



Clara Town Centre First Plan

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Rialtas
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Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



URBAN
AGENCY

RMLA. SYSTRA

4

Enabling the Place

Enabling the Place

The identification of project interventions to enable the regeneration of the Town Centre follows a structured approach whereby such interventions are directly related to the TCF Plan themes and objectives and wider project areas. The Plan themes also align with the Town Team's 1st blueprint document and the public consultations that took place.

The Plan team have undertaken an analysis of the urban fabric, movement and land use characteristics of the Town Centre along with identifying strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats that exist. The information provided across Sections 1-3 of this TCF Plan has led to the development of a number of wider project areas which comprise the following:

- **Sport & Recreation**
- **Town Green & Main Street**
- **Heritage & Tourism Loop**
- **Linkages & Connections**

The analytical work undertaken has allowed key project interventions to be established that support and align with the objectives of the TCF Plan and the Town Centre First Policy. The linked relationships of the Plan Themes and Project Areas are illustrated below.

The latter part of this section provides detailed information regarding the implementation and delivery of the proposed project interventions for Clara Town Centre, enabling the Town Team to develop Clara over the lifetime of the Plan.

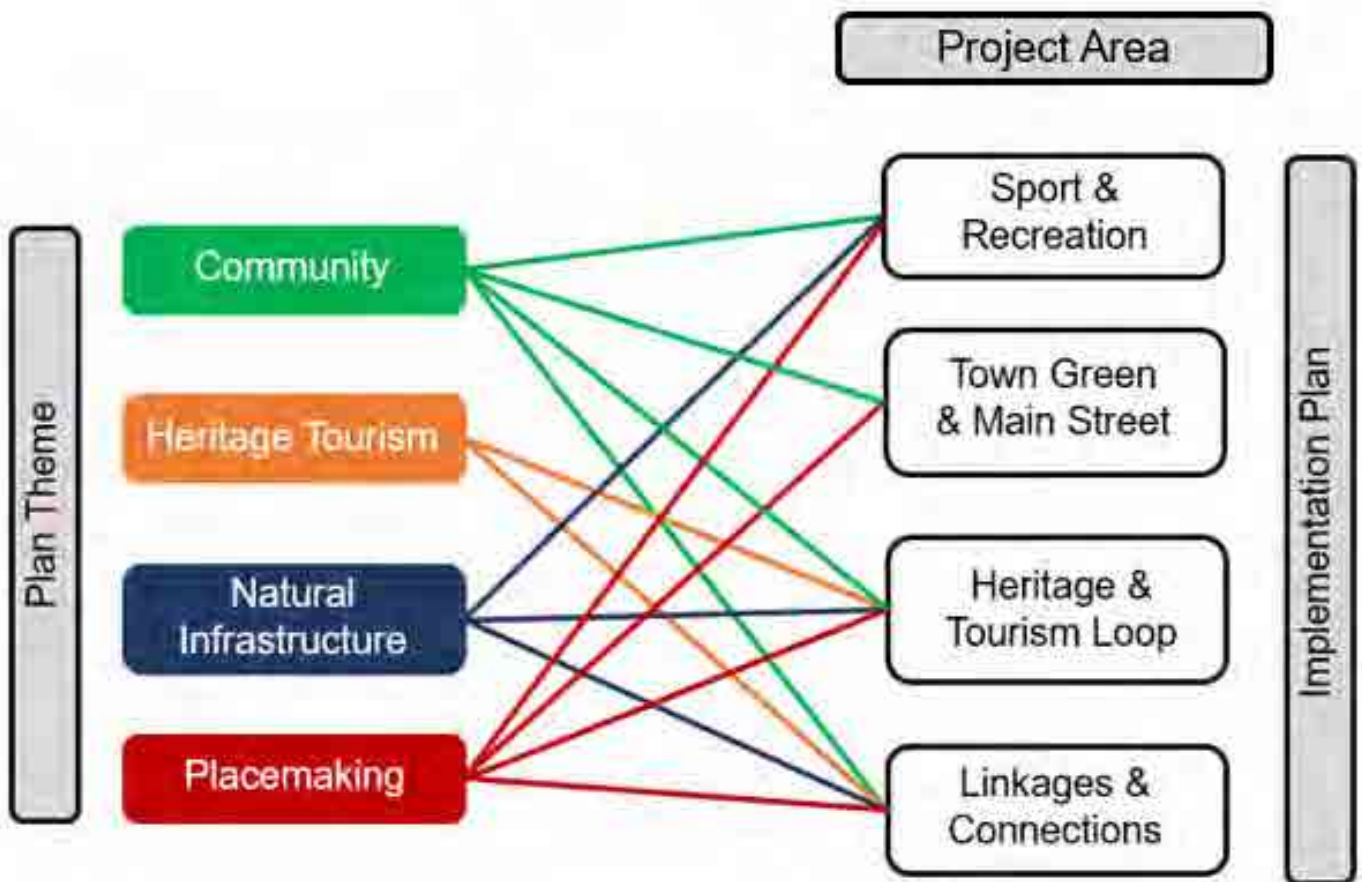


Figure 4.1 Relationships between Themes and Project Areas

Projects Overview Map

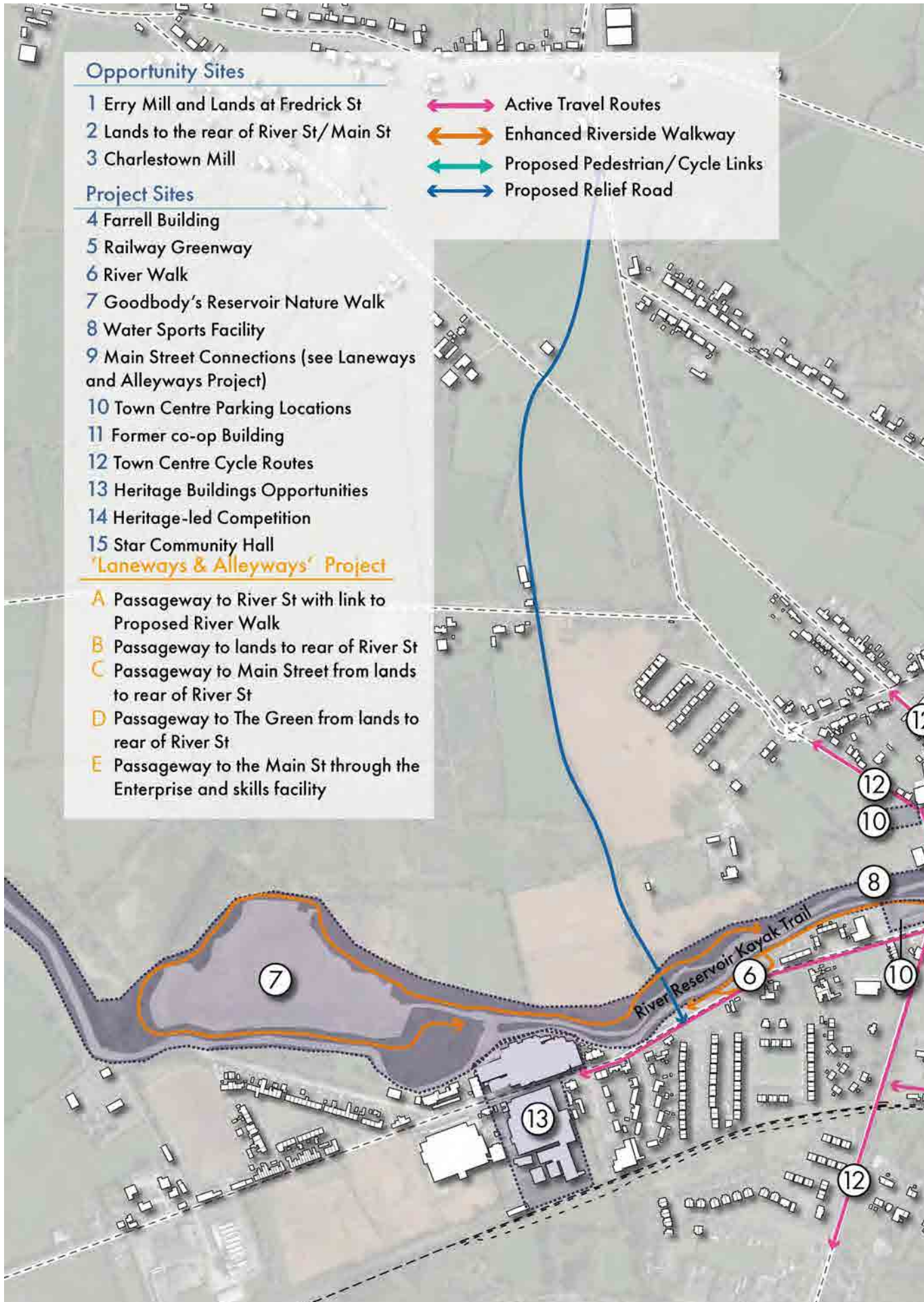
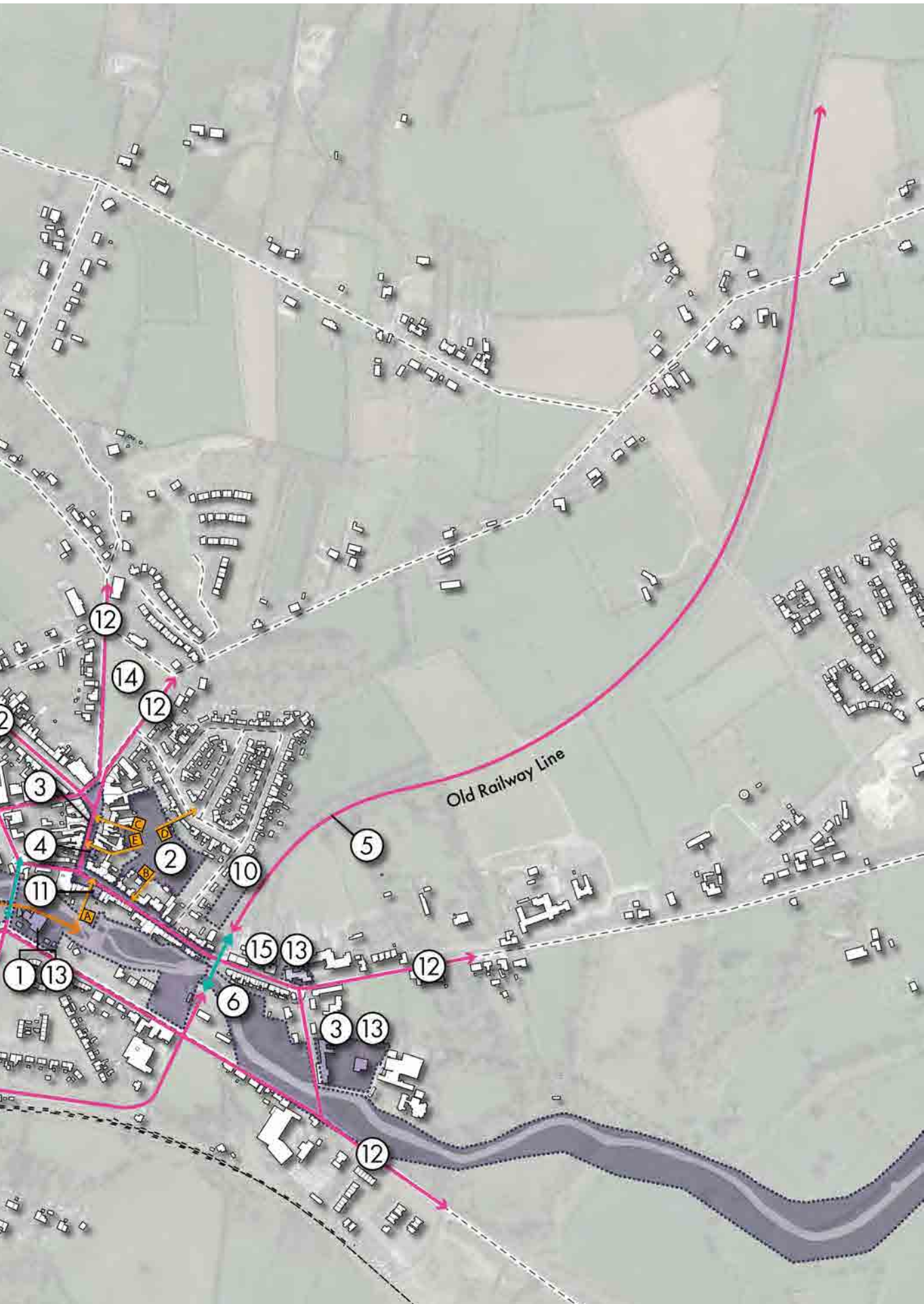


Figure 4.2 Projects Overview Map



Clara Future Context



Figure 4.3 Clara Future Context



PROJECT

1

Townscape Project

Enhancing the appearance and visual quality of the Town Centre.





Project Area - Town Green & Main Street

Townscape Project

The Town Centre First Policy recognises that successful places are characterised by, *inter alia*, an attractive public realm (streets, spaces and parks) that is designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell and that attractive, vibrant places allow enterprises to grow and develop. The quality of the public realm and the visual attractiveness of Clara can help its Town Centre to become a more vibrant place where people will want to be, to work, to socialise and to visit. It is proven that attractive places attract people and generate civic pride.

There are many components within Clara that can add value to the quality of the townscape. These include, *inter alia*, shopfront design, façade treatment, signage, lighting, soft and hard landscaping, street furniture, activation of upper floor levels, for example. A further key component regarding the overall townscape quality includes the level of vacancy in the Town Centre.

The Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this project is to improve the appearance of the streetscapes within Clara Town Centre including the refurbishment of vacant/derelict properties and bringing them back into use. There are a number of funding options available for such schemes including:

- Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund Scheme - DHLGH.
- Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) - DHLGH.
- Buy and Renew Scheme (BRS) - DHLGH.
- Streetscape Enhancement Scheme - DRCD (€100,000 secured by Offaly County Council in 2022 for Clara Town Centre).
- Historic Towns Initiative - DHLGH.

As stated in the Clara Town Teams 2nd Blueprint document, “*public realm must be utilised as a long term investment and not a quick and cheaply done fix.*”

Project Features

- Enhancing the attractiveness of Clara’s network of streets.
- Re-use of vacant and derelict buildings.

Project Physical Changes

- Upgrade works to improve building facades, elevational treatments etc.
- General works to improve the quality and functionality of streets (for example, removal of inappropriate signage, general clutter, new planting, new street furniture).
- Refurbishment of under-utilised properties.

Project Outcomes

- Vacant buildings (including heritage buildings) re-activation for a variety of uses.
- A more visually attractive Town Centre for Clara.
- Better perceptions of the Town Centre from residents, employers/employees, visitors etc.
- Greater animation and vibrancy at street level through activation of vacant/derelict buildings.
- Upper building levels re-purposed (for example, living over the shop).
- To encourage private investment and development.



Figure 4.4 Main Street, Clara - Future Vision Option



Figure 4.5 Church Street, Clara - Future Vision Option

PROJECT

2

River Walk

Utilising one of Clara's key natural assets to provide a new amenity resource.





Project Area - Heritage & Tourism Loop

River Walk

The River Brosna is a significant blue infrastructure asset in Clara that is currently under-utilised and one that makes an important contribution to the overall quality of the urban environment. The length of the River Brosna that flows through Clara is considerable, and such natural assets can enhance the overall liveability of settlements and their utilisation and promotion should be optimised for wider social and environmental benefits.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the River Walk project is to maximise the benefits this natural infrastructure asset has to offer the local community in Clara. As mentioned, the River Brosna is a key natural asset and through environmental improvements to the riverbank areas, new walkways and riverside public amenity areas can be created.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Engaged River Park



Subsequent River Area Activation

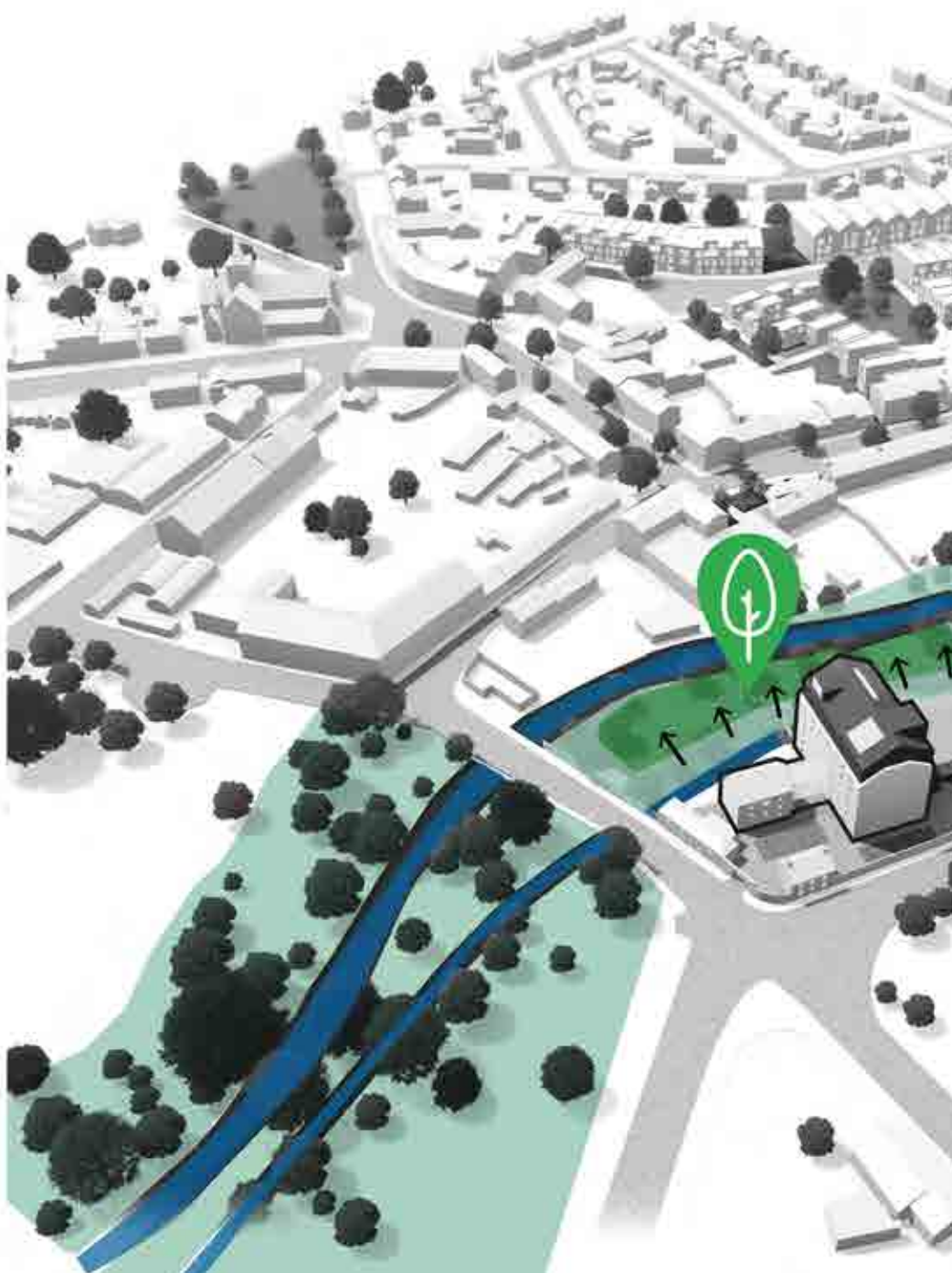


Figure 4.6 Green Infrastructure

The delivery of an enhanced riverbank route will not only result in the river becoming a more visually prominent feature within the Town Centre, it will also bring forward quality of life and health and well-being outcomes for residents. This new amenity resource also contributes to the enhanced tourism offer being promoted within this TCF Plan.



Project Features

- Creation of a new River Walk route.
- Creation of clear pedestrian routes from the Main Street to the river.
- Increased accessibility to the natural assets of Clara.
- A convenient, accessible, inclusive and inexpensive space for physical activity and active travel.
- Opportunity for year round activity along the River Brosna.
- New spaces along the River Walk designed for uses such as a fitness trail, picnic areas and rest areas.

Project Physical Changes

- Environmental improvements to the riparian areas of the River Brosna.
- Provision of appropriate lighting, signage and wayfinding along the River Walk.
- Facilitates increased pedestrian and cycle movement along the river.
- Provision of a new riverside boardwalk.
- New connections across the river to the Town Centre.

Project Outcomes

- New amenity resource for the local community to enjoy.
- Provides opportunities for increased social interaction.
- Promotes physical activity, recreation, and health and well-being.
- Project can potentially be added to the enhanced tourism offer in the town that can deliver positive economic outcomes.

The River

POTENTIAL RIVER BATHS



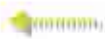
ERRY MILL HERITAGE SITE



RIVER



PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN /
CYCLE LINKS



RIVERSIDE WALKING ROUTES



Enhanced Sports Facility



Existing Swimming Pool



Existing Library



Potential River Baths



Reservoir Walking Loop

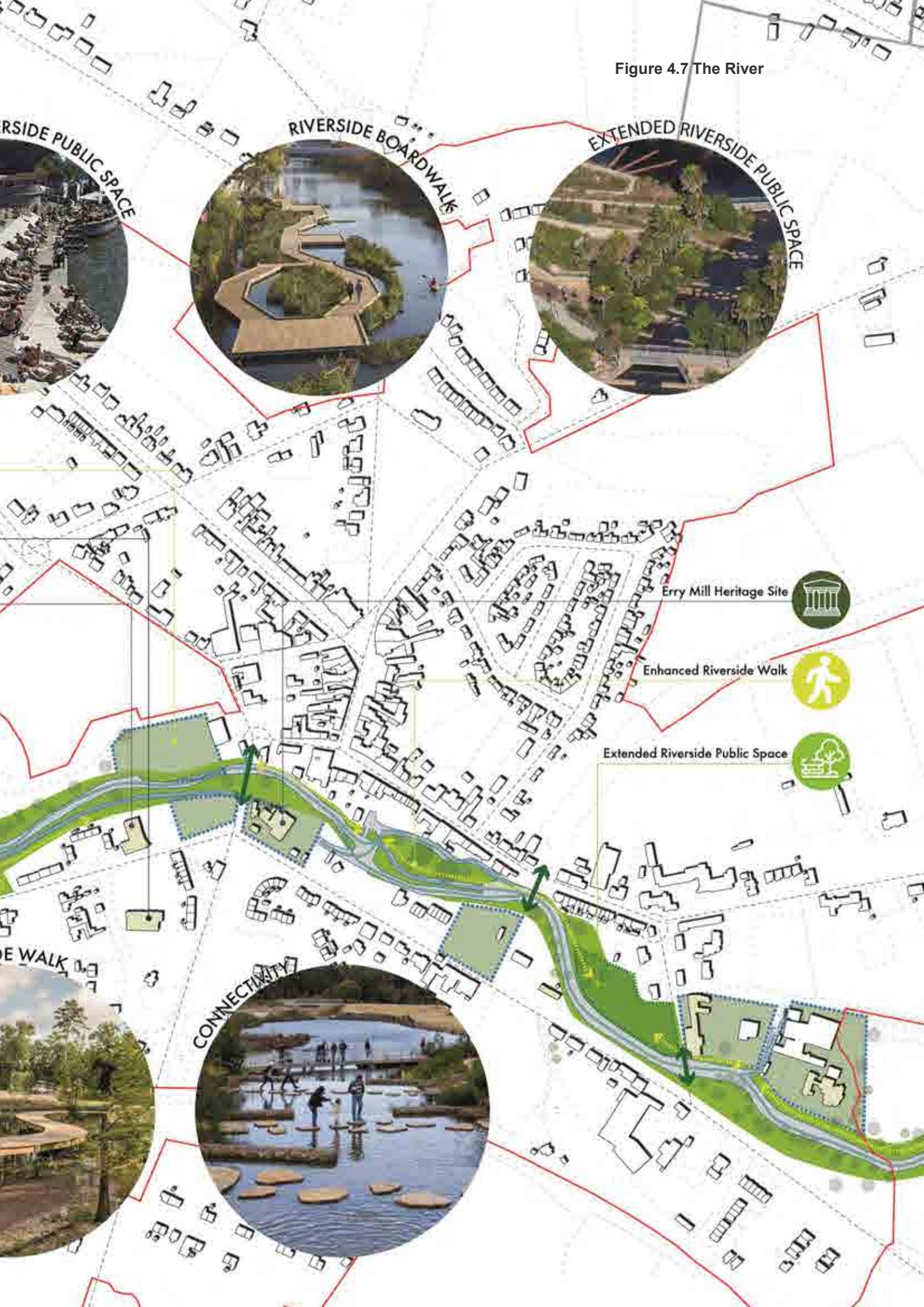


Potential Reservoir Kayak Trail

ENHANCED RIVERSIDE



Figure 4.7 The River



RIVERSIDE PUBLIC SPACE

RIVERSIDE BOARDWALK

EXTENDED RIVERSIDE PUBLIC SPACE

Erry Mill Heritage Site

Enhanced Riverside Walk

Extended Riverside Public Space

DE WALK

CONNECTIVITY

PROJECT

3

Town Centre Cycle Routes

Establishing a new local cycle route network for the Town Centre.





