

2021 - 2027

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
CHOMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE



**VOLUME 2 SETTLEMENT STRATEGY
DRAFT LAOIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN
JANUARY 2021**

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	5
2.0	KEY TOWNS	
2.1	PORTLAOISE	11
2.2	GRAIGUECULLEN	11
3.0	SELF SUSTAINING GROWTH TOWN	
3.1	PORTARLINGTON	12
4.0	SELF SUSTAINING TOWNS	
4.1	MOUNTMELICK	13
4.2	ABBEYLEIX	14
4.3	MOUNTRATH	20
4.4	STRADBALLY	26
5.0	TOWNS	
5.1	RATHDOWNEY	32
5.2	DURROW	36
5.3	BALLYLYNAN	41
6.0	VILLAGES > 500 POPULATION	
6.1	CLONASLEE	46
6.2	BALLYROAN	49
6.3	BORRIS IN OSSORY	52
6.4	KILLENARD	56
7.0	VILLAGES < 500 POPULATION	
7.1	BALLYBRITTAS	59
7.2	BALLINAKILL	62
7.3	CLOUGH	66
7.4	ERRILL	68
7.5	KILLEEN	70

7.6	KILLESKIN	72
8.0	RURAL SETTLEMENTS	
8.1	ARLES.....	76
8.2	BALLACOLLA.....	78
8.3	CAMROSS	80
8.4	CASTLETOWN.....	82
8.5	COOLRAIN	85
8.6	CULLAHILL	87
8.7	EMO	89
8.8	NEWTOWN DOONANE.....	91
8.9	ROSENALLIS.....	93
8.10	THE SWAN	95
8.11	TIMAHOE.....	97
8.12	VICARSTOWN	100

DRAFT

1. INTRODUCTION

DRAFT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Towns and villages of Laois have a key economic and social function within the settlement hierarchy of this Plan. The objective of this settlement strategy is to support the sustainable growth of our towns and villages by identifying key growth factors that will allow each area to grow in a sustainable manner, supporting appropriate local employment opportunities and economic activity and building on the areas unique character and natural assets to develop thriving areas where people want to live. Investing in key areas to support regeneration such as town centre renewal is key in supporting the growth and viability of local centres.

The Settlement Hierarchy of towns and villages as determined in the Core Strategy – Chapter 2 of the Laois County Development 2021 – 2027, Volume 1, is indicated as follows:

Table 1.1: Laois County Settlement Hierarchy

SETTLEMENT TYPOLOGY	DESCRIPTION	SETTLEMENTS
KEY TOWNS	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.	Portlaoise
		Graiguecullen
SELF-SUSTAINING GROWTH TOWNS	Self-Sustaining Growth Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining	Portarlington
SELF-SUSTAINING TOWNS	Self-Sustaining Towns with high levels of population growth and a weak employment base which are reliant on other areas for employment and/or services and which require targeted 'catch up' investment to become more self-sustaining.	Mountmellick
		Abbeyleix
		Stradbally
		Mountrath
TOWNS AND VILLAGES	Towns and villages with local service and employment functions	Durrow
		Rathdowney
		Ballylinan
VILLAGES (Pop > 500)	Villages that serve their local area	Clonaslee
		Killenard
		Ballyroan
		Borris In Ossary

SETTLEMENT TYPOLOGY	DESCRIPTION	SETTLEMENTS
RURAL REMAINDER (including villages with population <500, rural settlements and open countryside)		

1.1 COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY

This Settlement Strategy is informed by the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Region (EMRA) Area.

1.2 National Planning Framework

As described in Chapter 1 of Volume of 1 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, Project Ireland 2040 is the Government’s overarching long-term policy platform to guide and manage the future growth and development of the country. The primary aim of Project Ireland 2040 is to improve the quality of life in Ireland for all its citizens by creating and promoting opportunities for people and protecting and enhancing our environment. In order to achieve this goal, the NPF contains a series of national policy objectives (NPOs), which set out the intentions of the plan within specific areas. Table 2 below outlines the NPOs which are most relevant to the preparation of Settlement Strategy.

Table 1.2: Compliance with NPF

THEME	NATIONAL POLICY OBJECTIVE (NPO)	SETTLEMENT PLANS
COMPACT GROWTH	<i>NPO 3c: Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five Cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.</i>	A substantial majority of the housing target will be delivered within the existing footprint of the towns in accordance with CSO Census 2016 settlement boundaries.
STRONGER URBAN PLACES	<i>NPO 4: Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well-designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.</i>	Plans focus on creating sustainable communities and taking account of rural nature of many settlements as well as urban generated development pressure.
	<i>NPO 6: Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.</i>	Plans have been informed by an ‘ asset based approach ’ to development which will seek to utilise the each settlement’s existing social, economic and environmental assets to drive the sustainable growth of the town.
	<i>NPO 7: Apply a tailored approach to urban development that will be linked to the Rural/Urban Regeneration and Development Fund.</i>	Plans will identify a series of potential regeneration development projects that can be funded under the RRDF/URDF programme.
	<i>NPO 10: Regional and Local Authorities</i>	Strategic Employment Zones have

	<i>to identify and quantify locations for strategic employment development, where suitable, in urban and rural areas generally.</i>	been identified in the main urban centres such as Portlaoise, Graiguecullen, Portarlinton, and in the Self Sustaining towns. Other locations such as Borris in Ossory and Ballybrittas have also been identified for economic growth given their strategic connectivity by virtue of the motorway infrastructure.
DIVERSE RURAL PLACES	NPO 16: <i>Target the reversal of rural decline in the core of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.</i>	Each settlement is assessed for regeneration opportunities sites and support the reuse of vacant buildings by a targeted approach to vacancy
	NPO 17: <i>Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive use now and for future generations.</i>	Conservation and heritage-led regeneration policies included in the LAP for heritage assets.
	NPO 18a: <i>To support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.</i>	A series of community plans have been prepared by communities in some of the towns and villages which has informed this plan and its objectives.
	NPO 18b: <i>Develop a programme for 'new homes in small towns and villages' with local authorities, public infrastructure agencies such as Irish Water and local communities to provide serviced sites with appropriate infrastructure to attract people to build their own homes and live in small towns and villages.</i>	Castletown in Co Laois has currently a scheme of affordable sites (LCC initiative) which is currently being completed. Another scheme of affordable sites has been granted permission in Killeen in the east of the County which provides a good alternative to rural housing. A General guidance document will be worked up with the necessary stakeholders to further this initiative.
	NPO 21: <i>Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural economy into new sectors and services, including ICT based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability.</i>	The growth of the food economy in Laois and rural development supported by Laois Partnership. Examples of same are in the provision of commercial kitchens in Mountmellick together with ICT companies using the Beale Centre, the development of Bloom HQ in Mountrath and the network of remote working and co working spaces that have been rolled out throughout the county.

		Within Portlaoise the Regional Enterprise funded “Cube” Development is specifically auctioned with addressing climate change initiatives and sustainability.
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES	<i>NPO 27: Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments, and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.</i>	Plan promotes an age-friendly and accessible town which seeks universal accessibility and prioritises the development sustainable modes of travel.
	<i>NPO 35: Increase residential density in settlements, through a range of measures including reductions in vacancy, reuse of existing buildings, infill development schemes, area or site-based regeneration and increased building heights.</i>	The settlement maps have been prepared having regard to sustainable densities in accordance with Section 28 ministerial guidelines. They also have been informed by their character and what is appropriate to each level of settlement on the hierarchy and the services and amenities that exist to service them.
CLIMATE RESILIENCE	<i>NPO 53: Support the circular and bio economy including in particular through greater efficiency in land management, greater use of renewable resources and by reducing the rate of land use change from urban sprawl and new development.</i>	LAP and the Urban Regeneration Framework includes a targeted active land management provisions supported by a number of specific objectives.
	<i>NPO 54: Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.</i>	Plan integrates national policies on climate action by promoting compact growth, sustainable movement and other adaption/mitigation measures.
	<i>NPO 58: Integrated planning for green infrastructure and ecosystem services will be incorporated into the preparation of statutory land use plans.</i>	Identification of a comprehensive green infrastructure network to be protected and enhanced throughout the life of the plan.

1.3 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 sets out a framework to direct future growth of the region over the medium to long term. The Strategy is underpinned by key people-focused principles that reflect the three pillars of sustainability – Healthy Place Making, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity. Each settlement is underpinned by the following key overarching objectives. These objectives are in addition to those

included in the Written Statement in Volume One of the Laois County Development Plan. The objectives of Volume One should also be considered for all new development within the County.

1.3.1 Sustainable Communities

The plan supports new residential development which should respect the character and form of each village. The development strategy for each town and village is to support new housing and population growth, providing a viable alternative to rural one-off housing within the surrounding hinterland and contributing to the principle of compact growth. Building sustainable communities will comprise of developing a mix of housing types, densities and tenure.

High quality design, incorporation of the principles of place-making, green infrastructure, permeability and connectivity alongside the integration of community and recreation facilities is paramount.

Fundamental to each village is the ability to harness and support rural economies and diversification to maximize employment opportunities in areas such as agri-business, tourism, renewable energy and food production. The provision of physical support infrastructure is also vitally important, such as water, waste water and communication infrastructure.

1.3.2 Regeneration and Place Making

Regeneration of the village and town centres is fundamental to sustaining a vibrant community. Many of the settlements throughout the County have seen some level of decline and this Plan aims to bring these centres back to life. By identifying key sites for regeneration, objectives will be included to ensure key funding opportunities will be supported and harnessed.

1.3.3 Climate Resilience

Development in each village will build climate resilience by supporting the need to conserve and enhance biodiversity, protect habitats, species, landscapes and ecosystems to support the sustainable management of our natural resources.

SETTLEMENT STRATEGY POLICY OBJECTIVES	
SS 1	Promote residential growth, local employment, services and sustainable transport options to enable each settlement to become more self-sustaining.
SS 2	Provide for new residential developments in accordance with the requirements of the Housing and Core Strategy which is compatible with the density of development in each settlement.
SS 3	Require that an appropriate mix of housing type, tenure, density and size is provided in all new residential development to meet the needs of the population as indicated in the Core Strategy.
SS 4	Require proposals for development to demonstrate how they integrate/respond to Green Infrastructure and contribute to the development and protection of overall Green Infrastructure assets
SS 5	Provide for the expansion and development of educational, social, community and recreational facilities in each settlement.
SS 6	Support the development of green walking and cycling routes within the village and to

	the rural hinterlands including areas of interest and attractions.
SS 7	Support and encourage residential development on under-utilised land and/or vacant lands including 'infill' and 'brownfield' sites, subject to a high standard of design and layout being achieved
SS 8	Provide opportunities for the expansion of the employment base in each village.
SS 9	Support proposals to further develop and strengthen the tourism potential of each village.
SS 10	Support economic rural diversification to maximize opportunities in emerging sectors such as agri-business, renewable energy, tourism and forestry.
SS 11	Liaise with Irish Water to endeavour to provide adequate water services to meet the development needs of each village within the Plan period
SS 12	Support the roll out of the National Broadband Plan and broadband infrastructure within the County.
SS 13	Support environmental and public realm enhancements in the town together with measures to visually enhance the built form and streetscape.
SS 14	Facilitate public realm improvement works for villages, focusing on traffic-calming to achieve better balance between the needs of the pedestrians / cyclists / public transport and those of the private car and give better definition and legibility to the village core.
SS 15	Design the Public Realm of Towns and Villages to ensure universal access for all
SS 16	Ensure new development compliments and enhances the townscape, uses quality building materials and employs best conservation practice in relation to protected structures
SS 17	Ensure that any development that has the potential to impact on the European Sites is subject to Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.
SS 18	Implement Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems where appropriate.
SS 19	Ensure full compliance with all existing licenses and with measures prescribed under the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 - 2021.
SS 20	Ensure that any flood defense works or river channel maintenance is assessed according to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and carried out in accordance with the NPWS and IFI authorization.
SS 21	Avoid encroachment on European Sites and implement buffer zone of 10-30m where feasible or as determined following consultation with the Inland Fisheries.
SS 22	Ensure that groundwater abstractions that form part of planning applications do not negatively impact on the hydrology of the adjacent esker and bog habitats.
SS 23	All development shall comply with Draft Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and development shall accord with the provision of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities

2. KEY TOWNS

2.1 PORTLAOISE

It is an objective of the Council to make Local Area Plans for Portlaoise. During the Transition period between adoption of this County Development Plan and the adoption of the Local Area Plan for Portlaoise, the objectives (including zoning objectives – REFER TO Map 2.1), policies and standards in this County Development Plan shall apply.

2.2 GRAIGUECULLEN

A joint LAP for the Carlow / Graiguecullen area was prepared in 2012 and further extended up to and including 22nd October 2022. It is an objective of Laois County Council to prepare a Joint Spatial Plan for the Greater Carlow Graiguecullen Area in conjunction with Carlow County Council which will align with the policy provisions of the EMRA RSES and the Southern Regional Assembly RSES in order to comply with RPO 4.75.

DRAFT

3. SELF SUSTAINING GROWTH TOWN

3.1 PORTARLINGTON

It is an objective of the Council to make Local Area Plan for Portarlington in association with Offaly County Council. During the Transition period between adoption of this County Development Plan and the adoption of the Local Area Plan for Portarlington, the objectives, policies and standards in this County Development Plan shall apply.

DRAFT

4. SELF SUSTAINING TOWNS

4.1 MOUNTMELICK

It is an objective of the Council to make Local Area Plans for Mountmellick. During the Transition period between adoption of this County Development Plan and the adoption of the Local Area Plan for Mountmellick, the objectives (including zoning objectives – Refer to Map 4.1), policies and standards in this County Development Plan shall apply.

DRAFT

4.2 ABBEYLEIX

Population	2016 Census	1770
	2011 Census	1827
	% Increase/Decrease	-3%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	712
Infrastructure	Water	Water Treatment Plant
	Waste Water	Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity for 1645)
	Servicing Road Network	N77, R425, R430, R433 - Proximity to M7 Dublin to Limerick and M8 Dublin to Cork
	Broadband	Fibre Broadband
Social Infrastructure	Schools	4
	Church	Church of Ireland and Catholic Church
	Sporting Facilities	GAA and soccer pitches, Golf Club
	Other	Community Centres, District Hospital, Bank, Post Office, Level Retail 4 Centre
Environment	Conservation	River Barrow/Nore SAC and Abbeyleix Wood pNHA
	Natural Amenity	Abbeyleix Bog, Abbeyleix Demesne, River Nore Valley
	Flooding	FRZ to the north west and south west of the settlement boundary
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	56 protected structures
	Monuments	2 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Local Service from Portlaoise
	Cycle Route	Cycle Corridor between Abbeyleix and Durrow on N77

4.2.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

The Heritage Town of Abbeyleix is located in the south of County Laois in the plain of the River Nore, on the N77 (old Cork-Dublin Road), approximately 14km south of Portlaoise and M8 Junction 3. The origins of Abbeyleix can be traced back to the twelfth century and an early Christian Abbey located to the south of the town close to the River Nore.

The modern town of Abbeyleix dates to the late eighteenth century, when the then major landowners in the area, the De Vesci's, found a new town at its present location. The new town was formally planned in a cruciform shape, with an architecturally unified streetscape of 2 and 3 storey buildings of high architectural merit. A wide linear main street, with a central Market Square and planted lime trees, formed the spine of the new town. The market place was established immediately to the north of the principal crossroads which today still acts as a focal point.

The main commercial area is centred on Main Street and Market Square with residential areas concentrated on the southern portion of Main Street, Stucker Hill to the north, New Row/Balladine Row to the west and Ballinakill Road to the east. Painted timber shopfronts with applied lettering where units open directly onto the footpath which makes for a vibrant town centre and also form part of the character of the Main Street. Main Street also benefits from sensitive public realm in the form of lighting, street furniture, landscaping and planters.

The basic layout of the town's streetscape and compact urban form has remained relatively unchanged where the essential character of the original estate settlement has resulted in Abbeyleix being recognised as an important heritage town and designated an Architectural Conservation Area. Fine structures within Abbeyleix include the Church of Ireland, Bank of Ireland, Morrissey's Public House and the above mentioned Market House.

4.2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

4.2.2.1 Residential Development and Town Centre Regeneration

The total housing stock for Abbeyleix as indicated in the 2016 Census is 712 dwellings. There has been a slight decrease in population since 2011 (primarily due to a higher number of school goers and an aging population) and new residential development has largely taken place in the form of one off rural dwellings removed from the town and smaller development schemes within infill sites within the town. The Core and Housing Strategy of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 241 units over the Plan period or 4% of the housing allocation for the County. There is a capacity to deliver 60 units within brownfield and infill sites, including mixed use backland sites. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are no committed units.

It is an objective of the Plan to preserve the vital function of the town centre and ensure sufficient land is zoned for a mix of uses to strengthen the existing functioning of the town and add to its vitality and vibrancy. Therefore, backland areas within the core area have been zoned Town Centre to allow for a mix of uses, including residential. There are 2 noted backland areas within the town centre – an area to the north west of Market Square, Westlands, and an area to the east of the town centre and south of Temperance Street, Knockmoe.

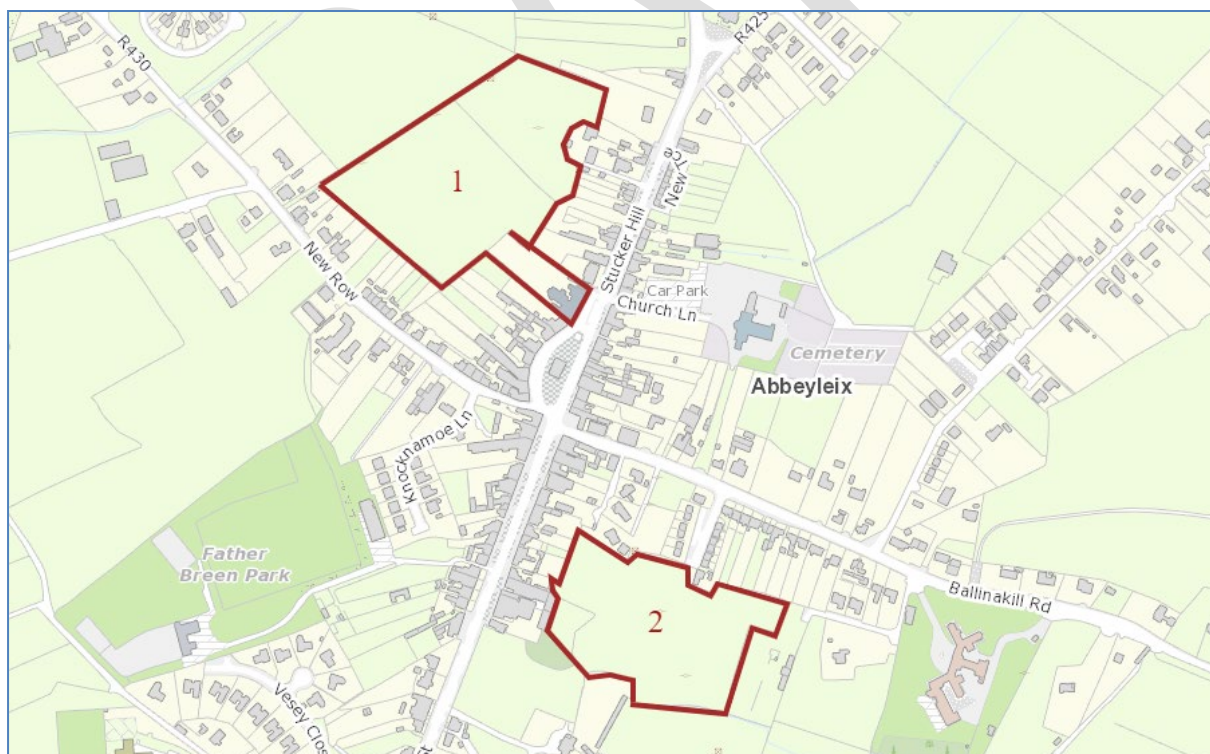


Fig 4.2: Opportunity Sites

Opportunity Site 1: The site of 3ha includes a protected structure on Market Square and the backland area towards Baladine residential estate, providing compact growth within the town centre. A masterplan was compiled for the subject lands (including a larger portion of land to the

north) in 2012 which also focused on compact development and supporting objectives in relation to permeability, sense of place, activity and green links. Any development proposals should consider a master approach to development incorporating the sensitive restoration of the protected structure RPS 084 on Market Square, character of the ACA and also provide a range of services to meet the needs of the community.

Opportunity Site 2: The Knocknamoe site covers an area of 2ha of backland behind the east side of the main street. The site has a number of potential points of access off the Main street and via Temperance Street. The plan envisages a number of town centre type uses and including residential/age friendly housing and community, educational and institutional uses. The site was subject of a planning permission for a primary health care facility, however has since lapsed.

4.2.2.2 *Employment and Economic Development*

Of the population aged 15 years and over, 45% are in employment. Unemployment is above the National average at 8.5%. However the town has a healthy jobs to resident worker ratio of 0.77 where 501 local jobs are noted¹. The main employers in Abbeyleix include Feeney Liquors (IDA Business Park), Abbeyleix District Hospital, Manor Hotel, convenience retailers (Supervalu and Clelands) and the range of essential services providers including doctors, hairdressers, Bank of Ireland, public houses, garages and small shops.

Abbeyleix provides for a wide range of retail/commercial services within the town centre commensurate with its level 4 position within the County retail hierarchy, having sustained the business of a traditional group of retail shops and commercial services, including convenience retailing, banking, hardware provider, pharmacy, restaurants, bars, cafés, takeaways and clothing stores.

Lands available for Enterprise and Employment are primarily located within the town's development boundary, to the north and south of the town centre, and can facilitate the development of small-scale services and local enterprise. Lands have also been zoned for industrial purposes adjacent to the existing IDA park on the Mountrath Road and in proximity to the proposed orbital route.

The town also has significant tourism potential owing to its heritage status and location in proximity to amenity areas of Abbeyleix Demesne, Collins Bog and Lords Walk Looped Walk and Abbeyleix Bog. Lands have been zoned for tourism purposes to build on this potential, such as development of artisan foods and arts and crafts etc. This potential is widely recognised due to the unique cluster of noteworthy heritage sites and visitor attractions, united with an exceptional picturesque landscape of Abbeyleix Demesne, Abbeyleix Bog and the River Nore valley. Alignment with Ireland's Ancient East tourism brand is required to maximise the potential of existing natural amenity areas and other heritage towns in the proximity such as Durrrow and Portlaoise and market as a broader tourism package.

