

# Lands at Stradbally Road Masterplan Proposals



March 2022  
Version 1.5



**CUNDALL**



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## Document control

Version	Date	Status	Prepared	Approved
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1.1	26 July 2021	Final draft	EB / BW / TJ	TJ
1.2	17 September 2021	Updated for consultation	EB / BW / TJ / BH	TJ
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1.4	18 February 2022	Final report. Minor edits to red line boundary for consistency (with the inclusion of the tennis court throughout), heights of Portrane House and Glen Down's developments, and reference to Dr Juidith Hill's recommendations within the masterplan development section.	EB / BW	TJ
1,5	15 March 2022	Final report with minor edits to residential masterplan.	BH	TJ

### Project

Land at Stradbally Road

### Client

Laois County Council

### LUC Project Number

11298

### LUC Project Team

Tom Jonson, Project Director and Landscape Architect  
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### Date

September 2021

All photos within the report have been taken by the project team, unless otherwise credited.





View east across masterplan site

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(confidential)**

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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View of looking south, along the Esker Ridge

### Project and Design Team Overview

The Design Team were appointed in November 2020 to prepare an Urban Design Framework (UDF) / Masterplan for the Lands at Stradbally Road, Portlaoise that will develop and deliver the most effective presentation (layout, form and design) for a number of uses within the confines of the zonings permitted under the Portlaoise LAP 2018-2024 associated with the site.

The masterplan was lead by Landscape Architects and Urban Designers at LUC in collaboration with the following team of specialists:

- Turley - Project managers and town planners;
- Healy Partners - Architecture;
- Dr Judith Hill - Cultural heritage;
- Cundall - Transport planners; and,
- LUC - Ecology and GIS.

This report has been prepared by the Design Team in accordance with the ongoing instruction by Laois County Council.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the masterplan design development process to date, including baseline analysis, consultation, and concept design, and present the final masterplan proposals for each of the zoned areas.

The image opposite illustrates the project delivery team hierarchy.

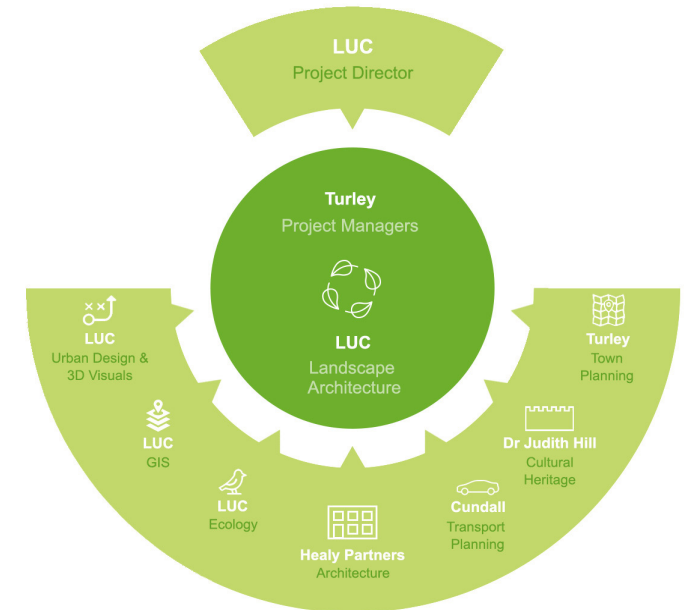
### Project Brief

As outlined within the original project brief, the UDF / masterplan for this landbank needs to consider a number of key components to ensure the proper planning of a town centre scheme. These components are:

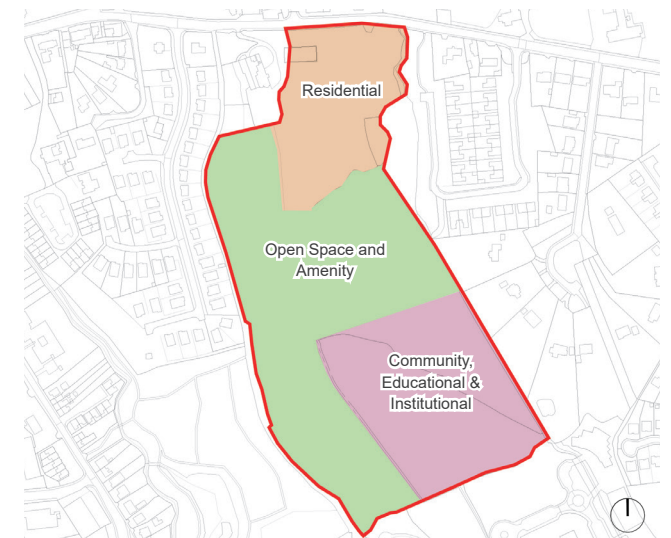
- The realisation of the residential potential of the site;
- The creation of an extension to the Peoples Park accessed off the Well Road/ Timahoe Road through the Ridge (pNatural Heritage Area) into this landbank;
- The development of the walking and cycling infrastructure within the site to ensure permeability between the Stradbally Road and the Timahoe Road, Portlaoise;
- The potential for provision of sports facilities / a multi games use area / buildings within the land bank;
- The provision of complementary facilities and land uses to support the sustainable development potential of the educational campuses at Summerhill;
- The area improvements which need to be created both in the built environment and in the hard and soft landscaping;
- The impacts of proposed development on the ecological habitats within the area.

### Masterplan Site Land Zoning

The site comprises a mixture of three different land use zonings, as identified in the Portlaoise Local Area Plan (PLAP) 2018 – 2024 and includes Residential, Open Space and Amenity; and Community, Educational & Institutional. This is explored further in Chapter 2: Planning Policy.



Project team and delivery hierarchy



Masterplan site land zoning

### The Masterplan Site

The site is located east of Portlaoise town centre, and south of Stradbally Road. The west boundary runs outside the wooded esker ridge. The woodland appears to be broadly commensurate with the wider woodland surrounding Portlaoise Retail Park, the River Triogue and the People's Park, and residential development at The Downs. Portrane House – a private residence and Registered Protected Structure – adjoins the northwest corner of the site. The eastern boundary is formed by a narrow watercourse and is abutted by private greenspace associated with the residential development at Glen Down's and Glenlahan. The recently built school adjoins the southern boundary.

The Ridge of Portlaoise – the remnants of an esker ridge of sand or gravel deposited during the last ice age, which extends approximately north-south through Portlaoise, forms a linear feature through the west of the site. The esker ridge is important for wildlife and is proposed for designation as a Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). It is also of importance for geology, social and cultural reasons.

The key site challenges include:

- Achieving local climate action goals;
- Ensuring the site is accessible for all;
- Protecting the heritage and environmental features.

The key site opportunities include:

- Increasing the green area within the town;
- Creating homes for a variety of people;
- Providing an area close to all amenities.



The masterplan site and project red line boundary (source: Google Earth)

## Masterplan Design Process

The development of the masterplan has involved seven distinct stages, illustrated in the infographic opposite.

This report represents the completion of Stage 5, and has been prepared by the Design Team in accordance with the ongoing instruction by Laois County Council.

### Stage 1: Project inception

An inception meeting and design team site visit at the start of the project ensures expectations are clearly understood and aligned from the outset.

The site visit is a fundamental starting point in the design process and provided an opportunity to discuss design options and ensure a collaborative response between team members. The inception meeting consisted of an initial briefing and knowledge sharing exercise to allow a full understanding of the project requirements and objectives.

### Stage 2: Baseline data gathering and thematic mapping

Baseline spatial data was gathered from a wide range of sources and collated using Geographical Information Systems (GIS). This allowed analysis of the spatial distribution of the existing GBI network, topography, land-use, heritage assets, transport infrastructure and other environmental factors.

### Stage 3: Local context and policy review

Relevant national, regional and local policy documents, strategies and studies was collated and reviewed. Any key implications of these documents were determined and taken forward as part of the masterplan. This provides the context for the masterplan and has helped to develop a clearer understanding of the need for housing, open space, and

sports infrastructure within Portlaoise.

An urban design, heritage, ecology and transport analysis supplemented the context review and allowed for the production of a series of site constraints and opportunity plans.

### Stage 4: Stakeholder and community consultation

A wide-ranging programme of engagement and consultation was undertaken to inform the masterplan and supplement the evidence base. Consultation coincided with the Covid-19 Pandemic and was therefore undertaken on a virtual basis. A discovery survey, inviting all members of the public and interested parties, was published online, and a series of virtual workshops organized with key stakeholders.

### Stage 5: Concept masterplan and optioneering

An overarching masterplan vision, concept and a series of masterplan design options were developed taking into account the technical work undertaken to date, an assessment of the evidence base, and the mapped site constraints and opportunities. Options were presented and discussed in detail with both the client team and key stakeholders to determine a preferred option.

### Stage 6: Further stakeholder and community consultation (current project stage)

Additional, virtual community consultation and stakeholder engagement will be undertaken on the preferred masterplan option, and the overall proposed masterplan vision and strategic direction.

### Stage 7: Final masterplan concept (still to be completed)

The final masterplan will incorporate the relevant responses from the consultation activities.



Masterplan process infographic



## Chapter 2 Planning Policy

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View south across the masterplan site

## National Planning Policy

The following section provides an outline of the main national, regional and local planning policies and guidelines relevant to the Stradbally Road masterplan lands.

### *Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework*

The National Planning Framework (NPF) was published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in February 2018. It sets out the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of the country.

The main objective of the NPF is to guide planning activities on a local, regional and national level, to ensure sound investment decisions and opportunities for sustainable economic development are maximised. The NPF contains 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs), which are supported and reinforced by 75 National Policy Objectives (NPOs).

The NPF contains a strong commitment to delivering compact growth (NPO 1) and it seeks, as a top priority, to achieve effective density in, and consolidation of, existing settlements rather than enabling the continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns out into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and smaller villages. It includes a target for at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built-up areas of cities, towns and villages on infill and/or brownfield sites.

The following National Strategic Outcomes are also of note with respect to the subject lands:

- NSO 2 – Enhanced Regional Accessibility;
- NSO 4 – Sustainable Mobility;
- NSO 7 – Enhanced Amenity and Heritage;
- NSO 8 – Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate

Resilient Society; and

- NSO 9 - Sustainable Management of Water, Waste and other Environmental Resources.

The NPF makes specific reference to Portlaoise under National Policy Objective 12 (pg. 67) which sets out a commitment to establishing a National Regeneration and Development Agency. The role of this agency will be to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending departments and agencies to co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands, investment required within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan and to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential.

Portlaoise is identified as an example of a town which ‘...witnessed very rapid expansion of new housing areas and retail centres outside the traditional town core during the early 2000s’.

The NPF states that like many other towns that went through similar periods of growth, there is a marked contrast in Portlaoise between the type of development that occurred in the historic town core and that which took place in the surrounding ring roads and outlying parking areas.

The NPF emphasises that there are many opportunities to address these legacy issues and that there is now a need for ‘...a major focus on regenerating original town centre and main street areas and how they relate to the expanded town, with a view to creating more attractive, desirable places that people want to live and spend time in, for work, shopping or recreational purposes’.

Thus, the NPF confirms that a ‘Demonstration Project’ will be initiated by the National Regeneration and Development Agency to ‘...create and deliver a new vision for the centre

of Portlaoise, to show how the best quality planning, urban design and implementation can create rejuvenated towns’.

It is further noted that the NPF identifies Portlaoise, along with Balbriggan and Navan, as Ireland’s three fastest growing large towns between 1996 and 2016 but that the rapid population growth was not accompanied by the equivalent increases in jobs.

## National Planning Guidelines

The following national planning guidelines are relevant to the masterplan proposal.

### *Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities (December 2020)*

The purpose of the Guidelines is to ‘...strike an effective regulatory balance in setting out planning guidance to achieve both high quality apartment development and a significantly increased overall level of apartment output’.

The Guidelines also recognise that there is a need for ‘...a significant and sustained increase in housing output and apartment type development in particular’ and ‘... for greater flexibility in order to achieve significantly increased apartment development...’

In particular, the Guidelines advise that general blanket restrictions on building height or building separation distances that may be specified in development plans, should be replaced by performance criteria, appropriate to the location.

The apartment design parameters contained in the guidelines include:

- General locational consideration;
- Apartment mix within apartment schemes;
- Internal space standards for different types of apartments;
- Dual aspect ratios;
- Floor to ceiling height;
- Apartments to stair/lift core ratios;
- Storage spaces;
- Amenity spaces including balconies/patios;
- Car parking; and
- Room dimensions for certain rooms.

For the purposes of the Guidelines, we consider that the subject site is located in a 'central and/or accessible urban location' as it is within walking distance (i.e. up to 15 minutes or 1,000-1,500m) of a principal city centre, or significant employment locations, that may include hospitals and third-level institution. Such locations are generally suitable for small- to large-scale and higher density development, including apartments.

### *Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, December 2018*

The Guidelines provide additional guidance with respect to achieving increased building heights in urban areas and reinforce the compact growth intentions of the NPF.

The Guidelines state that 'In relation to the assessment of individual planning applications and appeals, it is Government policy that building heights must be generally increased in appropriate urban locations. There is therefore a presumption in favour of buildings of increased height in our town/city cores and in other urban locations with good public transport accessibility'.

The Guidelines contain a total of four Specific Planning Policy Requirements and they also outline the following three broad principles that Planning Authorities must apply in considering development proposals for buildings taller than prevailing building heights in urban areas. In summary:

- *Principle 1* requires that a proposal positively assists in securing National Planning Framework objectives;
- *Principles 2* requires that a proposal is in line with the requirements of the development plan in force; and
- *Principle 3* requires that where the relevant development plan or local area plan pre-dates these guidelines, it must be demonstrated that implementation of the pre-existing policies and objectives of the relevant plan or planning scheme aligns with and support the objectives and policies of the National Planning Framework.

The Guidelines go on to outline specific development management criteria at town, district/neighbourhood and site/building scale that all applications shall satisfy.

### *Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)*

These Guidelines outline the key planning principles which should be used in the preparation of Local Area Plans / Development Plans for residential development in urban areas, with one of the key messages being that higher densities are appropriate in certain locations.

In general, the guidelines advise that increased densities should be encouraged on residentially zoned lands and particularly in city and town centres, brownfield sites, public transport corridors, inner suburban/infill sites, institutional lands and outer suburban/greenfield sites.

*Para. 5.9 (pg. 18)* advises that 'The provision of additional dwellings within inner suburban areas of towns or cities, proximate to existing or due to be improved public transport corridors, has the revitalising areas by utilising the capacity of existing social and physical infrastructure' and that 'The local area plan should set out the planning authority's views with regard to the range of densities acceptable within the area'.

The Guidelines recommend a minimum net density of 50 dwellings per hectare for the masterplan lands noting that they are within 1km walking distance from a train station. It is noted however, that the Guidelines also advise that 'In residential areas whose character is established by their density or architectural form, a balance has to be struck between the reasonable protection of the amenities and privacy of adjoining dwellings, the protection of established character and the need to provide residential infill'.

### *Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide (2009)*

This Best Practice Guide illustrates how the planning guidelines included in the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) can be implemented effectively and consistently across the different scales of urban development around the country.

The document is designed to act as a practical guide that prompts design responses through a series of 12 questions or criteria including context; connections; inclusivity; variety; efficiency; distinctiveness; layout; public realm; adaptability; privacy and amenity; parking and detailed design.

### *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007)*

The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in delivering homes in sustainable communities that are socially inclusive by:

- Promoting high standard in the design and construction and in the provision of residential amenity and services in new housing schemes;
- Encouraging best use of building land, compact development and optimal utilisation of services and infrastructure in the provision of new housing;
- Encouraging locations consistent with promoting Sustainable Communities and town centre development;
- Promoting higher standards of environmental performance in housing construction; and
- Seeking to ensure that residents of new housing schemes enjoy the benefits of first rate living conditions in a healthy, accessible and visually attractive environment.

### *Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2001)*

These Guidelines provide a framework to guide both Local Authorities in preparing development plans and assessing applications for planning permission, and developers and childcare providers in formulating development proposals.

With respect to new communities/larger new housing developments the Guidelines advise that 'for new housing areas, an average of one childcare facility for each 75 dwellings would be appropriate'. However the Guidelines go on to advise that 'The threshold for provision should be established having regard to the existing geographical

distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of areas".

Appendix 2 of the Guidelines outlines that any modification to the indicative standard should have regard to:

The make-up of the proposed residential area, i.e. an estimate of the mix of community the housing area seeks to accommodate; and

The results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a county childcare strategy or carried out as part of a local or action area plan or as part of the development plan.

### **Regional Planning Policy**

#### *Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031*

County Laois is located within the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (the EMRA). The EMRA is divided into 3 sub-regions or Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs), and Laois is located within the Midland Eastern SPA along with Longford, Offaly and Westmeath.

The EMRA's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 was made on 28 June 2019. The principal statutory purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework and National Development Plan 2019-2027 and the economic policies of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Regions.

Portlaoise is identified as a Gateway Region 'Key Town' in the RSES' Settlement Hierarchy. The RSES describes Key Towns as being:

'Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres'.

The RSES sets out the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) for the 'Key Towns':

- 'RPO 4.26: Core strategies in local authority development plans shall support objectives to achieve a minimum of 30% of housing in Key Towns by way of compact growth through the identification of key sites for regeneration.
- RPO 4.27: Key Towns shall act as economic drivers and provide for strategic employment locations to improve their economic base by increasing the ratio of jobs to workers'.

The RSES contains a specific sub-section of Portlaoise (see pgs. 90-91). In terms of central priorities for Portlaoise, the RSES identifies job creation and the facilitation of economic development in order to support the significant population growth levels experienced between 1996 and 2016.

The role of the Portlaoise Regeneration Demonstration Project, as earmarked in the NPF, is recognised in the RSES and that Portlaoise comprises a number of opportunity sites. However, it noted that the Stradbally Road lands are not listed/referenced.

