

Banagher Town Plan

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1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Location

Located within the Birr Municipal District, the market town of Banagher is located on the banks of the River Shannon in west County Offaly, 12km northwest of Birr and 37km west of Tullamore. The harbour and marina area is an important focus of tourism activity, while the Main Street running uphill from the bridge hosts the commercial and retail core of the Town. The town acts as a service town for the surrounding rural hinterland – which includes west Offaly but also stretches into rural east Galway.



Figure 1.1 Banagher Bridge and River Shannon

1.2 Settlement Form

The town has been identified in a study carried out by the Office of Public Works as an important urban archaeological centre in recognition of its ancient ancestry and of the fact that an urban centre existed here prior to the year 1700. Banagher is included in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places as an historic town, a designation which is also accompanied by a survey map demarcating an ‘Area of Archaeological Potential’ within the town.

The emergence of Banagher as a town, together with its architectural and archaeological heritage, has been influenced by a number of historic eras and events, mainly early Christianity, plantations, Cromwellian and Napoleonic Wars, and a river crossing. A *Conservation, Interpretation and Management Plan*, titled ‘Historic Banagher’ was prepared in 2018 by Howley Hayes Architects in conjunction with The Heritage Council and Offaly County Council. It provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the town. Records would indicate that the current urban layout of Banagher is composed of two former settlements; the early walled urban settlement close to the bridge and the

monastic settlement associated with St. Rynagh, centred around the existing Chapel of Saint Rynagh monastic site and historic Town Square at Church Street.

Records would suggest that urban settlement commenced when St. Rynagh founded a convent in the area in circa 600 AD, while it is believed that the early walled town may date back to the Anglo-Norman period of the 12th century. By 1628 the town was planted and incorporated as a borough which included the monastic area of the town. A stronghold called Fort Falkland was constructed adjacent to the bridge within the same decade, and it is believed that the walls which exist at the site today may be remnants of this fort or more likely remnants of the Former Constabulary Barracks, which was built in circa 1800s in place of Fort Falkland. It is believed that much of the earlier town was destroyed during the Cromwellian wars of the 1600s and subsequently rebuilt. During the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800s, further defences were put in place including Fort Eliza west of the town on Crank Road, the ruins of which still exist.



Figure 1.2 Extract from the 'Municipal Corporations and Parliamentary Boundaries Commission' map of Banagher c.1840

Historical records indicate that the first bridge at this location was constructed as early as 1049. The existing Banagher Bridge, which provides a conduit for the R356 regional road between Offaly and Galway, was constructed in the 1840s and features six masonry arches.

The extension of the Grand Canal Network from Dublin to the River Shannon in 1804, approximately 3km north of the town, established Banagher as a significant inland portal town, with much prosperity for the town, particularly from the woollen trade, through the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The principle axis of Banagher town is Main Street which continues uphill south east from the Bridge. Lower Main Street comprises narrow junctions with Crank Road and Queen Street, and subsequently widens to form Town Square at the junction with Harbour Road. Residential infill developments that lead directly from Main Street, and also developments at Crank Road, Portavolla and Harbour Road, contribute to the overall vibrancy of the town centre.

The town has evolved organically from the central spine of Main Street / R356, with residential development mainly to the east and south and industrial to the west, with the natural flood plain of the River Shannon being a major influencing factor in the settlement pattern of the town. The residential areas of the town are characterised by low density mature neighbourhoods, in particular in the Cuba Avenue area east of the town centre and the residential estates leading from Harbour Road to the east and the Birr road to the southeast of the town centre.



Figure 1.3 Aerial image of Banagher

1.3 Socio Economic Profile

An analysis of the Census 2016 data provides the following statistics for Banagher:

- The town's population has increased from 1,653 in 2011 to 1,760 in 2016, an increase of 6.5% which compares favourably to the national average of 3.8% growth for the same period;
- The largest cohort of the town's population is in the 30-39 age bracket (see Figure 1.4 below), which is consistent with the state population as a whole;
- Average household size in Banagher is 2.6 which is slightly below the national average of 2.75;

- 46% of the population over 15 years of age is employed, which is comparatively lower than the national average of 53%;
- Banagher has a relatively high jobs to resident workers’ ratio of 0.809, noting that a ratio of 0.7 and above indicates a strong economic function;
- Of the persons at work, the greatest proportions are involved in ‘Professional Services’ (27%), Manufacturing Industries (23%), ‘Other’ (16%) and Commerce & Trade (15%);
- 61% of Banagher’s population aged 5+ years commute to work/school/college by car/van and 33% of the population aged 5+ years commute to work/school/college by more sustainable modes of transport (on foot, bicycle, bus, minibus, coach, train, DART or Luas);
- 70% of Banagher’s population aged 5+ years travel time to work/school/college is under 30 minutes;
- Banagher has 799 no. permanent dwellings, of which 680 no. (85%) are occupied and 84 no. (10%) are vacant (excluding unoccupied holiday homes and temporarily absent dwellings); and
- Broadband is available to 58% of households in the town.

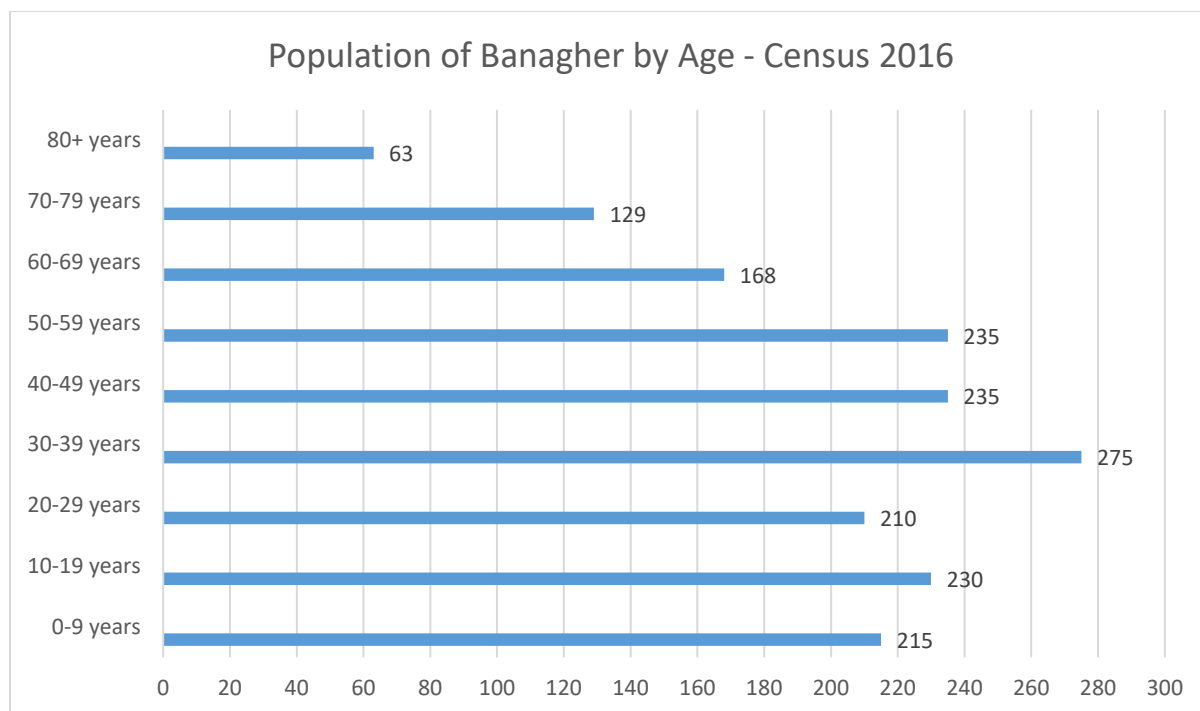


Figure 1.4 Population of Banagher by Age (Source: Census 2016)

1.4 Town Function and Development Trends

Banagher is classified as a 'Town' in the Settlement Strategy of the County Development Plan 2021-2027 and performs a local service and employment function. The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy advises that there is a need to promote regeneration and revitalisation of such towns and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for the surrounding rural areas. The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy also requires that local authorities support the diversification of rural economies to create additional jobs and maximise opportunities in emerging sectors such as tourism, an important economic driver for Banagher town.

