



DBFL CONSULTING ENGINEERS



Laois County Council  
Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois

# Draft Portlaoise Local Transport Plan



# Contents

<b>Part A: Background Information and Option Development and Assessment</b>		
<b>Chapter 1</b>	Introduction	Part A - 1
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Portlaoise Today	Part A - 3
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Policy Context	Part A - 14
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Case Studies	Part A - 29
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Portlaoise Transport Objectives	Part A - 33
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Key Plan Influences	Part A - 34
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Pre-Draft Consultation Summary	Part A - 43
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Option Development and Assessment	Part A - 50
<b>Part B: The Strategy</b>		
<b>Chapter 9</b>	Active Travel Network	Part B - 1
<b>Chapter 10</b>	Junctions	Part B - 3
<b>Chapter 11</b>	Walking, Accessibility & the Public realm	Part B - 11
<b>Chapter 12</b>	Cycling	Part B - 21
<b>Chapter 13</b>	Permeability	Part B - 39
<b>Chapter 14</b>	Public Transport	Part B - 49
<b>Chapter 15</b>	Road Network	Part B - 59
<b>Chapter 16</b>	Parking Management	Part B - 71
<b>Chapter 17</b>	Supporting Measures	Part B - 88
<b>Part C: Strategy Outcomes and Implementation</b>		
<b>Chapter 18</b>	Transport Modelling Assessment and Outcomes	Part C - 1
<b>Chapter 19</b>	Implementation	Part C - 6
<b>Chapter 20</b>	Local Transport Plan Outcomes, Monitoring and Reporting	Part C - 13

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

DBFL Consulting Engineers Ltd. (DBFL) have been commissioned by Laois County Council (LCC) to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Portlaoise using Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA) methodology.

The LTP is intended to underpin the future development of Portlaoise and ensure that the assessment of transport demand and its associated impact plays a central role in informing future development. The LTP will provide a shift to sustainable modes based on the road user hierarchy and will set a framework for investment in transport infrastructure within Portlaoise.

The development of a LTP for Portlaoise will inform the delivery of the Portlaoise Regeneration Demonstration Project envisaged under the National Planning Framework. This project intends to show how the best quality, planning, urban design, and implementation can create rejuvenated towns.

## 1.2 ABTA Key Stages

The key stages of the ABTA process are set out as follows:

- Baseline Conditions & Policy Review
- Establish Context
- Option Development
- Option Assessment, Refinement and Optimisation (Sense Check the Proposals)

and

- Draft Portlaoise Local Transport Plan (this document)

The study culminates in the preparation of a final **Portlaoise Local Transport Plan**, which will set out in detail each part of the transport assessment process and present proposed transport interventions across all modes for each scenario evaluated, along with an associated implementation plan.

## 1.3 Scope of Study and Expected Outcome

The Scope of the Study was as follows:

1. Complete a **Baseline Assessment** of the Plan Area and the Surrounding Area
2. Establish the **Context** for the ABTA
3. Develop and Assess **Options**
4. **Refinement** and **Sensitivity Check**; and

5. **Finalisation of the ABTA Study** in conjunction with the statutory plans and processes

The Study approach to the Portlaoise ABTA process is consistent with that outlined by the National Transport Authority (**NTA**) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (**TII**) 'Area Based Transport Assessment Guidance Note' issued in December 2018 and *ABTA How to Guide: Guidance Document* (2021).

### 1.3.1 Supporting Documents

This report provides an overview of a series of supporting documents which together comprise the Portlaoise ABTA. These are as follows:

- Portlaoise Baseline Conditions and Policy Context Report
  - Baseline Accessibility Study
  - Collision Data Report
- Portlaoise Context Report
  - POWSCAR, ATOS Analysis and PTAL Analysis
  - Traffic Survey Report
- Proposed Modelling Approach Report
- Transport Modelling Report



## 1.4 Report Structure

The Report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction
- **Chapter 2:** Portlaoise Today
- **Chapter 3:** Policy Context
- **Chapter 4:** Case Studies
- **Chapter 5:** Portlaoise Transport Objectives
- **Chapter 6:** Key Plan Influences
- **Chapter 7:** Pre-Draft Public Consultation Summary
- **Chapter 8:** Active Travel Network
- **Chapter 9:** Junctions
- **Chapter 10:** Walking, Accessibility and the Public Realm
- **Chapter 11:** Cycling
- **Chapter 12:** Permeability
- **Chapter 13:** Public Transport
- **Chapter 14:** Road Network
- **Chapter 15:** Parking Management
- **Chapter 16:** Supporting Measures
- **Chapter 17:** Transport Modelling Assessment and Outcomes
- **Chapter 18:** Implementation
- **Chapter 19:** Local Transport Plan Outcomes, Monitoring and Reporting



# Part A

## Background Information



## 2 Portlaoise Today

### 2.1 Overview

This chapter provides a synopsis of the **Baseline Conditions Report** produced earlier in the ABTA process.

### 2.2 Geographic Context

Portlaoise is a fast-growing county town in Laois – the 11<sup>th</sup> most populated settlement in Ireland. With the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the northwest and the Knockacoller and Coolrain Bogs (both EU-designated Special Areas of Conservation) to the west, the surrounding hinterland is a lowland agricultural area.



Figure 2-1 Triogue Park. Source: DBFL.

There is little variation in the elevation with the exception of a rise to the northwest of the town, hills to the west and south, and the Portlaoise esker in the southeast.

The River Triogue is an important element of Portlaoise's amenity provision, and flows north through Portlaoise from its source in the Cullenagh hills, before joining the River Barrow as its tributary.

County Laois has strong linkages with the Greater Dublin Area in terms of education and employment. Portlaoise itself is situated 94km from Dublin City and has numerous commuters who travel to Dublin via rail, bus, and car. The **National Planning Framework (NPF)** has therefore identified the potential of Portlaoise town - due to its location at the convergence of motorways, national routes and rail infrastructure.

Portlaoise has a relatively compact urban form, which is characterised by a number of key assets. Its traditional Town Centre is made up of churches, leisure and community facilities. This historic core includes Main Street, the historic lanes extending south of Main Street, and Market Square.

The town went through a rapid expansion of housing areas and retail centres outside of

the town core during the early 2000s. As such, there is a noticeable comparison between the type of development that occurred in the historic core and that which took place in the surrounding ring roads and outlying parking areas.

The modern day Town Centre is now located to the south of James Fintan Lalor Avenue, with Laois Shopping Centre, Kyle Centre, Shaws Department Store and a cluster of other large retailers located in that area. James Fintan Lalor Avenue effectively severs the Historic Town Centre to the north, and the New Town Centre to the south.

### 2.3 Demographics

#### Population Density

According to the 2022 Census, Portlaoise has a **total population** of 23,494 people compared to the 2016 results of 22,050. This is an increase of 7% since 2016, and 17% since 2011 when the population was 20,145.

Portlaoise hosts two electoral districts (ED) - Urban and Rural. The population of the Urban ED has remained steady around just under 4,000 while the population of the Rural ED has grown from 14,646 in 2016 to 17,352 in 2022. The differences in Portlaoise's urban and rural population demonstrate that more



residents live outside of the town centre than within - a trend in need of mitigation which underscores the importance of the ongoing regeneration work in Portlaoise. The most densely populated areas are to the north of the town centre, where estate development has spurred from the Dublin Road and the N80.

The CSO 2022 Census results indicated that there is a growing population of persons with a **disability** in Portlaoise.

Approximately 21.5% of the total population identified as having some form of disability or

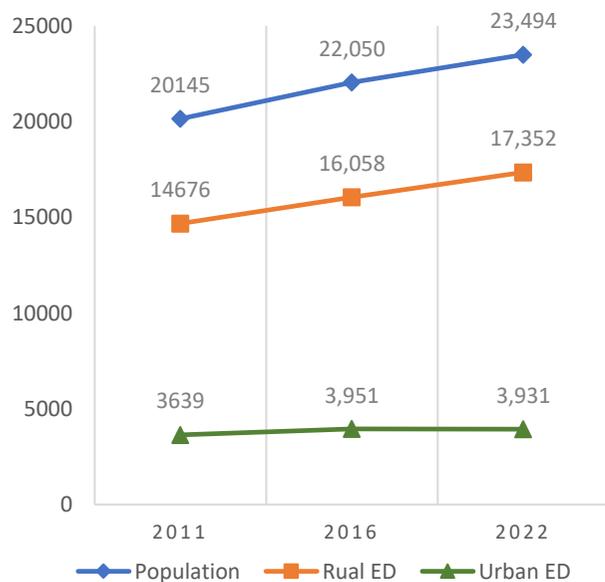


Figure 2-2 Population Trends from the 2011, 2016 and 2022 Census.

as experiencing at least one long-lasting condition or difficulty. This is a vital consideration to provide an equitable transport network accessible to all residents by the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan.

### Education and Employment

The **NPF** states that Portlaoise is one of the fastest growing towns in the State, but the population growth has not corresponded with a commensurate increase in employment in Portlaoise. The residential growth is primarily due to Portlaoise’s commuter-based employment patterns.

Despite this growth in residents commuting to employment, the jobs per workers ratio was 0.997 in 2016, indicating a relatively strong economy in comparison to other fast-growing towns. There was an 18% increase in resident workers from 2016 to 2022.

POPULATION AND RESIDENT WORKERS	2016	2022
Population	22,050	23,494
Resident Workers	8,438	10,032

Table 2-1 Population & Resident Workers in Portlaoise.

### Age

In 2016, the average age of residents in Portlaoise was 33.2 years old, making it the fifth-youngest large town in Ireland. In 2022, the average age has increased to 35.1, compared to the national average of 38.8. In 2022, Portlaoise is the seventh youngest town in Ireland with a population size over 10,000.

### Housing

Regarding the **housing** information registered in Census 2022, there is a 4.5% increase since 2016 with 7,794 households in 2022 compared to 7,457 households in 2016. The most predominant household type is a House/Bungalow, according for 91% in 2022 and 88% in 2016. In terms of people, 91% of the population in 2016 and 93% of the population lives in House/Bungalows.

### 2.4 Car Ownership

According to the 2022 Census, the total number of residential cars in Portlaoise is 7,293 which indicates a decrease of 2% (159) from 7,452 in 2016, despite the growing number of people and households in the Town. 14% of households do not own a car as of 2022.



It is noted that the percentage of households with 1 motor car remains the same at 14% in 2016 and 2022, whilst the percentage of households with 2 motor cars increased from 30% in 2016 to 34% in 2022.

Significant percentages of households living in and near the town centre do not have access to a motor car (18% to 50%). Census Small Areas with a higher percentage of households (30%-50%) with no car are concentrated within the town centre.

The residential areas to the immediate north east of the centre along Borris Road share the same figure – 30-50% with no car – therefore it is vital that an equitable transport network is provided for these residents. Furthermore, results show that areas to the north of the railway line along Mountmellick Road also have a high percentage of homes without a car.

Many of these estates are within a 15-minute walk (Newpark, Lakeglen) or 25-minute (Rossvale) walk to Main Street. Therefore, it is essential that reliable public transport, safe cycling infrastructure and continuous and high-quality footpaths are provided to allow residents to access services in the town centre.

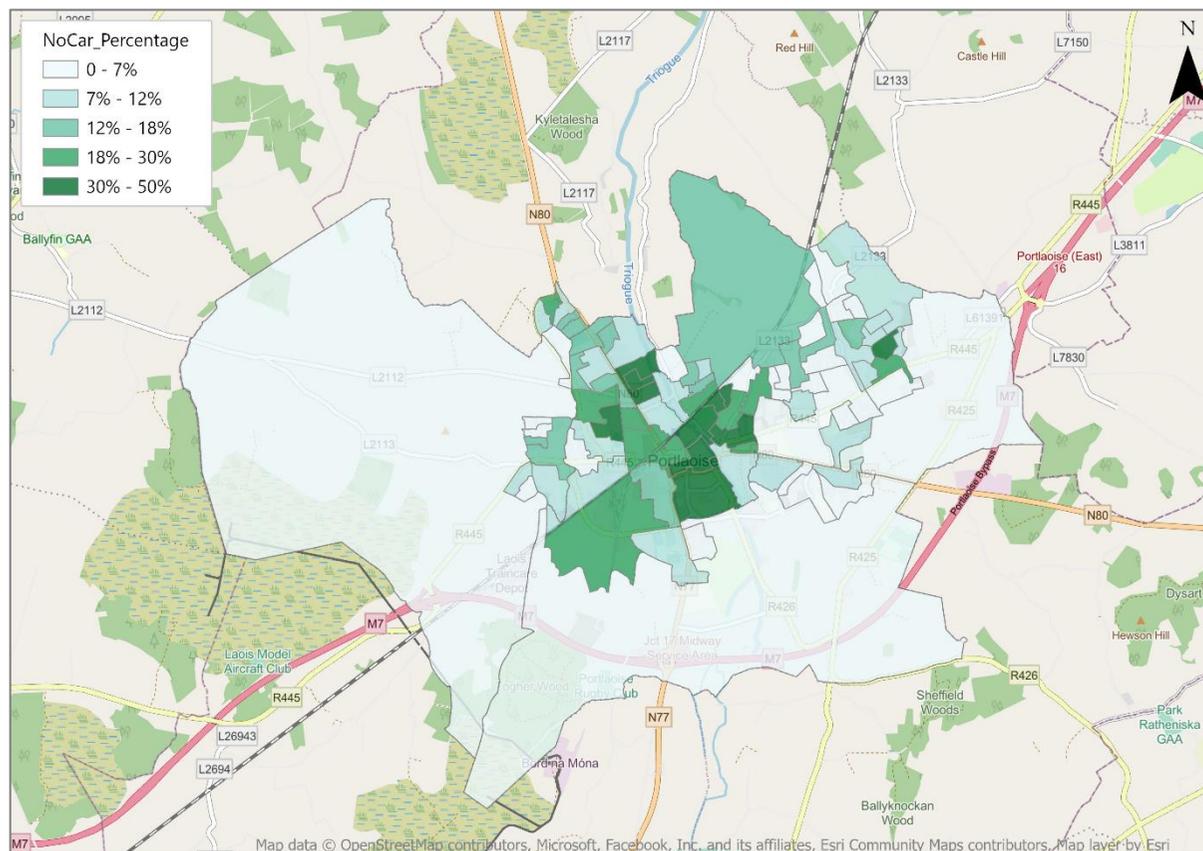


Figure 2-3 Percentage Distribution of Households with No Car in Portlaoise in 2022. Data Source: CSO.



## 2.5 Modal Split

### Commuting Patterns

The 2022 Census shows that 9970 work trips and 6542 school/college/childcare trips are generated in the wider Portlaoise area. The percentage of those who use cars as their mode decreased from 67% in 2016 to 62% in 2022

### Work Trips Modal Split

The results for the modal split for trips to work originating in Portlaoise is summarised as follows:

- The modal split highlights how dependent residents are on car travel in Portlaoise with 69% of all trips by car (drivers and passengers).
- Walking is the second most popular mode, with 8% of people travelling to work on foot. This is a 1% decrease from 2016 figures.
- Trips by bus (2%) and bike (2%) account for only 4% in total, with 3% taking the train, DART or Luas.

### Education Trips Modal Split

The results from the assessment of modal split for trips to education originating in Portlaoise is summarised as follows:

- The modal split highlights how dependent residents are travelling to school or college by car, with 52% of all trips by car (drivers and passengers).
- In terms of active travel modes, walking accounts for 18% of trips. Trips by bike increased from 1% to 4% between 2016 and 2022.

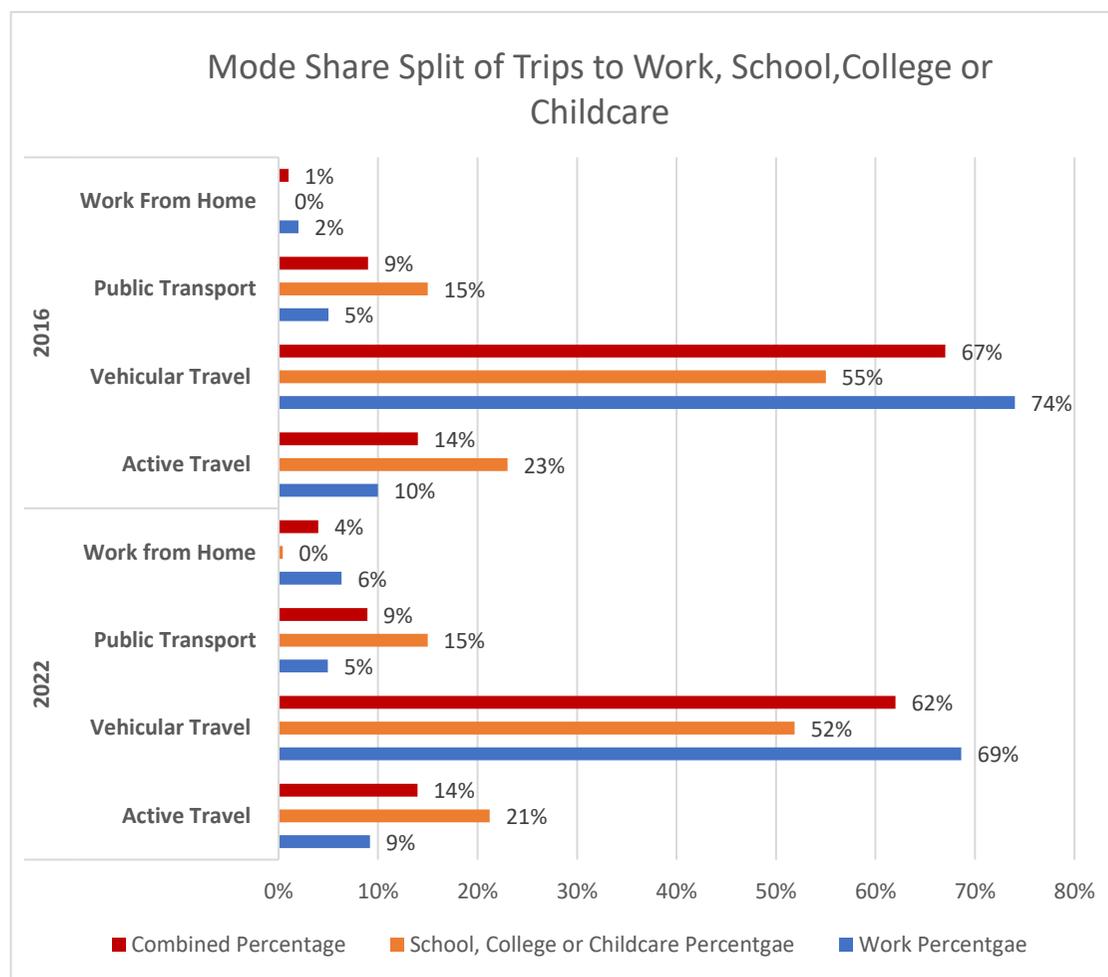
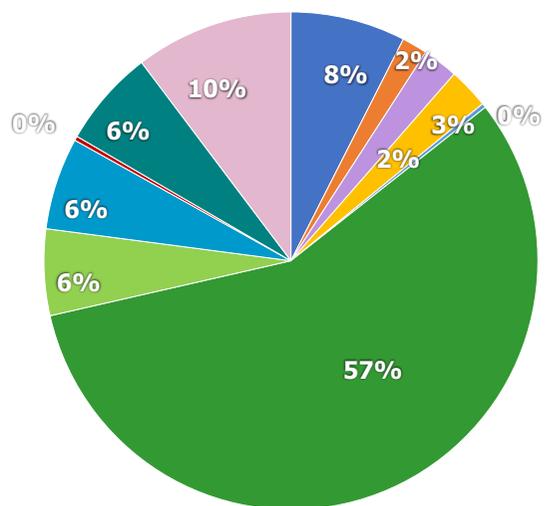


Figure 2-4 Mode Share Split of Trips to School, Work or College in 2016 and 2022. Data Source: CSO.

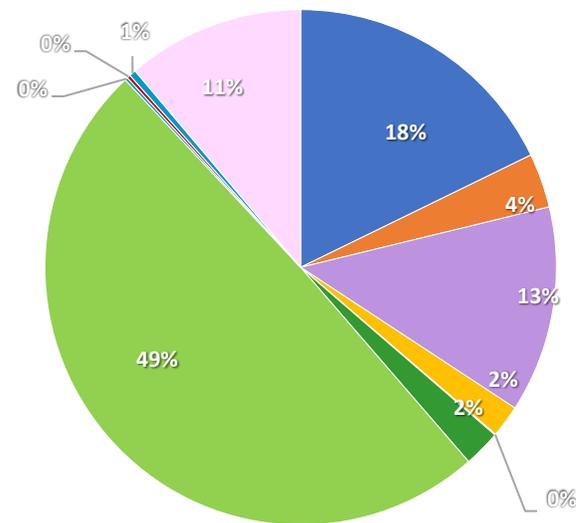


**Trips to Work by Mode in 2022**



- On Foot
- Bus, minibus or coach
- Motorcycle or scooter
- Car passenger
- Other (incl. lorry)
- Not stated
- Bicycle
- Train, DART or LUAS
- Car Driver
- Van
- Work mainly at or from home

**Trips to Education by Mode in 2022**



- On Foot
- Bus, minibus or coach
- Motorcycle or scooter
- Car passenger
- Other (incl. lorry)
- Not stated
- Bicycle
- Train, DART or LUAS
- Car Driver
- Van
- Work mainly at or from home

Figure 2-5 (left) Trips to Work by Mode in 2022 and (right) Trips to Education by Mode in 2022. Source: CSO.



## 2.6 Exiting Transport Network

### 2.6.1 Pedestrian Network

Despite recent improvements to the pedestrian environment – notably at Main Street and Fitzmaurice Place – much of the public realm throughout the Study Area can be characterised as being overly car-dominated. Street clutter, including pedestrian guardrails, bollards and signage, present barriers to pedestrian movement and detract from the sense of place.

Formal crossing points are often off desire lines. Typical junction radii and urban roundabouts have been configured to prioritise private cars rather pedestrians. Allocation of road space is often inconsistent with the overarching objectives of the **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets**.

The current configuration of the James Fintan Lalor Avenue creates community severance and is a barrier to place-making and active travel. Future bus network plans (discussed in **Chapter 14 – Public Transport**) will see a greater volume of buses along James Fintan Lalor Ave. Careful consideration of the siting of bus stops and kerbside infrastructure will be needed to ensure that James Fintan Lalor Ave. can both fulfil its role in the bus network

and provide a welcoming pedestrian environment will be needed.

The retail parks to the south of Main Street tell a similar story of prioritisation of the car, with expansive surface car parking areas, service roads, lack of safe crossing areas and big-box retail stores set-back from natural building lines disincentivising pedestrian movement.

Outside of the key commercial area, footpaths are often discontinuous on key approach roads, and pedestrian priority over local junctions is lacking.

Pedestrian and cycling links to the Portlaoise Train Station are poor. There are narrow footpaths obstructed by utility poles and parked cars along Railway Street and Station Road. Improvements to the accessibility of the Railway Station are required to develop a multi-modal transport hub.

### 2.6.2 Cycle Network

At present, little dedicated cycle infrastructure exists in Portlaoise. There are dedicated cycle lanes on the Dublin Road, beginning 0.17km after the roundabout exit onto Dublin Rd. The cycle lanes continue for 1.25 km before terminating at the entrance to the Grenville estate.

A 375m segregated shared cycling and pedestrian space follows the Southern Circular Road, running from the junction between the Southern Circular Road and the R426 to a connection with the recently opened first portion of the Triogue Way. From this connection, the cycleway bookends both sides of the road, and follows the Southern Circular Road up to the junction between the Southern Circular Road and Summerhill Lane for 900m. Past the roundabout connecting the Southern Circular Road and the Stradbally Road N80, the cycleway resumes briefly before terminating outside the Kolbe Special School.

The Triogue Way presently connects the Southern Circular Road to the People's Park. It also provides connection to a laneway which connects to the Stradbally Road portion of the N80.

### 2.6.3 Bus Network

Portlaoise is relatively well served by regional buses yet lacks a dedicated town bus service. Most bus services calling at Portlaoise are private services licensed by the National Transport Authority that connect Portlaoise to other environs. There is neither a central point for transfer between services in Portlaoise, nor transparent information





Figure 2-6 DRT Routes served in County Laois. Portlaoise is circled in blue. Source: NTA.

around the services provided and the potential connections available due to the decentralised nature of publicly operated bus services.

The most frequent inter-urban service is Route 726, served by Big Green Bus, to the Red Cow Luas stop and Dublin Airport. It makes 24 trips daily on an hourly schedule.

After the 726 Bus, no. 830 is the next most frequent service. Operated by Slieve Bloom Coach Tours, it makes 7 trips from Portlaoise to Tullamore per day Monday to Friday (5 trips on Saturday) and 5 trips from Tullamore to Portlaoise from Monday to Saturday.

Route 73 is a Public Service Obligation funded route operated by Bus Eireann between Waterford and Athlone via Portlaoise that runs once or twice a day (depending on the day of the week).

Local Link Services provide connectivity 7 days a week from Portlaoise to Birr, Roscrea, and Thurles. Additional destinations, including Athlone TUS, Tullamore LOETB and Mount Lucas Training Centre, are served by Demand Responsive Transit routes (DRT) that offer less frequent service based on demand (see **Figure 2-6**).

The first Local Link service often runs around 7am, the last is often around 8pm or 10pm, making it difficult for people with early morning or late evening travel needs to use the bus service to reach their destinations.

### 2.6.4 Rail Network

Portlaoise Railway Station is strategically located 350m north of the town centre. It is the busiest county town railway station in the Midlands Region with up to 36 trains to Dublin and 38 trains from Dublin per day. The number of trains stopping daily was recently increased in December 2023. Weekday morning service begins at 5.33am for trains to Dublin and 7.40am for trains to Cork and

Limerick. The last train weekday departs at 9.40pm for Cork and 10.30pm for Dublin.

For both the bus and rail networks, the deficits in the pedestrian and cycling facilities within Portlaoise diminish the useability of the inter-urban bus services and high-frequency rail services from Portlaoise. The lack of first and last mile active travel connections makes it difficult for people to access public transport, decreasing the attractiveness of public transport.

RAIL SERVICES	DIRECTION
Portlaoise / Limerick Service	Dublin – Limerick; Limerick – Dublin
Cork / Mallow Service	Dublin – Cork; Cork – Dublin
Dublin Commuter Service	Dublin – Portlaoise; Portlaoise – Dublin

Table 2-2 Rail Services that call at Portlaoise Railway Station.

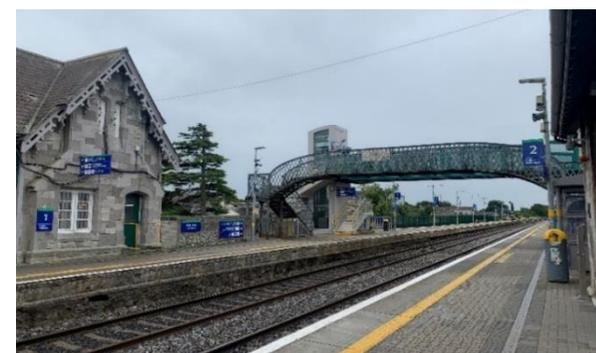


Figure 2-7 Portlaoise Railway Station in 2023. Source: DBFL.



### 2.6.5 Road Network

Portlaoise’s historical legacy as a crossroads resulted in the town’s infrastructural development of numerous routes in and out of the settlement. While Portlaoise’s development has historically occurred along the R445’s axis due to the connection between Dublin, Portlaoise, and Limerick, other major roadways pass through Portlaoise linking Portlaoise to Tipperary and Kilworth (R425), as well as Athy and Daingean (N80).

The Cork-Dublin rail line was completed in 1844 and enabled Portlaoise’s industrialisation, while the completion of the M7 Motorway has enabled Portlaoise’s ongoing growth as a distribution and logistics centre. Collectively, these facilities have resulted in a radial development pattern with most development occurring outside of the traditional town centre.

In conjunction with the creation of the M7 and connecting relief roads, Portlaoise’s roadway network has become a semi-hub-and-spoke configuration oriented towards the south, which consequentially incentivises travel away from Portlaoise’s historical town centre.

Most residential growth has occurred to the northeast, east, and southeast of the historic town centre. Retail development within Laois Shopping Centre and Portlaoise Retail Park concentrates retail development south of the town centre, while industrial development has occurred exclusively to the town’s southwest between the Cork-Dublin rail line and Iarnród Éireann’s permanent way work.

While Portlaoise is connected by historic routes and the busiest rail line in the country, the 20<sup>th</sup> century pattern of greenfield development and the construction of the motorway has ultimately transformed the way in which the town is approached, reflecting and affirming modern car-based travel habits and patterns.

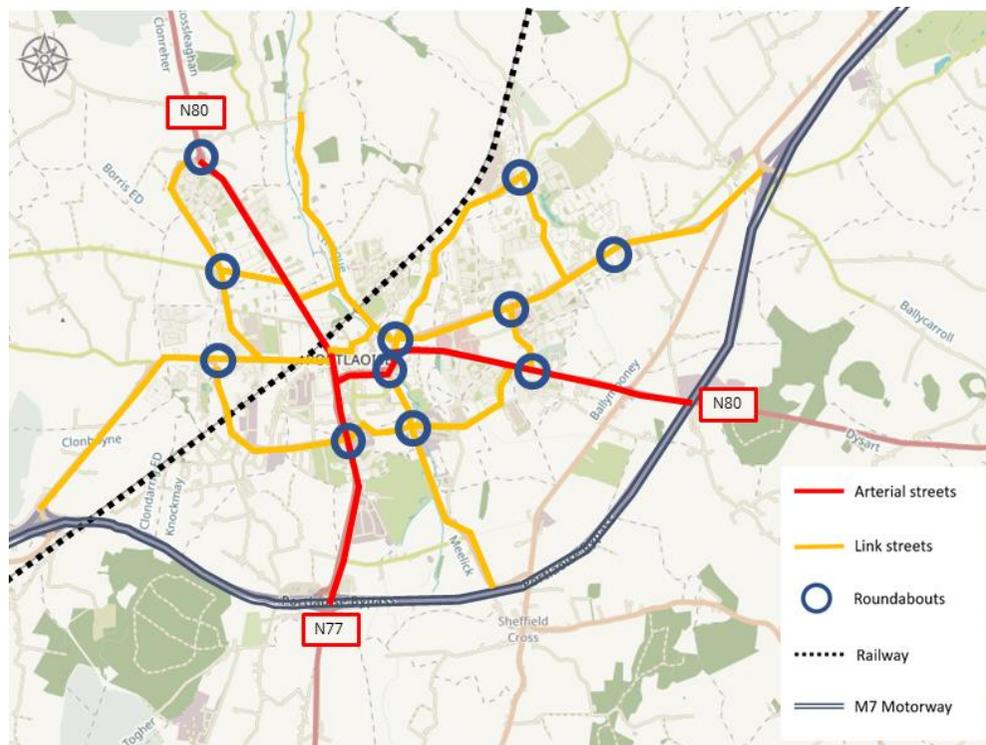


Figure 2-8 DMURS Road Hierarchy of Portlaoise with roundabouts on arterial and link streets noted and National Road Network (N80, N77 and M7 Motorway) indicated. Source: DBFL.



## 2.7 Healthy Streets™ Check

The Healthy Streets Approach™ puts people and their health at the centre of decisions about how we design, manage and use public spaces. Developed by Lucy Saunders, the approach is based on 10 indicators of a Healthy Street™ which focus on the experience of the people using the street.

This tool measures some of the most important factors in providing a healthy environment for people walking, cycling or taking public transport etc. Low scores on the indicators means that the street has been designed to prioritise the through-movement of vehicles, often to the disadvantage of people walking, cycling and spending time on the street.

A virtual Healthy Streets™ Check (loosely based on Lucy Saunders’ original concept) was undertaken for Main Street in Portlaoise with a group of post-graduate planning students who had varying degrees of familiarity with Portlaoise. The results can be seen in the figures below. The overall result for Main Street was a score of **5 out of 20**.

This low score indicates that despite its key function as a place for people to socialise, work, shop and access essential services, Main Street has been designed primarily for the through-movement of cars and other vehicles.

The score suggests that the street could be more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly, indicating the potential for outdoor eating areas and public benches to enhance placemaking, and additional greenery and planting down the length of the street.

To make the street safer for all, the score suggests that a reduction in through-traffic is necessary, as well as new and safer pedestrian crossings, more places for shade and shelter, less clutter on the footpaths and better street lighting.

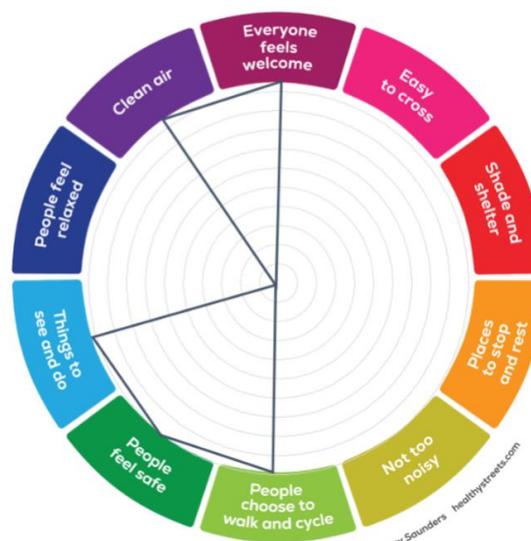


Figure 2-9 Results from the Healthy Streets Check™ of Main Street, Portlaoise depicted on the Healthy Streets Tool™.

## Healthy Streets Score

Healthy Streets Score	Existing Layout Score	Reasoning
Everyone feels welcome	1	Even and smooth path; Too much street clutter along the footpath - difficult for people with different mobility needs
Easy to cross	0	No pedestrian crossings; clutter such as guardrails constrains pedestrians crossing; too many cars to cross safely
Shade and shelter	0	Not enough tree canopies or awnings
Places to stop and rest	0	Not enough public benches or outdoor seating areas
Not too noisy	0	Noise from traffic close to pedestrians
People choose to walk and cycle	1	Lack of Safety; No shared space - score of 0 for cycling, score of 1 for walking
People feel safe	1	Lack of street lights - dark at night; bollards and other street clutter; traffic and cars parking
Things to see and do	1	Shops offer things to do; street is too long without breaks / seating
People feel relaxed	0	No - too long of a street, not age friendly; lack of lighting; too many cars
Clean air	1	More SuDS, planters, greenery needed to counteract the traffic pollution; too many cars
<b>Total score</b>	<b>5 out of 20</b>	

Figure 2-10 Results from the Healthy Streets Check™ of Main Street, Portlaoise.



## 2.8 Collision Analysis

A Collision Analysis was carried out using the Road Safety Authority (RSA) website. The complete analysis is set out in the **Collision Data Analysis Report**. There was no data available regarding mode, date, or time for the collisions in the Study Area.

The RSA database registered a total of **96 collisions** within the Portlaoise Study Area over the 2016 – 2020 period. Of these, 86.5% were classed as being non-Serious and 13.5% were Serious, with no fatalities registered. There are key collision clusters identified in the main **arterial and link roads within Portlaoise**, as well as the **connector routes**. There are noticeable clusters of collisions along the N80 and R445.

**Speed limits** in Portlaoise appear to be an important factor in terms of collisions registered. 91.67% of the total occurred in streets where the speed limit is 50km/h or higher. Only 8.33% of the collisions occurred where it is 30 km/h. See **Chapter 10 – Junctions** for more details on collisions at or near junctions.

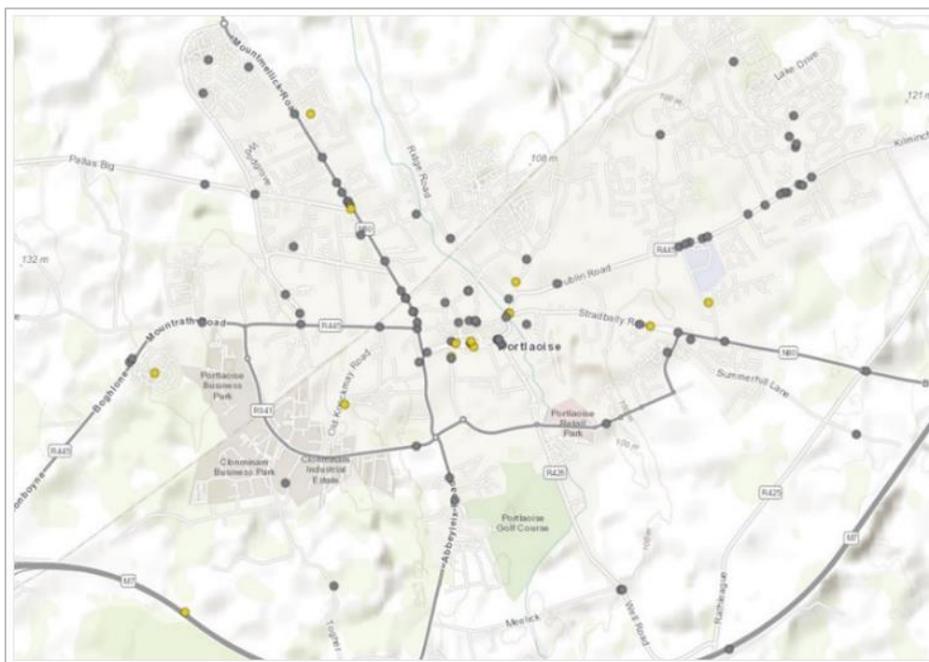


Figure 2-11 Collisions in Portlaoise from 2016 to 2020. Source: RSA.

## 2.9 Car Parking

At present, there is extensive provision of on-street parking within the Town Centre and its environs as well as numerous public and private off-street car parks. *Portlaoise 2040* reports that there are roughly 3,600 car parking spaces in the town centre.

The three public off-street car parks have a capacity of 332 spaces, and the on-street parking areas have a capacity of 545 spaces. Laois Shopping Centre alone is reported as having 1,200 available spots with up to 3 hours free parking.



Figure 2-12 Car park outside Portlaoise Train Station. Source: DBFL.

## 2.10 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (S.W.O.C) Analysis.

### Strengths

- Portlaoise is recognised by the RSES as part of a strong network of county and market towns that have capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining and to attract high quality knowledge-based employment, serving a wider catchment area as well as their resident populations.
- Strong policy basis for compact growth and prioritisation of sustainable transport.
- Many local policy frameworks for the town, including *Portlaoise 2040* (with URDF funding) and J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan.
- *Portlaoise 2040* scheme and broader town centre renewal identified as NPF demonstration project.
- Active and engaged Portlaoise Town Team with stakeholders from Laois County Council, local businesses, and Tidy Towns who work to showcase the best of Portlaoise and identify ways of making it a better place to live and do business in, including strong support for Active and Sustainable Travel.
- Direct rail connectivity to Dublin, Cork, and Limerick, with a centrally located rail station.
- Robust Local Link offering, connecting Portlaoise to its hinterland.
- Excellent road connections; access to M7 motorway.
- Historic Town Core designated an Architectural Conservation Area.

### Opportunities

- Portlaoise is identified by RSES as one of the settlements for which a Local Transport Plan will be made.
- Opportunity to dramatically increase sustainable transport mode share for short journeys (<5km) through compact development and improving pedestrian and cycle network and other forms of micro-mobility.
- 22% of journeys to school are currently on foot while 52% are made by car. This indicates potential to further increase mode share of travel to school by active modes with targeted Safe Routes to School interventions and improvements.
- Opportunity to significantly transform Portlaoise’s public realm to make a more attractive, vibrant and liveable town centre. Status as demonstration project allows for best-in-class transformation.
- Considerable tourism potential, particularly along historic Main Street corridor, laneways and fully completed Triogue Way. Completion of cycle network may unlock further tourism potential.
- Opportunity for car-free and low car developments in line with the NPF and Sustainable Housing Guidelines.

### Weaknesses

- Community severance created by the road and rail network.
- Lack of formal transport hub to facilitate interchange between bus and rail services.
- Overall poor-quality environment for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the Study Area.
- Car-dominated town centre with on-street parking and a legacy of highways engineering.
- Areas intended for pedestrian use are subject to excessive street clutter, barriers across desire lines, and lack of safe crossings.
- Provision of amenities in Portlaoise have not kept pace with the rate of population growth.
- Poor wayfinding and legibility between different areas of the town.

### Challenges

- A change in the economic outlook and political climate leading to uncertainty about required capital infrastructure funding and private investment.
- High car dependency and usage will be maintained and assumed for future development, as in the modal share targets for the Togher Masterplan.
- Acknowledged “donut effect” within Portlaoise town centre.
- A ‘Business as Usual’ approach to land use, transport planning, sustainable transport provision and parking policy.
- If opportunities to rationalise parking provision are not taken, issues around congestion and car dependency are likely to worsen as population grows.



### 3 Policy Context

This Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out Laois County Council’s transport policies and investment objectives for Portlaoise over the short, medium, and long-term, and will correspond with the strategic planning and transport framework established by National, Regional and Local plans, policies and guidelines.

A wide breadth of policy has been reviewed relating to land use and transport in Portlaoise, as well as a number of design guides, to inform the preparation of this LTP. A detailed review of these can be found in the *Baseline Conditions and Policy Context Report*. A synopsis of policy is outlined in the following pages.

#### 3.1 National Level Land Use and Transportation Planning Policy and Design Standards

##### Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF)

The **NPF** is a strategic development framework that sets out the long-term vision for the future growth and spatial development of Ireland up to 2040. The NPF is underpinned by a set of National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), which are translated by supporting policies at sectoral, regional and local level. *NSO 1 Compact Growth*, *NSO 4 Sustainable Mobility*, and *NSO 7 Enhanced Amenities and Heritage* are the most relevant to Portlaoise.

The NPF acknowledges Portlaoise as a **Regeneration and Development Demonstration Project**. Portlaoise Town Centre Regeneration will be initiated as a demonstration project of a community and locally-led urban design and renewal initiative, which will create and deliver a new vision for the centre of Portlaoise, and show how the best quality planning, urban design, and implementation can create rejuvenated towns. This Portlaoise Local Transport Plan is one of the many pieces that will contribute to this broader endeavour.

##### National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)

The **NIFTI** is the strategic framework for future investment decision making in transport

#### National Policy and Guidance



#### Regional Policy



#### International Best Practice



#### Local Policy and Guidance



and has been developed to guide the development of transport networks in Ireland.

NIFTI establishes four Investment Priorities: *Decarbonisation, Protection and Renewal, Mobility of People and Goods in Urban Areas, and Enhanced Regional and Rural Connectivity.* The four NIFTI Investment Priorities are supplemented by Modal and Intervention Hierarchies.

The Modal Hierarchy puts emphasis on sustainable modes first, such as active travel, which is followed by public transport investments, and finally private transport. This is aimed at ensuring travel is undertaken in the most sustainable way and encouraging a modal shift. The NIFTI's four-category intervention hierarchy should be used to inform the intervention decisions that are made to encourage this shift.

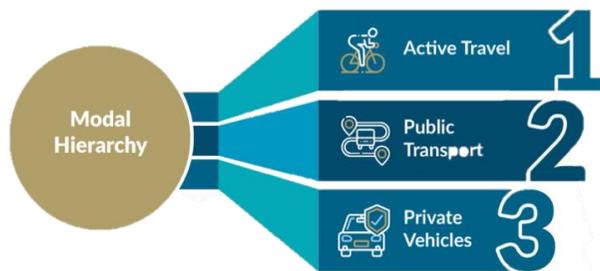


Figure 3-1 NIFTI Modal Hierarchy.

### Climate Action Plan 2023

The **Climate Action Plan 2023** sets out a major programme for change to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. The proposals outlined in the Plan are aimed at achieving a net zero carbon energy system within Ireland and it is envisaged that these proposals will also have associated positive economic and societal advantages. These benefits include cleaner air, better public health and a more sustainable economy.

Ireland's transport system plays a critical role in realising the ambitious targets of the Plan. High-quality public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure must be provided in order to reduce reliance on private cars, and to alleviate congestion caused by motorised vehicles.

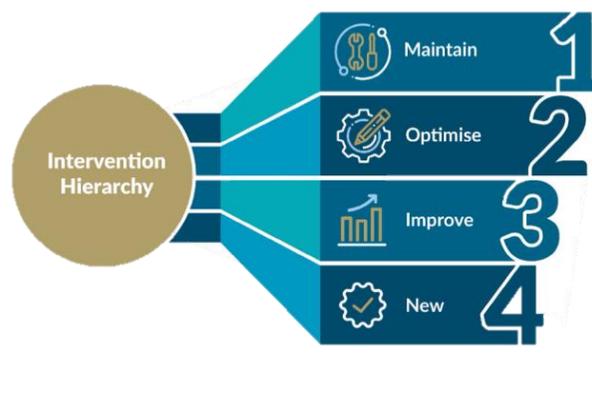


Figure 3-2 NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy.

Key to this are policies to reduce transport emissions by improving our land use planning and adopting the *Avoid-Shift-Improve Approach* – i.e., first avoid the need for travel, second shift to public transport, walking and cycling, and finally improve the energy efficiency of vehicles.

The Plan makes a commitment to delivering an additional 500,000 public transport and active travel journeys daily by 2030. The measures recommended in this LTP will help support the Climate Action Plan's target of walking, cycling and public transport accounting for 50% of trips across Ireland by 2030, by identifying a transport network and other interventions that prioritise these modes and give them an advantage over the private car.

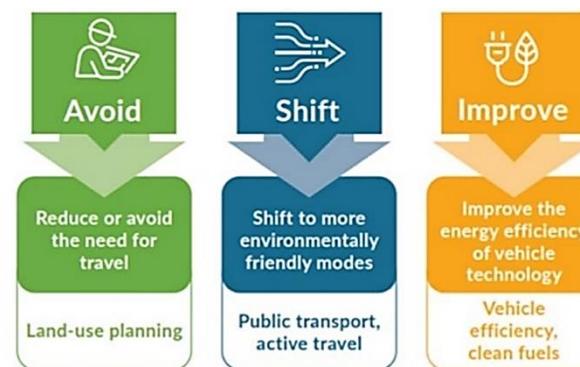


Figure 3-3 The Avoid Shift Improve Approach - Climate Action Plan 2023.



## National Sustainable Mobility Policy

The **National Sustainable Mobility Policy** is a strategic framework for 2030 for active travel and public transport journeys, to help Ireland meet its climate action obligations by 2030. The Policy aims to support a modal shift through infrastructure and service improvements, as well as demand management and behavioural change measures.

The Policy emphasises the need to rebalance transport movement in our urban centres away from the private car, and towards active travel and public transport through the reallocation of space and priority at junctions.

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy is guided by three key principles and 10 high-level goals (see Table 3-1).

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy is accompanied by the National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan 2022-2025 that includes the development and implementation of improved town bus services in Portlaoise as Core Action 34.

PRINCIPLES	GOALS
Safe and Green Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve mobility safety.</li> <li>2. Decarbonise public transport.</li> <li>3. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in metropolitan areas.</li> <li>4. Expand availability of sustainable mobility in regional and rural areas.</li> <li>5. Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car.</li> </ol>
People Focused Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all.</li> <li>7. Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model.</li> <li>8. Promote sustainable mobility through research and citizen engagement.</li> </ol>
Better Integrated Mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Better integrate land use and transport planning at all levels.</li> <li>10. Promote smart and integrated mobility through innovative technologies and development of appropriate regulation.</li> </ol>

Table 3-1 Principles and Goals of the National Sustainable Mobility Policy.

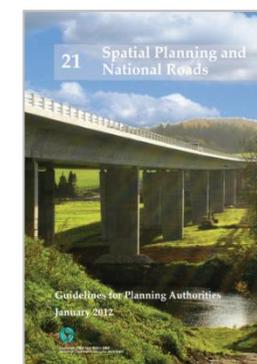
**Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities**  
**Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities**, issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG), set out planning policy considerations relating to development that affects National Primary and Secondary roads outside the 50-

60 kph speed limit zones for cities, towns and villages.

National roads play a key role within Ireland's overall transport system, and in the country's economic, social and physical development. The primary role of the national road network is to provide strategic transport links between the main centres of population and employment, including key international gateways such as the main ports and airports, and to provide access between all regions.

The guidelines charge local authorities to develop sustainable and complementary local transport strategies that cater for the requirements of local developments, as well as protecting the strategic function of the national road network.

The Local Transport Plan complements these guidelines by seeking to protect the capacity and strategic function of the national road network in the study area (N77, N80 and M7). National roads carry long-distance and



strategic traffic; short trips on national roads and motorways are to be avoided.

### NTA Mission and Objectives

NTA's vision, mission and relevant priorities and objectives as set out in the NTA Statement of Strategy 2023-2025 is to "connect Ireland's people and places, by providing sustainable transport infrastructure and services as well as working to reduce transport demand, all helping to lower carbon emissions." In order to deliver this vision, the NTA will:

- Support initiatives in the area of climate action including the ongoing transition of the public transport fleet to zero emissions.
- Continue to promote equality, prevent discrimination and to protect the human rights of our employees, customers and service users.
- Lead transport planning in our cities and delivering the BusConnects networks of services.
- Support its partners to deliver Metrolink, DART+ and active travel nationwide.

### Town Centre First Policy

This policy aims to support the vitality and viability of Irish towns, based on the principle that town centres should be the primary

locations for a range of activities, such as retail, services, housing, culture, and recreation.

The policy approach provides a framework for planning, investment, and collaboration to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of town centres. It also identifies the benefits and challenges of implementing Town Centre First and outlines the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders.

### Safe Routes to School Design Guide

The SRTS design guide is a planning document developed in partnership with the NTA and Green-Schools in 2020 as a response to the need to support schools to increase walking and cycling to school. The guide aims to provide technical guidance on design principles and considerations that will enable Local Authorities, in conjunction with Green-Schools, to create safer, calmer, more attractive routes to school and front of school environments. The guide provides planners and designers with a set of design concepts and ideas, and examples of schemes that have successfully enhanced sustainable access to school.



Figure 3-4 Front of School Zone. Source: Safe Routes to School Design Guide.

### Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)

The **DMURS** provides guidance relating to the design of urban roads and streets, and proposes a more place-based/integrated approach to road and street design. The following four core principles are promoted within the Manual:

**Connected Networks:** To support the creation of integrated street networks which promote higher levels of permeability and legibility for all users, and with emphasis on more sustainable forms of transport

**Multi-Functional Streets:** The promotion of multi-functional, place-based streets that balance the needs of all users within a self-regulating environment.



**Pedestrian Focus:** The quality of the street is measured by the quality of the environment user hierarchy with the needs of the pedestrian considered first.

**Multi-disciplinary Approach:** Greater communication and co-operation between design professionals through the promotion of a plan-led, multidisciplinary approach to design.

The document encourages more sustainable travel patterns and safer streets by proposing a hierarchy of road users. This hierarchy places pedestrians at the top, indicating that walking is the most sustainable form of transport and recognising that almost all journeys start and end on foot.

### TII Publications

There are several TII assets within the Study Area:

- Mountmellick Road (N80)
- Coote Street (N80)
- James Fintan Lalor Avenue (N80)
- Stradbally Road (N80)
- Abbeyleix Road (N77)

The LTP is mindful of the requirement to safeguard the strategic function of the National Road Network and comply with TII

Publications (Standards) and TII Publications (Technical), including the following:

- Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads (TII, 2021, DN-GEO-03084)
- Geometric Design of Junctions (priority junctions, direct accesses, roundabouts, grade separated and compact grade separated junctions) (TII, 2023, DN-GEO-03060)
- National Roads – Active Travel Planning (TII, 2021, PE-PMG-02045)
- NGS Circular No. 2 of 2022 re. Application of Guidelines and Standards in relation to works on Public Roads in Ireland (2022)

### Permeability Best Practice Guide

This document from the NTA provides guidance on how to address demand for walking and cycling that is not being met due to severance being designed into the local environment. The document details how permeability between homes, shops, schools, workplaces, public transport and other community services can be increased by the



Figure 3-5 Impermeable Neighbourhood vs Filtered Permeability. Source: NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide.

retention and creation of linkages within the existing urban environment.

The Guide promotes the establishment of modal choice in existing built-up areas, giving people the option to walk or cycle if they wish to do so. It encourages filtered permeability measures to give pedestrians and cyclists an advantage over the private car, and to create more people-friendly neighbourhoods.

### Cycle Design Manual (CDM)

The **CDM** (September 2023) is a national guidance document from the NTA that details the principles of designing safe off-road and on-road cycle facilities for both urban and rural areas. The CDM supersedes the **National Cycle Manual**, which has guided the design of cycle infrastructure in Ireland over the last decade, helping set the



foundations for normalising cycling as a regular mode of transport in Ireland.

The new manual puts more emphasis on recommendations focusing on segregating cyclists from traffic where speeds and volumes make roads unsuitable for sharing. It also includes several new types of infrastructure which are commonly used in other countries, and which will now become an option for Ireland including protected junctions, Dutch style cycle-friendly roundabouts, and parallel crossings.

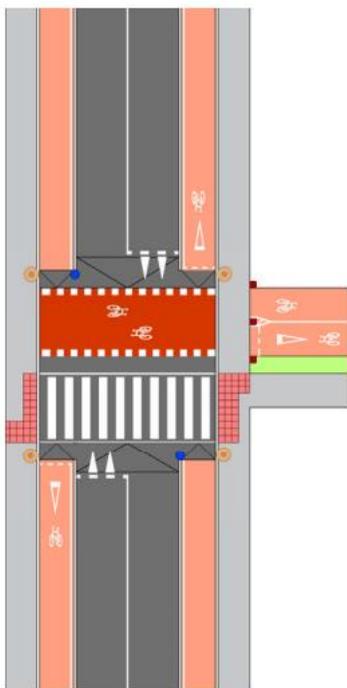


Figure 3-6 Example of a parallel crossing from the Cycle Design Manual. Source: NTA.

## 5 MAIN REQUIREMENTS FOR CYCLE-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE

### I. Safety

**Actual Safety** - Cycle facilities should be designed so that they are safe for people of all ages and abilities to use.

