

# Part VIII REPORT

for

CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING

Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise

Co. Laois

on behalf of

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

prepared by



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Author: OBFA Architects

1 Johnson Place,  
Dublin D02 HW58,  
Ireland

t: +353 (0)1 6854586

e: office@obfa.ie

w: www.obfa.ie

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Executive Summary

The project is for the construction of 4 no. Housing units and the renovation of 3 existing terrace units on Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise for Laois County Council. Our ambition for the site is to create a strong architectural proposal that provides high quality accommodation. The scheme has been designed to be sensitive to the existing urban form and architectural language of Portlaoise.

The area of the site being developed is approximately 715m<sup>2</sup> (0. 0.07149 Ha) (GPS Coordinates Irish Grid Reference X- 646769, Y- 698240 (ITM)). This site has 2no. Existing sheds and various outbuildings that will be demolished as part of the site works.



Fig 1.1 Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise.

## 2 DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

### Guidance Documents

The development is being designed with attention to the following documents:

- Portlaoise Local Area Plan 2018-2024
- Department of Housing Guidelines and Standards, including: Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities

### Land Use Zoning

The LAP zones the subject site as 'Town Centre (Primary Core Retail area)'. - Promote the development of the Town Centre with an appropriate mix of uses'. The proposed project, given its location and the infill development nature would typically satisfy this.

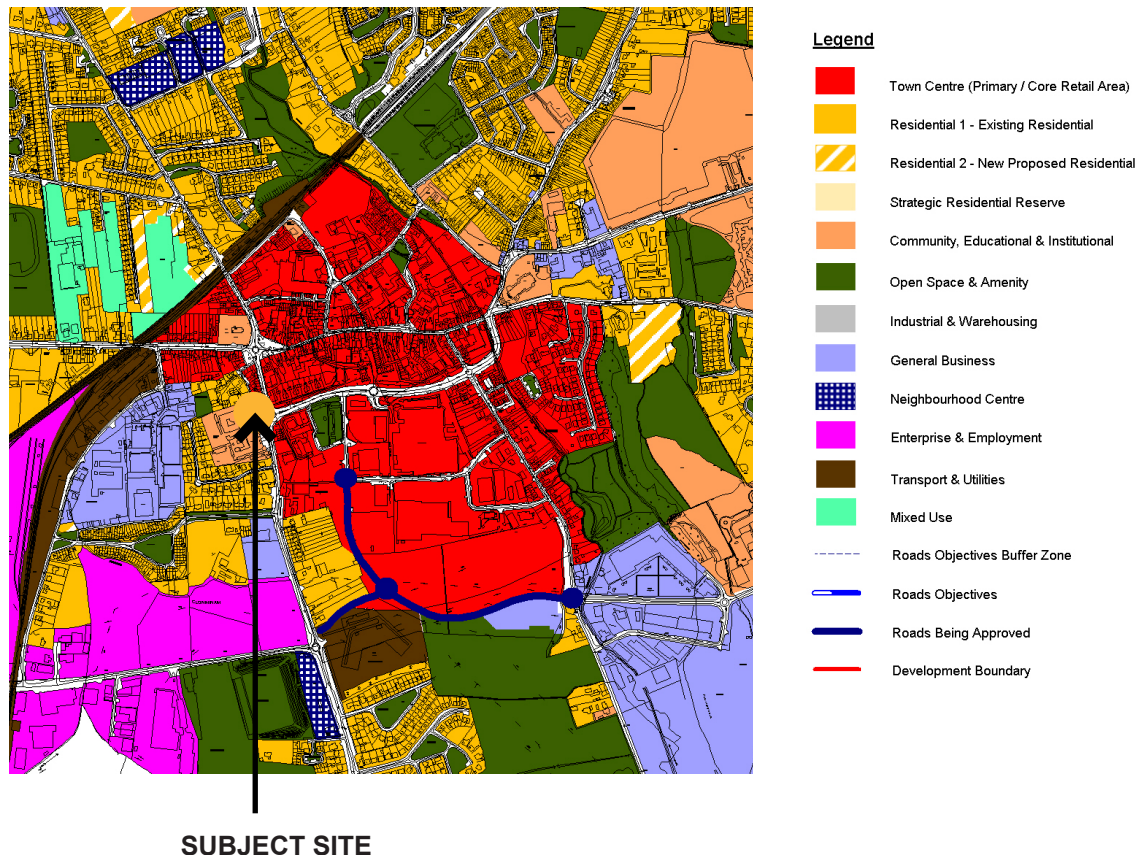


Fig 2.1 Extract from Portlaoise LAP 2018-2024 Map 2 - Land Use Zoning. Subject site indicated by orange circle.

### Specific Town Objectives

The LAP indicates that the subject site is just within Architectural Conservation area. Due consideration is made of the scheme design due to the site falling within this zone.

