urlingford
Town Centre Masterplan

Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

Turley

Note: Imagery used in this plan may be for illustration purposes only and does not represent actual development proposals. The plan may also includes images / visualisations created by third-parties, which are included for illustrative purposes only. Turley has included annotations, where relevant to identify the creators / source of such imagery.

Acronyms

ACA	Architectural Conservation Area
c.	Circa (Approximately)
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DHC	Department of Health and Children
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HSE	The Health Service Executive
K	Thousand
KCC	Kilkenny County Council
KCDP	Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020
km	Kilometres
LAP	Local Area Plan
m	Meters
M	Motorway
NDF	Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan
NPF	Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework
No.	Number
Ref.	Reference
R	Regional
RSES	Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy
SRA	Southern Regional Assembly

Contents

Vision

"Urlingford will become an increasingly vibrant, healthy, attractive and inclusive town, enhanced by revitalisation in tandem with enhanced connectivity, urban form and amenity.

Urlingford will be a place of choice, inspiring people, communities, visitors and investors to locate and thrive."

01

introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Masterplan for Urlingford

Kilkenny County Council appointed Turley in association with a multi-disciplinary team (see Section 1.3) to prepare a Town Centre Masterplan for Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to guide the development of Urlingford into the future and to influence and deliver on real change for the Town in order to make it a more attractive destination in which to live, work, visit and do business.

The town of Urlingford is an important Town in north-west Kilkenny, an area which is a predominantly rural in character. By virtue of its location proximate to various national and regional access roads, the town has the potential to fulfil a more significant role and it is envisaged that this Masterplan will guide development and re-imagine Urlingford so that it can ultimately realise its full potential.

The masterplan sets out an overall vision, strategy and most significantly, commitment for the proper planning and sustainable development of Urlingford. A multi-disciplinary integrated approach bringing together the development of places using co-design, urban design, transport planning and landscape architecture were used to develop the masterplan for the Town.

1.2 Context

The Government's Town Centre First Policy (February 2022) is a major new policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into town centres. The policy lays the foundation for towns to develop a tailored plan by a Local Authority in collaboration with a Town Team. The policy is underpinned by a multi-billion euro investment programme spread across Government schemes.

The Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan will subsequently provide a basis for the town to seek support from funding streams such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and Village Renewal Scheme, Active Travel Fund and Historic Towns Initiative.

The plan is developed within the context of national, regional and local policy and through careful consideration of best practice publications.

1.3 Multi-disciplinary Team

The Masterplan is visionary, ambitious, and creative in the design of new propositions for Urlingford. A multidisciplinary integrated approach bringing together the development of places and destinations, transport planning, urban design, mixed use architecture and landscape design were used to develop the masterplan strategy. The masterplan is holistic and addresses a wide range of issues; as such, Kilkenny County Council commissioned a multi-specialist team which included the following:

- Turley - planning, urban design, landscape architecture, economics and strategic communications consultancy services.

- Hegsons - Engineering and transport planning; and

- RSK - Environmental and ecology.

Settlement Boundary for Urlingford as per Figure 4.25 of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027

1.4   Project Objectives

The aim of this Masterplan is to ensure that Urlingford has the right objectives and projects in place to tackle issues of dereliction, vacant properties, and above all, to become a better place to live, work and run a business, ensuring the vitality and vibrancy of the town into the future.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

- Positively address key issues and challenges in Urlingford.

- Embrace the power of urban design and architecture in re-imagining the plan area so that it can ultimately realise its full potential.

- The vision for Urlingford must look beyond its form, to the wider Town context and connectivity to provide a holistic design approach from the outset.

- The Masterplan will set a new benchmark for public realm and town centre design, transforming Urlingford into a prosperous settlement and enabling it to realise its full potential.

- Provide longer-term adaptability and, robustness to survive ever-changing economic and social conditions.

1.5   Methodology

The methodology for the project is informed by the established double-diamond design methodology (see Fig 1.1) as developed by the UK Design Council in 2005. The Double-Diamond methodology is a four-stage innovation process which captures the divergent and convergent nature of design, and offers flexibility as a foundation to designers, allowing shifts to the model to fit the specific needs of a project. Typically, the four phases are:

- Discover phase (divergent): exploration of brief and hypothesis, contextual research and definition of project participants or communities.

- Define phase (convergent): designing and conducting engagement and feasibility studies.

- Develop phase (divergent): development of a number of ideas through co-creation and design ideation processes.

- Deliver phase (convergent): selection of ideas to take forward and delivery of outputs in the form of prototypes, services ideas or guidance.

Importantly, this is not a linear process as the arrows on the diagram show. The two diamonds indicate that a divergent and convergent creation process happens twice; once to define the problem (and in this case provide preliminary options – i.e. Stage 1) and once to create the solution (i.e. provide for design development and the preparation of a Masterplan – i.e. Stage 2).
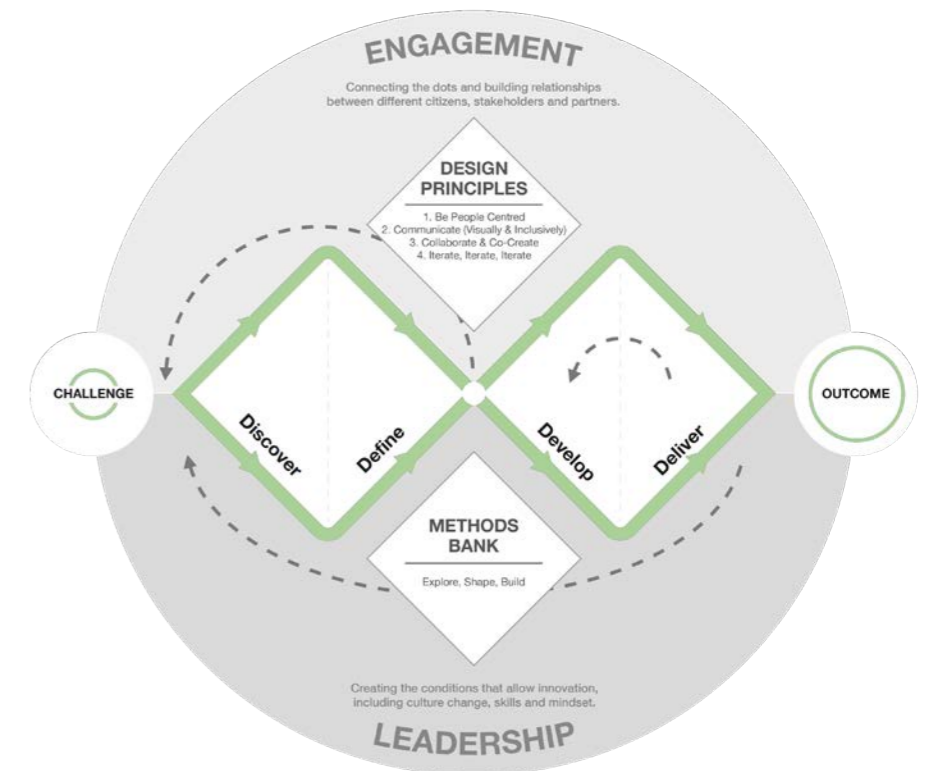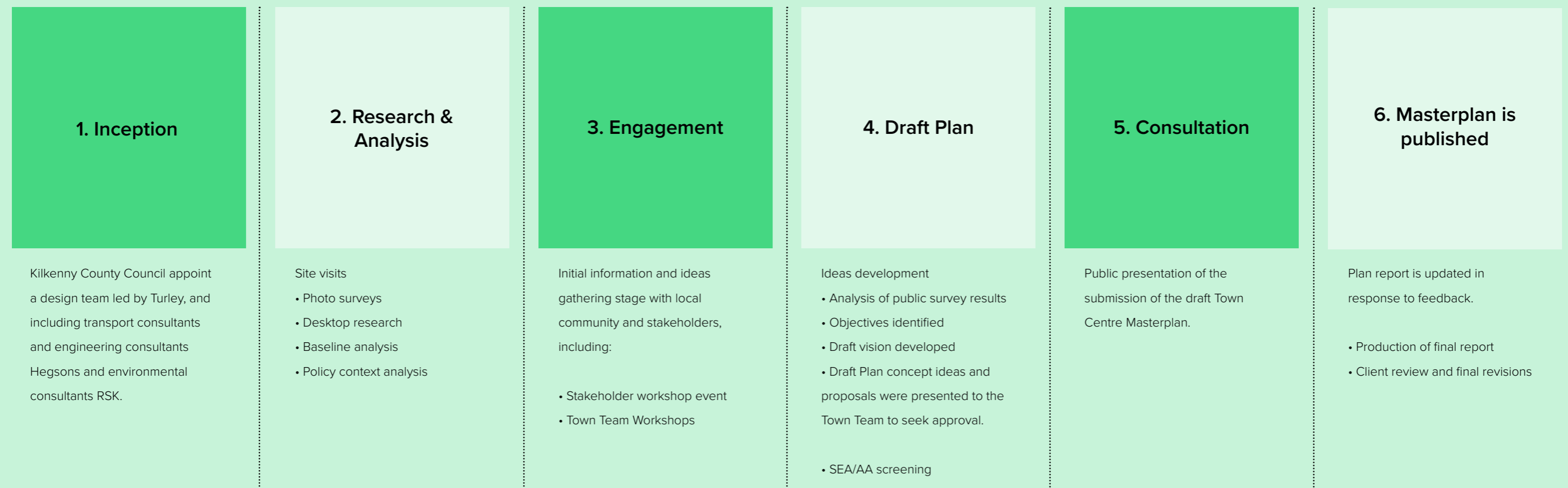

Figure 1.1: Design Council's Double Diamond Approach. © Design Council.

Producing the plan

Working closely with the Town Team and community is a vital component of the plan process. The programme comprised of six key stages. Taking account of feedback received from the local community, it identifies opportunities for improvements by proposing strategies and projects in the short, medium and long term.

Kilkenny County Council, in collaboration with the Town Team, will use the plan to implement improvements and seek funding to deliver positive change.

1. Inception	2. Research & Analysis	3. Engagement	4. Draft Plan	5. Consultation	6. Masterplan is published
Kilkenny County Council appoint a design team led by Turley, and including transport consultants and engineering consultants Hegsons and environmental consultants RSK.	Site visits • Photo surveys • Desktop research • Baseline analysis • Policy context analysis	Initial information and ideas gathering stage with local community and stakeholders, including: • Stakeholder workshop event • Town Team Workshops	Ideas development • Analysis of public survey results • Objectives identified • Draft vision developed • Draft Plan concept ideas and proposals were presented to the Town Team to seek approval. • SEA/AA screening	Public presentation of the submission of the draft Town Centre Masterplan.	Plan report is updated in response to feedback. • Production of final report • Client review and final revisions

02

the town

2.0   The Town

2.1   Town Context

Urlingford is located in the north western corner of County Kilkenny, close to the border with County Tipperary.

Urlingford's context is unique. At a national scale, the Town occupies a strategic location "halfway between Dublin and Cork". For many years, the town acted as a "natural" resting point for people travelling from Dublin to the south of the Country. Since, the opening of the M8 in 2010, 'through traffic' in the Town has declined, resulting in a change in the retail offering within the town core.

Urlingford is located to the west of the County, in an accessible location approximately 750m from Junction 4 of the M8 Motorway. The town is situated approximately 22 km from Kilkenny City, 15 km from Thurles, 128 km from Dublin City and 129 km from Cork City.

Johnstown is located approximately 4 km to the north-east of Urlingford. The Islands are located to the north-west of the Town beyond the M8 Motorway. The wooded area previously formed part of a trail that began at Urlingford Library.

The Town is built on a flat site – a cut-over bog. The River Goul, a minor tributary of the River Nore, has its source in the Slieveardagh Hills, approximately 6 kilometres south of Urlingford. It

enters the town from the south, passes under Main street and then turns east to skirt the northern fringe of the town, passing under the bridge at the Castle.

Due to the town's advantageous regional positioning, strong connections through transport infrastructure, and rich social, industrial and cultural heritage, Urlingford is recognised as presenting a truly unique and exciting opportunity for furthering its development and potential.
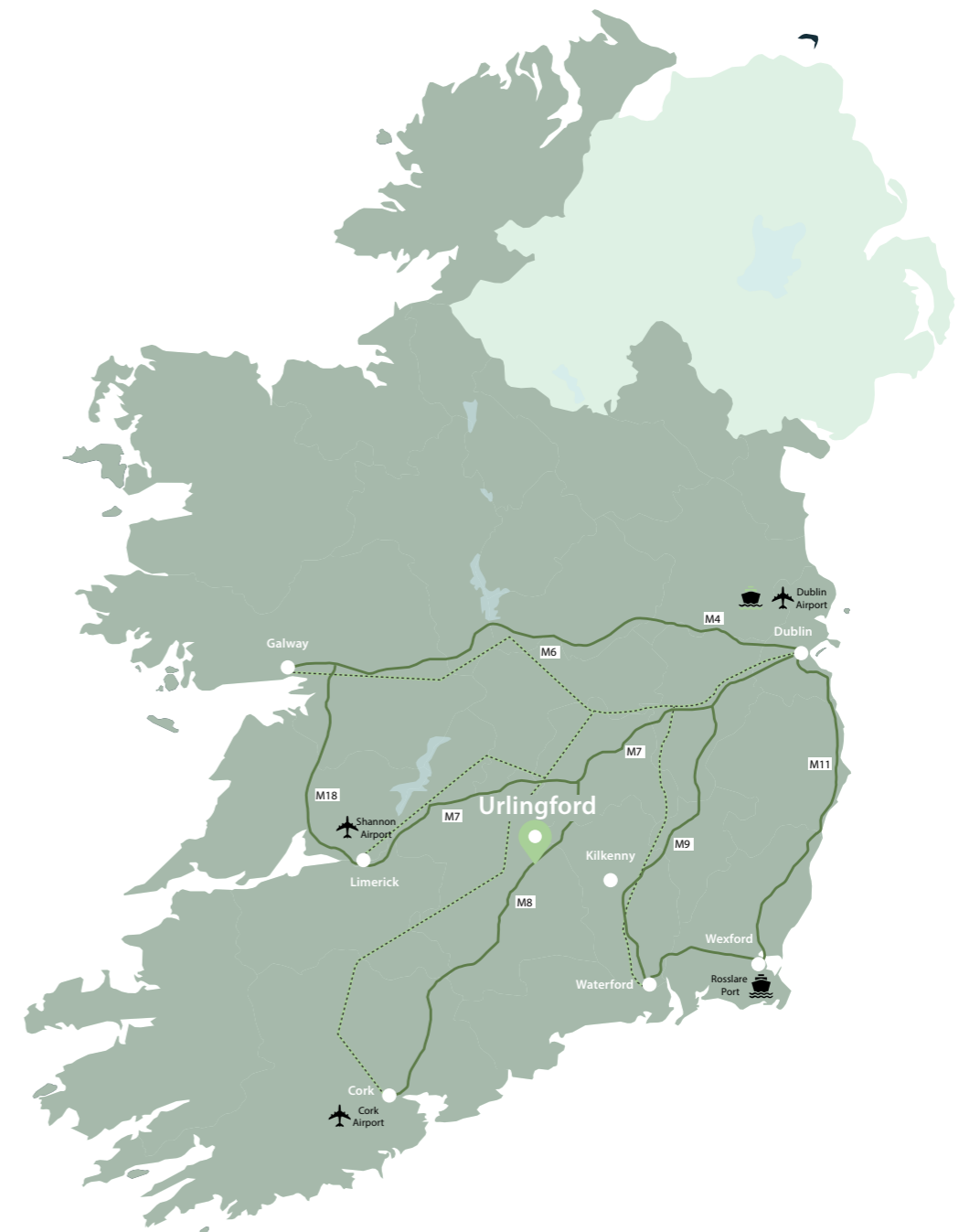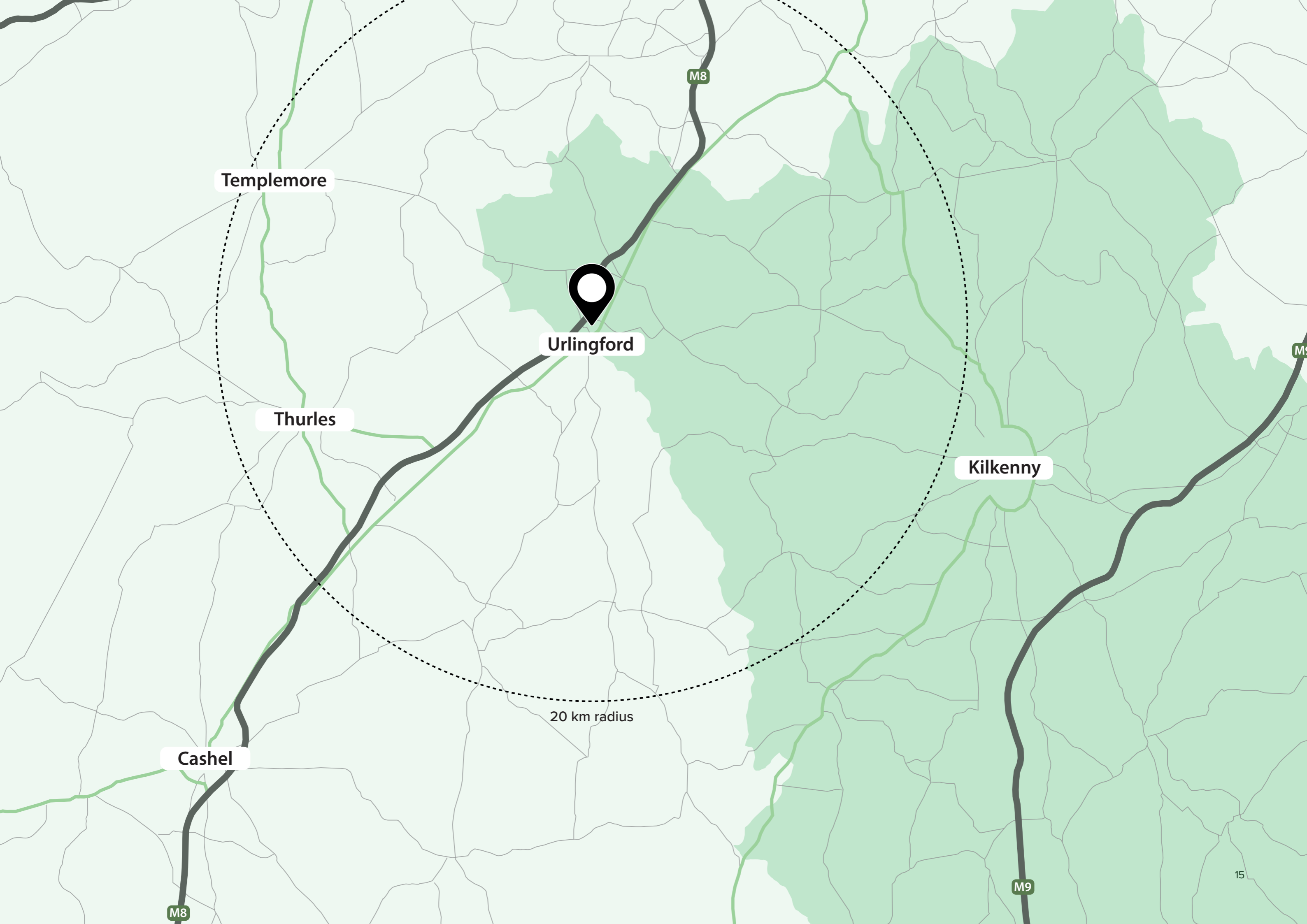
2.2 Historical Development

