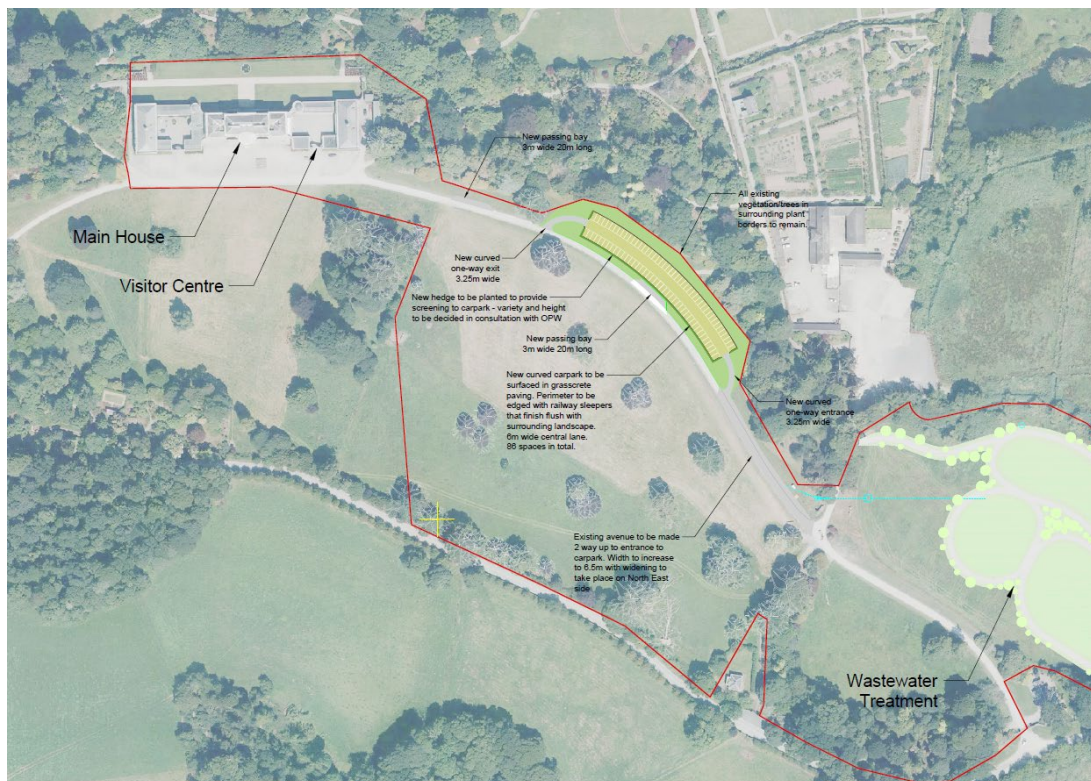


Figure 1.2 – Proposed location of Avenue Car Park

2. Planning & Zoning

The proposed development will be carried out in the townland of Mount Congreve. In the recently adopted Waterford City & Co. Co. 2022 to 2028 Development Plan, the Mount Congreve Estate and Gardens are zoned as 'TM – Tourism' and has been given a Specific Development Object **WCD017** which states that Waterford City & Co. Co. supports '*the sustainable development of the Mount Congreve Estate and Gardens as a major tourist asset for Waterford City and the Southeast region*'.

Below is a list of policy/objective references from the Waterford City & Co. Co. 2022 to 2028 Development Plan that support and/or specifically reference the development of tourism and/or the Mount Congreve Estate itself:

Chapter 3 – Waterford City & MASP

Section 3.5 'Strategic Employment Locations' includes Mount Congreve as part of a 'diverse economic base'.

Chapter 4 – Economy, Tourism, Education and Retail

Development of tourism is included as one of the *Strategic Objectives*, specifically '*to develop, deliver and promote Waterford as a year-round world class tourism destination with authentic, memorable experiences which attracts local, regional, national, and international visitors....*'

Section 4.10 Sustainable Tourism – Mount Congreve is included as one of the major attractions and its continued development and upgrading as an attraction is included as part of ECON 23 i.e., Key Flagship Tourism Projects.

