

# Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030

September 2021



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PHOTO: Portarlington Station, 1976



**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

The Portarlington Regeneration Strategy is a non-statutory planning document, prepared on behalf of Laois County Council to provide a framework for the future development of Portarlington Town Centre, with a focus on the historical Market House and its immediate surroundings. With Laois County Council having secured a lease on the Market House, from the Ryan family, the renovation of this important building is considered the catalyst for the urban regeneration of Portarlington and its surrounding area. The strategy does not seek to change land use zoning designation, rather it seeks to promote Portarlington through the re-use of the Market House and to maximise the potential that the Town has to offer for the local community.

A multi-disciplinary approach has been taken to ensure that a holistic vision is created with innovative ideas for the future development of the study area. For the purpose of this Strategy, the study area refers to the main routes leading to the 300-year-old Market House and its historic Square setting. The boundaries of the study area, as illustrated in Figure 1, are defined by the River Barrow; to the north at Spa Bridge, to the east along the outer limits of the Town Centre, and to the west at Patrick Street.



Figure 1. Aerial View of the Study Area

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Portarlington Town was established during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and named after its founder Sir Henry Bennet, Lord Arlington. The zone of archaeological potential for the historic town of Portarlington (LA005-031) extends through the northern half of the study area.<sup>[1]</sup> The Portarlington Regeneration Strategy is a heritage-led regeneration strategy which recognises the Market House as the heritage asset of Portarlington's historical centre catalysing the enhancement of its wider area. This is to be achieved by stimulating physical, environmental, economic, and community-related aspects of the town centre.

The main objective of the project is “to create a more viable and visually attractive Town Centre in Portarlington for residents, visitors and workers through the appropriate rehabilitation of the Market House and other buildings and improvements to connectivity, public realm and amenities”. Underpinning this objective is the desire to ultimately regenerate the town centre by tackling critical issues such as poor pedestrian environment, dereliction and dysfunctional public spaces. This overall vision also includes increasing the attractiveness of the area to encourage investment.

This report has been prepared by Downey Planning & Architecture, in collaboration with MESH Architects, Wilson Architecture, TOBIN Consulting Engineers, and Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. on behalf of Laois County Council (LCC). The key requirements of the project are to evaluate the potential to:

- Develop a vision for Portarlington town centre and public realm, with a focus on the historic Market Square, Main Street, Spa Street, and French Church Street, and is further developed by a set of proposals for public spaces, public buildings, parks and walkways.
- Develop proposals to connect the historic core with adjacent amenities, including People's Park, River Barrow, Leisure and Community Centres, and play areas, and with the community amenity at Derrycastle Bog by identifying priority pedestrian and cycle linkages.
- Identify key opportunity sites for enhancement and connection, where new residential or mixed-use development could promote opportunities for the Town Centre to help create more compact growth within the study area and address the current vacancy issues within the Town.
- Traffic management of the town's historical centre aiming at prioritising the pedestrians, including speed reduction, space sharing and traffic calming.
- Improve the public realm to increase biodiversity and promote safe, enjoyable, and environmentally friendly modes of transport.

<sup>[1]</sup> This encompasses the northern half of the area covered by the strategy. Based on the historical and cartographic analysis, the southern half of the area includes further possible 17th century defensive features and should be treated similarly from an archaeological viewpoint as having significant archaeological potential.

PHOTO: St. Michael's Church, n.d.



**PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

## PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The following provides an overview of the relevant planning policy, at three levels; this includes, National Planning Framework, National Adaptation Framework, Climate Action Plan, and All-Ireland Pollinator Plan at national level, Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly at regional level, and Laois County Development Plan, Offaly Development Plan, and the Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan at local level. The scope of the review was to cover “regeneration” and “heritage” as the key concepts alongside “ecological” elements and “climate change” to achieve a holistic insight to the policy context.

### Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework 2018

As outlined in the National Planning Framework (NPF), market towns and villages sit alongside more modern, but equally distinctive settlements that knit modern architecture with the existing historic urban heritage.

**National Strategic Outcome 7** of the NPF focuses on “Enhanced Amenities and Heritage”, describing attractive places as ‘*a combination of factors, including vitality and diversity of uses, ease of access to amenities and services supported by integrated transport systems and green modes of movement such as pedestrian and cycling facilities. Appealing places are also defined by their character, heritage and sense of community. This includes attractive buildings and street layouts, civic spaces and parks and regeneration of older areas and making places feel safe through active use and design.*

According to **National Policy Objective 18a**: ‘*Support the proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural towns that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.*

### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

As set out in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), and under the key principle of Healthy Placemaking, “Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration” is a regional strategic outcome providing for ‘*better use of under-used land and buildings within the existing built-up urban footprint and to drive the delivery of quality housing and employment choice for the Region’s citizens.*

According to the **Regional Policy Objective RPO 9.27**: ‘*EMRA will support local authorities to work with local communities to promote historic towns in the Region in the practice of heritage led regeneration, to promote the sensitive and adaptive reuse of historic building stock and industrial structures where appropriate, and to strengthen their capability to draw down European and national funding.*

### National Adaptation Framework: Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland

As outlined in “Built Environment and Spatial Planning” section, the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) recognises that, ‘*climate change considerations need to be considered as a matter of course in planning-related decision-making processes and that the deepening of adaptation considerations in the planning and building standards processes is considered the most appropriate way of increasing the resilience of the built environment.*

At a local level, and as part of the considerations for adaptation, the Plan notes how land use policies may also facilitate the conversion or maintenance of land at risk of flooding to less vulnerable uses (e.g., parks, gardens and open spaces for natural habitats, etc.). Local authorities should consider policies to acquire flood prone lands for suitable, less vulnerable land uses, within their overall increased active land management role. This is of particular importance given the proximity of the study area to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Special Area of Conservation).



The management and adaptation of the historic built environment to the effects of climate change is also essential. Historic buildings have already experienced and survived the effects of climatic change, in many cases over several centuries, leaving a building stock of proven resilience, such as the Market House.

### Climate Action Plan 2019

The Climate Action Plan 2019 sets out an ambitious course of action over the coming years to address this issue. The Plan clearly identifies the nature and scale of the challenge and recognises that Ireland must significantly step up its commitments to tackle climate disruption. Accordingly, under **Action 15** introduced by the Climate Action Plan to “implement National Planning Framework” it is necessary to ‘*Continue to deliver the urban (DHPLG) and rural (DRCD) regeneration and development funds on a competitive bid basis, to include specific evaluation criteria in relation to potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

### All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a shared plan of action which is to bring about a landscape where pollinators can flourish over 2021-2025. To achieve this, the Plan sets out six objectives; (1) Making farmland pollinator friendly, (2) Making public land pollinator friendly, (3) Making private land pollinator friendly, (4) All-Ireland Honeybee Strategy, (5) Conserving rare pollinators, and (6) Strategic coordination of the Plan.

The Plan also provides various booklets for different sectors, i.e., communities, businesses, schools, sport clubs, gardens, etc., to actively engage with the implementation of these objectives.

## Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

Portarlington is a “Key Service Town” located on the Laois/Offaly County border, with the majority of the urban area located in County Laois. According to Census StatBank, the settlement of Portarlington had a population of 8,368 in April 2016, a change of 580 persons or 7.4% from 2011 figures. It is noted that the population of Portarlington South (Co. Laois) is recorded 7,138 individuals for 2016 which is a 9% increase compared to 2011.<sup>[1]</sup>

Portarlington offers an attractive opportunity to facilitate further enterprise and employment given the existence of substantial serviced industrial land banks and the benefit of frequent train services travelling north, south, east and west. It is the policy of the Council to:

- “CS25: Seek the improvement of pedestrian and cycle linkages between Portarlington Railway Station and (i) Market Square/Main Street, (ii) Portarlington Leisure and Community Centre, (iii) Colaiste losagain;
- “CUL7: Ensure that all arts and cultural facilities in the ownership and management of the Council are accessible to the wider community and to promote the role of these centres as focal points for the community”.
- “TM 9: Improve the visual appearance of towns and villages, protect their character and maximise their tourism potential by the continuance of environmental and public realm programmes, design control, development initiatives and the removal/improving of dereliction where necessary”

## Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020

Portarlington is recognised as an important driver for the local economies, it has an ability to strengthen the settlement pattern across the county and also provide support to its immediate surrounding hinterland. As outlined in the Development Plan, ‘It is anticipated that the Key Service Towns will reinforce their role as key centres within the settlement hierarchy through the provision of employment opportunities, business, industry, education, tourism and infrastructure’. It is the policy of the Council to:

- “SSP-09: Ensure that population growth of Key Service Towns, Birr, Edenderry and Portarlington is appropriate in scale within their identified role in the settlement hierarchy and to apply appropriate management measures in ensuring that such growth and/or pace of growth is appropriate, sustainable and in compliance with the Core Strategy.”

In terms of retail and town centre development, the Development Plan aims to ‘Supports the roles identified for Birr, Edenderry and Portarlington by encouraging retail floorspace provision commensurate with their anticipated growth’.

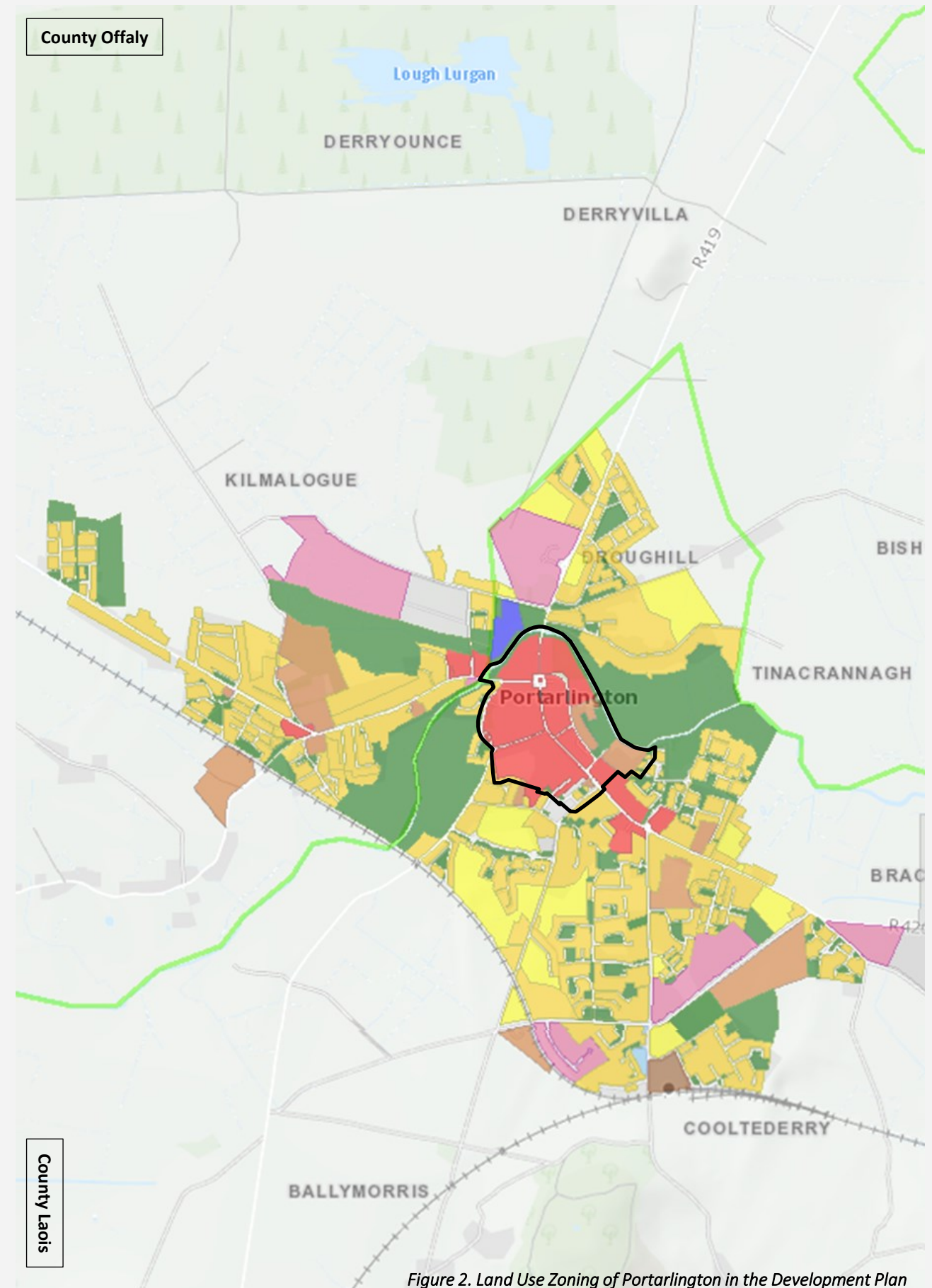


Figure 2. Land Use Zoning of Portarlington in the Development Plan

<sup>[1]</sup> The population stats have been updated as per Census 2016.

# Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan 2018-2024 (Laois County Council & Offaly County Council)

As set out in the vision statement of the LAP, both county councils are seeking: *“To develop Portarlington as a sustainable low carbon settlement centred on a vibrant town centre, utilising the location strengths to attract employment and promote the unique settlement as an attractive town in which to work, live and play, while ensuring the protection of the unique built and natural heritage and managing flood risk”.*

In this regard, it is an Objective of both Laois and Offaly County Council to:

*“TCR O1: Improve the quality, vitality and vibrancy of the town centre through the implementation of public realm improvements.*

*TCR O2: Promote the town centre as a priority location for commercial, civic, social and cultural development and sustainable consolidation.*

*TCR O3: Promote the consolidation of the town centre through the use of brownfield, infill and backland sites without compromising streetscapes.*

*TCR O4: Encourage and facilitate the appropriate reuse and regeneration of derelict, disused and vacant sites and prominent buildings including the Market House, the old cinema and Arlington House.*

*TCR O5: Facilitate the redevelopment of strategic opportunity sites within the town centre for a mixture of uses that will contribute to vitality of the central core area.*

*TCR O7: Ensure the type, quantum and location of future retail floor space is consistent with the requirements and recommendations of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020, relevant regional policy frameworks and national planning guidelines.*

*TCR O8: Guide retail development, in accordance with the sequential approach to sustain and strengthen the town centre.”*

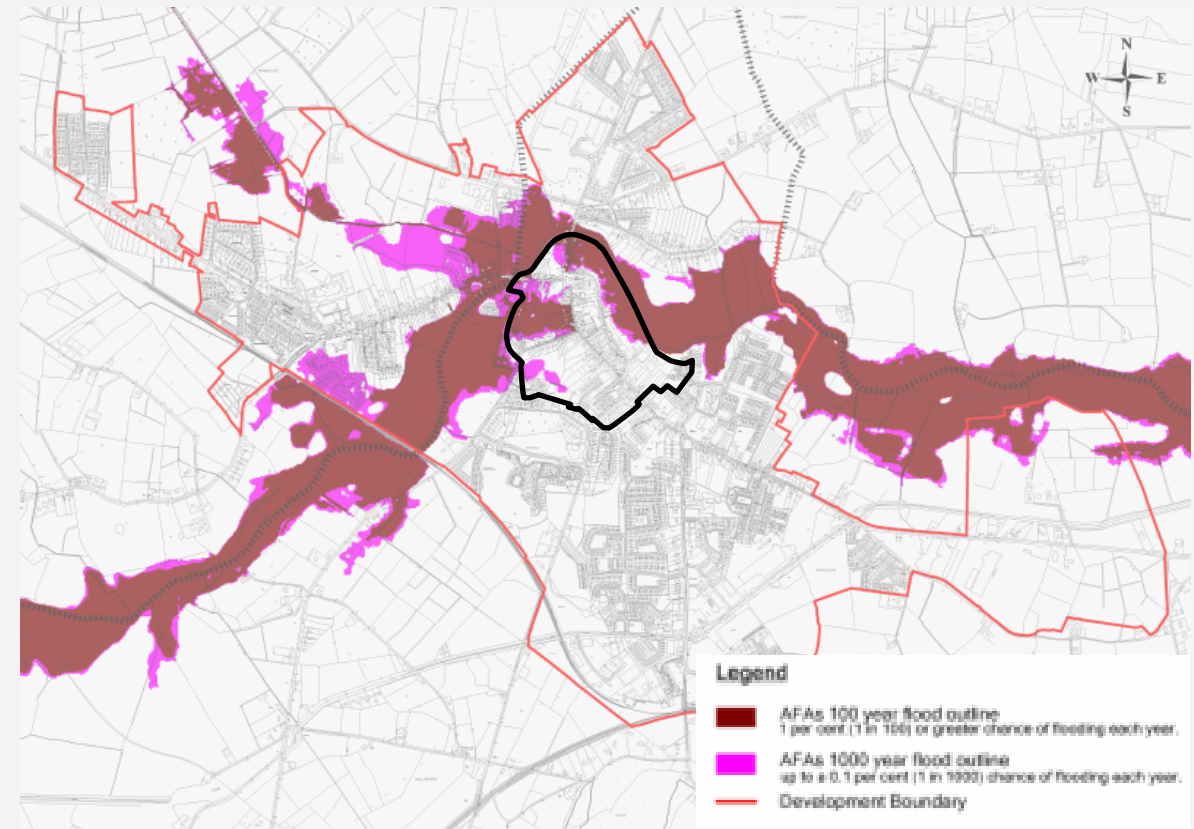


Figure 4. Portarlington within the Flood Plains

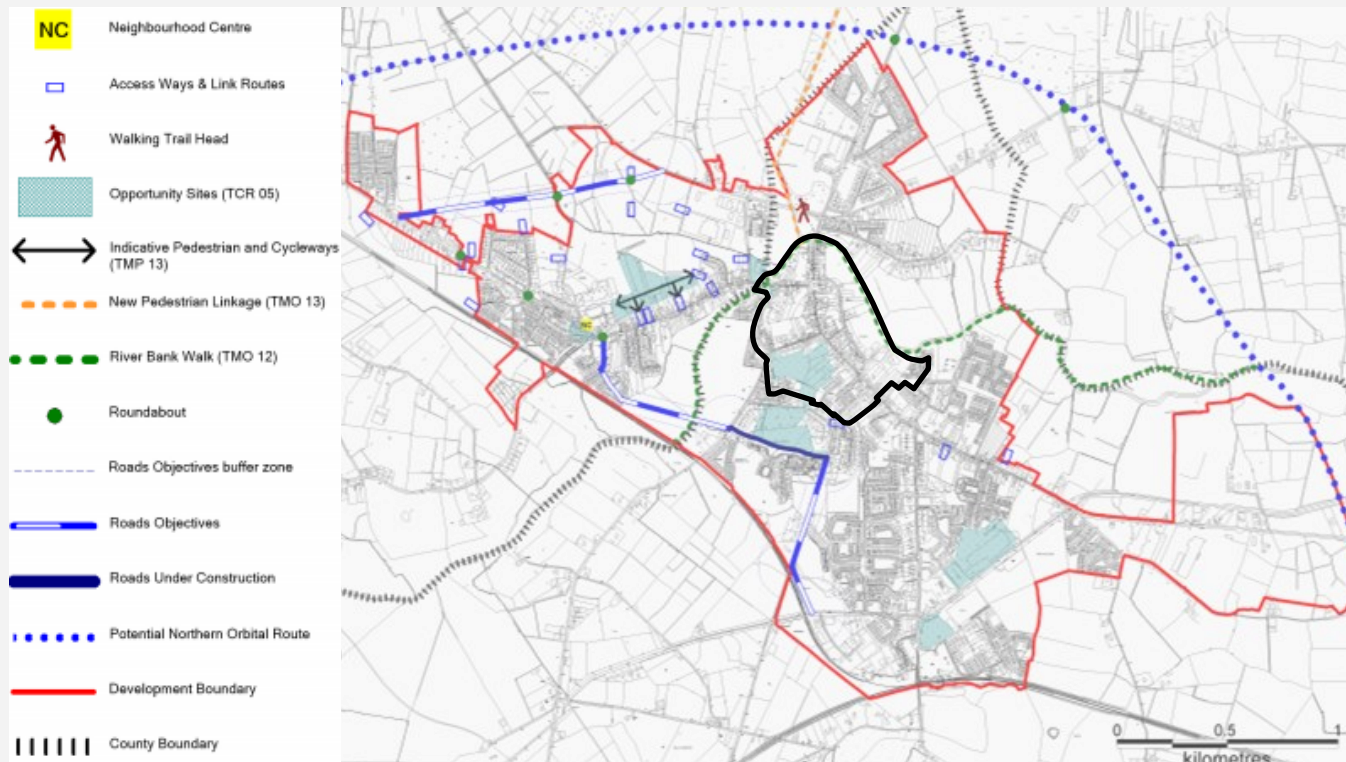


Figure 3. Portarlington Objective Map Extracted from the Local Area Plan

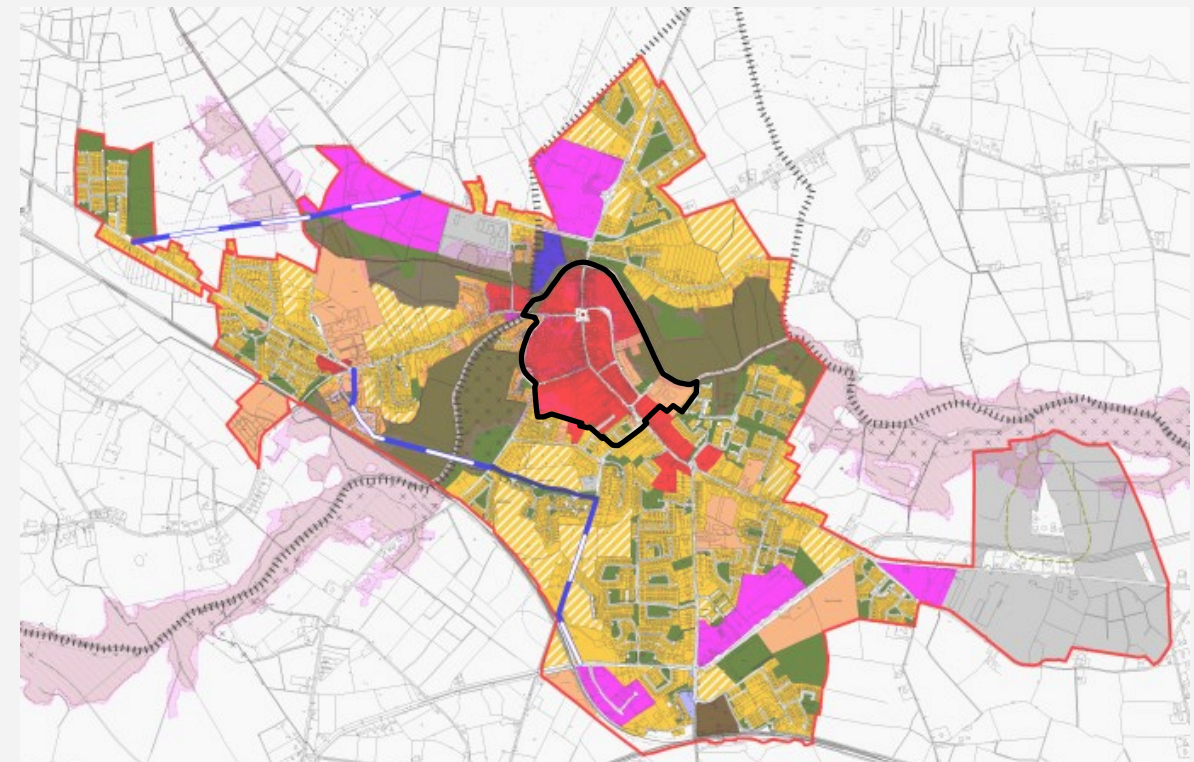


Figure 5. An Overlay of Land Use, Natura 2000 and Flood Plains Maps



## Laois County Heritage Plan 2014-2019<sup>[1]</sup>

The Laois County Heritage Plan 2014-2019 vision is:

*‘To protect, increase accessibility to, and maximise the value of our heritage by working in partnership to foster an understanding of heritage through participation, education and research’.*

Objective 1 of the Plan is to:

*‘Increase understanding of the heritage of Laois’.*

Objective is further specified to:

*‘Use co-operative projects to promote awareness of the importance and value of sites and settlements that cross county boundaries (such as the Slieve Blooms, the Rivers Barrow and Nore and boundary towns, including Graiguecullen and Portarlington)’.*

The Plan also forms the basis for the work of the Heritage Office and the Heritage Forum over the Plan period. Each year a work programme is drafted based on the contents of the Plan and current priorities. It is published and is available through the Laois County Council Website.

## Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2014

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Portarlington (BAP) proposes a list of actions achievable through local voluntary groups, including Portarlington Tidy Towns, Laois Partnership, Portarlington Business Association, etc. (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/wp-content/uploads/Portarlington-BAP.pdf>).

According to BAP and as illustrated in Figure 6, the Link road is one of the three locations of interest with suggested actions outlined in the Plan to improve and maintain biodiversity, including flora and fauna, in three open spaces along this road. These are as follows:

- **Erect bird boxes:** in public spaces where there are trees, in private gardens where the landowner agrees, and in school grounds.
- **Construct Bug Hotels:** An ideal project for school children to be involved with. Any spot where the public can see them and learn of their importance. Where possible, a small information sign highlighting the purpose and some of the occupants of the bug hotel would be helpful
- **Plant native trees & shrubs:** in Link Rd green areas; Public green areas; Any open grass areas where trees would not impair drivers’ sight lines.
- **Bird feeders:** where people can watch from a distance e.g., outside classroom windows; in graveyards and community car parks where they can be seen from the benches.
- **Leave piles of leaves in quiet corners:** Dark, quiet corners of public areas e.g., at the end of a hedgerow where there won’t be any disturbance.

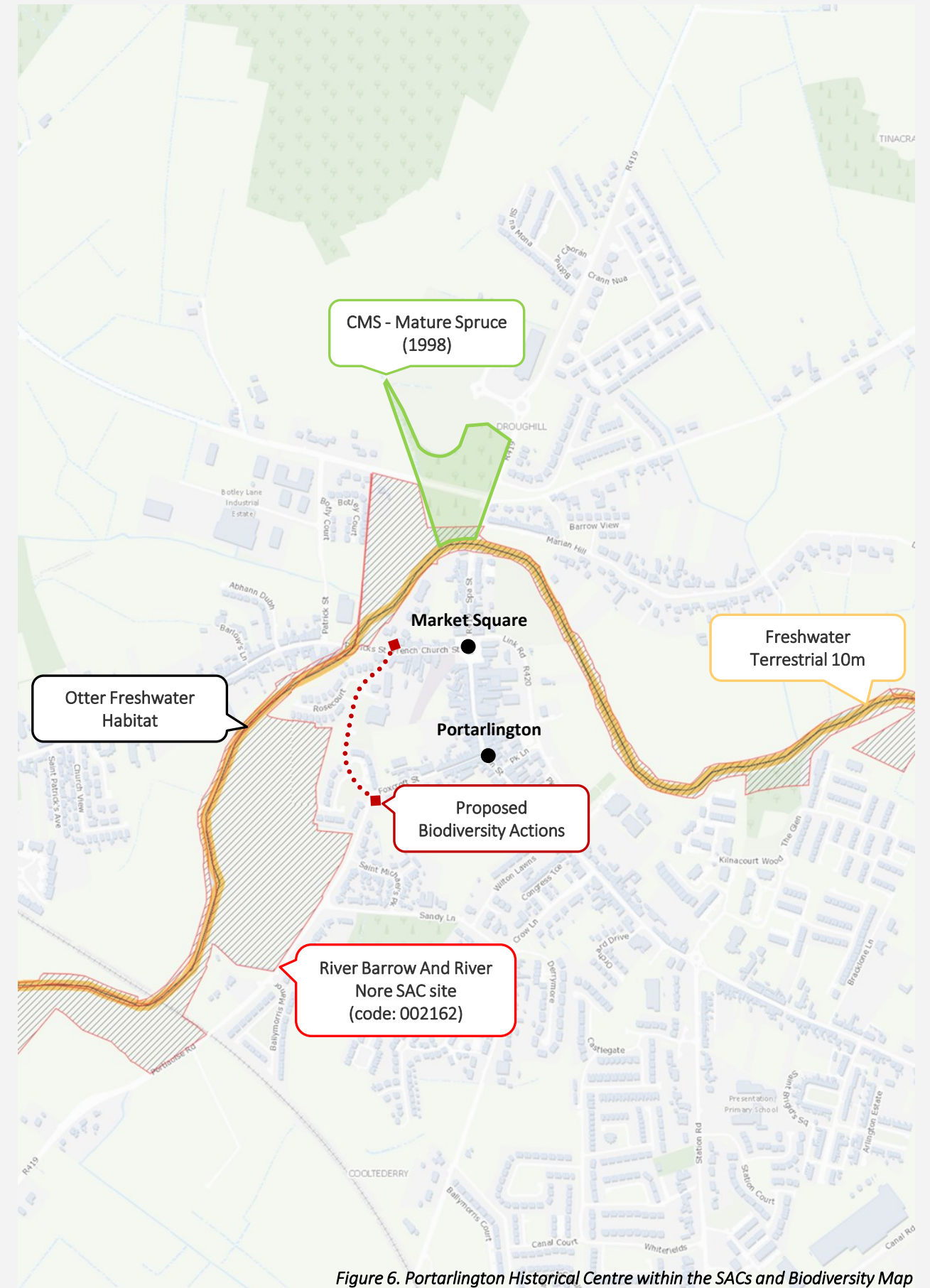


Figure 6. Portarlington Historical Centre within the SACs and Biodiversity Map

<sup>[1]</sup> As set out in Laois County Council’s website, work on preparing a new Heritage Plan to cover the period 2020 to 2025 is underway.

PHOTO: Portarlington Castle, n.d.



**EXISTING CONTEXT: STUDY AREA**

## EXISTING CONTEXT

Portarlington is dominated by a linear Main Street, terminated by the Market Square to the north. As shown in figure 7, the development of the town extended in a southerly direction towards the railway station. The Dublin-Cork and Dublin-Galway Railway lines comprise the boundaries to the town to the southwest-west and south. Portarlington is also constrained by the Barrow River and associated flood plain which forms a loop around much of the town.

The Main Street along with Patrick Street, Bracklone Street and also French Church Street comprise the traditional retail core of Portarlington accommodating a diverse range of retail services mainly in the control of independent retailers. The town has a mix of convenience and comparison retailing, financial institutions and service providers. As illustrated in Figure 7, most of the retail core is located within the Study Area, with the Market Square as the anchor point of the project.

## HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The historical core of the town is focused on a zone of archaeological interest centred around Market Square. The town centre area contains a number of Protected Structures and is proposed to be designated as an Architectural Conservation Area under the objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023, reflecting its special architectural interest. This includes 18th and 19th century two, three and four storey townhouses, walled gardens and burgages, vernacular structures, industrial heritage, Huguenot artefacts, ecclesiastical architecture and a considerable number of features of interest including stone walls and street furniture. There are 96 no. Protected Structures within the development boundary of Portarlington .

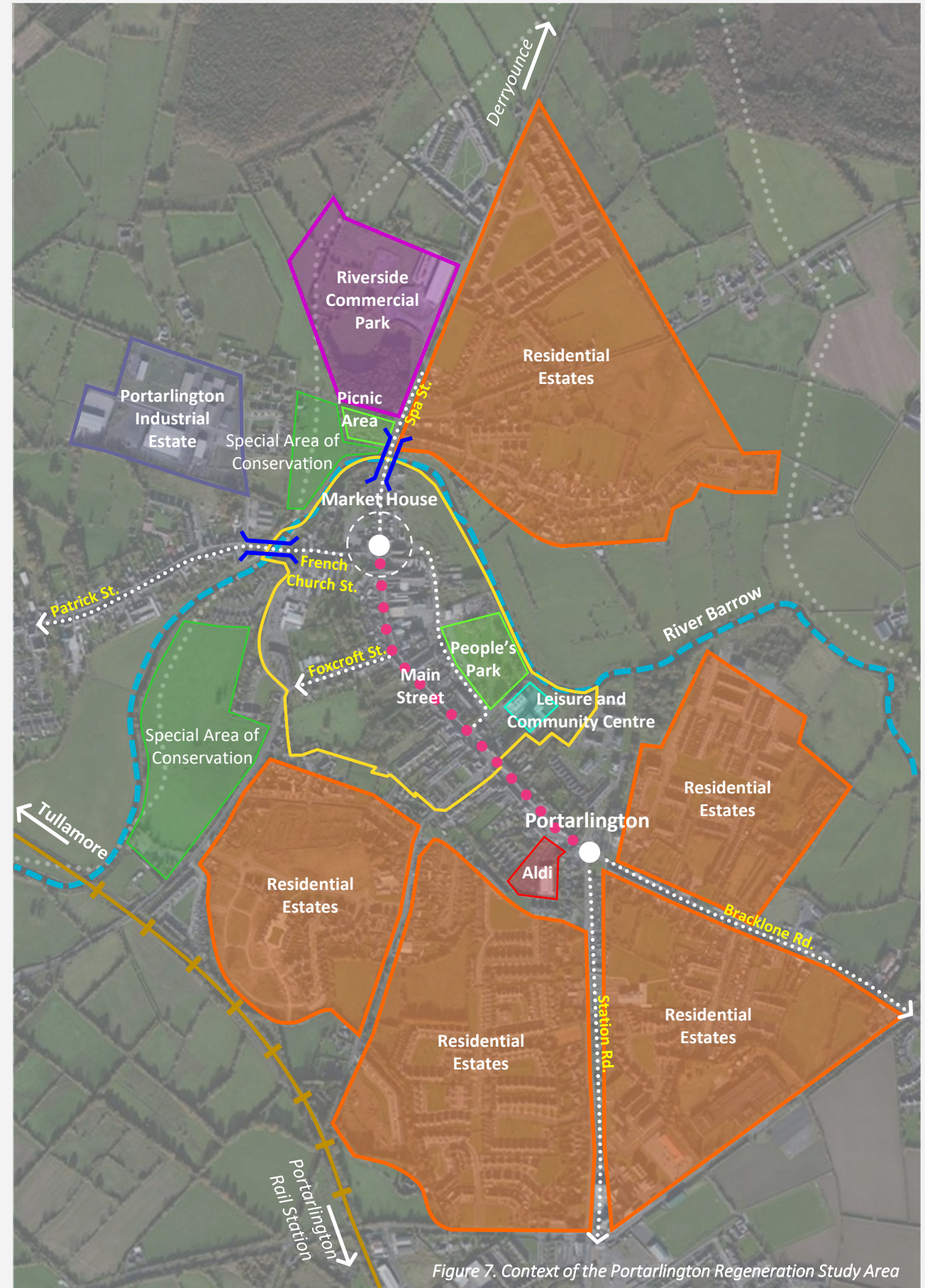
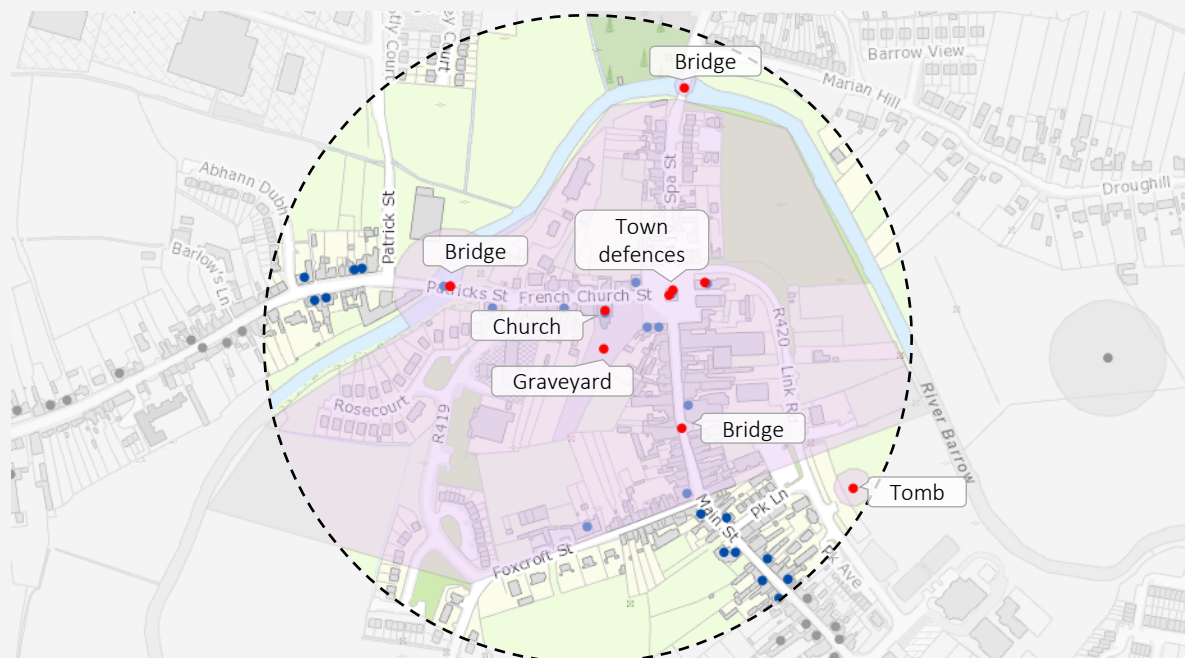


Figure 7. Context of the Portarlington Regeneration Study Area

## COMMUNITY AMENITIES

As illustrated in Figure 8, there is a wide range of services and amenities located along the Main Street which is further extended west and over the River Barrow along Patrick Street. Most of these services are within the catchment of the study area with the Market Square signifying the town centre location and embracing the Market House as a focal point. However, the significance of the Market House, is not only in the architectural representation of the building, but also the historical background and collective memory of the local environment.

The nature of the retail sector in the town centre remains small-scale and mainly comprises of local businesses. The key supermarkets include Centra, SuperValu, Aldi and Lidl.

As can be seen in Figure 8, there are a number of educational facilities, including, a Music School, and a Library within the Study Area, serving as crowd-pullers for the Town. The Portarlington Further Education and Training Centre is located on Bracklone Street, just outside the area as is the Portarlington Primary Care Centre. In terms of regenerating the town centre of Portarlington, these facilities can act as a driving force by an appropriate integration of the functions and the capacities of public realm. Moreover, the passing trade attracts new catering outlets and other businesses which can promote the livability of the place.

Another positive aspect of the Town is St. Paul's Church, shown in Figure 8, which has an open space area facing towards the Market square, providing a potential for developing a more integrated narrative of the public realm.

With regard to public amenities, the study area benefits from a wide range of facilities, including the Peoples' Park and Playground, the Leisure Centre and the Community Centre and Creche. These facilities provide an amenity hub in the south-eastern portion of the study area, with scope to expand these facilities and provide connectivity to the wider area in order to meet the growing demands of the Town.

## DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Portarlington is well served with fibre broadband in general. This allows the local enterprise centre to provide work/study hubs for the local community who can avail of good connectivity and wifi speeds while working remotely.

Laois County Council intend to provide public WiFi under the WIFI4EU programme in the near future. It is anticipated that this facility will be provided within the study area, including the Market House and Square.

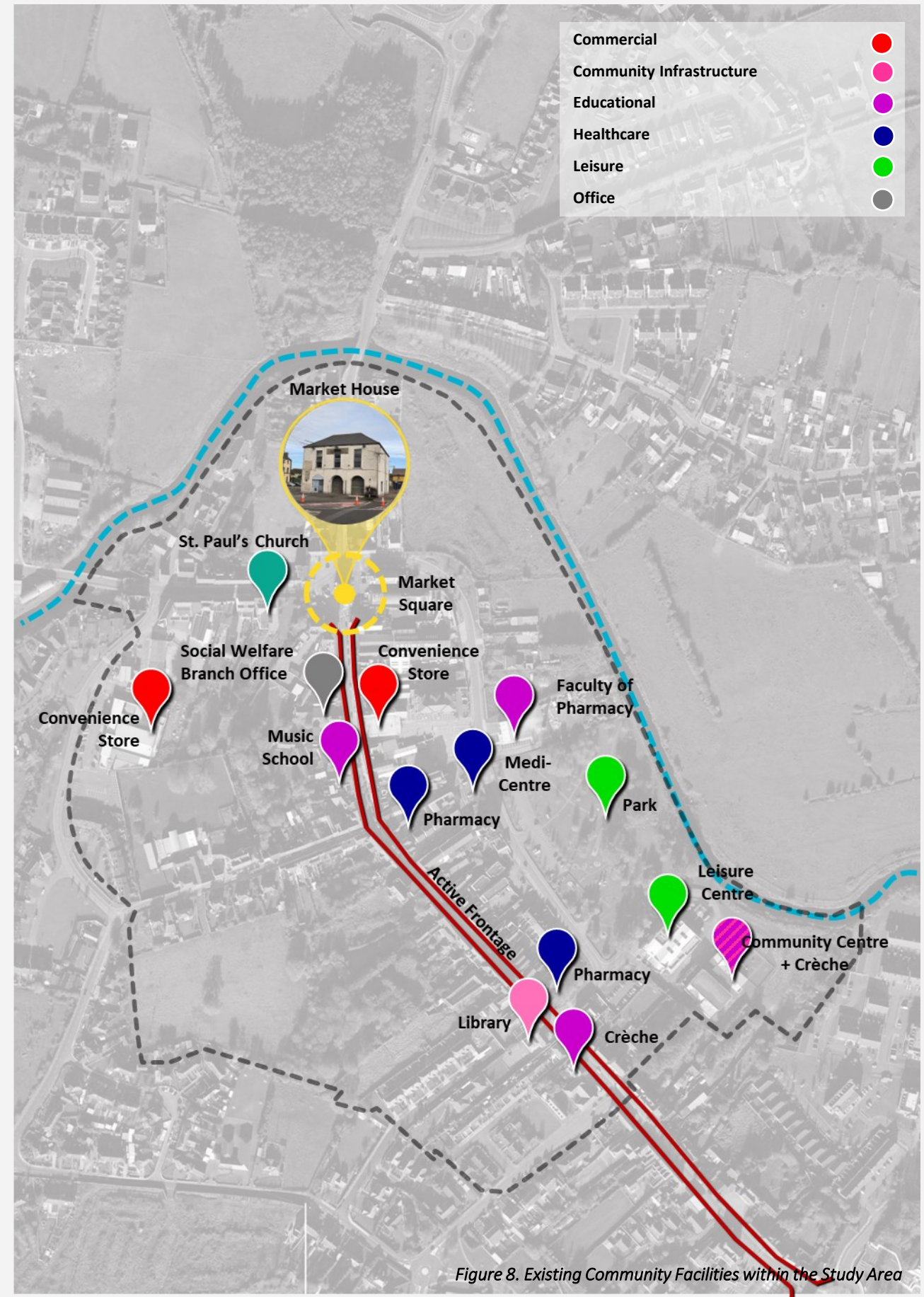


Figure 8. Existing Community Facilities within the Study Area

## EXISTING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The main commercial center of Portarlington is located within the study area, as shown in figure 9. Additional commercial and industrial businesses are located on the outer fringes within both Laois and Offaly County Council jurisdictions.

Main Street along with Bracklone Street, French Church Street and to a lesser extent Spa Street comprise the traditional retail centre of Portarlington accommodating a diverse range of retail services mainly in the control of independent operators such as Lyles, Burbages, Fletchers Hardware, Mullaney's Pharmacy, McConville's SuperValu, Centra, and Eamonn Brackens Menswear. Outside of the study area, but within the Town boundaries, a Lidl store, a Centra store, and an Aldi store are located. In addition, there is a high presence of non-core retail outlets including public houses, take-aways and licensed betting shops within the Town.

The latest available Geo-directory data on commercial vacancy sees Portarlington with a vacancy rate of 19.8% - Q2 2020 which is considerably higher than the national figure (13.5%).

The figure is a cause for concern for the local authority and the business community. A Portarlington Business Association has been established within the town to address these matters.

The Health Check assessment indicates that Portarlington has a mix of convenience and comparison retailing, as well as some retail warehousing, financial institutions and service providers. For the most part, retailing activity is concentrated in the town centre.

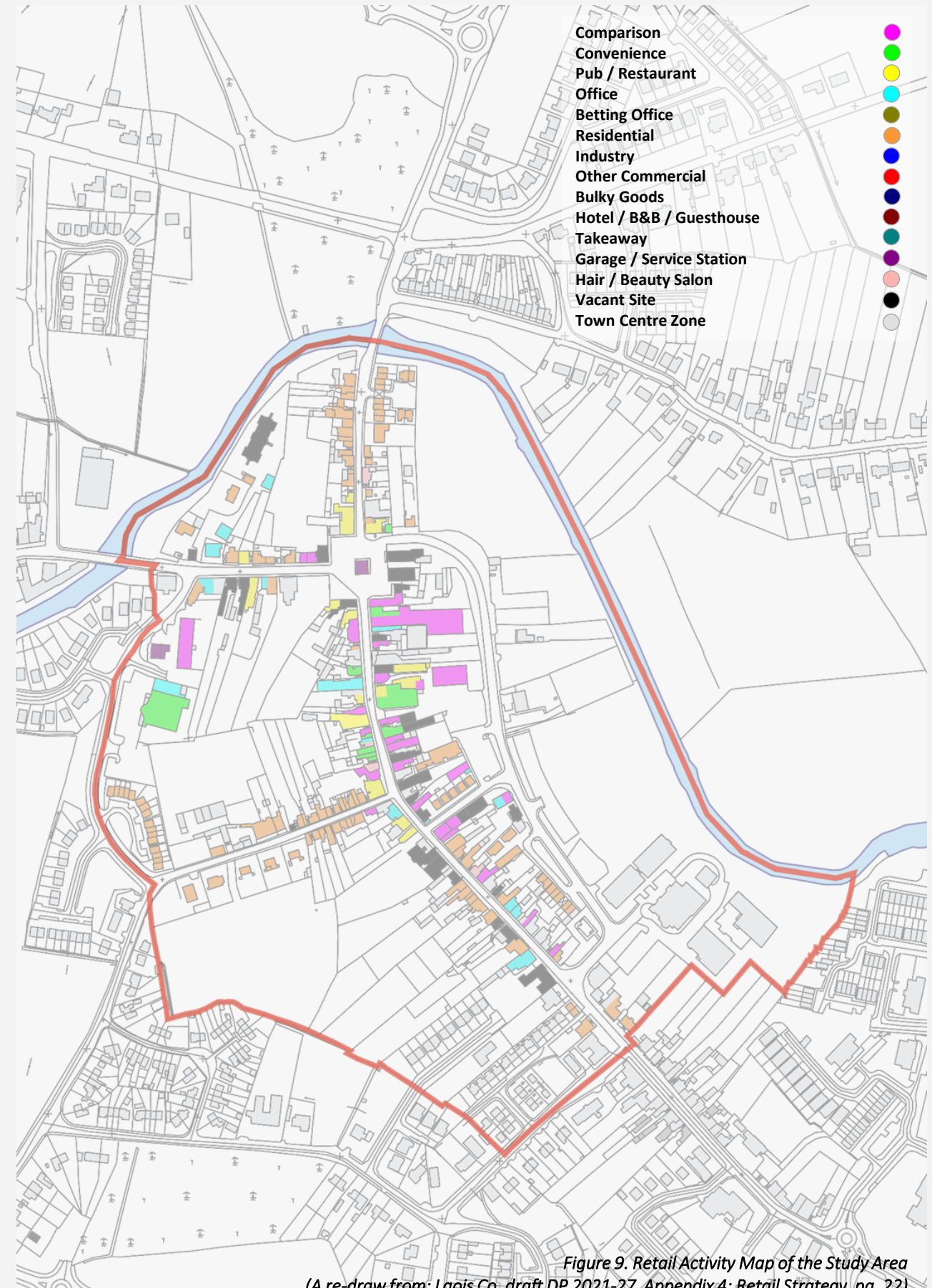


Figure 9. Retail Activity Map of the Study Area  
(A re-draw from: Laois Co, draft DP 2021-27, Appendix 4: Retail Strategy, pg. 22)

## CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORT

Portarlington is a focal point of the Irish railway network, being situated on the junction for services to the west (Galway, Mayo), the south (Cork, Limerick, Tralee) and the east (Dublin, Kildare). Portarlington Train Station provides regular daily services to all major urban areas in Ireland including Cork, Killarney, Limerick and Dublin. Portarlington also benefits from high frequency commuter trains to and from Dublin, during morning and evening peak times.