The Town's Name

Urlingford as a named place dates back at least one thousand years. There are three theories regarding the origin of this name. According to O'Curry, the name derives from the Gaelic 'Ath na hUrlaidhe' meaning the Ford of the Sledgings, it being the place where a battle was fought in the 10th Century in which "the Irish and the Danes did sledge each other's heads". The ford referred to is where the bridge now spans the River Goul near Castle, circa 450m north of the present day Main Street. The second theory is from Carrigan, who, in his "History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory" claims that the name comes from "Ath na hUrlainn", meaning the ford of the lawns – the lawns being those that would have originally fronted the castle. Yet other sources say that the name derives from the Gaelic for the "Ford of the Stones".

The town itself only dates from about 1755, when it became established because of its strategic position along the main Dublin-Cork road, and the construction of a number of important coach-houses. The Turnpike Road (tolled road) through Urlingford was established in 1751.
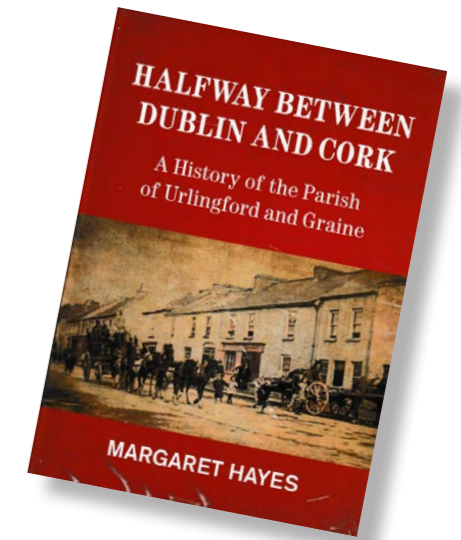
(For a detailed history of Urlingford, please refer to Halfway between Dublin and Cork - A history of the Parish of Urlingford and Graine by Margaret Hayes, 2014.)

| Origins | Earliest Times | c. 1550 | c. 1751 | 1800s | 1900s |

The Town initially emerged around the current location of Urlingofrd Castle and the Mill Cemetry. The early settlement was abandoned in the 1500s, when a more formal / planned town was established at the location of the Town that exists today.

In 1550 Pierce Ruadh, Earl of Ormond granted most of his lands in the north to his second Son, Richard. The lands included the entire civil parish of Urlingford along with Urlingford Castle.

During the 19th Century, thriving local industries – including wool manufacturing and a distillery, contributed to the prosperity in the town. There was also a malt house in operation. The majority of the town's buildings therefore, were built in the latter part of the 18th and early part of the 19th centuries – roughly corresponding to the Georgian period.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church was built in 1838, and the Courthouse dates from about 1840. The Union Workhouse and the Fever Hospital were also built in the 19th century. In 1837, it was the centre of manufacture of coarse stuffs, flannels, and worsteds, and carries on an extensive retail trade with the surrounding districts.

The Town expanded further in the 1900s. However, it has changed little since it was mapped in the first half of the 19th century by the Ordance Survey. This 1st Edition OS Map (shows landmarks such as the Roman Catholic Church and National School. The linear form of the town is also evident.
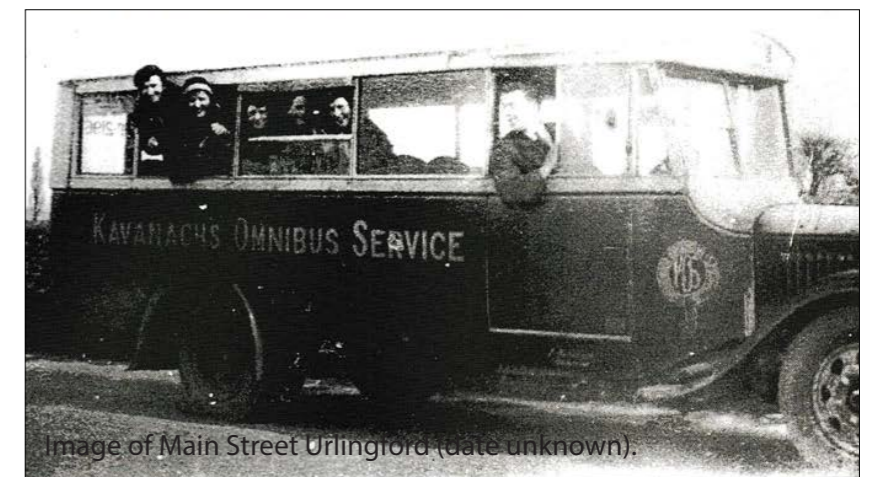

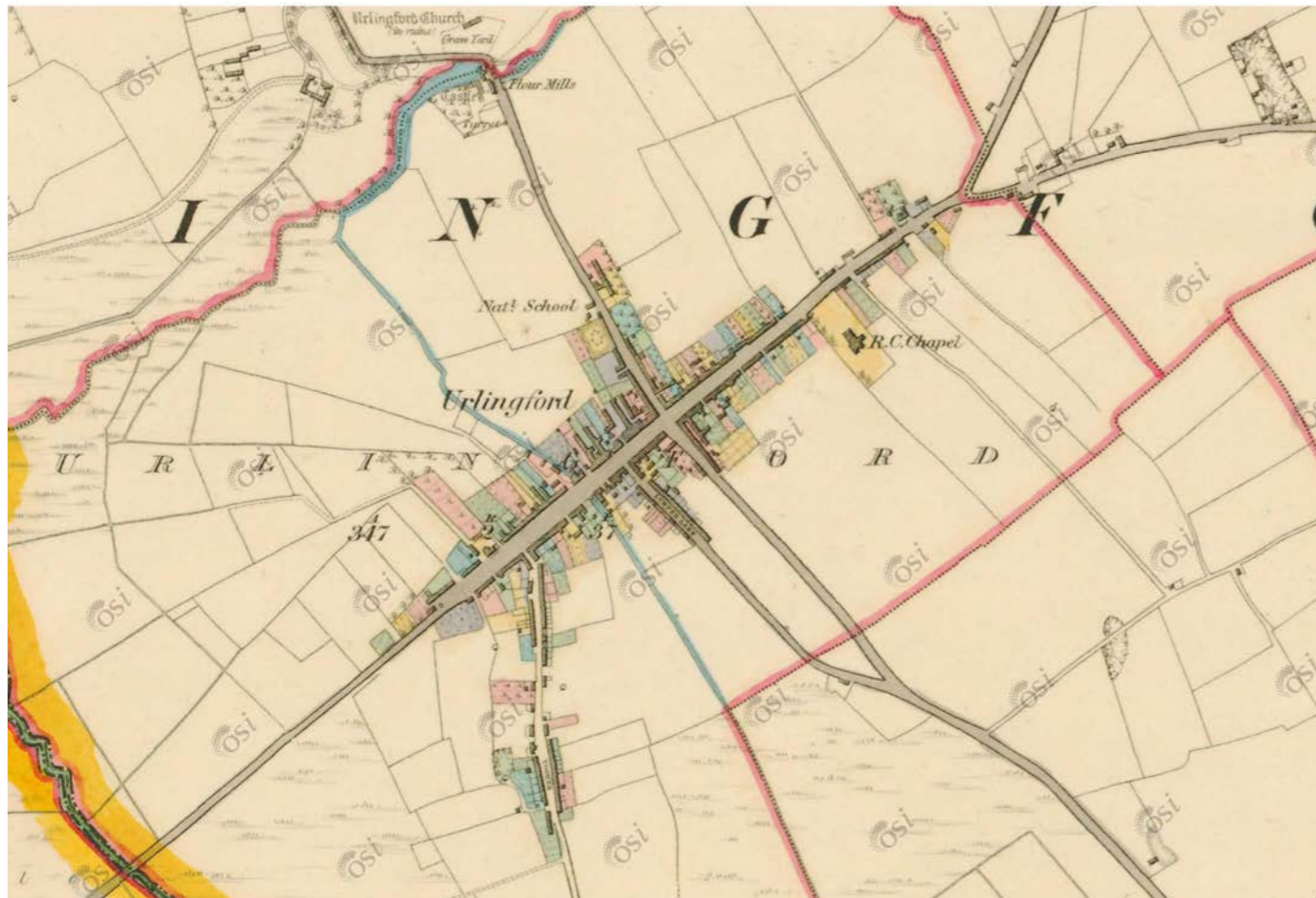Map of Kilkenny showing Urlingford 1656-1838 Bally...

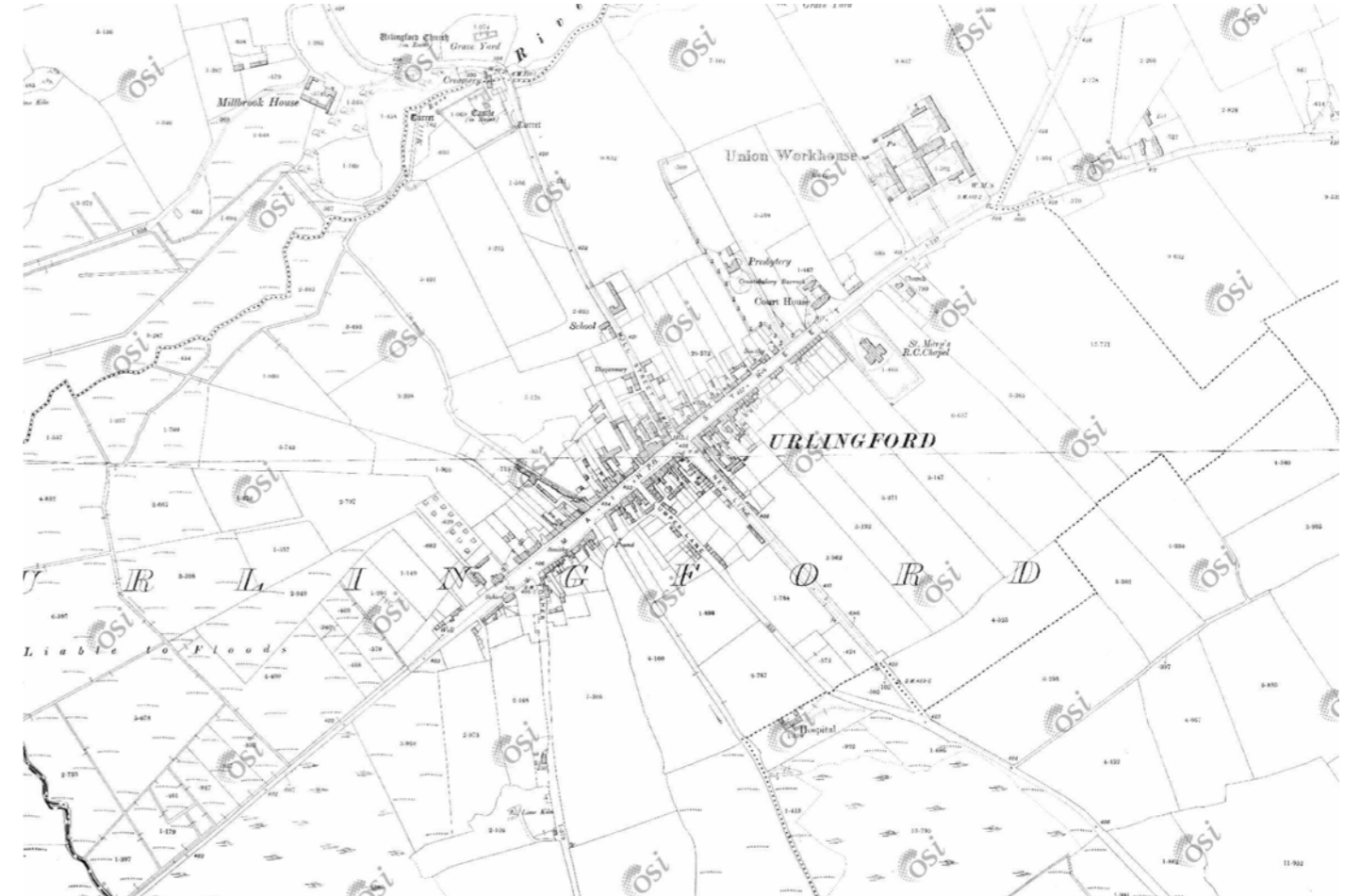Image of Main Street Urlingford (date unknown).

Image of Main Street Urlingford (date unknown).

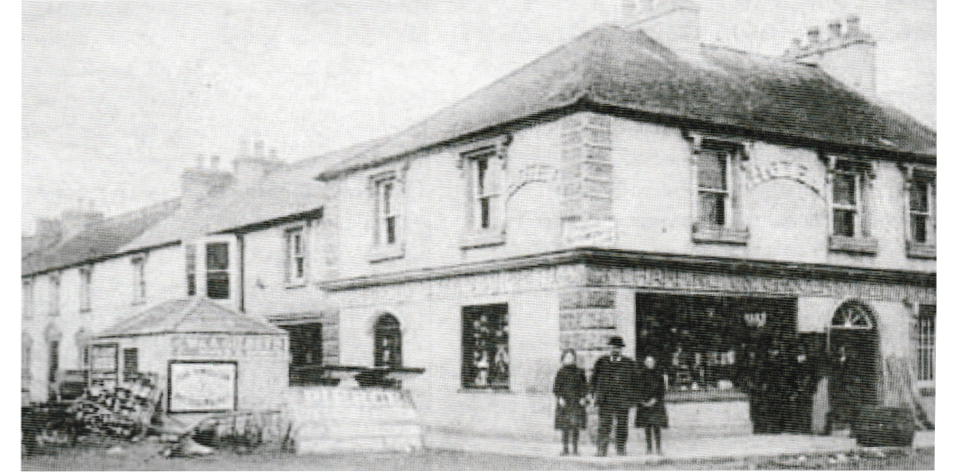## 2.2.1   Historical Mapping

Historical First Edition OSI Map

Historical Second Edition OSI Map

Image of Main Street Urlingford (date unknown).