**Perceived Safety** – Cycle facilities should be perceived to be safe i.e., people must feel safe using them.

### II. Coherence

**At a network level**, cycle routes should be connected and easy to navigate. Cycle routes should not have gaps or be interrupted at difficult locations.

**At an individual scheme level**, coherence is important where a number of different link types are connected.

### III. Directness

Directness is measured in both **distance** and **time**. Ideally cycle routes should connect origins and destinations using the shortest route with as little delay as possible. At an individual scheme level, coherence is important where a number of different link types are connected.

### IV. Comfort

Factors that influence the comfortableness of a facility include **Width, Gradient, Stoppages and Delays, Surfacing, Shelter, and Maintenance**

### V. Attractiveness

The cycling environment along a route should ideally be as **pleasant** and **interesting as possible**.

Cycle infrastructure should **help to deliver public spaces** that are **well designed** and finished in **attractive materials** and **be places where people want to spend time**.

*Cycle Design Manual, 2023.*



### 3.2 National Active Transport Proposals

#### CycleConnects

The National Transport Authority's (NTA) draft CycleConnects: Ireland's Cycle Network is intended to form a comprehensive cycle network to all rural and urban parts of Ireland outside of the Greater Dublin Area. The four route classifications used in CycleConnects are found in Portlaoise: Urban Primary, Urban Secondary, Interurban and Greenway. The urban cycle network developed for Portlaoise is comprised of primary orbital routes and a larger amalgamation of both primary and secondary routes that encompass the town, as well as greenways and interurban routes like the existing Triogue Way and proposed Portlaoise to Abbeyleix Greenway.

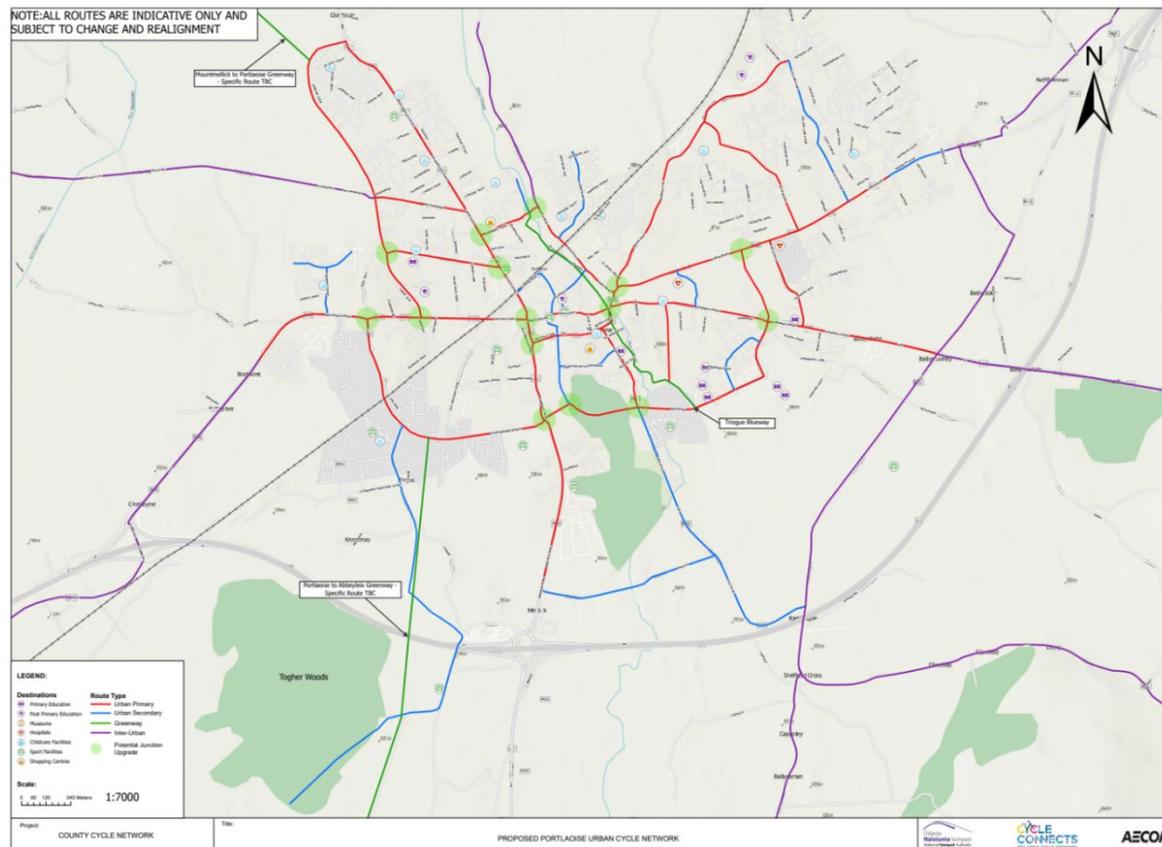


Figure 3-7 NTA CycleConnects Plan for Portlaoise.

#### National Cycle Network (2024)

The National Cycle Network (NCN), issued by TII, is a planned core cycle network of 3,500km that will cross Ireland connecting more than 200 villages, towns and cities. The network will include cycling links to transport hubs, education centres, employment centres, leisure and tourist destinations, and support “last mile” bicycle deliveries.

The NCN is mandated in the National Development Plan 2021- 2030 and was developed by the TII. Portlaoise is identified as a key town which will be served by the NCN with connections to Carlow (Corridor 55), Kildare (Corridor 59), Tullamore (Corridor 56), Limerick (Corridor 20) and Newbridge (Corridor 60).

CLASSIFICATION	FUNCTION
URBAN PRIMARY	High quality routes accommodating a high volume of cyclists in most urban areas - using major desire lines in town centres & form distinctive radial & orbital cycle routes in the major towns & cities.
URBAN SECONDARY	Second level route in major urban areas linking with urban primary network. Will typically be passing through residential areas, school & employment areas
INTERURBAN	On-road route linking all key settlements & destinations outside urban areas.
GREENWAY	Off-road route - no adjacent traffic for most of the route. Typically located on old rail trails or Blueways with cyclists sharing the route with pedestrians.

Table 3-2 CycleConnects Network Route Classifications (NTA).



### 3.3 National Rail Strategy and Review

While not policy documents, **Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027** and the **All-Ireland Strategic Rail Review** lay the groundwork for ever-expanding rail services that offer clean, safe and efficient public transport. Befitting its nationally central location, Portlaoise is set to benefit greatly from these improvements to rail service.

#### Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027

Published in 2021, **Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027** outlines the growth of the Irish rail network to align with the **National Planning Framework**. It seeks to develop the railway network so that it functions as the backbone of an efficient, integrated and sustainable public transport network. The Strategy focusing on three key areas:

- The growth and electrification of the DART+ network.
- Enhancements to InterCity services.
- The development of regional rail networks.

Through the reallocation of trains from the DART+ network and the increased InterCity service, the Strategy foresees an increase in train frequencies from Portlaoise to every 20 minutes in peak times and half hourly off peak.

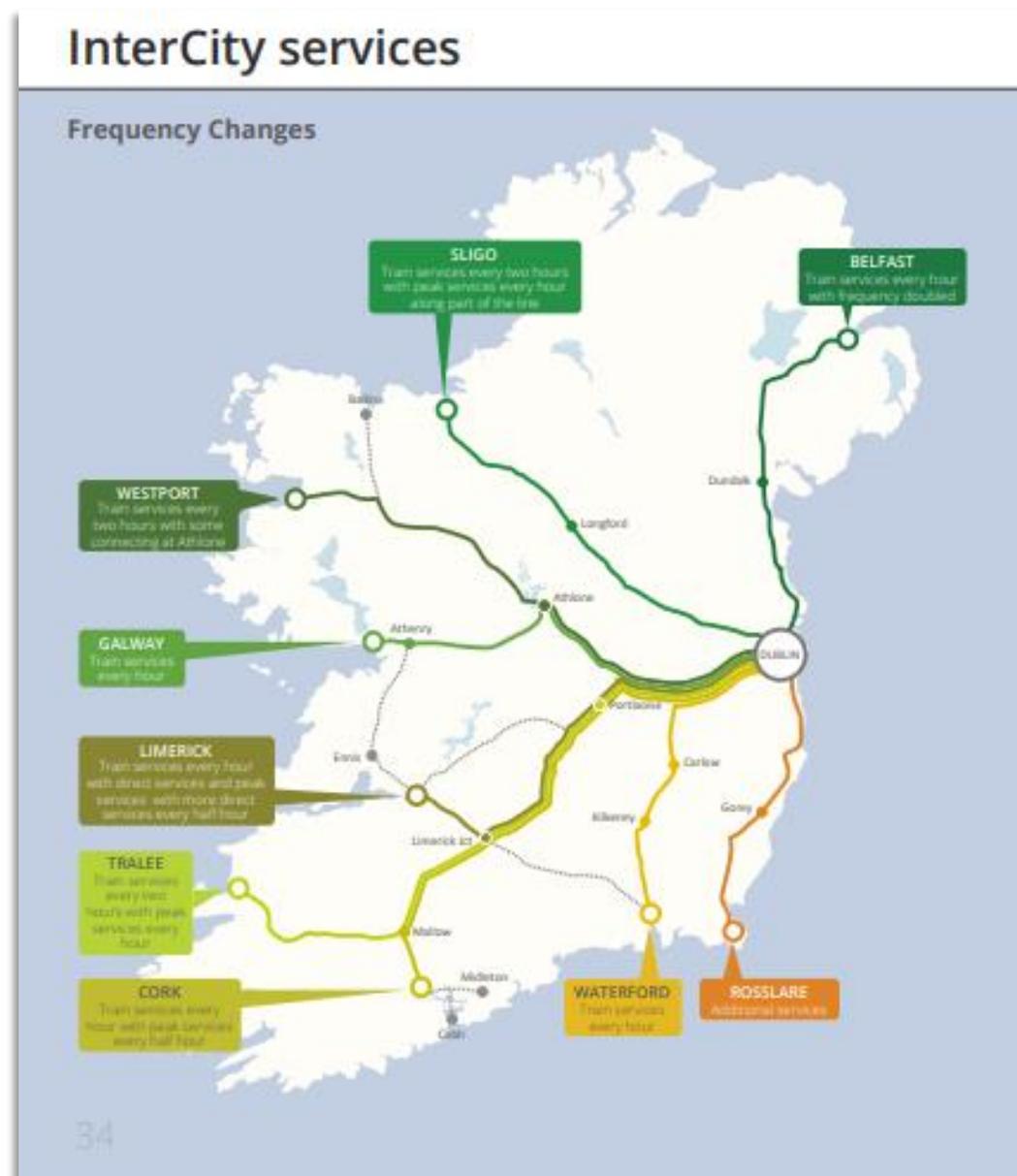


Figure 3-8 Changes to InterCity services in the Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027.

## All-Island Strategic Rail Review (AISRR)

The first All-Island Strategic Rail Review (2023) aims to inform policy and future strategy for railways on the island of Ireland. It examines how the railways are currently used and what improvements could be made to better serve the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In general, the AISRR recommends the electrification of fleets, new and enhanced routes, greater regional balance and improved speeds and frequency.

Several recommendations directly affect Portlaoise. Firstly, electrification upgrades are recommended as a decarbonisation intervention of an existing railway line, including the railway line between Ballybrophy and Hazelhatch.

Secondly, frequency and speed improvements are recommended as an intercity intervention for the railway line that stops at Portlaoise Station (**Figure 3-10**). This would improve on existing services to Portlaoise. Additionally, frequency improvements are also recommended as part of the sustainable cities heavy railway interventions, concerning the railway line between Dublin and Portlaoise.

Lastly regarding rail freight interventions, Portlaoise is located along a future core freight route

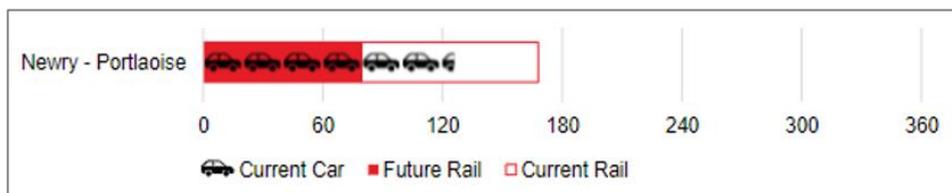


Figure 3-9 Indicative in-vehicle journey times between Newry and Portlaoise for the current rail and car journeys and for future rail journeys that would benefit from the recommendations in the AISRR

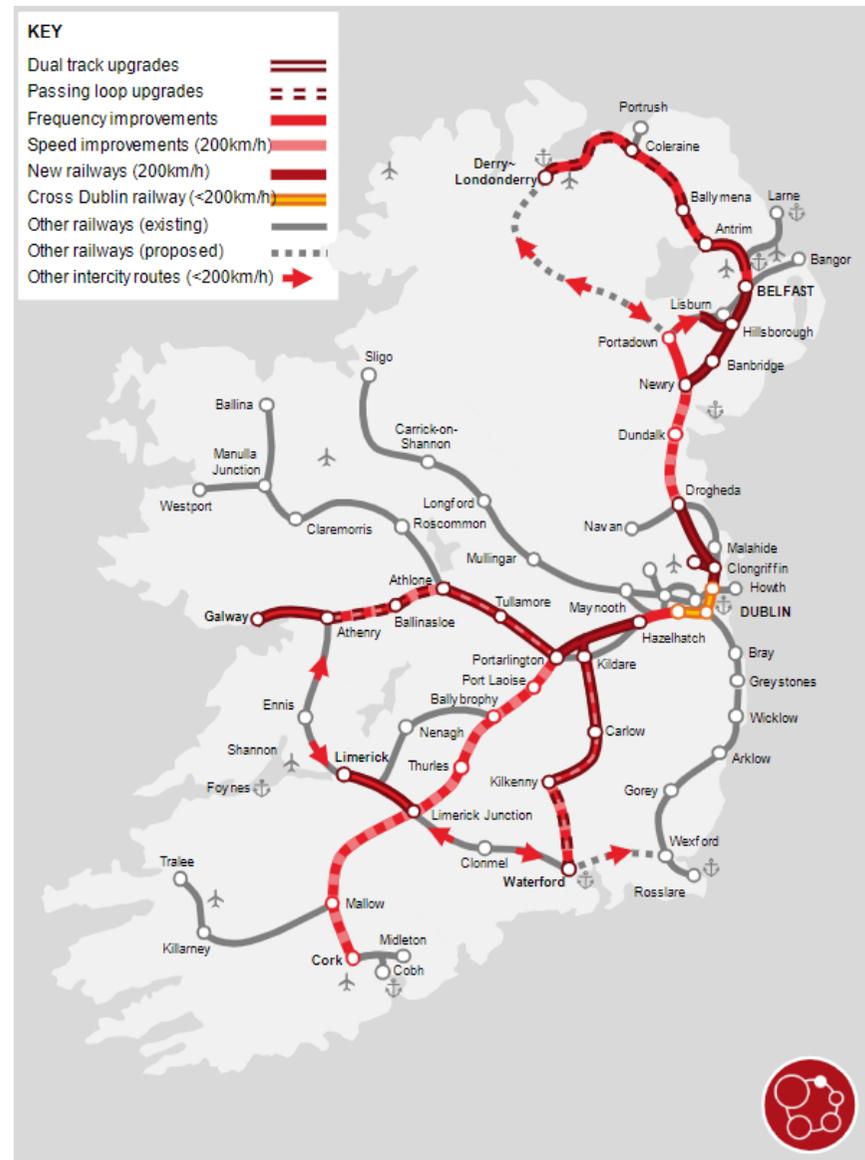


Figure 3-10 Intercity Network Interventions Source: AISRR.



### 3.4 Regional Level Planning Policy

#### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The **RSES for the Eastern and Midlands Region Assembly (EMRA) 2019 - 2031** sets the framework to direct future growth of the Eastern and Midlands Region over the medium to long term.

Within RSES, Portlaoise is identified as a key town of the gateway region that surrounds Dublin and its core region, providing service and employment activity for its surrounding area. Portlaoise also has high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as a growth driver that complements the Gateway Region's regional growth centres (Athlone & Dundalk).

The RSES supports continued population and economic growth in the Midland Region, noting that the sustainability, vitality, and vibrancy of Portlaoise can be enriched through a major focus on the regeneration of the town centre, balancing and consolidating housing and retail development adjoining the town core (**Policy Objective 4.71**).

Under the Portlaoise **Regeneration Demonstration Project** introduced by the NPF, Portlaoise's regeneration is tied with the

opportunity for the town to develop a '**Low Carbon Town Centre**' through reduction of the impacts of the car on the public realm and the encouragement of mixed use development in the town centre (**RPO 4.72**).

**RPO 4.73** supports the vision and objectives of the J17 National Enterprise Park in Portlaoise. Furthermore, the strategic importance of Midland Regional Hospital in Portlaoise is detailed within the RSES. Support of its development and expansion is included as **RPO 4.74**.

#### Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan (CIRMP)

The **CIRMP** is a major national public transport initiative developed by the NTA to improve mobility in rural areas and linking towns and villages with an enhanced regional network. Portlaoise and its sizable hinterland are particularly impacted by changes to rural mobility and transit strategy.

The rollout of new and improved services is due to begin on a phased basis from 2022 - 2025. Besides an increase in frequency on the Portlaoise-Roscrea route, no changes will be made to existing bus and rail services in Portlaoise, however the NTA and Laois County Council intend to continue to improve

rural bus service and are currently developing a new bus service for the town.

#### REGIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

##### Portlaoise as a Key Town

##### **RPO 4.71**

Support delivery of the **Portlaoise Regeneration and Development Demonstration Project** and assist the local authority in seeking funding opportunities for delivery of regeneration development.

##### **RPO 4.72**

Support transition of Portlaoise to a **low carbon town centre** by reducing car use and promoting walking and cycling and improving the mix of uses within the town centre.

##### **RPO 4.73**

Support the vision and objectives of **the J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan**, where appropriate, which aims to deliver a viable economic zone within Portlaoise which will accommodate a range of potential businesses and industries whilst having regard to spatial planning, infrastructural, environmental and transportation requirements and compatibility with adjoining land uses (subject to compliance with the requirements of the SEA, Habitats and Floods Directive).

##### **RPO 4.74**

Support the development and expansion of the **Midlands Regional Hospital** at Portlaoise.

*RPOs relating to Portlaoise (RSES for the EMRA 2019-31).*



### 3.5 Local Level Planning Policy and Guidance Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 came into effect in January 2022 and sets out the policies and objectives for sustainable development in the County up to 2027. The Plan seeks to deliver on the main aims of the Strategic Policy, including to “*require sustainable, compact, sequential growth in Portlaoise by consolidating the built-up footprint with a focus on the redevelopment and regeneration of infill and brownfield sites*” (CS 14).

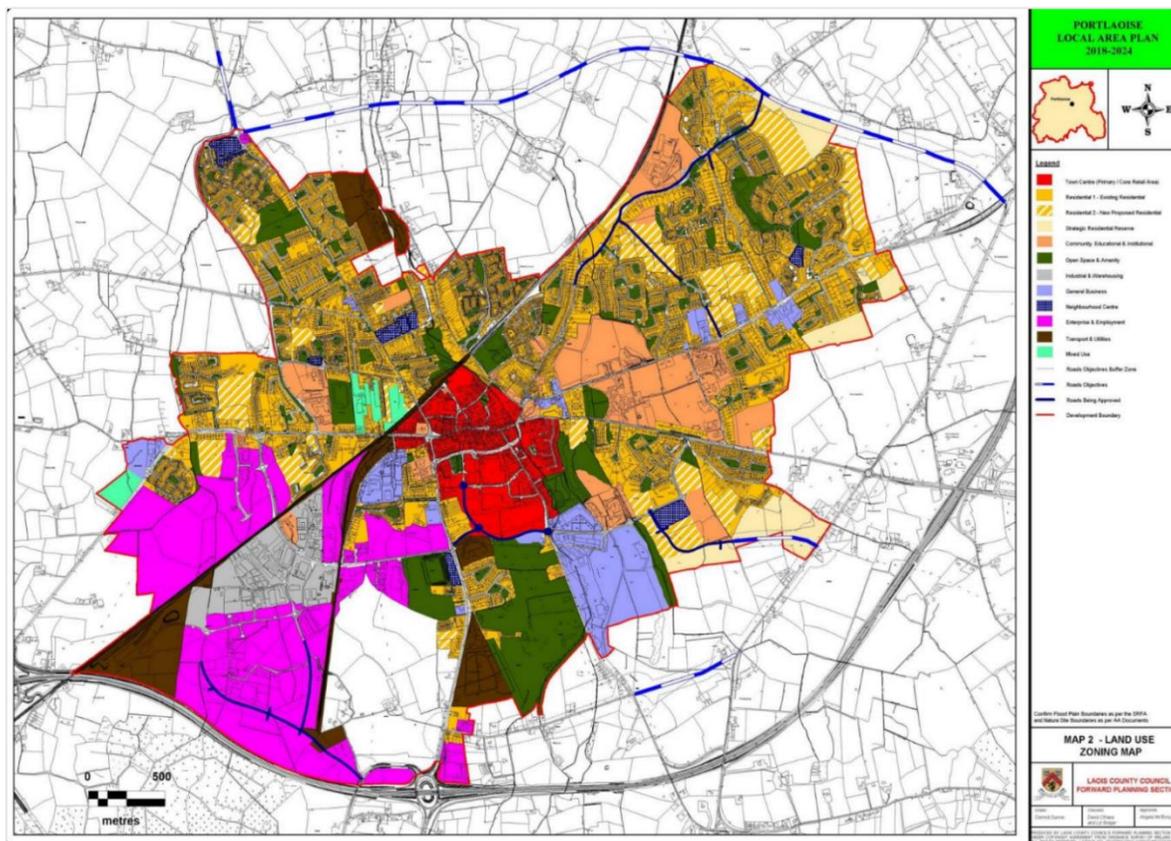


Figure 3-11 Mapped Land Use Zoning for Portlaoise under the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

#### RELEVANT LOCAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

**Objective CS 12** - Support the continued growth and sustainable development of Portlaoise to act as a **growth driver in the region** and to fulfil its role as a **Key Town** as outlined in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019.

**Objective CS 13** - **Direct population into the Key Town** to ensure that population growth is appropriate in scale with its identified role in the Regional and County Settlement Hierarchy.

**Objective CS 14** - Require sustainable, compact, sequential growth in Portlaoise by consolidating the built-up footprint with a focus on the **redevelopment and regeneration of infill and brownfield sites**.

**Objective CS 15** - **Apply increased residential densities where appropriate** having regard to Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas (2009) and apply appropriate development management measures in ensuring growth is appropriate and in compliance with the RSES 2019.

**Objective CS 16** - Implement the actions of the **'Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy "2040 And Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise'** to improve the character of the town of Portlaoise.

**Objective CS 17** - Support and facilitate the transition of Portlaoise to a **low carbon centre of excellence** in accordance with RPO 4.72 of the RSES.

Laois County Development Plan, 2021-2027.



In addition to broad-ranging policy objectives, the Laois County Development Plan devotes particular attention to the significance of transport emissions. It sets modal share targets for the entire county and includes 10 Climate Mitigation Objectives.

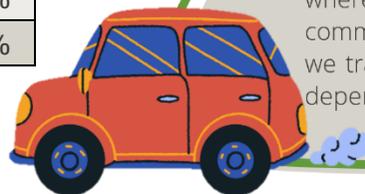
As discussed later in **Chapter 20 – Outcomes, Monitoring and Reporting**, the LTP sets higher modal share targets for walking, cycling and public transport use by 2040 because Portlaoise’s compact urban form and the availability of public transportation means that these modes are more accessible than elsewhere in the county. In addition, Portlaoise’s role as a national demonstration project Low Carbon Town provides motivation to produce higher walking, cycling and public transport use modal shares in Portlaoise.

Table 3-4 Modal Share targets from Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

Modal Share Targets for Co Laois 2040				
Year	Walk	Cycle	Public Transport	Car
2016	6%	1%	4%	73%
2040	20%	15%	20%	45%

Table 3-3 Climate Mitigation Objectives from the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027, highlighting the importance of reducing transport emissions for climate mitigation.

CLIMATE MITIGATION OBJECTIVES	
CM ST 1	Support construction of green routes/ cycleways/ pedestrian routes throughout the County.
CM ST 2	To support and facilitate the integration of land use with transportation infrastructure, through the development of sustainable compact settlements which are well served by public transport.
CM ST 3	To promote higher residential development densities in settlement centres along public transport corridors...
CM ST 4	Strengthen public transport linkages and promote their use.
CM ST 5	Support localisation of jobs/ shops/ services to minimise the need for most common travel patterns.
CM ST 6	Support the provision of electricity charging infrastructure for electrical vehicles throughout County Laois...
CM ST 7	Promote and support the provision of Park-and-Ride facilities which improve public transport accessibility....
CM ST 8	Deliver...a Public Transportation Hub in Portlaoise to accommodate national, commuter, regional and local bus services.
CM ST 9	Promote more compact development forms that reduce overall demand for private transport and private transport infrastructure and support proposals that encourage modal shift towards sustainable travel modes.
CM ST 10	Specify baseline figures and targets for modal share in new / varied Local Area Plans in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport...



The transport sector is one of the **biggest contributors of GHG emissions** in County Laois, where the predominant mode of transport is the private car. This is evident in the number of commuters **leaving the county for work** purposes which equates to **12,000 per day**. How we travel between places will need to be addressed, promoting a modal shift away from car dependency for more sustainable and active transport modes.

Laois County Development Plan



Table 3-5 Transport Objectives from the Laois County Development Plan, indicating the significance of walking, cycling and public transport use as transport choices.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY OBJECTIVES	
TRANS 1	Maintain, improve and protect the safety, capacity and efficiency of Laois’s roads network...
TRANS 11	Integrate land use policies and transportation in a manner which reduces reliance on car based travel and promotes more sustainable transport choice...
TRANS 13	Encourage the transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of transport, and ‘walkable communities’ together with promotion of compact urban forms close to public transport corridors to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement.
TRANS 25	Facilitate the following priority road projects during the lifetime of the Plan period 2021 -2027 Key Town – Portlaoise: i. M7 Junction 17 Off Ramp at Togher National Enterprise Park, Portlaoise; ii. Togher, Portlaoise Link Road Phase 2; iii. Portlaoise Northern Orbital Route (PNOR) iv. N80 Mountmellick Road , Portlaoise Improvements; v. R445 Mountrath Road, Portlaoise Improvements;
TRANS 37	Support the installation of infrastructure measures (for example new or wider footpaths, road crossings and cycle parking facilities), retrofitted if necessary, which facilitates, and encourages safe walking and cycling.
TRANS 38	Promote cycling and pedestrian friendly development layouts, provide facilities at public transport nodes, towns and villages, plan for and make provision for the integration of cyclist and pedestrian needs when considering new development proposals to promote Laois as a walking and cycling destination.
TRANS 41	Support the development of and secure funding for a Greenway along a dismantled railway line between Mountmellick, Portlaoise and Abbeyleix.
TRANS 42	Support the development of Town Based Bike Hire Scheme, similar to “Dublin Bikes”.

Similarly, Chapter 10 in the CDP outlines the importance of integrating transportation and land use planning and encouraging residents of Laois to walk, cycle and take public transport for their daily journeys. In addition, Transport Objectives 5 and 14 support the

preparation of a Local Transport Plan for Portlaoise. Transport Objectives 30 through 33 concern the provision of parking facilities for Age Friendly Parking, loading bays, and cycle parking, as well as the EV charging network, which will be discussed further in

**Chapter 16 - Parking Management.** Transport Objective 41 concerns the development of rail service in Portlaoise, which is discussed further in **Chapter 14 - Public Transport.**



## 2040 And Beyond - A Vision for Portlaoise: A Strategy for a Better Town Centre

Laois County Council in collaboration with the people of Portlaoise launched *2040 and Beyond – A Vision for Portlaoise* in 2017 in order to re-examine and re-purpose the town centre of Portlaoise. The overarching aim is to formalise a shared vision to focus on public spaces, buildings and walkways in a way that acknowledges the unique characteristics and heritage assets that the Town possesses, but also provides the foundation for the future development of a thriving town centre.

In addition to being the largest town in the Midlands, Portlaoise is the fastest growing of the 20 largest towns in Ireland, having increased in population by 50% over the last 20 years and by 38% between 2006 and 2011. With a projected growth in population to between 28,000 and 30,000 by 2040, significant regeneration is required within the town centre in order to accommodate and support such growth.

The vision proposed by *2040 and Beyond* aims to transform Portlaoise Town Centre into a place for its people, where residents, workers and visitors alike will come to enjoy a place

that is inclusive, accessible and truly sustainable from a social, economic and environmental perspective. It will be an exemplar town centre where businesses thrive and where the pride of the population is reflected in public spaces.

To achieve this shared vision, significant investment (primarily in transportation and public realm) is proposed, and several key actions will be required to support the following outcomes:

- The Creation of a Low Carbon Town Centre
- The Delivery of a Walkable Town Centre
- The Greening of Portlaoise Town Centre
- Exposure of Cultural Heritage within Portlaoise Town Centre
- Exposure of the River Triogue as a Pedestrian / Cycling Route
- The Reconnection of the Old and New Town
- Accommodating Living in Portlaoise Town Centre
- Provision for Working in Portlaoise Town Centre

The Strategy is arranged and described under five **Guiding Principles**, which address the key facets of the urban environment and

public realm - community, urban design, heritage and sustainability.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES from *2040 and Beyond A Vision for Portlaoise – A Strategy for a Better Town Centre*

#### The People's Town

A vibrant Town Centre and public realm that meets the needs and aspirations of those who live and work in it and those who visit, wherever they come from and however long they stay.

#### Urban Design—Smart Design

A public realm based on urban design principles that are distinctive and authentic.

#### A Future for Our Heritage

A public realm that embraces its unique heritage and promotes this heritage as a tourism asset.

#### The Connected Place

A Town Centre and public realm that is accessible, pedestrian friendly and 'wired'.

#### Sustainability

The assessment of the social, economic and environmental impacts of any intervention is essential as a guiding principle.



## Portlaoise Local Area Plan (LAP) 2018-24

The purpose of the Portlaoise LAP 2018-2024 is to put in place a land use framework that will guide the future sustainable development of the settlement of Portlaoise town and its environs for the 2018-2024 period. This plan, in conjunction with the Laois County Development Plan, informs and manages the future development of the area.

The preparation of the new Portlaoise LAP 2024-2030 is underway. The pre-draft public consultation on the issues paper concluded in December 2022. The Portlaoise LTP will support this LAP by providing a strategic foundation for its transport infrastructure objectives.

Adequate infrastructure is vital for the facilitation of the future development of Portlaoise, including water services, effective road and public transport networks, energy, waste management, education facilities etc. The infrastructure objectives of the Laois CDP deal with the general infrastructure objectives relevant to Portlaoise. The LAP specifically addresses water services, roads transportation and movement, and electricity transmission and distribution.

## County Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The Laois County Council Adaptation Strategy forms part of the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) which was published in response to the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.

The Strategy makes a baseline assessment of Laois' present climate risks and capacity for adaptation and creates a framework for the adoption of adaptation goals, objectives, and actions. As a part of this strategy, several objectives have emerged including the following:

- To ensure and increase the resilience of infrastructural assets and the built environment, informing investment decisions.
- To integrate climate action considerations into land use planning policy and influence positive behaviour.
- To build capacity and resilience within communities.
- To promote effective bio-diversity management and enhance protection of natural habitats and landscapes.

- To provide for enhancement of natural environment to work positively towards climate action.

## Togher Area Masterplan

Laois County Council adopted a Masterplan for the Togher area in 2018. The J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan facilitates the creation of employment within Portlaoise by providing a framework for adequately zoned lands underpinned by policies which support economic development. The masterplan site is located southwest of Portlaoise town centre, approximately 500 metres from the town centre at its northern edge and bordering the M7 to the south. The development of the roads network in the Togher Area is discussed later in **Chapter 15 – Roads Network**.

## Aghnaharna Masterplan

Laois County Council is developing a masterplan for the Aghnaharna area between Well Road (R426), the Southern Circular Road and Stradbally Road to ensure proper planning and sustainable development to the south of Portlaoise town centre. The Aghnaharna Masterplan Area is mapped in **Chapter 6 – Key Plan Influences**.



## 4 Case Studies

### 4.1 Overview

In order to establish the context upon which the transport characteristics of Portlaoise would be based, a selection of relevant case studies that display high-quality sustainable transport practices were identified. These examples help form a solid basis for the type of transport infrastructure and development principles that could be applied in the case of Portlaoise to encourage sustainable travel, and to reimagine Portlaoise town centre as a more vibrant urban realm.

### 4.2 Leuven, Belgium

Leuven is a historic city located 25km to the east of Brussels with a population of 100,244 in 2016. The city is well connected with the wider region via railway links to Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent.



Figure 4-1 Cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, Leuven, Belgium.

Leuven's transition from a commuter town to a self-sufficient settlement, as well as its history of proactive management of motorised transport provides a model for Portlaoise.

#### Sustainable Transport Context

Leuven has historically been viewed as a commuter town for a capital city, however in recent years it has become increasingly self-sufficient, recognised as a nationally significant employment and education-base, as well as a tourist destination.



Figure 4-2 The sector plan for Leuven, supported by cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, resulting in decreased car use and increased public transport use and cycling.

Leuven has a high volume of train services between it and the capital of Brussels, and more recently, the city has adopted a proactive traffic strategy in order to retrospectively reduce car use and promote walking and cycling within the city.

#### Proactive Traffic Management

In 2016, the City Council divided Leuven into five sectors, as well as a sixth largely car-free central pedestrian area. Private vehicular traffic movement through the city centre is now largely restricted to a ring road that encircles the Leuven, with local vehicular access permitted into each specific sector *from* the outer ring road, but *not* directly between sectors. Bus services meanwhile are available on all wider streets throughout the urban core, with contraflow lanes being utilised to ensure fluid two-way movement.

Cycling operates on shared surfaces within the city centre, based on the 'Fietstraat' principle. One year after the strategy came into effect, journeys made by bicycle increased by 32% in the city centre, and by 9% on the ring road, while total bus trips increased by 12%.



### 4.3 Vauban, Freiburg, Germany

Vauban is a master-planned development located 3km south-west of Freiburg City Centre, consisting of 2,000 housing units and hosting a population of approximately 5,000 people. Planning of the district began in 1998 and was completed in 2006.

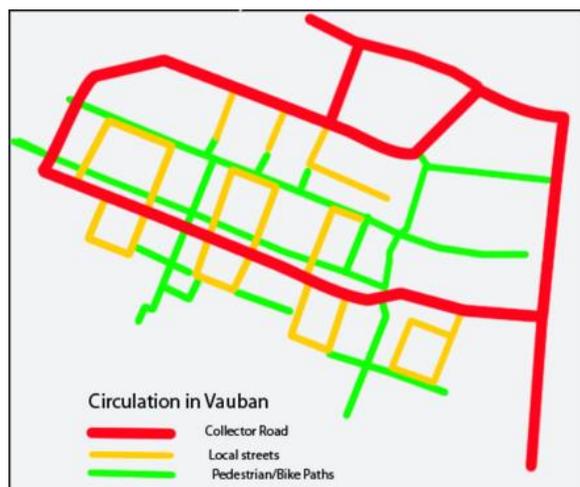


Figure 4-3 Transportation network in Vauban.

#### Sustainable Mobility Design Measures

Vauban was designed with a 'car-free' concept in mind and planning was based on environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Vehicles must be driven at walking pace and priority must be given to pedestrians and cyclists. Local streets incorporate the principle of filtered permeability, providing connecting pedestrian and cyclist paths through the entire

district. The collector road for cars is shown in red in Figure 4-3, with local filtered permeability streets in orange and cycle paths in green.

No parking is provided on residential streets. Car owners in the area purchase a parking spot in one of the several multi-storey car parks on the periphery of the development. Access to cars is provided by the local car club. This service operates in the whole city of Freiburg, but the Vauban area has the most members, and at least ten cars are always parked in Vauban for residents to use.

### 4.4 Winchester, England

Winchester is located in the county of Hampshire, England with a population of 45,184 people in 2011. Similar to Portlaoise, Winchester is located on a rail line and bypassed by a motorway. Historically Winchester has suffered from a poor public realm and traffic congestion, but strong planned development has revitalised the town centre.

#### Transport planning as impetus for renewal measures

In order to manage the existing inefficiencies in its transport network and cater for projected population and employment growth in a sustainable manner, Winchester City Council published the Winchester Movement Strategy

in 2018. The strategy identified three priorities to support the overarching vision to support strong and sustainable economic growth for the city of Winchester, including:

- **Priority One:** Reduce vehicular through-traffic in the City Centre
- **Priority Two:** Support healthier lifestyle choices
- **Priority Three:** Invest in infrastructure to support sustainable growth

The Strategy also sets out a number of schemes that will help achieve the overarching vision, including:

- Strategic Park and Rides
- Bus priority measures on key radial routes
- Introduction of charging zones
- Congestion charge zone
- Low emissions zone
- Workplace travel plans



Figure 4-4 Pedestrianised High Street, one of the key projects in Winchester. Source: Alamy.



## 4.5 Roscommon, Ireland

Roscommon Town is located in the centre of Ireland and has a population of 5,876 (2016 Census). Roscommon County Council selected Roscommon to be the county's first Decarbonisation Zone to model best practices in decarbonisation, green infrastructure and energy efficiency.

Roscommon town centre has a car-centric public realm, similar to Portlaoise town centre. The two towns share other hallmarks of mid-sized regional Irish towns: a national route running through the town, a county GAA stadium, and medium-sized hospital. Like Portlaoise, Roscommon is proactively developing its centre to drive attractive low-carbon development.

### Hub and spoke approach

Roscommon County Council received Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) funding to revitalise the town centre, focusing on a hub area around the town square, three spokes made up of streets and laneways leading to the town centre and a rim formed by a cycle lane around the town. An aerial image of the hub and spoke can be seen in **Figure 4-5**.

The project aims to cherish the heritage of Roscommon, reverse the hollowing out of the town centre, reduce the need to travel, improve quality of life, and works to transform Roscommon from a 3-minute driving town to a 5/10-minute walking and cycling town.

The redevelopment of the town square has been completed, replacing a car park with a vibrant public place. The design of the three spokes and rim is ongoing with numerous opportunities for public consultation.

The regeneration of Roscommon's town square is an example of how Portlaoise Town Centre, particularly in areas such as Market Square, could be regenerated from a space that was car dependant and unwelcoming for pedestrians into a vibrant central public space full of life and activity.



Figure 4-5 Roscommon town centre before and after; & Roscommon's Hub and Spoke Approach

#### 4.6 Summary of Key Concepts

It is not always appropriate to replicate exactly what is done elsewhere successfully. Instead, learning from elsewhere and applying principles and ideas in a local context, such as in Portlaoise, can offer valuable insights and lessons on some of the key ingredients for success and innovative solutions for local issues.

The key principles from the case studies that may be appropriate for the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan includes:

- **Healthy Streets Approach** (public realm-led street design)
- **Filtered Permeability**
- High-capacity **bike parking**
- **Safe access to schools**
- **Behavioural change / education**
- **Reallocation of road space** that supports the **revitalisation of town centre areas**, reintroducing **nature** into urban areas and promoting **active and sustainable modes of transport**
- **Self-sufficient settlements** & the **15-Minute City model**



Figure 4-6 Residential Street in Vauban. Source: Guardian Cities.

## 5 Portlaoise Transport Objectives

In conjunction with the objectives set out by the international, national, regional, and local policies detailed in **Chapter 3 – Policy Context**, five key transport objectives have been identified for Portlaoise, and have guided the progress of the Portlaoise LTP as a whole.

These objectives are designed to correspond with objectives set out in the *Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027*, the *Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2018-2014*, and *2040 And Beyond: A Vision for Portlaoise – A Strategy for a Better Town Centre*.

The five key transport objectives have been established ahead of the public consultation process and will be refined further based on public responses.

### PORTLAOISE DRAFT TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES

#### **Transport Objective 1:**

Support the **Compact Growth** of Portlaoise through the careful integration of land use and transport planning.

#### **Transport Objective 2:**

Improve and prioritise **access** to local services by sustainable modes, in particular walking and cycling, with links to public transport for longer journeys.

#### **Transport Objective 3:**

Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of **public transport** services in Portlaoise.

#### **Transport Objective 4:**

Maximise the potential of **natural environment assets** and the design and layout of the **built environment** to **facilitate connectivity and safe and permeable walking and cycling networks**.

#### **Transport Objective 5:**

Enhance the **vibrancy, accessibility, liveability** and **safety** of Portlaoise through **improved public realm, place-making** and a **Healthy Streets approach**.



## 6 Key Plan Influences

### 6.1 Overview

This chapter aims to identify current projects and future developments that are likely to influence the Local Transport Plan over the short, medium and long term future.

### 6.2 Triogue Way

The River Triogue runs north-south of Portlaoise Town Centre and links the People’s Park in the south-east with Triogue Linear Park in the north. *Portlaoise 2040* proposes opening-up the river as a linear park – The Triogue Way. A key priority of the proposed interventions is the creation of a pedestrian and cycle way following the route of the river.

Some of the Triogue Way is in place and open to the public. Phase 1 was completed in 2022 and funding from the NTA has been allocated for Phases 2 and 3. Public consultation on the section between the People’s Park and Green Mill closed in February 2024.

Key to the success of the Triogue Way will be enhancing the connection to other routes, providing safer access to the town and residential areas for pedestrians and cyclists. The interventions also hope to create an improved habitat for flora and fauna by including green infrastructure and bird/bat

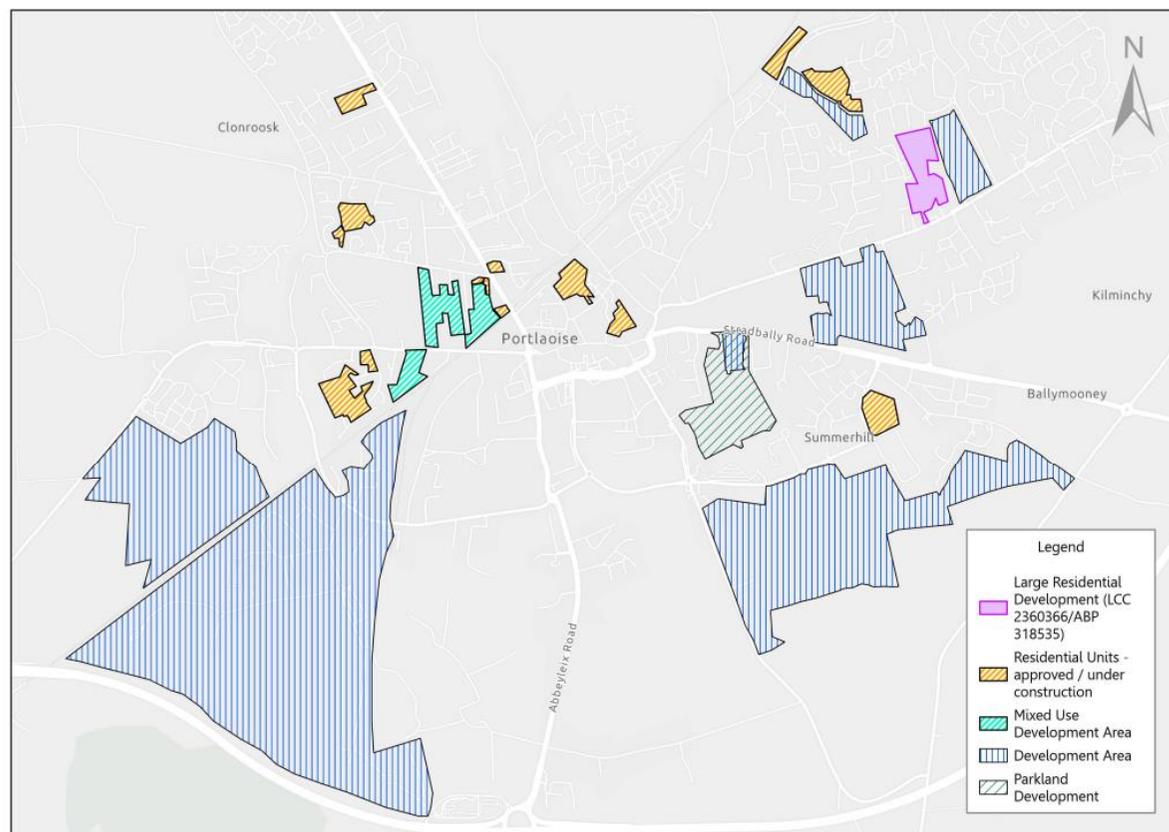


Figure 6-1 Key Residential, Employment and Mixed-Use Development Areas in Portlaoise



boxes and artificial otter holts along the route, decreasing pollution in the river, and removing invasive species.

#### Key benefits of the interventions include:

- Pedestrian and cyclist corridor through the town that connects the northern and southern areas of the town
- Enhance quality of life
- Manage flooding of the river Triogue
- Ecosystem improvements

#### Outcomes

- Increase the potential for passive supervision from adjacent dwellings
- Increase entry points and connections to nearby residential areas
- Create a central green space for the Town
- Increase level of accessibility to the river through the Town
- Increase path widths to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians



Figure 6-2 Plans for the Triogue Way. Source: Laois County Council

## 6.3 Future Housing Developments

### 6.3.1 The Maltings

The Maltings is a 2.6ha site in the centre of Portlaoise to the northwest of the Railway Station. Grain was malted on site from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the late 1970s; grain drying and storage continued until 2003 when the site was sold.

The approved development for the Maltings site consists of 154 residential units and a 101-bed nursing home. The residential units include 1, 2 and 3-bed houses and apartments. Approved Housing Body Clúid supervised the construction of 40 of the 2-bed units as Age-Friendly housing. Construction at the site is on-going. The majority of the units are new construction, but 8 apartments are accommodated in the heritage malting building.

### 6.3.2 Tyrrell's Lands Masterplan

A masterplan has been drafted for the 26-acre site located east of Portlaoise Town Centre and south of Stradbally Road. This Key Development Area is currently zoned for Residential, Open Space and Amenity, as well as Community, Educational & Institutional.



Figure 6-3 Plans for the redevelopment of the heritage Malting structure as residential development. Source: Krüger/Lyons.

The vision for the Tyrrell's Lands Masterplan is to create a new sustainable residential community that integrates with the existing town and surrounds residential areas with a natural environment.

A density of approximately 45 units per hectare is proposed, achieved with 2 apartment blocks, a 4-storey to the north and a 5-storey to the south, as well as duplexes, terraced town houses and

community/amenity space. Car parking will be limited to 1 space per unit to maximise the external community space. Cycle parking will be included for all units.

A new pedestrian and cyclist route will connect Stradbally Road with New Road. The site will be a pedestrian and cyclist priority zone, encouraging slower speeds for motor vehicles. High-quality public realm and civic spaces are key to the success of the site.





Residential development, a focus on shared community space & green infrastructure



**Legend**

-  Redline Boundary
-  Proposed Buildings
-  Proposed Residential Path & Road Network
-  Proposed Residential Planting
-  Proposed Path Network through the Site
-  Proposed Close Mown Path through the Site
-  Proposed Areas of Tree Planting
-  Proposed Meadow Planting
-  Proposed Wetland Expansion with Riparian Planting and Boardwalk
-  Proposed Amphitheatre
-  Proposed Multifunctional Canopy
-  Proposed Hard Sports Courts
-  Proposed Soft Sports Field
-  Proposed Hard Surfacing and Planting Areas
-  Existing Trees
-  Existing Footpath Network
-  Existing Watercourses & Waterbodies
-  Existing Hedgerow
-  Portrane House



Proposed connectivity through residential areas prioritising pedestrians



Green infrastructure, and wildflower meadows, Manor Field, Sheffield, UK.

Figure 6-4 Tyrrell's Lands (Stradbally Road) Masterplan. Proposed new shared footpath and cycle track shown in dotted blue. Design of residential area shaded in blue subject to change. Source: Laois County Council



6.3.3 An Lochán, Summerhill (2021)

Planning permission was granted in 2021 for 94 homes in Summerhill, comprising a mix of 4-, 3- and 2-bedroom houses and 1- and 3-bedroom apartments. The site is located between Summerhill Pond (a land drainage pond) and the Holy Family School Campus. The Southern Circular Road will be used as the access road into the development.

The public realm plan for the development allows for pedestrian and cyclist permeability from near the junction of Summerhill Lane and Southern Circular Road, providing an alternate route to the primary schools along Southern Circular Road, especially the Holy Family Schools. The permeability around schools is discussed further in **Chapter 13 – Permeability Options**.

6.3.4 Proposed Summerhill Housing Development (2023)

In September 2023, the same applicant – Bircrest Limited – submitted two planning applications for lands to the south of Southern Circular Road that sought planning permission for a neighbourhood centre with retail and office space, a creche, and 102 homes on a site with a combined area of 5.12ha. The site is located to the west of the Holy Family School Campus and the

application provides for pedestrian and cyclist access to the school through the estate.

Also proposed as part of this development is a new Link Road through the site that roughly aligns with the northern section of the proposed road link in the Portlaoise LAP. The new street would give access to Rathleague Road and Portlaoise GAA with permeability to Holy Family Schools and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure along the access road. The possibility of providing pedestrian and cyclist access in advance of residential development is discussed further in **Chapter 13 – Permeability Options**.

Laois County Council is developing the Aghnaharna Masterplan for this area to guide its development and ensure permeability.



Figure 6-5 Architectural CGI of the 2021 Summerhill Housing Development. Source: 3D Design Bureau

6.3.5 Dunamase College / Coláiste Dhún Másc

Dunamase College / Coláiste Dhún Másc is a relatively new (2017) post-primary school located in the centre of Portlaoise Town that currently caters for just over 300 students.

In 2020 Laois Offaly Education and Training Board secured €24.5 million in funding for the construction of a new school building south of the town centre on Well Road. The new building is set to accommodate 1,000 pupils, fulfilling a demand for post-primary schools in Portlaoise and its Environs.

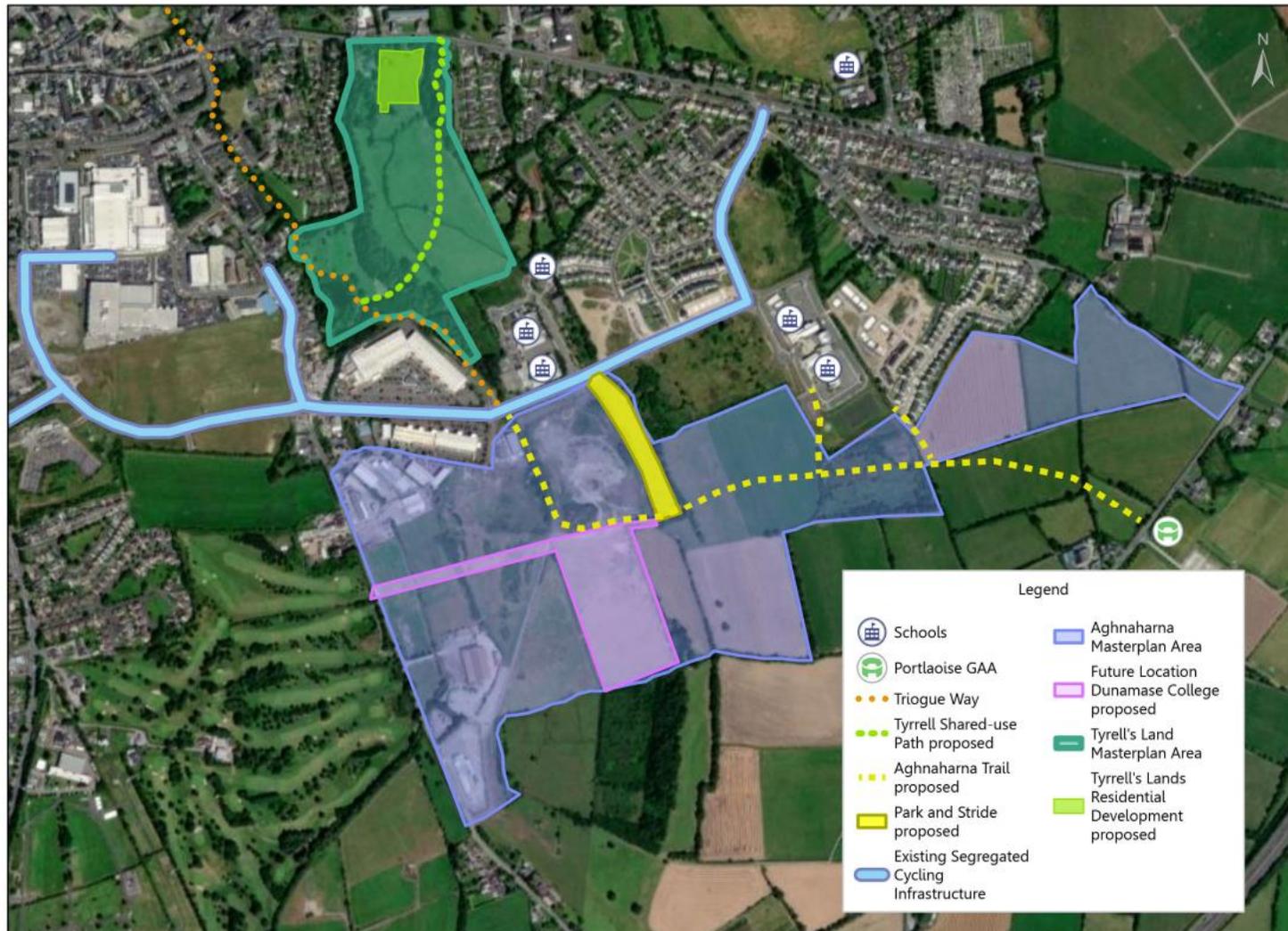


Figure 6-6 Coláiste Dhún Másc / Dunamase College

6.3.6 Summerhill Park and Stride

Laois County Council intends to deliver a Park and Stride along the Southern Circular Road to allow more children to incorporate active travel in their school journey and relieve motor traffic congestion.





