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1. Traffic Calming Proposals for primary approach roads into Portarlinton

Introduction

PBA SEC (Sustainable Energy Community) was set up in late 2020 as a sub-group of the Portarlinton Business Association and the group has a strong focus on sustainable transport. In that regard, the SEC group and its members have made several submissions to Laois and Offaly County Councils regarding improved cycling and walking infrastructure in Portarlinton and for a detailed mobility strategy to be developed for the town.

On a related matter, we are now submitting proposals to LCC in relation to traffic calming measures which we hope will;

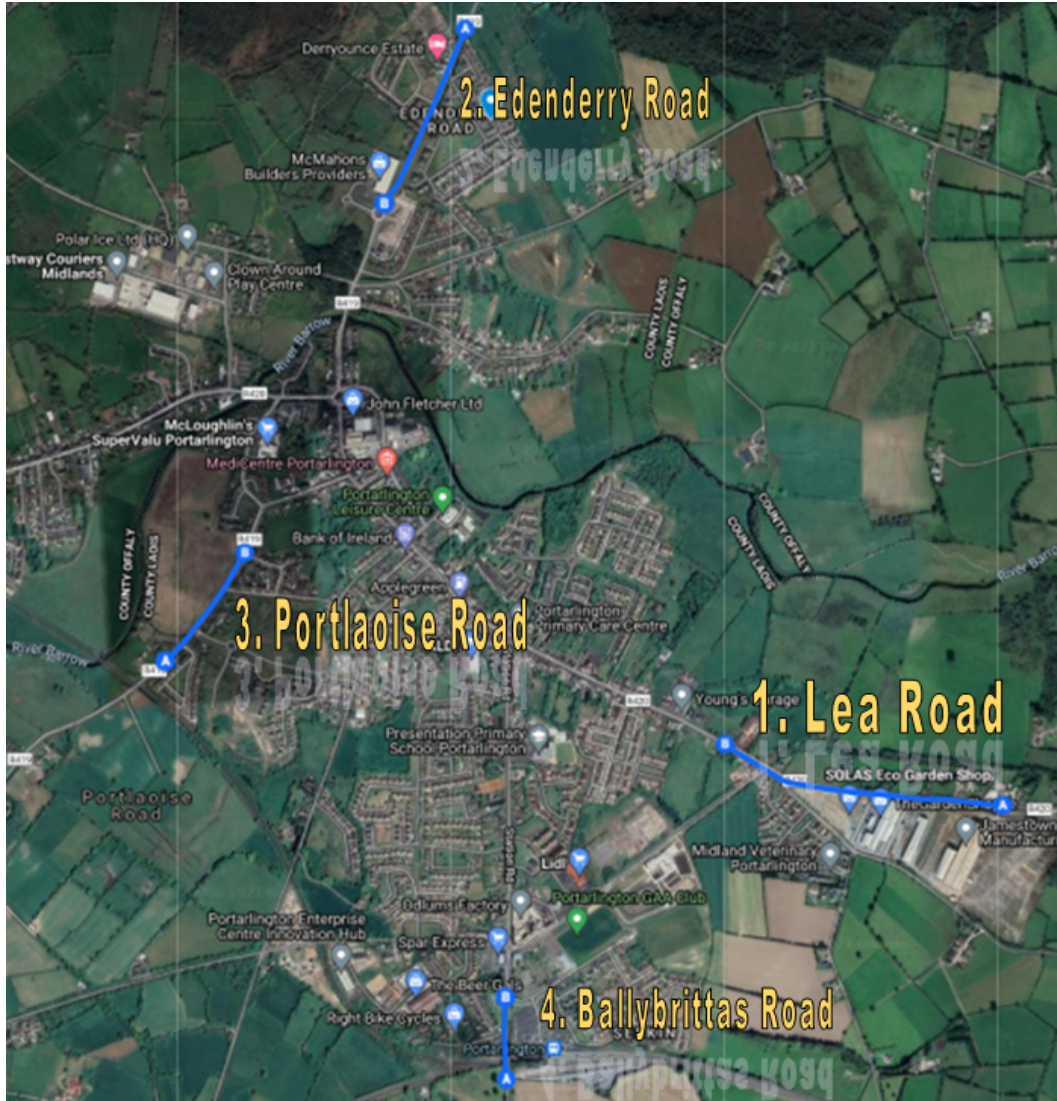
- Make the main approach roads to Portarlinton safer for all road users
- Improve quality of life for residents living on these approach roads where vehicle speeds can be excessive
- Help to alleviate a significant problem which afflicts Portarlinton – that it is often a thoroughfare for traffic with scant regard for more sustainable modes of transport
- Improve ‘place-making’ and sense of community within Portarlinton where all roads users can feel safer
- Encourage and incentive more sustainable transport options within the town (especially if the opportunity is availed of to utilise improvements in walking and cycling infrastructure as a traffic calming and demand management tool)