03

analysis

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Policy Context

Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan has been developed within the national, regional and local policy context and therefore aligns with these planning policy documents. The key policy documents are set out below. The Plan is an evidence based, non-statutory document and does not form public policy. The plan has been developed in collaboration with the Urlingford local community, the Town Team and all other stakeholders.

It is intended that the strategy for development, and the key proposals as set in the Plan, will enable Kilkenny County Council, in collaboration with the Urlingford Town Team, to leverage funding in order to implement the key actions for delivery as set out in Section 5 of the Plan.

Although, not a statutory policy document, the Town Health Check for Urlingford, prepared in August 2020, has been reviewed as part of this Masterplan to confirm *inter alia* that the assessment remains fit-for-purpose and that the results and objectives remain valid. (See page 25.)
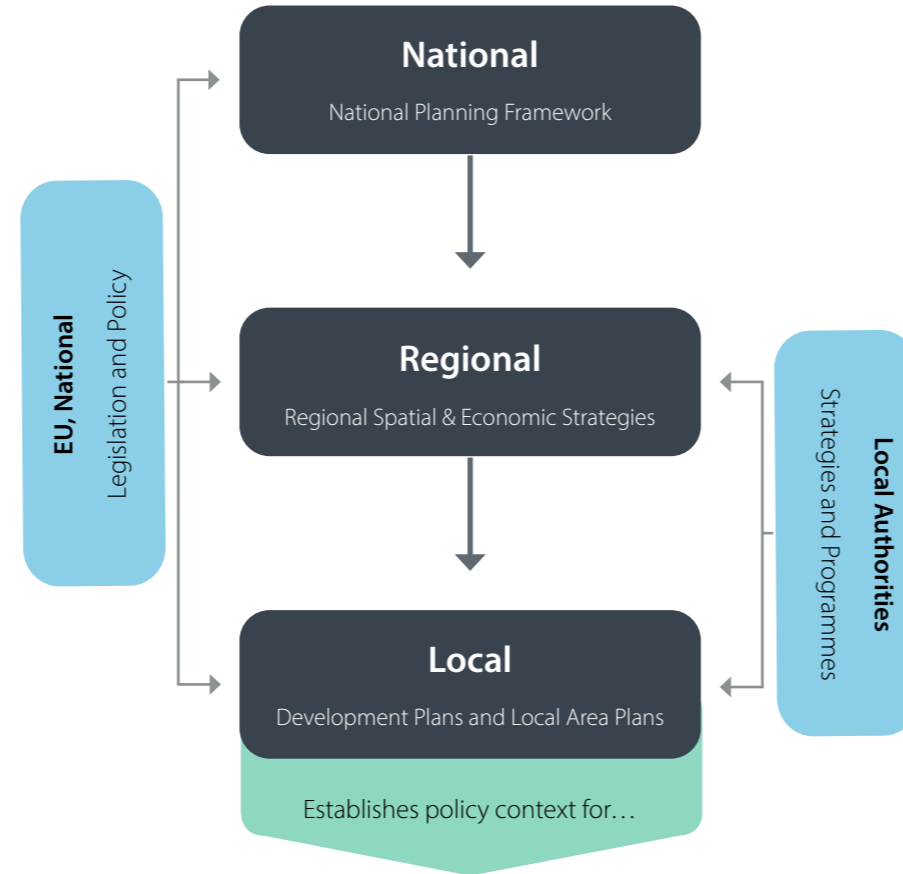

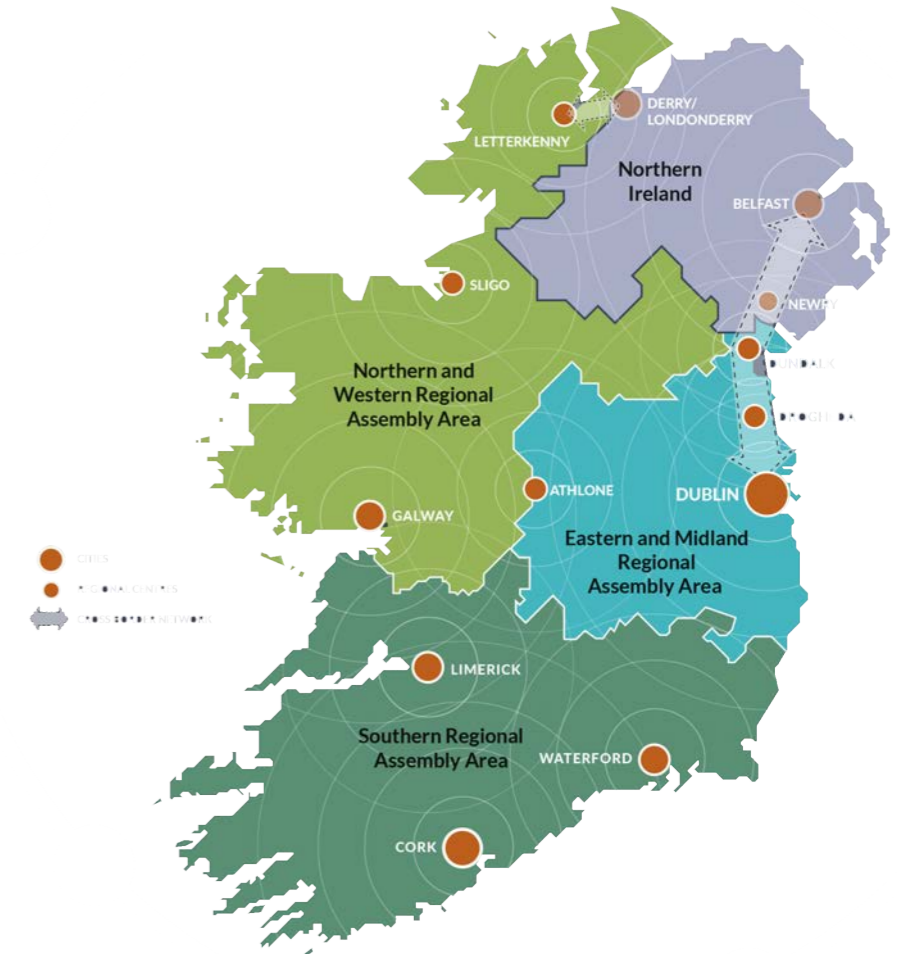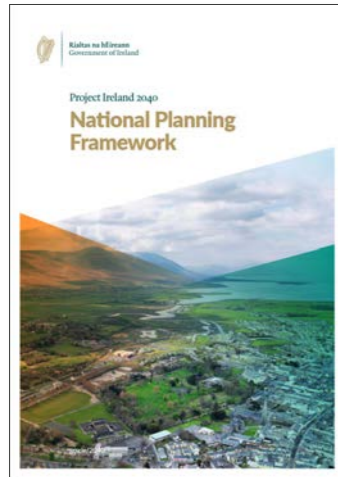Figure 3.1: Planning Policy Hierarchy in Ireland.

Figure 3.2: Diagram extracted from page 23 of the National Planning Framework.

3.1.2 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

The Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (NPF) is a strategic framework to guide public and private investment, and to protect and enhance the environment. It sets out a spatial hierarchy of urban centres that are in line for significant population and economic growth over the period of the plan. It also sets out the key principles that will guide future development across the country, addressing issues such as compact growth, making stronger urban places, creating strong and vibrant communities, and ensuring a healthy, liveable environment. This will be achieved through 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and priorities for every community in the country.

3.1.3 National Development Plan 2021–2030

Aligned with the NPF, the National Development Plan 2021–2030 sets out the government's overarching investment strategy and budget for that period, enabling delivery of the NSOs and priorities set out in the NPF. This significant funding source will support both urban regeneration and rural rejuvenation through a €3 billion Regeneration and Development Fund.

3.1.4 Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
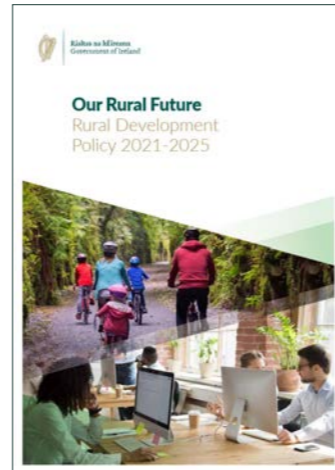
Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 represents a blueprint for the post-COVID recovery and development of rural Ireland. It contains key commitments that deliver on the government's aim to support the regeneration, re-population and development of rural towns and villages to contribute to local and national economic recovery, and to enable people to live and work in a high quality environment.

3.1.5 Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns
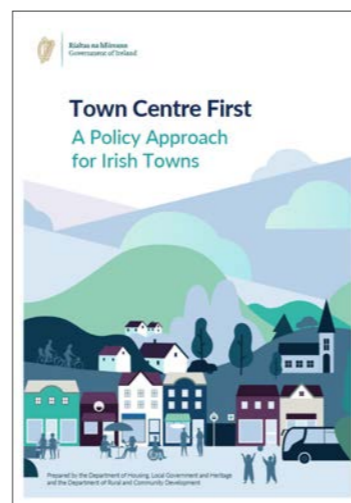
The Town Centre First policy (2022) approach seeks to support and complement a wide range of government policies impacting on towns and is central to the vision of Our Rural Future. It is a core policy objective of Town Centre First to "create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community". The policy lays the foundation for towns to develop their own planned path forward through a tailored Plan. The policy is closely aligned with many National Strategic Outcomes such as Compact Growth, Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities, Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Amenities and the Transition to a Low Carbon Society.

3.1.6 Climate Action Plan 2023
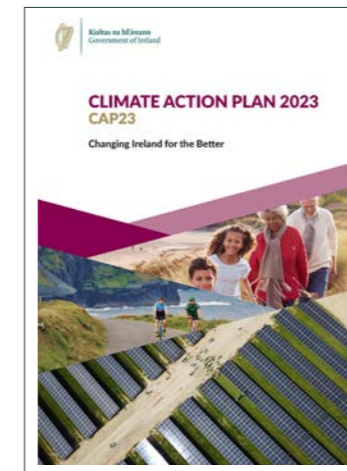
The Climate Action Plan 2023 sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. It further sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis. The compact growth agenda outlined in the National Planning Framework is reinforced which promotes extensive retrofitting of existing premises and housing stock and the prioritisation of brownfield and compact development. Actions in CAP23 strongly align and support the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland's towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment and amenities by sustainable transport modes.

3.1.7 Heritage Ireland 2030

Heritage Ireland 2030 is built around a vision of our heritage being at very centre of discourse, valued by all and cared for and protected for future generations. At the heart of this framework are three themes: communities, leadership and partnerships, reflecting the importance of ongoing collaboration between government and communities, heritage organisations, individuals and local authorities in caring and planning for our shared heritage.

3.1.8   Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region
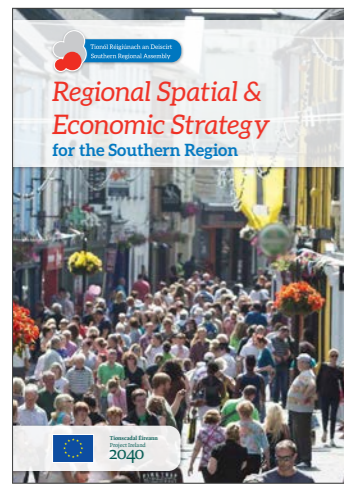
The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) provides a long-term, strategic framework for future physical, economic and social development and seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and NDP. To this end, the RSES sets out 11 Strategy Statements which are aligned with international, EU and national policy and which in turn set the framework for Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans.

Although the RSES does not specifically reference Urlingford, it acknowledges that:

"There is evidence of significant decline in some smaller towns and villages in the Region. Investment and policy support is urgently needed to bolster and consolidate these vital settlements to arrest the decline and the consequent depletion of the physical fabric and provision of services in these areas".

Table 3.2 of the RSES, entitled 'Settlement Typology', identifies Kilkenny City as a 'Key Town'. Kilkenny City is described as being the fourth largest settlement in the Region and it is identified as being centrally located within the Region with good road and rail links to Dublin and elsewhere.

3.1.9   Kilkenny City and County Development Plan
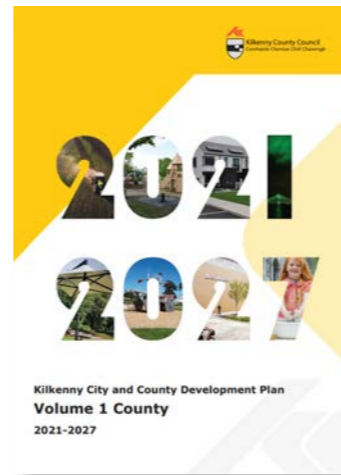
The Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kilkenny for six years whilst aligning with longer term national and regional objectives. As part of the Development Plan Core Strategy, Urlingford is identified as a Rural Town within the Settlement Hierarchy (Table 4.3).

The Development Plan includes Objective 4La, which forms the basis for the preparation of this Masterplan. It states:

"To develop a set of criteria and a programme to carry out an analysis of the Smaller Towns and Villages (Tier 4) to consider:

(a) The provision of zoning maps where appropriate (particularly for Ballyragget, Mooncoin, Paulstown, Piltown, Kilmacow and Urlingford) (b) Developing specific objectives for core areas, focal spaces, amenities and opportunity sites etc., (c) Identify land with development constraints.

This programme to be commenced within 12 months of the coming into effect of the Plan."

Figure 4.25 of the Development PLan outlines the Settlement Boundary for Urlingford. The boundary outlined in image below, has been used to prepared this Masterplan.
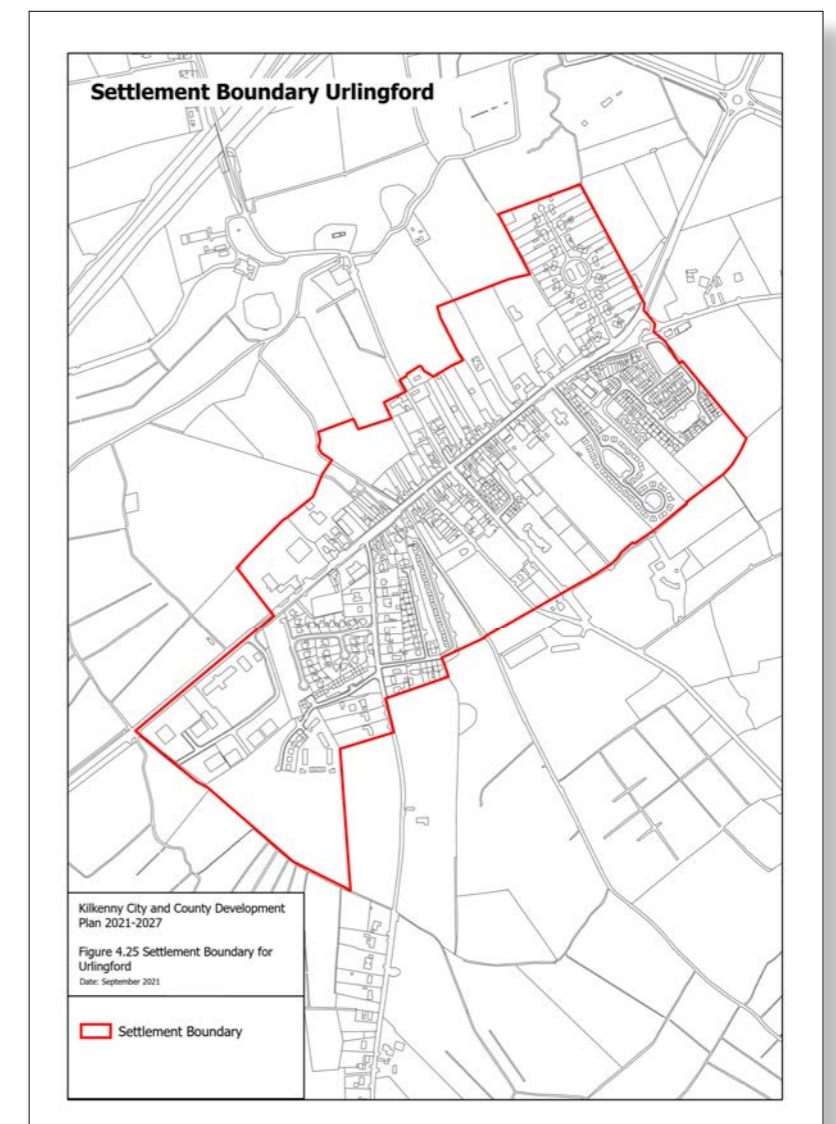
3.1.10   Review of Urlingford Town Heath Check 2020

As part of the preparation of this Masterplan, a review of the health check carried out for the town plan prepared in August 2021 was carried out. The purpose of the review was to enassure that the analysis and objectives set out in that Plan remain valid.

