

# KILCORMAC VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



**PREPARED BY THE LOCAL  
COMMUNITY**

**With technical assistance from  
CAAS (Environmental Services)  
Ltd.**



**Funded by**

**THE HERITAGE COUNCIL  
&  
OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL**

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# THE KILCORMAC VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (V.D.S.)

## What Is a VDS?

A VDS is a local planning statement that aims to manage change in the physical environment. It advises how planned development should be carried out in harmony with, and complimentary to, the character and quality of the local area.

Community input into this document also means that these guidelines set out how the local people of Kilcormac feel about their areas and how best future development can compliment the existing character of the area, which has evolved through hundreds of years of change.

In this way, the special character of Kilcormac can be recognised, protected and enhanced for the enjoyment of both the local community and visitors to the area.

To achieve this, this statement identifies those features of Kilcormac that give it its character and 'sense of place'. It looks at:

- Buildings,
- The Use of Materials, Colours, Special Features,
- Street Patterns,
- Views and Vistas into and Out of the Village;
- Open Spaces and Amenity Areas;
- Street Lighting and Furniture; Paving, Footpaths and Roads;
- Those features of the area worthy of preservation, improvement or that may need to be provided.

## Why Prepare a VDS for Kilcormac?

Kilcormac is a unique place with a strong sense of local community closely linked to its historical and physical character. This Statement identifies what elements form its character and highlights what elements need to be maintained. The VDS is a tool for Kilcormac to help identify its character and to influence future development styles.

## What are the Objectives of the Statement?

The objectives of the Statement are to:

- Identify and describe the distinctive character of the village and the surrounding countryside;
- Identify that character with regard to its landscape setting, shape and nature of the built environment;
- Establish design principles based on that distinctive character;
- Work with the County Council within existing planning policies and influencing future policies.

Therefore, the Statement will provide a strong, locally based, advisory input into future development and planning policy in the area.

**Photo 1**      *Aerial View of Kilcormac With the Distinctive Pairc Naomh Cormac in the Foreground*





## REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF KILCORMAC

A unique aspect of the VDS is that it is a strong reflection of how the people of Kilcormac feel about their locality and how it can be managed, maintained and improved.

In order to achieve this, independent planning consultants (CAAS Ltd.), were commissioned by Offaly County Council, to study the area and then to provide an arena in which members of the local community could vocalise their opinions.

### Listening to the Public

Involving the general public required a flexible and informal approach. Initial meetings with the Kilcormac Development Association – a well-established and active local community group, provided general information about the area, and also a good base for greater involvement of the community.

**Photo 2**      *The Community Workshop*



The Community Workshop was held in the Community Hall on the evening of 11<sup>th</sup> September. Radio and newspaper advertisements, posters in shop windows and invitations issued to every house, ensured a turn out of over 40 local people. In the week before the meeting leaflets describing what the VDS was all about and an overview description of key 'character areas' in the village were provided to give people a good idea of what would be discussed.

Briefly, the workshop involved:

- An overview of what this pilot project involves and the type of feedback needed;
- Display of photographs and images from throughout the village;
- Targeted discussion of key areas in the village and any suggested improvements that may upgrade their appearance;

**Photo 3**      *Small Discussion Groups Look at Small Local Areas Within the Village Aided by Maps and Photographs*



- Presentation of a list of 'key issues' facing the village as seen by the consultants from the 'outsiders' point of view and the reaction of the local population to these – whether they felt these were inadequate or indeed incorrect;
- General discussion of general aspects of the village with the completion of a brief survey.

### Presenting the Statement

Before its formal presentation to the Community, the statement was finalised in consultation with members of the Development Forum. Also, a display of the overall findings – and a copy of the statement itself, was made available to the wider community on display in the Community Centre in November 2002. The completed VDS is also available on Offaly County Council's website: [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie)

## **KEY CONCERNS AND ISSUES RAISED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

During the public consultation session, local people were presented with a series of key issues facing Kilcormac. Feedback on the adequacy of these was given by the local community and, where appropriate, additions made to that list.

At this stage a number of other concerns – all relevant but some outside the scope or remit of the VDS, were raised. These concerns and other aspects of the village local people would like to see addressed are set out in the final section of this Statement.

These issues and other points have been mapped (***See Map 1***) to give an idea of community opinions on specific parts of the village.

### **Issues Facing Kilcormac**

1. High levels of dereliction and poor building condition – particularly at key areas such as the Park Mills and Distillery House.
2. Heavy traffic volumes and parking on Main Street cause great congestion.
3. The area around the Square causes great difficulty with parking and the extremely high kerbing.
4. Pressure for new residential development on the periphery of the Village – such as along the southern approach routes.
5. Traditional shopfronts are being replaced by less attractive modern shopfronts. Some shopfronts are changing uses and losing their original function.
6. Use of modern materials – such as PVC windows and doors, has dramatically changed the character of some parts of the village.
7. Additional planting of appropriate trees and flowers is needed in preference to ‘hard landscaping’ such as block work and paving.
8. Prominent advertising visible on approach route N52 from Tullamore.
9. Little realisation of the potential heritage of the village – little information about the milling buildings and historic churches.



## Kilcormac Village Design Statement

### **The Catholic Church and Community Centre**

An attractive building located behind the Main Street, the Catholic Church and the nearby Community Centre, are considered important local facilities. Furthermore, these buildings link in with the riverside park in this attractive setting. The need for softer landscaping and maintenance in these areas was mentioned.

### **Main Street**

The busy Main Street is a commercial and retail hub. Predominated by fine two-storey buildings, key buildings such as the Sister of Mercy Convent are of great importance here. Overall, the 'features' of the village, the local community are critically aware that Main Street has been changed due to the influences of traffic and modernisation of buildings.

### **The Birr Road Approach**

Locally considered an unattractive approach into the village, the Birr Road is a busy national route. Ribbon development in this area has resulted in the degradation of the approach and associated views of the countryside and this is of some concern to the local community.

### **Fair Green**

This small urban space is located to the rear of the busy Main Street. The only soft landscaped, formal space in the village, it is attractive but largely under-utilised. Local comments suggested it could be improved with some planting and appropriate seating.

### **The Tullamore Approach**

This is an attractive approach into the village but marred by the highly visibly derelict Millbuildings. Advertising also occupies a prominent location on this road. High volumes of passing through traffic also affect the character of the area.

### **The Silver River and Town Park**

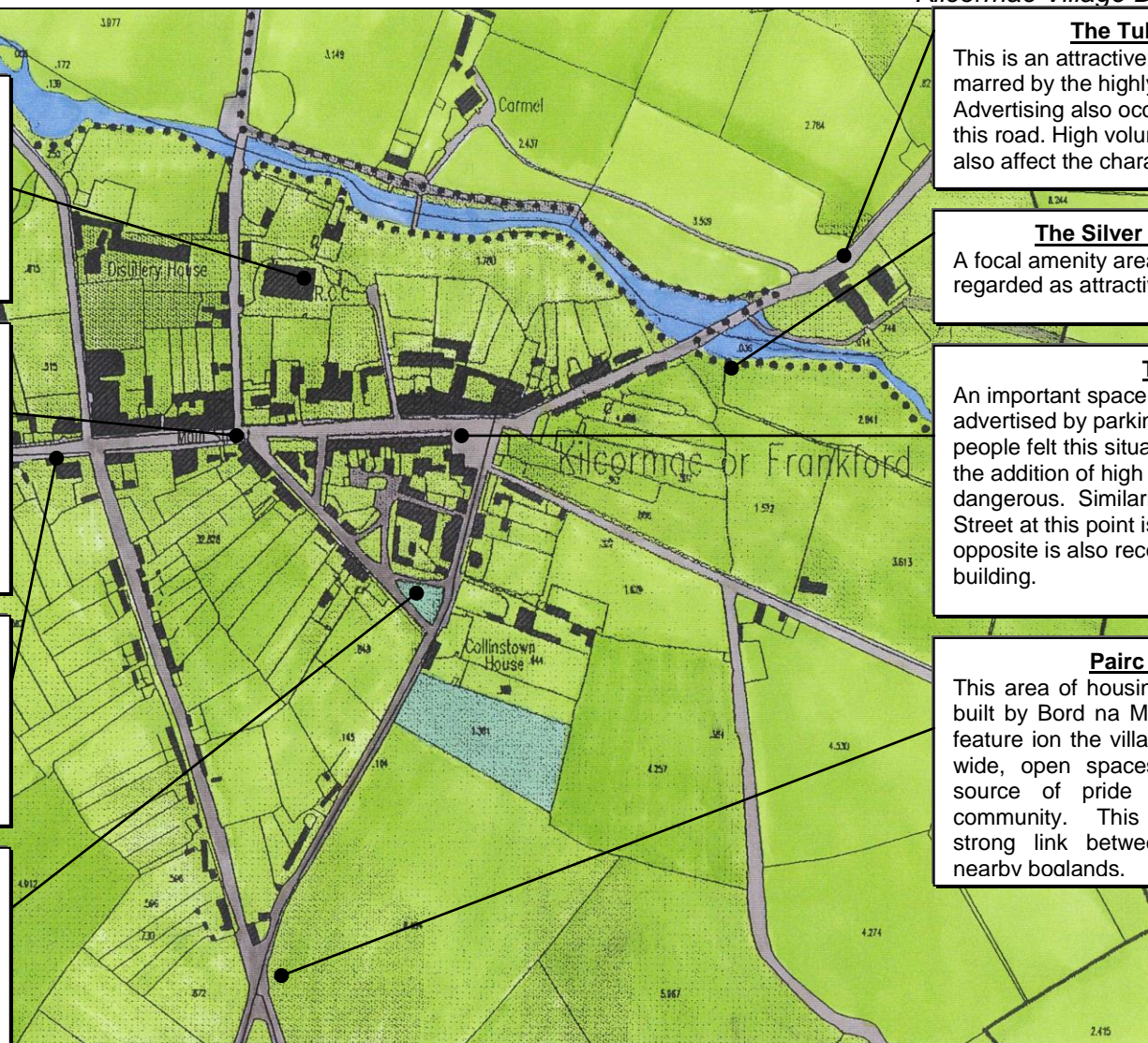
A focal amenity area in the village, this area is regarded as attractive and as asset to the village.