The RSES sets out the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) for Portlaoise:

- *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. This is subject to compliance with the requirements of the SEA, Habitats and Floods Directive; and
- *RPO 4.74*: Support the development and expansion of the Midlands Regional Hospital at Portlaoise’.

So far as housing is concerned, the RSES states that ‘... focus will be on proactively encouraging housing delivery in a sustainable manner that acknowledges economic and market conditions, whilst ensuring housing need is met including the housing needs of younger people, families, private renters and the ageing population’.

The RSES recommends the provision of a mixture of well-designed housing types at appropriate locations as this will facilitate and contribute to the ongoing regeneration, consolidation and renewal of the town. A number of opportunity sites offer potential to deliver consolidated residential development over the short, medium and long term. Again, it is noted that the Stradbally lands are not listed.

We also note that the RSES lists development of the River Triogue Blueway as being a considerable natural heritage amenity and a tourism resource for the town, linking the

People’s Park in the south to the Linear Park in the north.

## Current Local Planning Policy Context

The current local planning policy context for the masterplan lands is established in the:

- Laois County Development Plan (LCDP) 2017 – 2023; and the
- Portlaoise Local Area Plan (PLAP) 2018 – 2024.

### *Laois County Development Plan (LCDP) 2017 – 2023*

The LCDP was made on the 26 June 2017 by the Council of the County of Laois and came into effect on 24 July 2017. Portlaoise is designated as a ‘Principal Town’ in the LCDP and it occupies the top tier of County Laois’ Settlement Hierarchy.

The LCDP contains a number of Strategic Aims which relate to the whole of the county and we note the following as they make specific reference to Portlaoise:

- *Aim 1*: Provide for the growth of County Laois towards a target population of up to 89,790 by 2023, this to be structured in a balanced manner between the Principal Town of Portlaoise (up to 25,382) and the county balance (up to 64,408)’;
- *Aim 6*: Promote and encourage the development of critical mass in Portlaoise and enable more economic development opportunities and the provision of services in a cost effect manner; and
- *Aim 7*: Target Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to appropriate zoned locations in the principal town of Portlaoise... and build on the economic strengths and

tourism opportunities of County Laois in a balanced and sustainable manner’.

Section 2.5.2 of the LCDP sets out the following policies specific to Portlaoise:

- *CS16*: Continue to promote and facilitate the development of Portlaoise as a Principal town / National Trans port node as outlined in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010;
- *CS17*: Direct population into the Principal Town to ensure that population grow this appropriate in scale with its identified role in the Regional and County Settlement Hierarchy;
- *CS18*: Apply increased residential densities up to 35 per hectare where appropriate having regard to Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas (2009);
- *CS19*: Apply appropriate development management measures in ensuring growth is appropriate and in compliance with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010;
- *CS20*: Implement the actions of the Portlaoise Public Realm Strategy / Vision Statement 2016 to improve the character of the town of Portlaoise;
- *CS21*: In Portlaoise, seek the improvement of pedestrian and cycling linkages between:
  - Portlaoise Railway Station
  - Lyster Square/Main Street/Kylekiproe
  - Portlaoise Leisure Centre
  - Portlaoise College and running track
  - Borris Road Schools’

The LCDP advises that the planning framework for Portlaoise is set out in the Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2012-2018, which was to be reviewed within the life time of this Plan. It is noted that LCC adopted a new Portlaoise Local

Area Plan in 2018 and this is reviewed below, however, we also note the following from the LCDDP:

- 'The Core Strategy identifies a population target of 25,382 people for Portlaoise by the year 2023;
- At the time of adoption, Portlaoise had approximately 125.9 hectares of zoned land purely for residential development (excluding Mixed Use zonings) which had not yet been built out;
- A strategic housing land requirement of 78 hectares is identified for Portlaoise for the Plan period of 2017-2023; and
- This housing land requirement will accommodate a population increase of 5,237 persons over the period up to 2023'.

### Portlaoise Local Area Plan (PLAP) 2018 – 2024

The Portlaoise Local Area Plan (PLAP) 2018 – 2024 was adopted by the Elected Members on 22 October 2018 and the Plan came into effect on 19 November 2018.

The PLAP is underpinned by the following strategic vision which is intended to guide the future growth of the town:

*“To fulfil the role as Principal Town, by providing for low carbon, sustainable and consolidated growth in a coherent spatial manner, protecting and maximising opportunities presented by the unique natural and built environment for green and public modes of transport, recreation and employment opportunities, while delivering an exemplar quality of life for residents”.*

The PLAP identifies Portlaoise as the ‘Principal Town’ and administrative centre for the County of Laois and states that it is strategically located at a national, regional and local

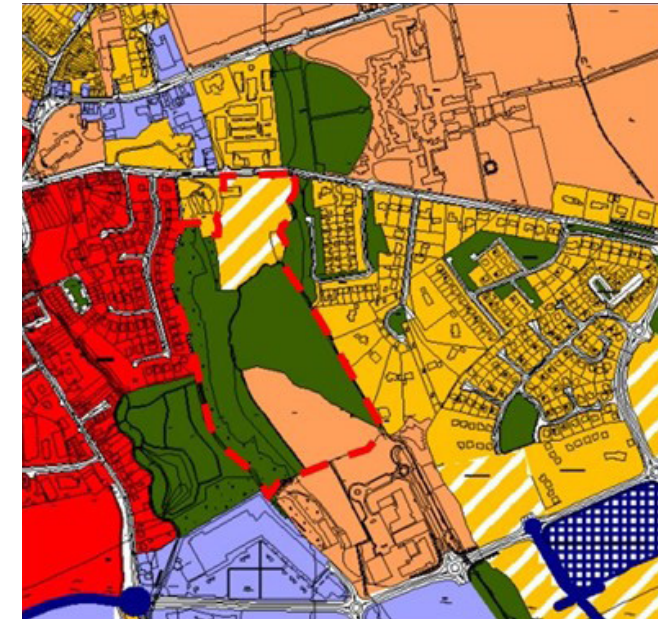
level. The PLAP advises that the development of Portlaoise over the lifetime of this plan shall be focused on employment generation, the consolidation of the town centre and the provision of community and social services.

The PLAP recognises that due to its proximity to Dublin, Portlaoise has experienced significant population growth, which has in turn placed an even greater demand on the town’s infrastructure, in particular education, housing, recreational amenities and services. Consequently, Portlaoise has experienced considerable urbanisation and expansion in recent years.

It is the aim of the PLAP Housing Strategy “To deliver new residential development, to support the existing community infrastructure, recreation and amenity facilities and provide new facilities in tandem with new housing”. 17 No. objectives and 5 No. policies have been set out in the PLAP to achieve this aim.

With respect to Community Services & Culture it is a strategic aim of the PLAP “To deliver, facilitate and support the provision of a broad range of high quality community, educational and cultural facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of the population”. 6 No. objectives and 4 No. policies have been set out in the PLAP to achieve this aim.

Map 2: Land Use Zoning of the PLAP identifies the Stradbally Masterplan lands (outlined in dashed red line in Figure 1.1) as being located within the ‘Development Boundary’ of Portlaoise and adjacent to/adjoining the ‘Town Centre’ area.



Map 2 - Portlaoise Local Area Plan (PLAP) 2018 – 2024 Land Use Zoning Map



The subject lands comprise a mixture of three different land use zonings, which we identify in the table below along with the Objectives and Purposes of each of the relevant land use zonings. It is noted that the masterplan lands are not specifically referenced within the PLAP nor are they identified as being a ‘Masterplan’ site.

Land Use Zoning	Objective	Purpose
<b>Residential 2</b>	To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.	The purpose of this zoning is to enhance the vitality and viability of town and village centres through the development of under-utilised land and brownfield sites and by encouraging a mix of uses to make the town and village centres an attractive place to visit, shop and live in. The character of the town and village centres shall be protected and enhanced.
<b>Open Space and Amenity</b>	To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational public and private open space.	The areas included in this zoning objective cover both private and public open space and are dispersed throughout urban centres of every size. The Council will not normally permit development that would result in a loss of open space.
<b>Community, Educational and Institutional</b>	To protect and provide for local neighbourhood, community, ecclesiastical, recreational and educational facilities	The purpose of this zoning is to protect and improve existing community, educational and institutional facilities and to safeguard their future provision. The land use will provide for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.

Section 18.2 of the PLAP contains a land use matrix which identifies land uses which LCC considers to be acceptable, open for consideration and not normally acceptable for each of the land use zonings contained in ‘Map 2 – Land Use Zoning’. The following table summarises the acceptable uses for three different land use zonings of the subject site.

Land Use Zoning	Acceptable Uses	Open for Consideration
<b>Residential 2</b>	Apartment; community hall; crèche/playschool; dwelling; park/playground; playing fields; recreational building;	Café; craft industry; cultural uses/library; guest house/hotel/hostel; halting site; health centre; medical and related consultants; nursing home/sheltered housing; offices <100sq. m.; place of worship; restaurant; school/educational facilities; retail (convenience) <100sq. m.; sport/leisure complex; utility structures;
<b>Open Space and Amenity</b>	Park/playground; playing fields;	Recreational building (community).
<b>Community, Educational and Institutional</b>	Cemetery; community hall; park/playground; place of worship; recreational building (community);	Apartment; craft industry; crèche/playschool; cultural uses/library; dwelling; funeral home; general public administration; guest house/hotel/hostel; halting site; health centre; medical and related consultants; nursing home/sheltered housing; offices <100sq. m.; offices >100sq. m.; playing fields; Recreational building (community); restaurant; school/educational facilities; sport/leisure complex; utility structures.

## Emerging Local Planning Policy Context

### Draft Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

The DLCDP was on public display and available for public inspection from 12th January 2021 to 23rd March 2021. This public consultation is now closed and LCC are currently reviewing the responses received.

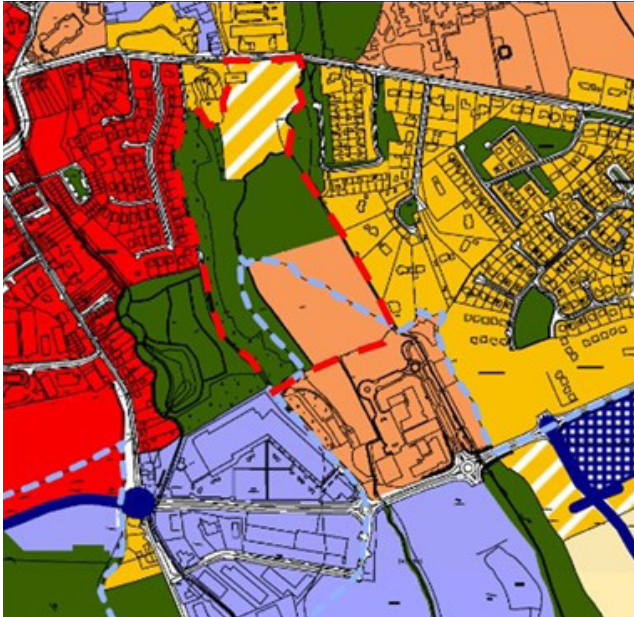
The DLCDP contains the following vision: ‘To improve the quality of life for all citizens in County Laois by creating sustainable communities and an environment that supports a vibrant, growing and well-connected economy, making it a County where people want to live, work, visit and do business, without compromising the environmental integrity of the county’.

The DLCDP advises that it is an objective of the Council to make a Local Area Plan for Portlaoise. However, during the Transition period (i.e. between the adoption of this County Development Plan and the adoption of the Local Area Plan for Portlaoise), the objectives (including zoning objectives), policies and standards in the County Development Plan shall apply.

Volume 2 of the DLCDP, entitled Settlement Strategy, identifies Portlaoise as a ‘Key Town’ in keeping with the designation contained in the NPF and the EMRA’s RSES. A Key Town is described as being a ‘Large economically active service and/or county towns that provide employment for their surrounding areas and with high-quality transport links and the capacity to act as growth drivers to complement the Regional Growth Centres’.

Map 2.2 of the DLCDP, entitled ‘Land Use Zoning Map’ (Figure 1.2) identifies the same mixture of three zonings for the masterplan lands, i.e. ‘Residential 2 – New Proposed Residential’; ‘Community, Education & Institutional’; and

'Open Space and Amenity'. However, it is noted that the 'Community, Education & Institutional' zoning has been increased and now occupies a larger portion of the site.



Map 2.2 - Portlaoise Local Area Plan (PLAP) 2018 – 2024 Land Use Zoning Map

Legend	
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Town Centre (Primary / Core Retail Area)	<span style="color: magenta;">■</span> Enterprise & Employment
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Residential 1 - Existing Residential	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Transport & Utilities
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Residential 2 - New Proposed Residential	<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> Mixed Use
<span style="color: lightorange;">■</span> Strategic Residential Reserve	<span style="color: blue;">---</span> Roads Objectives Buffer Zone
<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Community, Educational & Institutional	<span style="color: blue;">—</span> Roads Objectives
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Open Space & Amenity	<span style="color: blue;">—</span> Roads Being Approved
<span style="color: grey;">■</span> Industrial & Warehousing	<span style="color: red;">—</span> Development Boundary
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> General Business	<span style="color: blue;">---</span> CSO Settlement Boundary
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Neighbourhood Centre	

## Other Local Planning Context

In May 2017, LCC published 'Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond – A vision for a Better Town Centre', being a strategy that re-examines and re-purposes the Town Centre of Portlaoise.

The overarching aim of the strategy 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 of the Town, but also provides the foundation for a thriving town centre.

This Strategy is to be achieved through a number of interventions including:

- 'The designation of key urban spaces for enhancement and specific urban design proposals;
- The prioritisation of pedestrian linkages between the old and new town areas that will allow the Town to become a connected place;
- The utilisation of the River Triogue as a key environmental and amenity as-set;
- Realisation of the potential of key heritage assets that will not only show-case the Town's history for its residents, but also provide the foundation for an expanded tourism offer for this unique place; and
- The rebranding of the Town Centre as a place for people, where residents, shoppers and visitors alike can spend time enjoying its buildings and spaces'.

In order to deliver on this shared Vision for Portlaoise Town Centre a number of 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; and
- Provision for Working in Portlaoise Town Centre'.

Each of the above mentioned outcomes are supported by a number of ambitions and key actions. For example, under 'The Creation of a Low Carbon Town Centre' outcome, the following ambitions are identified, among others:

- 'Re-balance the existing circa 3,600 car parking spaces.
- Target 10% of all journeys by bicycle by 2020.
- 300-500 trees planted in the Town Centre'.

It is noted that the masterplan lands are located outside, but adjacent to, the study area of 'Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond – A vision for a Better Town Centre'.



**Chapter 3**  
**Existing Context:**  
**Study Area**

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Portrane House, Protected Structure to the north east of the masterplan site

## Urban Design

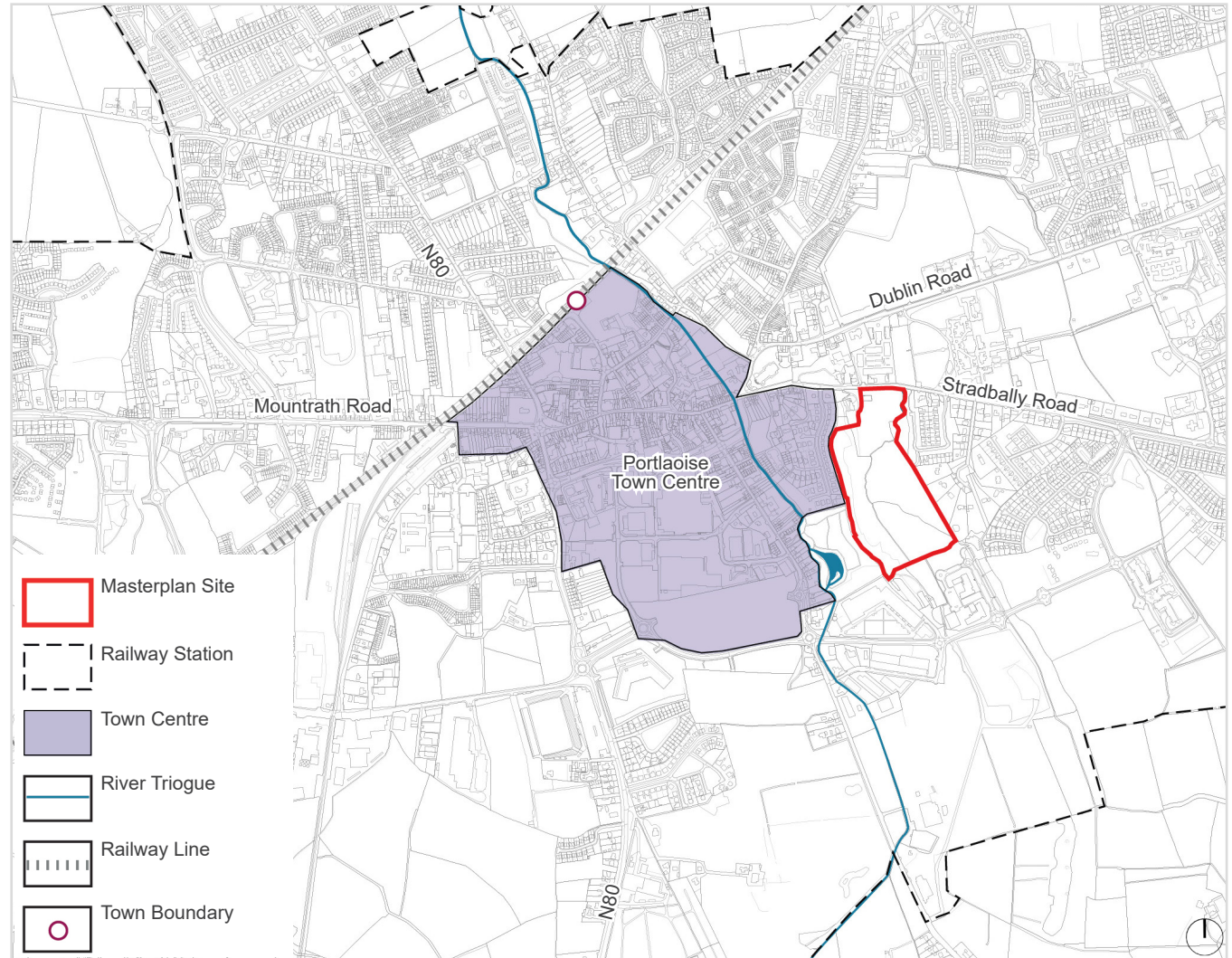
### Overview

The Urban Design Baseline report has been prepared by LUC and is attached at Appendix 1. The objectives of the urban design baseline report are to:

- Undertake an analysis of the Masterplan Site context, to understand the constraints and opportunities of both the site and the wider town centre - how it currently functions and how it should function in the future.
- Produce a series of analysis plans with accompanying commentary relating to movement and connectivity, geology and topography, flood risk, green and blue infrastructure, social infrastructure, heritage, and wayfinding.
- Analyse the different street typologies within Portlaoise, identifying key characteristics which may inform benchmark design principles within the Masterplan Site neighbourhoods.