The strategy for Banagher for the previous plan period (2014-2020) was to facilitate economic recovery to ensure that development completed during the previous development plan period can be utilised and occupied, thus seeking to prioritise land uses relating to tourism and employment related uses.

The population allocation for Banagher as per the Core Strategy contained in Chapter 2 of Volume 1, provides the sustainable growth of the town in accordance with its position in the county settlement hierarchy.

1.5 Strategic Aims for Banagher

This Settlement Plan takes an asset based approach to the future spatial development of Banagher focusing primarily on the consolidation, revitalisation and regeneration of the town and its sequential expansion subject to the availability of necessary infrastructure and services. Future growth shall be in line with the town's position on the Settlement Hierarchy and population allocation set out in the Core Strategy. This holistic approach aims to enhance the attractiveness, viability and vibrancy of Banagher as a place to live, work and visit and aims to achieve more sustainable patterns and forms of development.

The following Strategic Aims have been identified for Banagher:

1. Reinforce Banagher town centre as the heart of the town by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl; by consolidating new development within the built-up footprint of the town, through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/brownfield/underutilised/vacant sites; by delivering sustainable re-use and regeneration outcomes; and by extending out sequentially subject to available infrastructure.
2. Strengthen the economic base and employment generating potential of the town by supporting existing businesses and encouraging new enterprises, ensuring it is a viable service centre for the surrounding rural area and viable as a destination town for visitors, with a focus on drawing visitors from the river and marina to the town centre.
3. Deliver high quality housing of an appropriate scale, mix, tenure, location and density, aligned with adequate physical and social infrastructure and the population allocations contained in the Core Strategy; Promote healthy place-making in Banagher through attractive, well-

designed, 'liveable' and sustainable communities; Promote and support innovative housing models for all sections of the community in Banagher, including live-work units, special needs housing, housing for older people and tourist accommodation.

4. Protect, harness and develop the natural heritage assets of the town including the River Shannon and other green infrastructure for tourism and recreational purposes and to promote sustainable mobility.
5. Protect Banagher's built heritage assets which are a non-renewable resource that contribute to our understanding of the past and promote these assets in the creation of an attractive, vibrant town and in heritage-led regeneration. To encourage the repair and reuse of vacant and derelict heritage buildings in Banagher Town.
6. Ensure the timely provision of physical and social infrastructure to facilitate the future growth of Banagher in accordance with the Core Strategy, in the interests of achieving a self-sustaining settlement.
7. Support and facilitate community and cultural facilities as a vital component to creating a self-sustaining, socially inclusive Banagher, an enjoyable place to live and visit.
8. Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Banagher.

2 Development Strategy

2.1 Town Centre and Regeneration

Strategic Aim: Reinforce Banagher town centre as the heart of the town by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl, by consolidating new development within the built-up footprint of the town, through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/ brownfield/ underutilised/ vacant sites; by delivering sustainable re-use and regeneration outcomes; and by extending out sequentially subject to available infrastructure.

2.1.1 Retail Core

Banagher's retail core is centred around Main Street which continues uphill south east from the Bridge on the River Shannon. Some smaller streets run off of Main Street, but it remains as the commercial heart of the town. The buildings fronting the main business areas of the town are mainly two and three storeys. The centre of town is vibrant and active and the level of services available is commensurate with Banagher's role as a local service town, primarily including businesses that fulfil the needs of the population of the town and its immediate surroundings such as convenience retail, pharmacies, banks, licensed premises and some professional services.

There is a significant residential presence within and close to the town centre, particularly back land style housing developments, which add to the vibrancy of the core retail area of the town. There are a number of buildings at key locations within the town centre that have fallen derelict over the last decade, particularly in the north-western quadrant of Main Street and within the primary view scape

of the town on the approach from the River Shannon bridge and marina. There is also a noticeable level of vacancy, both in new and old buildings, with a concern remaining that such buildings may be allowed to deteriorate over the coming years.

There are a significant number of vacant premises within the town core, with the highest concentration identified within lower Main Street between the marina and the Town Square. Vacant properties include a number of ground floor shops, upper floor residential, derelict hotel, a 10 no. unit residential development and a three storey building located adjacent to the Town Square. The Council proposes to work with the Banagher Development Group and other stakeholders to promote the repair and reuse of town centre properties, including reuse of over the shop residential units, to drive economic growth in the town. As part of this the Council will continue to facilitate and assist with applications for funding under heritage scheme such as the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, seeking to promote the repair of built heritage in the town, including protected structures.

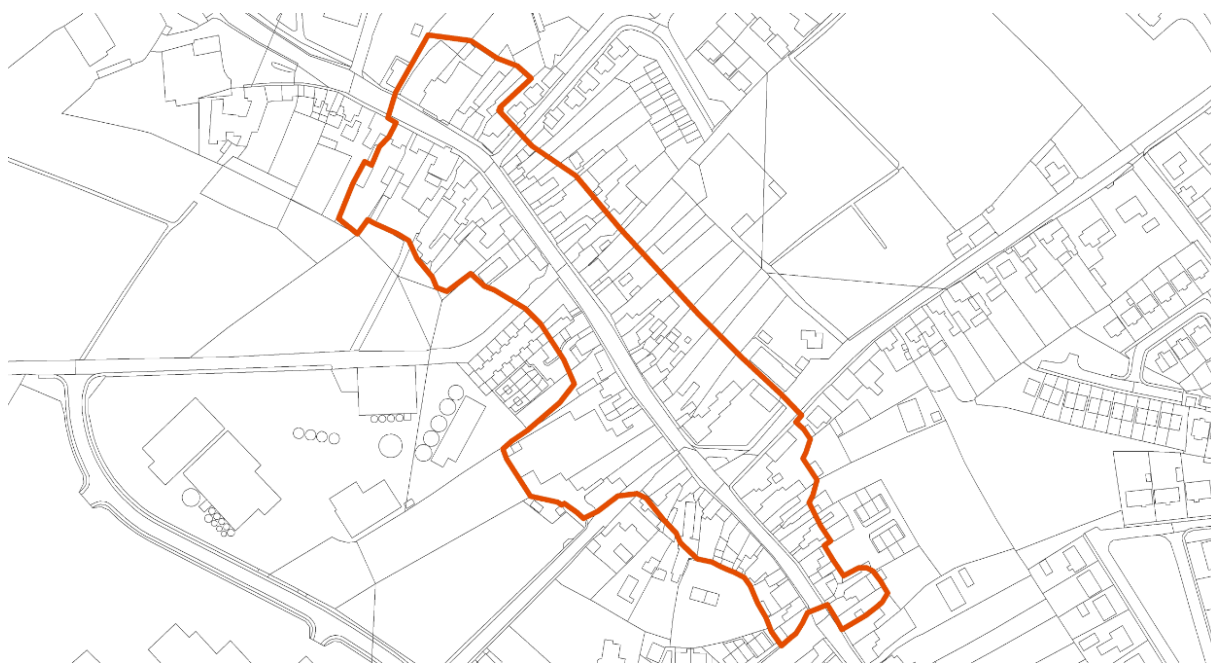


Figure 2.1 Banagher Retail Core

Banagher is identified as a 'Town' within the county retail hierarchy contained in Chapter 7, Volume 1 of this Plan. Table 7.2 'Level and Form of Retailing Activity in context of Retail Hierarchy' contained in Chapter 7 outlines the level of retailing for Banagher as follows:

Table 2.1 Extract from Table 7.2 ‘Level and Form of Retailing Activity in context of Retail Hierarchy’ contained in Chapter 7 of Volume 1

Typology	Description
Towns	<p>Additional convenience and comparison floorspace will be encouraged where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is needed to support levels of population growth commensurate with the town’s role, • Gaps are identified in local provision, and • There will not be a material and unacceptable adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the existing town centre. <p>Comparison retail development will not be considered where it proposes to attract a larger catchment such that it would be likely to affect the integrity of the retail hierarchy.</p> <p>There will generally be a presumption against the development of retail parks accommodating retail warehousing in these towns.</p>

The Council will encourage the expansion of the retail and service base in Banagher town centre commensurate with its level on the county retail hierarchy. The re-use and re-development of existing vacant or underutilised buildings and sites will be particularly encouraged for town centre uses (residential, retail, services, etc.) to create a compact, vibrant town centre. The vernacular building stock and shopfronts along Main Street shall be respected, as they contribute to the town centre’s identity and sense of place.