### **The Square**

An important space in the village this area is advertised by parking and advertisements. Local people felt this situation had been exacerbated by the addition of high kerbing, which many felt is dangerous. Similarly crossing the busy Main Street at this point is difficult. The Fiesta ballroom opposite is also recognised as an unusual building.

### **Pairc Naomh Cormac**

This area of housing (not indicated on the map), built by Bord na Mona, are considered a unique feature in the village. Well maintained and with wide, open spaces, the attractive estate is a source of pride and interest for the local community. This is also an indication of the strong link between the community and the nearby boalands.



### **Map 1 Kilcormac – An 'Local Character' Map**

One element of the public workshop sessions was topical discussion of specific areas within the village to prompt locals to look at what was unique about those parts of Kilcormac, and what they liked and also disliked about these areas. This required the identification of small areas of specific character and provided a clear idea of those features most readily identified with the village. Essentially, those points raised have been summarised on this map and give a good overview of how Kilcormac is perceived by the local community.

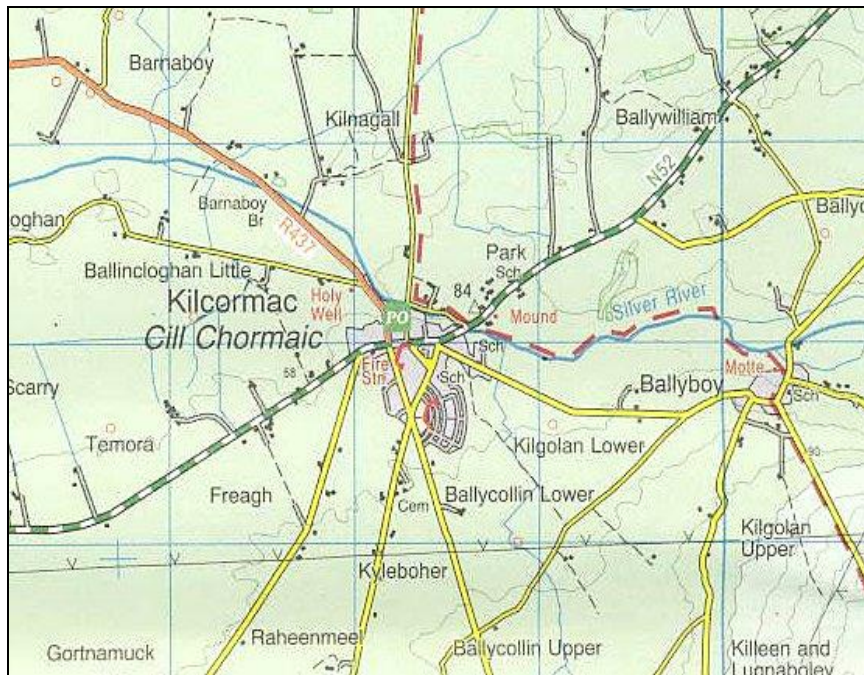


## KILCORMAC VILLAGE

### Location

Kilcormac is situated on the N52 approximately 13 miles south-west of Tullamore and 10 miles north-east of Birr. The village serves a particularly wide rural catchment and is an important centre within the County. The Silver River runs through the village with passage across provided by the main bridge to the east at Bridge Street.

### **Map 2 Kilcormac, Co. Offaly**



### Population

The 1996 Census recorded the population of the village at 889 persons. This indicated a decline of nearly 9% from the 1991 population.

Assuming a growth rate of 1% per annum, the Council have projected growth rates of 1,075 (2001) and 1,129 (2006). Provisional statistics from the 2002 Census suggest these projections may be modest as actual

growth in the order of 5.9% took place in the Kilcormac Electoral Division, in the period 1996 to 2002. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there will be a considerable level of development pressure in the area in future years.

### Origins and Evolution

The evolution of Kilcormac is largely based on the establishment of various religious centres in the area dating back to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century when Saint Cormac – after whom the name Cill Chormaic (or Church of Cormac) derives, established a church and round-tower on the Silver River. Tradition tells us that Cormac dies in 605 A.D.

In the early **1400's** a Carmelite Friary was founded in the garden of the Convent of Mercy. A **15<sup>th</sup> Century** missal from this priory remains in the library of Trinity College Dublin. The famous Pieta – a statue of Our Lady holding the body of Jesus after he had been taken down from the cross, also dates from the **16<sup>th</sup> Century** and remains in the Parish Catholic Church today. This statue depicts an image very popular in Europe of the middle ages and is carved into a block of solid oak and measuring 5 ft. x 3 ft. Thought to be Spanish in origin, the Kilcormac Pieta is believed to be the only one of its kind in Ireland.

The priory lands were confiscated in the **mid 16<sup>th</sup> Century**, during the Plantation period. At this time, the village did not rapidly expand due to the small influx of Planter's and difficulties with the divided ownership of land holdings. However, in the **late 17<sup>th</sup> Century**, the title of the lands was granted to Robert Leycaster (or Leicester) and these were leased to English tenants. The village and its markets began to flourish as the settlement expanded. At this time, Kilcormac was called Frankford however local history books ascribe the exact origin of this name to two sources – namely, the Frank family who oversaw the foundation of a charter school in the village in 1753, and Francis MacAwley the 16<sup>th</sup> Century 'founder' of the village. Whatever its origin, this name remained in place until 1903 when it reverted to its original name of Kilcormac.

The first buildings of the village began to appear in the **early 18<sup>th</sup> Century**. In 1704, a small thatched chapel was erected on the site of the old St. Cormac's Church. In 1750, this was expanded as a larger slated church dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady.

**Photo 4** The Disused Park Mill Buildings



From the **mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century**, milling played an important role in the local economy. The Park Mill, now in ruins (see **Photo 4**) lies to the north of the village, was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It operated until the 1960's as a grain drying and storage facility. The Mill provided grain to the Williams family's brewery in Tullamore. The Troy family, who managed the facility, lived in the attached house.

The Egan's were a well-known Midland's firm of whiskey, wine and beer purveyors. Their firm, established in 1852, had a great deal of influence on the growth of Midlands settlements such as Tullamore. The Egan's Corn mill was located on Main Street – where Grennan's hardware store is now sited. This facility was used until the 1930's. William's Malt House (see **Photo 5**) on the Kilnagall Road was also a successful corn mill. Unfortunately these fine buildings remain in a state of disuse.

Many important buildings were built in the **mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century**. By that time the village had grown substantially and in the **1837** Topographical Dictionary of Ireland (by Samuel Lewis) Kilcormack is described as a 'market and post-town ..containing 204 houses and 1,112 inhabitants'. At this time weekly corn markets were held in the town, as were spring and autumn fairs.

**Photo 5** The Disused Williams Corn Mill



The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built in 1867 (see **Photo 6**). The belfry and bell were added in the 1890's with further alterations in 1907 providing the apse, nuns choir, stained glass windows and marble alter.

**Photo 6** The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary





The Convent of Mercy was built in 1885 (see **Photo 23**). St Anne's (see **Photo 28**) – the former priests' residence (until 1932) was also built around this time. For the remainder of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the development of the village continued and it became an important commercial centre within a large rural catchment.

**Photo 7** Main Street, Kilcormac



The decline in the milling industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century impacted significantly on the area. Luckily, this decline came as Bord na Mona (established in the 1940's) became active in the area. The nearby cutaway bogs provided a source of local employment and activity from the early 1950's when the Bord began harvesting peat there. At this time, Bord na Mona developed housing at Pairc Naomh Cormac (or Saint Cormac's Park) for its employees.