In summary we can confirm that:

- The identification and assessment of the town's particular social and economic service centre functions, having due regard to its location and rural context is fit for purpose.

- The identification and assessment of the town's core (town centre) is valid.

- The identification and assessment of required social, economic, infrastructure and place making interventions as identified are still valid.

- The towns position within the settlement hierarchy of the County and the expected population over the duration of the County Plan to 2027 is valid.
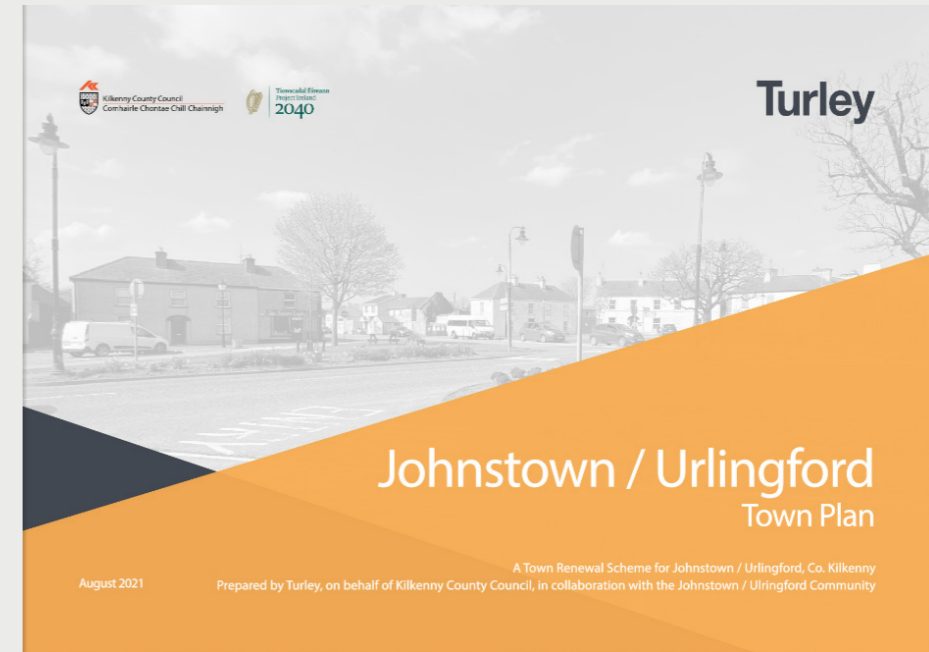
3.2   Socio-Economic Analysis

The total population of Urlingford in 2022 stood at 1,196 residents. This follows a period of significant growth in the population of the town, rising from only 689 residents in 1996 (+507 people; +74%). Based on the intercensal growth between 2016 and 2022, the population projection for Urlingford in 2028 is 1,354, representing an increase of 316 residents (+30.4%) when compared with 2016 levels.

The age profile of the town is broadly similar to the national average distribution. The average age in Urlingford is 38.2 while across the state it is 38.8. It is noted that Ireland has a comparatively youthful population, with just under half (44%) of residents under the age of 35, this is more pronounced in Urlingford with 46% of the population under the age of 35. 16.3% of the population are over the age of 65 which is slightly higher than the national average of 15.1%.

According to Census 2016, 62% of the population are single with 38% married. 37% of households are home to a lone parent family which is significantly higher than the national average (28%). The vast majority of residents at the time of the Census 2016 were Irish, comprising 84% of the population. 6% of the population originate from Poland with 3% from the United Kingdom and the rest of the world. Similarly at the tie of Census 2022, The majority of residents were born in Ireland (78.3%) while 21.7% of the population of Urlingford were born outside Ireland.

(Please note that the above text includes data from the 2022 Census. Only population data has been released at time of publication).

Population

739	2002
867	2006
973	2011
1,038	2016
1,196	2022
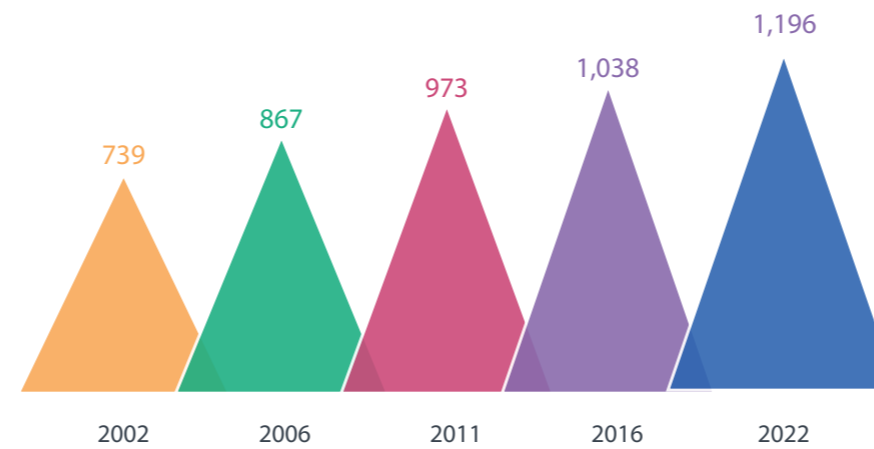
Nationality

Irish	84%
Poland	6%
United Kingdom	3%
Rest of the World	3%
Other European Countries	2%
Lithuania	1%
Not Stated	1%

Age Breakdown

15.1% Over 65 years
32% Under 19 Years
21% Between 35 and 65 years
35% Between 20 and 34 years

Martial Status

38% Married
62% Single
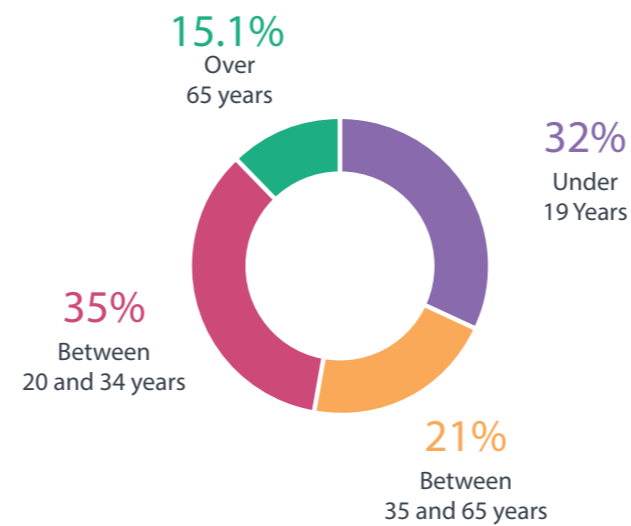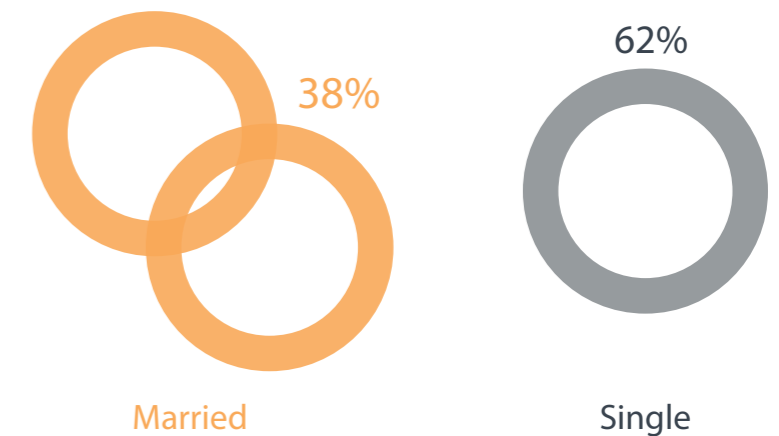
Housing

The largest proportion of households in Urlingford are 2-person households (31%); 23% comprise 1-person households. Whilst there are slightly more 2-person households than at state level (31% when compared with 29%), the remaining categories are all broadly aligned with the composition of households nationally.

93% of households live in a house or a bungalow, with only 5% living in apartments. The level of owner-occupiers (54%) is lower than the national average (68%) which is perhaps reflective of the younger age structure of the settlement. Similarly, there is a higher combined representation of those renting accommodation (43%) from a private landlord, local authority or voluntary body, than at national level (27%). In total, a fifth of households in Urlingford live in social housing, which is more than double the national average (9%).

Significantly, the Census 2016 data reveals that 37% of Urlingford's housing stock was developed between 2001 and 2010. This demonstrates the volume of new house building which occurred in the settlement in a comparatively short amount of time to a higher degree than at national level (25%). Housebuilding in the town from 2011 to 2016 has been relatively limited (1%).

Persons per Household

23% x1
31% x2
32% 3/4
14% 5+
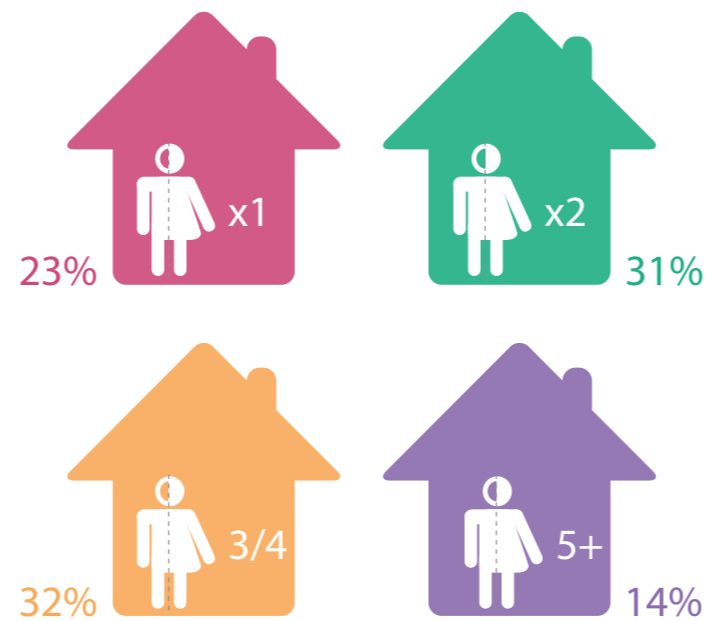
Type of Housing Occupied

House / Bungalow 93%
(National Average 86%)

Apartments 5%
(National Average 12%)
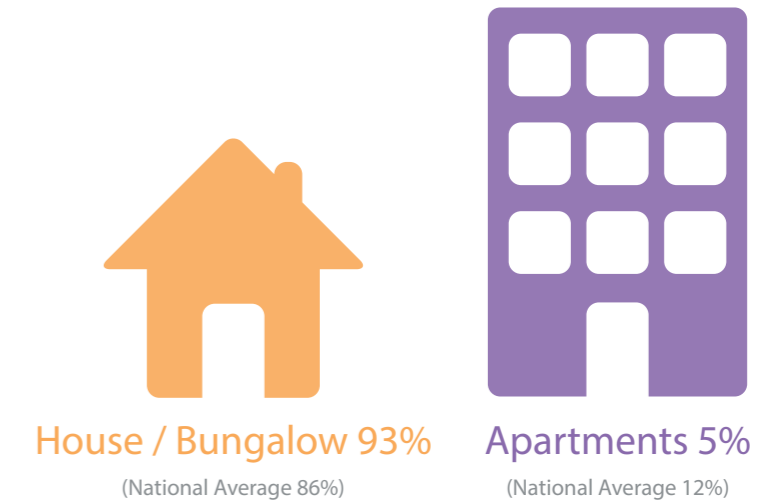
Household Occupation By Type

	Urlingford	Nationally
Mortgage	23%	32%
No Mortgage	35%	36%
Renting	38%	27%
Free Rent / Not Stated	4%	5%

Age of Housing Stock

1991-2000 — 16%
2001-2010 — 37% (National Average 25%)
2011-2016 — 1%
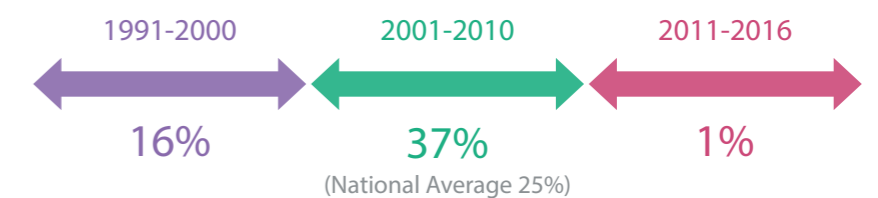
Education and Employment

Residents generally have low-levels of education. The Census 2016 reveals that 16% of the population had left school before the age of 16, higher than the national average (10%). Only 33% of residents had completed a higher level of education compared with 48% at state level.

At the time of the 2016 Census, 43% of the population (aged 15+) was working, compared with 53% of the population at state level. In 2016, the rate of unemployment was very high at 17%, over double the national average (7%). 4% of the population was described as unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability; this was equal with the national average at the time. The Census 2016 reveals that the highest representation of socio-economic group is non-manual professions (20%), a figure which is similar to the national average for this group (18%). The second highest representation was from those in the manual skilled group (16%), followed by employers and managers (13%).

Those in professional jobs account for only a fifth of working age adults which is significantly lower than the national average (34%). Excluding the miscellaneous category which accounts for a quarter of jobs, the main industries of employment for Urlingford residents are commerce and trade (27%) and professional services (20%), followed by manufacturing industries (10%).

The three largest sectors of employment broadly align with the three largest at national level. Urlingford ranks amongst the most deprived settlements in Kilkenny County with a score of 10 (with 10 being the most deprived). This indicates that the town ranks in the 4% most deprived settlements in Kilkenny County.