Project Area - Linkages & Connections

Town Centre Cycle Routes

The transportation analysis undertaken for the Town Centre highlighted the fact there are currently no dedicated cycle lanes within Clara and the existing infrastructure does not promote and support cycling as a mode of transport.

Clara Town Plan references the lack of cycleways and states *“there are currently no dedicated cycle lanes within the town and these may be incorporated into new development and on existing roads such as along the R436 (Ballycumber Road) to the Town Centre and the R436, linking the Kilcoursey residential area, the primary schools and the Town Centre.”*

The Town Centre First Plan provides a unique opportunity to identify and bring forward a new cycle route network for the Town Centre. As illustrated by the image opposite, there is scope to deliver a new cycle network in Clara based on the existing road and street infrastructure characteristics.

The Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this project is to establish a new local cycle route network for the Town Centre. The existing conditions in Clara do not support or indeed promote cycling as a sustainable transport option. Based on the transportation analysis carried out, a number of cycle lane typologies are proposed which include:

- Dedicated cycle Lane
- Mixed/Shared Street
- Off-Road Cycle Track

This project has the advantage of being aligned with the Railway Greenway project that cumulatively can enhance cycling as a viable mode of transport over the long term.

Project Features

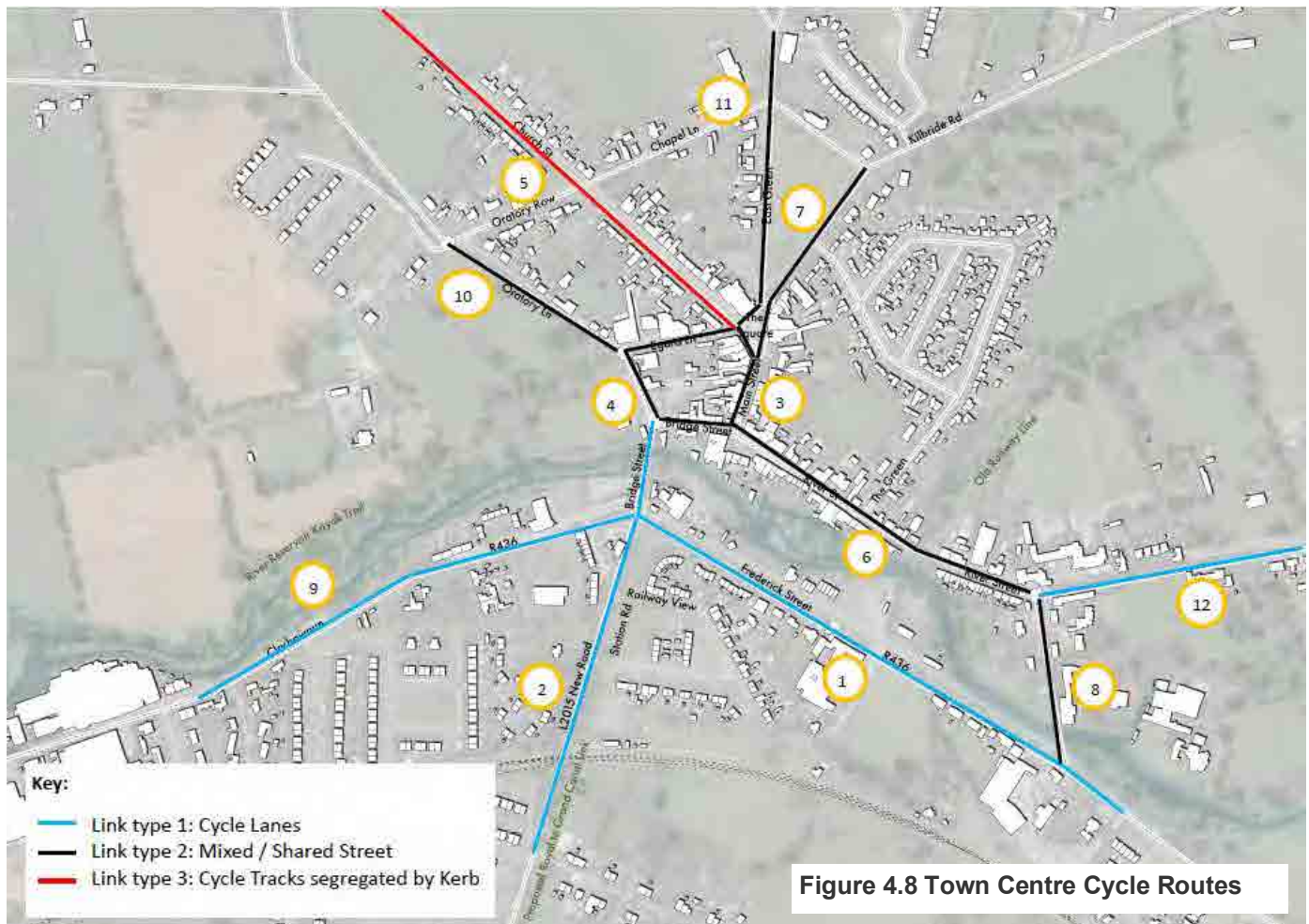
- Creation of a new cycle route network for Clara.
- Promotion of active travel and health and well-being.
- Increased movement options for residents, employees and visitors.

Project Physical Changes

- Increased cycle movements generated throughout the Town Centre.
- Variety of cycle routes appropriate to their existing context.
- Enhanced cycle infrastructure for Clara.

Project Outcomes

- Promotion of increased use of active travel modes.
- Reduced use of private car particularly for short trips.
- Provision of a more calmed Town Centre environment.
- Enhanced connectivity throughout the Town Centre.
- Alignment and connectivity with proposed Railway Greenway project.



Town Centre Cycle Route Details

1. Proposed Cycle Lanes: From R420/Cluain Abhainn Junction to R436/St Patrick's Terrace junction.

2. Proposed Cycle Lanes: From R436/St Patrick's Terrace junction to Armstrong Grove/L2015 New Road.

3. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding to cyclists and cycle road marking/signage): From River Street/R420 junction to Church Street/Sráid an Droichid junction.

4. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding to cyclists and cycle road marking/signage): From River St/R420 junction to Sráid an Droichid roundabout south, to Sráid an Droichid roundabout north to Church Street/Sráid an Droichid junction.

5. Proposed Cycle Track segregated by Kerb: From Church Street/Sráid an Droichid junction to 63-65 Church Street.

6. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding to cyclists and cycle road marking/signage): From River Street/R420 junction to R420/R436/Kilbeggan Rd roundabout.

7. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding to cyclists and cycle road marking/signage): From the Square/The Green to the junction in front of Celtic Park building.

8. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding and cycle road marking/signage): From R420/R436/Kilbeggan Road roundabout to R420/Frederick Street R436 Junction.

9. Proposed Cycle Lanes: From R436/St. Patrick's Terrace junction to Ballycumber Road/Cork Hill junction.

10. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding to cyclists and cycle road marking/signage): From Sráid an Droichid roundabout north to Egan's Lane/Oratory Row roundabout.

11. Proposed Mixed/Shared Street (measure includes traffic yielding to cyclists and cycle road marking/signage): From The Square/The Green junction to Church View/Church Road junction.

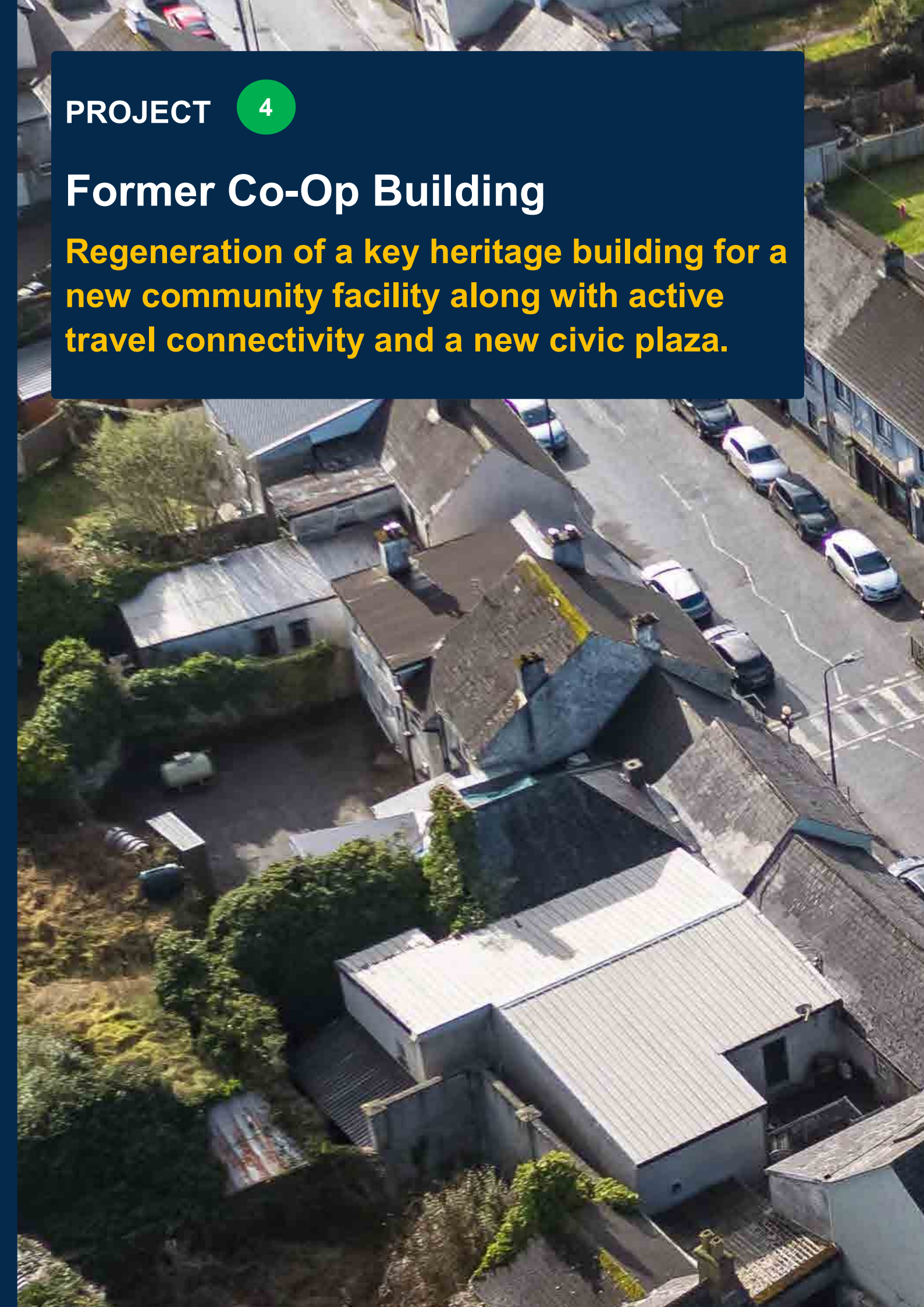
12. Proposed Cycle Lanes: From R420/R436/Kilbeggan Road roundabout to Clara Cemetery.

PROJECT

4

Former Co-Op Building

Regeneration of a key heritage building for a new community facility along with active travel connectivity and a new civic plaza.





Project Area - Town Green & Main Street

Former Co-Op Building

The former Co-Op building is located on River Street and in close proximity to the junction with Sráid an Droichid and Main Street which provides the building with a prominent location in the Town Centre. The building is two storey with frontage to River Street. To the ground floor are a number of arched windows and doorways that give the building an interesting architectural style. Over the years the building has had many uses including a street mill, school, co-operative, retail and residential. The physical condition of the former Co-Op building appears to be relatively good at present.

The Purpose of the Project

The regeneration of the former Co-Op building presents an opportunity to bring a prominent building back into active use as a new community building that will provide spaces for the many community groups in the town such as the Community Council, Town Team,

Heritage Society, Tidy Towns and Chamber of Commerce.

The rejuvenation of the building aligns with the themes of 'Community' and 'Placemaking' as set out within this Plan and will create a bespoke facility that meets the needs of Clara's community, in particular young and elderly persons as well as the aforesaid groups.

The re-development of the former Co-Op building also incorporates a new active travel link running south over the river and connecting with the Erry Mill site. The current parking area to the front of the post office is proposed to be re-imagined as a civic plaza as part of this project. A new parking location on River Street (2 min walk away) is proposed within this Plan. The regeneration of the former Co-Op building, new active travel connectivity and new plaza area will transform this Town Centre locale and bring forward positive placemaking outcomes.

Project Features

- Re-activation of prominent Town Centre building.
- New active travel link across the river.
- New civic plaza area.

Project Physical Changes

- Improvement works to regenerate the former Co-Op building.
- Active travel link running south and over the river for increased connectivity.
- Repurposing the existing car parking area as a new plaza area.

Project Outcomes

- Facilitating remote work and employment uses that meets the needs of the community.
- Assists with tackling of vacancy in the Town Centre.
- Visual quality enhancement of the streetscape in the River Street/Bridge Street/Main Street locale.
- Promotion of increased social interaction through the creation of a new civic plaza area.
- Sustainable use of an under-utilised building in the Town Centre that additionally can generate increased vibrancy and vitality in the Town Centre.
- Facilitating a new re-purposed community building in the Town Centre.

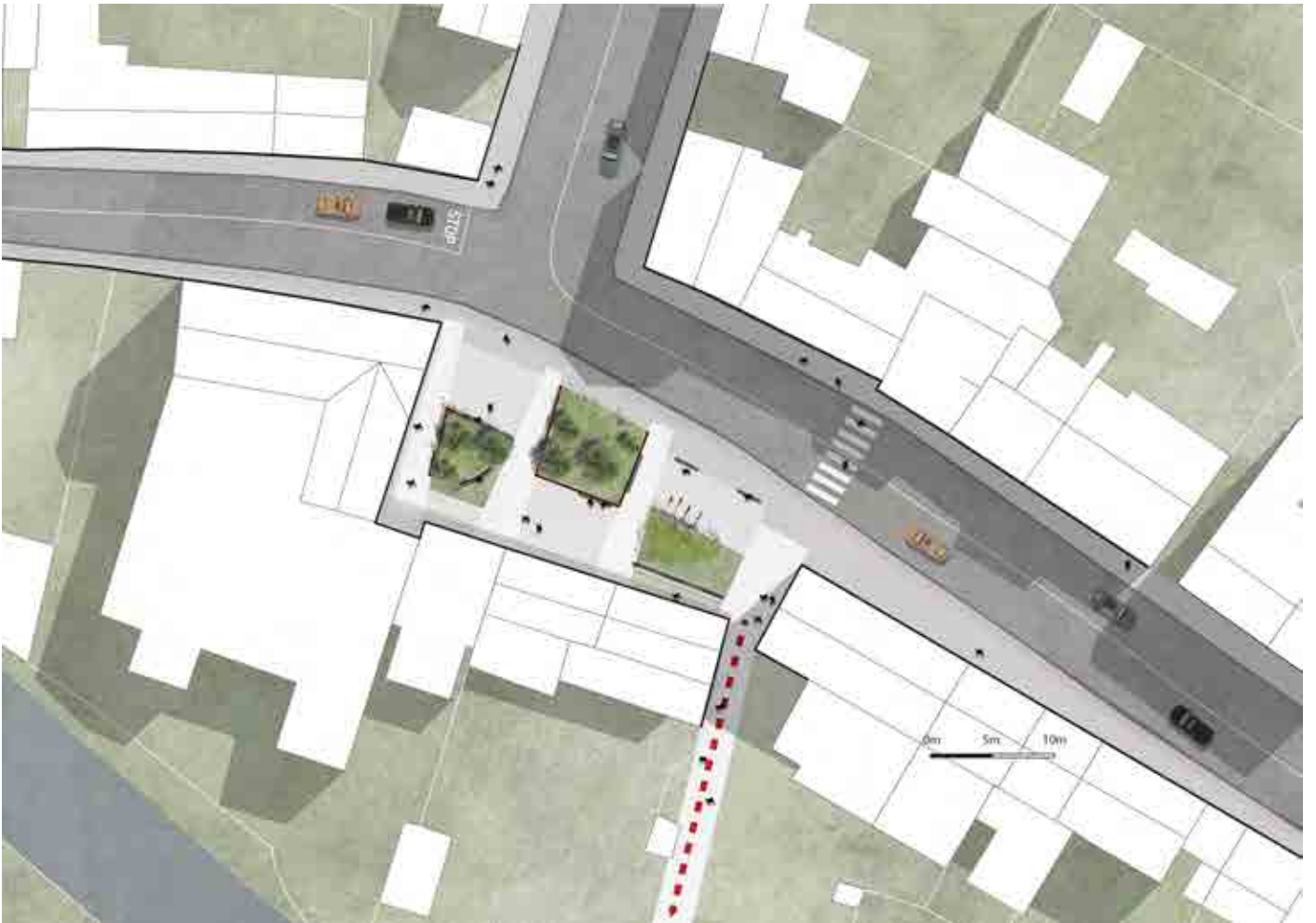


Figure 4.9 Former Co-Op Building, Active Travel Link and Civic Plaza - Future option



Figure 4.10 Former Co-Op Building, Active Travel Link and Civic Plaza - Future option

Case Study - Exchange Building, Dublin

Community Development

Introduction

The Exchange in Dublin is a not-for-profit organisation located in a previously vacant building on the northside of Dublin.

The group is operated by young people as a place to socialise, discuss ideas, meet people and have as an event space. It has been hugely successful and has helped many people in this space go onto establish careers in the creative arts sector.

One of the main goals that Exchange Dublin strives for is social well-being. The organisation is 'volunteers-only' to ensure it remains a

non-commercial space where everyone in the venue is there because they desire to be.

Developing skills is a core founding of the organisation, the belief is that regular participation in group activities can greatly benefit the youth by developing their skills, giving them the necessary elements that they need for future life.

The Centre offers a safe space for the youth of Dublin to explore art and socially interact with each other on a regular basis. The Centre allows for an outlet for the youth where they



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10155594265260556&set=pb.100067823325660.-2207520000>

otherwise might not have one due to individual circumstances, providing a safe space.

What Do They Do?

Many different activities and outlets are on offer in an attempt to accommodate as many people as possible. The regular events that are hosted are open to people of all ages, allowing everyone in the community to participate.

Activities include:

- Discussions in which a large group of like-minded people can all sit down and discuss what they want to create and how they will go about achieving this
- Gigs in which people can perform their art in a musical fashion. Numerous performance workshops are available and gives the opportunity for the performers of the pieces to bring their vision to life on the stage in front of a live audience.
- Various craft courses are also provided allowing people to create anything they want using tools provided by the centre, allowing young people to examine potential life skills.
- Various based activities including fitness classes, yoga, reading, English language lessons, female meeting groups, computer games competition.

Funding

The organisation works from charitable donations in which any money that is donated or made by fundraising immediately goes straight back into the organisation to better help the community and provide better services for everyone free of charge.

‘Hopefully, through their innovative and caring organisation and venue, less of the youth population will act out in anti-social ways as they now have a safe outlet if they need it.’

Exchange Dublin

PROJECT

5

Goodbody's Reservoir Nature Walk

Delivering a new active travel route and amenity resource that enhances access to a prominent blue infrastructure asset in Clara.



Project Area - Sports & Recreation

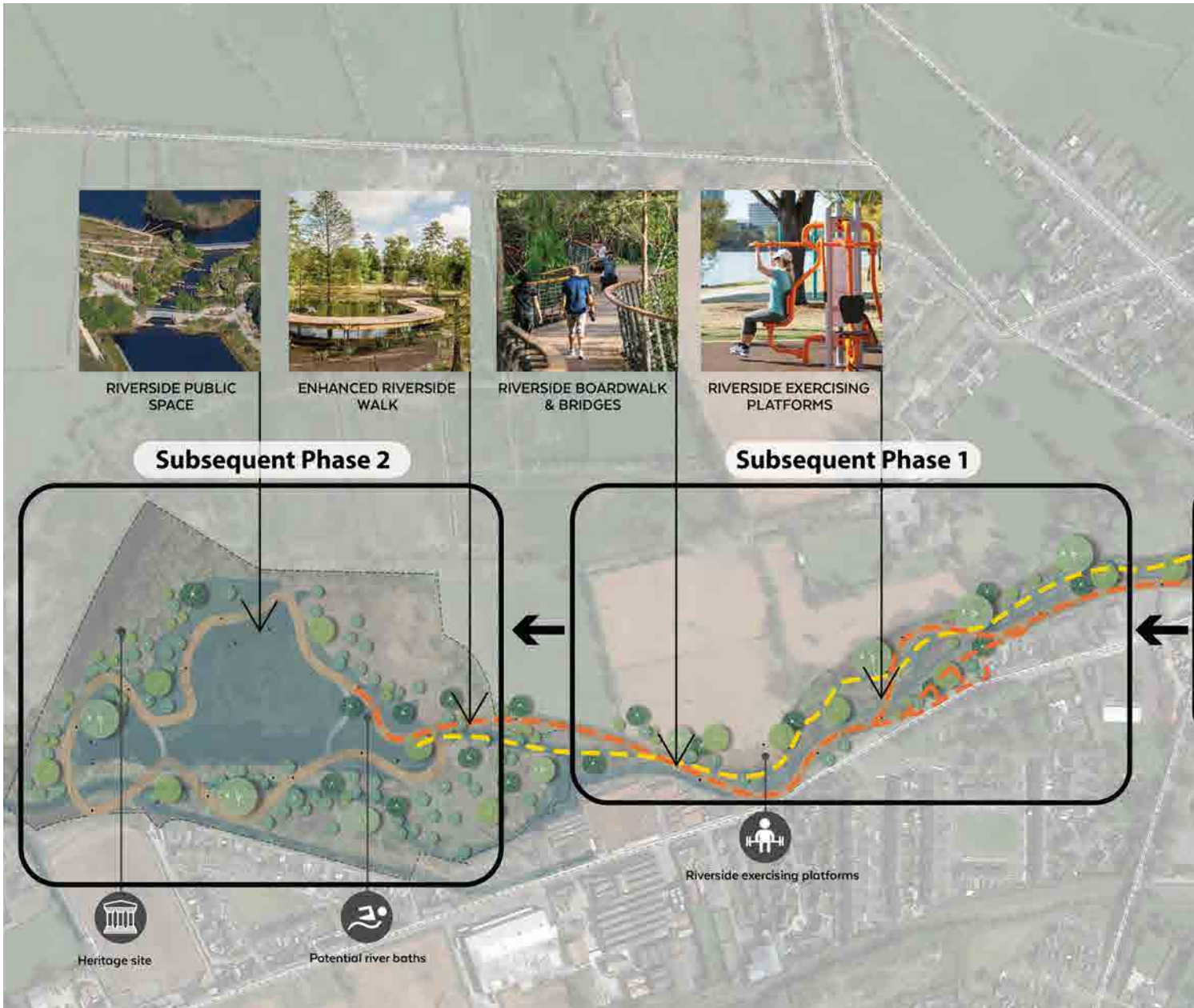
Goodbody's Reservoir Nature Walk

Situated within the west area of the Town Centre is the Goodbody's Reservoir which is part of Clara's industrial past. From the mid-18th century onwards the town's development was strongly influenced by the linen industry and the Goodbody family who were associated with various enterprises in the 19th century. The Goodbody's Reservoir provides an additional destination along the industrial heritage route that will be created by the new

River Walk and attached to the redevelopment of the Erry Mill site as a tourism development within a joined up approach.

