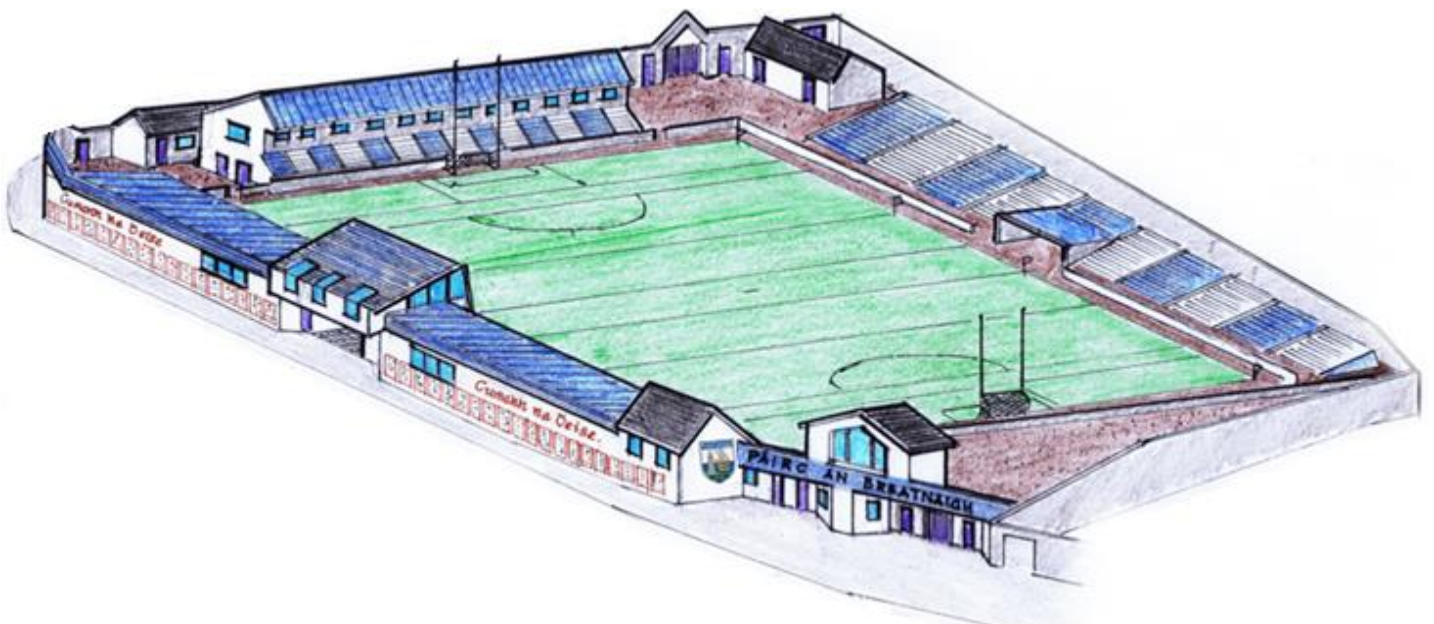




PÁIRC AN BHREATHNAIGH STADIUM PROJECT

Project Oversight Team

Interim Report No. 1 to An Coiste Bainistí, Contae Phortláirge



NOVEMBER 2020

Acknowledgement

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all those that have contributed to the development of this interim report. I would also like to particularly acknowledge the important role and contribution made by each member of the Project Oversight Team for their efforts and expertise throughout the review process and in compiling this report.

The experience and professional engagement of the Project Team has greatly facilitated the aim of redeveloping Walsh Park and thereby contributing to the future progress of Waterford GAA.

I look forward to their continued engagement with our efforts to oversee the redevelopment project, which will culminate with the delivery of a new stadium for Waterford GAA that will provide safety and comfort for our community of users.

Eugene McKenna

Chairperson

Project Oversight Team

Eugene McKenna, Chairperson

Elaine Brazil

Kevin Ryan

Marian Walsh

Sean Michael O'Regan (Chairperson Waterford GAA)

Pat Flynn (CEO Waterford GAA)

DISCLAIMER

This Report is prepared by the Project Oversight Team as part of an on-going consultation process to ensure that the redevelopment of the stadium is delivered to the required standards, on time and within budget. The information, which is summarised herein is for general guidance only and is not professional advice and should not be considered such or relied or acted upon in this regard. Whilst the authors have tried to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the contents of this document, the Project Oversight Team cannot offer any undertaking or guarantee, either expressly or implicitly, including liability towards third parties, regardless how correct, complete, or up to date the contents of the information provided in this report. The authors accept no liability for any loss or damage, either direct or indirect, arising out of the use of this information.

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1. Executive Summary

This review of the Walsh Park project is being prepared in an entirely new context from the original proposal of 2017/2018. The intervention of the COVID 19 pandemic has changed circumstances completely. However, there remains an absolute imperative to progress the project. Waterford needs a distinctive headquarters to showcase our games and meet customer expectations.

