



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council

**‘THE EAT OUT’ OUTDOOR DINING INFRASTRUCTURE
PROJECT, LETTERKENNY**

**AT
THE FORECOURT OF AN GRIANAN THEATRE, RAMELTON
ROAD, LETTERKENNY, IN THE TOWNLAND OF
LETTERKENNY, COUNTY DONEGAL.**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED in
relation to ‘The Eat Out’ Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Project at the forecourt of An
Grianan Theatre, Ramelton Road, Letterkenny within the townland of Letterkenny,
County Donegal and in the Letterkenny-Milford Municipal District;**

Pursuant to Part XI Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Article 81, Part 8 of
the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended)

Regeneration and Development Team
Directorate of Community Development &
Planning Services
September 2022



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	1
2.0	LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	3
3.0	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	5
	3.1 DESIGN CONCEPT	5
4.0	POLICY CONTEXT	8
	4.1 THE NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK (PROJECT IRELAND 2040)	9
	4.2 TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY	10
	4.3 OUR RURAL FUTURE	10
	4.4 THE REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR THE NORTHERN AND WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY INCLUSIVE OF THE NORTH WEST METROPOLITAN AREA PLAN AND THE LETTERKENNY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTRE STRATEGIC PLAN	11
	4.5 THE COUNTY DONEGAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018-2024 (AS VARIED)	13
	4.6 LOCAL AUTHORITY WEATHERPROOFING AND OUTDOOR DINING INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME	15
	4.7 BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR DINING AND URBAN ANIMATION	16
	4.8 LETTERKENNY 2040 REGENERATION PROGRAMME AND LETTERKENNY 2040 REGENERATION STRATEGY	16
5.0	THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK	18
6.0	PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION IN RELATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT	18
7.0	SCREENING IN RELATION TO APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT	19
8.0	PUBLIC CONSULTATION	19
9.0	PROPER PLANNING, SUSTAINABLE AND ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA	19
10.0	SCHEDULE OF PLANS	19

1.0 Background to the proposed development

During 2021, Failte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, established a number of support programmes for investment in the tourism and hospitality sectors as two of the worst affected sectors by the Covid-19 pandemic. Consumer research undertaken by Failte Ireland during the pandemic showed that the public remain interested in experiencing the key urban centres and a range of international case studies showed a shift towards public space and place-making and a growing trend for additional outdoor dining options. Furthermore and in line with the National 'Town Centre First' approach, Failte Ireland outlined their objective to encourage life back into cities and towns.

In May 2021 and forming part of the response, Failte Ireland, launched the 'Local Authority Weather Proofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme' to provide support to Local Authorities to implement remedial works, weather proofing and infrastructure solutions to streets/zones where additional outdoor dining could be possible.

Donegal County Council submitted an application for funding support to the scheme in May 2021 for the concept of sheltered communal outdoor dining space ('The Eat Out') at the existing public space at An Grianan Theatre and this was announced as successful with confirmation of funding agreement completed in January 2022. This Part 8 provides for progression of the project to statutory approval following which detailed design/construction tender drawings will be prepared, leading to appointment of a contractor and delivery on site.

The existing space at the front of An Grianan Theatre is a paved area of public realm together with associated seating, trees and signage. (Images 1 – 7 refer).The area is integral to and centrally located within the emerging Cultural and Innovation Quarter of Letterkenny as identified as such in the emerging Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy and is home to three leading cultural venues namely the County Museum, the Regional Cultural Centre and An Grianan Theatre all of which are within a short walk of each other. These cultural amenities are supported by a concentration of eating houses and a number of entertainment establishments within the immediate vicinity of the subject site, collectively providing for a rich, diverse and exciting place/space to be. The proposed communal outdoor dining infrastructure will serve the combined needs of this existing concentration of tourism and hospitality business as well as the annual events and festival calendar enabling a vibrant Cultural & Innovation Quarter in the town centre.

The area is easily accessible on foot and 200m from the existing central repository for public transport servicing the town and wider hinterland and is busy with passing pedestrian and vehicular movement.

The subject site is located to the front of the An Grianan Theatre which is a visually prominent building. To the front of the theatre, there is an expanse of hard landscaped ground cover (the forecourt) which is proportionate, accessible and visual, providing a natural public communal space to stop, sit, eat, meet and gather, encouraging life back into the town. The subject site is central to and close to surrounding businesses e.g. restaurants, eating outlets, shops and entertainment and provides a strong visual central location within the wider area.

Images 1-7: Existing physical environment



The proposed development is an important component in the wider urban regeneration programme known as 'Letterkenny 2040' which also involves the preparation of an ambitious, transformative and overarching regeneration strategy for Letterkenny town centre to achieve its goals as a Regional Growth Centre in line with its identified role in the National Planning Framework (NPF), The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and in the cross border context of the North West City Region. The overarching vision of Letterkenny 2040 is to co-deliver a vibrant, liveable and fully functioning regional centre with a flourishing population that has a strong economy, employment and housing choice, healthy and restorative environments, community and social amenities, high quality of life and positive public and civic spaces. The proposed development of outdoor dining space with dual capacity for performance space together with integrated tensile canopy is an important project to contribute to the wider regeneration programme, activating vibrant change on the ground and thus contributing the growing momentum for further regenerative interventions.

In particular, the proposed development forms the 1st immediate term step in a longer term vision under development for the enhancement of the wider public realm area as part of LK Cultural Corridor project and forming part of a network of future walking and cycling infrastructure (LK Green Connect). The LK Cultural Corridor project is in early design stages

and it will aim to better connect the three cultural venues through a safe cycling and walking route animated with art and cultural expression creating a place to experience as part of the Cultural and Innovation Quarter in Letterkenny. In due course, a proposed Part 8 development will be brought forward in respect of LK Cultural Corridor and it may include further enhancements to the existing public realm at the front of An Grianan Theatre alongside taking account of 'The Eat Out.'

The proposed Part 8 development will achieve multiple benefits including:

- Supporting the local hospitality and tourism sector.
- Increasing capacity for outdoor dining.
- Enhancement and upgrade to existing public realm.
- Supporting an attractive urban environment
- Increasing footfall and dwell time in the town centre and activating spin-offs for local businesses.
- Contributing to a more competitive and vibrant town centre.
- Enabling civic and community activity and cultural and artistic expression within the urban environment.

