

Clara Town Plan

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1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Location

Clara is located 11 kilometres northwest of Tullamore in County Offaly. The town is situated on the River Brosna, which runs from east to west, south of the town centre and is a tributary of the River Shannon. Clara Bog, which is among the few large raised midland bogs remaining substantially intact, lies a short distance south of the town.

1.2 Settlement Form

Clara town lies on the plain of the River Brosna with eskers running to the northwest and to the south of the town centre. The commercial town centre itself is linear in form, developed in a compact fine grain along the R420 running from the southeast end at River Street, through Main Street and onto Church Street, where the commercial use gives way to residential and the street widens into a tree lined boulevard. The heart of the town centre is laid out in a formal arrangement with Main Street, St. Brigid's Church of Ireland, the Fair Green and St. Brigid's Roman Catholic Church all along a north south axis. The mature residential estate, "The Green" has access to both the Fair Green and River Street while other lanes such as Bridge Street, Oratory Row and Chapel Lane provide excellent permeability within and around the town centre.

From the mid-18th century onwards the town's development was strongly influenced by the linen industry and the Goodbody family who were associated with various enterprises in the 19th century such as a gasworks and flourmills. Much of the associated industrial buildings are located along the River Brosna and while more recent industrial development has taken place on the outskirts of the town to the north and east of the town centre, there remains a legacy of industrial activity still occurring in these areas southwest of the town centre.

Much of the historic suburban residential development that remains was originally built as local authority dwellings built for the workers of the mills. Suburban residential development which has taken place over a decade past was detached from the existing town centre to the south of the river and the railway line, to the north of the town centre and to the east in the Kilcoursey area on the Kilbeggan Road, the R436.

Residential development to the north and north east of the town centre has been low density and predominantly one off in nature along local roads on account of the esker topography of the area.

1.3 Socio-Economic Profile

From an analysis of the Census 2016 Small Area Population Statistics for Clara and its hinterland, the following details are noted:

- The population of Clara has increased slightly from 3,242 in 2011 to 3,336, an increase of 2.9%, below the equivalent national average of 3.8%;

- Clara has a young population with 30.67% of its population in the age cohort 0-19 above both the average for the county, 29.66% and the state, 27.5%;
- The percentage of Clara's population 15 years or older who classify themselves at work is 45% below the average for the county, 50%, and the state, 53%;
- Manufacturing remains the industry providing the highest proportion of employment at 23% considerably higher than the county average, 17%, and the state, 11%. Commerce and trade 20% and professional services, 22%, are the other major employers in the town;
- Clara has a low job to resident workers ratio of 0.455;
- The percentage of Clara's population reaching third level education¹, 13%, is significantly below the county average, 19% and the state, 28%;
- Car/van/motorcycle/lorry comprise 70% of the means of travel for Clara's population aged 5 years and over to work, school or college which is slightly higher than the county average, 69% and moderately higher than the state average 63%; and
- 45% of journeys to work, school or college for Clara's population aged 5 years and over to work, school or college are under 15 minutes in duration, higher than the county average, 40% and significantly higher than the state average, 32%, while only 9% of Clara's population have a commute longer than ¾ hour, which compares quite favourably with the county and state average, both 14%.

1.4 Town Function and Development Trends

Clara is classified as a 'Town' in the Core Strategy of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-27 and performs important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for local rural hinterlands. The Core Strategy of the Plan places Clara in a hierarchy of settlements and includes an allocation for undeveloped residentially zoned lands for the town which is represented as 'New Residential' zoning in the Clara Zoning Map which is in this Settlement Plan.

The previous plan period (from 2014-2020), saw very little in the way of new residential development or planning applications for residential development. This Settlement Plan is committed to ensuring sustainable and compact settlement patterns and the development of further residential, employment, educational, community, leisure and recreational facilities. In accordance with national policy, it is a target that 30% of all new residential units will be provided within the existing built-up footprint of the town and that Clara grows to a sufficient scale that drives economic growth to support population growth.

¹ Third-level education is considered to be Levels 6-10 of the National Framework of Qualifications comprising ordinary bachelor degree or national diploma, honours bachelor degree, professional qualification or both, postgraduate diploma or degree, doctorate (PhD) or higher.

1.5 Strategic Aims for Clara

This Plan takes an asset based approach to the future spatial development of Clara focusing on areas which have the greatest capacity and potential for growth in line with its place in the county settlement hierarchy and core strategy allocation in Volume 1 of the County Development Plan. This holistic approach ensures that growth will be sustainable in the long-term supported by the provision of the necessary infrastructure, employment, amenities and services. The following Strategic Aims have been identified to shape and inform the vision for Clara over the lifetime of this County Development Plan:

1. Reinforce Clara town centre as the heart of the town by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl, achieving critical mass and consolidating new development within the built-up footprint of the town, through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/brownfield/underutilised sites and extending out sequentially subject to available infrastructure.
2. Harness the economic and employment generating potential of the town through the on-going development of the service and manufacturing sectors in the town, in particular the Lehinch Business Park, and facilitate new enterprises within the zoned and serviced areas of the town.
3. Deliver high quality housing of a sufficient scale, mix, tenure, sequence and density, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate social and physical infrastructure.
4. Promote permeable, healthy neighbourhoods that focus on place making and a sense of well-being to ensure Clara is an attractive place to live and work.
5. Promote and support innovative housing models including live-work units, special needs housing and housing for older people in the Clara Town Centre.
6. Provision of ecological connectivity and walking and cycling infrastructure throughout the town which links all the Green Infrastructure available to residents in Clara; Clara Bog, Eiscir Riada, River Brosna, the Goodbody Reservoir and the disused Clara – Banagher railway line.
7. Protect Clara’s built heritage assets which are a non-renewable resource that contributes to our understanding of the past.
8. Early and/or timely provision (in tandem with development), of critical physical and social infrastructure necessary for the future sustainable growth of Clara town.
9. Facilitate and support a broad range of community, cultural and recreational facilities to serve the needs of the residents of the Plan area and its wider catchment.
10. Enhance climate adaptation and mitigation, and accelerate a transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in Clara.

2 Town Centre

Strategic Aim: Reinforce Clara town centre as the heart of the town by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl, achieving critical mass and consolidating new development within the built up area of the town, through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/brownfield/underutilised sites and extending out sequentially subject to available infrastructure.



Figure 2.1 Aerial photograph of Clara Town Centre

2.1 Context

Clara town centre is predominantly linear in form running along the main axes of River Street, Main Street and Church Street, branching out into Bridge Street and Egan's Lane. The retail core area boundary, identified in Figure 2.2 below, was created with regard to the existing land uses that play a role in the function and vibrancy of the commercial heart of the town. The buildings fronting the main business areas of the town are mainly two storeys with some single storey shops. A number of sites, shop units and buildings located within the retail core lie vacant and/or underutilised and have been for a number of years.

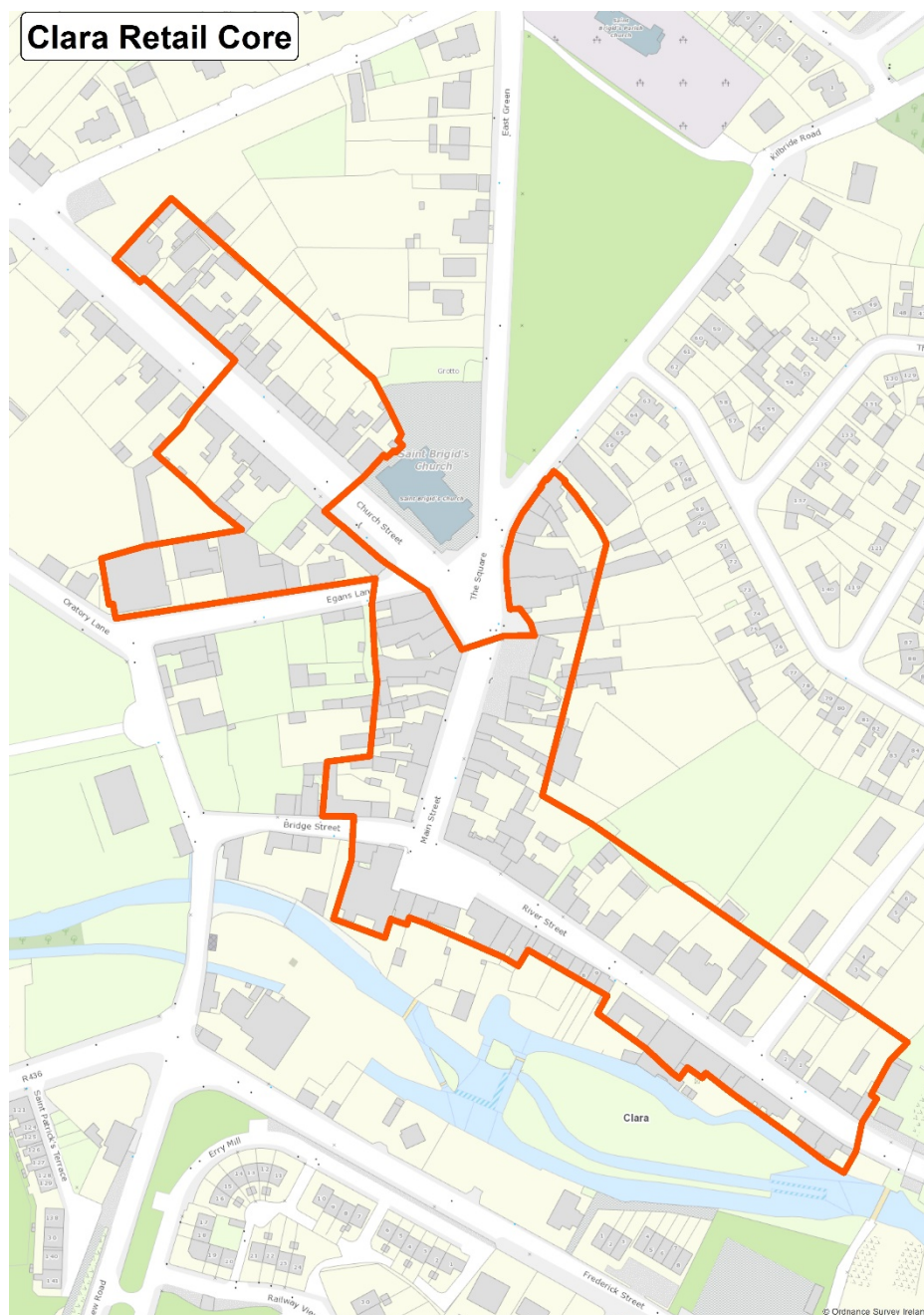


Figure 2.2 Clara Retail Core

In order to reinforce the town centre as a viable, vibrant and attractive retail centre, it should be retained as the centre of commercial activity in Clara, delivering a range of services and functions. In addition, the area for retailing should remain compact and walkable to ensure footfall is concentrated and benefits are maximised for all shops and services.

