

Ferbane Town Plan

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1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Location

The town of Ferbane is located in northwest Offaly at the crossroads of the N62 and R436 roads, approximately 27km from Tullamore and 22km from both Athlone and Birr.

It is sited on a bridging point of the River Brosna, a tributary of the River Shannon, on a shoulder of higher ground in the peatland landscape of west Offaly. Ferbane Bog Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located immediately to the north of the town while the worked-out Bord na Móna bog, Noggusboy Bog is 3km to the south of the town. The Eiscir Riada network of eskers and the Grand Canal lies to the south of the town also.

1.2 Settlement Form

The town of Ferbane has its origins at a crossroads on the north bank of the River Brosna at the bridging point. This historic core, now the town centre, was fairly compact in nature and grew up servicing the surrounding rural area including Gallen Abbey, which is a renowned early Christian site situated on the south side of the Brosna. The advent of the Grand Canal in the early 19th century, which passes approximately 2kms to the south of the town and the Railway line, (Midland Great Western line), which was opened in 1884, had a positive impact on the town during the 19th and early 20th century.

Ferbane's strategic location in relation to the west Offaly peatlands, provided a catalyst for continued prosperity when the development of Offaly's bogs began in the 1940's. Both Bord na Móna and the ESB proved to be significant employers in the town.

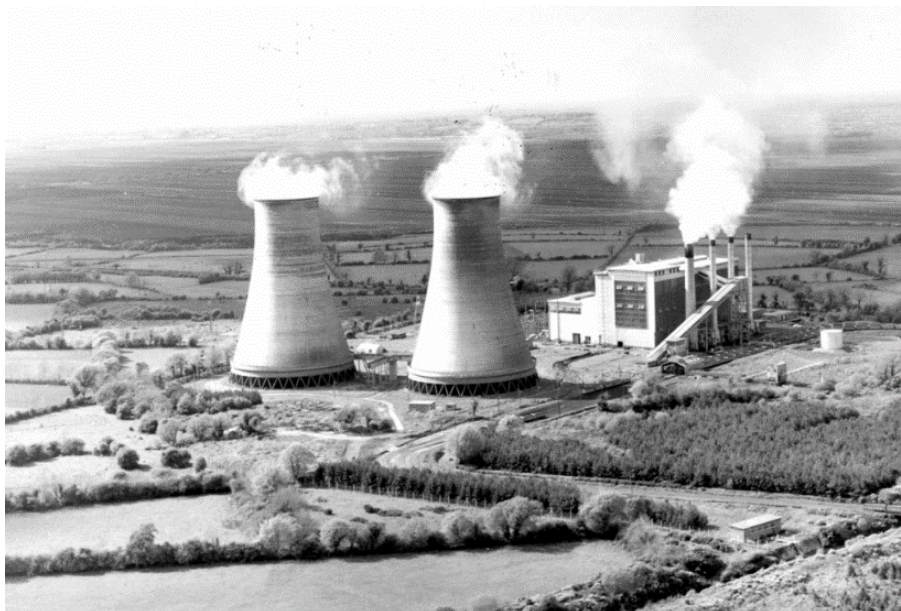


Figure 1.1 Photograph of Ferbane Power Station, 1957 (ESB archives)

The town has developed in a linear fashion along the radial routes, in particular the approaches from Ballycumber and Belmont, and along the N62 in the direction of Athlone. There are a number of housing estates dating from the 1950s that were built to accommodate the Bord na Móna and ESB workforce, and a number that were constructed since the mid-1990s which give the town some depth, particularly to the north and west of the town centre.



Figure 1.2 Aerial photograph of Ferbane from May 2018

1.3 Socio Economic Profile

From an analysis of the Census 2016 data, the following details are noted for Ferbane:

- Ferbane's population has increased from 1,165 in 2011 to 1,191 in 2016, an increase of 2.8%, below the national growth of 3.8%;
- Ferbane has a significantly young population with 25% of its population 19 years or younger, below the equivalent national percentage of 27.5% while the largest cohort of the town's population is in the 0-9 age bracket, 12.9%;
- Average household size in Ferbane is 2.6 which is slightly below the national average of 2.7;
- Some 39 % of the population over 15 years of age is employed, which is considerably lower than the national average of 53 %;
- Ferbane displayed a satisfactory job: resident workers' ratio of 0.76;
- Of the persons at work, the greatest proportions are involved in professional services (21%), manufacturing industries (19%) and commerce and trade (19%);

- 25% of Ferbane’s population aged 5+ commute by car or other means to work/school/college for 30 minutes or longer from the town, which compares favourably to the equivalent national percentage of 31%; and
- Broadband is available to 63% of households in the town.

1.4 Town Function and Development Trends

Ferbane is classified as a ‘Smaller Town’ in the Settlement Strategy of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-27 and performs important retail, residential, employment, service and amenity functions for local rural hinterlands. The population allocation contained in the Core Strategy in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan provides for an extension befitting Ferbane’s position in the county settlement hierarchy.

The previous plan period (from 2014-2020), saw very little in the way of new residential development or planning applications. Unfinished housing developments as a legacy issue required a particular focus in the last plan. These have been largely resolved in Ferbane, thanks to the successful collaboration and co-operation from a number of stakeholders.

1.5 Strategic Aims for Ferbane

This settlement plan takes an asset based approach to the future spatial development of Ferbane 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 Ferbane over the lifetime of this County Development Plan:

1. Reinforce Ferbane 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 Ferbane Business and Technology Park, Ferbane Food Campus and the service sector in the town, and facilitate new enterprises within the zoned and serviced area 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 sustainable communities that focus on place making and a sense of well-being to ensure Ferbane 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 Ferbane Town Centre.

6. Provision of ecological connectivity and walking and cycling infrastructure throughout the town which links Ferbane's Green Infrastructure; Ferbane Bog, River Brosna, Gallen Wood, Ballylin Amenity Woodland and Former Cow Park and Church of Ireland Ruins and new civic areas and green infrastructure in Ferbane over the plan period.
7. Protect Ferbane'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 Ferbane 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 Ferbane.

2. Town Centre

Strategic Aim: Reinforce Ferbane 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.

Ferbane's town centre, the boundary of which is identified in Figure 2.1 below, is predominantly linear in form along the Main Street in the town. The level of vacancy and dereliction along the Main Street of the town compares quite favourably with other towns of similar size and function in the county with most buildings on the Main Street having at least a residential presence on the first floor if the commercial ground floor unit lies vacant.