### Strategic analysis - baseline findings

Desktop analysis was first of all undertaken at a strategic level, presenting the Masterplan Site in context with the surrounding town centre area.



Masterplan site in the context of Portlaoise

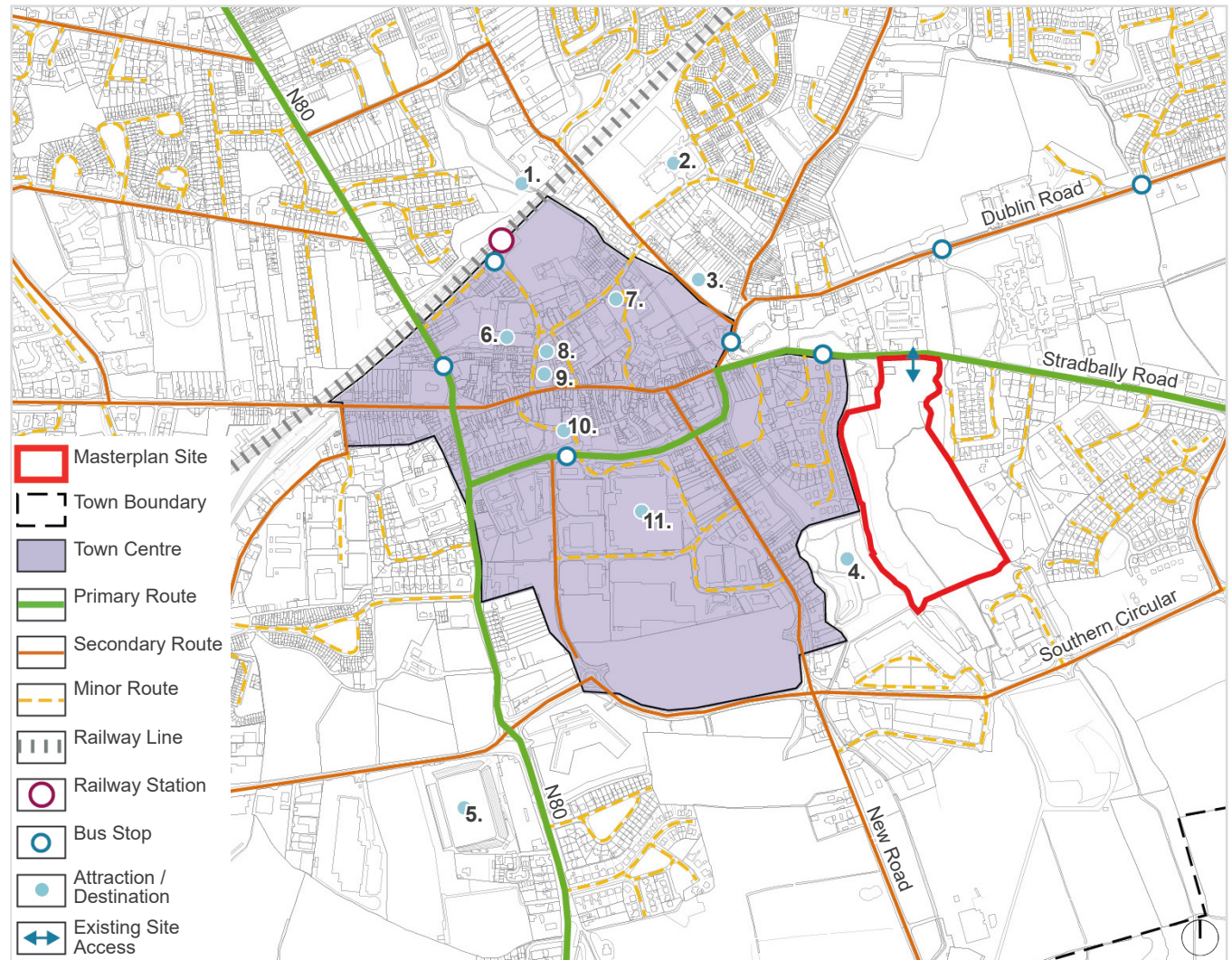
### Public Transport and Vehicle Connectivity

The Masterplan Site is located adjacent to a well-connected local highway network which offers convenient access to the wider Laois area in addition to the strategic highway network. There is one vehicle access into the Masterplan Site along the northern boundary, connecting to Stradbally Road.

Bus services currently pass the site on Stradbally Road, with the nearest stops located to the west of the site. Portlaoise railway station is also located within the vicinity of the site on the northern edge of the town centre. The figure opposite shows the location of these in relation to the site.

#### Key Destinations

1. River Triogue Linear Park
2. Portlaoise Leisure Centre
3. The Ridge Graveyard
4. People's Park
5. O'Moore Park Stadium
6. ODEON Portlaoise
7. Fort Protector & Fitzmaurice Place
8. Old St Peter's Church
9. Dunamaise Arts Centre
10. Portlaoise Tourism Information Office
11. Laois Shopping Centre



Public Transport and Vehicle Connectivity

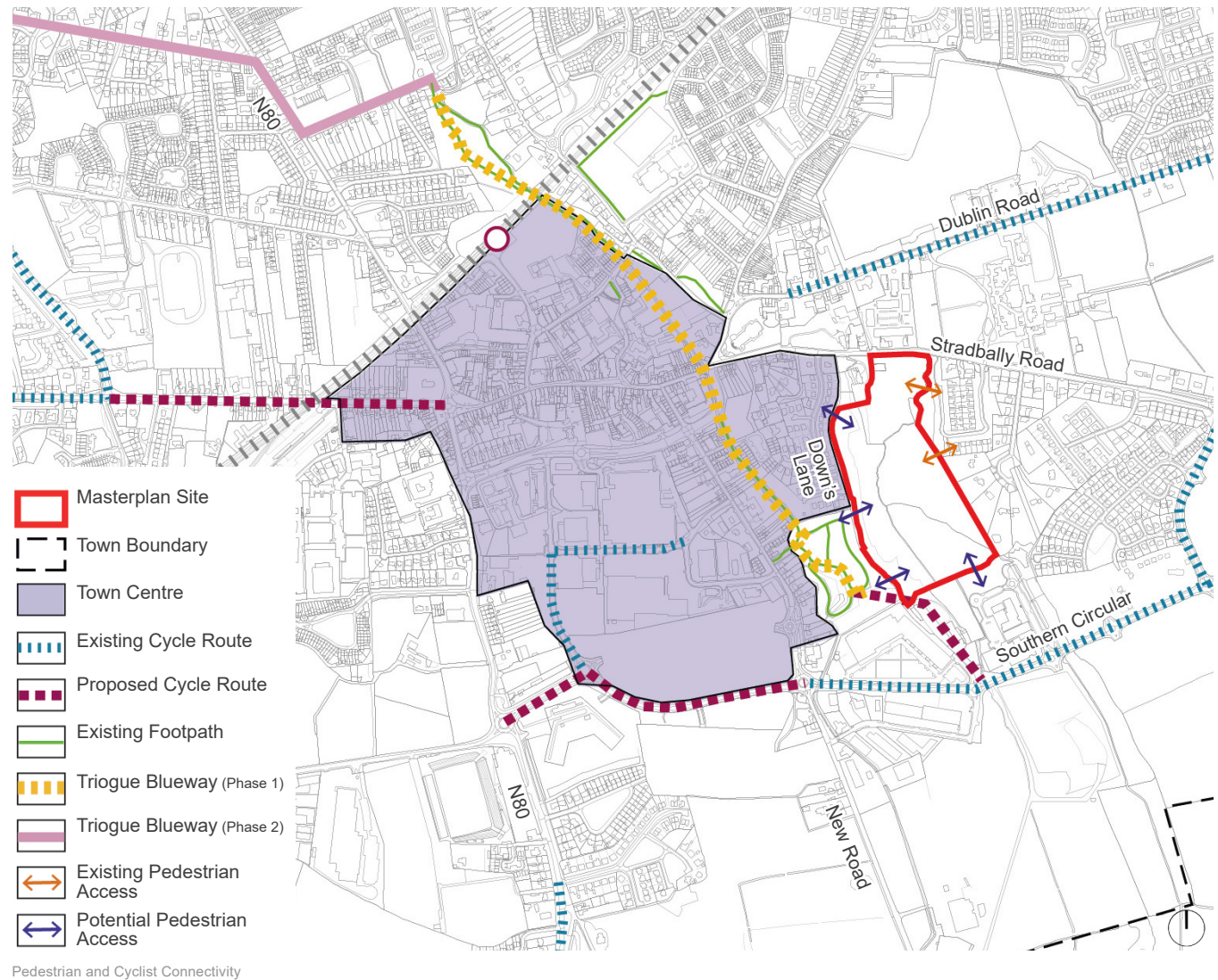
### Pedestrian and Cyclist Connectivity

The Masterplan Site is surrounded by a comprehensive network of pedestrian facilities, with lit footways provided adjacent to the majority of the adjacent road network. Public footpaths are also located within the People's Park, along the River Triogue, and through the surrounding green spaces including The Ridge Graveyard and the River Triogue Linear Park.

There are two public right of way access points along the eastern boundary of the site which lead into housing estates: Glendowns to the north and Glenlahan to the south. There is also an established crossing over Maryborough Drain which is linked to an established path at the southern end of the site, which crosses the esker and gives access to Downs Lane. A muddy track, routed in a north to south alignment, is also evident on the esker ridge.

A number of shared-use footpath/cycle facilities have recently been introduced in the town including on both sides of the Portlaoise Southern Circular road which connects the N80 and N77 and passes approximately 250m to the south of the site.

There is a proposal for a new cycle path to the south of the Masterplan Site, linking the People's Park to Portlaoise Southern Circular Route.

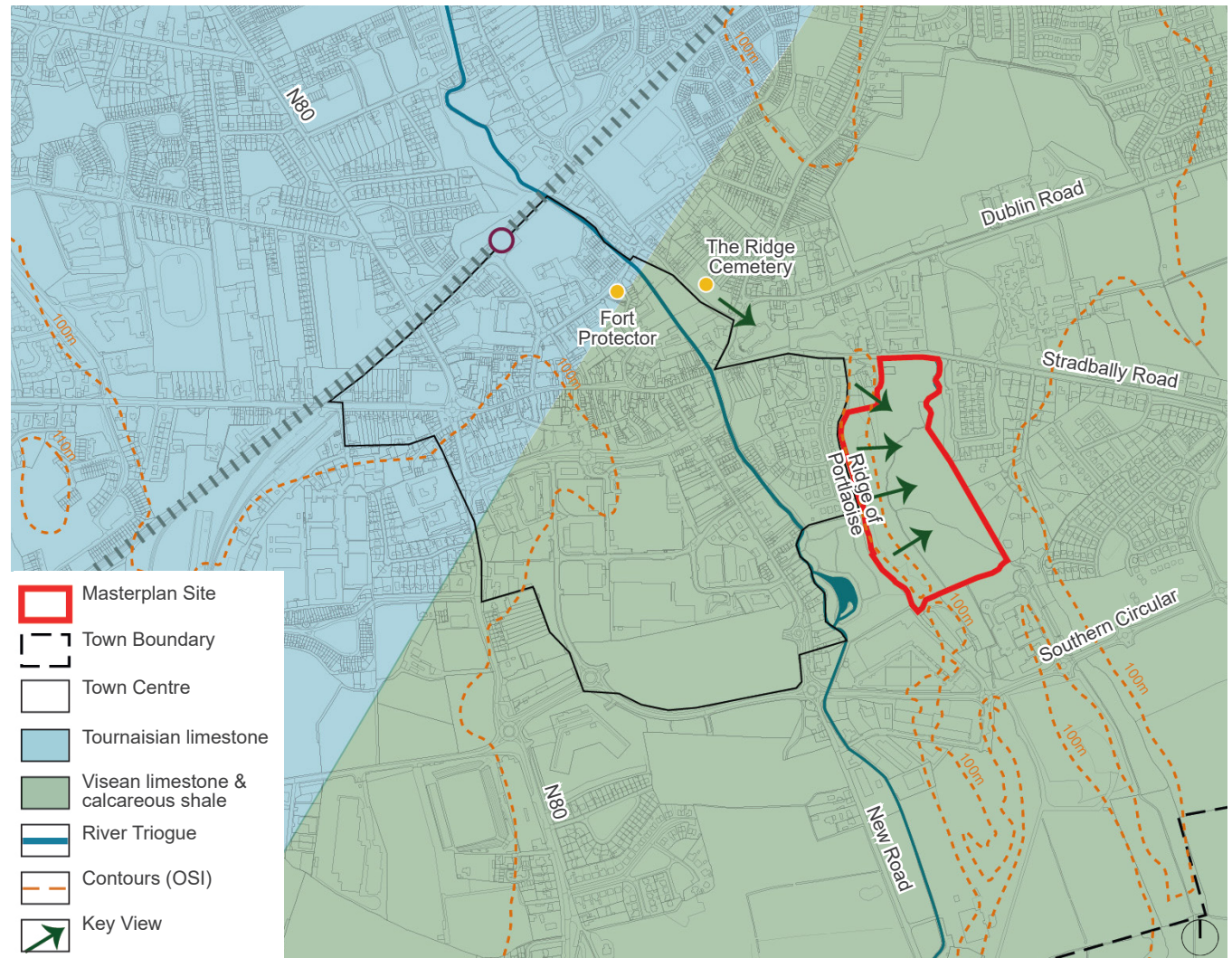


### Geology and Topography

Portlaoise is located between two different types of bedrock, with the Masterplan Site located on an area identified as 'Visean Limestone and Calcareous Shale.' The ground conditions for infiltration will need to be considered when determining appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

Portlaoise town centre is located within a relatively flat landscape. The Fort Protector, or Fort of Leys, was erected in 1548 on rising ground to the southeast of the River Triogue with the Esker Ridge, or Ridge of Portlaoise, to the east forming a natural boundary.

A section of an esker ridge, or the Ridge of Portlaoise, forms the western boundary of the Masterplan Site. The ridge comprises a raised, steep-sided, elevated ridge of sands and gravels. Panoramic views are available from the ridge and into the Masterplan Site. Another remnant of the esker ridge just north of the Masterplan Site, The Ridge Graveyard, also provides panoramic views towards both the town centre and Masterplan Site. The development of an esker ridge walk would provide a valuable amenity, with key views of Portlaoise framed and linked to historic views. This could be further enhanced with appropriate signage and interpretation.



Geology and Topography

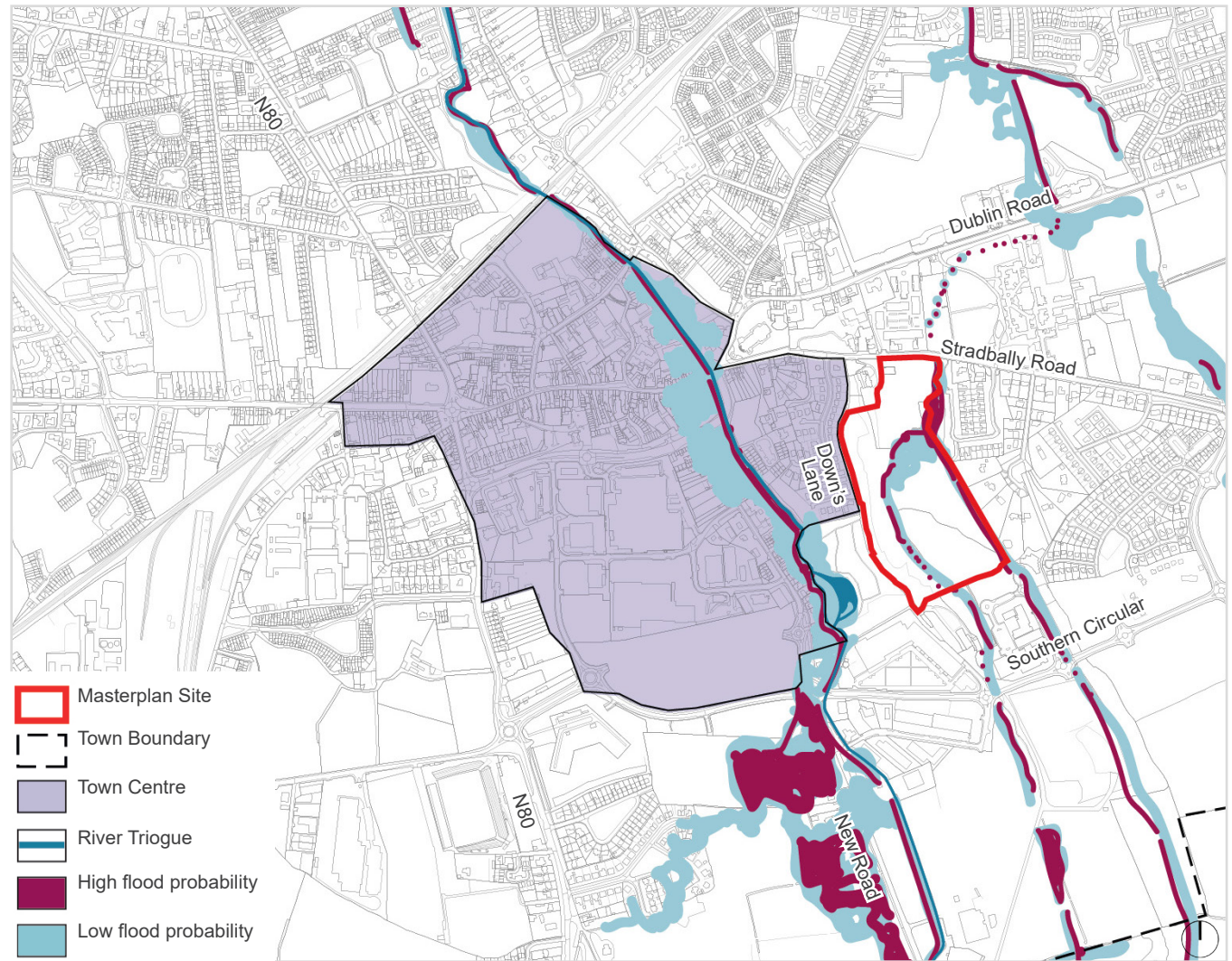
### Flood Risk

River Flood Extents are defined by the OPW, where Low Probability flood events have an indicative 1-in-1000 year chance of occurring and High Probability flood events have approximately a 1-in-10 year chance of occurring.