The scheme – of which there are only three others in the country, were designed by Frank Gibney. The development of 104 houses consists of twelve rows of two-storey semi-circular terraces – containing between eight and twelve houses. The generous green areas in front of the houses provide communal open spaces (see **Photo 18**). The local school, Scoil Mhuire was built inside the Park.

The Fiesta Ballroom

**Photo 8**



Other key buildings of note from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century also remain in the village. The art deco style Fiesta Ballroom (see **Photo 8**) and the fire station are typical of the 1960's.

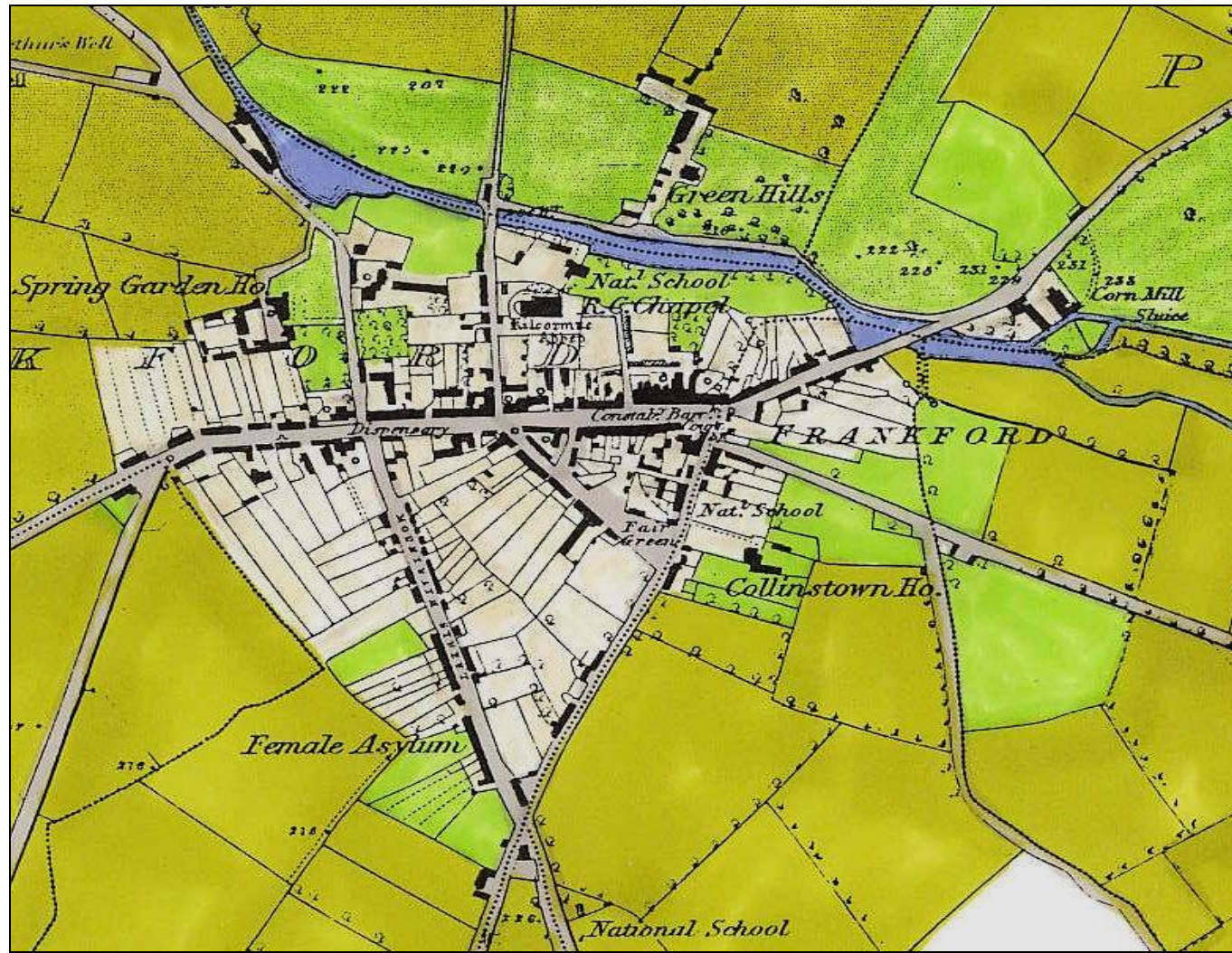
The more recent development of the Lough Boora Parklands – 3 miles north-west of the village, ensures the on-going development of the village will be closely linked with its surrounding bogland landscape. The Parklands now consist of an area of 2,000 ha of cutaway bog within a larger bog complex of 8,000 ha. Lough Boora was drained in the late 1940's by Bord na Mona in preparation for its development. The area remained largely un-investigated until 1977 when a ridge of loose gravel was discovered. This later proved to be a storm beach for a much larger lake in the last Ice Age. Further examination of the area revealed evidence of stone age (Early Mesolithic) cooking areas establishing that man had existed in inland Ireland almost nine thousand years ago – significantly earlier than originally thought.

Recent development has been largely residential in nature. In light of the growing need for local people to commute to work in larger urban centres such as Tullamore, the function of the village has now evolved from an important religious and industrial settlement, to a largely residential commuter village with small secondary retail and commercial functions. Its location within the catchment of strong urban centres such as Birr,



Tullamore and indeed Dublin, means the village is likely to grow as a base for commuters with a resultant impact on the need for additional housing and local services. Furthermore, the impacts of this trend of development on the character of the village and the surrounding countryside must be recognised and assessed.

**Map 3 – 1886 Ordnance Survey Map of Kilcormac**



## **20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Influences in Kilcormac**

In assessing the influences that the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have had on the village of Kilcormac, it is necessary to take into regard the central issues of dereliction, traffic and modern development. These have been highlighted as key concerns for present day Kilcormac at the public consultation workshop.

### o Dereliction

The appearance of Kilcormac has changed significantly over time due to high levels of dereliction. Many such cases have arisen as buildings fall into disuse and are effectively abandoned and allowed to fall into a state of disrepair.

Upon approaching the village from the N52 coming from Tullamore, the dereliction of these key buildings is immediately apparent. The mill buildings on the left hand side of the road, are a testament to the strong links between the milling industry and the growth of Kilcormac. However they are now in a ruinous condition and, given their prominent location, considered locally to be an eyesore.

**Photo 9** *Ruinous Mill Buildings on the N52 Approach from Tullamore.*



## *Kilcormac Village Design Statement*

Similarly, mill and related storage facilities, lie unused close to the Catholic Church to the rear of Main Street. Again, their disuse and poor condition is a matter of public concern.

*“The Old Mill is an eyesore, [and is] closed off and ignored by the town.”*

*Local Community Workshop Comment*

Other buildings in the village have fallen into disrepair and disuse and again their appearance detracts from the quality of the village. The community are acutely aware of the wide-ranging effects of dereliction on the village, its inhabitants and visitors.

*“A lot of work needs to be done on rebuilding old derelict premises all around the streets.”*

*Local Community Workshop Comment*

Another related issue that impacts on the village, is the number of buildings with disused shopfronts. A difficulty for owners of these properties is how to best treat these. While retaining shopfronts is encouraged in the interests of the streetscape, owners have some difficulty in how best to offset the loss of privacy associated with large windows.

### o Traffic and Parking

Bisected by the busy N52 road, linking to Birr and Tullamore, Kilcormac experiences a heavy volume of through traffic. Kilcormac acts as a commuter village as significant numbers of local people work in the large regional centres.

The high volumes of through traffic impact on the quality of the area – particularly Main Street, and affect the local community in a number of ways:

- o Road safety is problematic, as the wide, main approaches into the village do not encourage drivers to slow down;



- On-street parking on the Main Street is problematic at peak times. This has led to further overspill parking in Fairgreen Street and surrounds.
- Dust, litter and noise generated by traffic all impact heavily of the environmental character and condition of the area;
- There is some difficulty for pedestrians crossing Main Street and this is a source of serious concern among the community.

*“Heavy traffic and parking are congesting Main Street”*

Local Community Workshop Comment

The high speeds of traffic coming into the village are particularly noticeable on the approach from Birr where cars approach the Main Street at high speeds. It is agreed that this problem has worsened with the on-going stretch of the footprint of the village resulting in drivers not becoming aware of the built up nature of the area until they are in the centre of the village.

#### Modernisation of Older Buildings

Building maintenance and particularly the use of modern materials such as uPVC windows and doors has changed the appearance of individual buildings and the streetscape of Main Street in particular. Alterations to façade features such as doors, windows and also external finishes – both renders and paint, have negatively impacted on the appearance of specific areas. There is a high level of community concern about the overall effect this will have on the character of the village.