4.2.2.3 *Social and Community Infrastructure*

Abbeyleix has a well-established social and community infrastructure. Two primary schools currently serve the town, Scoil Mhuire and South Parish School. Whilst a secondary school is not present in the town, Heywood Community School serves the local catchment which is located 10km south east. The town also has its own further education and training facility located on the Mountrath Road which offers a range of adult learning opportunities. A number of community facilities are located in the town such as Heritage House, Market House and the Library which have a multifunctional communal, educational and recreational role in Abbeyleix.

¹ Appendix 2 of the National Planning Framework

Abbeyleix has well established and active community groups within the area and in particular the Tidy Towns Committee. Abbeyleix was awarded a gold and silver medal in the 2019 Tidy Towns competition and the town was also awarded the Irish Water Value Award for Best Small Town in 2016.

Public recreational space is found at Father Breen Park to the west of Main Street and includes GAA, soccer and tennis amenities. Abbeyleix Golf Club to the north east provides a valuable amenity for its members. A playground area is also situated adjacent to the Heritage House overlooking the Main Street. An extensive off-road walking route known as the Lord's Walk is signposted.

The town also benefits from the significant amenity areas such as Abbeyleix Demesne, Abbeyleix Bog, Killmuck Bog and Collins Bog Loop walks and Dove House Sensory Gardens, and attract nature enthusiast and walkers and hikers from around the Country. Furthermore, Abbeyleix Bog is a significant example of a biodiversity project and encompasses an area of almost 500 acres of diverse habitats including degraded (but recovering) raised bog, lagg, cutaway, wet carr woodland and meadows. The Abbeyleix Bog Project (ABP) conserves and protects the bog which was once threatened with harvesting for peat moss. This project is an open-access amenity developed by volunteers to benefit all.

4.2.2.4 Physical Infrastructure and Movement

The following essential infrastructure serves the town:

- Abbeyleix has its own wastewater treatment plant and its water supply comes from the Aughfeerish and Ballyglissen Spring Public Supply and a number of Group Water Schemes.
- Abbeyleix is currently served by wireless broadband.
- A recycling bring-bank is located at the petrol station to the south of the town.
- Support water conservation projects in the town such as the innovative "water ram" project.

The town has seen traffic congestion and heavy traffic volumes in the past before the opening of the M8 motorway. There is also a several roads of objectives, both approved and planned link roads which are illustrated in Map 4.2(a).

A cycle lane is present on the section of the N77 from Durrow to Abbeyleix and in order to facilitate more active modes of transport this Plan will support the extension of this protected cycle corridor northwards to Portlaoise and southwards to Cullohill and beyond. The provision of bicycle racks at Abbeyleix Heritage Centre, Market Square, Abbeyleix Bog, Fr Breen Park and any other areas identified, subject to agreement with all stakeholders is also supported to facilitate and encourage cycling

4.2.2.5 Sustainable Energy Community and Climate Change

A Sustainable Abbeyleix – Energy Master Plan has been commissioned by Abbeyleix Tidy Town Committee to aid in the transition of the town towards an energy efficient community. This Plan will support Abbeyleix in becoming a Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) and in particular assist in the delivery the Register of Opportunities (ROO) set out under the recently completed Energy Master plan such as select Abbeyleix as a pilot community for the implementation of the

- a) smart metering programme for Laois which will enable the move to a low-carbon electricity network;
- b) development of smart grids;
- c) support the electrification of heat and transport, local renewable generation and microgeneration;
- d) Support Abbeyleix community to implement a retrofit programme for residential, commercial and community buildings in the town;
- e) LED lighting upgrade at Abbeyleix Tennis Courts.

4.2.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- AB01 Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Abbeyleix's Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New development shall respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development;
- AB 02 Retain traditional painted timber shopfront and traditional advertisement styles and ensure that any new shopfronts or advertisements do not detract or erode the special character of the ACA.
- AB 03 Encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings within the town centre, infill sites and backland areas and encourage the maintenance and use of all town centre structures, especially the upper storeys to secure their longevity and support the town's vibrancy;
- AB 04 Maintain the quality and features of the public realm on Main Street and Market Square and introduce consistent village branding/presentation at the village entry points and along the main streets in the form of high quality signage, tourism information, public art and consistent village type lighting standards which would strengthen Abbeyleix's identity;
- AB 05 Protect individual trees, groups of trees and hedgerows on all approach roads, particularly the Ballacolla and Cork Roads, Ladies Hill, Church Grove and the Vicarage
- AB 06 Support the redevelopment of identified Regeneration/Opportunity Sites in the town (Map 4.2(b)).
- AB 07 Encourage the redevelopment of town centre backlands to the rear of the Main Street and vacant and derelict site in a coherent manner that facilitates expansion of town centre between adjacent sites, and enhanced retail and commercial services, with opportunity for ancillary residential uses directed to the upper floors.
- AB 08 To ensure that proposals for new residential and town centre developments, include specific measures to facilitate permeability and connectivity through new development layout arrangements that provide and contribute to accessibility between developments and between neighbourhoods.

Economic and Community Development

- AB 09 Advance Abbeyleix as a destination town on "Ireland's Ancient East" Route and support further growth of the tourism sector by harnessing the potential of its Heritage Town and Architectural Conservation Area status.;
- AB 10 Promote industrial and enterprise and employment opportunities on lands zoned within the town of Abbeyleix and expand the economic base of the town centre by way of mixed use backland development;
- AB 11 Support the ongoing development of Fr Breen Park in Abbeyleix as a model for a co-located sporting facility and support green infrastructure principle
- AB 12 Support the development of co-working spaces in Abbeyleix to allow the development of new businesses and to facilitate commuters with a "work from home" option.
- AB 13 To promote new development and/or uses for passive or active recreational uses within the town that is linked to the use of and accessibility of the Abbeyleix Bog, Collins Bog and Killamuck Bog.
- AB 14 Continue the restoration programme for Killamuck Bog south of Abbeyleix;
- AB 15 Further the development of a community biodiversity project – "neighbourhood" scheme at Ballardine, Abbeyleix;

Infrastructure and Climate Action

- AB 16 Support Abbeyleix in becoming Ireland's first low carbon small town and the objectives of Sustainable Abbeyleix – Energy Master Plan.
- AB 17 Provide and enhance strategic and recreational pedestrian and cycling linkages and associated street lighting and cycle parking at buildings in community use, especially schools and open up a wider cycle and pedestrian linkages to connect with villages nearby, in particular Ballyroan, Ballinakill, Raheen, Shanahoe and Durrrow;
- AB 18 Enhance Abbeyleix road network as necessary and reserve land and pursue funding for new orbital/relief routes as indicated on Map 4.2(a) and consider the impacts of the by-pass and seek to manage the traffic movement through the town in light of this change;
- AB 19 Provide disabled parking and cycle parking at Market Square to improve access to the bus stop and library;
- AB 20 Develop additional community facilities which are flexible and capable of being managed for a number of different uses; in particular youth-related facilities, an Elderly Day Care Service and Nursing Home, community-based healthcare facilities and school extensions or school-based facilities;
- AB 21 Liaise with the relevant authorities to provide Heritage Town signage at the M7/M8 Motorway exits from both the northern and southern approaches to Abbeyleix;
- AB 22 Continue to support and facilitate the extension of the footpath and cycle path improvement works within the town.

4.3 MOUNTRATH

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	1661 1774 7%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	840 units 129 units
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Water Treatment Plant Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity for 2,168 PE) R423 (Ballyfin), R440 (Kinnity), R445, (Portlaoise), R430 (Abbeyleix) Fibre Broadband
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	3 St Peter's and St Fintans GAA and soccer pitches, Golf Club Community Centre, library, post office, bank, credit union, fire station, Level 4 Retail Services
Environment	Conservation Natural Amenity Flooding	Mountrath River designated SAC (River Barrow/Nore), proximity to the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA Proximity to Slieve Bloom Mountains, Amenity area of the Mountrath River – FRZ A and B runs through the town in a north/south trajectory
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	41 protected structures 5 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Local Link, Bus Eireann to Dublin

4.3.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTERISATION

Meaning Moin Ratha (Bog of the Fort), Mountrath is located at the foot of the Slieve Blooms on the old N7 Dublin-Limerick road, now the R445, approximately 14 kms south west of Portlaoise and 8 kms from Junction 18 on the M7/M8 motorway network. Sir Charles Coote founded the town in the 17th century along the left bank of the Mountrath River or Whitehorse River and it soon developed into a centre for iron, brewing, cotton and farming. The town expanded in the 18th century with the development of facilities such as the fever hospital and became a centre of significance for the County.

Mountrath has a compact urban form, largely influenced by the Mountrath River, flowing in a northwest to southeast trajectory, and the local road network. The layout of the town has changed little over time, retaining its original relationship with the river and features such as the Market Square. Other historic references, such as the churches and the ruins of the old foundry remain, bearing evidence of the town's historical significance and historic past. Typically, the town is urban in character with the majority of 2 and 3 storey buildings fronting directly onto the Main Street, one building deep. Mountrath's buildings are diverse in age, height, roof profiles and elevational treatments. This diversity is particularly notable within Market Square and diverging streets. Many of the buildings that line Main Street and Market Square are Protected Structures. These buildings are of considerable architectural merit and the planned design of the Market Square provides Mountrath with its most distinguishing feature.

Residential areas have development along the approach roads into the town, most notably along the R430 (Abbeyleix Rd) where many higher density development has taken place. Mountrath also had a significant religious function where the Brigidine Convent located on the Castletown Rd in the early 19th Century, followed by the establishment of the Catholic Church, St Frances. Today the convent has a community and enterprise function where Bloom HQ has been located.

4.3.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

4.3.2.1 Residential Development and Town Centre Regeneration

The total housing stock for Mountrath as indicated in the 2016 Census is 840 dwellings with a level of vacancy of 15%. There has been an increase in population since 2011 of 7%. Recent development has taken place in the form of medium density infill development within the town boundary. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are 77 committed. This Plan identifies 2 sites for new residential development which are sufficient to meet the projected housing requirements during the Plan period. These sites have been selected based on their geographical spread across the town, their ability to consolidate the existing urban form whilst utilizing the availability of existing infrastructure and are connected to other residential areas and community facilities. The Planning Authority is satisfied that sufficient lands have been identified to accommodate the household allocation of 150 units.

It is an objective of the Plan to preserve the vital function of the town centre and ensure sufficient land is zoned for a mix of uses to strengthen the existing functioning of the town and add to its vitality and vibrancy. There is scope for limited development of backland areas, however the backland areas to the west of Main Street and adjacent to the Mountrath River offers significant potential. It is anticipated that 30 residential units can be accommodated within infill and backland sites.

The high level of vacancy within the town centre is perhaps the most significant obstacle to be overcome to achieve successful town centre regeneration where the level of vacancy of retail units and associated 1st floor accommodation is exceptionally high; 22 units were noted as vacant.

The Market Square area has a significantly high level of vacancy, with some units in danger of becoming derelict. With this high level of vacancy within the town centre it must be recognised that some of the former uses will not be returning and therefore it is imperative to identify and encourage credible alternative functions for these units, such as repurposing as homes (which may not require planning permission as per the Rebuilding Ireland – Bring Back Homes document).

Whilst the primary function of the town centre must remain and be respected, there is huge potential for the town centre to increase its residential population and foster compact development which will have benefits in terms of environmental and climate resilience. Other functions could be in the form of live/work units, tourist spin off enterprises and tourist accommodation.

Alternative uses for prominent buildings in the town centre such as medical, public services and social housing should also be considered. Many of these buildings are Protected Structures and as such, careful restoration and sensitive development should be considered. The town centre area would benefit from the completion of an urban regeneration framework to focus regeneration in a coordinated manner.



Fig 4.3 (a): Regeneration Area (indicative area only)

4.3.2.2 Employment and Economic Development

Of the population aged 15 years and over, 45% are in employment. This is due to a higher than average retired community residing in the town and also a relatively high level of students. Unemployment is above the National average at 8.5%. However the town has a relatively healthy jobs to resident worker ratio of 0.62 where 367 local jobs are noted².

Mountrath provides for a wide range of retail/commercial services within the town centre commensurate with its Level 4 position within the County retail hierarchy. The primary retail and services streets of Mountrath are focused on Patrick Street, Main Street, Church Street and Shannon Street. Costcutter and Centra provide convenience shopping in the town centre. Important employment centres in the town include Telfords Hardware outlet, Sheeran's timber processing plant on the Abbeyleix approach road and the Enterprise Park on the Portlaoise approach road. There are also a range of services including doctors, beauticians, hairdressers, public houses, garages and small shops providing employment in Mountrath. Smaller commercial areas have developed on the outskirts of the town on the approach roads of R433 and R430.

In terms of enterprise and employment, industrial and general business zonings, several areas on the outer limits of the town boundary to the north east and south west have been identified for appropriate development. In particular, the old mart site offers potential for redevelopment of an appropriate use.

Tourism

The town also has significant tourism potential owing to its key location on the Slieve Bloom Mountains Route. The potential regeneration opportunities within the town centre for tourist related purposes offers huge potential. This Plan will support developments that will establish

² Appendix 2 of the National Planning Framework

Mountrath as a cycling and outdoor recreation hub for the Slieve Bloom Mountains and to grow the visitor economy in the town by encouraging tourism-related uses, activities and amenities that will contribute to the Slieve Bloom Mountains tourism product.

Bloom HQ

In recent years the Mountrath Community Forum have worked extensively to transform community enterprise opportunities within the town. Of particular note is the development of Bloom HQ which is located in the old Brigidine Convent to the south of the town centre. The purpose of this financially self sustaining enterprise is to combine a hi-tech co-working space with a community space to promote better work/life balance. The facilities include extensive office space, meeting rooms and training areas which are complimented by a health and fitness centre with a modern gym offering a range of classes including; martial arts, fitness training, yoga, drama and musical theatre. Significant opportunity exists to further the development of this important community enterprise and build on the work of Mountrath Community Forum.



Fig 4.3. (b): Bloom HQ and Brigidine Convent Site

4.3.2.3 Social and Community Infrastructure

Mountrath is well-served by way of social infrastructure. The town has two primary schools Scoil Bhríde and St Fintans, and a new secondary school. 3 creche and playschool services are also provided. Mountrath has a healthy community ethic which is displayed through the work of the Development Association and the Tidy Towns Committee. There are a number of community facilities including a community centre on the Roscrea Road, a youth theatre and public library close to Market Square.

Public recreational space is found at the St Fintan's GAA Club and St Aengus FC. Mountrath Golf Club to the south east provides a valuable amenity for its members. In terms of amenity space, Mountrath is located in the foothills of the Slieve Blooms, an area rich in ecology and wildlife and popular for walking and hiking and mountain biking. The town lies on one of the access routes from the M7 Tourists to the Slieve Blooms which offers significant tourism potential. Mountrath Amenity Park is located adjacent to the Mountrath River which is a Special Area of Conservation and joins

with the River Nore south of the town between Castletown and Kilbricken. Several pedestrian linkages join this river walk with the Main Street including the Council's car park, the Quaker graveyard and narrow laneways.

4.3.2.4 Physical Infrastructure and Movement

The following essential infrastructure serves the town:

- Mountrath has its own wastewater treatment plant with a capacity for 2,168 PE
- Mountrath is currently served by wireless broadband.
- A recycling bring-bank is located at the car park.

The primary streets of Mountrath are focused on Patrick Street, Main Street, Church Street and Shannon Street. These streets are distinctly urban and characterised by a mixture of uses and building styles. Secondary streets such as the Rushin Road, Shannon Road and Abbeyleix Road link the surrounding residential and rural areas within the urban core. There are a number of roads objectives noted within Map 4.3(a) of this Plan including an approved orbital road connecting the Shannon Road with the Portlaoise Road.

Natural and managed open spaces within Mountrath including the Mountrath River and amenity area, playing fields, groups of trees and landscaped areas, are features of Green Infrastructure which collectively, contribute towards enhanced urban quality and provision of amenities for residents. This Green Infrastructure should be enhanced to provide connectivity between features resulting in green routes which can then be used to enhance the amenity of the town and to provide appropriate habitats to support flora and fauna.

4.3.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- MO 1 Create a new civic space within Market Square to facilitate everyday uses such as bus stop, waiting areas and special uses such as farmers market;
- MO 2 Encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings and improve public realm within the town centre as appropriate to support the town's vibrancy;
- MO 3 Support the preparation and implementation of an **Urban Regeneration Framework** for Mountrath town centre over the plan period;
- MO 4 Retain traditional painted timber shopfront and traditional advertisement styles and ensure any new shopfronts or advertisements must not detract or erode the special character of the town;
- MO 5 Enhance the visual amenity of approach roads into Mountrath, protecting mature trees and enhancing by way of further greening and landscaping;
- MO 6 Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of buildings in Market Square to a public/community/commercial/retail usage which will provide an opportunity to capitalise on its central location.
- MO 7 Encourage the use of upper floors within the town centre for a diversity of living and working uses where such uses would contribute to the function and vibrancy of the town centre.

Economic and Community Development

- MO 8 Encourage the further development of retail and commercial services in the town core - the redevelopment of existing unused or derelict structures for commercial or residential purposes will be particularly encouraged;
- MO 9 Support developments that will establish Mountrath as a cycling and outdoor recreation hub for the Slieve Bloom Mountains;

- MO 10 Support tourism-related uses, activities and amenities that will contribute to the Slieve Bloom Mountains tourism product;
- MO11 Reinforce the centre of Mountrath as the priority location for new commercial and retail development, with emphasis on quality of design, positive contribution to the existing streetscape and protection of existing heritage assets;
- MO12 Encourage small scale indigenous enterprise units at appropriately zoned lands;
- MO 13 Support and facilitate the development of Bloom HQ as a community enterprise hub within the town;
- MO14 Encourage the intensive use of existing community and sporting facilities and develop additional community facilities which are flexible and capable of being managed for a number of different uses, in particular youth-related facilities, community-based health facilities, extensions to schools and school facilities and an outdoor multi-use games area;

Infrastructure

- MO 15 Provide and enhance strategic and recreational pedestrian and cycling linkages and associated street lighting and cycle parking at buildings in community use, especially schools;
- MO16 Investigate the feasibility, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, of enhancing the existing road network as necessary and reserving land and pursuing funding for new orbital/relief routes;
- MO17 Actively manage short term parking in and around the Market Square;
- MO 18 Enhance the amenity of Mountrath and provide appropriate lighting to linkages between the riverside walk and the Main Street;

4.4 STRADBALLY

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	1350 1154 17%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	566 68
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Water Treatment Plant Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity for 1,924 PE) N80, R427 and R428 Fibre Broadband
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	Boys Primary school, Scoil Aonghusa, Cosby National School Church of Ireland and Catholic Church GAA and soccer pitches, Golf Club Community Centre, fire station, civil defense headquarters, post office, Steam Museum, Level 4 Retail Centre
Environment	Conservation Flooding	River Barrow/Nore SAC and Goul River Marsh pNHA Stradbally River – FRZ A and B runs through the town in a south west/north east trajectory
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	34 protected structures 6 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport and	Stradbally is served by National and Laos Trip bus services.

4.4.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

The history of Stradbally can be traced back to the 6th Century when a monastery was established at Oughaval to the south east. The town later developed under the influence of the Cosby Family, owners of Stradbally Hall, at the end of the 17th Century. Stradbally is located on the N80 National Secondary Route (Portlaoise to Carlow road) approximately 12 km south east of Portlaoise and sits in the undulating landscape between the Windy Gap to the south east and Rock of Dunamase to the north west.

The urban structure of Stradbally formed along a wide linear street, with two distinctive squares on the western side – the Market Square and the Courthouse Square. This formal setting out of the Main Street with its strong and distinctive urban form and key architectural focal points such as the mill buildings, free standing canopy over Market Square and the Courthouse, signifies its origins as a planned estate village. At the south-western end of the town is Courthouse Square, which is framed by the Courthouse at the western end and defined on both sides by two storey dwellings, creating a strong sense of place and enclosure. This is the principal open green space within the development envelope of the town. The Market Square with its distinctive canopy is the principal hard-surfaced open space in the town where much of this space is now used for car parking and vehicular access to properties to the rear of the Square. Within the historic core, the building orientation and heights play an important role in not just defining street edges, but also capturing specific views and creating a sense of enclosure and place. The retention of the estate gates and views between the estate and the Main Street indicate the intrinsic economic and historic links between the estate and the town.

The primary function of the town is that of a service centre for the surrounding agricultural hinterland. Milling was an important activity in the development of the town, however this function has since declined. Stradbally is also host to a number of nationally important events such as the annual Steam Rally, Gordon Bennett Rally and Electric Picnic Festival, which draws significant visitors to Stradbally. These events will continue to contribute to the economic growth and prosperity of the town and will also contribute to the development of Stradbally as a tourism destination.

Much of the heritage features associated with Stradbally concern built and archaeological elements. There are numerous fine examples of architectural heritage, with 34 Protected Structures noted within the settlement boundary, 25 of which are on Main Street.

It is an objective of this Plan to designate the town centre of Stradbally as an Architectural Conservation Area within the lifetime of this Plan.

4.4.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

4.4.2.1 Residential and Town Centre Regeneration

The total housing stock for Stradbally as indicated in the 2016 Census is 566 dwellings. There has been a significant increase in population since 2011 of 17%, well above the national average of 3.8%, and new residential development has largely taken place in the form of small infill housing developments within the town centre, such as a low density age friendly social housing project of 16 units suitable for older person, and single dwelling units removed from the town core.

The Core and Housing Strategies for the Plan provides a housing allocation of 165 units over the Plan period. A review of extant planning permissions has determined that there are 75 committed units.

Having regard to the housing allocation for the town there is adequate land zoned in Stradbally (in the backland area behind the town park and to the east of Main Street as an infill site on Church Avenue) to cater for the future housing needs of the town over the lifetime of the Plan. This strategy seeks to continue a pattern of consolidation of settlement development within the limits of the built up area and redevelopment opportunities within the town core. This will ensure the delivery of sustainable communities comprising of a mix of housing types, densities and tenure.



Fig 4.4 Opportunity Site (Convent Site)

An opportunity site has also been identified along Main Street, the old Convent building, which is a 3 storey Protected Structure, and surrounding lands, all of which are located within town centre zoning. This is a unique site which partially overlooks the amenity of the Stradbally River to the north east. This site could be used for a mix of uses, including residential, tourism related, community enterprise, and follow on from the success of the converted mill building to the north of the site which is now residential use.

4.4.2.2 *Employment and Economic Development*

Of the population aged 15 years and over, 45% are in employment. Major employers in Stradbally include Stradbally Town and Country Hardware, McKeown's Stone, public sector such as schools and the Stradbally Shopping Centre along with a range of essential service providers.