Figure 2.3 and 2.4 below using data from the GeoDirectory shows the pattern of retail development and business in Clara Town, indicating that retailing is predominantly concentrated in the town centre while a significant portion of business in general have agglomerated in or near the town centre of the town.

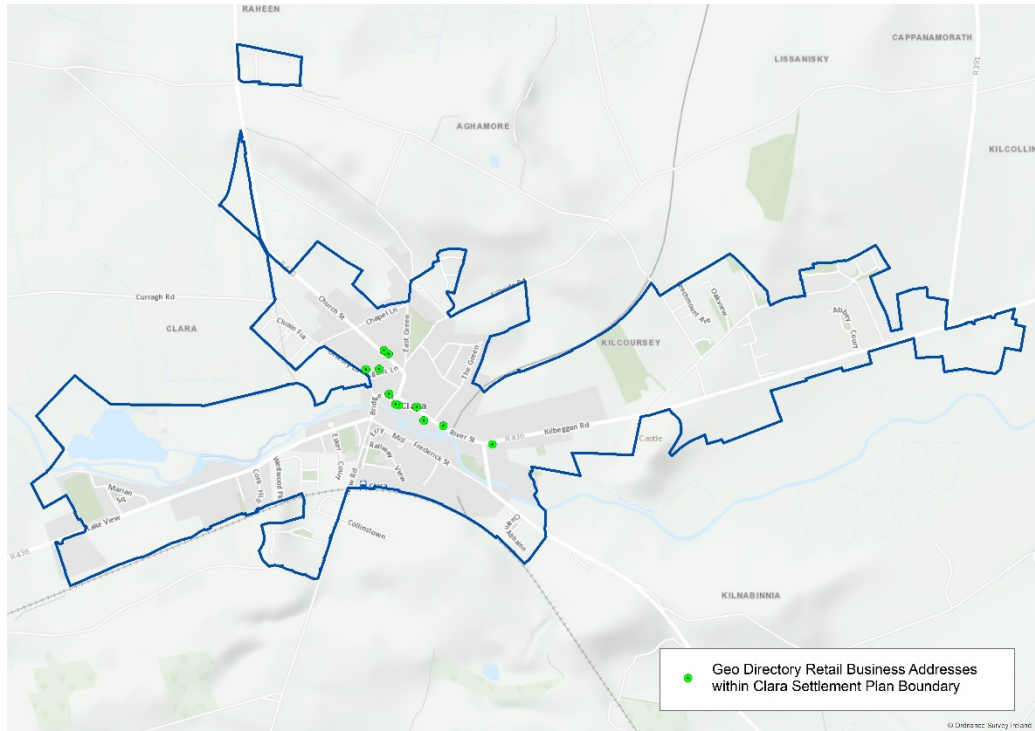


Figure 2.3 Location of Retail Business within Clara Town

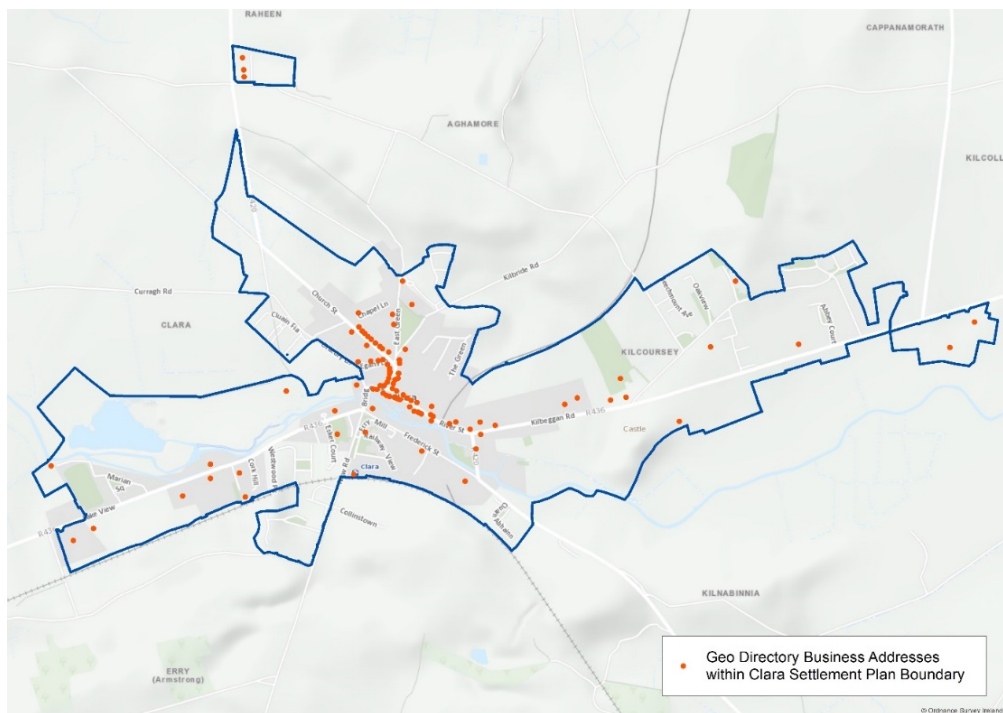


Figure 2.4 Location of Businesses within Clara Town

2.2 Retail

Clara is identified as a 'Town' within the county retail hierarchy contained in Chapter 7 of Volume 1 of this Plan. Chapter 7 outlines in Table 7.2: Level and Forms of Retailing Activity in context of retail hierarchy that additional convenience and comparison floor space will be encouraged in 'Towns' where:

- 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.

In addition, Chapter 7 of Volume 1 also outlines that 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 and there shall generally be a presumption against the development of retail parks accommodating retail warehousing in these towns.

2.3 Shop Fronts

River Street, Main Street and Church Street contain a wide variety of shop fronts. Shop fronts provide colour and add variation to main streets. Older shop fronts can contain clues of the history of commerce and the development of the town.

2.4 Regeneration

There is notable vacancy in the town centre with a significant number of buildings in a rundown underutilised condition. This Settlement Plan supports the regeneration of vacant and underutilised sites in the town centre by:

- directing new retail and commercial development into the town centre;
- continuing to develop the town's public realm; and
- identifying key opportunity sites within the town for development and supporting the progression and delivery of regeneration projects funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

2.5 Opportunity Sites

This Plan identifies a number of sites that could play an important role in the future development of the town centre, with a number of possible uses for each site. Each proposal will be assessed on its own merits but some of these sites may be suitable for a surface car park – alleviating parking pressures in the core retail area of the town, while others may be suitable for a more comprehensive redevelopment, subject to the relevant planning considerations.

2.5.1.1 Opportunity Site No. 1: Erry Mill and lands at Fredrick Street

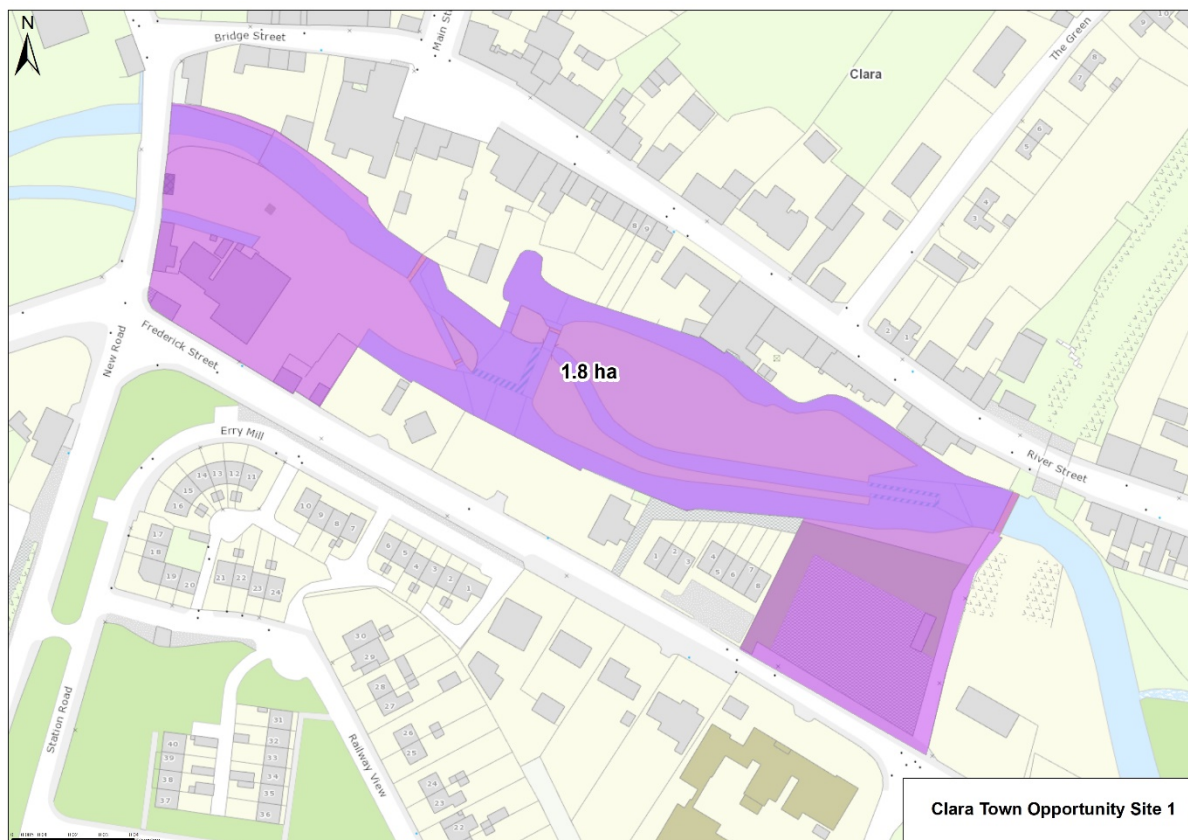


Figure 2.5 Opportunity Site No.1

Erry Mill is the largest surviving Flour Mill in County Offaly and occupies a prominent site at the corner of the Ballycumber Road and Bridge Street. Also on the site of the mill is a landmark brick chimney associated with a steam engine which was used to generate electricity in the late 1800s. These structures on the site are included in the Offaly Record of Protected Structures and the redevelopment of the site should include the careful restoration and reuse of these buildings.