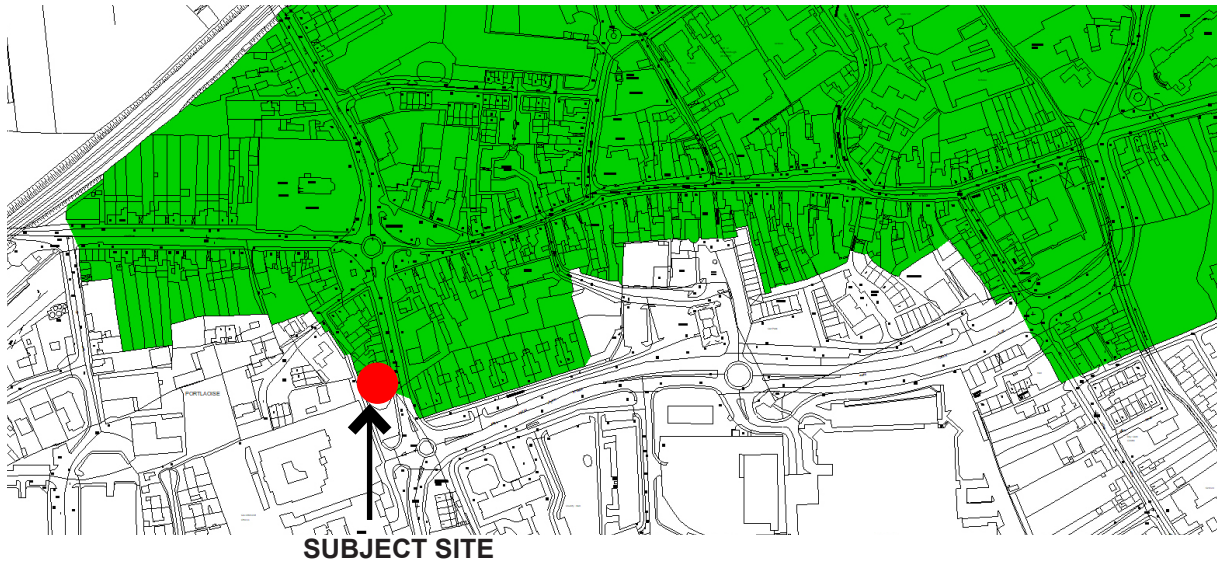


Fig 2.2 Extract from Portlaoise LAP 2018-2024 Map 6 - Architectural Conservation Area. Subject site indicated by red circle. The site is located just inside the ACA.

The LAP Map 7 (Archaeological Significance Zone) indicates that the site is outside this zone.

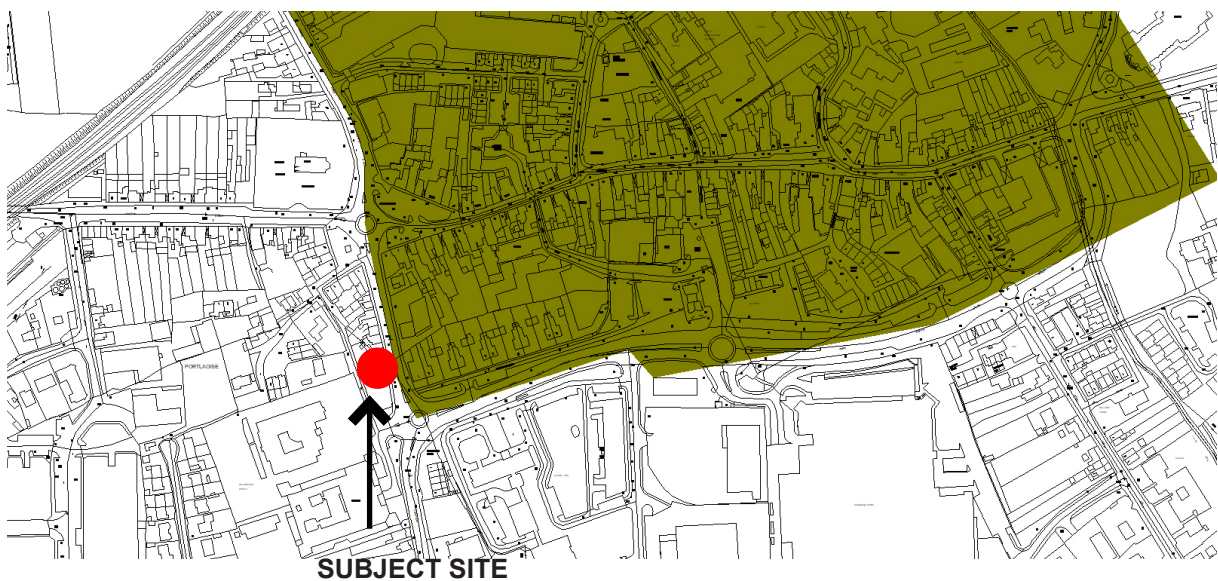


Fig 2.3 Extract from Portlaoise LAP 2018-2024 Map 7 - Archaeological Significance Zone. Subject site indicated by red circle.

### 3 SITE

#### Site Location

The site is located on Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. It is situated 0.3km from the town centre, which makes it ideal for non-car-dependent residents. A wide range of community facilities (schools, post office, church, shops potential employment opportunities, and access to public transport etc.) are minutes away on foot. The surrounding streets are predominantly residential.