Stradbally provides for a wide range of retail/commercial and other local services commensurate with its level 4 position within the County retail hierarchy, including Supervalu, hardware provider, pharmacy, restaurant, bars, cafés, takeaways and newsagents. Opportunity exists to increase the retail profile of town and address the level of vacancy within the town core. In this regard, consideration should be given to the re-use of vacant sites and buildings for retail purposes.

Significant opportunity exists to develop the economic base of the town thus allowing the settlement to become more self-sustaining. In order to increase the economic profile of the town, lands to the north east of the settlement and to the east of Main Street along the Vicarstown Road have been zoned for Enterprise and Employment use. Such lands can accommodate a range of enterprise uses ranging from incubator units to second site facilities. Given the strategic location of these lands adjacent to the proposed orbital route, it is considered that they offer an optimum location for enterprise facilities.

Tourism

The development of Stradbally as a strong destination for major events such as the National Ploughing Championship, Electric Picnic and Gordan Bennett Rally, offers the town huge tourism potential. The town also has a Steam Museum, where a national Steam Rally event is held every year to celebrate all things steam. This Plan will support Stradbally in capturing its share of the market in terms of "Big Events" concept that represent niche cultural events hosted in unique settings.

Stradbally is also located within a very rich natural environment with easy access to the River Barrow Navigation System and Stradbally Lake and also walking trails associated with Oughaval Woodlands. Such amenity areas provides opportunities for recreation and tourist related initiatives. Considerable potential exists to develop water-based activities in the area such as angling, canoeing and related tourist accommodation. The town also has significant built heritage such as Stradbally Hall.

4.4.2.3 *Social and Community Infrastructure*

Stradbally is well served by essential social and community infrastructure including two primary schools, 3 crèche facilities, Church of Ireland Church and a Catholic Church, town library located in the Courthouse, HSE Elderly Care Service and post office.

A new community centre and associated all weather pitch is also planned for a site in Carrig Glas behind the existing playground. Stradbally has a healthy community ethic as is evident from the work of the Development Association and the Tidy Towns Committee.

In terms of sporting facilities the GAA playing fields are located to the southwest of the town within the development envelope. A cricket field has also recently been developed to the east of Main Street.

Stradbally also has significant natural amenity areas such as Stradbally Hall Demesne to the west, where Stradbally Lake is located and is a noted brown trout fishery within the Cosby Estate. The Windy Gap and Oughaval Wood, located within the Natural Heritage Area of Stradbally Hill, also provides a wooded back drop to the town with over 150 hectares of woodlands and walking/hiking trails. Stradbally is also located 4km to the south east of the Rock of Dunamaise, Laois' most striking national monument.

Stradbally also has an active community and have recently prepared the Stradbally Sustainable Community Plan 2020 – 2024. The main objectives of this plan include, inter alia, the following:

- The development of a sports and community centre
- Respond to climate change including a community energy plan
- Public realm improvements
- Support economic development

4.4.2.4 Physical Infrastructure and Movement

The following essential infrastructure serves the town:

- Stradbally has its own wastewater treatment plant and water supply comes from Kyle Water Supply, which is considered adequate capacity to serve the development and growth provided for in this Plan.
- Wireless broadband infrastructure
- A recycling bring bank is located at Market Square

The town is dominated by the N80 National secondary route which forms the main street of the town. There are a number of roads objectives noted within Map 4.4(a) of this Plan including an approved orbital road bypassing the town from the north west of the town to the south east, traversing lands to the east of Main Street. There are currently no plans for a bypass of Stradbally (it is not referenced in the National Development Plan), however a further study to examine the national secondary network in the context of the National Planning Framework and connectivity of the regional centres, is to be carried out by the TII in due course.

Natural and managed open spaces within Stradbally including the Stradbally River and amenity area, Stradbally Demesne, playing fields, groups of trees and landscaped areas, are features of Green Infrastructure which collectively, contribute towards enhanced urban quality and provision of amenities for residents. This Green Infrastructure should be enhanced to provide connectivity between features resulting in green routes which can then be used to enhance the amenity of the town and to provide appropriate habitats to support flora and fauna.

4.4.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- ST 1 Conserve the elements that make up Stradbally's historic streetscape and sense of place by ensuring public realm improvements and new developments are sympathetic to local context, including building orientation, roof profiles, layout, materials, elevational features;
- ST2 Encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings within the town centre as appropriate and also infill development and backland development. Encourage the maintenance and use of all town centre structures, especially the upper storeys to secure their longevity and support the town's vibrancy;
- ST3 Audit the signage on approach roads and in the square area and provide landscaping elements and welcome signs incorporating natural materials on the approach roads in consultation with the Tidy Towns Committee;

- ST 4 Assess the town centre of Stradbally as a Candidate Architectural Conservation Area within the lifetime of the Plan;
- ST 5 Encourage public realm enhancement to Market Square to create a civic plaza and facilitate everyday uses such as passive recreation and special uses such as farmers market;
- ST 6 Support the redevelopment of Opportunity Site 1 indicated in Map 4.4(b) for mixed use, residential and social enterprise;

Economic and Community Development

- ST 7 Support and encourage the development of the Stradbally as a tourism hub and big events destination;
- ST 8 Encourage the more intensive and appropriate uses of the existing Market House and Square;
- ST 9 Support the continued functioning of existing commercial enterprises in the town and provide space for the establishment of additional small-scale indigenous enterprises;
- ST 10 Encourage the development of large scale enterprise or industry on Greenfield lands allocated for enterprise and employment and industrial use adjacent to the planned bypass of the town;
- ST 11 Support town renewal schemes to address the level of vacancy and dereliction of commercial units in the town centre;
- ST 12 Support the objectives of Stradbally Sustainable Community Plan 2020 – 2024, insofar as practicable;

Infrastructure

- ST 13 Pursue funding and reserve lands for the construction of an N80 bypass around Stradbally which is a priority road objective for Laois and for the Midlands Region;
- ST 14 Provide dedicated cycling corridor along the Main Street within the town centre to amenity and residential areas and improve footpaths incrementally and facilitate the provision of cycle parking at buildings in community use, especially schools;
- ST 15 Improve parking facilities along the Main Street and in the two squares—Market Square and Courthouse Square without reducing the amount of public open space;
- ST 16 Identify a bus stop area and develop related disabled parking spaces and cycle parking stands in consultation with the local community and bus service providers;
- ST 17 Develop lands within flood zone A to the east of Main Street as a town park with access from the Main Street ;
- ST 18 Support the provision, expansion or redevelopment of social infrastructure: public open space, youth-related facilities, educational structures and ancillary facilities, childcare facilities, and healthcare facilities, outdoor multi-game play areas;
- ST 19 Support the development of a new Community Centre and all weather pitch to the west of the playground in Carrig Glas;
- ST 20 Require proposals for development to demonstrate how they integrate/respond to Green Infrastructure and contribute to the development and protection of overall Green Infrastructure assets.

5. SMALL TOWNS

DRAFT

5.1 RATHDOWNEY

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	1208 1271 5%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	619 78
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Water Treatment Plant Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity for 1,957 PE) R435, R433 - Proximity to M7 Dublin to Limerick and M8 Dublin to Cork Fibre Broadband
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	4 Church of Ireland and Catholic Church GAA and soccer pitches, Golf Club Community centre, post office, bank, fire station
Environment	Conservation Flooding	River Barrow/Nore SAC and Goul River Marsh pNHA FRA A and B associated with the River Erkina, in particular the northern outer limits of the development boundary
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	25 protected structures 4 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport and	6km from Ballybrophy Train Station (daily services from Dublin to Cork and Limerick)

5.1.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Rathdowney is a small town located on the River Erkina in the south west of County Laois. It lies some 32 km southwest of Portlaoise at the point where the R433 regional road from Abbeyleix to Templemore is crossed by the R435 from Borris In Ossory to Johnstown. The R433 provides access for Rathdowney to the Dublin-Cork M8 motorway, while the R435 links the town to the Dublin-Limerick M7.

With a relatively compact town centre, the heritage qualities and character of Rathdowney are largely derived from its development of mainly 19th Century 2 storey structures fronting onto Market Square and along Main Street which later developed to the south along the R435. There are significant infill opportunities to the rear of the Main Street, as the backland area has not experienced any significant redevelopment and largely retains its 19th Century footprints. The town in recent times has extended along the main approach roads, with significant residential development evident to the east and south.

5.1.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

5.1.2.1 Residential Development

The total housing stock for Rathdowney as indicated in the 2016 Census was 523 dwellings. Although there has been an increase in population of 5% since the 2011 census, new residential development has largely taken place in the form of one off rural dwellings removed from the town. The Core and Housing Strategies of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 60 units over the Plan period. A review of planning history within the town has determined that there are no committed private

housing units. Currently, 13 residential units are being developed by Laois County Council at Moore Street.

Having regard to the housing allocation for the town there is adequate land zoned in Rathdowney (on the western approach to the town centre) to cater for the future housing needs of the town over the lifetime of the Plan. This strategy seeks to continue a pattern of consolidation of settlement development within the limits of the built up area and redevelopment opportunities within the town core. This will ensure the delivery of sustainable communities comprising of a mix of housing types, densities and tenure.

5.1.2.2 Town Centre Regeneration

There is a significant level of vacancy in the town centre, particularly to the north of Market Square and the south side of Church Street, with some units in danger of becoming derelict. With this high level of vacancy within the town centre it must be recognised that some of the former uses will not be returning and therefore it is imperative to identify and encourage credible alternative functions for these units, such as repurposing as homes (which may not require planning permission as per the Rebuilding Ireland – Bring Back Homes document). Whilst the primary function of the town centre must remain and be respected, there is huge potential for the town centre to increase its residential population and foster a compact development approach which will have benefits in terms of environmental and climate resilience.



Fig 5.1: Regeneration Area (indicative outline only)

Other functions could be in the form of live/work units and social and cultural uses. Alternative uses for prominent buildings in the town centre such as medical, public services and social housing should be considered. Many of these buildings are Protected Structures and as such, careful restoration and sensitive development should be considered.

This town centre area would benefit from a regeneration designation and the completion of an urban regeneration framework to focus regeneration in a coordinated manner, focusing on compact growth, building on climate resilience and bringing back vitality and vibrancy to the town core.

5.1.2.3 *Employment and Economic Development*

Of the population aged 15 years and over, 46% are in employment. The main employers in Rathdowney include Meadow Meats, Supervalu, Dunnes Stores, Midland Hardware and local banks.

The town provides for a wide range of retail / commercial services commensurate with its level 4 position in the County retail hierarchy. Retail and service provision includes a pharmacy, hardware provider, pubs, convenience retail, barbers, post office, take away, credit union, hair/beauty premises, butchers and clothing shop.

As previously indicated, there is significant vacancy in the town centre and opportunity exists to enhance the retail profile in the town. In this regard, the Planning Authority will look favourably upon the re-use of vacant sites and buildings for retail purposes.

Lands available for General Business are located within the town's development boundary and can facilitate the development of small-scale services and local enterprise. An area is also located to the north of the town to accommodate larger scale industrial uses or expansion of existing uses such as Meadow Meats.

It is noted that development for such uses has been stagnant in recent years, the accessibility of the town in proximity to the M7 and M8 makes it an attractive location for inward investment. However, most recently, the former Rathdowney Retail Outlets has been redeveloped as Brand Central Hub (formerly Erkina Digital Hub). This facility is part of a county wide remote working initiative, Laois Hub Collective, which provide vital services such as remote working space, incubator units for enterprise and employment uses and educational resources for people in the community. This is a vital service for the town both in terms of boosting enterprise and employment and regeneration of a vacant site.

The town also has significant tourism potential owing to its location on the River Erkina. A section of the River Erkina, between Castle Darrow and Boston Bridge near Manor Stone service station, will be developed as a Blueway and will see significant active tourism potential. It is anticipated that Rathdowney could capitalize on the tourism potential and seek to develop the River Erkina further towards Rathdowney.

5.1.2.4 *Social and Community Infrastructure*

In terms of recreation facilities, the town is well serviced with GAA and soccer pitches, Rathdowney Golf Club located to the south east and also the essential amenity of the River Erkina which has is being developed as a Blueway. The community is also served by a Catholic and Church of Ireland Church as well as a community health centre and a library. The HSE has a residential house (Erkina House), which also serves as an outpatient clinic and is used by mental health associations.

The town has a strong education base with 3 primary schools, Scoil Bride, Convent School, Church of Ireland National School and one secondary school, St. Fergal Post Primary School. Rathdowney's Community Resource Centre also has a multifunctional communal, educational and recreational role and is centrally located within the town. There is also a further education and training centre planned for the town.

5.1.2.5 *Physical Infrastructure*

The following essential infrastructure serves the town:

- Rathdowney's water supply is from the Beledy and Kilcorcan Group Water Schemes and the Arcon Mines public water supply. Rathdowney has its own wastewater treatment plant.

- Wireless broadband infrastructure
- A recycling bring bank is located south of the Square.

5.1.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- RD 1 Ensure new development compliments and enhances the townscape, uses quality building materials and employs best conservation practice in relation to protected structures;
- RD 2 Reinforce the urban structure of The Square in particular by way of maintenance, renovation, redevelopment and infill development;
- RD 3 Encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings within the town centre as appropriate and also infill development and backland development; encourage the maintenance and use of all town centre structures, especially the upper storeys to secure their longevity and support the town's vibrancy;
- RD 4 Enhance approach roads, Johnstown Road, Conoboro Road, Donaghmore Road, Errill Road by way of landscaping;
- RD 5 Support the preparation and implementation of an **Urban Regeneration Framework** for Rathdowney over the plan period.

Economic and Community Development

- RD 6 Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail and other town centre uses;
- RD 7 Facilitate the rejuvenation of Rathdowney Market Square as a civic plaza and functioning market place on a once-weekly or once-monthly basis;
- RD 8 Facilitate and support the redevelopment of Brand Central Hub for community enterprise;
- RD 9 Support the development of the tourism potential of Rathdowney and its location on the River Erkina;
- RD 10 Provide for the expansion and development of educational, social, community and recreational facilities in the settlement;

Infrastructure

- RD 11 Provide and enhance strategic and recreational pedestrian and cycling linkages and associated street lighting and cycle parking at buildings in community use, especially schools;
- RD 12 Enhance and facilitate improvements to the Rathdowney road network as necessary;
- RD 13 Identify a bus stop area and develop related disabled parking spaces and cycle parking stands in consultation with the local community and bus service providers;
- RD 14 Develop Greenfield lands within flood zone A to the south of the town centre as a town park and encourage the enhancement of the pond area for amenity use;
- RD 15 Support public realm enhancement works to improve pedestrian movements within the town centre which distinguish core area of the town by way of paving, street lighting, parking, undergrounding of cables, street furniture, planting etc

5.2 DURROW

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	834 845 -1%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	384 52
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Durrow's water supply is from the Convent and Fermoy Wells Wastewater treatment plant (Additional capacity of 2,071 PE) N77, R639, R434 Serviced
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	1 Primary School St Fintan's Church of Ireland, The Holy Trinity Soccer and GAA pitches, Children's play park Port Office, Fire Station, HSE, Garda Station, community hall, health centre, library, cultural centre, civil defence, Level 4 Retail Centre
Environment	Conservation Flooding	Located on the River Erkina within River Barrow/Nore SAC FRZ A and B associated with River Erkina which runs in a west/east trajectory
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	34 protected structures 6 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport Cycle Corridor	NTA, Sliabh Bloom Coaches, Local Link, Cycle corridor between Durrow and Abbeyleix on N77

5.2.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Durrow is a historic and picturesque town in the south of the county, located on the River Erkina and within the Demesne of 16th Century Castle Durrow Estate. The town lies approximately 25km south of Portlaoise and is located on the R639 road at its junction with the N77. The urban form of the village as seen today developed as a planned estate village under the influence of Viscount of Ashbrook, William Flower, M.P. for Portarlington.

The urban form of the town is dispersed however with a compact town centre. The tree lined central Square (dissected by the N77), which is overlooked by several fine 19th Century 2 and 3 storey buildings of high architectural order, provides a central focus to the town and an important link between the village and the Castle Durrow Estate. The walled Castle Durrow which is set in its own demesne also provides a focal landmark within the town centre. The village has developed along the N77 (Kilkenny Road) and the R639 (Cork Rd).

Much of the development to the south of the town square consists of residential development, both higher density housing estates and single dwellings on larger plots. Development to the north of the River Erkina is less dense and consists of a mix of uses including, residential, community and sporting facilities.

In order to preserve the special character of the town, it has been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area. The area known as the Pound is a small area at the junction of Carrigan Street and the Derry Road. This area has been landscaped with seating and provides a space where local artists can display their work. Tae Lane has also been planted and landscaped to provide a small amenity area, incorporating the Top Pump and traditional street lighting.

The River Erkina flows through the village meeting with the River Nore on the outskirts of the town. Mature trees and wooded areas enhance the sense of place and character of the town, integrating the town into the surrounding hilly landscape.

The land use strategy for Durrow aims to maintain and add to a built environment and heritage that is both attractive and distinctive, creating a unique sense of place. This will be achieved through the sensitive development of infill sites and the conservation of key buildings particularly within the Architectural Conservation Area. Supporting a compact and vibrant village centre is essential to maintaining the vibrancy and heritage of the town, in particular, as a key destination town on the Ireland's Ancient East route.

5.2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

5.2.2.1 Residential and Town Centre Regeneration

The total housing stock for Durrow as indicated in the 2016 Census was 523 dwellings. There has been a slight decrease in population since 2011 (primarily due to an aging population) and new residential development has largely taken place in the form of one off rural dwellings removed from the town and smaller development schemes within infill sites within the town.

The Core and Housing Strategy of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 60 units over the Plan period. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are 8 committed units.

New residential development within the town core backlands is impeded by the landlocked nature of the area with limited access onto the main access routes which are located within the ACA, however it is anticipated that 25 units could be delivered on infill/brownfield sites. The Plan therefore identifies 3 sites for new residential development which are sufficient to meet the projected housing requirements during the Plan period. These sites have been selected based on their geographical spread across the town and ability to consolidate the existing urban form and physical infrastructure.

5.2.2.2 Employment and Economic Development

Of the population aged 15 years and over, 56% are in employment. Unemployment is only slightly above the National average at 6%. The main employers in Durrow include Castle Durrow, Dunnes Garden Nurseries, the Castle Arms Hotel, Ashbrook House, The Stores and the range of services providers in the town including doctors, hairdressers, banks, public houses, garages and small shops.

Durrow provides for a wide range of retail/commercial services commensurate with its level 4 position within the County retail hierarchy, having sustained the business of a traditional group of retail shops and commercial services, including convenience retailing, banking, hardware provider, pharmacy, restaurants, bars, café, takeaways and clothing stores. Most of the buildings are owned by the proprietors operating their businesses from the ground floor, all of which collectively contribute to the character of this vibrant heritage centre.

Durrow was a traditional stopping point on the old Cork Road and has a long-established tradition of hotel and catering as a result. Durrow also has a strong tourism base, with Castle Durrow and 2 smaller hotels located in the town centre, providing local employment. A number of sites to the south west of Castle Durrow, which includes a disused heritage structure (noted below as Opportunity Site 1 in Fig 5.2), has been zoned for tourism purposes to allow for the expansion of tourist related facilities within the town.

The town also has significant tourism potential owing to its location on the River Erkina. A section of the River Erkina to the west of Durrow to Boston Bridge will be developed as a Blueway and will see significant active tourism potential especially for canoeing and kayaking.

Durrow is also in a prime location, offering significant heritage and amenity tourism products to merit its inclusion on Failte Ireland's, Irelands Ancient East route. It is also the starting point for the Leafy Loop walking trail and also offers excellent cycling opportunity. The Durrow Community Bike Hire Scheme, Pedal Vintage, was recently launched, which has significant potential to market Durrow as a cycle hub.



Fig 5.2: Opportunity Site 1

Lands available for General Business and Enterprise and Employment are primarily located within the town's development boundary to the north of the town centre and can facilitate the development of small-scale services and local enterprise. These lands have been selected as appropriate given their location adjoining the R744. Durrow is currently served by wireless broadband.

5.2.2.3 Social and Community Infrastructure

Durrow has a well-established social and community infrastructure. Durrow is served by a primary school in the grounds of the Castle off the main street. A crèche is located within the Square. A playground was opened in 2009 for the community at the Old Boys School on the Kilkenny Road and has been further expanded now to create other sporting pursuits such as basketball.

A community centre is located beside the church on the Kilkenny Road which caters for a number of organisations. Durrow Courthouse has also been successfully restored and is currently being used as a library and exhibition/meeting area for the use of the local community.

There are also a number of established community, sports and interest groups in the town and who work together for the collective benefit of Durrow.

Durrow Community Plan 2019 - 2023 is a community led approach to how the people of Durrow would like to see their town develop over the next number of years, highlighting priority projects such the redevelopment of the Methodist Church and Civil Defense property on Patrick St as a community facility (which is currently under development), requirement for additional play space, developing Durrow as a cycling hub and facilitating hot desking and remote working facilities within the village.

The town benefits from the amenity area of the River Erkina and is the starting point of the Leafy Loop walking trail. The recently approved River Erkina Blueway will be developed over the next number of years which starts within Castle Durrow Demesne to Boston Bridge further west. The central square provides passive amenity space and active space during events held within the village such as “The Scarecrow Festival” and which is also a short walk from the small pocket park of the Pound.

5.2.2.4 Physical Infrastructure and Movement

Durrow has its own wastewater treatment plant. Durrow’s water supply is from the Convent and Fermoye Wells. It has sufficient capacity in terms of both water and waste water to facilitate the development and growth provided for the lifetime of this Plan.

As previously indicated, Durrow is located on the N77 and its junction with the R639, both heavily trafficked routes from Portlaoise to Cashel (old Cork Road) and Kilkenny respectively. The thoroughfare of the N77 which is a direct route between Portlaoise and Kilkenny for many HGVs, particular along Carrigan Street and the Pound creates an unpleasant pedestrian experience. An orbital route is planned at a section of the N77 to the south east of the town which connects to the R639 to the south west.

Natural and managed open spaces including groups of trees and landscaped areas within Durrow, can contribute towards enhanced urban quality and provision of amenities for residents. This Green Infrastructure should be enhanced to provide connectivity between features such as the Pound and the Square and along the riverside within the village.