Potential Uses

Both the Erry Mill building and the site upon which it is located, due to their significant size, its riverside and open space setting together with its potential pedestrian links to Clara town centre, offer opportunities to accommodate:

- A creative hub, incorporating flexible co-working and remote working spaces in which emerging innovators and start-ups can cluster, collaborate and share ideas;
- Incubation facilities and enterprise centre;
- Community meeting spaces and conference facilities;
- Office development;
- Residential development;

- Linear park along the River Brosna with the provision of a boardwalk type proposal subject to relevant environmental and flood assessments; and
- Provision of surface car park to south east of site.

The Fredrick Street lands to the east of the overall site, opposite the existing school provides a direct connection to the town centre via the pedestrian bridge over the River Brosna. It is envisaged that this part of the site could potentially provide surface car parking which would provide an alternative to on-street parking in the town centre thus freeing up space for streetscape improvements.

Any development of this site will require the preparation of a masterplan and be in accordance with the development principles outlined in Section 7.2.4 'Opportunity Sites' of Volume 1 of this Plan and contain the following elements:

- A detailed Design Statement prepared by professionals with expertise in areas such as architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and sustainable travel. A high standard of architectural quality shall be achieved having regard to the landmark nature of the Erry Mill building in the town and its inclusion in the Offaly Record of Protected Structures;
- If proposing 10 residential units or more, an Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Adaptation Design Statement in accordance with DMS-31 Chapter 13, Development Management Standards of Volume 1 of this Plan;
- Green Infrastructure Masterplan in accordance with DMS-22, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards of Volume 1 of this Plan, which makes provision for addressing the River Brosna and its River Corridor in the overall design concept for the site;
- Adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists within the site and externally with linkages to Frederick Street, River Street, Bridge Street and the Main Street, in accordance with Section 3 'Best Practice Principles for Maintaining and Providing Permeability' from "Permeability Best Practice Guide" (NTA, 2015); and
- An appropriately detailed Flood Risk Assessment for flood alleviation and flood risk management for the site in line with "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2009), Circular PL2/14.

2.5.1.2 Opportunity Site no. 2: Lands to the Rear of River Street/Main Street

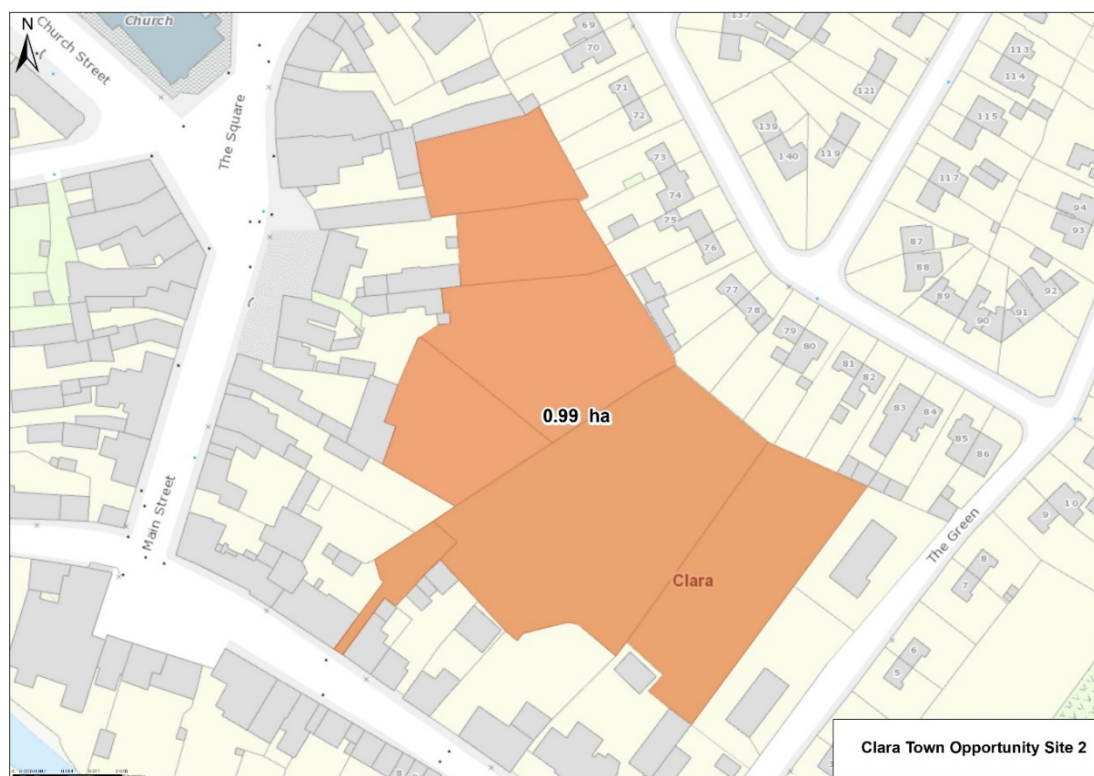


Figure 2.6 Opportunity Site No. 2

These lands are in close proximity to the commercial heart of the town centre. It is likely that some buildings may need to be demolished in order to gain satisfactory access to these lands. Future vehicular access may be provided from the access road to The Green, to the southeast or from River Street to the southwest. There are potential pedestrian access points to Main Street to the west and these should be developed as part of any scheme.

Potential Uses

These lands could accommodate;

- contemporary landmark buildings;
- comprehensive mixed-use scheme or large convenience retail store;
- covered market space for the promotion and sale of artisan, speciality foods and crafts;
- residential development (including the provision of specifically designed housing for older people); and
- the provision of a surface car park on a segment of the site which would enhance greatly the potential for streetscape improvements on Main Street and River Street.

Any development of this site will require the preparation of an indicative masterplan in line with development principles outlined in Section 7.2.4 'Opportunity Sites' of Volume 1 of this Plan and in conjunction with surrounding lands based containing the following elements:

- A design statement prepared in accordance with the 'Key Principles of Urban Design' as laid out in the 'Retail Design Manual, a companion document to the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities', explaining why the particular design solution is considered the most suitable for the particular site;
- Green Infrastructure Masterplan in accordance with DMS-22, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards of Volume 1 of this Plan, which makes provision for new green spaces, a pocket park and planting of trees;
- Adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists within the site and externally with linkages to Bridge Street and adjacent residential areas, in accordance with Section 3 'Best Practice Principles for Maintaining and Providing Permeability' from "Permeability Best Practice Guide" (NTA, 2015).
- Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Adaptation Design Statement in accordance with DMS-60, Chapter 13 Development Management Standards of Volume 1 of this Plan.

2.5.1.3 Opportunity Site No. 3: Charlestown Mill and County Council Yard

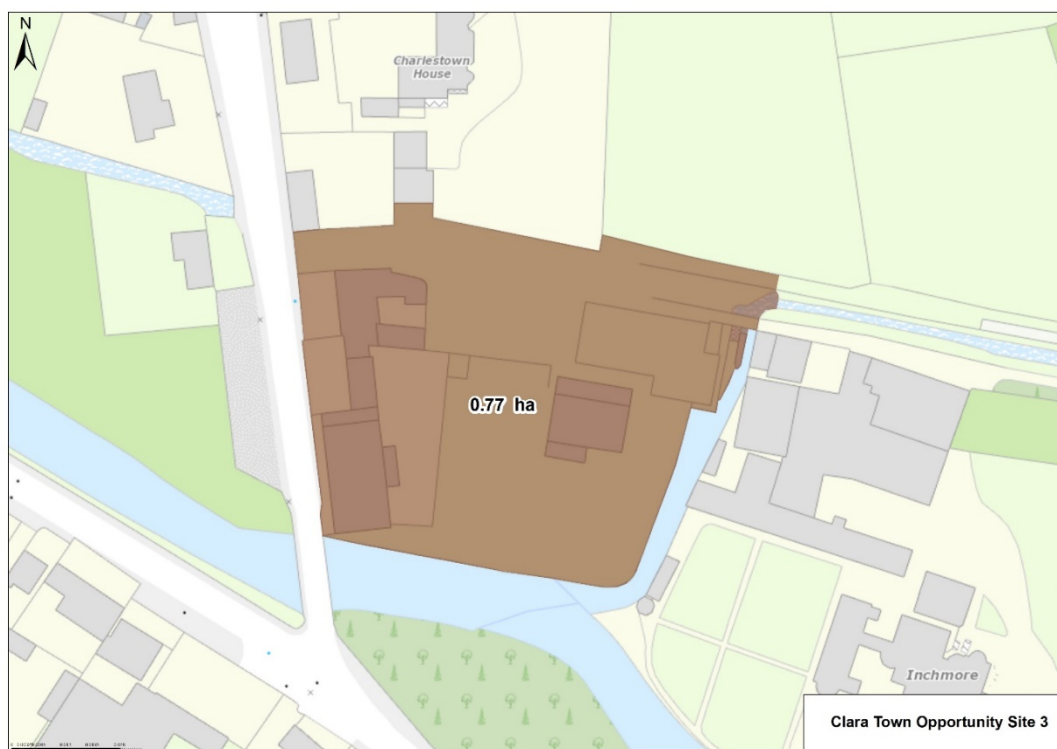


Figure 2.7 Opportunity Site No. 3

These properties make up a large site in close proximity to the town centre. The Mill is a protected structure and is a prominent gateway feature sited beside Charlestown Bridge at the edge of the Town Centre. Built by the Goodbody family, this mill is the sole surviving structure of an extensive mill complex along the banks of the Brosna. The detached three storey former mill building stands as a reflection of the industrial heritage of Clara, once a thriving industrial town. This site together with

the adjoining yard and various buildings has potential for heritage, cultural, community or health facilities which sensitively refurbishes and reuses these buildings.