The Council is favourably disposed to working with the owners of vacant, underutilised and derelict sites/buildings to identify new uses. The Council will use its powers as necessary under the Derelict Sites Act 1991 (as amended) and the Housing and Urban Regeneration Act 2015 (as amended).



Figure 2.2 Retailing in Banagher

2.1.2 Opportunity Sites

This Plan identifies 4 no. opportunity sites within the development boundary of the town, each considered to be conducive to delivering on compact growth for Banagher.

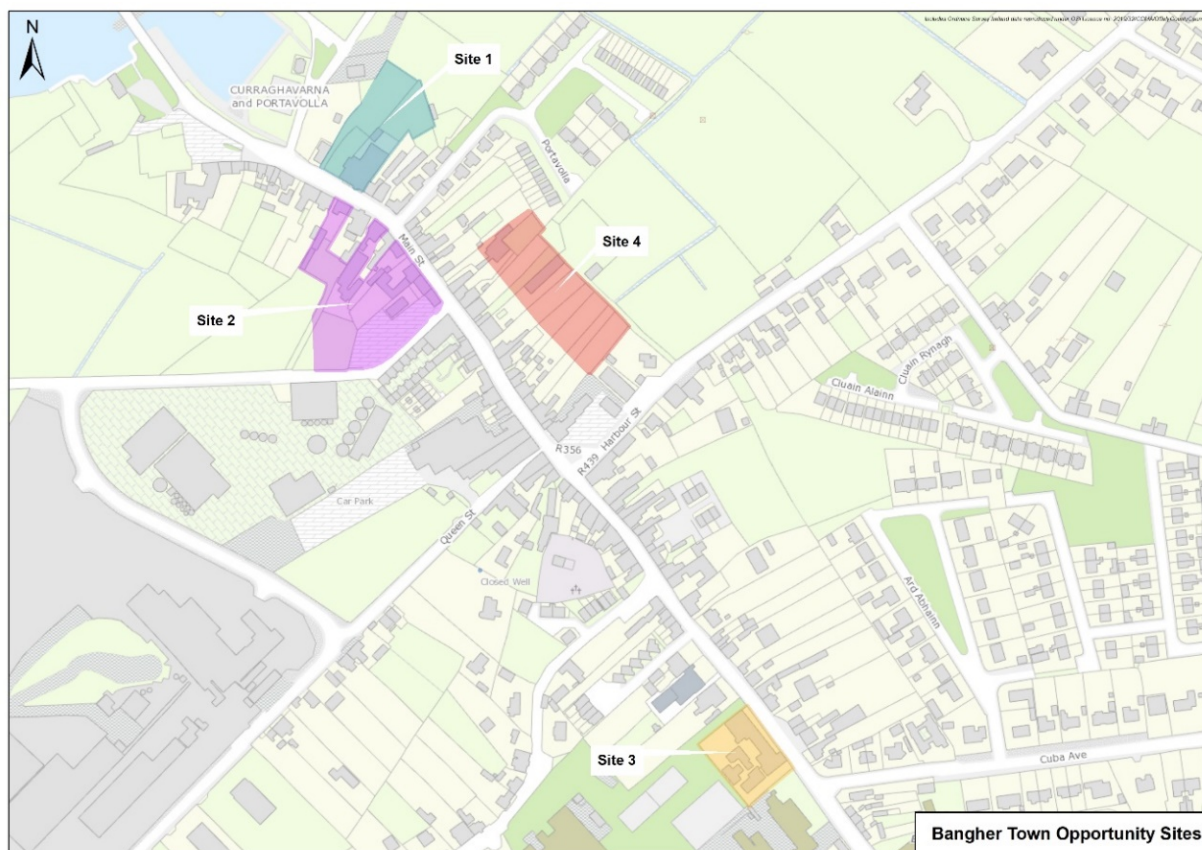


Figure 2.3 Opportunity Sites in Banagher Town

2.1.2.1 Site 1 – Royal Shannon Hotel Site

The site comprises two buildings separately included on the record of protected structures (RPS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH); a three storey former house (RPS Ref. 39-024 / NIAH Ref. 14810026) and two-storey former coach house (RPS Ref. 39-025 / NIAH Ref. 14810027), both built circa 1800, with extensions to the rear. The site represents an important focal point in the streetscape and with a large site area offers scope for refurbishment and redevelopment, subject to consideration for the architectural value and setting of the buildings. The Council will also encourage the provision of a pedestrian walkway through the site, connecting the marina with Main Street.



Figure 2.4 Royal Shannon Hotel Opportunity Site

2.1.2.2 Site 2 - Crank Road Area

This opportunity site generally comprises partially brownfield backland in the area north of Crank Road and south west of Main Street. This area is prime for a mixed use employment and residential development that would capitalise on the successful infill residential developments that have previously occurred on adjoining sites. A successful development in this area would see the amalgamation of a number of landholdings with a focus on permeability between Crank Road and Main Street with an overall design that contributes to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre, potentially achieved by the creation of a pedestrian laneway with active frontages at ground floor level. There is also potential to provide necessary infrastructure to support the development of a walking / cycling route between Banagher and Victoria Lock to the south.



Figure 2.5 Crank Road Area Opportunity Site

2.1.2.3 Site 3 - La Sainte Union Convent and Chapel Site

The site comprises a number of buildings with two distinct buildings fronting Main Street, both included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH); namely a two storey gable fronted chapel (NIAH Ref. 1481008) and two-storey over raised basement convent (NIAH Ref. 14810009), both built in 1836. Now vacant, the La Sainte Union Convent Boarding and Day School was part of a religious complex within Banagher town. The Council will support the retention of the building and repurposing for a variety of town centre uses.



Figure 2.6 Convent and Chapel Opportunity Site

2.1.2.4 Site 4 - Back land at rear of properties on east side of Main Street

This opportunity site generally comprises partially brownfield backland to the north east of Main Street. This area is suitable for mixed use development and a successful development in this area would see the amalgamation of a number of landholdings. Development would focus on permeability between Harbour Road / Town Square and Main Street, and potentially Portavolla housing estate with an overall design that contributes to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre.