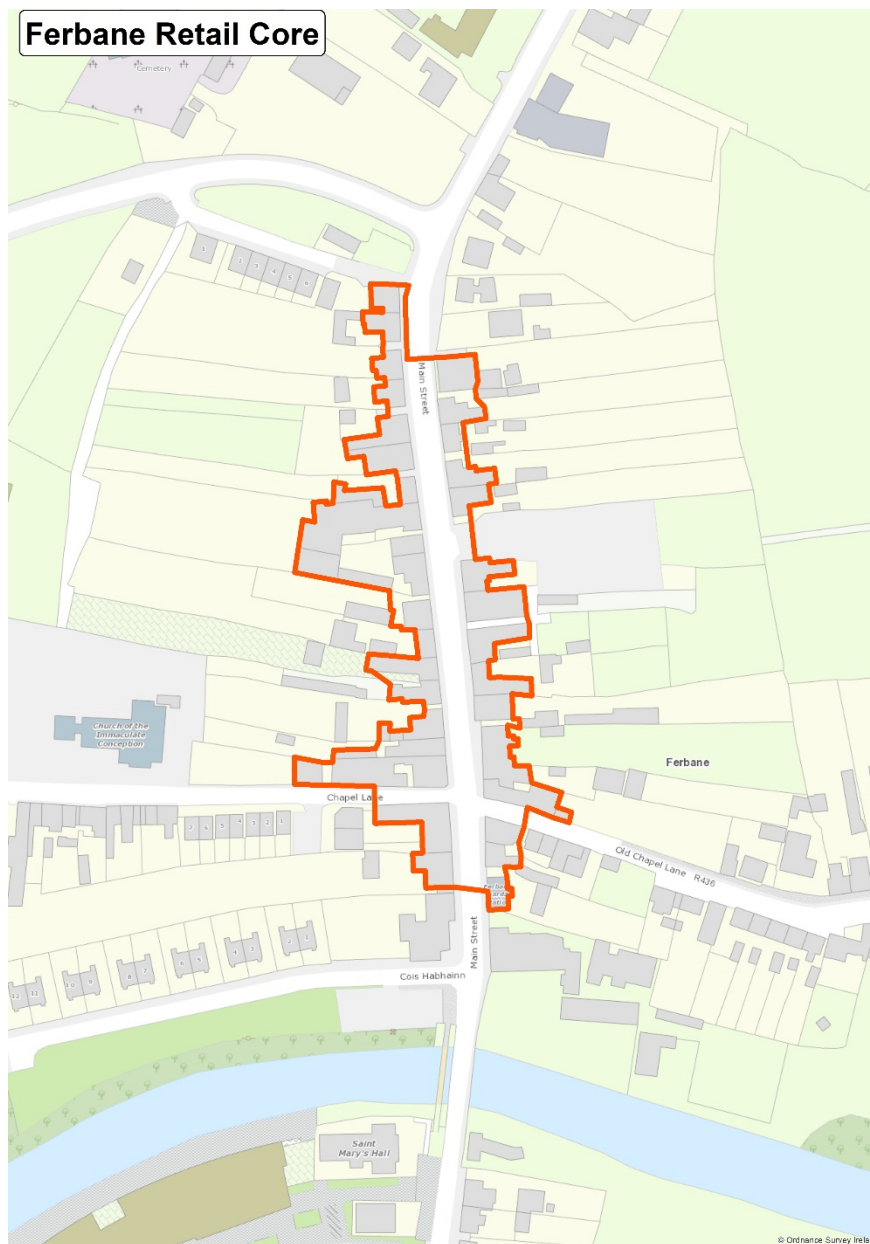


Figure 2.1 Ferbane Retail Core

2.1 Retail

Ferbane is identified as a 'Smaller 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 Form of Retailing Activity in context of Retail Hierarchy that additional convenience and comparison floorspace will be encouraged in 'Towns' where:

- It is needed to support levels of population growth commensurate with the towns 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.

Chapter 7 also outlines that comparison retail development will not be considered in ‘Towns’ where it proposes to attract a larger catchment such that it would be likely to affect the integrity of the retail hierarchy and that there shall generally be a presumption against the development of retail parks accommodating retail warehousing in these towns.

Any future commercial and retail development should be directed into the town centre, into existing properties along Main Street and Old Chapel Lane or within brownfield/back land/underutilised sites within the town centre in order to facilitate multi-purpose trips and to consolidate the existing retail and commercial core of Ferbane. The Council will encourage the appropriate reuse, adaptation and regeneration of buildings, back lands, derelict and obsolete lands including residential development above retail and commercial premises in the town centre.

2.2 Shop Fronts

Future commercial and retail development will need to respect the existing vernacular design traits of Ferbane including its original and attractive shop fronts, which contributes to the town centre’s sense of place.



Figure 2.2 Attractive shop front on Main Street, Ferbane

2.3 Opportunity Sites

The Council has identified two ‘Opportunity Sites’ within Ferbane Town Centre with the potential to contribute to the renewal, enhancement and regeneration of the Ferbane Town Centre and achieve sustainable compact development and integrate principles of good urban design and healthy place making.

These areas have been identified for various reasons such as dereliction, underutilisation and ability to be adaptable for new uses. The site areas or boundaries have not been identified definitively and can be modified to include other key sites. Additionally, other opportunity sites not listed can be presented for appraisal under similar criteria. Some of the sites may be owned by different parties and would require an element of site assembly for a coherent development strategy to progress. This approach to re-development will be encouraged over a piecemeal approach.

The Council is open 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.

2.3.1 Opportunity Site No. 1



Figure 2.3 Opportunity Site No. 1

This 1.62-hectare brownfield and infill site located to the south of Ferbane Town Centre contains a detached 'L' plan five bay 3 storey convent building with a five bay 2 storey rear extension which forms an imposing feature in the streetscape of Lower Main Street. The Convent grounds also contain significant open space areas that runs along the trees and riparian zones of the banks of the River Brosna, and a vacant field to the west of the subject site.

Potential Uses

Both the Convent 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 Ferbane town centre, offer opportunities to accommodate:

- Residential development;
- Office development;
- 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;
- Distillery or brewery, subject to necessary environmental assessments;
- Craft workshops, galleries and café;
- Third level education facility offering further education, post leaving certificate courses; and
- Walk along the banks of the River Brosna which could form part of the town's Green Infrastructure.

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 Convent building in the town and its inclusion in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage;
- If proposing 10 residential units or more, a Residential Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Adaptation Design Statement in accordance with DMS-31, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards within Volume 1;
- Green Infrastructure Masterplan in accordance with DMS-22, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards within Volume 1, 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 Main Street and R436, 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.