Figure 2.8 Historical photograph of Charlestown Mill

Potential Uses:

These lands could accommodate the following uses;

- Heritage Museum;
- Distillery or brewery, subject to necessary environmental assessments;
- Craft workshops, galleries and café;
- Third level education facility offering further education, post leaving certificate courses;
- Primary Care Centre; and
- Residential Care Facilities.

Any development of this site will require the preparation of an indicative masterplan in line with development principles outlined in Section 7.2.4 'Opportunity Sites' of Volume 1 of this Plan and in conjunction with surrounding lands based containing the following elements:

- A detailed Design Statement prepared by professionals with expertise in areas such as architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and sustainable travel. A high standard of architectural quality shall be achieved having regard to the landmark nature of the Charlestown Mill building in the town and its inclusion in the Offaly Record of Protected Structures;

- Green Infrastructure Masterplan in accordance with DMS-22, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards of Volume 1 of this Plan, which makes provision for new green spaces, a pocket park and planting of trees;
- Adequate provision for pedestrians and cyclists within the site and externally with linkages to River Street and lands to the north east of the site, in accordance with Section 3 ‘Best Practice Principles for Maintaining and Providing Permeability’ from “Permeability Best Practice Guide” (NTA, 2015); and
- An appropriately detailed Flood Risk Assessment for flood alleviation and flood risk management for the site in line with “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (2009), Circular PL2/14.

2.6 Town Centre Objectives

It is an objective of this settlement plan to:

TCO-01 Protect and promote the vitality and viability of Clara’s Core Retail Area, and to ensure that it remains the primary location for retail development.

TCO-02 Restrict retail development outside the Core Retail Area in accordance with Table 7.3 ‘Order of Priority – Sequential Approach’ in Chapter 7 of Volume 1 of this Plan and Chapter 4 ‘Retailing and Development Management’ of the Retail Planning Guidelines (DECLG, 2012).

TCO-03 Encourage and facilitate the reuse and regeneration of derelict and underutilised lands and buildings in the town centre for retail and other town centre uses by supporting the progression and delivery of projects funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and other appropriate funds.

TCO-04 Maintain and improve accessibility to and within the town centre and develop a comprehensive approach to the provision of car parking, pedestrian and cycle access with particular regard to the needs and access for people with disabilities.

TCO-05 Further improve the streetscape and public realm in Clara town centre by undergrounding existing cables and improving pavements and street furniture in particular.

TCO-06 Explore the feasibility of providing a piece of civic art within the town centre.

TCO-07 Ensure that traditional shop fronts are retained and restored, and that new shopfront design contributes positively to and enhances the streetscape.

TCO-08 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 redevelopment of Opportunity Sites for a mixture of uses that will contribute to the vibrancy, attractiveness, safety and liveability of the Clara Town Centre.

3 Economic Development

Strategic Aim: Harness the economic and employment generating potential of the town through the on-going development of the service and manufacturing sectors in the town, in particular the Lehinch Business Park, and facilitate new enterprises within the zoned and serviced areas of the town.

3.1 Context

Project Ireland 2040, The National Planning Framework sets out that the development of a strong economy supported by enterprise, innovation and skills as a National Strategic Outcome which will depend on creating places that foster enterprise and innovation.

Similar to other towns of its scale nationally, Clara suffered a downturn in its economy from 2008 to 2014 which did not lend itself to a conducive climate to allow it develop to maximum effect. Notwithstanding this, Clara has a number of significant employers successfully operating within the town. These include SteriPack, Europharma, Synthetic Packaging Limited, Wilker Automation Conversions Ltd., Rosderra Irish Meat Group, Clara Fields Ltd., and The Flat Bread Company.

Clara has the potential to attract other such industries and potential employers and has 4 key strategic advantages in relation to this:

- Its location on the Dublin-Galway/ Westport Railway Line;
- Its close proximity to the M6 Motorway, Dublin- Galway route;
- Its close proximity to Athlone, a Regional Growth Centre, and Key Towns, Tullamore and Mullingar; and
- Its availability of a young workforce.

It is envisaged that there should be renewed emphasis on the creation of long-term sustainable employment in industry including production and manufacturing in particular the food and pharmaceutical industries in Clara. It is anticipated that a vibrant production and manufacturing sector coupled with service industry will have resultant benefits in employment creation.

Clara has a rich industrial past, which is worthy of acknowledgement; in particular, a linen industry, a gasworks, flour milling enterprises and jute processing. The presence of the railway, the River Brosna, local raw materials and local entrepreneurship made Clara a busy industrial town from the mid-18th century to the mid-20th century. This past had a huge influence on the town in the form of employment and prosperity. While there has been a decline in manufacturing and industrial based employment since the mid-20th century, this industrial tradition and local entrepreneurship is a definite positive towards Clara's future and while providing direct manufacturing, warehousing and logistics employment can also be leveraged with nearby Clara Bog and Visitor Centre to provide a town tourism trail.

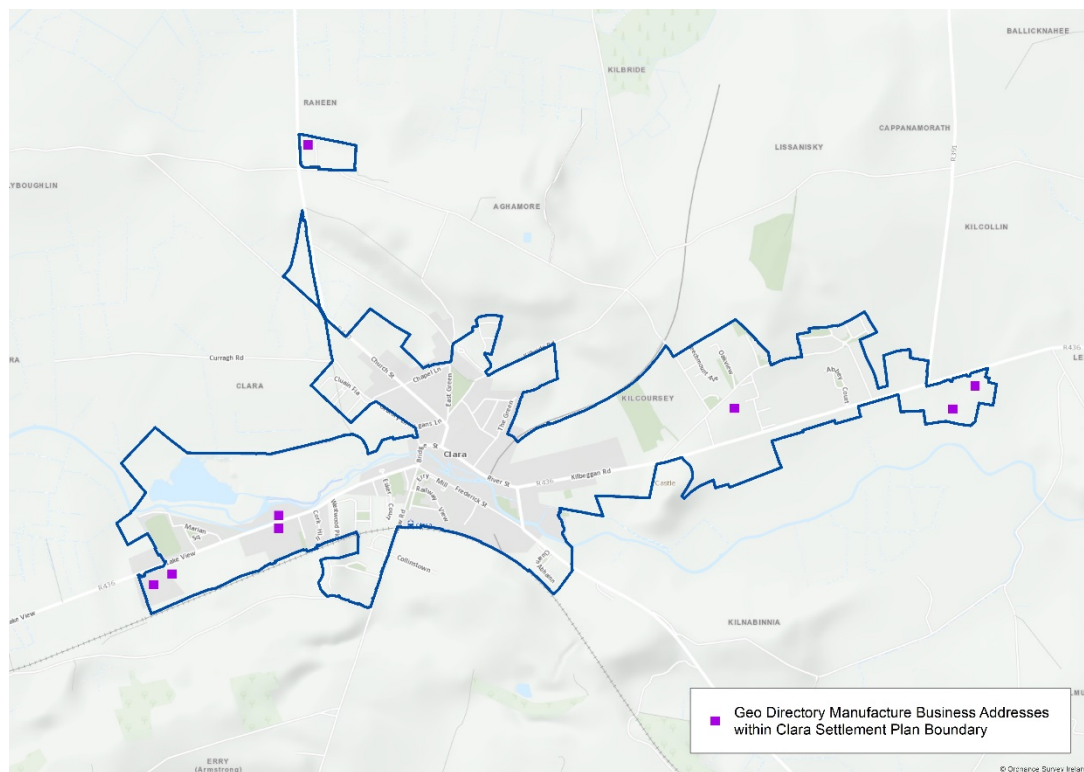


Figure 3.1 Location of Manufacturing Business Addresses in Clara Town

3.2 Potential for Economic Growth

This Plan will facilitate the expansion of employment generating activities through reinforcing a strong town centre, developing the town’s tourism product and the provision of zoned and serviced lands of adequate size at Raheen Industrial Estate, lands on Ballycumber Road and Lehinch Business Park.

3.3 Town Centre

While the town clearly displays indicators of economic downturn with evident vacancy in town centre units and dereliction of other buildings, the policies and objectives contained in this Plan will help make Clara Town Centre a more attractive place for people to visit, shop, live and socialise in addition to making the town more appealing to potential investors. The identification of Opportunity Sites at Erry Mill, Charlestown Mill, the County Council Yard and lands to the rear of River Street/Main Street, will encourage the redevelopment of landmark vacant, brownfield and derelict sites in the town.

3.4 Tourism

The on-going development of tourism, namely Clara Bog Nature Reserve, its visitor centre and the opportunity to leverage this unique natural asset along with Clara’s industrial heritage, its ancient abbeys, cemeteries and nature walks and other tourism attractions in the area such as Lough Boora Discovery Park, Clonmacnoise monastic site, Leamonaghan, Pilgrims Road and the Midlands Cycling

Destination as shown in Figure 3.2 below offer significant direct economic benefits and spin-offs to the town.

Having regard to the tradition of malting and distilling in Clara (Clara is said to have had up to 11 distilleries operating in the town in the eighteenth century), the river setting of the town centre and presence of historic mill buildings within the town, Clara offers the potential to accommodate a distillery or brewery. Clara’s proximity to the Tullamore Dew visitor centre (12 km) and the Kilbeggan Distillery (9 km) offer the potential for the town to form part of a regional whiskey destination.



Figure 3.2 Tourist Attractions in close proximity to Clara Town.

3.5 Raheen Industrial Estate and lands on Ballycumber Road

This Plan zones sufficient lands ‘Industrial and Warehousing’ at Raheen Industrial Estate and to the west at Ballycumber Road, which can accommodate the needs of manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, allowing for organic growth and extension of the existing industries and possible spin-offs. These lands will also accommodate businesses that do not fall into the categories supported by Enterprise Ireland or the IDA and will also provide opportunities for small starter businesses such as incubator units.

3.6 Lehinch Business Park

This Plan zones sufficient lands 'Enterprise and Employment' at the eastern approach to the town on the Kilbeggan Road. It is envisaged that the lands on the Kilbeggan Road, home to SteriPack and Europharma has the potential to develop as a high quality, campus style office based development suitable for high-end employment uses in the areas of Information Technology (IT), research and innovation, pharmaceutical and medical devices.