Similar to the proposed River Walk route as set out in this section, the addition of an amenity resource to the western side of the Town Centre will benefit the local residents by providing a new active travel route and enhanced accessibility to a former heritage asset.

Figure 4.11 Goodbody's Reservoir Nature Walk and phasing approach



The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to further promote and bring a focus to Clara's unique and rich industrial past while also providing a public amenity that will promote increased walking trips and outdoor recreation activity. These elements, in turn, support health and well-being for the local population. The creation of the Reservoir Nature Walk will provide a new destination and 'place' within the Town Centre that previously was restricted in terms of its connectivity, while delivering environmental improvements.



Project Features

- Creation of a Nature River Walk around the Goodbody Reservoir in conjunction with the River Walk.
- Increased accessibility to a blue infrastructure asset.
- Promotion of active travel.
- Provision of convenient, accessible, inclusive and inexpensive space for physical activity.

Project Physical Changes

- Facilitates increased pedestrian and cycle movement at the Reservoir.
- New pedestrian and cycle infrastructure for the Town Centre.
- Provision of signage and wayfinding detailing the history of the Goodbody's Reservoir.

Project Outcomes

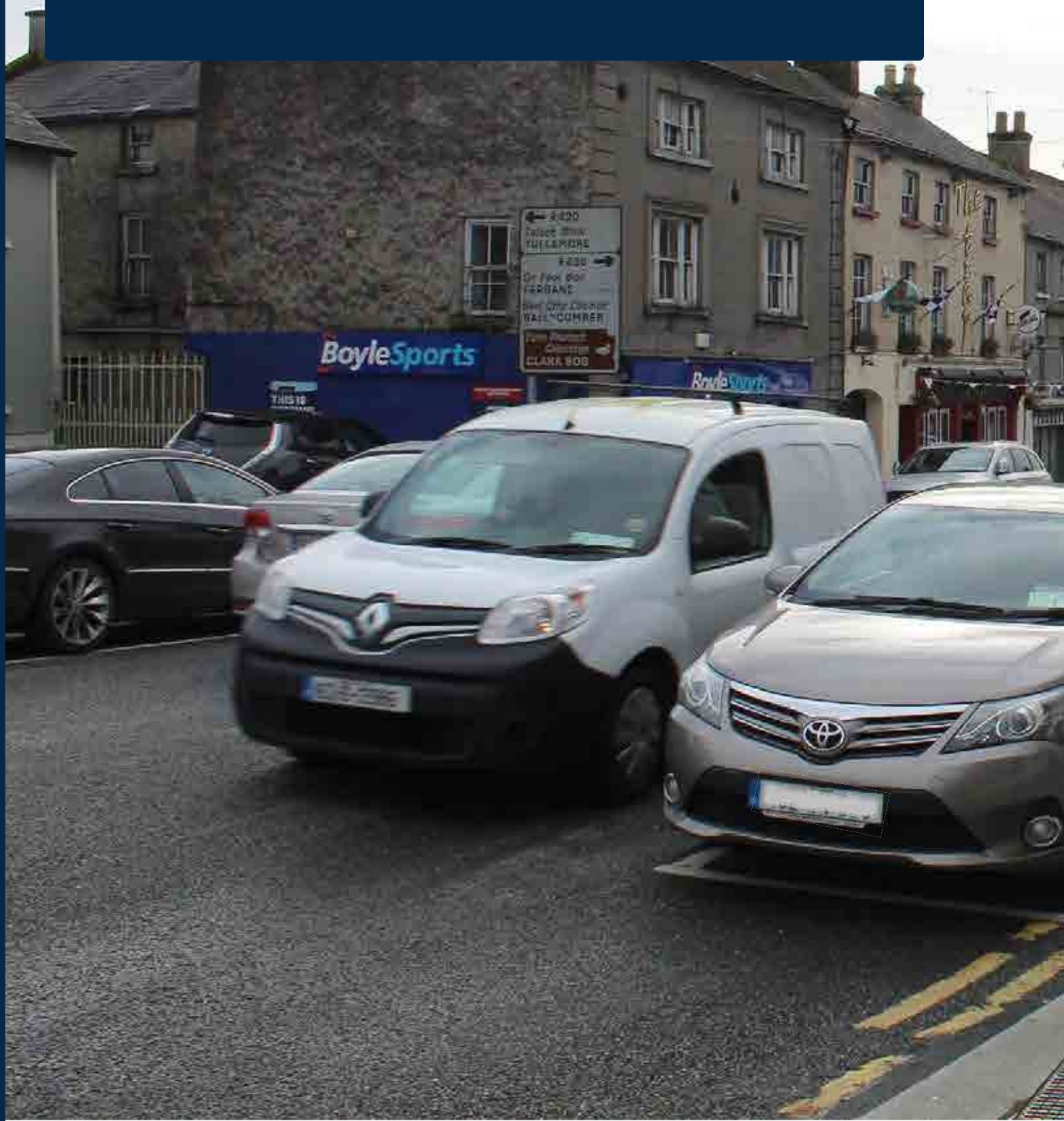
- A public amenity that will promote increased walking trips and outdoor recreation.
- Preservation and enhanced education of Clara's industrial history.
- Increased desirability and attractiveness of the Town Centre by providing a new amenity and destination and environmental upgrades.

PROJECT

6

Town Centre Parking Locations

Rationalising on-street parking to promote the accessibility of Clara's streets.





Project Area - Linkages & Connections

Town Centre Parking Locations

The public engagement process has provided feedback in relation to the subject of car parking within Clara. Matters highlighted referenced the lack of provision of appropriate off-street parking locations within the Town Centre and that streets such as River Street, Bridge Street and Egan's Lane provide car parking on both sides of the street, reducing the carriageway width which creates pinch points and traffic congestion. In addition, the footpaths are generally narrow and unsuitable.

Presently within Clara, there is a disproportionate amount of on-street parking when compared to off-street parking options. For the Town Centre going forward, there needs to be an optimal balance achieved whereby the parking of private vehicles is successfully managed so as to ensure Clara's streets are accessible places for all.

The Purpose of this Project

The purpose of the project is to create new off-street parking locations within the Town Centre. The identified locations are situated within a short walking distance less than 5 mins walk from the Main Street locale. Through the delivery of new dedicated parking locations, private vehicles can be accommodated in off-street locations. This approach has the potential to create a more calming, welcoming and accessible Town Centre where greater movement by sustainable walking and cycling modes is supported. This approach aligns with the Town Team's Public Realm Solution 3 (as set out within the Clara Town Team's 2nd Blueprint document) that states, *"loss of car parking allows for an opportunity to create an inviting landscaped public realm, with spaces that in themselves attract people to the centre of town."*

Project Features

- Rationalisation of car parking arrangements in the Town Centre.
- Dedicated off-street car parking locations (3 no.) that are located a short walking distance from the Main Street locale.
- Parking locations can support other project interventions such as the Erry Mill tourism development and River Walk as well as local amenities and school sites.

Project Physical Changes

- Operation of new car parking locations in close proximity to Main Street.
- Affords the opportunity to reduce the number of vehicles in key locations (such as Main Street and River Street) while still providing access to services and facilities.
- Assists with safer and increased pedestrian and cycle movement within the Town Centre.

Project Outcomes

- Contributes to a more people - focused Town Centre that is accessible to all ages and abilities.
- Dominance of people rather than vehicles in Clara's Town Centre.
- Promotes greater social interaction within a more welcoming Town Centre environment.
- Greater mass of people attracted to the Town Centre with socio-economic benefits.

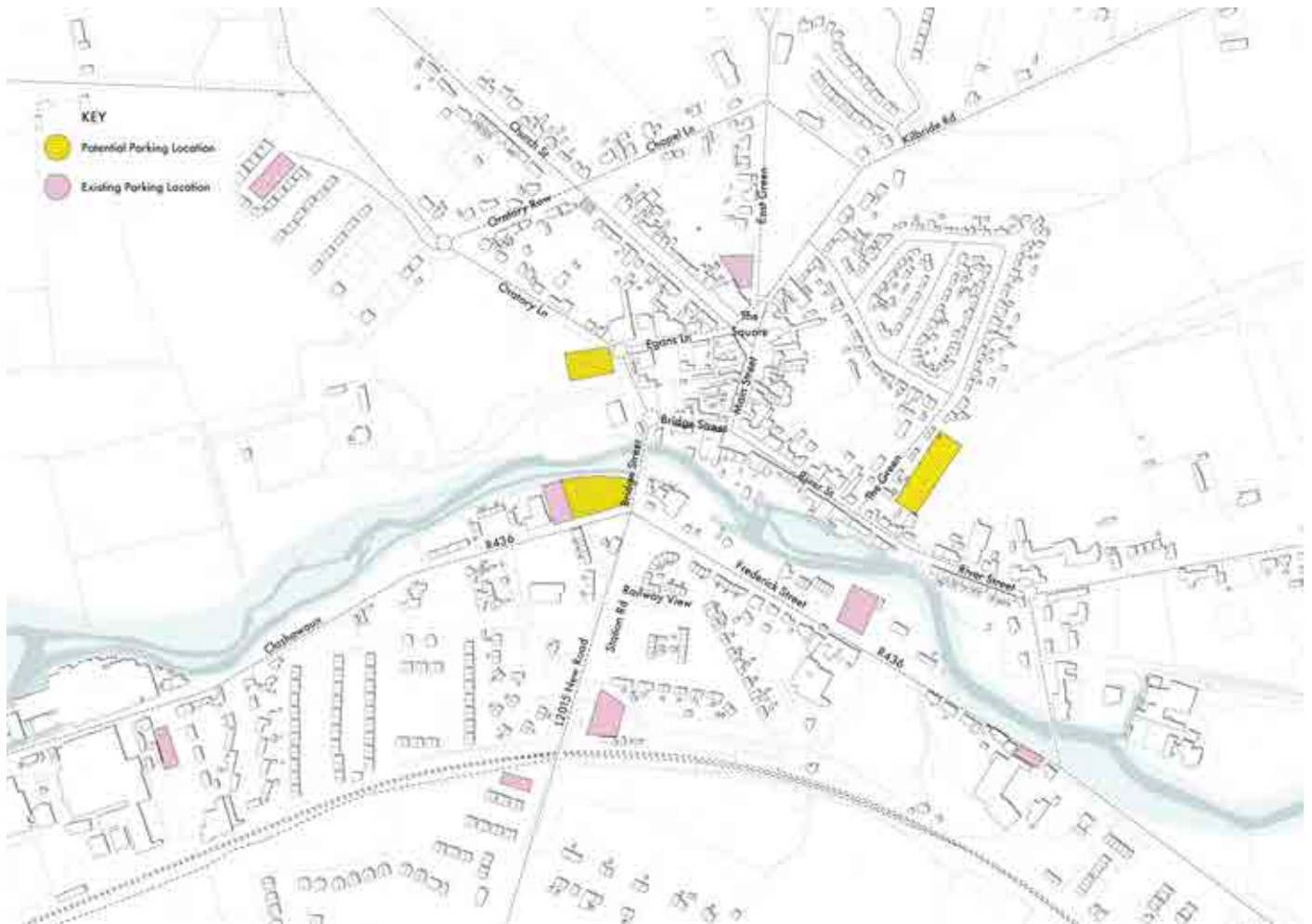


Figure 4.12 Existing and Potential Parking Locations

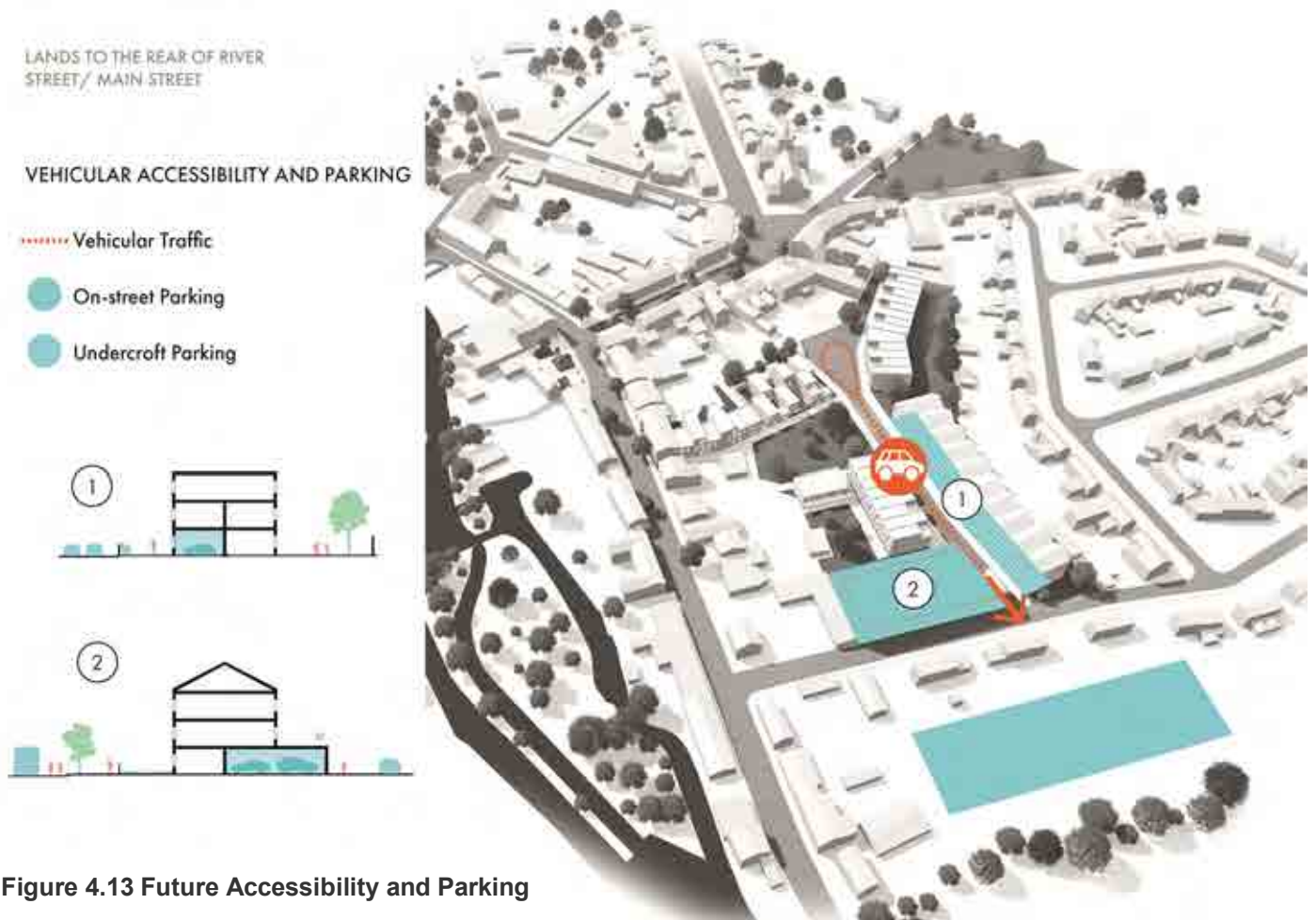


Figure 4.13 Future Accessibility and Parking

PROJECT 7

Star Community Hall

Upgrade and renovation works to facilitate a new multi-purpose community space in the Town Centre.



the hleas



Project Area - Town Green & Main Street

Star Community Hall

The Star community hall is situated on River Street in Clara. In terms of its appearance, the building has a non-traditional façade with only one window remaining at both ground and first floor level. At ground floor level there are four sets of double doors. The building is somewhat unique within the Town Centre due to its design and setback from the public road. The position of the building differs to the built form on the northern side of River Street which accommodates terraced two storey dwellings that are located immediately to the rear of the public footpath.

The Star community hall is still in active use however the building is of its time and requires improvement works to create a modern facility that will, in turn, generate greater use of the building by residents of all ages. The provision of new community facilities in Clara will promote the overall liveability of the town.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide a rejuvenated multi-purpose community hall for the people of Clara. Having a flexible, multi-purpose space in the Town Centre is socially advantageous in that it acts as a conduit for people to interact with one another, provides modern spaces for community-related activities while also making a significant contribution to community cohesion and the overall social infrastructure of Clara.

Project Features

- Rejuvenation of an existing facility in order to bring forward a new multi-purpose community hall in Clara.

Project Physical Changes

- Physical changes to improve the internal use and external appearance of the community hall structure.
- Contributes to the visual enhancement of River Street.
- Greater activity and animation within the Town Centre.

Project Outcomes

- Improved vibrancy on River Street through the intensification of use of the building.
- Upgraded and modern resource for the local community to utilise.
- Contributes to the social infrastructure network in the Town Centre.
- Enhanced social interaction amongst residents that assists with creating a strong community spirit.



Figure 4.14 Location of the Star community hall on River Street (Aerial View)

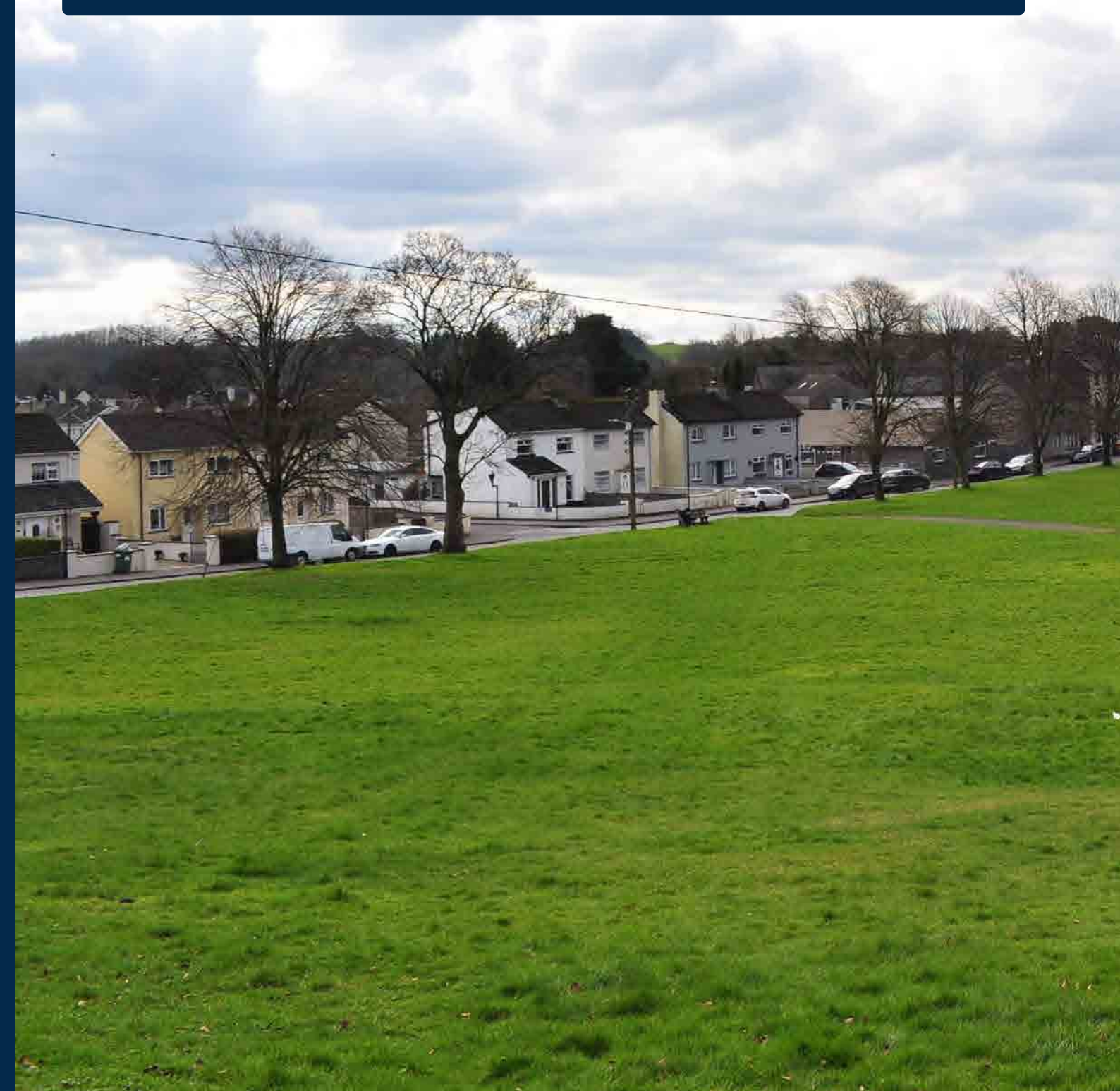


Figure 4.15 Location of the Star community hall (Town Centre Context)

PROJECT 8

Heritage-led Competition for The Green

Engagement with the local community to generate ideas for the optimal use(s) of this public open space.





Project Area - Town Green & Main Street

Heritage-Led Competition

Located to the north of The Square in Clara is the 'The Green', a large triangular area of grassed open space. The Green is an important amenity area located in the heart of the Town Centre that has the potential for a range of uses. The Green is situated between and provides a link between two historic religious structures being Saint Brigid's Church to the north and Saint Brigid's Catholic Church situated to the southern end of The Green.

Green spaces and amenity areas can create attractive places and spaces within the urban environment that is primarily dominated by buildings. Integrating green spaces within the urban context can bring forward environmental benefits, while also providing active open spaces for walking, cycling and nature.

The provision of new green spaces can promote the liveability of towns and can act as an attractor in bringing people back to live in the Town Centre thereby assisting its vibrancy. Presently, it is considered The Green is an under-utilised amenity resource in Clara.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to seek the involvement of the local community to determine the optimal use of The Green. This approach offers the opportunity for positive engagement with the community to establish a future use for The Green that can benefit the local community.

Project Features

- Establish a heritage-led competition to determine the future use of The Green amenity area.
- Encourages the re-use of a large open green space in the Town Centre that is currently under-utilised.
- Contributes to a sense of place for Clara.

Project Physical Changes

- Physical changes will be dependent on the future use of The Green.

Project Outcomes

- Potential for improved vibrancy and activity at the northern end of the Town Centre.
- Creation of new destination in Clara Town Centre.
- An improved resource for the local community.
- Selected future use may act in attracting more people to live in the Town Centre.