2.3.2 Opportunity Site No. 2

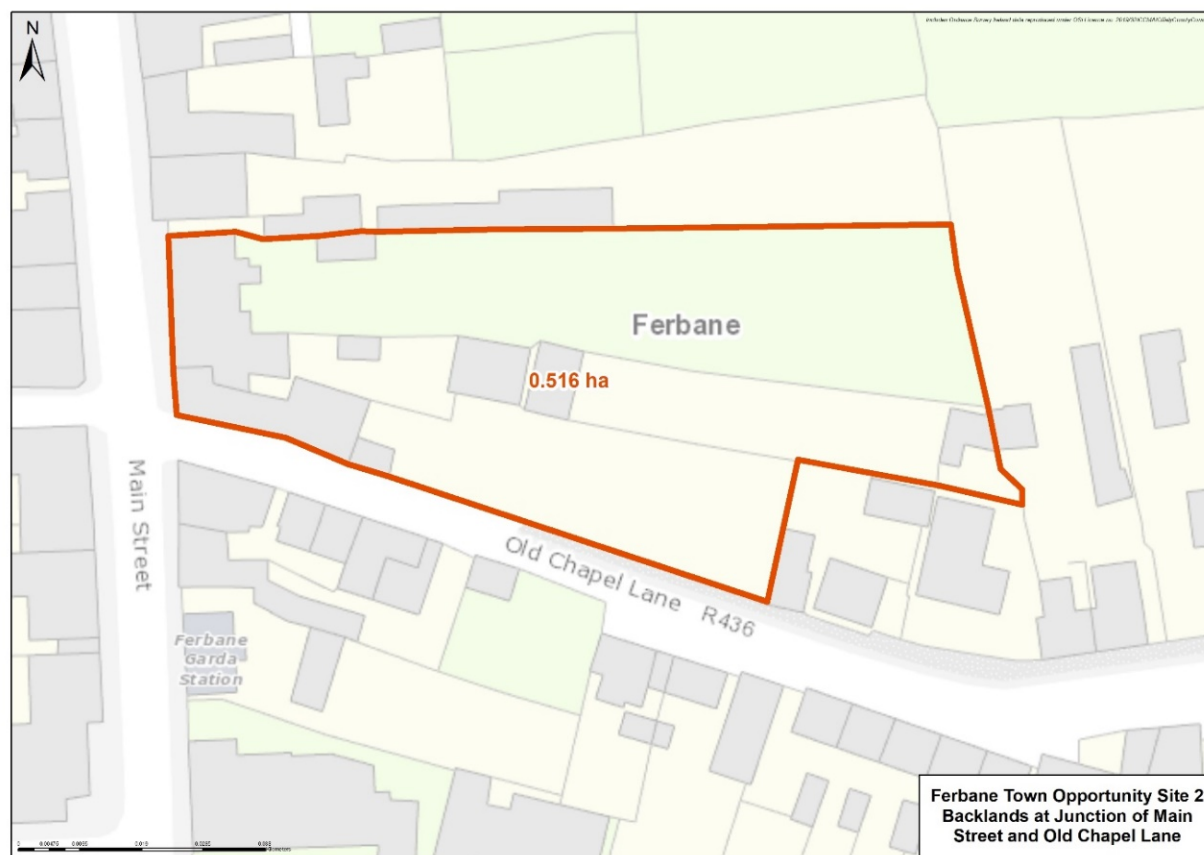


Figure 2.4 Opportunity Site No. 2

This 0.5 hectare site to the west of the Main Street and north of Old Chapel Street contains a terrace of two storey three bay buildings fronting onto Main Street, while there exists a number of farm buildings on the narrow tracts of land to the rear of the Main Street. This area has the potential to be accessed from the existing car park which runs along the R436 Ballycumber Road.

Potential Uses

This site due to its size, town centre location together with its potential pedestrian links to Ferbane town centre, offer opportunities to accommodate:

- comprehensive mixed-use scheme of commercial, community, office and residential uses;
- covered market space for the promotion and sale of artisan, specialty foods and crafts;
- residential development (including the provision of specifically designed housing for older people);
- office development;

- provision of a surface car park on a segment of the site; and
- new development fronting onto Old Chapel Lane shall provide active frontage and a well-considered public realm.

Any development of this site will require the preparation of a masterplan and be in accordance with development the 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 Convent building in the town and its inclusion in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage;
- If proposing 10 residential units or more, a Residential Energy Efficiency and Climate Change Adaptation Design Statement in accordance with DMS-31, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards within Volume 1;
- Green Infrastructure Masterplan in accordance with DMS-22, Chapter 13, Development Management Standards within Volume 1, 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 Main Street and R436, 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.

2.4 Fairgreen

The Fairgreen area north of Ferbane's Main Street offers potential to develop a high quality plaza and public space. The development of this area will provide an attractive entrance to Ferbane town centre from the north and a local focal space allowing for a range of activities such as markets and public gatherings. Any proposals for this area would need to incorporate an uncluttered central space, free of permanent features, to allow for a range of activities in the space and high quality surface design and materials.

2.5 Town Centre Objectives

It is an objective of this Settlement Plan to:

TCO-01 Promote the town centre as the priority location for commercial, civic, social and cultural development and to promote new infill and backland development that consolidates and regenerates the existing urban core.

TCO-02 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-03 Further improve the streetscape and public realm including reviewing and maintaining paving and street furniture in particular.

TCO-04 Work with service providers with a view to undergrounding overhead cables visible within the town centre.

TCO-05 To provide loading bays of adequate capacity where they are needed most in order to ensure that traffic flows are not restricted.

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

TCO-07 Facilitate the redevelopment of Opportunity Sites for a mixture of uses that will contribute to the vitality, vibrancy, attractiveness, safety and liveability of Ferbane Town Centre.

TCO-08 Carry out streetscape/public realm works to the west of the junction of the Ballyclare Road with the Main Street;

TCO-09 Provide a high quality civic space or town park at the old fire station/Fairgreen at the intersection of the town's relief road and the Main Street.

TCO-10 Continue to pursue funding avenues and apply for funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and other funds to reinforce Ferbane Town Centre.

3. Economic Development

Strategic Aim: Harness the economic and employment generating potential of the town through the on-going development of the Ferbane Business and Technology Park, Ferbane Food Campus and the service sector in the town, and facilitate new enterprises within the zoned and serviced area of the town.

While Ferbane at present does not harbour a major employer within the town plan area, there are a number of small or micro-enterprises which trade successfully and generate local employment. The town in its service function for the surrounding area generates significant employment, in the schools, retail outlets, hospitality sector and other services provided.



Figure 3.1 Ferbane Business Park

Whilst this Plan seeks to protect existing employment in the town and to regenerate and consolidate the town centre for the provision of significant retail and commercial functions, it is considered that Ferbane has the potential to attract a significant employer to the town, with the availability of;

- Provision of sufficient zoned and serviced sites at Ferbane Business and Technology Park to the east of the town which developed clusters in the following areas; food and drink, engineering and joinery businesses, in addition to a design and print company and childcare facility on-site and also at Coolnahinch on the southern approach;
- Access to M6 Motorway, Dublin-Galway route via the N62;
- Proximity to Athlone, designated a Regional Growth Centre and economic driver in the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy; and
- Availability of an educated workforce.

In order to capitalise on these advantages and to ensure long-term sustainable employment, it is necessary for Ferbane to focus on;

- Developing and strengthening Ferbane Business and Technology Park as:
 - A location for food processing and research, including the continued development of food incubator units and new focus on skincare and wellness products from developing linkages

- with Bord na Móna new product development on former peat harvesting sites, for example; medicinal herbs, birchwater and aquaculture;
 - Opportunities for warehousing and distribution from existing and potentially new clusters of businesses;
 - Having the potential to become a centre for green energy and renewables research and development, manufacturing and bio-energy; and
 - A location for satellite offices for large multinationals, SMEs and campus space for third level institutions linked to ongoing research at Ferbane Bog and green energy projects on nearby peatlands, availing of abundant space, reasonable cost of land and access to green infrastructure.
- Continued development and promotion of incubator units in the town, providing work space for start-up businesses in appropriately zoned locations in the town, linked to a wider programme of education and networking opportunities in order to adequately foster any new business.
 - Promoting Ferbane town and the wider area as a key destination for tourism, leisure and recreation activities, and accommodation linked to its proximity to important tourist destinations such as Clonmacnoise and Leamanaghan Monastic Sites, Lough Boora Discovery Park, the River Shannon, the River Brosna, Grand Canal Greenway and Athlone Castle Visitor Centre. Should the number of visitors to the town increase as a result of the Grand Canal Greenway or Ferbane Bog in the short to medium future, there will be a need to increase the town's tourist accommodation base as there is no bed and breakfast or hostel in the town.

3.1 Economic Development Objectives

It is an objective of this Settlement Plan to:

EDO-01 Promote and develop Ferbane Business and Technology Park as:

- A centre for green energy and renewables research and development, manufacturing and bio-energy;
- A location for satellite offices for large multinationals, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and campus space for third level institutions linked to ongoing research at Ferbane Bog and green energy projects; and
- A centre of excellence for food research, development and production.

EDO-02 Encourage the provision of high quality designs (including variations in design and scale), layout and boundary treatment within the Ferbane Business and Technology Park;

EDO-03 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-04 Cooperate with government agencies and the Offaly Local Enterprise Office (LEO) in examining potential sites for industry and in attracting firms to any land zoned as such;

EDO-05 Improve the overall attractiveness of Ferbane 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, attractions and activities.

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 sustainable communities that focus on place making and a sense of well-being to ensure Ferbane 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 Ferbane Town Centre.**



Figure 4.1 Ard Glas Residential Development



Figure 4.2 St. Cynocs Terrace Residential Development

This Settlement Plan provides for new residential areas in Ferbane 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. 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 Action.

Ferbane 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 encourage 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.