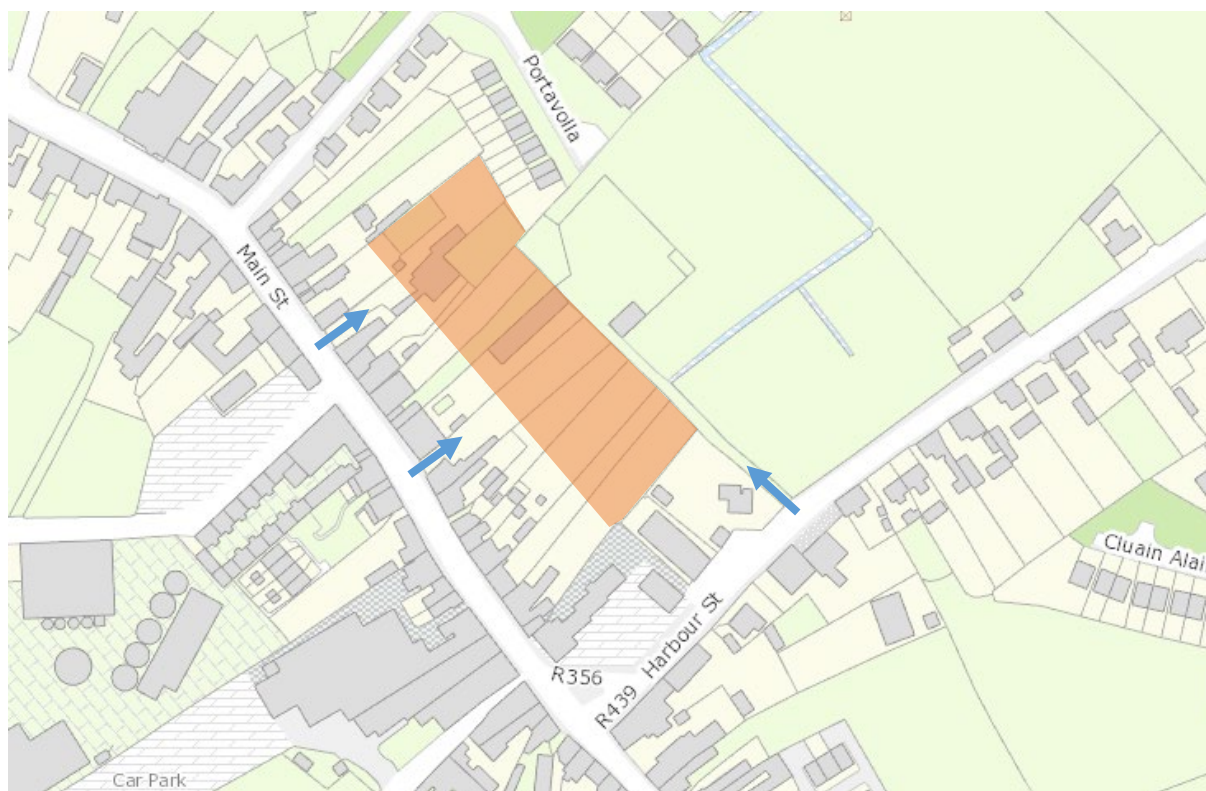


Figure 2.7 Main Street back land Opportunity Site

2.1.3 Public Realm

Public Realm is an umbrella term used to describe areas where all members of the public have routine access to; it includes streets, squares, parks and green spaces, public buildings and river banks. Elements that contribute to the success of each public realm include overall layout, shopfronts, architecture, passive surveillance, street furniture, planting, signage, paving, footpath maintenance, colour schemes, traffic management, cycling and pedestrian facilities.

In historic town centres, such as in Banagher, the quality elements of Public Realm have developed through investment over many years and ensure that the town centre is an attractive place to spend time and do business. It will be the Council's intention to continually improve the public realm, identifying elements that contribute positively and maintaining them while seeking to identify and resolve issues that detract from the quality of the public realm.

In order to maintain and improve the quality of the Public Realm in Banagher, a collaborative approach between central government (funding), the local authority, the community, local businesses, voluntary associations, key interest groups and stakeholders is required.

2.1.4 Town Centre and Regeneration Objectives

TCO-01 Encourage the expansion of the retail and service base in Banagher town centre commensurate with its level on the county retail hierarchy, to serve the town and its wider hinterland.

TCO-02 Facilitate the re-use and development of existing vacant and underutilised buildings and sites, including backland and over the shop units, for town centre uses to create a compact, vibrant town centre.

TCO-03 Facilitate the appropriate development of the Opportunity Sites identified in Banagher town for uses that will contribute to the renewal, enhancement and regeneration of Banagher Town Centre and achieve sustainable compact development. Development proposals on these sites shall be in accordance with the requirements of Section 7.2.4 (Chapter 7) of Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

TCO-04 Facilitate the delivery of improved cultural facilities as a vital component to creating a self-sustaining, socially inclusive and 'liveable' town centre, including the provision of additional library space, community and enterprise space for meetings, digital hub, remote working, creative spaces, exhibition spaces and study spaces.

TCO-05 Seek the maintenance and improvement of shopfronts within the town centre. Proposals for new shopfronts should be sensitively designed with regard to their location within the streetscape.

TCO-06 Further improve the public realm, which includes streets, footpaths, parks, squares, bridges and public buildings and facilities, to provide Banagher with an enhanced sense of identity.

TCO-07 Facilitate works which provide for the appropriate setting of the historic Town Square at the junction of Main Street and Church Road to create an area of public amenity / pocket park in addition to improved public interface with the adjoining Chapel of Saint Rynagh monastic site.

TCO-08 To provide loading bays of adequate capacity where they are needed most in order to ensure that traffic flows are not restricted.

TCO-09 Facilitate the improvement of gateway features on approach roads into the town on the R356 Cloghan / Ferbane road from the north-east and on the L3012 Lusmagh road from the south-west.

TCO-10 Maintain and enhance accessibility to and within the town centre in respect of pedestrian and cycle access, public transport and car parking, with particular regard to the needs and access for people with disabilities, and to facilitate walkway connections between the town centre and cultural sites including Fort Eliza on Crank Road to the west of the town.

TCO-11 To work with service providers with a view to undergrounding overhead cables visible within the town centre.

2.2 Economic Development

Strategic Aim: Strengthen the economic base and employment generating potential of the town by supporting existing businesses and encouraging new enterprises, ensuring it is a viable service centre for the surrounding rural area and viable as a destination town for visitors, with a focus on drawing visitors from the river and marina to the town centre.

The Council's strategy for sustainable employment is compatible with the Council's settlement hierarchy. Therefore, economic development shall be commensurate with the size of Banagher population growth. In order to ensure a sustainable employment base for Banagher into the future, a particular focus will be placed on growing existing businesses, supporting start-up businesses and developing tourism in Banagher during the plan period.

The economy of the town maintains a good local industrial employment base, including Banagher Concrete, Liffey Mills and Inland and Coastal Marina Systems, remaining notable employers in the town, continuing to contribute to the local economy. There is significant employment activity in the area west of the town centre, where ease of access is facilitated by the Banagher bypass which links the Birr Road (R439) to Queen Street (L3012) and the link road from Queen Street to the Crank Road (L7017). Other important local businesses include cruise liner operators at the marina, contributing significantly to the tourism offering for the town.

Businesses including Banagher Concrete and Liffey Mills are a continuing source of employment and the Council recognises the value of this and will seek to ensure that such uses are continued in these areas. Other businesses in the town such as Bo Bristle and Inland and Coastal Marina Systems reflect a diverse employment base while Silver Line Cruisers and Carrick Craft operating out of the marina as well as Shannon Adventure Canoeing Camping Holidays are an equally important source of employment and also play an important role in developing tourism as a key economic driver for the town. The Primary Care Centre is also an important public service and employer for Banagher, with the potential to act as a catalyst for the delivery of further health services in the town.



Figure 2.8 Silver Line Cruisers

There is significant potential for employment in tourism-related business in Banagher, taking advantage of the town's location on the River Shannon and the angling and cruising markets. The Council will encourage the development of Banagher as a main 'hub' for water sport activity and water based activity in accordance with the Offaly Tourism Statement of Strategy 2017-2022. The monastic settlement of Clonmacnoise is up river of the town and is easily accessible via both road and river. The Council recognises that the formation of the original settlement of Banagher is closely aligned with the height of Clonmacnoise and this fact should be part of the narrative that is presented as part of the overall tourism product of the town. Another advantage of the town is the existing early 19th century defensive infrastructure, such as the Barracks walls and Fort Eliza; together with the Chapel of Saint Rynagh monastic site and adjacent historic Town Square at the junction of Main Street and Church Road. The Council will encourage the sensitive development of these sites for recreational, tourism and educational purposes.

The Council will also support and facilitate the progression of a greenway network link through Banagher, utilising part of the former Ferbane to Banagher railway line to link with the proposed Grand Canal greenway connection at Shannon Harbour to the north. The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031 supports local strategies to link the development of the *Midland Cycle Destination – Offaly*. This strategy has a route through Banagher, with potential to bring more visitors to the town. The Council will also support development of recreational and tourism activities in Banagher as part of the Shannon Blueway.

There are a number of buildings at key locations within the town centre that are either vacant or derelict, particularly in the north-western quadrant / lower Main Street, within the primary view scape of the town on the approach from the River Shannon bridge and marina, and also in the vicinity of Town Square. These buildings have the potential to be refurbished for employment / tourism /community related uses. The Council will support applications for the redevelopment and re-use of such buildings particularly where they contribute to the economic revitalisation of the town.

The provision of tourist accommodation is a key driver for the town in terms of increasing visitor numbers and attracting visitors from the marina. There are a number of Bed & Breakfasts in the town however there is currently no hotel operating in the town. The Council encourages the development of a hotel, with the potential for refurbishment works to the Royal Shannon Hotel, positioned at a key location on lower Main Street creating an important visual link between the marina and the town centre. Other forms of tourist accommodation will also be encouraged, including short stay holiday apartments and glamping, subject to normal planning and considerations. The annual 'That Beats Banagher' festival is focused around the River Shannon and the rich history of the town of Banagher. Each year the festival includes events of historical and cultural significance, workshops and demonstrations, and leisure events on the River Shannon. The Council recognises the economic and community benefit of the festival and will continue to support the annual event.