As outlined in section 4.0 of this report, the proposed Part 8 development offers strong alignment with the National, Regional and Local policy contexts particularly National Priorities for Compact Growth, a Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills and Enhanced Amenity and Heritage alongside driving a strong and competitive Cross Border Regional Growth Centre to the highest standards in accordance with the Town Centre Strategy of the County Donegal Development Plan, 2018-2024 (as varied). It is also aligned with the vision emerging from the Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy.

The delivery of the project is supported by Failte Ireland (Local Authority Weather Proofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme) together with support from Donegal County Council.

2.0 Location of the proposed development

The location of the proposed development is the townland of LETTERKENNY specifically located at the existing forecourt to the front of An Grianan Theatre, Ramelton Road in Letterkenny town centre. The site currently consists of a gently sloping paved area inclusive of seating, public lighting, signage and trees. An Grianan Theatre dominates the space, positioned on elevated levels and accessible by means of stepped access arrangement.

The site is located within the town centre and therefore is surrounded by mixed-use urban development inclusive of the cultural venues of the An Grianan Theatre and its integrated restaurant (The Eaterie), the Regional Cultural Centre, adjacent community hall together with a number of surrounding hospitality businesses, offices, services and residential properties. There are a number of vacant properties in the surrounding area also.

Please refer to drawing no's: Dwg No's: 0000 (Site Location and Site Extent) and 0001 (Site Location Map) and as shown the following pages as images 3 & 4.

Image 3: Drawing No: 0000 (Site Location and Site Extent)

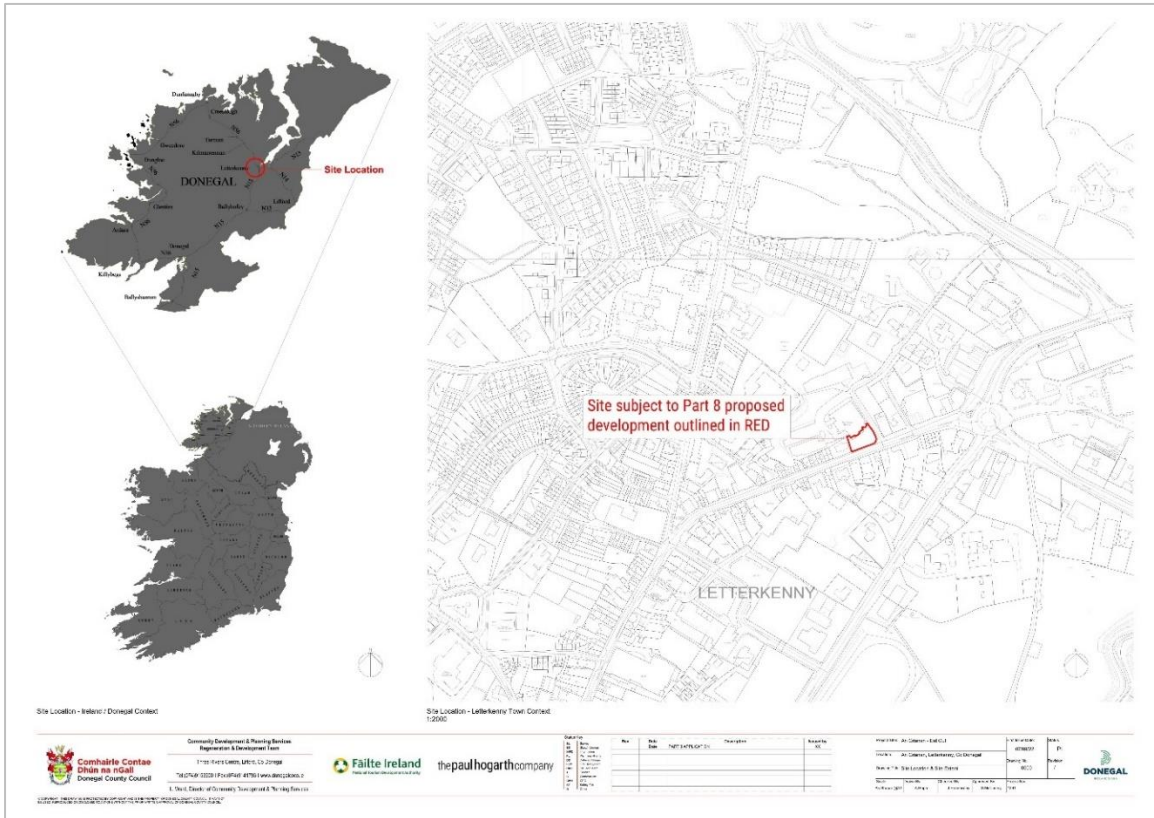
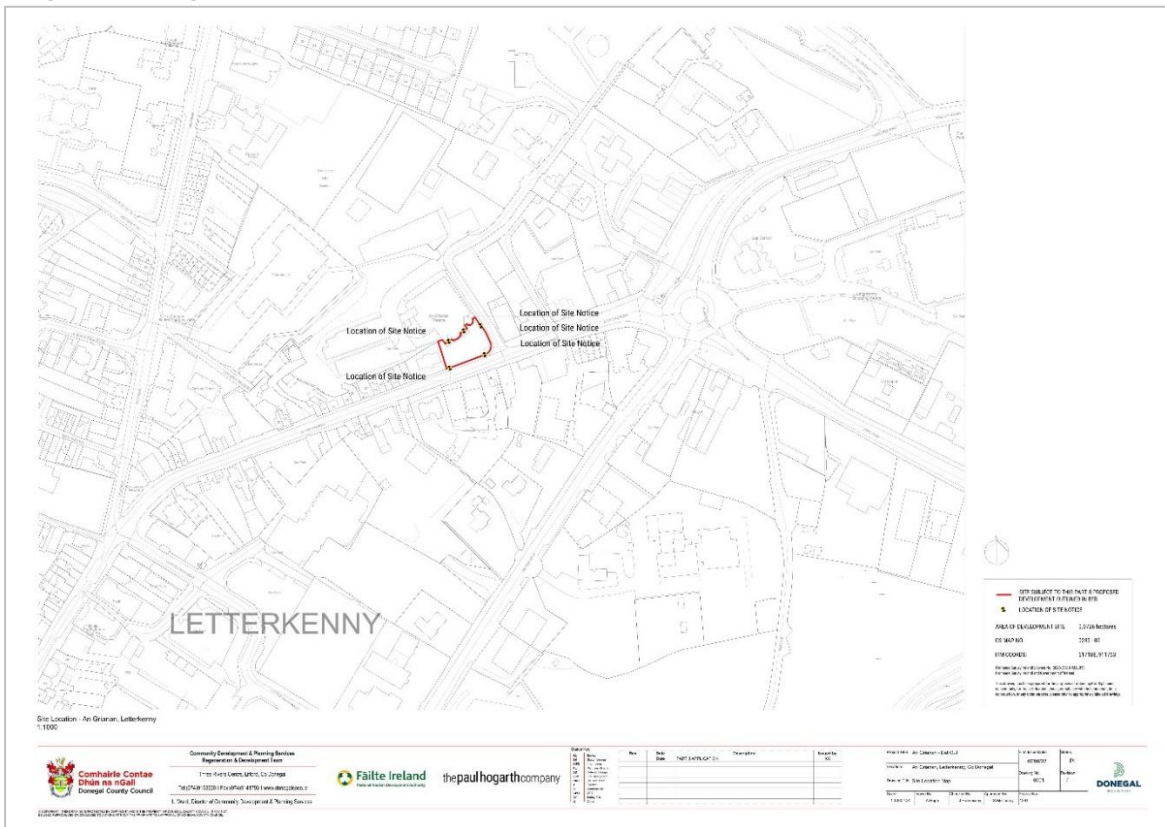