The most extensive areas of flood probability within the town are located concurrently with the River Triogue.

Within the Masterplan Site, areas immediately along the drainage ditches that transect the site and a waterbody within the north-east corner are identified as having high flood probability.

Planning open space and SuDS along the Masterplan Site watercourses will afford an opportunity to manage future flooding. Any SuDS within a floodplain should be selected and designed taking account of the likely high groundwater table and vulnerability to erosion during periods of high flows/water levels. Flood probability will also affect building location and building design.



Flood Probability

### Green and Blue Infrastructure

As a compact medieval town, open space is relatively limited in Portlaoise Town Centre. The River Triogue and the People’s Park form the most prominent green and blue infrastructure assets within the town core. Both the People’s Park and the River Triogue Linear Park suffer from anti-social behaviour although both are well used and considered a significant asset in the Town.

A study was carried out in 2015, analysing the People’s Park and recommending future works to improve the park and the standards of maintenance and upkeep. Its perceived remoteness from the town and proposals to introduce new entrances to increase its visibility are among the most relevant to the Masterplan Site. The ecological-based design principles of the People’s Park would complement the balance between community and nature within the Masterplan Site.

There is scope to link the walking route from the Masterplan to the Ridge Graveyard through appropriate interpretation and signage, and therefore form a longer chain of heritage sites within the town, and linking the piecemeal sections of the esker ridge.

#### Recreation Spaces and Sport Facilities Key

1. River Triogue Linear Park
2. Portlaoise Leisure Centre Park
3. Memorial Garden
4. The Ridge Graveyard
5. People’s Park
6. Portlaoise Golf Club
7. O’Moore Park
8. Portlaoise College Sports Ground
9. Fitzmaurice Place



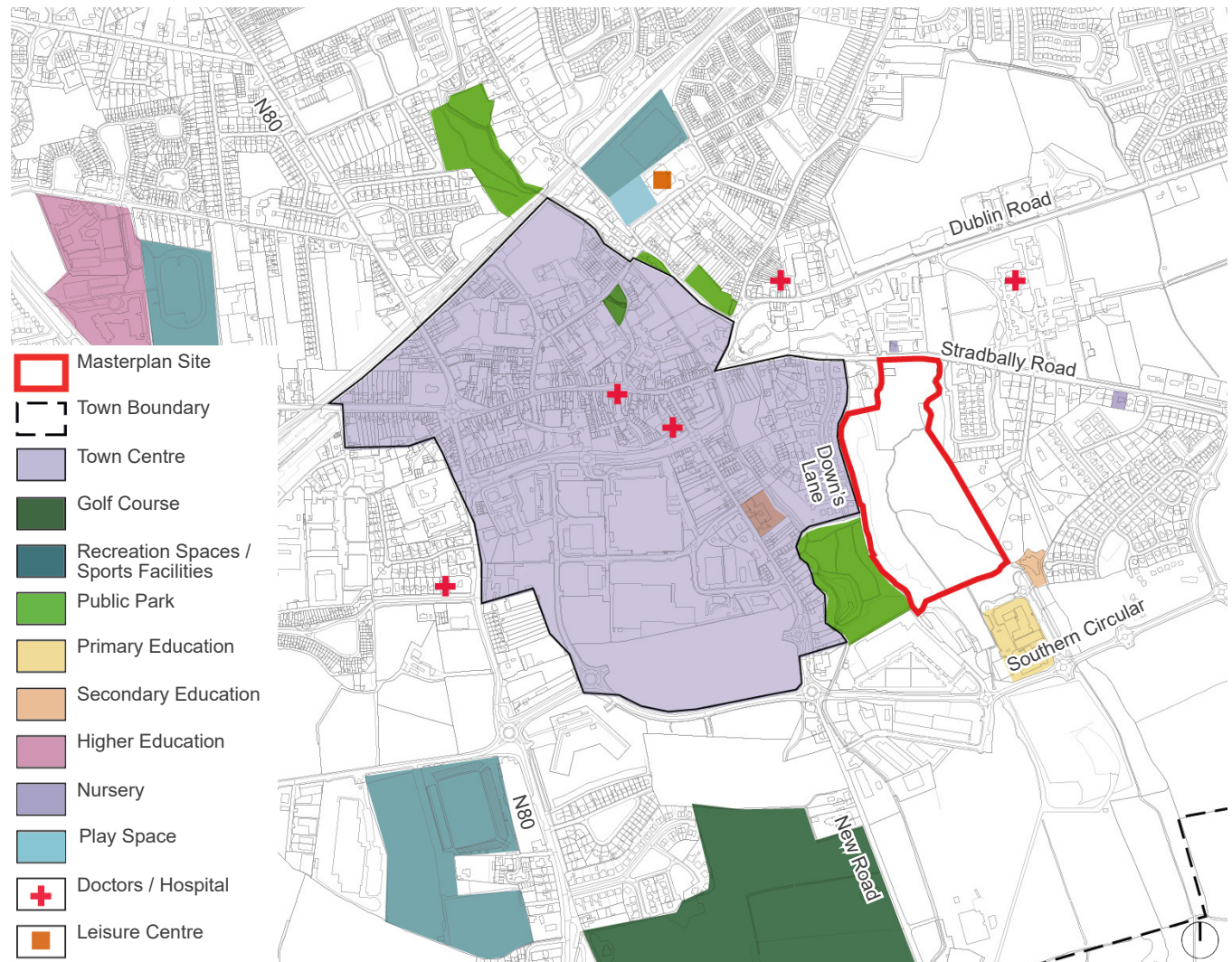
Green and Blue Infrastructure

*Social Infrastructure*

There is a range of facilities to support the local community, including multiple schools, recreational spaces, and sports facilities all of which are dispersed around the Masterplan Site.

Maryborough (Church of Ireland) National School, Gaelscoil Portlaoise and Portlaoise Educate Together National School are located immediately to the south of the site, with St Flintan's Hospital located immediately to the north of the site. A large number of employment and retail opportunities, including the eastern side of the town centre are located within a convenient 10 minute walk of the site.

The strong educational offering to the south of the Masterplan Site will play a key role as the community offering is developed.



Social Infrastructure



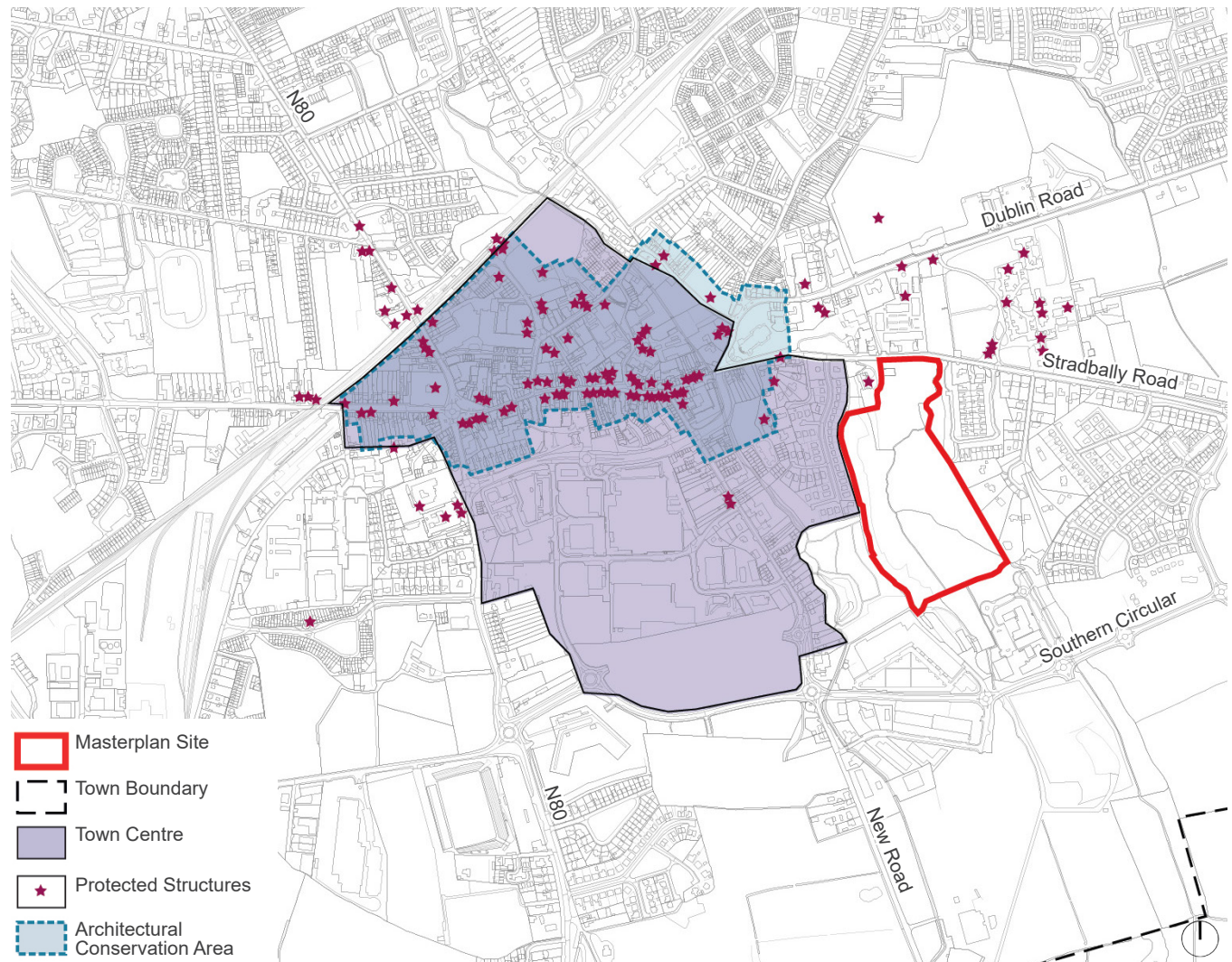
### Heritage Assets

Portrane House, a Registered Protected Structure, is located to the north-west corner of the Masterplan Site, the lands of which were once part of the Portrane estate.

Ordnance Survey maps from 1907 and 1838 reveal a network of paths in what was Portrane House demesne.

There is scope to sensitively reintroduce the historic footpath network, along the esker ridge and surrounding fields, within the Masterplan Site.

The setting and heritage sensitivities of Portrane House are explored further within the accompanying 'Preliminary Heritage Assessment Report' (Dr Judith Hill, February 2021), which includes a series of recommendations which will ensure the safeguarding of such features.



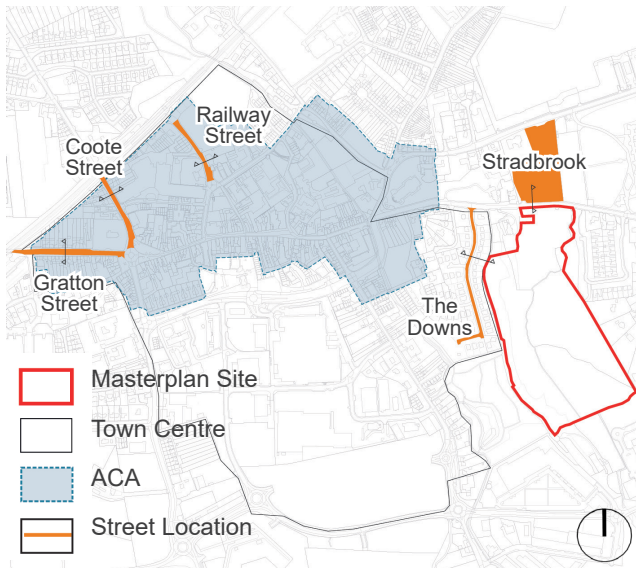
Heritage Assets

*Neighbourhood analysis - baseline findings*

The Neighbourhood Analysis analyses the following 5 streets:

- Grattan Street
- Cootte Street
- The Downs
- Stradbrook; and,
- Railway Street.

The streets have been selected as a representation of the housing types and densities that may be suitable within the Masterplan Site, and reflect a variety of architectural styles and building layouts. The analysis identifies the intrinsic qualities of Portlaoise that help to create local identity and sense of place.



Grattan Street (Source: NIAH 2020)



Grattan Street (Source: NIAH 2020)



Cootte Street (Source: NIAH 2020)



Stradbrook



The Downs (Source: Google Earth)



Railway Street (Source: NIAH 2020)

## Cultural Heritage

### Overview

The Cultural Heritage Baseline report has been prepared by Dr. Judith Hill and is attached at Appendix 2.

A visual and photographic survey of Portrane House and outbuildings and the development site was made on 1 December 2020.

The history of the site was investigated using deeds, Valuation Office Records, historic maps, family photographs and secondary sources. The sources are listed in the references section at the end of the baseline report.

The data was analysed to construct a building and demesne history and to define the curtilage, attendant grounds and setting of Portrane House. Local authority documents and NIAH were also consulted.










The scope of the project and the role of heritage was discussed with the team, and reviewed by local counsellors and officials. The report was written with reference to the Department of the Environment's Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2nd ed. 2011).

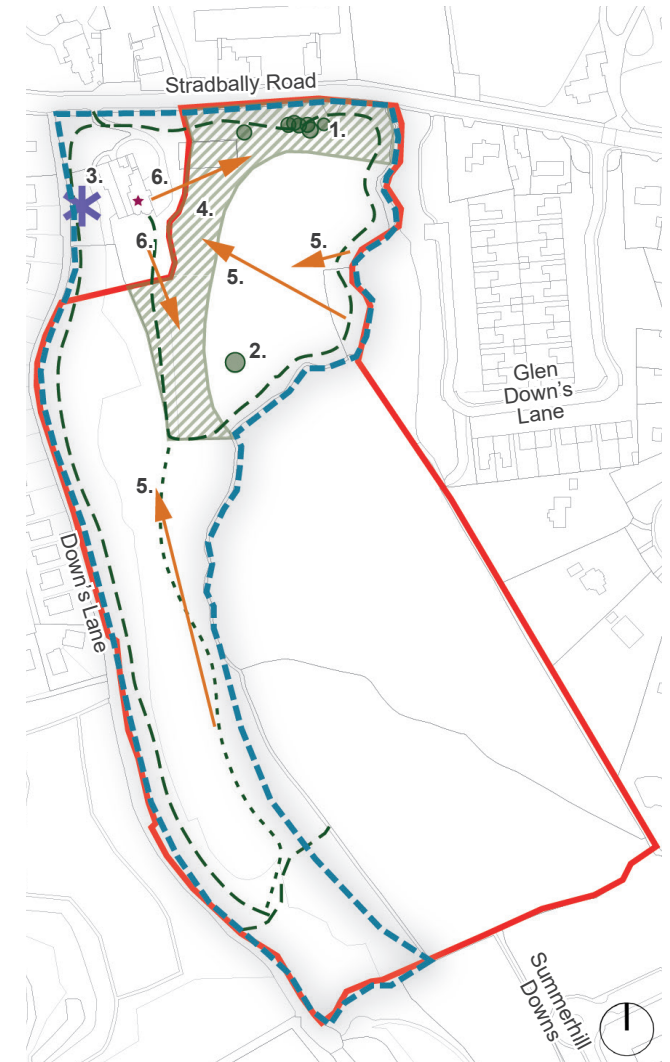
### Baseline Findings

Heritage sensitivities for the site derive from the existence of Portrane House, a protected structure, to the north west corner of the site. A significant part of the site is within the attendant grounds of the protected structure (defined in the report). The recommendations made in the report were intended to respect the picturesque setting of Portrane House and its character as a country estate.

### Notes on Key Cultural Heritage Features

1. Line of mature beech trees and a single beech (the remnants of a longer line) parallel to Stradbally Road.
2. A single evergreen tree, which is all that remains of the parkland trees.
3. Stone structure on the esker ridge, which may have been a viewing point.
4. Buffer zone between the boundary of Portrane House and the area zoned for housing.
5. Sight lines which would enable views of Portrane House in a setting that includes the ridge.
6. Significant views from Portrane House.