#### Modern Development

Given its close proximity to Tullamore, it is not surprising that there are a number of newer housing schemes in the village and the potential for increased development pressures in the area.

While the development of small housing estates is preferable than the on-going pattern of ribbon development, local people are concerned that new developments do not visually improve the character of the village and that the necessary support infrastructure is provided.

*“New developments should be planned in keeping with the character of the village”*

Local Community Workshop Comment

However, there is an established tradition of larger scale housing developments in the village and a general awareness that high quality design can add greatly to the area – as evidenced in the reaction to the Pairc Naomh Cormac development and also to the newer Bridge Street scheme.

**Photo 10** *New Housing Development on Bridge Street*



#### Advertising

There are a number of key locations throughout the village – namely on the N52 approach, and also at The Square, where prominent advertising used to catch the eye of passing drivers, detracts significantly from the appearance of the area.

*“Hoardings are an eye sore in the Square”*

Local Community Workshop Comment

## CONTEXT AND SETTING – THE LANDSCAPE, STREETS AND SPACES

### The Surrounding Landscape

Located in a low-lying open countryside, Kilcormac sits on a broad valley, crossed by the meandering Silver River. The underlying geology of the area is, in its most part, carboniferous limestone and the terrain is generally smooth and flat, with undulating raised bogs adding distinctive character to the region.

**Photo 11** *The Surrounding Landscape as Viewed from the N52 Approach Road*



*“There are commanding views of the Slieve Bloom Mountains”*

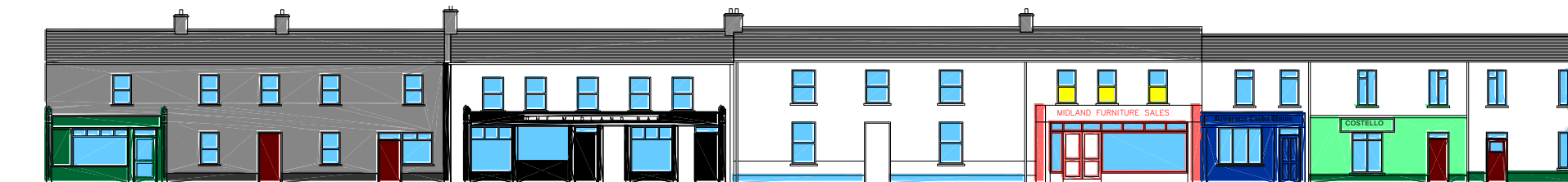
Local Community Workshop Comment

To the east and south-east of the village modest hills occur, as the undulating topography rises towards the steep slopes of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. Pasture and bog- or moor-type grasses are the dominant vegetation in the open and exposed environs of the village. The main landuses in the area comprise grasslands for low-density livestock production and arable lands, as well as peat extraction from the occurring boglands. Significant areas of coniferous forests and small pockets of broad-leaved woodlands also occur to the north of the village.

**Photo 12** *The Silver River and Associated Town Park*



The amenity of the Silver River is locally important and it is certainly an element of the village people are very aware of. In addition, the importance of the River is added to by the significance of the local amenity provided in the Town Park and development with much impetus from a community level.



*Southern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*



The Lough Boora Parklands are located 5km north-west of Kilcormac. The parklands comprise of wetlands, fishing lakes, 50km of walkways, deciduous and coniferous forestry, pastureland and cutaway bog. The lake bed contains shallow fen peat overlying calcareous shell-marsh. The 2,000ha of cutaway bog are contained within a vast area of parkland. Established plant life includes Birch, Willow, Bog-myrtle and Ring Heather. Fen species such as Great Fen-sedge and Ragged-robin, the Fragrant Orchid and Lesser Butterfly-orchid are also located in this area. The parkland contains historical sites, walkways, nature trails, grasslands and mixed woodlands.

*“[There is a need for] a link between Kilcormac and Boora Parklands and signs for the Slieve Bloom Mountains”*

Local Community Workshop Comment

The Boora bog complex is one of the oldest areas of commercial turf production and as a result was the first area in which large tracts of cutaway bog emerged.

The link between the village and the surrounding boglands is quite tangible and evident in the local pride and sense of feeling about the parklands. There is also a local appreciation for the need to provide heritage and tourist links so the village can act as a focal attraction and meeting point for visitors to the area.

**The Physical Environment**

The physical character of the village is directly influenced by a number of features and influences. These both add to its charm and attractiveness

and also give an indication of the influences of development trends and patterns throughout the years.

o **The Shape of the Village**

The shape of the village is unique given that it is focussed on a central spine street with small secondary routes intersecting to the south to create an addition hub of development. Significant clusters of development also lie off the surrounding minor roads including the approach roads from Kinnity and Ballyboy.

Beyond the central area of Main Street, the Fairgreen area is a focus for development and acts as a crossing point for roads coming into the village. There are a significant number of single housing developments as well as the well-known Pairc Naomh Cormac development. Similarly, Mountrath Street and the areas of housing in its vicinity, give the southern area of the village increasing bulk and depth (See **Photo 13** below).

This southerly elongation of the form of the village does not dramatically impacted on its overall footprint. However, a proliferation of development to the west on the N52 heading towards Birr has caused some loss in the urban-rural demarcation in that area. This has contributed to the problem of speeding traffic in this area. In spite of this, the village remains reasonably contained and compact and has not lost its characteristic shape or form.

**Street Layout**

As discussed above and clearly evident from the aerial view of the village, the focus of development in the area is the primary street – Main Street. This street pattern has remained largely unchanged from its evolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries (see **Map 4**) and is certainly a distinctive

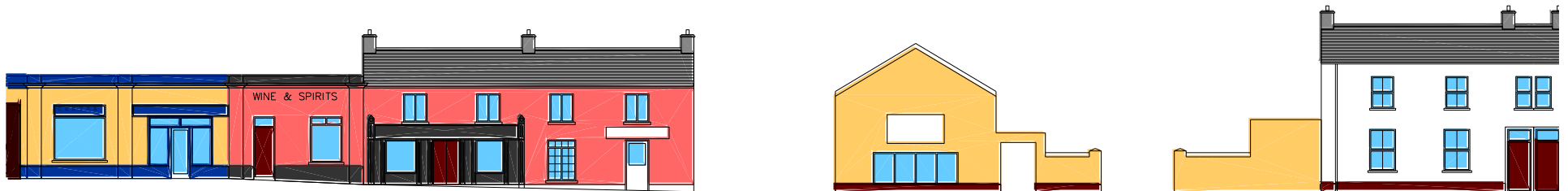


*Southern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*

feature of the village. Unusually for an Irish village street, Main Street has no distinctive focal point or closing view such as a Church or important

civic building like a Courthouse or Town Hall. Therefore, the focus of the street is very much the space it creates and the buildings on it.

**Photo 13** *Aerial View of the Village Facing South Towards Birr (Source: Offaly County Council.)*



*Southern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*

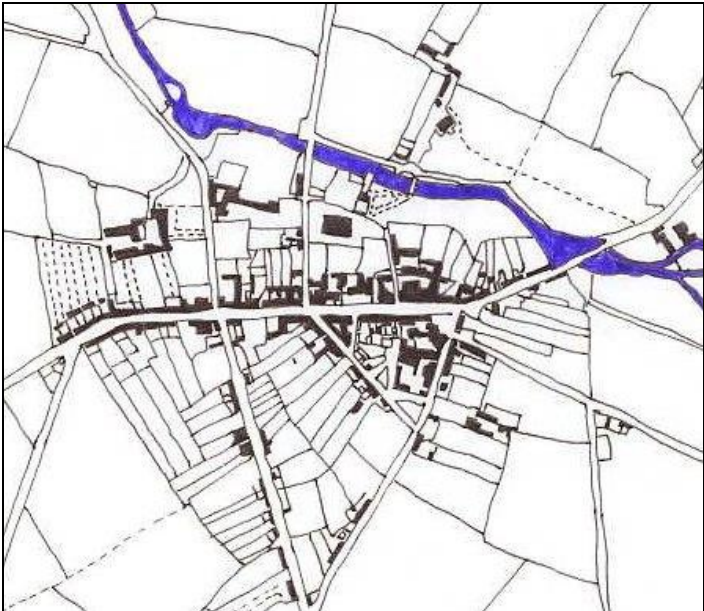


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The secondary streets off Main Street are modest. Those to the south retain an urban function, intersecting at the Fairgreen and acting as residential hubs. Again, Fairgreen Street and Mountrath are important focuses for development as are the minor roads leading off them into the surrounding countryside. These – and smaller streets, such as Tae Lane located beside the Chemist, link Main Street to these ‘backlands’ of the village, linking the compact village core with its surrounds.