Principal Economic Status

43% At Work

17% Unemployed having lost or given up previous job

13% Retired

12% Looking after home / family

10% Student

4% Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability

1% Looking for first regular job
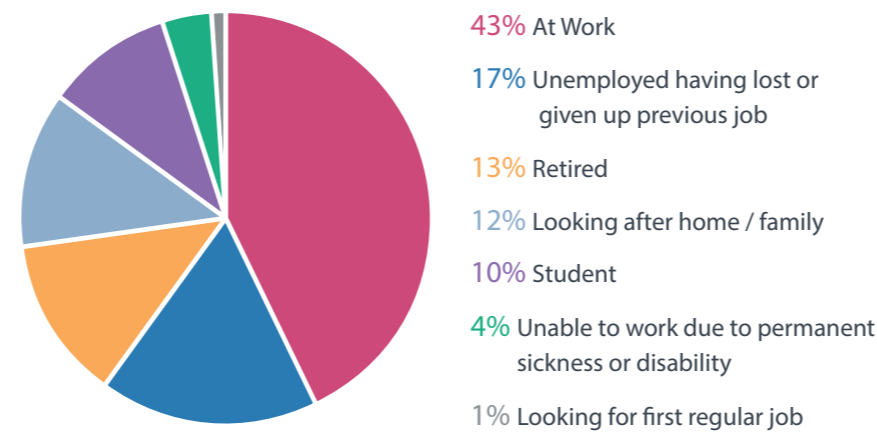
Persons by Socio-Economic Group of Reference

	Urlingford	National
Non-Manual	20%	18%
Manual Skilled	16%	9%
Employers and Managers	13%	16%
Semi-skilled	8%	8%
Unskilled	6%	12%
Lower Professionals	5%	4%
Own Account Workers	4%	5%
Higher Professionals	2%	7%
Farmers	2%	5%
Agricultural Workers	1%	1%
Other / Unknown	23%	15%

Level of Unemployment
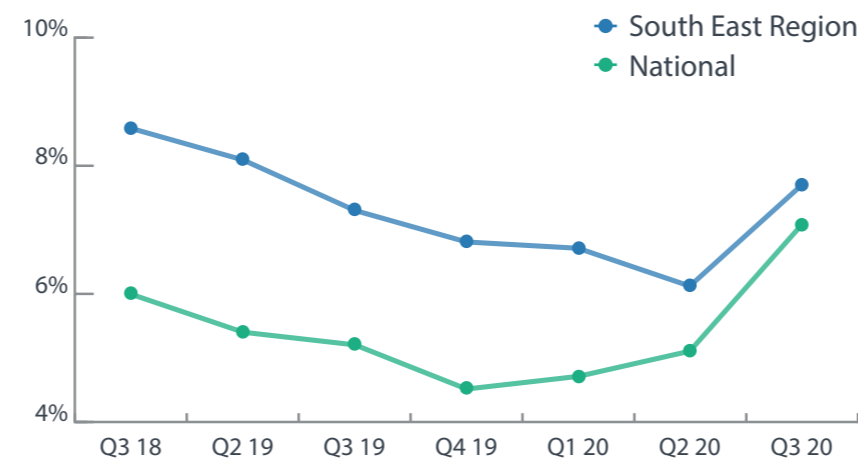
Persons at Work by Industry
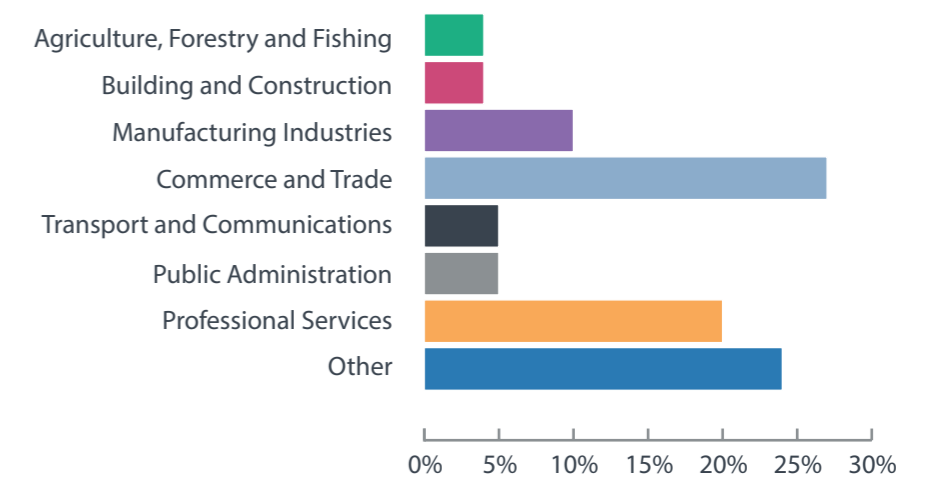
3.3 Urban Analysis

3.3.1 Appreciating Urlingford

Urlingford is a charming small town which, despite some vacancy and dereliction has managed to maintain its special built character over time.

The character of the historical town centre is very much evident, which derives from a combination of its cruciform urban structure - comprising the main street and secondary cross streets. A pattern of long and narrow plots are occupied by a variety of street buildings from different periods and of different styles define and enclose the street.

3.3.2 Heritage and Views

Urlingford has four protected structure recorded in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 Record of Protected Structures. As part of this plan an architectural assessment of the existing buildings in the town has been carried out.

Legend

 Protected Structures

 Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

 Views of note

3.3.3 Land use

A land use survey was carried out as part of the Masterplan. The health check reveals the clustering of commercial uses in the heart of the town, mainly focused on the Main street axis. Employment uses are discretely clustered with the Industrial Park to the south. Residential is the dominant land use in the town.

Legend

🟠 Residential

🟢 Commercial / Industrial

🔵 Mixed Use / Town Centre

🔴 Mixed Use / Vacant

🔴 Vacant

🟡 Public / Community

🟣 Healthcare

🟢 Agriculture

3.3.4 Vehicular Network and Parking

The R639 forms the principal circulation axis within the town. Though the road surface is good, this heavily trafficked road detracts from the amenity, ambience and character of the town.

There is no public car park in the town and therefore car parking tends to occur on-street. Furthermore, few retail outlets or other trip generators, have customer or employee off-street car parks and therefore shoppers and visitors (short term users) compete for limited on-street spaces with employees and business owners (long-term users). A notable exception is the local Centra on the north side of Main Street. On street car parking at the junction of Lumper Lane and Main Street restricts vehicular movement.

Legend

Primary Road

Secondary Roads

Local Roads

On-Street Parking Areas

P Off-Street Parking

Bus Stop
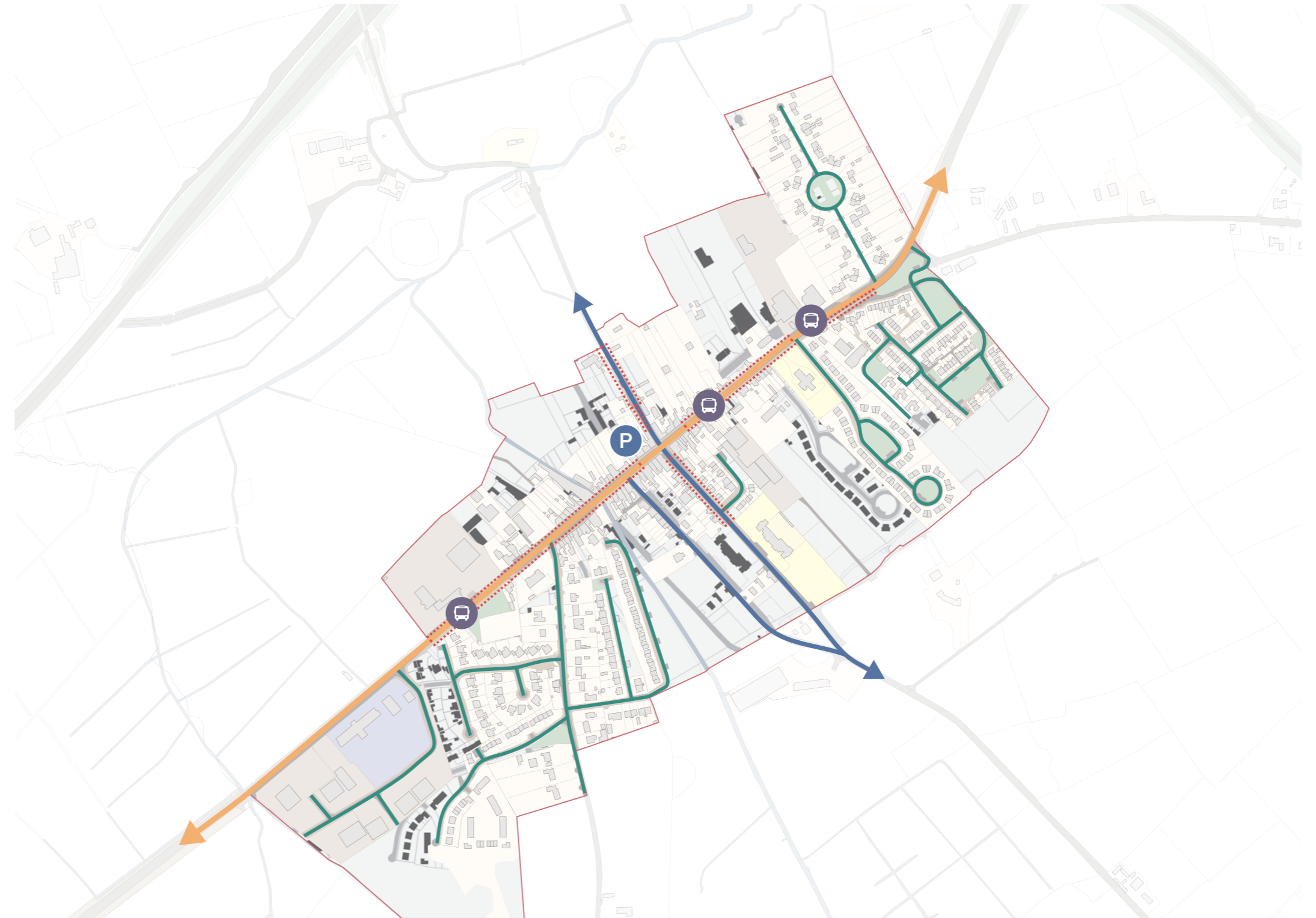
3.3.5 Pedestrian and Cycle Links

The majority of streets in Urlingford are serviced by formal footpaths. All housing estates have formal pedestrian footpaths and roads linking them to the town centre.

There are no designated cycling facilities within the central area of Urlingford, with cyclists forced to merge with vehicular traffic and the posted speed limit being 50km/hr throughout the town.

There are no formal pedestrian walkways or cycleways linking Urlingford to any of the surrounding area at present (e.g. along Mill Road to the Castle and The Islands).

Legend

- - - Key Arterial Routes

- - - Poor Levels of Pedestrian and Cycle Infrastructure

- - - Good Levels of Pedestrian Infrastructure

Unsafe area for Pedestrian and Cycle

Poor connectivity

3.3.6 Community and Sports Facilities

Sport plays a central part in town life with high-standard facilities in GAA. The GAA grounds includes a pitch and associated facilities.

Further amenities in the town include a community hall, playgrounds, public library and Mill Family Resource Centre.

The town includes St. Mary's National School and Urlingford Pre-school for little learners & After school care.

The new work hub and upgraded community centre will greatly enhance the community infrastructure within the town.

Legend

- GAA Grounds
- Public Library
- National School
- Community Centre
- Mill Family Resource Centre
- Working Hub

3.3.7 Environmental

A strategic Flood Risk Assessment was carried out, as part of the review of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027, which identified parts of the town centre within flood risk zones. A Flood Risk Assessment was completed by Hegsons Design Consultancy to support this Masterplan. It concludes:

"The Masterplan proposals has been assessed using exiting flood information and as such part of the site located in Zone A, be mainly vegetation and low vulnerability uses. The main developments proposed are in Zone C and therefore deemed acceptable for the development proposed.

Based on the drainage hierarchy assessment, the proposed drainage strategy will seek to dispose of surface water runoff from hardstanding areas primarily using SUD's mitigation measdures."

The town includes public open space within residential estates. However, the town would benefit from a wider network of open spaces.

Legend

Flood Zones

River /Stream

Key Open Spaces

04

engagement

4.0   Engagement

4.1   Overview

Good design is not linear, but instead an iterative process whereby proposals are rigorously tested and refined in response to design and technical reviews, with user input from community stakeholder engagement. We believe that people make places, and that user or publicly informed design relies on effective communication and co-ordination throughout all stages of design development.

Key to the success of this project was the integration of stakeholder engagement and consultation as part of a 'co-design' process with the residents and stakeholders of the towns, including Municipal District Meetings, continual engagement with the Urlingford Town Team and a stakeholder workshop event.

A stakeholder workshop took place on Monday 15 August 2022 from 7pm – 9pm, in Urlingford Community Hall. This followed on from a period of consultation undertaken in 2021 as part of the creation of a new Town Plan for Urlingford. The 2022 workshop was intended to be an opportunity, in conjunction with local people, to explore and develop ideas developed by the design team.

The following sections provide an overview of the workshop structure, a summary of the key points raised, followed by a more detailed record of the feedback received during the workshop exercises.

C. 30 no. stakeholders were invited to take part in the workshop and 11 no. attended the session.

Workshop Structure

Following a presentation of the proposed interventions, delivered by Turley, participants were asked to undertake a 'dream and draw' exercise in small groups. This involved:

• Identifying spaces within the town that should be considered by the Masterplan proposals

• Drawing on ideas for interventions

• Highlighting priority areas for development

The second exercise involved two parts. In the first, we asked participants to identify opportunities and challenges presented by the Urlingford Masterplan. These were to be written on post-it notes and stuck to the desk in front of them. For the second part of the exercise, participants were asked to pick one of the challenges they had identified and come up with a proposed solution to this.

Challenges and Opportunities

A summary of key challenges and opportunities identified by stakeholders is provided below:

Challenges	
Footpaths	Footpaths: Existing footpaths in Urlingford were criticised as being in poor condition, narrow and using low-quality materials.
Maintenance	Maintaining any new public realm was identified as a challenge, due to a lack of volunteers.
Important to Keep Town Centre Commercial	While greening and pedestrianising the town centre was generally welcomed, some participants were concerned that this should not negatively impact the existing businesses in town.
Banking Trends	The withdrawal of bank branches from rural communities was identified as a key challenge for Urlingford.
Community	Cohesion Community cohesion in Urlingford was seen as lacking by several of the groups.
Employment	Creating sustainable employment in the town was seen as a key challenge.
Existing Centra Car Park	The one-way system in this car park was seen as a challenge, with participants suggesting it contributed to congestion.
Overhead Power Lines	Overhead Power Lines and an ESB sub-station at the south-west corner of the town could constrain development there.
Land Ownership	As much of the potential development land in Urlingford is in private ownership, this could provide a constraint to the scope of any proposed redevelopment.
Lack of Fibre Broadband	Fibre connectivity was seen as a key barrier to Urlingford being a sustainable place to live and work.

Opportunities	
Proximity / Location	The town's location within Ireland and proximity to other major population centres was cited as a key opportunity.
Parking	An off-street car-park was suggested.
Reuse Vacant Property	While issues of dereliction in Urlingford were acknowledged, one group felt this presented an opportunity to create new uses for these businesses that could help create employment and a new identity for the town.
The River	Participants felt the river could be an important resource for Urlingford.
Opportunities to Soften Streetscape	Proposals to soften the streetscape with new planting and greenery were welcomed as a good opportunity for the town.
Library Buildings	The character of the library building was highlighted by one group as a key asset for the town.
Property Prices	Property Prices within the town were comparatively low, presenting an opportunity for redevelopment and to attract those put off by ballooning prices elsewhere.
Schooling	Good schools in the area create a draw for young families.
Hub and Community Hall	Development The new remote working hub and proposals for community hall redevelopment present an opportunity for the town that should be taken into account when developing the Masterplan.
Expansion of Community CCTV System	A community CCTV system was proposed by some residents, who voiced concerns about anti-social behaviour within the town.

The criticisms levelled at the town can be broadly summarised into the following themes:

Lack of a distinctive identity – Several participants pointed to a lack of a distinctive identity for the town, either at the town's entrances or within the town itself.

Lack of meaningful attractions – Participants felt that while the town's shops and pubs served as a draw for people to visit, there was a need for more attractions to create a greater draw to the town.

Traffic and parking – Car-based travel was a major theme of the discussion. There was a general consensus that the main street was too congested, leading to a poor atmosphere and difficulty parking for residents and visitors. At the same time, workshop participants were cautious of change, suggesting that any amendments should still make provision for people coming from the hinterland to visit the town's businesses, who invariably travelled by car

Public transport and active travel – Participants were critical of the poor public transport infrastructure serving Urlingford, which contributes to the town's cardependence. There was broad scepticism of active travel as a potential solution to these issues.

Dereliction – Participants confirmed our analysis that Urlingford's main street suffers from significant dereliction and vacant properties.

Antisocial Behaviour - Several participants raised issues relating to antisocial behaviour within the town, with one participant saying she would be 'nervous to walk around the town at night'.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

1. Strategic location of town/connectivity
2. Range of local amenities
3. Social groups (Mens Shed, Tidy Town)
4. Sports facilities and playground
5. Recently built housing
6. Protected structures

Weaknesses

1. Lack of communal open space
2. Car dominated/No off-street parking
3. Dereliction/vacancy rates
4. Limited employment opportunities
5. No historical / tourist attractions
6. By-passed by M8 motorway

Opportunities

1. Increase attractiveness of public realm along Main Street.
2. Provide communal open space within the town
3. Provide off-street car parking
4. Create additional pedestrian crossing points along Main Street

Threats

1. Availability of space
2. Continuing trend of derelict/vacant buildings
3. Ability to attract people and investment

S **W** **O** **T**

05

masterplan

5.1   Vision for Urlingford

Underpinned by its unique social history, built heritage and setting, the growing town of Urlingford will benefit from improved local shops, community facilities and employment opportunities. Existing heritage buildings will be brought back into productive use and a new greenway and public open spaces will radically improve the relationship between the town and the wider landscape including the River Goul.

Supported by measures designed to limit the impact of through traffic, the town's key public spaces will be transformed. A revitalised public realm will help to attract more people and activities to the centre; a new Town Park and an upgraded Community Centre will help to bring together and support key local community facilities.

"Urlingford will become an increasingly vibrant, healthy, attractive and inclusive town, enhanced by revitalisation in tandem with enhanced connectivity, urban form and amenity.

Urlingford will be a place of choice, inspiring people, communities, visitors and investors to locate and thrive."

5.2 Key Spatial Elements

The spatial framework informing the masterplan comprises three key elements as set out below.