### Map of the south of Portlaoise Town Centre

The map includes the Aghnaharna Masterplan Area with the proposed location of the new Dunamase College, the proposed location of a Park and Stride, as well as the Tyrrell's Lands Masterplan Area with residential development and a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists linking Stradbally Road to the Triogue Way. In the Aghnaharna Masterplan Area a shared-used path links the Triogue Way, multiple schools, residential developments and the Portlaoise GAA.



## 6.4 J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan

Laois County Council (LCC) has purchased 32ha of land within the 192ha J17 National Enterprise Park Masterplan Area, south-west of Portlaoise Town Centre. The strategic location of the site, sitting between the town and the M7 motorway, offers an opportunity to take advantage of the national road network to become a National Enterprise Park, as outlined in the *Portlaoise Local Area Plan (2018-2024)*.

The 32ha area, which is zoned as Enterprise and Employment, makes up around 17% of the overall Masterplan Area. As of February 2024, the North-South spine, which is key for the delivery of the National Enterprise Park, is complete.

A key component of the Masterplan is the movement strategy. Key objectives include:

- Enable businesses to take advantage of the land's strategic location
- Enable workforce to access employment close to their homes
- Enable provision / use of public transport
- Enable provision / use of active transport modes

- Minimise impact of motorised traffic at a local level & on the national road network

Open space provision and sustainability are also fundamental elements of the Masterplan. It is proposed that a centrally located park and greenways could be linked back the wider network of green spaces towards the town centre.

A set of 5 Character Areas have been proposed due to the varying degrees of development intended for each section of the site:

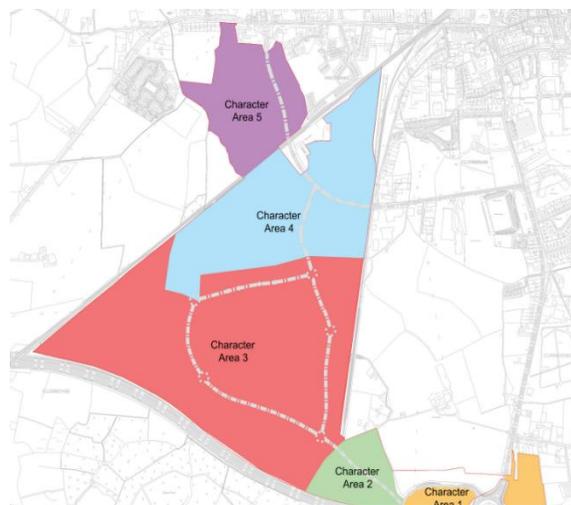


Figure 6-7 The 5 Character Areas within the Masterplan Area. Source: LCC/Arup/Future Analytics, 2018

## 6.5 Transport and Mobility Proposals

### 6.5.1 NTA Active Travel Allocations

In 2023, the National Transport Authority (NTA) allocated over €3 million in funds to Laois County Council to be split between 18 Active Travel projects, a number of which are in Portlaoise. These schemes include the provision of new / upgraded pedestrian and cycle infrastructure on several key roads, as well as junction tightening works, Safe Routes to School and footpath and pedestrian crossing improvements.

Laois County Council is proposing or delivering the schemes summarised in Table 6-1 on the following page.



Figure 6-8 A junction tightening at Beechfield completed with NTA funding. Source: DBFL.

Table 6-1 Summary of current and planned Active Travel Schemes that Laois County Council is preparing with committed or proposed NTA funding.

<b>Dublin Road Active Travel Scheme</b>	Part 1 of the scheme begins near the Grenville Estate and runs as far as the Kilminchy roundabout. Detailed design is in progress following Part 8 approval. Part 2 of the scheme formalises advisory cycle lanes on the Dublin Road from Grenville residential estate as far as St. Mary’s Hall. The scheme will provide a seamless route over its 2km length
<b>Stradbally Road Active Travel Scheme</b>	A scheme to review the provision of cycling infrastructure on the Stradbally Road is proposed by Laois County Council. Options for the Stradbally Road Scheme involve the delivery of dedicated cycle tracks or shared pedestrian/cycle tracks. Subject to approval, the works are planned to be delivered within 3 years.
<b>Beladd Active Travel Scheme</b>	This scheme will be developed as part of the Masterplan for HSE lands at Beladd and offers connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between Stradbally Road and Dublin Road. The scheme is at the inception stage and has yet to progress to Options Selection.
<b>Borris Road Active Travel Scheme</b>	This is a rapid deployment scheme proposed to extend existing provision of segregated cycle infrastructure to ca. 1.3km. Laois County Council also propose to include roundabout upgrade works.
<b>Father Brown Avenue Active Travel Scheme</b>	Part 8 approval was obtained in December 2022. The scheme would remove right turning lanes and central medians and reallocate the road space to cycling infrastructure. It will ensure continuity of segregated cycling infrastructure.
<b>R445 Mountrath Road Rapid Deployment Scheme</b>	The scheme formalises advisory cycle lanes on the Mountrath Rd between the roundabouts at the Western Orbital Road to Knockmay Road. Further expansion of this scheme will be put forward for 2024 through rapid deployment measures on the R445.
<b>Safe Routes to School- Maryborough N.S.</b>	Maryborough N.S. was selected in the first round of the Safe Routes to School Funding. Works will include upgrades to the roundabouts on the Southern Circular Road.
<b>Southern Circular Road</b>	The scheme proposes works to the southern Circular Road as well as both the Lismard Roundabout and O’Dowling Roundabout.
<b>Junction Tightening Works</b>	Junction tightening involves the reduction in corner radii at major road/minor road junctions which reduces the distance pedestrians must cross on the minor road. The crossing points are raised, giving priority to pedestrians and benefitting wheelchair users, the mobility impaired and visually impaired.



### 6.5.2 N77 Abbeyleix Road Rehabilitation and Enhancement Scheme

TII recently completed the N77 Abbeyleix Road Rehabilitation and Enhancement Scheme, which involved upgrading and installing footpaths, cycle facilities, lighting and landscaping on the N77 Abbeyleix Road.

### 6.5.3 Town Bus Service

Since 2018, Laois County Council has worked with the NTA to develop a new town bus network for Portlaoise. Two legible and direct routes have been identified which will connect the four corners of the town with the Town Centre. They are:

- **Route PL1:** Ballyfin to Colliers Lane via the Town Centre
- **Route PL2:** Mountrath Road to Kilminchy via the Town Centre

Main destinations to be served include Laois Shopping Centre, Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise Train Station and James Fintan Lalor Avenue.

The route will operate a half hourly service Monday to Saturday from ca. 5.30am to midnight and on Sunday from ca. 8am to midnight. Where the routes overlap between the Harpur’s Lane/Coote Street stop and

Bridge Street/ Stradbally Road stop, frequency will be doubled.

This LTP notes the opportunity for an eventual third bus line (PL3) serving schools

in the south and connecting the J17 National Enterprise Park to the town centre.

The NTA’s PL1 and PL2 Routes are expected to be in operation in 2024.

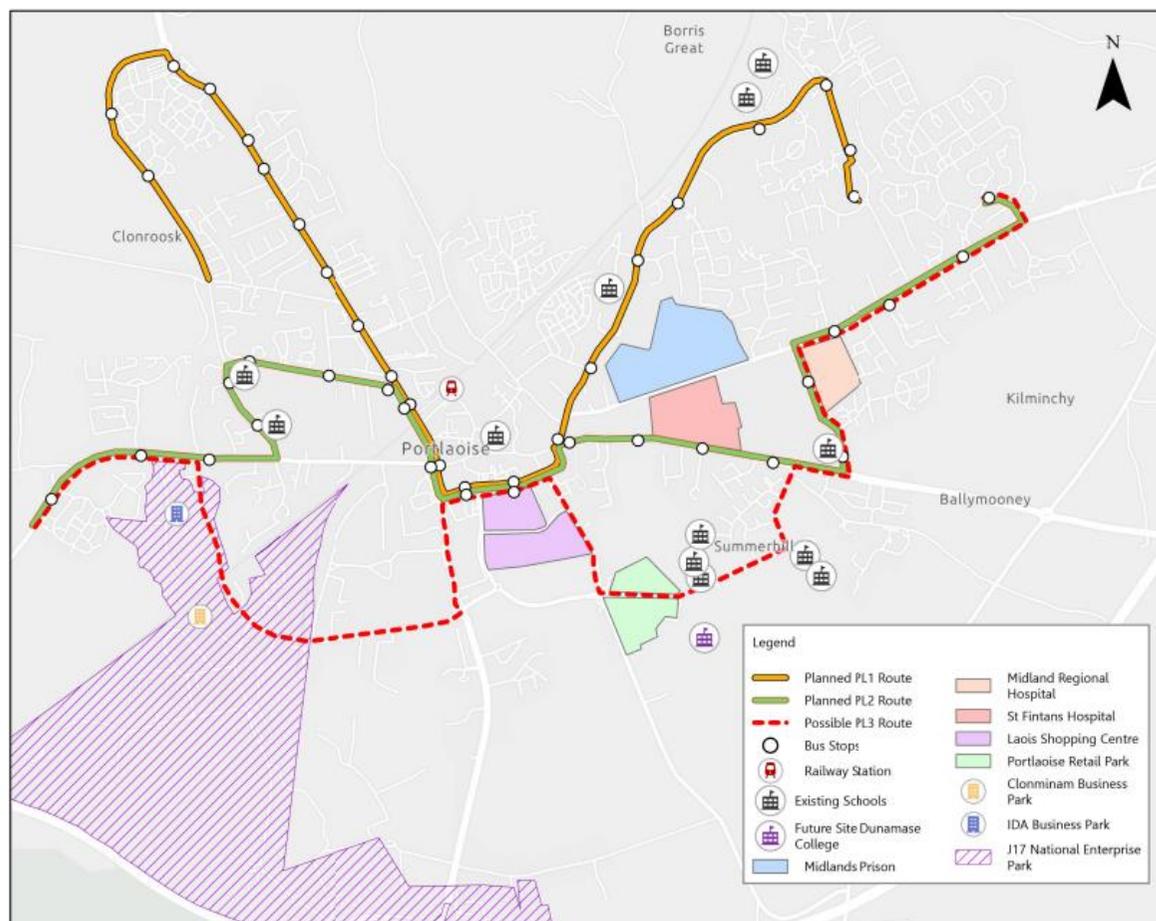


Figure 6-9 Proposed Portlaoise Town Bus Network. Source: DBFL.



## 7 Pre-Draft Consultation Summary

### 7.1 Overview

As part of the information gathering stage for the development of the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan, an online public consultation survey was prepared and open for submissions between 31 May and 14 July 2023.

The consultation survey utilises local insights to identify significant barriers and opportunities within Portlaoise. The survey, which received over 385 responses in total, also enabled residents to provide feedback on what they consider to be the key transport issues facing Portlaoise. This chapter outlines the main findings from this public consultation survey.

### 7.2 Car-dependence across age groups

From a total of 385 survey respondents, 56.7% **drive themselves to work / school**, while 70% **drive themselves to shops / leisure / recreational activities**.

The largest group of survey participants were the 36 – 44 age group (40% of the total). This group accounted for 42% of total responders who **drive themselves to work / education** and nearly 45% of total respondents who **drive themselves to shops / leisure / recreational activities**. This highlights the potential to reduce car dependency within Portlaoise by as much as 42-45% by encouraging behavioural change towards sustainable transport in the 36 – 44 age group.

### 7.3 How do children travel to school?

The consultation survey asked parents how their children currently travel to school. 56% of parents / guardians / caretakers said that they drive their children **to school and then return home**, or that they **drive them on their way to work / other commitments**. Only 15% of parents chose **they take the bus independently**, while even less chose **I walk with them** (13.3%). Only 1.4% of parents said that their child cycles independently.

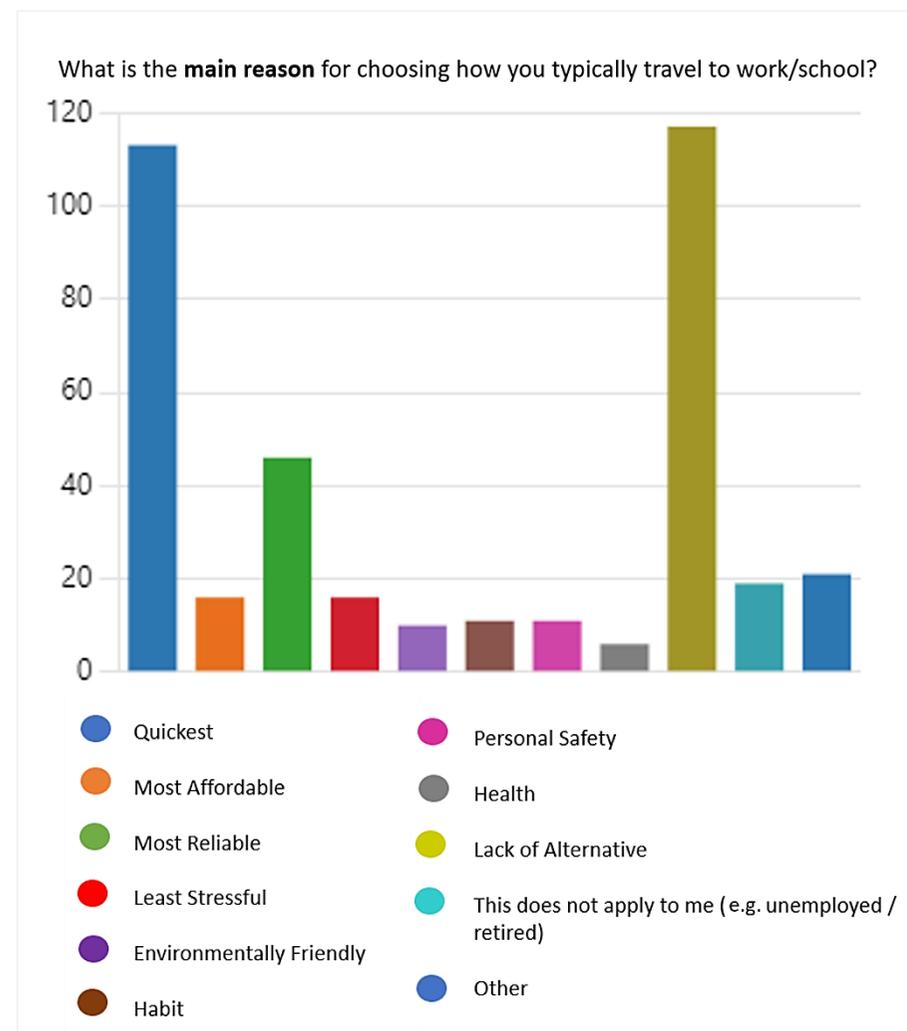


Figure 7-1 results from the Pre-Draft Public Consultation outlining how people make their transport choices.



65% of the parents / guardians / caretakers who said that they **drive them to school and then return home**, or that they **drive them on their way to work / other commitments** are in the 36-44 age group. The most popular answers given by those who **drive** their children to school within the 36-44 age group chose that they do so because it is the **quickest** (41.3%) and because of **a lack of an alternative** (29.3%).

Due to a lack of alternatives and the ability to complete journeys quicker by car, the travel patterns of parents in the 36-44 age group are resulting in unsustainable travel patterns for their children as well. By working to expand opportunities for walking, cycling and taking the bus, the LTP works to provide a broader range of safe transport options for people in this age group so that walking, cycling and taking the bus to school become viable alternatives for school transport in Portlaoise.

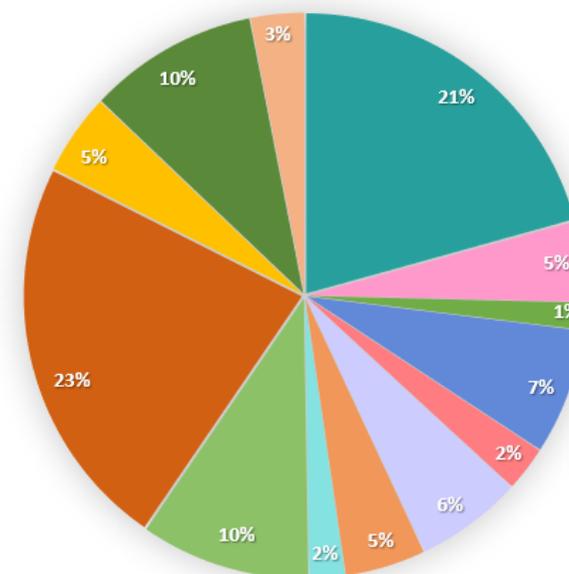
Furthermore, when asked what they believe are the main barriers to children walking to school, **other** was most popular answer given by parents (23%). Over 60% of these comments highlighted the **distance / location** of schools as discouraging children from walking.

Additionally, when asked which measures would support their child walking or cycling more, the most popular answers parents gave were **more Footpaths / Dedicated Cycle Lanes** (35%), **Safe Crossings** (12.5%) and **Park and Strides** (12.5%).

### 7.4 Enhanced Bus Network

Survey responders were asked about the most common key issues facing the transport network in Portlaoise today. From the total **1158 issues** raised, 27% mentioned bus-related issues. Common concerns highlighted the need for an integrated bus service serving Portlaoise, peripheral towns and rural / remote locations. The need for regular school buses for primary/post-primary students, and improved accessibility and legibility of existing / future bus shelters was also highlighted.

Main barriers to children cycling to school



- I don't think it's safe because of fast vehicular speeds / poor driver behaviour
- I don't have time to cycle with them
- They don't have a bike
- I drive to work / other commitments after dropping them to school
- The topography is too steep for them to cycle
- They don't know how to cycle
- They already cycle
- Distance is too far and they are too young
- Other
- There are no dedicated cycle lanes separated from vehicular traffic
- Their schoolbag is too heavy
- There are not enough safe crossings along the route
- It's easy to drive and drop them off at the school

Figure 7-2 Results from the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Survey showing the main barriers to children cycling to school



The survey also asked survey responders which measures would encourage them to use more public transport. From **373** responses, the three most popular answers were **better waiting facilities** (54.1%), **more frequent services** (53.8%) and **more reliable timetable information** (53.6.%). Other popular answers included **bus stops closer to home** (46.1%) and **more direct routes** (32.7%).

### 7.5 An integrated cycling network

Approximately 12% of key issues were cycling-related concerns, mainly detailing the absence of segregated cycle lanes near schools, roundabouts / junctions, and arterial / link streets (e.g., Mountmellick Road and Mountrath Road).

In total, less than 5% of survey respondents cycle to work / education. Based on 386 responses, 232 (60%) said a **lack of dedicated cycle lanes separate from vehicular traffic** was the biggest barrier to cycling more around Portlaoise.

65% of respondents also said the provision of **dedicated cycle lanes separated from traffic** would encourage them to cycle more, followed by **Off-Road / Greenway Routes**

(55%) and **More Cycle Storage Facilities** (32%).

### 7.6 Traffic within Portlaoise

Approximately 7% of key issues highlighted traffic as a concern within Portlaoise. **I don't feel safe because of driver behaviour / vehicular traffic** was the third greatest barrier to walking more around Portlaoise and the second greatest barrier for cycling. Many of the key issues concerning traffic highlighted the risks school children face when navigating traffic near schools. As one respondent noted, **"I drive my child because I couldn't let him navigate the traffic by himself."**

### 7.7 Public Desire for Modal Change

Most importantly, 42% of survey responders said they would consider changing their typical mode of travel, while another 36% said **maybe**. Only 22% said that they are not willing to do so. This sentiment provides strong impetus for the LTP.

When asked which mode you would like to change to, the greatest demand leans toward **bus** at 37%, while another 33% of responders said **bike**. **Walking** was also popular (17.5%). Therefore, interventions which promote

walking, cycling and public transport as viable alternatives to the private car will not only be well received, but are likely to encourage significant modal change.

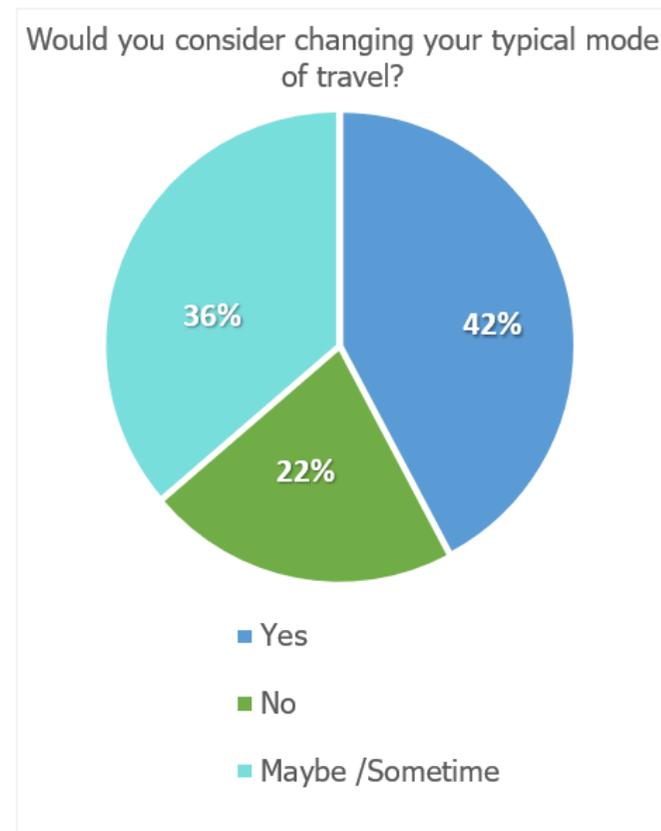


Figure 7-3 Results from the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Survey showing the % of people willing to change their typical mode of travel.



### 7.8 Mobility of Care

Women represented approximately 80% of parents/guardians/ caretakers who said that **they drive their children to school and then return home or on the way to work / other commitments**. Women also submitted 78% of concerns highlighting the barriers preventing children from walking more to school. These responses typically noted the challenges collecting and dropping kids to school. One woman stated they **“have to go to work straight after dropping them to the bus.”**

### 7.9 Creating safer places for women

**I don't feel safe on my own / at night** was the second largest barrier to walking more around Portlaoise (31.3%). 83% of respondents who gave this answer were women, compared with the 13.7% who were men. In total, 70% of survey responders were women, from which 40% said **I don't feel safe on my own / at night** was a barrier to walking more. One respondent noted the “need to feel safe walking alone at night as a woman.”

Significantly more women felt that driver behaviour formed a bigger barrier to walking around Portlaoise Town than lack of safe footpaths, pointing out that driver behaviour can be more influential than infrastructure.

The survey results also show that a higher number of women drive themselves to work and / or education at 59.6%, compared to men at 52.2%. Similarly, more women **drive themselves to shops, leisure and recreational activities** compared to men. Additionally, more women answered that they **drive themselves to work and / or education**, as well as **to shops, leisure and recreational activities** – 65.1% of women drive themselves to both, compared to 49.5% of men who answered this question.

Furthermore, the results showed that more men work from home compared to women, as of the total 182 who answered that they **never work from home**, 67% of responders were women. This highlights that women in Portlaoise have different mobility needs to men.

Global research by organisations such as the UN show that women tend to have more complex patterns of mobility characterised by trip chaining (making numerous small trips as part of a larger journey such as running errands and buying groceries on the way to work) and caregiving duties. The different mobility needs of men and women are further discussed in **Chapter 11 – Walking and the Public Realm**.

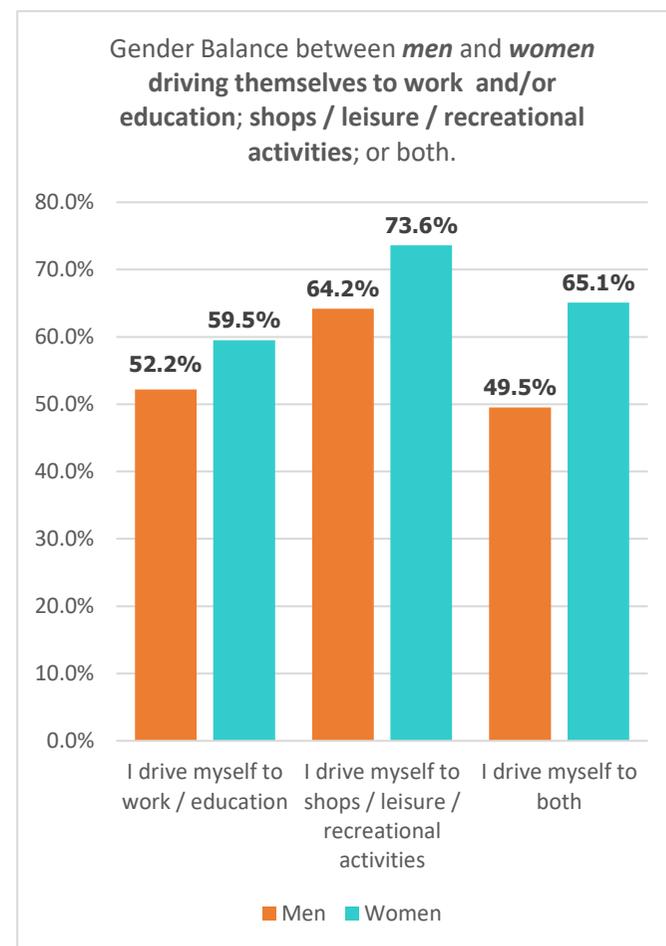


Figure 7-4 Results from the Pre-Draft Public Consultation Survey showing the percentage of women overall and of men overall who drive themselves to work / education; to shops / leisure / recreational activities; and both.





## 7.10 Summary of Key Points

### Barriers to Children Walking / Cycling to School

Missing footpaths (21%) and fast vehicular speeds / driver behaviour (14%) are major reasons why children do not walk to school. Furthermore, vehicular speeds and driver behaviour, and lack of dedicated cycle lanes were the primary reasons why children do not cycle to school, both at 20%.

34.8% of survey responders stated that more footpaths and dedicated cycle lanes would support their child in walking or cycling to school. This LTP recommends measures to address these issues, as well as recommending Safe Routes to School initiatives to ensure the provision of segregated and safe cycling facilities, as well as continuous footpaths and crossings. Other supports to encourage children to walk/cycle include Park and Strides and a Cycle Bus.

### Town Bus Network

The Survey indicated a strong need for a town bus network in Portlaoise. From over 1158 issues raised, 27.2% mentioned bus-related issues, which are further discussed in **Chapter 14 – Public Transport**. Issues include:

- More frequent bus services to serve peripheral towns including Abbeyleix, Mountrath, Mountmellick, as well as Portlaoise Town Centre
- Regular school buses for students
- Park and Stride facilities
- New high-quality bus shelters
- Upgrading existing bus shelters in terms of visibility and route information
- Situating bus stops closer to Portlaoise town centre and near schools/places of work

### Town Centre Safety

One of the biggest **barriers to walking around Portlaoise** is safety, including safety at night (31.3%). It is worth highlighting that 83% of respondents who *answered I don't feel safe at night on my own* were women, compared with the 18 (13.7%) who were men. This highlights the need for greater interventions aimed at enhancing the safety of the pedestrian environment within the Town Centre. This LTP recommends measures to increase safety including:

- Greater street lighting, especially in winter
- Cycle parking areas which are visible / secure

- Situating public transport facilities within close proximity to shops, employment centres and recreation areas.

More women choose to drive to shops / leisure as well as work / education than men, indicating that women in Portlaoise experience greater car dependency than men. While convenience and lack of alternatives are contributing factors, safety plays a major role. Recommendations in this LTP address the safety issue with particular reference to gender-based safety. See **Chapter 11 – Walking and the Public Realm** for more details.

### Behavioural Change Programmes

Behavioural change programmes are needed to respond to the 36-44 age group in particular, of which 77% prefer to drive to shops / leisure / recreational activities over active travel modes and public transport, and 56.7% choose to drive to work / education. The majority of this group also drive their children to school (79%) over alternative modes.

Of the 56.7% of the total responders who drive themselves to work / education, 32.4% would switch to cycling, and 30.1% would switch to public transport if facilities were provided for them. This provides further impetus for the delivery of this LTP.



Initiatives to change behaviour and the approach to active travel for this age cohort includes Workplace Travel Plans, Safe Route to School (STRS), the delivery of the Laois County Council Active Travel Programme to provide residents with enhanced walking and cycling facilities.



Figure 7-5 Article from Laois Live (6 June 2023) publicising the pre-draft public consultation survey and the QR code to enter the survey.



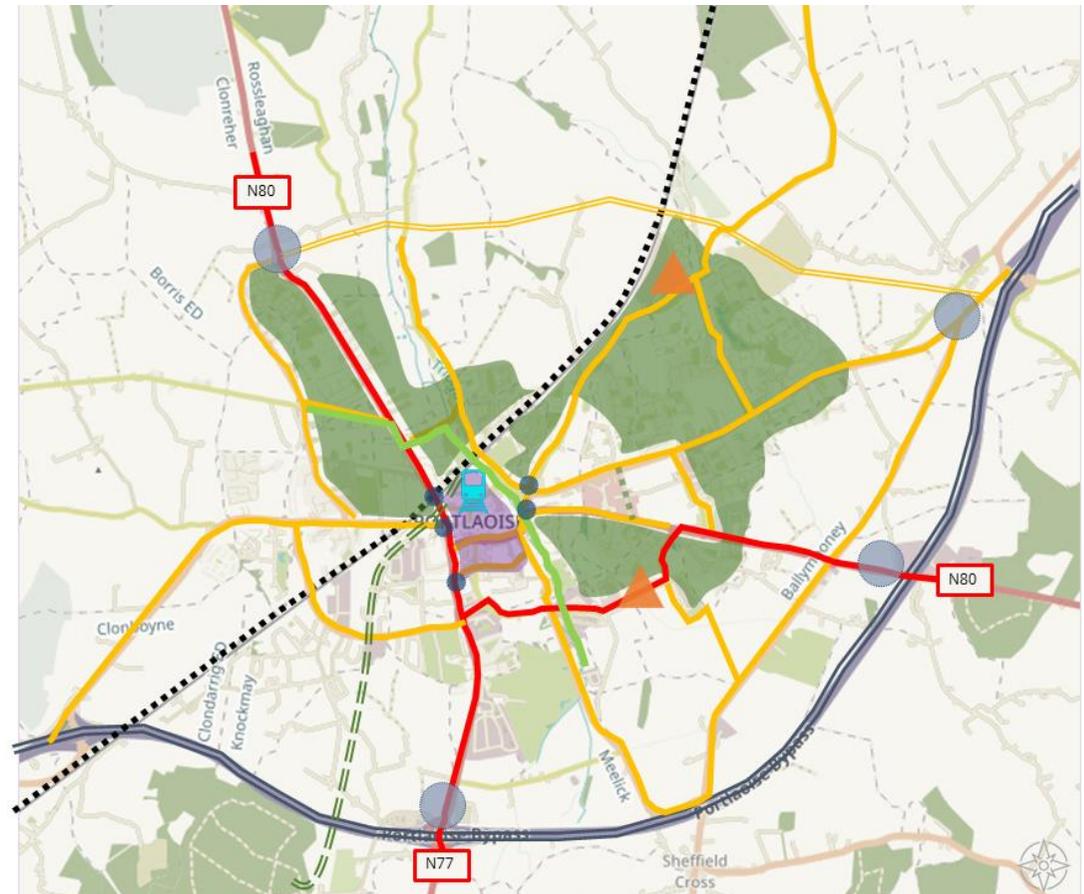
# 8 Option Development and Assessment

## 8.1 Overview

The development and analysis of options follows the completion of baseline studies and establishment of context in the ABTA methodology. The Options Development stage identifies solutions to the weaknesses identified in the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Constraints (SWOC) presented in Section 2-10 to develop a long list of options.

The Options Assessment stage then packages those options into scenarios and assesses whether the options meet the Transport Objectives of the Local Transport Plan. Scenarios that meet the objectives are further analysed in a Multi-Criteria Assessment with criteria drawn from the Department of Transport’s Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF). Each scenario often contains multiple options, which are considered corporately in the evaluation of scenarios.

Scenarios that meet the objectives of the Local Transport Plan and would have a positive impact as determined by the MCA are then included in **Part B** of the draft Local Transport Plan, which is prepared in Parts 4 and 5 of the ABTA process. A public consultation is held on the draft Local Transport Plan and the input from the public consultation, as well as from statutory stakeholders, will inform the finalisation of the LTP. In collaboration with Laois County Council, the NTA and TII and informed by public feedback, the Local Transport Plan will propose a phasing of projects and initiatives.



- Arterial streets with cycling and pedestrian infrastructure
- Link streets with cycling and pedestrian infrastructure
- Triogue Way
- Portlaoise Northern Orbital Route
- - - Sustainable transport corridor
- Enhanced permeability and 30 km/h speed zones
- Urban Gateway with potential for Park + Ride
- Town centre zone with pedestrian priority and 30km/h speed limit
- Inner Gateways to transition to Town Centre 30 kph zone
- ▲ Safe Routes to School planned and future
- 🚂 Train station with town mobility hub
- - - - Railway
- = = = Motorway

Preliminary Movement Strategy for Portlaoise 2030



## 8.2 Preliminary Movement Strategy

A conceptual preliminary movement strategy (see page above) was developed early in the Options Development process to inform the development of options and recommendations for improving the accessibility, connectivity and liveability of Portlaoise. The preliminary movement strategy builds on the existing policies and transport proposals set out in the earlier **Baseline Conditions and Context Report** and addresses weaknesses found in the **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (S.W.O.C)** analysis.

## 8.3 Principles

To ensure that the options developed address the weaknesses in the SWOC, key principles identified for developing options in Portlaoise were formulated. They include:

Reimagining Portlaoise’s urban core as a more **people-oriented town centre** as envisaged by the *Portlaoise 2040* vision document is proposed. The key measure is reducing vehicular traffic within Portlaoise town centre to facilitate a quieter, more attractive public realm for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate. In consultation with TII, the NTA and other relevant stakeholders this may involve the long-term reclassification of roads within the Study Area.

Revitalising the town centre may include shared streets, along with traffic-calming measures such as speed reductions, and **prioritising movement by pedestrians and cyclists**. A ring of transition zones and inner gateways will surround the centre of Portlaoise, providing a progressively more pedestrian-focused environment.

Improving **permeability** between schools and residential areas and implementing **Safe Routes to School (SRTS) measures** to encourage more children to walk and cycle to school.

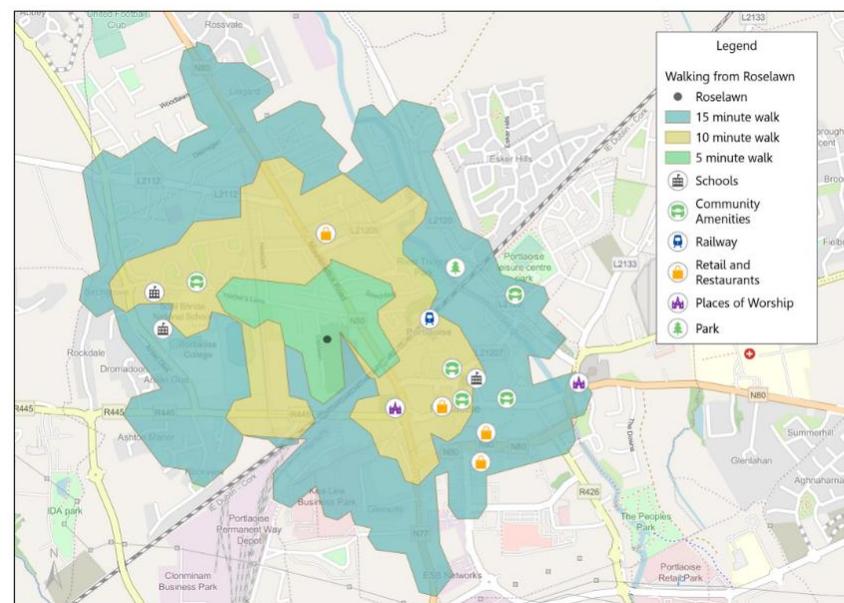


Figure 8-1 An example of destinations currently available within a 15-minute walk of Roselawn. Improvements to permeability would decrease the time needed to reach destinations. Cycling rather than walking increases the number of destinations that can be reached in a 15-minute journey.

Improving **permeability** between main squares and roads by removing barriers and de-cluttering – among other actions – could further this process of reinvigorating Portlaoise’s town centre as a vibrant space in which people work, socialise and live.

A **dedicated cycle network** for Portlaoise town is proposed, following the cycle connections proposed for the town in the NTA’s National Cycle Network *Cycle Connects* and TII’s *National Cycle Network*.

**Completion of the Triogue Way** as well as a new sustainable transport corridor leading to Togher Woods that would include attractive



pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. These schemes emphasise ease of use for pedestrians and cyclists and a sense of safety and security.

Increasing opportunities for completing daily tasks by short walking or cycling journeys, using the **15-Minute town concept** (see Figure 8-1 above).

**Maximising accessibility and connectivity of Portlaoise’s rail and bus network** by improving connectivity between places where people live, work, go to school and socialise. This includes the development of the **new town bus service** within Portlaoise, which will provide residents with a high-quality and accessible bus route connecting the town centre with the outskirts of Portlaoise.

It is proposed that Portlaoise Railway Station and its surroundings be redeveloped into an upgraded **intermodal transport hub**, serving Portlaoise and the entire Midlands region and beyond as a core transport nexus situated directly in the centre of Ireland.

To maximise the impact of the **new town bus service**, the LTP makes recommendations to improve **bus stop** permeability.

**Park-and-Ride** or **Park-and-Stride** could help alleviate traffic congestion in the town centre. **Park-and-Ride** facilities developed on the town’s periphery could prevent large volumes of vehicular traffic from entering the town centre, while **Park-and-Stride** set-down locations could improve congestion around schools. The LTP makes high-level suggestions for **Park-and-Ride** and **Park-and-Stride** locations that require further study by Laois County Council, the NTA, TII and other stakeholders.

## 8.4 Place-based considerations

These principles helped inform the development of options which were screened against the issues identified in the SWOC Analysis. The long list of options was organised by mode, but the identification of options had awareness of the following place-based considerations.

### Place-making – Town Centre Core Area

- Revitalisation of Main Street and Town Centre and Transformation of James Fintan Lalor Avenue (N80) as envisaged by *Portlaoise 2040*;
- Revitalisation of town centre laneways to provide high-quality pedestrian and cyclist connectivity;
- Reallocation of car parking space within the town centre;
- Provision of parking hubs for bicycles;
- Creation of new pedestrian/cycle linkages throughout the town centre
- Introduce Transition Zones and Gateways on approaches to town centre.
- Long-term consideration of removal of HGVs from town centre;

### Multi-functional Arterial Routes and Link Roads

- Reconfiguration of arterial and link streets to reallocate road space, allowing for the creation of enhanced footpaths and segregated bike lanes.
- Consideration of Portlaoise Southern Circular Road as a multi-modal arterial road
- Consideration of Portlaoise Northern Orbital Route (NOR) as a multi-modal arterial road
- Reconfigure roundabouts and junctions to DMURS standards.
- Permeability improvements throughout Portlaoise, including in residential neighbourhoods.
- Complete the urban cycle network proposed in Cycle Connects



### Greenways and Blueways

- Triogue Way.
- Sustainable access to Portlaoise GAA, perhaps ahead of residential development.
- Incorporation of planting and Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDS) wherever possible.
- Utilise the disused Portlaoise-Togher rail line as a sustainable transport corridor.

### Interchange Hub at Portlaoise Railway Station

- Establish a new intermodal transport hub on the site of the current Portlaoise Rail Station where trains, bus-links, and cycle-paths could all converge seamlessly on the one point, allowing maximum fluidity of access both around and into Portlaoise.

### Public Realm Improvements

- Interventions to include junction- tightening, new pedestrian crossings, the opening-up of established desire lines between as-of-yet unconnected areas, and the de-cluttering of streets and open areas within the town centre.

### Safe Routes to School

- Interventions to increase the percentage of primary and secondary school students walking, cycling or taking public transport to school, introducing students to concepts like sustainable mobility and active travel from a young age and letting them gain the health benefits of active mobility.

## 8.5 Option Development and Assessment Process

With these Principles and Place-based Considerations in mind, the ABTA process formalised a long list of options and assessed them. The development and assessment took place in four steps:

1. Options for improving the walking, cycling, public transport and road networks in the Study Area were identified. All options identified are informed by the principles and place-based considerations and address weaknesses identified in the SWOC Analysis.
2. These options that address weaknesses are packaged into scenarios. The analysis of scenarios rather than individual schemes highlights the importance of the creation of a network, building on the strengths of the existing transport network and current active travel schemes and public transport projects that Laois County Council, the NTA and TII are delivering in Portlaoise.
3. These scenarios are screened against the draft Portlaoise Transport Objectives to ensure that they meet the objectives. The draft Transport Objectives are:
  - Support the **Compact Growth** of Portlaoise through the careful integration of land use and transport planning.
  - Improve and prioritise **access** to local services by sustainable modes, in particular walking and cycling, with links to public transport for longer journeys.
  - Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of **public transport services** in Portlaoise.
  - Maximise the potential of **natural environment assets** and the design and layout of the **built environment** to **facilitate connectivity and safe and permeable walking and cycling networks**.
  - Enhance the **vibrancy, accessibility, liveability and safety** of Portlaoise through **improved public realm, place-making** and a **Healthy Streets approach**.



- Scenarios that meet the draft Portlaoise Transport Objectives are submitted to a Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) based on criteria from the Transport Appraisal Framework (2023).



Figure 8-2 Barriers across pedestrian desire lines was identified as a weakness in the SWOC analysis. For example, along Ballyfin Road access to an unfinished housing estate is blocked. When the estate is completed, it could provide permeability to Harpur’s Lane and make it easier for pedestrians or cyclists to access Scoil Bhríde or Portlaoise College. Source: DBFL.

The six MCA criteria with their descriptors from the TAF are as follows:

Accessibility	Measures how the proposed scenario will improve access to the town centre, educational institutions, hospitals, transport centres (the railway station and bus stops), parks, playgrounds, sporting clubs, employment areas.
Social	Examines how the proposed scenario will impact accessibility for people from deprived groups or different transport needs, as well as gender specific impacts.
Land Use	Considers the impact of the proposed scenarios on the quality of the public realm, existing public transport facilities and land use zoning
Safety	Assesses the proposed schemes’ impact on safety and security for all road users
Climate Change	Explores how the proposed scenarios provide climate change mitigation and adaptation
Local Environment Impact	Examines the impact of the proposed schemes on air quality, noise and vibration, biodiversity, water resources and landscape and visual quality. Because almost all the schemes proposed are located in an existing urban environment, it is expected that the effect of the proposed scheme will be neutral. A few proposed options, however, would have positive or negative environmental impact, so the criterion was included.

Table 8-1 MCA Criteria from the TAF. Source: Department of Transport.

Each proposed scenario is evaluated on a five-point scale with the effects ranging from highly positive to highly negative as judged against the existing conditions and with a view to how the proposed scheme supports the draft Transport Objectives.



Highly positive	The option significantly improves conditions for the relevant criteria.	
Mildly positive	The option is likely to improve conditions for the relevant criteria.	
Neutral	The option will result in no change in conditions for the relevant criteria.	
Mildly negative	The option is likely to worsen conditions for the relevant criteria.	
Highly negative	The option significantly worsens conditions for the relevant criteria.	

Table 8-2 Criterion Assessment from the TAF. Source: Department of Transport.

Because the ABTA process prepares an initial evaluation of packaged scenarios and not individual schemes, the sub-categories of the TAF are not used.

### 8.6 Option Development

Options that addressed weaknesses in the SWOC were separated into the following modal categories:

- Improve conditions for **Walking** in Portlaoise
- Improve conditions for **Cycling** in Portlaoise
- Upgrade **Junctions** to make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to cross
- Create greater **Permeability** for pedestrians and cyclists
- Develop the **Public Transport** network in Portlaoise
- Provide improvements to the **Road Network** in Portlaoise

- Encourage effective **Parking Management** in Portlaoise
- Deliver a suite of **Supporting Measures**

An example of options considered for Mountmellick Avenue/ Coote Street (N80) follows on the next page in Table 8-3.

### 8.7 Option Assessment

Following the completion of the long list of options, all of which addressed weaknesses identified in the SWOC, individual options were packaged into scenarios based on mode and type of improvement. For example, walking improvements were divided into four scenarios:

- **Scenario 1** primarily comprises projects that Laois County Council has already committed to delivering.
- **Scenario 2** includes options that improve pedestrian access to schools and workplaces.
- **Scenario 3** focuses on town centre improvements that can be delivered in the short to medium term to deliver the draft Local Transport Objectives and the goals of *Portlaoise 2040*.
- **Scenario 4** is comprised of more complex projects that deliver the draft Transport Objectives and align with policy, but are more complicated.
- A **Do Nothing** Scenario was also included for each mode for comparison.

The scenarios were first sifted against the draft Transport Objectives. Because the scenarios were based on options that addressed weaknesses identified in the SWOC, all scenarios met at least one draft Transport Objective and were passed to the MCA. All scenarios were judged to have a mildly positive or highly positive impact in the MCA except for the **Do Nothing** Scenario.



Table 8-3 A long list of options for improvements along Mountmellick Road/ Coote Street (N80) in Portlaoise. Source: DBFL.

Liveable Arterials	Walking	Cycling	Permeability	Junctions	Public Transport	Road Network	Parking Management	Supporting Measures	
Mountmellick Road/ Coote St (N80)	W1: Add signalised pedestrian crossing points	C1: Connection to River Triogue Greenway	PY1: Lighting and security improvement to laneway south of Leinster Council GAA Office	J1: Tighten junctions at: *Greenview *Liogard *Glenregan *Lakeglen *Newpark *Woodlawn Villas *Harpur's Lane *Elm Lawn *Ballyfin	PT1: Introduction of P1 route	R1: Redesign of Ballyfin junction	PM1: Introduction of Park and Ride facility at northern end of Mountmellick Rd.	SM1: Enhanced public realm at northern entrance to railway platform	
	W2: Remove street clutter	C2: Examination of carriageway widths and installation of cycle lanes where possible		J2: Redesign of Market Square discussed in Town Centre Options	PT2: New in-line bus stops at: *De Vesci Court *Carmody Way *The Village Green *Liogard/Opp. Liogard *O'Moore Place/Centra Mountmellick Road *Mountmellick Road/ Green Mill Lane *Coote Street	R2: Connection to Northern Orbital Route			
	W3: Remove pedestrian guardrails	C4: Shuttle system under railway line to provide space for cycle lanes					R3: Creation of Inner Gateway at Harpur's Lane with a narrow carriageway and 30 kph speed limit		
		C5: Consideration of Quietway alternative					R4: Introduction of shuttle system under railway line following construction of Northern Orbital Route		



The scenarios that had a positive impact in the MCA form the basis for the recommended Measures in the following chapters. Scenarios were further refined through transport modelling (see **Chapter 18 – Transport Modelling Assessment and Outcomes**). The public has the opportunity to consult on the draft Local Transport Plan; the results of the public consultation will further refine the Scenarios developed. Following the finalisation of the Local Transport Plan, the Elected Members of Laois County Council are responsible for its adoption.

The LTP includes an implementation table (see **Chapter 19 – Implementation**) of the phasing of individual schemes and projects within the Local Transport Plan Measures. As discussed and agreed with Laois County Council, implementation will depend on factors such as:

- Laois County Council’s priorities;
- The availability of funding and likelihood of completing projects using Rapid Build principles
- Agreement with landowners
- Feasibility and environmental appraisals
- The appropriate statutory approval processes with the necessary public consultation.

All individual projects must align with national, regional and local policy, including *Portlaoise 2040*. Should Laois County Council seek to deliver individual projects included in the scenarios, each individual scheme will be assessed separately and subject to appropriate feasibility, environmental, archaeological and architectural screenings and statutory approval processes.

The Options and Measures that follow in **Part B** have been developed and analysed through the Option Development and Assessment process. Collectively, these present scenarios whose implementation

leads to the creation of safe, coherent, comfortable, direct and attractive transport networks within Portlaoise, fulfilling the Draft Transport Objectives and informing this Plan.



*Figure 8-3 Community severance created by the rail network is a Weakness identified in the SWOC Analysis and several options developed attempted to improve safe and secure pedestrian and cyclist access to rail services. High-quality rail service to and from Portlaoise is also an Opportunity and several options sought to improve accessibility to rail services from Portlaoise. Source: DBFL.*



# Part B

## The Strategy



## 9 Active Travel Network

### 9.1 Overview

Active travel, i.e. walking, wheeling, cycling or scooting, is the most sustainable form of mobility, and can benefit both individuals and society in many different ways.

Land use planning and the design of the built environment are key determinants in someone choosing to cycle, walk or scoot. Where in the past car ownership propelled streets to be designed in a manner that prioritised the movement of cars, recent years have shown a willingness to re-examine the role our streets play as places that support cycling, scooting and walking.

Government investment in Active Travel has increased significantly in recent years, reflecting commitments made to move away from the private car towards more sustainable travel modes, as summarised in the **National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)**, the **Climate Action Plan 2023** and the **National Sustainable Mobility Policy**.

This Local Transport Plan aims to prioritise active travel modes in Portlaoise. Continued

investment in active travel modes will be guided by the speed at which they can be achieved, in accordance with prevailing government guidance.

The first chapter in **Part B** is a chapter that sets out recommendations for improving safety at junctions, which impacts pedestrians and cyclists. The following chapters present Measures by mode in line with the **DMURS** User Hierarchy. Recommendations will be first set out for walking, cycling and permeability, followed by Public Transport (bus and rail), the Roads Network, Parking Management, and Supporting Measures

### 9.2 Active Travel Targets

These chapters outline measures and recommendations that will enable a shift to sustainable modes of travel in line with European, National, Regional and Local policy objectives and targets.

The following chapters on Junctions, Walking and the Public Realm and Cycling focus on measures to promote active travel that will contribute to Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Active travel is key to achieving this target by 2030.

#### What is Active Travel?



Active Travel is travelling with a purpose and using your own energy – such as walking, cycling, wheeling and scooting – to make a journey. It is intended to be an inclusive term and includes anyone using any type of bicycle, adapted bicycle, tricycle, mobility aid or wheelchair.

The LTP sets modal share targets (see Table 9-1) for the Study Area that are higher than the modal share targets found in the *Laois County Development Plan* to reflect the availability of an active travel network and public transport in Portlaoise.

The modal share targets are separated by work and school trips to reflect the importance of school transport to the transport network in Portlaoise.

Modal Share targets for Active Travel		
	2016	2040
Laois County Development Plan	7%	35%
LTP School Trips	23%	40%
LTP Work Trips	12%	40%

Table 9-1 Modal Share Targets for Active Travel





“ There is a severe lack of dedicated cycle lanes and safe footpaths for walking. There is also a serious issue with pedestrian crossings in Portlaoise Town Centre. Previous dangerous experiences have since prompted me to drive instead of choosing to walk and cycle. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



Figure 9-1 A lack of active travel facilities can make active travel unattractive. Source: DBFL.

## Measure AT 1

### Laois County Council Active Travel Programme

Laois County Council and the NTA will work in collaboration to successfully deliver the following Active Travel schemes by 2028:

- Dublin Road (Grenville Estate to Kilminchy roundabout)
- Stradbally Road (Southern Circular Road to Tyrells Site)
- Beladd Active Travel Scheme
- Triogue Way
- Father Brown Avenue Active Travel Scheme
- R445 Mountrath Road - Rapid Deployment Scheme
- Borris Road Scheme
- Safe Routes to School – Maryborough National School.
- Southern Circular Road Active Travel Scheme



## 10 Junctions

### 10.1 Overview

Some junctions in Portlaoise can be unfriendly to pedestrians and cyclists and act as a disincentive to active travel. Vulnerable road users, such as children, those with disabilities or impairments, or cyclists using adapted bikes, may find some junctions or crossings particularly difficult. Having been designed primarily for vehicular traffic, the wide junction splays and corner radii and lack of dropped kerbs and tactile paving on some junctions make it difficult for people walking and cycling to cross safely.

Junction design in Portlaoise, as is the case in most towns across Ireland, has traditionally prioritised motor vehicle movement. However, the **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets** (DMURS) and the **Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads** (TII DN-GEO-03084) both state that a more balanced approach should be taken to optimise the safe and direct movement of pedestrians and cyclists through these junctions, whilst also balancing the needs of all road users.

Local junctions such as entrances to development or side roads should also be



Figure 10-1 The junction of Harpur's Lane and Mountmellick Road typifies some junctions in Portlaoise with wide corner radii, excessive turning lanes and little provision for pedestrians or cyclists. Source: DBFL.

reviewed and improved in line with **DMURS** and the **Treatment of Transition Zones** to include elements such as compact corner radii, landscaping, tactile paving, footpath widening and raised tables. Furthermore, changes to kerb lines will calm traffic and assist pedestrian movement by reducing crossing distances and allowing them to cross at-grade. Laois County Council has already begun this process.

As discussed in **Chapter 15 – Road Network**, the streets of Portlaoise are made up of national roads and regional and local streets. Based on DMURS and TII Standards, the following should be included in the design of new or upgraded junctions:

- Provide crossings on all arms of a junction, including for cyclists where appropriate
- Reduce kerb radii, thereby reducing crossing distances for pedestrians and slowing turning vehicles.
- Omit left turn slips, which generally provide little vehicular capacity but are disruptive for pedestrians and cyclists
- Omit staggered crossings in favour of direct/single phase crossings

## Measure JN 1

### Development Management of Junctions

Laois County Council will adhere to the design standards and principles for junctions identified in the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*, the *Cycle Design Manual*, and TII Publications, including the *Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads*, and *DMURS Advice Note 6: Priority Junction Tightening Measures* to ensure pedestrian and cyclist priority at any new junctions in Portlaoise.