Image 4: Drawing No: 0001 (Site Location Map)



3.0 Description of the proposed development

The specific nature of the proposed works is as follows:

- i. Construction of outdoor dining infrastructure for the purposes of sheltered dining area/performance space inclusive of raised seating/performance area, ground level paved area, integrated seating steps, relocation of existing benches and installation of wind breaks and tensile fabric canopy.
- ii. Installation of 4 no. trees along Western boundary.
- iii. All associated ancillary works to include installation of projection light, drainage, utilities and connection to services within the overall development area.

3.1 Design concept

The design concept for the proposed 'Eat Out' outdoor dining infrastructure involves a simple but effective intervention to deliver structured provision of outdoor dining in Letterkenny where there is a lack of space of this nature across the town centre. In total, the proposed development will deliver circa 120sqm of flexible and unique space within an existing public realm facilitating year-round accessible outdoor dining for between 25-50 people depending on table layout.

Working with the existing gradients of the existing public space, the proposed development involves the interlocking of a raised platform into the existing steps and terrace area to the front of An Grianan Theatre. As a result, the raised platform is proposed to match the existing level of the top terrace and is therefore readily accessible from this space. This area will provide circa 55sqm of elevated public space for use as dining space with moveable tables and chairs. Proposed use of material in respect of proposed raised platform is concrete or other suitable alternative subject to functionality, specification and budget. In addition, the installation of a tensile canopy structure will provide shelter to the space together with the insertion of wind breakers at suitable locations thereby weatherproofing the space and extending useability significantly. Refer to appendix A as regards the indicative specification of tensile canopy which will be confirmed at detailed design stage.

The proposed development includes for access to proposed raised platform from ground level of the existing public space by means of a series of shallow steps with text inscription and which double up as seating steps and add to the overall capacity of the outdoor dining space. At ground level, the proposed development provides for a further seating area of circa 65sqm delineated as forming part of the structured outdoor dining space by means of matching ground level finish. Again, moveable tables and chairs are proposed to populate and animate this space.

Adding value to the proposed investment when not in use as outdoor dining space, the proposed raised platform has the capacity for use as sheltered performance area therefore opening up the potential for the wider public realm space to be used effectively for wider scale events, gatherings and festivals and therefore further increasing the attractiveness of the space and increasing footfall to the town centre and to the surrounding local businesses including the hospitality sector.

The proposal also includes for enhancements to boundary treatment to improve the attractiveness of the space inclusive of replacement of existing tree grilles in respect of 4 no. existing trees located along the front boundary of the existing space. This intervention will improve rootball protection and percolation and therefore enhances the potential for the existing trees to thrive beyond their existing condition. Furthermore, the proposed development includes for the enhancement of boundary treatment to the western edge of the existing public realm through the planting of 4 no. new trees, clear stemmed and pleached to create structure with ground planting beneath.

The proposal provides for the installation of 1 no. projecting light mounted to the existing theatre beam facilitating options for the enhanced animation of the space. Finally, existing benches that are currently centrally located within the existing public space are proposed for relocation of the Eastern edge of the space, replacing existing bollards, framing the entire space and providing natural supervision of the space and enhanced opportunities for 'people watching.' Images 5-12 show an illustrative visualisations of the proposed development and indicative precedent images.



Image 5: Illustrative visualisation of view towards theatre showing raised seating area



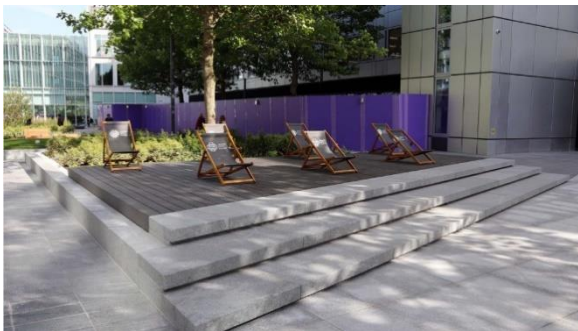
Image 6: Illustrative visualization of aerial view towards theatre



Image 7: Examples of text inscription on steps



Image 8: Example of raised seating platform



Images 9 & 10 above left and above right: Examples of tensile canopy shelter.



Image 11: Illustrative visualization of view towards theatre



Image 12: Illustrative visualization of aerial view towards theatre

4.0 Policy Context

The statutory plans at a National, Regional and Local context relating to the area of the proposed development are:

- The National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040);
- Town Centre First Policy
- Our Rural Future
- The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly inclusive of the North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Planning Framework (MASP) and the Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan;
- The County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024 (CDP).

In relation to tourism, the relevant Investment Schemes and Best Practice Guidelines are:

- Failte Irelands funding programme, 'The Local Authority Weatherproofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme.
- Best Practice Guidelines for Outdoor Dining and Urban Animation, Failte Ireland, 2021

In addition and as outlined in section 1.0 of this report, Donegal County Council is advancing a significant programme for the regeneration of Letterkenny town centre including funding support secured through the 1st and 2nd calls for applications to the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund. This activity is providing for the preparation of Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy for Letterkenny town centre within which particular consideration is given to the An Grianan public space and 'The Eat' out concept finds its origins.