4.1 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 the 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 Ferbane, including the provision of appropriate supported housing and longer-term residential care solutions designed for older people and/or people with disabilities.

5. Biodiversity and Landscape

Strategic Aim: Provision of ecological connectivity and walking and cycling infrastructure throughout the town which links Ferbane's Green Infrastructure; Ferbane Bog, River Brosna, Gallen Wood, Ballylin Amenity Woodland and Former Cow Park and Church of Ireland Ruins and new civic areas and green infrastructure which may develop during the plan period.



Figure 5.1 River Brosna and its riparian zone



Figure 5.2 Old Railway Line

Ferbane and its environs is host to a wide range of recreational and amenity assets or ‘Green Infrastructure’ some of which are referred to as ‘Wildlife Hotspots’ by local groups, in the form of the River Brosna, woodlands such as Priory Woods, Ballylin Woodlands and around the Church of Ireland ruins, meadow areas on the former Cow Park to the north of the Ferbane Business and Technology Park, the Grand Canal to the south and Ferbane Bog to the north of the town, all of which are shown in Figure 5.4 below.

Ferbane Bog is a designated Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive due to the presence of Annex I priority habitat raised bog. Ferbane Bog is also one of 12 bogs in the country included in the EU Living Bog Project which seeks to implement active restoration measures to establish suitable conditions to peat to once again form on these bogs. This plan recognises that there is a need to strike a balance between protecting this unique asset while also making provision for visitor facilities and ongoing research at Ferbane Bog and will liaise closely with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in this regard.

This Plan seeks to establish a coherent, integrated and evolving green infrastructure network which extends from Ferbane Bog through the town and its ‘Wildlife Hotspots’ all the way to the Grand Canal Greenway, providing habitats for wildlife, air and water filtration, surface water management, recreational and tourism opportunities and “greener” neighbourhoods.

In May 2019, a Green Infrastructure Plan for Ferbane was developed by the Ferbane Tidy Towns Group which specific projects within the environmental context of Green Infrastructure. The environmental context of the Green Infrastructure Plan has 4 strands;

1. Access, health and well-being;
2. Natural Heritage;
3. Sustainable Drainage; and
4. Cultural Heritage.

The Council has consulted with this Green Infrastructure Plan and a previous Biodiversity Management Strategy from 2014 prepared on behalf of the Tidy Towns Group in the preparation of this Town Plan and the development of public realm, biodiversity, landscape and green infrastructure related policies and objectives in Ferbane over the plan period.

Ferbane, located 800 metres north of the Grand Canal at Gallen Bridge, is well placed to tie in with the Grand Canal Greenway and benefit from providing both tourist accommodation and services from 'slow adventure' tourism. This Plan supports the provision of a footpath and cycleway stretching from the N62 at Gallen to the south west of Gallen Prior View onto the R437 as far as Gallen Bridge to facilitate visitors to the town from the Grand Canal Greenway, as shown in Figure 5.6 below.