The Council will seek to ensure that sufficient lands are zoned for employment purposes to allow for possible expansion of existing industries and development of new employment generating opportunities. The Council will also co-operate with employment agencies to attract inward investment and job creation in Banagher.

The graph below gives a snap shot of employment levels for Banagher in 2016. Taking the figure for those '*looking for first regular job*' and those '*unemployed, having lost or given up previous job*', the

unemployment rate in 2016 for those over the age of 15 years was 12%, which is down from the rate of 18% in 2011, demonstrating an uplift in the rate of employment for the town in the intervening period.

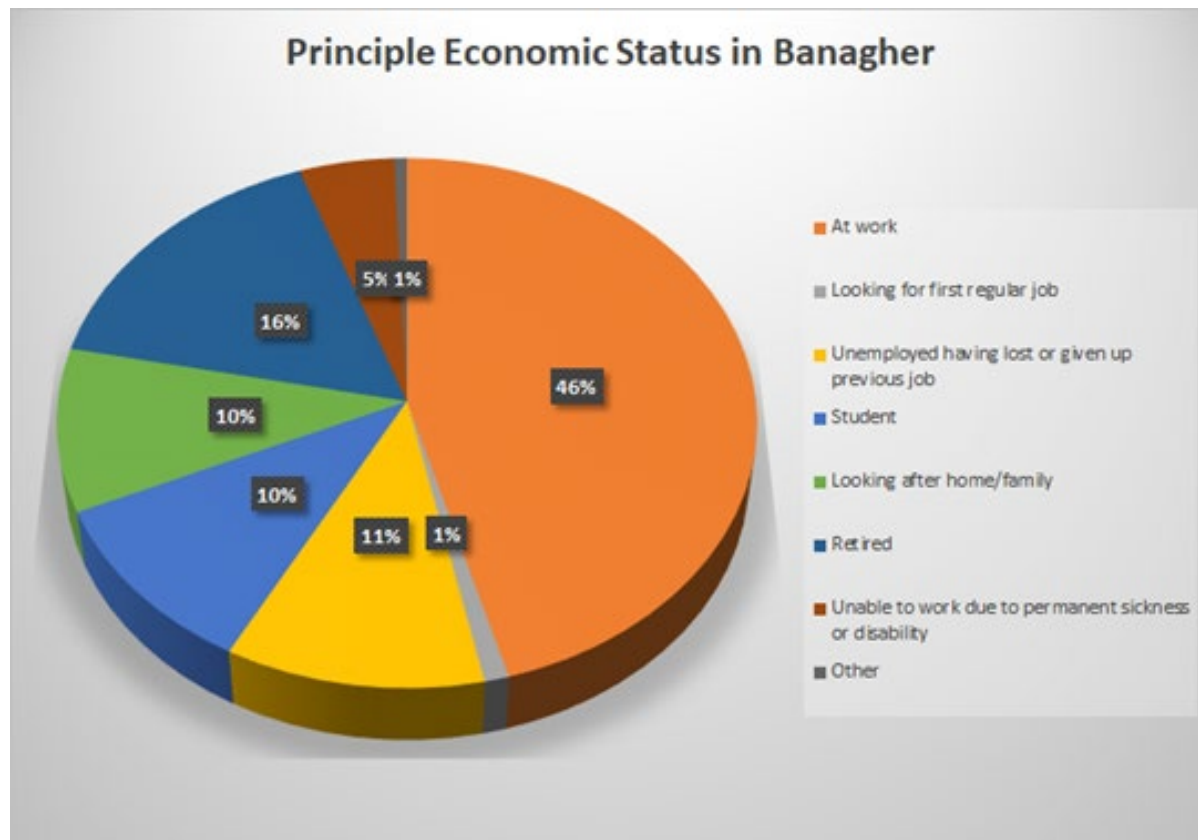


Figure 2.9 Principal Economic Status of population aged 15 and over for Banagher - 2016

2.2.1 Economic Development Objectives

EDO-01 Engage with and co-operate with employment agencies, such as the Offaly Local Development Company, Offaly Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, to attract inward investment and to facilitate job creation in Banagher.

EDO-02 Support the development of incubator units, providing work space for start-up businesses, in appropriately zoned locations in the town.

EDO-03 To engage with local community organisations and Fáilte Ireland to develop informational signage for the town.

EDO-04 Support the development of tourist accommodation for the town, including hotel and other forms of short stay accommodation.

EDO-05 Support and facilitate new and diverse economic and tourism related uses and development associated with the River Shannon, marina and harbour in Banagher, including the enhancement of mooring, cruising, boat hire, fishing, water sports and other similar activities and amenities.

EDO-06 Support continued hosting of ‘That Beats Banagher’ festival, showcasing Banagher as a tourism destination.

EDO-07 Engage with and co-operate with relevant stakeholders including private landowners, Bord na Móna, Coillte and Waterways Ireland to further develop strategies which would benefit the economic base of Banagher town, such as the *Greenway* and *Blueway* networks and *Midland Cycle Destination – Offaly*.

EDO-08 Facilitate and support the further development of the county’s network of greenways, including the repurposing of the former railway line between Banagher and Ferbane, with a link to Shannon Harbour.

2.3 Residential

Strategic Aims:

- **Deliver high quality housing of an appropriate scale, mix, tenure, location and density, aligned with adequate physical and social infrastructure and the population allocations contained in the Core Strategy;**
- **Promote healthy place-making in Banagher through attractive, well-designed, ‘liveable’ and sustainable communities; and**
- **Promote and support innovative housing models for all sections of the community in Banagher, including live-work units, special needs housing, housing for older people and tourist accommodation.**



Figure 2.10 Existing Residential in Banagher

Adequate zoned land has been made available to accommodate the population targets and associated housing allocation for Banagher to 2027, in accordance with the Core Strategy. The ability to service land and the concept of achieving ‘compact growth’ are key considerations in the future growth of Banagher. The sequential approach will be applied to new residential development in Banagher. The sequential approach relates to development taking place from the centre out, with a particular focus on developing infill sites, under-utilised buildings including vacant properties, avoiding ‘leapfrogging’ of more appropriate land. This approach will provide for compact growth as advocated by the National Planning Framework (National Strategic Outcome 1) and the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (Regional Strategic Outcome 2).

The following key guiding principles will be applied by the Council to deliver quality residential environments, with more detailed guidance, policies and objectives provided in Chapter 2 (Topic 3 Housing Strategy) and Chapter 13 (Development Management Standards) of Volume 1:

1. Compact Growth and Sustainable Density
2. Healthy Place Making including Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility
3. Variety of Housing Mix and Tenure
4. Best Practice Urban Design Principles for Attractive Buildings and Spaces
5. Universal Access and Design with Life Long Adaptability
6. Sustainable Design, Energy Efficiency and Climate Resilience

Innovative housing models such as live-work units and ‘living over the shop’ schemes will be encouraged in the town centre to make good use of underutilised buildings and infill sites. Special needs housing and housing for older people will also be encouraged in Banagher in the interests of social inclusion and diversity in the housing stock.

2.3.1 Residential Objectives

RO-01 Require residential development proposals to comply with the guiding principles set out in Section 2.3 above; the development management standards set out in the Chapter 13 in Volume 1 of this Plan; and Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines.

RO-02 Encourage the completion of unfinished residential developments in the town centre.

RO-03 Encourage innovative housing models in Banagher such as live-work units, ‘living over the shop’ schemes, special needs housing and housing for older people.

2.4 Biodiversity and Landscape

Strategic Aim: Protect, harness and develop the natural heritage assets of the town including the River Shannon and other green infrastructure for tourism and recreational purposes and to promote sustainable mobility.

The Council will seek to conserve, protect and enhance important landscape features such as rivers, stone walls, hedgerows, etc. which form wildlife corridors and link habitats. The Council will also seek to promote and encourage local biodiversity measures in development proposals including native planting, pollination areas, swift boxes and links to existing green infrastructure.

The River Shannon is an important asset for Banagher Town, having been central to its formation and growth as a settlement and, in terms of tourism, continues to be a key economic driver for the town. The Council will seek to harness and further develop this asset for recreational, tourism and sustainable mobility purposes and in the interests of healthy place-making.