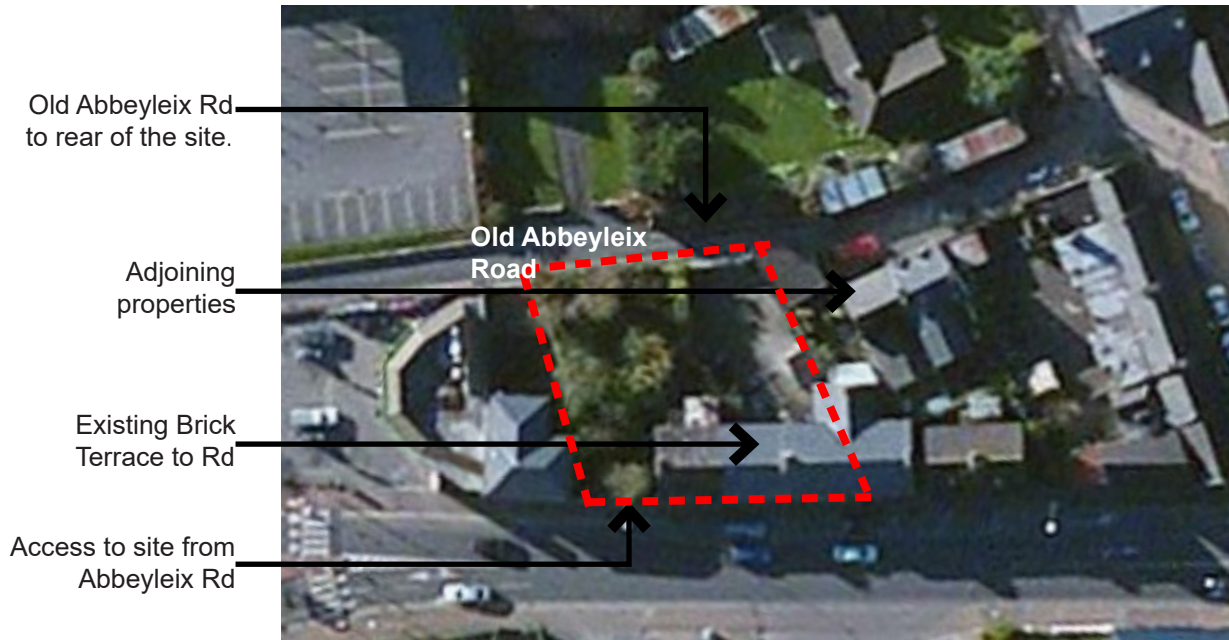


**Figure 3.1** Abbeyleix Road Aerial View. Subject Site indicated in red.



### Existing Site Layout

The site is set on a busy street (Abbeyleix Road) with vehicular and pedestrian traffic. It currently serves as rented office space and is surrounded on three sides by existing urban development, some being recent development and some adjacent buildings are older.



**Figure 3.2** Site Aerial View. Subject Site outlined in red.

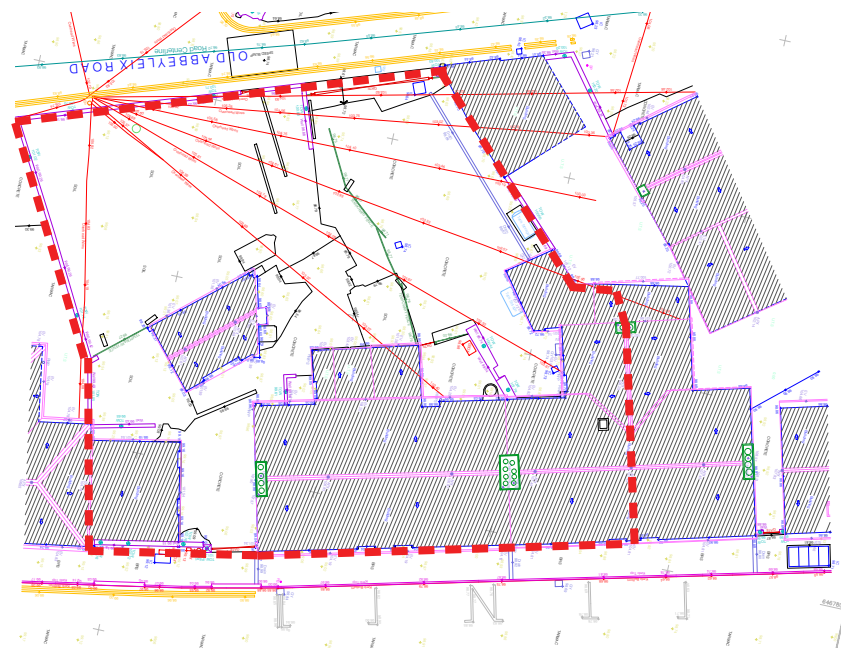
**Site Dimensions:** 30m x 24m (approx)

