

MOUNT USHER, ASHFORD, CO. WICKLOW, A67RT18,

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

E-MAIL; [REDACTED]

Ms Sorchá Walsh
Senior Executive Planner
Wicklow County Council

08.01.2020

Re. Submission on the Revised Ashford Area Plan 2020

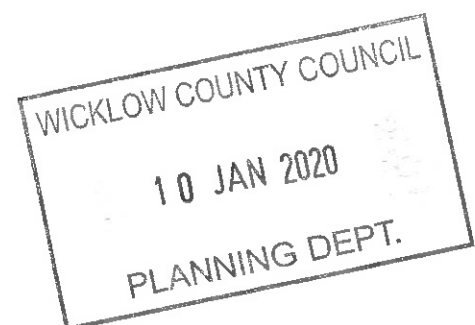
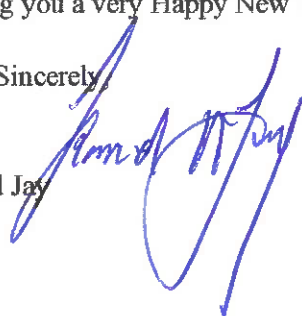
Dear Ms Walshe,

Please find our submission on the above plan enclosed. Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance, or if any further clarification is required on any matter raised,

Wishing you a very Happy New Year,

Yours Sincerely,

Konrad Jay



MOUNT GIBBIE WITH SITE CO. WICKLOW 1678118

RECEIVED 16 JAN 2020

1-MAIL 16 JAN 2020

Ms. Sarah Walsh
Senior Executive Planner
Wicklow County Council

08 01 2020

Re: Submission on the Revised Wicklow Area Plan 2020

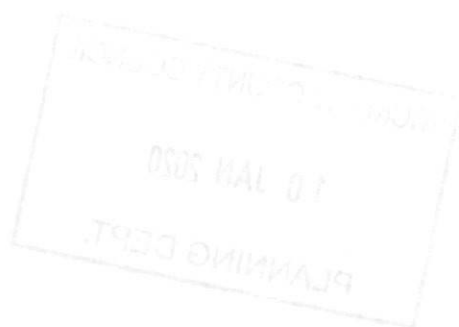
Dear Ms Walsh,

Please find our submission on the above plan enclosed. Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance or if any further clarification is required on any matter raised.

Wishing you a very happy New Year.

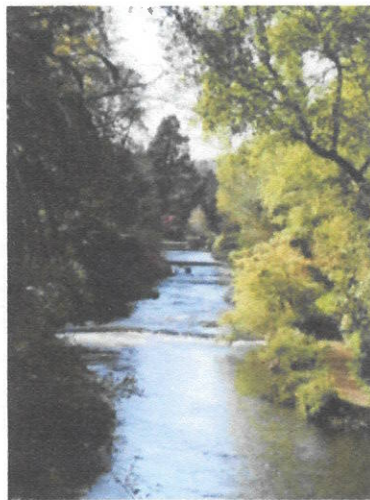
Yours sincerely,

Konrad Jay





**SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED
ASHFORD LOCAL AREA PLAN
2020**



**MOUNT USHER GARDENS
KONRAD & KATHERINE JAY**

January 8th 2020

10 JAN 2020

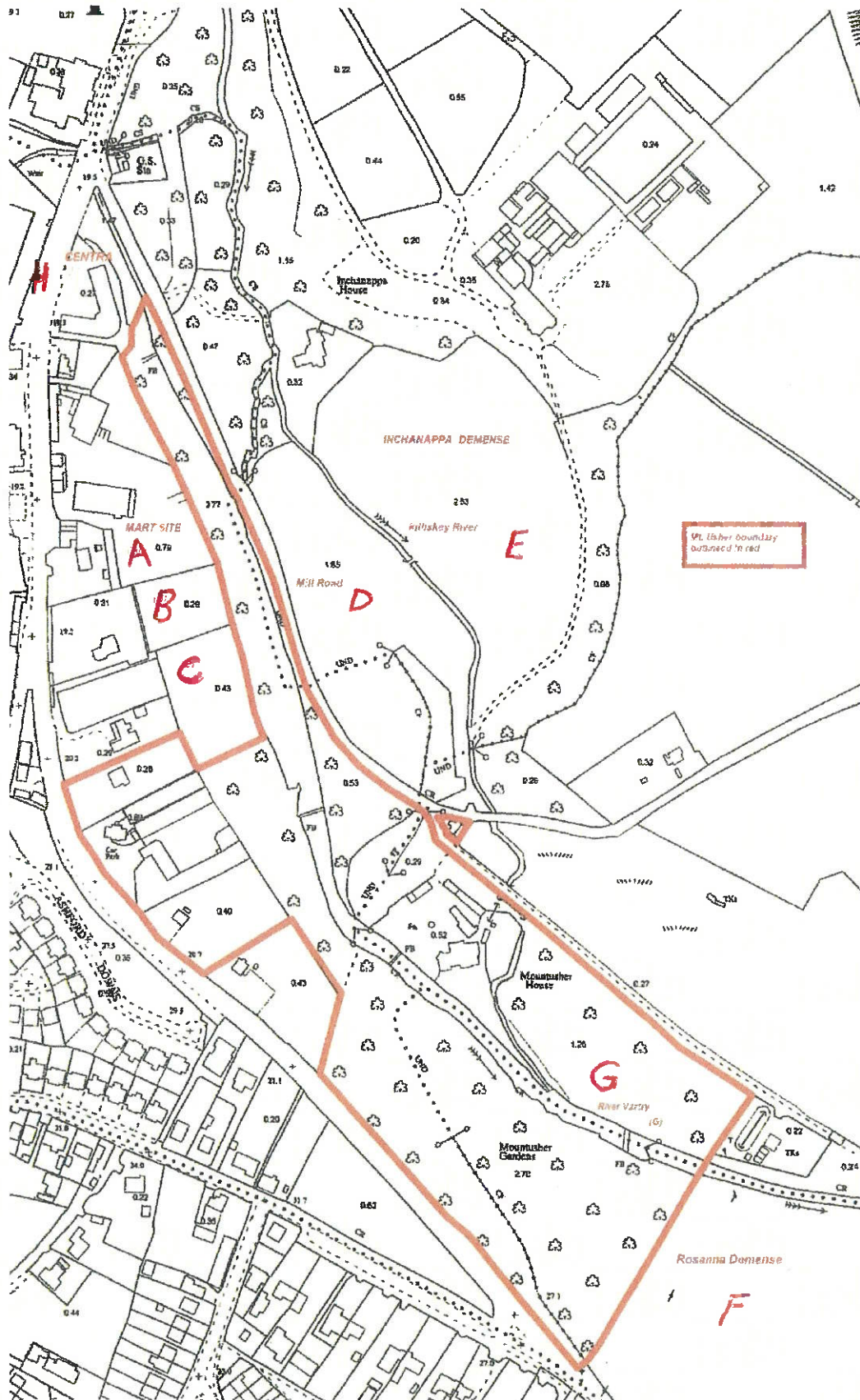
SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED
ASHFORD LOCAL AREA PLAN
2020



MOUNT USHER GARDENS
KONRAD & KATHERINE JAY

January 8th 2020

MAP OF MOUNT USHER GARDENS & SETTING



INTRODUCTION & SUBMISSION OBJECTIVE

As the owners of Mount Usher we wish to secure the long term protection of these internationally renowned Gardens, and the overall aim of this submission is to respectfully request the Planning Authority to include the following policy objectives in the revised Local Area Plan for Ashford 2020;

- a.) To include suitable objectives to achieve the protection of this unique recreational, environmental, and botanical asset and amenity from inappropriate development along it's boundaries.
- b.) To include suitable objectives to protect the River Vartry, the Killiskey River, and all other streams and watercourses within the area from the ever increasing threats of abstraction and impoundment and to protect them from the very acute threats posed by noxious and polluting effluents from agriculture, forestry, commercial activity, and housing

DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND

Mount Usher Gardens are located in the heart of Ashford Village and are considered amongst the greatest surviving wild Robinsonian gardens still in existence anywhere in the world and universally accepted as Gardens of great national and international importance and repute .

In short Mount Usher contains some five thousand varieties of trees, shrubs, and plants, a number of which are unique to Ireland and also include a large number of champion trees that hold both the Irish and British records for their great age and outstanding size.

The gardens were originally planted in the 1880's by Horace Walpole along both sides of the River Vartry as it flows down from Roundwood, through the Devils Glen, the village of Ashford, Mount Usher Gardens, and then on through Rosanna to the Murragh Special Area of Conservation (*SAC 002249*) into the Irish Sea.

Unquestionably the gardens and the River Vartry constitute a delicate and fragile eco system, and, with its intricate lacework of streams, weirs and sluices, it is no exaggeration to claim that the gardens are almost entirely shaped by the principal axis of the River Vartry, it's tributary the Killiskey River, and a number of other smaller streams

These two entities, gardens, and river are mutually interdependent, and we feel very strongly that both are deserving of the greatest possible protection in this revised plan

INTRODUCTION & SUBMISSION OBJECTIVE

As the owners of Mount Usher we wish to secure the long term protection of these internationally renowned Gardens, and the overall aim of this submission is to respectfully request the Planning Authority to include the following policy objectives in the revised Local Area Plan for Ashford 2020:

- a) To include suitable objectives to achieve the protection of this unique recreational, environmental, and botanical asset and amenity from inappropriate development along its boundaries.
- b) To include suitable objectives to protect the River Varty, the Killiskee River and all other streams and watercourses within the area from the ever increasing threats of abstraction and impoundment and to protect them from the very acute threats posed by noxious and polluting effluents from agriculture, forestry, commercial activity, and housing.

DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUN

Mount Usher Gardens are located in the heart of Ashford Village and are considered amongst the greatest surviving wild Robinsonian gardens still in existence anywhere in the world and universally accepted as Gardens of great national and international importance and repute.

In short Mount Usher contains some five thousand varieties of trees, shrubs, and plants, a number of which are unique to Ireland and also include a large number of champion trees that hold both the Irish and British records for their great age and outstanding size.

The gardens were originally planted in the 1880's by Horace Walpole along both sides of the River Varty as it flows down from Roundwood, through the Devils Glen, the village of Ashford, Mount Usher Gardens, and then on through Rosanna to the Muragh Special Area of Conservation (NAC 002349) into the Irish Sea.

Undoubtedly the gardens and the River Varty constitute a delicate and fragile eco system, and with its intricate lacework of streams, weirs and sluices, it is no exaggeration to claim that the gardens are almost entirely shaped by the principal axis of the River Varty, its tributary the Killiskee River, and a number of other smaller streams.

These two entities, gardens, and river are mutually interdependent, and we feel very strongly that both are deserving of the greatest possible protection in this revised plan.

As a family we have been the owners of Mount Usher since 1980, and since 2007 the café and retail outlets have been operated by Avoca Handweavers, the prestigious and highly successful Irish retailers

Mount Usher is frequently featured in books on gardening worldwide, and celebrated in all media as a place of outstanding beauty and unique specialist interest. The Gardens were voted "The Best Garden to visit in the Republic of Ireland" by the BBC's Gardeners World Magazine in 2009 and 2010, and also "Most Romantic Garden to visit in the Republic of Ireland" by the same publication in 2010.

The gardens currently attract in excess of forty thousand visitors annually, while the shops and restaurant here attract a further seventy thousand visitors approximately to Ashford.

Between the shops, the restaurant, and the gardens approximately sixty people are employed here fulltime.

In 1988 the International Council on Monuments and Sites included Mount Usher on it's list Irish Gardens considered to be of International importance.

The house and gardens are listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, and the property has been certified by the Minister of the Environment and Local Government since 1997 under section 482 of Taxes Consolidation act as a property of significant historical, architectural, scientific and aesthetic interest.

As a family we have been the owners of Mount Lister since 1980, and since 2007 the cafe and retail outlets have been operated by Avoca Handweavers, the prestigious and highly successful Irish retailers.

Mount Lister is frequently featured in books on gardening worldwide, and celebrated in all media as a place of outstanding beauty and unique specialist interest. The gardens were voted "The Best Garden to visit in the Republic of Ireland" by the BBC's Gardeners' World Magazine in 2009 and 2010, and also "Most Romantic Garden to visit in the Republic of Ireland" by the same publication in 2010.

The gardens currently attract in excess of half a million visitors annually, while the shop and restaurant have attracted further seventy thousand visitors approximately to Ashford.

Between the shops, the restaurant and the gardens approximately sixty people are employed here fulltime.

In 1988 the International Council on Monuments and Sites included Mount Lister on its list of Irish Gardens considered to be of international importance.

The house and gardens are listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, and the property has been certified by the Minister of the Environment and Local Government since 1997 under section 482 of Towns Consolidation Act as a property of significant historical, architectural, scientific and aesthetic interest.

ZONING

In the 2016 Plan Mt Usher Gardens are zoned as “Open Space”, and the restaurant courtyard is zoned as “Tourism”. Although privately owned and maintained by ourselves, the Gardens remain open to the public twelve months of the year, and as long as that remains the case we feel that the zoning of the property is entirely appropriate.

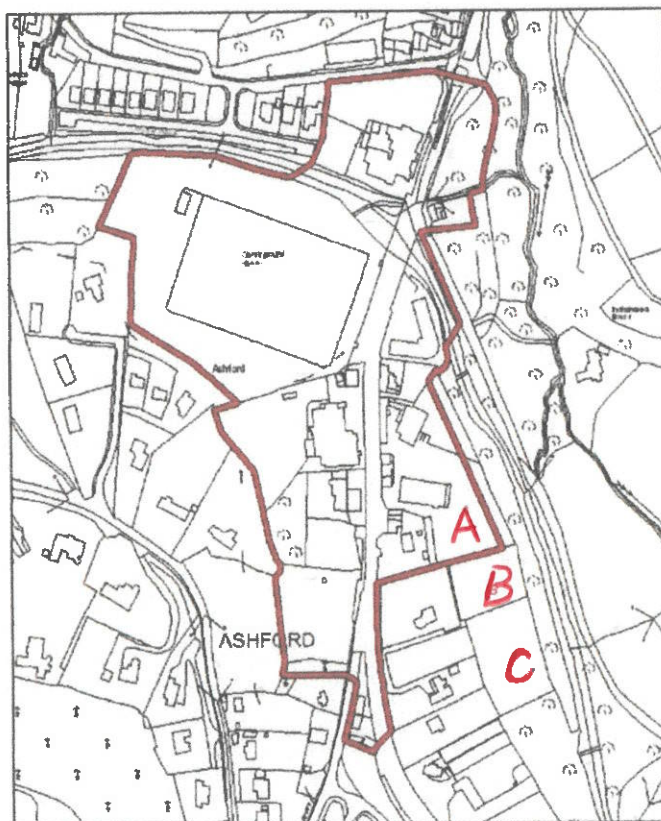
Given the continued and very necessary support of the Local Authority, it continues to be our intention to maintain and develop the gardens as a public amenity and centre of excellence in Ashford, and to develop the property in an environmentally sustainable way, doing everything we possibly can to support its unique eco-system and bio-diversity.

The areas that immediately affect our boundaries are as follows, and we have considered each one in our submission below.

OLD ASHFORD MART *(Marked “A” on Mount Usher Map, p1)*

We fully accept that the Mart site in Ashford (*also marked “a” in the map of the core area below*) should continue to be designated an “Opportunity Site” and zoned “town centre”, and, given certain planning provisos with regard to density, height, and landscaping, we would be supportive of it being developed as such within the time frame of the revised plan,

ASHFORD – CORE AREA



ZONING

In the 2016 Plan Mt. Ashted is zoned as "Open Space," and the restaurant compound is zoned as "Township." Although privately owned and maintained by ourselves, the gardens remain open to the public twelve months of the year, and as long as that remains the case, we feel that the zoning of the property is entirely appropriate.

Given the continued and very necessary support of the Local Authority, it continues to be our intention to maintain and develop the gardens as a public amenity and centre of excellence in Ashford, and to develop the property in an environmentally sustainable way, doing as much as possible to support its unique ecosystem and biodiversity.

The areas that immediately affect our boundaries are as follows, and we have considered each one in our submission below:

OLD ASHTED MART (Marked "A" on Above Map)

We fully accept that the Mart site in Ashford (also marked "a" in the map of the compound below) should continue to be designated as "Open Space" and zoned "Town Centre," and, given certain planning provisions with regard to design, height and landscaping, we would be supportive of it being developed as such, within the time frame of the revised plan.

ASHTED TOWN AREA



However, we feel that the current objectives pertaining to the protection of Mount Usher from any potential development on this site fall short of what is required.

As opposed to the plan published in 2008 there is no longer a “buffer zone “ of any sort proposed between Mount Usher and the mart site included in the 2016 plan.

The policies laid out in the 2016 plan are materially different and less helpful than those in the previous plan, and we do not feel that the objectives pertaining to landscaping and screening under Ash 12 and Ash 13 in the current plan provide sufficient protection for the amenities of Mount Usher.

Ash 12 : *“Require the planting of indigenous plant and tree species in new developments and along new vehicular and pedestrian routes”*

Ash 13: *“To maintain and protect the demesne settings of Inchanappa House, Mount Usher House and Rosanna House, and to require all development proposals within or directly adjoining these demesnes to fully evaluate and address any impacts on the setting”*

Therefore we would urge the Council to include or reinstate the following objectives:

- 1.) That the new plan includes a specific recognition that all the boundaries of the gardens be protected into the future
- 2.) That the new plan reinstates the 2008 objective to provide a ten meter buffer zone between all development on the Mart site, including parking, and the Southern boundary of Mount Usher Gardens
- 3.) That the new plan requires all development to the rear of the Mart site along it's northern boundary be two storey only (first floor, above ground)
- 4.) That the new plan retains the “private amenity space” zoning for the two small meadows (*marked b & c on the map above*) which are situated directly to the East of the mart site, both of which run directly along the boundary with Mt Usher and are not included the 2016 “core area” of the plan,

However, we feel that the current objectives pertaining to the protection of Mount Usher from any potential development on this site fall short of what is required.

As opposed to the plan published in 2008 there is no longer a "buffer zone" of any sort proposed between Mount Usher and the mart site included in the 2016 plan.

The policies laid out in the 2016 plan are marginally different and less helpful than those in the previous plan, and we do not feel that the objectives pertaining to landscaping and screening under Ash 12 and Ash 13 in the current plan provide sufficient protection for the enjoyment of Mount Usher.

2.2.1.2 "Regarding the planning of new gardens behind new houses in order to provide privacy and along new residential and pedestrian routes."

2.2.1.3 "To maintain and promote the historic setting of buildings within Mount Usher and to ensure that the historic character of the area is maintained and to ensure that the historic character of the area is maintained and to ensure that the historic character of the area is maintained."

Factors we would urge the Council to include or restate the following objectives:

1. That the new plan includes a specific recognition that all the boundaries of the gardens be protected into the future.

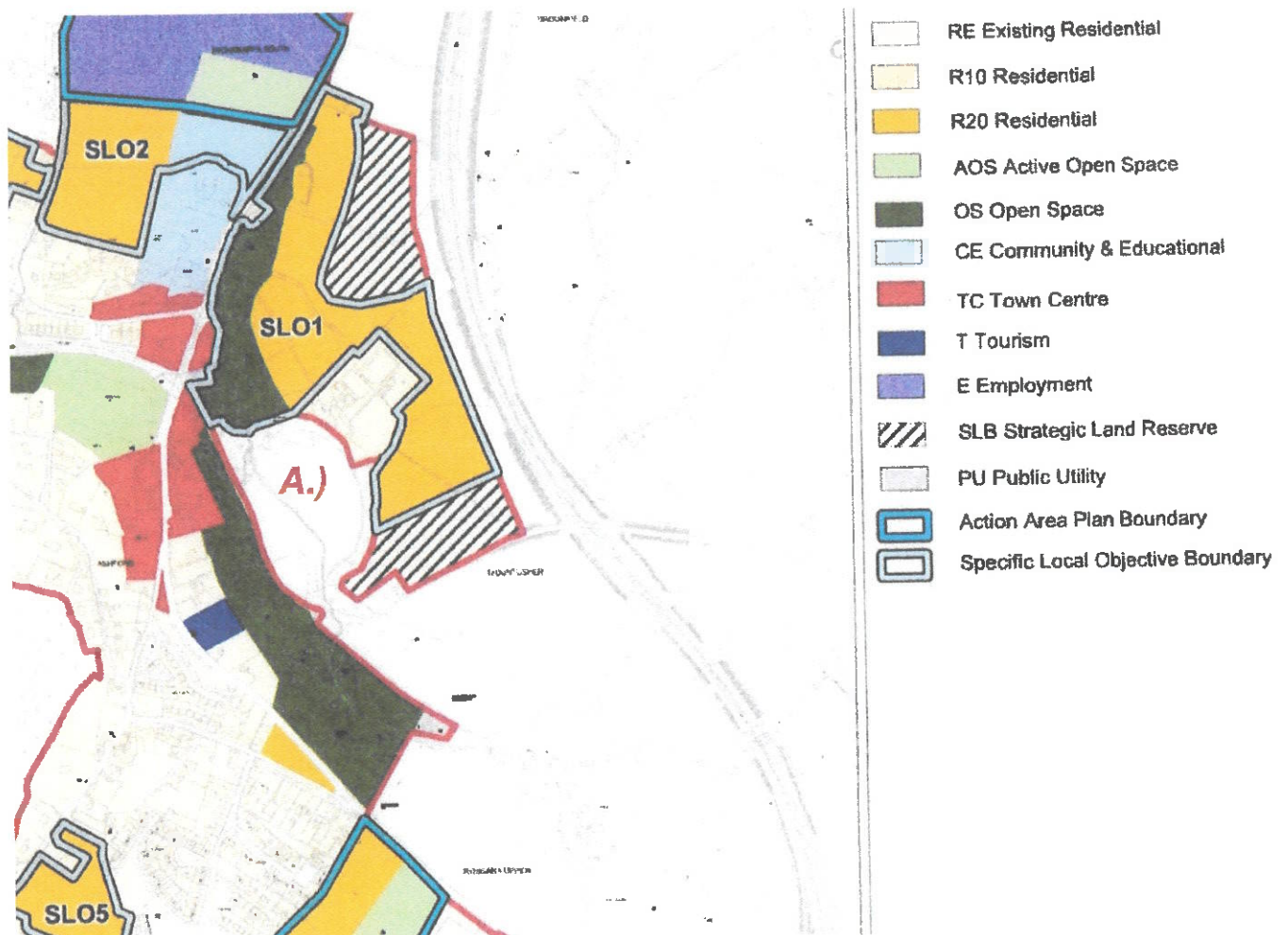
2. That the new plan reinstates the 2008 objective to provide a ten meter buffer zone between all development on the Mart site including parking, and the Southern boundary of Mount Usher Gardens.

3. That the new plan requires all development to the east of the Mart site along its northern boundary be two storey only (first floor above ground).

4. That the new plan retains the "private amenity space" zoning for the two small meadows (marked A & C on the map above) which are situated directly to the East of the mart site, both of which run directly along the boundary with Mt Usher and are not included in the 2016 "core area" of the plan.

INCHANAPPA DEMESNE/ MILL ROAD (Marked "d" on Mt Usher map, p1)

We fully accept that the lands within the Inchanappa demesne designated a specific local objective (SLO 1) and zoned R20 Residential in the current plan should continue to be zoned as such in the revised plan.



Zoning Map – 2016 Ashford Area Plan

However, we fail to understand why the meadows, streams, pond, mature and rare trees, hedgerows, and estate wall, that lie to the south of Inchanappa House (between the main dwelling and the "Mill Road" & marked "A" on above map) while included in the 2008 town plan as "Open space", were subsequently excluded in the 2016 plan altogether, and apparently fall outside of the town plan boundary.

We continue to be dismayed by the neglect of these lands, waterways, and the estate wall that runs along the Mill Road directly across the road from Mt Usher Gardens.

We feel that this land, the Killiskey River and other smaller streams that flow through it, and the estate wall that forms it's boundary, form an intrinsic and important part of the character, history, and bio-diversity of Ashford and should be cared for and maintained as such.

INCHANAPPA DEMISES MILL ROAD (Marked "d" on Mt Usher map p.1)

We fully accept that the lands within the Inchanappa demise designated a specific local objective (SLO 1) and zoned R20 Residential in the current plan should continue to be zoned as such in the revised plan.



Zoning Map - 2016 Ashford Area Plan

However, we fail to understand why the meadows, streams, pond, mature and rare trees, hedgerows, and estate wall, that lie to the south of Inchanappa House (between the main dwelling and the "Mill Road" & marked "A" on above map) while included in the 2008 town plan as "Open space", were subsequently excluded in the 2016 plan altogether, and apparently fall outside of the town plan boundary.

We continue to be dismayed by the neglect of these lands, waterways, and the estate wall that runs along the Mill Road directly across the road from Mt Usher Gardens.

We feel that this land, the Killiskey River and other smaller streams that flow through it, and the estate wall that forms its boundary, form an intrinsic and important part of the character, history, and bio-diversity of Ashford and should be cared for and maintained as such.

Therefore we would urge the council to reinstate the following objectives;

- 1.) To reinstate the lands referred to above, and indicated A on the map above, into the local area plan and zone them "Open Space" as per the 2008 area plan, in order for them to be integrated naturally into the lands adjacent to "SLO 1" which are already zoned as such.
- 2.) That the waterways, streams, and ponds running through these lands be maintained in accordance with best environmental practice and in keeping with the current plan under the heading of heritage objectives;

Ash 12 – Heritage Objectives ; *"In the interests of the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Ashford it is an objective of this plan to; Protect trees, hedgerows and wooded areas (particularly those containing indigenous species), watercourses and other features of the natural landscape"*

- 3.) That the Mill Road, the woodland, and boundary wall that runs between Ashford village and the back gates of Inchanappa opposite the private gates of Mount usher be referred to specifically in the revised plan and protected, and that a plan regarding the future responsibility for their maintenance and protection be put in place.

ROSANNA DEMENSE (Marked on "F" on Mt Usher map, p.1)

We note that the demesne setting of Rosanna is referred to in the current Area plan under Ash 13, Heritage objectives, although it does not seem to be included within the settlement boundary of the 2016 plan.

We also note that these lands were zoned "Agricultural/ Greenbelt" in the 2008 plan, and, if they are to be included in the revised 2020 plan, we consider this to be the appropriate zoning going forward, at the very least in the areas immediately bordering Mount Usher Gardens.

RIVER VARTRY

We note that the River Vartry is referred to specifically in the current plan under the following sections;

1.2 Overall Vision and Development strategy.; *"Facilitate and encourage the integration of the River Vartry as a key feature in the redevelopment of the town centre , maximising it's potential as a local amenity"*

And;

1.8 Built and Natural Heritage; *" In terms of Natural Heritage the key feature in the settlement is the Vartry River, which is an EU protected salmonid river. The River flows to the Murrough, a protected wetland on the coast"*

1. Before we would urge the council to reinstate the following objectives:

1.1 To reinstate the lands referred to above, and indicated A on the map above, into the local area plan and zone them "Open Space" as per the 2008 area plan, in order for them to be integrated naturally into the landscape adjacent to "SI.O.I." which are already zoned as such.

2. That the waterways, streams and ponds running through these lands be maintained in accordance with best environmental practice and in keeping with the current plan under the heading of heritage objectives.

Ash 1.2 - Heritage Objectives: "In the interests of the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Ashford it is an objective of the plan for 'Private' trees, hedgerows and wooded areas (where there is an existing hedgerow or tree-lined watercourse and other features of the natural landscape."

2.1 That the Mill Road, the woodland, and boundary wall that runs between Ashford village and the back gates of Inchacappa opposite the private gates of Mount Ashford be referred to specifically in the revised plan and protected, and that a plan regarding the future responsibility for their maintenance and protection be put in place.

ROSANNA DEVELOPMENT ZONING AND "OPEN SPACE" ZONING

We note that the domestic zoning of Rosanna is referred to in the current Area plan under Ash 1.3, Heritage objectives, although it does not seem to be included within the settlement boundary of the 2016 plan.

We also note that these lands were zoned "Agricultural/ Greenbelt" in the 2008 plan, and it they are to be included in the revised 2020 plan, we consider this to be the appropriate zoning going forward, at the very least in the areas immediately bordering Mount Ashford Gardens.

RIVER VARTY

We note that the River Varty is referred to specifically in the current plan under the following sections:

1.2 Overall Vision and Development strategy: "Facilitate and encourage the integration of the River Varty as a key feature in the redevelopment of the town centre, maximising its potential as a local amenity."

And,

1.8 Built and Natural Heritage: "In terms of Natural Heritage the key feature in the settlement is the Varty River, which is an EU protected submontane river. The River flows to the Mountrough, a protected wetland on the coast."

As already mentioned the River Vartry, it's tributary the Killiskey River, and a network of smaller streams and culverts provide the central axis around which the gardens at Mount Usher have been planted and developed for almost one hundred and fifty years.

Also, as is acknowledged in the 2016 Area plan, the River Vartry provides a key feature of the village of Ashford, and it's development as a burgeoning town into the future.

With this inevitable growth both in terms of development and the resultant growth of population unavoidable pressures will undoubtedly be brought to bear on the rivers and watercourses in the area.

Excessive abstraction and pollution already pose very real threats to the environmental integrity, rich biodiversity, and thus far at least, good health, of the River.

Therefore we would urge the Council to include the following objectives in the revised plan;

- 1.) To ensure that the River Vartry, and the Killiskey River be specifically protected from all excessive and damaging abstraction and impoundment going forward
- 2.) To ensure that any development in the area takes full consideration of the impacts it will have on the health of the all rivers and watercourses in the area and mitigates these in an acceptable and ecologically sustainable manner.
- 3.) To ensure the avoidance of pollution to the River and watercourses by ensuring that stringent and effective attenuation and disposal of all waste water and surface water is insisted upon in all further developments.

PRECEDENTS



TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT – ASHFORD – (Marked “G” on Mount Usher map P.1)

We would respectfully ask the Local Authority to consider the above development, photographed from inside the gardens, and then ask themselves if this style of “bunker

As already mentioned the River Varty, its tributary the Killiskew River, and a network of smaller streams and culverts provide the central axis around which the gardens at Mount Lisker have been planted and developed for almost one hundred and fifty years.

Also, as is acknowledged in the 2016 Area plan, the River Varty provides a key feature of the village of Ashford, and its development as a burgeoning town into the future.

With this inevitable growth both in terms of development and the resultant growth of population unavoidable pressures will undoubtedly be brought to bear on the rivers and watercourses in the area.

Excessive abstraction and pollution already pose very real threats to the environmental integrity, rich biodiversity, and thus for at least good health of the River.

Therefore we would urge the Council to include the following objectives in its revised plan:

- 1) To ensure that the River Varty, and the Killiskew River be specifically protected from all excessive and damaging abstraction and impoundment going forward
- 2) To ensure that any development in the area takes full consideration of the impacts it will have on the health of the all rivers and watercourses in the area and mitigates these in an acceptable and ecologically sustainable manner
- 3) To ensure the avoidance of pollution to the River and watercourses by ensuring that stringent and effective attention and disposal of all waste water and surface water is ensured prior to all further development.

PRECEDENTS



TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT - ASHFORD - (Marked "G" on Mount Lisker map 1.1)

We would respectfully ask the Local Authority to consider the above development, photographed from inside the gardens, and then ask themselves if this style of "bunker

architecture” could ever be considered acceptable directly along the remaining boundaries of Mount Usher.

To us that prospect remains unconscionable.

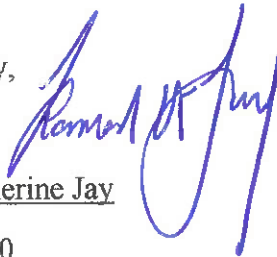
CONCLUSION

We respectfully request that the Planning Authority support this submission and include the suggested policy objectives in the revised Ashford Local Area Plan 2020.

Please contact us if we can be of further assistance. We will gladly make an oral submission if this is requested, and we are happy to supply any further information if this might be deemed helpful.

Thank you very much indeed for giving us the opportunity of making this submission,

Yours Sincerely,



Konrad & Katherine Jay

8th January 2020

architecture, could ever be considered acceptable directly along the remaining boundaries of Mount Light.


To us that prospect remains unconscionable.

CONCLUSION

We respectfully request that the Planning Authority support this submission and include the suggested policy objectives in the revised Ashford Local Area Plan 2020.

Please contact us if we can be of further assistance. We will gladly make an oral submission if that is requested, and we are happy to supply any further information if that might be deemed helpful.

Thank you very much indeed for giving us the opportunity of making this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Kieran & Katherine Jay
8th January 2020