The oversight team has undertaken a fundamental and comprehensive review of the project. Any proposals must reflect a number of key priorities. The project will:

- Serve the needs of the organisation for the next 50 years.
- Be of a quality that meets customer expectations and be a showcase for Waterford GAA.
- Be a positive contributor to its environment and immediate vicinity.

Costings.

With respect to the project as currently proposed the Teams views that delivery costs as of November 2020 would be of the order of between €9 and €10 Million having regard to construction cost inflation since the original project costings were developed and the reality of the mid-point of the contract being in 2022/2023 were the project to proceed from here.

Stadium Capacity

The current stadium design was developed on the need to accommodate a capacity of 16,000 spectators. However, analysis of recent and potential future games strongly indicates that attendance will not exceed 12,000 in the coming years. The Project Oversight Team are recommending that the capacity be reduced to 13,000 to accommodate the new projected Government operating compliance protocols and the demand for an extended spectator experience in a comfortable sporting theatre. A reduction in capacity will provide a better ergonomic design and the best use of the space in the stadium, along with reducing costs.

Key Recommendations

- (i) Having a regard to the impacts of COVID 19 on GAA finances at Central and Provincial level, a staged/phased approach should be taken in order to realising the ultimate design vision. The complete redevelopment plan can be scheduled into four phases:

Phase A – Construction of the North Stand as per the current design with possible minor modifications.

Phase B – Construction of the re-designed Facilities Block and Stand at the Keane's Road West End.

Phase C – Re-development of the City End Terrace.

Phase D – Upgrading and re-development of the existing Slievekeale Road South Stand.

Each phase can be completed without the requirement to close the pitch. Also, phases could be combined subject to the availability of financial resources.

This is not dissimilar to the approach adopted to the development of Croke Park.

- (ii) The redevelopment should commence in 2022 with a phase or phases that would extend to an expenditure of between €5 and €6 Million.
- (iii) The proposed dressing room and services building at the City end should be omitted and dressing room and other facilities provided under a redesigned Keane's Road stand.
- (iv) Additional architectural input should be provided for the design of the Keane's Road stand, the renewal of the existing South Stand and the presentation of key entry points.
- (v) A budget of €11 to 12 Million should be factored for the development of the project over a period of five years, with the project to proceed as resources permit, but to a quality that yields a headquarters for Waterford GAA that represents absolute best in class for a stadium of its kind.

2. Introduction

The Páirc an Bhreathnaigh Project Oversight Team was established in January 2020. The purpose of the Team is to oversee the Walsh Park re-development project, ensuring that it is delivered to the required standards, on time and within budget. In addition, the Team will develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure good governance throughout the project life cycle.

This Briefing document reports on the findings of the Team in respect of its Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) as stated at No.6 *“Review the overall project plan, drawings and schedules. Propose modifications and cost savings as appropriate while ensuring that the Páirc an Bhreathnaigh finish will be a source of pride and identity for the GAA community of Waterford”*.

3. Work Approach

The work of the Project Oversight Team has been concentrated on reviewing and evaluating the full documentation associated with the development of the project. This work included:

- (i) ‘Walkover’ surveys of Walsh Park to review and evaluate the condition of the existing infrastructure and its associated services. The space existing beneath the South Stand (existing stand) was noted and valued.
- (ii) Observation and consideration of roads and premises adjacent to the stadium.
- (iii) Meeting with and presentations from Horganlynch Consulting Engineers, the company that had prepared the planning application and tender documentation.
- (iv) Visits to sports stadia in neighbouring counties. Meetings with the respective managers and on-site staff to share their experiential learning.
- (v) Discussions with construction professionals and other relevant individuals.
- (vi) Establishing a structure to facilitate Focus Group meetings that will enable current and former players to review the design and share their experiences and requirements.

4. Main Driver

When the concept of upgrading Walsh Park was considered in 2016, the primary driver at that time was to address the findings of the Slattery Report, a Safety Audit that was carried out on the Stadium by in 2011. In this Audit, the stadium was deemed to be significantly underdeveloped, ‘*out of date*’ and noncompliant with the present-day code of practice for Sports Stadia (‘Red Book’). In early 2017, a master plan was developed for Walsh Park by Horganlynch Consulting Engineers.

Since the development of the master plan in 2017, the landscape and requirement of the stadium has changed, particularly in terms of match attendance, spectator capacity, stadium design, building regulations and the onset of COVID 19. The impact of this pandemic may very well change the criteria that dictate the design of sports stadiums and spaces in the future. Instead of maximising capacity while complying with the relevant codes of practice, the emphasis may now be on lower capacity, increased circulation space and increased floor areas of associated accommodation such as dressing rooms. Although experts differ on the duration of this stage of the pandemic, they do however, generally concur that a return to business as before is still a long way off, if possible at all.