Figure 4.16 The Green public amenity space in the Town Centre



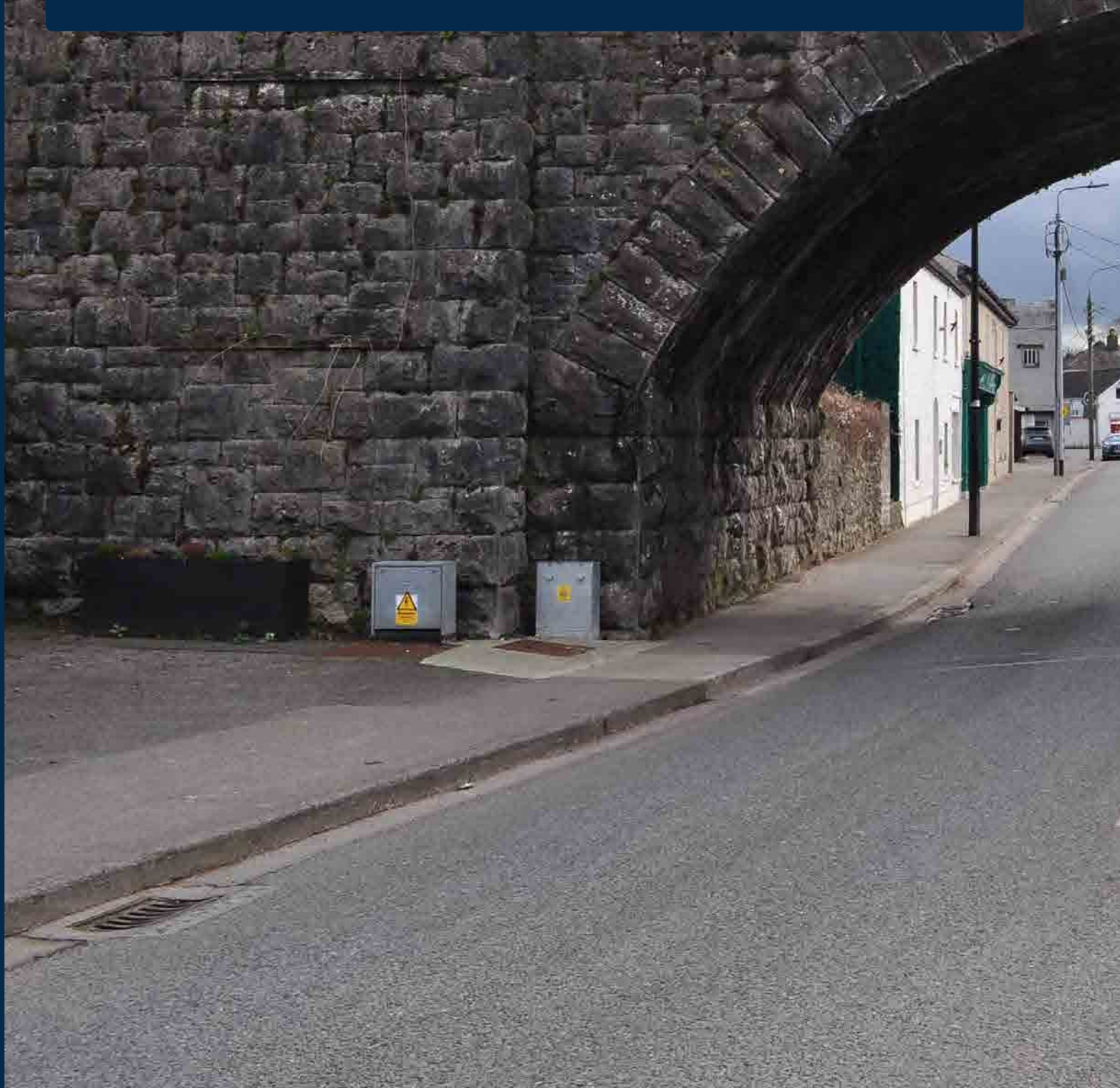
Figure 4.17 St. Brigid's Anglican Church, Clara

PROJECT

9

Railway Greenway

Restoration and re-use of a former railway line to create a new Greenway active travel route.





Project Area - Sports & Recreation

Railway Greenway

Situated to the north-east of the Town Centre is the disused Clara-Banagher railway line from Kilbride Cemetery to River Street. The former railway line is another layer to the rich industrial heritage that was present in Clara from the mid-18th century to the mid-20th century. It is envisioned that the disused railway line can provide a new recreational/leisure use in the form of a greenway.

Comments provided by the local community during the public consultation process highlighted the fact that Clara has a requirement for more walking and cycle routes. The former railway line provides an opportunity for a new greenway route that will provide a new amenity resource for the local community, as well as being an attractor of visitors to the town. The southern end of the greenway would connect to the Town Centre with the creation of a new entrance point at the

railway bridge on River Street, and through time becoming an established part of the urban fabric of Clara.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the greenway project is to maximise the environmental, social and economic benefits this significant green infrastructure asset has to offer the town. The greenway can become a unique asset for Clara by attracting increased visitors, while also providing a new amenity for the local community. In addition, the greenway will promote active modes of travel and sustainable movement in and out of the Town Centre while also encouraging physical activity and health and well-being outcomes.

Project Features

- Creation of a new greenway along the former railway line.
- Promotion of active travel and health and well-being.
- Provision of a convenient, accessible and inexpensive space for physical activity.
- Celebrating and regeneration of Clara's former railway heritage.

Project Physical Changes

- Increased pedestrian and cycle movement.
- New connectivity with the residential areas to the north east of the Town Centre.
- Creation of a new entrance point at the railway bridge on River Street.
- Environmental improvement and visual quality of Town Centre enhanced.
- Provision of new pedestrian and cycle infrastructure for Clara.

Project Outcomes

- Provision of a public amenity that will promote increased use of active modes of transport.
- Stimulate job growth and revenue through tourism, recreation, and construction.
- Potential to attract new businesses (for e.g. food and beverage, bike hire), residents and visitors to the Town Centre, thereby providing economic benefits to the local economy.



Figure 4.18 Future Railway Greenway link on River Street



Figure 4.19 Cyclist on the Waterford-Dungarvan Greenway

Proposed Greenway & Active Travel Routes

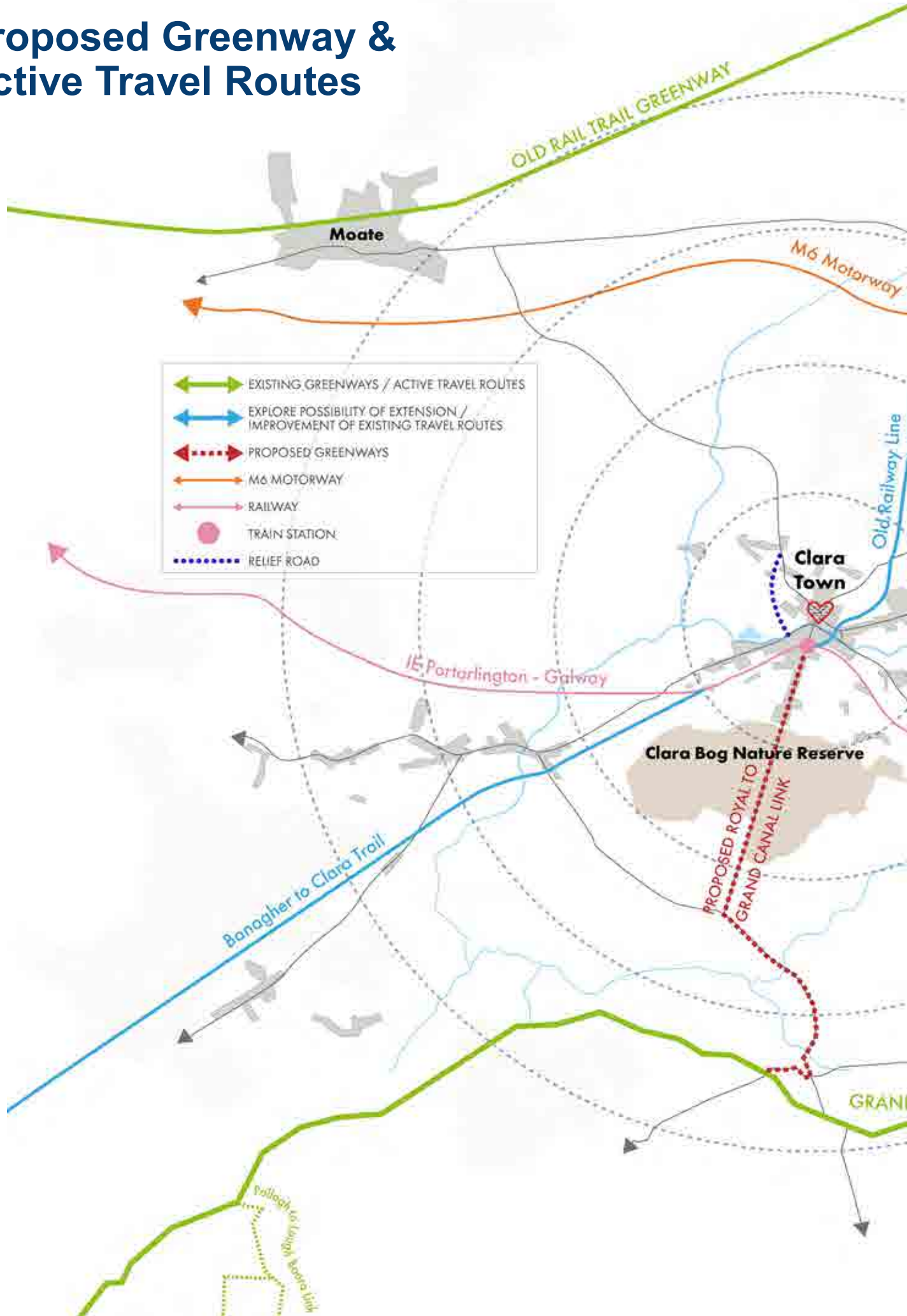





Figure 4.20 Proposed Greenway and Active Travel Routes




Benefits of Greenways

 **Economic:** Greenways located throughout Ireland are bringing forward significant economic benefits for cities, towns and villages. Greenways play a significant economic role in terms of attracting visitors for day and overnight trips along with the creation of associated enterprises such as bicycle hire and food and beverage operators. The economic benefits of the greenway are then indirectly shared throughout other businesses in the area (e.g. accommodation and food & beverage) as a result of increased visitor numbers.

 **Environmental:** Greenways help to protect important habitats and provide corridors for people and wildlife while also helping to improve air and water quality. Greenways provide enjoyable and safe options for active travel for people of all ages and abilities with quality of life benefits also associated with greenways.

 **Heritage:** Greenways have the ability to connect us to our heritage past by preserving historic places and by providing increased access to them. They can give citizens a sense of place and an understanding past events and practices.

 **Health and Recreation:** In many communities across the country, people do not have access to trails, parks, or other recreation areas close to their homes. Greenways provide a safe and relatively inexpensive option for regular exercise while encouraging more people to walk or cycle to short distance destinations, thereby promoting active travel.

Greenways Project Funding through Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) have allocated €63m for the development of around 70 Greenway projects throughout Ireland for 2023.

The funding will see construction continue on a number of projects, with other projects moving through planning and design stage, recent examples include:

Offaly County Council

€4.76 million of funding has delivered a further 35km of the Grand Canal Greenway in County Offaly from Edenderry to Lough Boora.

Wicklow County Council

€2,550,000 has been allocated through TII Projects including:

- Blessington Greenway - €1,800,000
- Arklow to Shillelagh Greenway - €500,000

Clare County Council

Over €2.1 million has been allocated towards Greenway projects in County Clare:

- West Clare Railway Greenway - €950,000
- Limerick to Scariff Greenway/Blueway - €780,000
- Shannon to Bunratty, Sixmilebridge and Limerick - €300,000

Waterford City and County Council

€1.5 million in funding has been allocated for projects which include:

- Waterford to Rosslare - €50,000
- Dungarvan to Mallow - €300,000
- Marlfield Blueway Clonmel - €300,000



Figure 4.21 Edenderry to Lough Boora Greenway



Figure 4.22 Edenderry to Lough Boora Greenway

PROJECT

10

The Farrell Building

Rejuvenation and re-activation of a prominent heritage building in the Town Centre.



A R R E L L



Project Area - Town Green & Main Street

The Farrell Building

The Farrell building is located on Main Street and its architectural characteristics and quality provide it with prominence within the streetscape. According to the NIAH, the building was originally constructed c.1800 and had use as a shop (grocers). The NIAH record of the building states that it has “*noteworthy features which enliven its façade such as the smaller sized windows to second floor level and the rendered fascia board. The shopfront and display window are a reflection of the modest shopfronts of the past and of the time of the small grocer*” and further, “*the tooled stone door surround contrasts with the timber shopfront, creating textural variation and adding to the structure’s visual appeal, making it positive contributor to the streetscape.*”

Presently, the Farrell building is unoccupied but despite its age, it appears to be in a relatively good physical condition. The building’s vacancy

detracts from contributing to an active and vibrant Main Street.

The Purpose of the Project

The regeneration of the Farrell building aligns with the themes of ‘Community’ and ‘Placemaking’ as set out within this TCF Plan. The re-purposing of the building as a possible enterprise and skills centre will create a bespoke facility that will provide training and upskilling opportunities and a new learning space for Clara’s community with the potential for specialising in key employment sectors.

Additionally, the redevelopment of the building and site as part of the ‘New Neighbourhood Quarter’ project, will provide key linkages and connections and contribute to a high quality public realm with increased pedestrian activity within this area.

Project Features

- Redevelopment of the Farrell building as a new enterprise and skills facility for residents.
- Enhances pedestrian activity in the Town Centre.
- Creation of a visually attractive public realm and streetscape for Main Street.

Project Physical Changes

- Redevelopment and re-purposing of an architecturally prominent vacant building.
- Contributes to re-activation of Main Street.
- New sustainable movement link connecting Main Street further eastwards.

Project Outcomes

- Assists with tackling of vacancy in the Town Centre.
- Positive contribution to the overall quality of place.
- Social interaction through meeting the needs of the community while contributing to a diversity of uses within the Town Centre.
- Sustainable use of an under-utilised building and restoration of local heritage.
- Promotes increased vibrancy and vitality in the Town Centre.
- New upskilling and training opportunities for the local community.



Figure 4.23 Main Street - Future Vision option

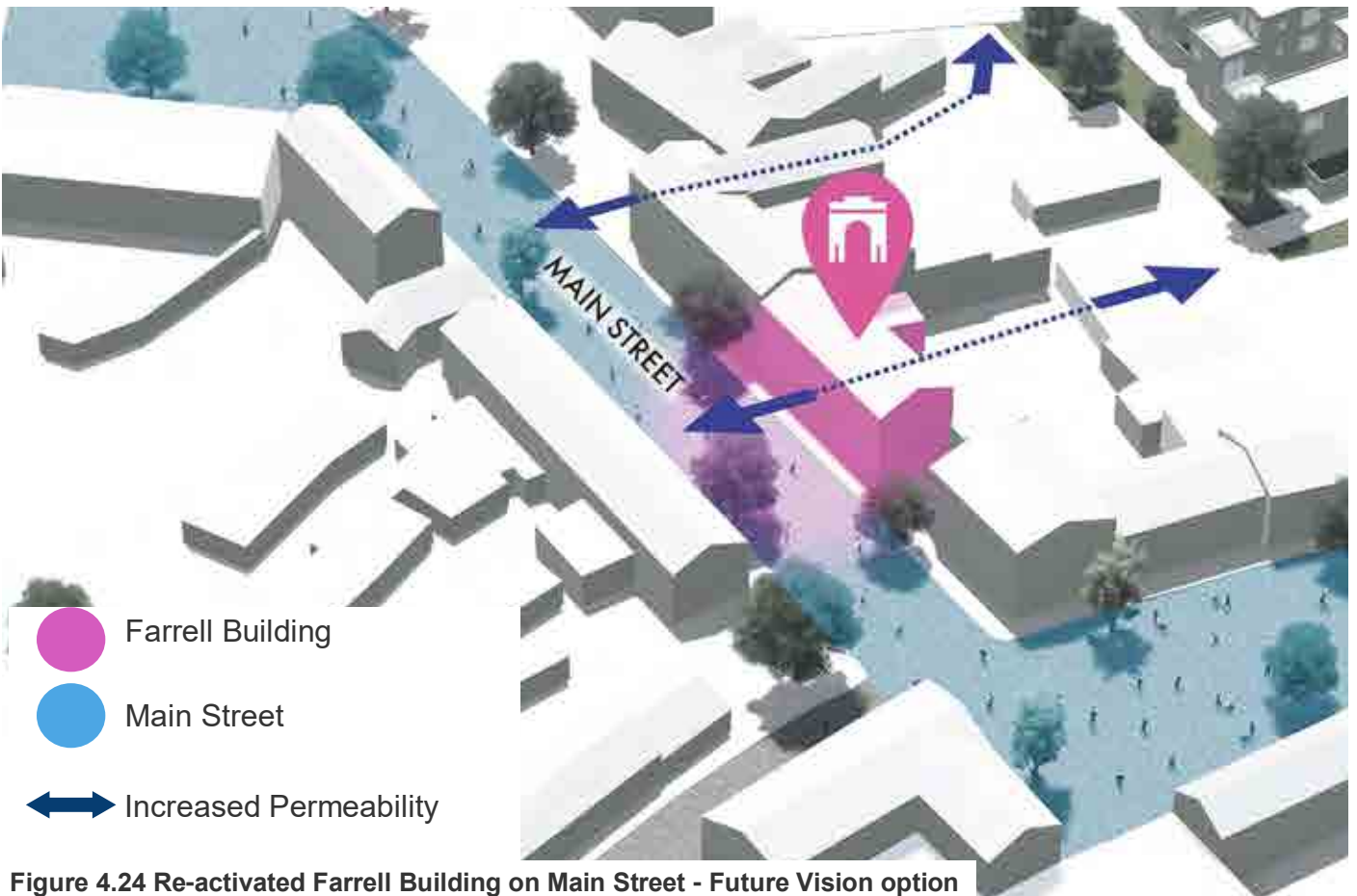


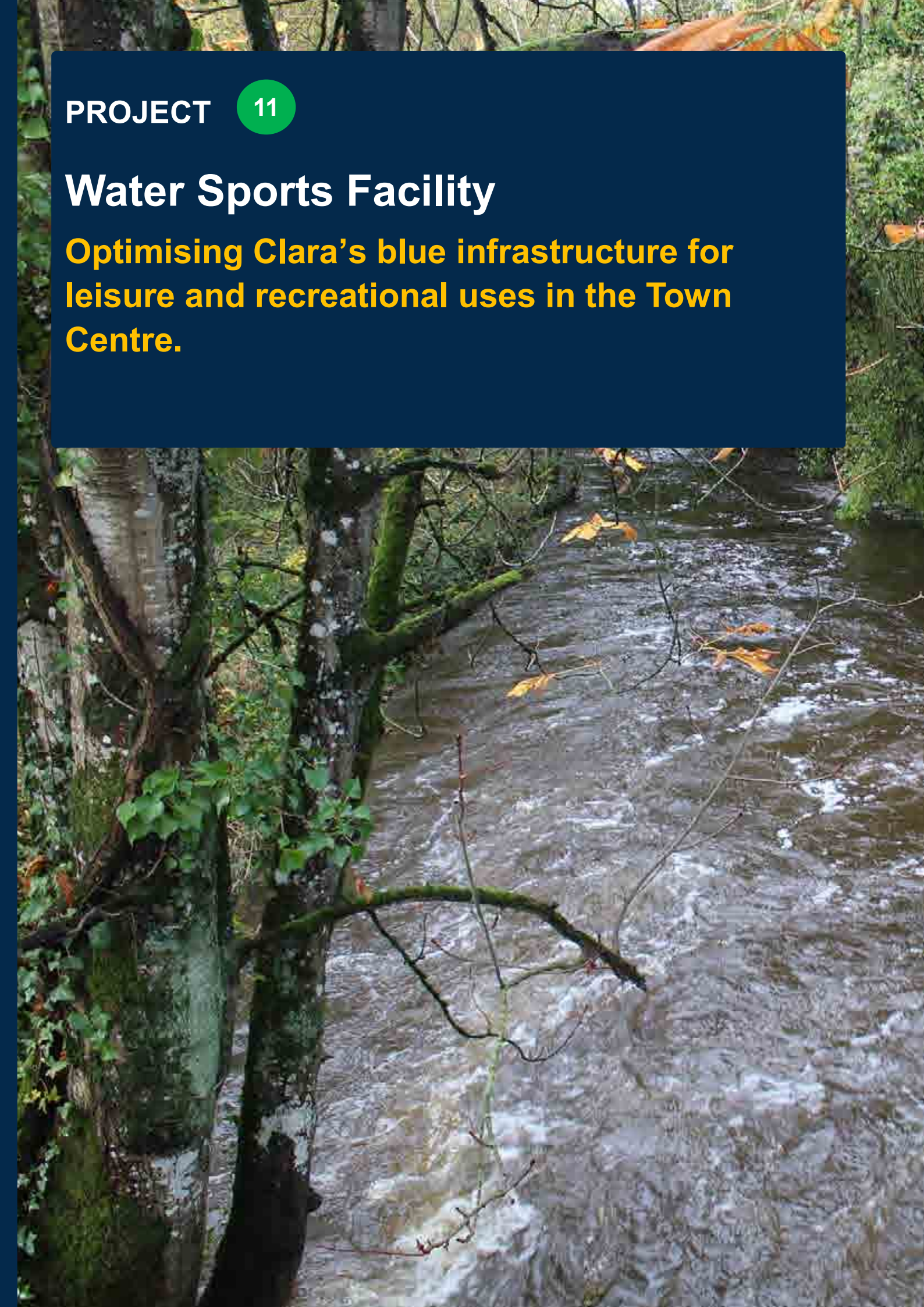
Figure 4.24 Re-activated Farrell Building on Main Street - Future Vision option

PROJECT

11

Water Sports Facility

Optimising Clara's blue infrastructure for leisure and recreational uses in the Town Centre.





Project Area - Sports & Recreation

Water Sports Facility

Aligning with the project interventions comprising the River Walk and Reservoir Nature Walk, a water sports activity facility is proposed on the River Brosna as a new amenity for residents and visitors.

Participation in outdoor water-based activities, as well as other outdoor-based pursuits, grew rapidly during the Covid-19 pandemic and water-based recreation has continued to remain popular for people of all ages. As mentioned within this TCF Plan, the location of the river affords a significant resource for the Town Centre and one that can be promoted with the aim of delivering social, economic and environmental advantages.

Notwithstanding the proposed water sports facility, additionally there is potential for river baths to be developed along the western section of the River Brosna, providing a unique recreational facility/attraction for the town. Further opportunities to provide

additional recreational facilities that utilise the River Brosna may come forward in future years as a result of this initial project intervention.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to provide a facility that both the local community and visitors to Clara can enjoy for recreational purposes. The project aims to increase the utilisation of the River Brosna as an existing natural blue resource available to the town.

Project Features

- Delivery of a water sports facility situated on the River Brosna providing activities such as kayaking and canoeing.
- Utilises the River Brosna for recreational and leisure-based activities.
- Project can act as a generator of increased visitors to Clara.
- Adds to the portfolio of new destinations in the Town Centre.

Project Physical Changes

- Facilitates increased activity on the River Brosna.
- Location of water sports-based infrastructure on the river.

Project Outcomes

- Re-invention of the river as a location for year round activity.
- Stimulates job growth and revenue by way of tourism and recreation.
- Promotes physical activity and health and well-being.
- Associated with other water/nature related projects that can place a positive focus on Clara as a place to visit.



Figure 4.25 Re-activated River Brosna - Future Vision option

PROJECT

12

Main Street Connections

Enhancing the future connectivity and permeability of Clara Town Centre.





Project Area - Linkages & Connections

Main Street Connections

The baseline analysis of Clara undertaken by the Plan team established that linkages and connections into the heart of the Town Centre, particularly Main Street and River Street, could be significantly improved in order to make the Town Centre a more permeable and connected destination. Connectivity from areas adjacent to and surrounding the Town Centre is critically important as it provides people with options in how they access services and facilities and how they move around Clara.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to enhance connectivity and permeability of Clara Town Centre. Strategically, this TCF Plan seeks to improve and enhance linkages and connections from key locations such as Clara railway station, the proposed tourism development at Erry Mill and from the River Brosna. By improving linkages and connections, the Town Centre can be re-imagined as a people-focused place.