**Site Area:** 715.188 m<sup>2</sup> (approx)

0.17668 acre/ 0.07149 Ha

**Existing Site Coverage:** 30.89%

**Existing Plot Ratio:** 0.3089



**Figure 3.3** Site survey (not to scale)







**Figure 3.6** Photograph of site from Abbeyleix road.



**Figure 3.7** Photograph inside the site looking at the rear of the existing terrace.

**Site Photos**



**Figure 3.6.** Rear of unit 3



**Figure 3.9** Rear of units 1 & 2. Looking from within the site.



**Figure 3.10** Rear of units 1 & 2.



**Figure 3.11** Rear Access to site from Old Abbeyleix Road



**Figure 3.12** Site cleared. Showing walls to neighbouring dwelling and rear wall to Old Abbeyleix rd.



**Figure 3.13** Access to site to Abbeyleix road

## Existing Urban Forms and Materials

Portlaoise is the principal town of county Laois, located at an important junction at the secondary routes between Dublin, Cork and Limerick. Known until the mid-twentieth century as Maryborough in honour of Queen Mary I, the town owes its current name to the sixteenth-century fort, the 'Fort of Leix' or the 'Fort Protector' as depicted on contemporaneous maps.

Like much of the county, due to continual advancement, changes in ownership and war, the town of Portlaoise has transformed considerably since the mid-sixteenth century. The consequence of history and development on the town is an extensive and highly complex layering of the urban form, and while each period leaves its mark on the town-scape.

The town's greatest period of development occurred during the early nineteenth century, which generated the central town plan and produced most of Portlaoise's prominent public buildings in addition to varied streetscapes created with a mix of archetypal pattern-book designs and vernacular terraced residences.

The predominant form in the surrounding streets are terrace buildings sometimes occurring with brick and a plaster finish.

It is noted that many historic buildings have a generous economy of scale with the proportion of windows and decoration, particular to shopfronts and grand merchant houses/stores.

OBFA's proposal intends to renovate and restore the existing terraced buildings, replace and renovate the sash windows and repair the roofs.

*Figure 3.14 Images of Portlaoise Town.*



# 4 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

## Design Options



Fig 4.1 Ground floor plan for 5 no. units. Layout prepared by LCC

A proposal for 9 no. units was proposed by LCC, including car parking facilities and limited green spaces. However it was determined that this was not the optimum use of the site.

Alternative sketches were examined with the allowance of permeability through the site. Options were devised with a courtyard and a lane, respectively focusing on the connection from street (Abbeyleix Road) to the rear Lane (Old Abbeyleix Road).



Fig 4.2 Early design concepts by OBFA exploring courtyard and a through lane option