As with all organisations that promote community gathering, a corresponding social responsibility lies heavily on the promoters and operators to do everything in accordance with National Guidelines, Public Health and Safety and Best Practice. Equally, as we are in the design implementation stage of the project, it would be remiss of Waterford GAA not to do a full review of the development design to ensure that all aspects of the plan conform to these guidelines and, where possible, implement permanent layout solutions that practically allow for or encourage social distancing. This will require larger dressing rooms and player facility areas (male and female). It will also require splitting corporate, games officials and player welfare facilities to avoid ‘crossover’ and to provide protected zones within the stadium. Also, consideration should be given to increasing the length and width of the pitch, on-site renewable energy generation, premium seats, and the creation of a pleasing architectural stadium structure.

5. Background to the Current Stadium Design

In 2016, Munster Council engaged Horganlynch Consulting Engineers to explore options for upgrading Walsh Park. This process offered four options, and Waterford GAA engaged Horganlynch to develop a Master plan for the stadium. The Master plan brief included:

- (i) Maximising the stadium capacity (increase from 9,000 to circa 16,000)

- (ii) Meet the requirements of relevant codes of practice for Sports Stadia, to include improved seating, terracing, sanitary accommodation, concessions, safe ingress and egress.
- (iii) Cover to spectators, where feasible
- (iv) New Dressing Rooms/Administration Building to be located at the City End (East End) of the Stadium that incorporates:
 - 4 no. Dressing Rooms
 - 2 no. Referees rooms, medical room, sanitary accommodation, gym, storage and GAA management offices.

The planning application was prepared in early 2018 and lodged with Waterford County Council on 29th June 2018. Planning permission was granted by Waterford County Council on 23rd August 2018. However, this permission was appealed to An Bord Pleanála in September 2018 by a number of residents in the area. On 13th February 2019, An Bord Pleanála granted planning permission for the development complete with 11 conditions.

Following the granting of the planning permission, Waterford GAA and their professional team proceeded to tender stage, which included the preparation of tender drawings, specifications and documentation.

The initial projected cost of the project in July 2018 was €7.677m. This included an allowance for upgrade to the existing Southern Stand, pitch upgrade, Fees, 10% Contingency and VAT. In March 2020, based on a projected cost increase of 10% over a period of 21 months from July 2018 to March 2020 and a potential sum of €500,000 for additional work, the estimated costs of the project was €8.946m.

A site layout plan of the stadium that was granted planning permission is provided in Appendix 3.

6. Findings

Reacting to the challenge, posed to the Gaelic Athletic Association in Waterford the Project Oversight Team now focuses on refining the design and developing a detailed specification to enable the community of users of the stadium to visit in safety and comfort. In order to conform to current stringent statutory operational obligations that are likely to remain in place for some time, it is now imperative to identify potential areas and types of risks and to remove these uncertainties and unknowns from the existing design.

The emphasis is now on space circulation, and separation at use-of-services. This involves managing entry to and exiting from the grounds, flow-ways to seating and welfare facilities, increased foot-printing of the changing and ancillary rooms, as well as new distinct spaces to monitor/protect all users. All designed areas must be brought to lifetime inclusive and accessible standards.

To provide a new stadium in compliance with, and flexible enough to anticipate change factors in the future, will require modification of the existing design. With the increasing requirements of ensuring health, safety and protection, additional floor area is required for gowning, monitoring/testing, isolation and direct ambulance access. Extra professional health personnel will be on-site with base room requirements. An increase in steward numbers will require assembly pre/post-match briefing/debriefing, sanitation, and nutrition areas. Playing squads will require rooms for similar purposes.

6.1 Proposed Design Amendments

The current design for Walsh Park received planning permission approval in 2018 for a capacity of 16,000 spectators. The Project Oversight Team are recommending amendments to the present design. These proposed amendments will, in no way, detract from the work already undertaken and completed to date relating to the design, planning and implementation stages. Any new ‘works’ will relate only to ‘design solutions’ and will be derived from the basis of the work, studies and community engagement completed to date. However, this work will require changes to the overall design of facilities. This will include compliance with the necessary changes in accordance with National Guidelines, Public Health and Safety and Best Practice and the relocation of the facilities block from the City End to the Keane’s Road End. The revised design should deliver an identifiable appealing architectural change from the old to the new stadium, particularly from the Keane’s Road End and the main entrance opposite the Presentation School. In addition, it should enable the potential option of completing the project in phases if required. It would also include the capability to increase the capacity into the future.

There is scope in the present design to accommodate change without radically affecting the layout. Any significant change will necessitate a revised planning application; however, much of the technical works has already been carried out, which will benefit any revised application.

The on-going evolving changes to the GAA games programme necessitate additional requirements and obligations on the hosting venues. Crowd management and their safety in stadiums is always an overriding factor. An Oversight and Central Stadium Control Room is required on match-day to monitor, direct and respond to situations arising in real time. Infrastructure that provides the stadium

controller with the required monitoring and control facilities, must be allowed for and included in the revision.

Ensuring that sufficient accommodation in central positions in the main stands is provided for patrons with mobility challenges is in accordance with our culture of inclusion. This is an obligation we must meet to ensure that our new stadium embraces equality in action.

While the print and voice media will be accommodated by upgrading the media/press area in the South Stand, we can do more for visual coverage. Throughout this summer, we have been indebted to RTE, TG4 and live streaming services for their extensive coverage of our games. Sheltered camera roosting points must be included in the new works to allow this media to deliver quality broadcasts in whatever circumstances that may arise.

Adding enclosed seating centrally at a high level above the existing South Stand will provide an opportunity to upgrade the existing entrance off Slievekeale Road. On match days, this would be the main inclusive entrance, which includes stairways, lift access to the higher stand, and Press area.

KEANE'S ROAD END (West End)

Re-locating the Facilities Block from the City End to the Keane's Road End provides additional design opportunities and benefits for both the exterior and interior requirements of the stadium. These include:

- (i) Gaining access to circa 1,600m² of new usable prime space by removing the existing spectator embankment on the Keane's Road End.
- (ii) Facilitating the required increase in space requirements in the Facilities Block for teams, management, medical, stewarding, catering and officials from the current design allocation of 800m² to circa 1200 m².
- (iii) Retention of the covered spectator-viewing stand as per the current design with option for terraced or seated accommodation.
- (iv) Removing the need to provide bus access and parking within the stadium. Drop-off and pick-up facilities on Keane's Road will enable teams, management, and officials to have direct ingress and egress to the facility block through an adjacent entrance. Space gained will be available for improved circulation, spectator entertainment and comfort at the Slievekeale City End.
- (v) Delivery of a modern and inspiring aesthetic architectural exterior along Keane's Road.

It would be desirable that all the newly required facilities are incorporated into a single facility building block with a high standard of air-conditioning to meet air-changing requirements at the Keane's Road End. In addition, a deep cleaning system in this building will enable rapid sterile cleansing of the entire premises. The design of these spaces will enable flexibility, with match day formats and functions reverting to weekday/night uses as required.

Developing this new building block with its frontage on the boundary with Keane's Road will enable maximum use of this rectangular area whilst freeing up the East End for a grand signature entrance, which will form a strong identity for the stadium and Waterford GAA.

THE CITY END (East End)

The relocation of the Facilities Block to the Keane's Road End enables safe and comfortable terracing to be developed at the City End of the Stadium. The design of this terrace should incorporate a potential future expansion of the terrace, if required, to increase stadium capacity. The triangular space at the rear of the terrace will become a flexible multi-purpose fan-zone. This space will enable spectators to spend more time in Walsh Park before and after matches. It will accommodate our sponsors, who want to interactively market their companies and products. In addition, this space will also provide for 'pop ups', kiosks, live entertainments and other revenue earners. The concept of creating a primary fans' access area to the stadium, opposite the Presentation School that is dedicated to Fanzone experience, should be considered.

THE EXISTING STAND (South Stand)

In addition to the replacement of seats, roofing remedial works and media/press area renovation as detailed in the present design, consideration should be given to converting the existing space beneath the stand into usable live space. Similar to other GAA Stadia the concept of incorporating premium seating on a podium in the centre area over the stand would be desirable, particularly in terms of revenue generation and the provision of spectator choice, loyalty and attraction to the new stadium.

THE NEW NORTH STAND

In the current design the North Stand provides uncovered seating of circa 4500 capacity. Consideration should be given to developing universal accessible covered seating towards the centre of this stand. This can be done without increasing the stand's height and therefore not impacting on sun and light spill to the residents behind it. The Fanzones and services areas at the East and West Ends would be accessible to spectators using the North Stand.

6.2 Spectator Requirements

The modern spectator demands an extended experience when attending a championship match. The new stadium development must meet those varied needs in a comfortable space. A range of facilities and comfortable seating positions rather than mono-density should be the emphasis in a facility that is ‘Green and Smart’. ‘Being Green’ reduces the whole life carbon impact, reduces maintenance and operating costs, exploits renewable energy, and accords with Government requirements and policy. ‘Being Smart’ integrates Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into the day-to-day operations. This will significantly reduce direct person-to-person and person-to-building surfaces contact. The intelligent use of ICT will build confidence in the user’s sense of health, security, and wellbeing together with ensuring cost savings in administration.

Seamless processing will facilitate access, comfort, circulation, together with engagement with the experiences offered in the Fanzones. This will make Walsh Park the venue for an extended family day enhanced by varied complimentary experiences to the centrepiece-sporting event.

