Mount Congreve Estate
A World Class Visitor Experience

Part 8 Planning Proposal – June 2019
Mount Congreve House was built for John Congreve in the 1760s by the local architect John Roberts and it was kept in the family until Ambrose Congreve’s death in 2011. It was then transferred to a Trust for the benefit of the people of Ireland and the grounds are currently open to the public.

Mount Congreve is an impressive palatial country house on a Palladian plan that forms an important element of the architectural heritage of County Waterford.

Mount Congreve is also internationally renowned as one of ‘The Great Gardens of the World’ with a superb collection of flowering shrubs and trees, some seventy acres of intensively planted woodland gardens and a four acre walled garden.

The Gardens are open to the public and attract 40,000 visitors annually. The House, however is closed to the public at present.
Location

- The Mount Congreve Estate is situated five miles west of Waterford City on the River Suir and is easily accessible from the N25.
- The 46km Waterford Greenway passes along the boundary of the Mount Congreve Estate and there is visitor access.
- The Waterford & Suir Valley Railway travels along the edge of the Mount Congreve Estate.
Ambition

• Develop a tourism destination which attracts 150,000 visitors annually.
• Restore the House and open up to the public.
• Enhance the visitor experience to these gardens and planted woodlands which are of international importance.
• Invest in the under developed assets on the Estate to generate additional employment and revenue opportunities as well as increased visitor numbers.
• Create new retail, craft and food opportunities, along with an incubation hub for new enterprises.
• Create new research and educational opportunities.
• Ensure that the key principles of environmental sustainability, accessibility, education and inclusion are applied to every area of the project.

“To transform a World Class Garden into a World Class Visitor Experience”
Site Plan
all works take place within redlined area
Site Plan
Development Areas
(House shown overleaf)
(large scale version available to view)
Site Plan
Development Areas
- House (circled blue)
- Woodland Playground (circled red)

(large scale version available to view)
Development areas

This project proposes the following:

• Renovation and up-grade of Mount Congreve House to secure its long-term future and provide for public access.

• Upgrading of the apartments & cottages to provide high quality tourist accommodation.

• Development of the farm yard to incorporate the following facilities: new café; offices and meeting facilities; craft yard; small playground and retail unit.

• Enhancement of the grounds and existing paths to facilitate improved accessibility and increased visitor numbers, along with woodland playground.

• Repair of the existing historic greenhouse.

• Provision of controlled access to wetland zone, a unique natural ‘garden’.

• Provision of a waste water treatment facility for 150,000 visitors.

• Provision of new car/coach park for up to 200 cars and 5 coaches.

• Improvement of sightlines on access road L4411.
Mount Congreve House is an impressive and palatial country house forming an important element of the architectural heritage of Co Waterford. The works being proposed here are to secure its preservation into the future and to provide options for its sustainable use, including public access, tourism, hospitality and events, offices, and high-quality visitor accommodation. Existing apartments within the house will be restored as will a number of estate cottages, and a new bio-energy heating system installed.
A range of developments are planned in this area, designed to deliver greatly enhanced economic and social dividends. A major new retail unit will be constructed, while farm-buildings will be renovated to provide 100 seater café, toilets, plant-sales, craft-yard, incubation units for local enterprise, offices and a ‘farmers market’ space. The original layout and features of the Yard will be preserved.
The Gardens in Mount Congreve are of international importance. The current project will preserve and enhance these gardens without in any way compromising its unique design principles. The works under consideration involve active maintenance and replanting as required.
The Gardens in Mount Congreve are already well-served with a network of trails and paths which formed part of the original garden design. Trail surfaces will be improved and stabilised where necessary, reproducing the existing finish.
The Greenhouse in Mount Congreve is an original and striking feature of the Walled Garden. Essential repairs will bring the historic greenhouse back into functional use once more, and potentially to be opened up to the public. The provision of a mobile cafe to service visitors from the Greenway will be accommodated to enhance the tourism offering.
Two new playgrounds for children are envisaged, one ‘woodland’-type located in the Gardens themselves, and another beside the Farm Yard, where children can play safely close to the retail and refreshment areas.
The lands at Mount Congreve include important wetland habitats, which will now be opened up for limited public access using the existing paths.

The creation of a wetland garden involves provision of access to an existing area of reed and sedge swamp and wet grassland, along with some Interpretative signage.
A Bio-Barrier Membrane Waste Water Treatment System is proposed which will provide for up to 3,000 people per day. This is a wastewater treatment system with membrane bioreactors that use biological processes in conjunction with membranes for producing a highly cleaned effluent.
The existing carparking facilities cannot cater for the expected increase in visitor numbers. Parking for up to 200 cars and 5 coaches will be provided in a dedicated new facility, with a further area set aside as an overflow.
The original entrance to the Estate will be reopened and set back from the road to improve sightlines and safety. This will allow for a new one-way system for visitors, who will enter through the reopened gate and exit though the second which currently provides all visitor access. Sight lines at both gates will be increased to 70m and the wall between will be set back to achieve this. The Council will reduce the speed limit to 50kms in the immediate area of the entrances. All original features at both Gates will be preserved. A traffic management plan will be prepared in line with the expected increase in visitor numbers.
Mount Congreve House was constructed about 1760 and is accredited to the famous Waterford architect, John Roberts. Mount Congreve is included in the Record of Protected Structures in the Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 - reference RPS.35. The House and elements of the Demesne such as the walled garden, the glasshouse, stables, workers houses, the entrances and gate-lodges, are also included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). Mount Congreve is described as being of artistic, architectural, historical and social interest and is rated as being of National Importance. Mount Congreve is also included in the NIAH Survey of Gardens and Designed Landscapes, reference WA-75-S-534102 and the gardens are internationally renowned. The works proposed have been carefully considered and have due regard to the DoEHLG Department Guidelines on Architectural Heritage Protection. An architectural heritage impact assessment is included.
Mount Congreve is of significance for both natural and built heritage.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment of the various works proposed has been carried out. The EIA screening identified key environmental receptors as architectural heritage, water quality, traffic and ecology which are being addressed by submission of an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment, ongoing water quality monitoring in the River Suir under the Water Framework Directive and commissioning of an Ecology Survey and Traffic Management and Mobility Plan all of which shall inform a Construction Environmental Management Plan to guide the proposed development works. It is concluded that an EIA Report is not required for the proposed development.

The AA screening concludes that the proposed development will not pose significant effects for the conservation objectives of the qualifying interest species that occur in this section and downstream in the River Suir SAC (special area of conservation). There is potential for biodiversity enhancement of the site through installation of bat and bird boxes and pollinator friendly management of meadow grasslands.