ERRY MILL

PERMEABILITY

-  Pedestrian Access
-  Pedestrian Connection
-  Potential Connection

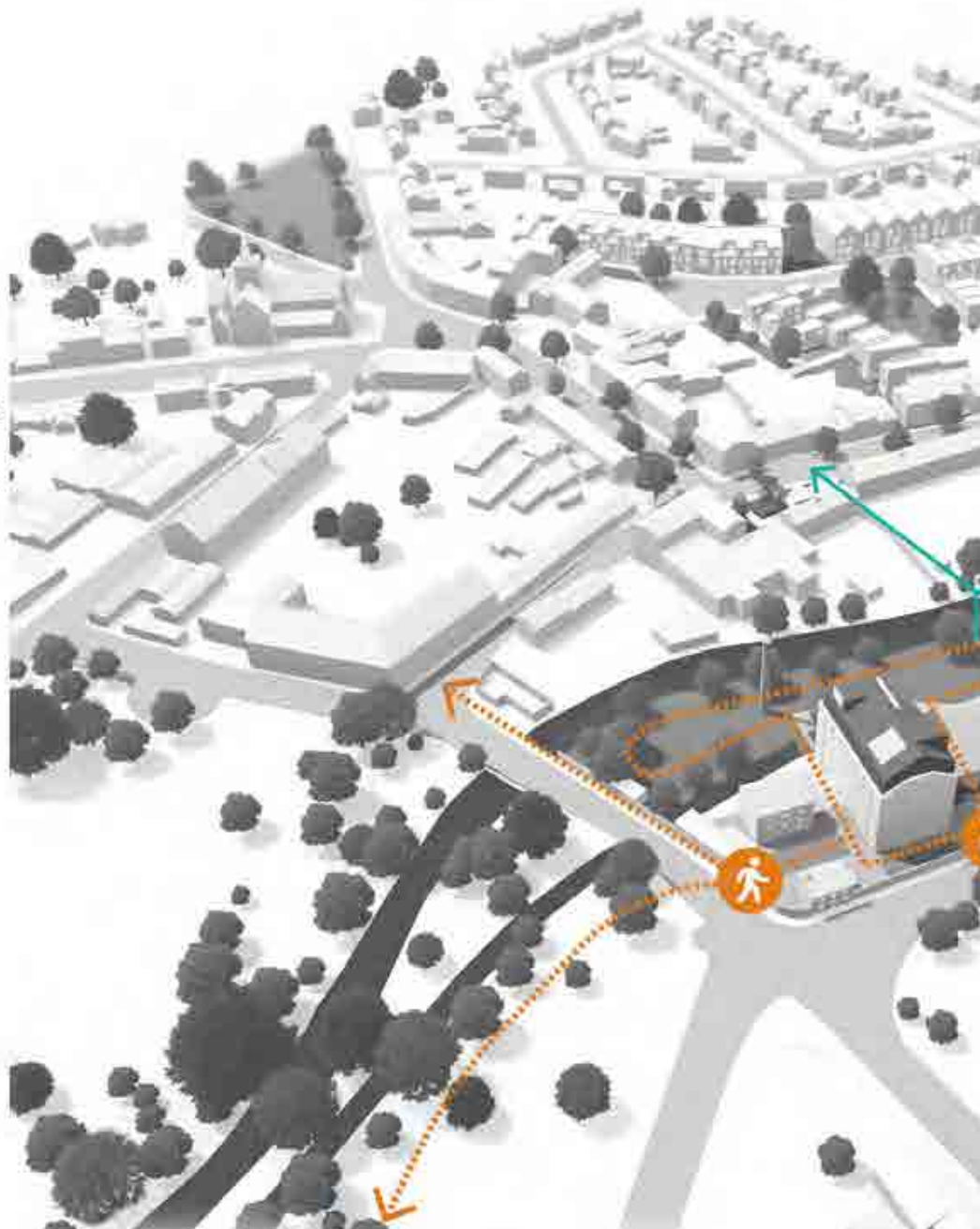


Figure 4.26 Permeability

Creating a more permeable and legible Town Centre destination that facilitates an ease of movement for residents, workers, and visitors will entice people to spend more time in the Town Centre, contributing positivity to its vitality and vibrancy.



Project Features

- Upgrade and improvement of existing active travel linkages to and from Main Street and River Street.
- Promotes a Town Centre that prioritises active travel modes over private car use.
- Provides for greater pedestrian and cyclist activity in the Town Centre.
- Project contributes to an enhanced and integrated public realm.

Project Physical Changes

- Increased pedestrian and cycle movements to and from the Town Centre.
- Construction of pedestrian/cycle bridge(s) across the River Brosna connecting River Street, Frederick Street and the Erry Mill site.
- Upgrades to the existing connection from Clara railway station to the Town Centre including the provision of a new bicycle hub.

Project Outcomes

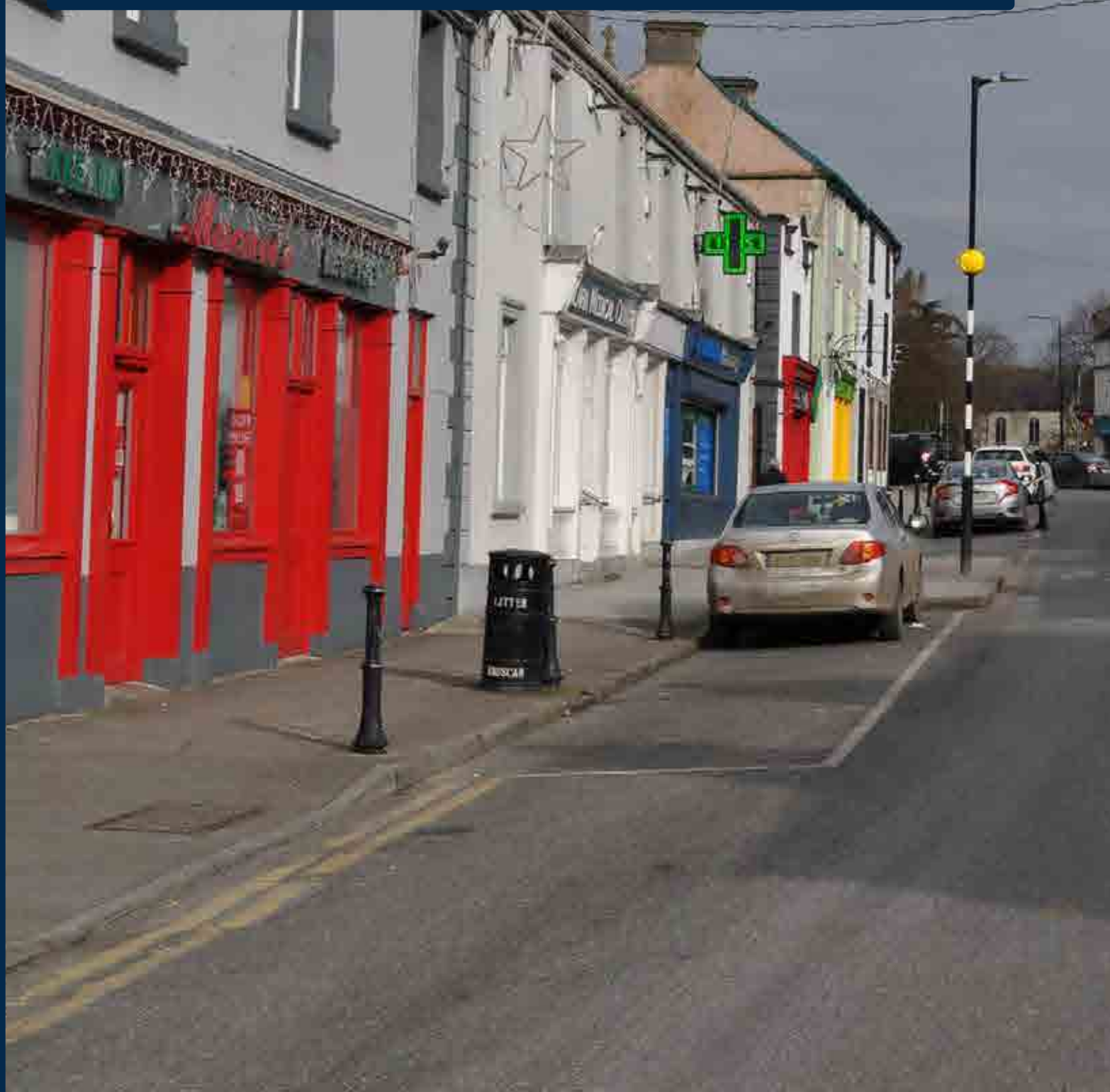
- Enhanced connectivity between Main Street, River Street, the River, Erry Mill and the railway station.
- Promotion of sustainable modes of travel within the Town Centre.
- Greater activity and vibrancy within the Town Centre producing social and economic benefits.
- Safer and more welcoming Town Centre where citizens have more movement options.

PROJECT

13

New Neighbourhood Quarter

Regeneration and redevelopment at a key location in the Town Centre.





CAROLINE

FARRE

MARKAL

N

Project Area - Town Green & Main Street

New Neighbourhood Quarter

The proposed new neighbourhood quarter is located at the axis of Main Street (west) and River Street (south) and stretches in an easterly direction to The Green. The built form of the streetscape on Main/River Street has a traditional arrangement whereby buildings are generally two-three storey, have immediate frontage to the street, with outbuildings and undeveloped lands positioned to the rear. The density of development is less on The Green, comprising residential dwellings with front and rear gardens, with bungalows located on the site side of this road. The lands comprising the site for the proposed quarter are characterised by a large central greenfield area.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to regenerate an important backlands opportunity site, as identified in the Clara Town Plan (Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, Volume 2:

Settlement Plans), in the Town as a new neighbourhood quarter that can create increased vibrancy in the Town Centre. The creation of a new quarter can bring forward a number of outcomes such as promoting a compact urban structure, re-developing Town Centre lands in an efficient and sustainable manner, bringing sterile backlands into active use, promoting Town Centre living and providing a range of uses that will benefit the community over the long term.

A key element of the neighbourhood quarter will be to increase permeability from The Green/ River Street to Main Street through the provision of new linkages that will result in a more connected Town Centre. The new quarter aligns with the Clara Town Team's 2nd Blueprint document that recommends "*new streets created in brownfield sites designed to accommodate mixed housing*".

Project Features

- Redevelopment of brownfield and greenfield lands situated in a key backlands opportunity site in the Town Centre for a new mixed-use neighbourhood quarter.
- Increased opportunity for Town Centre living where services and amenities can be accessed by walking and cycling modes.
- New central area of public open space to complement the built form.

Project Physical Changes

- Physical redevelopment of existing buildings and undeveloped backlands within the Town Centre.
- New public open space area.
- New walking and cycling route network.
- Improvement in the visual quality of the urban environment.

Project Outcomes

- Regeneration of a key backlands location within the Town Centre that will promote a mix of uses and Town Centre living.
- Efficient redevelopment of under-utilised backlands and buildings that align with the principles of compact growth.
- Enhanced permeability and connectivity.