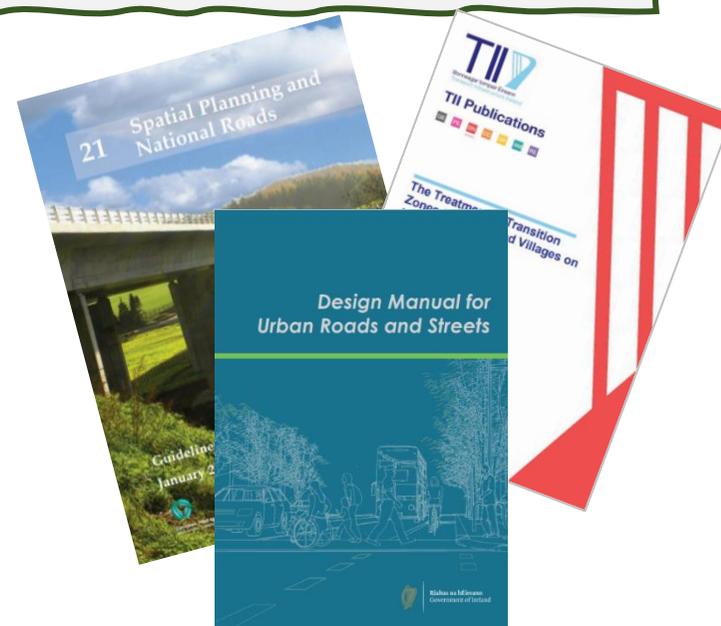
LCC will adhere to DoECLG's *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidance for Planning Authorities* and limit the number of new entrances or junctions on national roads, thereby preserving their strategic transport function.

LTP Active Travel proposals that interact with the N80 and N77 will do so in a manner that prioritises safe active travel routes while maintaining the safe and efficient operation of the National Roads Network in accordance with the DoECLG *Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities*. Detailed design and implementation of such proposals shall be in compliance with TII Publications and proceed subject to the agreement of TII.

- Include pedestrian, cyclist, and bus passenger delays in the optimisation of traffic signal phasing and timings
- Follow the relevant design guides

Within the centres of towns and villages that lie on National Roads, the treatments described in DMURS shall apply. Note that throughout the entire length of National Roads through towns and villages, the design shall also comply with all relevant requirements within TII Publications (Standards) for National Roads.

DN-GEO-03084



## 10.2 Junction Improvements

This LTP recommends an evidence-based approach to junction improvements throughout Portlaoise. Junctions were chosen based on the following criteria:

- An analysis of historic collision data in Portlaoise
- General patterns of collisions involving pedestrians, cyclists and private vehicles
- Key destinations served by the junctions
- CycleConnects and Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

An analysis of reported collisions in Portlaoise from 2016-2020 (the latest available figures from the Road Safety Authority (RSA)) identified clusters of collisions at the following locations:

- Mountmellick Road / Coote Street (N80)
- Dublin Road (R445)
- Main Street
- James Fintan Lalor Avenue (N80) and surrounds
- Timahoe Roundabout (James Fintan Lalor N80/Well Rd R426)
- Stradbally Road near the roundabout with the Southern Circular Road. While there are not as many collisions as in the other clusters, the proximity to the Summerhill School Campus makes this cluster concerning.

Selecting junctions on these criteria for redesign will help remove barriers to walking and cycling, making active travel more accessible. The NTA's draft *CycleConnects* gives guidance on upgrading junctions on the network, which will benefit pedestrians as well. In addition, the Safe Routes to School funding for Maryborough N.S. will facilitate the redesign of roundabouts along the Southern Circular Road, making it easier for school children at all five primary schools along the Southern Circular Road to access the school campuses on foot, bike or scooter.

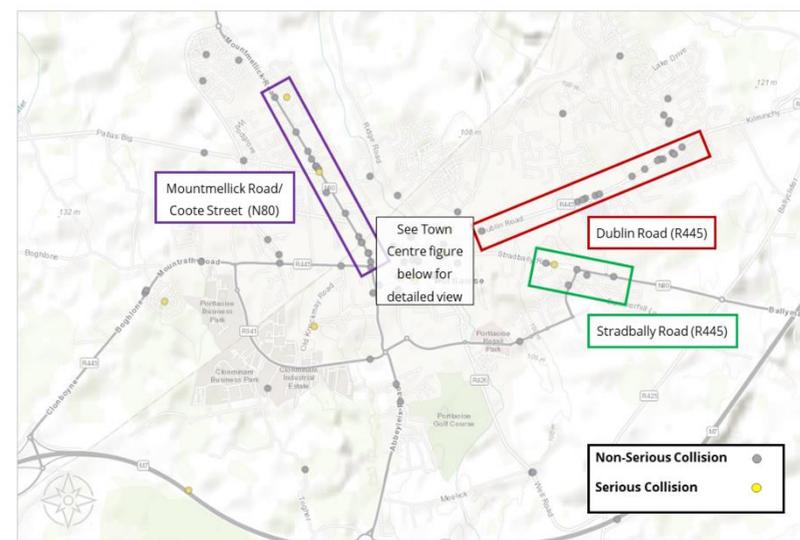


Figure 10-2 Collision analysis for Portlaoise 2016-2020

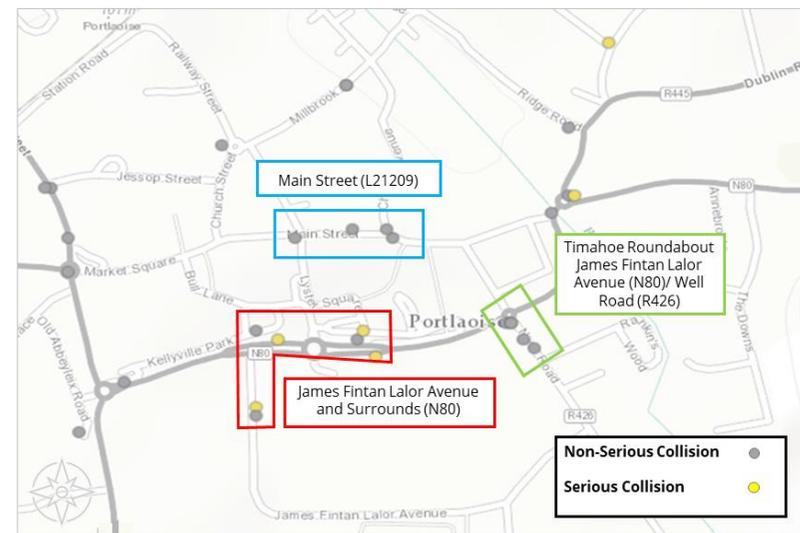
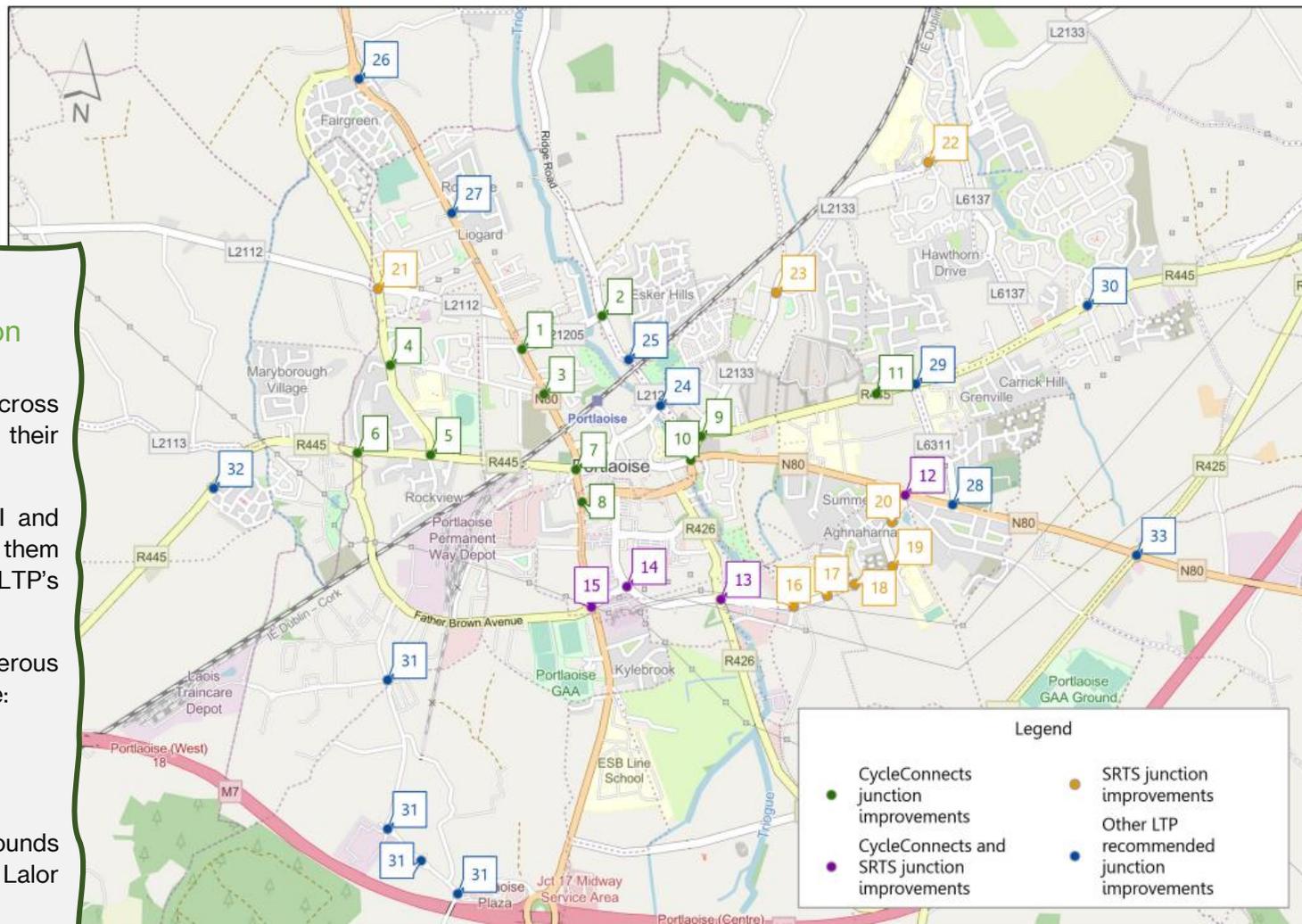


Figure 10-3 Identification of clusters of collisions within Portlaoise Town Centre





### Measure JN 2

#### Evidence-Based Approach to Junction Improvements

The LTP has identified a series of junctions across the Study Area that require an upgrade to their design to align with DMURS standards.

LCC, with input from key stakeholders TII and NTA, will review these junctions and upgrade them in the short- to medium-term following the LTP's order of priority.

Junctions along roads with a history of dangerous collisions which will require upgrades include:

- Mountmellick Rd / Coote St (N80)
- Dublin Road (R445)
- Main Street
- James Fintan Lalor Ave (N80) & surrounds
- Timahoe Roundabout (James Fintan Lalor N80/Well Rd R426)
- Stradbally Road

These junctions will be upgraded as part of individual projects such as Safe Routes to School, cycling infrastructure projects or a standalone junction improvement package.

Proposed junction improvements in Portlaoise.

Most junction improvements recommended by CycleConnects are in green, junctions recommended by CycleConnects that would improve Safe Routes to School as well are in purple. Junctions identified to improve Safe Routes to School (but not in CycleConnects) are in orange and other junctions that the LTP recommends improving are in blue.



Table 10-1 The following three tables set out the short-term (Priority 1), medium-term (Priority 2) and long-term (Priority 3) junction improvements recommended by the LTP.

Priority 1	Meets Three Criteria	Junction	Map Label	Key Considerations
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis SRTS	Stradbally Road/ Southern Circular Road	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses and Midland Regional Hospital</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis SRTS	Stradbally Road/ Block Road	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist Facilities in vicinity of Midland Regional Hospital, Kolbe School and SS Peter and Paul's Cemetery</li> </ul>



Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

Priority 2	Meets Two Criteria	Junction	Map Label	Key Considerations
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis	Green Mill Lane/ Mountmellick Rd	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection to Triogue Way</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis	Mountmellick Road/ Harpur's Lane	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve SRTS for Scoil Bhride and Portlaoise College</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis	Market Square	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfigure Market Square as signalised junction with improvements to public realm</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis	Borris Road/ Dublin Road	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to the town centre</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis	Main Street/ Lower Square/ Stradbally Road/ James Fintan Lalor	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to the town centre</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects SRTS	Well Road/ Southern Circular Road	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses and future site of Dunamase College</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects SRTS	Southern Circular Road/ Access to Laois Shopping Centre	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses and future site of Dunamase College</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects SRTS	Abbeyleix Road/ Father Browne Avenue (Southern Circular Road)	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses and future site of Dunamase College</li> </ul>



Priority 3	Meets One Criterion	Junction	Map Label	Considerations
	SRTS	Southern Circular Road/ Lismard Roundabout	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses and Triogue Way</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Southern Circular Road/ School entrance	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Southern Circular Road/ Aghnaharna Drive	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Southern Circular Road/ Aghnaharna Drive/ Holy Family Schools	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Southern Circular Road/ Aghnaharna Drive	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve access to Summerhill School Campuses</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Ballyfin Road/ Western Distributor Road	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve SRTS for Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Borris Road/ Collier's Lane	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve SRTS for Scoil Chríost Rí and St Mary's CBS</li> </ul>
	SRTS	Borris Road/ Highfield Meadows	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve SRTS for Scoil Chríost Rí and St Mary's CBS</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects	Green Mill Lane/ Ridge Road	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connection to Triogue Way</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects	Harpur's Lane/ Western Distributor Road	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve SRTS for Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects	Mountrath Road/ Western Distributor Road	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve SRTS for Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects	Mountrath Road/ Old Knockmay Road	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve SRTS for Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects	Abbeyleix Road/James Fintan Lalor	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to the town centre</li> </ul>



	LTP Analysis	Ridge Road/ Millview/ Tower Hill	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to the town centre</li> </ul>
	LTP Analysis	Ridge Road/ Laurel Dr	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to the town centre</li> </ul>
	LTP Analysis	N80 northern entrance into Portlaoise Two roundabouts	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark entrance into Portlaoise and urban environment</li> </ul>
	Collision Analysis	Mountmellick Road/ Rossvale	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure along an arterial street in Portlaoise</li> </ul>
	Collision Analysis	Dublin Road/ Block Road	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure in vicinity of Midland Regional Hospital</li> </ul>
	Collision Analysis	Dublin Road/ Kilminchy	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure in vicinity of Midland Regional Hospital</li> </ul>
	LTP Analysis	Knockmay Road	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve sustainable access to National Enterprise Park</li> </ul>
	CycleConnects Collision Analysis	HSE Lands/ Dublin Road/ Fielbrook	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While this junction meets two criterion, the cycle lane across HSE lands would need to be developed before a junction re-design would be needed.</li> <li>• Improve pedestrian and cyclist access between Dublin Rd and Stradbally Rd</li> </ul>



### 10.3 Placemaking at junctions

In addition to improving the safety of the street network, the upgrade of junctions can improve the placemaking function of public spaces in Portlaoise. The history of Market Square illustrates how the placemaking role of a place can change based on the traffic design.

From the founding of Portlaoise, Market Square served as a gathering place. However, with the widening of the street network throughout the years, much of the space on the square has been given over to the movement or storage of private vehicles. The public realm that remains today is noisy, polluted with traffic fumes, and unattractive to spend time in. This Local Transport Plan recognises the need to enhance the placemaking function of Market Square - plans that have been recommended in *Portlaoise 2040* - so that once again the square can serve as a gathering spot for the people of Portlaoise.

This LTP recommends a multi-disciplinary approach to improve the public realm of Portlaoise. This is recognised as the preferred approach in **DMURS**, whereby it is essential that transport projects take a multi-disciplinary approach so that they can be “fully assessed against the broad range of principles, approaches and standards contained within the Manual, particularly where any conflicts of place and movement may arise” (DMURS).



Figure 10-4 Historical Image of Market Square. Source: Laois County Council.



Figure 10-5 Existing Conditions of Market Square. Source: Google Earth.



Figure 10-6 3D Visualisation of Market Square & Proposed Interventions. Source: Laois County Council.

#### Measure JN 3

#### Placemaking at Junctions and Roundabouts

The Portlaoise LTP recognises the important placemaking function that junctions can serve. Laois County Council will take a multi-disciplinary approach, as recommended in DMURS, to ensure that the place making function of junctions is enhanced as they are upgraded, specifically Market Square. This includes seating opportunities, public art or landscaping.



“ Cars have priority everywhere and have destroyed the town centre. Main Street and Market Square need to be pedestrianised, with vehicular access only for public transport.”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



# 11 Walking, Accessibility and the Public Realm

## 11.1 Overview

### Every journey begins with a walk.

However, in a town such as Portlaoise, barriers such as a lack of pedestrian priority at junctions, narrow footpath widths and car-dominated streets can discourage people from choosing to walk for the entire length of their journey, and instead can encourage the use of the private car.

The location of parking, street furniture and general visual clutter can create unsafe conditions for pedestrians. This includes bollards, pedestrian guardrails, signage and light poles which are now generally considered unnecessary to a high-quality public realm and town centre environment.

The **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets** (DMURS) road user hierarchy will be followed to prioritise designing for the needs of pedestrians first, followed **by cyclists, public transport and lastly cars**, to reduce the number of short journeys taken by car. Well-designed facilities that follow desire lines and are legible to all users assist in

enabling walking journeys and can improve the overall pedestrian experience.

This chapter aims to address pedestrian network issues in Portlaoise to provide a safer, more direct network to schools, shopping areas, cultural and community facilities. It also suggests measures on how to improve Portlaoise's public realm to create a more attractive and vibrant place for residents and visitors to live, work and visit.

## 11.2 Existing State of Play

Walking has been proven to bring significant social, economic, environmental, and health and well-being benefits to society. Despite these benefits, a range of barriers to walking were identified as weaknesses in the Study Area, such as:

- Cluttered and narrow footpaths
- Excessively wide local junctions that prioritise motorist speed & movement and lack pedestrian priority
- Car dominated streets, impacting enjoyment, noise levels and safety
- Lack of safe controlled pedestrian crossings, particularly on desire lines
- Cul-de-sacs development that limits pedestrian and cycle permeability



Figure 11-1 Main Street. Source: DBFL.

### Did you know?

An Irish study showed that residents living in walkable neighbourhoods exhibit at least 80% greater levels of social capital than those living in car dependent ones.

Leydon, 2023



### 11.3 Census Data 2022 – Trips on Foot

Results from the 2022 Census indicates that the highest percentage of trips to work, school, college and childcare **by foot** originates from central and northern areas of Portlaoise.

The results show relatively high concentrations of residents that walk as their main mode of transport in residential areas close to the town centre. This suggests that investment in the improvement of the public realm and strategic walking routes (and concentration of employment and other services) in relatively central areas would prove beneficial.

In areas along Stradbally Road near Summerhill and Aghnaharna residential estates, between 15% and 37% of all work and educational trips start by walking.

Further east along Dublin Road at the edges of Portlaoise, significantly lower levels of trips to work and education begin by walking, which may be due to the time needed for walking trips. For example, walking from the Kilminchy area to the nearest school campus (St Mary’s CBS and Scoil Chríost Rí) takes between 20 and 30 minutes, while walking to

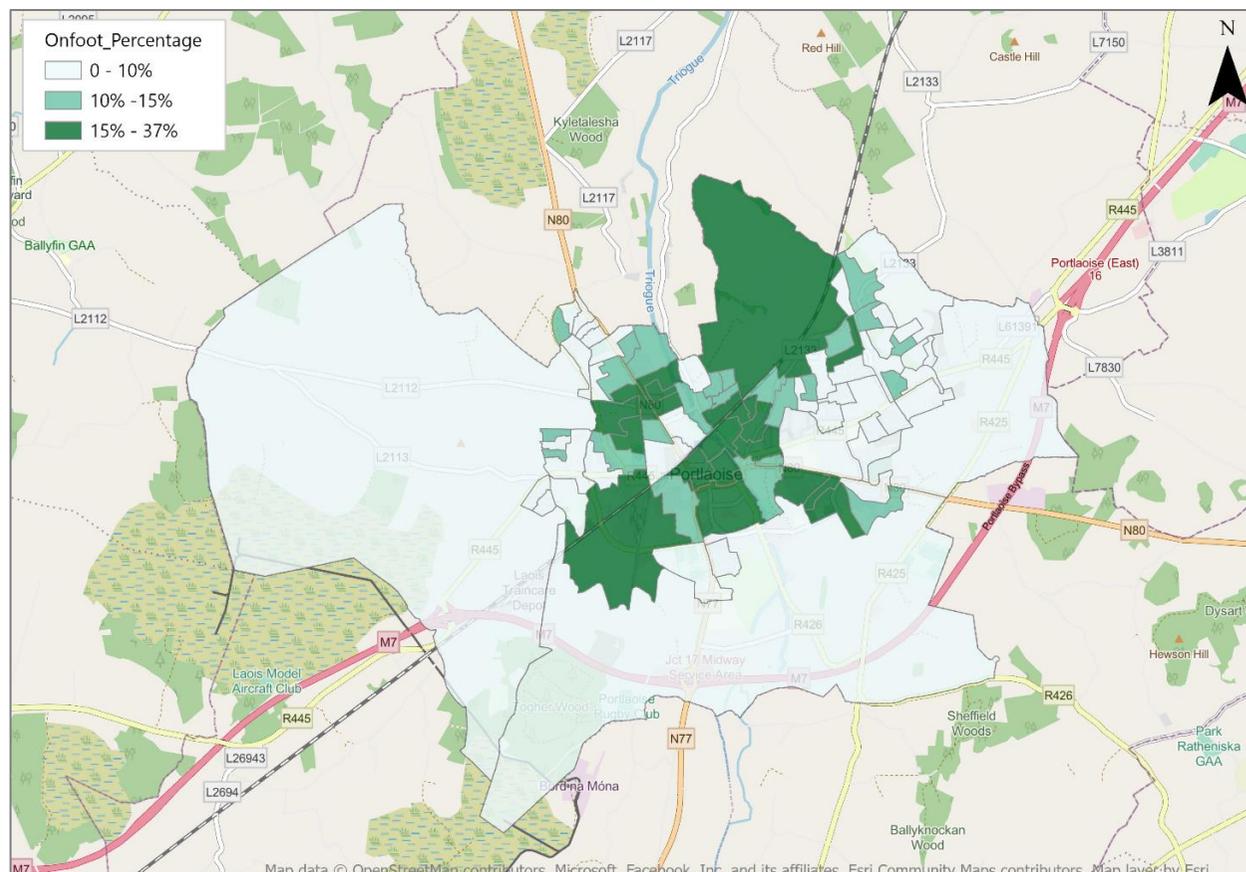


Figure 11-2 Walking Mode Distribution of Portlaoise in Census 2022. Data Source: CSO.

Main Street takes slightly longer at 35-40 minutes.

While Main Street and the Industrial Estates in the west could be considered too far a walk for residents, improving footpaths to schools

within a 20 minute walk could encourage more people to walk to work / education.

Measures to encourage more people to choose walking as their mode of travel will be discussed in the following sections.



## 11.4 Town Centre Public Realm Improvements – Portlaoise 2040

There is a significant opportunity to capitalise on *Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond* and its proposed interventions for the pedestrian network in Portlaoise, including the core goal of **Delivering a Walkable Town Centre**:

### James Fintan Lalor Avenue

The pedestrian linkages between the New and Old Town Centres are severed by the car-dominated environment of James Fintan Lalor Avenue. *Portlaoise 2040* aims to improve the walking and cycling environment and reconnect both Town Centres. Key to this is the reallocation of road space from cars to pedestrians and cyclists.

### The Laneways

*Portlaoise 2040* notes that Pepper's Lane, Lyster's Lane and Bull Lane all provide direct access from Main St. and Lower Square to Lyster Square. Pepper's and Lyster's Lanes are pedestrian streets, and Bull Lane provides a shared vehicular and pedestrian link from the historical core to Lyster Square. Poor lighting and street clutter need to be addressed in the Laneways to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

### Lyster Square

Lyster Square is currently the Town Centre of Portlaoise; however, it is dominated by traffic movement and car-parking. *Portlaoise 2040* seeks to create a connected, landscaped space on James Fintan Lalor Ave through the introduction of activity to the street, effectively producing the new heart of Portlaoise Town Centre.

### Market Square and Lower Square

Historically, Market Square was a hub of activity, facilitating a farmer's market in its large open space. *Portlaoise 2040* highlights the opportunity to reduce traffic and convert Market Square and Lower Square into pedestrian-friendly environments, including the creation of a large public space usable for markets, festivals and events year-round.

### Old Fort Protector – A Heritage Quarter

The Fort Protector is one of the oldest sites in Portlaoise town. *Portlaoise 2040* notes the opportunity to develop the Fort Protector and surrounds into a Heritage Quarter, adding a cultural dimension to the town centre.

The Strategy notes the potential which could be unlocked through the restoration of the site, particularly the interior, which would

enable the scale and character of the Fort to be appreciated. As stated in *Portlaoise 2040*, the space could become a venue for outdoor events, such as the Old Fort Quarter Festival, attracting visitors and transforming the image of the town. There is also the potential to link the site with the Triogue Way creating a pedestrian route.

#### Measure WK 1

#### Portlaoise 2040 & the Town Centre Pedestrian Network

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders, including the NTA, TII, National Disability Association (NDA), and local groups to improve the safety, accessibility, and attractiveness of the pedestrian environment of Portlaoise Town Centre through the delivery of the ambitious revitalisation programme, as set out in *Portlaoise 2040*.

This will include the implementation of the Strategy Objectives and Policies under 'A Walkable Town Centre' as part of *Portlaoise 2040 and beyond*, and the implementation of new speed limits of 30km/h.

*High-level actions for improving the pedestrian environment are summarised in Table 11-1.*



## Pedestrianisation

*Portlaoise 2040* also identifies key areas in the town centre that are proposed to be developed as pedestrian priority areas, and other areas which are proposed to be pedestrianised either during permanent or set hours.

There are a number of levels of modal restrictions that can be applied to a street, including the **Removal of Private Car Traffic**, the **Removal of All Motorised Traffic** and the **Removal of All Modes Except Pedestrians** – i.e., a fully pedestrianised street. In all of these cases, arrangements for goods delivery and blue badge holders will need to be considered.

Where recreational places are created within Portlaoise Town Centre under the Plan, traffic should be eliminated, or traffic calming measures should be put in place, and pedestrianisation should be maximised. For instance, the LTP recommends a time-limited closure of Main Street. Key to the successful implementation of pedestrianisation schemes throughout Portlaoise are trials and pilots of the schemes.

Furthermore, footpaths cluttered with excessive signage, poles and guardrails – as on Main Street – can inhibit the success of

pedestrianisation by obstructing pedestrian movement and creating visual clutter. This LTP therefore recommends street clutter audits are undertaken to remove unnecessary clutter.



Figure 11-3 Cluttered footpath on Main Street, with a view of Pepper's Lane. Source: DBFL.



“ Main Street in Portlaoise should be pedestrianised – so many more people would walk around the town if it was. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

## Measure WK 2

### Street Clutter Audit

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders to undertake a Street Clutter Audit, as recommended in DMURS, in the short-term across the Study Area. The audit will inform a programme to remove unnecessary street furniture that clutters the public realm and makes pedestrian wayfinding more difficult.

## Measure WK 3

### Portlaoise 2040 & Pedestrianisation

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders, including key stakeholders TII and NTA, to deliver the following, as set out in *Portlaoise 2040*:

- Support the development of key public areas as pedestrian priority areas, and the eventual pedestrianisation of Lyster Sq. to connect with the retail areas south of James Fintan Lalor Avenue.
- Support the pedestrianisation of Lower Sq. and Main St. during key hours to provide additional public space and a suitable setting for the new county library.
- Investigate the pedestrianisation Bull Lane and enhancement of other laneways in Portlaoise town centre.
- Improvement of pedestrian desire lines.
- Improvement of pedestrian crossing facilities.



### Measure WK 4

#### Portlaoise Pedestrian Network

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders, including key stakeholders TII and NTA, to improve the safety, attractiveness, liveability, and active travel function provided by Portlaoise’s Arterial, Link & Local Streets. This will include:

- Upgrading and retrofitting of existing footpaths
- Providing new footpaths where necessary
- Implementing new speed limits and traffic calming measures
- Retrofitting cul-de-sac development and implementing filtered permeability measures
- Implementing public realm improvements, such as soft landscaping, tree planting and filtered permeability measures

Table 11-1 summarises high-level recommendations for improving the pedestrian environment on Portlaoise’s Arterial, Link & Local Streets

### 11.5 Wayfinding

Wayfinding, or legibility, relates to how easily people can find their way around an area. For pedestrians and cyclists this is of particular importance as they are more likely to move through an area if the route is clear.

Lack of awareness of routes and distances to destinations can be a barrier to walking and cycling for tourists/visitors, and for those with intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

**DMURS** provides guidance on wayfinding, as well as several wayfinding techniques such as visual cues (i.e., landmarks), surface treatments, lighting, sight lines and, where appropriate, signage. It is important that wayfinding techniques do not contribute to street clutter.

At present, there is a great need to improve the overall legibility of Portlaoise including key destinations such as the Railway Station, People’s Park, Fitzmaurice Place, River Trigoue Linear Park and Main Street. Improved accessibility and pedestrian wayfinding is also needed between leisure areas, such as Fitzmaurice Place and the Triogue Way.



Figure 11-4 Wayfinding Scheme introduced in Dublin City in 2011 consisting of a network of map panels and fingerpost signs. Source: Dublin City Council.

### Measure WK 5

#### Wayfinding

Laois County Council will develop a consistent wayfinding system in Portlaoise along the lines of the Legible London system, in order to improve the legibility of the town and raise the profile of key destinations.



## 11.6 Street Art

Street art can contribute to the production of a high quality street environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Murals and paintings can add meaning to towns and cities, and can reflect the local culture by producing unique landmarks.

### Measure WK 6

#### Public Art

Laois County Council will work with local community groups / artists to identify and assess the possibility of introducing colour and street art to the links between Main Street / Lower Square and Lyster Square and other areas around Portlaoise.

This will be carefully considered by LCC as buildings may be Protected Structures and / or within an Architectural Conservation Area.

### Did you know?

Street art and murals can be used as a tool to foster social and urban regeneration, but they can also have a positive local economic influence by increasing the attractiveness and liveability of neighbourhoods.

URBACT



For instance, the artist of the ‘Bookshelf’ mural painted in Utrecht (Netherlands) asked local residents about their favourite book, which resulted in a painting with 49 book covers in seven different languages (see **Figure 11-8**). This mural is now synonymous with the street.

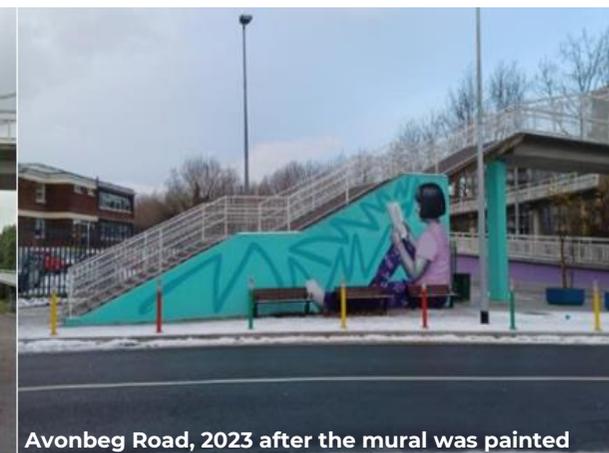
The NTA recommends that Local Authorities include micro-art inclusions in projects. Art is also recommended as part of **Rapid Build Projects** where feasible. For instance as part of a rapid build scheme in Avonbeg Road, Dublin, a mural was commissioned for the bridge ramp outside a school, inspired by the concept of learning and the imagination of children (see **Figure 11-9**).



Figure 11-5 Mural on Amsterdamsestraatweg in Utrecht, Netherlands. Source: DBFL.



Avonbeg Road, 2019



Avonbeg Road, 2023 after the mural was painted

Figure 11-6 Avonbeg before and after a mural was commissioned as part of a Rapid Build Scheme. Source: NTA.



## 11.7 Universal and Inclusive Design

The accessibility of the public realm for all individuals is essential. The principles of Universal Design will therefore be followed in the implementation of public realm and streetscape improvements throughout Portlaoise. Universal Design is the design of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability, including physical, cognitive and sensory.

Transport is aimed at serving all sectors of society and people's access to opportunities to work, get an education or partake in other activities should not be compromised by the design of the transport environment.

The features of universal design in the built environment are all encompassing and can include high-quality footpaths, tactile paving, dropped kerbs, sufficient provision of places to rest, public toilets, a reduction in street clutter, shade and shelter, a reduction in conflict between modes, etc.

The idea of accessibility in public space also broadens to include people who are neurodiverse, such as those with autism, or

have a cognitive impairment, such as dementia. Aspects of public realm design that should be considered to make it more accessible to all include clear wayfinding, legible and permeable street networks, clear sightlines, contrasting pavement materials, good quality lighting, soft landscaping, and/or calm and quiet place to pause such as a sensory garden.

Laois County Council and key stakeholders, including representatives from the Wheelchair Association and Vision Ireland completed a Walkability Audit of Portlaoise in September 2023 as part of Make Way Day. The audit assessed public buildings and various routes in the town centre for accessibility. Their findings will inform future works. Laois County Council intends to continue regular Walkability Audits, in conjunction with a variety of stakeholders.

National guidance documents such as **DMURS**, the National Disability Authority's (NDA) **Centre for Excellence in Universal Design** will be used by Laois County Council to ensure that active travel and public realm schemes in Portlaoise are fully accessible for all. Other important guidance such as Age-Friendly Ireland, Safe Routes to School and

the Child Friendly Cities & Communities Handbook will also be referenced.

### Measure WK 7

#### Walkability Audit

Laois County Council will continue regular walkability audits with a variety of stakeholders, including Age Friendly Ireland, Wheelchair Association and Vision Ireland. These will be undertaken at locations where demand for pedestrian activity is high, and where deficiencies in the network have been identified. This is to include continuous monitoring post-completion.

### Measure WK 8

#### Accessibility

Laois County Council will ensure that all streetscape and public realm improvements follow the principles of Universal Design and will ensure that active travel and public realm schemes are fully accessible for all through the following actions:

- Creation of a stakeholder group with members of Age-Friendly Ireland, Portlaoise Town Team, disability groups, youth groups, Green-Schools and other stakeholder groups to improve the safety, accessibility, and attractiveness of the pedestrian environment of Portlaoise.
- Design all active travel and public realm projects in line with the DMURS and other national guidance documents.



### 11.8 Safety in the Public Realm

Our public spaces and transport networks need to be designed to be inclusive and welcoming of all individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexuality, or ability. Many initiatives and policies, including Travelling in a Woman’s Shoes, the Healthy Streets Approach, Age-Friendly Ireland, and the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (UNICEF), support this aim.

Women and men often have different mobility realities and experience the public realm differently. Global research by organisations such as the UN show that women tend to have more complex patterns of mobility characterised by trip chaining (making numerous small trips as part of a larger journey such as running errands and buying groceries on the way to work) and caregiving duties.

Globally, personal safety is the most widespread concern for women when travelling. **Travelling in a Woman’s Shoes** (TII, 2020) called for consideration of women’s needs in the formation of Ireland’s future transport policy and infrastructure provision.

The following design aspects increase safety in the public realm:

**Good Quality Lighting:** Dark or poorly lit spaces amplifies the perception of a space being unsafe.

**Active Ground Floor Frontage:** A lack of active frontage reduces passive surveillance of public spaces, creating feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially at nighttime.

**Clear Sightlines:** Perceptions of safety increase markedly if people can see ahead and if other people are visible to them.

**Legibility and Wayfinding:** Legible design enhances safety because it allows people to orientate themselves and gives them greater control over their environment.



Figure 11-7 Example of a well-lit accessible taxi rank with seating for those waiting. Source: Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

**Citizen Engagement, Participation and Co-Creation:** Engaging all members of the community in the design of public spaces ensures a wide range of views and perspectives can influence the design process and fosters a sense of ownership and pride in the space which ultimately leads to greater design solutions and buy-in.

*Plan International, study of women in Dublin 2018*

**6 in 10**

women don’t feel safe taking the bus

**47%**

of women will choose a longer walking route if they perceive it as safer

#### Measure WK 9

#### Safety in Public Spaces

The Council will also consider the following elements to improve the safety of public space and ensure that all members of the community feel safe:

- Good quality lighting
- Active ground floor frontage
- Legibility and wayfinding – provide clear sightlines through a space
- Co-design with local community groups where possible





“ There is poor lighting in some parts of Portlaoise Town, especially along the Mountmellick Road. I wouldn't walk there on my own at night. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

## 11.9 Pedestrian Network Improvements

Although the NTA's **CycleConnects** proposals concern the provision of safe cycling infrastructure, they also very clearly provide a network of connected streets and roads that creates an active travel network in Portlaoise. For that reason, the **CycleConnects** network forms the basis for organising improvements to the pedestrian network in Portlaoise. The following table outlines the improvements needed to improve pedestrian infrastructure along routes classified as primary routes in the draft **CycleConnects**. The secondary routes are primarily local access streets and have existing footpaths. To help secure safe walking infrastructures to schools, items marked with a \* will be prioritised.

Table 11-1 Proposed improvements to pedestrian infrastructure along Primary routes in Portlaoise

Cycle Connects	Street / Road	Recommended Proposals
<b>Primary</b>	<b>*Mountmellick Road/ Coote Street (N80)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Add signalised pedestrian crossing points</li> <li>▪ Remove street clutter, including pedestrian guardrails</li> <li>▪ Redesign of Ballyfin junction</li> <li>▪ Tighten junctions at: Greenview, Glenregan, Lakeglen, Newpark, Woodlawn Villas, Harpur's Lane, Elm Lawn</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>James Fintan Lalor (N80)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider desire lines to deliver desired pedestrian crossings, increasing the number of potential crossing points</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guard rails</li> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian and cyclist crossing for Triogue Way</li> <li>▪ Implement <i>Portlaoise 2040</i> measures</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Stradbally Road (N80)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guardrails at roundabout with Bridge Street</li> <li>▪ Tighten junctions to residential estates at: Glendowns, Beladd Upper</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>*Ballyfin Road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve junction at Mountmellick Rd</li> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian crossings at roundabout with Western Orbital Rd</li> <li>▪ Tightened junctions at: Woodgrove, Glenbarrow</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>*Harpur's Lane</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve junction at Mountmellick Rd</li> <li>▪ Provide protected pedestrian crossing at Knockmay Roundabout</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Western Orbital Road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve roundabout at Ballyfin</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Ridge Road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout with Dublin Road and Borris Road to improve pedestrian access</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guardrails</li> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout with Church Street</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout with Esker Hills</li> <li>▪ Provide footpath on both sides of the carriageway</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guardrails at Green Mill Lane</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>*Borris Road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout with R445 Dublin Road</li> <li>▪ Tighten junction St. John's Square and Borris Rd</li> <li>▪ Removal of traffic islands at Dr Murphy Place</li> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout at the Grange</li> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout at Ashley Gardens/ school campus--being addressed by Laois County Council scheme</li> <li>▪ Remove pedestrian guard rails approaching school campus</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guard rails</li> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout at Collier's Lane</li> <li>▪ Provision of footpaths along Rathevan within urban footprint</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Collier's Lane</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision of footpaths along both sides of the carriageway</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guardrail at intersection with Dublin Road</li> <li>▪ Redesign of Hawthorn Drive roundabout to improve pedestrian access</li> <li>▪ Redesign of Rathevan Roundabout</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Dublin Road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout with Borris Road</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guardrails at pedestrian crossing outside SS Peter and Paul</li> <li>▪ Tighten junction with residential streets at: Ferndale, Carrick Hill and the unnamed street west of Des Hughes Motors</li> <li>▪ Redesign junction with Fielbrook to prioritise cyclists and pedestrians</li> <li>▪ Remove pedestrian guardrails at crossings outside Midlands Regional Hospital</li> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout with Collier's Lane, removal of pedestrian guard rails</li> <li>▪ Redesign of Kilminchy roundabout</li> <li>▪ Provision of footpaths on both sides of road beyond Kilminchy roundabout within 60km/h zone as far as Higgs Lane</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Block Road</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide footpath on both sides of the carriageway</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Father Brown Avenue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide footpaths and dipped kerbs as approved in Father Brown Part 8 application</li> <li>▪ Redesign two roundabouts as planned in Maryborough N.S. SRTS</li> <li>▪ Examine necessity for pedestrian guardrails at Holy Family National Schools</li> <li>▪ Removal of pedestrian guardrails outside Portlaoise Retail Park</li> <li>▪ Provision of additional crossing points at location of pedestrian guard rails outside Portlaoise Retail Park</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	<b>*Well Road/ New Road (R426)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide footpaths on eastern side of the road south of Southern Circular Road at Lismard Business Park to provide safe pedestrian access to the new location of Dunamase College</li> </ul>



## 12 Cycling

### 12.1 Overview

Along with walking, cycling and scooting are sustainable forms of mobility that offer low-cost and healthier alternatives to the flexibility and convenience of a private car. Like the term ‘Active Travel’, the terms ‘cycling’ and ‘scooting’ are intended to include anyone using any type of bicycle, scooter or mobility aid. Quickly creating cycle networks is key to delivering Ireland’s climate action plan, as well as offering everyone more opportunities for moving and socialising, thereby improving physical and mental health.

**Figure 12-1** shows the benefits of cycling recorded in 2021 in the Dublin Metropolitan Area in terms of improving air quality in Dublin and climate change benefits. Cycling benefits the individual, but also the local economy. The net annual economic benefit for individuals and society from all cycling trips in 2021 was €311.4 million, and of this total, €162.1 million is from people who own a car but chose to cycle instead of driving.

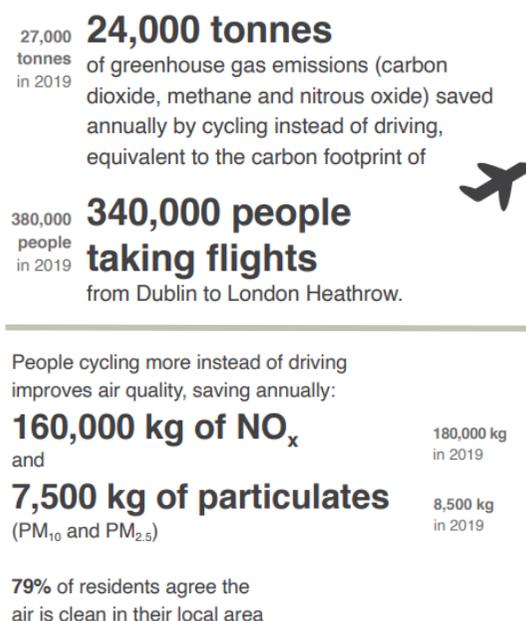


Figure 12-1 Benefits of Cycling. Source: 2021 Dublin Metropolitan Area Walking & Cycling Index.

### 12.2 Existing Cycle

#### Infrastructure in Portlaoise

A cycle network should address the five main requirements for cycle-friendly infrastructure – Safety, Coherence, Directness, Comfort and Attractiveness (**Cycle Design Manual, 2023**). Cycling infrastructure in Portlaoise is improving, but frequently does not offer safe, coherent and direct routes in and around the town.

The dedicated cycle infrastructure in Portlaoise is often disconnected, making it difficult to cycle to some of the main destinations. Portlaoise has untapped cycling potential with flat topography and a compact urban form making cycling easy and practical. In addition, many people stated in the public consultation survey that they would consider cycling if they felt it was safe.



Figure 12-2 Cycle Design Manual requirements for Cycle-Friendly Infrastructure.



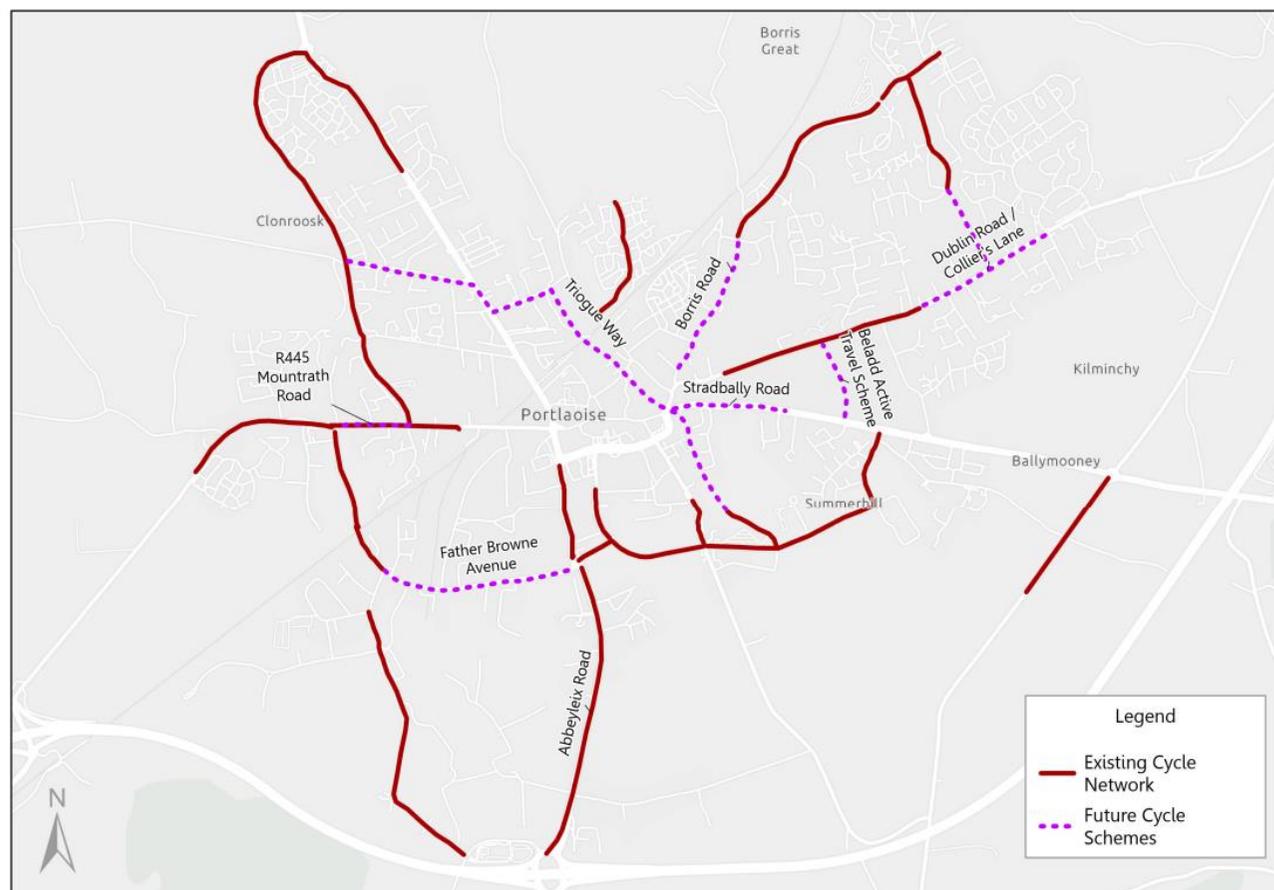
### 12.3 Key Outcomes for Cycling

- An increase in cycling for all trips, particularly for short journeys
- A cycle network that provides continuous and coherent routes between the main trip generators and attractors
- Cycling facilities that are designed to the NTA's Cycle Design Manual standards, including cycle parking
- Integration with pedestrian environments in central areas
- Ensure a safe, permeable, and attractive cycling environment for all

### 12.4 Current Network and Planned Projects

Laois County Council is developing active travel projects with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) funding.

Together the projects form the basis of a coherent network, but several key linkages are missing – including the town centre, Portlaoise Leisure Centre, Harpur's Lane and Mountmellick Road near Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College and Block Road and Stradbally Road near the five Summerhill primary schools.



Existing Cycle Network and Committed Future Cycle Network Schemes in Portlaoise.  
The existing cycle network reflects the status of cycling infrastructure in March 2024.





“ There needs to be a full network of safe and segregated cycle lanes throughout the town, including cycle and pedestrian pathways along the Triogue Way. This will also help children get to school safer. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

town centre and numerous locations, including:

- Portlaoise Railway Station
- Lyster Square/ Main Street/ Kylekiproe Road
- Portlaoise Leisure Centre
- Portlaoise College and running track
- Borris Road Scheme

### 12.6.2 CycleConnects

The NTA has proposed a cycle network for Portlaoise under their CycleConnects Plan that develops an **Urban Cycle Network**, comprised of primary orbital and radial routes, secondary routes, and the Triogue Way and Portlaoise to Abbeyleix Greenway. Inter-urban routes proposed in *CycleConnects* connect to the network outlined in the National Cycle Network (see Figure 12-7). A primary orbital route, an inner ring, and radials links are proposed for Portlaoise Town Centre (depicted in red in Figure 12-5).

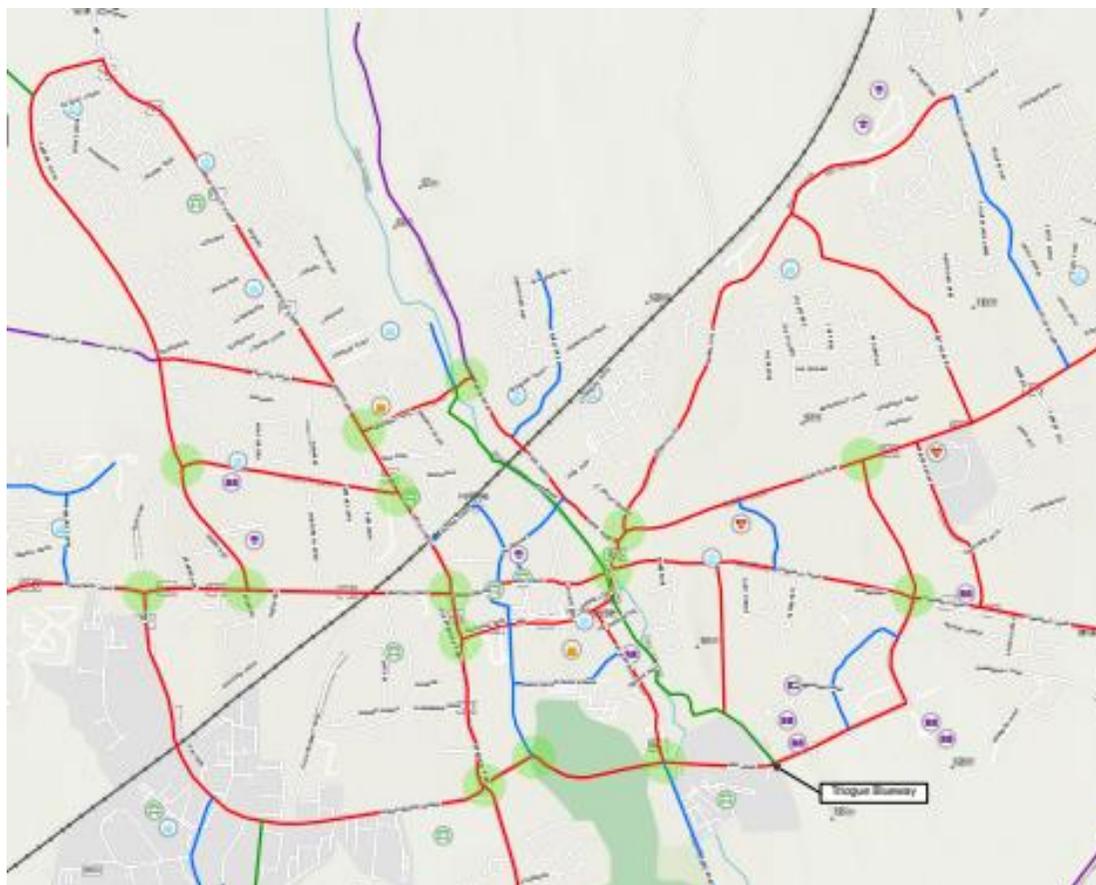


Figure 12-4 NTA CycleConnects proposals for a cycling network in Portlaoise.

Some of the radial routes are new connections between the Triogue Way, Stradbally Road and the Dublin Road. Secondary routes (in blue above) are proposed along streets such as Station Road, Tower Hill, New Road, Berryridge Avenue, and

Laurel Drive; these streets connect primary orbital and radial routes.



### 12.6.3 Arterial and Link Streets

In *CycleConnects* the Arterial and Link Streets in Portlaoise are all considered **Urban Primary Routes**. Guidance in the *National Cycle Manual* requires cycle lanes or cycle tracks due to the speed and volume of motorised traffic on the Arterial and Link Streets in Portlaoise.

### 12.6.4 Neighbourhood Streets

The streets between Arterial and Link Streets function as neighbourhood streets, offering connections to residential development and businesses. They can also function as **Quietways** (see section 12.7). Some neighbourhood streets are included as secondary routes in the *CycleConnects* strategy for Portlaoise.

Many residential neighbourhoods in Portlaoise already have a 30km/h speed limit. As discussed in **Chapter 15 – Road Networks**, the LTP recommends a two-step approach in local neighbourhoods. First, 30km/h speed limits are applied to all residential neighbourhoods to make walking and cycling safer and reduce noise and air pollution. Second, where required, engineering works are completed to create slower design speeds.



Figure 12-5 Teenagers cycling along Harpur's Lane, a Primary Route on a Link Street. Currently it has no cycle lanes. Source: DBFL.