Rationale/Context for Proposed Measures

The roads in Portarlington are dominated by motor vehicles (including a large volume of HGV's). There is very poor infrastructure for cyclists and improvements in active travel are significantly hindered by heavy traffic volumes travelling often at excessive speeds. This has a significant negative impact on road safety as well as on the public realm in general. The group calls on Laois County Council to conduct a town-wide **Mobility Strategy** to assess what measures can be taken to alleviate heavy traffic volumes, make roads safer for all road users, incentivise more active travel and improve the public realm.

Roads Assessed

The measures set out below relate to 4 of the towns' primary approach roads (i.e. local collector roads) – Lea Road (R420), Portlaoise Road (R419), Edenderry Road (R419) and Ballybrittas (Portlaoise) Road. To inform the measures proposed, the group has conducted detailed assessments of each approach road, spoken to locals to gain a greater insight into issues/concerns and we have reviewed the latest version of the Traffic Management Guidelines (TMG). Please see below map of roads assessed.



Objectives

The main objectives of this submission are as follows;

- that LCC engineer(s) meet with the group to discuss the proposed measures and what measures are feasible
- that LCC conducts a detailed review of possible traffic calming measures on these roads (taking due consideration of proposals set out within this document)
- that LCC consults with the group about measures planned to be implemented
- the group would like to establish an ongoing dialogue with the Council about traffic calming and related areas of preparing a mobility strategy for Portlaoise as well as improved walking & cycling infrastructure for the town.

1. Lea Road to Bracklone Street

This is the approach road from Monasterevin/Dublin and is the busiest of the approach roads assessed. It is a straight and wide stretch of road from the junction of the Bog road to Bracklone street. Cars, vans and articulated lorries can be regularly seen travelling at speeds well in excess of the speed limits in both directions.



There is little incentive for motorists to keep within speed limits on this road given the limited calming measures currently in place. Inbound when vehicles pass the 60km sign at the town outskirts as well as outbound traffic exiting at the Bracklone turn feel that they can 'put the boot down' when they see a straight stretch in front of them.



Inbound as you approach the town from Monasterevin and reach the 60km Gateway limit (at Portarlinton Tyres) there are a number of industrial entrances on the left hand side - Portarlinton Tyres, Jamestown Engineering - with a high volume of traffic using the entrance and the new and highly popular Solas garden centre along with its industrial park. On the right hand side there are eight residential properties and the Co. Council waste/recycling facility. Speeds in excess of 100kmh are a regular occurrence.

Two clubs - Portarlinton Rugby and Arlington Soccer - have their facilities on the Lea Road and children in particular are at risk when cycling or sometimes walking out to the pitches. Cyclists are particularly vulnerable due to their proximity to articulated trucks and wind shear.

We suggest to the Council that they seriously consider measures to upgrade this road and make it safe for all road users.

Existing traffic calming measures

See below image which contains a sample of existing, inadequate, traffic calming measures.



Proposed Traffic Calming Measures

Road Design Improvements

This is a general point re. road design improvements which are required to reduce speed within the present limits. Also, see below re. reducing carriage widths via extended/improved footpaths and cycle lanes.

Traffic Lights / Roundabout at Canal Road Junction

We propose a major overhaul of the Lea Road / Canal Road Junction. This is a very busy junction and queues are often seen at school pickup/drop off times (re. St Patricks Boys school on Canal Road). It is a very dangerous junction for pedestrians and cyclists as there is no pedestrian crossing currently installed. Traffic lights or a roundabout as well as a (town-side) pedestrian crossing should be installed at this junction.





Pedestrian Crossing at SOLAS

A town-side pedestrian crossing should be installed at the entrance to SOLAS Eco Garden Centre. This centre is becoming increasingly popular with locals and people in the wider region. It can be very dangerous to attempt to walk to this centre given that there is one footpath and also given the level and speed of traffic on this road and the lack of a pedestrian crossing.