Each of the aforementioned policy contexts are set out in greater detail on the following pages.

4.1 National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040)

The National Planning Framework (Project Ireland 2040) is underpinned by a set of National Strategic Outcomes (NSO's), which are the shared benefits the NPF will deliver if it is implemented.

NSO 1 outlines the Governments objective for Compact Growth. It seeks to carefully manage the sustainable growth of towns to create attractive places in which people can live and work. It outlines that all of our urban settlements contain many potential development areas, centrally located and frequently publicly owned, that are suitable and capable of re-use to provide housing, jobs, amenities and services but which need a streamlined and coordinated approach to their development enabling infrastructure and supporting amenities, to realise their potential. The NSO outlines that activating these strategic areas and achieving effective density and consolidation, rather than more sprawl of urban development needs a coordinated approach and is a top priority.

In particular, the NSO outlines a number of ways for the achievement of compact and sustainable growth including that it requires a focus on the 'liveability' or quality of life of urban places such as public realm, traffic and parking, access to amenities, a sense of personal safety and well being.

With specific reference to the proposed development, NSO 1 for Compact Growth is supported by National Policy Objectives which seek to:

- Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well being. (NPO 4)
- Develop Cities and towns of sufficient scale and quality to compete internationally and to be drivers of national and regional growth, investment and prosperity. (NPO 5)
- Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area. (NPO 6)
- In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and village... (NPO 11)

The NPF also makes provision for projects that (i) strengthen the economy by coordination with place-making (NSO 6) and (iii) enhancement of the attractiveness of towns and quality of life through investment in well-designed public realm (NSO 7) is set out below:

- **NSO-6: A Strong Economy Supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills** which states, 'This will depend on creating places that can foster enterprise and innovation and attract investment and talent. It can be achieved by building regional economic drivers and by supporting opportunities to diversify and strengthen the rural economy, to leverage the potential of places. Delivering this outcome will require the coordination of growth and place making with investment in world class

infrastructure, including digital connectivity, and in skills and talent to support economic competitiveness and enterprise growth'

- **NSO-7: Enhanced Amenity and Heritage** which states, 'This will ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It will require investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.

4.2 Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns, 2022

The Town Centre First (TCF) policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. It recognises that Irish towns are diverse places and that supporting these towns requires a flexible, adaptive, and strategic approach. The TCF policy is as an enabling framework to support towns to identify, develop and progress their own unique town centre revitalisation plans which incorporate best-practice with regard to place-making alongside the establishment of national oversight mechanisms and the employment of Town Centre Regeneration Officers within each Local Authority.

The TCF Policy identifies a 9 opportunities that can be implemented to drive future growth and development including the regeneration of public space. It outlines that in some cases, public spaces have lost their traditional function as civic/cultural spaces and many are now used as parking areas. It also outlines that the dominance of vehicles within the public realm has contributed to the decline of many town centres, making them unattractive places in which to live or visit for extended periods. It advocates that local communities be creative and ambitious in developing a public realm that is welcoming to all, is safe, is easy to access for all modes of travel (particularly walking), has low noise and air pollution levels and provides the community with things to do, places to sit and relax, and attractive views.

4.3 Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

The Governments, 'Our Rural Future' relates to the country's rural areas including the rural and towns and villages. Although Letterkenny is a Regional Centre, it is a critical urban settlement that supports the wider rural community in its hinterland. 'Our Rural Future' outlines 9 key deliverables of which the principles of the deliverable to 'Revitalize Rural Towns and Villages' is particularly relevant. Specifically, Our Rural Future outlines that this deliverable will be achieved through a number of measures including:

- Provide funding to support the upgrade and enhancement of shopfronts and street facades in towns and villages and for the adaptation of town centres for outdoor socialising.
- Fund Local Authorities to adapt and improve outdoor public spaces for cultural events and activities all-year round.

- Invest significantly in the development of parks, green spaces and recreational amenities in town centres to make them vibrant hubs for community enjoyment, and to increase footfall for local businesses.

4.4 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) inclusive of the North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Planning Framework (MASP) and the Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan

The RSES published by NWRA is a 12-year strategy to deliver transformational change, effective regional development and achieve the objectives and vision of the NPF and of the NWRA. The simple vision of the RSES is “*to play a leading role in the transformation of the region into a vibrant, connected, natural, inclusive and smart place to work and live*”. The RSES proposes the introduction of a ‘Growth Framework’ to deliver this vision inclusive of ‘*Five Growth Ambitions*’, recognizing that regional growth cannot be achieved through linear steps and that isolated interventions will not achieve the ambitions of the region. The five growth ambitions of the RSES are:

1. To be a Vibrant Region (Economy & Employment)
2. To be a Natural Region (Environment)
3. To be a Connected Region (Connectivity)
4. To be an Inclusive Region (Quality of Life)
5. To be an Enabled Region (Infrastructure)

In particular, the RSES advocates implementation of a ‘place-based’ approach where the creation of ‘place’ is the key to realising regional potential (section 3.3 of the RSES). In terms of creating sustainable regional centres, the RSES recognises that access to talent is a chief site location criterion for businesses and ‘quality of life’ is a key factor both in retaining our current population and also attracting more people to the region in the future. The proposed development specifically implements a place-based approach to enhancing the physical environment of the Regional Centre and thus enhancing quality of life.

The following Regional Planning Objectives of the RSES are relevant in the context of the proposed development:

- RPO 4.6: To ensure provision is made for the expansion in accommodation and facilities within Destination Towns. Supporting infrastructural investment will also be provided, including improvements to the public realm, transport links, accommodation, night-time economy and the sustainable development of our natural and built heritage.
- RPO 5.3: Protect, enhance and harness the potential of the Region’s Cultural and Heritage assets.
- RPO 7.9: Promote the provision of high-quality, accessible and suitably proportioned areas of public open spaces and promote linkage with social, cultural and heritage sites and buildings. In this process prioritise access for walking and cycling.

Chapter 9 of the RSES sets out the **North West Metropolitan Area Spatial Planning Framework (MASP)** relating to the area of the North West City Region encompassing Letterkenny, Derry and Strabane.