Dublin Coach operates the service that connects Portarlington to Kildare village and Monasterevin through route 816 operating 06.35 AM to 10.05 PM. As illustrated in Figure 10, the location for this bus stop is at Market Square, French Church street, and on the Link Road.

At a more local, rural level, the National Transport Authority funded the Rural Transport Programme to provide a Local Link for Laois/ Offaly. This is aimed at addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. A map of existing Local Link services is shown in Appendix 3. The current locations of bus stops in Portarlington, should be reviewed and increased where it is deemed necessary. An increase in the number of bus stops along the access roads and within the town limits would encourage more people to use public transport. Local Link Laois /Offaly has advised that they will be monitoring the transport needs of Portarlington over the coming months to look at possible new routes or amendments to existing routes.

Looking at private modes of transport, travel time from Portarlington to Dublin by car is less than an hour due to the opening of the Heath Mayfield section of motorway in 2004. In this regard, Junction 15 Monasterevin is located approximately 10 kilometres from the town.

Within the study area, the link roads serve as a route to remove through traffic from the Town Centre. Spa Street was previously upgraded to accommodate pedestrians and two-way traffic.

As part of the Transportation Plan for the Town, a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) should be compiled. This Plan should take into account commuting patterns, employment centres, education centres, traffic patterns, critical mass, etc, as these all have an influence on the size of area which should be considered. Integration with the long-distance transport system is also important.

The baseline analysis of current connectivity and transportation of the Town Centre and the information gleaned from the public consultation is summarised in a SWOT analysis as outlined in page 26. As the next step, different transportation scenarios were assessed and evaluated, with the final proposals outlined in the Strategy section and further elaborated on in Appendix 2. These measures should be further assessed and implemented as part of a Transportation Plan for the Town.

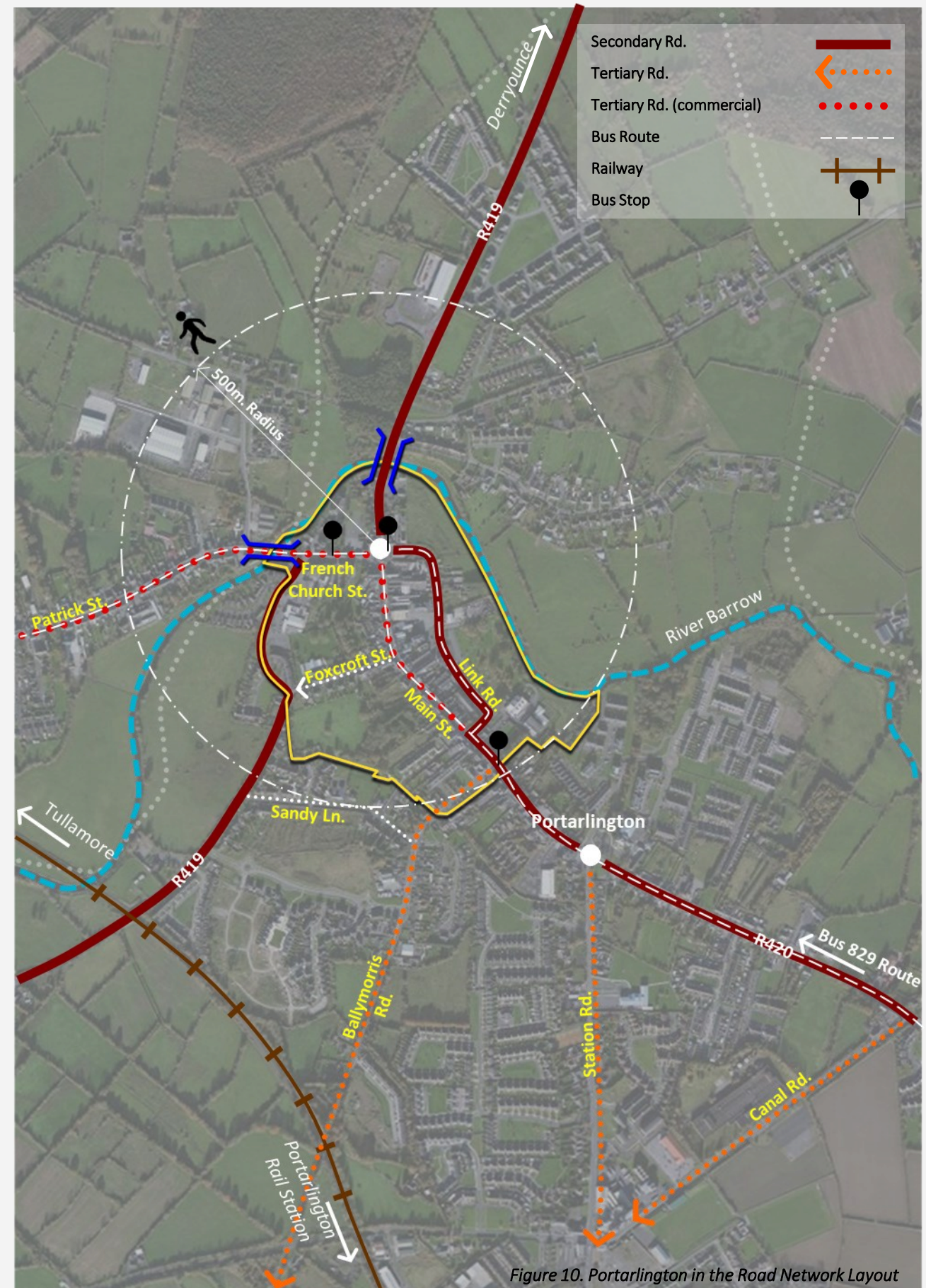


Figure 10. Portarlington in the Road Network Layout

# FLOODING

Portarlington is located on the River Barrow downstream of Mountmellick. Flowing through Portarlington is the River Barrow and the Blackstick Drain which is a small tributary of the River Barrow flowing from the north. The historical flooding records, the model outputs report and the FRMP Mapping all identified the same areas as being particularly susceptible to flood risk. Flooding in the urban area of Portarlington and surrounding lands is predominantly as a result of the exceedance of the river channel and the convergence with the Blackstick Drain.

**Flooding from the River Barrow:** Exceedance of the channel in times of increased rainfall as well as restrictions on flow from three bridges resulted in a backfall/overflow effect impacting on lands and properties adjoining the river to the east of the town centre, within the town centre and south west of the town centre.

**Flooding from Blackditch Drain:** Significant area of flooding at the River Barrow and Blackditch Drain confluence with a backwater effect of the Blackditch Drain.

Currently, there are no defence assets or structures in Portarlington. However, in August 2020, Black and Veatch (BV) and Nicholas O’Dwyer (NOD) were appointed by Laois County Council to develop a flood relief scheme. The works likely to take place in all areas are hard defences (walls & embankments), improvement of channel conveyance (maintenance & culvert upgrade) with a possibility of increased floodplain storage where appropriate. As illustrated in the timeline below, the scheme is currently in stage 1, which is estimated to be completed at the end of 2021.

Once the flood relief scheme is finalized, it will guide the future development of the Town.

Activity	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Stage 1 - Scheme Development & Design	█	█					
Stage 2 - Planning Process			█	█			
Stage 3 - Detailed Design and Tender				█	█	█	
Stage 4 - Construction					█	█	█
Stage 5 - Handover of Works						█	█

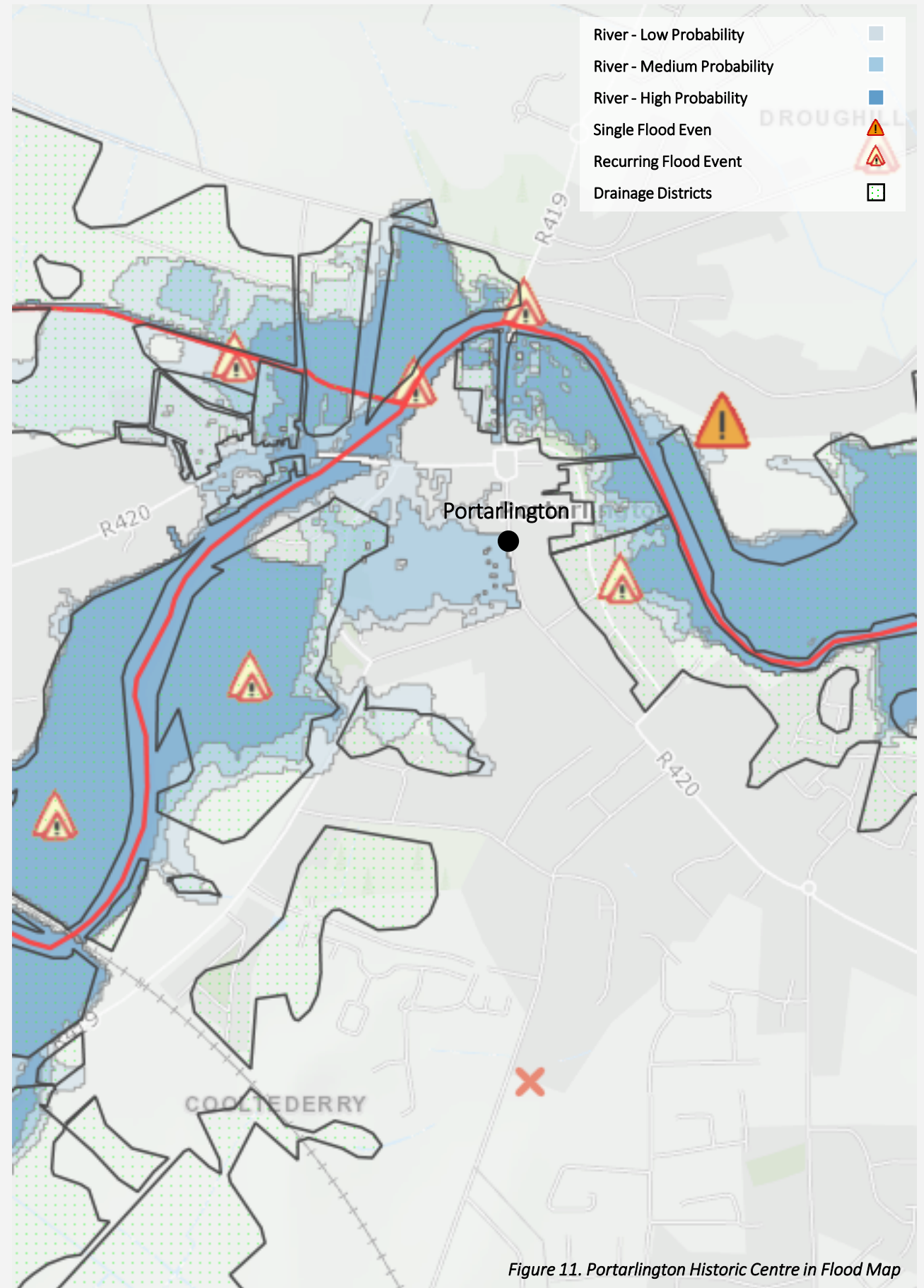


Figure 11. Portarlington Historic Centre in Flood Map

PHOTO: Market House, 1970



**EXISTING CONTEXT:  
MARKET HOUSE & MARKET SQUARE**



## MARKET HOUSE: BACKGROUND HISTORY

The Portarlington Market House is believed to have been built around 1740-1750, to serve as a Markethouse and Town Hall. The first floor consisted of three rooms, reached by a stair in the NE corner. The local courts were held there as well as being available as a hall. The Markethouse was the centre of the town's life through the 19th and early Twentieth Centuries. Regular markets were held in the open square and local courts were held upstairs.

Like many similar small-town market/courthouses, the Portarlington Markethouse lost its relevance with consolidation of court functions elsewhere, and changes to the way livestock and other farm produce was traded and brought to market. By the middle of the Twentieth Century, the typical market house had lost its relevance and importance in most locations.

Around 1990, the structure was converted into a motor repair shop, with living accommodation above. The masonry walls remained relatively intact, along with the timber framed hipped roof with central valley. A few paneled timber doors have survived in the ground and first floors, but no other significant early joinery has remained in place. Virtually none of the structure's original internal or external finishes or features have survived in place after that conversion. Over the last three decades, the former Markethouse was owned by the Ryan family, who operated the motor repair garage on the ground floor and lived in the first-floor accommodation created from the former court rooms.

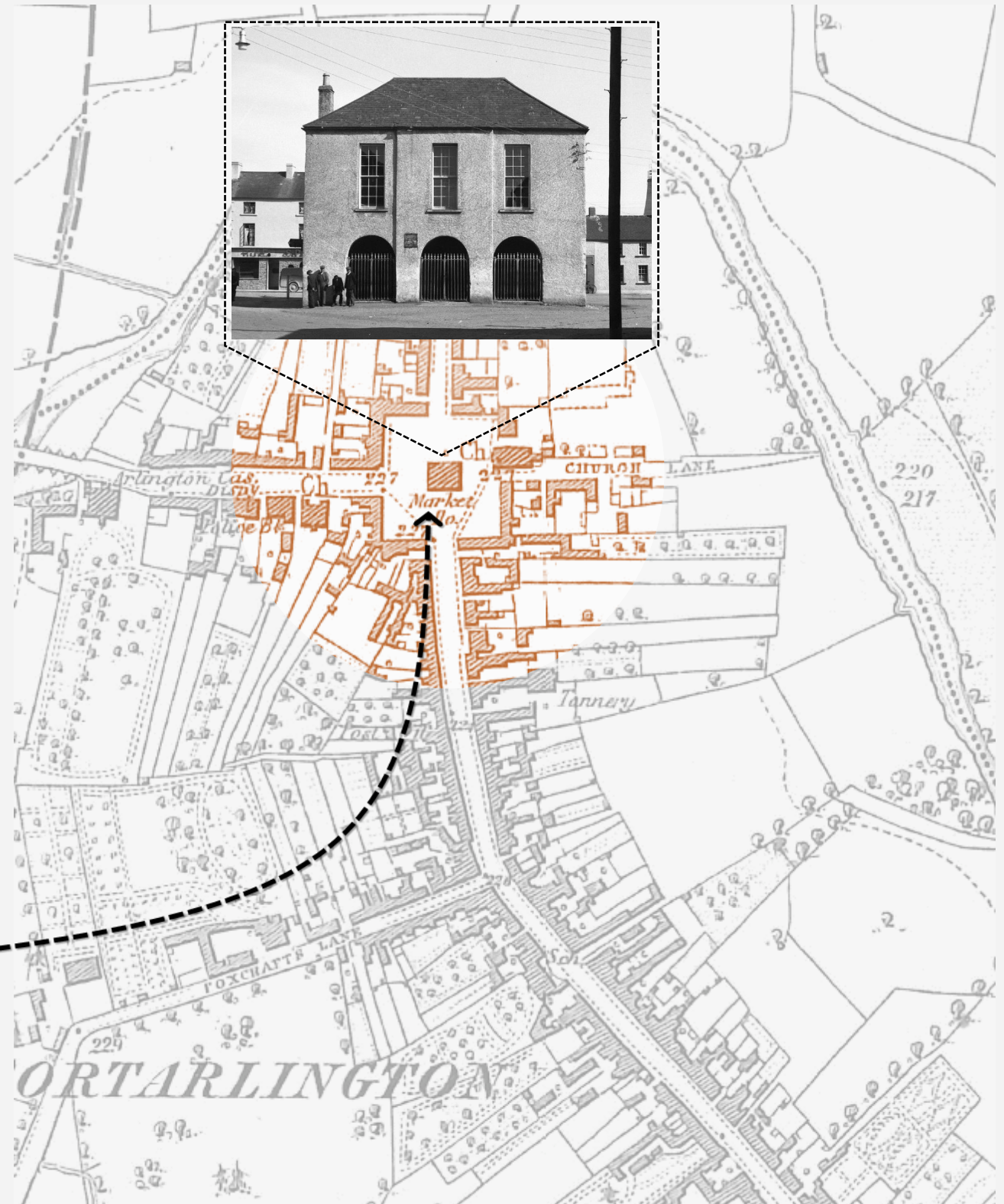


Figure 12. 'A Plot of the Towne of Portarlington...', by an anonymous author, 1678. (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland, NLI 21.F.55 (1).) The market house is the only structure shown, of a different shape to the surviving market house structure.

Figure 13. Extract from the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, showing Portarlington as surveyed in 1838. The Markethouse is clearly shown at the centre of the town square. The degree to which the square was totally enclosed on all sides is noteworthy, prior to the removal of the buildings on the south-west corner to enlarge the churchyard.

## MARKET HOUSE: ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN & BUILDING FABRIC

Following the common prototype of market houses, the ground floor included a series of arched openings to the front elevation, enclosed only by stout iron gates and railings. To the rear of the ground floor were a few separate rooms, and a stairwell to access the upper floor. On the first floor were three separate rooms. The largest of those rooms occupied the southern half of the structure, having three large sliding sash windows. This room served as the courtroom, and on occasions also served as a venue for other community functions. The other rooms were most likely used as a jury room and a judge's chamber.

Like most of the other structures in Portarlington, the Markethouse was built from the locally quarried limestone. The stone was laid up in coursed rubble masonry, covered on the outside with a south lime and sand wet dashed render and internally with traditional lime and sand plaster. Dressed limestone was used for door and windowsills, and for paving the internal ground floor. Traditional timber framed sliding sash windows were installed throughout, along with simple timber paneled doors. The roof and first floor were supported by timber joists and rafters.

During the last quarter of the 20th century, after the Markethouse ceased to be used as a courthouse and town hall, most of its external features and finishes were removed and replaced in modern materials and details. Sand and cement dash replaced the original soft lime wet dash, giving the external walls a much rougher appearance. The sash windows were all replaced with hardwood windows, of slightly different design and detail. The ground floor arched opes were converted to serve as a small shopfront and as garage doors. Internally, all the original lime plaster was covered with dry lining. The high ceilings were lowered and lined with plasterboard. New bathrooms and a kitchen were added to the first floor, the large hall was subdivided, and the stair was modified with a steel handrail.



Figure 14. Market House Survey (drawings by Wilson Architecture)

## MARKET SQUARE

Generally, the Square is underutilised, having an outdated public realm and a number of vacant buildings. Currently, the Square is the busy focal point of Portarlinton, where major roads of the town converge. The existing traffic system encompasses a busy two-way system and a less busy one-way system, via Main Street. The layout and design of this road network essentially cuts the Square into several different spaces, and limits pedestrians to the extreme fringes. The Square is heavily populated with cars, with the only space dedicated to people being located outside the Asian Wok Restaurant, but this is limited to outdoor dining. A lack of seating and trees are noted throughout the Square.

The Square is served with popular bars, restaurants and cafés within its immediate vicinity. Main Street, to the south, is the commercial heart of the town, home to much of the towns’ retail providers. The Square has previously hosted the annual French Festival, which was an important date in the town’s calendar.

This square has the capacity to provide a multi-purpose, user-friendly public space, which can enrich the lives of the surrounding population.

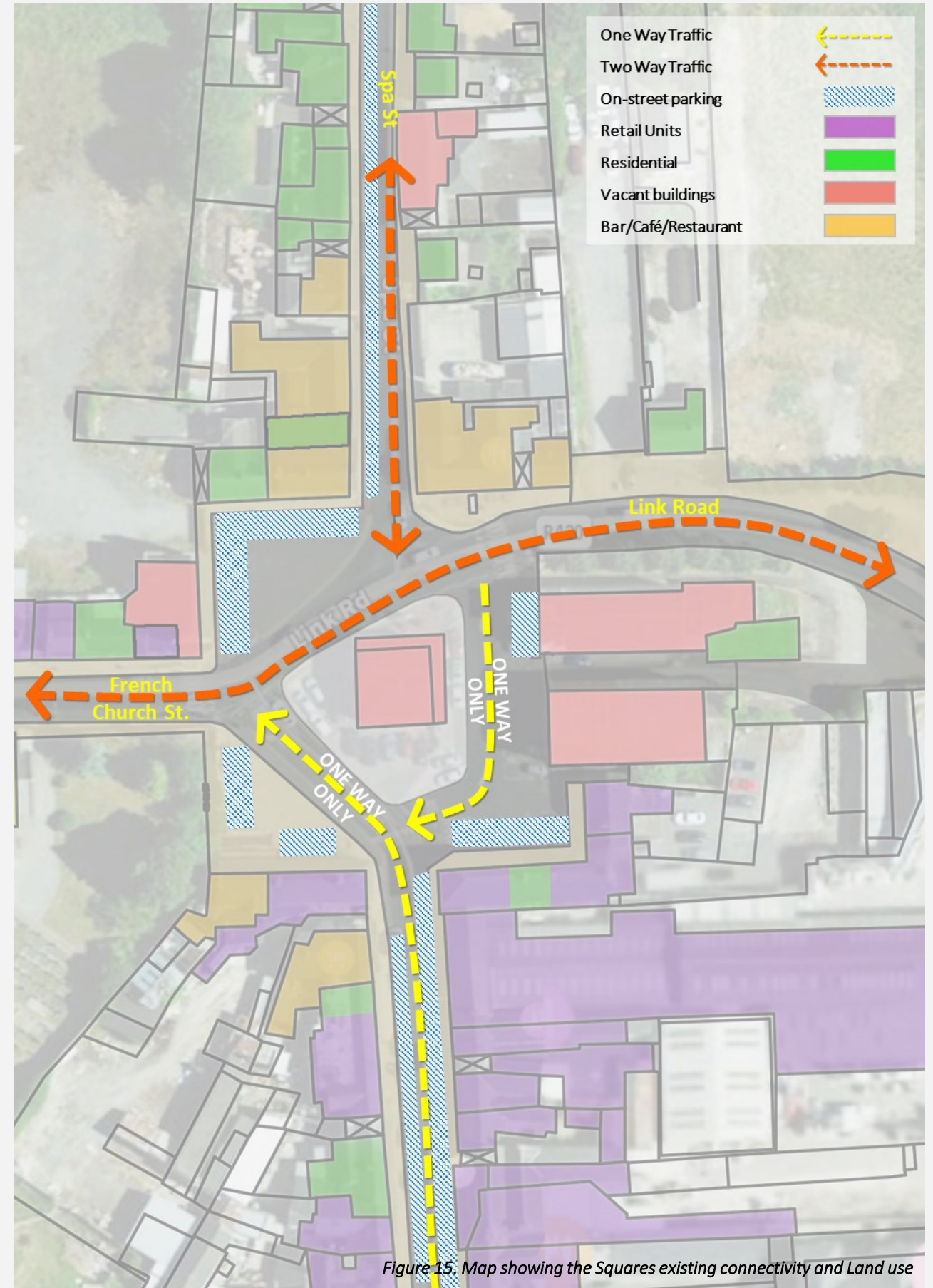


Figure 15. Map showing the Squares existing connectivity and Land use

PHOTO: The Barrow Bridge, n.d.



**PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public consultation is a fundamental cornerstone of the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy. As part of the pre-draft consultation period, members of the public were invited to make submissions via email, phone, writing, and through an online survey available on Laois County Council’s website. In addition to this, meetings were facilitated with elected members from Offaly County Council and Laois County Council, local representatives and local groups and interested parties, including local business owners. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and government’s restrictions in place during the consultation period, walking groups, school and local community workshops were not feasible. Virtual meetings were deemed more appropriate, in line with government recommendations at that time.

A total of 140 submissions were received from various stakeholders with 34 no. submissions via e-mail and 106 no. via the survey link. Submissions were received from a wide variety of interested parties, including, residents, local business owners, community groups, business groups, local school children, and families. Figure 16 below gives a breakdown of the various stakeholders who contributed to the pre-draft consultation process. A full report detailing all written submissions received are summarized in the Chief Executives Report, which has been used to inform this Strategy. This report is enclosed under separate cover.

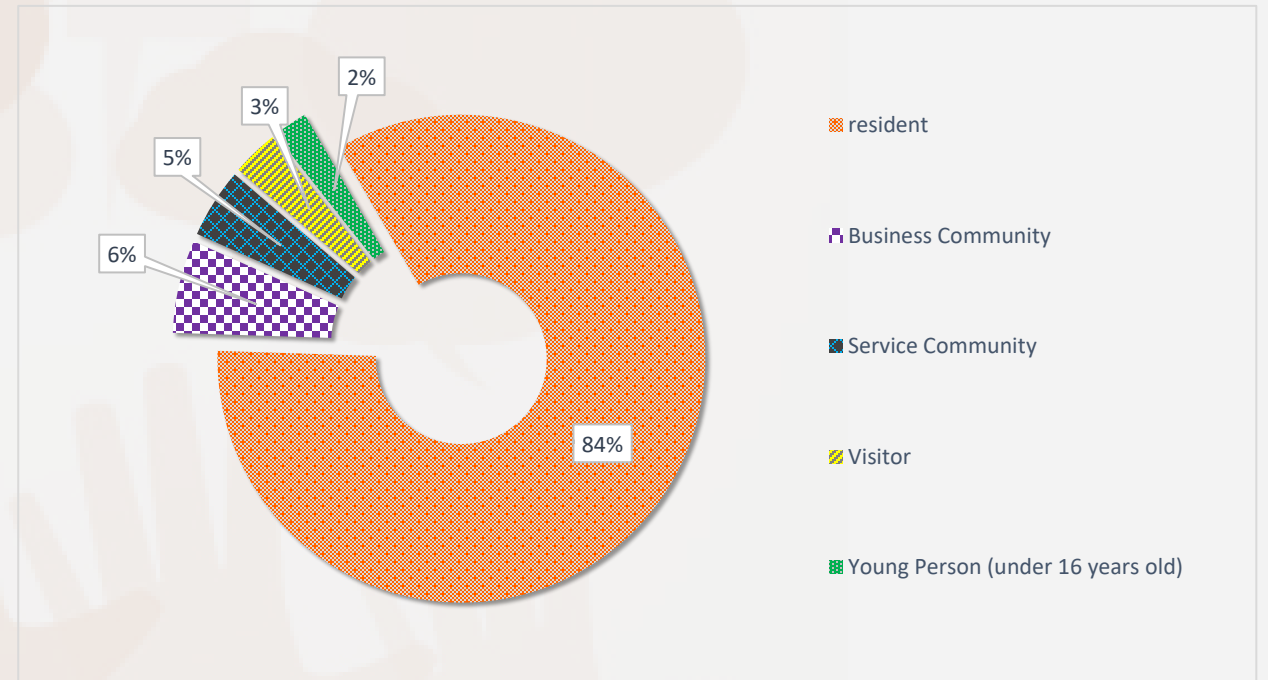
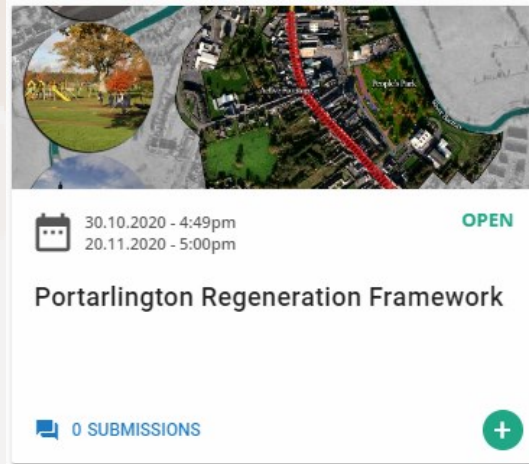
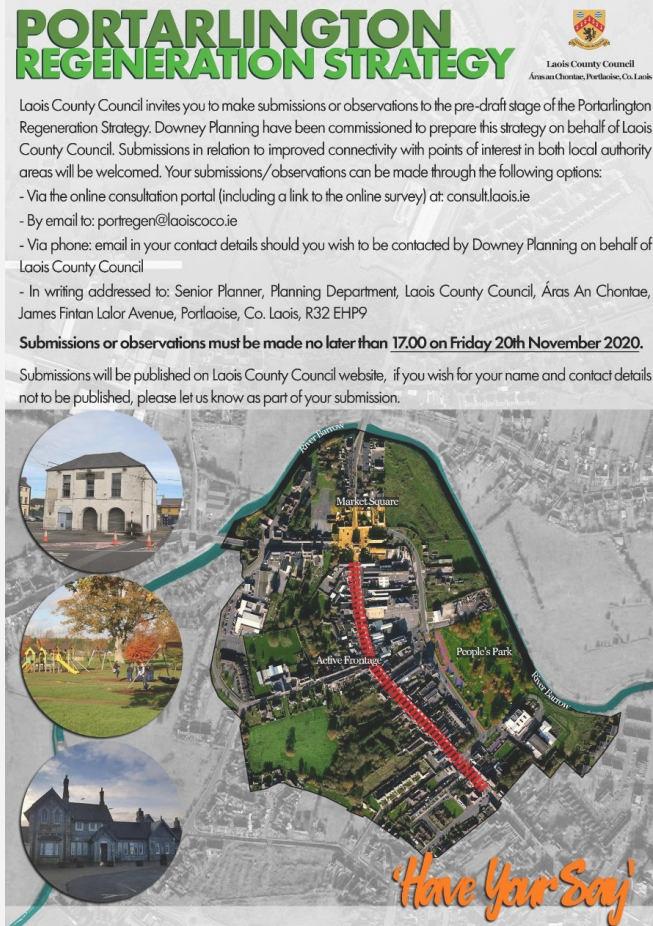


Figure 16. Various Stakeholders Involved within the Pre-draft Process

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED



### HERITAGE & TOURISM

- The Church of Ireland, the old Savoy cinema, and the Hall beside it need to be highlighted as historic points of interest in the Town;
- Use the history of place and events in the regeneration of the Town Centre, including the rich history of high-quality education associated with the Town (refer to John Powell's book "Schooling in Ireland 1695-1912"), and the arrival of the Huguenots in Portarlinton;
- Improve tourism activity and accommodation;
- Use Fr. Brownes SJ images on tourist information posts across the Town;
- Highlight the Town's history and connection to the French Huguenots through appropriate signage, tourist trails.

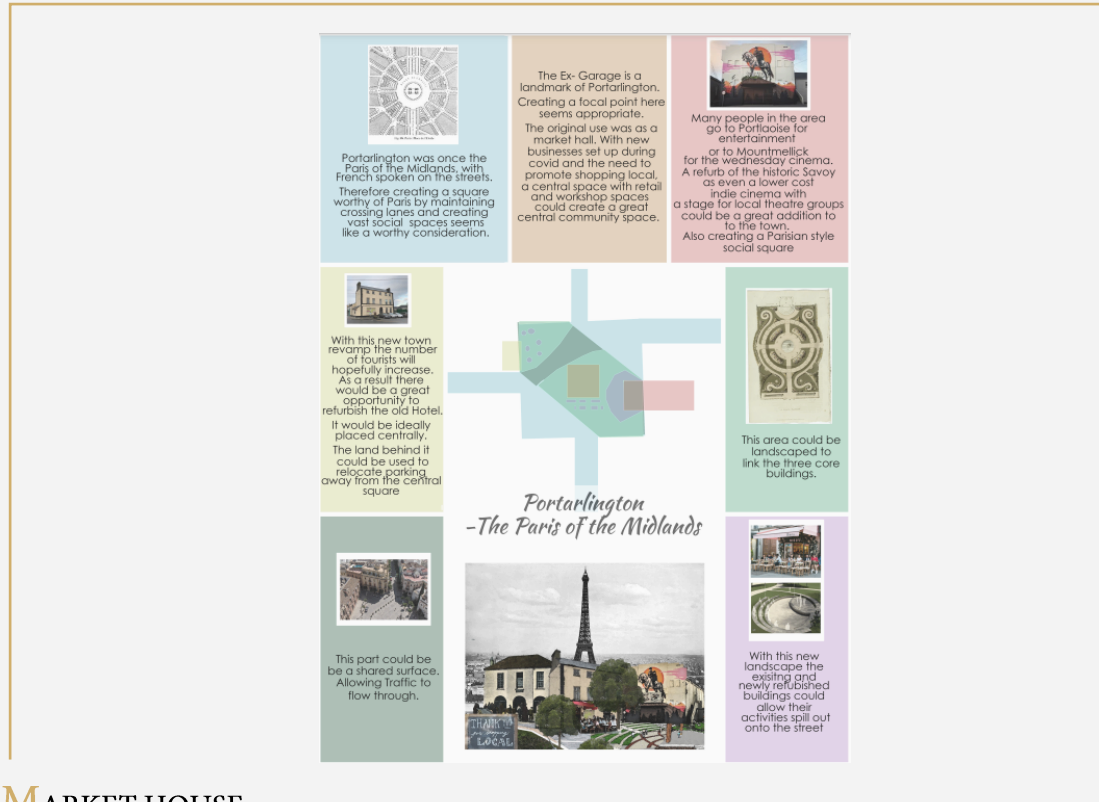
### Portarlinton Regeneration Strategy Picture A



### ACCESSIBILITY & PUBLIC REALM

- Install CCTV around Market Square and Main Street to deter anti-social behavior;
- Create a pedestrian link from Market Square to Derrycastle Trails;
- Over ground cables to be placed underground & upgrade public lighting;
- Provide a ring road between the Laois and Offaly end of the Town;
- Introduce traffic calming, improved car parking, car-free zones;
- Improve pedestrian and cycling provision, public transport and bus shelters;
- Improve riverside walkways and river activities, with link to Lea Castle & Derrycastle Lakes;
- Place Signs around the Town indicating walking times to the Town Centre;
- Improve the public realm, more trees should be planted;
- Create a smart town, use smart devices to monitor pollution to promote the reduction of traffic;
- Introduce 5G and Wi-Fi zones in the Town.

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED



### MARKET HOUSE

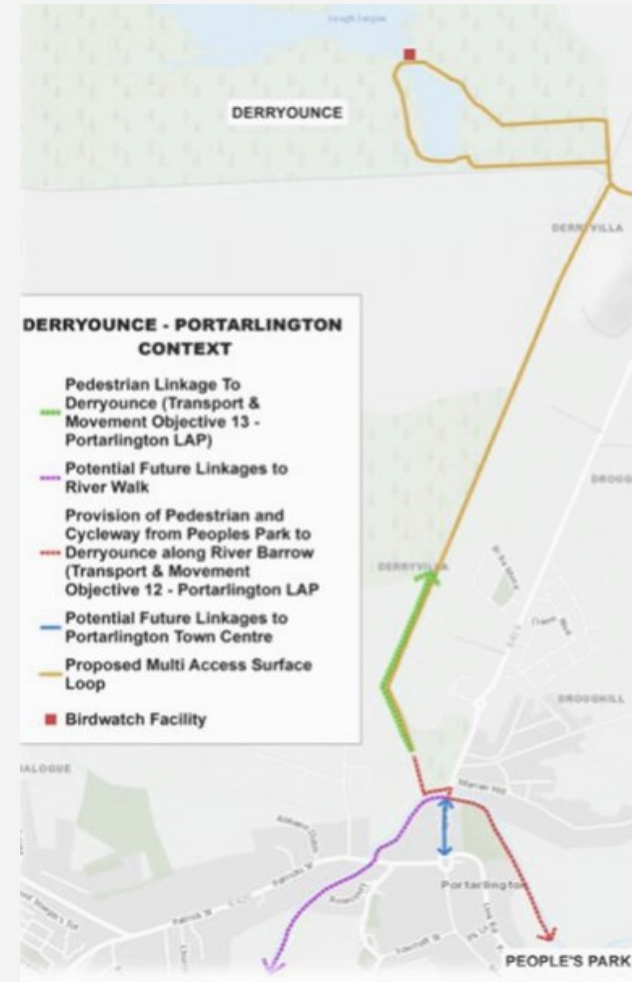
- Employ local workers to assist in the regeneration work;
- Re-use the Market House as a tourist shop like 'Carrolls of Dublin' with a small museum upstairs and an eating area at the Old Cinema;
- Re-use the Market House to create a collaborative work-study studio comprising of an equipped office space with desk spaces to let on a monthly/yearly basis, a board room, an area to hold classes and clubs, a content creation space for small businesses, and a communal lunchroom with kitchen amenities;
- Restore the Market House with the ground floor housing an indoor market and the first-floor housing a Huguenot Museum;
- Restore the Market House for use with civic offices, and /or a heritage museum, Heritage Centre or exhibition space;
- Provide a French themed café with outdoor seating.



### MARKET SQUARE

- Demolish the old Savoy cinema and create an outdoor picnic/eating area utilised with street furniture;
- Convert and re-use the Savoy cinema as a shopping arcade for small specialist retail businesses;
- Make a compulsory purchase order for the Savoy cinema and re-use it as an all-year market;
- Re-brand the Square as the new Cultural Quarter of the Town with the paving laid out to facilitate high quality food markets and pedestrian friendly areas;
- Enhance the Market Square as a lively focal point for the Town as a pedestrian-friendly environment utilised with street furniture;
- Improve the aesthetics of the Square with undergrounding the overhead cables and wiring.

## SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED



### AMENITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop a Flood Protection Plan;
- Flooding of all local roads to be addressed;
- Re-use of derelict buildings to create a vibrant Town Centre;
- Introduce larger retail store like Dunnes, M&S, Pennys or Tesco's;
- Improve outdoor activities in the Town such as a skate park, water activities;
- Cohesive development between Offaly & Laois sides;
- Improve shop fronts and buildings with appropriate signage, colour schemes or some street art;
- More community space required for events, festivals, drama, digital workshops;
- Use of opportunity sites to alleviate the Towns issues.



Create a gravel pathway to the Footstick along the riverbank for walkers/ cyclists.  
 Cyclists could then use local roads to hook up with the canal green way in Monasterevin  
 Takes in Lea Castle  
 Old Lea Graveyard  
 Allows residents of Kilnacourt access to the river as a means of walkway to the town center

Line in Orange is complete  
 Line in Blue is proposal



PHOTO: French Church Street, n.d.



**SWOT ANALYSIS**

# SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is considered a valuable tool to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) to a plan or project, particularly when a desired vision has been defined. Extensive baseline analysis, coupled with public consultation and stakeholder engagement, was used to facilitate the preparation of the SWOT analysis for the regeneration of Portarlinton. A carefully and professionally prepared SWOT analysis derives important information in a legible format, and is a vital component to any detailed, balanced analysis for establishing future initiatives and recommendations for the study area. The SWOT analysis for the proposed regeneration of Portarlinton is detailed below:



## Strengths

- Railway Station
- Bus service connections
- Rich built and natural heritage
- River Barrow
- Numerous recreational and leisure amenities
- Walking routes
- Strong population catchment
- Retail and commercial offerings
- Educational facilities
- Active volunteers within community
- Community and Business Groups



## Weaknesses

- Car dominant town centre environment
- Traffic congestion / limited traffic capacity
- HGV traffic through narrow streets
- Derelict abandoned buildings
- Poor public realm and legibility
- Road network requiring repairs /safety concerns
- Poor pedestrian / cyclist provision
- Lack of street furniture
- Overhead powerlines/cables
- Disconnection of the Railway Station to the Town Centre
- Ad-hoc bus stops
- No national road within 10km & no ring road
- Lack of larger retail offerings
- Flooding risk



## Opportunities

- Improved Built Environment
- Vacant Derelict Sites / Buildings - Development / Re-Use Opportunities
- Enhanced Natural Environment and Biodiversity
- Better Links to Existing Amenities
- Increased Employment
- Increased Tourism
- Better Quality of Life
- Increased Variety of Services
- Reduced Traffic Congestion/Parking Issues



## Threats

- Nearby Urban Centres/Leaking Business
- Vacant Derelict Sites/Buildings and Under-Use
- Flooding
- Inability to manage traffic
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Lack of Action (Do Nothing Scenario)

PHOTO: The River Barrow at Portarlington, n.d.



**THE STRATEGY**

# ROADMAP OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy has been informed by the existing baseline information set out in Sections 3 and 4, and the analysis driven from the Public Consultation outlined in Section 5.



## VISION STATEMENT

Vision Statement for Portarlington Town Centre is:

“To create a more viable and visually attractive Town Centre in Portarlington for residents, visitors and workers through the appropriate rehabilitation of the Market House and Square and other key buildings, with improvements to connectivity, public realm and amenities.”



# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 1.0 Rehabilitation of the Market House

### 1.1 Design Approach: Market House

The approach to be taken in establishing a viable use for the Market House building is to reinstate the building interior to its original configuration and for the resulting accommodation to provide flexible multi-purpose spaces for both Town community and Local Council use. The ground floor with its series of arched openings to the front elevation, toward Main Street, is to provide an enclosed space connected to the town square that redefines its original role as a place for exchange and congregation - commercial, social, and cultural, which are central to the everyday workings and identity of the town.

To the rear of the ground floor the remaining two rooms provide additional community rooms and associated facilities. A stairwell provides access to the upper floor. At first floor level, the non-original walls are to be removed and the original three rooms reinstated with the largest of those rooms to provide a large community and event space while providing meeting rooms for local activities. The two smaller rooms to provide Local Area Office accommodation with staff and event support facilities.

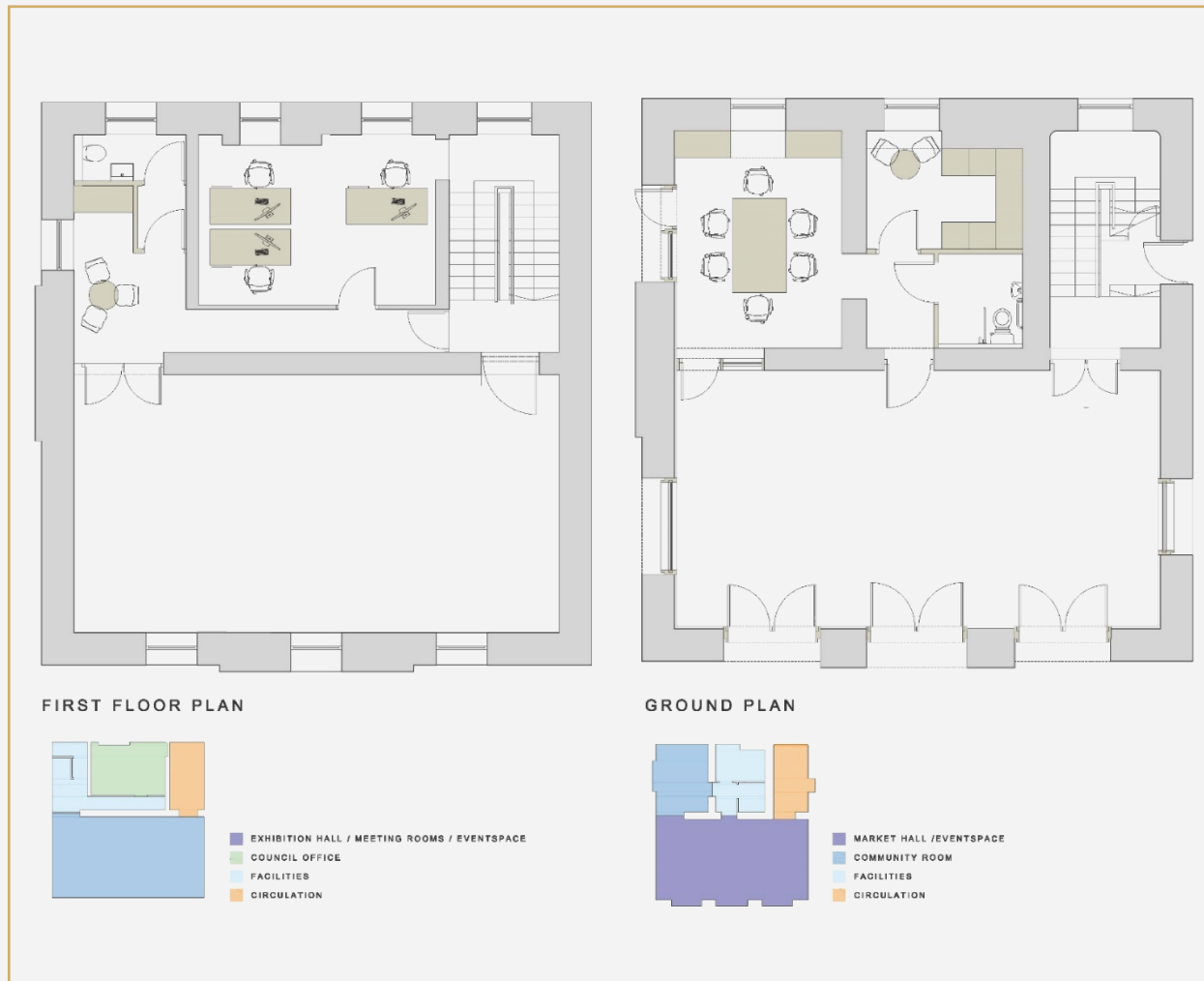


Figure 17. Proposed Architectural Plan (drawings by Wilson Architecture)



## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

### 1.0 Rehabilitation of the Market House

#### 1.2 Market House: Recommended Conservation Repairs

The following recommended repairs are intended to augment proposals by the design team in considering the redevelopment of the Markethouse for its new use.