Gateway at Killenard Junction

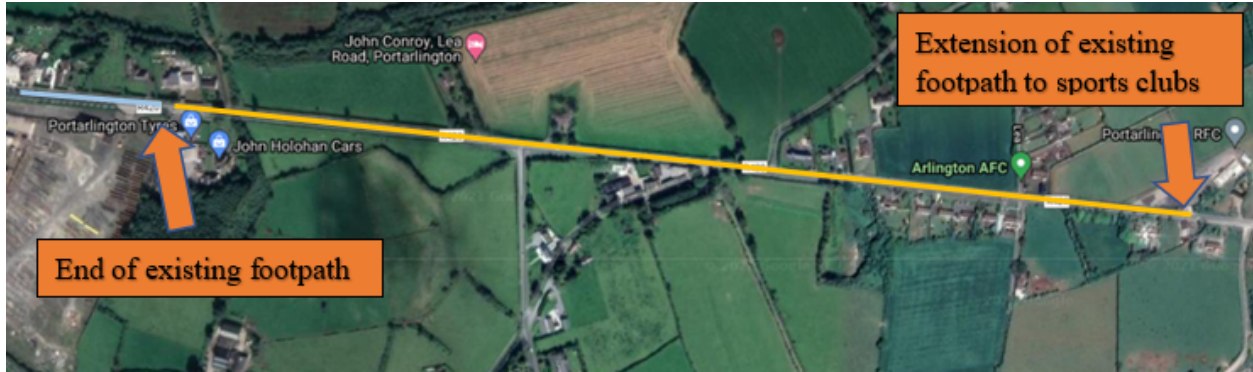
Erect signage and a gateway as you approach the town just after the Killenard cross – speed reduction from 80kmh to 60kkm at this point.

Reductions in Speed Limit

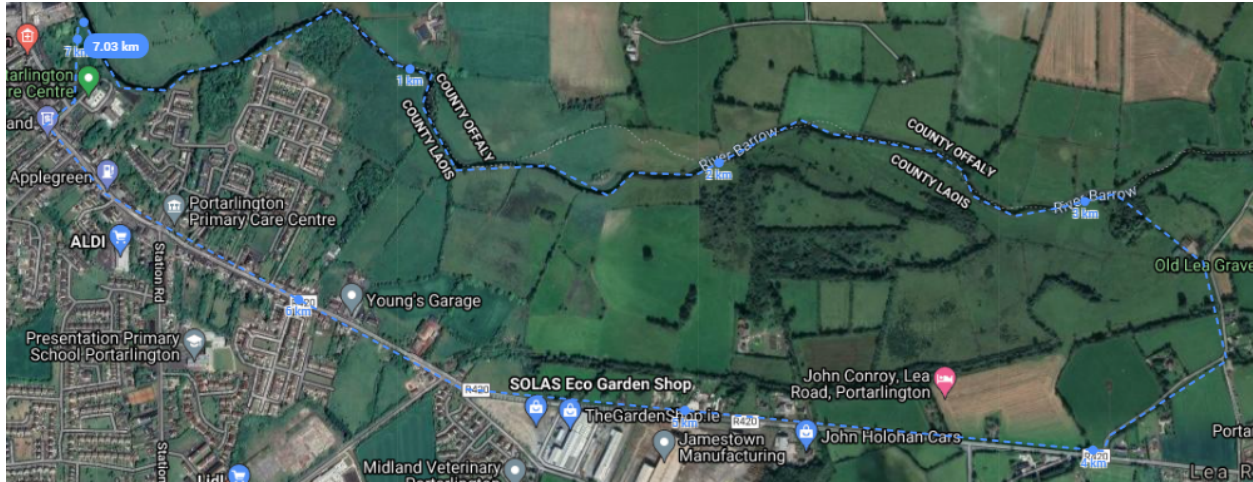
- Implement a 60kmh speed limit from new Gateway at Killenard junction
- Reduce the speed limit from 60kmh to 50kmh at Portarlinton Tyres Gateway

Upgrade and Extension of Existing Footpath

There is ample road space to introduce improved active travel infrastructure which would also calm traffic by reducing large carriage widths on this road. We suggest an upgrade to the current footpath and extension to the Rugby club.