Reflecting the themes of the proposed development in relation to compact growth, urban design and placemaking and enabling economic opportunity, the North West MASP identifies four strategic outcomes as follows:

1. Building inclusive and compact places
2. Investing in connected and accessible places
3. Planning for a vibrant economy and nurturing communities
4. Creating resilient places and low carbon infrastructure.

Within and underpinning the framework for the NW MASP strategic outcomes and reflecting the overarching RSES vision in relation to a 'place-based' approach, the NW MASP also requires to the greatest extent possible, that new developments will:

'contribute towards the creation of high-quality places across the North West City Region, taking account of Place-Making Principles. Under the principles of place-making, development proposals should be based upon a design-led and participative process and should seek to deliver on the six qualities of place – namely, distinctive, safe and pleasant, welcoming, adaptable, resource-efficient and easy to move around and beyond'.

Section 3.7.2 of the RSES sets out a '**Letterkenny Regional Growth Centre Strategic Plan' (LK RGCSP)** providing for growth and investment to build the function of Letterkenny as the primary urban centre in Donegal and as part of the North West Metropolitan City Region (Letterkenny/ Derry/Strabane). The vision of the RGCSP for Letterkenny is:

'Between 2020 and 2040 Letterkenny will grow to a centre of at least 27,300 people, and will encompass all the key characteristics of a future city, with an expanded employment base, an additional 4,000 houses, together with an expanded offering in education, public services, civic spaces, and a Regeneration and reconfiguration of the Town Centre. Letterkenny will offer sustainable choices in housing, employment, and will be a centre that is pedestrian friendly, well served by public transport, with an emphasis on well-being, supported by a healthy environment, and quality spaces in the public realm.

The RGCSP outlines that Letterkenny has been identified as one of Failte Irelands 'Destination Towns.' It outlines that it is important that Letterkenny continues to grow its offer as a Regional Centre of scale to host, and support visitors across all of north Donegal. To do this, the RGCSP specifies a number of objectives that need to be progressed in the short to medium term including:

- 'To further enhance public realm offer within Letterkenny to enhance visitor experience'.

4.5 The County Donegal Development Plan 2018 – 2024 (as varied)

The County Donegal Development Plan (CDP), 2018-2024 (as varied) provides the strategic planning framework and vision for County Donegal. Its vision is that:

'By 2028, County Donegal will be a connected place with a strong, competitive and innovative economy that is attracting and sustaining a population of upwards of 200,000 people, offering a quality of life ranked highest in the county and asserting a key role in the context of the North West City Region and within the area of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.'

The CDP identifies Letterkenny as a Layer 1 settlement in its own right within the County settlement structure. The CDP outlines that, as the largest town it provides a broad range of services across the sectors including employment, education, health, cultural services, community services, entertainment and many more, stating that its growth and strengthening as a major centre of population together with its wider metropolitan area is important in the regional context particularly in terms of its relationship with Derry City. The Plan outlines that a strong, vibrant, connected Letterkenny with a growing population will provide benefits across the County and within the Region in terms of attracting private sector investment in jobs and the economy and in securing investment in infrastructure that is critical to the County as a whole.

The CDP contains 10 Strategic Objectives, a number of which specifically underpin the important role of Letterkenny in the County and regional context and the importance of transitioning to sustainable and compact land use and transportation patterns. The relevant Strategic Objectives of the CDP include:

- S-O-3:** To support the role of Letterkenny as a linked urban area in the North West City Region in order to drive investment and produce consequential benefits throughout the entire County and to support regional growth in the context of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.
- S-O-5:** To prioritise regeneration and renewal of the County's towns, villages and rural areas in order to support vibrant and strengthened communities and drivers of economic growth

The CDP includes a Core Strategy which sets out an overarching and ambitious vision for the future growth and development of the County over the 6 year life of the Plan (to 2024) and beyond to a 20 year timeframe (2038). Of its Core Strategy Objectives, the following are of particular relevance in the context of the proposed development:

- CS-O-4:** To support the growth of Letterkenny and its metropolitan area as a driver of population and economic growth in the County and to make appropriate provision for approximately 4,200 additional persons by 2024.
- CS-O-11:** To support economic growth throughout the county through....
 - (b) Participation in a regional approach in order to assert a key strategic development role in the North West City Region and as part of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly area
 - (c) the establishment of Letterkenny as a centre for economic growth across the sectors, in particular through....consolidation of the town centre including prioritizing

improvements to the public realm (and).....through a proactive approach to enable the delivery of key regeneration sites.

Chapter 3 of the CDP outlines the importance of towns and villages to the County and the importance of renewal and regeneration and Chapter 9 outlines the Council's objectives and policies as regards tourism. Key relevant objectives and policies include:

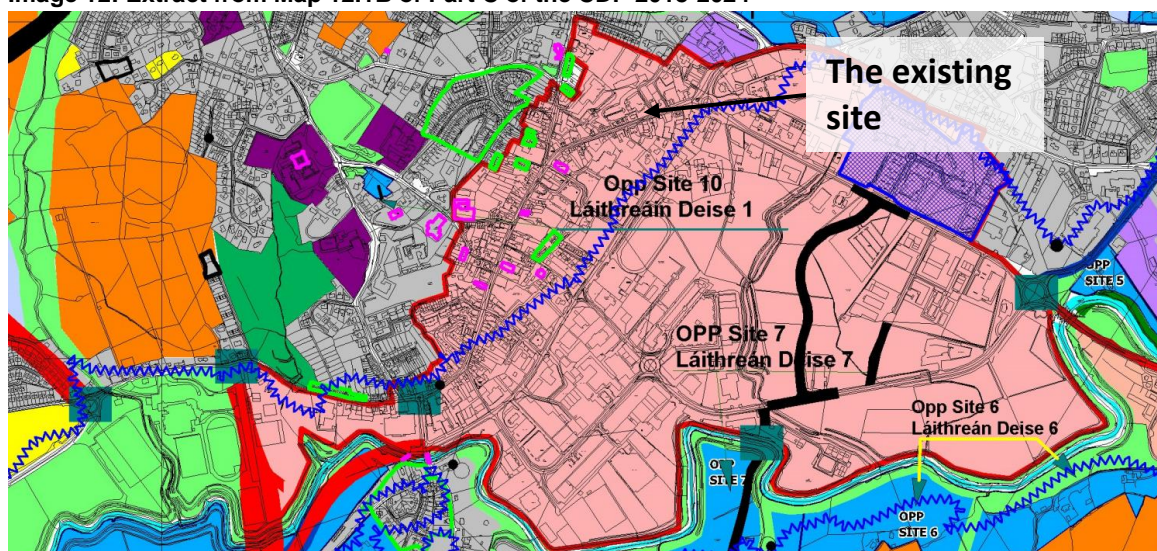
- TV-O-4:** To support initiatives to strengthen and improve the physical environment of towns and villages and encourage positive place-making.
- TV-P-3:** It is the policy of the Council to seek quality in proposals for new development within town centre in order to contribute to positive place-making.
- TOU-O-10:** To protect and enhance the vitality, vernacular character, streetscape and design quality of our towns and villages as vital tourism assets of our overall tourism product.