Figure 4.27 Main Street, Clara - Present Day



Figure 4.28 River Street, Clara - Present Day

New Neighbourhood Quarter



Figure 4.29 New Neighbourhood Quarter



LANDS TO THE REAR OF RIVER STREET / MAIN STREET

INFILL SITE ACTIVATION

Ø Uninhabited lands

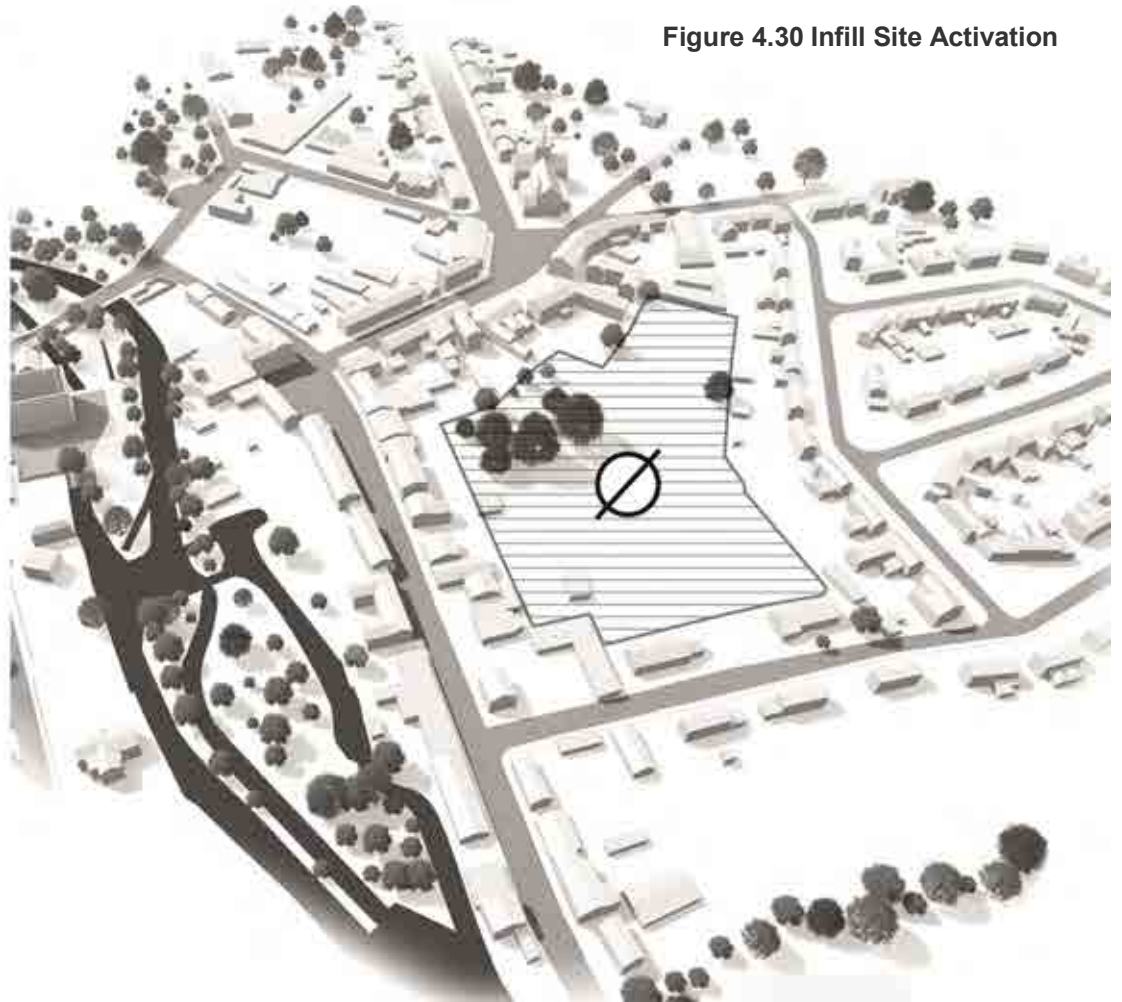


Figure 4.30 Infill Site Activation

LANDS TO THE REAR OF RIVER STREET / MAIN STREET

PROPOSED SCHEME STRUCTURE

● Building Plots

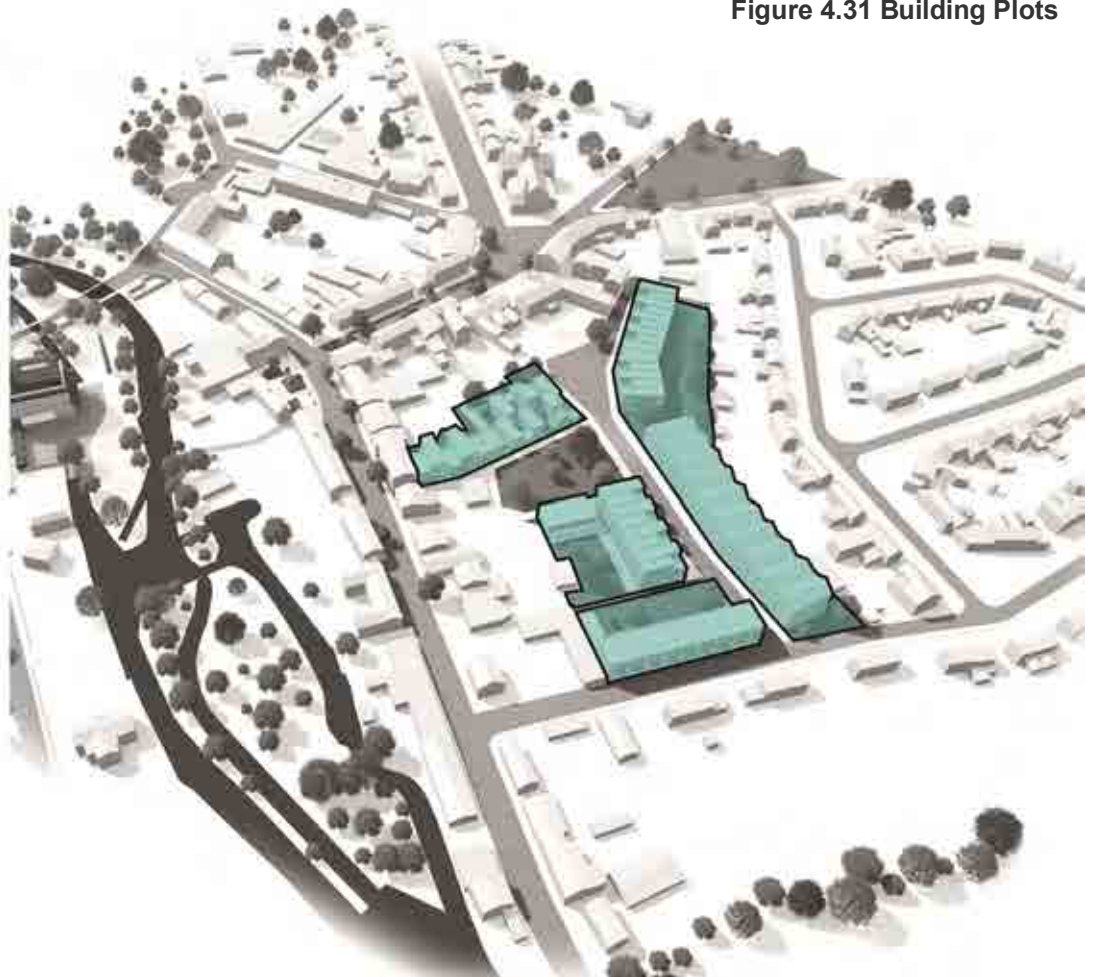


Figure 4.31 Building Plots

Figure 4.32 Housing Typologies

LANDS TO THE REAR OF RIVER STREET/ MAIN STREET

HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

- Detached house
- Semi-detached house
- Terrace house
- Apartments
- Duplex

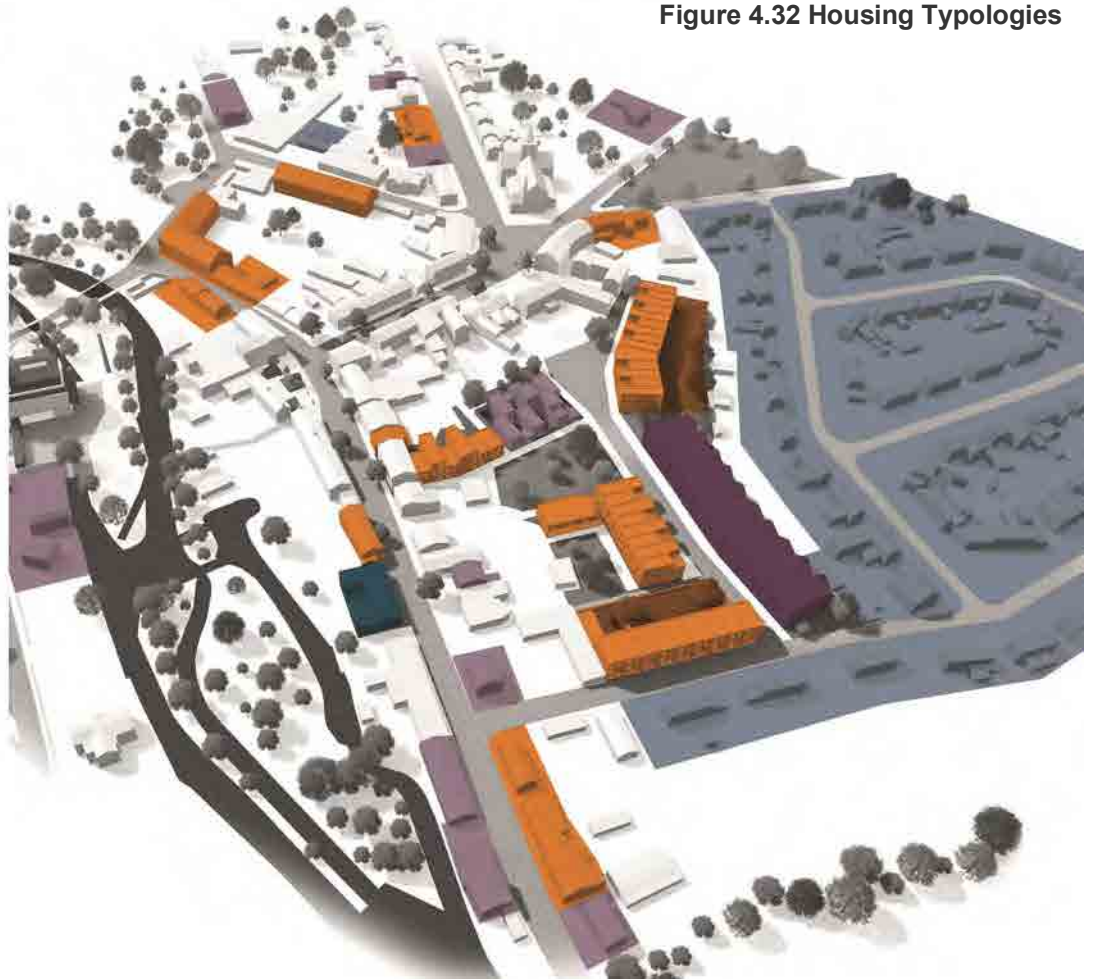


Figure 4.33 Access Points

LANDS TO THE REAR OF RIVER STREET/ MAIN STREET

CONSOLIDATION OF THE MAIN STREET

- Access points

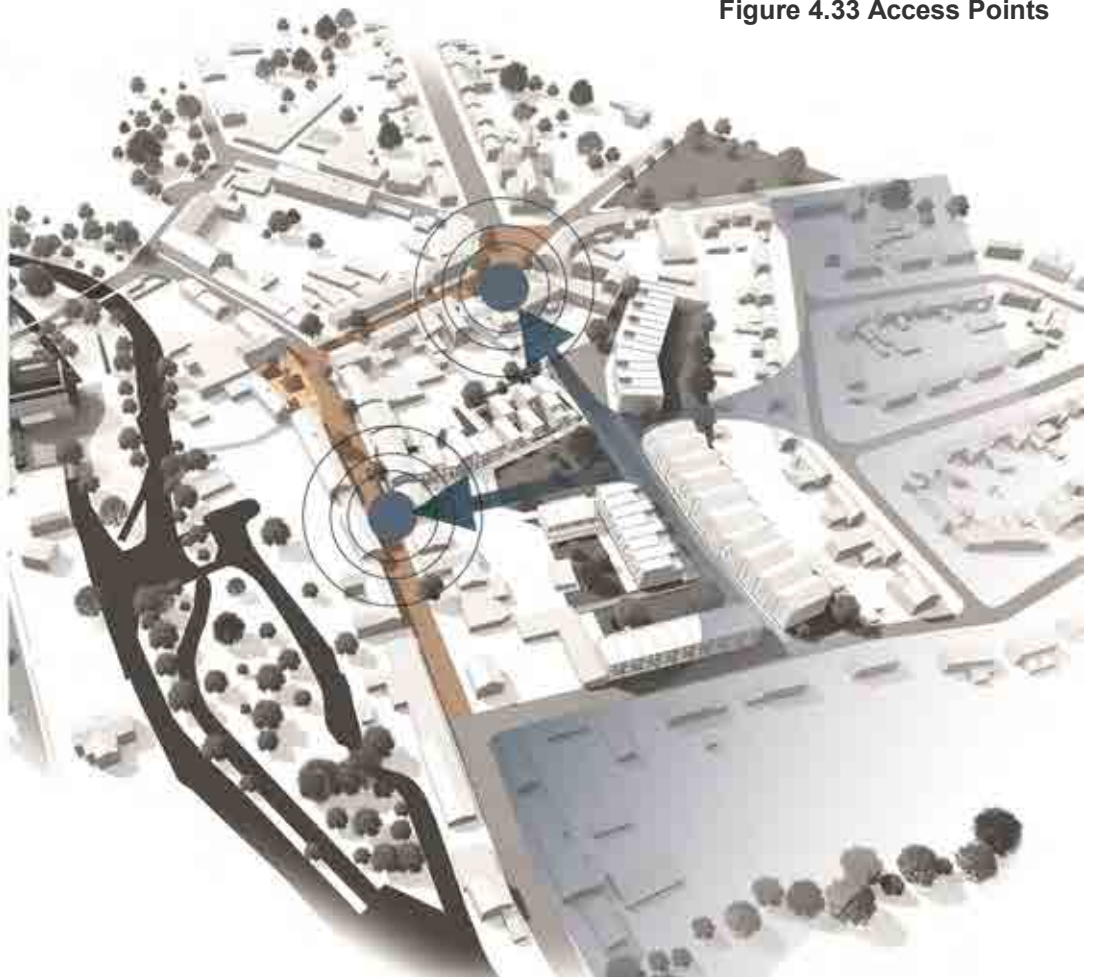


Figure 4.34 Vehicular Accessibility & Parking



Figure 4.35 Unit Types

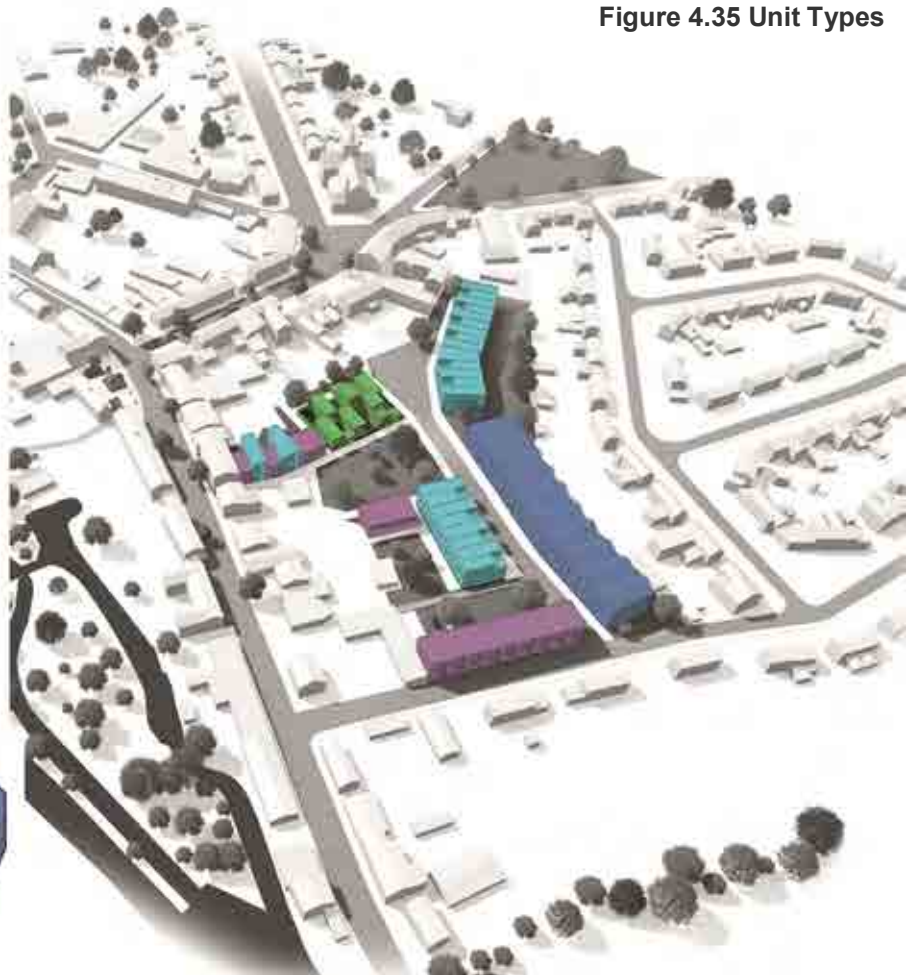
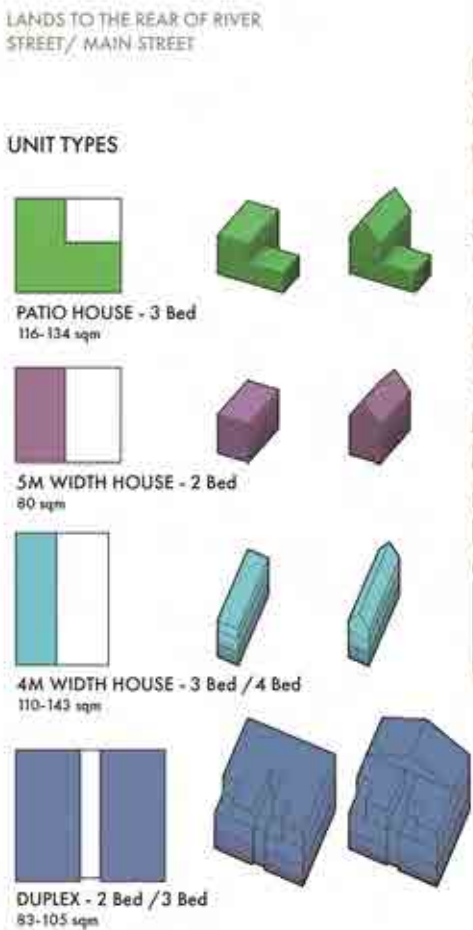


Figure 4.36 Green Courtyard

LANDS TO THE REAR OF RIVER STREET / MAIN STREET

GREEN COURTYARD

- Private Open Space
- Semi-Public Open Space
- Public Open Space

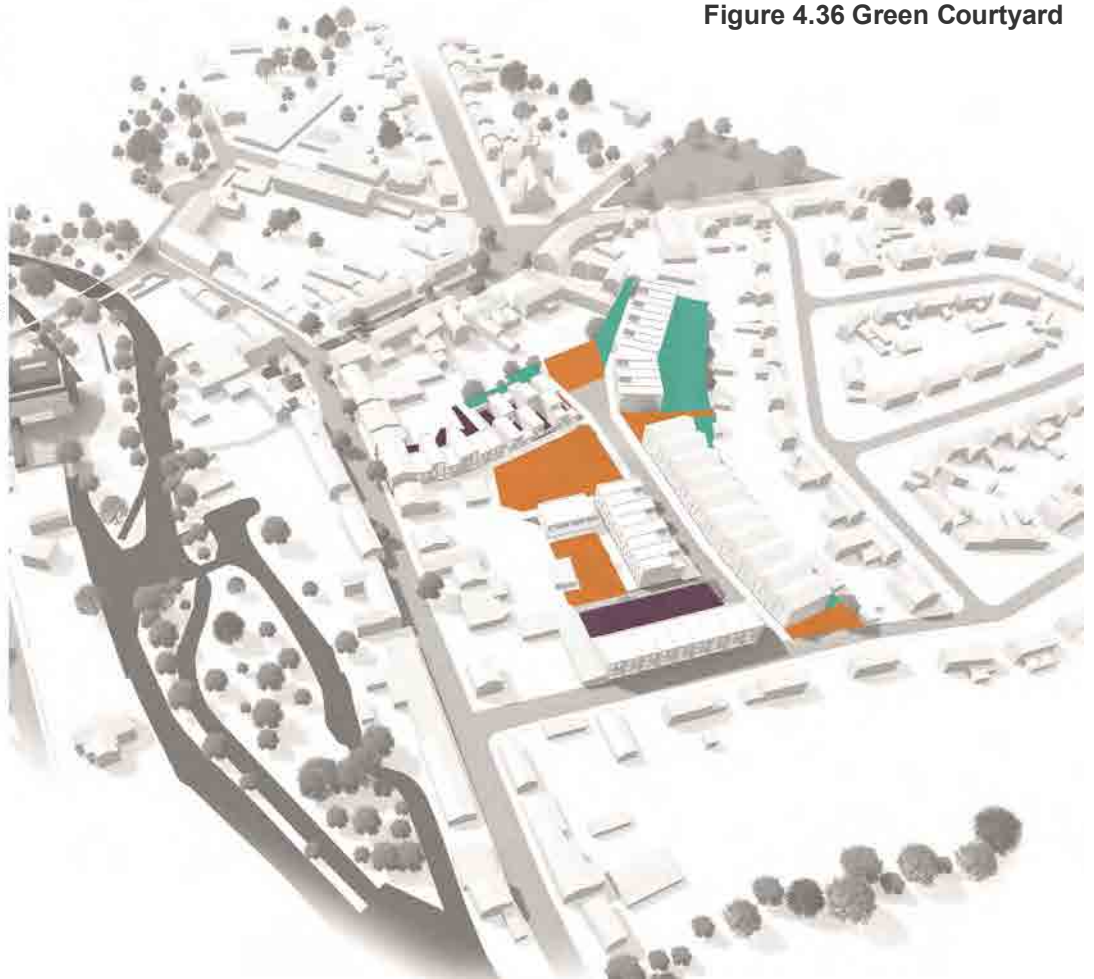
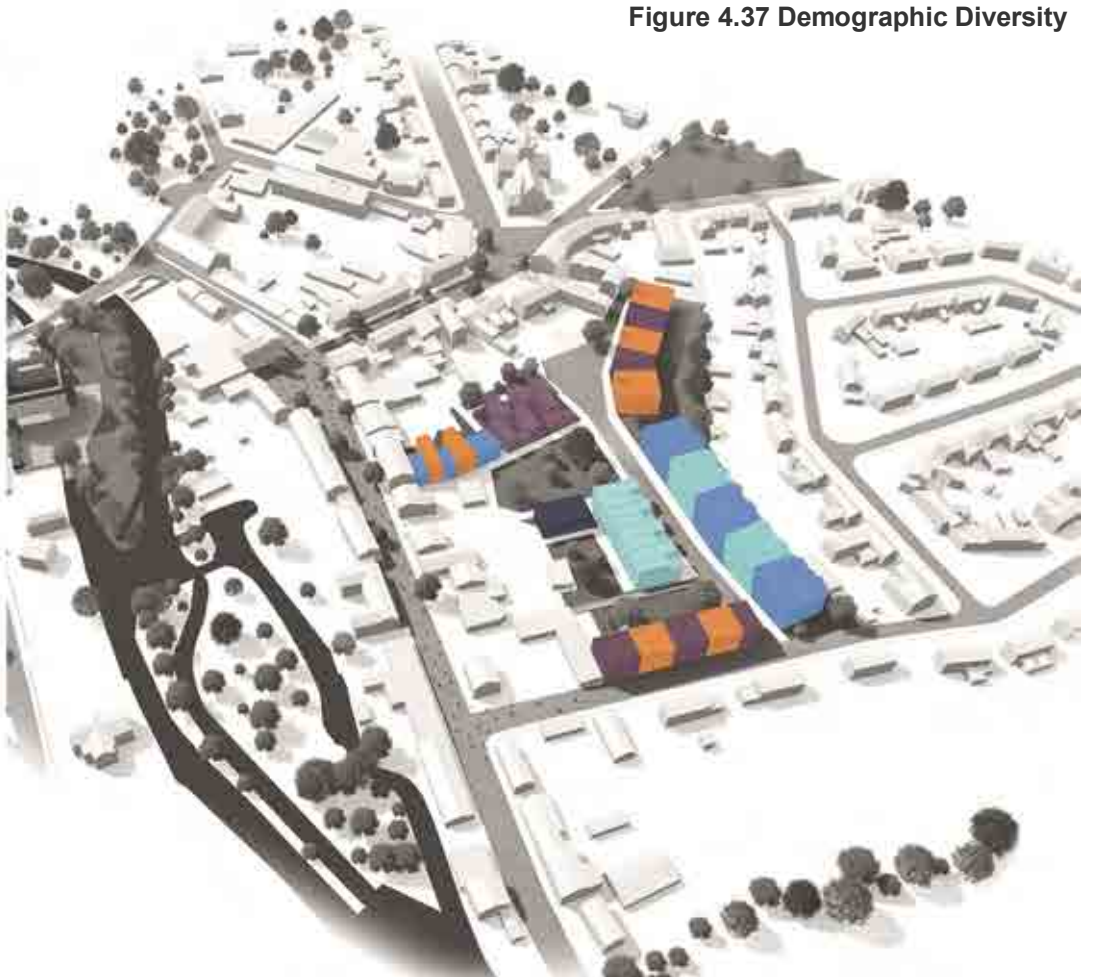


Figure 4.37 Demographic Diversity

LANDS TO THE REAR OF RIVER STREET / MAIN STREET

DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY

- Individuals
- Students
- Couples
- Families
- Elderly



New Neighbourhood Quarter



Figure 4.38 New Neighbourhood Quarter - Future Option

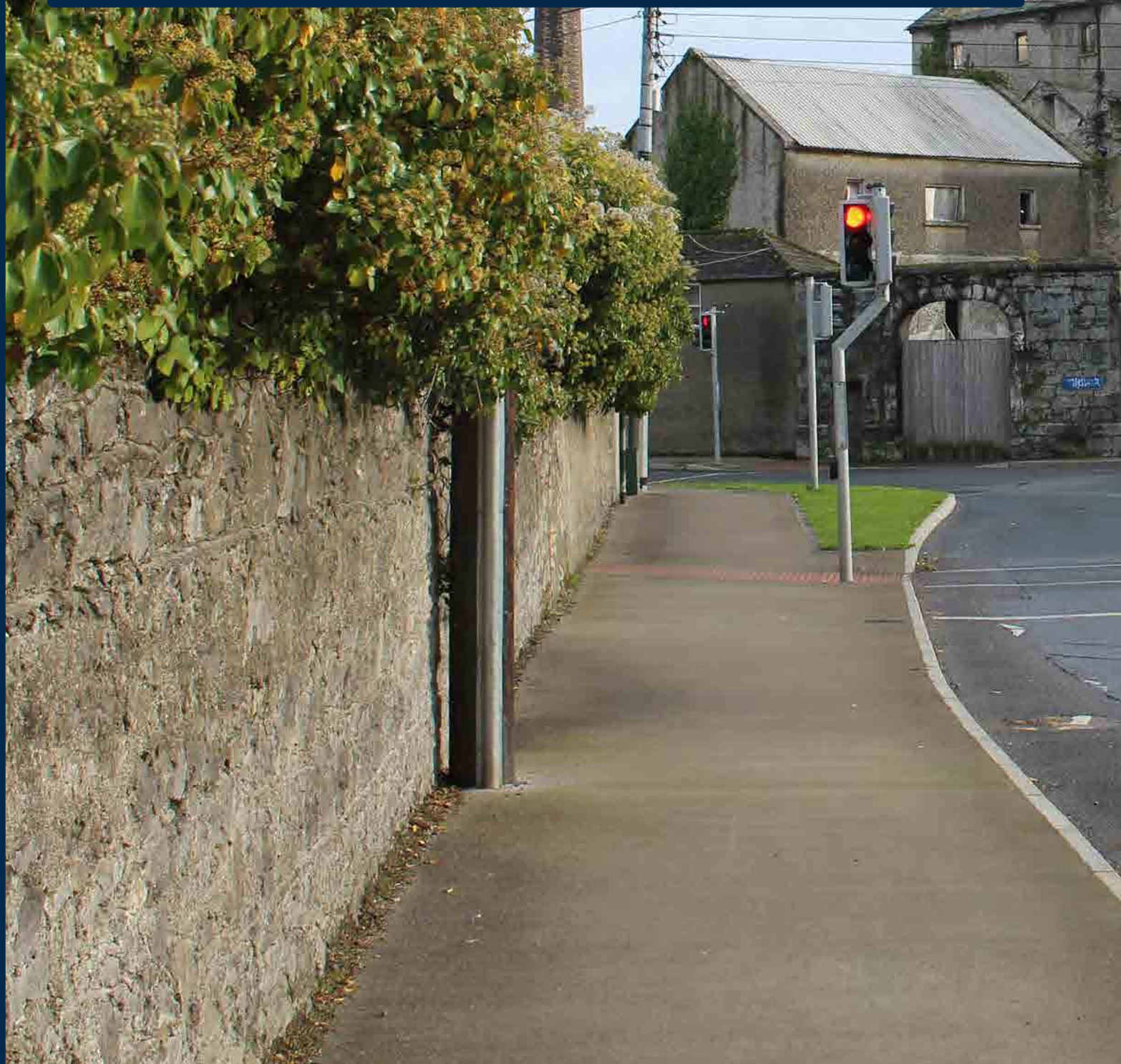


PROJECT

14

Erry Mill Site

Celebrating the story of Clara's unique and rich industrial heritage at the Erry Mill site.





POBBERY
MAHAN'S
COOBS

DART

2436

Project Area - Heritage & Tourism Loop

Erry Mill Site

The Erry Mill site is located at the junction of Frederick Street and Clara Bridge and makes a significant contribution to the story of Clara's unique and rich industrial heritage. The main mill building is a substantial and prominent building within this part of the Town Centre and streetscape, being six storeys in height. Unfortunately, through time, the physical condition of the mill building has deteriorated with the roof almost fully collapsed.

The grouping of buildings and structures on the site also includes the distinctive tall red brick chimney, mill manager's house and forge/ smithy building that are in view from the public road network. The additional buildings in this locale, as described, are in a better condition than the mill building and also contribute positively to the streetscape. Collectively, this group of former industrial heritage buildings make a significant contribution to the townscape of Clara.

The Purpose of the Project

The Erry Mill site offers the potential opportunity to not only regenerate a number of noteworthy buildings within the Town Centre, which in itself is important, but also to celebrate and promote the story of Clara's former industrial history.

The regeneration of the Erry Mill site aligns with the themes of 'Heritage Tourism' and 'Placemaking' within this TCF Plan through the conservation and restoration of key heritage buildings for a new tourism development use. Benefits of this project intervention also include wider environmental improvements to the overall site and an enhancement to the visual quality of the urban environment around Frederick Street.

Project Features

- Sympathetic redevelopment of the Erry Mill site for a new tourism-based development.
- Conservation and re-use of a number of significant and valuable heritage buildings.
- Promotes a tourism offer for the Town Centre.
- Access to a key heritage asset within Clara.

Project Physical Changes


- Physical restoration of the Erry Mill site and associated buildings.
- Construction of new pedestrian links to the Town Centre.
- Improvements to the overall quality of the townscape.

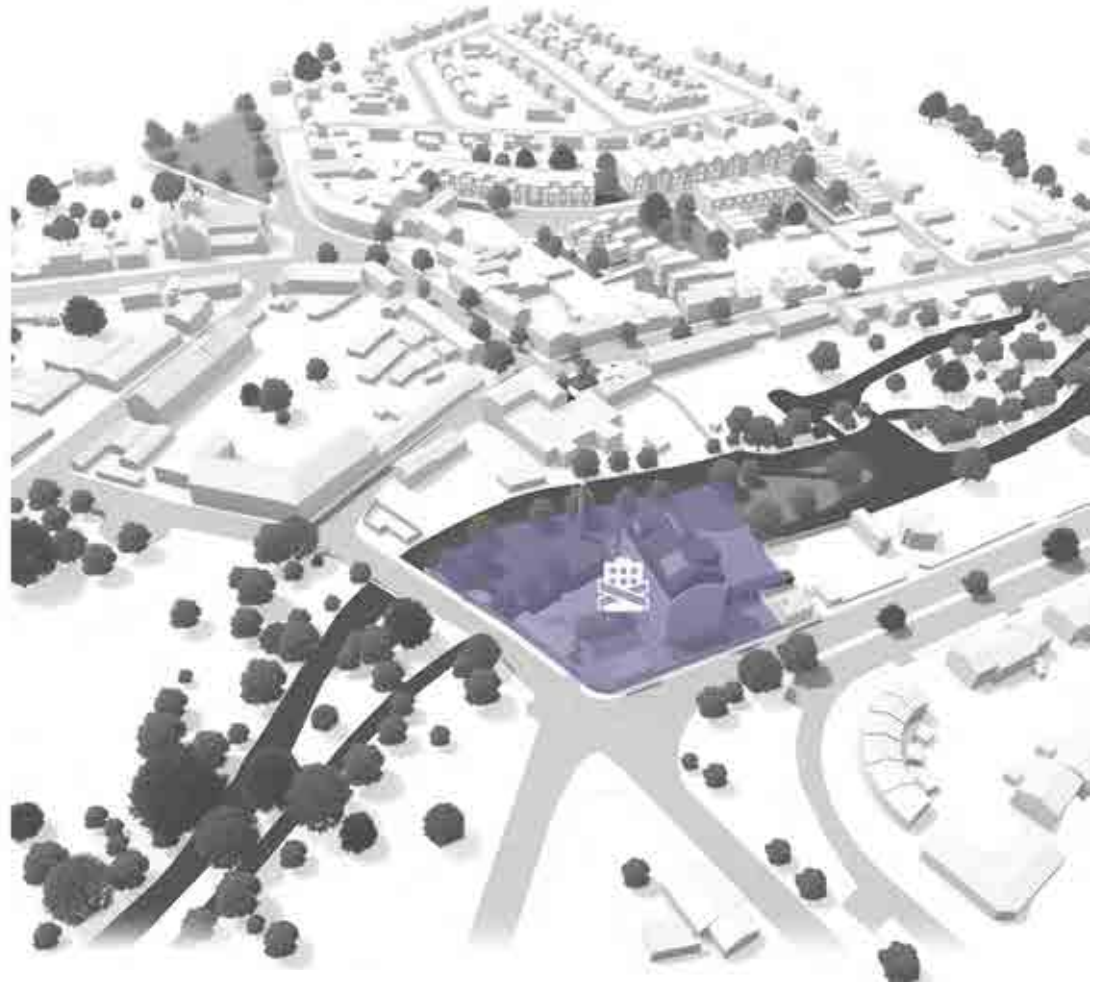
Project Outcomes

- A new tourism development for Clara.
- Increased visitor numbers to Clara that can generate additional economic benefits.
- Vibrancy and connectivity between the train station and River Street.
- Visual representation of Clara's industrial heritage past.
- Creation of a new 'destination' within Clara.