-  Masterplan Site
-  Protected Structure
-  Demesne
-  Historic Footpath, illustrated on 1907 OS Map
-  Historic Footpath, illustrated on 1838 OS Map
-  Key Views and Sight Lines
-  Key Feature
-  Buffer Zone
-  Parkland Tree



Cultural heritage features

*Buffer zone between the proposed housing development in the former Front Field and the curtilage of the protected structure.*

The proposed tree-lined path situated between Portrane House and the proposed housing estate constitutes an effective buffer to the east of Portrane House. This path connects to the proposed parkland to the south, which will include the retention of the character of the esker ridge. Together, these elements of the masterplan will form a very effective setting for Portrane House from the south. The proposed amphitheatre, built into part of the esker, is situated at a significant distance to the south of Portrane House and will not significantly impact on the house and its grounds. The retention of the beech trees along Stradbally Road and the single evergreen that survives in Front Field will retain significant surviving elements of the former parkland.

*Linking the buffer zone with proposals for a path network on the site.*

The proposed path in the buffer zone is linked to a network of paths in the proposed parkland, play areas, wetlands and sports facilities to the south. These include the development of the historic path that links this area to Downs Lane, as well as the existing path that runs along the east side of the esker ridge.

*Respecting a number of views, which could also be linked to a new path network.*

The retention of the beech trees along Stradbally Road will protect the view north-east from the house. The view south will be largely protected by the retention of trees on the slopes and at the foot of the esker ridge. The proposed

southern-most five-storey housing block will be visible from the house to the south, but it is at a significant distance from the house, mitigating its impact. Portrane House will retain much of its picturesque setting when seen from the south.

Because of the requirement to locate the housing scheme to the east of the house the picturesque setting of the house has been impacted. There are however a number of significant mitigations. The buffer zone is a primary mitigation, allowing the house to be seen in its setting from the proposed path and from the eastern edge of the housing scheme. Secondly, the proposed scheme includes amalgamated landscaping rather than a proliferation of small gardens. This provides opportunities to see the esker ridge and the tree-surrounded house from the proposed scheme. Thirdly, the retention of the parkland tree within the scheme will be a reminder of the former parkland, especially as it can be seen in juxtaposition with the wooded slopes of the esker ridge. Finally, the proposed central area of two-storey housing within the scheme will allow views from Portrane House across the scheme towards the trees lining the River Derry.

*Protecting selected features (both natural and manmade) in the attendant grounds.*

The retention of the parkland trees to the east and north-east and of the trees on the esker ridge, slopes and foot of the esker ridge have been noted above.

The masterplan will also retain the stone-built look-out point on the esker ridge. Measures should be made to investigate this feature and ensure its protection.

*A country area within Portlaoise*

Overall, the masterplan, which proposes retention of the trees and grassland of the esker ridge and its eastern slopes, the developing of the wetland and grassland character of the fields to the south-east of the house, the retention of the beech trees along the Stradbally Road and surviving parkland tree to the east, will enable Portrane House to retain to a significant degree its character as a country estate. It will also ensure that this rural area will retain to a significant degree its role as a green lung within Portlaoise.

The Cultural Heritage Baseline report advises that the emerging masterplan proposals can take account of the recorded heritage sensitivities by:

- proposing a buffer zone between the proposed housing development in the former Front Field and the curtilage of the protected structure;
- by linking this buffer zone with proposals for a path network on the site;
- by respecting a number of views, which could also be linked to a new path network; and
- by protecting selected features (both natural and manmade) in the attendant grounds.

## Ecology

### Overview

An ecological desk study has been completed and is summarised in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) which has been prepared by LUC (see Appendix 3).

### Baseline Findings









The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of May 2021 summarises the desk study and Phase 1 field surveys completed earlier in the year. Recommendations to inform the concept Masterplan have been relayed to the design team since project inception.

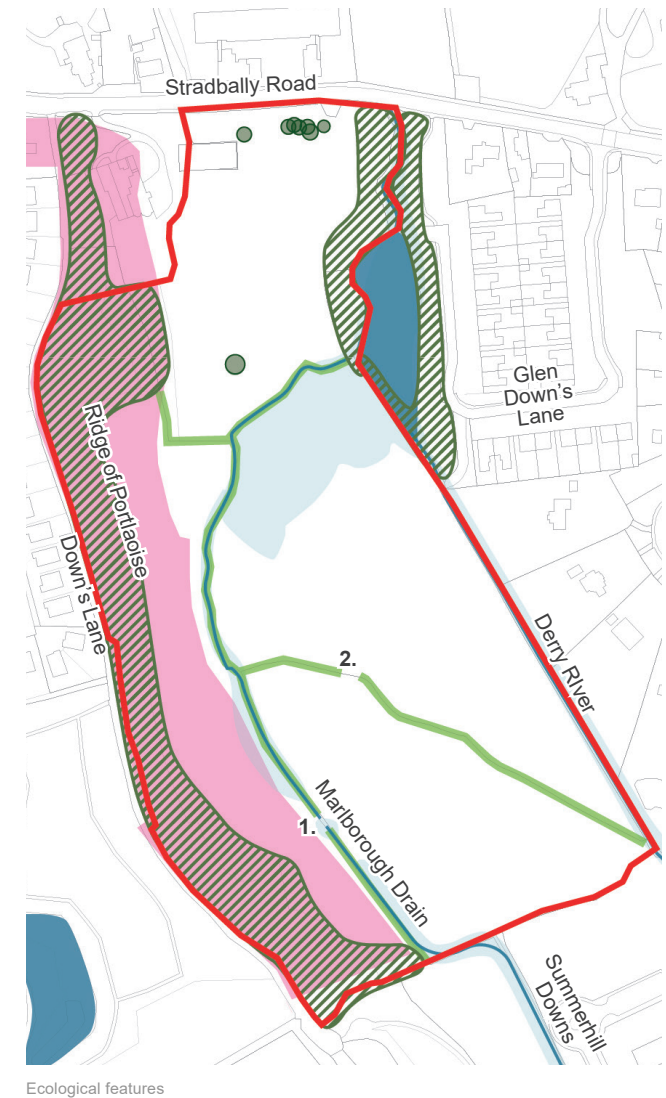
The site is broadly divided into three fields of horse-grazed pasture – north, central and south, with a fourth area of open grassland in the west, running alongside the esker ridge pNHA. The field boundaries are typically marked by intact species-poor hedgerows, with wet ditch running south to north at the base of the hedgerow which approximately marks the boundary of the pNHA. Woodland habitats extend along the esker ridge (oak-ash-hazel woodland WN2) and at the periphery of the northern field (mixed woodland WD2). Scattered trees in this field reflect a ‘parkland’ character, possibly reminiscent of historic association with Portrane House.

The single national designated site identified in the 2km search area is the Ridge of Portlaoise pNHA. The esker ridge is important for wildlife as well as for geology, social and cultural reasons. The pNHA forms a corridor c.60km through Portlaoise (see inset, which run through the west of the study site). The esker ridge is fragmented by development and the stretch that runs through the site provides some connection between the

### Notes on Hedgerow Crossing Points

1. Existing crossing over Marlborough Drain.
2. Existing break in hedgerow.

	Masterplan Site
	Hedgerow
	Woodland Extents
	Parkland Tree
	pNHA
	Watercourses and Waterbodies
	Flood Extents
	Watercourse (Wet Ditch / River)



north and south sections that have been separated as a result of development of the town centre. It supports mature broadleaved woodland and species-rich calcareous grassland. NHA and pNHA protect sites that have national importance that may contain Annex I habitats or support Annex II species. The Ridge of Portlaoise supports contains two rare species of plant – the legally protected nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula Trachelium* and Red Data Book-listed blue fleabane *Erigeron acer*.

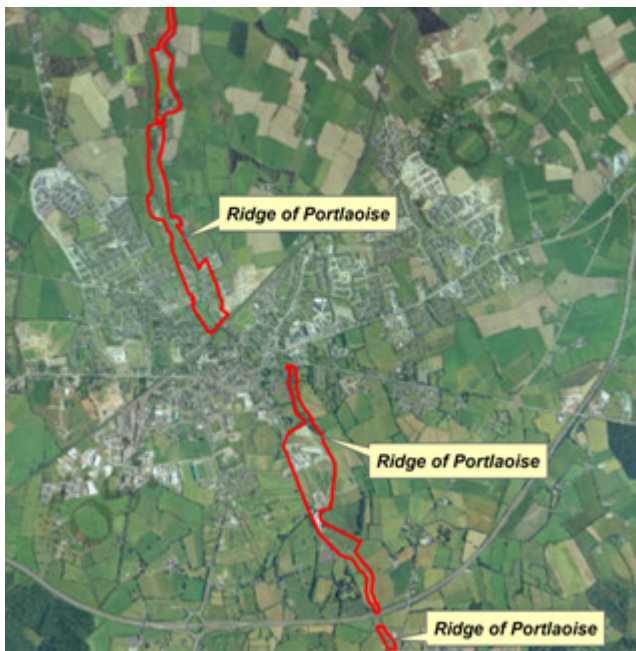
The masterplan proposes to open public access across the pNHA esker ridge as well as construction of stepped seating within the east slope, tree planting and changes to

land management. The design aims to minimise ecological impacts on the designation and to benefit the habitats present through sensitive long-term management. Phase 2 botanical survey is recommended to inform the detailed masterplan and consultation with the NPWS.

Recommendations for the wider woodland, grassland and wetland habitats on site include minimisation of unavoidable loss (such as grazed pasture) and fragmentation (such as the hedgerow network), as well as opportunities for enhancement (such as targeted tree planting, management of invasive snowberry, creation of SuDS and long-term management).

The PEA sets out provisional 'sensitive design principles' under the headings below. These documents may suitably serve as planning conditions and/or part of the future contractor tender process to ensure all parties are clear on and committed to their delivery. Reference to these documents can support a robust and consistent approach across all disciplines.

- Sustainable Drainage Strategy;
- Public access;
- Sensitive Lighting Strategy;
- Natural play and educational engagement;
- Landscape Planting Plan;
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP);
- Landscape & Habitat Management Plan (LHMP).



Location of Ridge of Portlaoise which extends through the town

## Transport Planning

### Overview

Cundall has been commissioned by Laois County Council to provide transportation consultancy advice to support development of a site located to the south of Stradbally Road in Portlaoise, for residential and leisure/general amenity use. The Transport Planning Baseline report is attached at Appendix 4.

The site will make use of its highly accessible location in relation to the wider area including the town centre, by ensuring that the development is connected to the adjacent pedestrian and bicycle networks in addition to supporting access to local public transport services.

### Policy

The ethos of all planning and development policy both at a national and local level which is cognisant to the proposed development aims to focus on low carbon modes and to promote local linkages and the use of low carbon modes such as walking and cycling for the majority of journeys. Alternatives to the private vehicle such as car clubs, car sharing and public transport should be the alternative mode of choice for longer journeys. The baseline review has therefore focussed on these modes rather than the more traditional traffic focussed transport approach.

### Baseline Findings

The site is located close to the centre of town with reasonable pedestrian facilities providing convenient access to local retail, leisure, education and employment opportunities on foot. These are due to be improved through existing planned works and the opportunities within the site.

Connection to the segregated paths and cycleways to the south will be key to improve the journey to school whilst the opportunity to link through the People's Park to the west and further to the retail and employment opportunities provide good opportunities for a well-connected site.





















The site's location will also facilitate convenient access on foot to the nearest bus stops which are located adjacent to the site and rail stations located within a reasonable walk of the site within Portlaoise town centre. This will provide good opportunity for residents to access retail, leisure, education and employment opportunities located further afield by public transport. The level of services would be considered to be adequate but there is scope for improvement especially through the low carbon town scheme.

The site is also located adjacent to a well-connected local highway network which offers convenient access to the wider Laois area in addition to the strategic highway network. Whilst there is anecdotal evidence that the site will have an impact on the wider network in line with the ethos of a low carbon town and current transportation policy it would be anticipated that no off site highway works would be warranted and more impact would be gained by focussing on low carbon alternatives.

The location of the site will therefore provide excellent opportunity for future residents to travel to and from the development using sustainable modes of travel in accordance with local and national planning policy, in addition to by private car.

## Site Analysis Summary

This plan illustrates the key site sensitivities, and the important features which will inform the strategy for the Masterplan Site.

	Masterplan Site		Flood Extents
	Primary Route		Residential
	Secondary Route		Retail & Commercial
	Cycle Route		Education & Community
	Key Views		100m AOD Contour
	Site Access		Trees and Hedgerows
	Node Spaces		Visual Screening
	Gateways		Watercourses
	Registered Protected Structure		Parkland Trees
	Barriers to Movement		Ridge of Portlaoise pNHA

### Key Features and Destinationa

1. Memorial Garden
2. The Ridge Graveyard
3. Sacred Heart Primary School
4. St Peter & Paul's Roman Catholic Church
5. St Fintan's Hospital
6. Portlaoise Educate Together National School
7. Maryborough National School
8. Laois Shopping Centre
9. People's Park
10. Portlaoise Retail Park





Chapter 4  
**Public  
Consultation**

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Existing parkland tree planting in the northern extents of the masterplan site

## Discovery Survey Results

### Overview

On 18 December 2020, Laois County Council published a discovery survey on its Consult Laois website which invited members of the public and interested parties to complete and to help inform/shape the development of a masterplan for the regeneration of lands at Stradbally Road, Portlaoise (formerly known as Tyrell's lands).

In addition, an advertisement was placed on Laois Today's website on 18 December 2020 and in the Portlaoise Parish Link-Up Newsletter on 20 December 2020.

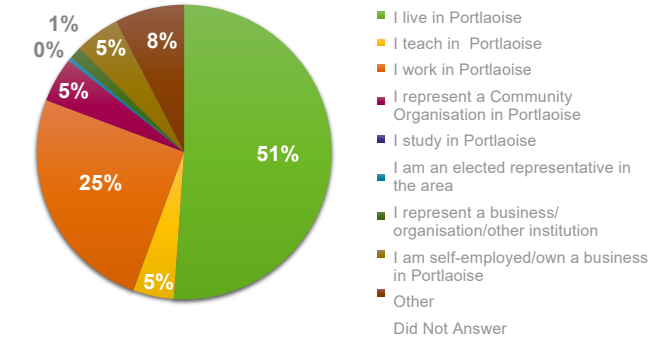
A total of 147 no. completed discovery surveys were submitted along with 6 no. additional standalone submissions by the following politicians/people/organisations:

- Joint Submission by Brian Stanley TD (Laois/Offaly) and Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley of Laois County Council/Portlaoise Municipal District;
- Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald of Laois County Council/Portlaoise Municipal District;
- Mike Fingleton (B.Sc. B.Arch.);
- Laois Association for the Intellectually Disabled;
- Laois GAA Handball; and
- Portlaoise Table Tennis Club.

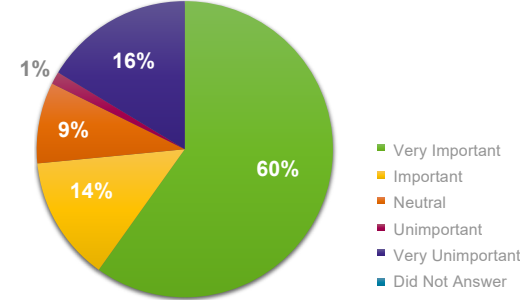
Each of these submissions, along with the Discovery Survey responses, will be taken into account and considered in detail during the development of the masterplan for the subject lands. We outline a brief summary of the main points raised below.

The Discovery Survey report is attached at Appendix 5.

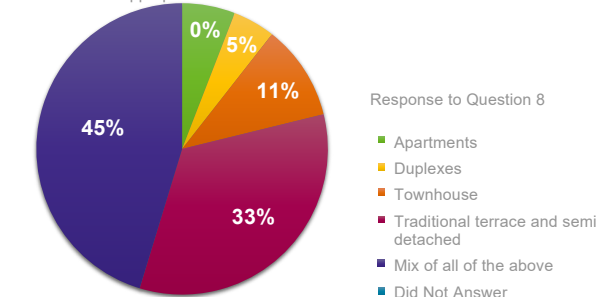
Respondents were asked to identify their connection with/to Portlaoise:



Respondents were then asked to identify how important the redevelopment of the Stradbally Road lands is to the regeneration of Portlaoise:



Respondents were asked to identify what type of residential accommodation they consider to be appropriate for the site:



### Baseline Findings

We summarise below some of the main findings from the 147 completed Discovery Surveys submitted:

- 'Quality of sports and natural amenity facilities' selected by majority as being the main key driver of Portlaoise's attractiveness as a place to live and work followed.
- Significant support expressed for development of a multi-purpose indoor/outdoor community sports facility/complex/arena/centre of excellence.
- 108 (74%) respondents consider the redevelopment of the Stradbally lands to be either 'Very Important' or 'Important' for the regeneration of Portlaoise.
- Majority of respondents selected 'Proximity to Town Centre' as the most important existing aspect of the site New/improved cycling and walking paths/trails/greenways required to promote active travel.
- Esker Ridge, the aqueduct, Portrane House and its gardens, the rookery, existing walls and natural features and Down's Lane identified as important site features to be retained.

We summarise below some of the main findings from the 6 standalone submissions:

#### Representative from Laois County Council:

- The 25 acre site offers a unique opportunity to provide badly needed housing for Laois citizens and to develop/expand the range of sporting facilities in the county.
- An existing need for social and affordable housing and a major facility for indoor sports is identified.
- Proposals for the Masterplan land should incorporate sustainability principles such as a sufficient amount

of green space and bio diversity, high environmental standards for new buildings that are carbon neutral and exploring potential to generate power on site.

*Representative from Laois County Council:*

Any proposed development should take into account the site's geology, ecology and local history.

- The following types of housing should be provided: 3 bedroom bungalows for families with disabilities; a retirement village/ sheltered housing; affordable sites/ houses; and a Cost Rental Scheme.
- Important to provide a Community Sports Centre for the sporting needs of Portlaoise's growing population such as the Panthers Basketball Club, handball, table tennis, badminton and wheelchair sports.
- The site's proximity to local schools make in an ideal location for a Sports Centre and the proposed Walkway/ Cycle Lane will be great for children/teenagers to access the centre safely.