3.7 Economic Development Objectives

It is an objective of this settlement plan to:

EDO-01 Engage with and co-operate with employment agencies, such as the Offaly Local Development Company, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, to foster an environment of job creation and attracting inward investment.

EDO-02 Cooperate with government agencies and the Offaly Local Enterprise Office in examining potential sites for industry and in attracting firms to any land zoned as such.

EDO-03 Facilitate the development of employment generating enterprises within existing employment areas such as the town centre, the Lehinch Business Park and vacant commercial premises.

EDO-04 Encourage the establishment of incubator units and start-ups on appropriately zoned lands.

EDO-05 Promote and encourage cultural development and creative industries.

EDO-06 Improve the overall attractiveness of Clara for visitors to the town, including the enhancement of the visual amenity of the town and its approaches and through the encouragement of new or extended facilities for tourists, including quality tourist accommodation, linkages with attractions and activities in the area such as Lough Boora Discovery Park, Clonmacnoise Monastic site, Lemanaghan, Pilgrims Road and the Midlands Cycling Destination.

EDO-07 Facilitate innovative work practices such as 'Live-Work' units where they do not negatively impact on residential amenity.

EDO-08 Encourage the establishment of a Clara Heritage and Architectural Trail incorporating Clara Bog, the towns industrial heritage sites, ancient abbeys, cemeteries and nature walks.

4 Residential

Strategic Aims:

- **Deliver high quality housing of a sufficient scale, mix, tenure, sequence and density, located in optimum locations and aligned with adequate social and physical infrastructure;**
- **Promote permeable, healthy neighbourhoods that focus on place making and a sense of well-being to ensure Clara is an attractive place to live and work; and**

- **Promote and support innovative housing models including live-work units, special needs housing and housing for older people in the Clara Town Centre.**

4.1 Context

There are a number of large housing estates within Clara Town, with the highest number of units in The Green, a local authority housing scheme constructed in the 1940s, just east of the town centre. Other developed housing estates are located elsewhere in the town centre at Erry Mill, Esker Court, Kinclare, Cluain Fia, Kilcoursey on the Kilbeggan Road, Beechmount Avenue, Silverdale Estate and Oakview. In more recent times, medium sized developments such as Westwood Grove, Westwood Park, Kilmanaghan Lodge, Abbey Court, Heather Grove, Cluain Abhainn and Kilbride Gardens have been constructed around the town.

4.2 Approach

This Plan provides for new residential areas in Clara primarily to the north east, east and south of the Town Centre with other pockets of land on infill sites/brownfield sites in different areas identified suitable for housing also. These development areas:

- are clearly identifiable as sequential extensions to the already established urban fabric of the town, promoting the concept of compact growth, a key National Strategic Outcome (NSO 1) in Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework and Regional Strategic Outcome (RSO 2) in the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy;
- are within 400-800 metres or easy 5-10-minute walking distance of the Town Centre, promoting Clara as a walkable town;
- are located close to existing community and social infrastructure in the town;
- take due cognisance of the need to protect the environment, built, natural and archaeological heritage of the town.

It is critically important at this stage to highlight the key principles and standards envisaged for the development of quality residential environments as laid out in Chapter 13 of Volume 1 of this Plan that will be applied by the Council in the lifetime of this Plan;

1. Universal Access and Design with lifelong adaptability;
2. Compact Growth;
3. Green Infrastructure;
4. Permeability;
5. Healthy Place Making;
6. Mix of house types, sizes and tenures;
7. Section 28 Guidelines; and

8. Sustainable Design and Climate resilience.

Clara Town Centre is considered to be an appropriate location for innovative housing models including live-work units, special needs housing, social housing and housing for older people, reducing commuting levels from the town and encouraging the development of brownfield sites and the reuse of older building stock, which in turn will maintain the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre.

4.3 Residential Objectives

It is an objective of this settlement plan to:

RO-01 Secure the provision of social infrastructure, community and recreational facilities in tandem with residential development.

RO-02 Encourage the appropriate redevelopment of brownfield and infill sites for mixed uses within the existing built-up footprint of Clara Town.

RO-03 Require that an appropriate mix of housing type, tenure, density and size is provided in all new residential areas and in appropriate brownfield/infill areas to meet the needs of the population of Clara, including the provision of group housing schemes and appropriate supported housing and longer-term residential care solutions designed for older people and/or people with disabilities.

RO-04 In line with the requirements of the National Planning Framework, ensure that at least 30% of all new housing development is delivered within the existing built-up footprint of Clara Town.

5 Biodiversity and Landscape

Strategic Aim: Provision of ecological connectivity and walking and cycling infrastructure which links existing Green Infrastructure assets in and around Clara such as Clara Bog, Eiscir Riada, River Brosna, the Goodbody Reservoir, the disused Clara – Banagher railway line and numerous recreational walks.

5.1 Context

Clara and its environs are host to a wide range of recreational and amenity assets, such as Eiscir Riada, the River Brosna and Clara Bog. In addition, there are numerous recreational walks around Clara which are enjoyed by the people who live in and work in Clara as well as also attracting people from outside the area. These include the Erry Way, the Kilmucklin Way and the Aughamore Way, which are in close proximity to the town. Also, the Offaly Way, the Grand Canal Way and Slí Mhór are popular recreational walks which are located in the wider area. These existing walks are an important amenity and should be maintained and promoted.

5.2 Clara Bog



Figure 5.1 Clara Bog in Winter



Figure 5.2 Information board and board walk at Clara Bog

Clara Bog, at over 440 hectares in size, is the largest remaining raised bog in Western Europe. Home to many protected wildlife species, Clara Bog has been the focus of much national and international study. The provision of a 1 km boardwalk and interpretive panels around Clara Bog in 2017 offers visitors the chance to explore the ‘Living Bog’ and its biodiversity. The conservation and management of the bog is the responsibility of the National Parks and Wildlife Service who also operate the Clara

Bog Visitor Centre, built in 2010, which houses an interactive interpretative centre and audio visual room, covering themes such as the development of peatlands, biodiversity, history and archaeology associated with raised bogs and unique facts about Clara Bog. The provision of a footpath for the full 2 km stretch between Clara Bog, the town and its visitor centre and the investigation of the feasibility of providing an additional boardwalk on Clara Bog to the east of the public road are major objectives of this Plan.

This Plan recognises that there is a need to strike a balance between protecting this unique asset while also making provision for visitors and ongoing research at Clara Bog and leveraging the tourism impact that it can have for the town.



Figure 5.3 Clara Bog Visitor Centre

5.3 River Brosna

The River Brosna flows south of the town centre. Its course through the town has been altered over time by the construction of mill races and a reservoir to the west of the town centre for industrial purposes. The river itself is not a designated site, but it is a tributary of the River Shannon, a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and Natural Heritage Area, which it meets at Shannon Harbour approximately 17km downstream of Clara. The natural flood plains of the river widen east and west of the town centre.



Figure 5.4 Public Open Space area adjacent to Charlestown Bridge

This Settlement Plan supports access to the River Brosna within the town, promoting its development as an amenity space that will enhance the quality of life in Clara, making the town more liveable and visually attractive. The development of Opportunity Site 1 as detailed in Section 2.4.1 above would require the provision of a linear park, pedestrian and cycling connections with the town centre as part of any development of that site.

5.4 Eiscir Riada

The Eiscir Riada system runs in a west to east direction north and south of the town. Eskers are of geological, zoological, botanical and scientific value. An Offaly Esker Study was published in 2006 and provides detailed information about the eskers close to Clara Town. Many of these eskers have been designated as Areas of High Amenity in Chapter 4 of Volume 1 of this Plan.

5.5 Recreational Walks

There are numerous recreational walks around Clara which are enjoyed by the people who live and work in Clara as well as also attracting people from outside the area. These include the Erry Way, the Kilmucklin Way and the Aughamore Way, which are in close proximity to the town. Also, the Offaly Way, the Grand Canal Way and Slí Mhór are popular recreational walks which are located in the wider area. These existing walks are an important amenity and should be maintained and promoted.