#### External Building Envelope

The external building envelope currently suffers from the replacement of the original traditional features and finishes. The main external elements are generally grouped into a few categories including roof/rainwater goods, external walls, doors and windows (including iron railings and gates), and external lighting.



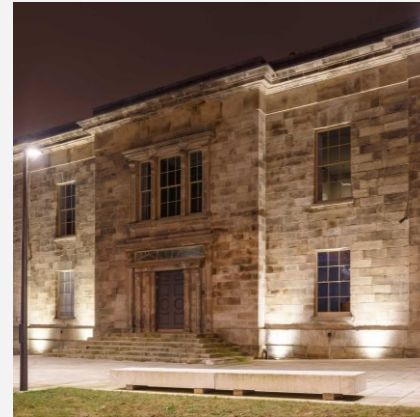
#### Roof and Rainwater Goods

It is recommended that all of the current roof finishes are removed and replaced by traditional materials. Natural slates should be installed over new battens and breather membrane. The valley should be relined with lead or copper sheet, depending on the existing details of the valley boards. Any damaged timber elements should be repaired at this time. If the budget will allow, the external gutters should be replaced with good quality cast iron half round gutters, with new round cast iron down pipes



#### Windows, External Doors and Iron Gates

It is recommended that the original arched openings on the south elevation are returned to their historical appearance. Photographic documentation shows that there were traditionally detailed iron gates in all three openings, none of which have survived in situ. In addition to the iron gates, it is proposed to install moveable internal glazed screens to provide additional protection to the otherwise open ground floor. These will likely consist of double glazing, set in powder coated W20 steel frames, or a similar proprietary product.



*Kilmainham Gaol Lighting Design, Dublin*

#### External Lighting

The use of external lighting is recommended to highlight the historic Markethouse, and to help it to stand out in its important central setting. This lighting should be carefully considered, to avoid damage to the external walls, and to avoid vandalism in the exposed location

## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

### 1.0 Rehabilitation of the Market House



#### Internal Finishes and Features

It is recommended that the internal plan of the Markethouse be returned as much as possible to its original layout. This will entail stripping back all of the linings and partitions dating from the late Twentieth Century, and renewal of all damaged or missing internal wall, floor and ceiling finishes. There are some structural cracks in the ground floor internal stone walls which will require attention. On the ground floor, the existing concrete floors should be broken up and removed, to allow for a new insulated concrete floor to be installed, over a dpc and radon barrier. Any surviving original stone floor paving should be carefully lifted and considered for reinstatement, along with the installation of new stone paving slabs of the same stone type, throughout of the ground floor. The internal walls should be re-plastered using insulating lime renders, with improved thermal properties. Any surviving original lime renders should be retained where possible, particularly on internal partitions.

The timber floor structure of the first floor should be carefully surveyed by a structural engineer to determine if additional supports are required. The presence of Twentieth-Century steel beams was noted in the ceiling of the former garage, suggesting that the original joists were insufficient in their structural capacity. Similarly, the roof structure should be carefully assessed by a structural engineer with experience in building conservation. It is recommended that the first-floor ceilings are raised up to their original heights, to be lined with modern skimmed plasterboard finishes. Thermal insulation should be added above the first-floor ceilings.

All new building services are required, including new wiring, plumbing and heating, throughout. New fire alarms and emergency lighting will be required, along with whatever lighting and electrical services are required for the proposed new uses.



#### External Masonry Walls

It is recommended that all of the 20th century renders are removed from the external walls and replaced by new natural lime and aggregate wet dash render. After removal of the current rough dashed render, the original rubble stone masonry will require a small amount of patching and repointing to provide a solid base for the lime wet dash. The specification for the wet dash render will include a scratch coat of natural lime and sand, followed by two or three coats of wet dash. The lime can consist of NHL 3.5 plus a small amount of lime putty, or a hot lime mix of quick lime pellets and sand mixed on site. After the wet dash has set, there will be approximately 4-6 coats of lime wash external coating.



# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 2.0 Rehabilitation of Market Square

### 2.1 Design Approach: Market Square

The Strategy proposes to remake the Market Square as a place which is usable as a public amenity and event space. Existing traffic movements should be reconfigured within the square to increase the usable space provided to pedestrians while still providing turning movements required for vehicles. It is also proposed to rationalise design in the public realm to eliminate clutter and to design street surfaces, landscape features, and traffic management interventions in a coordinated and strategic approach, aimed at improving the look of private properties via a council framework within the public realm

Key Interventions are:

- A reinforcement of the visual and physical connection to the Church of Ireland site and the architectural landmark of the Savoy Cinema;
- Reduce the number of car parking spaces and move same to alternative, more appropriate locations;
- Optimise the use of space to feature outdoor dining elements and a variety of standing and seating areas;
- Conservation and rejuvenation of the former Market House;
- Provision of a significant civic event space within the historic town core as a venue for markets, small concerts, etc.; and
- Better integration of Main street and French Church Street and St. Paul’s and Saint Michael’s Churches.

The following provides details on the proposed interventions in the Strategy:



#### Buildings & Space

The buildings around the square need to engage with the public space of the Market square through ground floor uses and design that reaches out (physically and/or perceptively) into the public realm. Effective use of building forecourts, parklets, and partial closure of the public realm can assist not only to activate the space, but also to create a vibrant townscape which is more welcoming. Windproof retractable awnings attached to buildings aligned with street level containment elements will also help ensure outdoor seating, standing areas and circulation corridors are sheltered.



#### Flexibility / Adaptability

Existing public spaces and key buildings need to be able to refocus their purpose from an operational perspective to allow for different events and experiences.

Vehicular access and parking for shopping, businesses and visitors must be balanced with traffic dominance and congestion, and the need for attractive and safe pedestrian environments, centred on Portarlington’s market square. A traffic policy to reduce the location and volume of traffic is central to the delivery of a people-focused town instead of one dominated by cars.



#### Laneways

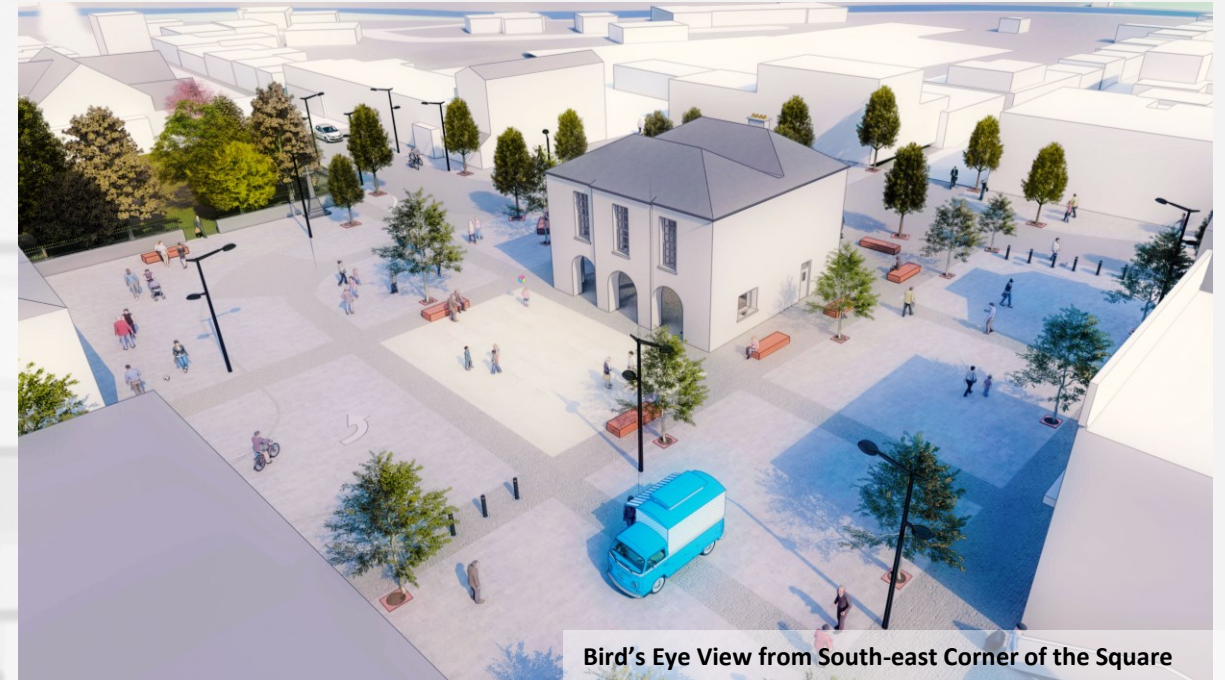
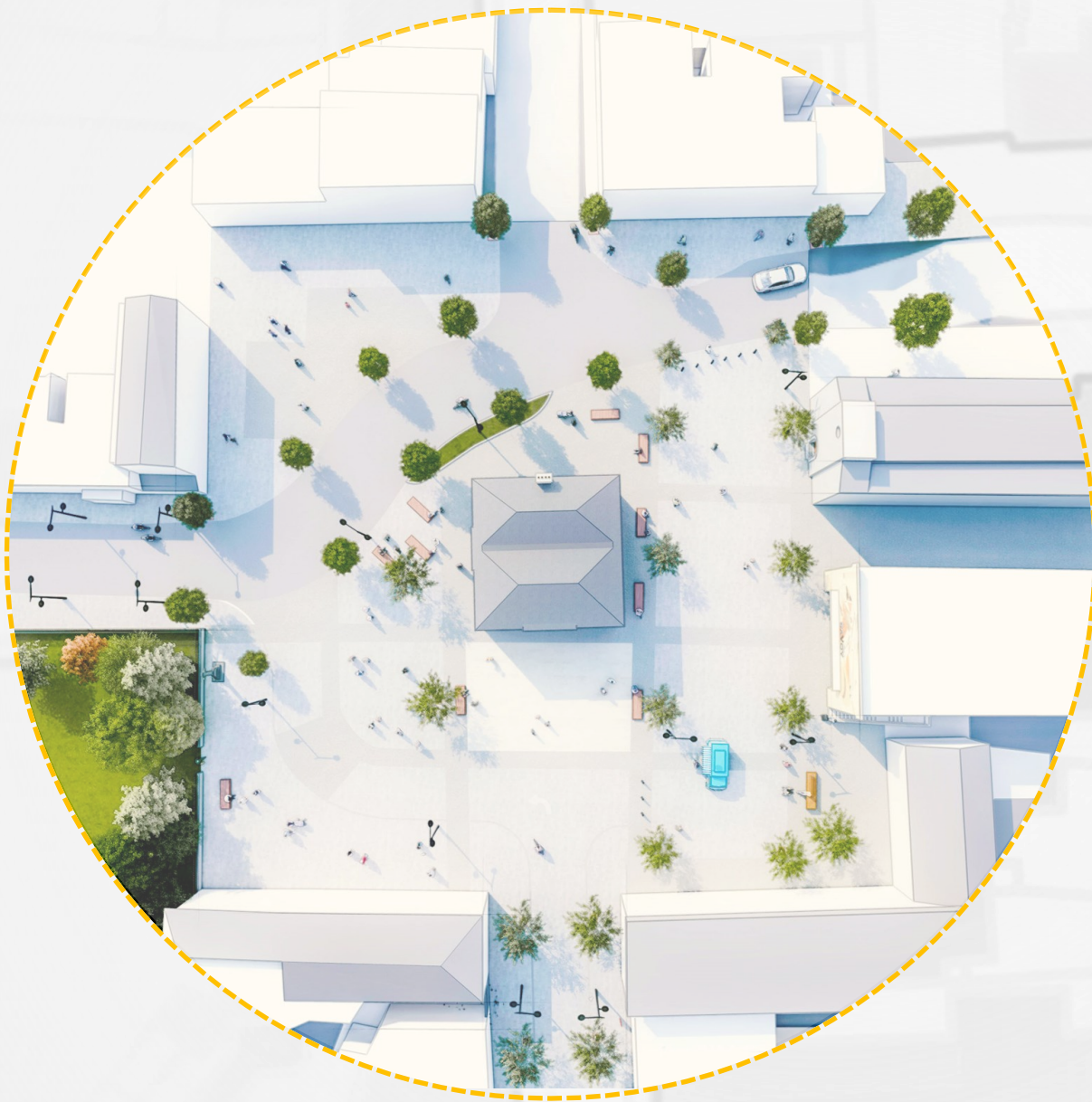
The public realm works should be extended to take in the laneway between Saint Michael’s Church and the Savoy Cinema with pedestrian connection through to the Link Road. There are opportunities to extend and reimagine the activities and use of these buildings within the community.

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 2.0 Rehabilitation of Market Square

### 2.2 Artistic Impression of Conceptual Design for Market Square

The following images provide an artistic impression of the conceptual design of the Market House and Square. It is envisaged that the Market House and Square will become a multi-purpose space for the Town which can facilitate a range of commercial, tourist and leisure facilities. It will be a meeting place for the residents of the Town and a place of interest for visitors to converge.



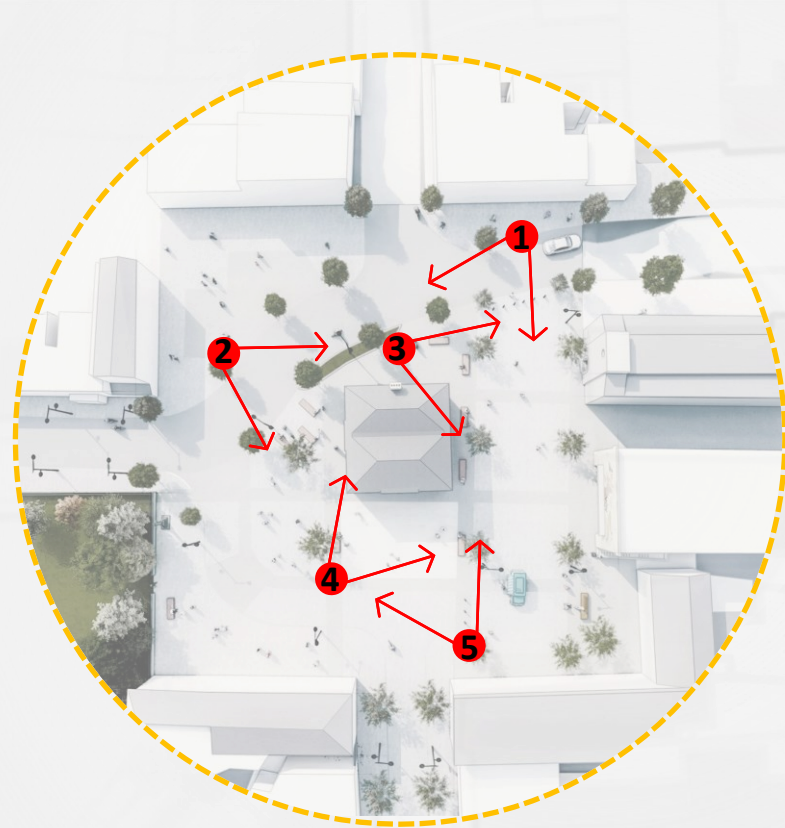
Bird's Eye View from South-east Corner of the Square



Bird's Eye View from South-west Corner of the Square

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 2.0 Rehabilitation of Market Square



# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 2.0 Rehabilitation of Market Square

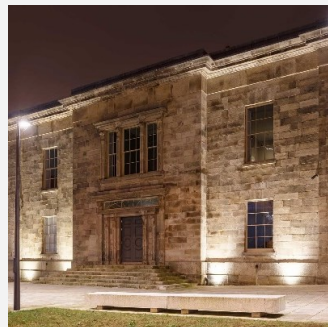
### 2.3 The Public Realm within Market Square

This is to be achieved through a series of actions as follows:



**W**ayfinding and Signage

Clear simple directional wayfinding signage should be introduced with Market Square as the starting point. This will guide and inform the public and tourists through the Town Centre's public spaces and highlight significant places of interest. Anticipated tourism walking and cycling ways including support transport links, parks, and car parking should also be highlighted. A Marketing Plan should be undertaken to assess and provide signage and interpretative experiences for the public leading from Market Square to the various social, cultural, and heritage amenities in the area. Wayfinding signs should include travel times to important amenities within the area. All unnecessary and unsightly signage should be removed. Well considered finger post directional signage is advised, being functional, but is not overly dominant on the streetscape. Clear guidelines on signage should be considered for retailers and businesses to advise on suitable scale, size and dominance, specific to their individual building.



**L**ighting

For Market Square, with the removal of the overhead power lines, there is opportunity to upgrade the public lighting, with more relevant and attractive street lighting, enhancing the Square's identity and character. Impactful contemporary lamps should be positioned to provide appropriate directional lighting within the Market Square and extended into the public realm works on Main Street. Indirect lighting should be incorporated into the public realm hard landscape works, to include street furniture, benches, etc including up lighting to accentuate Trees, Pathways, and Building frontages within the Square, in particular the Market House, as outlined on the Figure 18 shown here. The restoration of the Savoy Cinema sign with individual lighting could be reviewed as part of any restoration works to the Cinema.



**S**treet Furniture

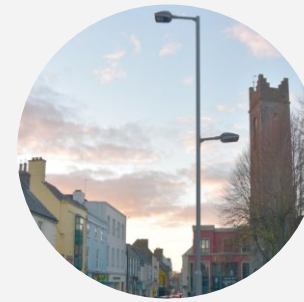
Market Square will become a pedestrian friendly zone with bollards to demarcate traffic control zones and protect newly introduced pedestrian areas. It is advisable to minimise the bollard types to one- or two-unit types with a limited height depending on location. Retractable bollards can be used where a space provides for multiple uses such as annual festival, weekly farmers markets. Street furniture should be modern and contemporary where possible, natural materials such as timber and stone should be used. Timber is preferred as it is more comfortable to sit on, particularly in colder weather. Bike stands should also be included in Market Square to encourage sustainable modes of transport and a suitable environment to secure bikes while visiting the area. These stands should be minimalist and contemporary. There is opportunity to introduce a drinking fountain and solar bins at this location also.



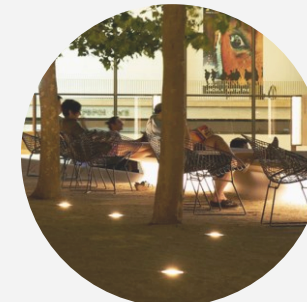
**G**reen Infrastructure

New tree planting can breathe new life into public realm areas and help to reinvigorate the area, by visually softening the streetscape. Tree planting, hanging baskets and window boxes along shopfronts can also have positive effects on local biodiversity in the area, with carefully selected species catering to pollinators and birds. Soft landscaping should be incorporated into the Market Square area to soften the landscape and enhance the proposed new shared space. The soft landscaping should include numerous trees of varying species, to provide year-round interest.

Single-post Streetlight With directional lights



Hardwood Bench seating throughout



Contemporary Minimalist Design for Bike Stands

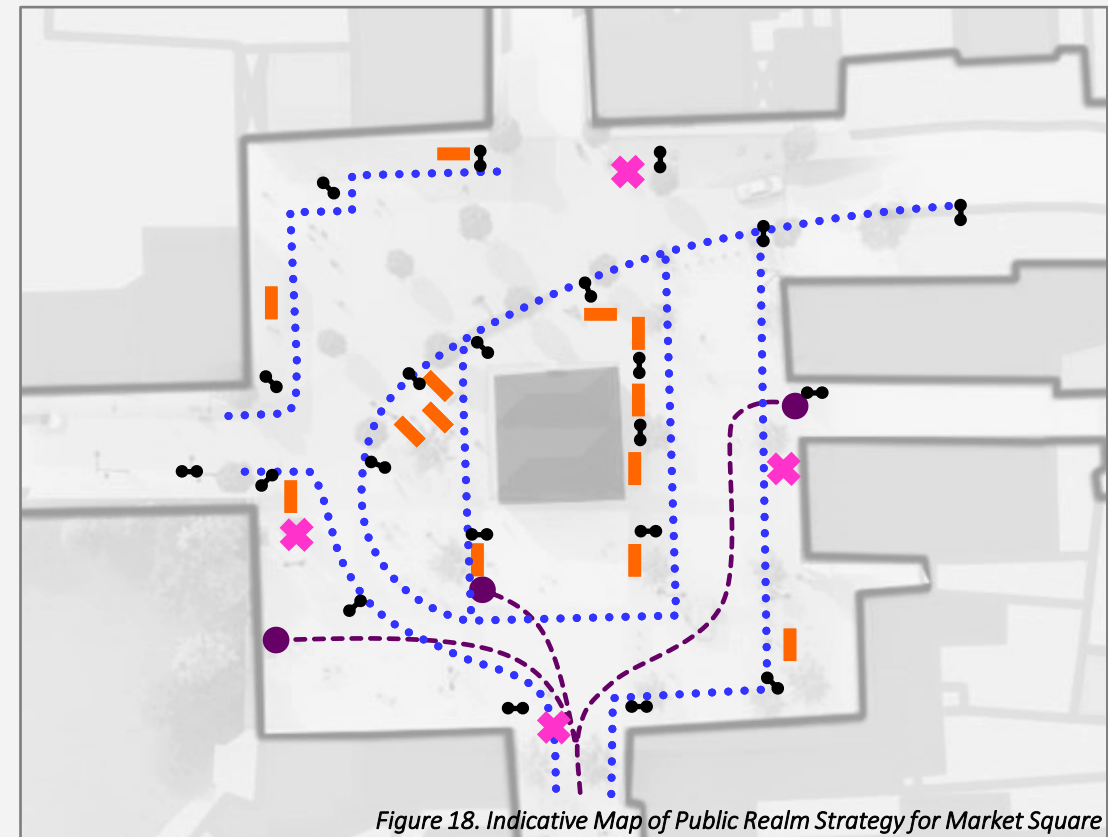
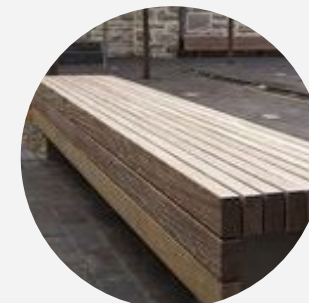


Figure 18. Indicative Map of Public Realm Strategy for Market Square

**Legend**

- Single-post Streetlights with Directional Lights
- ✕ Fingerpost Wayfinding Signage
- Historical interpretation Signage
- Hardwood Bench Seating
- Uplighters



Hardwood Bench seating throughout

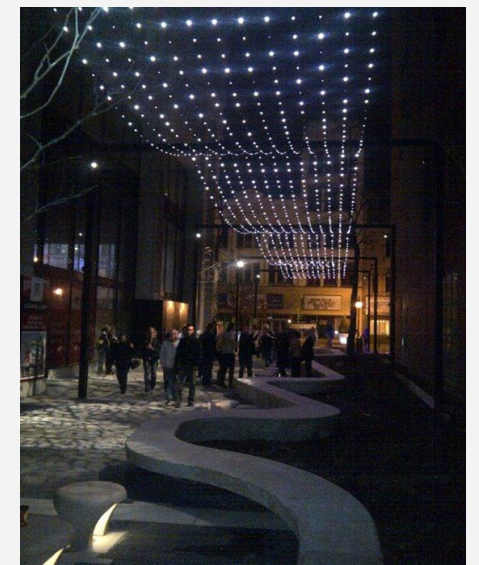


Historical interpretation Signage

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

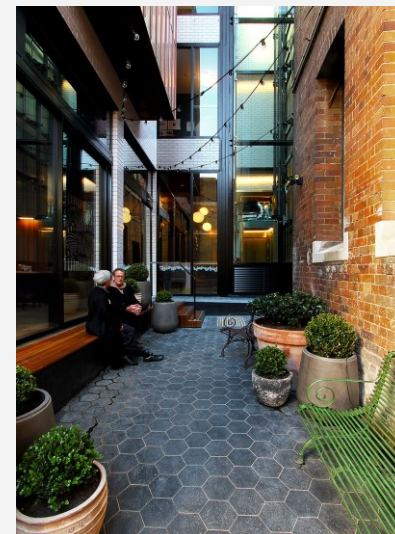
## 2.0 Rehabilitation of Market Square

### 2.4 The Public Realm: Church Lane



#### Church Lane

The enhancement of this laneway with cohesive surface treatment, soft and hard landscaping and appropriate signage and lighting will encourage its use and promote further development of businesses and amenities within the town, it will allow for the town to further promote network connectivity. Compared to main streets, lanes are more conducive to a human scale, with narrow widths limiting vehicular access and favouring pedestrian movement. There are opportunities for activating the lanes through material interventions, animating pockets of space through the provision of outdoor dining and a variety of standing and seating areas, and event programming. A similar treatment should be considered for the numerous laneways along Main Street.



# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 2.0 Rehabilitation of Market Square

### 2.5 Opportunity Sites within Market Square

The following provides a list of heritage properties and opportunity sites that can complement the re-development of Market Square. These are key buildings which should be renovated and re-used, to allow for the success of the renovation of the Market House and Market Square, in providing a main focal point and new multi-purpose urban quarter for Portarlington Town.

**OS 1: Market House:** Built to serve as a Market House and Town Hall. Converted to a motor repair shop in 1990 with living accommodation on the first floor. Could provide key facilities to the Town and will act as a catalyst in the re-development of Market Square, as outlined in Principal Action 1.0 above.

**OS 2: Savoy Cinema:** The Cinema was opened in 1945 and has been left unused for over 25 years. Local Artist ADW created a mural on the front façade in 2019, inspired by the 1992 Irish Movie, 'Into the West' which shot some of its scenes inside of the cinema. Currently vacant but could provide an opportunity for its re-use as a commercial, cultural or amenity space with provision for ancillary facilities for the Town.

**OS 3: Old Hotel:** Detached five-bay, three-storey Georgian House, constructed c.1780, renovated c.1900. Listed on NIAH as regionally important. Laois County Council issued a decision to grant planning permission on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2021 (planning File Ref: 20346), for the renovation and conversion of the Hotel to 3no. apartments and the construction of 15 houses to its rear, along with 27 car-parking spaces and vehicular and pedestrian access off Market Square.

**OS 4: St. Michael's Church:** St. Michael's Church of Ireland is located at the NE angle of the Square. The present building was constructed in c.1830 on the site of the earlier seventeenth century Church built for English settlers. It is listed on the NIAH as a building of regional importance. It is now in use as a community Hall and could provide additional amenities to the Town.

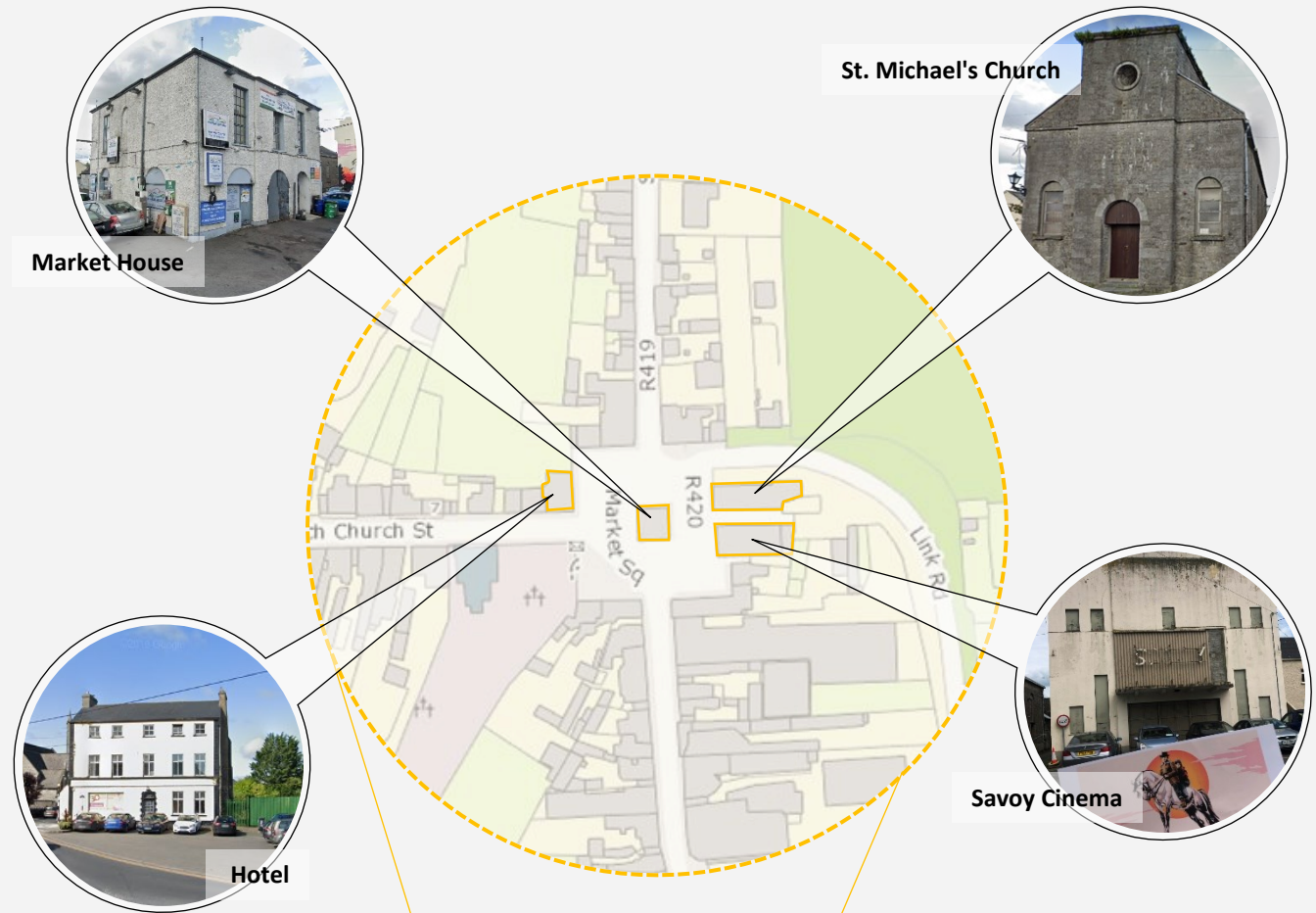


Figure 19. Opportunity Sites within the Study Area

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 3.0 Improve the Public Realm within the Town Centre

This is to be achieved through a series of actions as follows:

1. Re-design the public realm leading to Market Square to create a welcoming space;
2. Footpath upgrade on Main Street;
3. Develop a facade enhancement scheme for the Town;
4. Provision of outdoor dining areas and animating building forecourts;
5. Designate pedestrian crossings;
6. Develop a lighting strategy for the Town;
7. Develop a wayfinding and signage strategy for the Town;
8. Enhance the connecting streets through use of consistent paving materials, street furniture, lighting, and signage;
9. Identify new car parking spaces, re-surface existing car-parks with permeable surfaces;
10. Create new linkages - to river walk, Derrycastle, Lea Castle.

Some of these actions are reflected in the conceptual images below:



Animating streets with outdoor dining areas  
(Left: Costigan's outdoor area, Cork;  
Top Right: Princes Street, Cork;  
Bottom Right: Union Quay, Cork)

Utilising a bright color palette to the shopfronts  
(Left: A traditional shopfront in Youghal, East Cork;  
Top Right: Shopfronts in Clonakilty, West Cork;  
Bottom Right: A traditional shopfront in Cork, Co. Cork)

These action are reflected in the following parts of the study area:



View from Main Street to Market Square

View from Main Street to Link Road

View from Arlington House to Market Square

View from Spa Street to Market Square

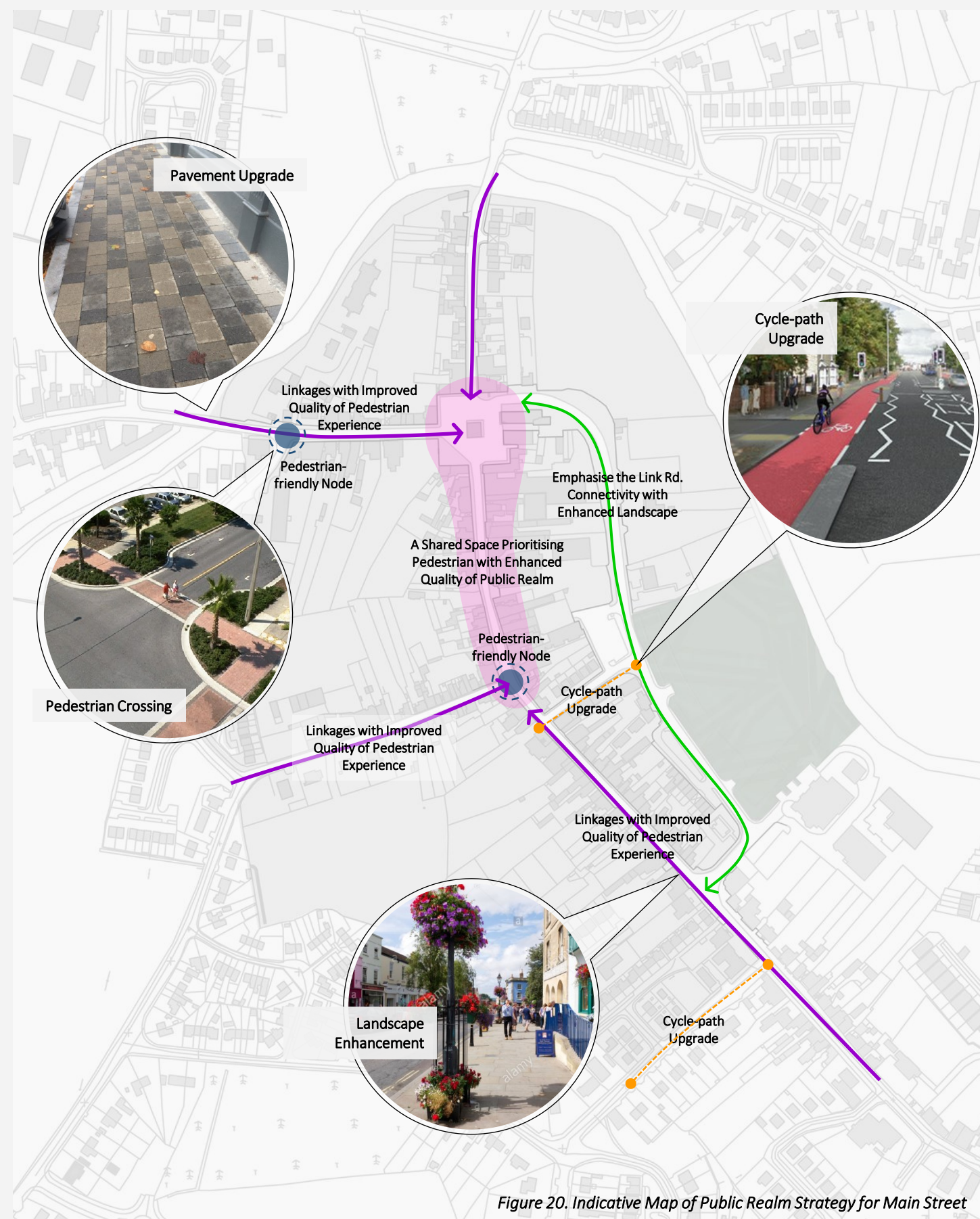


Figure 20. Indicative Map of Public Realm Strategy for Main Street

## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

### 3.0 Improve the Public Realm within the Town Centre

#### 3.1 The Public Realm: Vacant Buildings & Shop Fronts



#### Vacant Buildings & Shop Fronts

There are numerous buildings within the study area which have become vacant and derelict and are detracting from the visual environment of the streetscape. The shopfront forms an important part of a street's character, as it constitutes a highly visible part of the building at street level. The streetscape should have active frontages, such as shops or businesses, to provide a visual or physical interaction between the ground floor and public space offering opportunity for diverse and independent businesses. Public Realm works will further enhance these and could encourage outdoor dining along Main street where appropriate. Shopfronts which are well designed and maintained make for a more attractive street for the shopper and passer-by and are of particular importance due to the visually dominant role which retail plays in a town or village streetscape. Building owners should be encouraged to retain and restore all good quality historic shopfronts, whether protected or not. Regular maintenance is essential to avoid deterioration.



# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 3.0 Improve the Public Realm within the Town Centre

### 3.2 The Public Realm: Former AIB Bank Site



#### Former Bank Building

The town's streetscape character is undermined by both excessive traffic and the neglect of heritage buildings and the network of town laneways. It is worth considering the introduction of public realm works to reinforce the Town's positive characteristics where opportunities arise. One such location is at the former AIB Bank building, where public realm works integrated with the recently permitted residential scheme, the opening up of a lane connection and the introduction of a pocket park along the lane will encourage alternative pedestrian routes and facilitate pedestrian connectivity beyond Main street and to the opportunity site to the rear.



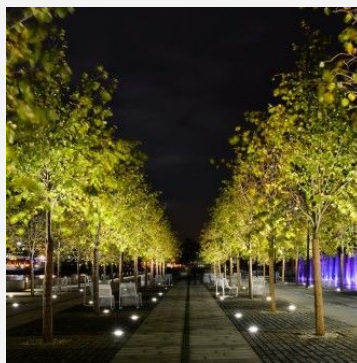
# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 3.0 Improve the Public Realm within the Town Centre



Wayfinding and Signage

As with the Market Square, a wayfinding and signage strategy should be developed for the whole town, in association with Offaly County Council. This signage strategy should provide a legible and cohesive plan to provide clear directional wayfinding signage throughout the Town. Wayfinding signs should include travel times to important amenities within the area, including those identified on the heritage trail proposed in Principal Action 7.0. All unnecessary and unsightly signage should be removed around the Town, including the Link Road. Well considered finger post directional signage is advised, being functional, but is not overly dominant on the streetscape. Heritage signage should be effective but minimal in appearance, and strategically placed. Clear guidelines on signage should be considered for retailers and businesses to advise on suitable scale, size and dominance, specific to their individual building and should include guidelines to prevent superfluous and repeated advertising signage in the town.



Lighting

Chosen street lighting should be appropriate to the towns identity and character. It is important to establish a cohesive lighting strategy, in conjunction with Offaly County Council, that can generate appropriate lighting for everyday activity, particular cultural events and safety. The lighting types and specification should remain consistent across the public realm. Up lighting can be deployed successfully along building perimeters and edges to illuminate and enhance the character of key buildings and streetscapes on Main Street, French Church Street , the link road and other roads.



Street Furniture

Street furniture should be modern and contemporary where possible, natural materials such as timber and stone should be used. Timber is preferred as it is more comfortable to sit on, particularly in colder weather. Bike stands should also be provided at strategic locations around the town to encourage sustainable modes of transport and a suitable environment to secure bikes while visiting the area. These stands should be minimalist and contemporary.



Green Infrastructure

New tree planting can breathe new life into public realm areas and help to reinvigorate the area, by visually softening the streetscape. Tree planting, hanging baskets and window boxes along shopfronts can also have positive effects on local biodiversity in the area, with carefully selected species catering to pollinators and birds. There is evidence of successful efforts to introduce soft landscaping and biodiversity friendly inputs throughout the town and this should be re-enforced and expanded where possible. Soft landscaping should be focused on Main Street and all roads leading to Main Street. Where applicable, it is suggested the number of on-street car-parking spaces should be reduced to provide adequate room for new street trees.

## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

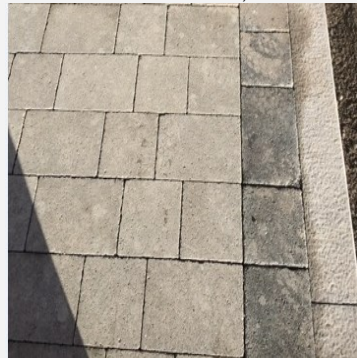
### 3.0 Improve the Public Realm within the Town Centre



Along the link road, new native hedging, floral wildflower and tree enhancements should be introduced to provide a more cohesive visual environment. Hedge planting along the link road, as well as within car-parks can provide a pleasant screening and has been successful along the frontage to the People's Park. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 (National Biodiversity Data Series) provides a useful set of guidelines for improving both proposed & existing local Biodiversity in our towns and cities. Particular emphasis should be placed on providing Pollinator friendly Flora, in the forms of hanging baskets and wildflower meadows to the proposed River Barrow trail and green spaces. Maintenance of hedgerows and mowing of lawns and removal of plant litter should be revised to ensure wildlife and Pollinators can thrive locally. Habitat creation (such as Bug hotels) are proven ways to promote site-wide biodiversity.

#### Biodiversity

*Irish Blue Limestone, Flamed Finish*



*Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin*



Proposed paving should aim to be harmonious with surroundings architecture and site context. A neutral paving palette aims to subtly enhance the streetscape and not visually dominate it. High quality natural stone products will help to accentuate the unique architecture of Portarlington. Materials such as Irish Blue Limestone, grey granite banding (and kerbing) typically work well together and bring about a timeless character that will ensure longevity into the future. Large flag paving should be avoided, particularly to spaces that are open to traffic. Medium sized pavers are suggested for Major public spaces & public pavements. Setts and smaller sized units are desired for carriageways and trafficable spaces, including shared space zones. Granite kerbs are highly recommended in Public realm improvements as they ensure high durability, a long lifespan and have a timeless quality.

#### Paving



Shared spaces can successfully help improve the sense of safety and increase walkability for pedestrians and cyclists, to encourage visits to the town centre and its wider attractions on-foot or by bike. It is suggested that Main Street should receive this treatment in conjunction with Market Square. The introduction of a shared space on Main Street provides for an enhanced public realm experience for visitors and business in the Town. Secondary streets such as French Church Street and Spa Street should remain trafficable to ensure easy access in and around the town. Shared spaces and pedestrian crossings encompass a change in surface materials and are effective in highlighting pedestrian friendly zones. By removing traffic and the need for excessive on-street parking, spaces can be provided for additional landscaping, improving the public realm and increasing biodiversity within this area. In Shared spaces, it is recommended that the maximum upstand for kerbs be no more than 6mm above the carriageway, which will help define the carriageway (particularly to visually impaired and disabled users) whilst also helping to prioritise pedestrian safety and lower vehicular traffic speeds.

#### Traffic Calming Measures

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 4.0 Promote Sustainable Access and mobility

This is to be achieved through a series of scenarios as the following:

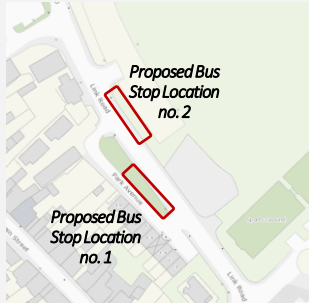
- Scenario 1: Development of the Town Centre by creating a shared space and an improved public realm, i.e., provision of street furniture, tree-planting, street lighting, and new paving, Carry out structural repairs and improvement to the existing carriageway on Main Street, Existing services should be formalised with extra ducting provided to ensure the new surfaces remain intact Promote bus service routes in the local level by provision of new bus stops.
- Scenario 2: Removal of surface car parking spaces from the Town Centre, while allowing for deliveries and providing for road for vulnerable road users, Provision of alternative public car parking space (potential car parking spaces are shown on the Figure) Facilitate access to the Town Centre from alternative public parking spaces through pedestrian links
- Scenario 3: Pedestrianisation of the Main Street and Market Square by introducing a one-way system around the Town Centre as a long-term vision following the implementation of the scenarios 1 and 2 in the short- to medium-term.

For further details see: Appendix 2.

Moreover, it is proposed that,

1. Laois and Offaly County Councils to prepare a Local Transport Study for the town of Portarlington;
2. Better integrate the Link Road within the town centre by providing for accessibility;
3. Create new access routes and interlinks (this is marked by potential lanes on the diagram);
4. Enhance River accessibility by providing a consistent blue walkway (see Principal Action 8.0);
5. Improve Derrycastle connections to the Town Centre with Offaly County Council;
6. Integrate identified measures from the Public Realm Strategy.

These are reflected in the following conceptual images of the study area.



**Link Road**  
Provision of new bus stops on the Link Road



**Park Lane**  
The junction with Main Street should be upgraded as shown in Appendix 2.



**Potential Lane 1**  
This potential lane would link Main Street with the opportunity site at the back of the streetscape.



**Centra Lane**  
An existing access lane between Centra and a car park. This should be linked with the Main Street upgrade and made more pedestrian friendly.



**Church Lane**  
A historical old lane which should be linked directly from the revitalised Market Square to the Link Road



**Potential Lane 2**  
The potential for provision of this link should be investigated as it would provide a pedestrian link from the east side of the town, via Centra Car-park to the town centre.