Figure 5.3 Grand Canal

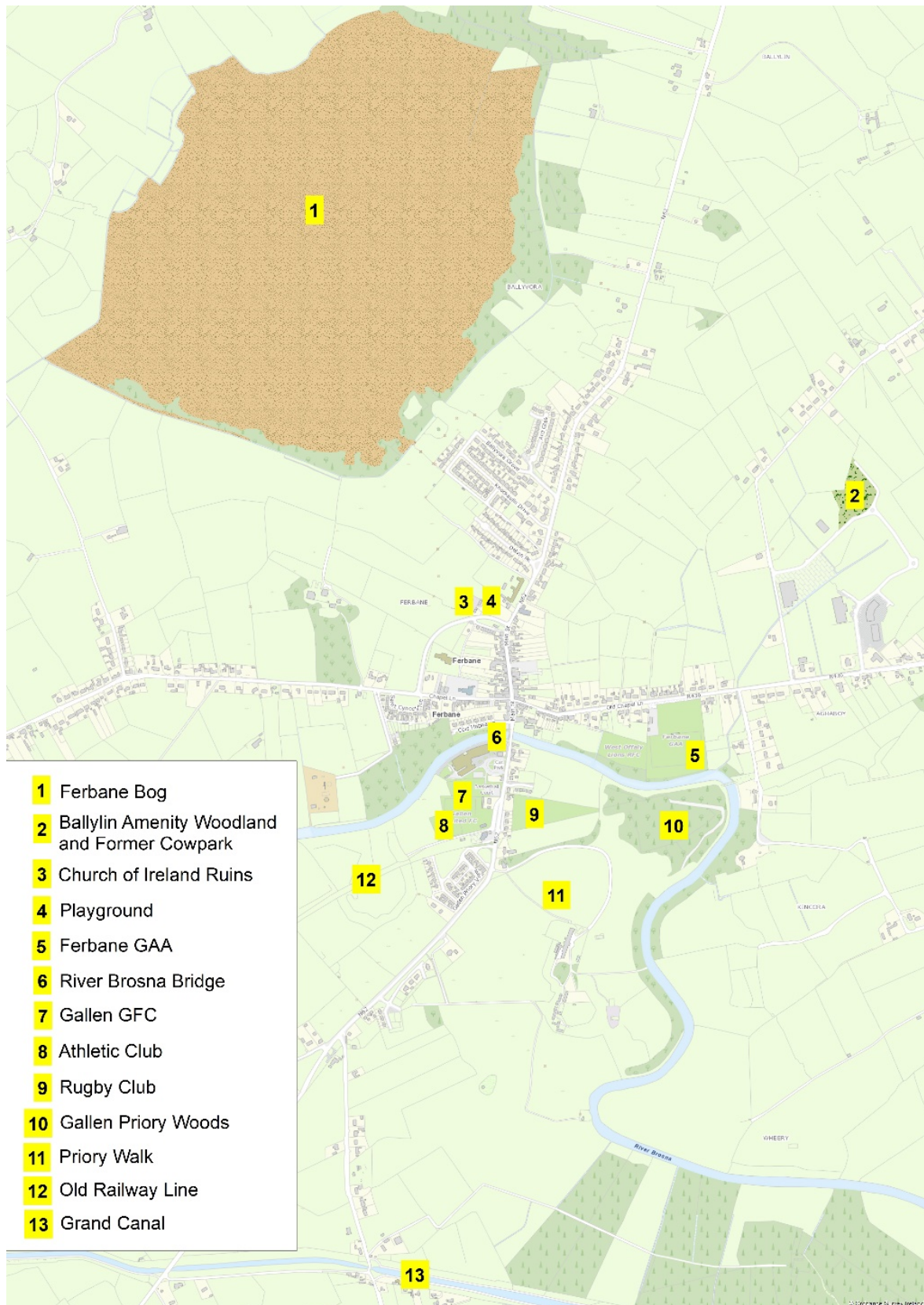


Figure 5.4 Ferbane’s existing Green Infrastructure and community facilities

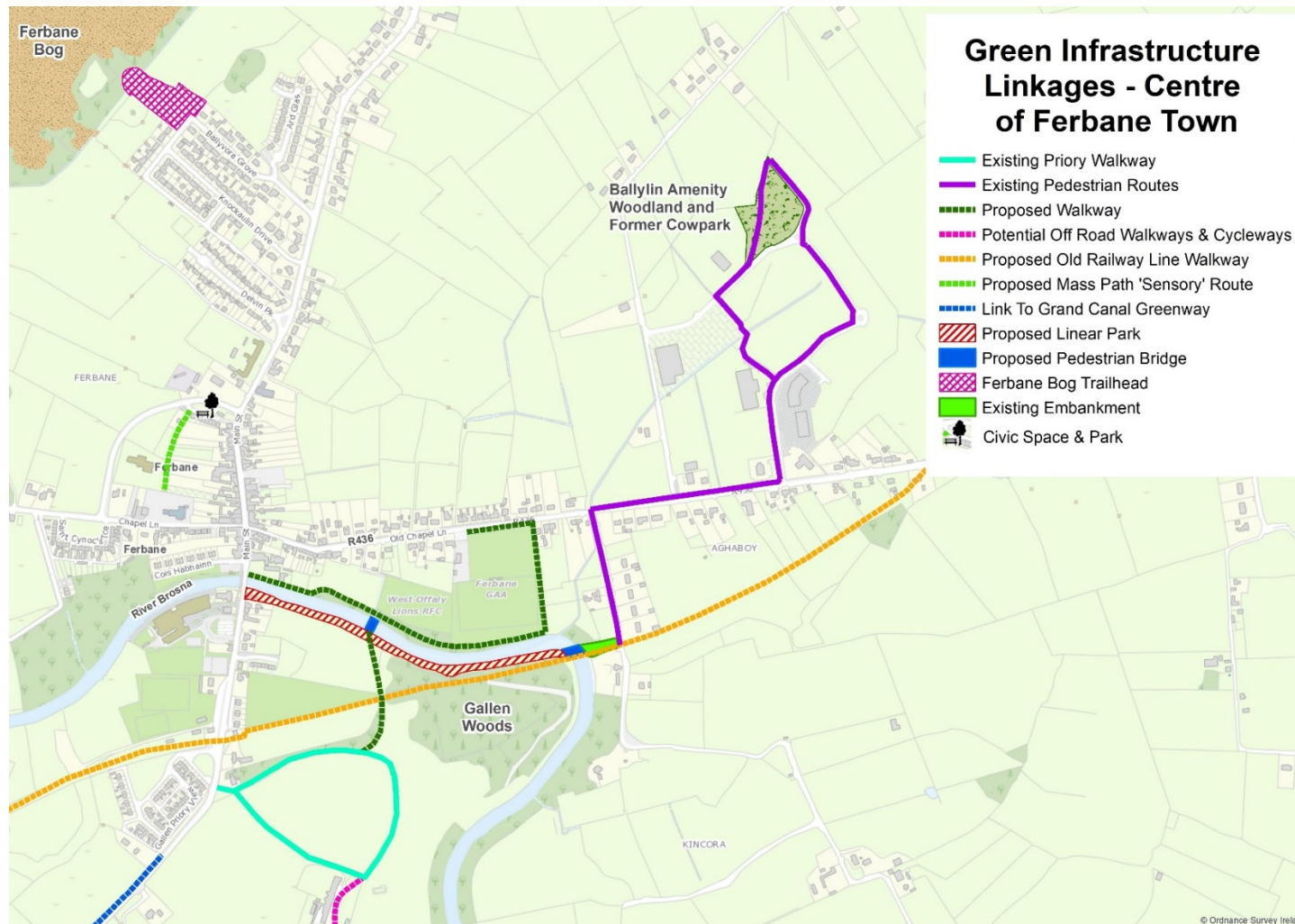


Figure 5.5 Potential Green Infrastructure Linkages in Ferbane

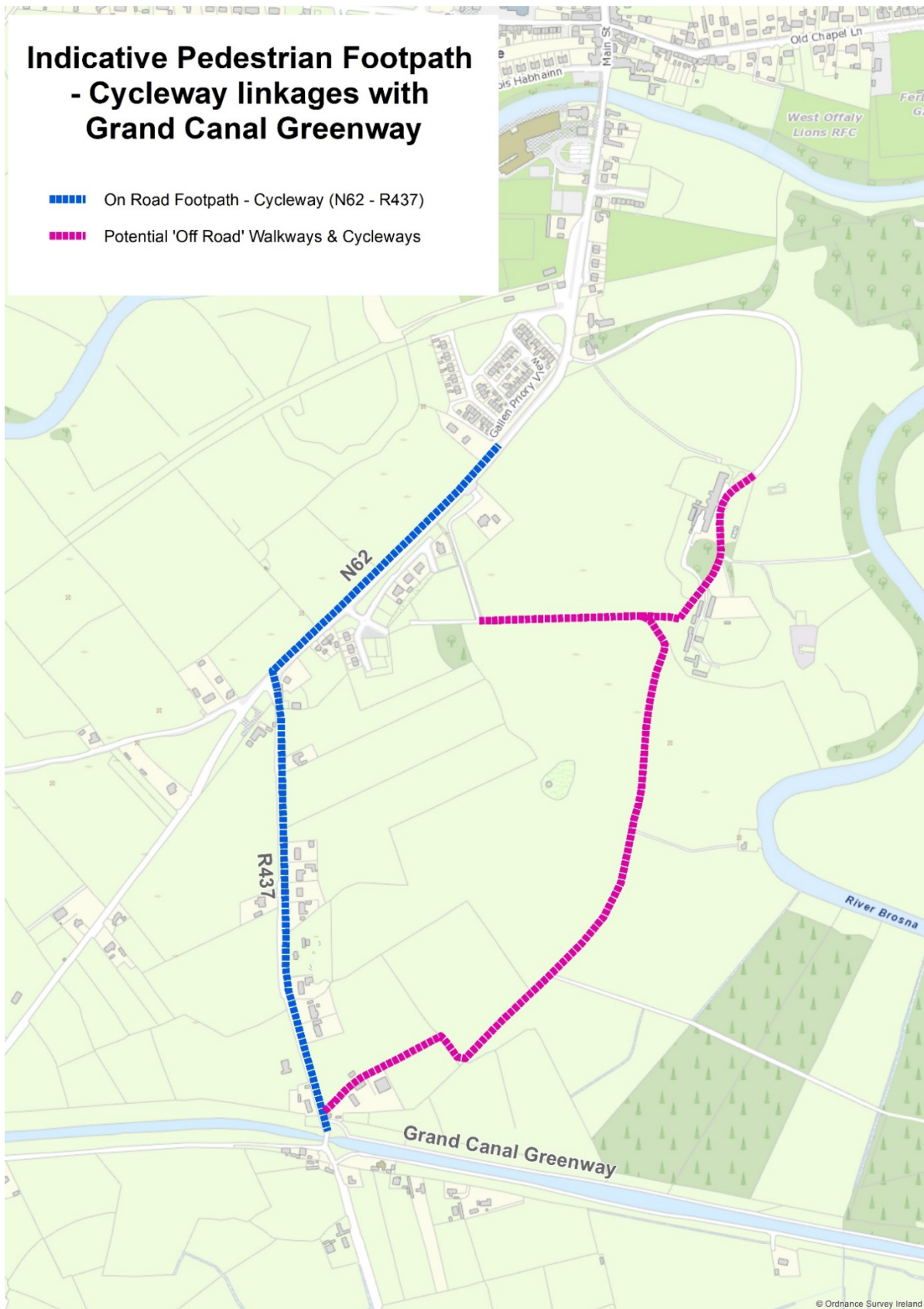


Figure 5.6 Indicative pedestrian linkage with town and Grand Canal Greenway

5.1 Biodiversity and Landscape Objectives

It is an objective of this Settlement Plan to:

BLO-01 Work with the relevant stakeholders to examine the feasibility of developing an amenity route along the disused Clara-Banagher railway and the banks of the River Brosna in Ferbane, taking into account the environmental sensitivities of the site and Inland Fisheries Guidance document, Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment.

BLO-02 Provide a footpath/cycleway along the N62 and R437 which links Ferbane with the Grand Canal Greenway to the south of the town.

BLO-03 Upgrade the existing footpaths and lighting along the R436 and L-30048-1 between the Ferbane Business and Technology park and the disused Clara-Banagher railway.