5.2.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- DU 1 Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Durrow’s Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New development shall respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development;
- DU 2 Encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings within the town centre as appropriate and also infill development and backland development; encourage the maintenance and use of all town centre structures, especially the upper storeys to secure their longevity and support the town’s vibrancy;
- DU 3 Improve the quality of the public realm and in particular of the open spaces in the centre of Durrow including the provision of seating away from the principal carriageways to allow for the supervision of children, the improvement of street lighting and the maintenance of the town pumps;
- DU 4 Protect and plant groups of trees on the principal approach roads and audit signage on all approach roads;

- DU 5 Maintain the quality and features of the public realm on The Square and introduce consistent village branding/presentation at the village entry points and along the main streets in the form of high quality signage, tourism information, public art and consistent village type lighting standards which would strengthen Durrow's identity;
- DU 6 Support and promote the implementation, where feasible, of the strategy contained in the Durrow Sustainable Community Plan;
- DU 7 Support the redevelopment of identified Regeneration/Opportunity Sites in the town (Map 5.2(b)).

Economic and Community Development

- DU 8 Promote Durrow as a tourism destination on Ireland's Ancient East Route and facilitate active tourism opportunities such as cycling and walking;
- DU 9 Harness the tourism potential associated with the River Erkina Blueway and walking trail of the Leafy Loop and promote the environmental tourism potential of Knockanoran woods / Bishop Woods alluvial woodland site;
- DU 10 Upgrade the river amenity area near the Old Stone Bridge and the Tae Lane area subject to the requirements of Habitats Directive;
- DU 11 Support and facilitate the development of enterprise to the north of the town and maintain and improve the range of commercial services available in the town centre;
- DU 12 Encourage the intensive use of existing community and sporting facilities and develop additional facilities which are flexible and capable of being managed for a number of different uses;
- DU 13 Support the development of Opportunity Site 1 for community enterprise/tourism purposes as indicated on Map 5.2(b) of the Plan;

Infrastructure

- DU 14 Improve pedestrian linkages and provide cycle path linkages within the town and facilitate the provision of cycle parking at buildings in community use;
- DU 15 Investigate the feasibility, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, of enhancing the Durrow road network as necessary and reserving land and pursuing funding for new orbital/relief routes;
- DU 16 Provide disabled parking and cycle parking in association with the existing bus stopping area.

5.3 BALLYLYNAN

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	1101 1084 1.5%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	426 37
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Rahin Group Water Scheme and the Kyle Public Water Supply. Ballylynan has its own wastewater treatment plant (Additional capacity of 702 PE) N78 Serviced
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	1 Primary School RC Church Soccer and GAA pitches, Children's play park Post Office, takeaway, Garda Station, community hall, health centre, new library, shop, Level 5 Retail Centre
Environment	Conservation Flooding	5km east of the River Barrow/Nore SAC NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	5 protected structures 3 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	IT Carlow bus services, Local Link

5.3.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Ballylynan village is located in south-east County Laois in close proximity to the Carlow/Kildare border, approximately 28 km south of Portlaoise on the N78 between Athy and Castlecomer. The Main Street is located in a northeast, southwest trajectory along the N78. The urban form of the village developed in a linear pattern along the N78 with much of the higher density residential development dispersed in clusters of varying layouts along the western boundary of the village.

The traditional village centre consists of single and two vernacular buildings forming a continuous building line either side of the N78. The tree lined Main Street has many traditional stone faced buildings which add to the character and sense of place within the village. Many of the approach roads into the village have significant ribbon development of one off rural dwellings.

Overall the village has developed in a linear and dispersed manner. The development of infill/brownfield sites within the village centre presents an opportunity to reinforce a more compact development pattern and provide the facilities for the continued growth and expansion of the town

The land use strategy for Ballylynan aims to consolidate and enhance the village core, regeneration of backland and infill site, public realm improvements and enhanced permeability from new residential areas to the new school.

5.3.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

5.3.2.1 *Residential Development and Town Centre Regeneration*

The total housing stock for Ballylynan as indicated in the 2016 Census was 426 dwellings. Although there has been a slight increase in population of 1.5% since the 2011 census, new residential development has largely taken place as infill development with existing residential zoned land and one off dwellings removed from the town.

The Core and Housing Strategy of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 181 units over the Plan period or 3% of the housing allocation for the County. Of this allocation, it has been determined that approximately 25 units could also be delivered on infill/brownfield sites. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are 39 committed units.

All further new residential development is accommodated in 4 land parcels as close as possible to the town centre area thus promoting sustainable land use and transport. Such parcels of land could also provide essential opportunity to develop serviced site to accommodate New Homes in Small Towns and Villages initiative due to the towns location in an area under strong urban influence, excessive ribbon development on the approach roads to the town and its proximity to large urban centres.

There is an opportunity to develop the backland areas, including refurbishment of the associated vacant dwellings on the east side of the Main Street identified as Opportunity Site 1 in Fig 5.3 below. This area of approximately 1.4ha incorporates a number of vacant units and their backland areas, also including an unfinished housing development to the south east of the site. Additional uses can be accommodated on this town centre zoning such as live work units, commercial enterprise and community enterprise. A masterplanning approach should be undertaken by the project proponent and the output submitted to the Planning Authority as part of a planning application as a means of demonstrating that key urban design and good place making principles have been fully considered in the proposal.

There are also a 3 traditional stone cottages (noted as Opportunity Sites 2 in Fig 5.3 below), 2 of which are Protected Structures, located to the south of Linden Drive and fronting onto to Main Street which are currently vacant and in need of refurbishment. Such structures should be brought back into use such as age friendly living units or space for community enterprise.

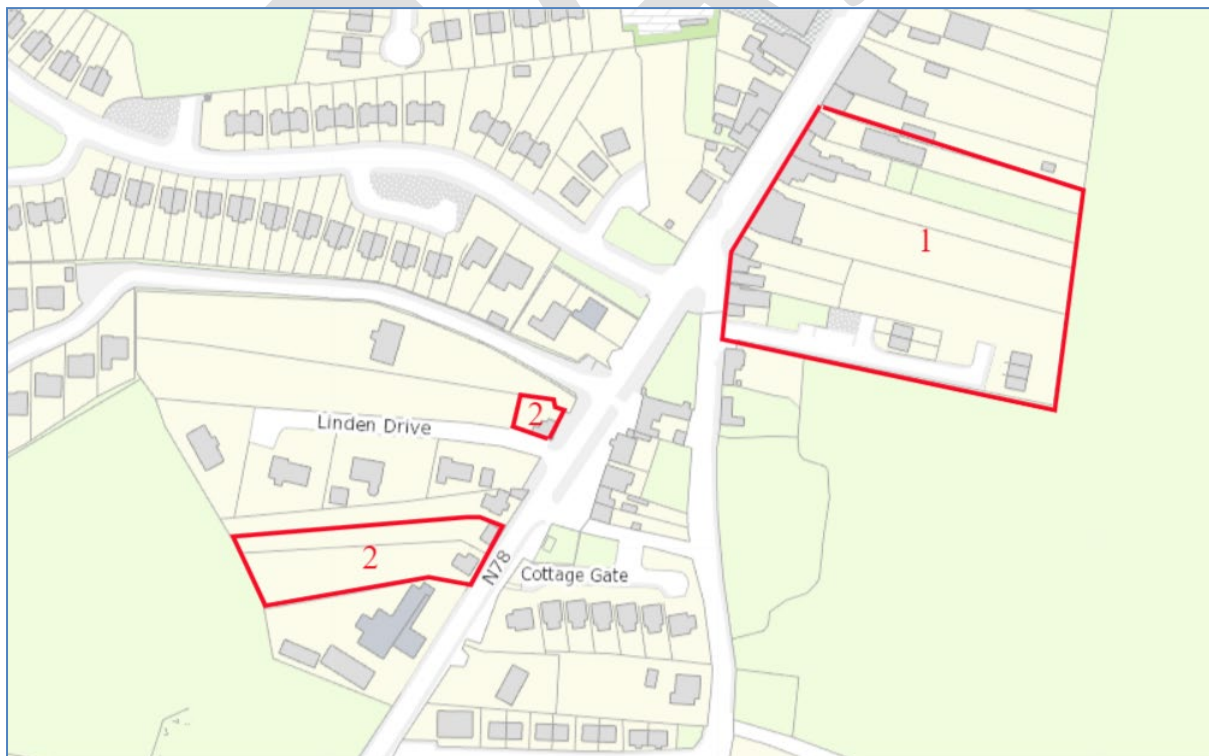


Fig 5.3: Opportunity Sites 1 and 2

The primary focus of the development strategy for Ballylynan is to strengthen and consolidate the village core. There will be a focus on regeneration of the historic core where a number of properties

are currently vacant. Appropriate reuse of underutilised sites for commercial uses is vital and encouraged and bringing the backland areas into use. The village core area also has a significant residential function and in order to promote and sustain an appropriate level of commercial activity within Main Street, the level of residential versus commercial use should be monitored where 'living over the shop' schemes should be promoted to ensure a non-residential ground floor use. Further retail/commercial development would benefit the vitality and viability of the village.

5.3.2.2 *Employment and Economic Development*

Of the population aged 15 years and over, 56% are in employment. Unemployment is above the National average at 9.6%. The main employers in the town are the services providers in the town including doctors, post office, public houses, convenience retailer and garage.

Ballylinan is identified as a level 4 retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy and has a limited range of local retail and business services, consisting of convenience retail, petrol station/shop, public houses, takeaway. A recently constructed retail unit, which houses the village library, in the village centre also provides the opportunity for additional local services. Such facilities are also the main employers in the village.

The proximity of Ballylynan to Carlow/Graiguecullen and to Athy in County Kildare has resulted in the aforementioned small-scale facilities servicing the village. Whilst the Plan ensures that there is sufficient and appropriately located land identified for village uses to protect and cater for the commercial needs of Ballylynan, the level of vacancy within the town core must also be addressed.

It is recognised that alternative uses and functions within such units should be encouraged to repurpose and rejuvenate the town centre, such as residential units, live-work units and remote working facilities.

With a growing population, sufficient land is also available for General Business which is located in the northern most limit of the settlement boundary, and can facilitate the development of small-scale services and local enterprise.

5.3.2.3 *Social and Community Infrastructure*

Ballylynan is adequately served in terms of social infrastructure. The village has a primary school, RC Church, new library and HSE Health Centre which serve the village and surrounding hinterland. St Anne's Community Centre is located in the old national school and has a multifunctional communal, educational and recreational role.

In terms of sporting facilities, the village soccer and GAA grounds are also conveniently located to the south east of the settlement boundary and provide clubhouse and training facilities. A children's play area is also located within this area. Whilst there are several open space areas within existing housing developments, the village does not benefit from a public park within its boundary. Any potential redevelopment of the old national school site may present an opportunity to achieve an area of public landscaped open space for recreational use. There is also an opportunity to promote safe walking and cycling within the village and in particular to the new primary which is located to the north west of the village.

5.3.2.4 *Physical Infrastructure and Movement*

Ballylynan's water supply is from the Rahin Group Water Scheme and the Kyle Public Water Supply and Waste Water Treatment Plant (PE 702). It has sufficient capacity in terms of both water and waste water to facilitate the development and growth provided for the lifetime of this Plan.

The N78 passes through the town and facilitates traffic, specifically HGVs from the south east of the County. The lack of traffic calming has resulted in a poor pedestrian and cyclist environment. This Plan supports environmental improvements required to enhance pedestrian and cyclist movement within the village core and along the approach roads connecting the community facilities, in particular the school, to the village centre and residential areas.

Natural and managed open spaces including groups of trees and landscaped areas within Ballylynan, can contribute towards enhanced urban quality and provision of amenities for residents. This Green Infrastructure should be enhanced to provide connectivity between features such as the Pound and the Square.

5.3.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- BLN 1 Consolidate the village centre by way of infill development, backland development and redevelopment as appropriate and enhance the public realm;
- BLN 2 Ensure that new development is sympathetic to the character of the town and ensure the use of quality finishing materials in particular along the Main Street;
- BLN 3 Protect established mature trees to the southeast indicated on Map 5.3(b);
- BLN 4 Encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings within the town centre as appropriate and also infill development and backland development; encourage the maintenance and use of all town centre structures, especially the upper storeys to secure their longevity and support the town's vibrancy;
- BLN 5 Support the regeneration of Opportunity Site 1 and 2 indicated in Map 5.3(b) for mixed use, residential and social enterprise development. All new development must be sensitive to the context and character of the sites including the refurbishment of Protected Structures.

Economic and Community Development

- BLN 6 Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail and other town centre uses;
- BLN 7 Facilitate the development of enterprise uses to the northeast of the town;
- BLN 8 Provide for the expansion and development of educational, social, community and recreational facilities in the settlement;
- BLN 9 Encourage the more active use of the community centre including the potential for the interchanging of crèche and other community services in the Centre;

Infrastructure

- BLN10 Improve pedestrian linkages and cycling linkages within the town centre, residential areas and the school and provide cycle parking at buildings in community uses, in particular at the national school;
- BLN15 Identify a suitable location for a bus stop and related disabled car parking spaces;
- BLN17 Provide a park within the town (possibly the area to the rear of the old school house).

6. VILLAGES > 500 POPULATION

DRAFT

6.1 CLONASLEE

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	566 518 9%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	266 16
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Water Treatment Plant Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity of 545 PE) R422 (Mountmellick to Kinnity) Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	Clonaslee College 237, Scoil Bhríde National School 118 St Manman's RC Church St Manman's GAA 2 community centres, Public House, Garda station, credit union, pharmacy, restaurant, shop, post office, machinery outlet, petrol station and shop, Level 5 Retails Centre
Environment	Conservation Flooding	The Sliabh Bloom Mountains are located to the immediate south of the village centre FRZ A and B associated with River Clodiagh and Gorragh River
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	8 protected structures 2 national monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Laois Link – twice weekly to Portlaoise

6.1.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

Clonaslee is a picturesque village in the north of the County, situated in the foothills of the Sliabh Bloom Mountains, anchored by the Clodiagh River and Gorragh River to the west and east respectively. The village is situated on the R422 Mountmellick to Birr road, 20km north west of Portlaoise. Access to Clonaslee was facilitated in the 19th century by the Cut, an impressive mountain pass cut through red sandstone. Nearby are the ruins of the Gothic mansion Brittas House and Castlecuffe, an early 17th century fortified dwelling.

The urban form of the village has developed essentially along 2 intersecting streets, Main Street and the Tullamore road. The Main Street has the layout of an estate village, comprising a wide and open boulevard, with a continuous building line defining the boulevard on either side and creating a vista which terminates in the Visitor's Centre, formerly the Church of Ireland. The boulevard with its two-storey simple, rendered and generally well-proportioned buildings, orientated towards the street and punctuated by the cut-stone former church, is the primary focus of the village. To the west of the main street, a small triangular green space contributes to the character of the village. Buildings front onto the green creating a strong sense of place and enclosure. A small hard landscaped square directly in front of Hickey's pub, close to the bridge over the Clodiagh River provides a pleasant amenity space. This area has been designated an Architectural Conservation Area.

The streetscape of the Tullamore Road which runs parallel to the Clodiagh River, is quite different. At the southern end, closer to the village, two-storey buildings create a strong feeling of urban enclosure on one side. Beyond the church gates, the building form changes and one-storey buildings predominate. At the southern end of this road, the village is anchored by a trailhead to Slieve Bloom Mountains and walking loops around Brittas House and Lakes.

6.1.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

6.1.2.1 *Village Centre Renewal and Residential Development*

The population of Clonaslee has grown by 9% over the last census period which represents a moderate rate of growth. Clonaslee is identified as a rural village within the settlement hierarchy and as such only limited residential development shall be accommodated within the lifetime of the Plan. There are no extant planning permissions for housing developments within the village.

The Core Strategy of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 51 units over the Plan period. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are no committed units. All further new residential development is accommodated in infill development and land to the west of the town centre as close as possible to the village centre area thus promoting sustainable land use and transport. It is imperative that any new development is integrated seamlessly within existing residential development for modest, low density housing schemes.

The primary focus of the development strategy for Clonaslee is to strengthen and consolidate the village core. There will be a focus on regeneration of the historic core where a number of properties are currently vacant. Appropriate reuse of under utilised sites for commercial uses is vital and encouraged and bringing the backland areas into use.

6.1.2.2 *Economic Development*

Clonaslee is identified as a Level 5 retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. It has a small range of retail services, primarily a local convenience shop/post office, machinery sales outlet, a pharmacy, restaurant, petrol station and a number of public houses. The village would benefit from a greater range and variety of such facilities for the wider community.

In order to facilitate the sustainable development of Clonaslee, a village regeneration strategy is proposed which builds on the tourism potential and opportunities of its unique location within the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains, where the village could be developed as a key hub within the area.

There are a number of key elements to the development and regeneration of Clonaslee which are indicated on Map 6.1(b) to enhance public realm within the village core and the gateways, and improve parking facilities and way finding to the Clonaslee Trailhead and Brittas Forest. Appropriate land has been zoned for the development of tourist related initiatives is indicated on Map 6.1(a) of the Plan.

6.1.2.3 *Social and Community Infrastructure*

Clonaslee is well-served by way of social infrastructure. The village has two primary schools, one in the village and one at Castlecuffe. A community crèche is located in the old boys school which caters for between 30-35 children. A second level school, Clonaslee College is also located in the village which serves the sounding hinterland. This school is located in the grounds of the well-utilised community centre. A playground, a recycling bring bank and all weather playing pitches where basketball and badminton are played are also located adjacent to the community centre. The GAA grounds are also conveniently located within the village centre.

Clonaslee is also a hub for active tourism associated within the Slieve Bloom Mountains and also the heritage areas of Brittas Forest and Lake. Clonaslee is one of 3 noted trailheads on the Slieve Bloom Way in the County. Clonaslee also has two looped walks around Brittas Wood and Lake – the Rickets Rocks Glendinoregan looped walks.

6.1.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- CLON 1 Mixed-use applications which comprise a housing element will be open to consideration within the village centre zoning, loss of active commercial or retail floorspace to residential use will not be accepted;
- CLON2 Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Clonaslee’s Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New buildings should respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development;
- CLON3 Introduce consistent village branding/presentation/public realm at the village entry points and along main streets in form of high quality signage, tourism information, public art and consistent village type lighting standards which would strengthen Clonaslee’s identity;
- CLON4 Require the preservation and reinstatement of traditional details and materials on existing buildings and the streetscape where improvements or maintenance works are being carried out.

Economic/Community Development

- CLON 5 Protect the established retail and commercial functions within the village;
- CLON 6 Promote the tourism product offered in Clonaslee having regard to its archaeological and architectural heritage and proximity to the conservation areas of Brittas Forest and Slieve Bloom Mountains;
- CLON 7 Promote Clonaslee as a tourist hub and as a destination for active tourism and as a multi experience tourism destination for visitors to Ireland’s Ancient East.;
- CLON 8 Support the development of tourist related initiatives having regard to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment;
- CLON 9 Encourage provision of an Elderly Day Care Service and associated accommodation for the elderly in consultation with the Health Services Executive and local developers;
- CLON 10 Enhance sporting facilities within the village including GAA facilities;
- CLON 11 Support provision, expansion or redevelopment of Social Infrastructure including recreational amenities (Public Open Space, GAA facilities, etc), Educational Amenities (School and Child-care) and Community Facilities;

Infrastructure

- CLON 12 Improve pedestrian linkages in the town and provide cycling linkages and cycle parking at buildings in community use, particularly schools;
- CLON 13 Provide additional vehicular and cycle parking in proximity to Brittas Forest and Clonaslee Trailhead;
- CLON 14 Encourage the removal of overhead power lines and their placement underground;
- CLON 15 Work with Offaly County Council to manage the condition of the Clodiagh River.

6.2 BALLYROAN

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	563 455 +23%
Housing Stock	2016 Census 2011 Census	213 25
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Crubeen Upper GWS and Tullore Public Water Supply Waste water treatment plant (Additional capacity 900 PE) R425 Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Scoil Eoin Phoil II Naofa NS (enrolment 159) St Patrick's Church RC, Ballyroan Church of Ireland Church Ballyroan Abbey GAA 2 pubs, local shop and petrol station, crèche, Community Hall, health centre
Environment/Heritage	Conservation Flooding	6km east of River Nore SPA FRZ A and B associated with the Glorian River
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services Cycle Routes	Local Link and Slieve Bloom Coaches NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	9 Protected Structures 5 National Monuments

6.2.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

Ballyroan has a significant cultural heritage which can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages, where a castle is likely to have stood on the eastern side of the Glorian River, built by Conall Ó Mórdha, son of Daibhí Ó Mórdha, Lord of Laois in the 14th Century. The area remained in the hands of the O'Mores until the 16th Century. Today, all that remains is a large mound and fosse which is planted over with trees, where it can be seen that the majority of the village developed on the eastern side of the castle.

Ballyroan Village is located 10km south of Portlaoise and 5km north of Abbeyleix on the R425. The village stretches in a linear manner along the Main Street (R425) where the streetscape consists of 2 storey traditional structures and uses mainly consist of residential and some commercial uses, with community and institutional uses more dispersed along Chapel Street.

The majority of residential development is located toward the eastern approach to the village along Chapel Street and on the south western approach from Abbeyleix along the R425. The village is well serviced in terms of community and social infrastructure with a church, primary school, multi functional community hall, the old National School serving as a community space and Ballyroan Abbey GAA Club located further east along the Spink road.

A village green is located to the south of the Main Street which allows for passive recreational needs of the community, with the larger housing estates served by pockets of public open space which also allow for a range of activities.

6.2.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

6.2.2.1 *Housing Land Requirement*

Population has significantly increased 23% between 2011 and 2016. A housing allocation of 63 units has been indicated in the Core Strategy, 47 units of which can be accommodated on infill/brownfield lands. Adequate infill opportunities on sites off Chapel Street have been identified for residential development. There are a number of extant planning permissions consisting of 23 dwellings units and 4 dwelling units on 2 sites to the west of the village centre and 20 dwelling units off Chapel Street. A scheme of 20 dwellings was approved (Part VIII) by Laois County Council as an extension to the current Housing scheme – Gleann na Glaisce. Consideration shall also be given to facilitate New Homes in Small Towns and Villages initiatives, for the residential development of serviced sites.

6.2.2.2 *Village Centre Renewal*

A number of key sites exist within the village core which presents the potential for physical and social regeneration with the support of private and public-sector investment, including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. Accordingly, the potential to improve economic and social development opportunities within the village is supported in this plan.



Fig 7.2: Opportunity Sites 1 and 2

Opportunity Site 1: This site comprises of the former Boys National School, which is currently vacant and situated in a prime location to the north of the village core. The site is rectangular in shape with a site area of circa 0.45 ha, bounded on the east by R425, and to the rear by open space. The site is zoned village centre and has the potential to provide a suitable mix of uses including community enterprise, remote working hub or light commercial.