This would have the added benefit of creating a 7km looped walk incorporating the planned extension of Riverside Walk from Portarlington People’s Park to Lea Castle.



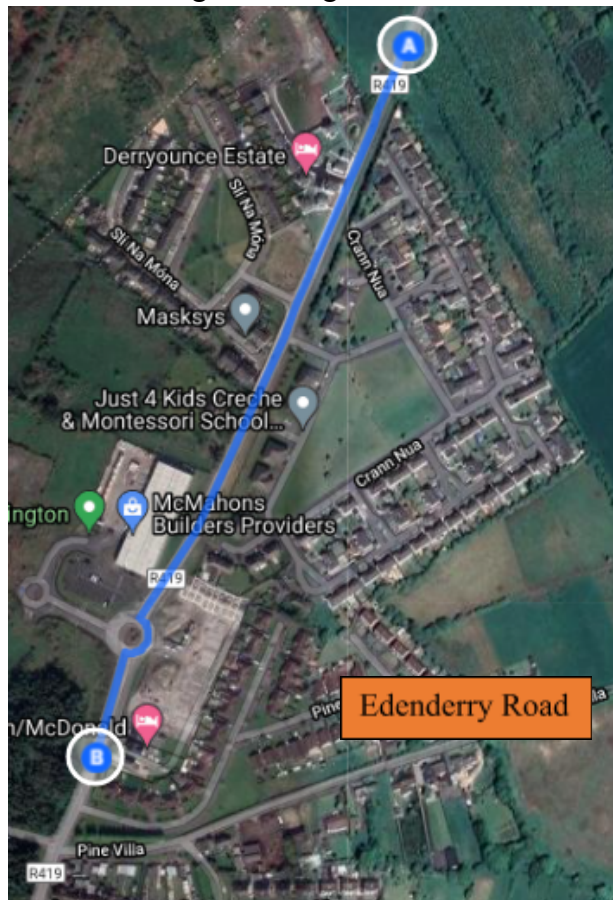
Installation of Cycle Lanes

Installation of cycle lanes out to the Rugby club would promote more sustainable transport and additionally would support the calming of traffic along this road by reducing excess carriage widths. This could be done in tandem with extensions/improvements to footpaths.

2. Edenderry Road (R419)

The approach road from Edenderry - once it reaches Portarlinton town boundaries - enters a residential area with 2 large estates (Crann Nua and Sli Na Mona) on either side. Therefore, it is especially important on this road to encourage slower speeds.

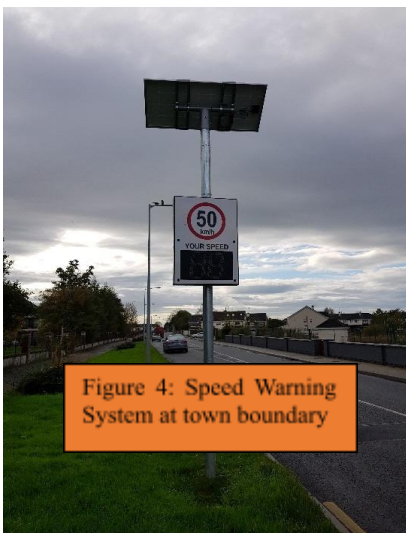
See below image showing the reference area for these traffic calming proposals.



As can be seen in the below image, there are very few traffic calming measures in place and there is no incentive for motorists to slow down as they approach these estates and the town centre.

As a result, there have been many reports from residents of excessive speeds on this road.

Existing traffic calming measures



- 50kmh speed limit
- Speed warning system powered by solar panels – Crann Nua side as you approach Portarlinton
 - Roundabout at McMahons Builders Providers
- Ghost islands at junctions for Crann Nua and Sli Na Mona estates

Proposed Traffic Calming Measures

Gateway



Gateways provide a clear signal to motorists to slow down as they are

entering a built up area – e.g. sample Gateway from Stradbally (signs on either side of the road, accompanied by a central median which reduces carriage width and enforces slower speeds)

Pedestrian Crossing/Speed Table at estates

There is a large offset junction at the 2 large estates on this road (Crann Nua and Sli na Mona). There is no safe way for residents to cross between these estates. There are amenities in Crann Nua estate (such as Just4Kids creche) which would regularly be used by residents in Sli Na Mona estate. Therefore, a pedestrian crossing is clearly needed at this junction.