The River Shannon in the vicinity of Banagher town is subject to European Site designations, namely the River Shannon Callows Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), which is listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (1992) and Middle Shannon Callows Special Protection Area (SPA) established under Annex 1 of the Birds Directive. The Council recognises the immense value of the River Shannon and Callows as a key habitat and encourages the protection of this landscape.



Figure 2.11 Green Infrastructure in Banagher

The Council will also support and facilitate the progression of a greenway network link through Banagher, utilising part of the former Ferbane to Banagher railway line to link with the proposed Grand Canal greenway connection at Shannon Harbour to the north. The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031 supports local strategies to link the development of the *Midland Cycle Destination – Offaly*. This strategy has a route through Banagher, with potential to bring more visitors to the town. The Council will also support development of recreational and tourism activities in Banagher as part of the Shannon Blueway.

2.4.1 Biodiversity and Landscape Objectives

NHO-01 Work with the relevant stakeholders to promote and enhance the ecological value of the River Shannon.

NHO-02 To conserve, protect and enhance important landscape features, such as rivers, wetlands, stonewalls, hedgerows etc., which form wildlife corridors and link habitats and to promote and encourage biodiversity within all new developments in Banagher.

2.5 Built Heritage

Strategic Aims:

- **Protect Banagher’s built heritage assets which are a non-renewable resource that contribute to our understanding of the past and promote these assets in the creation of an attractive, vibrant town and in heritage-led regeneration.**
- **Encourage the repair and reuse of vacant and derelict heritage buildings in Banagher Town.**



Figure 2.12 Examples of Banagher’s Built Heritage

2.5.1 Architectural Heritage

There is a rich variety of buildings in Banagher included on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) including the bridge and the quay, a post box, the malt house, Fort Eliza, two churches, and a limestone monument. There is also a number of two and three storey residential and commercial buildings positioned at key locations in the town centre which are included on the register of protected structures. A number of these buildings are vacant and / or fallen derelict, in which cases the repair, refurbishment and reuse would contribute to improving the vibrancy and economic viability of the town. It is a goal of the Council to encourage and assist property owners in the repair and reuse of these vacant and derelict heritage buildings.

Banagher has a rich industrial past and the historical buildings that remain are a legacy of this. These mill related buildings are still prominent in the town, particularly in the Crank Road area. Many of the mill structures are still in industrial use. Offaly County Council encourages the maintenance of Banagher's industrial heritage buildings and is positively disposed to proposals for the re-use and change of use of protected structures provided that alterations are sensitively designed, appropriate conservation measures are put in place, environmental legislation and section 28 ministerial guidelines are adhered too and the proposed development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Protected Structures in Banagher are contained in the RPS which form part of this County Development Plan. Policies and objectives regarding the protection of architectural heritage are contained in Chapter 10 (Built Heritage) Volume 1, of this Plan. In addition, the *Conservation, Interpretation and Management Plan*, titled 'Historic Banagher' prepared in 2018 by Howley Hayes Architects in conjunction with The Heritage Council and Offaly County Council, identified that Banagher is not included in the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) established by The Heritage Council in 2005, and thus not recognised as a Historic Walled Town. Inclusion in the Irish Walled Towns Network would allow further protection, preservation and conservation of town defences as provided for in the *National Policy on Town Defences* published in 2008 by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The Council will advocate for the inclusion of Banagher Town on the Irish Walled Towns Network.





Figure 2.13 Examples of Banagher's Architectural Heritage

2.5.2 Archaeological Heritage

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is a list of historical and archaeological sites in Ireland established under the National Monuments Acts. There are a number of recorded monuments in Banagher town. The town itself is included in the record as an 'historic town', a designation which is also accompanied by a survey map demarcating an 'Area of Archaeological Potential' within the town. The town has been identified in a study carried out by the Office of Public Works as an important urban archaeological centre in recognition of its ancient ancestry and of the fact that an urban centre existed here prior to the year 1700. The historic town designation includes a number of significant individual recorded monuments including the Church of Cill Rignaight (St. Rynagh) which is dated to the late medieval period, c. 1500s, located on land to the rear of Main Street and accessed from Church Road.

There are two other sites and monuments records in the town, one to the west relating to Fort Eliza, a 19th century fortification along the Shannon River, and another enclosure in the Cuba area of the town to the east comprising the remnants of an early 18th century two-storey house, later converted to a school. The map in Figure 2.14 below shows the areas of archaeological potential within and close to the Plan area, any proposed development within these areas will be required to submit a report from a suitably qualified archaeologist.

The Council seeks to protect and preserve Banagher's archaeological heritage through the implementation of the relevant legislative provisions while it is also the intention of the Council to promote the tourism potential of the town's archaeological heritage assets. Policies and objectives regarding the protection of archaeological heritage are contained in Chapter 10 (Built Heritage) Volume 1, of this Plan.

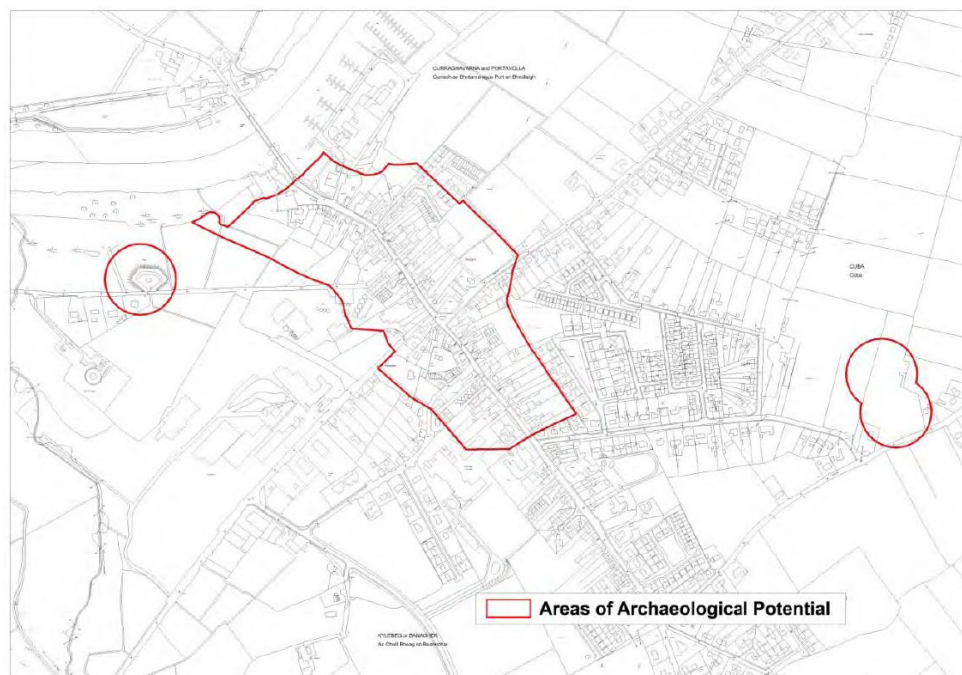


Figure 2.14 Banagher's Areas of Archaeological Potential

2.5.3 Built Heritage Objectives

BHO-01 Ensure the protection, sympathetic restoration and sensitive re-use of Protected Structures in Banagher as contained in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) which forms part of this County Development Plan.

BHO-02 Protect and preserve Banagher's archaeological heritage through the implementation of the relevant legislative provisions.

BHO-03 Advise owners of protected structures in the preparation of funding applications including those under Built Heritage Scheme of the Historic Structures Fund.

BHO-04 Encourage the inclusion of Banagher Town on the Irish Walled Towns Network.

2.6 Critical Infrastructure

Strategic Aim: Ensure the timely provision of physical and social infrastructure to facilitate the future growth of Banagher in accordance with the Core Strategy, in the interests of achieving a self-sustaining settlement.

This section deals primarily with physical infrastructure. Social infrastructure is dealt with in Section 2.7 below.

Appendix 2 of Volume 1 of the County Development Plan includes an Infrastructural Assessment Report which addresses infrastructure provision, deficiencies and investment proposals relating to the towns and villages.