Opportunity Site 2: This is a significant site within the village core along Main Street which comprises of 2 different land parcels - 17th century semi detached building with traditional shopfront currently in a state of disrepair and the remains of a detached 2 storey former house c 1170, both structure being Protected Structures. The site also includes a detached 2 storey dwelling house of vernacular style and associated outbuildings. This larger site area is also located within the zone of influence of a recorded monument of Ballyroan Castle. Both sites have considerable backland areas. The overall complex is circa 0.7 ha and is zoned for village centre development. The potential for development or reuse within the spheres of residential, employment, tourism, sport and recreation should be further explored in the context of regeneration. Any potential development within this complex should have regard to the requirement to respect the architectural and cultural heritage value of its context and be compatible with surrounding uses in the area.

6.2.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- BR 1 Encourage the maintenance of buildings within village core and encourage the regeneration of key derelict, vacant or underused village centre buildings noted as Opportunity Sites 1 and 2 on Map 6.2(b) of the Plan as appropriate.
- BR 2 Support the development of serviced sites under the New Homes in Small Towns and Villages Initiative
- BR 3 Protect (RPS 657) from further endangerment and secure the longevity of this seventeenth century structure.

Economic and Community Development

- BR 4 Support the functioning of Ballyroan as a retail, commercial and community service centre for residents of the village and the wider hinterland
- BR 5 Support the existing uses within the village core and encourage the development of mixed uses subject to development management standards.
- BR 6 Encourage the more intensive use of the Community Centre including the potential for the interchanging of crèche and other community services in the centre.
- BR 7 Support the reuse and redevelopment of the Ballyroan Boys National School and the Old School House for community/enterprise purposes.

Infrastructure

- BR 8 Provide and improve pedestrian linkages and cycle linkages within the village centre and between the village centre, community facilities and residential estates.
- BR 9 Provide disabled parking within the village centre and at buildings in community use.
- BR 10 Liaise with Irish Water to secure adequate water supplies to facilitate future development in Ballyroan.

6.3 BORRIS IN OSSORY

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	508 475 7%
Housing Stock	2016 Census 2011 Census	260 54
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Public Water - Donaghmore Borehole Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity of 1092 PE) R445 (Roscrea to Mountrath Rd) Serviced
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	St Joseph's NS (enrolment 106) Catholic and Church of Ireland Church GAA Grounds Public House, Garda station, pharmacy, restaurant, shop, post office, petrol station and shop, Level 5 Retail Centre
Environment	Conservation Flooding	River Nore SPA located 1km north FRZ A and B to the west of the village and FRZ A to the east of the village
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	12 Protected Structure 1 national Monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Laois Link – twice weekly to Portlaoise

6.3.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Borris in Ossory is located on the old N7 Dublin-Limerick road, now the R445, and adjacent to junction 21 of the M7 motorway. Borris in Ossory is located 5 kms from Ballybrophy Train Station which provides mainline rail services between Cork, Limerick and Dublin and to smaller settlements such as Roscrea. The village is also a long-established stopping point for inter-urban bus links. Geographically, Borris in Ossory is located in west Laois, close to the Tipperary border between the towns of Mountrath and Roscrea.

The village centre comprises of the Main Street which accommodates the main retail, commercial, institutional, educational and residential functions of the village. There are a number of protected structures in this part of the village. Although the village centre is compact and the architectural quality of the village is strong, Borris in Ossory suffers from dereliction and poor maintenance of some buildings and would benefit from enhancement of the public realm.

Architectural focal points include the Church of Ireland and former courthouse. During 2014 and 2015, works were carried out to conserve the decorative stonework at the courthouse and to restore the historic railings and gates round the building.

6.3.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

Village Centre Renewal and Residential Development

The population of Borris In Ossory has grown by 7% over the last census period which represents a moderate rate of growth. The village is identified as a rural village within the settlement hierarchy and as such only limited residential development shall be accommodated within the lifetime of the Plan.

The Core Strategy of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 75 units over the Plan period. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are no committed units. It is anticipated that 40 of the housing allocation could be delivered on infill/brownfield sites.

All new residential development shall be accommodated in infill development and land to the south east of Main Street indicated as **Opportunity Site 1** in Fig 6.2 and Map 6.3(b). This site of 2ha is located on the corner of Main Street and the St Patrick's Terrace Road and is the location of the former Leix County Hotel. This site has a considerable backland area and lies adjacent to an unfinished and derelict housing development. These land parcels could be amalgamated together to provide a mixed use development and provide much needed regeneration for the village.

In terms of regeneration of the historic core, there are a significant number of properties along Main Street which are currently vacant and in danger of dereliction. The town centre area would benefit from the completion of an Urban Regeneration Framework provide a consolidated approach to regeneration of the village centre to address vacancy and dereliction and appropriate reuse of underutilised sites. A number of strategic sites are noted however within the village which have considerable community enterprise potential.

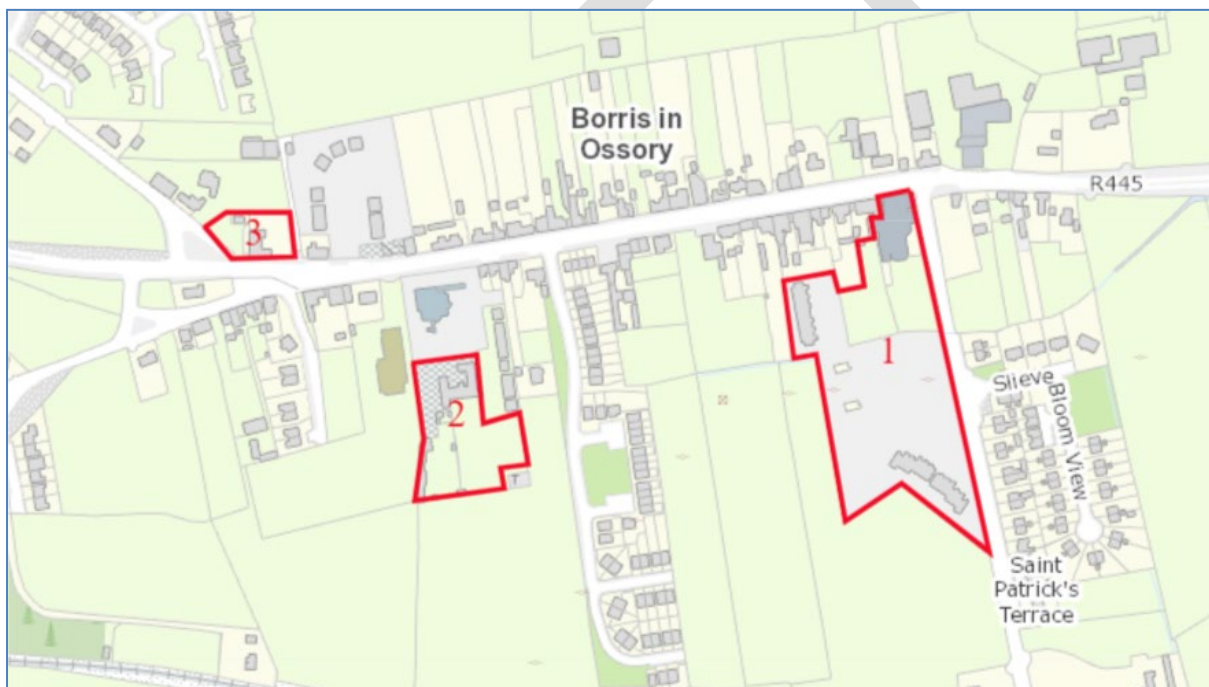


Fig 6.3: Opportunity Sites

Opportunity Site 2 is former Convent, which is currently vacant and situated in a prime location to the rear of the church off Main Street. The site is bounded on the north by the church, west by the primary school and to the south by Greenfield. The site is zoned Community/Education use with access through the church grounds onto Main Street. This existing vacant and underutilised site has the potential to provide a suitable mix of uses that could serve the wider community such as another possible location for a community centre, digital hub or further education facilities. The Convent is also a Protected Structure (RPS 640) and any proposal for its redevelopment should be sympathetic to the architectural quality of the structure.

Further to the west is **Opportunity Site 3** which occupies a prominent location on the western approach to the village. Considerable potential exists to develop this site as a new community centre, a tourism hub for nearby attractions or as a creative/digital hub for local employment opportunities. The building is the former courthouse and is listed on the Record of Protected

Structures (RPS 319). Any proposals for reuse and refurbishment should include an architectural impact assessment.

Economic Development

Borris In Ossory is identified as a fifth tier retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. It has a small range of retail services, primarily a local convenience shop/post office, butchers, a pharmacy, take away, petrol station and a number of public houses. The village would benefit from a greater range and variety of such facilities for the wider community and also renewal initiatives to address the level of vacancy in the village.

In order to facilitate the sustainable development of Borris In Ossory, a strategy is proposed which builds on the enterprise and employment potential and opportunities of its strategic location in proximity to the M7. Adequate enterprise and employment lands have also indicated to the south east of the village to accommodate larger scale employment opportunities, while industrial land is indicated to the west of the village centre. (Should any of these be strategic employment sites).

Social and Community Infrastructure

Recreational space is found at the Gaelic playing fields located 1.5km to the east of the village. The amenities include a playing pitch, dressing and meeting rooms. While, the existing community facilities are limited, an extensive range of community groups are present in the village with O'Brien Hall playing an important communal and recreational role. Regarding childcare facilities, the village has a play school, crèche, after school club and school collection services. A new primary school opened in 2012.

Borris In Ossory has a proactive community and voluntary sector and most recently prepared a Community Plan (2018 – 2022) which aims to address the economic and social development of the village over the coming years. This plan has identified a number of issues facing Borris In Ossory and provides a suite of objectives the community would like to see develop over the life time of the plan such as additional community facilities, services for younger and older people and economic development to address the declining economic profile of the village. This Plan has been informed by the objectives of the Borris In Ossory Plan and will support further initiatives.

Physical Infrastructure

The present public water scheme is sourced at Donaghmore borehole. The village also has its own waste water treatment plant. There is adequate capacity to accommodate future development of this Plan.

6.3.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- BIO 1 Consolidate the village centre by way of infill development, backland development and redevelopment as appropriate;
- BIO 2 Encourage restoration or redevelopment of derelict sites, vacant or underused buildings within the village centre;
- BIO 3 Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of the old Courthouse and Convent Sites (Opportunity Sites 2 and 3) to a public/community/enterprise uses which will provide an opportunity to capitalise on their prominent locations indicated on Map 6.3(b) of the Plan;
- BIO 4 Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of the Leix County Hotel site and backland areas with unfinished housing development (indicated as Opportunity Sites 1) to residential and mixed use purposes indicated on Map 6.3(b) of the Plan;

- MO 5 Support the preparation and implementation of an **Urban Regeneration Framework** for Borris In Ossory over the plan period;
- BIO 6 Enhance the appearance of the Main Street by means of tree planting and biodiversity planting proposals;

Economic Development

- BIO 7 Encourage industrial development to the west of the town to harness the development potential arising from the proximity to the motorway interchange, require the preparation of a masterplan including site specific flood risk assessment for these lands;
- BIO 8 Facilitate business and enterprise development on appropriate lands within and adjoining the village centre;
- BIO 9 Retain and improve the range of commercial services available in the village.
- BIO 10 Support provision, expansion or redevelopment of social infrastructure (public open space, playground facilities and educational amenities (school and child-care), and community facilities;

Infrastructure

- BIO 11 Improve pedestrian and cycle linkages in the town and provide cycle parking at buildings in community use, particularly schools;
- BIO 12 Facilitate the mobility of persons with special needs by way of disabled parking provision and suitable pedestrian network;
- BIO 13 Facilitate traffic management improvements within the town;

6.4 KILLENARD

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	671 622 8%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	249 28
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Borehole and Water Treatment Plant in Lough Waste Water Treatment Works in Portarlington Local Primary Road Serviced
Social Infrastructure	Schools Church Sporting Facilities Other	Killenard National School St John's catholic Church O Dempsey's GAA Public House, hotel, Mount St Anne's Retreat
Environment	Conservation Flooding	River Barrow/Nore SAC 2km north NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	2 Protected Structures 2 National Monuments
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Laois Link

6.4.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Killenard Village is located in northeast Laois in close proximity to the Kildare border, approximately 2.5 km from the former N7 Dublin to Portlaoise Road, 4 km from the M7 and 3 km from the town of Portarlington to the northwest. The village has experienced substantial residential growth during the Celtic Tiger year, owing to the development of The Heritage Hotel and Golf Course.

The village development envelope stretches from Mount Saint Anne's crossroads to the railway bridge in the North. The historic village core is defined by the Catholic Church, community centre, and the national school buildings where there are good pedestrian linkages between residential areas and social infrastructure. Groups of mature trees on the approach road from Mount St Anne's into the village contribute to the character of the settlement.

6.4.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

Village Centre Renewal and Residential Development

The population of Killenard has grown by 8% over the last census period which represents a higher than average rate of growth in comparison to other villages in the north of the County. Killenard is identified as a rural village within the settlement hierarchy and as such only organic residential development shall be accommodated within the lifetime of the Plan.

In terms of regeneration, the village core does not have a significant level of vacancy, where only one commercial unit has been identified as vacant. There are no extant planning permissions for housing developments within the village.

Economic Development

Killenard is identified as a fifth tier retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. It has a limited range of services only including a pub and restaurant. The village would benefit from a greater range and variety of such facilities for the wider community which could be accommodated within the vacant units to the front of the Hotel complex.

In terms of tourism potential, the Heritage Hotel, Spa and Gold Club is the main amenity in the village and draws visitors from around the Country.

Social and Community Infrastructure

In terms of social infrastructure, the village has a primary school, Catholic Church and a community centre that has a multifunctional communal, educational and recreational role. Developed areas of public open space are currently lacking in Killenard. A substantial area of land is zoned for open space at Mount Saint Anne's. GAA playing fields are located to the south of the village. There is an extensive leisure resource based at The Heritage Golf and Country Club including a championship and par 3 golf course, international bowls arena, leisure centre, health spa and private walking track.

A Sustainable Community Plan has also been prepared by the community for the village and identified, inter alia, the following objectives. It is an objective of this Plan to support the Killenard Sustainable Community Plan.

- Strengthen connectivity from the community centre to the GAA Club
- Improve public realm
- Improve commercial offering in the village
- Upgrade the community centre and memorial garden
- Improvements at Mount Henry Cross Roads.

Physical Infrastructure

The source of water supply for Killenard is from a borehole and a water treatment plant in Lough which is at capacity and requires upgrade. Effluent from Killenard is pumped, via a rising main, to the wastewater treatment works in Portarlinton and has an additional capacity for 2495 PE.

6.4.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- KD 1 Develop a tree planting scheme and landscape plan for the village centre to include the placing of native species of trees, plants and flower beds along the streetscape particularly outside the church and community centre;
- KD 2 Retain a modest building scale along the main thoroughfare of Killenard;
- KD 3 Housing developments shall be of a density compatible with the prevailing density of the village, higher densities may be considered within the village centre;

Economic and Community Development

- KD 4 Support the established tourist related products in the village such as The Heritage Hotel, Golf and Spa complex and Mount St Annes Retreat House;
- KD 5 Support the development of further enterprises and commercial uses on suitably zoned lands within Killenard;
- KD 6 Examine suitable locations for the development of passive public open space and playgournd;
- KD 7 Encourage the enhancement of community services and the more active use of the community centre including the potential for the interchanging of crèche and other community services;
- KD 8 Support insofar as practicable the objectives of the Killenard Sustainable Community Plan.

Infrastructure

- KD 9 Provide disabled parking spaces within or adjacent to the village centre;
- KD 10 Facilitate the proposed works on Duke Street Bridge Killenard and at Mount Henry Crossroads to Killenard Community Centre are carried out subject to available funding;

7. VILLAGES < 500 POPULATION

DRAFT

7.1 BALLYBRITTAS

Population	2016 Census	388
	2011 Census	331
	% Increase/Decrease	+17%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	135
	Vacancy	16
Infrastructure	Water	Borehole in Killenard
	Waste Water	Ballybrittas has a shared wastewater infrastructure, which connects to Killenard and is pumped from there to Portarlinton.
	Servicing Road Network	R445
	Broadband	Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	Nearest NS in Rath (2km S/E)
	Church	Nearest RC is ST John's in Killenard (2.5km N)
	Sporting Facilities	Nearest GAA pitch O Dempsey's Old Pound (1.5km N)
	Other	Public House, local shop and petrol station, crèche, a number of various enterprises
Environment/Heritage	Conservation	Derries Wood pNHA
	Flooding	Not Applicable
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	2 Protected Structures
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	24hr Airport Bus from Portlaoise to Dublin Airport
	Cycle Routes	NA

7.1.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Ballybrittas village is located on the old N8 Cork-Dublin road, now the R445, approximately 1 km from Junction 15 of the M7. The village formed around a cross roads where development is located in a linear pattern along the R445 with dispersed pockets radiating from the village core. It has a heterogeneous building stock with a large housing estate located on the northern perimeter of the village and one off dwellings located on all other approaches. The village has a strong economic base for a settlement of its size where a number of enterprise developments are also located on the northern and southern approach to the village.

In terms of community facilities, the village lacks a number of key social infrastructure components, however a number of facilities are located in nearby Rath, Killenard and Old Pound, including a national school, church and a community centre. One of the main amenity areas serving the village is Derries Wood (pNHA) which consists of a 9 acre lake set in extensive woodland area. Derries Wood is located less than 1km north east of Ballybrittas village core.

7.1.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirements

Ballybrittas has been the subject of substantial residential development between 2006 and 2011 where there was an increase in population of 56%. Between 2011 and 2016, the village experienced 6% growth. Only natural residential growth shall be facilitated over the period of this Plan, having regard to the household allocation in the Core Strategy where 12 units shall be accommodated.

A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are no committed units. All new residential development shall be accommodated to the south of the village centre which consolidates with existing residential development.

Due to its location on in proximity to Portarlington, Portlaoise and the M7, the hinterlands of Ballybrittas has experienced high urban generated rural development and is therefore designated an Area Under Strong Urban Influence in the rural typology of the County. Sufficient land has been zoned to accommodate residential development which could also provide essential opportunity to develop serviced site to accommodate New Homes in Small Towns and Villages initiative.

Village Centre Regeneration

The village core has a number of vacant units, both commercial and residential which require regeneration to strengthen the function of the village core and provide vital and strengthened community functions and social infrastructure for the surrounding population.

Opportunity sites have been identified for regeneration to promote a compact village settlement with a defined village core indicated in Fig 7.1. Opportunity Site 1 is an existing vacant public house and associated outbuildings (0.17ha) within the heart of the village centre. This site is zoned for village centre uses and could be refurbished for example as community enterprise or remote working hub. Opportunity Site 2 is a derelict site with single storey structure on a site of 0.13ha. This site is also zoned for village centre purposes and could be used for additional village services or for residential purposes.



Fig 7.1: Opportunity Sites

Social and Economic Development

The area has seen substantial development pressure for one off dwellings in recent years as a result of the growth of surrounding towns and the opening of the M7 motorway, which places Ballybrittas in a unique strategic location to capture its share of economic and social development. It has been identified in the analysis of the social infrastructure within the village, there is a clear requirement for additional community and recreation facilities for the large population base which could be accommodated as a regeneration opportunity in Site 1 or within the community/enterprise zoning.

Land has been zoned for enterprise and employment uses on the eastern limits of the village which can also accommodate community and recreation uses.

7.1.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Environment and Regeneration

- BB1 Encourage the maintenance of buildings and encourage the regeneration of key derelict, vacant or underused village centre buildings noted as opportunity sites 1 and 2 on Map 7.1(b) as appropriate;
- BB2 Provision of landscaping and biodiversity planting and street trees along the main street of the village;
- BB3 Support the development of serviced sites under the New Homes in Small Towns and Villages Initiative in lands identified as Residential 2;

Economic and Community Development

- BB4 Harness the potential of the villages' accessibility to the M7 through the appropriate development of lands for enterprise and employment, general business and industrial development subject to proper planning and sustainable development design and standards;
- BB5 Facilitate the expansion of village core appropriate to scale of development and expand the range of social and community services and facilities, available to residents and the wider rural hinterland subject to planning development and design standards;
- BB6 Support the development of remote working opportunities within the village core;

Infrastructure

- BB7 Provide footpath and cycle path within the village centre and to the residential housing estates and the lands zoned for community use;
- BB8 Provide pedestrian crossing within the village centre in association with the above pedestrian and cycle linkages and also with reference to the bus stop;
- BB9 Upgrade existing bus stop and provide associated disabled parking and cycle stands within the village core;
- BB10 Develop linked areas of public open space and provide safe cycle walking route to Derries Wood.

7.2 BALLINAKILL

Population	2016 Census	445
	2011 Census	438
	% Increase/Decrease	1.5%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	398
	2011 Census	444
Infrastructure	Water	Public Water - Donaghmore Borehole
	Waste Water	Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity of 229 PE)
Social Infrastructure	Servicing Road Network	R432
	Broadband	Serviced
Social Infrastructure	Schools	St Joseph's NS (enrolment 106)
	Church	St Canice's Catholic Church
	Sporting Facilities	GAA grounds, swimming pool, fishing lake
	Other	Public House, Garda station, pharmacy, restaurant, shop, post office, machinery outlet, petrol station and shop
Environment	Conservation	River Barrow/Nore flows to the immediate east of the village. Although not a conservation area, Mass Lough is located to the east within walking distance of village centre
	Flooding	Not Applicable
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	13 Protected Structures
	Monuments	6 National Monument
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Laois Link – twice weekly to Portlaoise

7.2.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Ballinakill is a picturesque village in south Laois, located on the R432 between the heritage town of Abbeyleix and Ballyragget village in Co Kilkenny. The village has a unique character created by the interaction of the traditional architecture, a linear streetscape with village square and its setting within the landscape feature of Masslough Lake and woodland.

The urban form of this planned estate village dating back to 1612, developed essentially in a linear pattern along Main Street, however overtime this streetscape extended to the south to include the Durrow Road and the Castlecomer Road at the bottom of Stanhope Street. To the north, the gateway to the village from Abbeyleix is marked by impressive 'toll trees' where a toll was once paid by visitors to the village.

The Main Street has the layout of an estate village, comprising a wide and open boulevard, with a continuous building line defining the boulevard on either side and creating a vista which terminates in the village square framed with 2 and 3 storey buildings and a monument dedicated to the local men who died in the 1798 rebellion. The boulevard is lined with two-storey simple, rendered and generally well-proportioned buildings, orientated towards the street and are punctuated by 2 gothic churches and terminates in the village square, which creates the central focal point of the village. Some historic painted timber shopfronts have been retained to village centre properties creating a strong sense of place. Owing to its unique character and heritage, the village centre has been designated an Architectural Conservation Area and also a Zone of Archaeological Significance.