BLO-04 Provide visitor facilities, signs and notice boards and boardwalks around Ferbane Bog.

BLO-05 Provide a linear park along and a pedestrian bridge across the River Brosna to the south east of the town centre taking into account the environmental sensitivities of the site and Inland Fisheries Guidance document, Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment.

BLO-06 Provide a wetland amenity area to the south west of the town as shown in the Ferbane Town Objectives Map taking into account the environmental sensitivities of the site and Inland Fisheries Guidance document, Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment.

BLO-07 Any proposal for development at the lands to the north west of the town as shown in the Ferbane Town Objectives Map must demonstrate that it will not affect the nearby Ferbane Bog SAC, including as a result of changes to drainage patterns.

6. Built Heritage

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

There is a rich variety of buildings in Ferbane included on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) including Gallen Priory (located just outside the development boundary of the town), a number of commercial premises on Main Street, Brosna Bridge, the old Railway Station and a ruined church. Policies and objectives regarding the protection of architectural heritage are contained in Volume 1, Chapter 10 of this Plan.

There is one recorded monument to the south east edge of the town and the associated zone or archaeological potential includes Gallen Priory. This is the site of a Monastery founded by St. Cynoc in the 5th century. Policies and objectives regarding the protection of archaeological heritage are contained in Volume 1, Chapter 10 of this Plan.



Figure 6.1 Ferbane's built heritage



Figure 6.2 Aghaboy Bridge



Figure 6.3 Gallen Priory Early Monastic Site

6.1 Built Heritage Objectives

It is an objective of this Settlement Plan to:

BHO-01 Preserve and protect the structures and items from Ferbane Town listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) identified in Volume 1 of the Offaly County Development Plan and as may be amended during the lifetime of the Plan.

BHO-02 Protect the archaeological integrity of the remains of St. Cynocs monastery and the associated zone of archaeological potential which includes Gallen Priory.

7. Critical Infrastructure

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

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 consolidated and coherent growth of Ferbane is dependent on the satisfactory provision of critical infrastructure associated with:

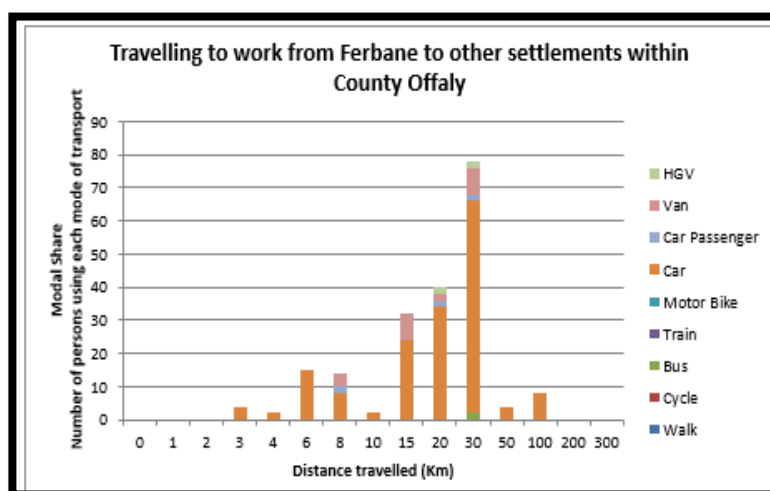
- Movement and Connectivity;

- Water, Wastewater, Drainage and Flooding;
- Energy and communications; and
- Waste and Recycling.

7.1 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 Ferbane 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 Ferbane 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.



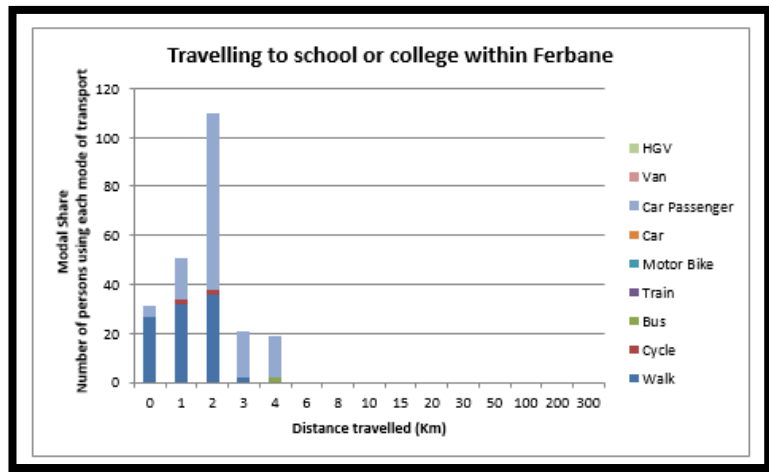
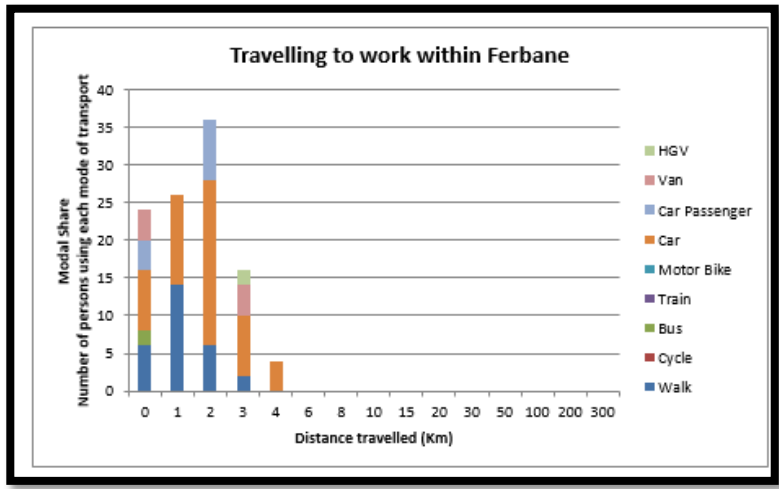
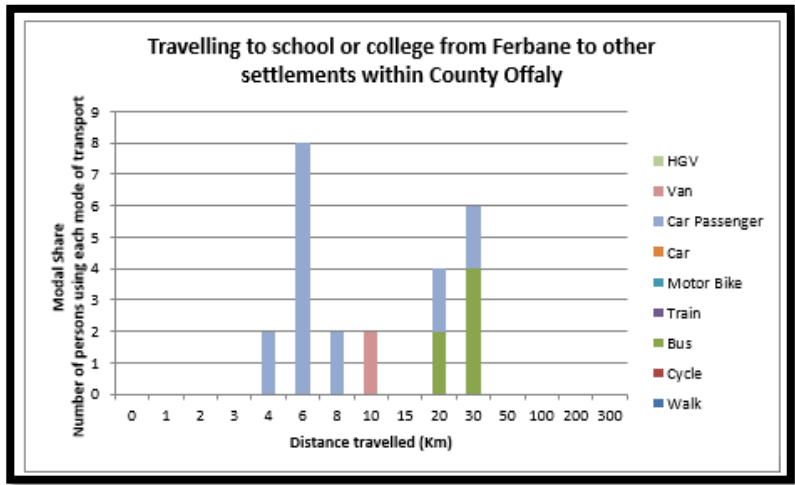


Figure 7.1 Modal Share of trip generation in Ferbane

The graphs in Figure 7.1 indicate the following statistics:

- For journeys to work in which the trip is from Ferbane to another settlement within County Offaly, 94% of trips are less than 30km; 85% of workers travel either by private car or as a passenger in a private car; 1% travel by public transport (bus).
- 66% of those who work in Ferbane travel to work by car or van while 26% walk to work;
- 42% of those travelling to school within Ferbane walk compared to 57% who are car passengers;
- 75% of those attending school or college outside Ferbane travel by car or van compared to 25% who use the bus.