Key Arterial Routes

Urlingford will remain structured around the character of the historical town centre, which derives from a combination of its cruciform urban structure - comprising the main street and secondary cross streets - and urban grain - the density and pattern of long and narrow plots that are occupied by a variety of historical street buildings from different periods and of different styles that define and enclose the street.

Green Loop

A Green Loop will act as a secondary spatial element, its form partially informed by the location of the River Goul. The green loop will provide enhanced connectivity within Urlingford and serve as a tourism asset promoting active tourism and enabling visitors to explore its rich heritage and biodiverse hinterlands.

Key Nodes

Lastly, civic and community buildings, heritage assets, entrances to the Town and other focal points will act as key nodes within the Town. Key nodes are the strategic foci into which the observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which one is travelling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths.

5.3 Guiding Principles

This plan is about shaping a better place to be, for all people, communities and visitors, positioning Urlingford for the future as a more attractive, vibrant, inspirational town. The aim is to increase the resilience of the local community and economy and provide for an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, child-friendly, and healthy urban environment. Towns are continually evolving and never complete. Urlingford deserves to be re-imagined as a vibrant and dynamic place, one that fulfils the potential of the town's history, location and people

Taking into account the Town Centre First policy objectives, our baseline analysis of the town, and the feedback received from local people, we have developed a set of principles to help guide the ideas, actions and strategies for the masterplan. These are:

Streets and Public Spaces - Rebalancing Urlingford's streets and public spaces, providing an attractive public realm.

Movement - Connectivity to accommodate human activity is fundamental to the social and economic success of a town.

Heritage and Identity - It is critical to celebrating Urlingford's culture and heritage, whilst defining its image, identity and role within the wider region.

Built form and Use - Provide a mix of well designed building types which respond to local character and provide for a range of uses.

Vitality and Vibrancy - An economically viable community possesses the capacity to generate the income and employment necessary to maintain or improve the town.

Sustainability and Resilience - Resilient towns promote sustainable development, well-being and inclusive growth.

Streets and Public Spaces

1. Urlingford will be characterised by an attractive public realm (streets, spaces and parks) that is designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell. The public realm will be carefully designed to serve the whole community, performing multiple roles as places to rest, meet, play, exercise or host community events.

2. Develop a green loop along the River Goul providing a dedicated cycle and pedestrian greenway for residents and visitors alike. The green loop will provide enhanced connectivity within Urlingford and serve as a tourism asset promoting active tourism and enabling visitors to explore its rich heritage and biodiverse hinterlands.

3. Minimise street clutter and ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to street furniture and materiality within the public realm.

4. Enhance connectivity of streets and places to encourage sustainable movement for short journeys.

5. Provide a network of public and green spaces at a range of scales - helping to strengthen community ties across all ages, offer space for activities and events, and improve the health and well-being of the community and visitors.

Movement

1. Redress the balance between public space and parking to create a safer, more accessible pedestrian experience which improves the attractiveness and perception of the town.

2. Create an accessible and inclusive streetscape which supports ease of movement for children travelling to school, older people, and people with reduced mobility - minimising uneven surfaces and street clutter.

3. Manage and improve traffic to lessen its impact on the town centre experience by easing congestion at peak times (school drop-off and pick-up), slowing traffic down to create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

4. Develop a new car park to provide affordable, accessible and appropriate car parking in the Town Centre. The new car park will allow for public realm enhancement and provide a "park and walk/cycle" facility.

5. Develop an integrated active travel network including the preparation of an active travel plan for the Town.

Heritage and Identity

1. Tackle dereliction and improve appearance of buildings particularly façade improvements to buildings in the town centre to improve overall perception and attractiveness.

2. Identify, adapt, restore and reuse historic buildings for the benefit of the local community, whilst also creating a more attractive town centre experience, restoring pride in the historic character.

3. Prepare a shopfront enhancement strategy which includes site-specific guidance for Urlingford. Guidance should include how shopfronts should be improved. New building uses should consider adaptive reuse/ refurbishment of existing shopfronts.

4. Celebrate heritage and history using interpretation, signage, wayfinding, heritage trails, events and festivals; and highlighting historic assets with possible interventions including lighting, greening and access.

5. Define Urlingford's image and identity as an attractive historic town which celebrates the continuity of its character and appreciates its historic assets whilst also meeting today's needs as a destination in which to live, work and do business.

Built form and Use

1. Make effective use of infill and backland sites to deliver a mix of appropriate town centre uses which help to bring vitality to the town centre, including innovative and compact housing types.

2. Provide a strong mix of town centre uses which supports the needs of the community and provides opportunities for jobs and enterprise, including working hubs and experience-led retail, such as a food markets and light industry.

3. Urlingford will provide a mix of housing typologies and tenures to cater for diverse communities in terms of age, income and mobility. New homes will connect to the existing development to form coherent streets and spaces

4. Enhance existing, and provide a range of public and community spaces at a range of scales - helping to strengthen community ties across all ages, offer space for activities and events, and improve the health and wellbeing of the community and visitors.

5. Enhance energy efficiency of buildings including the thermal upgrading of the historic building stock.

6. To encourage the principle of town centre first and to identify opportunities that promote a sequential development approach from the centre outward.

Vitality and Vibrancy

1. Services and amenities - Urlingford will contain a variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities, enable people to shop locally and meet the needs of the local community.

2. Urlingford will provide attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop. It will provide opportunities for jobs and enterprise, including working hubs and experience-led retail, such as a food markets and light industry.

3. Explore Tourism opportunities and prepare a coordinated tourism strategy for the town. Urlingford has huge tourism potential including: active tourism (the greenway and the Islands Loop); historic assets (Urlingford Castle); potential for a boutique hotel; and provision of a range of independent cafés, eateries and retailers.

4. Create an attractive and welcoming environment with well designed and considered planting, street furniture, lighting, public art, signage and wayfinding.

5. Enhance the town's programme of events and activities which celebrate aspects of the town's identity, and appeals to a range of people in the community as well as visitors.

Sustainability and Resilience

1. Amenity, Health and Well-being - Urlingford will provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.

2. Introduce, greening, planting, growing and sustainable drainage to create an attractive streetscape, improve biodiversity, create shaded areas, and help mitigate the effects of climate change such as flooding and extreme heat.

3. Digital Technology - Urlingford will embrace and utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle. It will prioritise the installation of fibre broadband.

4. Future-proofing- With population growth, Urlingford needs to ensure it has an urban framework and infrastructure that will support this growth in the most sustainable way, including the provision of local services and schools.

5.4   Plan Framework

This overall plan drawing brings together opportunities for investment, improvement and development across a wide range of potential locations. The plan is not a blueprint, rather a flexible framework which seeks to set out how opportunity sites might come forward in a manner which responds positively to context and creates good quality, connected and integrated places. Some particular ideas and opportunities are highlighted across the following two pages before individual plan project ideas are outlined for the town.

(A)   Public Realm Enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road (part) and New Road (part).

(B)   Town Squares / Raised Tables

(C)   Green Loop

(D)   New Town Park

(E)   New Town Car Park

(F)   School Street

(G)   Town Gateways

(H)   The Old Bank.

(I)   Community Centre.

(J)   Improved Local Convenience Retailing.

(K)   Enlarged school site.

(L)   New Footpath on Mill Road

Plan Framework

5.5 Interventions toolkit

The interventions toolkit has been arranged to align with the six placemaking themes (guiding principles), under which there are a broad range of intervention opportunities.

Within the following section are a series of ideas to reinforce these placemaking pillars, with a focus on physical enhancements to the public
realm alongside opportunities for events, activation and branding.

5.3.2 'Physical Enhancement' vs 'Activation Interventions

All the projects are identified as either a "physical enhancement" project or an "activation" project.

Physical Enhancement: will typically be interventions comprising physical development in the built or natural environments. (For example, public realm enhancement, a public park or a new building.)

Activation: will typically be interventions that do not result in changes to the physical environment per se but play an important role in supporting effective land use and activities in the Town. (For example, events coordination, business development or feasibility studies.)

Streets and Spaces

Movement

Heritage and Identity

Built Form and Activity

Vitality and Vibrancy

Sustainability and Resilience

urlingford
Town Centre Masterplan

Placemaking Themes

Streets and Spaces

01. Public Realm Enhancement of Main Street
02. Creation of 'Mini' Town Squares (Key Nodes)
03. The Green Loop
04. New Town Park

Movement

05. New Town Car Park
06. Reducing the impact of on-street parking
07. Pedestrian and Cycle Network Improvements
08. School Street
09. Explore Urlingford 'Bike Hub' Concept
10. Traffic Calming
11. Wayfinding

Heritage and Identity

12. Facade and Shopfront Improvements
13. Town Gateways
14. Celebrate Heritage

Built Form and Activity

15. The Old Bank Banking Hub
16. Community Centre
17. Improved Local Convenience Retailing
18. Feasibility - Boutique Hotel
19. Promote Compact Town Centre Development
20. Provide a mix of well-designed house types

Vitality and Vibrancy

21. Targeting Programme to Address Vacancy & Dereliction
22. Business Development Officer, Support and Training
23. Broadband
24. Cycling and Walking Activities and Trails
25. Heritage Trail
26. Explore Potential for a New Culture and Events Centre
27. Programme of Events
38. 'Place-Brand', Promotion and Marketing

Sustainability and Resilience

29. Support Town Groups and Organisations
30. Ensure sufficient school capacity
31. Promote Health and Well-being
32. Greening and sustainable drainage
33. EV Car Charging
34. Circular Economy

Masterplan Interventions

Streets and Spaces

01. Public Realm Enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road and New Road

02. Creation of 'Mini' Town Squares (Key Nodes)

03. The Green Loop

04. New Town Park

01

Public Realm Enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road and New Road

Preparation of a comprehensive public realm enhancement scheme in order to provide an attractive Town centre. The scheme will include widened pavements, will support active and sustainable travel choices designed to serve the whole community.

Key features:

- Improved balance of pedestrian and vehicular space - widened footpaths and enhanced pedestrian crossings.

- Reduced / relocated car parking. Car and bicycle parking will be provided at select locations.

- Landscape features - tree planting and greening in the form of raised planters.

- High quality materials (local materials e.g. limestone paving and sets) and high quality detailing (e.g. recessed utility cover with paving infill).

- Lighting - lighting columns, wall-mounted, and up-lighting (heritage design / other, as appropriate).

- Coordinated approach to street furniture including seats, bins, water fountains, signage, lighting columns etc. (Note: bollards should not be as substitute to good traffic management.)

- Reduction of street clutter.

A good example...

Abbeyleix

Abbeyleix demonstrates the value of strategic infrastructure investment, including public realm enhancement, acting as a catalyst for regeneration. In 2009, Laois County Council began initiatives to address challenges to the vitality and viability, of Abbeyleix, including depopulation of the urban core, traffic congestion and limited car parking provision.

Laois County Council commissioned the adaptation of the market house into a new Library. Subsequently, a strategic plan was prepared for the town. The Plan highlights the importance of a sense of place, respect for the environment and a high quality public realm in the creation of sustainable communities. It also recognises the value of heritage – both in terms of historic buildings and public spaces – as a resource to be conserved, both for its own sake and to revitalise the town centre and its economy.

Zoom Plan

Widened footpath along the southern side of Mill Road providing safe access for pedestrians to the Community Centre. (Note: pedestrian and cycle access will also be provided to the Community Centre via the Green Loop.

A new "mini square" to be provided where the River Goul (and the proposed Green Loop) traverses the Main Street. A raised table provides cyclist and pedestrian priority for users of the Green Loop.

A mini square is proposed at Urlingford Library celebrating this piece of architectural heritage. Tree planting will be carefully located to enhance the building (rather than hide it, which is currently the case).

Drop-off facility provided outside the existing crèche.

A "mini square" is proposed opposite the Credit Union. It will be defined to the south-east by proposed infill development. The Square will provide a comfortable space for people adjacent to Main Street and also provide a pedestrian link to the proposed backland residential development.

Wider areas of the Main Street allows for perpendicular parking.

Car and cycle parking to be provided at considered locations.

Trees to be introduced between parking rows at considered locations.

A raised table at the crossroads will enable traffic calming, provide a safer environment for pedestrians but also enhance the identity of this central space.

c. 14 - 24m varies
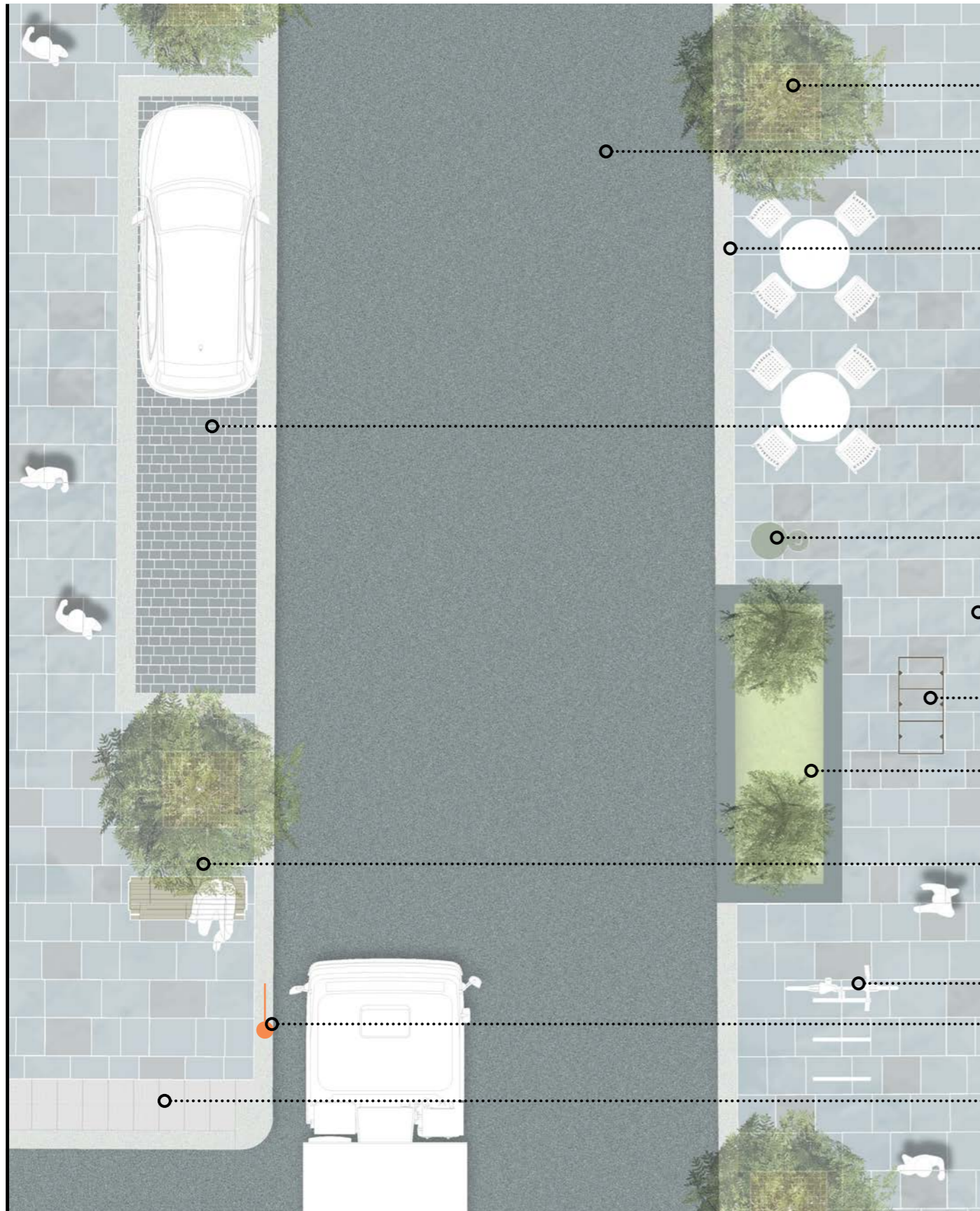
Trees to be introduced between parking rows at considered locations.

Tarmacaddem carriageway

300mm granite kerb to delineate carriageway and footway.

Irish granite parking bays at select locations. (Maximum four parking spaces in a row.)

Light column (appropriate / heritage design) with LED lights. Street lighting staggered on both sides of the street.

Irish limestone footway. Paving size to be maximum 1:5 proportion. Paving pattern adaptable to street conditions.

Recessed utility covers with paving infill.

Raised planter a specific locations, providing seating and greening.