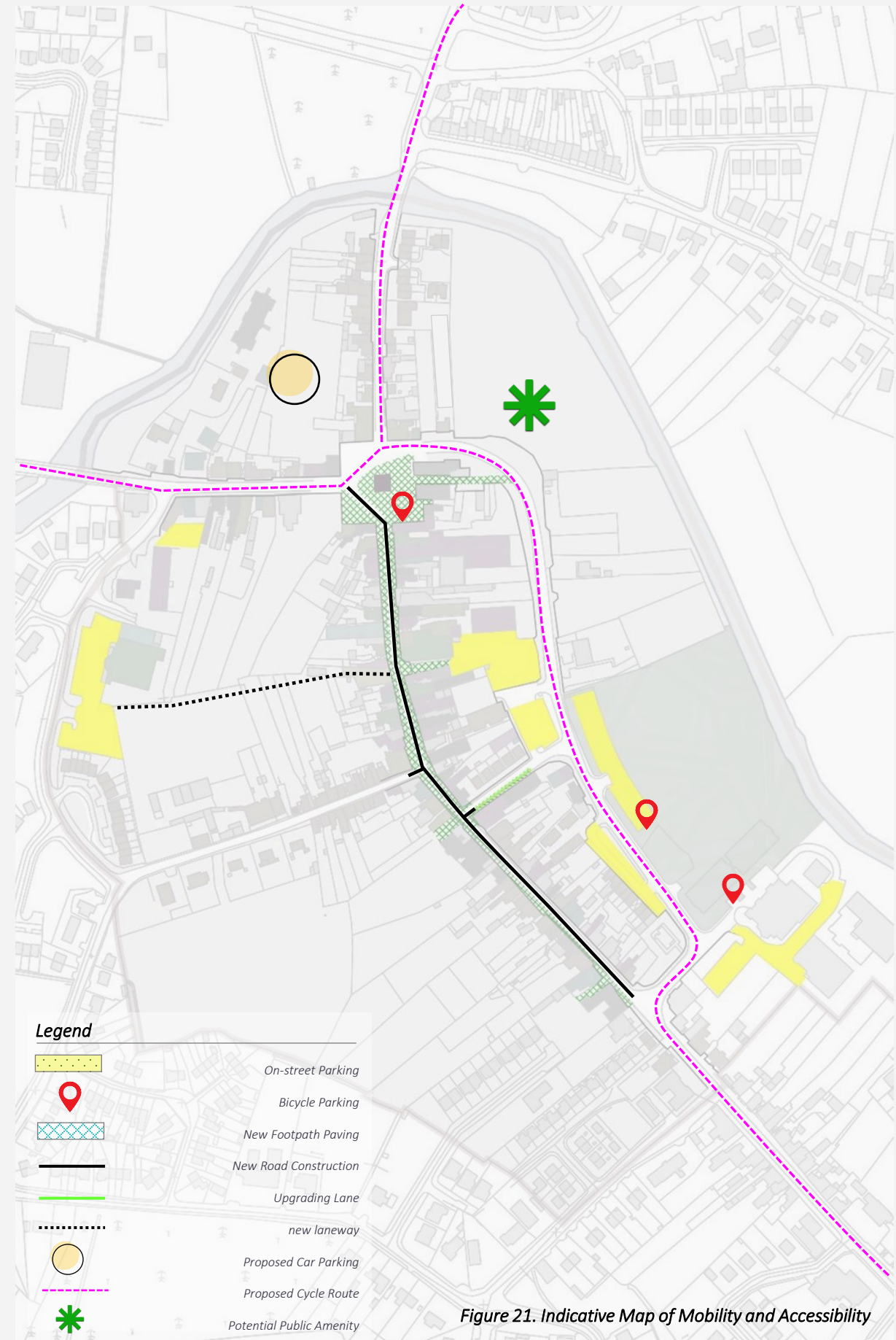


Figure 21. Indicative Map of Mobility and Accessibility

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 4.0 Promote Sustainable Access and mobility



**L**ink Road

The link road is dominated by traffic and car parks. The building typology is a mismatch of many different styles with a lack of active frontages. Pedestrian navigation is an issue and impacts on the safe level of walkability. As outlined in section 3.0, new public realm enhancements should be introduced to improve the visual and pedestrian amenity at this location. New traffic calming measures should be provided, including additional pedestrian crossings to improve walkability and encourage visits to the town centre and wider attractions. The Link road is wide enough to accommodate 2 cycle lanes on either side and should be looked upon as an important transitional route for visitors to Derryounce and to cyclists in any future trail upgrades along the River Barrow. The mis-match of car-parks along this road, makes it hard for pedestrians to move throughout the area. Shared space linkages within car-parks can help delineate a more defined walking network for shoppers and on-foot visitors. A re-configured network of pathways and clearly defined parking spaces would benefit the experience of visiting the area.



**B**lue Trail Upgrade

The River Barrow is an important, but largely underutilized asset of Portarlington. Improving accessibility to the River would encourage an increase in on-foot visitors, contributing to more active lifestyles. It is envisaged the trail could extend as far as Lea Castle and provide a direct link with Derryounce lakes and its associated trail. Consideration would need to be given to the environmental sensitivity of this area and its tendency to flood the surrounding area, including the People's Park. Any development at this location would be subject to stringent environmental assessments. Subject to these assessments and their mitigation measures, an appropriate strategy could be developed which could provide a pathway to accommodate a variety of users, including pedestrians and cyclists. Docking platforms and seating areas could also be provided for fishing and other water sporting activities. New tree planting and native wildflower meadow planting can further enhance the biodiversity in the area and create a more pleasant trail.



**M**ain Street

As outlined in section 3.0, several public realm enhancements should be introduced at this important location in the core of the Town. Main Street should become a shared surface area, with vehicular access limited to necessary local journeys and deliveries only. The majority of Portarlington's population are living within 1.5km of the town centre, this should be capitalised upon and should encourage a strategy at reducing car-parking. Pedestrians and cyclists should be afforded priority, with designated cycle lanes provided where possible. The removal of car-parking will allow for opportunities for dining and trading to spill out onto the street, providing active and enlivened streetscape.



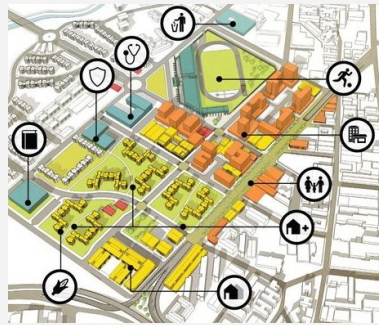
**L**aneways

There are a number of laneways feeding onto Main Street which should be enhanced to promote access and mobility throughout the town. The enhancement of these laneways with cohesive surface treatment, soft and hard landscaping and appropriate signage and lighting will encourage their use and promote further development of businesses and amenities within the town, it will allow for the town to further promote network connectivity.

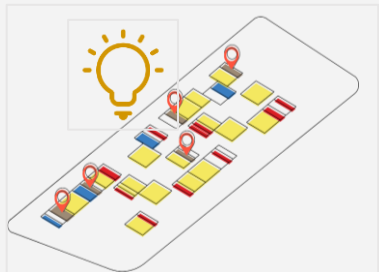
# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 5.0 Promotion of Sustainable Uses in the Town Centre

This is to be achieved through a series of actions as follows:



**1.** Creation and integration of residential zones within the town centre to ensure a sustainable community;



**2.** Identification of opportunity sites to achieve the above;



**3.** Identification of spaces where outdoor dining opportunities can be developed or expanded upon;



**4.** Identification of living over the shop/on street initiatives;



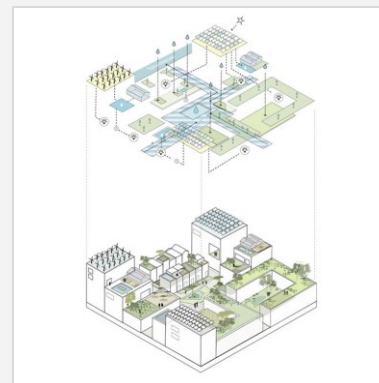
**5.** Creation of a Trailhead in Market Square for interpretation and connection to nearby attractions - Derrycastle Lakes and Trails - Emo Court and its surroundings walks;



**6.** Creation of local food producers' market in an appropriate building or at Market Square;



**7.** Development of remote working and learning solutions, including remote working hubs, digital connectivity;



**8.** Enhancement of community infrastructure within the town centre;



**9.** Promotion of events to celebrate the heritage of Portarlington in key town centre locations.

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 5.0 Promotion of Sustainable Uses within the Town Centre

### 5.1 Opportunity Sites

The following provides a list of heritage properties and opportunity sites that can complement the Town in terms of re-development and to introduce sustainable uses into the Town Centre.

**OS 1. Health Centre**, Detached bungalow set in from French Church Street with laneway access to its west serving private dwellings and the McMahon Apartment complex to the rear. Opportunity for the re-development of this site to provide residential use within the Town. Opportunity to expand the pedestrian links to the River Walk and the Old Hotel on Market Square.

**OS 2. Arlington House**, Detached five-bay, two-storey over basement Georgian House, constructed c.1730. Now derelict. Could provide opportunity for residential or commercial use.

**OS 3. Old AIB Bank**, Planning permission for a change of use to an apartment development was granted in 2019 by Laois County Council for the old Bank AIB site and the adjacent vacant house (former rectory).

**OS 4. Landholding off Foxcroft Street, Main Street & Sandy Lane**, This is a 4.08ha fully serviced, greenfield site. It provides the opportunity to create a sustainable and compact urban quarter with a mix of uses and pedestrian and cycle links to the wider area with proper permeability to the Main Street and the Potential Lane 1.



Opportunity to provide for an additional pedestrian link to river

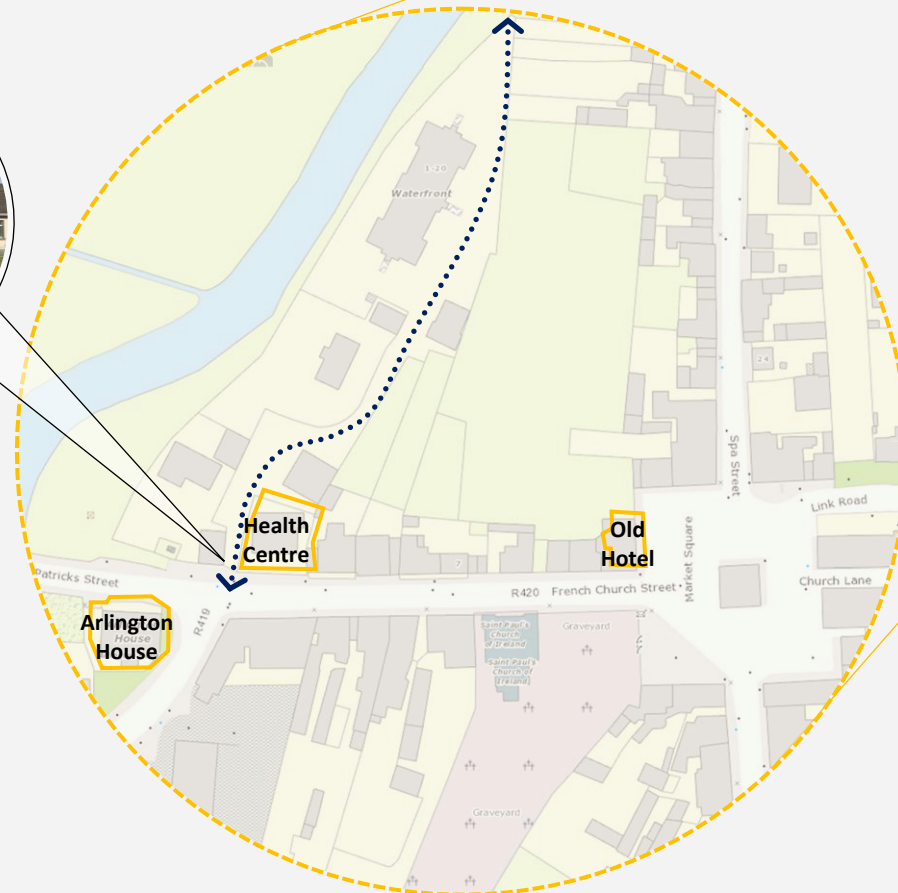


Figure 22. Opportunity Sites within the Study Area

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

## 6.0 Create a Low Carbon Zone

This is to be achieved through a series of actions as follows:



1. Biodiversity planting and incorporation of biodiversity into the public realm;
2. New buildings to comply with Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) Standard;
3. Remove all surface car parking from the Square and provide alternative car parking spaces;



4. Reclaim streets for pedestrians and cyclists;
5. Promote sustainable modes of transport;
6. Provide additional electric car charging points, in conjunction with ESB Networks;



7. Provide additional bus routes and bus stops, including sheltered bus stops;
8. Promote the use of energy efficient heating solutions in public buildings;



9. Promote the efficient use of lands within the Town;
10. Promote recycling and waste minimization mechanisms, a bin strategy should be created for the Town, including appropriate segregation and waste reduction measures;

11. Create a sustainable energy community for Portarlington, which should be informed using smart devices to monitor air quality, traffic and pedestrian movements, and flooding and biodiversity levels.

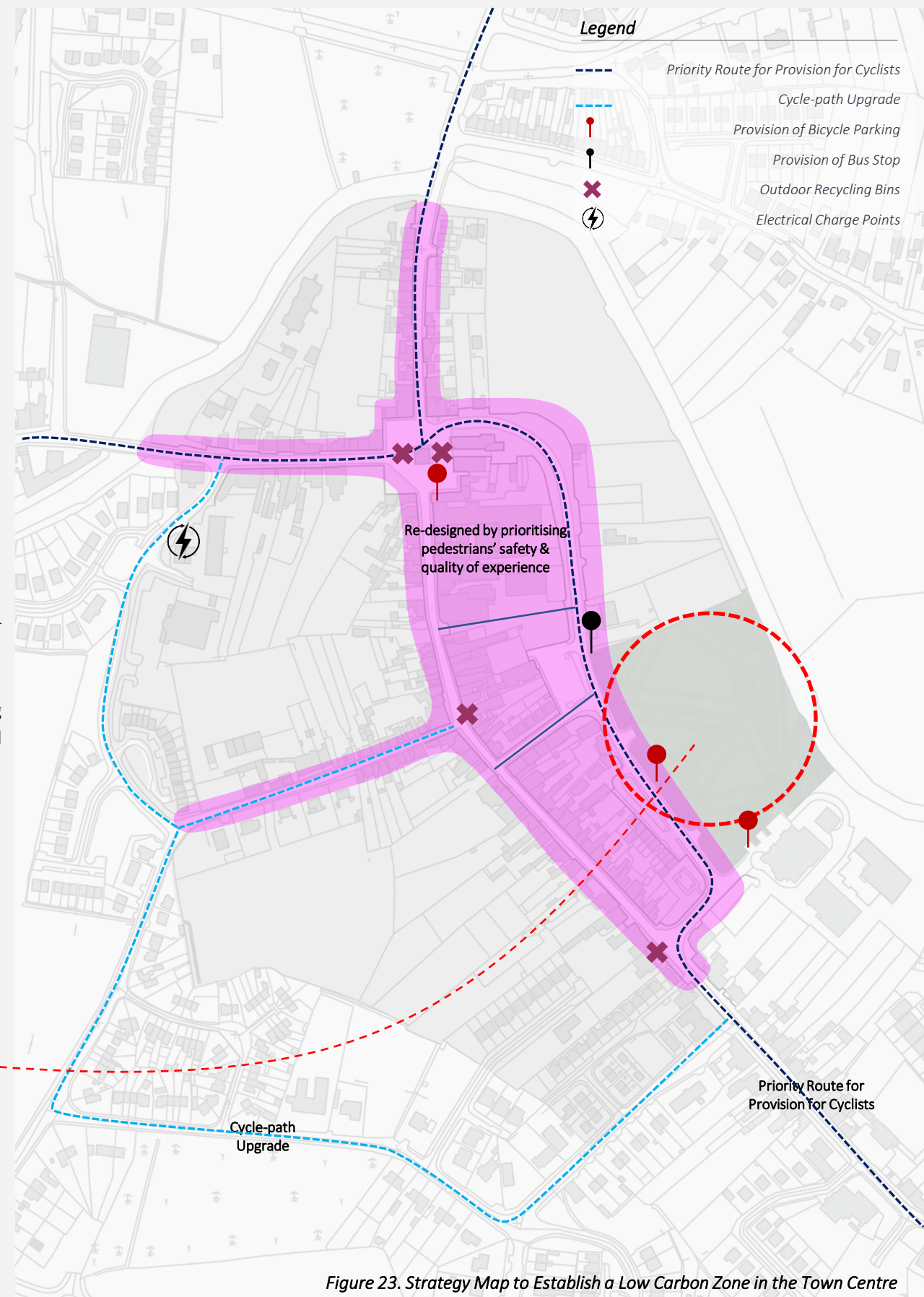
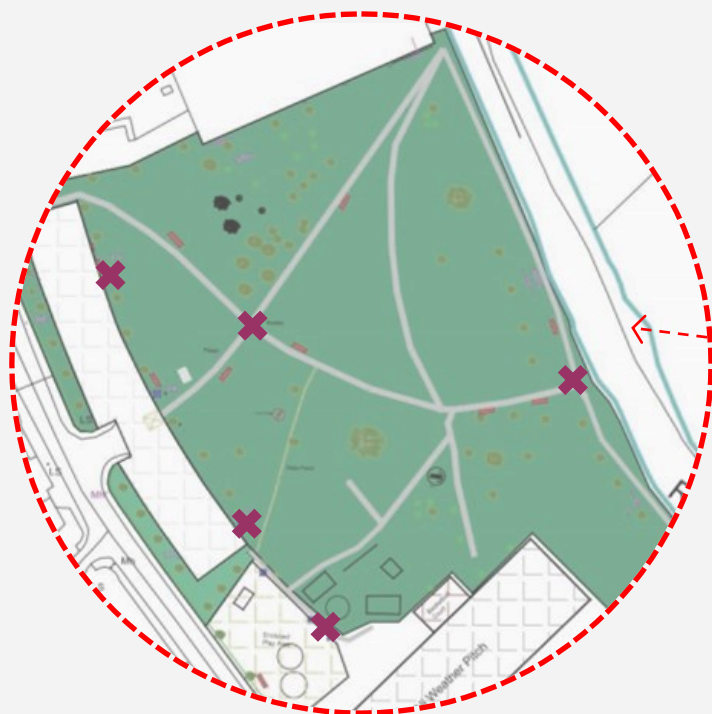


Figure 23. Strategy Map to Establish a Low Carbon Zone in the Town Centre



## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

### 7.0 Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlington

Portarlington was originally founded in 1666 by Henry Bennett, Lord Arlington, on land located in a bend of the River Barrow. Arlington tried to “plant” the town with English and Scottish settlers. He sold the lands to Sir Patrick Trant, a supporter of James II. After William of Orange defeated James II at the Battle of the Boyne (1690), the lands containing Portarlington were seized by the crown and then given to Henri Massue, Marquis de Ruvigny, Earl of Galway and later Baron of Portarlington. Ruvigny decided to offer the town as a refuge to the Huguenots. These French and Flemish protestants had been forced to flee their homes after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which eliminated the right to practice their religion. By 1702, 500 Huguenots lived in Portarlington. The vibrant community they created spread into Offaly, and the surrounding countryside. Portarlington became known for its Public Classical Schools, where the children of well-to-do families were taught the French manners considered desirable in ladies and gentlemen. Portarlington has a rich history with strong influence from Huguenots as evidenced by many of the existing buildings in the Town today.

Celebrating the rich heritage of Portarlington can be achieved through the following actions:

- A Town Heritage Plan should be developed for Portarlington. This Plan should be complimented by an interactive tourist map to showcase the rich heritage of the Town and provide a heritage trail for visitors to the Town. This should be completed in conjunction with Offaly County Council to include important buildings along Patrick Street and further afield;
- Wayfinding signs should be placed within the Town with distances to the respective Heritage points shown;
- The Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlington could be reflected in street art throughout the Town. Maintenance of street art is a consideration that should be addressed so that in time it does not detract from the public realm.
- Heritage Plaques should be erected on buildings of importance with details of the history of the building, this should be linked with the interactive tourist map;
- A museum could be included in the Market House to highlight the heritage and history of the Town with regular presentations from local historians to inform visitors to the Town;
- Historic buildings should be conserved and restored to maintain their important status and historical context within this heritage Town. A full assessment in conjunction with Offaly County Council should be carried out to identify buildings of importance and methods for their renovation and restoration;
- Portarlington's Streetscape forms an important part of its rich historical heritage. There are many examples of buildings with decorative fanlights over elaborate doorways, reflecting their previous status. These extend outside of the study area and into the Offaly County Council area. These important and interesting buildings should form part of any heritage trail.



## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

### 7.0 Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlington

#### 7.1 Important historic features which should be included in any heritage trail



Henri de Massue de Ruvigny, Earl of Galway – detail  
(Courtesy of The owner)



#### French Huguenots

In 1685 Ruvigny, who was deputy general of the Huguenots at the court of Louis XIV in France, emigrated to Ireland and took the opportunity to reconstruct the town of Portarlington, along with his fellow Huguenot Compatriots. The reconstruction was completed in 1698 and included the establishment of an 'English Church' as well as a 'French Church'. By 1702, around 500 Huguenots had settled in Portarlington, and the town was known as the 'Paris of the Midlands'. The French language was commonly spoken, and several French schools were established in the Town.



#### Into the West image on the front of the Old Savoy Cinema

'Into the West' is a successful Irish film about Irish Travellers and was written by playwright, screenwriter, director, and producer, Jim Sheridan. The cinema scene in the film was shot in the Old Savoy Cinema and brought huge excitement to the Town at the time.



#### Portarlington Train Station

Portarlington Train Station is a Victorian railway station complex, built 1850, comprising two ranges of buildings with a former restaurant in one building. Renovated, c. 1995. Designed by Sancton Wood, Portarlington. It is a focal point of the Irish railway network, being situated on the junction for services to the west (Galway, Mayo), the south (Cork, Limerick, Tralee) and the east (Dublin, Kildare).

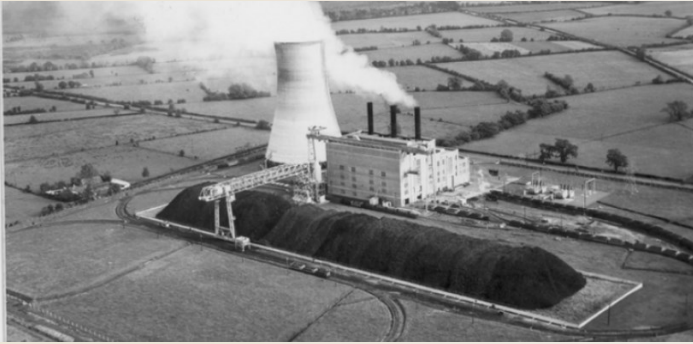


#### Odlums Mill & Museum

The Odlum family first established a mill in Portarlington in 1845. This mill is the last remaining operating commercial flour mill in Ireland today.

## PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

### 7.0 Celebration of the Heritage of Portarlinton



#### ESB Power-Station

Portarlinton Power Station was first opened in 1950 adjoining Clonsast Bog, Portarlinton. It was opened by Minister Daniel Morrissey and at the time was the largest peat fired power station in Western Europe. It was Ireland's first turf-fired generating station, and it was designed to make use of the output of sod peat fuel produced on the bog. At its peak, the station consumed approximately 195,000 tonnes of peat per annum, producing 150 million units of electricity. The Station closed in 1988 and was demolished in 1997.



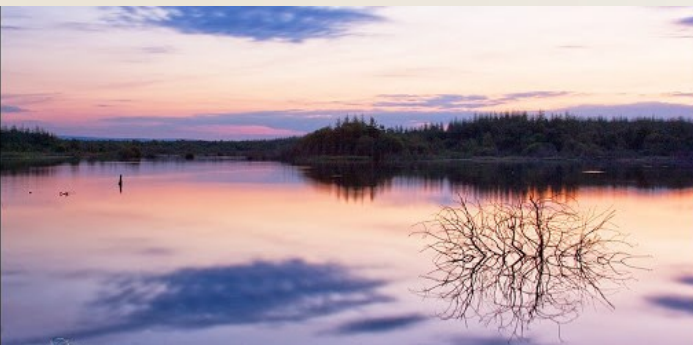
#### Avon Factory

The Avon Arlington facility, which was located on the Canal Road, manufactured costume jewellery and cosmetics. The Avon Arlington factory, which employed up to 800 people at its height, closed in 1999 with the loss of more than 400 jobs. In 2014 the factory was destroyed by a fire and later demolished.