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 7.3 of this Town Plan.

Ferbane is located at the junction of the R436 and N62 roads and lies within easy reach of Athlone and Tullamore. It is important that Ferbane maintains good transportation linkages to surrounding urban and rural areas, which is a key factor in maintaining and attracting future residential and economic populations.

Bus Éireann services the town of Ferbane on the Athlone to Tralee, Regional Service while Local Link Laois-Offaly service connects Ferbane with towns in west Offaly and Athlone.

It is proposed that a line for a north eastern relief route be reserved from the Ferbane Business Park westwards on to the N62. This will allow both the Business Park and town centre to function more effectively. The corridor for this relief road is shown on the Ferbane Settlement Plan Zoning Map.

The approach roads to Ferbane have avoided serious proliferation of signage that can have negative visual impacts. The Council supports the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the roadsides on the approach to the town. While some gateway stone and planted gateway features and signage have been erected, over the lifetime of this Plan consideration may be given to the installation of a consistent scheme of gateway features on the approach roads to the town.



Figure 7.2 Mass Path

The Council will endeavour to make provisions for walkers and cyclists in Ferbane forming an integrated, safe, convenient, direct and comfortable network of routes, which will require:

- Future development in the town to integrate itself with the existing street network of the town enhancing the quality of the pedestrian and cyclist experience along key local destinations in line with Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and accompanying Urban Design Manual (DoEHLG, 2009);
- In the case of retrofitting existing areas, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DECLG, DTTAS, 2013 as updated in 2019) should be followed.

The Mass Walk which runs from Saint Marys Catholic Church alongside Saint Cynocs National School to the north of the town centre relief road at Fairgreen/Old Fire Station is a great example of a successful permeable walking route allowing people in Ferbane, in particular school children walk and cycle safely and conveniently in preference to the private car as a mode of transport. This Plan not only seeks to protect this route but also supports the provision of a 'nature walk' along these route and requires that any development of the Main Street backlands incorporates the Mass Walk in its design.



Figure 7.3 Cycleway in Gallen on southern entrance to town

7.2 Water, Wastewater, Drainage and Flooding

7.2.1 Water Supply

Ferbane’s water supply is taken from the Gageborough River and Ballyboughlin Borehole, storage is at Cor Hill and Aughamore. There is spare capacity available.

7.2.2 Wastewater Treatment

The Ferbane wastewater treatment plant has sufficient spare capacity for the residential and commercial development planned for under this Settlement Plan. Notwithstanding that the amount of land zoned in the Plan allows for growth in the town, normal planning development management practice is that proposals are assessed as regards capacity of services to cater for them and development would not be permitted unless adequate treatment can be assured.

7.2.3 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 Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). The SFRA identified lands which may be at risk of flooding by reference to existing data sources. The SFRA included a detailed Flood Risk Assessment where it was considered that this flood risk could threaten the strategic land-uses envisaged in the Land-Use Plan. This allowed the application of the Justification Test to land-use classification decisions. The SFRA made recommendations in relation to flood risk assessment and / or mitigation measures to accompany developments carried out within the Plan areas and also produced guidance on the management of surface water run-off.

7.2.4 Surface Water

In order to reduce surface water run-off and to minimise the risk of flooding, all developments in Ferbane should make provision for the inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), in accordance with best management practices of same.

7.2.5 Waste and Recycling

There are recycling facilities available for public use located at the public car park at the Ferbane Heritage Centre. The Council supports the expansion of such facilities on appropriate sites. The Birr Recycling Centre is approximately 22km distant while the Derryclure Waste and Recycling facility is available to accept domestic and commercial waste for the wider region.

7.2.6 Energy and Communications

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 Ferbane.

The Bord Gáis gas network does not currently extend to Ferbane town, however should a line be installed for the proposed Lumcloon gas powered station that consideration may be given to extending this line to serve nearby towns so that there would be gas supply connections available to domestic and business users. The Council will encourage the extension of the gas network to Ferbane, if considered feasible.

7.2.7 Broadband

Broadband is readily available in Ferbane. 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.

7.3 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 in the indicative location as shown on the Ferbane Zoning Map taking into account environmental sensitivities as 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. Development of any road proposal shall be subject to requirements of the EIA, Habitats, Water Framework and Floods Directives where relevant and appropriate.

KIO-02 Prepare a Traffic Management Plan for Ferbane that examines the feasibility of a relief road for the town. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relief road, subject to other provisions in the Plan including Section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process in Volume 1 of this Plan.

KIO-03 Provide where new development is proposed, new or additional access/linkages as indicated on the Ferbane Settlement Plan Objectives Map into adequately zoned and serviced land to provide for the opening up of the full development potential of backland, 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.

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 the progressive improvement of the amenity/walking/cycling network, to include existing and enhanced public footpaths along the main streets, and approach roads, including indicative internal distributor roads, providing linkages to existing and new developments, existing and future schools, cycling routes/lanes where possible and amenity corridors linking town centre, residential, community facilities, public amenities, commercial and transport nodes.

KIO-08 Provide adequate, secure and sheltered bicycle parking facilities at appropriate locations at: (i) In the town centre (ii) Employment areas and (iii) Adjacent to heritage, community and amenity destinations.

KIO-09 Upgrade existing footpaths, provide street lighting and facilitate the provision of a 'nature walk' along the Mass Path Looped Walk from Saint Marys Catholic Church alongside Saint Cynocs National School to the north of the town centre relief road.

KIO-10 Ensure footpaths in the town provide adequate access for persons with a disability or who have impaired mobility.

KIO-11 Upgrade the existing footpaths and lighting along the R436 and L-30048-1 between the Ferbane Business and Technology Park and the disused Clara-Banagher railway.

Surface Water and Flooding

KIO-12 Upgrade and extend the surface water collection system for the town.

KIO-13 Ensure that developments in 'Constrained Land Use Zones' comply with Objective LUZO-14 in Chapter 12 Land Use Zoning Objectives contained in Volume 1 of this County Development Plan.

Gas Networks

KIO-14 Encourage the extension of the Gas Network to Ferbane so as to provide gas supply connections to domestic and business users.

KIO-15 Improve leak detection and resolve leakage, where possible, in the water supply network.

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.



Figure 8.1 Ferbane Playground

8.1 Education and Childcare

There is one primary school in the town; Saint Cynocs National School. There is one post-primary school in Ferbane, Gallen Community School, located on the southwest bank of the River Brosna. The location of both of Ferbane's schools are within the town boundary. The requirement for further educational facilities will be monitored throughout the Plan period having regard to the take up on residential development and ongoing consultation with the Department of Education and Skills. In identifying suitably located lands, the Council has had regard to the Development Plans: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DEHLG, 2007), the Department of Education and Skills Technical Guidance Documents for primary schools and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Education and Skills and the County and City Managers Association on acquisition of sites for school purposes (2012).

The existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure within the town and proposed under this Plan, will continue to facilitate children and parents walking and cycling to school in line with the 'Sustainable Mobility' National Strategic Outcome of Project Ireland 2040, The National Planning Framework.

Currently childcare services are primarily delivered by the private sector within Ferbane. There is a variety of private childcare facilities including full day care facilities, sessional services, pre-school, crèche facilities, Montessori and after school facilities (refer to Table 8.1 Community Facilities).

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.

8.2 Healthcare

There are a number of existing healthcare facilities including medical centres, dental practice and a nursing home within 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 Ferbane.