*Representative from Laois Housing Association for the Intellectually Disabled CLG:*

- A need for accommodation/services in Portlaoise is identified:
- the provision of residential respite accommodation for children/adults with severe and profound general learning disabilities; and
- the provision of recreational amenities that meet the needs of children/adults with severe and profound general learning disabilities.
- Council is requested to consider the provision of residential respite accommodation as part of the



Infographic illustrating the main findings and key recommendations within the Discovery Survey:

masterplan for the subject lands.

*Architect local to Portlaoise:*

- Useful insights provided with respect to the masterplan lands as well as Portlaoise in terms their historic context, development patterns, existing needs and potential site uses, such as public park and amenity.

*Representative from Laois GAA Handball:*

- Laois GAA Handball outline a desire to establish a new club in Portlaoise to further expand the growth of the game across Laois. It support the development of a multipurpose sports facility within the Masterplan lands, which includes a handball court and provision for non-contact indoor sports.
- Laois GAA Handball make reference to an emerging pattern whereby sports once based in Portlaoise are moving to peripheral small villages and a lack of facilities in Portlaoise is identified as being a factor in this pattern of re-location.
- Laois GAA Handball advise that there are specific design requirements to be considered with respect to Handball courts and the club is more than happy to liaise with the Design Team to identify/discuss these specific requirements.
- Laois GAA Handball consider that the provision of a one-wall outdoor court for Handball can be achieved at minimal cost and the club also has an idea for an indoor court that could also facilitate both Racketball and Squash.

*Representative from Portlaoise Table Tennis Club*

- Portlaoise Table Tennis Club identify a lack of suitable training and competition facilities in Portlaoise and that this is preventing the development of table tennis locally.
- Portlaoise Table Tennis Club favour the masterplan lands as a suitable location for such facilities noting its location along the Stradbally Road and in close proximity to the relief road and most of Portlaoise's large schools.

## Chapter 5

# Vision & Masterplan Objectives

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Accordia, Cambridgeshire - Utilised redundant land to create exemplar housing scheme

## Masterplan Concept

The Stradbally Road concept plan illustrates the following principles:

- Key views, from the Ridge of Portlaoise and both from and of Portrane House, have been retained and enhanced;
- Site provides good access to the north and south of the town;
- Good visual connection with Stradbally Road;
- Spine route links the whole site;
- Connect local schools and community with green infrastructure;
- Respect historic environment and Portrane House
- Respect environment and biodiversity of the site;
- Connections with the People's Park.

## Masterplan Objectives

- To provide for new residential development, residential services and community facilities.
- High quality residential areas of sensitive design, which are complimentary to their surroundings and do not adversely impact on the amenity of adjoining residents.
- To preserve, provide for and improve active and passive recreational open space.
- To protect and improve existing community, educational and institutional facilities and to safeguard their future provision. The masterplan will also provide for local civic, religious, community, educational and other facilities ancillary to neighbourhood uses and services.



## Masterplan Vision

The vision for Stradbally Road is to create a new sustainable residential community that meets the needs of local people whilst being resilient to economic, social and climate change. The new community shall be fully integrated with and connected to the existing town, surrounding residential areas as well as the existing landscape and open space. This new sustainable community will be integrated into the landscape and will be a place where walking and cycling are part of people's daily routines.

The Stradbally road masterplan should therefore consider a number of key components to realise this vision and ensure the proper planning of a town centre scheme. These components are as follows:

- Maximising the residential potential of the site;
- Creating an extension to the Peoples Park accessed through the historic Esker Ridge;
- Developing walking and cycling infrastructure within the site to ensure connectivity between the Stradbally Road in the north and the Timahoe Road in the south;
- Provision of sports facilities / a multi games use area / buildings within the southern part of the site;
- Provision of complementary facilities and land uses to support the sustainable development potential of the educational campuses at Summerhill ;
- Improving the built environment including hard and soft landscaping; and
- Minimizing the impacts of any proposed development on ecological habitats as well as existing historic assets.



Land at Stradbally Road combined masterplan

## Chapter 6 Residential Strategy: Creation of a Living Zone

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## Delivering an Environmentally and Sustainable New Community

The proposals seek to create a new sustainable new community for Stradbally Road with strong links to the existing town centre but also connected to and fully integrated with the natural environment which surrounds the land zoned for residential use.

### Density

The proposals seek to maximise the development potential of the site by creating a density of almost 43 units per hectare. This is achieved with the introduction of some higher density forms of housing such as the 2 apartment blocks which sit on the northern and southern boundaries of the site and act as bookends and help frame the residential development. Elsewhere duplexes and terraced town houses which are also an efficient use of space further help to increase housing density on the site thus making it more sustainable.

### Permeability

A key feature of the site is the creation of a new primary pedestrian and cycle route which connects Stradbally Road in the north to Timahoe Road in the south. This route is located between the residential development and the Esker Ridge and runs south and into the new country park before finally leaving the site adjacent to the Portlaoise Retail park. The new primary pedestrian and cycle route will be fully overlooked by adjacent residential properties to maximise natural surveillance and minimize antisocial behavior.

### Layout

The proposed layout of the development takes into consideration environmental and historic constraints as well as utilizing the existing access. It is envisaged that the development will consist of a high quality development taking references from the existing apartments on Stradbally Road as well as new development at the Riverside in Portlaoise. Proposals will also include high quality public realm proposals and minimize the impact of parking on the site. There is also a clear definition between public and private space with planting separating the new primary pedestrian and cycle route from proposed residences.

### Landscape and Green Open Space

Proposed buildings have also been positioned to avoid existing historic mature trees on site including the mature beech trees adjacent to Stradbally Road as well as the mature pine tree towards the south of the site. The proposed buildings are set amongst a strong landscape framework to integrate the buildings into the wider environment as well as help minimize the visual impact of the development. Two central civic amenity spaces have also been created within the site for the use of the new community.

### Protected Views and Portrane House

The proposed development has also been located to minimize its impact on the historic Portrane House and the Esker Ridge with key views from these locations towards the pond being retained. A strong landscape framework will also help to minimize the impact of proposed residential development on this protected structure. Taller apartment buildings are located away from the central part of the site as well as Portrane House so that visual connectivity between the house and the historic pond are maintained.



Layout of land zoned for residential use

## Existing Developments in Portlaoise



Existing apartment at Riverview development in Portlaoise



Existing apartments along Stradbally Road

## Placemaking Principles to create a Community Centred Design

A number of place making principles have been adopted in order to create a strong community and sense of place for the new residential development at Stradbally Road. A range of house types are proposed across the site, including 1 and 2 bedroom apartments, 1 and 2 bedroom duplexes, 3 and 4 bedroom town houses. The following design and placemaking principles have been applied to create a community centred design. These are as follows :

- Proposed housing faces directly onto the main public route into the country park in order to maximise natural surveillance and discourage antisocial behavior;
- House types and tenure is mixed in order to create variety and reflect the needs of the local community;
- Parking is limited to 1 space per unit in order to minimise the impact of surface car parking and maximise the amount of external community and garden space;
- A new 4 storey apartment block is located to the north on Stradbally Road to mirror the apartment block opposite the site, thus creating a gateway into Portlaoise;
- A new 4 storey apartment block is located to the south of the site overlooking the park but also creating 2 bookends for the scheme;
- The ground floor of both apartment blocks will comprise car parking, cycle storage and bin storage again to maximise external community green open space and reduce the dominance of surface car parking.
- Proposed trees and planting will overtime create a strong landscape framework for the housing; and
- A shared surface route is provided through the site where pedestrians and cyclists take priority over the motor car.



Placemaking principles for a community centred design

## Transport, Connectivity and Parking

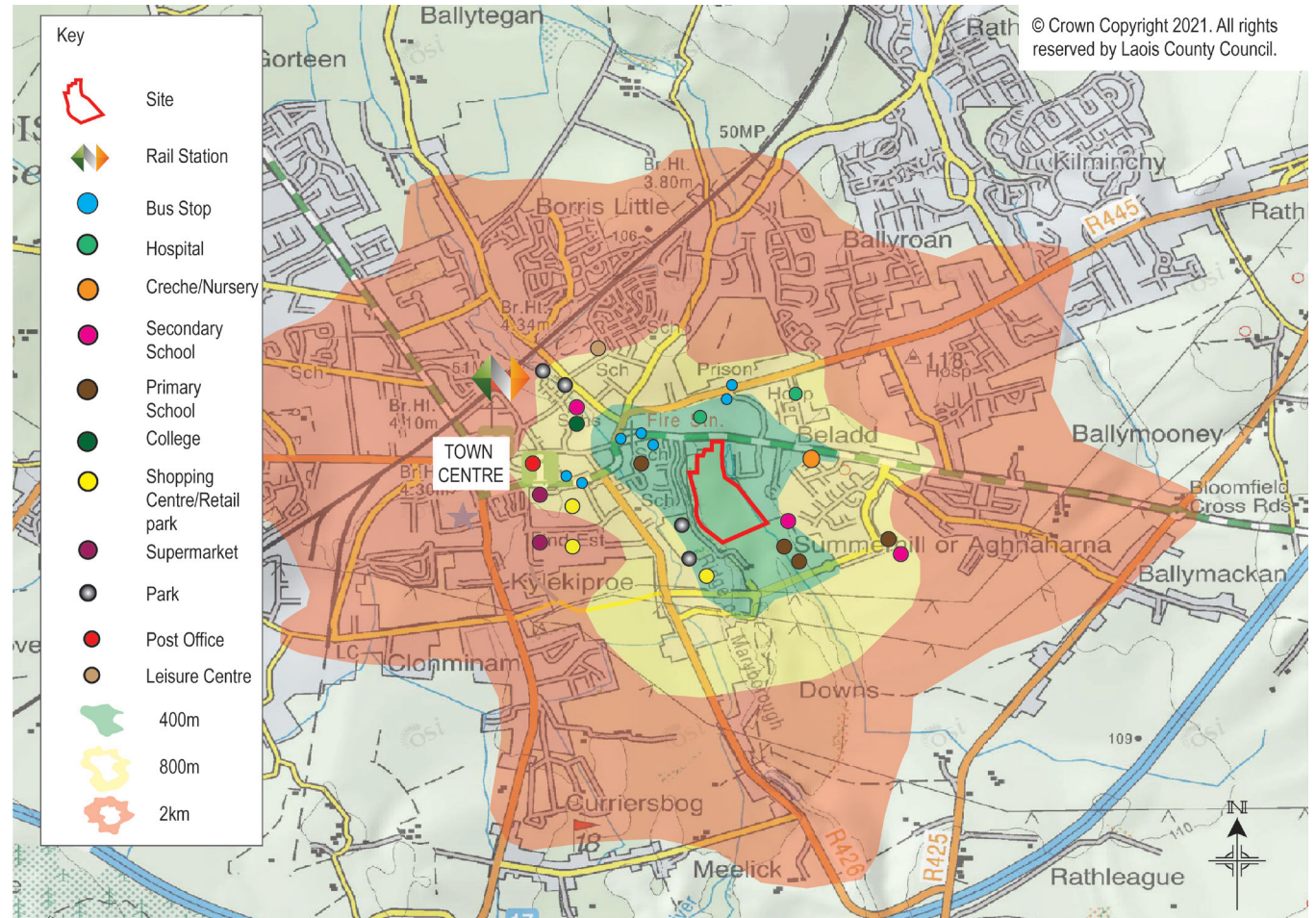
### Overview

The site's development provides excellent opportunity to improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the area to enable both existing and future residents to conveniently access local amenities on foot. The development will be designed to provide a highly legible site with a comprehensive network of pedestrian facilities provided throughout by way of a mix of footways and footpaths.

Pedestrian accesses will be formed on all sides of the site to ensure its permeability and connectivity with the adjacent area. The facilities will support access to employment and healthcare opportunities located to the north, education opportunities located to the south and leisure and retail opportunities provided to the west.

The development will be designed to provide a low speed environment which is attractive to cyclists. A proportion of the segregated accesses will be provided at a standard able to also accommodate cyclists and it is proposed to provide a number of segregated cycle paths throughout the development to provide convenient access between the site and the surrounding areas.

The site's development will enhance the legibility of the area for existing residents in addition to providing convenient access for future residents to adjacent employment, education and leisure opportunities.

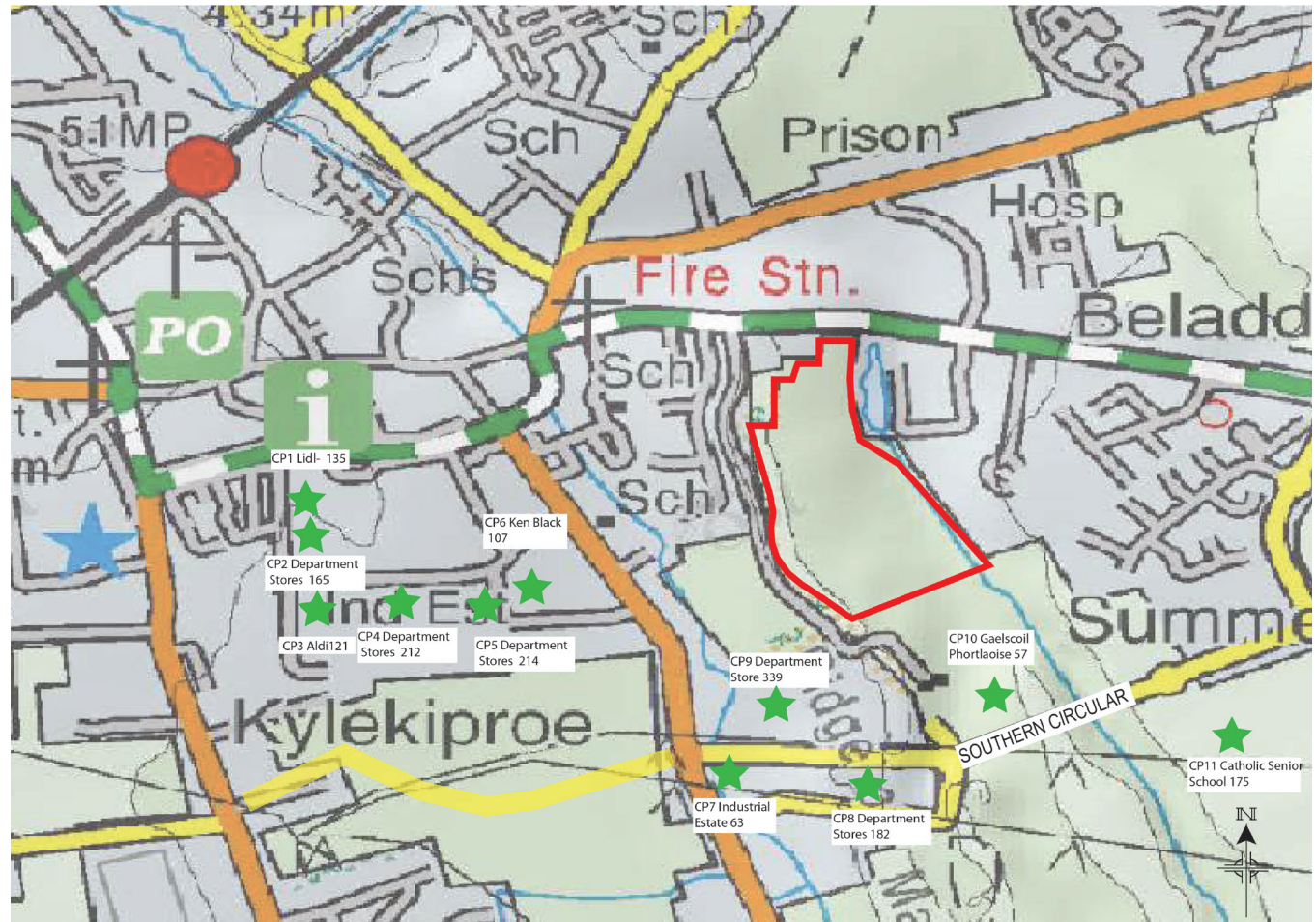


Local facilities, pedestrian accessibility and journey times to the masterplan site

### Residential Area's Accessibility

The residential area is to be located to the north of the site close to Stradbally Road with its existing footpaths providing convenient walking access to the nearby town centre with its local amenities. The site's location also results in a number of bus stops being located within a convenient 5 minute (400m) walk of the site, with Portlaoise rail station located around a 12 minute (960m) walk from the site. The development's layout has also been designed to provide convenient access on foot and by bicycle to the People's Park located immediately to the west of the site. The locations of these facilities are shown on the diagram on the previous page.

The site's location will therefore encourage residents making shorter trips to do so on foot in addition to providing convenient access to local bus and rail services to enable journeys to be made further afield using public transport in preference to the private car.



Car parking locations and numbers in relation to the masterplan site

## Development Layout

The development layout has been designed to promote a low speed environment supporting pedestrian and cyclist movements.

The layout also provides convenient access to the main shared-use facility which passes through the centre of the site and connects Stradbally Road with the existing education campus located to the south of the site, in addition to offering convenient access to the recreational facilities provided to the west of the site.

All vehicles including larger vehicles associated with servicing site, will access the development from Stradbally Road with the layout supporting the vehicles accessing and leaving the external road network in a forward gear.

### *Consideration of Heritage Sensitivities*

In order to safeguard the picturesque setting of Portrane House and its character a country estate, the following recommendations by Dr Juidth Hill were integrated into the development layout:

- A buffer zone, including an access footpath and a concentration of gardens, between the boundary of Portrane House and the proposed housing. This includes the strip of land adjacent to Stradbally Road where the beech trees grow and flows into the area zoned open space at the foot of the esker ridge.
- Retention of existing features of the esker ridge, including the trees and viewing point (the latter falls outside the project red line boundary).
- Retention of open areas and sight lines through the housing development which would enable views of Portrane House in a setting that includes the ridge. This is associated with a new path system that provides access to the open amenity and links with a path in the buffer zone.