Part C of the CDP sets out the Objectives and Policies for Towns including Letterkenny within Chapter 12. It reiterates the importance of Letterkenny as the only Layer 1 settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy and it outlines 6 key areas for intervention in Letterkenny including 'Urban and public realm enhancements throughout the town centre.'

The subject site for the proposed development is located within the identified 'Town Centre' land use zone on Map 12.1B, 'Letterkenny Land Use Zoning Map 12.1B' (Image 12 refers). Table 12.2 of Chapter 12, Part C sets out the objective in relation to 'Town Centre' zoning as:

'To sustain and strengthen the core of Letterkenny as a centre for commercial, retail, cultural and community life.'

Image 12: Extract from Map 12.1B of Part C of the CDP 2018-2024



The site is also located in the area defined as the 'Traditional Town Centre' on Map 12.2 of Chapter 12, Part C which is described as covering;

'an extensive area North and South of the Main St and the Upper Port Rd. It continues to act as the commercial core of the town and displays a vitality and diversity of functions not apparent in other areas of the town. The strong links between the arts, entertainment, traditional town services (e.g. banking, legal) and independent retailing remain the core strengths of this area. The quality of the built environment of the commercial core also contributes significantly to the shopping and visitor experience of the town. It is imperative that the vitality and vibrancy of the Commercial Core is maintained and expanded.'

The Plan identifies a number of adverse development trends which if left unmanaged could significantly hinder the achievement of a cohesive, multifunctional and high-quality town centre. These adverse trends are identified to include a lack of quality public spaces throughout and immediately accessible from the town centre. In view of this the Plan recommends a Town Centre Strategy which is supported by a suite of objectives and policies in the areas of mixed-use development, design criteria, streetscape, shop fronts, key linkages, active frontage and quality residential development. Particularly relevant objectives and policies include:

- LK-TC-O3:** Creation of an attractive retail environment in terms of overall design and the quality of public realm.
- LK-TC-P-10:** It is a policy of the Council to promote an attractive town centre atmosphere which would encourage additional trade and business to the traditional town centre encouraging increased footfall along the historic streetscape of the town.

Section 12.10 of Chapter 12 of Part C of the CDP refers to objectives and policies in relation to social, community and cultural issues in Letterkenny with the following objective of particular relevance to the proposed development:

- LK-SCC-O-3:** To provide parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation areas which provide a range of active and passive open spaces for all sectors of the community.

4.6 Local Authority Weatherproofing and Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme

During 2021, Failte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, established a number of support programmes for investment in the tourism and hospitality sectors as two of the worst affected sectors by the Covid-19 pandemic. Failte Ireland outlined consumer research undertaken during the pandemic which showed that the public remain interested in key urban centres and a range of international case studies showed a shift towards public space and place-making and a growing trend for additional outdoor dining options. Furthermore and in line with the National 'Town Centre First' approach, Failte Ireland outlined their objective to encourage life back into cities and towns.

In May 2021 and forming part of the response, Failte Ireland, launched the 'Local Authority Weather Proofing & Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Scheme' to provide support to Local Authorities to implement remedial works, weather proofing and infrastructure solutions to streets/zones where additional outdoor dining could be possible. Specifically, the primary focus of the investment scheme related to traditionally busy city/town centre locations where there is greatest potential to generate the greatest impact on short-term employment opportunities and recovery of the tourism and hospitality sector. The fund sought suitable locations for investment in capital projects that were demonstrated as flexible, innovative and facilitate year-round use for outdoor dining. In response, the concept for the proposed 'Eat Out' development was created and announced as successful in terms of funding support in January 2022.

4.7 Best Practice Guidelines for Outdoor Dining and Urban Animation, Failte Ireland, 2021

The Best Practice Guidelines, published in response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, aim to ensure that tourism and hospitality businesses accommodate a wide range of users in outdoor design responses. The guidelines also set out "what looks good" through diagrams and existing precedents of streets and public spaces outlining that there is an opportunity for (Covid-19) recovery initiatives for the public realm, to ensure the short and long term economic and social sustainability of local areas. The guidelines aim to assist this process by setting a clear vision and principles for the creation of engaging and animated outdoor spaces and streets surrounding and adjacent to businesses. The guidelines emphasize place-making and identity and, of particular relevance to the proposed development, set out technical design advice for a range of outdoor dining spaces including in relation to existing public spaces and forecourts stating that existing squares and open space naturally offer maximum flexibility, enabling a combination of a wide range of recreational uses.

The guidelines outline that in the case of projects for outdoor dining in squares and forecourts that the layout should allow for a sufficient degree of flexibility so that temporary uses such as festivals, events, markets and exhibitions can be successfully installed in the space without compromising its functionality or legibility.

4.8 Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Programme and Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy

'Letterkenny 2040' is Donegal County Councils wider regeneration programme that involves the preparation of an ambitious, transformative and overarching Regeneration Strategy for Letterkenny town centre to achieve its goals as a Regional Growth Centre in line with its identified role in the National Planning Framework (NPF), The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and in the cross border context of the North West City Region. The overarching vision of Letterkenny 2040 regeneration programme and Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy is to co-deliver a vibrant, liveable and fully functioning regional centre with a flourishing population that has a strong economy, employment and housing choice,

healthy and restorative environments, community and social amenities, high quality of life and positive public and civic spaces.

Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy is a non-statutory framework, the preparation of which is supported by the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund under Project Ireland 2040. The project has completed three phases of consultation and will publish the final Regeneration Strategy in October 2022.

The Masterplan element of the Regeneration Strategy identifies a series of projects to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of Letterkenny town centre. This includes the enhancement of the Cultural and Innovation Quarter which includes the area of the subject site and specifically includes a Design Concept for outdoor dining and public realm at the existing public space at An Grianan Theatre.

Image 13: Extract from the emerging Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy.



Specifically, the Design Concept in respect of the potential of the space at the front of An Grianan Theatre advocates the installation of outdoor dining infrastructure as per the proposed development and also imagines the further potential for broader and larger scale intervention to the wider space and surrounding streetscape to consider further integration of trees, rationalisation to the multiplicity of existing materials and physical improvements to adjoining road in order to better connect the public realm area with the wider LK Green Connect walking and cycling infrastructure project. Image 14 provides an extract of 'The Eat Out' Design Concept.

Image 14: Extract from the emerging the Design Concept for 'The Eat Out' at An Grianan public space contained in the Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy.



5.0 The Proposed Development and Flood Risk

OPW Flood maps (www.floodinfo.ie) provide information on flood risk for a range of flood event scenarios including climate change. The OPW flood maps show that the proposed site is located within Flood Zone C where there is a low probability of flooding. In accordance with F-P-1, F-P-2 and 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities', November 2009, DoEHLG and the objectives and policy in relation to flooding set out in Part B of the CDP, chapter 5, the proposed development is classified as 'Water Compatible Development' and as such, within an area identified as Flood Zone C is considered as 'Development Appropriate'. As a result, a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.

6.0 Preliminary Examination in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment

The proposed development is sub-threshold for the purposes of Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") per Article 92 of the Regulations and the Council has concluded on the basis of a Preliminary Examination in accordance with Article 120 (1)(b)(i) thereof that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and that an EIA is not required. Please refer to the accompanying Preliminary Examination.

7.0 Screening in relation to Appropriate Assessment

In order to ascertain whether the proposed development required Appropriate Assessment ("AA") Donegal County Council carried out a screening of same in accordance with Article 250(1) of the Planning and development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and made a determination in view of best scientific knowledge that the development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives and that AA was not required. Please refer to accompanying Screening Report and Determination which includes the main reasons and considerations on which the determination was based.

8.0 Public Consultation

Informal consultation took place in May 2021 with a number of key stakeholders in the area surrounding the proposed development as part of the funding application process to Failte Ireland. This included letters of support from 8 no. local stakeholders including the cultural institutions, nearby hotels, nearby hospitality businesses and Letterkenny Chamber.

In addition, the concept for 'The Eat Out' formed one of 11 Design Concepts published in May/June 2022 for a period of consultation under the Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy project. 79% of online respondents indicated they were either supportive or very supportive of the proposed concept.

9.0 Proper planning, sustainable and orderly development of the area

It is considered that the proposed Part VIII development providing for 'The Eat Out' Outdoor Dining Infrastructure Project, is in accordance with the provisions of the NPF, Town Centre First Policy, Our Rural Future, RSES, Failte Irelands Outdoor Dining investment scheme, Failte Irelands 'Best Practice Guidelines for Outdoor Dining and Animation' and the County Donegal Development Plan, 2018-2024 will give full effect to the regeneration and development objectives and policies therein. The project is also fully aligned with the vision set out in the emerging Letterkenny 2040 Regeneration Strategy. It is considered that the proposed development is therefore in accordance with the proper planning, sustainable and orderly development of the area.

10.0 Schedule of Plans

Drawing No.	Document Title
DRAWING: 0000	SITE LOCATION & SITE EXTENT
DRAWING: 0001	SITE LOCATION MAP
DRAWING: 0002	EXISTING SITE LAYOUT
DRAWING: 0003	PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT AND SECTION

Appendix A

Indicative specification of tensile canopy which will be confirmed at detailed design stage

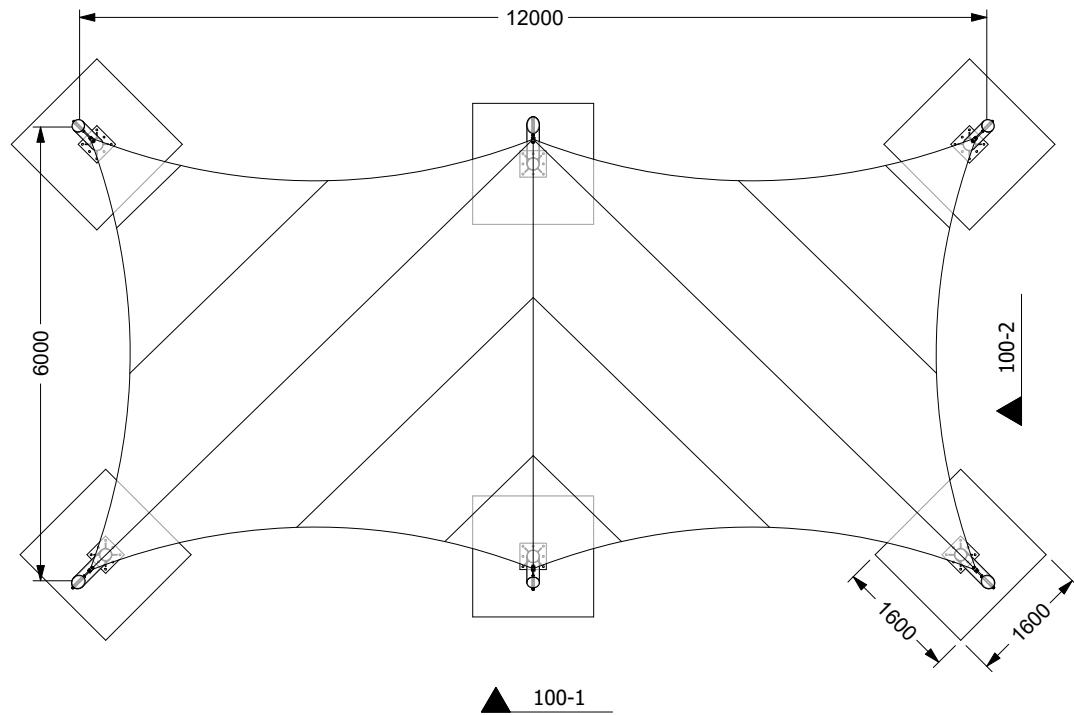
TEMPEST 12X6 DOUBLE HYPAR - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT

3rd Angle Projection U.N.O. 

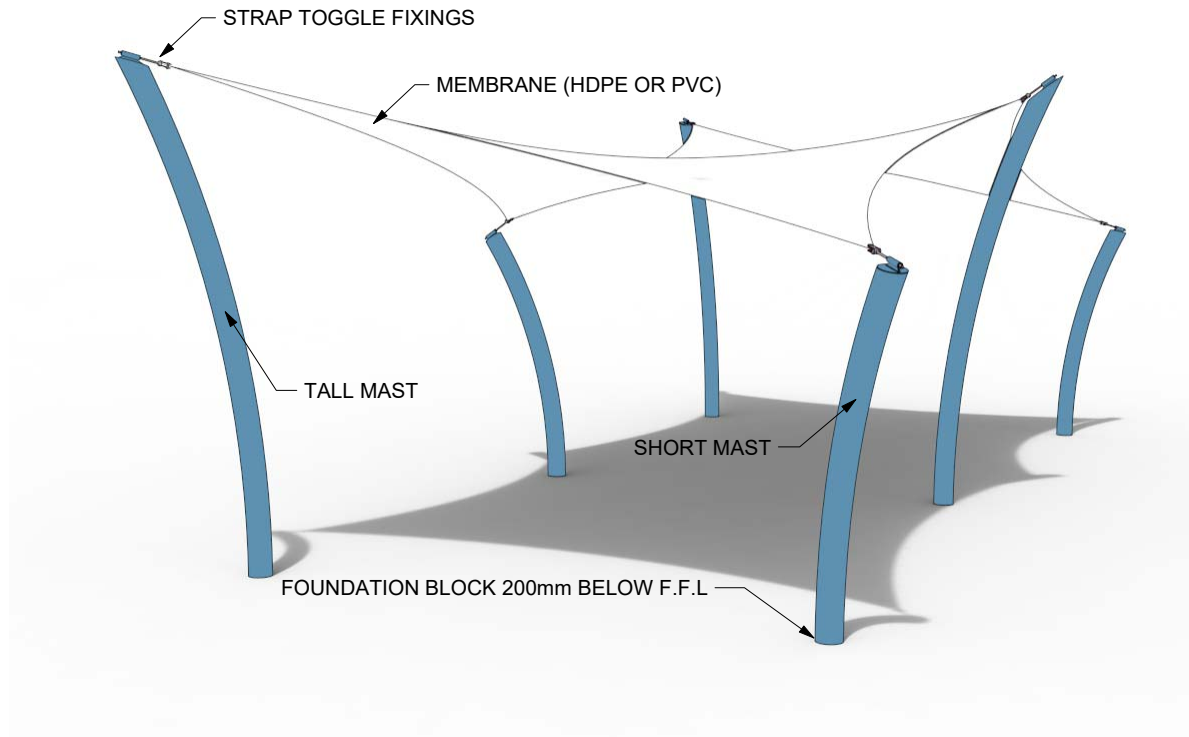
Do not scale this print.

GENERAL NOTES:

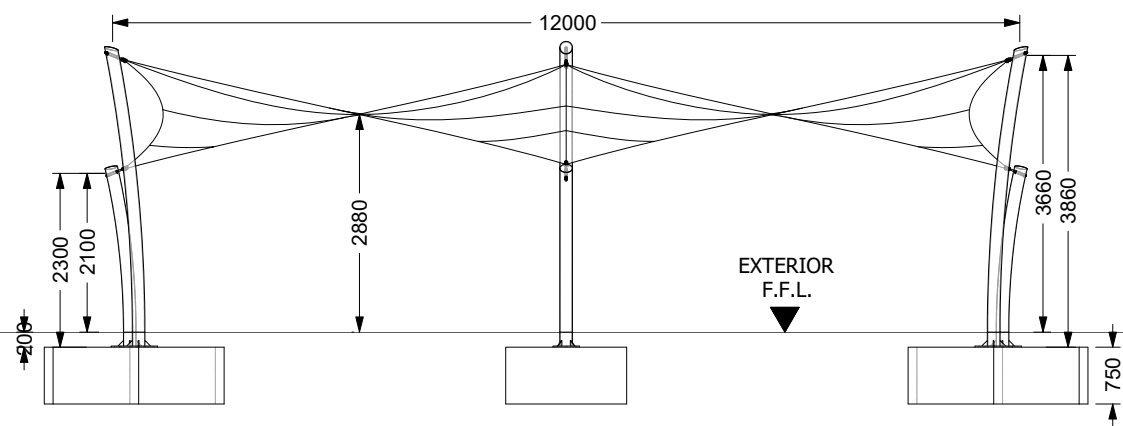
All dimensions are shown in millimeters
 STEEL MASTS: M.S.S355
 FINISH: ZINC PRIMED & POWDER COATED OR HDG
 FIXINGS: 316 STAINLESS STEEL
 FABRIC: HDPE COMMERCIAL 95 OR FERRARI 502 PVC
 FOUNDATIONS: MIN. C30 CONCRETE IN SOILS HAVING P.B.C > 60kN/m²



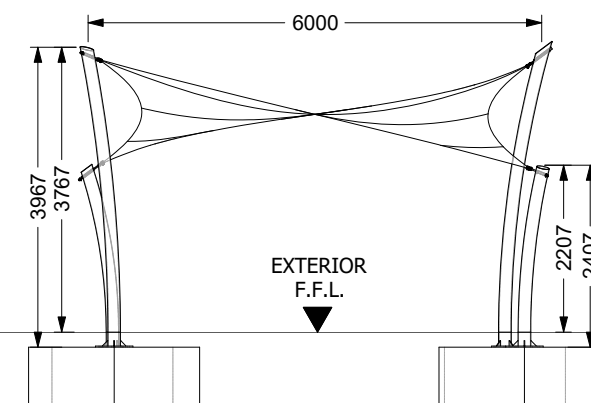
PLAN
SCALE 1:100 @ A3



PERSPECTIVE
NTS



100-1 ELEVATION
SCALE 1:100 @ A3



100-2 ELEVATION
SCALE 1:100 @ A3

Rev	Comment	By	Date
0	First Issue	LB	08/05/18

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Drawing Status
For Approval

Client

Project Title
Tempest 12x6 Double Hypar

Drawing Title
General Arrangement

Scale Noted	Drawn By LB	Checked SW	Rev. 0
Date 08/05/18	Project No. TED12x6	Dwg No. 100	