8.3 Community

Ferbane has a vibrant and dynamic community with social 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. The town has a number of community facilities including a Roman Catholic Church, public library, community centre, playground, health centre and a parochial hall. The Council recognises the need for the provision of facilities for young people within the town in particular.

There are a number of sporting clubs, activities and facilities located within Ferbane. The clubs and societies managing and promoting sporting activities in Ferbane have varied individual requirements for playing pitches, club houses, halls, ancillary structures as well as ancillary car parking. Many of the existing sporting activities and facilities are located within the boundary of Ferbane Town in proximity to other services and are facilitated by footpaths, lighting and car parking.

Ferbane has a strong GAA club, with Gaelic football and hurling teams at both adult and underage levels. Gallen FC is the local soccer club. Both clubs have their pitches and facilities within the town boundary.

Offaly County Council will seek to promote and encourage a range of sporting activities in Ferbane that not only contribute to the town but to its wider hinterland also. Offaly County Council will encourage sporting clubs to expand or re-develop existing facilities and to maximise the usage of existing lands given over to the sporting activities associated with those clubs. Should a demonstrable need arise to re-locate clubs and their associated facilities, the Council would encourage their re-location to lands within the town boundary of Ferbane, within walking distance of residential areas and along well lit roads with footpaths.

Table 8.1 Community Facilities

Category of Community Facilities	List of Existing Facilities
Education	Primary School Secondary School
Childcare	1 playschool and 1 community childcare facility
Parks and Playground	1 community playground
Healthcare and Garda Station	Full GP service Autism Unit at Gallen Community School Two pharmacies HSE health centre Dentist Garda Station
Sports Facilities	Including (but not limited to): GAA Club Soccer Club Rugby Club Pitch and Putt Club
Other community facilities and organisations	Scouts and Girl Guides Health and Fitness Centre
Care for older persons	Gallen Priory Nursing Home

8.4 Culture

Ferbane has a vibrant local music and arts scene. The Council supports the further development of these activities over the course of the Plan in partnership with the community, in particular to maximise its proximity to Sculpture in the Parklands and Belmont Mill, and to identify a suitable location within the town to host festivals and markets.



Figure 8.2 Educational and Community facilities in Ferbane

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 Facilitate the provision of schools by zoning suitable lands capable of meeting the demands of the projected population of Ferbane.

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 Ferbane'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 Ferbane.

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

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

CECO-09 Support the Tidy Towns Committee and community groups and associations in reducing litter, while maintaining and improving the overall environment of the town.

CECO-10 Support the refurbishment and upgrade of Ferbane Library in accordance with the Offaly County Library Development Plan.

CECO-11 Support the renovation of the Old Parochial Hall in Ferbane and its redevelopment for community uses.

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 Ferbane.

This Settlement Plan will integrate a series of measures focusing on compact growth, town centre regeneration, sustainable mobility and green infrastructure protection and enhancement that will help in conjunction with the towns strategic location to the west Offaly peatlands, provide a sustainable low carbon and climate resilient future for Ferbane 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 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 and walls and SuDs into developments and provide new Green Infrastructure elements and connections between existing Green Infrastructure as outlined in Section 5 of this Settlement Plan.

9.1 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 Ferbane as a key driver of the transition to a low carbon economy within the west of the county.

CAO-02 Support the effective and efficient use of land, 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 integration of positive climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in all planning applications in Ferbane Town. Promote the use of biodiversity techniques, blue and green walls and roofs and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) and support the design of developments that harvest 'grey' water for re-use and minimise the usage of fresh water supplies.

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 Ferbane.

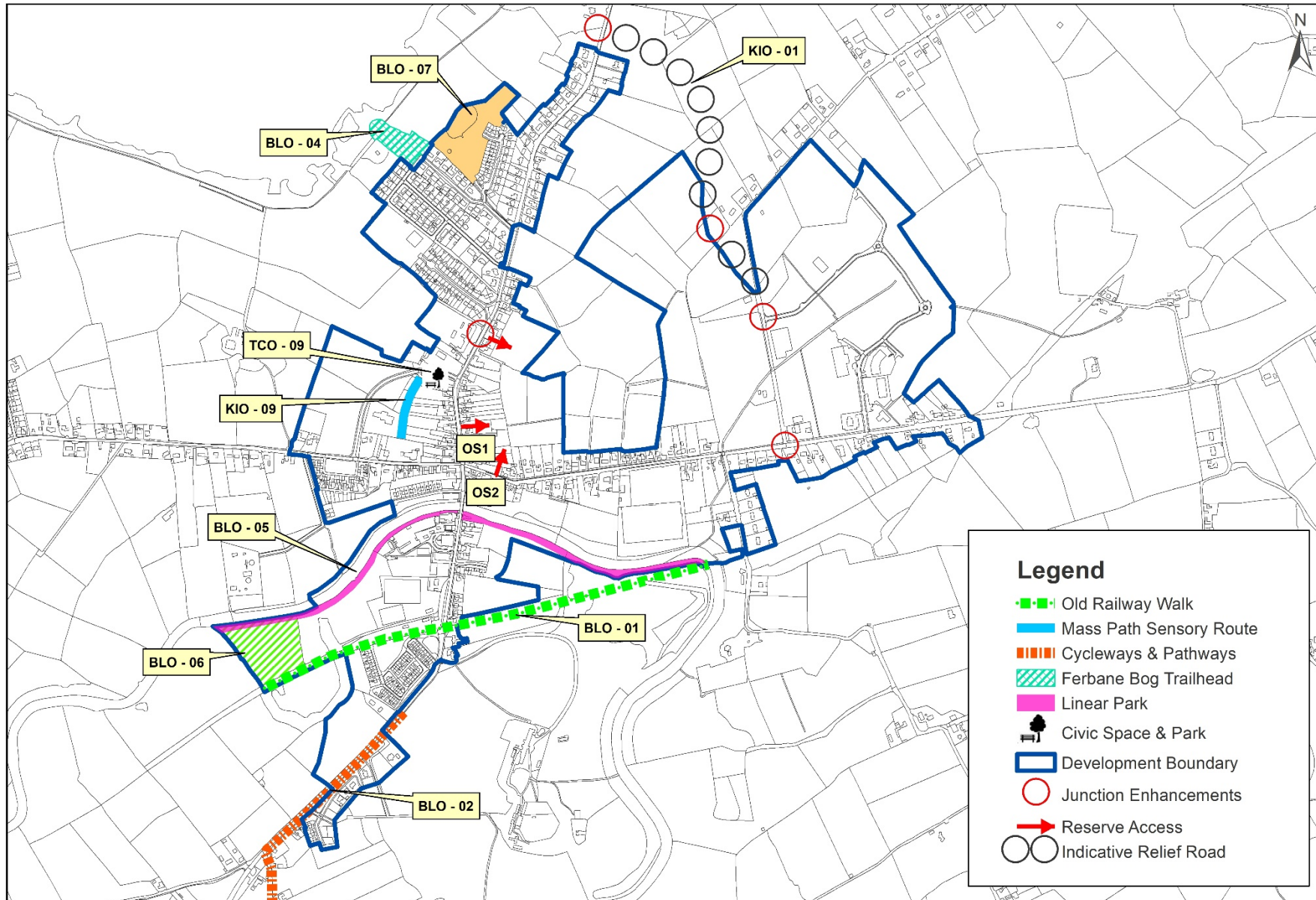
10. Land Use and Zoning

Lands within Ferbane 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 zoning objectives map also includes indicative arrows and circles showing the location of accesses and 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. The arrows do not show the precise line of any roadway but demonstrate that a connection will be required. 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 in Volume 1 of this Plan.

FERBANE SETTLEMENT PLAN - SELECTED OBJECTIVES MAP



FERBANE TOWN PLAN