#### Lea Castle

Lea Castle is located along the River Barrow, it is unclear who originally constructed the castle, but it is believed that the castle structure was built by Earl William Marshall and the original earthen structure developed by the Baron of Offaly, Gerald Fitz Maurice. The castle is now in the hands of the local Callanan family.



#### Derrycastle Lake

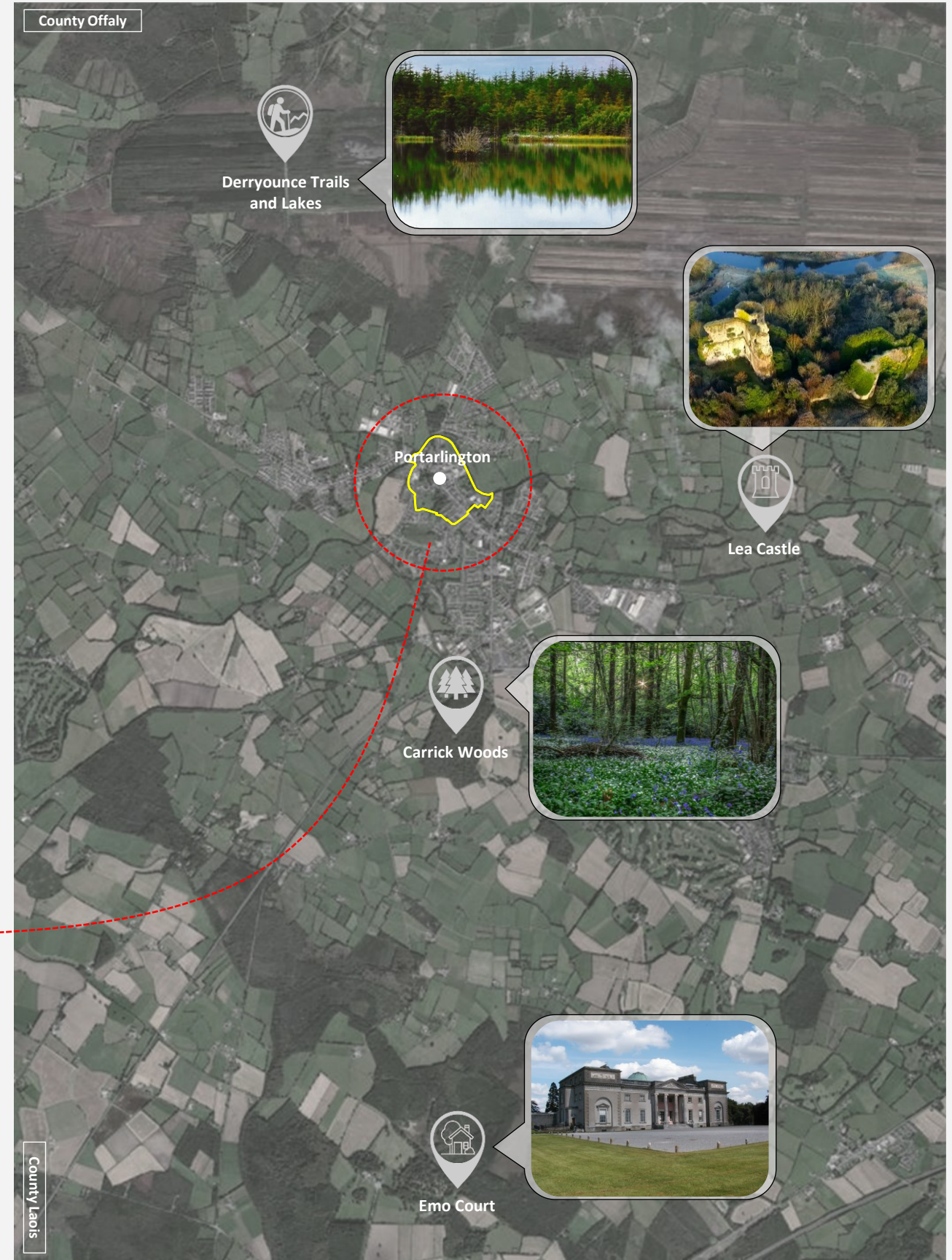
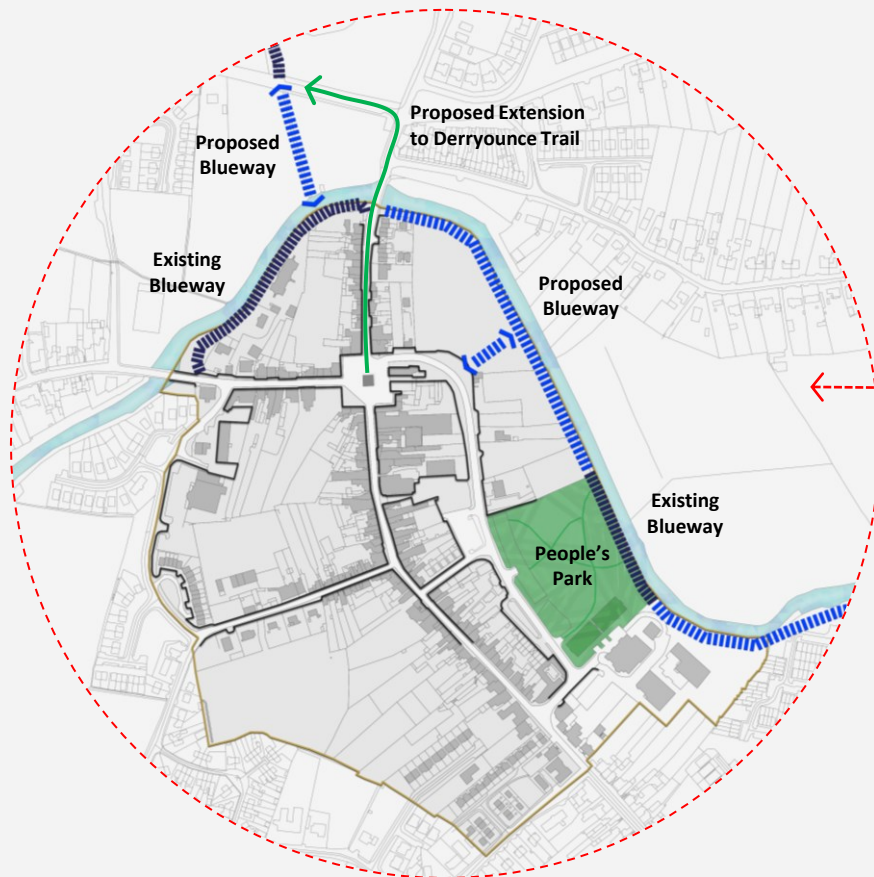
Derrycastle Bog was cut for sod peat production up to the 1980's. After peat production ceased, the central basin area flooded permanently, creating Lough Lurgan. Derrycastle Walks and Lakes are now leased from Bord Na Mona, by Portarlinton Community Development Association. The Lakes and Trails have been developed to provide a valuable asset for the area with amenities for everyone, including, walkers, anglers, naturalists, photographers and people who want to experience its peace, tranquility and Scandinavian vistas.

# PRINCIPAL ACTIONS

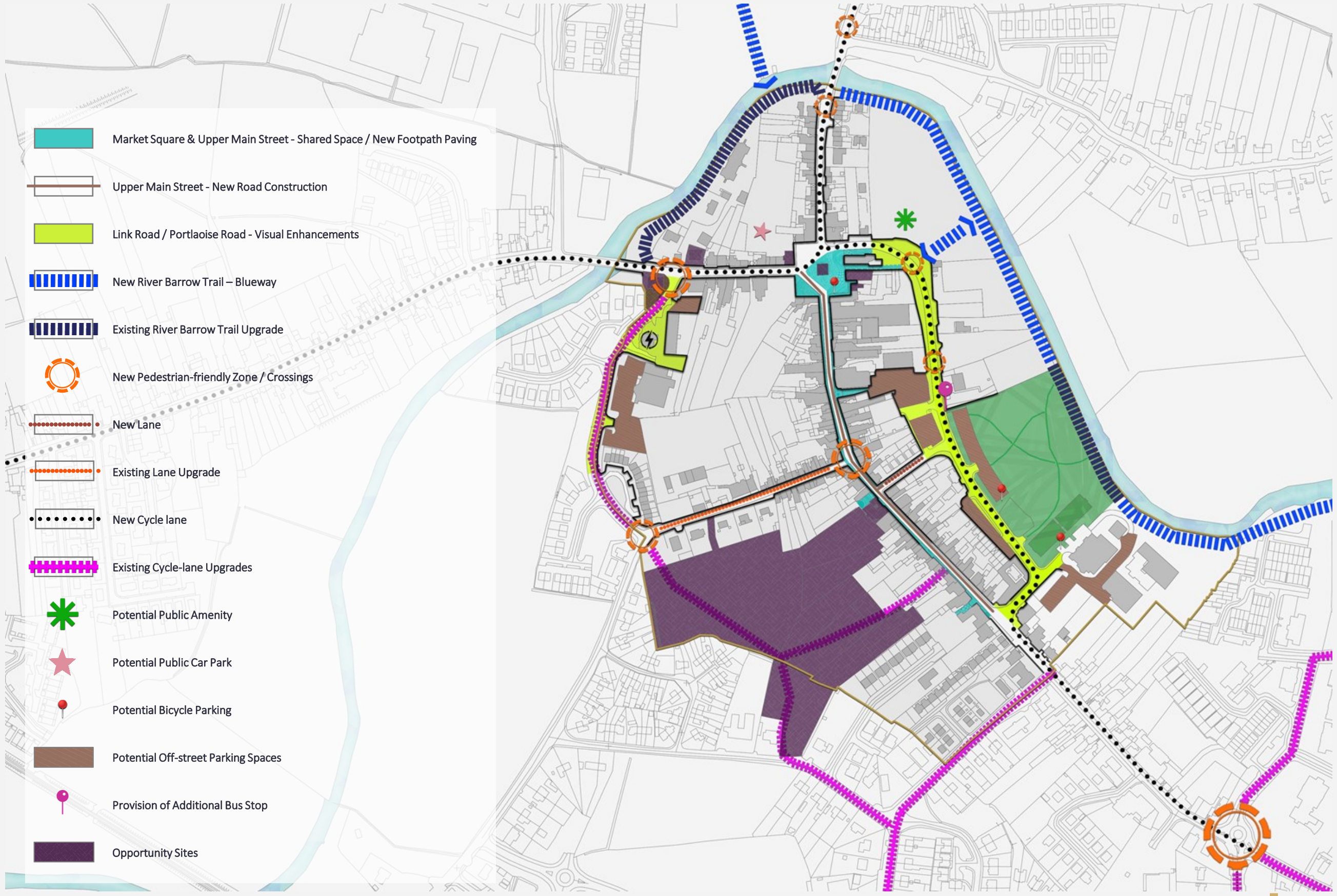
## 8.0 Development of Green/Blue Infrastructure

This is to be achieved through a series of actions as follows:

1. Reinforce the green infrastructure of Portarlinton by enhancing its linkages to the existing heritage including Derryounce Trails and Lakes, Lea Castle, Carrick Wood, and Emo Court. These elements would be the core areas of the ecological network which are to be linked through green corridors;
2. Further promote this ecological network by establishing a hierarchy of green spaces within the town, highlighting People's Park, playgrounds, sport facilities, high profile open spaces, green spaces within the residential areas, and grassed roadside margins;
3. Enhance the eligibility of the above-mentioned core areas of ecological network by installation of proper information boards and signage;
4. Ensure protection, enhancement and maintenance of the green infrastructure and recognizing their diverse benefits through involving the local community within the planning and development process and raising environmental awareness.
5. Promote local knowledge of the native trees by placing tree plaques displaying the name and/or details in English and Irish;
6. Integrate provision for biodiversity with public open space provision and sustainable water management measures (including SuDS) where possible and appropriate.
7. Extend the existing blueway along the River to improve town connection to the River and maximise River Barrow benefits for the local community. Look at possibilities for linking to the national blueway network;
8. Integrate blueway with green infrastructure by native tree planting and incorporating green elements along the Riverwalk;
9. Animate the blue infrastructure by facilitating water-related activities, i.e., canoeing, rowing, angling, etc.



# THE EMERGING STRATEGY




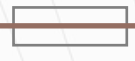




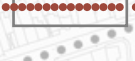









-  Market Square & Upper Main Street - Shared Space / New Footpath Paving
-  Upper Main Street - New Road Construction
-  Link Road / Portlaoise Road - Visual Enhancements
-  New River Barrow Trail – Blueway
-  Existing River Barrow Trail Upgrade
-  New Pedestrian-friendly Zone / Crossings
-  New Lane
-  Existing Lane Upgrade
-  New Cycle lane
-  Existing Cycle-lane Upgrades
-  Potential Public Amenity
-  Potential Public Car Park
-  Potential Bicycle Parking
-  Potential Off-street Parking Spaces
-  Provision of Additional Bus Stop
-  Opportunity Sites

PHOTO: Main Street, Portarlington from Byrne's Garage, c. 1900



**IMPLEMENTATION & PHASING**

## IMPLEMENTATION &amp; PHASING

PHASE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE BODY	TIMELINE
<b>Phase 1 (a)</b>	Refurbish & Reuse of the Market House & Square (RRDF grant notified on the 19 <sup>th</sup> of April 2021 for €1,216,533).	Laois County Council	2021-2023
<b>Phase 1 (b)</b>	Undergrounding of cables along Main Street & at Market Square	Laois County Council	2021-2022
<b>Phase 1 (c)</b>	Re-surfacing of footpath on Main Street	Laois County Council	2021
<b>Phase 1 (d)</b>	Develop Free WIFI Zone	Laois County Council	2021-2022
<b>Phase 1 (e)</b>	Façade Enhancement Scheme	Laois County Council /Local Businesses/Property Owners & Community Associations	2021-2022
<b>Phase 1 (f)</b>	Develop CCTV Roll-out for the Town & extended areas	Community-Led	2021-2022
<b>Phase 1 (g)</b>	Develop a Local Transport Plan & An Active Travel Plan	Laois County Council and Offaly County Council National Transport Authority	2021-2022
<b>Phase 1 (h)</b>	Develop Portarlington as a Sustainable Energy Community for the Town Centre Engage Consultants to Develop Masterplan	Community-led	2021-2022
<b>Phase 2</b>	Main Street and Connecting Streets -Undergrounding of remainder of Cables Re-surfacing of streets and footpaths Streetscape Enhancement	Laois County Council/Tidy Towns/Building Owners/Business Association	2021-2024
<b>Phase 3</b>	Link Road Provision of additional Car Parking Re-surfacing Car Parks and Landscape Proposals	Laois County Council/Tidy Towns/Building Owners/Business Association	2022-2024
<b>Phase 4</b>	River Barrow Enhancement Flood Strategy Advancement	Laois County Council/Offaly County Council	2021-2026
<b>Phase 5</b>	Opportunity Sites	Private Owners	2021-2030

## INCENTIVE SCHEMES SUPPORTING TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

### **Business Incentive Scheme**

The Business Incentive Scheme is designed to encourage the use of vacant commercial premises within a designated area in Portarlington (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/departments/business-and-economic-development/business-incentive-scheme/>).

### **Early Payment Incentive Scheme**

The aim of the Early Payment Incentive Scheme is to support the Small and Medium Enterprise Sector in relation to commercial rates (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/departments/business-and-economic-development/early-payment-incentive-scheme/>).

### **Shop Front Grant Scheme**

The Shop Front Grant Scheme is designed to enhance the appearance of retail and commercial premises in towns and village centres (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/departments/business-and-economic-development/shopfront-grants-scheme/>).

### **Facade Enhancement Scheme**

The purpose of the Facade Enhancement Scheme is to improve the appearance of towns by assisting property owners to paint the exterior of their premises (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/departments/business-and-economic-development/portlaoise-facade-enhancement-scheme/>).

### **Trading Online Voucher Scheme**

The Trading Online Voucher is a financial incentive for small businesses to develop or enhance their ability to trade online (for more information see: <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Trading-Online-Voucher-Scheme-/>).

### **Business Continuity Vouchers**

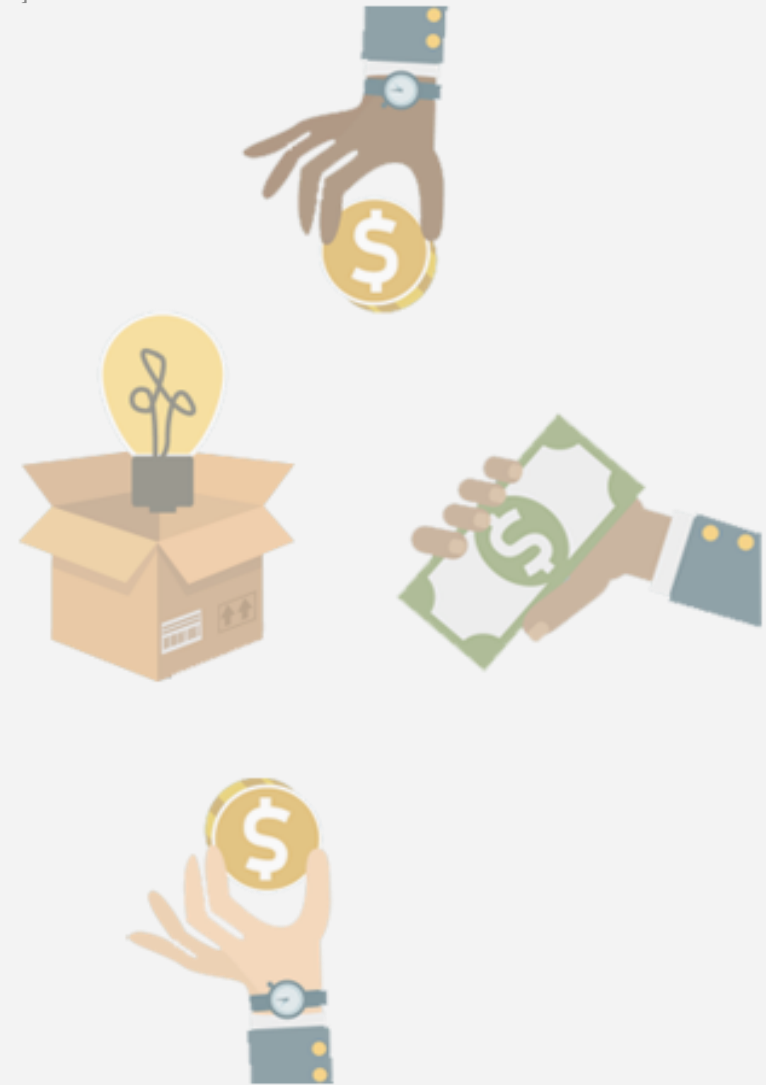
The Business Continuity Voucher, available through Local Enterprise Office, is designed for businesses across every sector that employ up to 50 people (for more information see: <https://www.localenterprise.ie/response/Business-Continuity-Voucher/BUSINESS-CONTINUITY-VOUCHER-Application-Form-pdf.pdf>).

### **Built Heritage Investment Scheme**

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is designed to support owners and custodians in caring for our built heritage and ensuring that it is protected into the future (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/>).

### **Historic Structures Fund**

The primary focus of the Historic Structures Fund is on conservation and enhancement of historic structures and buildings for the benefit of communities and the public (for more information see: <https://laois.ie/>).



### **Active Travel Investment Programme**

The National Transport Authority recently announced a new Rural Active Travel Programme, which is a 5-year plan to promote active travel projects in each Local Authority, including the provision of new pedestrian and cycle routes and upgrading of existing ones (for more information see: <https://www.nationaltransport.ie/planning-and-investment/transport-investment/active-travel-investment-programme/>).

### **Outdoor Dining Enhancement Investment Scheme**

Fáilte Ireland, in partnership with Local Authorities will provide funding for outdoor dining including the upgrading and enhancement of street and public spaces to provide year-round outdoor dining (for more information see: <https://www.failteireland.ie/Identify-Available-Funding/local-authority-schemes/Outdoor-Dining-Enhancement-Scheme.aspx>).

### **Rural Regeneration & Development Fund**

The Rural Regeneration & Development Fund (RRDF) is a commitment of €1 billion by government to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019-2027, to support job creation and support improvements in our towns and villages (for more information see: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/c77144-rural-regeneration-and-development-fund/>).



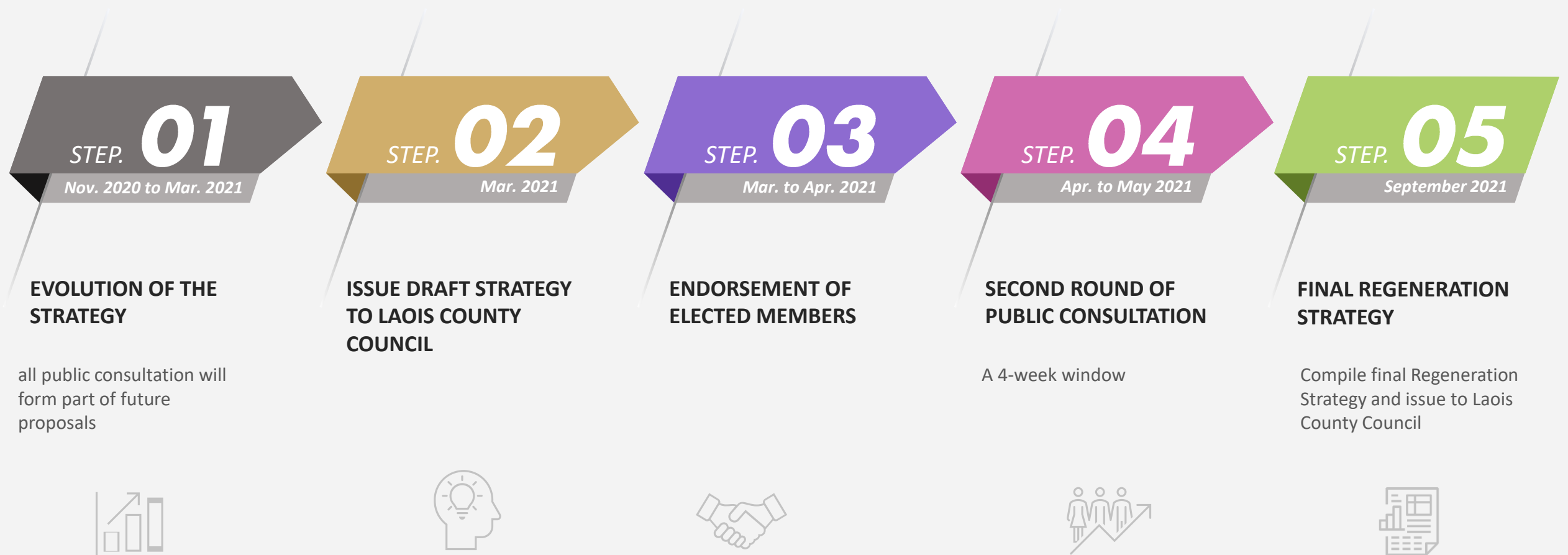
PHOTO: St Michael's Portarlington, n.d.



**NEXT STEPS**

## NEXT STEPS

The following graph provides an overview of the next steps to the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy.





**Laois County Council**

Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois