

## LDA launches feedback from Columb Barrack Consultation

Community, enterprise, education and heritage uses identified as complimentary to housing potential of former barracks site.

The Land Development Agency (LDA) has published the findings of the successful Columb Barracks Consultation Process. The report has been presented to the Columb Barracks Advisory Forum, an advisory group comprised of Westmeath County Council, Westmeath Public Participation Network, Mullingar Chamber of Commerce, Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, Enterprise Ireland and the Land Development Agency.

The Columb Barracks site is currently owned by the Department of Defence. The total site is 9.9 hectares and located 800m west of the main street and 500m from the Mullingar train station. The site has access to educational, community and retail facilities as well as public transportation provision in the form of multiple bus services in addition to the train station. It is currently earmarked for transfer to the Land Development Agency.

The consultation process was held over a two-month period during the Summer and involved themed webinars, workshops, posters, information leaflets and a short survey. Community groups, statutory bodies, businesses and individuals participated in an extensive process, with over 100 people participating in the webinars.

The engagement was intended to involve the community in discussing both the opportunities and the issues relating to the potential for redevelopment of the former Columb Barracks site.

The response to the consultation identified a high level of support for the redevelopment of this important cultural and historical site as something that will benefit the whole of the community, the town and further afield.

Among the topics which respondees prioritised in their vision for the future of the Barracks are, community, heritage, amenity and open spaces. The potential to develop educational facilities at the site was strongly favoured by many respondees, as was the potential for a museum, as part of the heritage at the site. There was a strong sense that any development should be inclusive of all ages and include a mix of uses.

The opportunity to develop a digital and remote working hub was also raised by a number of organisations and individuals. With the shift to remote working during the pandemic, this may be particularly timely.

Declan Hayden, Community Liaison Officer of the Land Development Agency explains the rationale behind the consultation.

*“We are delighted with the outcome of this stage of consultation. The aim of the early engagement phase of this project was to consult with all stakeholders and the local community. This involved working with the core partners on the Advisory group and all local elected representatives with strong community connections and who are part of the local network. The consultation process also involved the participation of resident associations, community, arts, culture and sports groups, local business and any individual or organisations who wished to submit their feedback or ideas.”*

The Advisory Forum will now consider this feedback and next steps to progress a Regeneration Roadmap. This will help to inform a high-level vision and outline opportunities for the potential future regeneration of the site. This is likely to be followed by further engagement with the community.

Declan Hayden explained the next steps

*“What is clearly emerging from the consultation is that that any redevelopment of Columb Barracks will likely be a mixed-use development based on a partnership approach. The Advisory Board is representative of key interests in the region. This consultation has provided important feedback to help them create a high level vision for this unique site. While we remain at very early days in this project, this report is an important milestone on charting a course for the future of Columb Barracks.”*

**ENDS**