6.3 Current design and revised design comparison

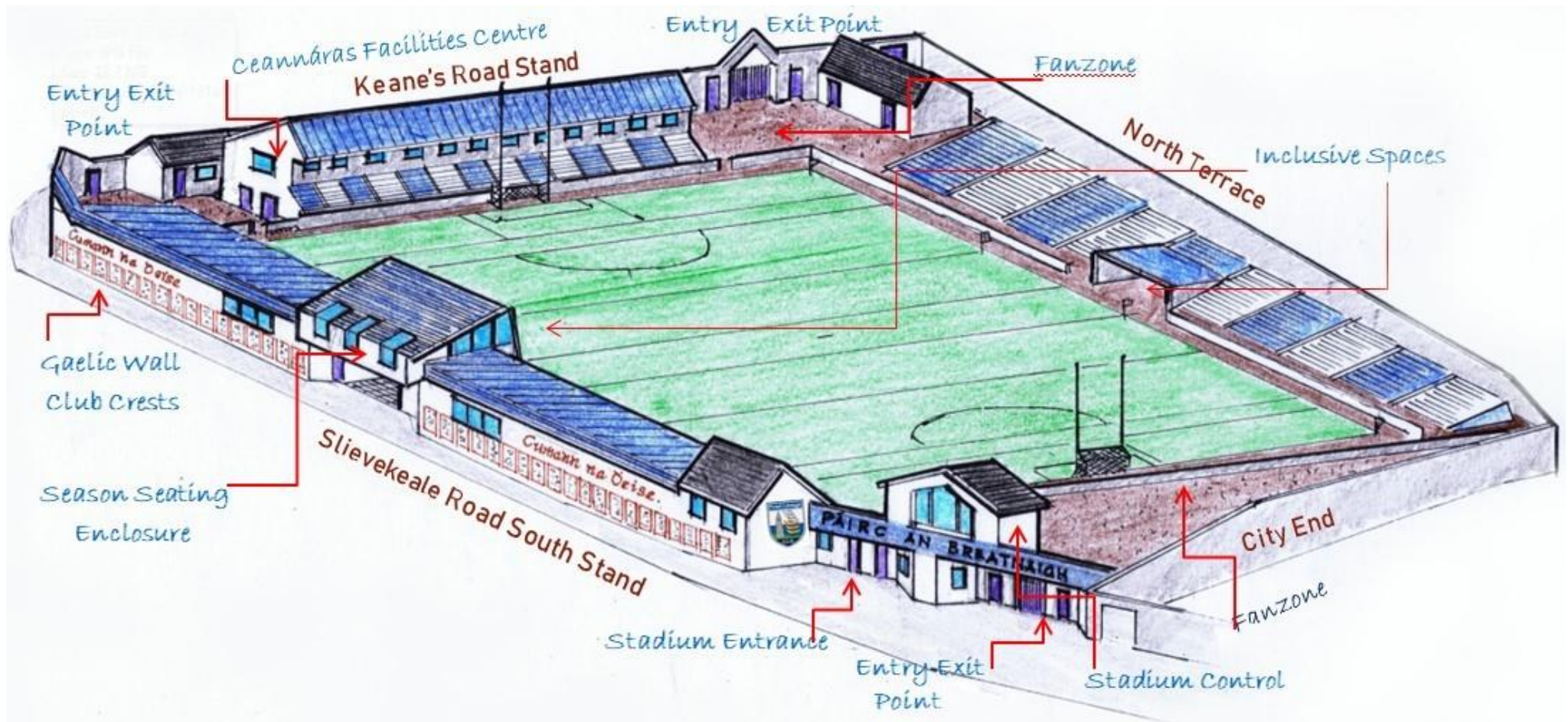
The review and evaluation of the current design by the Project Oversight Team has resulted in a number of amendments being proposed in addition to the changes required by COVID 19. The Project Oversight Team believe that incorporating these changes into a revised design will provide much additional space, safety and comfort that will provide a good experience for all patrons.

Table 1.0 below provides a comparison between the current permitted design and potential revised design:

| Item | Description | Current Permitted Design | Potential Revised Design |
|------|---|--------------------------|--|
| 1 | Seating Capacity | 16,000 – no expansion | 13,000 – Potential expansion to 16,000 (future terrace/stand development City End) |
| 2 | Player and Officials Space | 800m ² | 1,200m ² |
| 3 | GAA Offices and match day activities etc. | 600m ² | 800m ² |
| 4 | On-site parking – match day | 16 cars; 2 buses | 0 cars; 0 buses, off-site parking to be considered |
| 5 | On-site parking – non-match day | 16 cars; 2 buses | 30 cars; 4 buses |
| 6 | Fanzone | Not included | Fanzone areas: |

| | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| | | | Keane's Road Access 550m ² City End - opposite Presentation School (primary access) 2,000m ² |
| 7 | Premium Seats | Not included | Block of premium seats on a podium in the centre area over the south stand. |
| 8 | Removal of spectator embankment at the Keane's Road End | Not included | Embankment removed and used to create an extra 1,600m ² for the Facilities Block relocation site. |
| 9 | Unusable space underneath South Stand | Not included | Convert this space into usable live space. |
| 10 | External visible impact of a new stadium | Limited changes from the old stadium | Delivers an identifiable appealing architecture change from the old to the new stadium, particularly from the Keane's Road end and a significant presence in the form of a statement entrance at the City End off Slievekeale Road. Provide evidential change to the exterior of the stadium that gives visible improvement to the community. |
| 11 | Position of Turnstiles | Located on stadium perimeter | Locate inside the perimeter of the stadium to avoid fans congregating on the public roads for access. |
| 12 | COVID 19 Requirements | Not applicable at time of design | Compliance with Pandemic design requirements for sports stadia. |
| 13 | Increase length and width of pitch | Not included | Option to increase length and width. |
| 14 | On site renewable energy generation | Not included | Use of south-facing roofs for PV arrays. Reduction of carbon and energy costs. Collection and re-use of rainwater to assist new borewells for pitch irrigation. SEAI grant aid available. |
| 15 | Main entrance relocation to the City End - opposite the Presentation School to reduce pinch point issues at the existing roundabout. | Not included | Redesign of existing entrance at the City End opposite the Presentation School, will provide improved crowd management where spectators will feel safe and relaxed in the off-street space generated. |
| 16 | Parabolic ramped seating in the new build stands | Not included | Include in design of North Stand to provide enhanced spectating angles. |
| 17 | Pitch Closure Requirement | 18 Months | No pitch closure, phased approach recommended. |

6.4 Schematic 3D Sketch of an Indicative Design



6.5 Stadium Capacity

The current design was developed on the need to accommodate a capacity of 16,000 spectators. However, when both recent and future potential games programmes are analysed it strongly indicates that attendance at games will not exceed 12,000 in the near future. The Project Oversight Team are recommending that the capacity be reduced to 13,000 to accommodate the new projected Government operating compliance protocols and the demand for an extended spectator experience in a comfortable sporting theatre. A reduction in capacity will provide a better ergonomic design and the best use of the space in the stadium.

7. Conclusion

Initially the Project Oversight Team set out to review the proposed re-development plans to identify solutions that would give optimum value by developing a technical design that could be efficiently delivered. With the arrival and growth of the COVID 19 crisis the deliberations of the Project Oversight Team took cognisance of and responded to the health crisis that has controlled the actions of all the citizens of the world in 2020. Gaelic sport's economic health now depends on the return of players and supporters to our stadia in a controlled manner without limiting capacity.

To comply with the evolving best practice requirements when people assemble and recreate in large numbers, we propose that the design be adjusted to ensure, insofar as possible, its fitness for purpose. Notwithstanding this, it is an opportunity for Walsh Park to set a new standard and become the lead sporting venue of the new era. The new stadium will have a singular reputation for providing a unique and extended sensory experience on the 'big' inter county championship days. Similarly, it will adapt to accommodate the players and community crowds who attend to play and support their parish teams in the club grades on the many 'big' days for the Association's most important units.

Our modifications and adjustments of the stadium development proposal in this report are proposed in this context and are summarised in Table 1.0. and the key ones are listed hereunder. The project should be undertaken on a staged approach to realising the ultimate design vision. The complete redevelopment plan can be scheduled into four phases:

Phase A – Construction of the North Stand as per the current design with possible minor modifications.

Phase B – The re-designed Facilities Block and Stand at the Keane's Road West End.

Phase C – Re-development of the City End Terrace.

Phase D – Upgrading and re-development of the existing Slievekeale Road South Stand.

Each phase can be completed without the requirement to close the pitch. Also, phases could be combined subject to the availability of financial resources.

- (i) The redevelopment should commence in 2022 with a phases or phases that would extend to between €5 and €6 Million.
- (ii) The proposed dressing room and services building at the City End should be omitted and dressing room and other facilities provided under a redesigned Keane's Road stand.
- (iii) Additional architectural input should be provided for the design of the Keane's Road stand, the renewal of the existing South Stand and the presentation of key entry points.
- (iv) A budget of €11 to 12 Million should be set for the development of the project over a period of five years, constructed as resources permit but to a quality that yields a headquarters for Waterford GAA that represents absolute best in class for a stadium of its kind.

The next stage is to establish a brief for a revised design of Walsh Park. This brief should focus on quality rather than quantity. It should have a vision and overall plan for a stadium that will create a modern sporting setting in an iconic structure in the Waterford City landscape. Adopting a phased approach to the development would always enable the venue to continue to host Gaelic games. Using sequenced funding, maintaining gate receipts, and operating relativity to the association could underpin the practical realisation of the vision.

In the present age of sporting popularity where spectator participation and engagement through all forms and media is critical, Waterford people must have a venue that reflects Waterford GAA as a distinctive corporate level organisation presenting its sport at its best in an optical setting. Having reviewed the overall project plan, drawings, and schedules, we now put forward our updated strategies and supportive recommendations as set out in this Report to An Coiste Bainistí, Contae Phortláirge. We believe that the proposed modifications and the stadium's fitness for purpose are appropriate, whilst ensuring that the finished Páirc an Bhreathnaigh will be a source of pride and identity for the GAA community of Waterford.

“Tús maith leath na hoibre”.