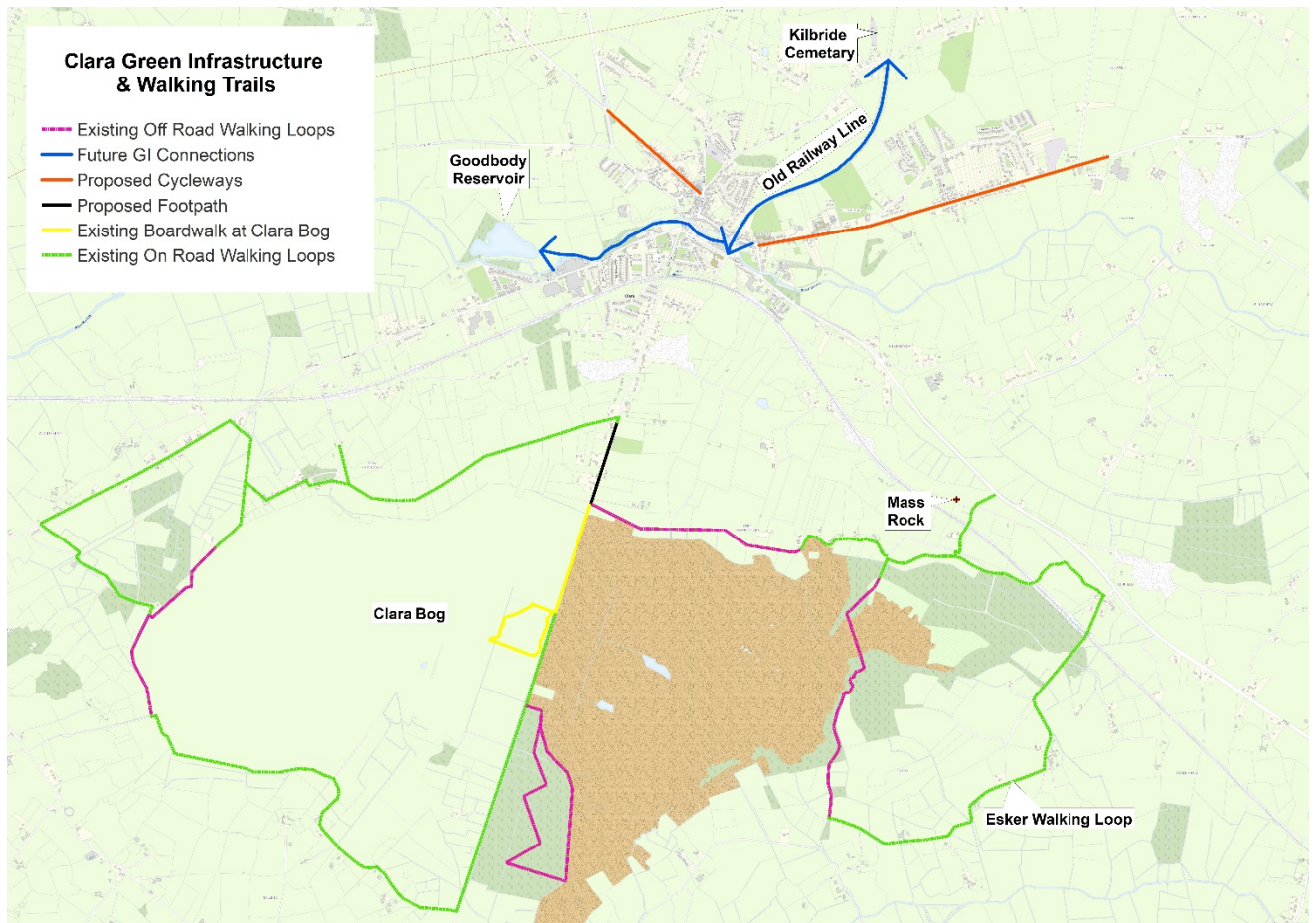


Figure 5.5 Clara's Potential Green Infrastructure (G.I) Linkages and Existing Walking Routes

There is potential for the development of both linear and linked recreational walks within the Clara Town Plan area and wider rural area, the banks of the River Brosna, the local eskers and the disused Clara-Banagher railway from Kilbride Cemetery to River Street (as shown in Figure 5.5 above).



Figure 5.6 Mass Rock

5.6 Public Open Space

Current open space provision in Clara consists primarily of the Fair Green, a small existing open space area along the River Brosna adjacent to Charlestown Bridge and a number of playing pitches. In addition, areas around Kilcoursey Castle and the Goodbodys Reservoir also meet recreational needs in the town. It is considered that a need exists for an additional area of public open space in the town by the development of a linear park along the River Brosna in the centre of the town and the development of Goodbodys Reservoir as a recreational area for the town.



Figure 5.7 Fair Green



Figure 5.8 Goodbody Reservoir

5.7 Biodiversity and Landscape Objectives -

It is an objective of this settlement plan to:

BLO 01 Develop a linear walk along the River Brosna within the town centre and to the Goodbody Reservoir.

BLO 02 Work with relevant stakeholders to examine the feasibility of developing an amenity route along the disused Clara-Banagher railway from Kilbride Cemetery to River Street in the town.

BLO 03 Develop Goodbodys Reservoir as a recreational area for the town.

BLO 04 Enhance the network of signposted walks around the town.

BLO 05 Support the development of green infrastructure linkages within the town.

BLO 06 Provide a footpath linking the town with Clara Bog as shown on the Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map.

BLO 07 Investigate the feasibility of providing an additional boardwalk and additional parking on Clara Bog in the location shown on the Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map subject to consideration of necessary environmental considerations.

6 Built Heritage

Strategic Aim: Protect Clara's built heritage assets which are a non-renewable resource that contributes to our understanding of the past.

6.1 Context

Clara's historical character and built heritage are expressions of the town's culture and identity. It is important to ensure that Clara retains its built heritage and that the architectural and historical character of the town and quality of its townscape is protected and enhanced.

6.2 Record of Protected Structures

There is a rich variety of buildings in Clara included on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) including a number of large 19th century homes, three bridges, four post boxes, a convent, two churches, industrial buildings including mills and associated structures and a terrace of 11 residential dwellings on River Street. Policies and objectives regarding the protection of architectural heritage are contained in Chapter 10 of Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

6.3 Recorded Monuments

There are 4 Recorded Monuments within the Clara Settlement Plan area to the east of the town;

SMR	Class
OF008-015	Enclosure
OF008-016	Castle-Tower House
OF008-0160001	Bawn
OF008-019	Enclosure

Policies and objectives regarding the protection of archaeological heritage are contained in Volume 1, Chapter 10 of this Plan.

6.4 Clara's Industrial Heritage

Clara has a rich industrial past and the historical buildings that remain are a legacy of this. Jute, grain and flour were among the valuable products of industry in the town from the late 18th to the early 20th century. Many of the mill structures are protected structures and some are still in industrial use. The Mill Races along the River Brosna are also substantially intact and are an important part of this heritage.

Offaly County Council commissioned a survey of Offaly Mills by industrial archaeologist Fred Hammond which was published in 2009; the study is available in the heritage section of the Council's website: http://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Architecture/Mills_of_Offaly/. The study includes three industrial buildings within the Clara Settlement Plan boundary that it rates as being of 'regional importance' including Erry Mill and Clashaun Works, and it also includes Charlestown House as having industrial significance due to its association with the Goodbody family.

Offaly County Council encourages the maintenance of Clara'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 and appropriate conservation measures are put in place.

6.5 Built Heritage Objectives

It is an objective of this settlement plan to:

BHO-01 Preserve and protect the structures in Clara listed in the Offaly Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and as may be amended.

BHO-02 Protect and preserve items of archaeological interest within Clara town from inappropriate development that would adversely affect/and or detract from the interpretation and setting of these sites.

7 Critical Infrastructure

Strategic Aim: Early and/or timely provision (in tandem with development) of critical physical and social infrastructure necessary for the future sustainable growth of Clara town.

7.1 Context

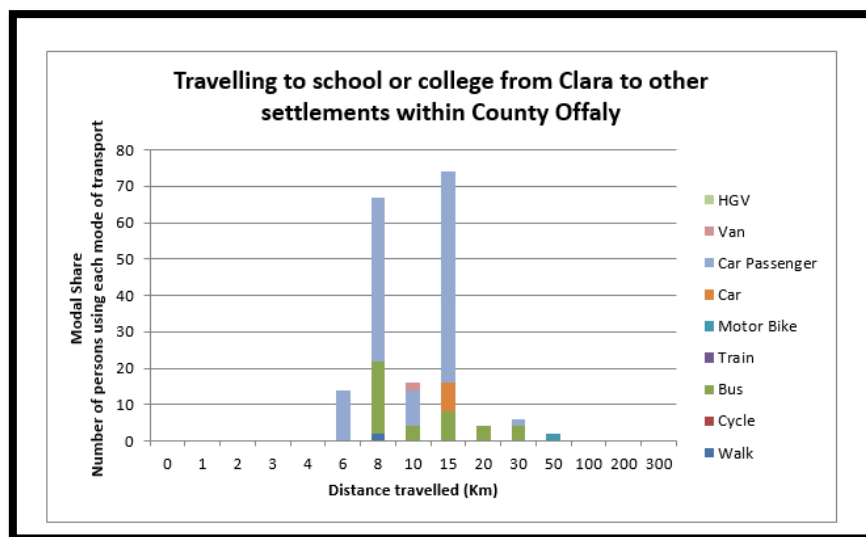
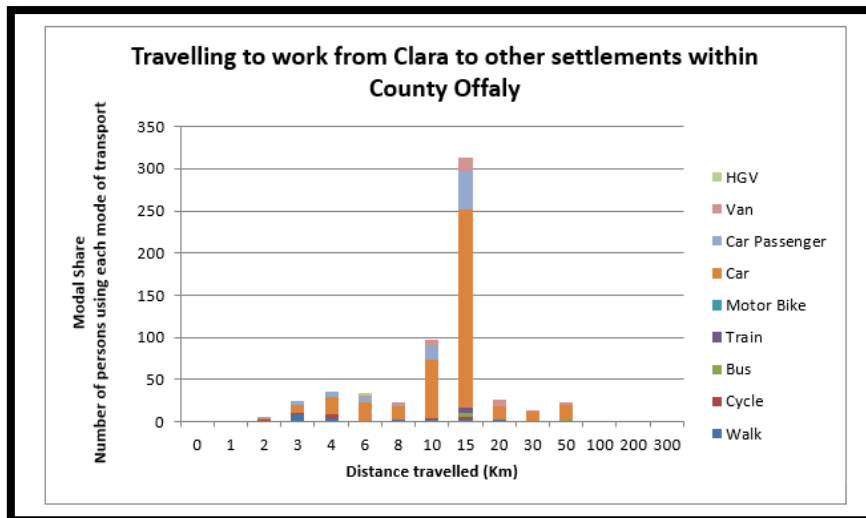
The provision of transport and services infrastructure is essential to the future development of Clara, providing ease of movement within the town and with surrounding areas while providing sufficient service infrastructure capable of meeting the demands of Clara's resident, commercial and employment population. Clara has the advantage of very good transport links: - Clara is 11.5km from Tullamore via the R420, only 7.5 kilometres via the R420 to the M6 Dublin to Galway motorway route and is on the main Dublin to Galway and Westport train line. In addition, the town is connected to nearby towns and villages and its wider rural hinterland via an extensive network of regional and local roads.

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.

7.2 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 Clara maintains good transportation linkages to surrounding urban and rural areas, which is a contributing factor to its future growth.

The graphs in Figure 7.1 show the modal share for trips generated at various distances travelled from and within Clara 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.