In contrast development patterns to the north side of Main Street differ greatly with only small pockets of development – namely at the Mill and Catholic Church. Indeed many of these streets perpendicular to Main Street, contain little or no development and lead straight out into the rural surrounds while providing interesting and deeply contrasting views from the busy Main Street (see **Photo 14**)

**Map 4** – Street Pattern 1909.



**Photo 14** Secondary Route Directly off the North of Main Street



- Key Open Spaces  
Open spaces play a particularly important role in any village as providing well-needed open space areas and also giving the village character and a



*Southern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*

sense of identity. Local people are critically aware of how important retention and maintenance is to these areas is and strongly reinforce the need to maintain and care for these areas.

**The Town Park**

The Town Park is a riverside walk developed by the Kilcormac Development Association in recent years. This area, from the Silver River Bridge, stretches back into the village to the Community Centre. It is attractively landscaped with amenity facilities such as picnic table provided.

**Photo 15**      *The Town Park*



The area is open and inviting and regularly maintained. Local people felt a particularly strong attachment to this area. Some comments did suggest

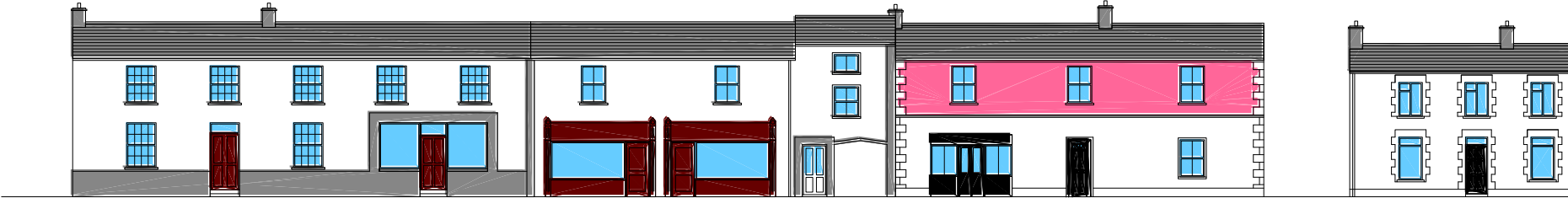
litter in the area was sometimes a problem and that additional seating could greatly enhance the area.

*“The area around the river has great potential. With very little effort this area could greatly enhance the appearance of the village.”*  
Local Community Workshop Comment

**The Fair Green**

Located at the junction of Kinnity Road and Ave Maria Street, this small green area is an attractive open space that is knit into the fabric of the village.

**Photo 16**      *The Fairgreen*



*Northern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*



The area is attractive but the local community suggested it could be improved by the addition of mature trees or landscaping. Such improvement could include the replacement of the current metal seating with wooden seating. In addition, some minor improvements to the attractive stone building on the Green's northern verge would improve the area considerably.

**The Square**

This is the hard tar macadam area in front of the Dance Hall on Main Street. A small space it is currently used largely as a car park and appears bare and unattractive. Advertisement hoarding on the gable wall of a surrounding building is disproportionately dominant as the only feature in this area.

*“The Square needs to be marked out”*  
Local Community Workshop Comment

Local opinion of this area focussed on the recent provision of kerbing to provide an extension to the path from Main Street. These works were undertaken to remove a hazardous route for traffic using the junction but there is a strong feeling that this has created a traffic hazard for cars exiting the area. It is also felt that the kerb is too high and represents a danger for pedestrians.

Strong local feeling suggests that any future works to the Square are undertaken in close consultation with the community. It is considered important that while such works may provide some landscaping such as trees to soften the appearance of the area, that the primary function of this area as a convenient car park would be retained.

**Photo 17**      *The Square*



**Open Spaces in Pairc Naomh Cormac**

Laid out in semi-circular terraces, the houses of Pairc Naomh Cormac overlook significant open areas that are unique to this development and indeed, Kilcormac. These spaces are extremely well maintained, locally significant and seen as an important asset to the community.



*Northern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*

**Photo 18** *Open Areas in Pairc Naomh Cormac*



help create a first impression of the area, but also because of the need to slow traffic down as it enters the village.

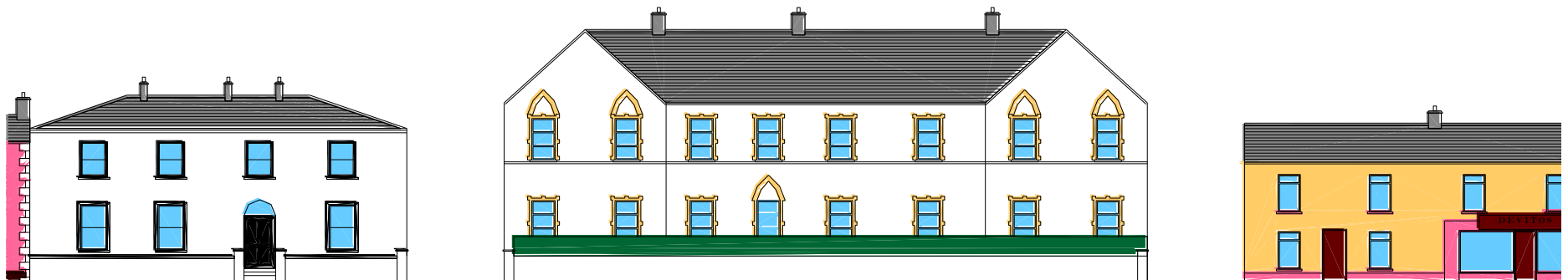
**Photo 19** *Approaching the Village from the Tullamore Road*



○ *Approaches into the Village*

There are two principal approaches into Kilcormac. The quality and maintenance of these approaches to the village are recognised as being important among members of the local community as not only does this

The quality of the approaches is variable. The eastern approach from Tullamore (via the N52) offers highly scenic views of the rural surroundings. This approach into the village at this point is marked by the sweeping of the road revealing a high quality view of the bridge and Main Street. Development is slowly creeping out this road with the recent development of a new housing estate and the school in this area.



*Northern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*



Unfortunately, on coming closer into the built up area, the ruinous mill buildings detract somewhat for the area. Furthermore, the large amount of advertisements here and at the Petrol Station are more prominent than the signage welcoming the visitor into the village.

Closer to the village, there is a definite sense of arrival crossing the Bridge. This area is attractive and is complimented by the nearby residential developments – particularly of the terraced houses on Bridge Street.

The approach from Birr in the west (also via the N52), provides similar views of the surrounding countryside. However, this approach is of a lower quality and does not create a strong sense of arrival until Main Street. Local community feeling is that this area could benefit greatly from landscaping and some signage. Furthermore, the prevention of additional ribbon development along this approach is also important.

Access into the village from the north and south is by small rural roads (as shown on **Photo 14**). From the north, this road passes through the surrounding boglands and undulating countryside marked by mature trees, with a rather sudden arrival at the junction with Main Street. This is an interesting feature of the area and these views should be maintained. Similarly, the approach from the Kinnity and Ballyboy roads is through rural areas with a fairly sudden arrival into the village. These roads provide good views of Pairc Naomh Cormac and the surrounding countryside respectively.

○ Views and Vistas

Views and vistas within the village capture glimpses of locally significant buildings and spaces. Views from the Silver River Bridge show the long and curving Main Street to the west, the riverside amenity area to the north

and the wide-open countryside to the east and north. In contrast, views from within the fabric of the village show strong streetscape and important buildings.

The primary view within the village is in fact of Main Street. As mentioned above, the focus of the Street is, unusually itself, and this is achieved by the strong terraces of buildings flanking it on either side. Small features on the street – such as The Square, are important but again remain secondary to the importance of the streetscape itself.

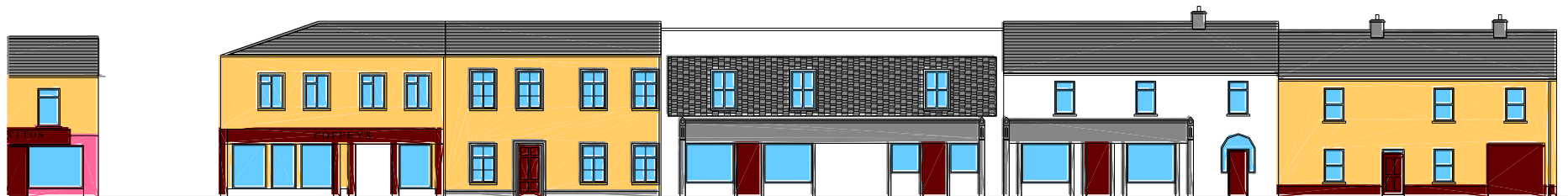
Many views of the surrounding landscape are from points between buildings and along access roads. These occasional glimpses establish a rich backdrop for the village and set the village within a wider rural context.

Again, key buildings are also a feature. In particular, the Convent of Mercy is visible from along Main Street and from between buildings at Fairgreen. Due to its location off the Main Street, fewer views are available of the Catholic Church until approached via small narrow access roads.