The southern streetscapes are quite different. Chapel Street is defined along both sides of the street with single storey cottages and 2 storey semi detached and detached dwellings. A low density residential development is also located at the village's most western boundary. The Castlecomer rd and Ballyragget rd are again lined with single storey and one storey buildings creating a strong sense of enclosure. At the southern end of the Castlecomer road the graveyard marks the southern

boundary to the village. A number of new residential areas have been established around the town, namely Heywood Village lakeside homes on the Abbeyleix approach road, Monaclear on the Durrow Road and Masslough Meadow Estate at the top of Chapel Street.

7.2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

Village Centre Renewal and Residential Development

The population of Ballinakill has grown by 1.5% over the last census period which represents a low rate of growth in comparison to other villages in the north of the County. Ballinakill is identified as a rural village within the settlement hierarchy and as such only limited residential development shall be accommodated within the lifetime of the Plan.

The Core Strategy of the Plan provides a housing allocation of 45 units over the Plan period. A review of extant planning permissions within the town has determined that there are no committed units.

All new residential development shall be accommodated in infill development in 3 land parcels to the north and south of the village centre. There is substantial backland area to the east of Main Street, however this area is substantially landlocked with restricted access from Main Street and Chapel Lane. The area is also within the Balinakill ACA which further impedes access.

In terms of regeneration of the historic village centre, there are a number of properties off Market Square which are currently vacant and in danger of dereliction. Of particular note is an opportunity site the south east corner of Market Square (indicated as Opportunity Site 1 in Fig 7.2) which has the potential to regenerate a significant traditional structure in need of repair. The site is also located within the zone of archaeological potential and includes a protected structure and two monuments, including the site and ruins of the former charter town tower house or castle. This site is zoned for village centre uses which would allow a mix of uses to take place including economic, tourism and residential. Any redevelopment of the site must include detailed archaeological and architectural impact assessments.

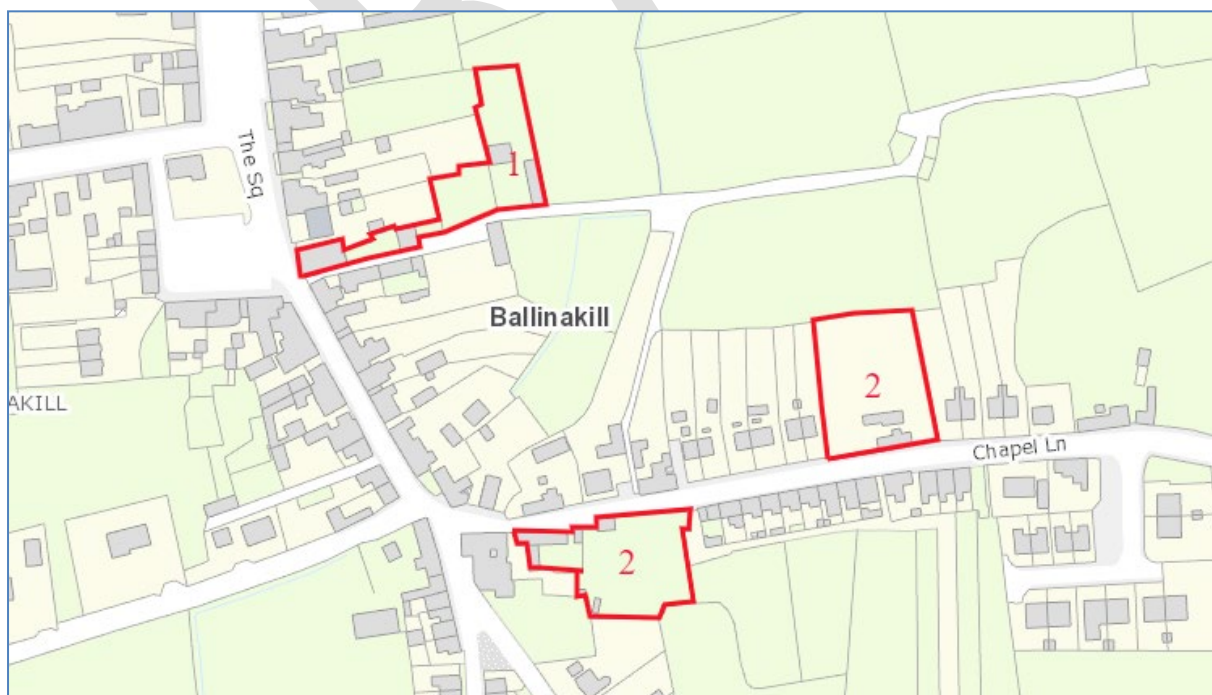


Fig 7.2: Opportunity Sites 1 and 2

It was also noted that there are a number of vacant/derelict housing units along Chapel Lane (indicated as Opportunity Sites 2) that would provide an opportunity for refurbishment and redevelopment on site areas of 0.24ha and 0.21ha. It is imperative that any new development is integrated seamlessly within existing residential development.

Social and Community Infrastructure

Ballinakill is well-served by way of social infrastructure. The village has a primary school located in the village centre and a playschool adjacent. The community centre is located on the Main Street and is used by the local groups, which caters for a wide catchment area. GAA playing fields are located to the north of the village.

An outdoor swimming pool is located off Main Street within the village centre and is well-used during the summer months. Most recently Laois County Council prepared a Part 8 for lands adjacent to the swimming for a playground.

Ballinakill has a good network of green infrastructure with walks around the Mass Lough and the landscaped gardens of the Heywood Demesne. The community hall facilitates Bingo, snooker and squash courts.

Ballinakill has a proactive community and has most recently prepared a non statutory Community Plan (2018 – 2022) which aims to address the economic and social development of the village over the coming years. This plan has identified a number of issues facing Ballinakill and provides a suite of objectives the community would like to see develop over the life time of the plan such the development of tourism in the area and in particular additional walking routes which links to Mass Lough, Heywood Gardens and the village and facilitate the upgrade and development of community facilities on parish lands. This Plan has been informed by the objectives of the Ballinakill Community Plan and will support further initiatives.

Economic Development

Ballinakill is identified as a fourth tier retail centre in the County Retail Hierarchy. It has a small range of retail services, primarily a local convenience shop, weekly mart, a pharmacy and a number of public houses. The village would benefit from a greater range and variety of such facilities for the wider community.

Due to its location in proximity to a number of natural and cultural amenities such as Mass Lough, River Nore and Heywood Demesne, the tourism potential of the village should be developed especially for in the area of angling and outdoor activities. Ballinakill is also in a prime location, offering significant heritage and amenity tourism products in proximity to both Durrow and Abbeyleix to merit its inclusion on Failte Ireland's, Irelands Ancient East route.

7.2.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Built Form and Regeneration

- BK 1 Protect and enhance the archaeological heritage of Ballinakill Zone of Archaeological Potential;
- BK 2 Mixed-use applications which comprise a housing element will be open to consideration within the village centre zoning.
- BK 3 Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Ballinakill's Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New buildings

should respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development.

- BK 4 Introduce consistent village branding/presentation/public realm at the village entry points and along main streets in form of high quality signage, tourism information, public art and consistent village type lighting standards which would strengthen Ballinkill's identity
- BK 5 Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of Opportunity Site 1 to a public/community/enterprise uses which will provide an opportunity to capitalise on its prominent location in Market Square indicated in Map 7.2(b);
- BK 6 Encourage and facilitate the regeneration of Opportunity Sites 2 for residential development indicated in Map 7.2(b);
- BK 7 Examine the feasibility of making the Toll Trees at entrance to village subject of a Tree Preservation Order;
- BK 8 Encourage the restoration or redevelopment of vacant and derelict buildings in the village centre;

Economic and Community Development

- BK 9 Support the development of tourist related development in the village and market the village for proximity to natural and cultural amenities;
- BK 10 Facilitate and support the expansion of commercial services within the village core;
- BK 11 Support the development of commercial tourism and walking/cycling routes around Mass Lough, Heywood Garden and the village centre to support an evolving active tourism product for the area;
- BK 12 Encourage additional employment opportunities at the Mart site;
- BK 13 Upgrade the outdoor swimming pool and provide a playground on Parish lands;
- BK 14 Support the provision, expansion or redevelopment of Social Infrastructure and community facilities;

Infrastructure

- BK 15 Improve pedestrian linkages in the town and provide cycling linkages and cycle parking at buildings in community use, particularly schools;
- BK 16 Facilitate the mobility of persons with special needs by way of disabled parking provision and suitable pedestrian network;
- BK 17 Restore the Walkways particularly at Brewery Lane and Dunphy's Lane.

7.3 CLOUGH

Population	Estimate (No Census details)	58
Housing Stock	Estimate (No Census details)	20
Infrastructure	Water	Private wells
	Waste Water	Waste Water Treatment Plant – constructed wetland
	Servicing Road Network	Local road
	Broadband	Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	Clough NS (enrolment 82)
	Church	RC Church
	Sporting Facilities	Clough/Ballacolla GAA located in Ballacolla
	Other	2 Community Hall, pub
Environment /Heritage	Conservation	1km north of Grantstown Wood and Lake pNHA
	Flooding	NA
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	Bi Weekly Local Link service to Portlaoise
	Cycle Routes	Destination along Slieve Bloom Bike Trail
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	1 Protected Structure

7.3.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Clough is a picturesque late 18th century village set in the heart of the south Laois countryside and located on a local road 6km north east of Rathdowney, approximately 1km west of the M8. Clough Church was built in 1770 and refurbished in 1871 and is one of the main distinguishing features of the village. The church was built alongside St. Canice's Monastery, Aghaboe and is of great historical significance to the area.

The development envelope for Clough stretches from a south east direction from the church to the school, giving it a dispersed urban structure. Development within the village consists of a community centre, graveyard, playschool, school and pub.

7.3.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

Clough has not experienced growth similar to that which has occurred in other villages within the County. In this regard the facilities available are considered to be adequate at present and village will remain a small scale village settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Plan.

The capacity to accommodate multi house residential development is low, however appropriate infill development will be supported to consolidate development.

Village Regeneration

Potential for regeneration the village is limited given the rural character of the village. Some infill development opportunities are present within the village centre zoning, which would allow for limited local services.

In terms of community facilities, the requirement for a new community centre has been highlighted. In this regard appropriate land has been zoned for such uses and associated recreation space in the village.

Infrastructure

An Integrated Constructed Wetlands was built to service the existing housing scheme at Limekiln.

7.3.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- CL 1 Consolidate the urban structure of the village by way of infill development;
- CL 2 Provide landscaping features and welcome signs incorporating natural materials to be located on the approach roads to the village in consultation with the community;

Economic/Community Development

- CL 3 Support commercial uses within the village centre necessary for the population of the village;
- CL 4 Support the development of a new community centre and recreation space on appropriately zoned land;
- CL 5 Enhance the amenity area surrounding the old kiln and identify and develop active and passive recreational facilities;

Infrastructure

- CL 7 Secure cycle parking facilities at the national school, church and community centre;
- CL 8 Improve the road network incrementally;
- CL 9 Ensure that the WWTP is upgraded to meet the requirements of the population and that all works associated with the upgrade are assessed according to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive;

7.4 ERRILL

Population	2016 Census	182
	2011 Census	196
	% Increase/Decrease	-7%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	91
	Vacancy	19
Infrastructure	Water	Errill Group Water Scheme
	Waste Water	Errill has its own wastewater infrastructure (Additional capacity XX PE).
	Servicing Road Network	Crossroads of the R433 and local roads
	Broadband	Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	S N Naomh Colmcille (enrolment 71)
	Church	Our Lady Queen of the Universe Church RC
	Sporting Facilities	GAA pitch
	Other	2 pubs, shop, HSE health centre (closed), community centre
Environment /Heritage	Conservation	River Barrow/Nore SAC (002162), The Curragh and Goul River Marsh pNHA (000420)
	Flooding	NA
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	Local Trip
	Cycle Routes	NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	NA
	Monuments	1 National Monument

7.4.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

Errill village is located in southwest Laois close to the Tipperary/ Kilkenny border, 6.5 kilometres from Rathdowney and 16 kilometres from Borris in Ossory.

The village development envelope for Errill stretches from the central diamond area in a linear manner along four approach roads with the majority of development forming towards the eastern and southern boundary of the village. The village core centres around the local shop and public houses, where traditional style single storey and two storey buildings line both sides of the street.

The Rathdowney approach road to the east comprises of a privately owned sports grounds and a long established low density housing development, while the southern area comprises of a mixture of new and old dwellings of varying styles.

Social infrastructure is relatively disperse from the village core with the primary school and community hall located 0.5km south of the village core and the GAA playing fields located 1km north. In terms of natural and cultural heritage, Ballagh Castle and Ballagh Bog are located 2.5km south of the village core.

7.4.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

Population has decreased by 7% since the last Census and minimal development has taken place in the period of the previous Development Plan.

There is currently a Laois County Council approved (Part 8) housing development of 14 dwellings planned on residential zoned land to the south of the village core.

A housing allocation of 45 units has been indicated in the Core Strategy which can be accommodated on lands to the north east and south west of the village. The village also has capacity within the existing infrastructure to facilitate New Homes in Small Towns and Villages, for the development of serviced sites to create 'build your own home' opportunities within the existing footprint of village on residential zoned.

Village Centre Regeneration

Potential for regeneration the village is limited given the rural character of the village. Some vacant units and infill development opportunities are present within the village centre zoning, which would allow for limited local services.

Errill has a strong and active community sector, Errill Vision Group, who has regularly received grant aid for the upgrading of social infrastructure in the village. Most recently a non statutory Errill Village Plan was prepared with a focus on driving community and economic development. A number of priority projects have been noted including the redevelopment of St Bernadette's Hall, the reopening and redevelopment of the village health centre, new and improved sporting recreation facilities such as a new playground.

7.4.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- ERR1 Protect the distinctive diamond shape and related green open spaces and ensure infill development or redevelopment is sympathetic in relation to building lines, roof profiles and building heights;
- ERR2 Enhance the soft landscaping and provide seating to the central passive open spaces;

Economic and Community Development

- ERR 3 Support the existing commercial services in Errill and facilitate their expansion subject to proper planning and sustainable development and design standards;
- ERR 4 Support the redevelopment of the old HSE building to provide a community hub and facilitate communal facilities;
- ERR 5 Support the development of a village park;
- ERR 6 Support the objectives of Errill Village Plan, insofar as practicable;

Infrastructure

- ERR 7 Improve pedestrian linkages and provide cycling linkages within the village centre and between the village centre, residential housing estates and the GAA playing fields, St Bernadette's Hall and Errill NS;
- ERR 8 Provide disabled parking within the village centre;
- ERR 9 Improve pedestrian and cycle linkage to cultural tourism locations of Ballagh Castle and Ballagh Bog

7.5 KILLEEN

Population (Killabban ED)	2016 Census	434
	2011 Census	420
	% Increase/Decrease	3%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	169
	2011 Census	169
Infrastructure	Water	Borehole
	Waste Water	Waste Water Treatment Plant (Additional capacity of 115 PE)
	Servicing Road Network	Crossroads of the R429 and local roads
	Broadband	Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	St Abban's National School (enrolment 94)
	Church	St Abban's Church RC
	Sporting Facilities	GAA pitch shared with Arles
	Other	Pub, community centre
Environment /Heritage	Conservation	River Barrow/Nore SAC (002162), The Curragh and Goul River Marsh pNHA (000420)
	Flooding	Extensive FRZ A and B
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	Local Trip
	Cycle Routes	NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	1 Protected Structure

7.5.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Killeen village is located in east County Laois in close proximity to the Kildare border, anchored to the west and east by tributaries of the River Barrow, approximately 10km north of Carlow Town. The traditional village development envelope for Killeen is centred on a staggered cross road, with St Abban's Catholic Church forming the focal point for the village. Development formed along the main street in the village, the R429, which consists of the primary school, community centre and a local authority housing estate.

Social infrastructure within the village consist of a local pub, Killeen Community Centre and St Abban's National School. Much of the village is restricted from development by noted flood zones.

7.5.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

The village has seen significant residential development in the mid 2000s with the development of a high density residential estate and village green located to the south of the church.

There is an extant permission for 30 to the south east of the existing residential development, some of which are serviced sites in phase 2 of the development. A housing allocation of 30 units has been identified within the Core Strategy of the Plan. Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Development Plan in line with the Development Plan Core Strategy.

Village Regeneration

Potential for regeneration is limited given the rural character of the village. This Plan will support the expansion of existing social infrastructure in the village to support the community.

7.5.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- KL 1 Develop a tree planting scheme and biodiversity and landscape plan for the village centre to include the placing of native species of trees, plants and flower beds along the streetscape particularly outside the church and community centre;

Economic and Community Development

- KL 2 Support the development of local enterprise and commercial uses on suitably zoned lands within Killeen;
- KL 3 Encourage the enhancement of community services and the more active use of the community centre;

Infrastructure

- KL 4 Improve pedestrian linkages and provide cycling linkages within the village centre and between the village centre and residential areas.

DRAFT

7.6 KILLESHIN

Population (Ballickmoyler ED)	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	650 615 6%
Housing Stock	2016 Census 2011 Census	252 233
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	The water supply from Carlow County Council Waste Water Treatment Plant in Mortarstown, Carlow R430 Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	1 Primary school Catholic Church GAA pitch, Soccer pitch, community centre/all weather pitch Pub, community centre, playschool and shop, local enterprise centre
Environment /Heritage	Conservation Flooding	1.5km south of River Barrow/Nore SAC FRZ A and B to the north and south of the development boundary
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services Cycle Routes	Local Service NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	None within the village None within the village

CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Killeshin village is located in southeast Laois 4km to the north west of Carlow Town and on the Regional Road (R430) between Abbeyleix and Carlow.

The development envelope for Killeshin stretches in a northwest to southeast direction along the R430. The village core consists of a village shop, the old national school and community hall. The village has significant cultural heritage located to the south of the development boundary which includes the parish church, medieval church ruins and old graveyard.

The Church of St. Brigid and the Sacred Heart occupies a prominent and elevated site to the north of the village. Killeshin has experienced significant growth and development pressure in recent years as a result of its proximity to Carlow Town. The village has significantly developed to the east with the development of a private housing development, Rath Glen and the new primary school.

Public recreational space is found at the GAA playing fields located to the north east of the village and also within the community centre area. The community centre on the site of the old national school has a number of businesses and incubator units operating on site employing 57 people, including; The Den childcare facility, hairdresser, tea which provides essential services for the community.

REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

The village has seen significant residential development over the past 10 years with the development of Rath Glen to the east of the village. However, Killeshin has not been identified as a settlement by the Central Statistic Office which limits detailed analysis of population. However the settlement lies within the ED of Ballickmoyler which indicates the area has grown by 6% since the last Census.

A review of extant planning permissions has determined that there are 50 committed units on the remaining areas of new residential land zoning to the south east of the village core. The development of Killeshin is dependent on the Waste Water Treatment Plant capacity for Carlow and the level of development is limited by this fact. The Core Strategy has provided a housing allocation of 69 units during the lifetime of the Plan. There are no Brownfield or infill opportunities within the village. Sufficient land is zoned to accommodate this growth.

Village Centre Regeneration

Due to recent residential development and the relocation of the school to the northern limits of the village boundary, there is limited scope with the traditional village core for new development, however there is opportunity for consolidation and creating better links to the main residential area of Rath Glen.

The heart of the village centres around the Community Centre, where a considerable amount of the structures on site are of a temporary construction, however recent permission has been granted for permanent structures. This Plan supports the redevelopment of this vital resource by extending the mixed use zoning to include the green area to the east and connect with the area zoned mixed use within Rath Glen to provide a more connected and consolidated village core. It has also been identified within the Killeshin Sustainable Community Plan, that a village playground with recreational equipment is required due to recent growth. An area behind the community centre is the preferred choice for such an amenity area.

Killeshin has a strong and active community. Most recently, a non statutory Killeshin Sustainable Community Plan was prepared with a focus on driving community and economic development. A number of priority projects have been noted including the redevelopment of a more prominent village hub, playground including outdoor gym, upgrade to Killeshin Community Hall, outdoor communal space for running markets, fetes etc, development of Killeshin Waterworks as a recreational and tourist amenity in the area and traffic safety improvements.

WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- KN 1 Protect and enhance the archaeological heritage of Killeshin;
- KN 2 Prepare a masterplan for the redevelopment of village core to support the expansion of the community centre and business units to consolidate the centre with the development opportunity within Rath Glen.
- KN 3 Facilitate the provision of sheltered housing facilities for the elderly;
- KN 4 Seek to provide open space and recreational areas for the local population, in particular a playground. This could potentially be located to the rear of the community centre;

Economic Development

- KN 5 Protect and support the expansion of the existing retail use of Killeshin;
- KN 6 Facilitate and support the expansion of commercial services within the village core;
- KN 7 Support the development of Killeshin Waterworks as a recreation and amenity area;
- KN 8 Support the objectives of the Killeshin Sustainable Community Plan insofar as practicable;

Infrastructure

- KN 9 Enhance pedestrian and cycle linkages within the village core and between new residential estates and the church, including a safe pedestrian crossing;
- KN 10 Improve road network incrementally, including traffic calming measures to reduce traffic speed;

- KN 11 Facilitate the upgrading of car parking, including disabled parking at the church, old school house and community centre;
- KN 12 Encourage the provision of a public garden with allotments for the benefit of the local community;
- KN 13 Facilitate the development of an underpass at Cappalug Road subject to having the necessary funding in place.

DRAFT

8. RURAL SETTLEMENTS

DRAFT

8.1 ARLES

Population by ED	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	418 421 -1%
Housing Stock by ED	2016 Census 2011 Census	146 142
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Unserviced Unserviced N80 Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Arles National School (Enrolment: 56) Sacred Heart RC Church and graveyard Arles GAA pitch Public House, Garda station
Environment	Conservation Flooding	2.5km north of River Barrow/Nore SAC Not applicable
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Monuments	RPS 375 Church RPS 518 Freestanding Georgian Gothic mausoleum LA01639 St Abbans Well LA01640 penal mass station

8.1.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

Arles is a small picturesque village located on the N80 approx. 9 kilometres west of Carlow Town. Despite its limited size and population, Arles enjoys a relatively healthy service base including church, national school with associated playing fields, Garda station and public house.

In addition, a housing scheme and related treatment system (PE 150) has been developed on the south-eastern approach to the village doubling the population of the village and supporting its sustainability as a settlement.

The Church provides the focal point for the village setting, with an adjacent small semi-circular public open space provides a pleasant setting to the public house and adjacent buildings. GAA playing fields are located to the north of the village.