The sustainable consolidation and coherent growth of Banagher is dependent on the satisfactory provision of physical infrastructure associated with:

- Movement and Transport
- Water Supply, Wastewater and Surface Water Drainage
- Energy and Communications
- Waste and Recycling

2.6.1 Movement and Connectivity

The Sustainable Transport Strategy chapter (Chapter 8) in the Plan examines county level data on modal split and identifies the need to reduce the reliance on the private car by promoting and facilitating more sustainable modes of transport and supporting development in locations that would reduce the need to travel. The Council seeks to promote sustainable mobility including walking, cycling and public transport, in order to create a sustainable settlement pattern and environmentally sustainable town. It is also important that Banagher maintains good transportation linkages to surrounding urban and rural areas, which is a contributing factor to its future growth.

The graphs in Figure 2.15 show the modal share for trips generated at various distances travelled from and within Banagher for work and education. The graphs are based on data derived from Census 2016, and provide a baseline to inform objectives in this Town Plan, which seek to improve the modal share away from private car and in favour of walking, cycling and public transport.

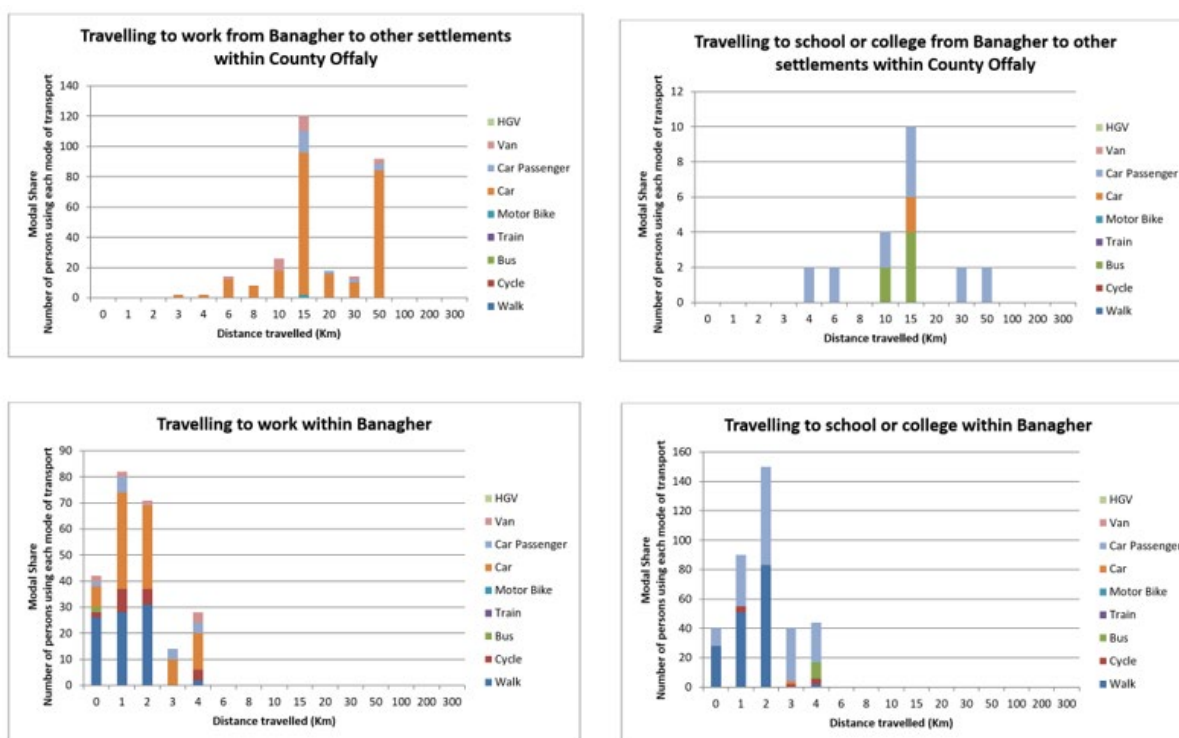


Figure 2.15 Modal Share of trip generation in Banagher

The graphs in Figure 2.15 indicate the following statistics:

- For journeys to work in which the trip is from Banagher to another settlement within County Offaly, 69% of trips are less than 30km with the remaining being less than 50km; 90% of workers travel either by private car or a passenger in a private car; 0% travel by public transport.
- For journeys to work in which the trip starts and ends in Banagher itself, 88% of trips are less than 3km; 50% of workers travel either by private car or a passenger in a private car; 37% walk and 9% cycle.
- For journeys to school/college in which the trip starts and ends in Banagher itself, 88% of trips are less than 3km; 47% of students travel as a passenger in a private car; 45% walk and 3% cycle.

In terms of work related journeys to other settlements within the county, the statistics support a review of local bus services in the county in terms of connections and frequency. In terms of work and schools trips within the town, while the statistics do show a relatively positive modal share in favour of walking, travel by private car still dominates modal share. As such, the data supports provision of / improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure and permeability within the town.

Critical infrastructure necessary to improve the modal share in favour of sustainable modes of transport is further discussed under separate headings below, with identified improvement measures supported by critical infrastructure objectives set out under Section 2.6.5 of this Town Plan.

Walking and Cycling

The Council will endeavour to make provision for walkers and cyclists in Banagher, forming an integrated, safe, convenient, direct and comfortable network of routes.

Footpaths are provided throughout the town and the Council will seek the consolidation and incremental expansion / improvement of the existing footpath network in tandem with new development proposals. It is a goal of the Council to improve the pedestrian network in the town and particularly create a continuous footpath loop connecting the town centre with the western relief road.

There is limited cycle infrastructure in the town. The only dedicated cycle lanes in the town are on the access road running east off the western relief road, providing access to Banagher College and the Primary Care Centre, and also on the pedestrian / cycle link between Main Street and Banagher College. The Council will seek to improve the cycling network and cycling facilities in the town while also supporting the development of a walking / cycling route between Banagher and Shannon Harbour to the north and Victoria Lock to the south.



Figure 2.16 Cycling lane on access road to Banagher College

Public Transport

The Local Link bus service operates in the town providing a weekday term-time service to Birr/Roscrea/Templesmore and a weekday term-time service to Athlone IT. A private bus operator provides a daily service to Birr, Tullamore and Dublin.

Car and Cycle Parking

Car parking in the town consists of on-street car parking and off-street car parking in the Town Square, Crank Road, Church Road and on land on the west side of Banagher bridge. An ESB electric car charging point has been installed in the car park adjacent to Banagher bridge. The Council will continue to monitor car parking arrangements in Banagher on an ongoing basis.

Cycle parking is provided in the Town Square. The Council will require the further provision of cycle parking as part of development and public realm proposals in accordance with the Development Management Standards contained in Chapter 13 of Volume 1 of this Plan.



Figure 2.17 Cycle parking in the Town Square

Road Network

Banagher is located at the junction of the R439 and R356 regional roads. The town is connected to nearby towns and villages and its wider rural hinterland via an extensive network of regional and local roads. Within the town there is good permeability with vehicular, and pedestrian friendly routes crossing the town linking different neighbourhoods, employment areas, community facilities and the town centre.

2.6.2 Water Supply, Wastewater, Surface Water Drainage and Flooding

Water Supply and Wastewater

Banagher Public Water Scheme provides a water supply to the town.

The Banagher Wastewater Treatment Plant is due to be upgraded under the Irish Water Investment Plan 2020-2024 (awaiting Commission for Regulation of Utilities determination, expected in 2020).

As part of the development management process, the Council will ensure that new schemes are permitted only where adequate water supply and wastewater treatment capacity or resources exists or will become available within the life of a planning permission.

Surface Water Drainage

The Council seeks to ensure the sustainable management of surface water discharges and to minimise the risk of flooding by requiring new development in Banagher to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Flooding

In accordance with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared to assess flood risk within the Plan area, and it forms part of this County Development Plan as a separate document.

The Council will facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas shown as a Constrained Land on the accompanying zoning map. Constrained Land shall be developed in accordance with Section 12.6, Objective LUZO-14 contained in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

2.6.3 Energy and Communications

Banagher has access to high speed fibre broadband. There is also adequate electricity infrastructure to serve Banagher. The Bord Gáis gas network does not currently extend to Banagher town. The Council will encourage the extension of the gas network to Banagher, if considered feasible.

2.6.4 Waste and Recycling

There are authorised domestic waste collectors serving Banagher.