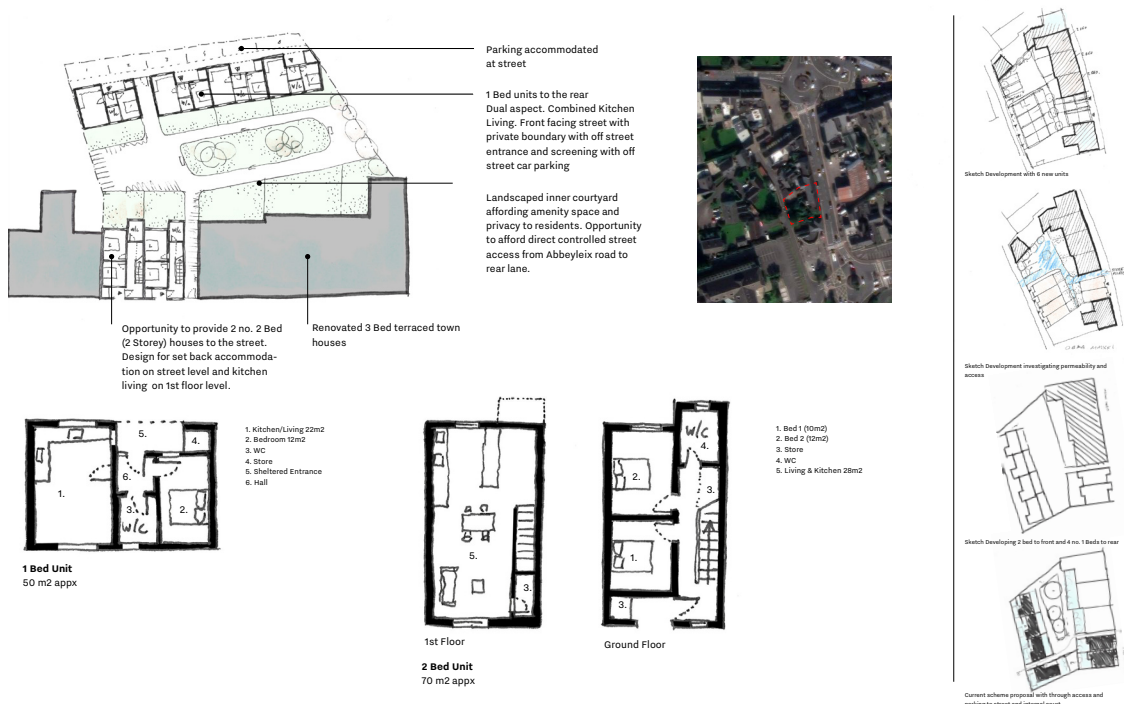


Fig 4.3 Design development by OBFA

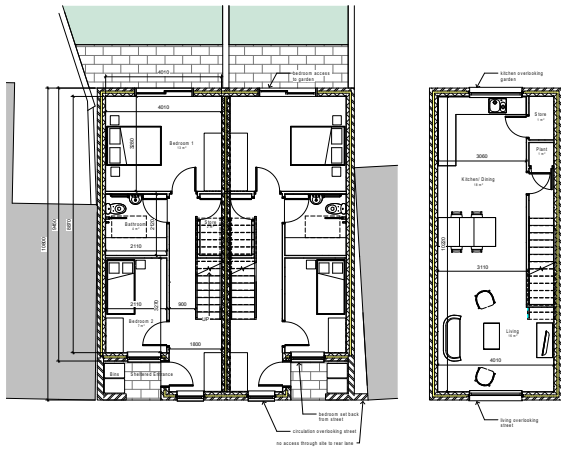
This scheme was examined further creating a communal courtyard and a one storey terrace to the rear. This scheme included 3 no. 2 storey existing terrace, 2 no. 2 storey two bed units and 3 no. 1 storey units to the rear. The aspiration was to create an enclosed courtyard and a garden, with a lane reaching out to the street for connection and accessibility.



Fig 4.4 Design development exploring courtyard studies

### OPTION A - 74sqm

2B/3P FIRST FLOOR LIVING  
NO ACCESS THROUGH SITE



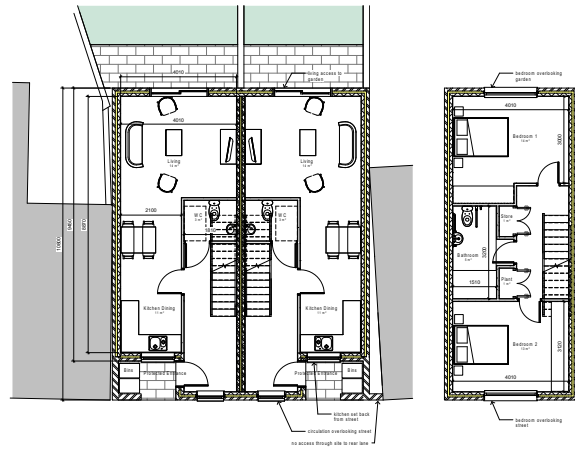
Ground Floor  
1:50

1st Floor  
1:50



### OPTION B - 74sqm

2B/4P GROUND FLOOR LIVING  
NO ACCESS THROUGH SITE  
- Unit size does not meet target floor area (80sqm)  
- Living aggregate does not meet min area

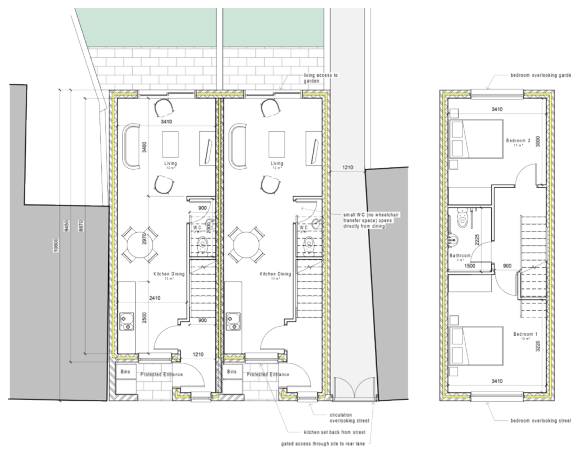


Ground Floor  
1:50

1st Floor  
1:50

### OPTION C - 64sqm

2B/4P GROUND FLOOR LIVING  
ACCESS THROUGH SITE  
- Unit size does not meet target floor area (80sqm)  
- Living and storage do not meet min areas