This junction may also benefit from a speed table to calm traffic and ensure pedestrians are given priority.



Cycle Lanes from Estates

There has been a somewhat haphazard attempt at installing cycle lanes on this road from the estates of Sli Na Mona and Crann Nua which primarily consist of painted lanes on existing wide footpaths and cannot be construed as planned segregated cycle lanes.



There is ample space for safe segregated cycle lanes on this road and such active travel infrastructure would help to provide alternatives to the use of motor vehicles and serve as an effective demand management measure.

Furthermore, there is extensive development of new housing on this road adjacent to McMahon Builders Providers which further strengthens the need for improved active travel infrastructure. Segregated cycle lanes could be installed for the length of this road from the entrance to Crann Nua and all the way to the Spa Bridge. Funding has been approved for a pedestrian bridge here connecting the Riverside walk with Derrycastle Lakes & Trails trailhead. This bridge should also cater for cyclists.



Proposed cycle lanes connecting Crann Nua, Sli Na Mona estates (as well as new housing developments) with Market Square.

Planting on Road Verge



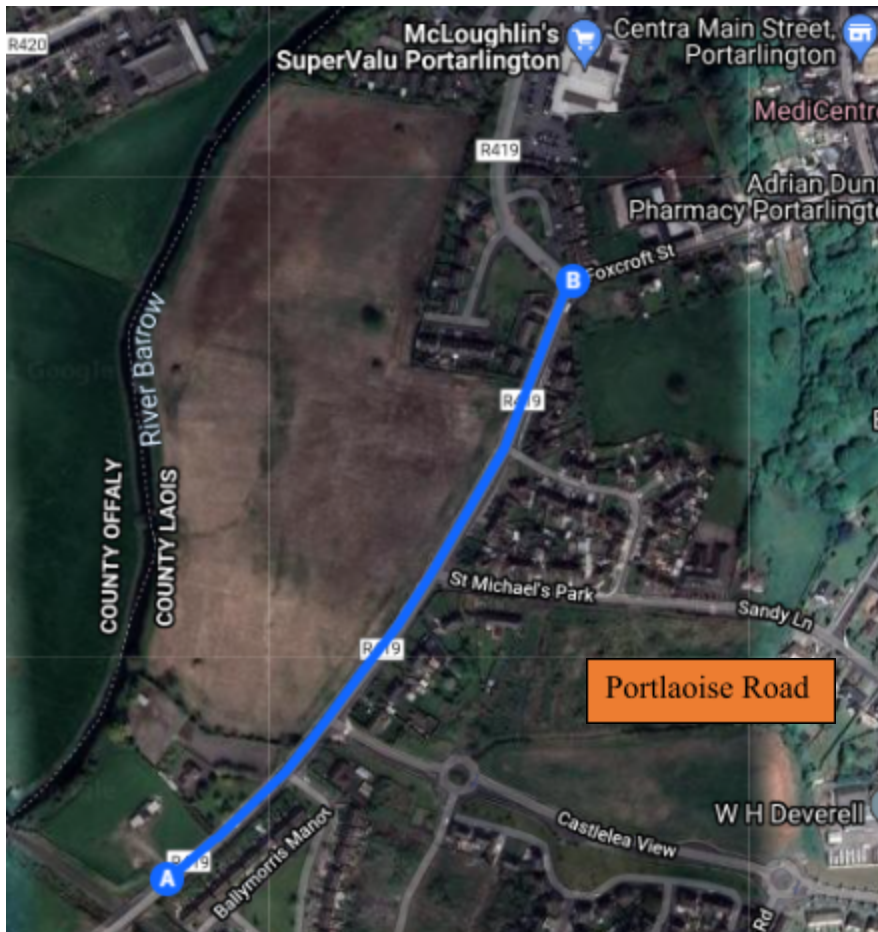
This image shows a small section of a very large green area on the Crann Nua side of this road. There has been some planting done in this area. However, there is an opportunity (perhaps for Tidy Towns in conjunction with LCC) to carry out significant additional planting.

This would improve the overall aesthetics of the area and also serve to calm traffic by making it clear that this is a residential/amenity area and that excessive speeds are not appropriate.

3. Portlaoise Road - R419

This is a busy road connecting to the nearby county town of Portlaoise. This road is well known locally for excessive speeds and has been the scene of a fatal and tragic accident in recent years.