ERRY MILL

ACTIVATION OF
DERELICT SITE

 Erry Mill Lands



4.39 Re-activated Erry Mill Building - Future Vision option

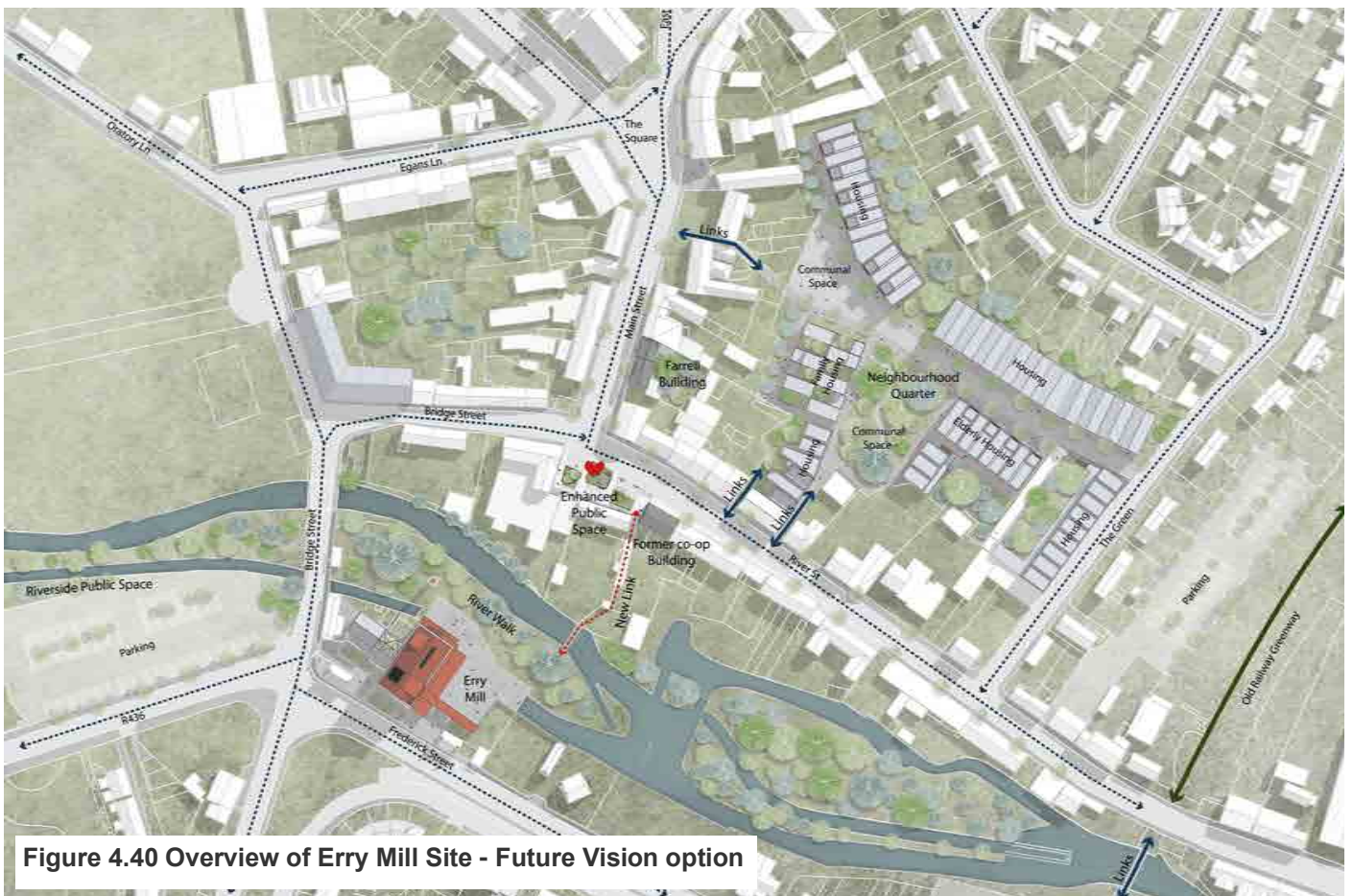


Figure 4.40 Overview of Erry Mill Site - Future Vision option

Erry Mill Redevelopment



Figure 4.41 Erry Mill Redevelopment



Figure 4.42 Town Centre Regeneration

ERRY MILL

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

-  Erry Mill
-  Potential Cultural Hubs

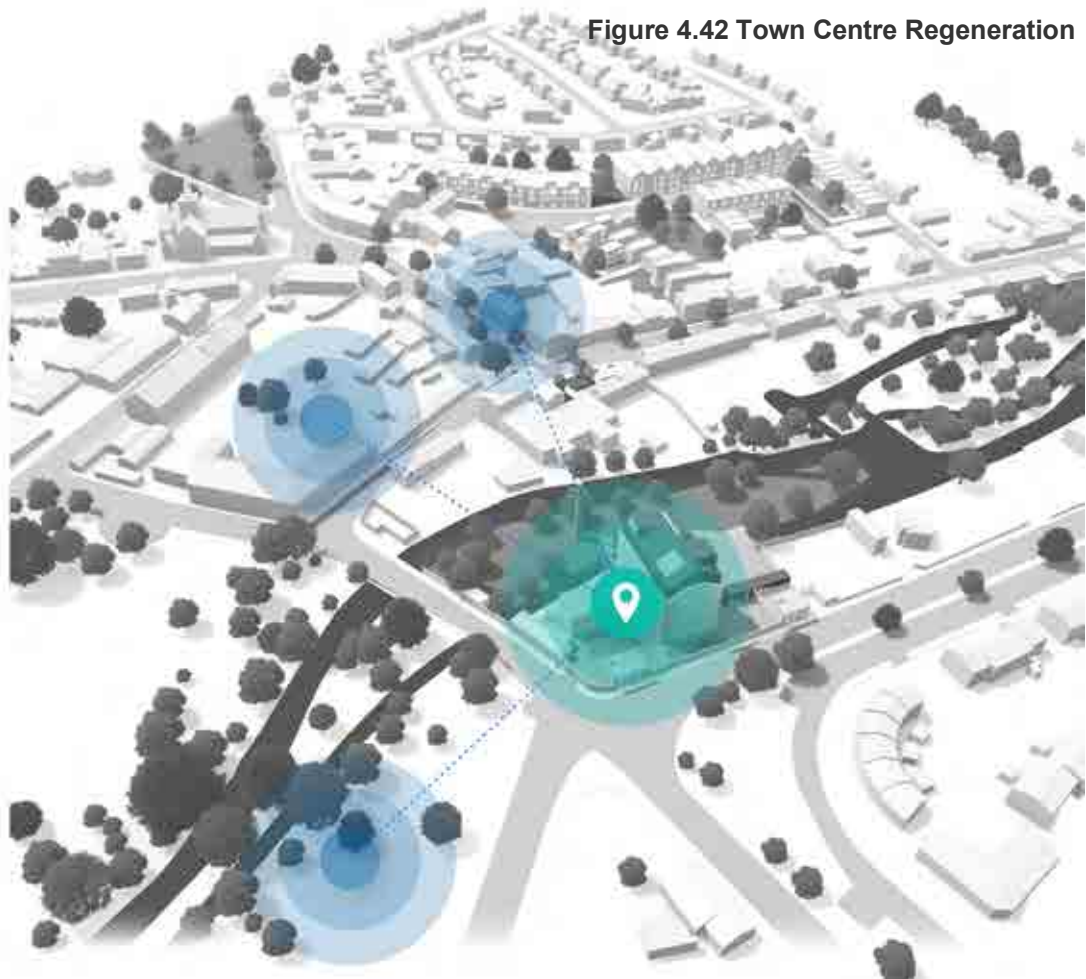


Figure 4.43 Permeability

ERRY MILL

PERMEABILITY

-  Pedestrian Access
-  Pedestrian Connection
-  Potential Connection

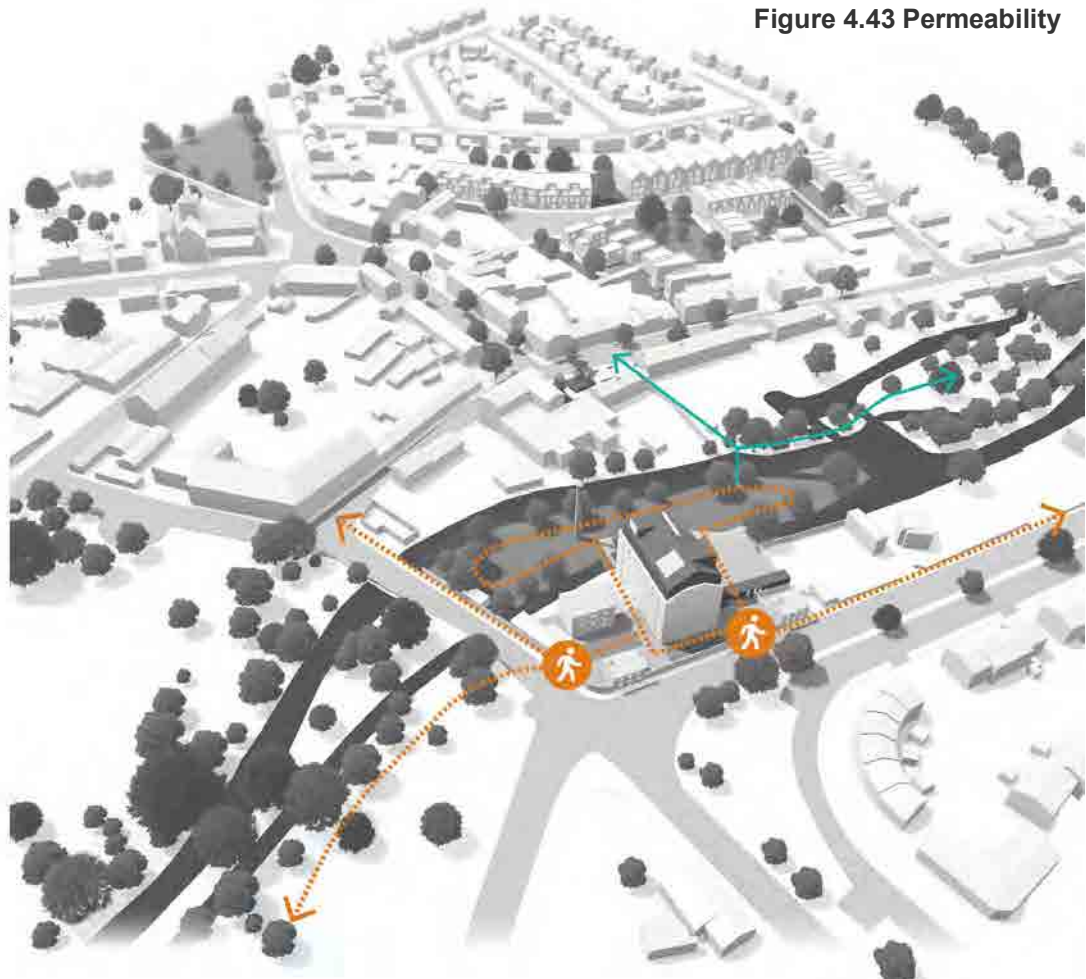


Figure 4.44 Landmarks

ERRY MILL

LANDMARKS

-  Existing Landmark
-  Proposed Landmark
-  Routes

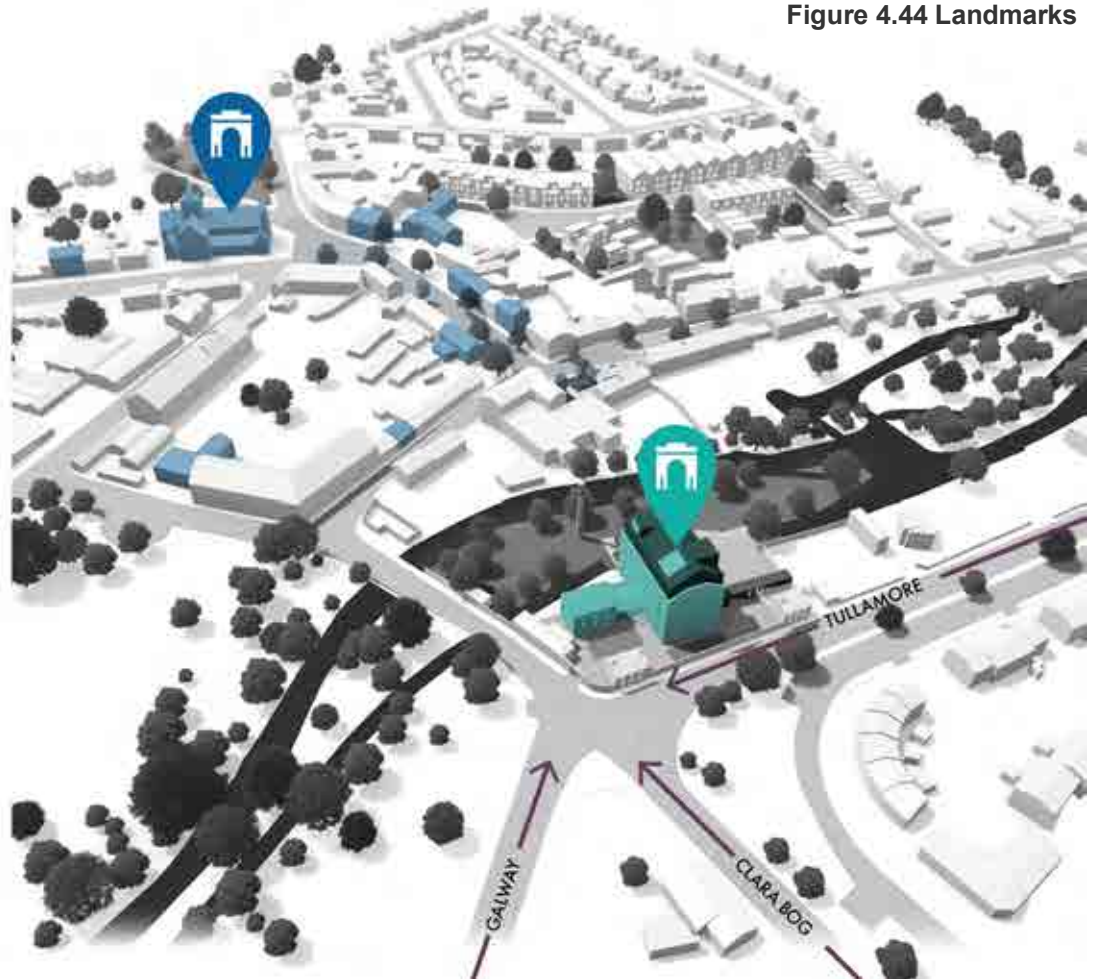
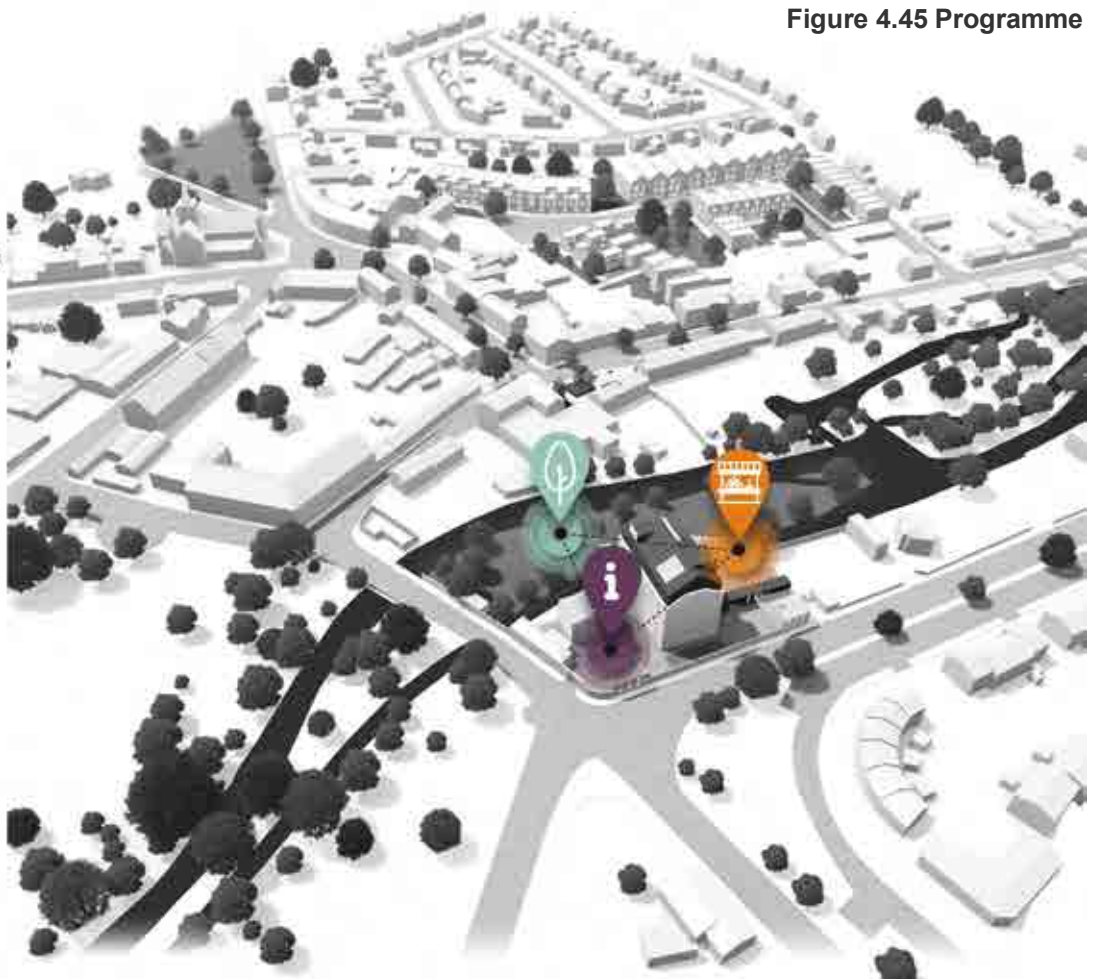


Figure 4.45 Programme

ERRY MILL

PROGRAMME

-  Erry Mill River Garden
-  Market Square and Outdoor Events
-  Information Centre



Case Study - Church of Oak Distillery, Monasterevin, Co. Kildare

Heritage Regeneration

Introduction

The former Cassidy's Distillery occupies a c.2 hectare site a short distance north of Monasterevin, Co. Kildare. The town has a long-established whiskey-making tradition dating back to the 1780s when John Cassidy opened his distillery. The original Ballykelly Mills site dates back to the early 1800s and began as a large corn and flour mill.

This significant heritage regeneration project comprises the development of a distillery and visitor centre (including ancillary development such as café and maturation facilities). The project involves the restoration of the former seven storey Ballykelly Malthouse building, a Protected Structure. The heritage project is under construction and is nearing completion.

As well as its primary use as a functioning high-end whiskey distillery, the distillery features whiskey tasting rooms, a roof garden, terrace, gallery rooms and an exhibition area for visitors.

The distillery has an advantageous location and is situated adjacent to the Grand Canal which forms part of the Barrow Blueway. The Blueway is a 46km multi-use shared leisure route which runs alongside the Barrow Line of the Grand Canal between Athy and Robertstown.



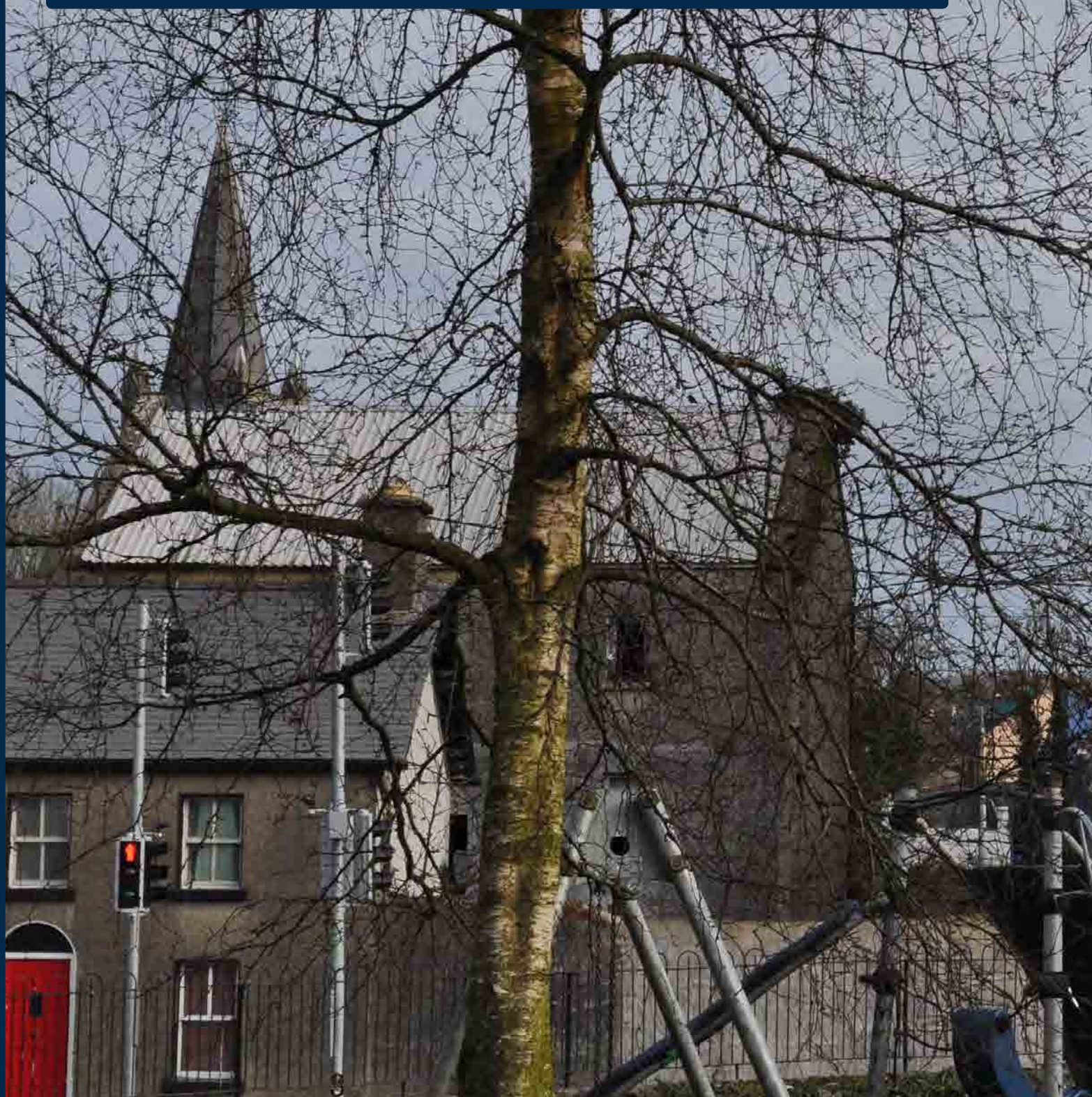


PROJECT

15

Heritage Buildings Opportunities

Regenerating and re-activating Clara's valuable heritage buildings.





Project Area - Town Green & Main Street / Heritage & Tourism Loop

Heritage Buildings Opportunities

Clara has a rich network of heritage buildings that are located throughout the Town Centre. These buildings provide a unique insight into Clara's past and the evolution of the settlement through time. Clara's heritage buildings and Protected Structures are a valuable built asset for the town and local community. They provide significant architectural, historic, and cultural value and interest.

This project comprises a number of prominent heritage buildings in Clara. However, this project is not limited to these buildings only. Rather, this project is brought forward to highlight the benefits and opportunities heritage buildings in general can generate for Clara. The heritage buildings highlighted within this project include:

- Erry Mill (Frederick Street).
- Charlestown Mill (R420).

- Clashawaun Jute Works (Brendan Street).
- Lehinch Monastery Abbey (Kilbeggan Road).
- Family Resource & Community Centre (River Street).

The Purpose of this Project

The purpose of this project is to direct a focus on Clara's valuable built heritage assets. Through renovation and regeneration, these buildings offer a range of land use opportunities comprising residential, commercial, cultural, tourism and leisure uses, for example. Funding opportunities, such as the Historic Structures Fund, can assist with the conservation and enhancement of heritage buildings for the benefit of the community and public. As set out within this Section, Erry Mill has been selected as a key project intervention that could realise a new heritage tourism development within the Town Centre.



Figure 4.46 Clashawaun Jute Works - Present Day



Figure 4.47 Erry Mill Site - Future Vision option as a new Heritage Tourism development



Figure 4.48 Charlestown Mill - Present Day

Heritage Building Case Study 1

Pot Duggan's, Ennistymon, Co. Clare



Project Summary

Pot Duggan's bar and restaurant is located in the town of Ennistymon, Co. Clare. The two storey building originates from c.1840-1880 and is a Protected Structure (RPS Ref. 356). The building's original use was a private residence with outbuildings to the rear. Around the turn of the century, a timber pilaster shopfront was installed and the structure changed use to a shop. Further renovation and refurbishment works were carried out in 2017-2018.

The current commercial enterprise is an example of how a small scale Protected Structure can be successfully restored as a contemporary food and beverage premises. The works to the building have retained its original character and it makes a significant contribution to the quality of the New Road streetscape and the vibrancy of the local area, delivering positive environmental, social and economic outcomes for Ennistymon.

Heritage Building Case Study 2

The Millhouse, Slane, Co. Meath



Source: www.themillhouse.ie

Project Summary

The Millhouse is located in the village of Slane, Co. Meath. The complex of heritage buildings and Protected Structures were originally constructed in 1766 and comprised a former corn mill that evolved to become a linen manufacturer in time. On site, the Protected Structures include a former miller's house (RPS Ref. 90696), mill building (RPS Ref. 90694), gate lodge building (RPS Ref. 90689) and chimney (RPS Ref. 90695).

In 2006, the complex was fully restored and transformed into a contemporary commercial enterprise as wedding venue. Guest accommodation, glamping and retreats are also available on site. The Millhouse is an example of how a large scale former industrial complex, with Protected Structures, can be rejuvenated and brought back into active commercial use. The complex is only 850 metres from the village centre and it has delivered positive outcomes for Slane through the generation of new employment opportunities and sympathetic restoration of the aforesaid heritage buildings.

Clara Heritage Assets

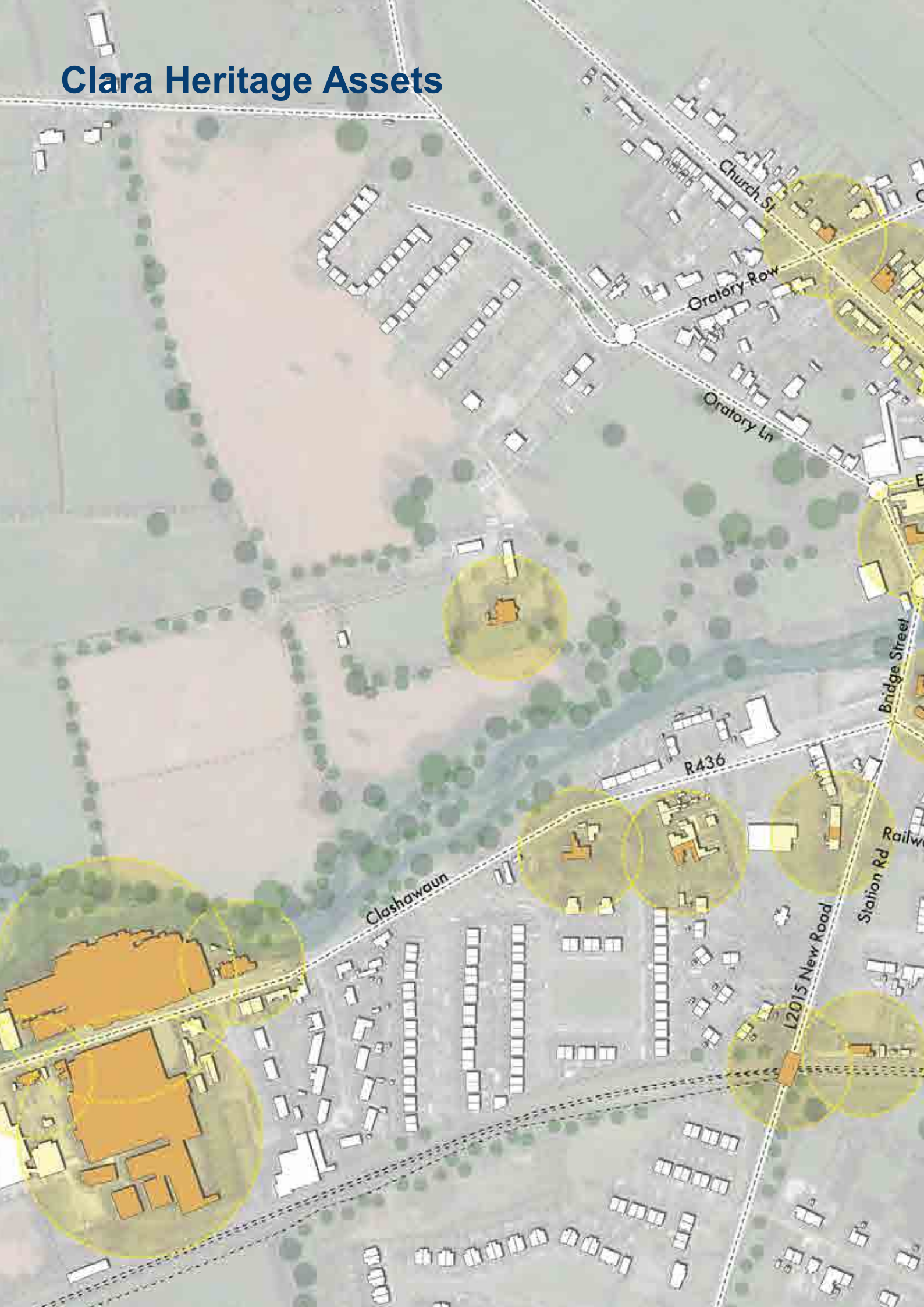


Figure 4.49 Clara Heritage Assets



Clara Vacant Buildings



Figure 4.50 Clara Vacant Buildings



Clashawaun Jute Works - A Case Study

Background

The Clashawaun Jute Works site is situated on the R436 route in the western area of Clara. The buildings that comprise the Jute Works were originally constructed in 1864 and they represent a significant part of Clara's industrial heritage.

By the 1900s, employment at the Jute Works had exceeded 600 people which demonstrates the economic importance of the works to the town. Uniquely, it was the only Jute Works in operation in Ireland at that time which again illustrates its significance. The Jute Works ceased operation in 1971 after 106 years of operation however the works had firmly placed Clara on the industrial map of Ireland.

The architectural heritage value of the Jute Works is evidenced by a number of the buildings on site being Protected Structures including the weaving works factory (RPS Ref. 12-39) and spinning works factory (RPS Ref. 12-37).

The Clashawaun Jute Works, while no longer in operation, form a key part of the living heritage of Clara and retain a significant level of historical interest for the town's population. Due to the former operations that took place on site, and taking cognisance of the numerous buildings and structures that still remain, the Jute Works site offers a multitude of potential uses that can allow the site and its buildings to be regenerated and re-used for the benefit of the town and the local community.



Source: Google Earth

Clashawaun Jute Works - Future Options

Regeneration Potential

As described, the Clashawaun Jute Works has significant regeneration and redevelopment potential to accommodate a variety of future uses given the physical size of the site and the number of buildings present. The images below present regeneration options for Clashawaun and are examples that have been sourced from a number of European towns. Former industrial sites such as Zollverein in Essen and Landschaftspark in Duisberg, Germany, are case studies of how former industrial sites have been successfully regenerated and re-purposed for different land uses.

Festivals and Events



Source: www.landschaftpark.ie

Heritage & Tourism



<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/975/gallery/>

Sport and Recreation



Source: www.dezeen.com

Climate and Ecology



Source: www.landschaftpark.ie

Sustainable Energy



Source: www.landschaftpark.ie

Clara - Future Townscape



Figure 4.51 Clara Town Centre - Future Vision



Table 4.1 Summary of Project Intervention Alignment with Town Centre First Policy document

Project Details	Project Alignment with TCF Policy
Townscape Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to attractive public realm. • Contributes to building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces. • Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity. • Attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop.
River Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Town Centre Cycle Routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Former Co-Op Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to attractive public realm. • Contributes to well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop.
Reservoir Nature Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Town Centre Parking Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage traffic within central areas.
Star Community Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces. • Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport.
Heritage-led Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to attractive public realm. • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Railway Greenway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.

Project Details	Project Alignment with TCF Policy
Farrell Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds to variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities. • Contributes to well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces. • Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop.
Water Sports Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Main Street Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to attractive public realm. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Prioritise vulnerable users (pedestrians and cyclists), enabling them to move about safely and in comfort. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Neighbourhood Quarter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to attractive public realm. • Contributes to building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Provide a mix of housing typologies and tenures to cater for diverse communities in terms of age, income and mobility. • Utilise digital technology to enhance living. • Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.
Erry Mill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds to variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities. • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop.
Heritage Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to attractive public realm. • Adds to variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities. • Contributes to the range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists. • Contributes to well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces. • Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity. • Well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport. • Attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop.

Implementation and Delivery Plan

This Town Centre First Plan builds on Clara’s existing strength as a great place to live as characterised by the strong community spirit that was evident during the public engagement process.

Vision

The TCF Plan is centred around its core Vision which seeks to ensure a better quality of life for all through the delivery of an attractive, sustainable, vibrant and prosperous Town Centre. In order to achieve the Vision, key themes representing important regeneration elements have been identified and associated with each theme are project interventions and a series of related objectives and outcomes.

Interventions

As outlined in this section, the project interventions seek to regenerate and rejuvenate Clara’s Town Centre as a place that exhibits the TCF Plan outcomes as well as alignment with national, regional and local policy.

The next steps forward from the identification of project interventions is to establish a strategy for project delivery and to secure funding. Funding and delivery are crucially important steps as the Vision for the Town Centre will only be realised by ensuring the projects as proposed are followed through and ultimately delivered on the ground.



Figure 4.52 Intervention, Funding & Delivery Elements

Delivery

The preparation of a Town Centre First Plan for Clara is the first step in the delivery of a revitalised Town Centre. The TCF Plan sets out the Vision and the interventions required to re-imagine and regenerate Clara over the long term with the objective of ensuring a quality of life for all through the delivery of an attractive, sustainable, vibrant and prosperous Town Centre.

The delivery process undertaken in respect of the proposed project interventions, and ultimately the success of the Town Centre First Plan, will involve a framework of different stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. The degree of success in relation to the delivery of project interventions will be reliant upon the successful interaction and engagement of stakeholders at all levels.

Broadly, the composition of stakeholders will involve the participation of:

- Government departments
- State sponsored agencies
- Regional Assembly
- Local Authority & Town Team
- Clara Chamber of Commerce
- Private landowners / private developers
- Non-governmental organisations
- Local community

The Town Centre First Policy sets out that, at national level, a National Oversight and Advisory Group (NOAG) will be established with the purpose of monitoring and guiding the overall delivery process. NOAG will also have the responsibility of providing a shared forum for engagement with Government departments and stakeholders at a national level.

At a local level, the role of the Town Team in the wider development and delivery process is crucial (Figure 4.52). The role of the Town

Team is supported by Offaly County Council (OCC) and the Town Regeneration Officer. Within its role, OCC has responsibility at a county level for matters concerning housing, enterprise, heritage, public amenities, transportation for example, all of whom are important for the future Town Centre Vision. The Town Centre First Policy establishes the delivery of projects will be done in collaboration with the local authority (and others as required) which effectively demonstrates the importance of the role of OCC. Furthermore, the Council provides the Town Regeneration Officer who contributes to the delivery process by assisting local authority co-ordination and engagement with multi-disciplinary teams.

It is considered that the overall timeframe for the implementation and delivery of the project interventions in Clara will not exceed a period of 15 years in order to maximise the economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits anticipated by the interventions. An important step in the delivery of the project interventions is to determine project priority.

Due to the differing characteristics of each project intervention, in terms of their size, detail, funding requirements, stakeholder participation etc., it is advantageous to establish project priority for Clara. This approach is beneficial for a number of reasons such as targeting 'early project wins' whereby early momentum and trust among stakeholders can be achieved and projects brought forward relatively quickly within the Town Centre. Additional considerations in relation to project priority potentially include:

Project Finance: targeting funding streams that presently have financial assistance available for certain project types which align with the Town Centre First Plan (for example, tackling vacancy and dereliction).

Project Value for Money: certain projects may be prioritised on a 'Value for Money' basis and particularly where a project(s) can create

additional indirect benefits (for example, Greenway development throughout Ireland has provided new recreation and leisure amenities for residents and visitors, however they are proven to deliver significant economic benefits).

Project Complexity: prioritising the less complex projects at the start of the regeneration process to gain momentum.

Project Land Requirement: utilising lands within Local Authority ownership as a means of project delivery that doesn't require third party agreement which can lead to project delay.

Project Need: it may be the case there is an identified regeneration need within a particular town and which is considered to be the main priority over short to medium terms (for example, enhancement of walking and cycling infrastructure).

Regarding project delivery, undertaking the appropriate public/stakeholder engagement prior to commencement is critically important to ensure that local stakeholders are fully understanding of the project and its desired outcomes. An additional step in the overall delivery of projects is the monitoring and evaluation of same once completed - see overleaf.

Funding

The funding of project interventions will require a joined-up and coordinated approach due to the various stakeholders that will play a role in the funding process. At a high level, the actors involved will include, but are not limited to:

- Central government departments
- State sponsored agencies
- Regional assembly
- Local authority & Town Team
- Private landowners / private developers
- Non-governmental organisations
- Local community

To date, Clara has been successful in securing funding that allowed for the preparation of this Town Centre First Plan which is the first stage in the long term rejuvenation of the town. Clara has received funding over €300,000 under the National Transport Authority's Active Travel Investment Grant Allocations (2023) for a number of schemes which include active travel footpath improvements and 'Safe Routes to School' support infrastructure for Frederick Street. This funding will help to enhance safe sustainable movement in Clara and provides a firm basis for future enhancements to the sustainable movement infrastructure in the town.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), which is administered centrally through the Department of Rural and Community Development, will be a potentially important source of future funding for Clara. Presently, this funding source has a value of €1 billion up to the year 2027 for settlements of less than 10,000 people outside of the five city metropolitan areas with Clara falling into this category.

The RRDF has the ability to assist projects that have a focus on, inter alia:

- Town centre living
- Building vacancy
- Community/public facilities
- Enhancement of heritage/community assets including recreational facilities

As set out within this TCF Plan, a number of the project interventions in Clara have alignment with projects that can be brought forward with the help of RRDF funding. The project interventions will require the necessary public and private funding in order to deliver their objectives and to ultimately realise the Vision for Clara. Given the variety of stakeholders that will be involved in the regeneration process, as referred to, funding

and investment for Clara Town Centre may be secured from a range of sources including:

- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) - a €1 billion fund distributed by central government to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027 for settlements of less than 10,000 persons.
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - funding distributed by regional assemblies which supports the sustainable regeneration of towns and urban centres using a Town Centres First Framework.
- Town & Village Renewal Scheme - funded under Project Ireland 2040 as part of Our Rural Future – Ireland’s Rural Development Policy 2021-2025. For 2022, the funding focus sought to bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use.
- National Transport Authority’s (NTA) Active Travel Investment Programme for sustainable transport projects.
- EU Just Transition Fund supports tourism initiatives, small business start-ups and town and village regeneration in the Midlands.
- Offaly County Council funding programmes as available.

New funding and investment streams, not currently in operation, may become viable options for Clara in future years and cognisance needs to be given to same.

In terms of funding generally, the Town Team will play a key role in identifying and securing the appropriate funding to assist the delivery of the project interventions as set out.

A key funding stream for Clara, as mentioned above, is the EU Just Transition Fund (JTF) 2021-2027.

The JTF shall contribute to the single specific objective of **enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic**

and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union’s 2030 targets for energy and climate and **a climate-neutral economy** of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement.

There are a select number of Counties and Municipal Districts within certain Counties approved as part of the territorial Just Transition plans in Ireland. The approved territory includes the entire counties of Offaly, Laois, Westmeath, Longford and Roscommon. In addition, the Municipal Districts of Ballinasloe (Galway), Carrick-on-Suir (Tipperary), Thurles (Tipperary), Athy (Kildare) and Clane-Maynooth (Kildare) fall within the approved Just Transition territory.

The ‘EU Just Transition Fund Programme 2021-27’ was formally adopted by the European Commission on 15th December 2022.

The Programme is centred around 3 priorities and the following fund allocation for each:

Priority 1 (€87 million) – Generating employment for former peat communities by investing in the diversification of the local economy. The Priority 1 fund allocation will focus on projects relating to the following actions:

- o Economic Diversification (€38m)
- o LECP/REP Schemes (€29m)
- o Bio-economy (€20m)

Priority 2 (€57 million) – Supporting the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands and regeneration and repurposing of industrial heritage assets.

The Priority 2 fund allocation will focus on projects relating to the following actions:

- o Peatland Restoration (€12m)
- o Farming Wet Peat Soil (€15m)
- o Networks of Trails (€30m)

Priority 3 (€18 million) – Providing former peat communities with **smart and sustainable mobility options** to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition. The Priority 3 fund allocation will focus on projects relating to the following actions:

- o Electric Buses (€2m)
- o Support to Transport (€1m)
- o Charge Points (€15m)

Funding Schedule 2023

Funding opportunities for the year 2023 include the following:

January: €50m Community Recognition Fund open for applications.

February: Financial allocations under 2023 Local Improvement Scheme announced; and Walks Scheme expansion process opened.

March: 2023 Building Acquisition Measure to open for applications under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme; 2023 CLÁR Programme to open for applications; Community Centre Investment Fund to open for applications for new build centres; and Call for proposals to open under Community Services Programme.

April: Call for proposals under the Libraries Capital Programme 2023-2027; and Libraries Measure Call under Dormant Accounts Fund to open.

May: Call for Local Authority Action Plans under PEACE Plus; Call for applications under the PEACE Plus Reimaging Communities Investment Area – Large Capital Spaces; and 2023 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme to open for applications.

June: Town and Village Renewal Scheme to open for applications – main scheme and Project Development Measure.

November: Category 1 call for applications to open under 2023 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

Monitoring and Measuring Success

An important task is to monitor the Plan's progress at periodic intervals. For Clara Town Centre, this will be a key step in the overall regeneration process as it allows for Plan objectives, outcomes, priorities for example to be evaluated in light of changing circumstances, funding availability or other relevant matters.

As set out within the Town Centre First policy document, there will be a continuous role for the Town Team in overseeing delivery, communicating with stakeholders and reviewing the Plan over time so that they retain ownership of the process.

Catalyst Projects

As part of the Implementation and Delivery Plan for Clara, a number of projects have been identified as catalyst projects whereby they have the potential to deliver the greatest impacts and outcomes for the Town Centre.

A summary of the catalyst projects is provided below at Table 4.2. A summary of all project interventions proposed for the Town Centre is provided overleaf at Table 4.3.

Table 4.2 Catalyst Project Summary

TCF Project Intervention	Project Description	Estimated Cost	Timeframe	Key Actors
New Neighbourhood Quarter	Regeneration of brownfield and under-utilised lands/buildings as a new neighbourhood quarter that can deliver a mix of uses and increased vibrancy in the Town Centre.	c. €15 million - €20 million	5-15 years	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Department of Rural and Community Development Town Team Private Landowners
Former Co-Op Building	Restoration of a prominent building on River Street as a new community facility along with new active travel link to Erry Mill and new civic plaza area.	c. €2 million - €2.5 million	0-5 years	Department of Rural and Community Development Town Team Private Landowners
Erry Mill Site	Heritage-led project delivering the restoration and re-use of former mill buildings as a new tourism development within walking distance of Main Street.	c. €5 million - €6 million	5-15 years	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Department of Rural and Community Development Town Team Private Landowners Heritage Council
River Walk	Promotion and utilisation of the River Brosna for recreational use with new active travel routes and environmental improvement outcomes.	c. €1 million - €1.5 million	0-5 years	Department of Rural and Community Development Town Team Private Landowners National Transport Authority
Railway Greenway	Re-use of a former railway line as a new greenway active route providing new connectivity to River Street in the Town Centre.	c. €1.5 million - €2 million	5-10 years	Department of Rural and Community Development Town Team Private Landowners National Transport Authority
Star Community Hall	Internal and external upgrade works to provide a modern multi-purpose community space.	c. €1.5 million - €1.75 million	0-5 years	Department of Rural and Community Development Town Team Private Landowners

Table 4.3 Project Cost, Phasing, Timeframe and Implementation Summary

Project	Stakeholders	Priority	Timeframe	Project Cost (exc. VAT) *
Townscape Project	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners Heritage Council	Medium	0 - 5 years Multiple Phases	Various
River Walk	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners NTA	High	0 - 5 years Multiple Phases	c. €1 million - c.€1.5 million
Town Centre Cycle Routes	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners NTA	Medium	0 - 5 years Multiple Phases	c.€2.75 million - c.€3 million
Former Co-Op Building	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners Heritage Council	High	0 - 5 years Multiple Phases	c.€2 million - c.€2.5 million
Reservoir Nature Walk	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners NTA	Medium	0 - 5 years Single Phase	c. €500,000 - c.€750,000
Town Centre Parking Locations	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners	Low	0 - 5 years Multiple Phases	c. €400,000 - c.€500,000
Star Community Hall	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners	High	0 - 5 years Single Phase	c. €1.5 million - c. €1.75 million
Heritage-led Competition	Town Team Private Landowners	Low	0 - 5 years Single Phase	c. €10,000 - c.€20,000
Railway Greenway	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners NTA	High	5 - 10 years Multiple Phases	c. €1.75 million - c.€2 million
Farrell Building	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners Heritage Council	Medium	5 - 10 years Single Phase	c. €1.75 million - c.€2 million
Water Sports Facility	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners	Medium	5 - 10 years Single Phase	c. €750,000 to c. €1 million
Main Street Connections	DRCD Town Team Private Landowners NTA	Medium	5 - 10 years Multiple Phases	c. €1.5 million - c.€2 million
Neighbourhood Quarter	DHLGH DRCD Town Team Private Landowners	High	5 - 15 years Multiple Phases	c. €15 million - c.€20 million
Erry Mill	DHLGH DRCD Town Team Private Landowners Heritage Council	High	5 - 15 years Multiple Phases	c. €5 million - c.€6 million

* All project costs should be subject to review to allow for inflation and for other economic factors to be fully considered.

Note: It should be noted the 'heritage buildings opportunities' project is not a standalone project per se. Rather, it serves to highlight the potential opportunities that Clara's heritage buildings may bring forward over the long term. Erry Mill is highlighted as the exemplar heritage project.

Implementation

This project seeks to improve the overall appearance of the Town Centre. As referred to, a number of funding options exist to enhance the appearance and physical condition of Clara's buildings and streetscapes. The project cost cannot be specified as it is dependent upon the quantum of works undertaken and engagement and cooperation of third party landowners, particularly in relation to the financial assistance available for the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties. It is noted that Offaly County Council secured funding of €100,000 in 2022 from the Streetscape Enhancement Scheme operated by the DRCD.

This active travel recreation project covers a significant tract of land along the length of the River Brosna and will require land parcels in private ownership. Given the land area requirement to facilitate the River Walk, this project will involve multiple phases for delivery.

Due to the detailed cycle route network proposed in the Town Centre, it is considered this project will require a number of phases to complete. It is generally anticipated that the development of the cycle route network should not require the purchase of any third party lands, however this matter will only be confirmed at detailed design stage.

Multiple phases are anticipated for the completion of this project which comprises three primary elements: (i) building refurbishment (ii) active travel link and bridge (iii) new civic plaza. Final cost will be dependent on a number of related matters including the purchase of the property on River Street (and adjoining lands to the rear) and the detailed design scheme brought forward for the new civic plaza area (for example, materials, street furniture, planting, lighting etc).

Similar to the River Walk project, this outdoor recreation project will involve the purchase of third party lands. A key factor regarding the overall project cost will be to undertake an initial assessment of the existing ground conditions around the reservoir as this may have a bearing on what type of construction will be required to develop the nature walk (for e.g. pathway or a boardwalk).

The parking locations have alignment with and support a number of other project interventions such as Erry Mill, the River Walk, and Water Sports Facility. However, the delivery of the Town Centre Parking locations will require a number of project phases and the purchase of third party lands.

It is considered the upgrade works associated with this project can be delivered in a single phase on River Street.

Marketing strategy for competition will be required along with the formulation of a project committee to assess submitted proposals. Project committee to be comprised of individuals such as local stakeholders, professional persons (for e.g.

Project covers a significant tract of land along the length of the former railway line and will require purchase of lands in private ownership. Given the land area requirement to facilitate the greenway, this project will involve multiple phases.

The Farrell Building and lands to the rear are currently in private ownership. While this project has alignment with the Neighbourhood Quarter project, it can be delivered in a single phase on Main Street. A full structural survey of the building, given its age, would be required in order to inform the overall project budget.

The Water Sports Facility can be delivered in a single phase. Overall, costs will be dependent on the scale of the project facility to be brought forward (for e.g. changing facilities, equipment storage, facility office, staff requirements etc.).

The Main Street Connections project, much like the Farrell Building scheme, is attached to the Neighbourhood Quarter project. A key component of this project will be to bring forward a new pedestrian / cycle bridge over the River Brosna that will provide a new active travel route from River Street to Frederick Street and the Erry Mill site. Project costs also incorporate new lighting, signage, landscaping, footpath upgrades and a new cycle hub at Clara train station. Multiple phases will be required for this project.

Project requires the purchase of buildings and lands in third party ownership on Main/River Street and The Green. Given the land requirement, it will require a number of phases for completion and will include housing, public open space areas, access routes, enabling works. Indicative costs are based on the Local Authority delivering the residential development, however, final costs will depend on the delivery strategy adopted (for e.g. Local Authority as provider; formulation of a Public-Private Partnership etc.).

The Erry Mill project comprises the former mill site and a number of buildings situated at the junction of Frederick Street and Clara Bridge. It is considered this tourism project would required to be delivered over a number of phases. The condition of the mill building has deteriorated over time, and as such a full structural survey of the mill building would be required in order to inform the overall project budget. The condition of Erry Mill Cottage and the Mill Manager's House appear to be in good physical condition, however surveys of same would also be required to assist cost purposes.