○ Streetscape

Streets are extremely important elements in the landscape of a village. The appearance of a street – or streetscape, is influenced by all of the surrounding elements including buildings, roads, paved areas and open spaces.

The older buildings of Kilcormac are located within the central area encompassing Main Street and the area south to Fairgreen. Within these areas the streetscape is a critical feature of the urban landscape. Within these areas, building orientation and the relationship of opposing terraces and buildings is critical in creating a sense of places and identity.



*Northern Side of Main Street, Kilcormac*

A regularity of building form is characteristic of the Main Street and uniform building heights, roof pitches and similar façade features and proportions are used to this effect. However, within this uniformity there is scope for a level of diversity and this adds greatly to the character and charm of the streetscape.

**Photo 20** *Building Edges Set out a Corner and Road Junction*



Within these area, nearly all buildings front directly onto the street. Therefore, front facades define the street edge and become a feature of the public thoroughfare. Within this context building features such as roof height and pitch, gable walls and façades have an important relationship with the street as they create a sense of enclosure. Facades demark the path edge and gables set out street corners to great effect. Similarly, at the junctions of Main Street and secondary access roads, building edges actually set out the road and junction (see **Photo 20**). Similarly, gable walls mark out open space areas – as at the Square (see **Photo 17**).

Within modern developments in Kilcormac there are a wide variety of new streetscapes. The development at Pairc Naomh Cormac set out terraces of similar housing in semi-circular blocks. These sited in large areas of open space with attractive landscaping and mature trees, to great effect.

The residential development on Bridge Street (pictured in **Photo 10**) reflects the direct frontage of the older buildings in the village while providing small front gardens and protruding porches. Again, this

development compliments the existing area while allowing some diversity in design and layout.

**Photo 21** *The Streetscapes of Pairc Naomh Cormac*



Other residential developments – both public and private, have tended to adopt a relatively uniform approach to their layout with opposing terraces or semi-detached houses fronting onto a central green area or distributor road. Such layouts do little to reflect the historic pattern of development in the area.

### Surfacing

Roads and paved areas impact greatly on the streetscape. Kilcormac's roads and paths are in poor condition in a number of places – particularly where parked trucks and heavy goods vehicles have eroded the surface leaving it unattractive and somewhat dangerous. The poor condition of the pavement at Chapel Lane is also of some concern.

Path surfacing is of particular interest to the local community as, in addition to aesthetic considerations, there is concern that pedestrians are poorly provided for in the village despite the heavy volumes of traffic passing though.

The local community are reluctant to see the introduction of inappropriate pavement materials – such as brightly coloured paving, cobble-lock, etc.



into the village, as these would look out of place and detract from the important appearance of the streets and buildings.

### Street Furniture

The addition of attractive features on Main Street would improve its appearance greatly. In particular, planting and bollards should be used to separate paths from the busy main Road and prevent trucks from mounting the pavement. Similarly, the local community would welcome the addition of street lighting and seating – particularly at the amenity areas such as the River and Fairgreen

The provision of facilities on the street should be considered in relation to their functionality and also their impact on the street. Comments from the community had highlighted the unsuitability of the siting of the recycling facility close to the Fiesta Ballroom. This facility was recently moved – with the exception of the cloth-recycling bin, to the more appropriate Shell garage forecourt where parking is more accessible and the unattractive bins are screened to better effect.

*“Re. the location of the re-cycling bins: when a visitor arrives from the Birr Road, the first thing they see are the bins.”*

Local Community Workshop Comment

### Signage

Signage – both commercial and road signage, can have a particularly strong impact on the quality of a streetscape.

Within the village, street or place name signs are not at all prominent and locals suggest there is a need for better signage. Where these are provided – such as in a new development, they should be subtle and appropriately positioned. They should not appear to clutter or detract from any buildings or spaces and names should complement Kilcormac.

### Boundary Treatment

Within the central village area few residential properties have private front gardens. Therefore direct frontage onto the street is characteristic in these areas.

### *Kilcormac Village Design Statement*

There are a number of attractive stonewalls in the village and these are both old and new. The stone walls associated with buildings such as the mills and distillery are particularly attractive. These walls are a characteristic feature of the village and should be maintained and repaired as necessary in an appropriate way and using the appropriate materials. This effect has been mirrored in a number of newer developments – such as that on Bridge Street where a small, capped stone wall separates small front gardens and the street.

Painted rendered walls are found throughout other developments and single house plots in the village. These are attractive when well maintained but there are a number of areas in the village where fresh painting or maintenance or planting would greatly improve the character of those areas.

**Photo 22** *Boundary Treatment in a New Residential Development Showing the Need for Planting*



Within the modern housing developments, boundary walls tend to be unremarkable and somewhat uniform in appearance. Where rendered, the painting of these walls is important and, where possible, neighbouring properties should adopt a common approach. In addition the enhancement of bare breezeblock walls with careful planting should be considered.

## VILLAGE CHARACTER: BUILDINGS AND FEATURES OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Buildings

There is a significant stock of fine older building in the village and these are undoubtedly key to the protection and enhancement of the area's character.

There are a number of key buildings in the village, which feature highly in the public consciousness and are central to the sense of place of the local community. However, there are also those normal buildings which have a particular vernacular style which quietly reinforces this feeling, contributing to what it is that makes Kilcormac unique.

### Key Buildings

These are buildings that feature prominently in the public awareness of the area. They are of significant importance to the local community and identified as being central to the identity of Kilcormac.

#### The Sisters of Mercy Convent

This fine building occupies a dominant position on the north side of Main Street. No longer in use as a school, it is of architectural merit and extremely important to the streetscape of the village.

**Photo 23** Sisters of Mercy Convent, Main Street



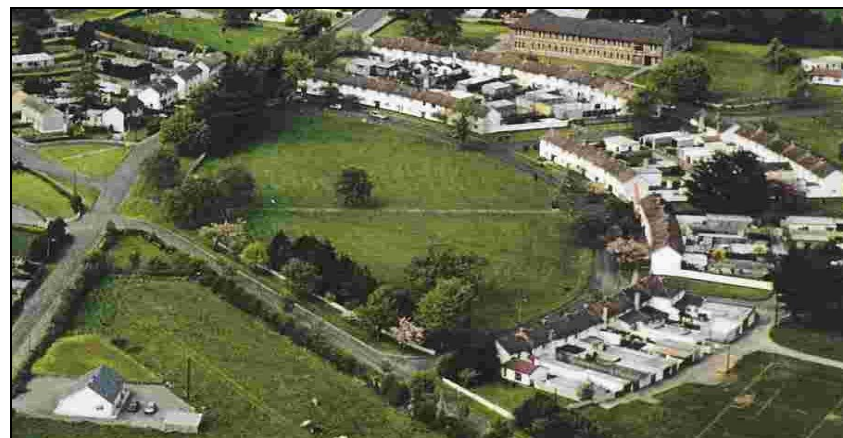
#### The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Built in 1867, this Church (see **Photo 6**) is located to the rear of the Convent of Mercy, off the northern side of Main Street. An attractive building constructed from cut-stone, the Church is an important architectural and social feature of the village.

#### Pairc Naomh Cormac

Developed in the 1950's by Bord na Mona, the semi-circular curved terraces of Pairc Naomh Cormac are a particularly important feature of the village. The area is attractively landscaped with large open spaces and extremely well maintained. Locally it is highly regarded.

**Photo 24** Aerial View of Pairc Naomh Cormac



*"Pairc Naomh Cormac is unique for its play areas and open spaces."*

Local Community Workshop Comment



### The Mill Buildings

Located on a prominent roadside position, the ruinous Mill buildings are a symbol of the village's historic connection to the milling industry (see **Photos 4 and 5**). The current condition of the buildings is regarded as regrettable by most local people.

### The Old Distillery Buildings

Located north of the Main Street, the former distillery buildings are currently disused. Attractive stone buildings, there is considerable local opinion that these could be developed.

### Vernacular Style

The vernacular style of Kilcormac is founded in the fine buildings of its Main Street and its immediate vicinity. Essentially, the village buildings are simple in form but knit into a unique street layout and urban form to give the area a definitive character and uniqueness.

In general, the older normal buildings are simple in their design and appearance. The buildings tend to front directly onto the street. Facades are typical with a symmetrical arrangement of windows and doors.

Doors and windows have a strong vertical emphasis. These elements are set back into the building façade by some 100mm (typically) to create a shadow effect and give the façade a feeling of depth. This effect is generally increased by the painting of window and door frames to contrast with the façade colours. Plaster finishes and painting of facades are predominant. Carriage lanes are also present in many buildings and many still remain well maintained with brightly painted gates.