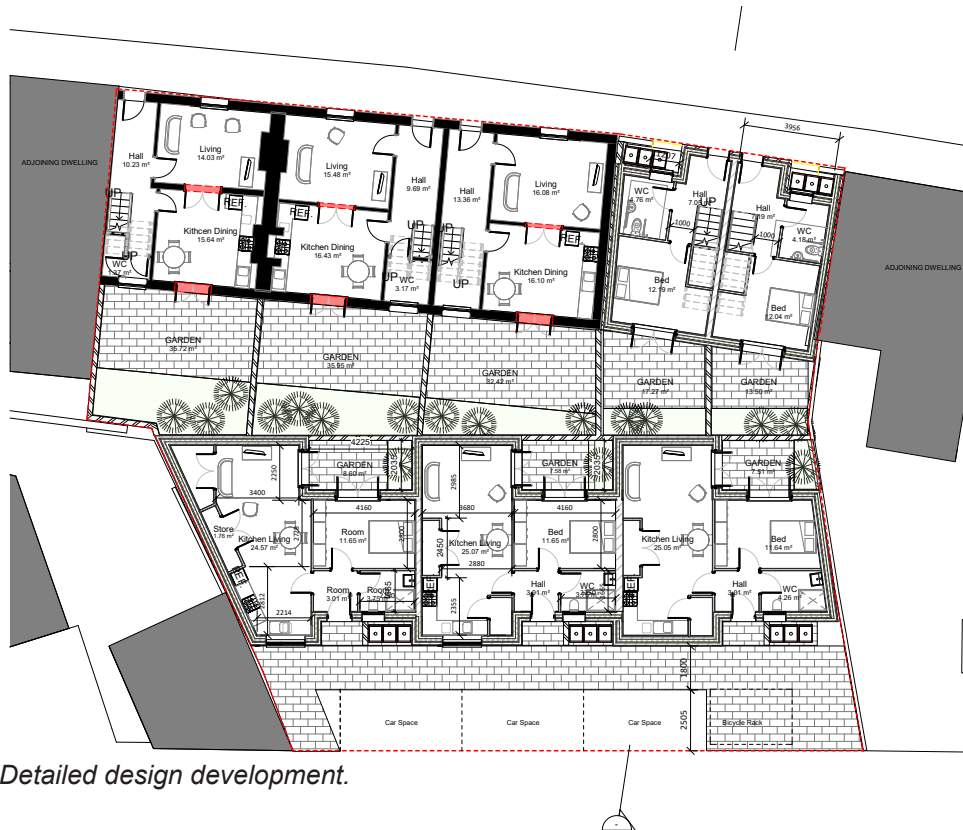
Ground Floor  
1:50

1st Floor  
1:50



**Fig 4.5** Design development options exploring the Abbeyleix Rd street facing units

A design option developed focusing on the street units with bin-stores located directly on the street was also explored. This option was problematic in terms of adequate space for two units on the street. Additionally, consideration was given to front door access and how it directly interacts with Abbeyleix Rd.



**Fig 4.6** Detailed design development.

### Measured Design Options

Following previous sketch designs a detailed topographical survey of the site confirmed the area and space available. Creating an internal courtyard was not viable with the intention to locate units as a terrace at the rear, with parking allocated along a footpath.

This detailed design option was explored providing single-storey, dual aspect 48sqm units with kitchens overlooking the lane and bedrooms and living rooms opening to quite small external areas. There is no common green space/ courtyard in this option or path from the street (Abbeyleix Rd) to the lane. Thus depleting the proposals permeability and connection with the town.

It was considered the proposals are very tight on the site, especially with the provision of parking and a footpath. In this design option there are single-storey houses to minimise potential overlooking and overshadowing issues.

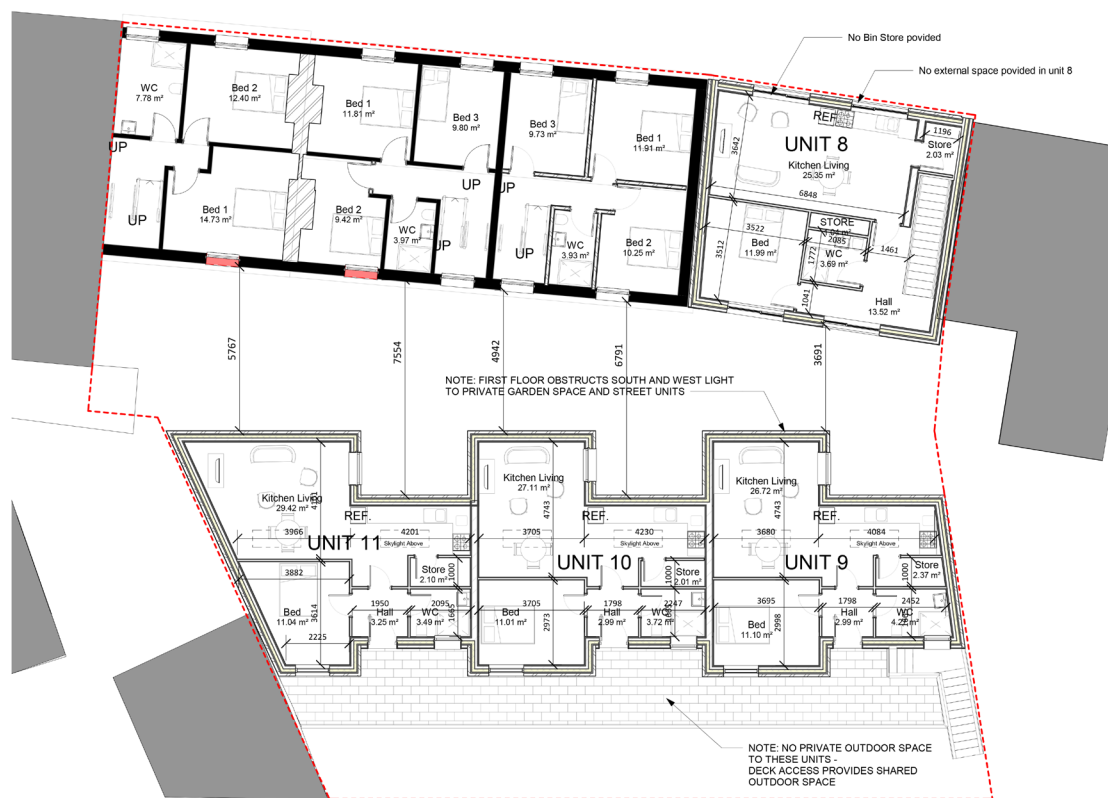


Fig 4.7 Detailed design development of two storey units to the rear lane (Old Abbeyleix Rd)





**Fig 4.8** Perspective sketch of two storey units to the rear lane (Old Abbeyleix Rd)

### **Two Storey Rear units study**

A detailed designed scheme showing 6 units at the rear, with parking allocated in front of the new rear units with a footpath. This was indicating two storey block of units to the rear lane (Old Abbeyleix Road)

This scheme provided single-storey, dual aspect 48sqm units with kitchens overlooking the lane and bedrooms and living rooms opening to quite small external areas. Problems arise with the issues of overlooking and overshadowing particularly to the existing terrace when a second floor is introduced.