Derwent Thorpe - people friendly streets with integrated active travel routes

## Sustainability

As stated in the National Development Plan 'By 2040 the population of Ireland is expected to reach almost 6 million with a need for 550,000 more homes which corresponds to a long-term trend of 25,000 new homes every year. The continuation of existing patterns of development accentuates the serious risk of economic, social and environmental unsustainability through, for example, placing more distance between where people work and where people live'. As a result new development needs to consist of denser more compact growth.

New housing at Stradbally Road has therefore be designed to be integrated into Portlaoise town centre, connected by new pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, high quality public realm and also providing significant green open space as part of the wider masterplan proposals.

The 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007)' also sets out guidelines to help achieve sustainable developments. It states that 'A key aim in the design of any housing scheme should be to ensure that it is socially, environmentally and economically sustainable by:

- Providing a high-quality environment that **meets the needs** and, as far as possible, the preferences of the residents and fosters the development of community;
- Achieving **energy efficiency** both at construction stage and during the lifetime of the scheme, e.g., by climate sensitive design which takes account of the orientation, topography and surrounding features so as to control wind effects, while optimising the benefits of daylight. Properties at Stradbally road are for example mainly orientated east-west to maximise solar gain;
- Having due regard to the **social and environmental consequences** associated with the construction

process and the use of materials and resources, e.g., minimizing the use of water and energy in construction, making efficient use of land, minimising the use of scarce non-renewable materials and using renewable resources and materials that have minimal environmental consequences, wherever practicable;

- Integrating the new housing into the existing natural and built environment in a way that makes a positive contribution to the overall environment of the locality; and
- Designing individual dwellings so that they are comfortable, adaptable to changing needs, cost effective to build and economic to manage and maintain



Derwent Thorpe - Development includes large scale green infrastructure



Carrowbreck Meadow - Highly sustainable and efficient homes

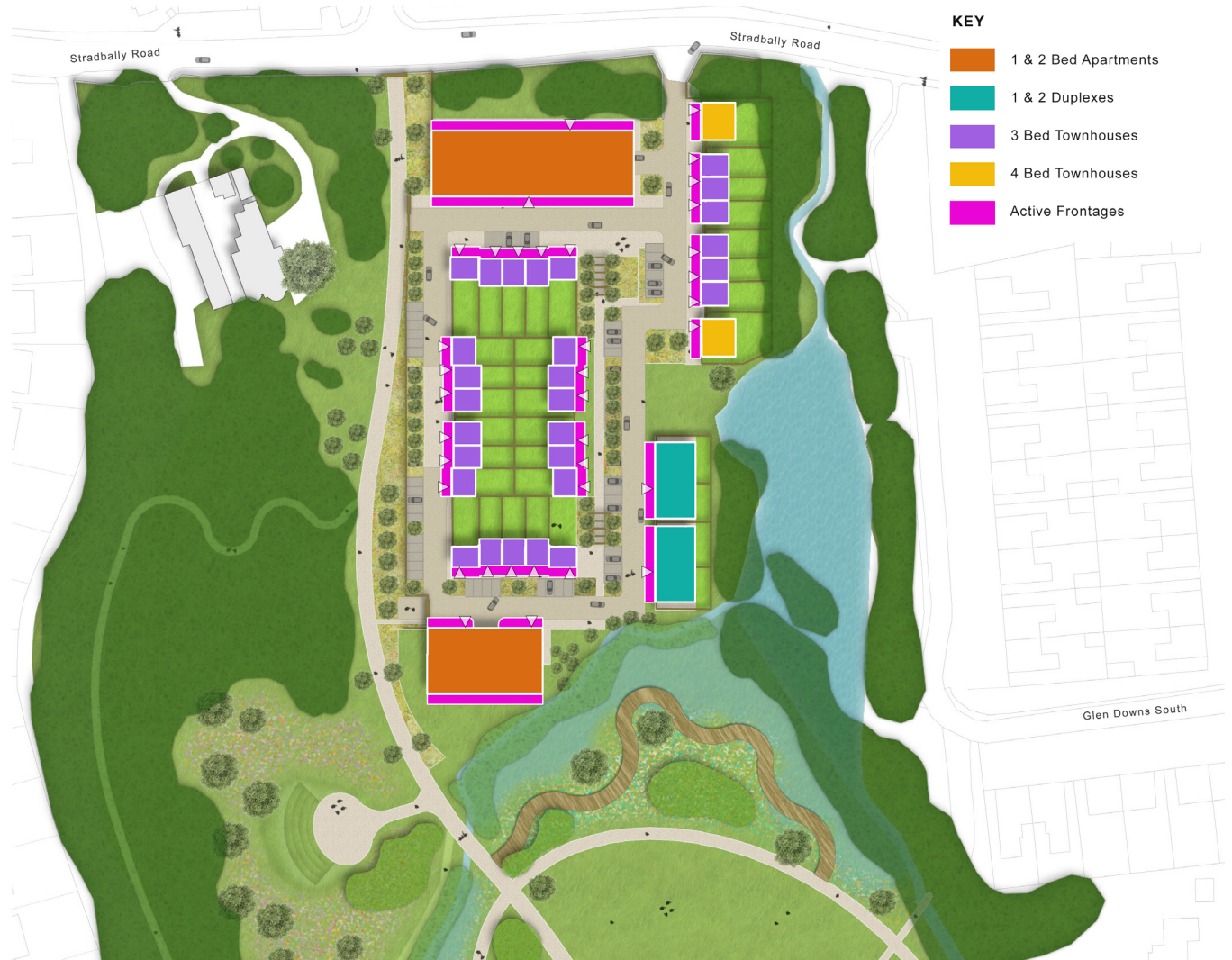
## Housing Layout

The development consists of 80 units across the residential masterplan site area which is approx. 2.0 ha in size. Density across the development is higher than existing peripheral residential areas at 40 units/ha (Gross) and consist of the following mix of units:

- 1 bed apartments – 9 units
- 2 bed apartments - 33 units
- 1 bed duplexes – 4 units
- 2 bed duplexes - 4 units
- 3 bed town houses – 28 units
- 4 bed town houses - 2 units

There will also be 46 parking spaces for undercroft parking and 47 surface car parking spaces. This allows for 1 space per unit with an additional 10% for visitor parking.

Whilst the proposed mix meets local requirements is an example of what can be achieved on the residential masterplan site it is envisaged that some fine tuning and minor further work would however be required at detailed design stage to determine the exact mix of units across the site in order to exactly meet the needs and aspirations of the local community.

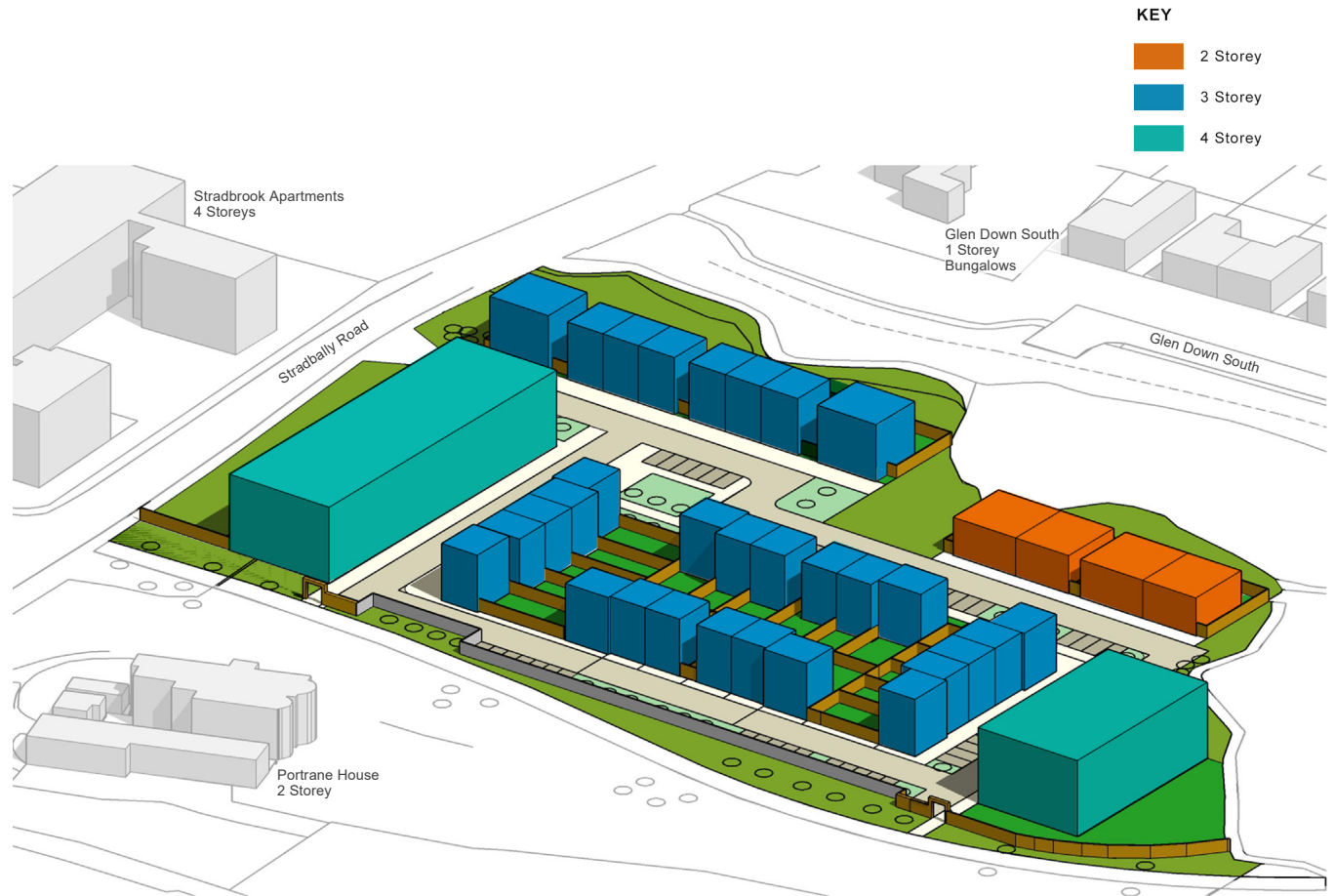


Colour coded masterplan indicating house types, main entrances and views from habitable rooms



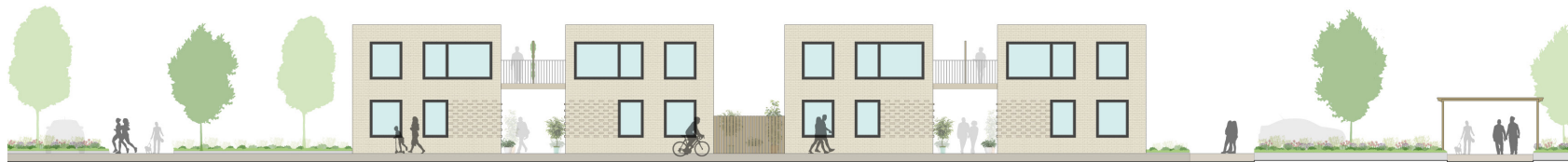
## Built Form

Whilst the proposals will seek to reflect the qualities of traditional architecture in Portlaoise and help reinforce place and local identity particularly in terms of materials, massing and scale, it is envisaged that new housing would be of a contemporary architecture style. The new homes would also be designed as sustainable homes with efficient insulation, energy supply and use, and sustainable water resources and waste management etc.



Building heights within land zoned for residential use

## Typical Elevation Treatment for Duplexes and Town Houses



Typical 1 and 2 storey duplexes housing



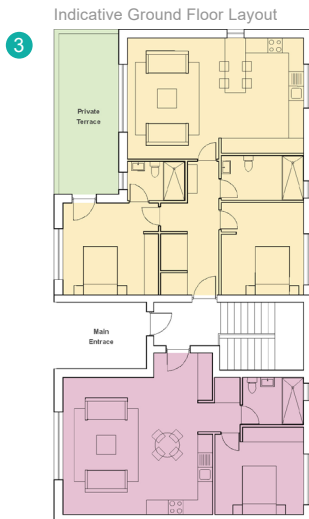
Typical 3 storey houses

## Example Apartment & Housing Layouts



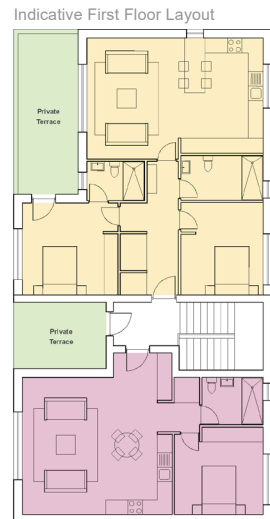
- 1 Bed Apartments
- 2 Bed Apartments
- Internal Access Hallways, Lifts and Stairwells

Typical layout of apartments



- 1 Bed Duplex
- 2 Bed Duplex
- Private Terraces

Typical layout of 1 and 2 bed duplexes



### KEY

- 1 & 2 Bed Apartments
- 1 & 2 Duplexes
- 3 Bed Townhouses
- 4 Bed Townhouses
- Active Frontages

## Public Realm and Civic Spaces

A series of public realm spaces are proposed as part of the masterplan. These will act as new civic spaces that can be used for social interaction and community uses and particularly for properties such as the apartments that have limited private external space. High quality materials, planting and street trees will create a series high quality public realm spaces.

New high quality shared streets within the masterplan will give priority to pedestrians and cyclists whilst vehicles will be required to slowly navigate through the new residential development which has been designed to reduce vehicle speeds creating a safer environment for pedestrians, cyclists and children playing outside. Shared surfaces, parking areas and new civic spaces are set around courtyards which are overlooked by adjacent properties to maximise natural surveillance.

New rain gardens associated with the community spaces are proposed as part of a SUDs system and are included to capture surface water drainage and reduce the amount of water entering the positive drainage system. New street trees will help create a green new urban quarter in Portlaoise.

Whilst there are direct links to the to the new primary pedestrian and cycle route from within the residential masterplan site these will be gated entry points to create secure courtyard spaces and a strong definition between public and private spaces.



Proposed connectivity through residential areas prioritising pedestrians



High density 2 storey, sustainable housing with a focus on pedestrian use with connected public spaces



Mixed house types along pedestrian streets



Residential development with shared community space and a focus on green infrastructure

**Chapter 7**  
**Creating a Passive  
Green Space**

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Tumbling Bay Playground, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London

## Open Space Key Principles

The landscape strategy for land zoned as open space is based on 3 key principles:

### High standard of accessibility and connectivity

The open space masterplan will set a high standard of accessibility and connectivity to promote healthy lifestyles and active travel for all residents and visitors, regardless of ages and mobility needs. Permeability and the safe and legible connection of neighbourhoods and amenities have been at the heart of the masterplanning approach.

### Ecological and heritage sensitive design

There has been close dialogue with the project ecologist and heritage consultant throughout the project lifecycle to ensure the design is sensitive towards the sites important environmental and heritage features. An ecologically focused open space has been created, with the existing ridge, woodlands, trees, watercourses and hedgerow network prioritised and retained. The creation of ponds and wetlands areas along the existing watercourses will optimize opportunities for wildlife, the historic footpath routes have been reintroduced and key views towards Portrane House respected.

### Social and physical inclusion

The design will be inclusive and seek to cater for different groups of society, in terms of age, ability, and interests, to be accommodated with a broad range of activities and uses. The masterplan aims to inspire both children and adults to play and immerse themselves within the natural environment.



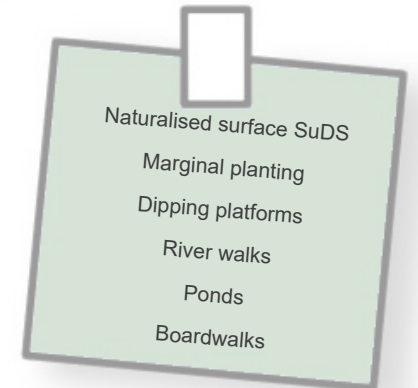
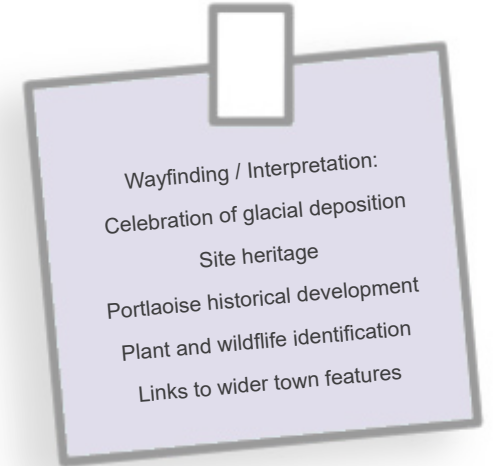
Open space indicative character images

## Open Space Uses

To inform the proposed uses within the area zoned for open space, the local green infrastructure provision and the findings of the Discovery Survey were reviewed. Activities missing from the local area and those desired by the community were identified and have been broadly grouped into themes in the diagram opposite. All of these are considered appropriate for inclusion within the masterplan concept and have helped inform the design.

Inclusivity and accessibility for all, and the provision of play, seating, and activities for users of all ages and abilities, will be prioritised within the masterplan. Examples of how this will be applied:

- Seating provision located at regular and convenient locations to respond to inclusivity principles and users of all abilities, including at around 50m intervals along primary routes. A mix of seating types (for example, benches with and without backrests and armrests and informal seating such as stepped terraces in the ridge for teenagers) located within focal points and gathering spaces and positioned to allow wheelchair users to sit easily alongside non-wheelchair users.
- Step-free access and a smooth, paved surface finish to the primary route through the site.
- Play opportunities integrated throughout the masterplan allowing for different kinds of play - imaginative, challenging, social, creative, quiet and contemplative play allowing for children of all abilities to play alongside each other.