Building heights in the village vary but the vast majority of older buildings within the central area are two-storey. Along Main Street and the other secondary streets maintenance of terraces within which the individual buildings sit is important. This is achieved by a maintaining a reasonable uniformity of building styles and roof pitches. Furthermore, the retention of roof pitches ensures the classical views and vistas of this planned village are maintained.

Where single storey buildings are found they mirror the proportions and features of the two-storey buildings. Given the simplicity of the facades, painting and features such as door surrounds are used to good effect to provide a level of decoration

### Building Features

#### o External Finishes and Renders

Local awareness of the variety of buildings and building styles in the village is clear and this is largely based on the variety of finishes used. In older areas of the village cut-stone finishes predominate, whereas in newer areas render and plaster finishes are popular. Yet there is a strong appreciation that these knit together in an overall coherence very effectively.

Some older cutstone buildings remain – namely at the Church and in the distillery and mill buildings,. A small number of simple lime rendered cottages survive – particularly around the Fairgreen area, but many of these are not maintained and in poor condition.

On many of the older buildings in the village core smooth painted plaster finishes are predominant. In fact, unlike in many Irish villages of its size, a feature of Kilcormac, it that so many of its buildings are plaster finished and this is a feature of the village which should be retained.

**Photo 25** Use of Decorative Curved Quoin Stones at a Corner Site



### *Kilcormac Village Design Statement*

The finish of these buildings is simple with a level or decoration provided in the contrasting colours used on painted plinths and quoins. This is particularly effective in adding to the buildings bulk and also on corner sites where curved quoin stones are used (see **Photo 25**)

In general there is a careful use of colour on these buildings. White or similarly pale colours are often used with a stronger dark colour used to decorate the window reveals, door frames, plinths and guttering.

#### **Removal of External Render – A Good or a Bad Idea?**

Quite often a render or plaster is removed from a stone or brick façade for entirely aesthetic reasons with the intention of exposing attractive stonework. However, this impacts significantly on the character of a building, and if done on a wider scale, the character and appearance of an entire street or village.

It is important to bear in mind that when the building was constructed, the render was put on as the essential skin to weatherproof the building. The stone therefore is like a skeleton that needs its skin. These rendered rubble stone buildings are very different from cut-stone buildings, which were built using worked stone and never designed to be rendered.

The stripping of renders can lead to water penetration and serious damp problems, which can in the long term, have severe structural implications. Taking off the render also greatly changes the appearance of the building with the joints of rubble stonewalls being large, irregular and often pointed in an unattractive and unsightly manner.

In light of these considerations, it is a general rule of thumb that the removal of a render is ill-advised and the maintenance of renders and plasterwork is in all cases highly preferable.

Similar care is required in repairing rendered buildings. Most old buildings were finished with a limestone render. Appropriate lime mixtures must be used in all repair works and applied by a qualified person. If in doubt, seek the advice of the Conservation Officer.

Owners of Protected Structures (buildings previously called 'Listed Buildings') should note that any alterations to their buildings may require planning permission. In all cases the advice of the Council's Conservation Officer should be sought.

In few cases is a higher quality stone used for features such as cills or door frames as these tend to be quite simple and of plaster construction.

More modern developments utilise a variety of finishes including redbrick, pebble dash and painted renders. While attractive, these do not readily reflect the styles and materials used in the area and therefore are visually separate from the main settlement. Furthermore, the use of a variety of bright colours is often excessive.

**Photo 26** *Cut Stone*



**Photo27** *Rubble Stone as Exposed by the Removal of a Finishing Plaster / Render.*





## Roofs

Roofs may at first appear to be a fairly innocuous and somewhat ‘invisible’ element of a building and streetscape, but even a minor alteration can have a serious impact on the surrounding area.

Roof pitches tend to be uniform (approximately between 35 and 45 degrees) along streetscapes and this is critical in the maintenance of views and vistas. For example, along the Main Street there is little variation in roof pitch although building heights do vary. Some older buildings incorporate hipped roofs – even within the streetscape, and these are an attractive feature.

**Photo 28** *Attractive Building With Hipped Roof, Adjacent to the Convent, Main Street*



With few exceptions roofs in the village are tiled or slated and simply constructed with small over-hangs accommodating guttering and a small gap between the eaves and windows of the upper floor.

Poor maintenance of roofs in older buildings rapidly leads to structural problems – such as damp, and decay. Therefore, the maintenance of older roofs and the use of appropriate materials and insulation is critical.

Chimneys – an important roof feature, are present but tend to be invisible as they are not particularly ornate features. On terraced houses they are generally located on the shared gable walls and are simple in design and appearance. Their absence on numerous buildings suggests extensive modernisation and remodelling. However, where possible these should be retained and maintained appropriately with clay chimney pots

## ○ Windows and Doors

In older houses the proportions of doors and window openings were critical in capturing light and also maintaining the character and style of the building.

Generally symmetrical principles were applied in large houses with a centrally located door flanked by windows on either side. In smaller houses a window was generally located on one side only. Where present, the windows of upper floors were smaller.

At one stage, most of the older buildings in Kilcormac would have been wooden sliding sash windows. These are characteristic of the vernacular style with glazing bars providing a vertical emphasis. However, many of these have been replaced by PVC swing windows and this has had a serious impact on the streetscapes of the village.

Windows were set back into the façade to give a feeling of depth and shadow. In few buildings, plaster or brick surrounds are evident but it is more characteristic for window reveals to be brightly painted to deepen the shadowing effect of the set-back window. Similarly, cills are not a dominant feature on buildings in Kilcormac and where provided are simple and often painted to match the window surrounds.

Traditional doors were wooden with vertical emphasis and set into the façade with a small setback (in the order of 100mm). Some buildings retain door surrounds but these do not appear to have been an original feature of significance. Where provided these should be maintained.

Unfortunately, many doors have been replaced by PVC or metal doors, and this does inevitably alter the character and appearance of many buildings.

### Fitting uPVC and Modern Material Windows in Old Buildings.

Older windows found in Kilcormac and throughout Ireland are typically wooden with sliding sash or a similar style. These windows were used with minor variations up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century – particularly in public buildings. Only in the mid-1950's did the use of metal frames become more widespread and these were replaced by aluminium in the 1970's. Nowadays, the use of uPVC is dominant but it is important to realise the impact these can have on older and historic buildings before making any changes.

Commonly, old windows are replaced as they are considered draughty and unable to exclude outside noise such as traffic. However, the 'wear and tear' on an old sash windows can often be simply repaired at a small cost as the wood used in these windows came from slow-growing mature trees and is denser and of a much higher quality than the timber used today. Regular maintenance (such as painting every 3 to 5 years) can protect from water penetration and timber decay, making the replacement of snug fitting sashes unnecessary, as they will manage to effectively exclude both draughts and noise. It is also important to note that older buildings were designed to 'breathe' based on the fitting of sash windows and their replacement with modern windows, which hermetically seal openings, can result in reduced ventilation with resultant condensation.

The removal of sash windows greatly changes the architectural appearance of a building. This also affects the financial value of the building as period details are highly desirable.

Again, owners of Protected Structures are reminded that changing or altering windows may require planning permission and in all cases you should seek the advice of the Conservation Officer of the County Council.

While there should be an overall preference for wooden sash windows, new developments – particularly on Main Street, incorporating uPVC windows can minimise their negative impact on the streetscape by using up-and-down sliding windows rather than outward swinging ones.

### Shop Fronts

There is an established core of commercial and retail activity on Main Street. However, there are two trends occurring in Kilcormac which are greatly affecting the appearance of shopfronts in the village and thus impacting greatly on the character of the street.

First, there is a modern tendency to remove traditional shopfronts and replace them with standard, corporate facade that does little to add to a sense of place. Secondly, there are a number of old shops in the village which are now in use as private residences. Understandably, in order to maximise privacy there is a tendency to 'ignore' the old features of the building and this has a negative impact on the liveliness and animation of the street. In some instances (such as shown in **Photo 29**) the only remaining feature is slightly larger windows and an unusual plaster feature above the door. However, in other instances the effect of concealing the shopfront is less successful.

**Photo 29** Former Shop in Use as a Private Residence



Therefore it is important to note a number of principles that should be adhered to:

- Where practicable, a traditional shopfront should be maintained and restored in favour of its replacement. Where renovated or altered, all works should be carried out carefully with an appreciation for the need to retain the old character.



- Where this is not possible, such as where a former shop is in use as a home, the former shop windows should be acknowledged as a feature of the building. This can be quite simply done with flowers, planting or other features while maintaining privacy.

In general the following principles should apply:

- The shopfront and associated signage should be a secondary feature to the main building;
- Shopfronts should be designed with regard to the proportions of the building;
- Maintenance of shopfronts is critical and glazing putty and paint should be regularly maintained to avoid decay.
- The incorporation of roller shutters – where often necessary as a security measure, should be carefully considered for its impact on a traditional shopfront or historic building;
- Signage – in windows or hanging from a wall, should not be above the ground floor level;
- Neon and bright lighting should be avoided in favour of more subtle illumination or ‘animation’ of the shopfront by the use of planting, (such as window baskets, modest hanging baskets) or subtle up-lighting.