It was considered the proposals here were an over development of the site with many impacts on the quality of spaces with the proposed units.

It was considered that the courtyard arrangement was to be re-examined as quality of spaces engaging with the street and lane.

## **Planning Engagement**

### **Ongoing direct consultation was undertaken with Laois County Council in relation to this project.**

OBFA have taken on board the LCC comments throughout, including input from the Planning and Roads Department on 01 February 2022 and Donal Kelly, Senior Executive Planner LCC on 31/01/22. It is to be noted that the proposal remains subject to planning permission approval. LCC Roads Department confirmed that existing parking to Abbeyleix Road would be adequate for this scheme.

### **OBFA consulted Alison Edgeworth RIAI from the Dept of Housing.**

Following a site visit on 22 December 2021, a summary of discussions and recommendations was distributed by Alison Edgeworth on 26 January 2022. OBFA took on these comments and updated the design proposal development. Further comments were received from Alison Edgeworth on 23 February 2022 on this scheme which OBFA have included as part of the proposed scheme.

## 5 THE PROPOSAL

The submitted proposal is for 7 no. units: 4 no. 1 bed new build units and 3 no. renovated existing units. (2no. 3 bed units and 1 no. 2 bed units)



Figure 5.1 Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Figure 5.2 Proposed First Floor Plan (not to scale).

## Unit Layouts

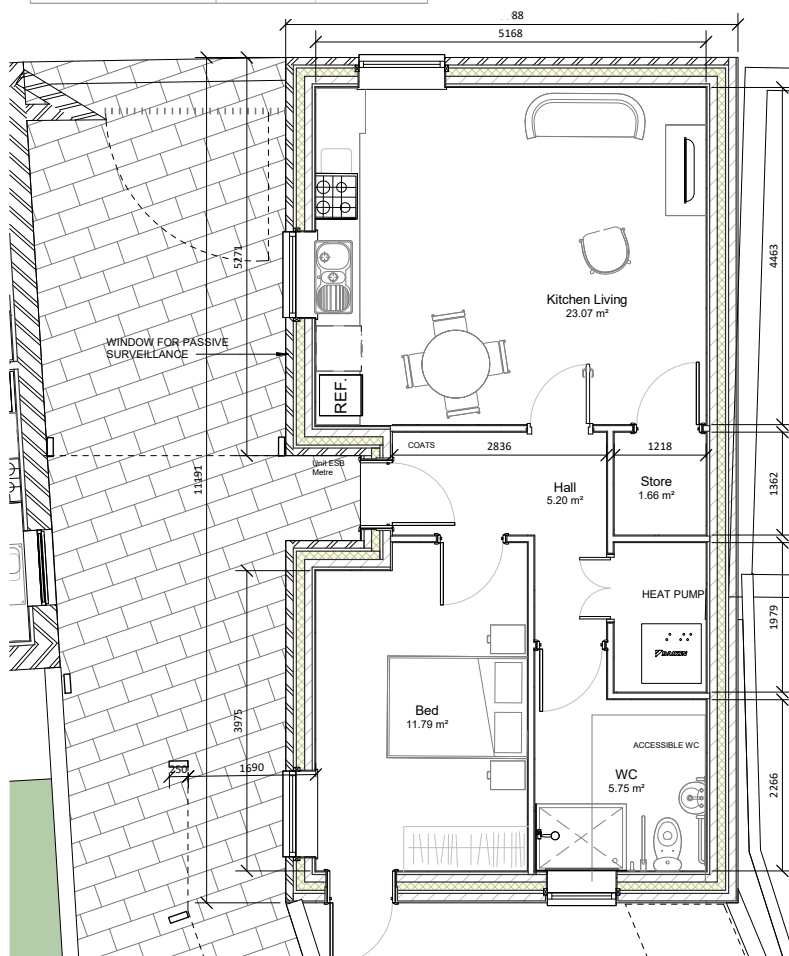
The layouts and sizes of the 1 bed units are in response to the housing need as confirmed by Laois County Council. All of the units are dual aspect with private open space.

The units are both accessed from the front and rear. The Abbeyleix Road entrance is accessed by a recessed, covered entrance /access controlled gate. The rear lane (Old Abbeyleix road) is accessed via an accessed controlled gate also.

This approach keeps the scale and density of the development at the appropriate level for this part of Portlaoise. It creates a strong boundary to the site entrance and seeks to engender a sense of enclosure for the rear gardens and 1 bed units.

Reference was to key planning policy requirements for apartments was taken from the **Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines**, [Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018 as amended.