There is a Bring Centre in Banagher, located in the public car park on Crank Road for recycling of bottles, cans and textiles. The Birr Recycling Centre accepts a wider range of materials.



Figure 2.18 Bring Centre at Crank Road, Banagher

The Council will continue to encourage the provision of recycling infrastructure where it is considered necessary and will assess requirements for recycling facilities on a case by case basis as part of the development management process.

2.6.5 Critical Infrastructure Objectives

Movement and Transport

KIO-01 Support the pedestrianisation and permeability of Banagher town where appropriate in order to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe places.

KIO-02 Improve cycle infrastructure in the town as part of development and public realm proposals.

KIO-03 Investigate the feasibility of providing dedicated cycle lanes along the Western Relief Road.

KIO-04 Seek the consolidation, incremental expansion and upgrading of the existing footpath network in the town where necessary.

KIO-05 Extend the footpath along the full length of Church Road to create a walking loop connection between the town centre and Western Relief Road.

KIO-06 Identify car parks and other appropriate locations for the provision of further battery charging infrastructure for electric vehicles in Banagher.

KIO-07 Support the development of a footpath connection between the town centre and Fort Eliza on Crank Road to the west of the town.

KIO-08 Support the development of a cycle route / greenway connection between Banagher and Shannon Harbour to the north and also between Banagher to Victoria Lock to the south.

KIO-09 Support the Local Link Rural Transport Programme 2018-2022 in County Offaly and subsequent programmes.

Water Supply, Wastewater, Surface Water Drainage and Flooding

KIO-10 Ensure that new schemes are permitted only where adequate water supply and wastewater treatment capacity or resources exists or will become available within the life of a planning permission.

KIO-11 Require new development in Banagher to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

KIO-12 Promote the use of green infrastructure, for example green roofs, green walls, planting and green spaces for surface water run-off retention purposes, in the interests of flood mitigation and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

KIO-13 Constrained Land Use zoning shall be developed in accordance with Section 12.6, Objective LUZO-14 contained in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

KIO-14 Protect groundwater resources within the Source Protection Zone.

Energy and Communications

KIO-15 Co-operate and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future needs of the town.

KIO-16 It is an objective of the Council to encourage the provision of WiFi zones in public buildings and tourist destinations in the town.

KIO-17 It is an objective of the Council to avail of funding opportunities for the provision of WiFi and broadband in the town to support economic development and social inclusion.

Waste and Recycling

KIO-18 Encourage the provision of recycling infrastructure where necessary and to assess requirements for recycling facilities on a case by case basis as part of the development management process.

2.7 Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development

Strategic Aim: Support and facilitate community and cultural facilities as a vital component to creating a self-sustaining, socially inclusive Banagher, an enjoyable place to live and visit.

2.7.1 Education and Childcare

There is one primary school (St. Rynagh's National School) and one post-primary school (Banagher College) in the town. Both schools are located within the settlement boundary, promoting the use of sustainable modes of transport.



Figure 2.19 Primary and Secondary Schools, Banagher

The Banagher branch of the Laois Offaly Further Education and Training Centre is located on Main Street. The centre offers a wide range of part-time unaccredited and accredited courses at QQI Level 1-5. The centre also offers the Youthreach service, a full time programme for early school leavers aged 15-21. The programme offers a range of courses at Level 3 and Level 4 on the National Framework of Qualifications.



Figure 2.20 Banagher Further Education and Training Centre

Banagher has a small number of childcare facilities in the town that provide the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, however there is currently no full day child care facility in the town. The Council seeks to support the development of a full day childcare facility in Banagher Town.

2.7.2 Community Facilities

Banagher has a vibrant community with a number of active community and sporting groups.

Existing community facilities include the marina, library, garda station, community hall, parish hall, tourist office and Roman Catholic Church.

Existing clubs in Banagher include St. Ryanagh's GAA Club, Banagher United Soccer Club, Cloghan Boxing Club, Banagher Athletic Club, Shannonside Sub Aqua Club, Billiards Hall, Banagher Scout Group, Banagher Bridge Club, Ladies Club and Men's Shed.

The marina represents an important recreational and open space amenity for the town. It includes a playground, public toilets and seating areas. It is a goal of the Council to seek to further enhance the facilities and public realm at the marina.

The former Banagher Fire Station on Cuba Avenue is vacant and represents an opportunity for repurposing to provide additional community facilities.

Offaly County Council will seek the retention and expansion of the community facilities in Banagher, with a particular focus on facilities for the youth and older people, to serve the needs of the local population.



Figure 2.21 Banagher Community Facilities

2.7.3 Arts and Culture

The Town Square provides the primary civic function in the town. Civic art pieces have been incorporated into the re-developed Town Square. The square is fronted on its north east side by the recently refurbished library, and on its north west side by a new town centre development. The square is used for cultural events including 'That Beats Banagher' festival. The Council will support further arts and cultural facilities in Banagher, as part of a well-balanced, sustainable community.



Figure 2.22 Library Square, Banagher

2.7.4 Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development Objectives

CECO-01 Assist, encourage and facilitate the provision and extension of community and sports facilities in Banagher in liaison with community based groups, public bodies, government departments, state agencies and other interested parties.

CECO-02 Encourage shared use of existing sports, educational and community facilities for community purposes where feasible, to promote the sustainable use of such infrastructure and to meet the needs of Banagher’s population.

CECO-03 Facilitate local groups in the acquisition and/or use of lands for sports, community, recreational and cultural purposes.

CECO-04 Support and promote the development of facilities and services for the youth and older people at appropriate locations in Banagher.

CECO-05 Support the development of a full day childcare facility in Banagher Town.

CECO-06 Encourage and facilitate the development of cultural, arts and performance facilities and spaces and the provision of civic art pieces in Banagher.

CECO-07 Support and facilitate the relocation of the library in Banagher to larger premises, and to include provision of community and enterprise space for meetings, digital hub, creative spaces, exhibition spaces and study spaces.

CECO-08 Support further enhancement of amenities, facilities and public realm in the marina area including the land in the vicinity of the Billiard’s hall.

CECO-09 Encourage the provision of pedestrian linkages between the marina and Main Street.

CECO-10 Support local groups in reducing litter and improving the overall appearance and environment of the town.

2.8 Climate Action

Strategic Aim: Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Banagher.

Having regard to Banagher's role as a service centre in performing important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for its local rural hinterland, the town can act as a driver in the area in terms of climate change adaptation, transition to a low carbon economy and reduction of pollution.

The Council will seek to ensure that all development in the town will contribute positively towards reduced energy consumption and the associated carbon footprint. It will achieve this by:

- Ensuring land is used effectively by minimising the amount of greenfield urban sprawl development over the course of the Plan period with development of compact brownfield / infill land being encouraged.
- Integrating land use and transportation to reduce travel demand.
- Promoting sustainable mobility including public transport, walking and cycling.
- Ensuring that development proposals incorporate alternative energy technologies, where feasible.
- Promoting the retrofitting of existing housing, commercial and public buildings to reduce energy demands.
- Requiring all buildings in the town to incorporate environmentally sustainable design principles in their design and construction in accordance with Development Management Standards set out in Chapter 13 of Volume 1 of this Plan.
- Promoting the use of green infrastructure, for example green roofs, green walls, SuDS, planting, green spaces and routes into development proposals and the public realm.

2.8.1 Climate Action Objectives

CAO-01 Support the implementation of the Offaly County Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and promote Banagher as a driver in the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

CAO-02 Support the effective and efficient use of land in the town, prioritising compact growth through the development of brownfield/infill land in the built-up footprint of the town in preference to greenfield land.

CAO-03 Seek the integration of positive climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in all development proposals such as blue and green walls and roofs; Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); planting, green spaces and biodiversity techniques; harvesting of 'grey' water for re-use and measures to minimise the usage of fresh water supplies; and innovative design solutions.

CAO-04 Provide LED lighting in all new public lighting and retrofitting of existing public lighting throughout the town.

3 Land Use and Zoning

Lands within Banagher are zoned for various land uses. Chapter 12 of Volume 1 contains the zoning objectives identified in the Plan area together with the accompanying zoning matrix.

The provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) shall apply to land zoned for residential use or a mixture of residential and other use

BANAGHER TOWN PLAN