### 12.6.5 Greenways / Blueways

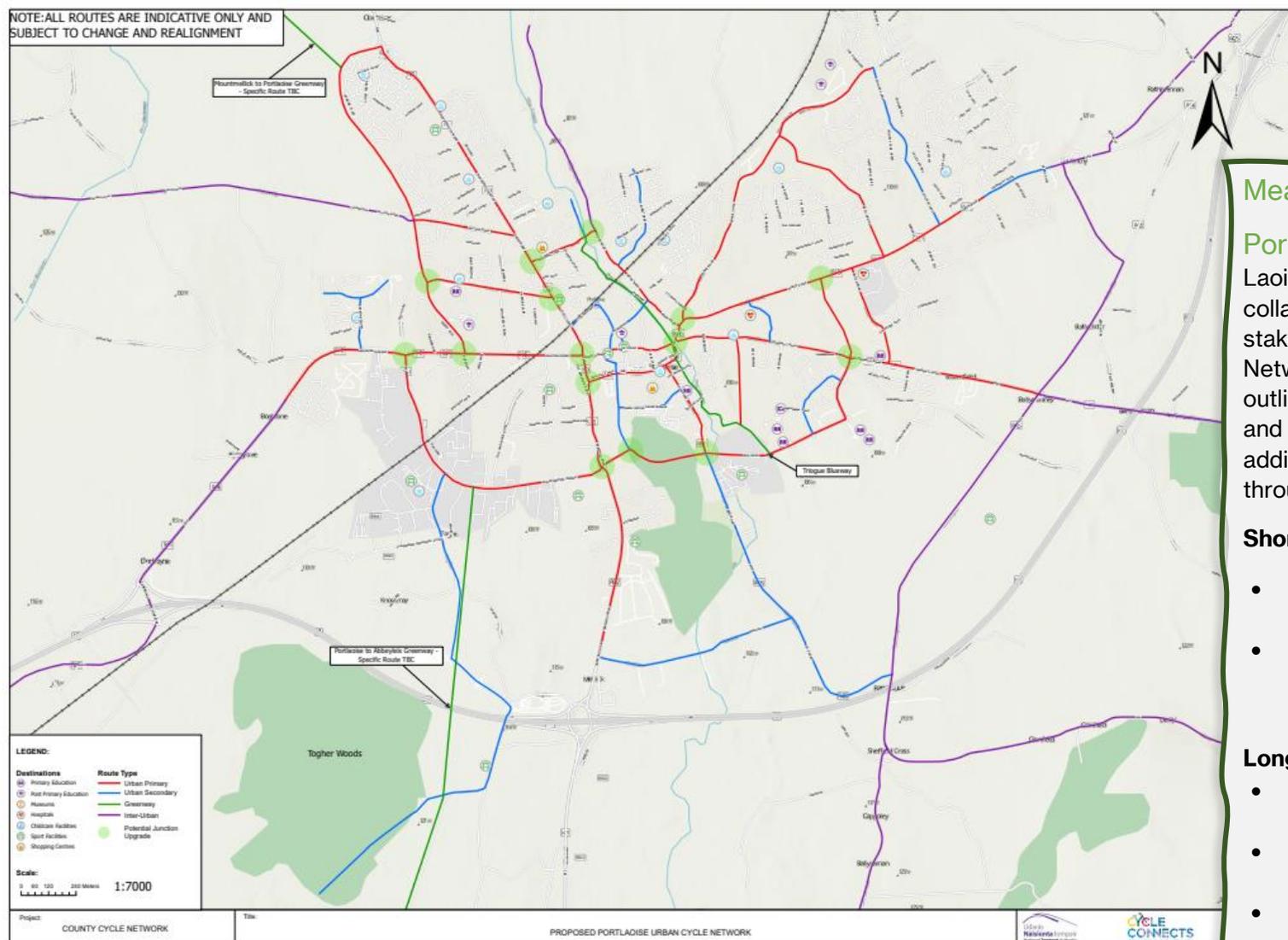
Greenway Networks correspond to traffic free or low-trafficked routes. They are often constructed along derelict railway lines, through parks or alongside rivers. As many of these routes are quite rural and nature-focussed, they can serve amenity and commuter functions.

Laois County Council is actively developing the Triogue Way as a Blueway which will run along the River Triogue from the People's Park to Green Mill Lane, and then travel along Greenmill Lane and Ballyfin Road. Opening up the River Triogue as a linear park through the town will connect the existing People's

Park with James Fintan Lalor Avenue and Church Street and will also provide residents and visitors with a new amenity space in the town centre. The opened section of the Triogue Way already does and will continue to enhance the quality of life in Portlaoise and provide a crucial walking and cycling route away from vehicular traffic. When completed, the Triogue Way will offer safe, secure, green connectivity from the north to the south of Portlaoise. **Chapter 6 – Key Plan Influences** discusses the Triogue Way in more detail.



Figure 12-6 (Top) Existing section of the Triogue Way. (Bottom) A section of the Tralee to Fenit Greenway, illustrating an opportunity for improved security along the Triogue Way. Source: DBFL.



### Measure CY 1

#### Portlaoise Cycle Network

Laois County Council will work in collaboration with the NTA, TII and other stakeholders to deliver the Portlaoise Cycle Network by 2042. This includes routes outlined in the NTA's CycleConnects Plan and TII's National Cycle Network and additional local improvements identified throughout the course of this LTP.

#### Short-medium term:

- Development and completion of the Primary and Secondary Cycle Networks
- Further implementation of the network in line with new development opportunities and traffic calming.

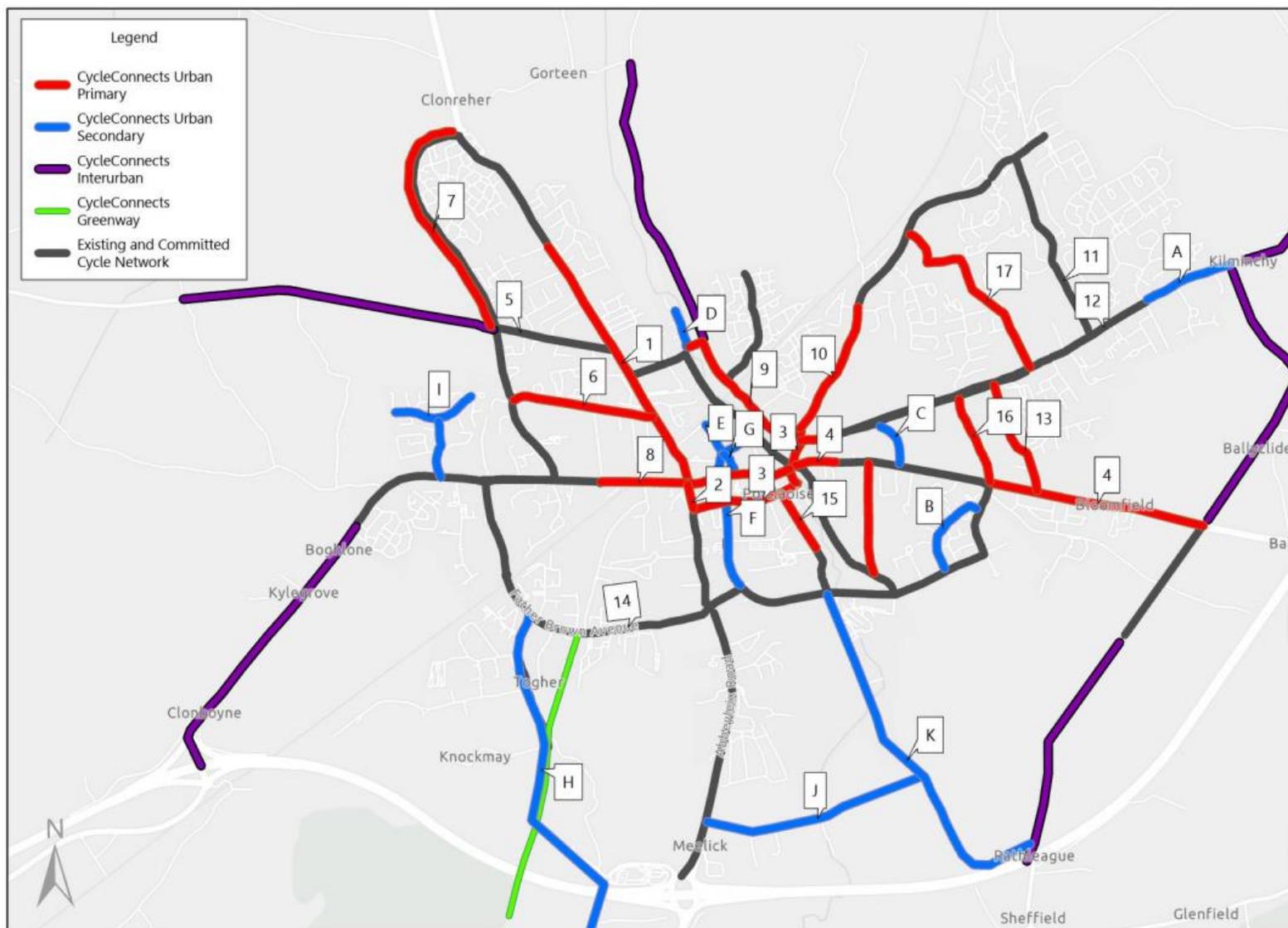
#### Long term:

- Completion of Inter-urban and Greenway Cycle Networks
- Ongoing maintenance and improvement of cycle infrastructure
- Completion of all Active Travel Schemes

*High level recommendations are outlined in Table 12-1.*

Draft CycleConnects Network for Portlaoise. Source: NTA.





**Measure CY 2**

**CyleConnects**

Laois County Council will work in collaboration with the NTA, TII and other stakeholders to deliver the *CycleConnects* plans for Portlaoise by 2042, including the greenway projects. Based on existing projects and prioritising delivering projects that support Safe Routes to School, it is expected that the following schemes will be completed by 2028 subject to availability of funding, compliance with NTA Project Approval Guidelines and all necessary environmental and planning processes:

- Ballyfin Road (5 on map)
- Harpur’s Lane (6 on map)
- Mountrath Rd/ Grattan Street (8 on map)
- Borris Road (10 on map)
- Collier’s Lane (17 on map)
- Father Browne Avenue (14 on map)
- New Road/ Well Road (15 on map)
- Beladd Cycle Scheme (16 on map)

*High level recommendations are outlined below in **Table 12-1**.*

Combined with the existing cycle network and projects that Laois County Council has committed to deliver, CycleConnects proposals produce a safe, coherent, and direct network.



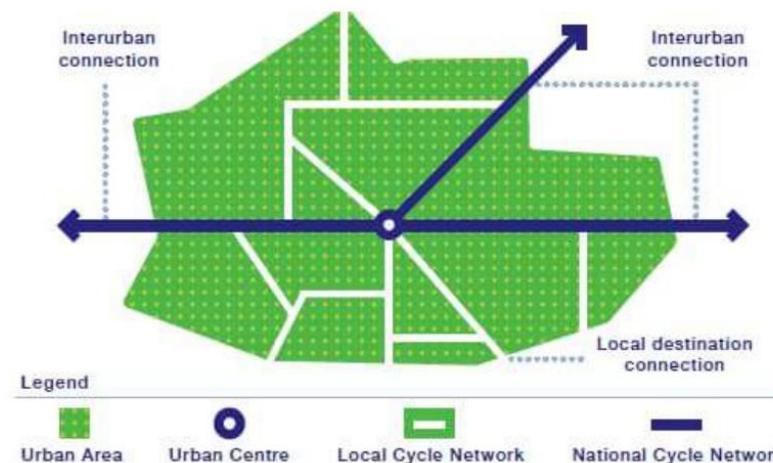


Figure 12-7 The integration of the National Cycle Network with urban cycling routes. Source: TII.

### Measure CY 3

#### National Cycle Network

Laois County Council will work in collaboration with TII, the NTA and other stakeholders to deliver the *National Cycle Network* plans for Portlaoise by 2042. Laois County Council will work in collaboration with TII and the NTA to create connections between the urban cycling network in Portlaoise and the inter-urban network in the *National Cycle Network*.

High level recommendations are outlined below in **Table 12-1**. Error! R





“ We have to choose a longer and harder route to be able to cycle safely through town. We live on the Ballyfin Road and would not be comfortable cycling on Mountmellick Road. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

Table 12-1 outlines the measures needed to produce a comprehensive cycle network in Portlaoise. The streets marked with a \* play a particularly important role in the delivery of Safe Routes to School and will be prioritised. The table does not include improvements to junctions, which are discussed **Chapter 10 – Junctions**.

Table 12-1 Cycle Connect improvements based on the NTA's draft CycleConnects programme for Portlaoise.

Category	Street / Road	Label	Recommended Measures
Primary	*Mountmellick Road/ Coote Street (N80)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of carriageway widths</li> <li>• Along the northern section where carriageway widths are wider, install cycle lanes or shared paths that would connect to a Quietway, the Triogue Way, railway station and town centre</li> <li>• Consider the use of a Quietway (see <b>12.7 Quietways</b>) to provide a connection to the Triogue Way and create alternate cycle connectivity from the N80 to the railway station and town centre</li> <li>• Consider the installation of a shuttle system under railway line to improve cycling access to the train station and town centre</li> <li>• Long-term shift strategic traffic to Western Orbital Road allowing for further reduction in carriageway widths and provision of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure</li> </ul>
Primary	Abbeyleix Road (N77)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install segregated cycle lanes between Abbeyleix Roundabout and Market Square</li> </ul>
Primary	James Fintan Lalor (N80)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install cycling infrastructure so that cycle lanes are segregated from motorised vehicles, including buses</li> <li>• Ensure continuity of cycle lanes around bus stops</li> <li>• Provide pedestrian and cyclist crossing for the Triogue Way</li> </ul>
Primary	Stradbally Road (N80)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe cycling provision along the length of the road</li> </ul>
Primary	*Ballyfin Road (delivered as part of LCC's Triogue Way)	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce cycle lanes or widen shared surface</li> </ul>
Primary	*Harpur's Lane	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install shared path of 3 – 4 metres in width on the southern side of Harpur's Lane to be completed within the existing road widths. This will facilitate a safer route for children</li> </ul>



			walking and cycling to schools, which are located on the southern side of Harpur's Lane. On the northern side, the boundary walls prevent the construction of an adequate footpath and / or cycle lane.
<b>Primary</b>	Green Mill Lane (western half delivered as part of LCC's Triogue Way)	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe cycling provision</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	Western Orbital Road	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide cycle lane on north-bound side of the street from Ballyfin</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	*Mountrath Road/Grattan Street	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide protected cycle infrastructure under railway line through cycle lanes or shared paths</li> <li>• Shift car parking along Grattan Street so it provides a protected cycle lane</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	Ridge Road	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine opportunities to reduce speed limits to 30 km/h or provide cycling lanes</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	*Borris Road	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce safe cycling provision from roundabout with Dublin Road to Highfield Meadows</li> <li>• Investigate provision of alternative car parking arrangements to avoid on-street car parking</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	*Collier's Lane	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the delivery of cycle lanes on southern section of Collier's Lane as in LCC's scheme for Dublin Rd and Collier's Lane</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	Dublin Road	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the delivery of cycle lanes on southern section of Collier's Lane as in LCC's scheme for Dublin Rd and Collier's Lane</li> <li>• Towards SS Peter and Paul's Church, provide cycle lanes or extend the footpath to provide a shared surface that can accommodate cyclists</li> <li>• Provide protection for existing cycle lanes using NTA's Rapid Build designs</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	Block Road	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine feasibility of providing cycle lanes or shared paths along the length of Block Road. If carriageway widths do not allow cycle lanes on each side of the street, examine feasibility of providing two-way cycle lanes on eastern side nearest the hospital.</li> </ul>
<b>Primary</b>	*Father Brown Avenue	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete LCC's plans to deliver segregated cycle lanes along Father Brown Avenue that will provide continuity in the cycle network from the Mountrath Road to the school campuses on the Southern Circular Road</li> </ul>



Primary	*Well Road/ New Road (R426)	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine feasibility of providing cycle lanes or shared paths along Well Road/ New Road from just north of junction with Southern Circular Road and James Fintan Lalor Avenue</li> <li>• Where road widths make it impossible to provide dedicated cycling infrastructure or shared paths, lower the speed limit to 30km/h and install traffic calming measures</li> <li>• Construction of cycling infrastructure takes place in advance of Dunamase College opening at new location</li> </ul>
Primary	*Beladd Cycle Connection	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide connectivity between Stradbally Road and Dublin Road as part of development of HSE landbank, part of large masterplan project (see <b>Chapter 15 – Road Network</b>)</li> <li>• Provide Safe Route to School to Summerhill schools from northwest Portlaoise, including Kilminchy</li> </ul>
Primary	Borris Road to Dublin Road connectivity via Rath Galline	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide connectivity between Borris Road and Dublin Road, improving accessibility for work and school trips</li> </ul>

Category	Street / Road	Label	Recommended Measures
Secondary	End of Dublin Road	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given traffic volumes and speeds and ghost islands, reconfigure road space to provide protected cycle lanes to proposed location of Park and Ride facility (see <b>Chapter 16 – Parking Management</b>)</li> </ul>
Secondary	Aghnaharna Drive	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given neighbourhood street function, maintain lower speed limit of 30km/h to better encourage shared streets approach</li> </ul>
Secondary	Link between Stradbally Road and Dublin Road	C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalising existing connections through St Fintan’s Complex</li> </ul>
Secondary	Triogue Manor	D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given neighbourhood street function, maintain lower speed limit to 30km/h to better encourage Quietway approach</li> </ul>
Secondary	Station Road/Tower Hill	E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide cycle lanes to provide cycling access to railway station</li> </ul>



Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bull Lane</li> <li>▪ Link between South Circular Road and James Fintan Lalor Avenue</li> </ul>	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide cycle lanes between James Fintan Lalor Avenue and existing cycle lanes south of Aldi</li> <li>• Remove on-street car parking from Bull Lane to provide enhanced environment for pedestrians and cyclists</li> </ul>
Secondary	Railway Street and Church Street	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of town centre 30km/h zone, maintain 30 km/h speed limit to encourage a shared streets approach</li> </ul>
Secondary	Road outside Clonminam Business Park (Old Knockmay Road)	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycling lanes needed for first 200m from Father Brown Avenue</li> <li>• Raised cycle lanes and shared paths already installed on remainder of Old Knockmay Road providing access to Togher and J17</li> </ul>
Secondary	Maryborough Village	I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No dedicated cycle lanes, but existing 30km/h estate speed limit supports shared streets and Quietway</li> </ul>
Secondary	Meelick	J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine possibility of providing shared paths or cycle lanes</li> </ul>
Secondary	*Well Road	K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between the junction with South Circular Road and the new location of Dunamase College, ensure that cycling lanes are present to encourage school children to cycle to school, preferably a two-way cycle track on the eastern side of the road nearest the school entrance.</li> </ul>

Category	Street / Road	Recommended Measures
Greenway	Triogue Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the Triogue Way as intended by LCC</li> </ul>
Greenway	Portlaoise to Abbeyleix Greenway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed Greenway would run along the along the dismantled Mountmellick to Kilkenny railway line, beginning at Telfords on Father Brown Avenue in the direction of Togher Woods and Portlaoise Rugby Club.</li> </ul>



## 12.7 Quietways

One of the difficulties of creating the network described in CycleConnects is that some existing roads have little capacity for safe and segregated cycle lanes. In those circumstances, providing Quietways offers the potential to expand the cycling and walking networks without expensive and complicated road construction projects.

The LTP proposes the creation of a network of Quietways to improve connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. Quietways are continuous and convenient routes that use neighbourhood streets, greenways and filtered permeability to provide accessibility to pedestrians and cyclists. Ideally, they are direct and easy to follow for people who would prefer to cycle along quieter routes, including younger or less experienced cyclists. Generally, they utilise traffic calmed local streets that adhere to Healthy Streets principles and slow motorised traffic through build-outs that can create space for enhanced landscaping and seating. Quietways are particularly useful for journeys to school, especially for children who are mature enough to walk or cycle to school on their own.

Filtered permeability, discussed in **Chapter 13 – Permeability**, is a feature of Quietways, making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to reach their destinations and discouraging rat-running and inappropriate motor vehicle use.

To function as alternate routes, wayfinding is important for Quietways. Destinations can be marked by signposts, as in Dun

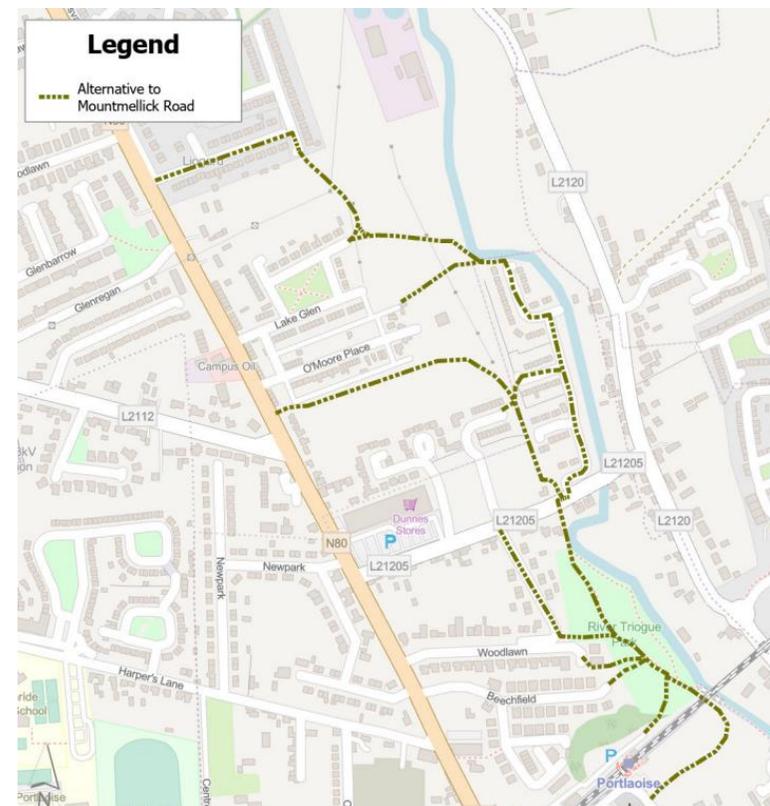


Figure 12-8 Varieties of Quietways and Wayfinding. (Top Left): Ballybrack/Mangala Greenway in Cork that uses quiet streets and a greenway to deliver local connectivity. (Top Right): Mardyke Walk, Cork, has red paving and a 30km/h speed limit to provide a Quietstreet. (Bottom Left): Wayfinding for Safe Routes to School in Dún Laoghaire Rathdown. (Bottom Right): Marked Quietways in London. Sources: Streetview, NTA Cycle Design Manual and DBFL.

Laoghaire Rathdown County Council's Active School Travel Scheme, or by road markings as in London's Quietways where quietways are numbered to make it easier for people to find their way.

Many of the secondary cycle routes proposed in *CycleConnects* will function as Quietways. On Triogue Manor, Aghnaharna Drive and Maryborough Village, the existing 30 km/h speed limit calms motor traffic and makes it more inviting for people to walk or cycle.

In other cases, targeted interventions are necessary to create new Quietways. For example, Mountmellick Road/ Coote Street (N80) connects the town centre, residential areas, shops and stores, and sporting facilities. From the Liogard estate on the northern end of Portlaoise to Market Square, the existing carriageway is narrow with no traffic islands or filter lanes that would easily lend themselves to reallocating road space to construct cycle lanes or expand footpaths. A Quietway creates an alternate route that uses residential estates, short sections of new greenway construction and the Triogue Way to provide connectivity to the railway station and town centre. The possibilities for an alternative are presented in the map to the right.



## Measure CY 4

### Quietways

Working in conjunction with the NTA and other stakeholders, Laois County Council will identify a network of Quietways in the short to medium-term. These Quietways will improve pedestrian and cyclist accessibility throughout Portlaoise and help deliver the network of primary routes outlined in *CycleConnects*. The LTP identifies options for a Quietway (pictured to the right) as an alternate route to the Urban Primary route proposed in *CycleConnects* along Mountmellick Road/Coote Street (N80).

Suggestion for a proposed Quietway that could provide alternate connectivity for Mountmellick Road along Liogard, Lakeglen, O'Moore Place, Triogue Manor, Craydon Court, and the Triogue Way to provide access to the Railway Station and Portlaoise Town Centre from the northern side of Portlaoise.



## 12.8 Cycle Parking

Provision of secure, accessible parking is essential to support the development of cycling, scooting and other forms of micromobility as a practical transport choice. A lack of appropriate parking facilities is often cited as a barrier to cycling and cycle ownership and could be a constraint on the future growth and undermine investment in Portlaoise’s overall cycle network. Dedicated cycle parking facilities will encourage the uptake of cycling and contribute to Portlaoise’s development as a Low Carbon Town. Providing cycle parking can be a short-term solution that prepares the way for Mobility Hubs.



Figure 12-9 Bicycle parked informally outside SuperValu, Lyster Square. Source: DBFL.

Ample high quality secure parking for all types of micromobility therefore, is a key element of any strategy and is just as important as other forms of infrastructure. Different types of cycle parking solutions are required to cater for different types of users depending on the location and trip purpose such as short- and long-stay parking.

Cycle parking should also make appropriate provision for different designs of bicycles and other forms of micromobility such as cargo bikes, adaptative bikes, scooters, etc.



**Fit for purpose:** meeting identified current and future demand, with an appropriate balance of short-stay and longer-stay provision and accommodating all types of cycle.



**Secure:** stands in visible, well-lit places that have high levels of natural surveillance.



**Well-located:** convenient, accessible, as close as possible to the destination, and sheltered from the elements.

Figure 12-10 Cycle Parking Principles. Source: London Cycling Design Standards.

## Short Stay Bicycle Parking

Short-stay bicycle parking is designed for ease of use by the public and visitors to a development. Such bicycle parking spaces should be located in highly visible areas with good passive surveillance, which are easy to access and well lit. They should ideally be situated no further than 15m from main entry points.

Increased short-stay cycle parking provision is recommended at the following locations:

- Main Street
- Laois Shopping Centre
- Lyster Square
- People’s Park
- O’Moore Park
- Rossleighan Park
- Portlaoise Leisure Centre
- Along the Triogue Way

### Did you know?

Cycle parking delivers 5x the retail spend per square metre than the same area of car parking.

Raje and Saffrey, 2016





“ Portlaoise needs safer cycle lanes and places to park bikes, especially near shopping areas and in the town centre. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

### Long Stay Bicycle Parking

Long-stay bicycle parking is designed generally for residents of private developments, or commuters. Individual bike lockers, cycle hubs and shared on-street hangars offer security to cyclists and provide innovative solutions to cycle parking requirements for longer periods of time, particularly where internal storage space is limited.

Secure, covered, long-stay cycle parking is recommended at the following locations:

- All primary and secondary schools
- Portlaoise Railway Station
- Midland Regional Hospital
- Lismard Business Park
- Kylekiproe Industrial Estate

### On-Street Bicycle Parking

In a street environment, cycle stands should be located in space taken from the

carriageway wherever possible, inset or with island protection as necessary.

Where this is not possible, cycle parking on the footpath should be located in an identified zone adjacent to the carriageway, ensuring at least 1.8m is left available for pedestrians wherever possible (DMURS minimum).

An emphasis is needed on not obstructing pedestrian desire lines and movement, or access for deliveries from shops and other premises. Care should also be taken to allow for car doors to open, if there is parking at the kerbside, and to avoid obstructing access or egress onto buses. Provision also needs to be made for visually impaired people to identify the potential obstruction that cycle parking stands on the footway represent.

In addition to providing cycle parking for private bicycles, LCC will aim to facilitate a strategy for the parking of dockless rental bicycles and/or scooters ahead of the introduction of shared mobility schemes in Portlaoise.

Over the last year, dockless bicycle sharing schemes have opened in Tullamore, Athlone and Mullingar. All three towns have smaller populations than Portlaoise’s and have

similar rail connectivity, suggesting that a scheme would be viable in Portlaoise.



Figure 12-11 Bike hanger on a space previously used for on-street car parking. Hangers provide safe, secure, and sheltered parking for long-stay trips, such as residents of private developments or commuters working in old town centre buildings with no space for bike parking. Photo: DBFL.



Figure 12-12 Dockless shared bike scheme bikes in Mullingar. Photo: Westmeath County Council.



### Cycle Hubs/ Kiosks

Cycle hubs can offer high-capacity, secure and dry parking, typically for longer stays. Sometimes these hubs can also be equipped with other end-of-trip facilities such as storage, changing rooms, repair stations, etc. Suggested locations where a Cycle hub / kiosk may be suitable in Portlaoise includes:

- Railway Station
- Town Centre
- Large employment areas, such as Midland Regional Hospital or J17 Enterprise Park.
- The area around Laois Shopping Centre and the Kyle Centre
- Portlaoise Retail Park



Figure 12-13 High-capacity bicycle parking kiosks/hubs.

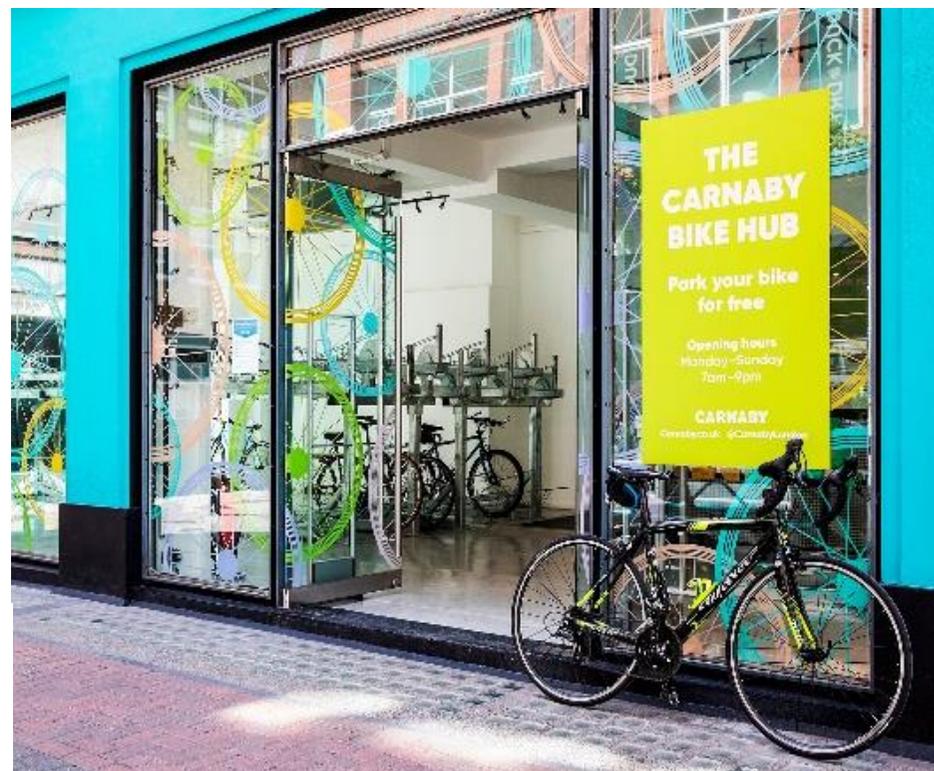


Figure 12-14 Use of vacant building for cycle parking hub and repair station in Carnaby, London.

### Use of Vacant Town Centre Buildings

The use of vacant buildings for sheltered secure bicycle parking is becoming increasingly common across Europe with numerous examples of different models in the Netherlands and UK. Most are funded by the local authority, some operated by an external organisation, with others championed by local business associations. The use of vacant buildings improves the

vibrancy of the streetscape and supports the local economy, drawing people to the location.

This LTP suggests that LCC works with organisations such as Laois Chamber of Commerce or the Portlaoise Town Team to investigate the potential ‘meanwhile use’ of vacant buildings in the town centre for an indoor parking hub.



## Rothar Rogues – Cycling without Age

The **Rothar Rogues** from **Durrow, County Laois** is a group of 16 retired men, all from the Laois area. Ranging from 65 to 78 years, they are best described as a ‘Men’s Shed on Wheels’ who meet every week for a coffee and a leisure cycle on their vintage bikes. The group rent bikes from the Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme and have also purchased 6 E-bikes.

Groups like the Rothar Rogues cycling group demonstrate the **social** and **health benefits** of cycling. The benefits are evident through the great friendships that have been made through the years, as well as the additional health benefit for retired men who want to enjoy exercising with friends.



Midlands Ireland

Figure 12-15 Cycle Parking along Main Street. Photo: DBFL.



### Measure CY 5

#### Cycle Parking

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders to carry out the following:

- Continue to support an uplift in both high-quality short-stay and long-stay public cycle parking throughout Portlaoise Town Centre and key destinations such as Lyster Square, People’s Park, Laois Shopping Centre, Lismard Business Park, Clonminam Business Park, Kylekiproe Industrial Estate, Portlaoise Retail Park, and the Railway Station, which is envisaged to play a significant role as a multi-modal interchange.
- Examine the feasibility of providing dedicated, high-quality cycle (e-scooter) parking hubs in key destinations such as the town centre and railway station.
- Ensure the provision of off-street, accessible cycle parking facilities as part of any significant new development.
- Consider innovative practices such as on-street bike hangers and the use of indoor vacant spaces for dedicated public off-street bike parking hubs that are secure, sheltered and easily accessed.
- Consider the colocation of cycle parking facilities with car clubs, bus stops and other forms of sustainable transport infrastructure through the development of Mobility Points.
- Develop a policy for the parking of shared bike service bicycles in advance of opening a scheme in Portlaoise.

## 13 Permeability

### 13.1 Overview

Permeability describes the extent to which an urban area allows the movement of people by either walking or by cycling. Permeability is not concerned with motor vehicles but rather it focuses on providing a competitive advantage to pedestrians and cyclists over the use of cars.

A permeable street network is a key component of supporting more walkable environments. This Local Transport Plan identifies a series of ‘filtered permeability’ opportunities across Portlaoise to maximise connectivity and accessibility for people walking and cycling.

Opportunities to retrofit permeability in existing developed areas should be sought, while high-quality permeability techniques to restrict rat-running and facilitate Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, Home Zones and play streets should be considered from the outset in all future development.

#### What is Filtered Permeability?



Filtered permeability measures aim to separate sustainable modes of travel from private vehicular traffic to give them an advantage in terms of speed, distance, convenience, and safety.

Filtered permeability is increasingly applied in towns and cities across Europe to prioritise active travel and limit car use. Filtered Permeability techniques can include:

- Closure of existing streets to vehicular traffic using planting, bollards, etc.
- Providing a link for pedestrians and cyclists only via existing cul-de-sacs or through fences/blank walls.
- Providing a link for pedestrians and cyclists via green areas or along water courses.

These measures aim to shorten people’s journey by walking or wheeling, reduce people’s exposure to motor traffic and its associated noise and air pollution, and generally create a more people-friendly environment that is safe and attractive.



Figure 13-1 Filtered permeability along Bridle Walk provides connectivity between Kilminchy and Dublin Road. Source: LCC.



Figure 13-2 A new access point to Holy Family Schools from Ashewood Walk makes it easier for children to walk or cycle to school. Source: LCC.

#### Did you know?

There are tangible local economic benefits to be gained from maintaining and creating permeability networks in urban and suburban areas, as well as public health and social capital benefits.

NTA - Permeability Best Practice Guide



## 13.2 Permeability in Portlaoise Today

One of Portlaoise's strengths is its Historic Town Centre street pattern. While the urban grain of areas like Main Street should be considered pedestrian friendly, its current environment is car-dominated. The pattern of street layouts in Portlaoise overall is disconnected, meaning that residents who wish to walk or cycle to their desired destination may face unnecessarily long journeys. This can increase the attractiveness of using private motor vehicles for daily trips.

The lack of permeability in Portlaoise deprives residents of opportunities to walk or cycle along quieter streets, forcing people to walk or cycle along busier and noisier streets. In particular, it detracts from the ability of school children to travel to and from school in a safe and secure fashion. Sometimes permeability exists, but is difficult for everyone to use because of kissing gates or other barriers.

Portlaoise has a handful of informal permeability links, where people have broken through hedges, cut holes in a fence or used a rock to climb over walls to make a more direct route. These informal solutions to overcome severance are common throughout urban

areas in Ireland and can give clues as to where formal connections should be made.

In addition to formalising desired connections, permeability links can also be made by limiting the through-movement of cars by the use of planters and bollards that allow pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles to pass through.

## 13.3 Permeability and Residential Neighbourhoods

The street design of many of Portlaoise's newer residential developments acts as a disincentive to walking, wheeling, cycling or taking public transport. These newer residential developments are often built with one connection to a main road, a high number of dead ends and cul-de-sacs, and intersections that are at far distances from each other. This pattern of street layouts, or *Disconnected Street Development*, is common throughout the country.

Portlaoise already enjoys 30 km/h zones in many residential neighbourhoods, which makes them more attractive for active travel. Increasing the number of access points between residential areas will aid their suitability for walking, cycling and public transport use.

Permeability connections will also offer opportunities for placemaking, providing neighbourhoods with places to gather and allowing children to play in or close to the street.

### Measure PY 1

#### Permeability in Residential Areas

Laois County Council will work with the NTA and other stakeholders to ensure that filtered permeability is secured in all new residential estates, providing safe and direct access to commercial developments and where possible, schools.

Laois County Council will aim to retrofit connectivity where possible.



Figure 13-3 Kissing Gates between Harpur's Lane and Mountain View Square. Source: DBFL.



### 13.4 Permeability & the New Town Bus Service

A new bus service for Portlaoise town centre is currently being developed by Laois County Council and the NTA. This will provide two bus routes with a total of 72 stops, and will link residential areas with the town centre, community and employment areas (see **Chapter 14 – Public Transport** for further details).

The introduction of the new town bus service makes removing barriers to permeability increasingly important. A lack of permeability between bus stops and residential areas, retail areas and key destinations around Portlaoise means that the distance that people have to walk to get to a bus stop is increased, thus decreasing the attractiveness of public transport.

Impermeable cul-de-sac layouts and walled boundaries can prevent direct and safe movement to public transport stops, in residential estates such as Clonkeen View, Glenregan and Rossvale Court. **Figure 13-4** is an example of how permeability measures can reduce the distance that people have to walk between Castle Drive and the location of one of the proposed bus stops under the proposed town bus service.



Figure 13-4 Example of enhancing permeability.

#### Distance between Castle Drive and one of the Proposed Bus Stops of the New Town Bus service – *with and without* Permeability Measures.

A resident living in Castle Drive in Kilminchy currently faces a **590m** walk to the nearest proposed bus stop. If an access point was created at the end of Castle Drive connecting to Dublin Road more directly, the walk to the nearest new bus stop would only be **260m** – less than half the distance.

“ There needs to be better accessibility to bus stops. Buses that stop outside large estates mean that some people have to walk nearly a mile to get to the bus stop. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

#### Measure PY 2

#### Permeability and the New Portlaoise Town Bus Service

Laois County Council will work with the NTA and other Stakeholders to ensure that the users of the town bus service enjoy accessible and direct access to the bus service. This will include the use of filtered permeability measures to open up impermeable, cul-de-sac layouts and walled boundaries which are preventing the ease of movement between residential areas and future bus stop locations.

See also **Measure PT 1** for the short, medium and long-term recommendations for the New Portlaoise Town Bus Service.

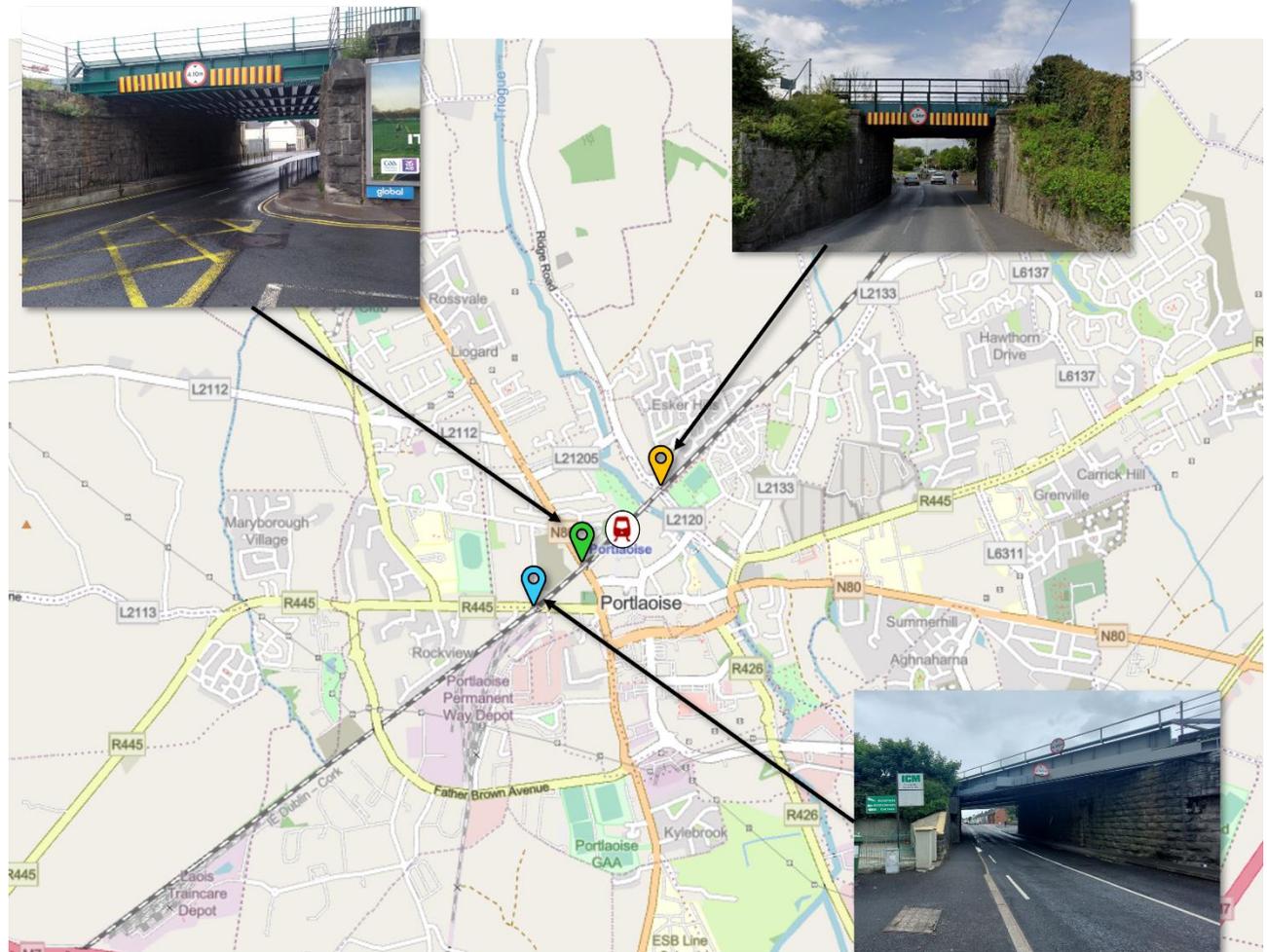


### 13.5 Railway Line Severance

A key permeability issue throughout Portlaoise is the severance caused by the Railway Line. There are three main points where the railway line crosses over Arterial and Link Roads – Grattan Street, Coote Street and Ridge Road. At all three points, footpaths on the roads are narrow or exist at only one side of the road, and there is little room for additional active travel facilities such as cycle lanes. The bridges are also low, ranging from 4.10 – 4.34 metres, which has the potential to cause issues for future bus routes in the town due to height restrictions.

In addition to creating an unfavourable environment for walking or cycling, the railway line severance can create longer journeys for cyclists and pedestrians between residential neighbourhoods and services in the town centre. Pedestrians and cyclists who want to access the town centre often cannot take the most direct route if it crosses the railway line.

This issue is unlikely to be resolved in the short-term, given the complexity of redesigning the bridges along the railway line throughout Portlaoise, although the delivery of the Triogue Way will provide one more crossing point. This Plan has therefore identified short-to-medium term projects throughout this chapter aimed at reducing severance, and maximising permeability using existing street patterns and crossing points.



Location of Railway Bridges in Portlaoise



### 13.6 Permeability and Schools

Portlaoise is well served by primary and secondary schools. Primary schools are mostly concentrated to the south-east of Portlaoise at the Summerhill educational campus, while secondary schools are located to the north and west of Portlaoise. Portlaoise Further Education and Training Centre and Laois Education Centre provide post-leaving certificate education near the town centre and Midland Regional Hospital.

All of Portlaoise's primary schools have moved out of the town centre. The last remaining secondary school in the centre of town, Choláiste Dhún Másc/Dunamase College, will eventually move to a site purchased by Laois Offaly Educate Together Board at the Well Road. Once Dunamase College moves, only the Portlaoise Further Education and Training Centre will remain near the town centre.

Newer residential areas, such as estates in the vicinity of St Mary's CBS and Scoil Chríost Rí have poor permeability with the schools. LCC has plans for new controlled pedestrian crossings at the two northern roundabouts on Borris Road, to improve safety for school children attending these two schools.

The Holy Family School Campus includes a Junior and Senior school located south east of the town. Currently there is poor permeability to the school, but new development at Ashewood Walk provides a new pedestrian connection, greatly improving the permeability of the school from the east.

Additional planning applications for development to the south and west of the school have the potential to similarly improve access to the Holy Family Schools and other primary schools along the Southern Circular Road. Current development applications to the south and west of the Holy Family School campus also provides an opportunity to deliver a link to Portlaoise GAA grounds from the town centre, identified as poor in the *Portlaoise 2040* strategy. The development will take place on a phased basis starting nearest to Southern Circular Road. The LTP recommends that pedestrian and cyclist connectivity to the GAA is provided even in advance of residential development.

Three additional primary schools (Maryborough N.S, Gaelscoil Phortlaoise and Portlaoise Educate Together) are located further west along Aghnaharna Drive. Providing connections between the cluster of schools and residential estates to the east

would provide safer and more direct access to the schools from Aghnaharna Drive and further afield.

The recently opened southern section of the Triogue Way creates a direct link from the People's Park and facilitate walking and cycling to and from the cluster of schools.

Creating new pedestrian and cyclist linkages between the residential areas and the schools makes it possible for more children to walk and cycle to school and results in less congestion at peak times and quieter and cleaner environments. Formalising existing desire lines can provide more direct and safer routes to schools through residential estates.

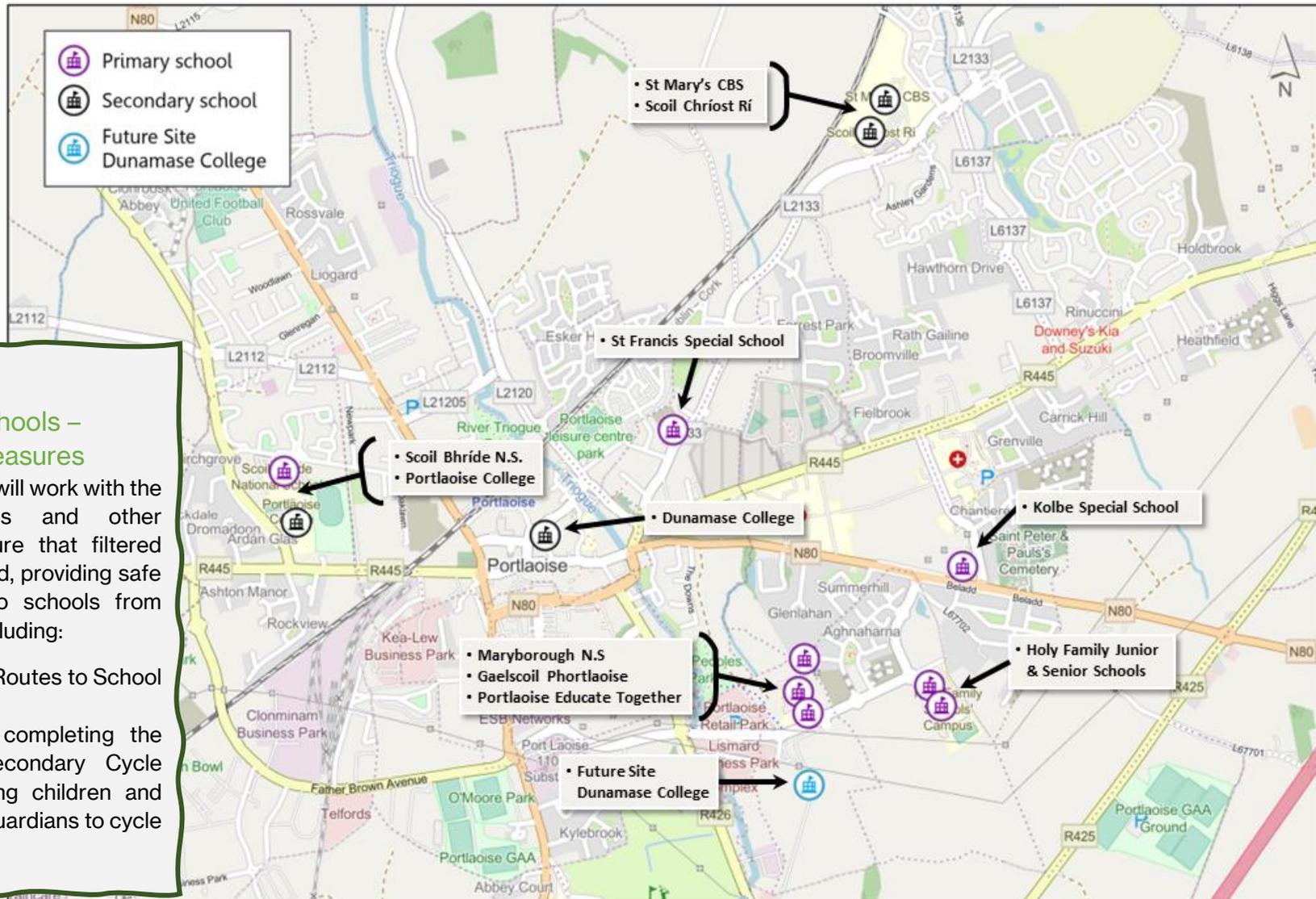


Figure 13-5 New permeability between Ashewood Walk and Holy Family School. Source: LCC.



**Measure PY3**  
**Permeability to Schools – Supplementary Measures**  
 Laois County Council will work with the NTA, local schools and other stakeholders to ensure that filtered permeability is secured, providing safe and direct access to schools from surrounding areas, including:

- Supporting Safe Routes to School schemes
- Developing and completing the Primary and Secondary Cycle Networks enabling children and their parents or guardians to cycle safely to school.



Location of Schools in Portlaoise



### 13.7 New connections to create or enhance permeability

This Local Transport Plan LTP has identified a series of filtered permeability opportunities across Portlaoise to accompany the walking and cycling measures in order to maximise connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. Some of these exist in an informal sense but are often illegible, are not fully accessible for all ages and abilities, perceived to be unsafe or are of limited value in inclement weather. The existing and proposed new connections are illustrated on the map on the following page. Options marked with an asterisk (\*) on **Table 13-1** improve connectivity to schools and are to be prioritised.

#### Measure PY4

#### Filtered Permeability

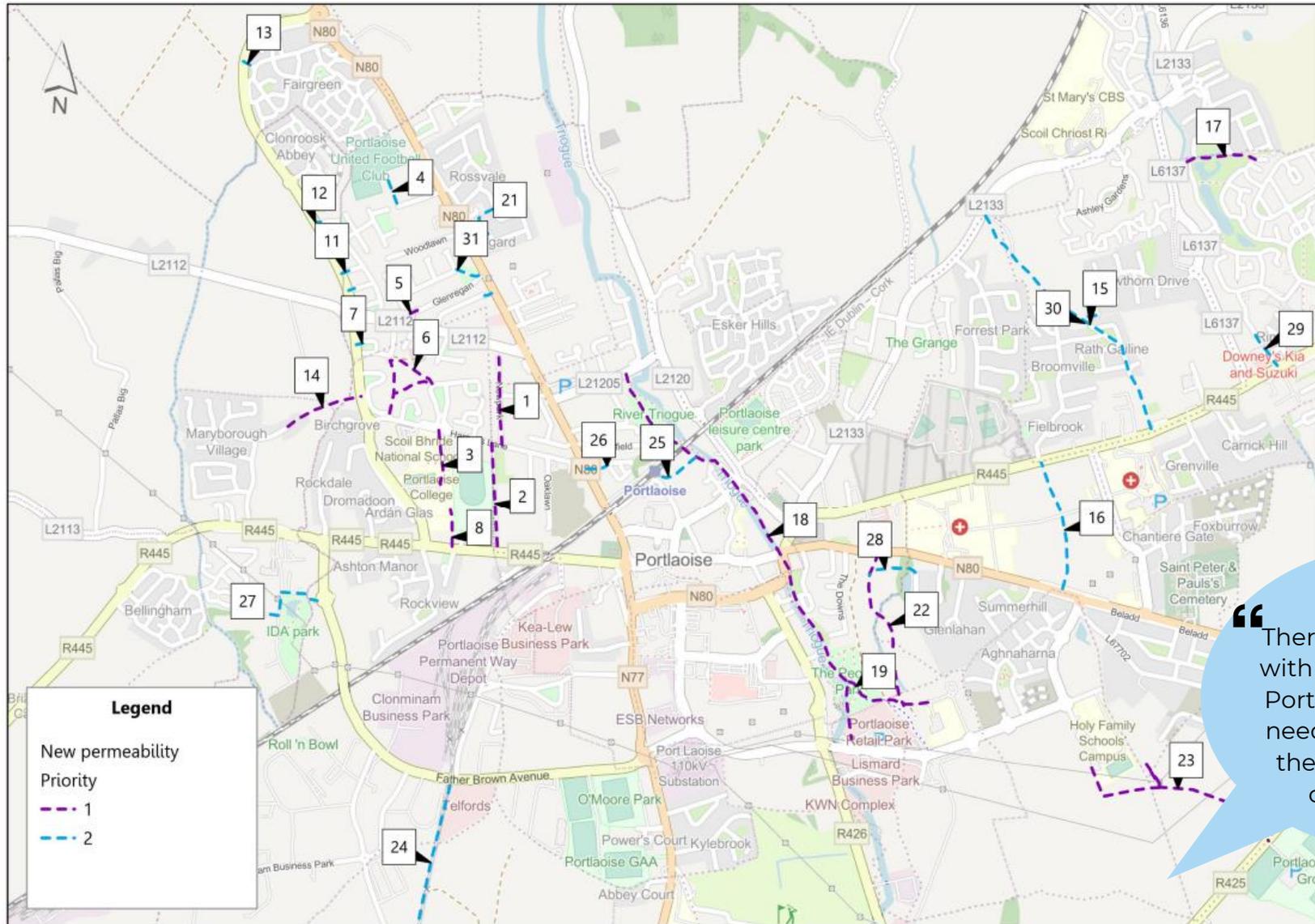
It is an objective of Laois County Council to create a fully permeable environment for pedestrians and cyclists across Portlaoise. Laois County Council will ensure that

- Existing informal permeability points are formalized where possible.
- Existing formal permeability points are upgraded and retrofitted where possible.
- Filtered permeability is secured in all new residential estates, commercial developments and where possible, schools

The safety and attractiveness of these connections for all ages and abilities will be an important consideration, including lighting, sightlines and passive surveillance.