8.1.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

There is a lack of social infrastructure and local services in the village, where neighbouring urban areas provide access to commercial services and community facilities. Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Plan in line with the Core Strategy.

Village Centre Regeneration

Due to the rural nature of this village, there is limited scope for development opportunities. There is, however, a significant derelict building located to the west of the Church, the presents a regeneration opportunity. This structure is located within the village centre zoning and could be redeveloped for community uses or residential uses. Public realm improvements are also encouraged throughout the village such as tree planting and greening.

8.1.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- ARL 1 Reinforce the approaches to the village through creative placemaking including additional planting of native trees and biodiversity planting;
- ARL 2 Support the improvement and maintenance of the small open space in the village core;

Economic Development

- ARL 3 Facilitate and support mixed use development at an appropriate scale within village core subject to planning and development standards;

Infrastructure

- ARL 4 Provide and improve footpath and cycle path in the village core between the residential estate and the GAA playing fields;
- ARL 5 Facilitate enhanced set-down and traffic calming measures in the vicinity of the school.
- ARL 6 Provide traffic calming measures and a convenient pedestrian crossing in response to high traffic volumes and in association with new pedestrian and cycle linkages;
- ARL 7 Carry out incremental improvements to the existing road network.

DRAFT

8.2 BALLACOLLA

Population (Killermogh ED)	2016 Census 2011 Census % Population Change	346 341 1
Housing Stock by ED	2016 Census 2011 Census	145 145
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Group Water Scheme Unserviced R433, R434 Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Community Centre Other	St. Pius X National School Church of Immaculate Conception RC and Graveyard GAA grounds, handball facility Hawthorn Community Centre Village shop, 3 local pubs Glanbia, Garda Station
Environment/Heritage	Conservation Flooding	River Barrow/Nore SAC 2.5km south Cuffborough pNHA 2.5km west Grantstown Nature Reserve pNHA 3km west Not Applicable
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structure	2 Protected Structures

8.2.1 CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

The rural village of Ballacolla is located in south Laois at the crossroads of the R433 Abbeyleix to Rathdowney regional roads and the R434 Durrow to Borris in Ossory regional roads. The village is well connected to larger urban areas, being 4kms from Junction 3 of the M8, 8kms West of Abbeyleix, 11kms East of Rathdowney, 6kms North of Durrow and 16kms South of Borris in Ossory.

Ballacolla's sense of place and definition is formed around a group of late 19th and 20th Century 2 storey traditional buildings located at the four corners of the village crossroads. Natural stone walls forming boundaries along approach roads into the centre also add to this distinctive sense of place. The village core accommodates a shop, 3 local pubs and Glanbia while other essential services such as the church, school and community centre, GAA Pitches are located further north and east on the approach roads.

8.2.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

The development of Ballacolla is dependent on the development of sufficient water and waste water infrastructure to adequately service the village and the level of residential development is limited by this fact. Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Plan in line with the Core Strategy. However appropriate small scale infill residential development could readily integrate with the existing built environment to consolidate the urban form of the village, east of the community centre and directly north of the existing housing estate.

Village Centre Regeneration

Regeneration opportunity is limited by the rural nature of this settlement, it is a priority of this Plan to enhance the settlement structure by facilitating improved local service provision within the village

core supporting public realm enhancement in terms of tree planting, biodiversity planting and greening of the approach routes and the village centre public area.

The reuse of the former national school located on the Abbeyleix Road also has the potential to deliver positive social and economic benefits for the local community. A community garden has already been put in place by members of the community. Any development proposals should retain the existing vernacular structure.

8.2.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- BA 1 Maintain and improve village welcome signage and planting of native trees at the approaches to the village to encourage a sense of place.
- BA 2 Retain and enhance the village character features such as natural stone walls on approach roads.
- BA 3 Encourage the restoration or redevelopment of derelict or vacant properties in the village centre.

Economic Development

- BA 4 Facilitate enterprise and employment development on allocated lands to the east of the settlement.
- BA 5 Promote Grantstown Nature Reserve as a tourism destination from within the village;
- BA 6 Support the retention of and Facilitate the expansion of village centre uses appropriate to scale of development within the village of Ballacolla and subject to planning and development standards;

Infrastructure

- BA 7 Implement incremental improvements to the existing road network;
- BA 8 Protect and retain the range of community services within Ballacolla;
- BA 9 Support the reuse of the Old School House for a community / social enterprise use.

8.3 CAMROSS

Population by ED (Marymount)	2016 Census	139
	2011 Census	137
	% Increase/Decrease	+1%
Housing Stock by ED	2016 Census	57
	2011 Census	58
Infrastructure	Water	Camross is served by private well water supply. A possible public water supply has been identified on the Local Authority land on the eastern end of the village.
	Waste Water	Applied for funding for WWTP Local Roads
	Servicing Road Network	Shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
	Broadband	
Social Infrastructure	School	Camross NS (enrolment 100)
	Church	RC Church
	Sporting Facilities	Camross GAA (outside village boundary)
	Other	Crèche, Community Hall, pub, Community Garden
Environment/Heritage	Conservation	A tributary, River Delour, of the Barrow/Nore SAC (002162) runs to the east of the village. The Slieve Bloom Mounts SPA (004160) are also located 2km west of the village
	Flooding	Not applicable
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	Bi Weekly Local Link service to Portlaoise
	Cycle Routes	Destination along Slieve Bloom Bike Trail and Village Route
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	RPS 372 St Kevin's RC Church
	Monument	LA00572 – settlement

8.3.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Camross is a small picturesque village located within the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains, 10km northwest of Mountrath. The village developed in a linear pattern along a local road where old stone walls and vernacular dwellings add to the character of the village. The Georgian Gothic St Kevin's Church, which is now in a ruined state, is a strong architectural focal point within the village.

Despite its limited size and population, Camross has a strong community sector and relatively healthy service base including RC Church, national school, public house, Poet's Cottage with the newly-built community hall and a crèche. Recreational space is located within the school playing fields and Camross GAA grounds (which is located 3km from the village).

The community has also done extensive work on creating a community garden and walking loop adjacent to the River Delour and backland areas on Parish lands.

8.3.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

Most residential development in the village takes the form of one-off houses served by individual septic tanks, with a small low density housing estate located on the eastern approach to the village. The village is not serviced by public water and waste water infrastructure which limits the capacity of the village to accommodate future housing needs. Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Plan in line with the Core Strategy. However appropriate small scale infill residential development could readily integrate with the existing built environment to consolidate the urban form of the village.

Village Centre Regeneration and Community Development

In recent years, community development has been a priority in the village. The Camross Development Association, in association with the community, prepared a non-statutory Camross Community Development Plan in 2019 which has informed the policy objectives of this plan. Of particular note, the community has worked extensively on completing a community garden, a multipurpose community hall at Poet's Cottage which will act as a village hub and enhancement of the Littler River Delour.

The main priority project noted in the Camross Village Plan is to develop a village hub that will function as a multipurpose recreational space, providing new enhanced facilities for the community. This priority project will link the existing Poets Cottage with the new building to the rear by developing a courtyard area that can also function as a new public space. It is also envisaged that the development of the Village Hub will also link to the evolving village open greenspace area located to the rear of the school and connecting to the River Delour.

Camross is also noted as being a destination on the Slieve Bloom Village Route. Enhanced services and public realm is encouraged to enhance tourism potential for the village.

8.3.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- CM 1 Protect (RPS 372) from endangerment and secure the longevity of this architectural focal point;
- CM 2 Support the development of a village hub and Poet's Cottage as identified in the Camross Village Plan with key stakeholders;
- CM 3 Support the objectives of the Camross Village Plan insofar as practicable, and in particular the development of a Village Park which will incorporate enhanced sports pitches, looped walkway and enhanced riverside walk with key stakeholders, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive;
- CM 4 Support the community in securing funding for progressing the Smart Village concept;

Economic Development

- CM5 Support the existing uses within the village such as the public house use and encourage the development of mixed uses such as the local shop subject to development management standards;
- CM 6 Develop commercial tourism facilities to take advantage of the Poet's Cottage and the villages location on the Slieve Bloom Village Route and Slieve Blooms Bike Trail;

Infrastructure

- CM 7 Improve public realm within the village and in particular footpaths and public lighting;

8.4 CASTLETOWN

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	436 418 +4%
Housing Stock	2016 Census 2011 Census	165 8
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Public Mains Sewage treatment facilities are deficient and in need of upgrading (69 PE capacity) R445 Partially serviced and remaining areas serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Castletown NS (enrolment 120) RC Church Tennis Court, Golf Course, River Nore, Castletown GAA, handball alley, playground 2 Community Hall, 2no. of pubs, Community Garden/Orchard
Environment /Heritage	Conservation Flooding	The River Nore SPA (004233) and River Barrow/Nore SAC (002163) runs to the north of the village centre FRA Zone A and B associated with the River Nore SPA to the north of the village
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services Cycle Routes	Bi Weekly Local Link service to Portlaoise Destination along Slieve Bloom Bike Trail
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures Architectural Conservation Area National Monuments	10 Protected Structure Castletown ACA 5 National Monuments

8.4.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

The picturesque Georgian village of Castletown framed by the River Nore and old castle walls forming the northern boundary to the village, is located close to the old N7 (Dublin-Limerick) road, the R445, approximately 2km south of Mountrath. This historic village can be traced back to the 12th Century where a castle was built by Hugh de Lacy and became the centre of an important Norman Borough.

The village has a well defined core, developed around the central green area with 2 and 3 storey period homes, the De La Salle Monastery and the parish church. The Main Street runs from the village Green to the entrance onto to the R445 to the east and is mainly characterised by residential development characterized by one off dwellings and low density housing schemes.

Other uses within the village core consist of small scale commercial such as the school buildings, village shop, 2 public houses and a funeral director.

Due to the significant cultural heritage, the village is designated an **Architectural Conservation Area**.

In terms of community recreation facilities, the village is well served by 2 community centres. Castletown also benefits from a number of passive open spaces including the focal point of the village green surrounded by mature trees and the River Nore amenity area including weir and mill race which forms the northern boundary. The riverside walk along the River Nore is accessible from this picnic area and extends upstream under and past the old N7. A golfcourse is also located downstream of the picnic area to the east of the village.

8.4.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

Population has increased 4% between 2011 and 2016 and therefore the Core Strategy indicates that a housing allocation of 45 units is required for Castletown. Adequate land has been indentified for residential development on lands at Churchfield which would consolidate residential development in the area. This site currently accommodates 5 existing dwellings built on serviced site. There is approximately 1.15ha of land remaining. It is an objective of this Plan to support and promote the development of these sites as an alternative to one off housing in the rural area.

Village Centre Regeneration and Community Development

In recent years, community development has been a priority in the village. The community has prepared the non statutory Castletown Smart Environment and Sustainability Plan which highlighted the following objectives: connection to Slieve Bloom Biking Trail, provision of a digital hub, extension of the community centre, provide a looped walk along the River Nore and develop the Castletown – Mountrath Cycle Route. This Plan supports the sustainable development of the village.

In terms of regeneration within the village, the old corn mill on the banks of the River Nore presents a significant opportunity. This site provides an impressive approach to the village centre and comprises of a 19th Century corn mill (5 storey structure) and its surrounding outbuildings. The structure is a protected structure and requires significant redevelopment to bring it back into use. The overall complex is circa 0.25ha and is zoned for village centre development. The potential for development or reuse within the spheres of enterprise/employment, tourism, sport and recreation should be further explored in the context of regeneration of this site. Any potential development within this complex should have regard to the requirement to respect the architectural and cultural heritage and conservation and flood risk within the setting of the River Nore SAC.

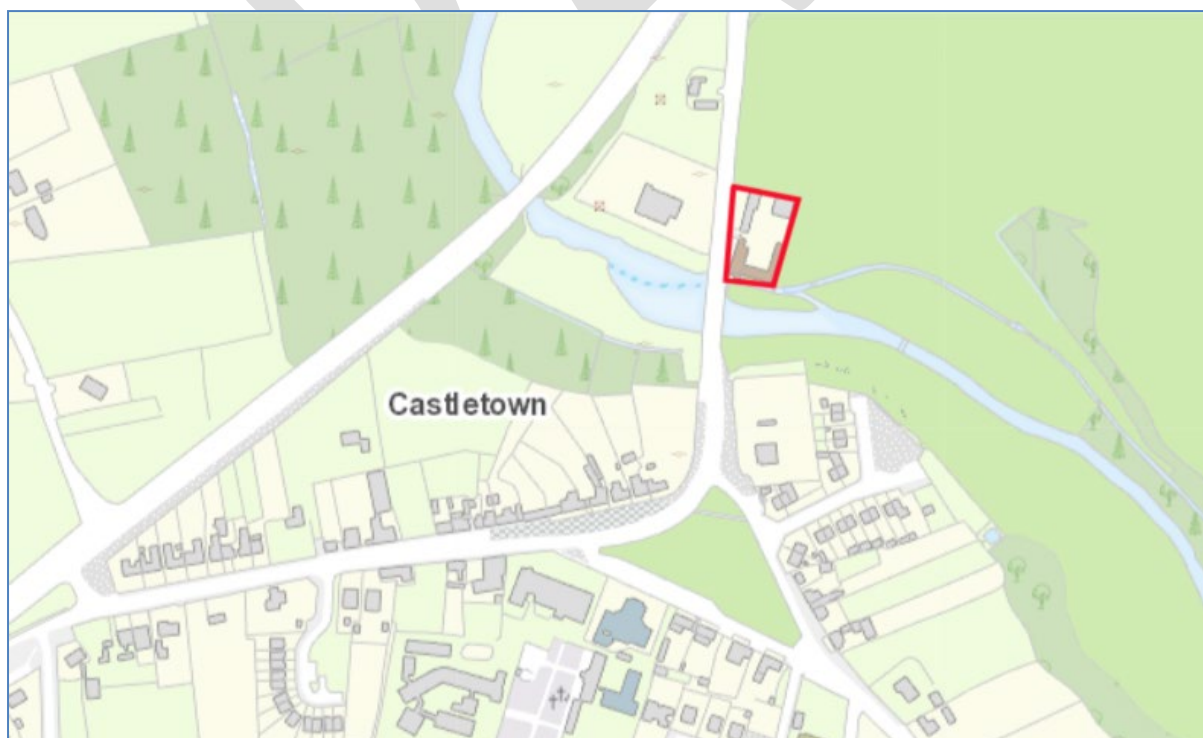


Fig 8.4: Opportunity Site

8.4.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- CAS 1 Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Castletown's Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New buildings should respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development.
- CAS 2 Protect and preserve trees on all approach roads and the central green area of the village centre.
- CAS 3 Support the redevelopment of the mill building as indicated as Opportunity Site 1 in Map 8.4(b) for active use subject to proper planning and sustainable development and design standards and flooding related policies given that the structure is located within flood zone A;
- CAS 4 Support the development of serviced sites within the village.
- CAS 5 Support a conservation study of the Castle walls and Turret;

Economic/Community Development

- CAS 6 Support the functioning of and facilitate the expansion of Castletown as a centre for retail, commercial, institutional and community uses.
- CAS 7 Promote and facilitate development of the tourism product offered in Castletown having regard to its architectural/cultural heritage, location on the River Nore SAC and proximity to the Slieve Blooms.
- CAS 8 Promote and develop Castletown as a multi experience tourism destination for visitors to Ireland's Ancient East and attractions in the County;
- CAS 9 Support the development of a remote working/digital opportunities in Castletown.
- CAS 10 Improve village branding/presentation along main roads and at village entry points to strengthen Castletown's sense of place and unique identity
- CAS 11 Support the objectives of the Castletown Smart Environment and Sustainability Plan insofar as practicable.

Infrastructure

- CAS 12 Improve pedestrian linkages within the village centre and facilitate the provision of cycle parking, especially at schools.
- CAS 13 Facilitate the improvement of pedestrian and cyclist routes within the village and River Nore amenity area having regard to its environmental sensitivities;
- CAS 14 Provide seating areas within the main green and the River Nore amenity area;
- CAS 15 Encourage the placing of overhead power lines underground to enhance the character of the ACA and examine the feasibility of providing underground broadband cable in association with the above works;
- CAS 16 Support the preparation of a feasibility study for a walking loop along the River Nore and safe cycling route to Mountrath town centre.
- CAS 17 Support the community in preparing a study to determine the feasibility of introducing more renewable energy sources into the community.

8.5 COOLRAIN

Population by ED	2016 Census	302
	2011 Census	308
	% Increase/Decrease	-2%
Housing Stock by ED	2016 Census	121
	2011 Census	119
Infrastructure	Water	Private wells
	Waste Water	Septic Tank / Waste Water Treatment Systems
	Servicing Road Network	Local road
	Broadband	Shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	NA
	Church	NA
	Sporting Facilities	NA
	Other	2 Pubs, playground
Environment /Heritage	Conservation	1.5km east of Coolrain Bog SAC (pNHA), 1.5km west of Knockacoller Bog SAC (pNHA) and River Barrow/Nore SAC to the north
	Flooding	FRZ A and B to the north of the development boundary
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	NA
	Cycle Routes	NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	1
	National Monuments	0

8.5.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Coolrain is a picturesque village situated in the mid-west of the County in the foothills of the Slieve Blooms, 6km west of Mountrath, 7km north east of Borris in Ossory and approximately 9km from the M7/M8 motorway. The village developed in a linear pattern along a local road where a number of traditional single and two storey vernacular buildings have been located, including single storey thatched cottages which contribute significantly to the distinctiveness of the settlement. Traditional boundary treatments consisting of natural stone walls are located on the approaches into the village core.

8.5.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirements

Coolrain has experienced a limited amount of development due to lack of critical infrastructure such as public water and waste water. There is also a notable lack of social infrastructure present, where the village depends on neighbouring villages of Camross and Castletown and larger town of Mountrath for access to commercial services and community facilities.

Coolrain has also been identified for investment in public services in Irish Water's Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme.

Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Plan in line with the Core Strategy. However appropriate small scale infill residential development or serviced sites could readily integrate with the existing built environment on village centre lands to consolidate the urban form of the village, subject to upgrade of infrastructure.

Village Centre Regeneration

The village's greatest asset is its location within the Slieve Bloom Village Drive and proximity to the natural amenity areas including Coolrain Bog SAC (pNHA) to the west, Knockacoller Bog SAC (pNHA) to the east and is bound to the north by a tributary of the River Barrow/Nore SAC which is located

further south. Enhanced branding, local services and public realm are encouraged to enhance tourism potential for the village.

8.5.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- COOL1 Support appropriate infill development to consolidate Main Street and backland development to the east of the Main Street;
- COOL2 Ensure development along the Main Street is sympathetic to the vernacular character of the village;

Economic/Community Development

- COOL3 Support the existing uses within the village such as the public house use and encourage the development of mixed uses such as the local shop subject to development management standards;
- COOL4 Develop commercial tourism facilities to take advantage of the village's location on the Slieve Bloom Village Drive;
- COOL5 Support the establishment of additional community services;

Infrastructure

- COOL6 Provide a direct pedestrian link between the main street and the monuments at Antrim by way of backland development if the opportunities arise;
- COOL7 Improve incrementally the existing road network;
- COOL8 Provide disabled parking within the village centre;
- COOL9 Ensure that new housing has sufficient wastewater treatment facilities and conditions of maintenance attached;

8.6 CULLAHILL

Population	2016 Census	357
	2011 Census	359
	% Increase/Decrease	-1%
Housing Stock	2016 Census	132
	2011 Census	131
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Group Water Supply Scheme Private wastewater treatment systems. R639 Shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Scoil Tíghearnach Noafa Ns (Enrolment 99) St Tighearnach's Church The Harps GAA, Durrow Shop, post office, pub, garage, community centre, recycling facility, crèche
Environment /Heritage	Conservation Flooding	3km north of Cullohill Mountain SAC Not Applicable
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	NA
	Cycle Routes	South Laois Cycle Route
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	2
	Monuments	6

8.6.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Cullahill is located in south County Laois, 5 kilometres southwest of Durrow along the R639. The settlement extends onto two local roads to the northwest and a local road to the southeast. The village centre is disjointed with its focal point formed by the presence of a shop and filling station, community hall, recycling bring bank, public house and agricultural supplies outlet.

A church and primary school are located to the northwest outside the settlement boundary. Defining features of Cullahill include the dramatic topography to the south east where a 15th Century Tower House is located in the foothills of the Cullahill Mountains. The rural nature of the village is also seen in the natural stone boundary walls along the north western approach.

8.6.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Housing Land Requirements

Cullahill has experienced only a very limited amount of development in recent years, mainly in the form of one-off dwellings on individual septic tanks located primarily on its southwestern outskirts. At the same time, some properties in the centre of the village have fallen into disuse and dereliction. Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Plan in line with the Core Strategy. However appropriate small scale infill residential development could readily integrate with the existing built environment on village centre lands to consolidate the urban form of the village. There are also a number of vacant units and derelict dwellings within the village core which could offer potential residential redevelopment opportunities.

Village Centre Regeneration and Community Development

The village has a proactive community which is demonstrated in the Cullahill Community Plan 2018. This plan has focused on priority projects for the village and include inter alia:

- a) Refurbishment and extension of the existing community centre to accommodate meeting space, enterprise space and sports and recreation;
- b) A need for a multi-purpose sports facility accommodating a range of field sports close to the village core;

- c) Development of co-working space possibly in a vacant unit in the village core;
- d) Develop the tourism potential of the area;
- e) Additional sports and recreation facilities.

Tourism

The village has significant potential to develop a tourism based on day trippers for active tourism. There is a well established walking trail on Cullahill Mountain which has a way marked looped trail from the trailhead in the village. The area also has potential as a cycling hub - Five routes ranging from 8.6km to 48.4km have been developed by South Laois Tourism in conjunction with Laois Partnership, Laois County Council and Failte Ireland and includes Cullahill, Durrow, Ballacolla, Attanagh and Ballinakill.

There are also a number of historical and archaeological sites that would attract an interest from a number of tourism market segments. Opposite the Castle are the ruins of an old chapel which was the private chapel of the Catholic lords of Upper Ossory. There is a fine example of a lime kiln on the green opposite Cullahill Castle. Such significant heritage sites could form part of a Heritage Trail and be marketed on Ireland's Ancient East Route.