Seating to be introduced at considered locations and where an appropriate clear footway can be maintained.

Cycle racks perpendicular to kerb.

Totem boards, finger posts or wall mounted signage to be placed at key junctions and minimised through use of surface mounted signage.

Uncontrolled crossing - tactile blister paving as hazard warning for private vehicle access.

c. 4 - 8m varies

02

Creation of 'Mini' Town Squares

Key areas of public realm developed at key nodes or at civic buildings. The squares / raised tables would be developed as part of the public realm enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road (part) and New Road (part).

Special paving, planting and lighting will be used to create key spaces for people within the Town core either as raised table / 'shared spaces' at key junctions or as key public realm spaces (mini public squares).

Key features:

- Areas to provide pedestrian priority / crossing points will comprise raised tables / shared surfaces.

- Areas providing "mini public squares" will be constructed around key buildings or nodes.

- Highlight heritage of the area through designs for the public realm and ensure good wayfinding throughout

- Define areas for outdoor seating.

- Define areas for entertainment, potentially through special paving.

- Use high-quality Irish materials - granite or limestone.

- Landscape features - tree planting, boundary planting and lawns.

- Appropriate lighting to encourage day and night-time activity and to celebrate heritage.

03

The Green Loop

A new greenway along the River Goul and around the Town, providing a dedicated cycle and pedestrian loop for residents and visitors alike.

The "Green Loop" route alignment will remain notional until such time as route selection process for same consults with local land owners and the community at large and investigates and considers the potential for impacts of the proposed alignment and construction on any Natura 2000 sites.

Key features:

•   A 3km greenway loop with dedicated cycle and pedestrian lanes.

•   Enhances connectivity within the town providing active travel routes to key locations within the town (e.g. from key residential areas to the school).

•   Supports the health and well-being of residents and visitors.
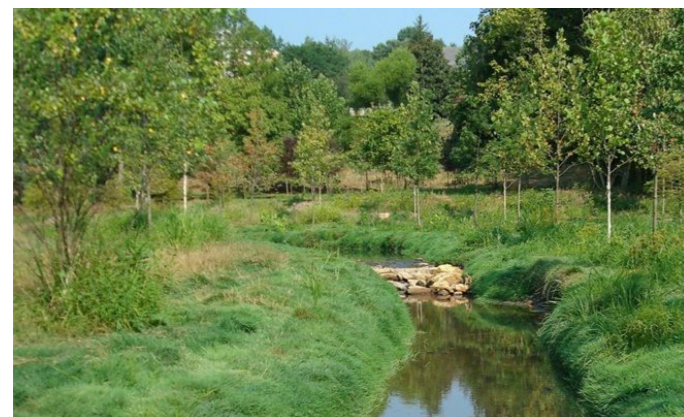
04

New Town Park

A new park located close to Main Street, along the proposed Green Loop and connected to the Community Centre would provide a dedicated public green space in the centre of the Town.
It will include a playground and a pavilion (potentially providing for bike hire, tourism support and facilities to support park users). active travel routes to key locations within the town.

Key features:

- c. 1.2 ha centrally located public park, integrated within the town.

- Excellent connectivity provided by access points to/from the Main Street (Men's Shed), from Mill Road and from the proposed car park.

- Located adjacent to the community centre and the proposed green loop.

- A pavilion to provide supporting facilities and services such as public toilets, a cafe, bike hire, first-aid point etc. It will also provide passive surveillance for the park.

- A walking loop, exercise equipment, a playground, sensory play equipement.

- Interpretative signage.

- The park and its features / equipment will be accessible to all.

Masterplan Interventions

Movement

05

New Town Car Park

Develop a new car park to provide affordable, accessible and appropriate car parking in the Town Centre. The new car park will allow for public realm enhancement and provide a "park and walk/cycle" facility.

Key features:

• Centrally located.

• Provides immediate access to the Main Street, Community Centre. The car park is also located adjacent to the proposed Town Park.

• Includes a Recycling Centre.

• Includes EV Car Charging Points.

• Includes Bike Share Point.

06

Reducing the impact of on-street parking

Rebalancing the street to reduce the impact of on-street parking by providing spaces in a more compact arrangement, allowing the use of these spaces for short-stay visitors

Key features:

- How we use kerbsides in shopping areas matters – it can make the difference between a dull and lifeless retail experience to one that is full of activity and interest.

- Some of the car parking spaces along Main Street could be turned into parklets for dining and amenity.

07

Wider Pedestrian and Cycle Network Improvements

With growth anticipated and planned in the town, opportunities for improvements to the wider pedestrian and cycle network should be considered. Opportunities exist for further new pedestrian and cycle connections. Such connections would deliver very significant improvements in terms of safe routes to numerous neighbourhoods and estates in the town.

Cycle parking should be provded centrally to prmote active travel choices.

Actions include:

- Explore locations to provide enhanced connectivity

- Provision to be co-ordinated in conjunction with potential new residential development and the prospect of a new Green Loop

- Explore opportunities to provide a new footpath along Mill Road. New and enhanced footpaths are required on Mill Road to provide safe access to the Community Centre and beyond to the proposed Green Loop and existing heritage assets such as Urlingford Castle.

- Further engagement with the local community and relevant stakeholders will be critical.

- With the town earmarked for continued growth and with transport issues having been identified as the priority issue for the town, a strategic movement study should be commissioned for the town.

- Explore a possible set down area and safe walking route from the creche to Main Street.

08
School Street

It is proposed that at key times of the day the New Road becomes a 'School Street' creating a safer and calmer route to school for children travelling to school (potentially school traffic could travel in a 'one-way' manner using Lumper Lane). Set-down and pick up parking for the school is also proposed.

Key features:

- School streets can be trialed before any permenant changes.

- Time restricted access to New Road.

- New signage and road makings.

- Improve safety at the school gate by providing 'front of school' treatments to alleviate congestion and improve access.

- Improve access routes to school by improving walking and cycling infrastructure.

- Increase the number of students who cycle to school by expanding the amount of cycle parking.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Plan

67

09
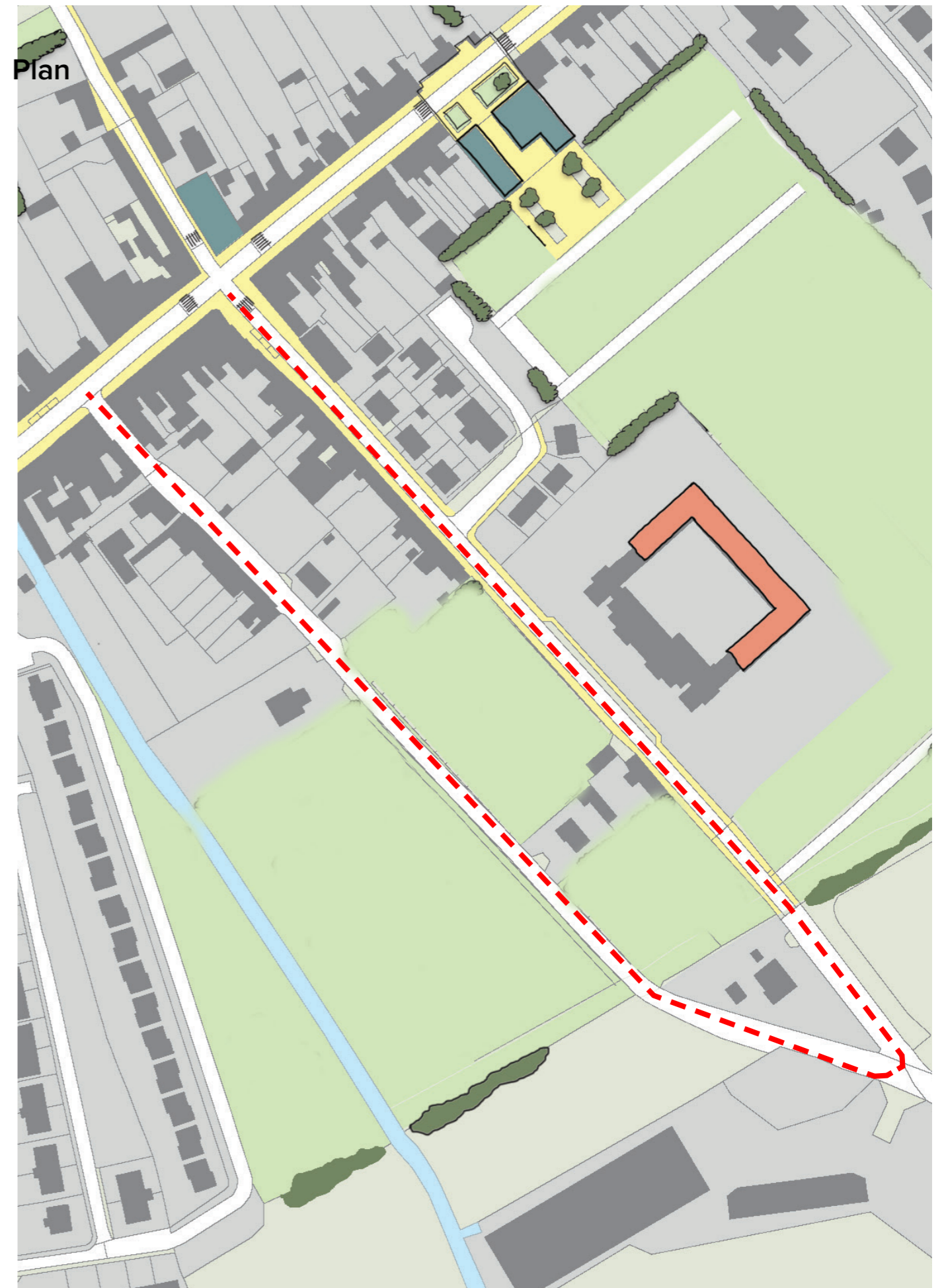
Explore Urlingford 'Bike Hub' Concept

Owing to Urlingford's location on the close to the Islands and considering the potential Green Loop, there may be an opportunity to capitalise on the town's growing profile as a hub for cyclists and walkers. A purpose built or refurbished hub facility could support these visitors and attract new business to the town.

Actions include:

- Learn from successful locations which have established themselves as hub locations for visiting cyclists and walkers.

- Example locations include Staveley Mill Yard in Cumbria and Kilmacthomas Workhouse on the Waterford Greenway.

- Liaise with local cycling groups and business owners to explore the potential opportunities.

- Approach retailers and operators to raise awareness and attract investment.

A good example...

Kilmacthomas Workhouse on the Waterford Greenway

Kilmacthomas Workhouse on the Waterford Greenway Once a famine workhouse, the building is now a heritage site which has been converted into a range of new businesses to support cycle tourism, including bike hire and a place for bike repairs mid-way on the greenway. The converted structures also contain a business centre, a successful coffee shop/restaurant, events space, bathroom facilities, a falconry, a distillery and visitor accommodation.

10

Traffic Calming

The conflict between through traffic, heavy good vehicles and walkers and cyclists has been identified as a key issue to be addressed. To help address conflicts between all road users and to help create more priority for people in central areas, further traffic calming measures should be delivered.

A number of interventions including signage, speed bumps, and carriageway narrowing could be employed to achieve this.

Actions include:

- Calming measures on the four principal approach corridors:

- North
- South
- East
- West

11

Wayfinding

Improve signage, facilities and services which support sustainable movement, interpretation of heritage. Also exploring technology as a way of improving overall ease and experience.

Key features:

- Branded signage.

- Improve signage, facilities and services which support sustainable movement, interpretation of heritage. Also exploring technology as a way of improving overall ease and experience.

Masterplan Interventions

Heritage and Identity

12

Façade and Shopfront Improvements

The vacancy and dereliction survey identified numerous properties, many within the Town Core.

The character of the commercial heart of the centre is characterised to some extent by the quality of the shopfronts of commercial premises.

Key features:

- Undertake a high level survey of commercial premises within the Town Core to identify frontage properties that are in need of sensitive refurbishment.

- Work with local businesses and property owners to explore options for improvement.

- Liaise with Kilkenny County Council Heritage Officer to ensure planned improvement works are appropriate from a heritage and conservation perspective.

- Support local business owners to secure grant funding for implementation.

How this could be done...

Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative Project

Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative Project
The award winning Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative was a collaboration between Donegal County Council, Ramelton Georgian Society, Dedalus Architecture and local property owners. Conservation works were undertaken on fourteen properties and included roof and chimney repairs, addressing structural issues, the installation of cast-iron rainwater goods, reinstatement of windows and doors and the repair and reinstatement of shopfronts.

Glove Factory, Tipperary Town

Renovated as part of the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI), a programme led by the Heritage Council, in association with local authorities. Here a derelict factory in the town centre underwent a signifi cant upgrade to apartment building with potential ground fl oor retail unit, as part of the scheme. The funding allocated to the project by the HTI was 160,000, which was a substantial contribution toward the costs of the conservation works involved.

13

Town Gateways

The Northern Gateway and the Southern approach to the Town should be redesigned in order to provide an attractive approach to the Town. The use of sculpture and / or public art should be considered in combination with planting.

Key features:

- A green approach to the town created by planting trees along the northern edge and imporving boundary treatments along the southern side of the road.

- Signage

- Public Art.

14

Celebrate Heritage

Celebrate and realising Urlingford's culture and heritage by preparing a Culture and Heritage Strategy for the Town. Identify, adapt, conserve / restore and reuse historic buildings and use interpretation and heritage trails to tell the story of the Town.

Key features:

- Engage with the Heritage Council to act as the lead agent for this project.

- Working with the Town Team to help promote understadning of the town's heritage through on-line and printed resources.

Masterplan Interventions

Built Form and Activity

15

The Old Bank Working Hub

The Exit 4 Remote Working Hub was recently established in the former Bank of Ireland Building on Main Street.

The Old Bank is centrally located with a number of public amenities close by such as parking, schools and retail, making it an ideal location for a co-working space.

Actions include:

- Improve signage outside the working hub to create awareness of it as a 'Business Centre' for remote workers.

- To investigate the feasibility of using the remote working hub as a Business Centre for start up / entrepreneurs, an Open Day base for Local Business promotion sessions, a centre for the running of Digital Coderdojo Programmes for Youth and the wider community and the hosting of a specific digital marketing training programme for local businesses.

Precedent

Fumbally Exchange

Fumbally Exchange (FEx) is a not-for-profit movement of creative and innovative professionals who share co-working spaces. It currently has two hubs: Dublin city centre and Waterford city centre. Fumbally Exchange is a community of design and innovation focused small businesses, sole traders and start-ups. Their aim is to cultivate an open, professional atmosphere for creative and regenerative growth.

in that regard, Fumbally Exchange offers more than just a desk or office space. It provides a create environment, a supportive community and a hub to foster new ideas and new business. Co-working should offer many components that are essential to innovation: collaboration, open network input, a safe space for ideation and in many cases, mentoring and support. As the coworking model continues to explode and diversify, we can expect to see more opportunities and models for startup open culture innovation around the country.

75

16

Community Centre

The need for the Community Hall to provide for multi-use and flexible community facilities has emerged as a top priority for the local community.

The Community Centre is in need of refurbishment to bring it up to a standard that will ensure it continues to be used by the community of Urlingford.

Refurbishments works to the Parish Hall/Community Centre are required to make it fit for purpose. The Town Team is working to secure funding and carry out these works (Phase 1).

Opportunities for bringing the youth and elderly together could be considered as part of this.

Actions include:

- Liaise with the network of local community groups to assess their space and facility requirements.

- Review local provision including an assessment of the existing Community Centre.

- Assess the feasibility and opportunity to enhance the community usage of the building.

- Undertake a feasibility study to explore the potential provision of a multi-use Community Sports Facility.

Precedent

Bredagh Old School

Community buildings serve a very important role in our society. From playgroups to town halls, and community centres to sports complexes, they provide us with a place to meet up, take part in hobbies, share our experience and meet new people. The power of these buildings can not be underestimated. Yet, we rarely take the time to stop and appreciate their importance and the benefits that they bring to local residents.

Built in 1840, the building was in use up until the 1970s; however, after this time it was derelict for several years. Unhappy with the situation, a local committee decided to apply for funding and renovate the building. Given its age, special care had to be taken to make sure that all renovations were in line with the historical nature of the building. This included hiring a heritage architect and using traditional lime mortar to plaster the building.

17

Improved Local Convenience Retailing

The town currently only benefits from convenience stores of a smaller size which chiefly perform an everyday and top-up shopping function. Many residents travel out of the centre to undertake their larger weekly shop. A larger supermarket in the town centre would help better meet local convenience retail needs for a rapidly growing town. This would reduce trips to other places and help to keep shoppers in the town where they are more likely to also support other businesses.