Figure 13-6 (Top Left) Existing permeability between Ridge Road and St John's Square. (Top Right) Informal permeability along Glen Down's; (Bottom Left) Existing permeability between Mountmellick Road and Beechfield Estate; (Bottom Right) Informal permeability through a hedge along Ballyfin Road. Source: DBFL.



Possibilities for New / Upgraded Permeability Connections [see Table 13-1 below]



Table 13-1 Recommendations for Permeability across Portlaoise. Items marked with an \* are Priority 1; other connections are Priority 2. Because of the scale of the map above, not all new connections could be shown.

No.	Scheme	Rationale
1	*New Park to Harpur's Lane	Connection to Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College
2	*Centrepoin Site (currently blocked off)	Connection to Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College
3	*Harpur's Lane to Portlaoise College	Connection to Portlaoise College
4	Elm Lawn to Rossleighan Park	Connection to sporting facilities
5	*Glenregan to Glenbarrow	Proximity to Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College
6	*Clonroosk View to Hillview	Proximity to Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College
7	Mountain View Square to Western Distributor Road	Connection to local bus service
8	*Portlaoise College to Mountrath Rd	Proximity to Portlaoise College
9-12	Woodgrove to Western Distributor Road	Connection to Proximity to local bus service
13	Cosby Avenue to Western Distributor Road	Connection to local bus service
14	*Maryborough Village to Western Distributor Road	Proximity to Scoil Bhríde and Portlaoise College
15	Dublin Rd to Borris Rd via Rath Galline	LAP and CycleConnects
16	Stradbally Rd to Dublin Rd via HSE lands	LAP and CycleConnects
17	*Colliers Way to Rathevan View to Lake Side Gardens	Connection to Scoil Chríost Rí, St Mary's CBS & employment centres
18	Triogue Way (Cycle Connects)	Provides pedestrian and cyclist connectivity throughout Portlaoise
19	*Summerhill School Campus to Triogue Way	Link between greenway and primary schools
20-21	Rossvale to Mountmellick Road and Liogard	Improved access to bus service along Mountmellick Rd
22	*Tyrrell's Land Masterplan Site (Cycle Connects)	Connection to Summerhill schools & future site Dunamase College
23	*Aghnaharna Trail (LAP)	Connection to schools, sporting facilities & town centre via Triogue Way
24	Togher Woods Greenway/Sustainable Transport Corridor	Connection to public amenity/ Abbeyleix Greenway
25	Railway Station to Triogue Way	Improved accessibility to railway station
26	Beechfield to Coote St. existing connection to be improved	Improved security
27	Clonkeen View to Old Knockmay Road	Improved connectivity to employment centres and schools
28	Glen Down's to Tyrrell's Land Masterplan site	Local connectivity to public amenity
29	Castle Drive to Dublin Road	Improved connectivity to public transport
30	Hawthorn Drive to Rath Galline	Improved connectivity to public transport
31	Glenbarrow to Glenregan/	Improved connectivity to local bus service and schools
32	Lynden Ct to Mountmellick Rd	Improved connectivity to local bus service and schools



## 13.8 Sample Connectivity Improvements

To illustrate the impact of improving permeability in local areas, the northeast area of Portlaoise (between Dublin Road and Borris Road) is shown in Figure 13-7. A plan developed by the Kilminchy Homeowners Association pointed out the benefits of improved connectivity between Kilminchy and Borris Road (connection 17 in Table 13-1).

### Lake Side Gardens to Scoil Chríost Rí, St Mary's CBS via Rathevan View

- A pedestrian link from Lake Side Gardens (Kilminchy) through Rathevan View would provide children with a safe pedestrian link from Kilminchy to St Mary's CBS and Scoil Chríost Rí. With the appropriate wayfinding signage, this route could also function as a **Quietway** (see **Chapter 12-Cycling**).

This intervention and others can together make it easier for people to walk or cycle in Portlaoise for their daily journeys.



Figure 13-7 Map from Kilminchy Community Plan. Source: A Green Infrastructure Masterplan for Kilminchy Estate, 2019.

## 14 Public Transport

According to the **Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027**, the transportation sector is one of the biggest contributors of emissions in the county, primarily due to emissions from private cars.

Investment in public transport in Portlaoise is therefore crucial to promote a modal shift away from car dependency and reach climate action targets, as well as to create a more welcoming and interactive public space.

The County Development Plan identifies local county targets for public transport for Portlaoise, which align with national targets as set out in the **Climate Action Plan 2023**, including:

- the delivery of a **public transportation hub** in Portlaoise by 2027
- the prioritization and delivery of public bus measures by 2027
- achieve **modal shift** in line with national targets
- the prioritisation of **pedestrian linkages** and creation of **Blueways / Greenways**
- 30 additional **EV charge points** by 2027

Modal Share Targets for Public Transport Use			
	2016	2028	2040
Laois County Development Plan	7%	n/a	20%
LTP School Trips	23%	35%	40%
LTP Work Trips	12%	30%	30%

Table 14-1 Modal share targets for Public Transport Use in Portlaoise. A modal target for 2028 is not available in the County Development Plan.



Figure 14-1 The entrance to Portlaoise Railway Station, which has EV Charging points, a bus stop and bicycle parking. Source: DBFL.



Figure 14-2 Bus service travelling under the railway bridge on Coote Street. Source: DBFL.

The **Climate Action Plan 2023** identifies the transport sector as a **Vital High Impact Sector**, emphasising the need for a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. Under the Plan, walking, cycling and public transport will account for 50% of all journeys by 2030.



The County Development Plan sets modal targets for public transport use across County Laois. Because of the availability of public transport, as well as the pedestrian and cycle links to access it, the share of public transport use in Portlaoise was higher in 2016 than in County Laois. The LTP sets higher modal shares for public transport use for Portlaoise into the future as well. To reflect the impact of the planned town bus service, the biggest increase in public transport use happens by 2028 (see **Table 14-1** above).

This Chapter covers public transport (bus and rail) provision including:

- The new town bus service for Portlaoise
- Bus stop infrastructure
- Integration with other modes of transport
- Railway station facilities and accessibility
- Existing and future rail projects

### 14.1 Bus Network Overview

Portlaoise has excellent bus connectivity nationally, including services to Cork, Limerick and Dublin. However, the majority of bus services that call at Portlaoise do not

provide public transportation from one part of Portlaoise to another.

For a town the size of Portlaoise, reliable public transportation is a key element to its sustainable development and in achieving a low carbon economy. The absence of a dependable bus service encourages the use of the private car, impacting negatively quality of life and the safety and attractiveness of Portlaoise.

### 14.2 Existing Network

Portlaoise is served by a network of Local Link, Bus Eireann and other service providers. Most buses operating through Portlaoise serve one or more stops along Dublin Rd (R445). The most frequent bus routes are Dublin-bound bus route No. 726, No. 735 linking Portlaoise with Dublin and Limerick,



Figure 14-3 An electric bus owned by Martleys of Portlaoise. Source: Martleys.com.

and No. 830 connecting Portlaoise with Tullamore.

The bus stops in Portlaoise are mainly distributed along the main corridors of the town – the N80 and the R445. Four bus routes call at Portlaoise Railway Station; bus routes serving the town centre stop at the Old Post Office and Laois Shopping Centre, the two most central bus stops in Portlaoise.

#### 14.2.1 Key Outcomes for the Bus Network

The key outcomes for the bus network in Portlaoise are as follows:

- The delivery of the new town bus network
- The provision of high-quality bus shelters along the new town bus route, with Real Time Passenger Information
- Walking network upgrades to and around bus stops to ensure pedestrian comfort, safety and accessibility (see **Chapter 13 – Permeability**)

### 14.3 Bus Network Improvements

#### 14.3.1 New Town Bus Network

Laois County Council and the NTA are at an advanced stage of planning a new town bus service for Portlaoise, with expectations that the service will be in operation in 2024. Four



buses in total will operate the two proposed routes. In keeping with the Low Carbon Town designation of Portlaoise, Laois County Council is investigating the use of electric buses for the new bus service. The two proposed routes are designed to connect many of the most populous areas in Portlaoise, including key attractions and schools.

There are 72 stops planned along the two routes on both local and national roads. The service is set to operate a half hourly service Monday to Sunday, from 7am to midnight.

The bus stops in the middle of each route are shared which doubles the frequency of the service. Shared stops include those within the town centre along Coote Street and James Fintan Lalor Avenue. To facilitate passengers changing between bus and rail, improvements should be made to pedestrian facilities along Coote Street and the entrance to Portlaoise station. This route would provide capacity for town and inter-urban buses, regular in-line stopping places, bus shelters and passenger information.

This LTP makes a high-level recommendation for an eventual third bus line (PL3) serving schools and a public transport corridor connecting the J17 National Enterprise Park

## Measure PT 1

### New Town Bus Network

Laois County Council will work with the Service Planning Team at the NTA, Bus operators, landowners, TII and other relevant stakeholders on the following:

#### Short-term:

- Deliver the New Town Bus Service for Portlaoise.

#### Medium-term:

- Examine the potential for an additional route (P3 Route) along the Southern Circular Road to enable more children to take the bus to school.

#### Long-term:

- Examine the potential for the town bus network to serve the J17 National Enterprise Park
- Investigate the reuse of the Togher Railway Line for sustainable transport
- Promote the use of public transport in the J17 Enterprise Park

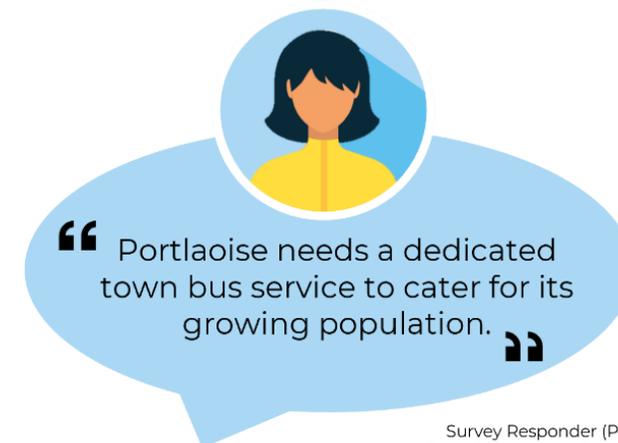
that would further improve public transport alternatives for school and work trips.

### Bus Depots

An appropriate depot is required for the provision of a high frequency town bus service as planned for Portlaoise. The Local Authority will continue to work with the NTA to determine the ongoing requirements and specifications for a bus depot.

### Regional Bus Services

Portlaoise town has five regular Local Link routes serving the rural hinterland. Less



Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



frequent Local Link regional bus routes in Portlaoise service surrounding villages and towns such as Mountmellick, Stradbally, Ballyfin, Mountrath, Vicarstown and Borris-In-Ossary.

Other bus companies such as Slieve Bloom Coaches, Martleys and JJ Kavanagh and Sons offer additional routes, including to Abbeyleix, Cashel, Tullamore and Kilkenny. Many of these services stop at Portlaoise between one and seven times a week, creating a difficulty for those who live in Portlaoise and work in neighbouring towns, in particular Abbeyleix, and want to take public transport.

**Measure PT 2**

**Regional Bus Network**

Laois County Council will work with the Service Planning Team at the NTA, Bus operators, landowners, and other relevant stakeholders to maintain and enhance regional bus networks in line with the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan and will make further improvements to routes where demand is identified.

The **Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan (CIRMP)** found a need to increase the frequency of the Portlaoise to Roscrea bus route (834), but proposed no other changes to bus services. The CIRMP is discussed in detail in **Chapter 3 – Policy Review**.

Survey results from the Pre-Draft Public Consultation undertaken as part of the LTP process indicated a need for more frequent buses to surrounding towns. Therefore, this LTP recommends further service improvements to accompany CIRMP recommendations to rural regional routes where demand is identified and / or where future analysis of travel patterns show a persistently high dependency on the private car.

**Measure PT 3**

**Local Link Services**

Laois County Council will work with the Service Planning Team at the NTA, Bus operators, and other relevant stakeholders to maintain and enhance Local Link services where required.



“ A lot of people who work and study in Portlaoise live in the rural areas nearby which are not serviced by many bus routes, if any at all. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



“ Bus services between Portlaoise and towns such as Mountmellick and Mountrath only run a few times per day. This needs to change. Small towns and villages need better connections to Portlaoise. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



## Bus Stops and Shelters

Currently very few bus stops in Portlaoise are sheltered and many do not have timetables regarding the available bus services and time information. Bus shelters play a valuable role in delivering accessibility and a sense of safety for passengers. *Transport for London* recommends the following elements in designing a universally accessible bus stop:

**Security:** Providing a covered shelter is important to protect people from the weather, and adequate lighting is needed to help them feel more secure. Passive supervision and clear lines of sight can also improve safety and a sense of security.

**Green Infrastructure (GI):** Green Infrastructure – including Street trees, woodlands and green walls – can deliver environmental, economic and social benefits (see **Figure 14-4**).

**Key Information:** Providing up-to-date information can make users feel more comfortable and secure. This includes Real Time Information (RTI) and maps.

**Legibility:** The bus stop post, and signage are important aids of legibility.

**Crossings:** It may be necessary to provide additional dropped kerbs and / or crossing facilities at a bus stop.

**Seating:** Seating needs to be provided to assist mobility impaired passengers that do not use wheelchairs, such as older passengers. Space should be left for wheelchair users to park alongside the bus stop.

Placement of bus stops and permeability between stops and key services is also crucial in the success of the new town bus service. Permeability between bus stops, residential areas and schools is discussed in further detail in **Chapter 13 – Permeability**.

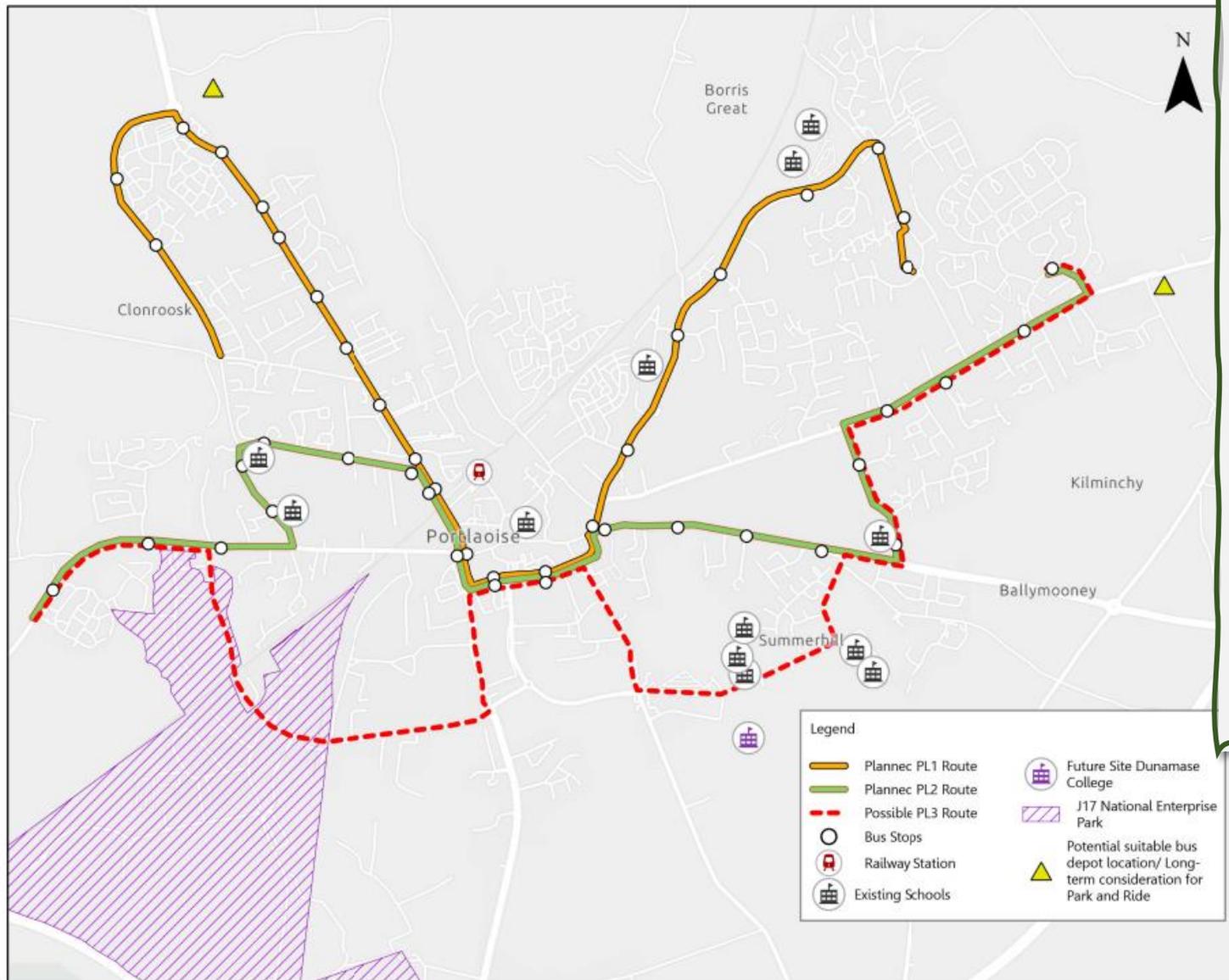


Figure 14-4 Green Infrastructure on a bus stop in Utrecht, Netherlands, participating in the 'Bee Stop Project.' Source: Barbra Verbij/Clear Channel.

“ Bus stops need to be better designed and have better shelters, timetables and signage. Bus services should also be more regular, allowing travel into the town centre from the key main residential areas. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)





**Measure PT 4**

**Bus Stops and Shelters**

Laois County Council will work with the NTA to ensure that each bus shelter that accompanies the new Town Bus Service will be consistent and legible and will include the following:

- Real Time Information (RTI)
- Standardised bus stop sign, pole, and information panel
- Accessible Kerbing
- Seating and Lighting
- Landscaping where applicable

Laois County Council will ensure that permeability is secured between all existing and proposed bus stops with residential areas, schools, and key attractors.

The Proposed Town Bus Network in Portlaoise



# Rail

## 14.4 Overview

Ireland’s rail network has the potential to develop as the ‘backbone’ of the Irish public transportation system, providing a network of connectivity between urban areas and regions. Portlaoise is centrally located along this network, located on the main Dublin to Cork and Limerick railway line.

The Portlaoise Railway Station is strategically located 350 metres north of the town centre and is the busiest county town railway station in the Midlands region with up to 38 trains to and from Dublin per day.

The Portlaoise Railway Station currently has 90 car parking spaces, 4 disabled spaces and 1 EV charging point, as well as Sheffield parking stands for 18 bicycles and 5 bicycle lockers. Vehicle parking is open 24-hours a day.

## 14.5 Facilities & Universal Design

The existing conditions of Portlaoise Railway Station prevent universal access by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability, including physical, cognitive and sensory.

The station has level access to platform 2 and a lift and footbridge to access platform 1,

making it difficult or impossible for mobility impaired passengers to disembark trains from Dublin or board trains heading south from Portlaoise. Aside from those travelling in the direction of Dublin, the Irish Rail website states the following in relation to mobility impaired passengers at Portlaoise:

*Mobility impaired customers travelling from Heuston will have to alight at Portarlington for a suitable taxi transfer to Portlaoise station.*

*Mobility impaired customers travelling south from Portlaoise will be taken by taxi to Thurles to join their train.*

- Irish Rail



Figure 14-5 Bike lockers at Portlaoise Railway Station. Source: DBFL.

### Measure PT 5

#### Portlaoise Railway Station Facilities

Laois County Council will work with the NTA and Irish Rail, to improve the facilities available in Portlaoise Railway Station.



“ Portlaoise needs a public transport network which is more accessible to the elderly and disabled community ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



## 14.6 Pedestrian and Cycling Accessibility

Walking and cycling infrastructure should provide a seamless interchange between residential areas, education, workplaces, amenities and leisure areas, with bus and rail options.

There are opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment in the vicinity of the Railway Station to provide for better integration between transport options, including increasing permeability between the station and residential estates to the north via the Triogue Way (see **Ref. no.3** in **Figure 14-8**). Additionally, footpaths on Ridge Road (**Ref. no.4** in **Figure 14-8**) and Station Road (**Ref no.5** in **Figure 14-8**) have a footpath on only one side of the street and need to be upgraded.

Lighting improvements should be made to the laneway south of Leinster Council GAA Office for increased safety and security (**Ref no.6** in **Figure 14-8**). The pedestrian path at the entrance to the station from Cootte Street is narrow and needs upgrading (**Ref no.7** in **Figure 14-8**).

Cycling accessibility to the railway station is reliant on the condition of cycling infrastructure. Portlaoise’s compact form and

the central location of the railway station means most of Portlaoise can be reached within a 12-minute cycle from the station.

The ability to cycle to the station is constrained, however, by the quality of the infrastructure. Some Arterial Streets have cycle lanes on the outskirts of the town, as the streets approach the town centre, the cycle lanes disappear. On Cootte St, Ridge Rd, and Grattan St, the carriageway narrows when the street passes under the railway line, further increasing the difficulty of cycling (**see Chapter 12 – Cycling**).

This Plan recommends the delivery of the routes as outlined in the NTA’s draft CycleConnects to provide a continuous and coherent route between the railway station, the town centre and residential areas.



Figure 14-6 Sheffield Bike Parking at the Station. Source: DBFL.

### Measure PT 6

#### Pedestrian and Cycling Accessibility at Portlaoise Railway Station

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders, such as Irish Rail and the NTA, to improve the accessibility to Portlaoise Railway Station. At a minimum this will include:

- Increasing permeability to the Railway Station and Triogue Way from Beechfield and Woodlawn Villas.
- Improving the cycling infrastructure to the standards set out in CycleConnects for Urban Secondary Routes.
- Improving the pedestrian environment on Station Rd, Railway St, Ridge Rd & the entrance to the station on Cootte St.

## 14.7 Multi-Modal Interchange Hub

While passengers may change at Portlaoise for other train services, alternative methods of transport for those leaving the railway station, such as bike, bus and car travel must also be provided for. There is therefore an opportunity for the station to become a high-quality Multi-Modal Interchange Hub.

While bicycle and car parking is being provided for the station by various future and existing developments, Bike Sharing Schemes could also offer transport flexibility and convenience, and its visibility can help promote a culture of cycling (See **Chapter 17 – Supporting Measures**). Additionally, a new town bus service with two routes is proposed by the NTA and Laois County Council and both routes will serve the railway station.

Park and Rides (P & R) are the provision of high capacity, car parking facilities at designated public transport interchanges to provide onward access to key destinations, including the town centre, employment hubs and so on via high frequency public transport, walking or cycling. Park and Ride facilities located on the outskirts of Portlaoise with services running to the station would prevent additional motorised traffic from entering the town

centre. This LTP therefore proposes P&R facilities in the north and east of Portlaoise that would serve the Railway Station and complement the introduction of the town bus

### Measure PT 7

#### Multi-Modal Interchange Hub

Laois County Council will work with the NTA, Irish Rail and relevant stakeholders to progress Portlaoise Railway Station as a high-quality Multi-Modal Interchange Hub to enable seamless transfer between different modes and services.

This will include the provision of a bus stop outside the station (on Coote Street), a bike hire scheme, and bike lockers and parking.



Figure 14-7 Cars, a taxi and a bus all stopped outside the Railway Station. Source: DBFL.

service. P&R facilities are discussed in greater depth in **Chapter 16 – Parking Management**.

## 14.8 Existing & Future Projects

### 14.8.1 Railway Street – Irish Rail Planning Permission

Irish Rail has received planning permission for improvements to the front of the Railway Station in Portlaoise, including enhancing pedestrian access to the station by creating an open pedestrian area at the entrance, reorganising parking by providing 28 additional car parking spaces, the creation of a new bike shelter with 30 bicycle parking spaces, 3 EV charging points and additional works such as footpaths and public lighting (**Ref no.1 in Figure 14-8**).

### 14.8.2 Railway Street Carpark

An additional 94 car parking spaces, including 10 EV charging spaces, cycle parking and storage are being constructed as part of the URDF- funded Railway Street Carpark on the former CBS lands to the east of the railway station. This new development will provide pedestrian access to the east of the station, improving accessibility (**Ref. no. 2 in Figure 14-8**). See also **Chapter 6 – Key Plan Influences**.



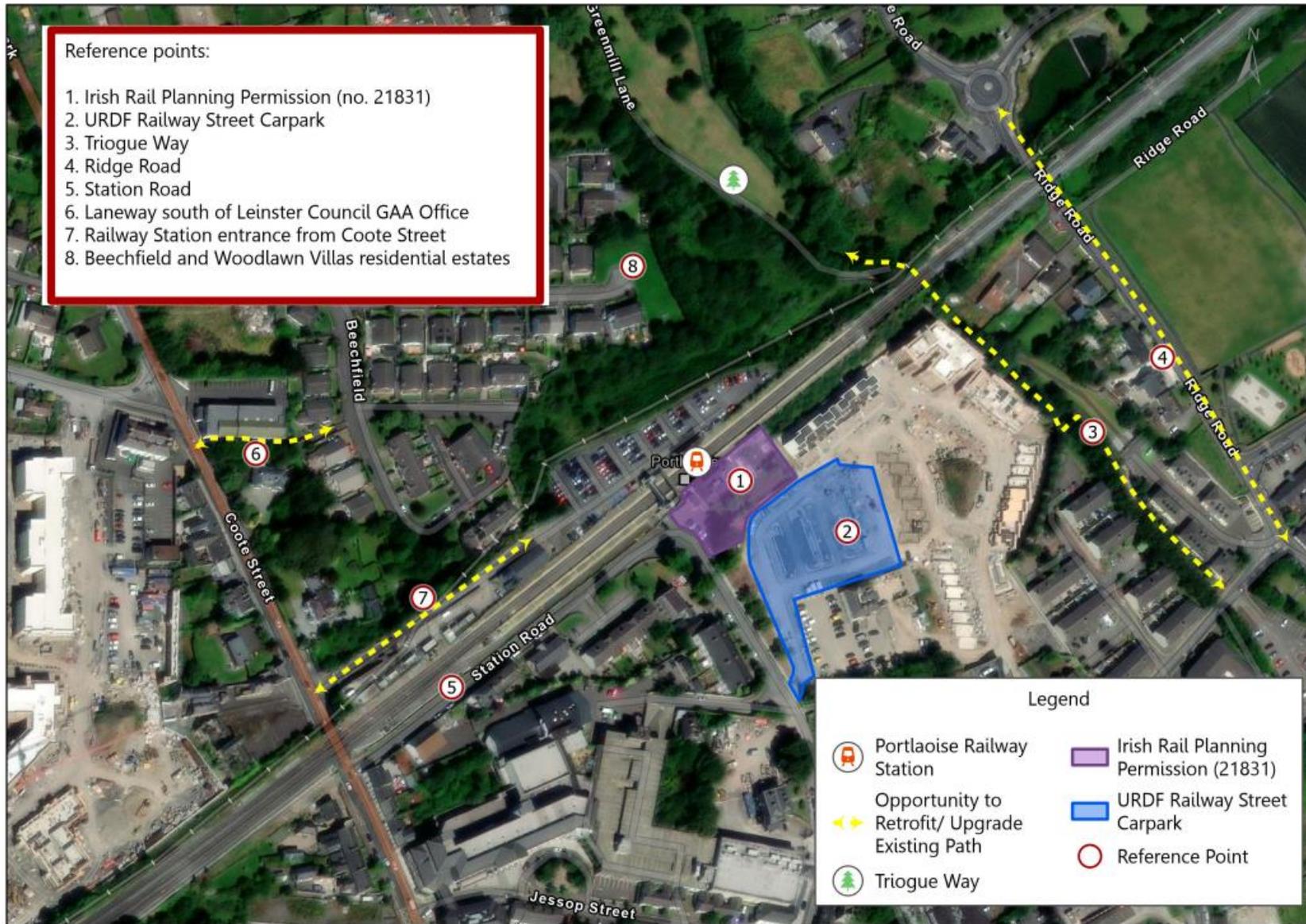


Figure 14-8 Existing and Future Projects, as well as Proposed interventions under the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan.



# 15 Road Network

## 15.1 Overview

The roads and streets within the Study Area of the Portlaoise LTP enable the completion of journeys and the delivery of goods and services, both locally and across the country. They provide a dense network of local, regional and national connections.

Uniquely for a town of its size, Portlaoise has a series of National Roads that converge and run through the town:

- The N80 bisects Portlaoise heading north to Tullamore and southeast to Carlow.
- The N77 heads south to Kilkenny.
- Regional roads provide connectivity to Ballybrittas, Ballyroan and Timahoe.
- Just outside the urban boundary, the M7 passes to the south of Portlaoise, offering motorway access to Dublin, Cork, and Limerick.

While bypassed by the motorway, the national roads in Portlaoise perform a national strategic transport function, enabling connections and the delivery of goods and services throughout Ireland. As such, development that occurs along them is guided by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government’s **Spatial**

**Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and TII Publications (Standards) and TII Publications (Technical),** including:

- Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads (TII, 2021, DN-GEO-03084)
- Geometric Design of Junctions (priority junctions, direct accesses, roundabouts, grade separated and compact grade separated junctions) (TII, 2023, DN-GEO-03060)
- National Roads – Active Travel Planning (TII, 2021, PE-PMG-02045)
- NGS Circular No. 2 of 2022 re. Application of Guidelines and Standards in relation to works on Public Roads in Ireland (2022)

The national roads within the Study Area will continue to support strategic and local traffic until such stage as when it can be diverted around Portlaoise and/or replaced by more sustainable modes. This LTP seeks to address the aspects of the road network, including national roads, that make it difficult for people to choose active or sustainable travel.

In addition to their movement functions, the roads and streets in Portlaoise form a vital part of the public realm and are social spaces in their own right. Enhancements to the

← Within the centres of towns and villages that lie on National Roads, the treatments described in DMURS shall apply. Note that throughout the entire length of National Roads through towns and villages, the design shall also comply with all relevant requirements within TII Publications (Standards) for National Roads.

DN-GEO-03084

public realm offer the opportunities to restore vitality to the town centre, create meeting places, plant pollinator-friendly and biodiversity-enhancing plants and introduce Sustainable Urban Drainage.

The objectives in this Local Transport Plan represent a new way of thinking about travel that prioritises sustainable mobility and



Figure 15-1 A variety of road users along Ballyfin Road. Photo: DBFL.

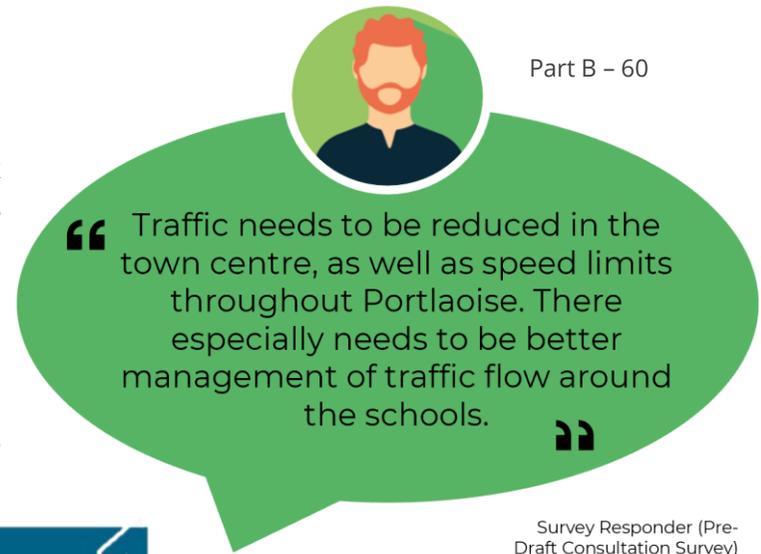


support the **Climate Action Plan 2023** objective to reduce total vehicle kilometres by 20% by 2030.

The road network objectives work in conjunction with Laois County Council's ambition to develop Portlaoise as a **Low Carbon Town**, by promoting a compact settlement pattern that diminishes the need for journeys and encourages active travel. The objectives reflect the submissions in the pre-draft public consultation report (see **Chapter 7 – Pre-Draft Public Consultation Report**) that looked for more opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport use.

Going into the future, the network of roads and streets in Portlaoise will facilitate a mix of transport users. The junctions on the street network in Portlaoise are discussed in **Chapter 10 – Junctions**; this chapter focuses on the remainder of the streets and roads.

The following objectives for the Road Network in Portlaoise align with the Government's National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland's Modal Hierarchy that prioritises Active Travel and Public Transport and the Intervention Hierarchy (see **Figure 15-2**) that commits to maintaining and optimising its infrastructure assets before introducing new infrastructure.



Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

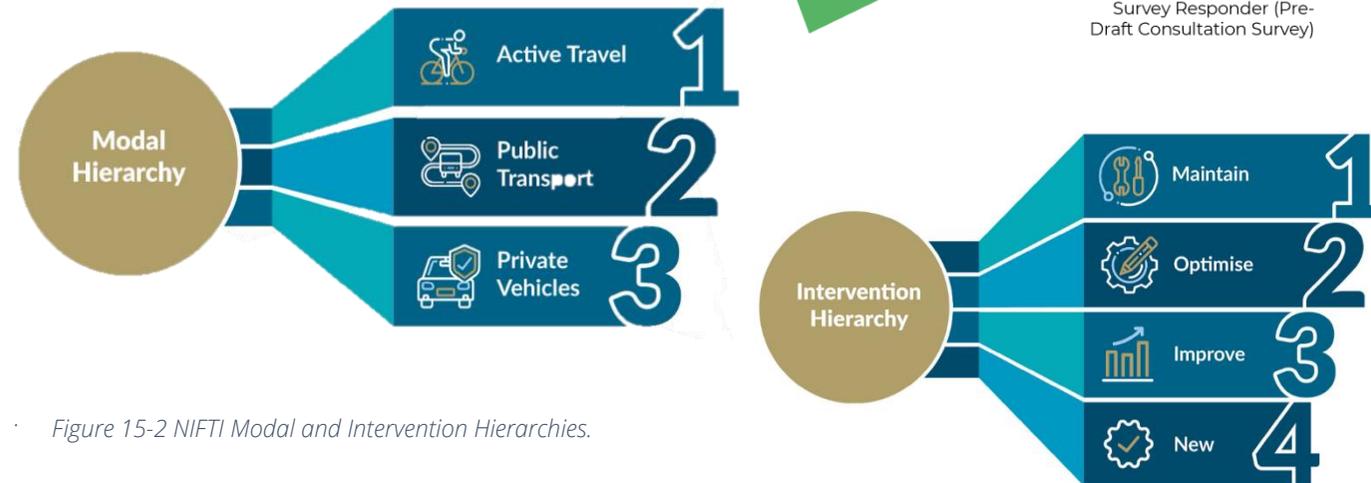


Figure 15-2 NIFTI Modal and Intervention Hierarchies.

### Objective RN 1

#### Principles of Road Development

Laois County Council will work with NTA, TII and all other relevant stakeholders to:

- Balance the needs of road users so the roads in Portlaoise can perform their national, strategic transport function while promoting vibrancy, accessibility and lower emissions.
- Optimise the existing road and street network within Portlaoise to encourage more people to walk, cycle or take public transport for their everyday journeys.



## 15.2 National Roads Network

The National Roads within Portlaoise—Mountmellick Road (N80), Coote Street (N80), Abbeyleix Road (N77), James Fintan Lalor Avenue (N80) and the Stradbally Road (N80)—connect Portlaoise with destinations throughout Ireland. They are assets of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and any improvements on them shall comply with all relevant requirements within TII Publications (Standards) for National Roads. At the same time, they form part of the arterial road network within Portlaoise and provide access to many areas in Portlaoise. The proposed objectives balance providing the necessary transportation infrastructure, while not inducing demand for additional private vehicle journeys.

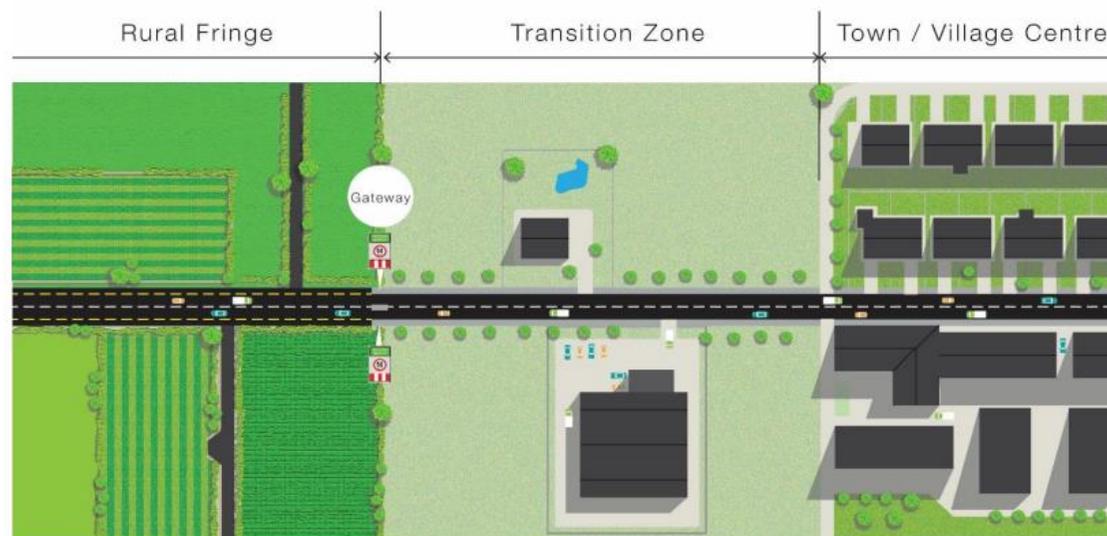


Figure 15-3 Depiction of Rural Fringe, Transition Zone and Town/Village Centre from DN-GEO-03084 that indicates most streets in Portlaoise should be designed as Town/Village Centre streets. Source: TII.

### Objective RN 2

#### National Roads Requirements

Laois County Council will preserve the strategic function of the National Roads Network in accordance with the **DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads** and in compliance with **TII Publications (Standards and Technical)**. In particular, Laois County Council will:

- Continue to contain development within the existing built-up footprint, thereby minimising sprawl and reducing the distances of journeys and reliance on private vehicles and preserve the strategic function of the N80 and N77.
- Limit development with access onto the National Road network, preserving its strategic function.
- Ensure that any LTP proposals that interact with the N80 and N77 comply with TII Publications.

### Objective RN 3

#### National Roads and Sustainable Travel

Laois County Council will work with TII and NTA and all other relevant stakeholders to incorporate active travel on the National Road Network by:

- Working with the relevant stakeholders to progress plans in *Portlaoise 2040* to redesign James Fintan Lalor Avenue (N80).
- Working with relevant stakeholders to redesign junctions, roundabouts & crossings on the National Road Network to better facilitate pedestrians and cyclists, using guidance in DN-GEO-03084 to apply treatments described in DMURS and DN-GEO-03060 regarding junctions.
- Progressing plans to provide segregated cycle lanes for the entirety of the National Road Network within Portlaoise or, when carriageway widths do not allow, provide alternate safe, coherent, direct, accessible, comfortable and attractive cycle connectivity.
- Liaising with the NTA and TII to design bus stops for the new town bus service.
- Working with relevant stakeholders to provide gateway treatments at the entrance to Portlaoise from the National Road Network to mark the entrance to the urban environment.



### 15.3 New Road Projects

Following the NIFTI Hierarchies (see **Figure 15-1**), proposed road schemes would only proceed after alternative solutions, such as expanding the active travel network, enhancing the public transport network, introducing traffic and/or demand management measures, optimising and improving the existing road network, are determined to be insufficient to address the need that the proposed road scheme addresses. Any new roads within the Study Area will be designed to promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

When the road proposed forms an urban bypass, it is necessary to consider the function of the roads and streets within the bypassed area as well as the proposed road project. The construction of an orbital route must be accompanied by measures to reallocate road space within the bypassed area to the advantage of walking, cycling and public transport and/or enhancements of the public realm.

The development of any new roads projects will be required to satisfy the following **Road Design Principles**:

1. The development of new road schemes will occur in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Framework, particularly NSO 1 Compact Growth and NSO 4 Sustainable Mobility, and the Government’s investment priorities included in the NDP.
2. The development of new local roads must ensure that the capacity and function of the National Road Network and its ability to carry strategic traffic is not compromised (NSO 2 Enhanced Regional Connectivity).
3. The development of new local roads facilitates the removal of local traffic from the strategic road network.
4. The development of new local roads will provide safe and appropriate infrastructure for active and public transport.
5. The development of new local roads will follow the NIFTI Intervention and Modal Hierarchies, demonstrating that alternative approaches to meet transport demand are not applicable or appropriate.
6. When the development of a new local road creates a new urban bypass, the development of that road accelerates the reallocation of road space within the bypassed areas to the advantage sustainable transport and/or public realm improvements. The development of urban bypasses enables restrictions on strategic traffic traveling through the bypassed area.
7. Key stakeholders, TII and the NTA, and all relevant stakeholders will be consulted on any road development project and all applicable design standards will be followed. Any roads project requires the relevant statutory and project approval processes, including environmental appraisals, feasibility studies, and public consultation.

Laois County Council has proposed the development of the following Orbital Routes and New Residential Neighbourhood Streets in their emerging *Local Area Plan 2024-2030*.



The proposed Orbital Routes are:

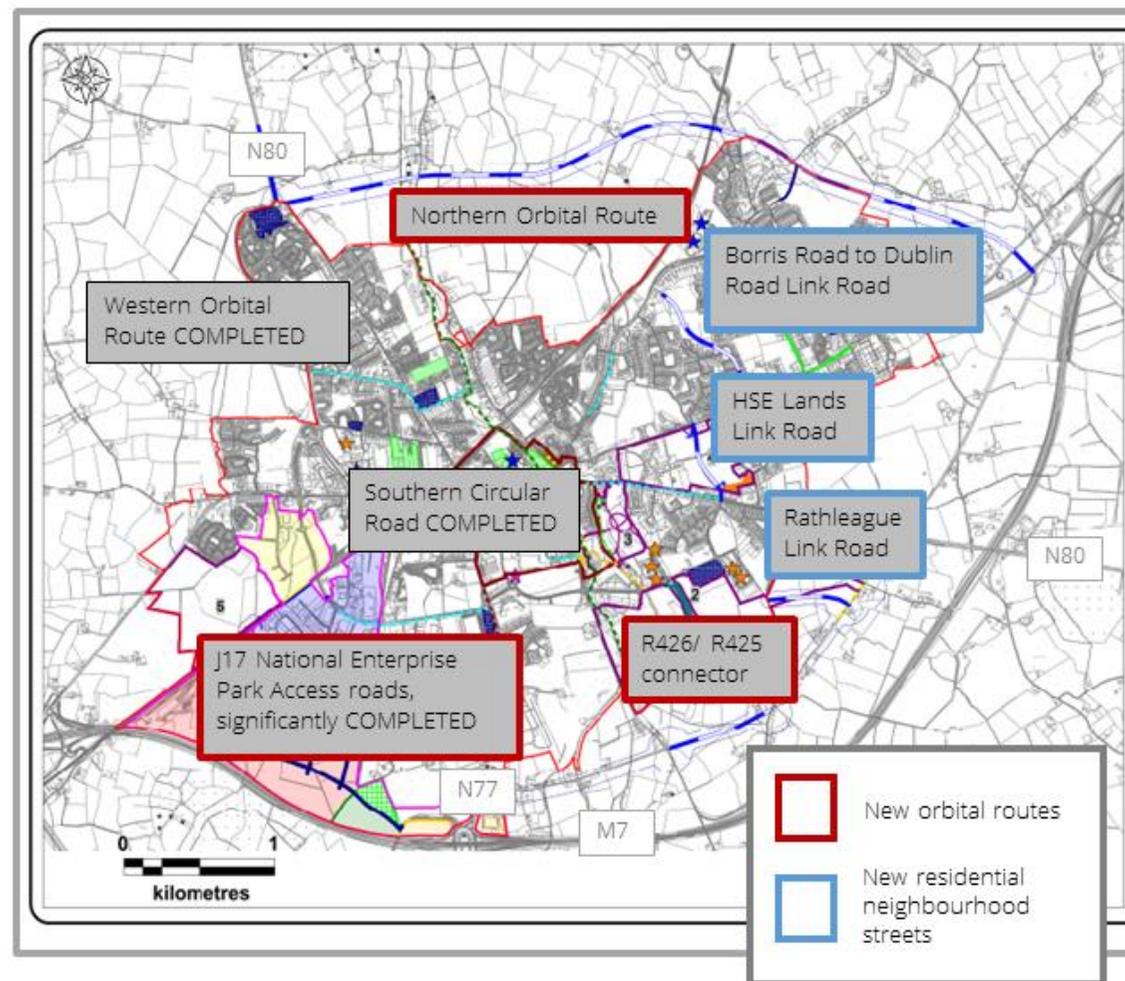
- The Northern Orbital Route (NOR);
- The R426/ R425 connector;
- J17 National Enterprise Park Access roads; many of which are completed.

The New Residential Neighbourhood Streets proposed in the draft LAP are:

- The Dublin Road to Borris Rd via Rath Gailine;
- The Rathleague Link Road; and
- The HSE Lands Link Road.

These road projects are expected to perform functions that cannot be accomplished through the first three levels of the NIFTI Intervention Hierarchy (see **Figure 15-1**) and will incorporate additional Active travel and Public Transport opportunities. Objectives from previous Local Area Plans—the Southern Circular Road and the Western Orbital Route—have been completed so that they facilitate active travel and provide an alternative route for strategic traffic from the N80 north of Portlaoise to Junction 17 on the M7.

The following tables (**Tables 15-1** and **15-2**) outline high-level consideration of the functions that the proposed roads will be required to serve. It should be noted that all roads will be subject to their own feasibility, environmental and statutory appraisals and public consultation.



Draft Portlaoise LAP 2024-2030 Zoning Objectives

Table 15-1 Key considerations to inform Orbital Routes.

Orbital Routes	Considerations
Northern Orbital Route (NOR)	<p>The ca. 5.4km NOR as proposed by LCC is intended to serve multiple functions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a bypass for strategic traffic from Fairgreen on the N80 to the R445 in the proximity of J16 on the M7.</li> <li>• Set a northern development boundary for Portlaoise, provide for its compact growth, mitigating against urban sprawl and providing for plan-led development in accordance with national, regional and local policy.</li> <li>• Facilitate the further reallocation of road space throughout Portlaoise, including consideration of restrictions on strategic through traffic.</li> <li>• Include the provision of orbital walking and cycling infrastructure (online or offline) and provide active travel connectivity.</li> <li>• Enable an orbital public transport route.</li> <li>• Upgrade of access routes to the NOR, including Mountmellick Road (N80), Ridge Road and Rathevan Road that are currently inhospitable to pedestrians and cyclists.</li> <li>• Allow the potential future reclassification of existing national routes within the Study Area.</li> </ul>
J17 National Enterprise Park Access roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate further development of the J17 National Enterprise Park, following the completion of the North-South spine between Junction 17 and Clonminam/ Old Knockmay Road.</li> <li>• Provide access roads within the National Enterprise Park to provide connections to individual sites.</li> <li>• Provide for active travel and public transport as already present on the recently constructed North-South spine road.</li> </ul>
R425/ R426 Connector	<p>A proposed ca. .7km new connector between the R425 and R426</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a more direct route between Stradbally Road (N80) and access points to J17 National Enterprise Park and the M7.</li> <li>• Provide a bypass that removes strategic through traffic and heavier vehicles from built-up areas.</li> <li>• Set a southern development boundary for Portlaoise.</li> <li>• Provide for sustainable access to residential development.</li> <li>• Provide multi-modal connectivity and active travel infrastructure.</li> <li>• Enable orbital public transport if required.</li> </ul>



Table 15-2 Key considerations to inform the development of New Residential Neighbourhood Streets

New Residential Neighbourhood Streets	Considerations
Borris Road to Dublin Road via Rath Gailine Link	Delivered in conjunction with residential development, a link between Dublin Road and Borris Road would function as a Local Street in DMURS categories. It will be designed as a street for living with residential amenities and public realm enhancements, green infrastructure, Sustainable Urban Drainage and traffic calming so that its form matches its function. It would provide accessibility to the secondary schools on Borris Road and employment sites along Dublin Road, extending the existing infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists in Rath Gailine. It will enhance permeability for pedestrians, cyclists, improving public transport accessibility and enhancing the active travel network.
HSE Lands Link Road	The road link through the HSE lands will be delivered as part of the Masterplan redevelopment of the HSE’s land holdings between Dublin Road and Stradbally Road. Development on this site will promote compact development in Portlaoise. When completed, the link will provide accessibility to primary schools along Southern Circular Road and the Kolbe School. It will function as a Local Street and provide residential amenity, green infrastructure, Sustainable Urban Drainage and traffic calming so that its form matches its function. It will enhance permeability for pedestrians, cyclists, improving the active travel network and public transport accessibility. As plans for the HSE lands develop, it may be possible to deliver pedestrian and cyclist connectivity in advance of residential development.
Rathleague Link Road	The Rathleague Link Road will be delivered in conjunction with residential development. It will provide a link between the schools on the Southern Circular Road, new residential development, existing residential development, and sporting facilities, promoting the use of sustainable transport for school and social trips. It will be designed as a Local Street and provide residential amenities and public realm enhancements, green infrastructure and Sustainable Urban Drainage and traffic calming so that its form matches its functions. It will enhance permeability for pedestrians, cyclists, improving public transport accessibility and enhancing the active travel network. It is included in <b>Chapter 13 – Permeability</b> as the Aghnaharna Trail.

**Objective RN 4: New Local Roads**

Laois County Council, the NTA and TII will;

- Design all new roads to be consistent with the Road Design Principles 1-7 outlined above.
- Subject all new road schemes to stringent feasibility and environmental assessment processes.
- Consider and design new roads to ensure consistency between their function, form and layout.
- Design new roads with appropriate urban speed limits and full provision for walking, cycling, and future public transportation use if required.



### 15.4 Regional Road Network

The Regional Road Network within Portlaoise—Mountrath Road (R445), New Road/Well Rd (R426), Dublin Road (R445) and Rathleague Road (R425)—forms part of the network of arterial streets within Portlaoise used by pedestrians and cyclists, as well as motorists. The planned Portlaoise bus service will use the Dublin Road (R445) and Mountrath Road (R445).

**Objective RN 5**

**Regional Roads and Sustainable Travel**

Laois County Council will promote the use of the Regional Road Network for sustainable transport by:

- Working with relevant stakeholders to provide gateway treatments at the entrance to Portlaoise on Dublin Road (R445), Mountrath Road (R445) and Rathleague Road (R425) to mark the entrance to the urban environment and the start of the 50km/h speed limit zone.
- Working with relevant stakeholders to redesign junctions, roundabouts, and crossings on the Regional Road Network to better facilitate pedestrians and cyclists.
- Progressing plans to provide safe infrastructure for active travel for the entirety of the Regional Road Network within Portlaoise.
- Liaising with the NTA to design bus stops on the Regional Road Network to serve the new Portlaoise town bus service.

Street Networks should be designed to maximise connectivity between destinations to promote higher levels of permeability and legibility for all users, in particular more sustainable forms of transport.



Figure 15-4 Regional Road Network – Mountrath Rd/R445.New Road/R426 Source: DBFL.



## 15.5 Local Road Network

Local streets within Portlaoise provide alternatives to national and regional roads and provide local connectivity. For example, the Southern Circular Road allows vehicles to bypass the town centre or James Fintan Lalor Avenue. In **DMURS** categories, they function as link and residential streets.

As discussed in **Chapter 12 – Permeability**, branching street networks that end in cul de sacs make active travel distances longer and less attractive. Laois County Council will work to retrofit permeability and ensure that new developments augment the street network and provide multiple connection points.

### Objective RN 6

#### Local Roads and Sustainable Travel

Laois County Council will prioritise the use of the Local Road Network (LRN) for sustainable transport by:

- Providing gateway treatments at the entrance to Portlaoise on Ridge Road at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Rathevan Road where residential development starts to mark the entrance to the urban environment and the start of the 50km/h speed limit zone.
- Working with relevant stakeholders to redesign junctions, roundabouts, and crossings on the Local Road Network to better facilitate pedestrians and cyclists as discussed in **Chapter 10 – Junctions**.
- Progressing plans to provide segregated cycle lanes along select Local Roads – Harpur’s Lane, Ballyfin Road, Borris Road – prioritising access to primary and secondary schools as discussed in **Chapter 12 – Cycling**.
- Liaising with the NTA and TII to design bus stops to serve the new Portlaoise town bus service.
- Providing SUDS and Green Infrastructure along the Local Road Network.
- Ensuring that new developments connect to the existing street grid at numerous points, providing permeability and avoiding cul de sacs.



Figure 15-5 Local Road Network in Portlaoise – Harpur’s Lane, Greenmill Lane, Ballyfin Road. Source: DBFL.

## 15.6 Town Centre Road Network

The redesign of traffic networks in Portlaoise Town Centre plays a central role in pedestrianising part of Main Street and the creation of a civic space as outlined in *Portlaoise 2040* and Local Authority plans to revitalise the town centre. The viability of these plans depends on changes to the circulation patterns of motor vehicles on the road network in the Town Centre.