Appendix 1 Project Oversight Terms of Reference

Purpose:

The purpose of the Páirc an Bhreathnaigh Project Oversight Team is to oversee the Walsh Park development project, ensuring that is delivered to the required standards, on time and on budget.

Reporting Relationship:

The Team will report to An Coiste Bainistí, Contae Phortláirge.

Term:

1st February 2020 until the handover of the completed project to Waterford GAA.

Responsibilities:

- 1 Develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure good governance throughout the project life cycle.
- 2 Satisfy itself as to the competence and suitability of the Project Management leadership, contractors, and sub-contractors.
- 3 Review sources of funding. Ensure that funding sources and amounts are in place and committed to and that the project “size” is appropriate to the funds available. Ensure the avoidance of unsustainable debt.
- 4 Review overall budget and itemised project costs, satisfying itself that costs conform to norms for a project of this nature and are within the funding envelope available for the project.
- 5 Ensure that internal controls are in place to identify and manage risks to Waterford GAA in terms of procurement of goods and services, capital expenditure, extras and cost over-runs. Approve all certificates and invoices.
- 6 Review the overall project plan, drawings, and schedule. Propose modifications and cost savings as appropriate while ensuring that the Páirc an Bhreathnaigh finish will be a source of pride and identity for the GAA people of Waterford.
- 7 Liaise with appropriate personnel in Munster Council and Croke Park throughout the project.

Membership:

Eugene McKenna, Chairperson

Elaine Brazil

Kevin Ryan

Marian Walsh

Sean Michael O'Regan, Chairperson Waterford GAA

Pat Flynn, CEO Waterford GAA

The Oversight Team will have the power to co-opt an additional member and to seek input from people with relevant experience where required.

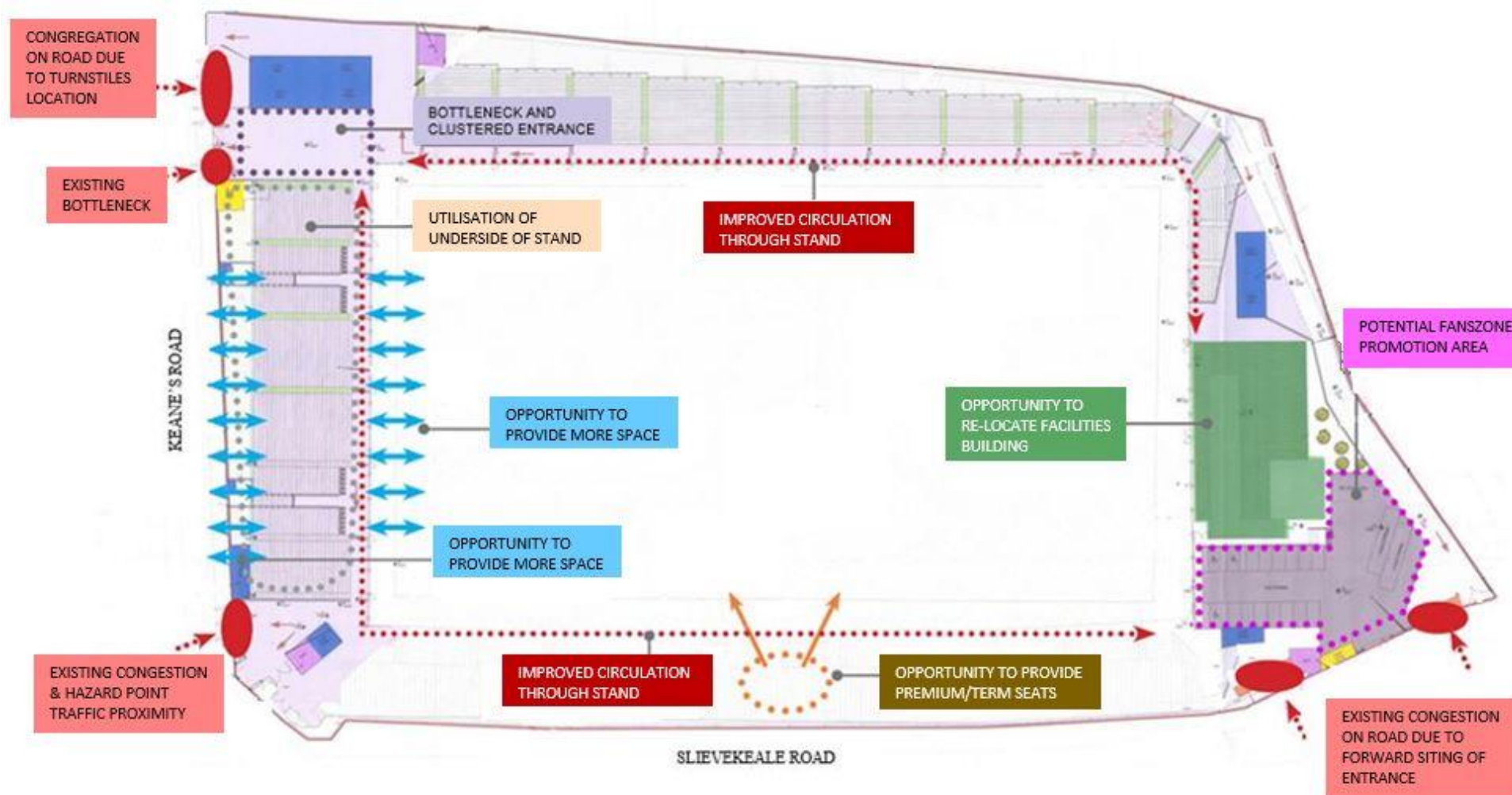
Meetings:

Meetings will be held monthly and more often as required.