8.6.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- CU 1 Consolidate the urban structure of the village by way of infill development;
- CU 2 Encourage the restoration or redevelopment of derelict or vacant structures within the village centre;
- CU 3 Provide additional landscaping features and welcome signs incorporating natural materials on the approach roads to the village;
- CU 4 Housing developments shall be of a density compatible with the prevailing density of the village;

Economic and Community Development

- CU5 Support the existing retail and commercial uses within the village and facilitate their expansion subject to proper planning and sustainable development and design standards;
- CU6 Support the objectives of the Cullahill Community Plan 2018 insofar as possible and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
- CU 7 Support the enhancement of the community centre as a multi-functional facilities for community recreation and enterprise;
- CU 8 Facilitate the development of additional passive recreation facilities in the village such as a village park and sensory garden within the central amenity area;
- CU 9 Facilitate the development of tourist related enterprise within the village and enhance the branding of active tourism such as walking and cycling associated with Cullahill Mountains and South Laois Cycle Routes;

Infrastructure

- CU 10 Enhance and extend the footpath within the village centre and to the school and provide safe pedestrian crossing within the village;
- CU 11 Provide a pedestrian crossing to the R639 within the village centre;
- CU 12 Secure cycle parking facilities at the national school and community centre;
- CU 13 Provide designated car and coach parking at the community centre

8.7 EMO

Population	2016 Census	257
	2011 Census	245
	% Increase/Decrease	5%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	95 6
Infrastructure	Water	The present public water scheme is supplied from the Kilminchy reservoir.
	Waste Water	Emo does not have its own wastewater treatment plant.
	Servicing Road Network	R422
	Broadband	Shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	Emo National School (enrolment 209)
	Church	St Paul's Church RC
	Sporting Facilities	GAA pitches, passive recreation in Emo Court
	Other	Pub/restaurant, shop, HSE health centre, childcare/community centre
	Conservation	pNHA Emo Court
Environment /Heritage	Flooding	Not Applicable
Sustainable Transport	Bus Services	Regional College Services and Local Link
	Cycle Routes	NA
Cultural Heritage	Protected Structures	2
	Monuments	2

8.7.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Emo is located in northeast County Laois on the R422 Regional Road, with convenient access to the M8 serving Dublin, Cork and Limerick. Emo's most distinctive feature is the James Gandon designed Emo Court and Park dating to 1790, located to the east of the village centre. Emo Court is one of the finest stately homes in Ireland and a noted destination on the Failte Ireland's Ancient East route planner.

The picturesque village developed around the central crossroads where many traditional two storey and single storey buildings formed along the approach roads. The village core accommodates the retail, pub and institutional needs, including a primary school, RC church and health centre. In terms of community facilities, the old school house is used as a childcare facility and also as a community centre for a youth club and active retirement group.

Emo Court provides accessible passive open space and walking routes while active public open space is found at the GAA playing fields. The amenities include a playing pitch, dressing and meeting rooms.

8.7.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

Whilst the village itself has not seen significant development due to lack of public infrastructure in terms of waste water treatment, the surrounding area is noted as an area under strong urban influence where there has been significant pressure from one off rural dwellings.

This Plan supports the development of serviced sites in rural towns and villages in line with the Core Strategy. Laois County Council and Irish Water are currently reviewing the Small Town and Villages Growth Programme, of which Emo has been identified for investment in a waste water treatment plant to service the village. In this regard appropriate land has been identified for the provision of

serviced site on land identified which would provide an alternative to one off dwellings in the rural countryside.

Village Centre Regeneration and Economic Development

Emo village is ideally located at the entrance to Emo Court Demesne, one of the County's most popular tourist attractions and a noted attraction within Ireland's Ancient East route. The development of Emo for tourist related/arts and cultural purpose is supported in this Plan where land has been zoned for such uses on the approach to Emo Court. An area of land to the rear of the village shop, zoned for village centre uses, also has potential to create additional supporting services or tourist accommodation.

8.7.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- EO 1 Designate an ACA within Emo and have regard to the special character appraisal in the determination of planning applications or the carrying out of works to the public realm;
- EO 2 Structures and features demonstrating the historical development of Emo Court including stone walls, stone dwellings and associated outbuildings should be retained, restored, preserved and enhanced;
- EO 3 Ensure infill development is sensitive to the special architectural context;
- EO 4 Explore the feasibility of providing serviced sites within the village settlement on land indicated as Residential 2.

Economic Development

- EO 5 Support the existing commercial services within the village core and facilitate their expansion subject to proper planning and sustainable development and design standards;
- EO 6 Support and facilitate the development of tourism and tourist related infrastructure and facilities within the village, in particular Ireland's Ancient East branding and the development of Emo Court;

Infrastructure

- EO 7 Provide a pedestrian and cycle link between the village centre and the school and playing pitches and secure cycle parking at these community buildings;
- EO 8 Provide disabled parking within the village centre and at the school;
- EO 9 Encourage the enhancement of community services and the more active use of the centre;
- EO 10 Support the provision of a recycling bring bank in the village centre.

8.8 NEWTOWN DOONANE

Population	2016 Census	269
	2011 Census	246
	% Increase/Decrease	9%
Housing Stock	26 Census Vacancy	111 9
Infrastructure	Water	Swan Water Supply
	Waste Water	Waste water treatment
	Servicing Road Network	R430
	Broadband	Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School	Newtown National School (enrolment 53)
	Church	Doonane Church is located 1.5km south west
	Sporting Facilities	Crettyard GAA pitch located 2km north east
	Other	Community centre/playschool, credit union (pub, recycling centre further east in Crettyard)
	Environment /Heritage	Conservation
	Flooding	NA

8.8.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Newtown Doonane is located in southeast County Laois in close proximity to the Carlow/Kildare border. The village has formed in a linear pattern along the R430 Carlow-Abbeyleix regional road and stretches in a north-east direction along the N78. Development in the village has occurred in a dispersed fashion rather than in a compact village form. The village core centres around the primary school, community centre, credit union. Recycling facilities, a public house and an established industrial unit are located at the crossroads further east (which lies outside the settlement boundary of this village plan).

Outside of the village area is the church in Doonane which serves the area. A GAA pitch is located along the N78, north of the village. The GAA grounds include two playing fields and basic dressing room facilities. A small area of passive open space is located at the crossroads and within housing estates.

8.8.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

The capacity to accommodate multi house residential development is low because of its limited service capacity, however appropriate infill development could readily integrate with the existing built form and natural environment. Due to the size of Newtown Doonane and the close proximity of larger urban settlements, the facilities available are considered to be adequate at present and village will remain a small scale village settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Plan.

Village Centre Regeneration

This Plan will support the expansion of existing community facilities in the village. Additional public realm improvements such as greening and tree planting will also be encouraged to add to the sense of place of the village.

8.8.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- ND 1 Consolidate the urban form by way of infill development that encloses the principal thoroughfare of the village using shared vehicular access points, where possible;
- ND 2 Maintain the modest scale of buildings within the village centre;

ND 3 Improve the public realm and streetscape to enhance the village core character, and improve the village aesthetics;

Economic/Community Development

ND 4 Support appropriate rural economic development and diversification within the hinterland and support the modest expansion of existing uses;

ND 5 Harness the economic potential associated with the proximity of the village to the national road network;

ND 6 Enhance community and recreational uses including support for the development of a village green/pocket park within the village.

Infrastructure

ND 7 Improve the cycling and pedestrian network within the village core and between the GAA grounds to the north of the village;

ND 8 Provide for traffic calming within the village centre;

ND 9 Enhance the modal interchange point at the lay-by opposite the public house.

DRAFT

8.9 ROSENALLIS

Population	Estimate – No Census details available	130
Housing Stock	Estimate	51
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	GWS Unserviced, individual treatment systems R422 Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Primary School Catholic Church, Church of Ireland Church Crettyyard GAA pitch located 2km north east Hairdressers, public house, community centre, crèche
Sustainable Transport	Bus Service Cycle Corridor	Local Link N/A
Environment /Heritage	Conservation Flooding	Located within the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA FRZ A located to the west of the village centre

8.9.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Rosenallis is located on the Regional Road (R422) between Mountmellick and Clonaslee in the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Its origins dates back to the early Christian settlement, however later developed as a Quaker colony and linen centre. The Church of Ireland presents the most distinctive architectural element and focal point within the village.

The core of the village centres around two public houses and residential dwelling forming a well defined streetscape. A passive green space area with a miniature ornamental thatched cottage also functions as a picnic area. The village further developed to west with residential development and community facilities.

In terms of social infrastructure, there is a national school, community centre and GAA grounds and both Catholic and Church of Ireland Churches. Local services are limited and consist of a hairdressers and public house.

8.9.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

The capacity to accommodate multi house residential development is low due to limited service capacity, however appropriate infill development could readily integrate with the existing built form and natural environment. Only natural/organic residential growth will be encouraged over the lifetime of the Plan in line with the Core Strategy.

Village Centre Regeneration

There is high level of vacancy within the village core and opportunity exists to reuse and regenerate the existing building stock for residential purposes and commercial purposes within village centre zoning as indicated in Fig 8.9.

An opportunity to build on the tourism potential and natural features of its unique location within the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains is to be encouraged. The village could be developed as a local tourist stop off within the area whereby additional tourist related facilities and accommodation could be provided.



Fig 8.9: Regeneration Opportunity Sites

8.9.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Character and Built Form

- ROS1 Provide landscaping features and welcome signage incorporating natural materials on approach roads;
- ROS2 Encourage the restoration or redevelopment of derelict, vacant or underused structures, as appropriate and indicated in Map 8.9(b) of the Plan;
- ROS3 Ensure consolidation of the built environment through appropriate and sensitive infill development;

Economic Development

- ROS5 Encourage the use of the lands that have been zoned for tourism to the south of the village on the road to the Glenbarrow eco-walk for tourism amenities;
- ROS6 Protect existing retail and commercial uses;

Infrastructure

- ROS7 Provide and maintain dedicated pedestrian and cycling linkages between the town centre, the community uses and the shop to the west;
- ROS8 Provide disabled parking within the village centre and at buildings in community use to the west of the village centre;
- ROS9 Protect and make the best use of existing social infrastructure;
- ROS10 Improve road network incrementally.

8.10 THE SWAN

Population	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	216 213 1.5%
Housing Stock	2016 Census Vacancy	71 9
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Swan water supply 35 PE R430 Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Scoil and Chroi Ro Naofa NS (enrolment 31) Doonane Church is located 4km south Crettyard GAA pitch located 4km south Community centre/playschool, credit union (pub, recycling centre further east in Crettyard)
Environment /Heritage	Conservation Flooding Monuments	2km east of River Barrow/Nore SAC 002162 Flood Zones A and B runs through the village in a west/east trajectory 2

8.10.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

The Swan is located on the Regional Road (R430) between Abbeyleix and Carlow. The River Clough runs to the north west of the settlement boundary. The village's growth formed along the R430 in a linear patterned and centred on the establishment in 1935 of Flemings Fireclay factory which utilised the local fireclay reserves and is one of the local economy's biggest employers. This village core and most distinctive feature is a small council housing estate arranged in a semi-circle around a small green.

Many of the buildings have also been constructed using the redbrick which adds to the unique sense of place. The Swan has a low level of services and facilities. The only commercial service in the village is a vacant public house which is located towards western perimeter of the village core. There are a number of community uses within the village including a school, community centre and recycling bring bank. The HSE clinic is currently vacant. The green open spaces in the Swan are passive in nature and are associated with residential housing estates.

8.10.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing Land Requirement

The capacity to accommodate multi house residential development is low because of its limited service capacity, however appropriate infill development could readily integrate with the existing built form and natural environment. The Plan will also support the completion of the existing housing estate to the south west of the settlement boundary.

Village Centre Regeneration

Due to the size of The Swan and the close proximity of larger urban settlements, the facilities available are considered to be adequate at present and village will remain a small scale village settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Plan. This Plan will support the expansion of existing social infrastructure within the village and in particular extension to the community centre and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).

Community Development

The community of The Swan has recently prepared the Sustainable Community Plan which provides strategic objectives for the settlement, including, inter alia:

- Upgrade to the Swan Community Centre
- Improve safety and security within the village
- Improvements to public realm
- Establish the Swan as a Smart Village

8.10.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- SW 1 Encourage the use of the locally produced red brick in future developments in order to reinforce the distinctive character of The Swan;
- SW 2 Protect recorded monuments in The Swan;
- SW 3 Support the completion of any unfinished sites within Carmallagh housing estate;

Economic and Community Development

- SW 4 Support the maintenance and establishment of commercial services at The Swan;
- SW 5 Support the continuing functioning of the Fireclay factory and provide for its expansion as necessary subject to proper planning and environmental standards being met;
- SW 6 Support appropriate after uses within the quarry area;
- SW 7 Support the objectives of The Swan Sustainable Community Plan insofar as practicable;

Infrastructure

- SW 8 Improve or develop footpaths and cycle paths linking the village centre with residential housing estates and community uses;
- SW 9 Develop a pedestrian crossing within the village centre, connecting the school to residential development on the west side of the R430.

8.11 TIMAHOE

Population (Doonane ED)	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	589 569 4%
Housing Stock	2016 Census 2011 Census	207 199
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Public Water supply Unserviced, individual treatment systems R426 Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Mhuire Fatima NS (enrolment 147) RC Church GAA pitch located 4km south Community centre/playshcool, credit union (pub, recycling centre further east in Crettyard)
Environment	Conservation Flooding	Timahoe Esker pNHA 1km north west Ballyprior Grassland SAC 5km north east Much of the village lies within Flood Zones A and B
Cultural Heritage	Architectural Conservation Area Protected Structures Monuments	Yes 5 9

8.11.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

The village of Timahoe is located on R426, Portlaoise to The Swan regional road, in a broad and fertile valley between Fossey and Cullenagh Mountains, 12km to the south of Portlaoise. The village has a significant built and cultural heritage where its origins can be traced back to the 7th century where a monastery was founded by St. Mochua. It was later refounded by the O'Moores where it remained a monastic community until 1650. One of the finest round towers in Ireland, dating to the mid 12th century, remains intact within this monastic site, standing some 30m high and creating a dramatic backdrop to the village centre. Sites of interest in the area include a castle, built by Hugh de Lacy in 1189. A stream separates the round tower and church from the village green and these two elements are connected with a pedestrian bridge and vehicular road.

The village centre has a cohesive urban form, where 2 storey and single storey vernacular buildings provide a strong building line around a large central green (Goosegreen) and connection to the well-preserved Medieval round tower, create the special character of the village.

The traditional character of the village is also reinforced with the traditional painted timber shopfronts with restrained lettering. The approach roads are well signposted and the presence of trees on the Portlaoise Road softens the approach to the village and creates a pleasant vista. As such, the village is designated as a Candidate Architectural Conservation Area.

In terms of social infrastructure, the village is well facilitated. There is a primary school with associated playing fields, crèche, RC church, recycling facilities and a substantial community centre which caters for a wide catchment area. GAA playing fields are located outside the development envelop 1km north of the village. The village is well-served in relation to passive green open space in the form of a landscaped central green. Vacant premises exist in the village which should be encouraged for redevelopment to appropriate uses particularly the old HSE building off the Green and the old garage.

8.11.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing requirements

The capacity to accommodate multi house residential development is low, however there is an area to the north east of the village settlement identified for low density housing or serviced sites which would consolidate development with existing residential development in the village. Due to the size of Timahoe and the close proximity of larger urban settlements, the facilities available are considered to be adequate at present and village will remain a small scale village settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Plan and as indicated in the Core Strategy.

Village Centre Regeneration

A significant opportunity also exists to further promote Timahoe as a tourist destination or hub for visitors to Ireland's Ancient East and encourage appropriate development of an integrated tourism product at Timahoe Round Tower and Monastic Settlement. A site has also been identified for tourism development which could facilitate tourist infrastructure such as accommodation, interpretative centre and supporting commercial services.

8.11.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- TM 1 Preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of Timahoe's Candidate Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) by requiring that the height, scale, design and materials of any proposed development within the village and in the surrounding area should complement the character of the village and not diminish its distinctiveness of place. New buildings should respond to the individual site context and take due cognisance of adjoining development.
- TM 2 Require all development proposals within or contiguous to the Architectural Conservation Area be sympathetic to the character of the area, that the design is appropriate in terms of height, scale, plot density, layout, materials and finishes and is appropriately sited and designed in accordance with advice given in Timahoe Architectural Conservation Area Character Statement.
- TM 3 Protect and preserve trees on the Portlaoise approach roads, and landscaping and ornamental features on the central green and mature trees in and around the round tower;
- TM 4 Encourage the full use of vacant or underused structures, in particular any structures overlooking the central green;
- TM 5 Introduce consistent village branding/presentation at the village entry points and along main streets in form of high quality signage, tourism information, public art and consistent village type lighting standards which would strengthen Timahoe's identity
- TM 6 Seek to preserve views identified on the land use zoning map from development which would adversely impact on the character and visual amenity of the Round Tower
- TM 7 Require the preservation and reinstatement of traditional details and materials on existing buildings and the streetscape where improvements or maintenance works are being carried out.

Economic/Community Development

- TM 8 Protect the established retail and commercial functions within the village;
- TM 9 Promote the tourism product offered in Timahoe having regard to its archaeological and architectural heritage, proximity to the Timahoe Nature Reserve and walking routes and Fossey and Cullenagh Mountains;
- TM 10 Promote Timahoe Round Tower as a multi experience tourism destination for visitors to Ireland's Ancient East and attraction in the County, subject to the normal development management standards. Seek to support and develop Timahoe as a tourist hub.

TM 11 Improve village branding/presentation along main roads and at village entry points to strengthen Timahoe's sense of place and unique identity.

Infrastructure

TM 12 Support the provision of wastewater treatment at Timahoe;

TM 13 Encourage the placing of overhead power lines underground to enhance the character of the ACA and examine the feasibility of providing underground broadband cable in association with the above works;

TM 14 Establish a footpath and cycle path between the village centre and the school and ensure the provision of cycle parking at the school;

TM 15 Provide disabled parking within the village centre.

DRAFT

8.12 VICARSTOWN

Population by ED	2016 Census 2011 Census % Increase/Decrease	194 206 4%
Housing Stock by ED	2016 Census 2011 Census	77 80
Infrastructure	Water Waste Water Servicing Road Network Broadband	Kyle Public Water Supply Private waste water treatment systems R427 Partially serviced and remaining areas shall be serviced under the National Broadband Plan
Social Infrastructure	School Church Sporting Facilities Other	Closest schools located in Stradbally, Rath, Portlaoise, Mountrath and Monasterevin RC Church GAA pitch Community centre, 2no of pubs, bike hire, barge hire
Environment	Conservation Flooding	Grand Canal NHA NA
Sustainable Transport	Public Transport	Transport for Ireland Town link to Portlaoise bi weekly
Cultural Heritage	Architectural Conservation Area Protected Structures Monuments	Yes 6 9

8.12.1 CHARACTER AND CONTEXT

Vicarstown Village is located in east County Laois, 6 kilometres north east of Stradbally on the R427 Regional Road. The village originally developed as an 18th Century port on the Grand Canal and is popular for waterway-based tourism such as boating and fishing.

The village core is focused adjacent to the Grand Canal where a number of historic canal warehouses were built in the 1800s. These 2 storey structures are now used for local enterprise and tourism purposes associated with renting barges for tours on the Grand Canal.

The village developed further west of the canal where a public house and residential development consisting of one off dwellings of varying types and a low density housing scheme have been constructed. Further development along this approach road also consists of focal points such as the Catholic Church and Old School House and Annanough GAA Club.

The most distinguishing feature of the village is undoubtedly the Grand Canal National Heritage Area which links to the Stradbally River SAC at Cormac Aqueduct. The tow path along the canal provides an extensive walking and cycling network immediately accessible from the village and is part of the Barrow Blueway network. Active recreational space can also be found at the GAA playing fields located to the west of the village which consist of two playing fields, dressing rooms and meeting room facilities. The clubhouse also functions as a multifunctional communal and recreational space. Similarly, the Old School House also provides for multifunctional communal and recreational needs of the community.

8.12.2 REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Housing requirements

Vicarstown has not experienced growth similar to that which has occurred in other villages within the County, particularly in relation to residential development. In this regard the facilities available

are considered to be adequate at present and the village will remain a small scale village settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Plan. The capacity to accommodate multi house residential development is low, however appropriate infill development will be supported to consolidate development west of the village core in accordance with the Core Strategy of the Plan.

Village Centre Regeneration

The village has significant potential to expand and enhance tourism in the area based on the amenity of the Grand Canal and the Barrow Blueway and could act as a hub for active tourism such as boating, kayaking, canoeing, cycling and walking.



Fig 8.12: Opportunity Sites

Two opportunity sites have been identified for potential regeneration and development. The existing warehouses along the western banks of the canal indicated as Opportunity Site 1 offer significant opportunity for redevelopment for tourist related enterprise and already facilitate barge hire and bike hire. A derelict site on the eastern side of the canal indicated as Opportunity Site 2 also offers opportunity to accommodate active tourism facilities. It should also be noted, that, whilst not within the settlement boundary of this plan, a Viking Longphort settlement is located on the banks of the River Barrow at Dunrally. This settlement, although not formally developed as a tourist destination, has the potential to generate significant tourism within Ireland's Ancient East destinations of which Vicarstown can gain significant footfall.

8.12.3 WRITTEN OBJECTIVES

Sustainable Development and Regeneration

- VIC 1 Facilitate the re-use or redevelopment of derelict or vacant structures as appropriate;
- VIC 2 Facilitate the regeneration and re-use of the cut-stone warehouses along the Grand Canal and derelict site noted as Opportunity Sites 1 and 2 indicated in Map 8.12(b);
- VIC 3 Retain and maintain the stone walls within the village;
- VIC 4 Protect trees and hedgerows on approach road from Stradbally;
- VIC 5 Preserve and enhance Protected Structures in Vicarstown;

Economic/Community Development

- VIC 7 Promote and facilitate development of the tourism product offered in Vicarstown having regard to its location on the Grand Canal and connection to the Barrow Blueway system and further east to Dunrally Longphort.
- VIC 8 Promote Vicarstown as a multi experience tourism destination for visitors to Ireland's Ancient East and attraction in the County, subject to the normal development management standards. Seek to support and develop Vicarstown as an active tourism hub.
- VIC 9 Encourage the provision of tourist related amenities / infrastructure within the village centre to compliment the natural tourism product of the Grand Canal;
- VIC 10 Protect and enhance the established commercial functions within the village;
- VIC 11 Improve village branding/presentation along main roads and at village entry points to strengthen Vicarstown sense of place and unique identity.

Infrastructure

- VIC 12 Provide a pedestrian and cycle network within the village centre and between the village centre and the GAA playing fields and secure cycle parking at the playing fields and in the village centre;
- VIC 13 Facilitate the improvement of cycle and pedestrian path along the tow path of the canal having regard to its environmental sensitivities;
- VIC 14 Formalise parking along the southern side of the R427 to facilitate activities associated with the Grand Canal