### Objective RN 7

#### Town Centre Streets

Laois County Council and relevant stakeholders will:

- Redesign Market Square roundabout into a signalised junction with the reallocation of space to serve the public realm (as recommended in **Chapter 10 – Junctions**).
- Pedestrianise Lower Main Street, providing a public area outside the new county library and removing Main Street’s function as a through route.
- Reverse the existing one-way system on Church Street, Church Avenue, Railway Street and Bridge Street.
- Reconfigure Lyster Square.
- Improve the laneways to enhance their security and attractiveness.
- Complete plans to introduce one-way flow for motor traffic on Station Road and construct a cycle lane.

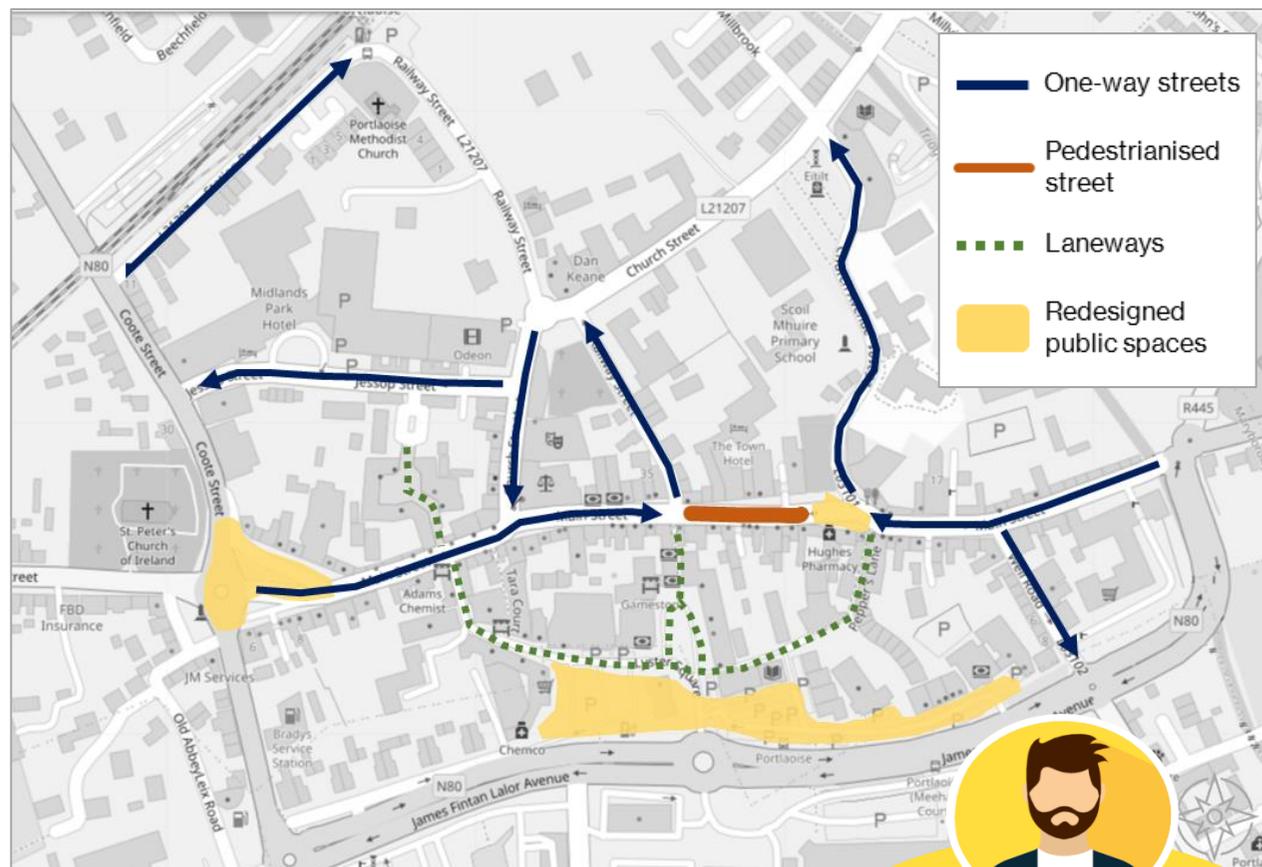


Figure 15-6: Street network changes in Portlaoise Town Centre. One-way streets marked in navy, pedestrianisation of Main Street marked in orange, improved laneways marked in dotted green, revitalised public spaces at Market Square, Lyster Square and outside the county library marked in yellow.

“Cars currently seem to have priority everywhere. Market Square, Main Street and Lyster Square all need full pedestrianisation with vehicular access only for public transport.”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



### 15.7 Speed limits in Portlaoise

In response to an increasing number of road fatalities, Jack Chambers, Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Road Safety, announced a Speed Limit Review in September 2023. The review proposed lower speed limits on many categories of roads as in **Table 15-3**. The Department of Transport is preparing guidance on speed limits that will be released to local authorities in early 2024 with the expectation that local authorities engage with the process throughout 2024 and 2025 and revise speed limits within their

Table 15-3 New recommended speed limits.

Road category	Existing speed limit	Recommended limit
National Secondary	100 km/h	80 km/h
Regional	80 km/h	80 km/h
Local & Rural	80 km/h	60 km/h
Arterial & Radial Routes in Urban Settings	60/80 km/h	50 km/h
Urban Areas: Residential Areas & Town Centres	50 km/h	30 km/h

functional authority. The importance of speed limits on road safety is illustrated in **Figure 15-7** below.

Because lower speed limits enable active travel and reduce emissions, the LTP recommends that Laois County Council engages with the Department of Transport’s review of speed limits at the earliest opportunity and introduces lower speed limits on the relevant roads and streets throughout Portlaoise. Many residential estates and town centre streets already have

a 30km/h speed limit, but a thorough review can ensure consistency.

The LTP also recommends that Laois County Council introduce 30km/h speed zones outside of schools throughout Portlaoise. Advice in the Speed Limit Review recommends a speed limit of 30-50km/h outside of schools depending on how often pedestrians and cyclists access the school and the local road layout. Given the large numbers of pupils enrolled in Portlaoise schools, the schools’ urban locations, and ambitions to

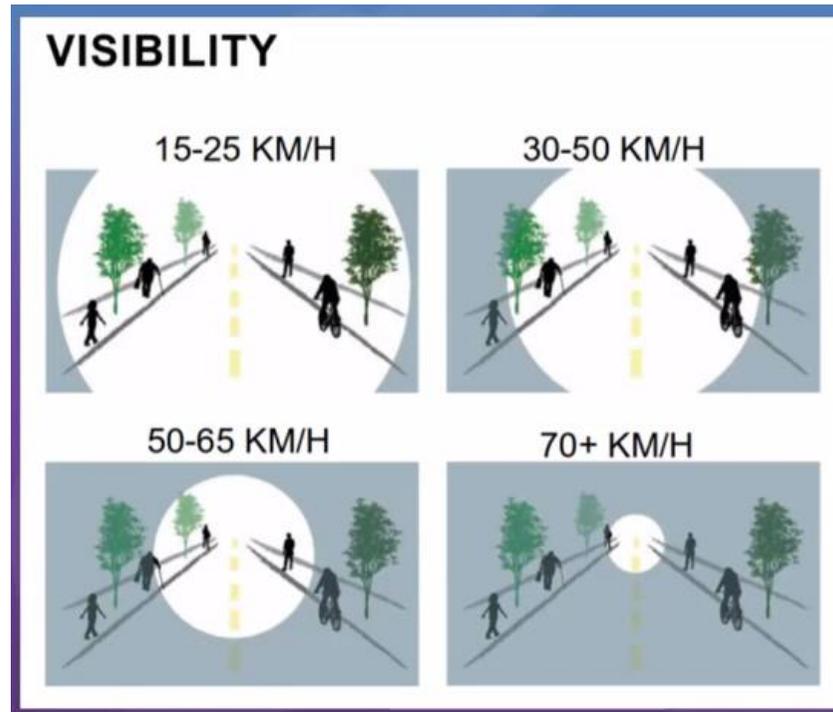


Figure 15-7: The impact of speed on field of vision, illustrating the safety impact of lower speed limits. Source: NTA.



increase the number of children walking and cycling to school, the LTP recommends the lower 30km/h speed limit.

Simply reducing speed limits is not sufficient to reduce the speed of motor vehicles. If the design speed remains above the posted speed limit, speed reductions may not occur. An engineering retrofitting programme is needed so that the design speed of the roads is also effectively lowered. The LTP recommends that following a review of local speed limits, LCC ensures that street design reinforces the posted speed limit.

### Objective RN 8: Speed Limit Review

Laois County Council will:

- Liaise with the Department of Transport to advance a review of all speed limits within Portlaoise and, where suggested, lower the existing speed limit.
- Prioritise the town centre, streets in front of schools and local streets for the delivery of 30km/h speed zones.
- Carry out a design review of streets on which the speed limit has been lowered to ensure that the design speed matches the posted speed limit.



Figure 15-8 Many sections of Portlaoise's town centre already have a 30 km/h speed limit. The LTP recommends that the speed bye-laws for Portlaoise clearly reflect the 30 km/h zone in the town centre.



# 16 Parking Management

## 16.1 Overview

This chapter examines the provision of parking for private motor vehicles. Recently there has been a step-change in thinking regarding parking standards and overall parking provision. As towns promote more walkable urban development and prioritise sustainable travel, they are also reforming their approach to car parking as seen in all four case studies—Leuven, Vauban, Winchester and Roscommon—that have revitalised their urban cores through parking displacement and consolidation of long-stay parking outside traditional shopping streets and market areas.

There is a long-established relationship between the location, availability and price of parking and its impact on travel behaviour. Controlling the availability and cost of parking is one of the most widely used demand management measures and is a key component of any strategy that aims to affect a modal shift towards active and sustainable travel and reduce car dependency.

Significant amounts of private and public on and off-street car-parking areas are available

in Portlaoise. Parking surveys, which were conducted as background for the LTP, found that the three off-street car parks surveyed (Laois County Council Car Parks 1 & 2 and Triogue River/ Church St Car Park) had close to 50% of spaces available on a weekday and over 70% of spaces available on a Saturday. On-street car parking in and near the town centre reached much higher levels of occupancy (close to 100% on a weekday), but almost two-thirds of cars were parked for less than 30 minutes.

Prudent management of car parking availability will be needed to achieve a change in travel behaviour—particularly for short journeys. Possible measures include maximum parking standards provision for trip origins (residential developments) and destinations (places of employment, study, cultural and leisure facilities) and the reallocation of parking spaces.

Some reallocation of kerbside space will be required in Portlaoise to deliver the projects envisioned in *Portlaoise 2040*. This will provide a better balance of space in line with the DMURS User Hierarchy, and facilitate the delivery of the Strategy's public realm and transport proposals including footpath extensions, cycle lanes, street furniture and

planting. This chapter sets out the shifts in parking provision and policy in Irish urban areas and outlines an appropriate car-parking strategy for Portlaoise.

Effective Parking Management helps to improve the public realm, provide space for people to stay and linger, and promote a modal shift toward sustainable travel and reduced car dependency. Many of the Draft Transport Objectives from the Local Transport Plan are met through actively managing car parking and providing more cycle parking as discussed in **Chapter 12 – Cycling**.

### Did you know?

A typical car in Europe is parked 92% of the time and spends another 1.6% of the time looking for parking.

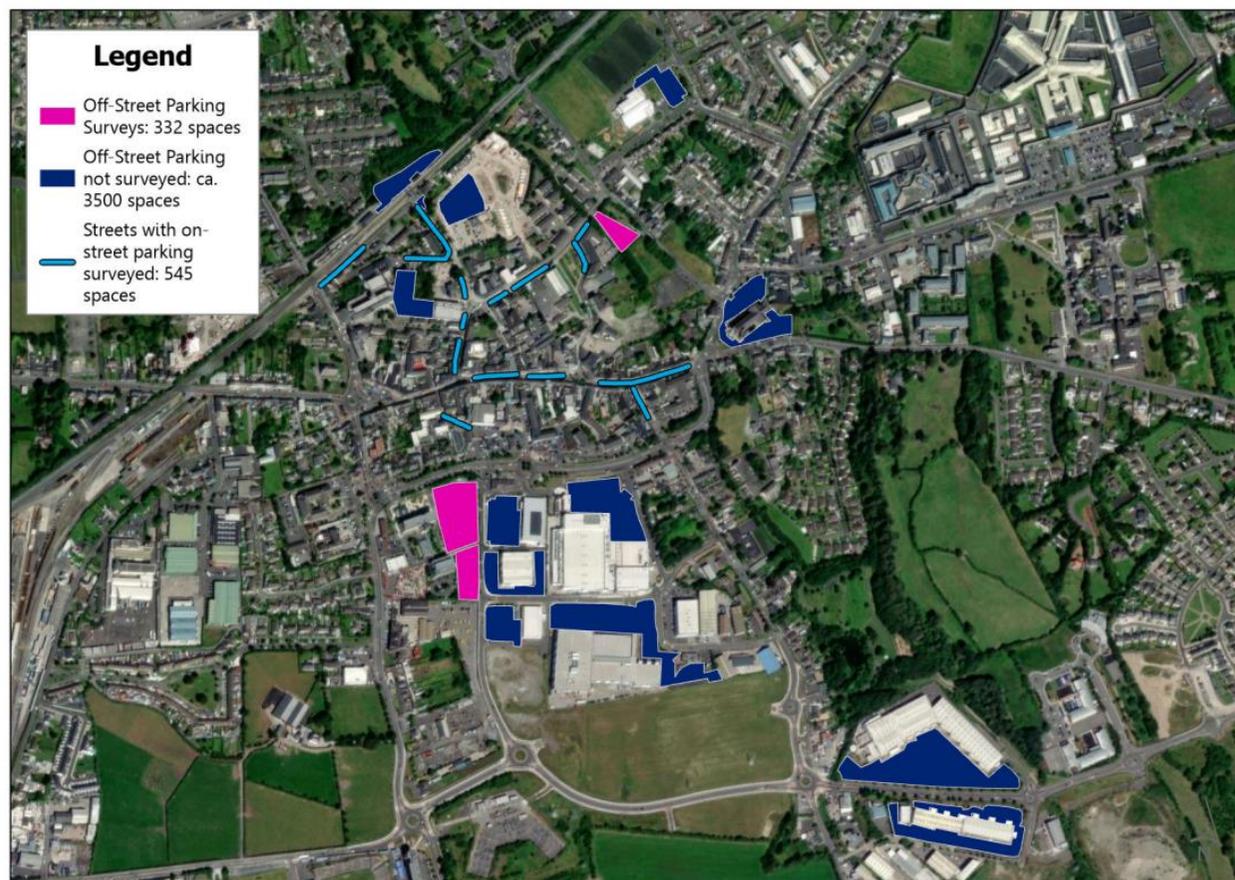
Source: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, SUN and McKinsey Centre for Business and Environment, 2015.



## 16.2 Existing conditions

There is extensive provision of on-street parking and numerous public and private off-street car parks as illustrated on the map to the right and demonstrated in the recent *Review of Existing Parking Provisions in Portlaoise and Recommendations for Enhancements* (LCC). The scope of the LTP parking study was limited to publicly owned on- and off-street car parks (pink and aqua on the map). Additional off-street car parking that was not surveyed is highlighted in navy. Together there are approximately 4,400 car parking spaces available in or to the south of the centre of Portlaoise.

The extensive provision of parking for private cars impacts can detract from the quality of Portlaoise's public realm and heritage assets. For example, Station Road 1-4 is a terrace of 4 two-storey, two-bay houses built in the 1940s. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage calls them a fine example of mid-twentieth-century domestic architecture whose 'stripped classical idiom' gives them a distinctive appearance. The appeal of the terrace and the ability of the terrace to contribute to the distinctive environment of Portlaoise is sometimes damaged by cars parking in front of the terrace.



Car parking provision in Portlaoise

Improvements to parking provision in Portlaoise will help improve the public realm on Station Road. In November 2023 Laois County Council opened a new 92-space car park on Railway Street, offering ample parking opportunities for people who wish to take the train from Portlaoise. Laois County Council is considering a one-way vehicular traffic pattern on Station Road with a new cycle lane on one side of the street, which would further improve the public realm in this one location. Throughout Portlaoise similar interventions are needed to provide car parking in proper locations and return other areas currently used for car parking to public use.



“ So many footpaths are impassable for the disabled, elderly and parents with young children due to footpath parking and associated footpath damage. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



Figure 16-1 Prior to the opening of the Railway Street carpark, Station Road residents had requested that drivers not park outside their houses. Photo: Laois County Council



### 16.3 Parking management policy

The change in global thinking about parking for private vehicles is reflected in recent Irish policy directives at national, regional and local level where there has been a move towards more compact forms of development, walkable and cyclable town centres and accessibility to high-quality public transport (Transit Oriented Development).

These policy and guidance documents which provide an impetus for Portlaoise to better manage parking provision include:

- **National Planning Framework 2040.** National Policy Objective 13 recommends that in urban areas, planning and related standards, in particular car parking, will be based on performance criteria that seek to achieve well-designed high-quality outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth and sustainable mobility, with a preference for no-car and low-car developments.
- **Sustainable Urban Housing Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines (2018)** remove a default policy for car parking provision and instead require that car parking provision is based on the location of the

proposed development and proximity to public transport and urban centres.

- In January 2024 the government introduced the **Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements Guidelines for Planning Authorities**. The Guidelines note:

The availability of car parking has a critical impact on travel choices for all journeys, including local trips... In areas where car-parking levels are reduced studies show that people are more likely to walk, cycle or choose public transport for daily travel.

The new guidelines ask planning authorities to consider the location and availability of urban services when determining car parking need. They point to reduced car parking provision accompanied by mobility hubs, cycle parking, and car clubs, as a motivator of more walking, cycling and public transport trips, helping Ireland meet its climate emissions reduction goals.

- **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands**

**Region 2019-2031** sets out guiding principles for integrating Transport and Land Use Planning in Regional Policy Objective 8.1, including applying maximum parking standards for all non-residential developments and managing car parking spaces in town and village centres so that accessibility by car compliments active and public transport, but does not compete with it.

- **Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027** sets the standards for parking in County Laois. The Plan does not state whether the parking standards are minimum or maximum standards and does not clearly allow for low or no parking developments.
- **Portlaoise 2040** details ambitious projects to revitalise the centre of Portlaoise through creating a low-carbon, walkable and green town centre. It aims to capitalise on the cultural heritage and natural assets of Portlaoise and accommodate living and working in Portlaoise town centre. It seeks to reconnect the historic town centre with recent development to the south of the town centre. **Portlaoise 2040's** most noteworthy



parking proposal is to transform Lyster Square into a pedestrian focussed plaza with surface car parking removed and replaced with basement car parking.

## 16.4 Approach to Parking Management

With the existing rail service and the committed local bus service and ambitious plans for town centre rejuvenation, Portlaoise’s town centre is well-placed for careful parking management.

Reflecting the above policy objectives and national guidance, the Portlaoise LTP recommends reallocating on-street car parking space to support transformative public realm improvements and restraining the use of on-street car parking in areas within easy walking and cycling distance of existing and planned public transport.

Several of the Emerging Preferred Options for the Portlaoise LTP and *Portlaoise 2040* involve the reallocation of space from the carriageway and on-street car parking, including segregated cycle lanes, plazas, footpath buildouts, SuDS, etc., that will necessitate the reuse of public space that is currently used by on-street car parking. Demand management through parking restraint can be targeted to

locations where accessibility by alternative modes is high, thereby encouraging a mode shift toward sustainable modes.

It is therefore recommended that the LTP seeks to reduce, rationalise, and consolidate on-street parking to “free-up” space to realise these proposals. Where on-street parking is provided to support the various functions of Portlaoise Town Centre, the emphasis will be on providing blue badge/disabled car parking space, providing for more sustainable transport and ensuring a quick turnover of spaces so that spaces are readily available for businesses that rely upon them.

Innovative practices to better manage on-street parking spaces such as Dynamic Parking Systems or Virtual Loading Bays could be employed in the Town Centre, as well as the construction of multi-purpose bays that can be used as loading bays during the morning and public space in the afternoon and evenings.



Figure 16-2: Alternatives to on-street car parking. (Top) Covid mobility measures in Dungarvan where seating areas for restaurants and cafes and landscaping replaced parking spaces. (Bottom) Newly constructed dual-purpose loading bay in Cork. Photos: J. Egan

To carry out these proposals, the LTP recommends the creation of a **Parking Management Strategy**, building on the findings and recommendations in the *Review of Existing Parking Provisions in Portlaoise and Recommendations for Enhancements*. Parking management measures includes controls on the price of parking and the quantum of parking space available, especially on-street parking, and the consolidation of parking in favourable locations.

### Town Centre Parking (On-Street)

The provision of a carefully managed on-street parking system can support the economic functions of a town centre, as well as support accessibility for those with disabilities and other mobility impairments. However, on-street car parking can also lead to large amounts of traffic circulating looking for a parking space, contributing to congestion and pollution.

Where retained or re-provided, on-street parking should be allocated to support a **hierarchy of parking need**, prioritising the needs of disabled users, short-stay business users and discouraging long-stay commuters. The high occupancy percentage of on-street car parking in Portlaoise town centre may indicate that the current pricing encourages on-street car parking. Long-stay general parking will be redirected to more accessible dedicated off-street spaces on the periphery of the urban core, closer to the arterial and link road network.

More people travelling by sustainable modes, however, will reduce parking demand and there may not be a need to replace displaced parking on a one-for one basis. A 'Smart Parking' System and a Variable Message System could be implemented along with reduced parking provision in the town centre. These Systems communicate the availability of parking and reduce the negative impacts of 'search traffic', including traffic congestion and air pollution and instead direct motorists to off-street car parking facilities on the periphery of the town centre. The potential for Park-and-Stride and Park-and-Ride will be discussed in the following sections.



Figure 16-3 Given the proximity to off-street car parking, on-street car parking along Church Street could be used for higher value public realm improvements. Photo: DBFL.

## Objective PM 1

### Parking Management Strategy

Laois County Council will develop a Parking Management Strategy that will manage the provision of car parking spaces in Portlaoise in accordance with the following broad principles:

- Reallocate road space to establish a hierarchy of parking need for on-street parking that will support ambitious public realm and civic space proposals in *Portlaoise 2040* and the Portlaoise LTP, taking care to ensure the continued provision of blue badge parking, delivery bays and a limited supply of short-stay car parking and discourage long-stay commuter parking.
- Maximise the efficiency of the existing car parking spaces, so that one space can serve multiple purposes, for example as a loading bay, taxi rank or public seating.
- Ensure that long-stay parking will largely take the form of consolidated off-street car parking on the periphery of places of high pedestrian activity to curtail movement of unproductive vehicular through traffic and elimination of search traffic movements.
- Manage the availability and cost of public car parking in the town centre core to encourage a higher turnover of spaces, aiming for an occupancy rate of 85% that represents a good use of the available land and reduces the amount of driving searching for parking.
- Consolidate some existing parking to the periphery of the town centre core at locations that are well connected by good quality walking, cycling and public transport networks.

## Objective PM 2

### Parking Management Policy

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders to implement maximum parking standards for new development and allow low or no private vehicle developments as per the *Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027*.



## 16.5 Park and Stride

### 16.5.1 Park and Stride for the town centre

Park and Stride is aimed at those entering Portlaoise Town Centre for more than a brief visit, but not for the whole day.

Potential Park and Stride users could be running errands and shopping, visiting the new library on Main Street, attending a performance at the Dunamais Arts Centre, or dining out.

These car parks are located within a 12-minute walking distance of the town’s central amenities. The advantages of promoting park and stride usage of existing car parks is to repurpose on-street car parking for higher-value usage, reduce the emissions within the town core, and reduce congestion within Portlaoise Town Centre.

A walking isochrone map for Portlaoise in **Figure 16-4** illustrates that a number of off-street car parking facilities are located within a reasonable walking distance of Portlaoise town centre and that much of the on-street car parking in the town centre could be replaced by existing off-street car parking.

Portlaoise town centre is within a 10-minute walk of many off-street parking facilities, including:

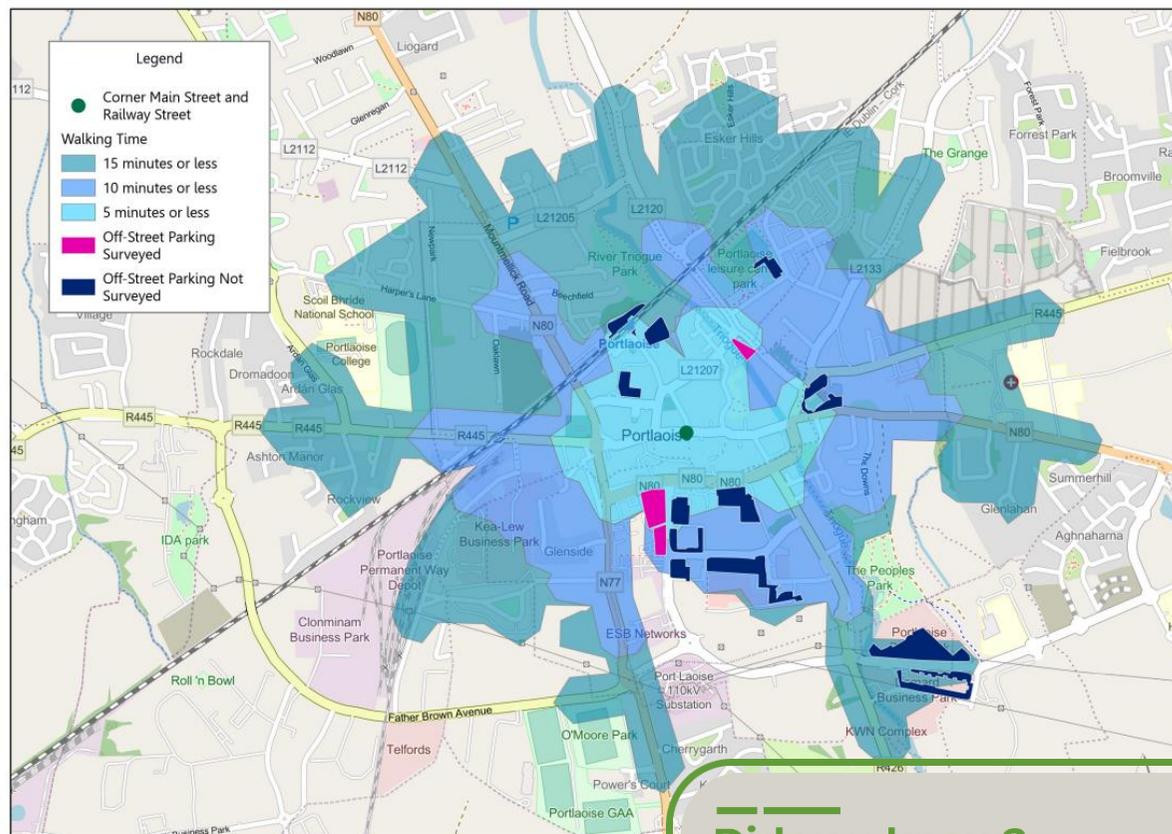


Figure 16-4: Walking times from the corner of Main St & Railway St.

- Laois County Council Car Park
- Lidl car park
- Laois Shopping Centre
- Kyle Centre
- Church Street Car Park

### Did you know?

Under the Fingal School Streets Pilot Programme, which included 3 Park & Stride locations, one Fingal school saw an increase in the number of pupils starting their trip by car and ending it by walking from **24% to 39%**, and in another school from **31% to 42%**.

SYSTRA, Fingal County Council.



This LTP recommends that Laois County Council engage with the owners of private car parks to assess their capacity and explore the potential of encouraging people to park and stroll into Portlaoise Town Centre.

As illustrated in **Figure 16-4**, almost all of the larger off-street car parks are located within a 10-minute walk of the corner of Main Street and Railway Street, a representative location that was selected because it is in the centre of the historic town centre.

Public car parks at Memorial Park and Laois County Council offices in pink, as well as private car parks at the Railway Station, Portlaoise Leisure Centre, SS Peter and Paul's Church, as well as the many car parks in the vicinity of James Fintan Lalor Avenue are within a 10-minute walk of the centre of Portlaoise. Church Street Car Park is within a 5-minute walk.

The Laois County Council's car park appears to be under-utilised; the *Review of Existing Parking Provision in Portlaoise and Recommendations for Enhancements* reports that one level of the County Hall car park is regularly closed. Encouraging the use of this car park - particularly at weekends and evenings – offers an opportunity to free up more valuable public space elsewhere that is

currently being used for on-street parking. It could potentially replace some of the surface car-parking displaced through the redevelopment of Lyster Square as envisaged by *Portlaoise 2040* without requiring the substantial expense of constructing an underground parking garage.

### 16.5.2 Park and Stride for Summerhill School Campus

Park and Stride locations could also serve schools and reduce vehicle congestion around them. The concentration of primary schools in the Summerhill area, with more than 2000 primary school pupils, makes it an excellent location for a Park and Stride location, a need that Laois County Council foresaw in the objective to provide a Park and Stride location at Lismark Business Park in the *Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2018-2024*. The Sustainable Transport Plan and Project Proposals drawing from Laois County Council also suggests an additional Park and Stride location to the south of the Gaelscoil, Educate Together and Maryborough National Schools. Existing off-street car parking, particularly around the Portlaoise Retail Park, could serve as Park and Stride locations, pending agreement with landowners.



Figure 16-5 Laois County Council carpark is within a 12-minute walk of the centre of Portlaoise. Source: Google Maps.



“ There's too much traffic around the schools. A Park and Stride should be established for school-going children. It would reduce traffic and it also gives us parents more options. ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)



**Figure 16-6** illustrates walking times from the entrance of Maryborough National School, Portlaoise Educate Together and Gaelscoil Phortlaoise. Both of Portlaoise retail parks are within a 4-8 minute of the entrance to the schools. The Kyle Centre Carpark is within a 12-minute walk from the entrance to the schools.

### 16.5.3 Encouragements of Park and Stride Use

Incentives that complement the Park and Stride strategy include the removal of some on-street parking spaces (taking care to maintain loading bays and disabled bays), reducing the free period of on-street parking to 15 minutes, raising prices of on-street parking, as well as including e-charging facilities in car parks, and ensuring that parking in Park and Stride locations compares favourably financially to on-street car parking.

Improving the quality of routes between car parking locations and the Town Centre also makes using Park and Stride locations more attractive. *Portlaoise 2040* includes an objective to improve the pedestrian experience and reconnect the historic and new Town Centres of Portlaoise by improving laneways that link Main Street to James

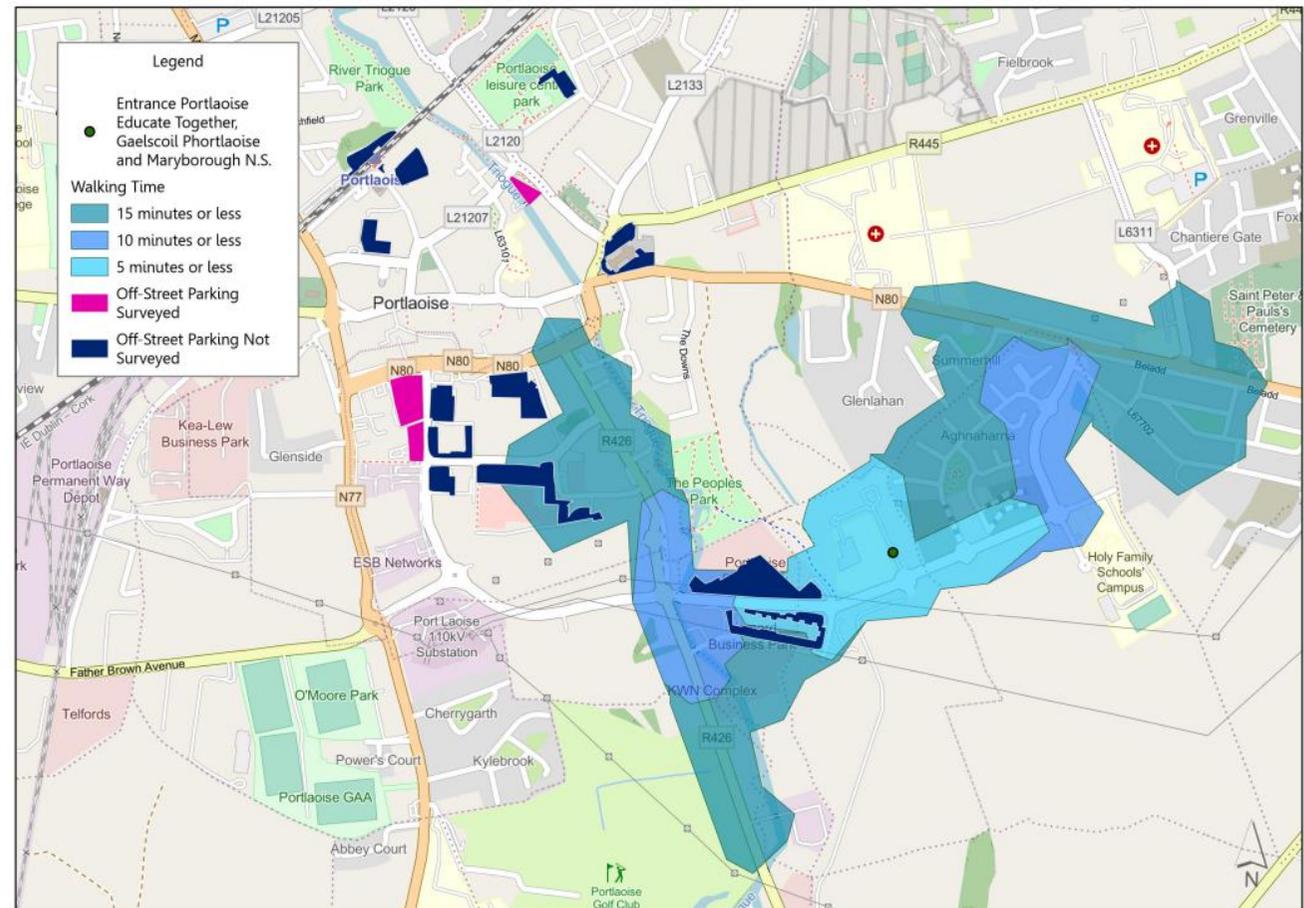


Figure 16-6: Walking times from the entrance to Maryborough N.S., Gaelscoil Phortlaoise and Educate Together Portlaoise. The map does not take into consideration the new connectivity offered by the Triogue Way.



Fintan Lalor Avenue and reducing car dominance along James Fintan Lalor Avenue, which would support greater use of park and stride locations.

For schools, Green School Initiatives like Walk on Wednesday or completing a Green Flag in Travel can be used to encourage families to Park and Stride.

## 16.6 Park and Ride

Park and Ride (P&R) refers to facilities provided for long-stay car parking on the outskirts of settlements that offer motorists the opportunity to transfer to public transport, bicycles or foot to travel the final 2 or 3 kilometres to their destination in the town centre. P&R facilities offer the opportunity to remove long-stay parking from within the centre of Portlaoise while still supporting employment, education or social trips that begin outside of the boundaries of Portlaoise and end in the Portlaoise town centre.

The NTA is preparing to introduce a town bus service in Portlaoise by 2025 which makes the current moment an opportune time to consider locations that in the long-term have the potential to serve a dual use as a bus depot and P&R location. As the NTA transitions to an all-electric bus fleet, the feasibility of delivering charging infrastructure for an electric bus fleet at a bus depot is a key consideration, raising the possibility of eventually co-locating bus charging and private car charging.

County and town land-use planning policy plans have proposed one location for a Park and Ride facility in Portlaoise:

- *Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027* includes an objective to introduce a Park and Ride facility at Junction 17 in Portlaoise to facilitate links to public transport facilities within Portlaoise and connections to Dublin City and Dublin Airport (TRANS 64).
- The draft *Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2024-2028* contains a mapped objective to provide a Park and Ride to the west of Junction 17 to service the Togher Area.

### Objective PM 3

#### Park and Stride

Laois County Council and relevant stakeholders will;

- Assess the capacity of private car parks to serve as Park and Stride locations to the town centre and the Summerhill School Campus.
- Promote the use of Park and Stride locations for journeys into Portlaoise Town Centre and the Summerhill School Campus through management of parking in the town centre and at school locations.

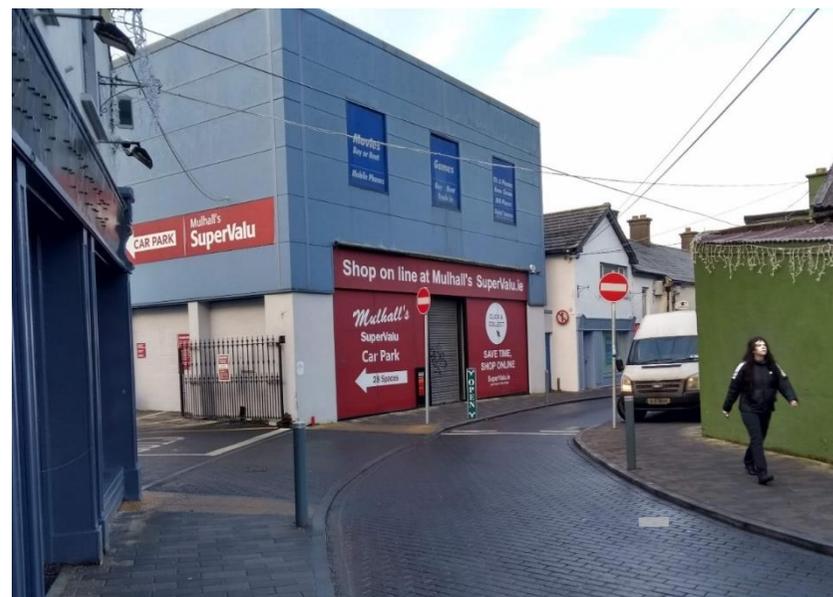


Figure 16-7 Bull Lane, which connects Lyster Square and Main Street, provides connectivity between proposed Park and Stride locations, the town centre and railway station.



The NTA's planned town bus service for Portlaoise does not include a connection to Junction 17, which limits the functionality of a Park and Ride near Junction 17.

The LTP's preliminary selection of sites for Park and Ride looks to site bus depots on the outskirts of Portlaoise and also considers meaningful expansion to the EV charging network within Portlaoise. Currently EV chargers are located at the Railway Station, Lyster Square, the Lidl car park, the Midway Food Court and near the ESB offices. P&R locations on the outskirts of Portlaoise with EV charging facilities could expand the network outside of the centre of Portlaoise.

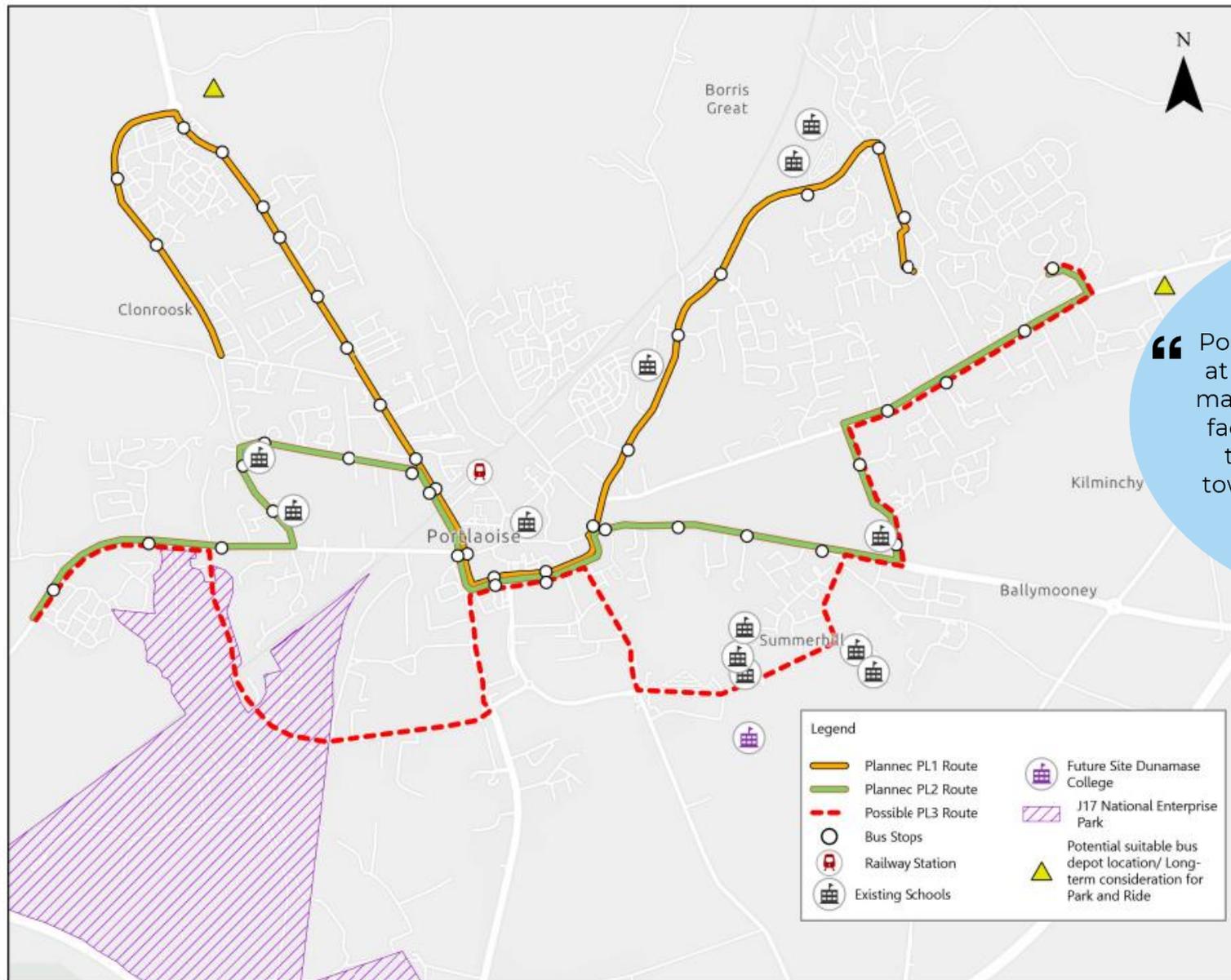
In addition, recent developments in solar technology offer an opportunity to install solar panels and generate electricity locally, which could help support the bus and car charging at the P&R. Solar PV at Park and Rides would support national climate action goals and the aims of *Portlaoise 2040*.

Other measures that complement a P&R Strategy include congestion charges, removal of car parking within the Town Core, or increasing the price of car parking closer to town. Nationally the development of Park

and Ride facilities is coordinated by the NTA Park and Ride Development Office. Development of a Park and Ride requires consultation with all relevant stakeholders and landowner agreement.



Figure 16-8: Plans for installing solar PV at a Park and Ride in Cambridge, England, illustrating the variety of uses for Park and Ride facilities. PV generation at a Park and Ride could play a role in Portlaoise's decarbonisation plans. Source: Cambridgeshire County Council.



“ Portlaoise Town Centre is the point at which all traffic merges from so many roads. Perhaps Park and Ride facilities would encourage people to park on the periphery of the town and take a bus into the town centre to reduce traffic? ”

Survey Responder (Pre-Draft Consultation Survey)

Figure 16-9 New town bus service and two potential locations for bus depots with the possibility of considering parking provision in the long term.



### Possible Park and Ride Locations

Two locations have been identified as possible bus depots with long-stay parking provision following a high-level assessment. In addition to serving as P&R locations, bus depots, EV charging facilities and micro-generated solar energy, they could also serve as gateways to Portlaoise, marking the beginning of the urban fabric.

The two possible locations would require further feasibility studies to assess their potential, as well as consultation with key stakeholders including Laois County Council, TII, the NTA, and the relevant landowners.

#### Proposed Locations:

- Portlaoise Park and Ride **North**: Close to Fairgreen on the Mountmellick Rd (N80)
- Portlaoise Park and Ride **East**: Near Kilminchy on the Dublin Road (R445)

The Park and Ride locations in the north and east of Portlaoise offer the most potential to support the final stage of the journey by cycling and to integrate the Park and Ride location with the proposed Portlaoise town bus service.

In addition to the merits of individual locations, the success of P&Rs in Portlaoise depends on other factors, including the availability and cost of parking in the town centre and the level of priority given to buses, which in turn influences the efficiency of buses. Using a P&R becomes attractive when parking in other locations is difficult or expensive or time-consuming and the public bus service is a reasonable and attractive alternative to the convenience of private motor journeys



Figure 16-10 A visual representation of the proposed Eynsham Park and Ride in Oxford, England. Source: Oxfordshire County Council.

### Objective PM 4

#### Park and Ride

Laois County Council will

- Engage with the NTA, TII and relevant stakeholders to investigate the possibility of co-locating Park and Ride facilities with bus depots and, if possible, progress development to deliver multi-purpose Park and Ride facilities in conjunction with the town bus service for Portlaoise.
- Include EV charging facilities for cars and buses and PV generation in any planned Park and Rides.
- Promote the use of Park and Ride facilities through appropriate pricing of the Park and Ride and town centre parking and giving priority to public transport so that Park and Ride users can experience a reliable service.



## 16.7 Mobility Hubs

Mobility hubs are increasingly common in best practice regeneration-led proposals across European cities. They are typically located in areas of high public transport accessibility and walking and cycling networks and comprise high-capacity cycle parking, substantial car clubs bases, EV charge points and (low) car parking provision that enables the cost of apartments to be decoupled from that of parking. Mobility Hubs typically include consolidated car

parking areas that predominantly cater for long-stay residential or commuter use.

In many cases, mobility hubs are multi-storey car parks that are wrapped around by higher value active land uses such as apartment blocks, workplaces or retail uses. Some examples in cities such as Copenhagen and London enable active uses such as rooftop playgrounds and creative workplaces. Typically, the active uses of mobility hubs face pedestrian areas whereas vehicle access points are located to the rear.

Mobility Hubs can potentially be instigated by a Local Authority or as part of a Public Private Partnership with a landowner and/or car park operator.

### *Hubs typically include features such as:*

- Sheltered, secure bike parking including for adaptive and cargo bikes
- Bike repair station
- Public toilets
- Bus stop, shelter, and RTPI
- EV charge points for bikes, scooters, and vehicles
- Consolidated waste collection.
- Parcel collections points providing an alternative to last-mile delivery

Mobility hubs should be located in areas that are served by frequent public transport and have quality walking and cycling links. In the context of Portlaoise, Mobility Hubs may be appropriate for:

- Portlaoise Town Centre (retrofitting existing car park spaces to serve as a mobility hub)

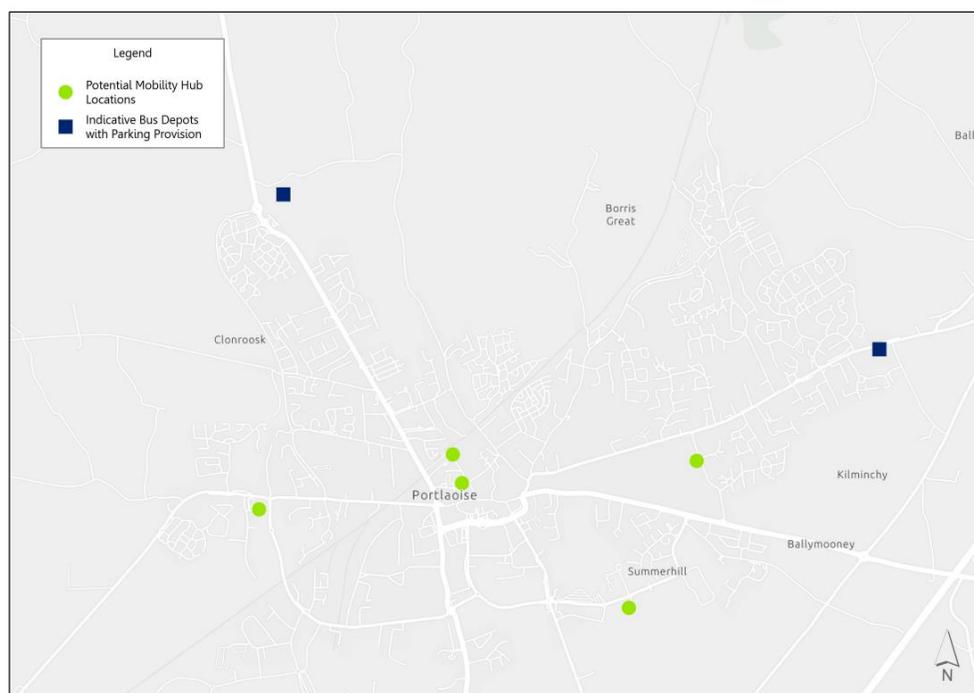


Figure 16-11 Potential locations for Mobility Hubs within Portlaoise



- Redesigned Lyster Square as envisioned in *Portlaoise 2040*
- Portlaoise Railway Station
- Summerhill area serving the five primary schools and new residential development.
- Portlaoise College / Harpur's Lane
- Midland Regional Hospital

Mobility Hubs can be provided as part of new residential or mixed-use developments or retrofitted within the redevelopment of existing off-street car parking areas to incorporate public transport stops, and a network of legible and safe walking and cycling routes.

Further assessment is required to determine the feasibility of Mobility Hubs, in terms of number of hubs, car parking capacity per hub, operations, management, funding, complementary uses and facilities, etc. As plans progress to deliver *Portlaoise 2040* it may be found that investing in a multi-storey mobility hub better suits Portlaoise's transport and climate ambitions than the original suggestion of an underground car park on Lyster Square.



Figure 16-12 The first shared mobility hub in Utrecht Vaartsche Rijn Station in the Netherlands. It includes shared bike schemes, cargo bikes and a car park.

## Measure PM 5

### Mobility Hubs

Laos County Council will undertake an assessment to determine the feasibility of Mobility Hubs, in terms of number of hubs, car parking capacity per hub, operations, management, funding, complementary uses and facilities, etc.

Laos County Council will consider Mobility Hubs in future development and forward planning.



## 16.8 Mobility Points

Mobility points differ from Mobility Hubs in that they are smaller scale, typically on-street interventions entailing the co-location of sustainable transport measures near public transport stops. At a minimum, Mobility Points include bus stops, cycle parking and car club spaces but can be expanded to include E.V. Charge Points, shared bike schemes and seating. It is important that Mobility Points, however, do not create street clutter or obstacles.

Mobility Points should be visible and accessible to residents and visitors, but care must be taken to ensure that they are not sited in areas of high-pedestrian movement. Some suitable locations for Mobility Points could include side streets off the Main Street that are easily accessible and have available space so that the Mobility Point does not form a barrier. The reallocation of on-street car parking may allow for an opportunity to introduce a Mobility Point.

### 16.8.1 Car Ownership - 2022 Census Data

Results from the 2022 Census Data indicate that the total number of residencies **without a car** decreased by 2% between 2016 and 2022 – that is from 7,452 to 7,293. This is despite the growing number of people and

households in the town in the last number of years.

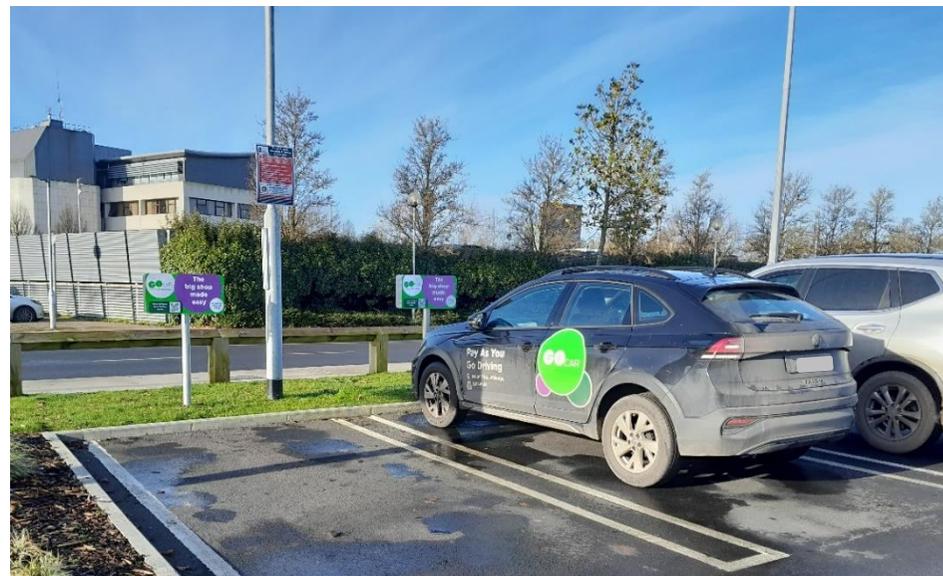
For residents that do not have access to a car, the development of high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, as well as reliable public transport is highly important. However, the Census results on car ownership in Portlaoise particularly emphasises the need for investment into Mobility Points which incorporate car club spaces to cater for those who do not own a car, but wish to drive to a destination.

### Measure PM 6

#### Mobility Points

Laois County Council will identify locations within existing on-street parking to provide for mobility points (car club vehicle, hire bike scheme).

*Figure 16-13 GoCar available for rental in the Lidl car park, Portlaoise. An EV charging point is available nearby. If bike hire schemes are introduced in Portlaoise, locating a hire station here would expand the transport possibilities. Photo: Laois County Council.*



## 17 Supporting Measures

### 17.1 Overview

This chapter provides supporting measure recommendations for **Chapters 9 to 16**.

### 17.2 Micromobility and Shared Schemes

More recent innovations to the city mobility toolkit include e-bikes and other forms of micromobility including scooters and e-scooters. These are increasingly popular but to date, remain largely in private ownership. However, given recent changes to legislation, both are highly likely that these will become increasingly part of the shared mobility systems network usually referred to as Mobility as a Service (MaaS). Given that around 50% of all trips in Ireland are 6km or less (Source: CSO National Travel Survey 2016), there is undeniable potential for micromobility to enable more convenient and more flexible local mobility.