Schedule of Accommodation		
	No. Beds	TOTAL FLOOR AREA m <sup>2</sup>
UNIT 1 (Existing Terrace)	3	96.48
UNIT 2 (Existing Terrace)	3	87.04
UNIT 3 (Existing Terrace)	3	87.58
UNIT 4	1	50.25
UNIT 5	1	48.47
UNIT 6	1	50.25
UNIT 7	1	48.47



### 1 bed unit Characteristics

Side Entry/ Central Plan entrance.

This allows a wider more efficient circulation which allows daylight and dual aspects to various spaces.

Kitchen and Dining to the Front.

This promotes clear passive surveillance of the front areas to the properties and in turn allows the sitting and living room to be wholly private.

External access to private patio and to courtyard.

**Figure 5.3 1-Bed Unit Layout.**

**Architectural Expression & Materiality**

The intent of the new development is intended to be sympathetic to the existing street-scape while creating a quality housing scheme. As such the building facades are proposed as a mixture of brick and render finish.

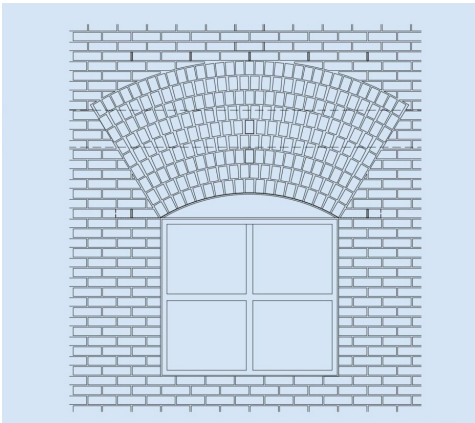
Brick is proposed as an elevation treatment to the apartments and in limited sections – for consistency and to promote a scheme identity over the entire development.

The careful use of brick is reasonable here because :

The material weathers extremely well over the building lifecycle and differentiates the new and existing.

At the street level of the proposed new units on Abbeyleix road, will be more exposed and will weather better as a street frontage.

Using brick in some locations is a conscious design decision to tie in with the existing street scape and terrace which are part of an ACA (Area of Architectural Conservation).



**Figure 5.4** Proposed materiality and precedent studies.

## Open Space

This scheme has been designed around a courtyard to the rear with each unit provided with private outdoor amenity space.

According to Section 8.5 “Development Management Standards” of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, a 1 bedroomed apartment shall have a minimum provision of 5 square metres of private open space. This shall be provided in the form of gardens or patio/terraces for ground floor apartment and balconies at upper levels.

These spaces have been designed with a minimum depth of at least 2 metres to be useful from an amenity viewpoint, to accommodate chairs and a small table.

## Car Parking

A Road Safety Audit was carried out on the proposed scheme. No curtilage car-parking is proposed. This has been discussed in outline with LCC. It was confirmed that no car parking will be required due to the proposed tenant profile and town-centre site location.

## Security and Access

The project has been designed to minimise opportunities for anti-social behavior and provide passive surveillance throughout. All units have own-door access from the courtyard, including the existing units via the back gardens. Access to the courtyard is by a key controlled gate, either from the street (Abbeyleix Road) or rear lane (Old Abbeyleix Road) respectively.

## Waste Management

Provision has been made in the design for individual general, green and brown bins for each unit.



*Figure 5.5 Entrance detail Sketch study*

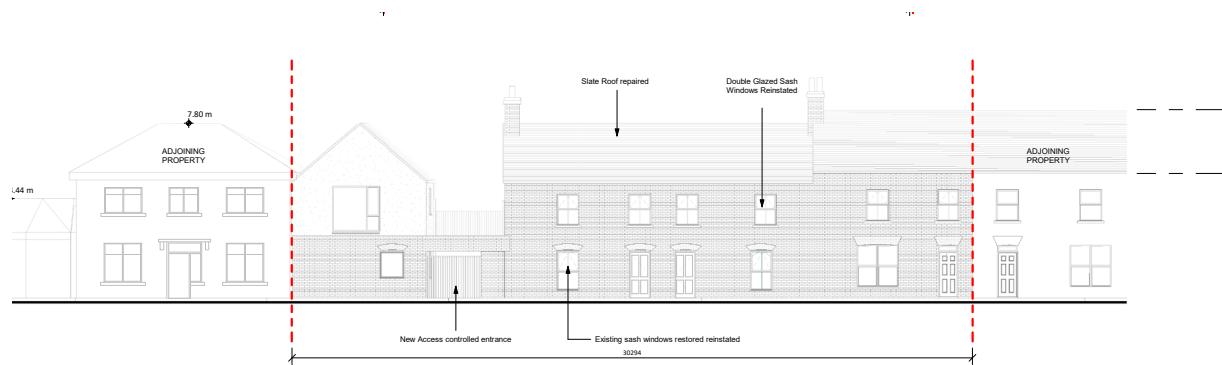
# APPENDICES

## Drawings

OBFA

### Civil and Structural Engineering Outline Report

ROD Consulting Engineers



**Figure 5.5** *Abbyleix Rd facade.*