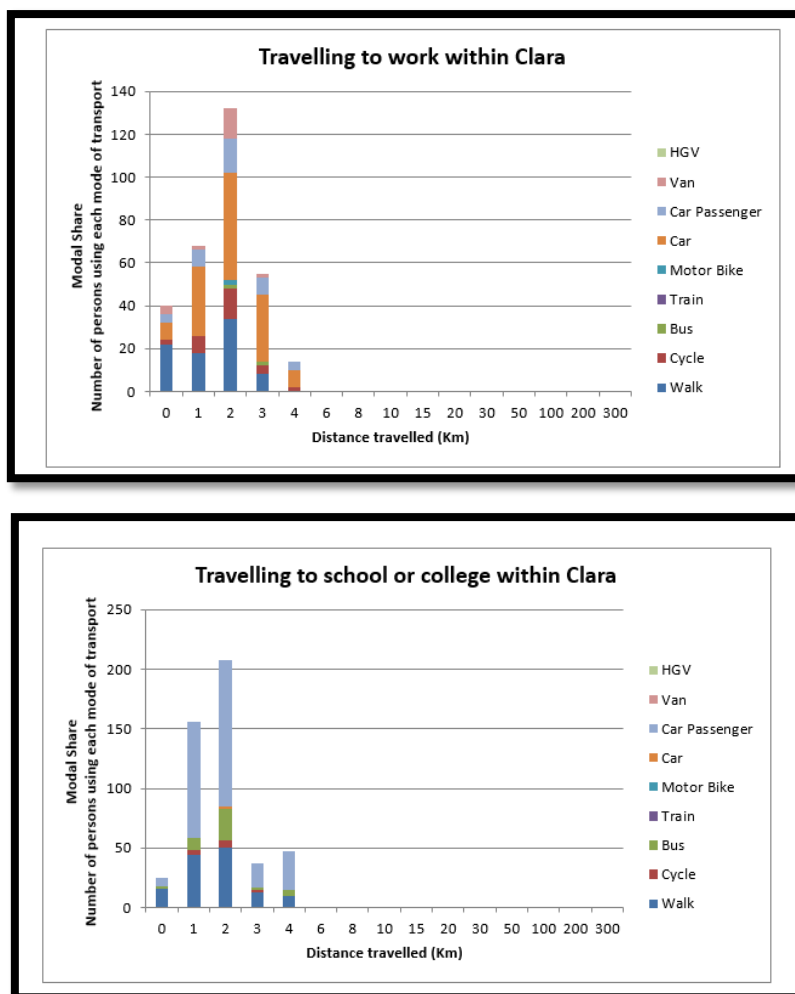


Figure 7.1 Modal Share of trip generation in Clara

The graphs in Figure 7.1 indicate the following statistics:

- For journeys to work in which the trip is from Clara to another settlement within County Offaly, 90% of trips are 15km or less; 91% of workers travel either by private car, passenger or van; 1% travel by public transport (bus).
- 62% of those who work in Clara travel to work by car or van while 36% walk or cycle to work;
- 76% of those attending school or college outside Clara travel by car or van compared to 22% who use the bus.
- 60% of students travel to school in cars compared to modes such as walking 28%, cycling 3% and bus 10 %.

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 7.11 of this Town Plan.

7.3 Clara Relief Road

This Plan makes provision for a new Relief Road to the west of the town centre from the Moate Road (R420) to the Ballycumber Road (R436), in order to take through traffic away from the town centre reducing congestion. The delivery of this relief road is entirely dependent on the availability of resources in the future, the location of which is shown on the Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map.

7.4 Public Parking

The town centre in Clara suffers from traffic congestion as a result of the parking of cars on both sides of streets. The following locations shown on the Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map may be suitable for off-street car parks within the town centre and on the edge of the town centre;

Possible Location 1: An off-street car park off Church Street would alleviate existing parking constraints along Church Street and would serve demand generated by the Church during mass times and businesses along Church Street.

Possible Location 2: The land to the rear of Main Street and River Street would provide great connectivity and permeability with these streets along with alleviating pressure for parking on Main Street.

Possible Location 3: The existing pedestrian bridge across the River Brosna would provide access to River Street and the rest of the Town Centre.

7.5 Electric Vehicles

It is important that significant new developments provide the infrastructure necessary for the move towards greater use of electric vehicles. The Council will support the provision and delivery of charging points in new developments in accordance with DMS-104 of Chapter 13 and in appropriate accessible locations for the general public.

7.6 Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

Pedestrian and cycle routes around the town mainly correspond to the vehicular routes, though there are some pedestrian routes running along and over the River Brosna, including a pedestrian bridge and path linking River Street with Frederick Street. There are currently no dedicated cycle lanes within the town and these may be incorporated into new development and on existing roads such as along the R436 (Ballycumber Road) to the town centre and the R436, linking the Kilcoursey residential area, the primary schools and the town centre.

7.7 Train Line and Station

Clara Train Station, located to the south of the town centre, is on the main Dublin to Galway and Dublin to Westport/Ballina line and offers regular services to Galway, Westport and Ballina as well as

other towns such as Tullamore, Athlone, Ballinasloe and Portarlinton. Offaly County Council supports the retention of staff at Clara Station having regard to the numbers of commuters and visitors to Clara Bog using the service, and the presence of the station within walking distance of the town centre.



Figure 7.2 Clara Train Station

7.8 Public Bus Transport

Bus Éireann operates a bus service between Athlone and Waterford twice a day in each direction which also serves Clara. A private operator also operates a service running four times a day connecting Clara to Athlone and Tullamore.

7.9 Approach Roads

The approach roads to Clara have avoided serious proliferation of signage that can have negative visual impacts on the approach roads to towns. However, the Council supports the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the roadsides on the approach to the town. Over the lifetime of this Plan consideration may be given to the installation of traffic calming ‘gateway’ features such as a solid kerbed central islands on the approach roads to the town to remind motorists that they are entering a built-up area providing a traffic calming effect.

7.10 Water and Drainage

7.10.1 Context

The responsibility for water service provision rests with Irish Water. However, the Local Authority remains closely involved in the sector acting as an agent of Irish Water in relation to the operation and maintenance of services.

7.10.2 Water Supply

Clara's water supply is from the Clara and Ferbane Regional Water Supply, which was established in 1998 and serves a large area of mid and west Offaly. There is spare capacity available.

7.10.3 Wastewater

The Clara wastewater treatment plant has a capacity to treat for the waste of 9,000 population equivalent (P.E.) which is considered adequate for the long-term needs of the town.

7.10.4 Flooding

This Plan has been subject to strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA) in accordance with "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" as published by the DEHLG (2009). The Council will facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas shown as a Constrained Land Use on the accompanying zoning map. Constrained Land Use shall be developed in accordance with Section 12.6, Objective LUZO-14 contained in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

7.10.5 Waste and recycling

There are authorised domestic waste collectors serving Clara.

There are recycling facilities for bottles and cans available for public use located at the public car park at the Leisure Centre on the Ballycumber Road. The Council supports the expansion of such facilities on appropriate sites.

7.11 Energy and Communications

7.12 Electricity

Enhanced development of secure and reliable electricity transmission infrastructure is recognised as being a key factor for supporting economic development and attracting investment to any area. At present there is more than adequate electricity infrastructure supplying Clara, with the town located 12 km from a 110 kV station in Tullamore and the location of a 38kV substation on the Kilbeggan Road.

7.13 Gas

The Bord Gáis gas network extends to Clara town and there are gas supply connections available to domestic and business users.

7.14 Broadband

Broadband is readily available in Clara. A number of telecoms providers have network infrastructure serving the area and provide various types of connectivity from fixed line to wireless and mobile broadband.

7.15 Critical Infrastructure Objectives

It is an objective of this settlement Plan to:

Roads and Access

KIO-01 Investigate the feasibility of providing a future relief road to the north west of the town as indicated on the Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map taking into account environmental sensitivities identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of this County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility, including Section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. The development of any relief road proposal shall be subject to the requirements of the EIA, Habitats, Water Framework and Flood Directives where relevant and appropriate.

KIO-02 Prepare a Traffic Management Plan for Clara Town Centre.

KIO-03 Provide where new development is proposed, new or additional access/linkages as indicated on the Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map providing for the opening up the full development potential of back land, and developable areas in the town.

KIO-04 Improve and upgrade all approach roads to the town as a method of enhancing the first impression of the town, including, the restoration, maintenance and preservation of old stone walls along these approach roads.

KIO-05 Facilitate and implement measures to reduce or manage traffic associated with schools to regularise movement patterns and ease congestion.

Electric Vehicles

KIO-06 Identify car parks and other appropriate locations for the provision of battery charging infrastructure for electric cars.

Walking and Cycling

KIO-07 Support improvements in the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the town that will improve connectivity and permeability, and promote more sustainable modes of transport.

KIO-08 Provide cycle lanes or adequate space for cyclists on proposed footpaths within Clara Town in the locations shown on Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map.

KIO-09 To provide adequate, secure and sheltered bicycle parking facilities at appropriate locations: (i) in the town centre (ii) at employment areas and (iii) adjacent to heritage, community and amenity destinations.

Public Parking

KIO-10 Support the provision of public off-street car parks at the locations shown on Clara Settlement Plan Objectives Map.

Public Realm

KIO-11 Support public realm improvement works in the town centre, focusing on pavements, dedicated parking bays, additional pedestrian crossing, street furniture, signage and the provision where possible of cycle paths.

KIO-12 Ensure footpaths in the town provide adequate access for persons with a disability or who have impaired mobility.

Surface Water and Flooding

KIO-13 To upgrade and extend the surface water collection system for the town.

KIO-14 Developments in 'Constrained Land Use Zones' shall comply with Objective LUZO-14 in Chapter 12 Land Use Zoning Objectives contained in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

8 Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development

Strategic Objective: Facilitate and support a broad range of community, cultural and recreational facilities to serve the needs of the residents of the Plan area and its wider catchment.

8.1 Community

Clara has a vibrant and dynamic community with social, sporting and voluntary groups active in many aspects of life in the town. The community facilities that have been developed over time reflect this ongoing activity and are detailed in Table 8.1 below. Many of the existing sporting activities and facilities are located within the boundary of Clara Town in proximity to other services and are facilitated by footpaths, lighting and car parking.

The Clara Community and Family Centre at the heart of the town on River Street provides a range of valuable classes and facilities for the various groups and clubs from the town such as the youth club, womens group, mens shed, senior citizens, family support, lone parent support groups and Citizen Information.

There is a Tidy Towns group in the town supported by the local Community Employment Programme and Offaly County Council while there is a Green Flag Committee in the local schools.

Offaly County Council promotes and encourages all ranges of community, cultural and sporting activities in Clara that not only contribute to the town and its growing younger population but to its wider hinterland also.