#### 17.2.1 Shared Bike Schemes and E-Bikes/E-scooters

Moby and BleeperBike are examples of a bike sharing schemes that have become popular in Tullamore and Dublin City. These bikes can be picked up and left anywhere that a traditional

bike is permitted to park. This type of bike sharing scheme offers transport flexibility and convenience and the scheme’s visibility can help promote a culture of cycling. Bleeper additionally offer private e-bike schemes for organisations. The scheme includes e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and standard bikes, bike maintenance and liability insurance for a monthly fee.

It is understood that a number of other companies are in the process of applying to enter the shared e-scooter market once legislation permits shared use systems.

E-bikes can significantly widen the catchment area for commuting and often require less end-of-trip facilities in terms of showers and lockers. Similarly, e-scooters are likely to become an increasing popular part of the mobility mix both for personal and shared use. E-scooters can facilitate linked trips with public transport where walking distances and conditions may be prohibitive.

#### 17.2.2 Car Clubs

Public car sharing is a model of car rental where people rent cars for short periods of time, often by the hour. They are important in urban areas in facilitating car-free or low-car developments. They are particularly attractive

to customers who make only occasional use of a vehicle or are reconsidering the need for a second car.

Car sharing schemes can reduce the number of cars on the road and free up land traditionally used for parking spaces. Participation in such schemes can often be more cost effective than owning a private car. Vehicles provided by car clubs are often new and thereby greener and more environmentally friendly than private cars, which on average tend to be older.

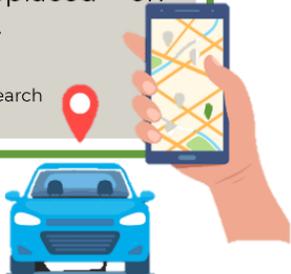
GoCar an Irish-based car club operator have recently opened a base near the Laois shopping centre.

Traditional car rental facilities, such as Practical Car and Van Rental and the local Tony Brady and Sons, are also present in the town.

Did you know?

Car clubs reduce private car ownership. In 2022 in the UK, each car club vehicle replaced on average 22 private cars.

CoMoUK -Annual Car Club Research Reports 2022





**Measure SM 1**

**Micromobility and Shared Schemes**

Laois County Council will:

- Establish the feasibility of initiating an e-bike and e-scooter pilot scheme(s), once legislation permits.
- Proactively ensure careful siting of dedicated e-bike and e-scooter parking areas at key destinations that do not inhibit pedestrian movement (e.g., Town Centre and Train Station).
- Work with car club companies to investigate and develop car club facilities in Portlaoise.



Figure 17-1 Holy Family Senior School received their Active School Flag award in June 2022. Source: Alan Hartnett/Laois Today.

**17.3 Behavioural Change**

Behavioural change, as it applies to transport, is about making people aware of the range of travel choices available for the variety of trips which they make on a daily basis and encouraging the use of more sustainable modes where feasible, as alternatives to single occupancy private car use.

They can be implemented at various locations and at veditarying scales, e.g., workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods. They comprise a highly personalised approach aimed at engaging a group of people, making them think about their travel choices, providing them with full information, and encouraging and incentivising the use of alternatives.

Behavioural Change programmes for younger people can include:

- Active Flag Programme
- Green Schools
- Safe Routes to School

**17.3.1 School Travel Planning**

Improving the quality and extent of school travel planning throughout Portlaoise is of critical importance to the reduction of the social, health and environmental impacts of car-based journeys to school on public health, the environmental and congestion.

Attempts to incorporate active travel are sometimes undermined by a lack of adequate design provision for walking and cycling, and by readily available car parking. To address some of these issues, Laois County Council will work with schools and other relevant stakeholders to implement Active School Flag and Green Schools Programmes, as well as Safe Routes to School, all of which are discussed in the following sections.

**17.3.2 Active School Flag Programme**

Active School Flag (ASF) is a Department of Education initiative supported by Healthy Ireland, and part of the National Physical Activity Plan. The ASF initiative provides schools with a framework to guide, support and incentivise them to work towards achieving a physically educated and physically active school community. Once awarded, ASF remains valid for a period of 3 years, after which -



time schools are invited to re-engage with the process. Schools in Portlaoise with an ASF award include Scoil Bhríde N.S. and Holy Family Senior School.

### 17.3.3 Green Schools

Green Schools is a long-term environment education and awareness programme where schools, including the wider school population, contribute to the sustainable development of their County for both current and future generations. Many of Portlaoise’s schools have achieved their Green Flag Award, which needs to be renewed every two years.



#### Measure SM 2

#### Green Schools & Active Schools

Laois County Council will encourage all schools within the Portlaoise Study Area to undertake a Green Schools Audit on an ongoing basis to inform the detailed design of projects. At a minimum, this should include:

- Front of School Audits
- Gap analysis of existing infrastructure on-site e.g., sheltered and secure cycle or scooter parking

Laois County Council will encourage all schools in Portlaoise to progress the continuation and expansion of the Active School Flag Programme.

### 17.3.4 Safe Routes to School

Green school audits and Active School Flags prepare a school and a local authority for redesigning the streets outside of local schools. Traffic at the front of school during drop-off and pick-up poses a hazard for school children and impacts significantly on local air quality.

Congestion and parked cars can reduce visibility of children crossing the road, particularly those parking on footpaths which can further block access and reduce available footpath width, leading to overcrowding on footpaths or forcing children to walk on the road.

The **Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programme** was set up to address these issues. The programme is operated nationally and is designed to encourage as many students as possible to walk and cycle. SRTS has three main aims:

1. To accelerate the delivery of walking/scooting and cycling infrastructure on key access routes to schools.
2. To provide Front of School treatments which will enhance access to school grounds.

3. To expand the amount of bike parking available at schools.

**Table 17-1** recommends a series of suggested proposals that will encourage people to walk and cycle to school, such as junction improvements and filtered permeability. The NTA’s own Safe Routes to School Design Guide and Appendices provide case study examples from schools across Ireland as well as material specifications and visualisations.

Another key element that is often undervalued to improving active travel to schools, is around behavioural change and education. Initiatives such as Fresh Air Fridays, cycle training courses, or the Green Schools Travel modules can promote parents and schoolchildren to try out more sustainable modes of travel to school occasionally which may in turn lead to modal shift.

#### Did you know?

The introduction of a School Streets Zone in Malahide resulted in a 43% modal shift from car travel to walking and cycling.



Maryborough National School was selected under Round 1 of the SRTS Programme. Work at Maryborough NS will include works to the roundabouts on the Portlaoise Southern Circular Road, which is scheduled to take place in 2023. No Portlaoise schools were selected under Round 2.

### Measure SM 3

#### Safe Routes to School

Laois County Council will aim to implement measures consistent with the Safe Routes to School Programmes throughout Portlaoise.

This includes targeted infrastructural improvements to facilitate initiatives such as the School Bike Buses, Walking Buses and Park & Stride drop-off areas within walking distance of schools.

### Measure SM 4

#### School Planning and Design

Planning for new schools and the expansion of existing schools will prioritise access for pedestrians and cyclists. Detailed design shall maximise the priority for pedestrians and cyclists accessing the school.



**Before**  
Scoil Mhuire, Abbeyleix, Laois.

Figure 17-2 Before measures were implemented under the Safe Routes to School programme at Scoil Mhuire in Abbeyleix, Co. Laois. Source: Safe Routes to School.



**After**  
Scoil Mhuire, Abbeyleix, Laois.

Figure 17-3 After measures were implemented under the Safe Routes to School programme at Scoil Mhuire in Abbeyleix, Co. Laois. Source: Safe Routes to School.



Table 17-1 Proposed improvements to schools in Portlaoise to encourage pupils to walk and cycle to school

Schools	Strategy Indicative Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gaelscoil Phortlaoise</b></li> <li>• <b>Portlaoise Educate Together</b></li> <li>• <b>Maryborough N.S</b></li> <li>• <b>(&amp; future Dunamase College site).</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential for a Park and Stride off the Southern Circular Road to cater for Portlaoise Educate Together, Gaelscoil Phortlaoise, Maryborough National School &amp; Holy Family School Campus.</li> <li>▪ Improve pedestrian environment along the Southern Circular Road</li> <li>▪ Provide filtered permeability from the residential areas around Glenlahan and Aghnaharna, as well as from the People’s Park to the schools to increase walking and cycling</li> <li>▪ Provide facilities for cycling between James Fintan Lalor Avenue and future site of Dunamase College either through reallocating road space (taking advantage of off-street parking for businesses and houses) or lowering speed limits</li> <li>▪ Improve cycling and pedestrian environment at the roundabouts on the Southern Circular Road</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Holy Family Junior &amp; Senior Schools</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve filtered permeability between surrounding residential areas such as Ashewood Walk and Beladd as part of Aghnaharna Masterplan Area.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Portlaoise Further Education &amp; Training Centre</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian crossings adjacent to the new bus stops/entrance to the school.</li> <li>▪ Improve cycling and pedestrian environment along Block Road, including footpaths on both sides of the road, cycle lanes and pedestrian crossings in accordance with DMURS.</li> <li>▪ Improve connections with the Triogue Way</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scoil Bhríde National School</b></li> <li>• <b>Portlaoise College</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Install shared path of 3 – 4 metres in width on the southern side of Harpur’s Lane to be completed within the existing road widths.</li> <li>▪ Introduce School Street from Hillview Drive to Knockmay Roundabout</li> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian crossings adjacent to the new bus stops/entrance to the school.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scoil Chríost Rí</b></li> <li>• <b>St Mary’s CBS</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deliver 450m of protected cycle lanes along Borris Road, with works to be completed in 2024.</li> <li>▪ Improve filtered permeability between surrounding residential areas such as the Hermitage estate, Rathevan View, Lake Drive into Rosdarragh Hill with the schools to increase walking and cycling.</li> <li>▪ Redesign of roundabout at Ashley Gardens/ school campus – to be delivered as part of Borris Road Scheme.</li> <li>▪ Remove pedestrian guard rails approaching school campus</li> <li>▪ Redesign roundabout at Collier’s Lane for pedestrian and cyclists in accordance with DMURS.</li> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian crossings adjacent to the new bus stops/entrance to the school.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kolbe Special School</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve cycling and pedestrian environment at the roundabout between Block Road and Dublin Road.</li> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian crossings adjacent to the new bus stops/entrance to the school.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>St Francis School</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide pedestrian crossings adjacent to the new bus stops/entrance to the school.</li> </ul>



## 17.4 Playful Active Travel School Zone

Laois County Council are planning and designing a Playful Active Travel Zone to schools in Portlaoise. LCC consulted with the community asking how walking and cycling routes to school can be made safer, more convenient and fun. The first phase of consultation in 2023 resulted in a variety of interactive and playful design elements along a specific school route (Southern Circular Road).

Feedback from over 500 children were posted in the form of playful elements along this route. This included signposts stating that 8 out of 10 students who are driven to school feel 'bored' or 'tired,' compared to 10 out of 10 that cycle who say they feel 'free' or 'happy.'

### Measure SM 5

#### Playful Active Travel School Zones

Laois County Council will continue to work with service providers, schools and other relevant stakeholders to implement Playful Active Travel School Zones along school routes in Portlaoise.

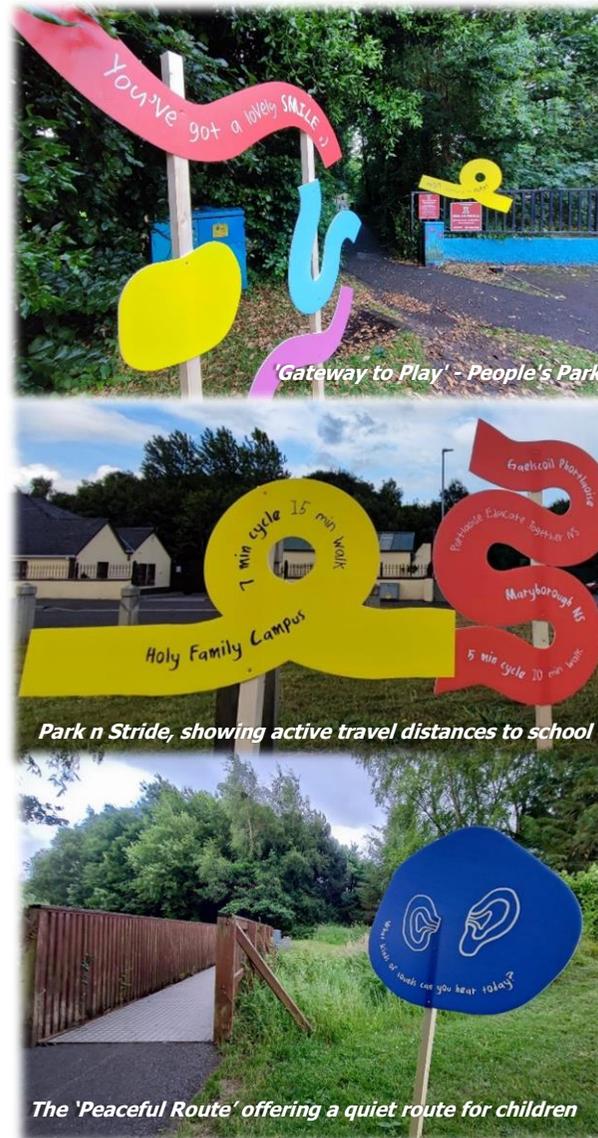


Figure 17-4 Some 'playful prototypes' along the Triogue Way in People's Park. Source: A Playful City.

## 17.5 Playful Streets

Play streets are a low cost and easy way to turn streets into play spaces. They are generally neighbour-led and involve the closure of a residential street to vehicular traffic for a few hours to a full day. During this time, children and residents who live on that street can play and socialise freely and safely outside, counteracting trends of spending more time inside and offering moments for communities to gather and get to know each other.

In this way, Playful Streets encourage children to play outside, making exercise fun and easy, while at the same time fostering positive social connections between neighbours, by providing a time and space for informal interactions. Playful Streets essentially challenge the culture of street space being predominantly a space for car, and instead look to rebalance this toward a Healthy Streets Approach.

### Measure SM 6

#### Playful Streets

Laois County Council will investigate the potential to implement Playful Street Schemes throughout neighbourhoods in Portlaoise and implement where possible.



### 17.6 Healthy Streets

The Healthy Streets Approach™ was developed by Lucy Saunders and is based on research into the health impacts of public realm and urban planning. The approach is based upon the principle that the key elements necessary for public spaces to improve people's health are the same as those needed to make urban places socially and economically vibrant and environmentally sustainable. The approach uses ten evidence-based indicators to assess the quality of a street and support liveable, high quality and people-friendly streets. Following the approach provides the framework for putting human health and experience at the heart of planning.

See **Chapter 3 – Policy Context** for the Healthy Streets Check carried out on Main Street as part of the Baseline Assessment for this LTP.

**Measure SM 7**

**Healthy Streets**

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that active travel and public realm projects in Portlaoise take into consideration the 10 indicators of the Healthy Streets Approach.



Figure 17-5 Children playing on closed off streets in Balbriggan as part of the Playful Streets initiative, June 2023. Source: Alan Betson / The Irish Times.



Figure 17-6 The Healthy Streets Approach

### 17.7 Workplace Travel Plans

Workplace Travel Plans, also known as Mobility Management Plans, comprise a package of measures to promote / support sustainable travel patterns. The Smarter Travel Workplaces Programme managed by the NTA engages with larger employers in the development and implementation of Workplace Travel Plans.

The **Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2018 - 2024** requires Mobility Management Plans for new developments in lands zoned as *Enterprise & Employment*, where the objective is to provide for enterprise and employment activities. Workplace travel planning provides the opportunity to promote the benefits of the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan directly with a large number of commuters.

Examples of measures could include car sharing schemes, Cycle to Work Schemes, delivering ancillary facilities for cyclists (showers, lockers, covered parking) and Tax Saver Tickets.



### Measure SM 8

#### Workplace Travel/ Mobility Management Plans

Laois County Council and the NTA will continue to expand workplace travel planning in Enterprise and Employment zoned land in Portlaoise. Laois County Council will work to identify appropriate employers suited to initiating Mobility Management Plans.

### Did you know?

Workplace travel plans have been found to reduce car use by **10-30%**. Irish organisations in the TFI Smarter Travel Workplaces Programme have achieved an average reduction of **18%** in car usage.

National Transport Authority



## 17.8 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and other Nature Based Solutions—such as urban forests, habitat preservation, street trees and green buildings—can play a significant role in Portlaoise’s development as a Low Carbon Town and Pilot Decarbonisation Zone. Recent research has explored how Nature Based Solutions can mitigate carbon emissions, reduce urban sprawl, promote environmentally friendly behaviour, provide cooling in summer and sequester carbon.

The LTP recommends the introduction of Nature Based Solutions, especially SuDS, wherever possible. The attractiveness of street trees and SuDS can provide an incentive for people to work or cycle to their destinations rather than driving. SuDS also reduces the risk of flooding and improves the quality of water that enters our watercourses.

As a broad term, there are numerous features that could be classed as SuDS, such as rain gardens, planters or large ponds. These features rely on surface water flows being directed into the areas of planting where the water is absorbed

by soils, irrigating plants, and is dispersed back into the air. SuDS also add significant value communities, providing cleaner air, enhancing biodiversity, and creating more beautiful green spaces.

Urban environments often limit space available for natural habitats, fauna and flora, generating a negative impact on biodiversity and increasing the pressure on balanced environments, SuDS can mitigate negative impacts.

The NTA’s advice note *for Greening and Nature-based SuDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) for Active Travel Schemes* provides inspiration on potential SuDS interventions, as well as practical information in relation to dimensions, planting, challenges, and potential solutions.

As an urban environment, SuDS need to be considered in Portlaoise to provide Green Infrastructure connections to People’s Park the River Triogue, and residential estates where feasible, in order to enhance placemaking and to mitigate the impacts of Climate Change. Interventions include:

Creating linear **Rain Gardens** or Bioswales (sloped rain gardens) to help improve surface water management whilst performing a



range of other functions such as amenity, reduced pollution and improved biodiversity.



Figure 17-7 Before and After the installation of a Rain Garden at Green Lane / Pollerton Road, Carlow.

**Planting new trees** of suitable species, size and form, consistently spread along Portlaoise's streets as called for in *Portlaoise 2040*.

Considering **Green Walls** where screening of unsightly structures or spaces is required. Considering reinforced grass in car parks.

Encouraging selection of species for seasonal interest and in support of the '**All Ireland Pollinator Programme**'.

Incorporating **hanging baskets**, on streetlights and/or shop fronts where suitable, for colourful season display.

Including **raised planting beds** with integral seating (**parklets**), particularly in areas where it is necessary to incorporate underground services.

Portlaoise Tidy Towns has already planted 30,000 trees around Portlaoise since 2019, providing a significant benefit to the local community. The LTP recommends even more **Community Woodlands / Forest Gardens**. Unused grass spaces and difficult to manage banks can be utilised as community owned and managed woodlands that add interest to residential estate. Trails through these woodlands / gardens can create a range of opportunities for communities.

The *Kilminchy Community Plan (A Green Infrastructure Masterplan for Kilminchy Estate) (2019)* presented the idea of Community Woodlands for Kilminchy Estate as an opportunity for natural play / recreation, outdoor learning, enhancing biodiversity and reducing run-off and carbon footprint.



Figure 17-8 The Dunkettle to Carrigtwohill Cycleway Scheme, with SuDS in the form of a pollinator corridor. Source: Cork County Council.



Figure 17-9 SuDS in the form of a Parklet along Sallynoggin Rd in Dún Laoghaire. Source: Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.



Consider **Wildflower Meadows** in residential estates. Unused mown grass areas can be turned into interesting community spaces that are full of colour and wildlife. Mown paths and break out spaces invite people to wander through them. They're good for reducing residential estate's carbon footprints, reducing water runoff and grass maintenance costs, and natural play and recreation.

Lastly, other **Biodiversity Enhancement Features** should also be considered, such as nesting boxes for birds, bee banks and bug hotels. These have social benefits for health and wellbeing and can increase civic pride among communities. Environmental benefits include, providing habitats for wildlife, raising environmental awareness and engaging in specific conservation measures.



Figure 17-10 Forest Garden - RHS Resilient Garden by Tom Massey. Source: Irish Times.



Figure 17-11 Wildflower Meadow with a grass / mowed path in Portlaoise GAA Grounds. Source: National Biodiversity Data Centre.

### Measure SM 9

#### SuDS & Green Infrastructure

Laois County Council will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Green Infrastructure (GI) will be included along active travel schemes and as part of any future public realm projects in Portlaoise.



Figure 17-12 Southern Circular Road reimagined with rain gardens, wildflower meadow and a pocket forest. Source: Google Streetview and DBFL



# Part C

## Strategy Outcomes and Implementation



## 18 Transport Modelling Assessment and Outcomes

### 18.1 Overview

In order to validate and sense-check the Emerging Preferred Options, a multi-tiered hierarchical modelling framework was employed to quantitatively and qualitatively assess and appraise the transport environment impacts and changes resulting from the proposed options in the LTP. The transport modelling framework has four tiers of modelling tools: strategic macro-modelling using the NTA's **Eastern Regional Model**, local area modelling, microsimulations, and to local junction models, as shown in **Figure 18-1**.

### 18.2 Future scenarios

Traffic surveys were conducted in 2022, making 2022 the base scenario, before some of the recent active travel schemes were completed. For Horizon Years 2028 and 2042 two types of scenarios are proposed: Do Minimum (DM) and Do Strategy (DS). The DM Scenarios envisage implementing existing transport policy, including any new agreed upon infrastructure and traffic management

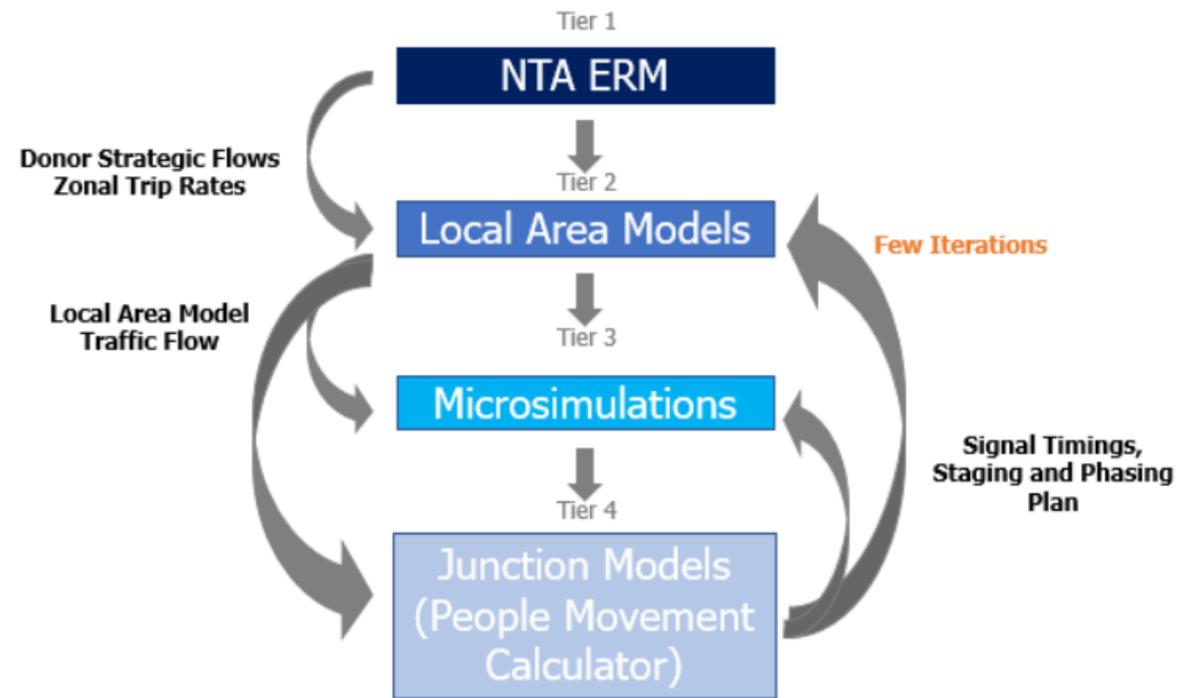


Figure 18-1 Overall Modelling Framework of the LTP.

principles. The Do Strategy includes new proposed transport infrastructure proposals and any additional projects or plans proposed by the LTP.

#### 18.2.1 FUTURE DO MINIMUM

The future Do Minimum scenario is extracted from other plans such as the Portlaoise Local Area Plan (2018-2024), *Portlaoise 2040*, *Connecting Ireland*, the draft *CycleConnects*,

and other transport policies in place in Portlaoise. It includes:

- 2no. new local bus routes in Portlaoise
- Road projects proposed in the *Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2018-2024*, including the Northern Orbital Route, the Rathleague Link Road between the Southern Circular Road and the GAA grounds, and a road connecting the R425 and R426



- Proposed Public Transport Network as part of **Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan**, which includes a route from Roscrea to Portlaoise
- Cycle Network Proposals as in the draft CycleConnects that proposes a comprehensive cycle network throughout Portlaoise
- Blueway/Greenway along the Triogue River
- Redesign of James Fintan Lalor Avenue to one lane in each direction with enhanced public realm
- Transformation of Lyster Square into an urban square
- Construction of an underground carpark on Lyster Square
- Reduction in the car parking spaces on Market Square
- A signalised junction at Market Square
- Pedestrianisation of Lower Square at Main Street
- Revised one-way system in town centre
- Introduction of a one-way system on Station Road

### 18.2.2 FUTURE DO STRATEGY

The following assumptions are to be included in the **Do Strategy** scenarios for 2028 and 2042. They summarise the options that were

recommended in the Measures in **Chapters 9 to 17**. They include:

- Redesign and reconfiguration of roundabouts
- Reallocation of on-street parking to enhance pedestrian experience in line with pilot decarbonising zone status and development plan objectives
- Formalised pedestrian crossings
- Sustainable transport corridor to Togher Woods
- Pedestrian and cycle access to GAA grounds delivered by Rathleague Link Road
- Implementation of universal design standards in all future projects
- 'People-friendly' town centre via traffic calming measures and incentivisation of pedestrian activity
- Provision of two park and ride depots on the outskirts of Portlaoise
- Park and Stride provision for schools and town centre
- Improved accessibility at railway station

A comprehensive outline of the Do Minimum and Do Strategy projects is included in the **Transport Modelling Report**.

## 18.3 Key Modelling Findings and Proposed Mitigation Measures where required

The overall transport modelling assessment found that the implementation of the Local Transport Plan's (LTP) proposed transport proposals and measures would have the following impacts:

- 1) The overall evaluation of the NTA's Eastern Regional Model indicated a travel modal split in the Base 2022 scenario of 29% for active modes, 4% for public transport, and 67% for cars. The Do Nothing Scenario showed modest changes to these modes are anticipated in the future modelled years of 2028 and 2042. The rise in working from home is expected to reduce car usage by 8%. In the Do Strategy, a sustainable mode share of 41% non-car/ 59% private vehicle mode share is achieved in the medium-long term. 27% of the non-car mode share comprises of active travel. Linked trips with public transport account for an additional 6%. The modal share of the Do Strategy points to the important role that Supporting Measures, outlined in **Chapter 17 – Supporting Measures**,



play in realising the modal share targets in the LTP.

- 2) It is anticipated that the LTP's bus network proposals, based on the NTA's plans for a network of 2 local bus routes (PL1 and PL2) connecting key trip attraction areas, would further encourage the shift away from private cars. This finding aligns with Transport Objective 2 promoting access by sustainable modes and Transport Objective 3 providing public transport links. When assessing the internal trips in Portlaoise, high generation of trips occur in the Dublin Road and Borris Road area for trips towards the Town Centre, a demand that would be met by PL1 and PL2. An additional high attraction area seems to be the Father Brown Avenue and Abbeyleix Road, where the J17 National Enterprise Park is located suggesting the need for the third PL3 Route, as recommended by the LTP, to be considered particularly as the National Enterprise Park grows.
- 3) The LTP's proposals and measures result in lower traffic speeds across the Study Area, improving road safety, reducing noise levels and encouraging walking and cycling, meeting Transport Objective

2. However, bus speeds also reduce, which may deter potential users from using reliable public transport as an alternative to private vehicles. Further measures to enhance bus journey reliability such as bus gates may need to be considered in the future to support the desired modal shift and achieve Transport Objective 3 supporting public transport services.

- 4) Discounting linked trips to public transport, cycling as a mode of travel is expected to see modest growth under the current committed proposals in the Do Minimum Scenario. Therefore, additional cycle routes to connect Portlaoise Town Centre with peripheral areas are proposed as in the Do Strategy, accompanied by behavioural change measures recommended in **Chapter 17 – Supporting Measures**.
- 5) Delay times are expected to increase on some of the key access roads including Abbeyleix Road N77, Mountmellick Road N80, Dublin Road and Stradbally Road N80. This may deter drivers and lead them to other modes or encourage them to park in more peripheral areas of the Study Area in Park and Ride/Stride areas. However, to ensure the safety for cyclists

and pedestrians on these busier roads, and junction improvements are recommended at key junctions, including:

- a. Abbeyleix Rd/James Fintan Lalor Avenue
- b. Mountmellick Road/Western Distributor Road
- c. Dublin Road / Borris Road
- d. Stradbally Road / Southern Circular Road

These junctions were identified in **Chapter 10 – Junctions** as needing improvement. The findings from the modelling will raise the priority of all four junctions.

- 6) Rail services in 2042 in the PM peak show to have a Volume to Crush Capacity of over 100% in a section between Dublin and Portlaoise, while other sections show between 70% and 100%. Therefore, advocating additional rail services to cater the future demand is recommended. This recommendation aligns with the measure RAIL 5 - Regional and Intercity Services from the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) Transport Strategy 2022 – 2042, where the NTA will continue to work with Irish Rail to improve



regional and intercity services within the GDA. Changes to rail service are outside the remit of this LTP, but improved accessibility to Portlaoise Train Station is included as part of the proposals and measures in the LTP.

- 7) With the implementation of the LTP transport proposals and measures, traffic flows are observed to have reduced in the Portlaoise town centre and surrounding schools and Midland Regional Hospital. This was highlighted in both the Local Area Model and Microsimulation results. This aligns with Transport Objective 5 by enhancing the vibrancy, accessibility, liveability, and safety of the Town Centre. However, some local link routes may experience increased flows, including Ridge Road with the implementation of the Northern Orbital Route, and Old Knockmay Road, requiring additional traffic management such as filtered permeability and other traffic calming measures to discourage through trips (rat-running) by motorists and allow for pedestrians and cyclists to use these routes to access the Northern Orbital Route.
- 8) Reduced traffic flows result in significant reduction in noise in the core town area

between Portlaoise railway station, Market Square, James Fintan Lalor Avenue and Ridge Road.

- 9) Bypass and orbital routes around the town centre become busier with the implementation of the LTP proposals and measures. These include the Southern Circular Road and the future Northern Orbital Route, supporting the reduction of motorised traffic flows in the town centre, and again aligning with Transport Objective 5. However, the modelling indicates that future improvement to the R425-R426 southern orbital road is underutilised supporting the view that it is a longer-term project.
- 10) The analysis in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the future years shows a considerable reduction in carbon emissions supported with the increase in the use of electric vehicles (EVs) and the boost of working from home, which will help meet the 51% decrease outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2023. This reduction should be supported by the additional Behavioural Change Measures and Demand measures included in **Chapter 17 – Supporting Measures**.

It is important to emphasise that drops in emissions attributed to electric vehicles only measures tailpipe emissions. The operational emissions of EVs are only low if they are charged from a power grid with a high proportion of renewable energy. Even when charged from renewable sources, when CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are considered holistically to include vehicle manufacture and disposal, the climate advantages of EVs over internal combustion engines are relatively modest. In addition, EVs also produce PM<sub>2.5</sub>, the air pollutant of greatest concern for human and planetary health, from brake and tyre wear while driving. Such PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions from EVs are comparable to those from petrol and diesel vehicles.

In summary, the implementation of the LTP transport proposals and measures is expected to cause an overall positive impact in the performance of the transport network and environment in Portlaoise, with no major negative impact expected across the study area. However, further demand management measures including further restrictions on through traffic movements, and lower car parking standards in line with prevailing national policy and investment in



prevailing national policy and investment in addition to targeted behavioural programmes including Safe Routes to school and workplace travel planning would see additional gains in sustainable mode share, a reduction in 'last mile trips' by the private car and improved air quality and noise levels.

There is additional scope to include Residential Travel Planning measures – for

example in new developments such as the Maltings, Tyrell's Lands or in Aghnaharna – to provide travel planning advice, car clubs, mobility points and other incentives for new residents.

Certain details of the LTP have not been fully accounted for or captured within the model because they are subject to further assessment and engagement, including

objectives for LCC to work with the NTA, Irish Rail and other stakeholders to expand and realign the town and regional bus and rail services, as well as behavioural change initiatives. As these objectives, which could not be modelled, are realised, it is considered likely that higher active travel and public transport mode shares than those within the model are achievable.

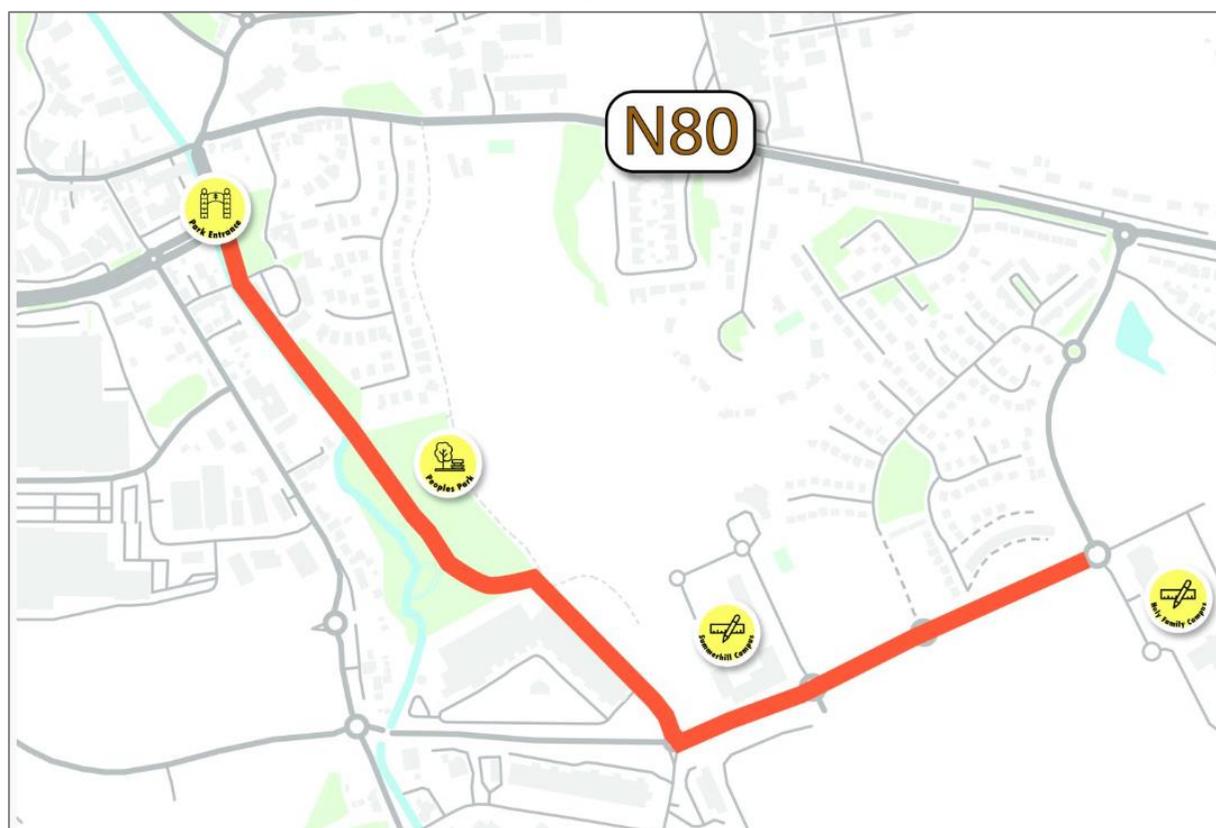


Figure 18-2 Laois County Council has implemented a Playful Active Travel Zone along the Triogue Way, encouraging students and their families to walk, wheel, scoot or cycle to school. Such projects are part of the behavioural programmes that encourage modal shift. Source: Laois County Council.



## 19 Implementation

### 19.1 Overview

This Local Transport Plan examines the transport network within Portlaoise to provide supportive, evidence-based analysis for preparing the next Portlaoise Local Area Plan (LAP) for the period 2024-2030 and to help Portlaoise reach its potential as a Low Carbon Town and a national demonstration project for sustainable and community-driven urban renewal.

The proposed transport projects are based on the five transport objectives as mentioned in **Chapter 5 – Transport Objectives:**

1. Support the **Compact Growth** of Portlaoise through the careful integration of land use and transport planning.
2. Improve and prioritise **access** to local services by **sustainable modes**, in particular walking and cycling, with links to public transport for longer journeys.
3. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of **public transport services** in Portlaoise.
4. Maximise the potential of **natural environment assets** and the design and layout of the **built environment** to

**facilitate connectivity and safe and permeable walking and cycling networks.**

5. Enhance the **vibrancy, accessibility, liveability** and **safety** of Portlaoise through **improved public realm, place-making** and a **Healthy Streets approach**.

Proposals for individual projects are based on analysis and the transport objectives. Before any projects are constructed or implemented, they would need to be examined on their own merits and be subjected to the rigorous analysis requirements of the Public Spending Code (PSC) and the Transport Appraisal Framework (TAF). Costs have risen on all active travel schemes over recent years.

Individual projects will require:

- individual feasibility studies
- assessments of environmental, archaeological and architectural impact
- detailed design
- the appropriate statutory procedures with public consultation

Design Standards are rapidly changing, as evidenced by the recent introduction of a new **Cycle Design Manual** and any projects must conform to the most recent design standards.

Portlaoise is already making significant progress towards the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure for the town. The town bus service is expected to be in operation by 2025. The recent TII upgrade of the Abbeyleix Road/N77 and numerous NTA-funded projects are improving pedestrian and cyclist facilities throughout the town. Nevertheless, significant gaps in the network remain, particularly around schools and the historic town centre.

### 19.2 A Collaborative Approach

The successful delivery of the recommendations set out in this LTP will require collaboration between a broad range of stakeholders, from various Laois County Council departments, the National Transport Authority, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Irish Rail, Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly, advocacy groups and the wider community of Portlaoise.



Each of the projects will require to be appraised individually in terms of feasibility, design, planning, approval and funding.

### 19.3 Rapid Build Options

Several of the schemes recommended include improvements that could be achieved using Rapid Build methods. Rapid Build active travel facilities are schemes that utilise cost-effective measures to deliver walking and cycling infrastructure quicker than traditional (full build) construction methods. They do not typically involve major construction works, meaning that the works are usually within the boundaries of the existing carriageway which can simplify the planning process.

Rapid Build options can include:

- Narrowing/converting general traffic lanes to active travel facilities
- Reallocating on-street parking
- Removing Ghost Islands
- Introducing shuttle systems
- Tightening junctions
- Creating Traffic Free streets
- Redesigning junctions

The Rapid Build approach could deliver many of the proposed walking and cycling



Figure 19-1 Overview of Rapid Build improvements at a roundabout.  
Source: NTA

improvements along Arterial and Link Streets in Portlaoise. For example, the Rapid Build scheme on Borris Road is extending the provision of segregated cycling infrastructure to 1.3km and upgrading uncontrolled pedestrian crossings to controlled pedestrian crossings, providing greater safety and accessibility for all users of Borris Road,

#### Did you know?

**Traditional building** schemes such as new footpaths, lighting and road resurfacing range from **€4 - 7 million per km**, compared to **rapid build** construction which cost in the range of **€0.25 - 1m per km**.

National Transport Authority



especially the 1500 students at St Mary's CBS and Scoil Chríost Rí.

Rapid Build Options are also available for junctions. In Portlaoise some roundabouts are challenging for cyclists and pedestrians, but these junctions can be retrofitted using Rapid Build methods into roundabouts that are well-suited for pedestrians and cyclists.

Where Rapid Build schemes involve future and current bus operations, consideration must be given to the provision of bus services.



## Measure IM 1

### Rapid Build Options

Laois County Council will work in collaboration with the NTA and other stakeholders to deliver Rapid Build Schemes, along Arterial and Link Streets as a short-term and long-term improvement to the existing state of cycling and pedestrian facilities.

## 19.4 Implementation of Options and Timeframes

This section assumes that projects that have received NTA or TII funding and are in the design phase or under construction, will be brought to completion in the near future. This category includes projects such as the Father Browne Avenue Active Travel Scheme, the Mountrath Road (R445) Rapid Build Scheme and the Triogue Way.

It suggests a prioritisation of remaining measures to create a cohesive and connected transport network for all users, focusing particularly on Safe Routes to School and access to public transportation.

The following pages set out potential timelines for the implementation of the proposed transport projects. Timescales are defined as follows:

- **Short term (up to 2025):** Measures currently under construction or intended to go to construction very shortly.
- **Medium term (up to 2030):** Measures intended for implementation before 2028 during the current Laois County Development Plan and due to be completed by 2030 to meet ambitions in the **Climate Action Plan**.
- **Long term (up to 2040):** Measures intended to be completed by 2040 to correspond with the end date of *Portlaoise 2040*.

The pace of implementation of some of the recommendations and projects set out in this LTP will be dictated by the level of available funding and the requirement for planning approval. More complex schemes, including improvements to Portlaoise Railway Station, are likely to be medium to long-term projects and will entail close cooperation between multiple stakeholders and landowners.

A transformation of how we travel is required for our own health and the health of the planet, as expressed in the **Climate Action Plan 2023**, which necessitates the reallocation of existing road space towards public transport and active travel.

Aside from capital investment, the implementation of the projects suggested in this LTP will incur on-going operational costs. Other forms of supplementary funding and agreements have been or are likely to be sought including:

- The NTA's Active Travel Investment Programme
- Development contributions for strategic transport infrastructure
- Site-specific development contributions and/or
- Land agreements through the development management process

The Measures presented in **Table 19-1** on the following pages come from **Chapters 9-17** where maps and implementation tables for individual measures are included.



Table 19-1 Implementation Table

No.	Objective	Short term (Up to 2025)	Medium term (Up to 2030)	Long term (Up to 2040)
<b>Active Travel</b>				
AT 1	Laois County Council Active Travel Programme			
<b>Junction improvements</b>				
JN 1	Development Management of Junctions			
JN 2	Evidence-based Approach to Junction Improvements			
JN 3	Placemaking at Junctions and Roundabouts			
<b>Walking</b>				
WK 1	Portlaoise 2040 & the Town Centre Pedestrian Network			
WK 2	Street Clutter Audit			
WK 3	Portlaoise 2040 & Pedestrianisation			
WK 4	Portlaoise Pedestrian Network			
WK 5	Wayfinding			
WK 6	Public Art			
WK 7	Walkability Audit			
WK 8	Accessibility			
WK 9	Safety in Public Spaces			
<b>Cycling</b>				
CY 1	Portlaoise Cycle Network			
CY 2	CycleConnects			
CY 3	National Cycle Network			
CY 4	Quietways			
CY 5	Cycle Parking			
<b>Permeability</b>				
PY 1	Permeability in Residential Areas			



PY 2	Permeability and the New Portlaoise Town Bus Service			
PY 3	Permeability to Schools – Supplementary Measures			
PY 4	Filtered Permeability			
Public Transport				
PT 1	New Town Bus Network			
PT 2	Regional Bus Network			
PT 3	Local Link Services			
PT 4	Bus Stops and Shelters			
PT 5	Portlaoise Railway Station Facilities			
PT 6	Pedestrian & Cyclist Accessibility at PL Railway Station			
PT 7	Multi-Modal Interchange Hub at PL Railway Station			
Roads Network				
RN 1	Principles of Road Development			
RN 2	National Roads Requirements			
RN 3	National Roads and Sustainable Travel			
RN 4	New Local Roads			
RN 5	Regional and Sustainable Travel			
RN 6	Local Roads and Sustainable Travel			
RN 7	Town Centre Streets			
RN 8	Speed Limit Review			
Parking Management				
PM 1	Parking Management Policy			
PM 2	Parking Management Strategy			
PM 3	Park and Stride			
PM 4	Park and Ride			
PM 5	Mobility Hubs			
PM 6	Mobility Points			
Supporting Measures				

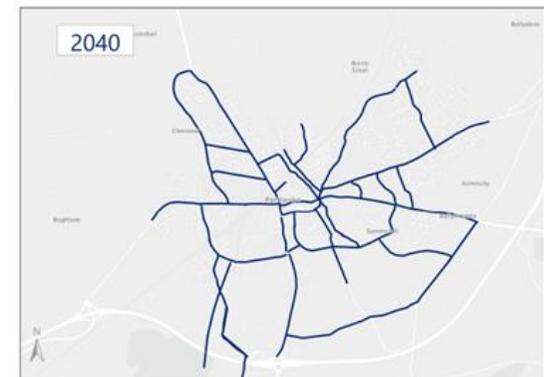
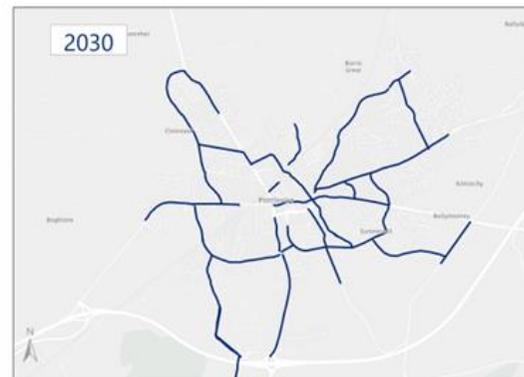
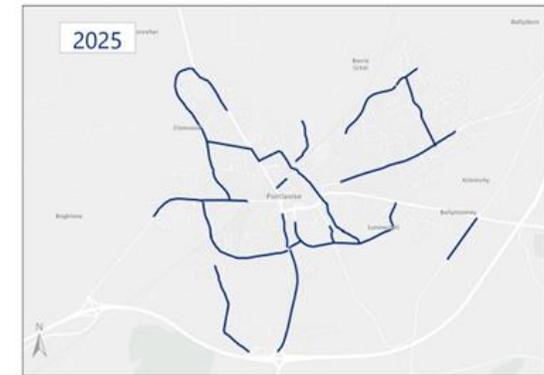


SM 1	Micromobility and Shared Schemes			
SM 2	Green Schools & Active Schools			
SM 3	Safe Routes to School			
SM 4	School Planning and Design			
SM 5	Playful Active Travel School Zones			
SM 6	Playful Streets			
SM 7	Healthy Streets			
SM 8	Workplace Travel/ Mobility Management Plans			
SM 9	SuDS & Green Infrastructure			
Implementation				
IM 1	Rapid Build Projects			
Monitoring				
MR 1	Measuring Strategy Outcomes			



## 19.5 Cumulative impact

Taken together the changes made in Portlaoise will gradually create an environment that is welcoming to active and sustainable travel and that is alive with people spending time together, being physically active while they carry out their daily routines. As an example of the cumulative impact, the following maps illustrate the impact of the growth in the cycle network. While a network is made up of individual schemes, the impact of numerous schemes together is far greater than the impact of an individual scheme. The maps show the progress from what existed in 2022, what is planned and committed for 2025 and additional expansions of the network by 2030 and 2040 (subject to availability of funding and necessary environmental and planning processes).



The growing Portlaoise Active Travel network



## 20 Local Transport Plan Outcomes, Monitoring & Reporting

### 20.1 What will success look like?

By 2040, Portlaoise’s streets will be quieter, safer, and more attractive for all users. We will have continued to reduce the speed and number of private motor vehicles on our streets. Portlaoise Town Centre will be more vibrant, walkable, and enjoyable place to linger and spend time in that draws people to it. The connections between the historic town centre and the newer retail areas will be attractive and inviting, making it easy to visit both.

Most short trips within Portlaoise or trips to take the train or bus from Portlaoise will be made by foot, bicycle, or bus. Furthermore, the queues of private cars around schools and major employment centres will be a thing of the past, because most people living and working in Portlaoise will be able to walk, cycle or take the bus to work and their children will do the same to get to school.

**Did you know?**

A Carbon Footprint Study found that Portlaoise Town emits around **100,000 tons of CO2 per year, more than 4 tons for each of its 23,000 residents.** Laois County Council aims to reduce these emissions through measures introduced under the **Low Carbon Town** initiative.

Siemens, Laois County Council.



**Portlaoise**  
Low Carbon  
Town

Longer trips will be made by public transport and supported by accessible and inclusive shared mobility schemes. Deliveries and service impacts will be mitigated through fewer trips, condensed operating hours, and greener and quieter vehicles.

Portlaoise will have fulfilled its role as a Low Carbon Town Centre national demonstration project, with more residents and fewer vehicles in the town centre, a new home for Music Generation Laois in the former Scoil Mhuire, upgraded laneways, hundreds of new trees, and an inviting walking and cycling network, including the Triogue Way.

Portlaoise will be better prepared for the impacts of climate change with more street trees, landscaping, and rain gardens to reduce surface run-off in times of heavy rainfall. The greenery will also cool the surroundings during heat spells. The

increased reliance on walking and cycling for daily trips will free residents from individual carbon emissions and fluctuations in fuel prices. Air quality and noise levels will have improved thanks to fewer vehicle trips.

### Working from Home and Remote Hubs

Given the frequency and speed of rail connections between Portlaoise and Dublin, Cork and Limerick, Portlaoise has potential to grow as a WFH and Remote Working Hub location. Already the renovation of The Cube has shown the potential for the provision of flexible work meeting rooms and training opportunities to end dereliction and



Figure 20-1 The CUBE Low Carbon Centre of Excellence in Portlaoise offers meeting rooms for local businesses, as well as consultancy and training service. Photo: Alf Harvey.



introduce vitality into town centres. The Cube assists in attracting and developing new companies with a low carbon focus, in turn supporting and assisting a transition to a low-carbon economy.

## 20.2 Portlaoise LTP Mode Share Targets

Mode share targets have been set for Portlaoise up to 2042 with an interim year of 2028 (Table 20-1). The mode share targets build on:

- Relevant planning policy that prioritises compact growth
- Analysis of Census data from Portlaoise
- Strategic transport modelling exercises
- Experience of other similar-sized towns
- Portlaoise’s role as County Laois’s Decarbonising Zone and a National Demonstration Project

As County Laois’s pilot decarbonising zone, it is expected that residents of Portlaoise will lead the county in modal shift.

The *Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027* (LCDP) sets targets for modal shift throughout Laois, creating an average modal shift for residents regardless of their access to active or sustainable transport options. As an urban settlement, it is expected that the

modal share for sustainable modes will be higher in Portlaoise because residents have access to walking and cycling infrastructure and public transport. The LCDP modal share targets are higher for sustainable modes than the modelling for the Portlaoise LTP indicates, highlighting LCC’s commendable ambition in increasing active and sustainable modal share.

The objectives in the LTP position Portlaoise to far exceed the 40% increase in cycling called for in *Portlaoise 2040* and the modal share targets in the LCDP.

The LTP’s modal share targets only address **trips that start and end** in Portlaoise. In the 2016 Census there were 7,433 of these types of trips on a daily basis, split almost equally between work and school trips. An analysis of the 2022 Census found that 33% of all trips to work and school took less than 15 minutes, suggesting that there is much potential for switching to more sustainable modes.

The modal targets are set separately for work and school trips to reflect a key objective of

Plan	Mode	2016	2028	2042
Laois County Development Plan	Active Travel	7%	n/a	35%
	Public Transport	4%	n/a	20%
	Private Vehicle	73%	n/a	45%
LTP Work Trips	Active Travel	12%	20%	40%
	Public Transport	8%	30%	30%
	Private Vehicle	80%	50%	30%
LTP School Trips	Active Travel	23%	35%	40%
	Public Transport	21%	35%	40%
	Private Vehicle	56%	30%	20%

Table 20-1 Modal share targets from the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Local Transport Plan.

the LTP to encourage more children to walk or cycle to school. Through provision of active travel infrastructure on Borris Road, Mountrath Road and Southern Circular Road, LCC has laid a strong foundation for children walking and cycling to school. Other infrastructure projects and supporting measures proposed in this LTP build on existing strengths to facilitate slower streets, better pedestrian crossings, and dedicated cycling infrastructure.

The greatest changes in modal share occur in this decade to reflect the impact of the opening of the town bus service in Portlaoise and the effort to reach Ireland’s climate emission goals. These targets are intentionally ambitious to reflect the need to increase sustainable travel, meet climate



action targets, improve air quality and promote physical activity and social interaction.

The recommendations of the LTP, such as Safe Routes to School, 30 km/h speed limits, cycle facilities, filtered permeability and connectivity measures, car parking management, etc., will support and facilitate this modal shift. The supporting measures, including behavioural change programmes, will be required to achieve the desired modal shift.

### 20.3 Additional Modal Shift Support Measures

Based on the findings from the modelling assessment including the following recommendations from the LTP will help reach the modal targets, producing the modal shift that infrastructure cannot provide on its own. The recommendations include:

- The delivery of the **town bus service** for Portlaoise, including a 3<sup>rd</sup> route to serve the Summerhill school campus and the J17 National Enterprise Park. Adding a third route significantly increases the impact it can have on transport within Portlaoise.

- **Additional Demand Management Measures**, including parking controls to discourage using on-street parking for long-stay use and regular reviews of available kerbside space with a view to reallocating underutilised space to higher value uses including tree planting, public seating, cycle parking and more accessible bus stops.
- **Additional Behavioural Change Measures** to focus on modal shift for shorter journeys (walking under 2 km and cycling under 8 km). Monitoring and Review

The Portlaoise Local Transport Plan is intended to be a ‘live’ document that will be reviewed and updated as it evolves. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed to gather data sources such as pedestrian counts, cycle counts, walkability audits, parking surveys, air quality surveys and collision data will be used to measure the progress of the LTP.

#### Objective MR 1

#### Measuring Strategy Outcomes

Laois County Council will continue to monitor and report on the delivery of the Portlaoise Local Transport Plan.