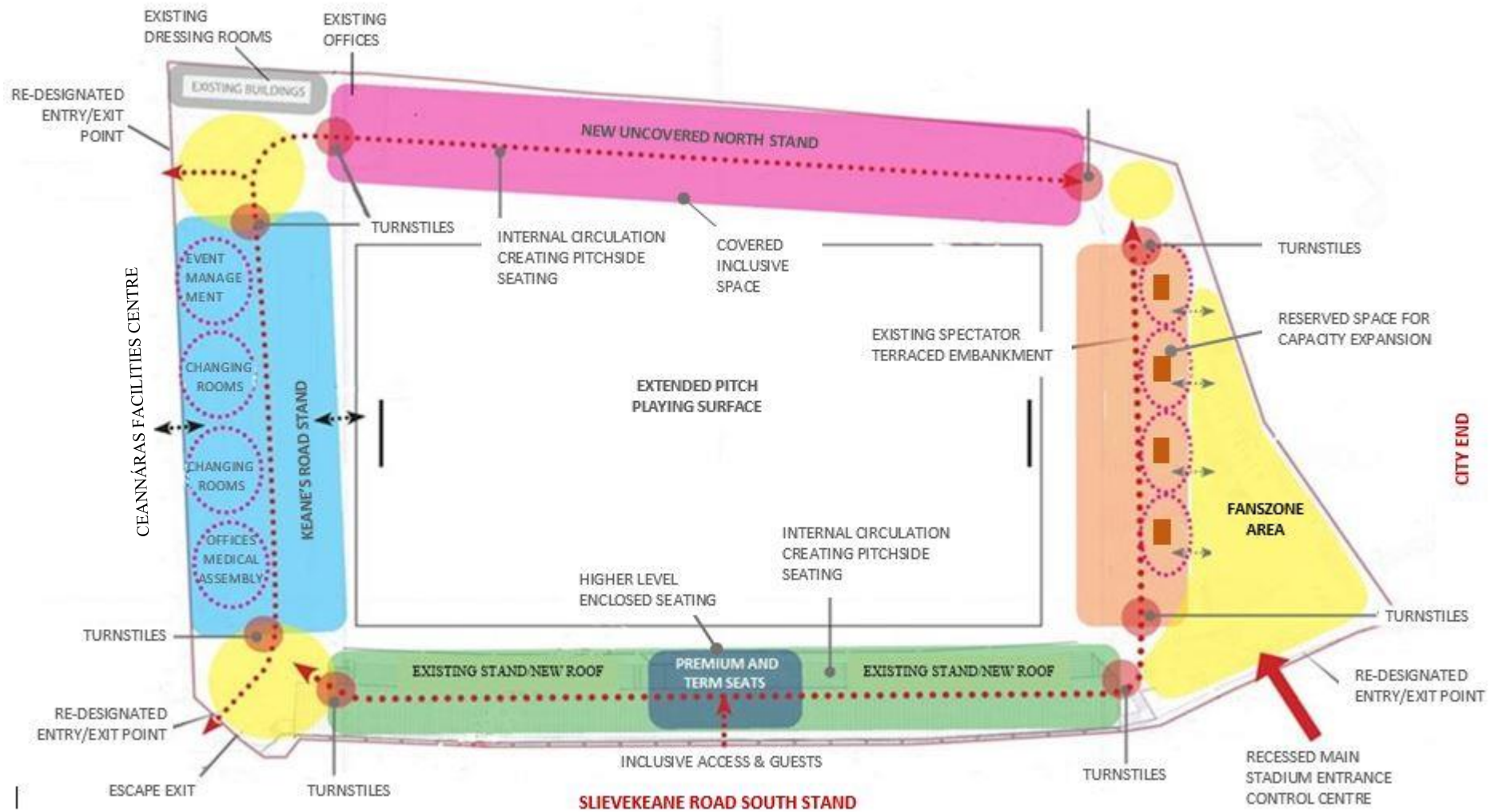
Secretarial services will be provided by Waterford GAA.

Appendix 2 Preliminary Concept Sketches

Opportunities & Limitations



Outline of Proposed Modifications



Appendix 3 Stadium Site Layout Plan – Planning granted 2018 (Horganlynch Consulting Engineers)