See below image showing the reference area for these traffic calming proposals from the town boundaries to Foxcroft St junction.



Existing traffic calming measures

See below images showing examples of current traffic calming measures on this road.



50kmh speed limit at Railway Bridge inbound



Speed warning system after Railway bridge

Proposed Traffic Calming Measures

Reductions in Speed Limit

A 50kmh speed limit inbound (and 80kmh limit outbound) begins just before the Railway bridge. This speed limit should be brought back c. 200m where c. 5 residential houses are located on this road. This would provide a much safer environment for these residents compared to living with cars travelling at 80kmh+ outside their houses.



Should cycle lanes be installed after the Railway bridge inbound, then it may be appropriate to reduce the speed limit on this section of road to 30kmh.

Installation of Cycle Lanes

Once past the Railway bridge, the road widens and there is ample space for the provision of cycle lanes (these lanes should be raised above road level to footpath level).



Pedestrian Crossing at Sandy Lane Junction

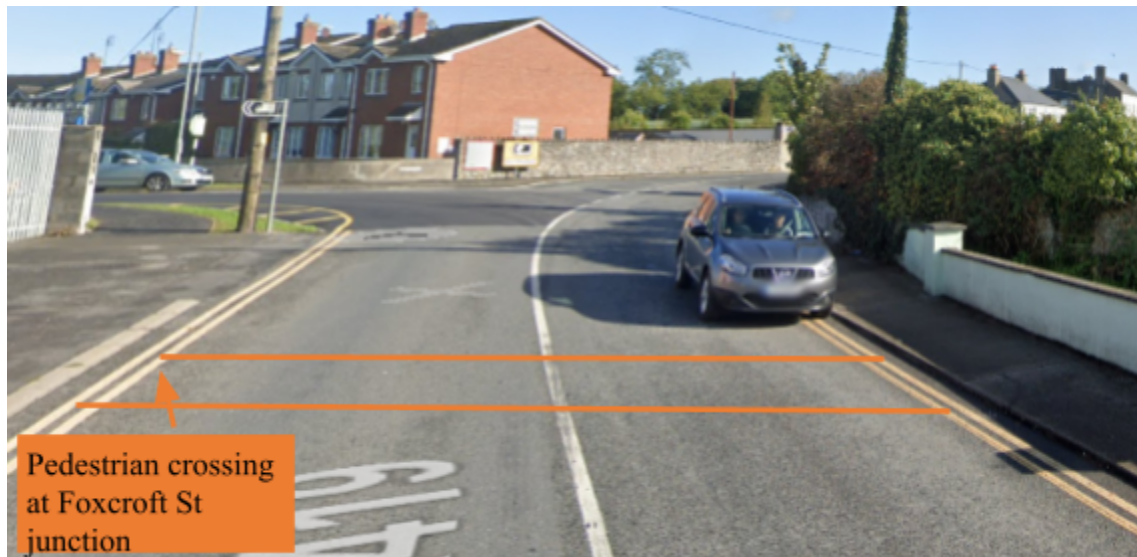
This is a busy junction entering a large residential area of St Michaels Park as well as Sandy Lane primary school. A pedestrian crossing should be installed on the town side of this junction to improve pedestrian access to and from the town centre.

LCC should also assess the possibility of adding a right turn box for cars turning right onto Sandy Lane.



Pedestrian Crossing at Foxcroft Street Junction

A further pedestrian crossings should be installed at the Junction for Foxcroft St as the R419 veers left inbound towards the town centre. This would help reduce the speed of vehicles and make it possible for both residents and school children to cross safely.



4. Ballybrittas Road

This is the road approaching Portarlinton train station/Station Road from Ballybrittas. There is a speed limit of 80kmh until the Railway station. At this point, this is already a heavily populated residential/amenity area within the town boundaries.

This is a very busy area as its located close to 2 large primary schools, residential areas and also the Railway station. There is a high volume of pedestrian traffic at this point accessing Corrig Wood and c. 20 houses on this road (outbound) and the town centre, local estates and the Railway Station (inbound).

See below image showing the reference area for these traffic calming proposals from the town boundaries to the Railway Bar on Station Road.



Existing traffic calming measures

See below image showing example of – very limited - current traffic calming measures on this road.