8.2 Education and Childcare

There are two primary schools and one post primary school in the town of Clara. The two primary schools are located in Kilcoursey on the Kilbeggan Road. The post primary school is Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa located south of the River Brosna on Frederick Street. In consultation with the Department of Education and Skills, it is considered that it is unlikely that a new school will be required to serve the population of Clara in the immediate future. However, in creating this Plan Offaly County Council are cognisant that the existing post-primary school is on a relatively confined site and that future changes

in primary school provision in the town could possibly require reorganisation and a new school site. It is not envisaged that it will be required within the lifetime of this town plan, however, it is considered prudent to ensure that a site is reserved for a future education campus in the town as part of this land-use plan. This is located central to the residentially zoned area that could be developed to the northeast of the town centre.

Currently childcare services are primarily delivered by the private sector within Clara, ranging from crèches and preschool facilities, to a Montessori school and also local home child minding services. The Council recognises that the availability of good quality, appropriately located and accessible early childcare facilities is important to support the development of sustainable communities.

8.3 Healthcare

There are a number of existing healthcare facilities including medical centres and a dental practice within the town. There exists a large nursing home in Killnabinnia on the Tullamore Road outside the town. The Council will continue to work with healthcare service providers and key stakeholders, including the HSE and private bodies to strengthen healthcare services in Clara.

8.4 Arts and Culture

While Clara does not have a purpose built Arts building, there is an active arts community existing in the town. The Clara Parish Choir, Musical Society, Town band and Drama Group are active in the town. The Council will support further arts and cultural facilities in Clara.



Figure 8.1 Clara Community and Family Centre, River Street

Table 8.1 List of Community facilities in Clara

Category of Community Facilities	List of Existing Facilities
Education	<p><u>Primary Schools</u></p> <p>Scoil Proinsias Naofa (Boys)</p> <p>Scoil Bhríde (Girls)</p> <p><u>Post Primary School</u></p> <p>Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa (mixed)</p>
Healthcare	Health Services Executive (HSE) health centre, provides a number of services including Public Health Care nurses, community welfare services, chiropodist services, and older people services.
Garda Station	Station at Fairgreen which is a sub-district office of the Tullamore Branch
Childcare	<p>No public childcare facilities.</p> <p>3 no. private childcare facilities at Kilbride Gardens, Church Street and Scoil Bhríde.</p>
Parks and Playground	<p>The Fair Green in the town centre and a small open space area adjacent to the River Brosna at Charlestown Bridge.</p> <p>Playground at Erry.</p>
Sports Facilities	GAA club, soccer club, swimming pool, Sports and Leisure Centre, Pitch and Putt course, driving range, boxing club and Aspire Sports Performance Centre.
Other community facilities and organisations	Clara Library and Clara Bog Visitor Centre, Clara Community and Family Resource Centre, Garran an Caisleain community centre at Kilcoursey, Boy Scouts.
Care for older persons	Nursing home facility at Killnabinnia outside the town boundary.

8.5 Social Inclusion, Community and Cultural Development Objectives

It is an objective of this settlement plan to:

CECO-01 Facilitate and promote the upgrading and enhancement of community facilities in the town.

CECO-02 Use development levies under Sections 48 and 49 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended to fund community and sports facilities.

CECO-03 Support and facilitate the provision of primary and post-primary school facilities as required by the Department of Education and Skills.

CECO-04 Encourage shared use of existing educational and community facilities for community and non-school purposes where possible, in order to promote sustainable use of such infrastructure and meet the needs of Clara's growing population.

CECO-05 Facilitate sports and community groups in the acquisition and/or use of lands for sports and recreation purposes.

CECO-06 Support and facilitate improvements to and the expansion of existing educational, early learning, childcare and health care facilities at appropriate locations in Clara.

CECO-07 Support and promote the development of facilities and services for older people at appropriate locations in Clara.

CECO-08 Support and promote the development of cultural, arts and performance spaces in Clara.

CECO-09 Provide an additional playground and new skate park at an appropriate location in the town.

CECO-10 Support the Tidy Towns Committee and community groups and associations in reducing litter, while maintaining and improving the overall environment of the town.

9 Climate Action

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

9.1 Measures

This Settlement Plan integrates a series of measures focusing on compact growth, town centre regeneration, sustainable mobility and green infrastructure protection and enhancement that will help provide a sustainable low carbon and climate resilient future for Clara town.

The Council will seek to ensure that all development in the Plan Area 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 required over the course of the Plan with development of compact brownfield/infill land being encouraged;
- Ensuring that development proposals incorporate where possible alternative energy technologies;

- Promoting the retrofitting of existing housing, commercial and public buildings to reduce energy demands;
- Prioritise sustainable mobility i.e. public transport, walking and cycling and integrate land use and transportation in order to reduce travel demand;
- Requiring all buildings in the Plan Area 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 County Development Plan; and
- Incorporating Green Infrastructure techniques, such as the use of green roofs, green walls and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) into developments and provide new Green Infrastructure elements and connections between existing Green Infrastructure as outlined in Section 5.5 of this Settlement Plan.

9.2 Climate Action Objectives

It is an objective of the settlement plan to:

CAO-01 Support the implementation of the Offaly County Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and promote Clara as an exemplar town in transitioning to a low carbon economy.

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

CAO-03 Seek integration of positive climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in all planning applications in Clara Town such as green walls, green roofs and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) and support the design of developments that minimise the usage of fresh water supplies and the harvesting of 'grey' water for re-use.

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

CAO-05 Identify car parks and other appropriate locations for the provision of battery charging infrastructure for electric vehicles in Clara.

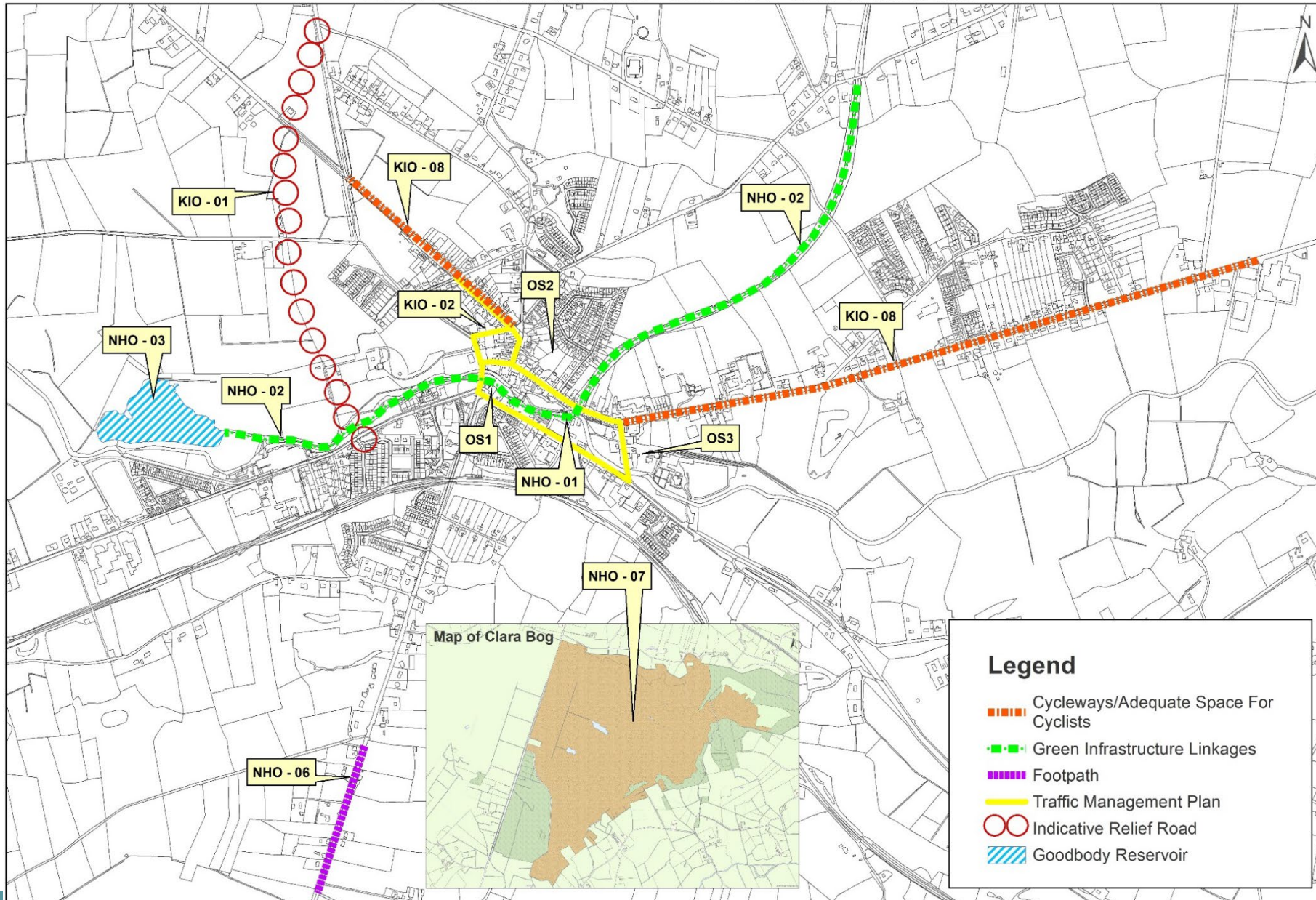
10 Land Use and Zoning

Lands within Clara are zoned for various land uses. The provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) shall apply to land zoned solely for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses. Chapter 12 in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan contains the zoning categories identified in the Plan area together with the accompanying matrix.

11 Access and Linkages

The Objectives map incorporated into this Settlement Plan includes indicative circles showing the location of potential linkages, should the lands in question be developed in the lifetime of the Plan – these links will provide improved vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian access. These links are part of an overall approach to achieving increased permeability throughout the town. This approach allows for flexibility to be applied to proposed schemes. Developments within the town will be required to provide improved connectivity to adjoining developed and undeveloped lands where possible. Cul-de-sacs will be discouraged. Some of these links may be achieved through one development while others will be an incremental part of an overall objective. Please also refer to Chapter 8 Sustainable Transport Strategy contained in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan in this regard.

CLARA SETTLEMENT PLAN - SELECTED OBJECTIVES MAP



CLARA TOWN PLAN