## Open Space Proposals

- 1 - Retained woodland
- 2 - 'Naturalised amphitheatre'
- 3 - Bridge over wetlands
- 4 - Wetlands
- 5 - Meandering boardwalk and dipping platforms
- 6 - 'Green Heart'
- 7 - Orchard trees and urban farming
- 8 - 400m elliptical exercise route
- 9 - Exercise station
- 10 - Kick-about space
- 11 - Natural play opportunities
- 12 - Canopy
- 13 - Connection to Glen Down's
- 14 - Connection to the approved Part 8 cycle route
- 15 - Connection to the People's Park
- 16 - Nature exploration trail next to Marlborough Drain
- 17 - Seating within the meadows
- 18 - Wildflower meadows
- 19 - Esker ridge walk





## Landscape Features

**Naturalised amphitheatre:** An amphitheatre space, which utilizes the existing topography of the ridgeline with stepped seating. This space will provide an opportunity for informal seating and gathering, as well as play and an opportunity for events such as markets or concerts. Located next to Portrane House, it is in the attendant grounds of this protected structure. To minimize any impact on views from the south, the design of the amphitheatre will be 'naturalised', with the stepped terrace made from local stone, and a grass central base and seat tops.

**Wetlands:** The existing watercourses within the site have been extended and new ponds created to establish an enhanced wetlands area. This will optimise opportunities for wildlife and include both open water and vegetated areas, accommodating locally-appropriate submerged, emergent and marginal vegetation. Meandering boardwalks, dipping platforms, stepping stones and mown grass paths will all feature and encourage access, encouraging users to interact and connect with the landscape and the water.

**Green heart:** The central focal space, or green heart, will include seating, play and activity equipment, and provide opportunities to sit and gather. The lawn areas can be used for a variety of activities from yoga to informal kickabouts. This elliptical footpath surrounding the space is 400m in length and is intended to form a circular fitness trail and walking route. Fitness equipment as well as play opportunities will be located along its edge. Wildflower meadow planting and trees will help to reinforce the edges. Seating opportunities will also be scattered, with some immersed within the landscape and some on the lawn areas. The eastern side of the green heart will have a 'wilder' character, interfacing with the wetlands and featuring scattered fruiting trees.



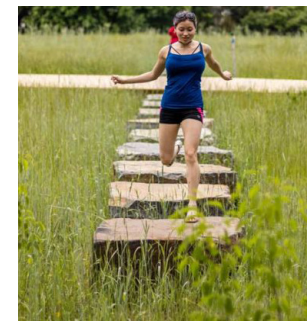
'Naturalised' amphitheatre space



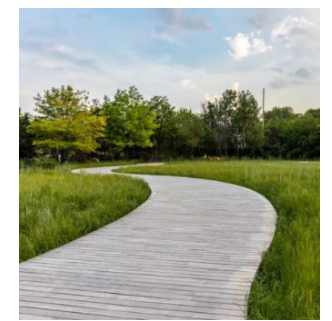
Local stone used for stepped terraces



Wetlands dipping platform



Stepping stones



Meandering boardwalk



Open lawns and sweeping footpaths



Activities on the lawn



Fitness equipment

**Nature exploration:** The western side of the site, between the retained Marlborough Drain and the ridge, will be a nature exploration areas – encouraging the sense of exploration into wild nature. Tree planting and wildflower meadow areas will be introduced, with scattered seating opportunities. Bird hides, and interpretation which doubles as an educational resource, will also feature.

**Play opportunities:** Opportunities for play and outdoor activity are scattered throughout the site. The proposed play equipment will:

- Make use of natural elements;
- Provide a wide range of play experiences ;
- Be accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children;
- Meet community needs;
- Allow children of different ages to play together;
- Build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge;
- Be sustainable and appropriately maintained.

A dedicated play area will be located within the green heart, and natural play opportunities will be scattered throughout the rest of the site. This will include changes of level, boulders, logs and other engaging features, in order to create incidental play opportunities.

**Wayfinding and interpretation:** Signage and sculpture at key access points, and within the wider town centre, will ensure both residents and visitors are aware of everything that the site has to offer. The introduction of interpretation related to the site's wildlife and heritage, including the Esker Ridge, will also help celebrate the special features of the site and provide a resource for both the local schools and community. There is scope to link the ridge walk within the site with the Ridge Graveyard through appropriate interpretation and signage, and therefore form a longer chain of heritage sites within the town.



Outdoor classroom - links with local schools



Seating immersed within the landscape



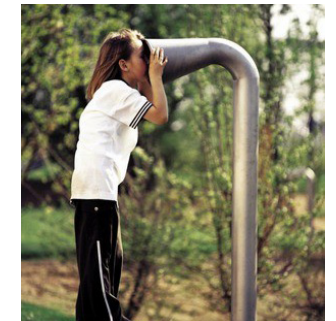
Accessible-for-all play



'Formal' play equipment for all ages



Natural play - hollowed logs



Sensory play - acoustic play tubes



Sculptural signage



Distance waymarker



Wildlife interpretation

## Movement Framework

The creation of a distinct hierarchy of routes for pedestrians and cyclists has been a key aspect of the open space approach:

**Primary routes:** A key axis is routed between the northern and southern access points and connects Stradbally Road to the new 'Southern Circular Road to People's Park' cycle route. This route is 4m wide and classed as a 'primary route.' This route links together the main spaces, activating as much of the site as possible, and utilizing the existing breaks in existing hedgerows where possible. This route will be step-free and have a smooth, paved surface finish to allow access for all.

**Secondary routes:** This includes central elliptical footpath, circling the green heart space, and a link between the sports zone and the adjacent schools. These will be 2-3m wide.

**Tertiary routes:** These will provide further connections including: an east to west link between the People's Park and Glen Down's Lane residential area, and along the western edge of the Marlborough Drain. This latter route reflects the historic footpath illustrated on the 1907 OS Map.

**Informal routes:** An unmade path will be established on the top of the ridgeline, reinstating an existing historic track.

## Soft Landscaping

**Existing trees and hedgerows:** The existing trees, woodlands, and hedgerow network have been prioritised and retained wherever possible within the open space masterplan - for their visual amenity value, to provide instant structure and maturity to the open space and wider development, and ensure the current green infrastructure remains intact. Some loss will be required to accommodate access although hedgerow breaks and tree gaps have been utilised where possible to avoid loss.

**Proposed tree planting:** Scattered trees are proposed

throughout the open space masterplan, and the wider masterplan along streets and within garden spaces. Trees will be planted along the edges of the green spaces to reinforce the boundaries, and along key desire lines to reinforce the movement pattern. Tree species will be selected based on their suitability for this urban location; that provide colour and interest through all of the seasons; a feature both native and non-native species to ensure a their tree stock – important for future climate change resilience.

**Wildflower meadows:** Within natural spaces along the eastern edge of the ridge, sections of the green heart, and surrounding the wetlands areas, swathes of wildflower meadows and bulbs will benefit and attract insects, birds and mammals, and offer an attractive, high-amenity, low-maintenance habitat.

**Edible landscape features:** Community grow plots and fruiting trees will be included within the green heart to give residents access to produce and encourage active participation in the management of the landscape. These features will help install a sense of community.

## Hard Landscaping

The hard landscape comprises a material palette which balances durability and quality with aesthetic appeal within a natural setting.

A simple and consistent palette of paving materials will be used throughout the masterplan. Coloured tarmac or resin bound gravel will be used along the main footpaths. Furniture and fittings will predominately be manufactured from timber to compliment the parkland character, and provide a naturalness and warmth to the scheme.



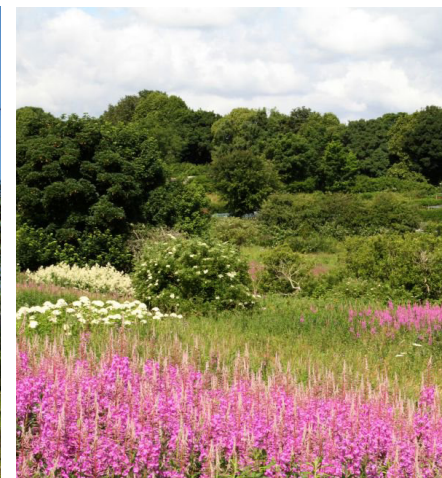
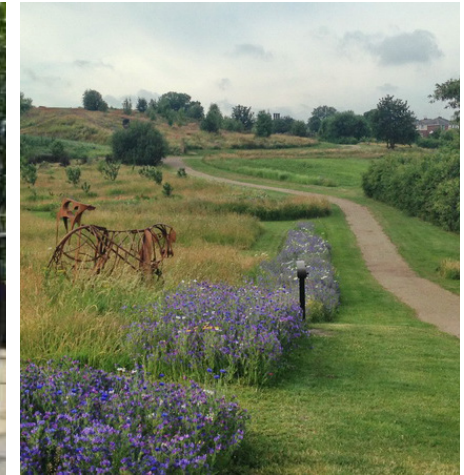
Diagram illustrating movement framework and route hierarchy

## Case Studies

### Manor Fields, Sheffield UK

Manor Fields Park has historically suffered from flooding and, following the demolition of large swathes of housing along the top part of the park in the 1990's, the land was left accessible and vacant in a way that attracted fly-tipping and joy riding.

In 1999, a 15 year investment programme began which has shaped the land into a distinctive and increasingly popular District Park. Today, the park is highly regarded and well-used, and is a haven for wildlife with almost 90 species of birds recorded on site so far, thanks to the first class wildflower meadows, ponds, woodland pockets and management style that emphasises a more wild, natural look. There is new housing around the perimeter for natural surveillance and a greater definition of spaces rather than large areas of open mown grass. An art and sculpture trail and artistic interventions with local artists has also created a distinct identity and sense of place to the park.



Manor Fields, Sheffield UK

### Activity Landscape, Copenhagen Denmark

The Activity Landscape scheme in Copenhagen is another scheme which has turned leftover space into a neighbourhood park. Before the transformation, the area was a 'non-site' - a leftover space by the train tracks that brought a sense of insecurity to the neighborhood. Playgrounds, gardens and running tracks have brought more people to the area and the more people that came, the safer the area felt. Through strategic planning of varied facilities, the park gained relevance for a large variety of new user groups.



Activity Landscape, Copenhagen Denmark

### Ballincollig Regional Park, Co. Cork

The location of the Park on a floodplain on the banks of the River Lee and its internal watercourses mean that wet woodlands and wet habitats are a feature of the park and form an important part of its natural character. Just as the River Lee was integral to the operation of the 20th Century Gunpowder Mills, today the river is as important to the surrounding flora and fauna and indeed to park users.

The Park and its surrounds form part of the Lee Valley and constitute a flyway and migration route for birds, bats, other mammals and a relatively unspoilt habitat for a variety of plants, trees and insects. Other natural habitats throughout the park include, woodland, scrub and marginal grassland and the natural appearance of these systems change markedly throughout the year.

For many park users it is the natural character of the park that forms their attraction to it. In an increasingly urbanised setting, the Park is a means of escape to the 'countryside' without having to travel far.



Ballincollig Regional Park, Co. Cork

**Chapter 8**  
**Active Community**  
**Zone**

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## Active Community Zone Strategy

### Overview

The assessment for community uses for the masterplan study area were in some way framed by the existence of schools to the southern end of the study area and specifically the three schools which are immediately adjacent to the southern boundary.

Consideration at the outset was to develop a design approach which permitted these three schools to have ease of access to the proposed park area. This would open up the possibility of the schools using the public park as a source of education and play where study of nature and undertaking of sports activities were possible.

Providing direct pedestrian access from the public park also opens the possibility of walking to school through the park area and the establishment of frequent use of the park as a new safe route within the infrastructure of the town centre.

The primary pedestrian route through the park also establishes connectivity to the other existing and future schools when travelling from the town centre and this again reinforces the engagement of the public in the use of the park.

### Community Zone Components

Located along the Southern boundary of the public park area, we have proposed some hard court and sports surface play areas. What is proposed is a full-size Football (Soccer) Playing pitch, all weather playing field of a size that accommodate 5 aside football and other sports that suit that format, one full basketball court and three 3V3 Basketball courts. This selection of play areas we feel responds to the project discussions to date.





Adjacent to this selection of sports areas, we have suggested a park pavilion. This pavilion is intended to accommodate a degree of services that benefit the park and sports facilities. It is envisaged that the building can accommodate a café which is intended to also have an outdoor seating area and enjoying the setting of the new public park. To provide public toilet facilities and services (baby changing etc), and changing room suites for use by those using the adjacent sports facilities. This pavilion should be a building of high design standards and construction as it occupies a prominent position within the park area.

From the consultation process, there was a strong desire to accommodate within the park a space of play for teenagers. This has been accommodated in our Parkour & adventure play area. This is a location where the environment can be one of large play equipment and space to 'hang out' and achieve a sense of space where teenagers feel comfortable in a space where they can relate to and have a sense of ownership of.

There is the opportunity adjacent eastwards to the existing playground to extend the playground into a play space for smaller children into a more natural play area, using the site contours to achieve a less structured sense of play in a more natural setting.



Precedent images for the proposed pavillion - Amateur Soccer Club VV Capelle, The Netherlands (Healy Partners Architects)



Parkour in the park



Basketball court



5-A-Side all weather football pitch

## Transport, Connectivity and Parking

### *Overview*

It is proposed to locate the education and community uses in the south-east of the site to provide an element of separation between it and the proposed residential use.

The nature of the land uses will attract residents living locally in addition to those currently accessing the education facilities provided on the southern site boundary. It is therefore not proposed to provide any parking within the site as it is expected that the facilities will be accessed on foot or by bicycle by both employees and visitors.

### *Development Layout*

The layout supports no general vehicle access from the south although the main shared-use facility running through the centre of the site, will be provided with a 4m width to accommodate emergency vehicles.

It is intended that the facilities would be serviced from the external road network located to the south of the site, with no requirement for large goods to be delivered and all refuse taken off-site to be processed.

### *Local Parking Provision*

It is intended that the development makes use of parking provided in the local area as the nature of its use will result in facilities being shared with the adjacent schools. This will result in trips being linked with both sites, with the proximity enabling travel on foot between the two.

It is expected that the community uses will be accessed after the main school hours with those accessing the facilities therefore able to make use of the vacant parking spaces provided immediately to the south of the site.

There are also a number of car parks located within a convenient 10 minute (800m) walk of the site providing a capacity of over 800 spaces within the local area and it is considered that these could accommodate a proportion of the demand.

Nevertheless, it is intended to encourage access by sustainable travel modes in accordance with national and local planning policy through the provision of no parking within the site.

## Chapter 9

# Implementation

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Existing Beech trees along the northern masterplan site boundary

### *Implementation and Monitoring of the masterplan objectives*

This Masterplan has been developed on behalf of Laois County Council in order to information guide the development of this very strategic landbank within the town of Portlaoise

However, the delivery of this landbank is predicated on a collaborative approach between multiple stakeholders, utilising the statutory powers and project management skills of the public sector as well as the commercial insight and innovation of the private sector. This section outlines the proposed delivery mechanism of the Masterplan which will ensure that the goals, objectives and vision of the Masterplan are translated into actions, policies and tangible outcomes.

The phasing of development builds on the existing uses in the area including the open space at the Peoples Park , the community infrastructure provided at the southern end of the site – Educate Together/ Maryborough NS / Gaelscoil which will be further enhanced with the secondary school campus for Colaiste Dun Masc in future years.

In order to ensure the robust and sustainable development of the lands, the build-out of certain elements – particularly the residential component of the masterplan has been divided into four phases: an enabling phase, an embryonic development phase, a consolidation phase, and a completion phase.

These phases reflect the need for structured development, aligning with the zoning and policy objectives of Laois County Council as well as the availability of serviced lands, while also recognizing the requirement for the Masterplan to react to the ever-changing landscape of the provision of

housing (social/ affordable and private ).

What may make commercial sense today may not be viable in 10 or 20 years' time and is very much dependent of National Government policy and initiatives to sustain housing provision and meet the demands of the population. The Masterplan reflects the evolving nature of such development in terms of the mixture of typologies being proposed within the site.

### *Funding*

The delivery of a Masterplan of this scale and ambition will depend on multiple sources of funding. The phasing of development is such that public-sector investment is required within the initial phases (i.e. the delivery of the extension of the Peoples Park in into the area and creation of walkways / cycleways through the site as part of active travel initiatives )

In relation to the Housing aspect of the Masterplan , it will be dependent on the implementation mechanisms in relation to the delivery of social, affordable and low cost rental housing options and funding streams associated with the Housing For All - A new Housing Plan for Ireland , prepared by the Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and launched in September 2021.

Objectives	Phasing	Consents Required	Timelines	Stakeholders in the Process	Funding Streams
<b>Delivery of Green Infrastructure</b>	1. Extending the open space from the People's Park	Part VIII approval	2022 - 2024	Laois Heritage Office Laois Sports Section, Laois Sports Partnership, Laois Tidy Towns  Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,  The Heritage Council	ORIS  Regional Funding streams  Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)
	2. Creation of Active Travel - walking and cycling infrastructure through the site	Part VIII approval	2022 - 2024	Active Travel, Cycling officer / Laois Sports Section, Laois Sports Partnership  Schools BOM / Dept of education	Active Travel  Climate Action funding  ORIS
<b>Delivery of Sports Infrastructure</b>	1. Create links to educational campuses 2. Provision of Playing pitches 3. Associated facilities	Part VIII approval	2022-2030	Laois Sports Partnership  External sporting organistaions  Schools / BOM / Dept of Education and skills	Sports Capital Grants  Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)
<b>Housing Provision</b>	1. Engage Design Team to develop Housing Proposal based on: - Need; - Tenure; - Delivery mechanism; - Funding. 2. Enabling works 3. Part VIII documentation approval 4. Proposal 5. Delivery dependent on funding streams	Part VIII approval	2022-2030	Laois County Council Housing Section  Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,  Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's)	Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)  Housing Finance Agency  Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