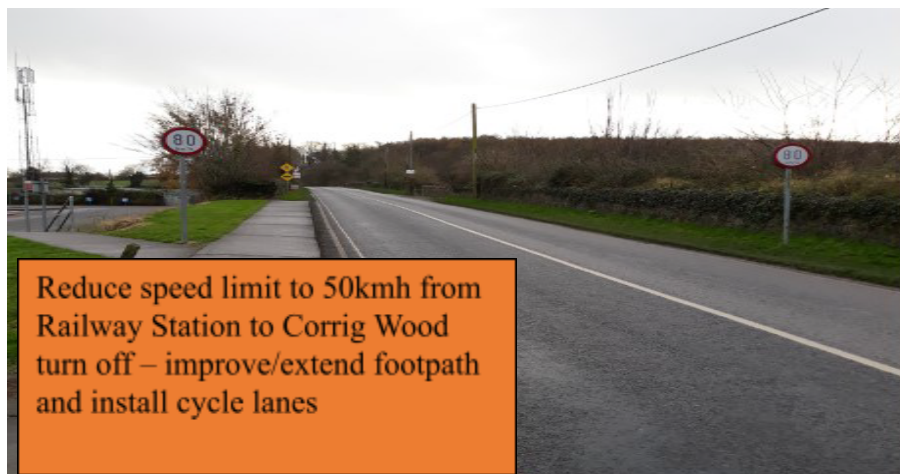
Proposed Traffic Calming Measures

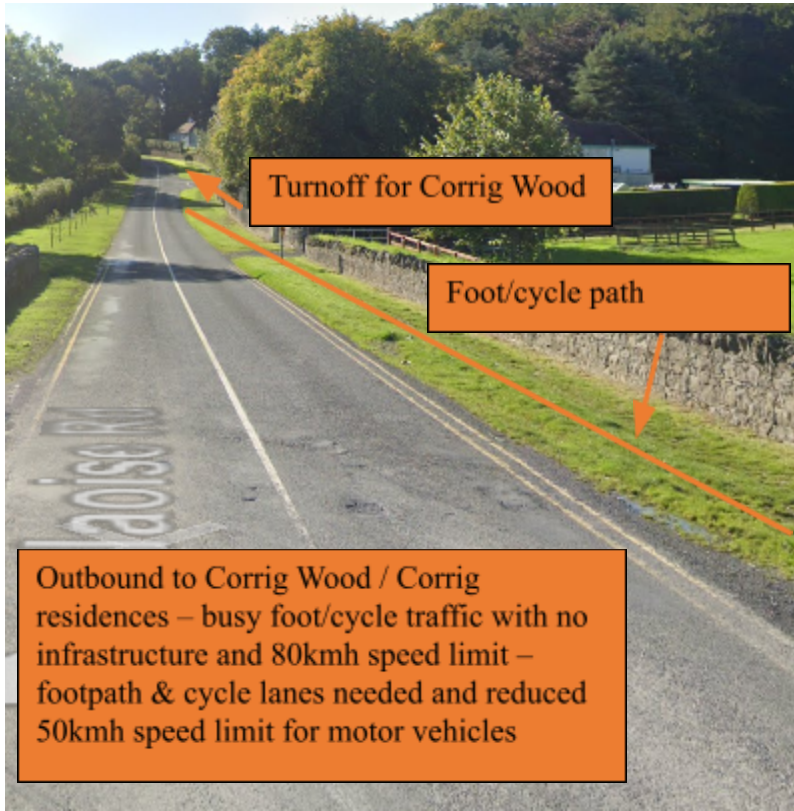
Reductions in Speed Limit / Improve Walking & Cycling Access

The amenity of Corrig Wood is located in an 80kmh zone and this is a popular recreational area used by many locals including schools which regularly bring children on walks to this woods.

The speed needs to be reduced in this area and improved/extended footpaths and cycle lanes installed. Speed limits should be reduced to 50kmh inbound from the turn-off to Corrig Wood. It should be investigated by the Council whether speeds can be reduced below 80kmh further back on this road where c. 20 residential houses are located.

There is also a need for improved public lighting in the area as there is a lot of pedestrian traffic and cyclists sharing the road.





Turnoff for Corrig Wood

Foot/cycle path

Outbound to Corrig Wood / Corrig residences – busy foot/cycle traffic with no infrastructure and 80kmh speed limit – footpath & cycle lanes needed and reduced 50kmh speed limit for motor vehicles