Chapter 11 of the Development Plan – Heritage

Section 11.10 – Historic Demesnes, Gardens & Landscapes – Specific reference is made to Mount Congreve where further commitment is given by WCCC to 'continue to promote this tourism asset for the benefit of all'.

3. Project Scope

This Part 8 proposal relates to the proposed car park shown in figure 1.2 above and is referred to as the 'Avenue Car Park', it also includes ancillary works such as resurfacing of areas adjacent to the house, surface water drainage improvements and the installation of public lighting along the main avenue and along the pedestrian route from the 'Dairy Car Park' to the house/retail/visitor's centre. Figure 1.3 below shows the 'red line boundary' of the proposed works and the routes of the lighting and paths.

The design team that prepared the drawings and documentation and project managed the recently completed Visitor's Centre/Cafe works, Bluett O'Donoghue Architects (BoDA) have been retained to prepare the required planning and tender documentation for these works. The proposed car park layout has been prepared taking into account the recommendations of the 'Historic Landscape Assessment Report'.



Fig 1.3 – Proposal's 'Red Line Boundary' & Proposed Works

As stated above, the original approved Part 8 from 2019 gave permission for a 200-space car park with the 'Dairy Car Park' (Coloured yellow above) acting as an 'Over Spill' car park. Subsequently the Dairy Car park has now become the Main Car Park providing 93 spaces

Following the opening of the new Visitor's Centre in early November 2022, both Mount Congreve Trust and the operators of the new Café have reported that the quantum of car parking is already an issue, particularly at weekends and it is common for visitors/customers to ignore the signage directing them to the 'Dairy Car Park' and to park in the limited number of 'Disabled Parking Spots' at the front of the main house i.e., the area shaded purple in figure 1.3.

The construction of the 'Avenue Car park' will:

- provide a further 75 parking spaces significantly closer to the house and visitor's centre.
- greatly assist access for those with mobility issues and families with young children.
- reduce/eliminate uncontrolled parking at the main house.

4. Proposed Works Details

As mentioned above, the proposed works will consist of a combination of the following:

1. Construction of a new 75-space car park - which will include disability/universal access spaces and an EV charging facility,
2. Installation of public lighting along the main avenue, within the car park and to the existing Dairy Car Park as indicated in figure 1.3 above.
3. Installation of passing bays - Due to narrow width of the main avenue, 3 nr locally widened areas will be installed and act as vehicle 'passing bays'.
4. Screening – Screening of the car park using a combination of shrubbery, hedging, trees and earthen berms will be provided.
5. Installation of a barrier/automatic bollard – this will control access to the front of the house and limit its use to disabled vehicle drivers only.
6. Replacement of the 'quartzite' stone area to the front of the main house - the existing quartzite stone to be replaced with a bound/metalled surface using an aggregated/stone with a colour as close to that of the quartzite as possible.
7. Installation of a surface water drain - this new drain will run from the front of the main house for approximately 450m parallel to south side of the main avenue.
8. All other associated ancillary works – such as drainage, landscaping, signage.

5. Impact on Existing Estate & Gardens

The construction of the car park due to its location and size will have no impact on the existing house and adjacent buildings and only a very minor impact on the gardens.

A Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report have been prepared and are included in support of this planning application – refer to appendix A for copies of both reports.

The Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment concludes that the project is not likely, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites.

In the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, the proposed car park has been assessed as a sub-threshold Environmental Impact Assessment development and concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

In addition to the above, the proposed works are being designed, managed and led by *a Grade 1 Conservation Architect* and developed in line with the 'Historic Landscape Assessment' report. An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report (AHIA) has also been prepared for the development and a copy is included in Appendix B.

Appendix C contains copies of the Part 8 Drawings in A3 format which are listed below

- P22-026 P-01 Site Location Map
- P22-026 P-02 Site Layout Plan Overall 1-500
- P22-026 P-03 Site Layout 1-250
- P22-026 P-04 Site Layout Plans 1-250
- P22-026 P-05 Site Section - Details

Appendix A – Environmental Screening Assessments

Appendix B – Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report

Appendix C – A3 versions of project drawings