Where new shopfronts are being installed, the use of contemporary styles and materials in a manner complimentary to the building and its environs should be considered. Generally pastiche or mock traditional shopfronts should be avoided unless an alternative is inappropriate.

The largest issue relating to shopfronts is that of advertising. Some effort should be made to avoid the use of plastics and neon. Perhaps some consideration could be given to the use of a small hanging sign or advertisements painted directly onto the façade wall as done to great effect on the Midland’s Bar.

### Conclusion

There are a number of characteristic features of the built environment of Kilcormac Village. Detailed above, a quick and useful guide to these, and less appropriate works, is presented on **Tables 1 and 2**.

**Tables 1 & 2** A Summary Guide to Features of the Village.

Characteristic Features- These should be maintained in existing buildings and complimented by new development.
Two-Storey terraces
Traditional shopfronts
Painted Plinths
Painted quoin stones – often ornately curved on corner sites.
White or pale colours on plaster finished building facades
Significant place names – e.g. Pairc Naomh Cormac
Dark colours on door and window surrounds
Wooden sash windows and doors with a vertical emphasis
Uniform roof pitches
Plain chimney stacks
Fan Lights
Ornate window surrounds painted to co-ordinate with other façade elements including plinths and quoin stones.
Carriage lanes with painted gates.
Native species and planting
Subtle signage using wood, stone and small metal signs as appropriate
Uncharacteristic Features – Where possible, these features should be avoided in both existing and new developments.
uPVC doors and windows and doors in old buildings
Swing-out windows in all buildings
Removal of render
Bare, un-landscaped hard surfaced areas
Use of strong colours as the primary colour on building facades
Dormer windows
Plastic and corporate shopfronts
Overhead wiring
Ribbon development along surrounding rural roads.
Corporate and plastic signage
Large-scale advertising and hoarding.

## **GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN KILCORMAC**

### **New Developments in Kilcormac**

Kilcormac has an established urban tradition and style that has evolved from its history. That tradition effectively includes examples of high quality development covering urban schemes, large-scale housing developments and quasi-rural housing. Therefore, there is an established set of principles of how to 'do it right' in the area and this should be borne out in the planning and design of all new developments.

Whether infill or large-scale new development, building orientation and plot layout should reflect existing styles and patterns. Similarly, the proportion, scale and design of buildings should compliment the existing urban character.

The monotony typical of many modern residential developments can be avoided through the use of a carefully selected variety of building types and the careful use of colour and other building features. Where similar house types are used throughout – such as in St. Cormac's Park, landscaped and grassed open space with mature planting provide an attractive context and with an attractive overall appearance.

Place names and signage should reflect local trends and traditions. Similarly, street furniture should be provided with cognisance for the existing street layout and style. Landscaping should be incorporated early into a development. Semi-mature planting should be considered as an effective means of reducing the bare look of a new development.

### **Building Maintenance**

Building maintenance plays an essential role in ensuring the built tradition of the village is protected. This is important for *all* village buildings. All owners of buildings in the village should appreciate the importance of maintenance through regular painting, retention of boundaries and original features is important in preserving Kilcormac's character.

Undoubtedly, regular roof and structural inspections of older buildings will ensure they do not gradually fall into a state of disrepair. Similarly, older wooded windows, doors and other features can be protected if well maintained and looked after.

All owners of Protected Structures should be aware of their legal obligation to maintain their property and prevent it from falling into disrepair. In such buildings particular care should be taken to seek expert advice to ensure the use of proper materials and procedures. Due to recent changes in legislation for planning permission for works on Protected Structures, the advice of the County Council should be sought before any works are undertaken.

### **Alterations to Existing Buildings**

All works undertaken on an existing building should reflect the character of the building and its vicinity. In particular, the building style should be reflected through the façade elements – such as windows, doors, etc. Roof styles and pitches should similarly compliment the existing structure. The use of appropriate materials is critical and all aspects such as - texture, colour, proportion, etc. should reflect the established character of the area and compliment existing buildings and styles. Where possible, un-used materials from older buildings should be 'recycled' for re-use.

Alterations such as the removal of original render and the replacement of windows and doors should not be undertaken without due regard to their potential impact on the character of the building. In all instances professional advice should be sought and all alternative considered. Similarly, consideration should be had to the impact of a 'change of use' of a building on the streetscape and character of the area.

### **Amenity Areas and Landscaping**

Amenity areas should be retained and well maintained with the addition of lighting and seating to encourage their use and ensuring the safety of users.

Landscaping adds greatly to an area and should be encouraged. The use of appropriate native trees, as a cost effective and environmentally friendly method of livening up and visually improving the character of areas is recommended. In particular, the screening of unattractive features such as ESB boxes of telephone exchanges is encouraged.



When planting the preference should be for permanent planting – such as trees, and native species are favoured. Small scale flowerbeds and planting should be secondary to these large scale plants which will, in the long-term, add to and compliment the village’s character. Such planting should be strategically located to act as both an amenity, landscape features and also to encourage traffic calming and speed control on busy routes.

The planting of native species is important particularly as they play an important role in maintaining local wildlife and ecology. **Table 3** below sets out briefly a number of native species that are commercially available and can be appropriately used in planting schemes

**Table 3** Summary Guide to Commercially Available Native Trees and Plants

English Name	Latin Name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>
Birch Silver	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Birch Downey	<i>Betula pubescens</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Burnt Rose	<i>Rosa pimpinellifolia</i>
Common or European Gorse	<i>Ulex europeaus</i>
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Goat Willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>
Guelder Rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>

Rowan or Mountain Ash	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Scots Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>
Sessile Oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymous europaeus</i>
Wild Cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Western or Mountain Gorse	<i>Ulmus gallii</i>
Woodbine, Honey suckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>

The use of planting in screening developments – such as existing one-off housing is also important. In these instances, planting appropriate shrubs and trees can maintains the visual continuity of the roadside, concealing the development and minimising the visual impact.

### Street Furniture

In general, the provision of street furniture can raise the somewhat difficult question of maintenance. The variety of shareholders in this aspect of the streetscape including private residential owners, private commercial ventures, the ESB and the County Council makes the organisation and co-ordination of design and maintenance often difficult. However, there are a number of key principles to be observed:

- Temporary and permanent street furniture should be organised to minimise clutter. This is important in relation not only to appearances but also to the ease of which a mobility impaired person or person with a pram or wheelchair can realistically navigate the path.
- Street furniture such as lamp standards should compliment the area and in general and overly ornate designs should be avoided.
- A schedule of maintenance should be drawn up with particular references to painting and regular maintenance.

The relevant local groups, in consultation with the County Council and statutory undertakers, should draw up a co-ordinated and integrated plan for the provision of street furniture. A uniformity of design in lamp standards, seating, litter bins and fencing should be adopted but a theme approach should be avoided.

### **Signage**

Directional and 'welcoming' signs at the approach into a village should be clearly visible and made from an appropriate material. However, these should not be excessively dominant or bright. Signage on the approaches into Kilcormac are well maintained and give a good impression coming into the village.

Appropriate signage of amenity areas – such as indicating walks and trails, is encouraged as is the on-going use of walking path maps and information packs

There should be a clear separation between the prominence afforded to directional or tourist signage and that advertising products. This is a particular problem in Kilcormac where advertising signage detracts from the village's character. Similarly, shops advertising should not clutter the paths and, where appropriate should be incorporated onto the façade of the buildings (see the section on *Shopfronts* above). There are also a number of locations where more signs than necessary are provided – such as those indicating the location of the pieta, and this should be addressed.

## COMMUNITY ACTION LIST

Throughout public information sessions a number of issues arose that the local community felt extremely strongly about. While some of these

suggestions are beyond the remit of the VDS they are nonetheless included as part of a comprehensive community 'Action List'.

### Community Action List

1. All open spaces should be maintained to a high standard and litter bins provided in all areas. Co-ordination of street and open space cleaning between the County Council and the community should be arranged.
2. Pedestrian crossings should be provided on Main Street.
3. Derelict buildings should be re-developed or improved in some way.
4. The possibility of by-passing the Town should be investigated in order to reduce heavy traffic volumes.
5. Car parking should be provided in official set out areas.
6. The high kerbing at The Square should be lowered or removed.
7. The recycling bins should be relocated to a more suitable location.
8. The condition and possible landscaping of the Square and Fairgreen areas should be examined in consultation with the community.
9. Better signposting of housing estates and streets is required.
10. The Health Centre should be re-located to a more suitable and accessible area within the village.
11. Welcoming signs at the entrance into the village would be improved to include an Irish greeting.