Actions include:

- Engage with national businesses in order to understand the feasibility of establishing a grocery store / supermarket at the site of the former Josephine's Restaurant.

- Support a new supermarket in principle: The plan supports the principle of a larger new supermarket in a town centre location. This will encourage more sustainable patterns of local movement.

- Dedicated off-street car park: Any new retailing would need to be supported by a nearby off-street car park, with local on-street parking controls helping to reduce congestion.

- Refurbishment of historic structures: New retail space within heritage structures will need to be designed sensitively to respect the historic integrity of the building and its setting.

- 'Shop Local' campaign: Any major new retail development could precipitate the launch of a 'Shop Local' campaign to raise awareness of local retailing and encourage local people to support local businesses.

18

Feasibility - Boutique Hotel

A feasibility study should be undertaken to explore the potential of an existing or a new (infill) building to provide a boutique hotel or hostel accommodation, in turn supporting potential tourism initiatives in the Town.

Actions include:

- Engage with key stakeholders such as Failte Ireland to understand how hotel and short-term accomodation (including B&Bs) can support local tourism.

- Prepare a Feasibility study to assess local provision and future needs.

- Working with partners and service providers, any existing or anticipated gaps in service provision should be addressed, through improvements and investments in existing, or the delivery of new, accomodation.

19

Promote Compact Town Centre Development

The Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan shows how a range of potential development sites might come forward.

- Housing: There are clusters of housing sites which have the potential to make an important contribution to addressing the housing crisis.

- Employment: Vacant buildings and other spaces south have scope for employment and mixed-use development to help create additional floorspace for new, existing small and growing businesses.

- Retail and community: Central areas would be suitable for retail and community uses, with an emphasis on the refurbishment of derelict or vacant existing properties or new build / infill opportunities.

Housing   Employment   Retail   Community   Mixed Use

20
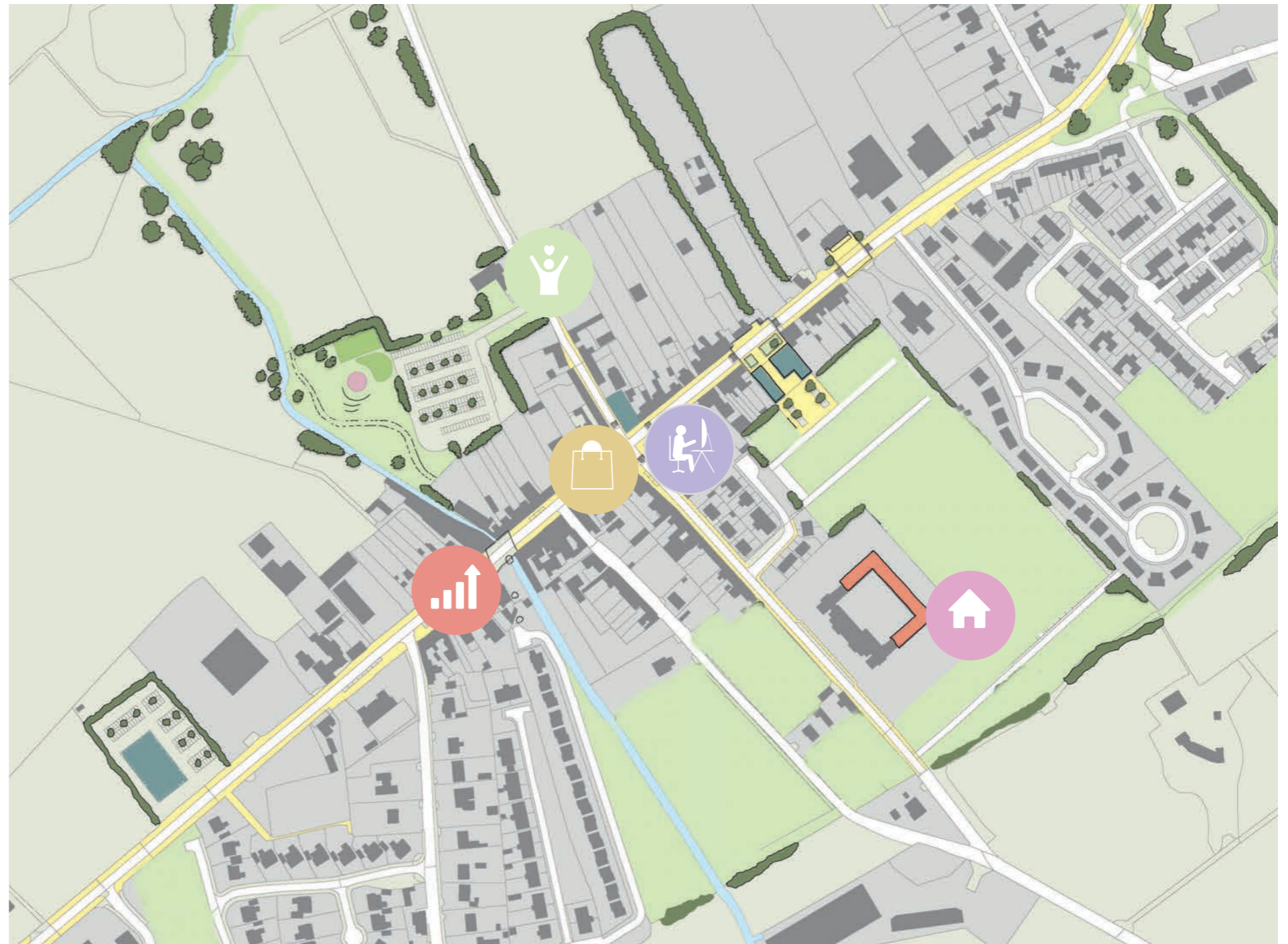
Provide a mix of well-designed house types

Key areas of public realm developed at key nodes or at civic buildings. The squares / raised tables would be developed as part of the public realm enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road (part) and New Road (part).

Special paving, planting and lighting will be used to create key spaces for people within the Town core either as raised table / 'shared spaces' at key junctions or as key public realm spaces (mini public squares).

Key features:

• Backland / Infill housing Opportunity – Opportunity for infill / backland housing providing a range of housing types throughout the town.

• Self-build homes opportunity - A number of sites within the town provide an opportunity for housing as individual development or self-build housing.

• New Homes – A range of new houses creating developments with public green space and play areas.

• To encourage the principle of town centre first and to identify opportunities that promote a sequential development approach form the centre outward.
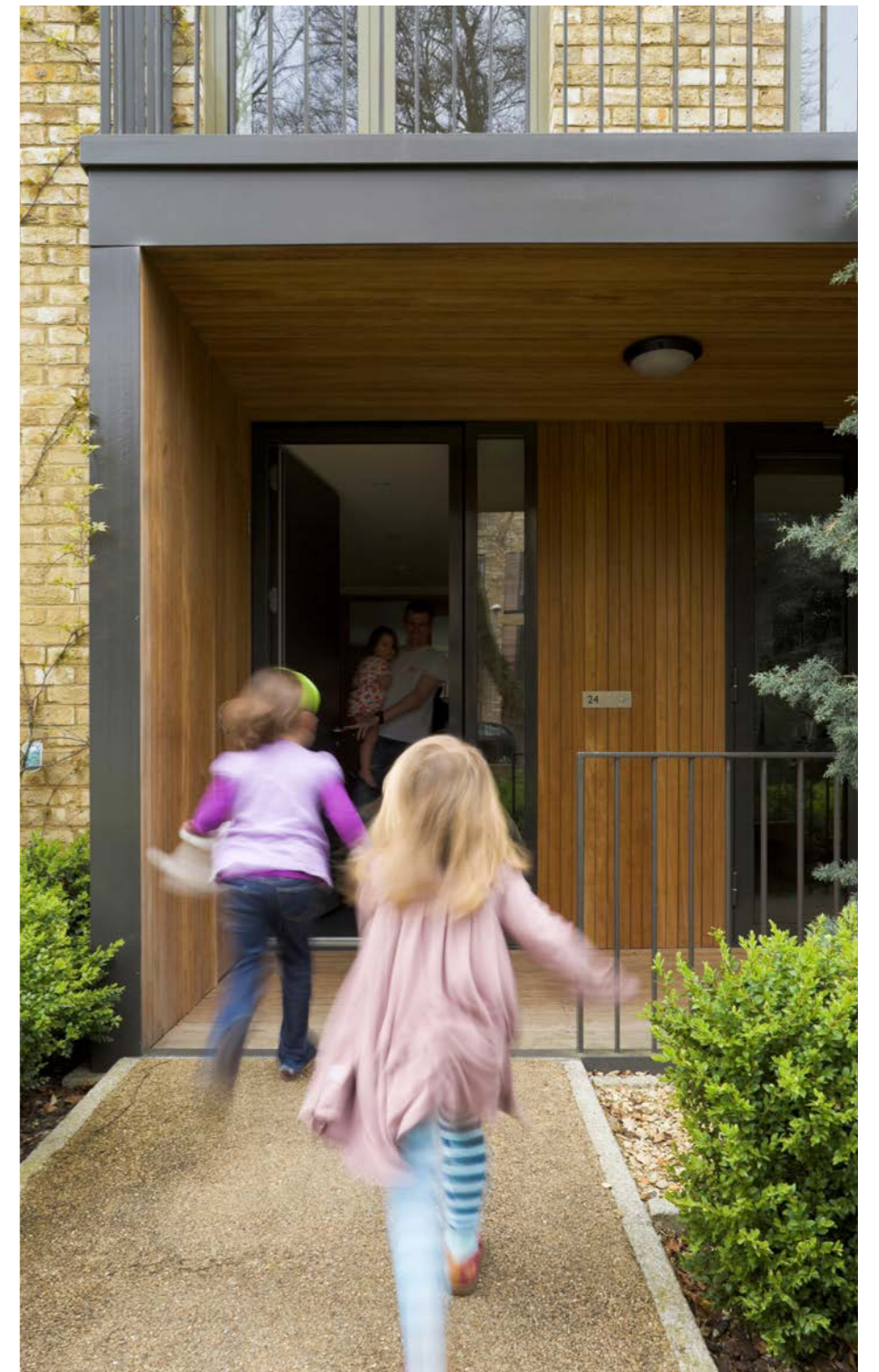
Masterplan Interventions

Vibrancy

21. Targeting Programme to Address Vacancy & Dereliction
22. Business Development Officer, Support and Training
23. Broadband
24. Cycling and Walking Activities and Trails
25. Heritage Trail
26. Explore Potential for a New Culture and Events Centre
27. Programme of Events
28. 'Place-Brand', Promotion And Marketing

21

Targeting Programme to Address Vacancy & Dereliction

This is a key priority under the national Town Centre First policy framework. A Vacancy and Dereliction Survey has been prepared alongside this plan. Feedback from the local community also revealed the issue as a local priority for those who live and work in the town.

Actions include:

- On the back of the recent vacancy survey, identify individual land and property owners.

- Seek to engage these owners and discuss issues associated with bringing the land or premises
- back into use.

- Liaise with the Heritage Council and other relevant stakeholders to identify and target potential financial support.

- Develop a targeted plan to reactivate those properties from a heritage, commercial, community and residential perspective.

- Prioritise particular heritage assets in the town/

- Finally, any refurbishment of derelict buildings should take the potential for nesting swifts into account and that provision of Swift bricks/boxes should be included in any such plans.

22

Business Development Officer, Support and Training

To investigate a sustainable funding model for appointing / recruiting a Business Development Officer for the Town.

Through liaison with local businesses, a tailored training programme could be devised to meet local training needs and business support. This will help support new businesses in the town find their feet and build a business network.

Actions include:

- Identify funding opportunities and supports available for the Business Development Officer.

- To liaise with existing local businesses to better understand their business support and training needs. Through liaison with local businesses, a tailored training programme could be devised and delivered to meet local training needs and business support.

- A review of wider business support and training programmes across County Kilkenny with a view to incorporating Urlingford into existing programmes.

- Investment in local business premises to ensure training spaces are fit for purposes (see Action 15).

- Local Enterprise Office to host business advice clinic and information session on the Trading Online Vouchers, Digital Start Programme, Digital Marketing programmes and LEO mentoring programme amongst other services in Urlingford.

Local Enterprise Office

23

Broadband

Urlingford must prioritise the provision of Fibre Broadband in the Town. Improving local connectivity to principal communication (broadband), is essential to promote new economic opportunities from digital connectivity.

Key features:

- Work with stakeholder partners to implement the findings and recommendations of the Digital Blueprint report for Urlingford.

24

Cycling and Walking Activities and Trails

Improving connections with the The Islands is one of the principal objectives of the Town Team. Discussions with the Town Team have identified the aspiration to develop a Greenway base, within Urlingford, for active tourism, potentially including hiking, cycling and mountain biking.

A wider greenway route along the River Goul should also be explored to link the proposed Green Loop with the Islands.

Key actions

- Engage with Coillte, Kilkenny County Council and other relevant Stakeholders to explore the feasibility of cycling and walking activities and trails using the proposed Green Loop and the Islands.

- Working with stakeholders as riverside sites come forward for development to secure riverside access as part of this walking and cycling link.

- Explore opportunities to leverage the green loop asset and potentially deliver a Greenway route.

25

Heritage Trail

Research and engagement undertaken as part of the plan production has highlighted a wealth of heritage assets across the town. The Town Team has advanced ideas on the establishment of a heritage trail around the town.

Key features:

- Establish a focus group within the Town Team to be the lead agent for this project.

- Working with the Town Team to help promote the trail –supported through on-line and printed resources.

- Liaising with property owners about extending the programme of plaque mounting on key landmark buildings.

- Installation of QR codes on key sites along a planned Heritage Trail to provide tourists with digital information.

26

Explore Potential for a New Culture and Events Centre

Potentially related to Action 17, a feasibility study to explore the potential for a new culture and events centre in the town. With so many heritage assets and with its strategic location close to Kilkenny, and with links between these centres being improved, the business case for a new cultural and events centre should be explored.

Actions include:

- Working alongside relevant Council services and departments, including leisure and tourism and economic development.

- Exploring scope for specific heritage buildings to be refurbished.

- Liaising with relevant funding agencies to explore how public sector fi nancial support might be found to support the project.

27

Programme of Events

Preparation of the plan has demonstrated that Urlingford benefits from an active and engaged local community who care passionately about their town and its future. The COVID pandemic has demonstrated the value and resilience of local communities and the importance of events that bring the local community together.

Actions include:

- In conjunction with improvements to key public spaces, the Town Team and other local groups should conceive a programme of events for the town.

- These could range from regular farmer's markets to musical and cultural events.

- An events programme would be kept under continual review and promoted though local channels (see Action 26).

28

'Place-Brand', Promotion And Marketing

Urlingford has much to offer residents visitors and organisations. Much more could be done to promote the town and its assets and attractions through devising a co-ordinated 'place-brand' approach.

Actions include:

- The Town Team would be best placed to lead the initiative through the establishment of a marketing and communications working group.

- Establishment, design and ongoing management of a dedicated website and social media channels.

- Run regular branding and event campaigns via social media, web and print, including music festival, heritage week etc.

- Management of regular events, exhibitions and festivals (see Action 25).

urlingford

Sustainability and Resilience

29. Support Town Groups and Organisations
30. Ensure sufficient school capacity
31. Promote Health and Well-being
32. Greening and sustainable drainage
33. EV Car Charging
34. Circular Economy

29

Support Town Groups and Organisations

Support groups and organisations established to improve and develop the Town of Urlingford including the Town Team and the Tidy Towns.

Consider establishing a 'Neighbourhood Watch' Network with input from KCC and local Gardai.

Key actions:

• Recruitment campaign for the Town Team

• Town Team to engage with School and GAA, Men's Shed

• 'Neighbourhood Watch' Network with input from KCC and local Gardai.

30

Ensure sufficient school capacity

Ensure sufficient school capacity and consider lands surrounding the existing National School in order to allow for extension of same.

Key features:

• Engage with Local School.

• Engage with the Department of Education.

• Prepare a Policy to support the expansion of the National School in accordance with development objectives of this plan and the Development Plan.

31

Promote Health and Well-being

Provide the spaces, buildings, services and facility and amenity necessary to provide a Town that supports the health and well-being of its residents and visitors. Prepare a Health and Well-being Audit to identify potential enhancement opportunities.

Key features:

- Provide the spaces, buildings, services and facility and amenity necessary to provide a Town that supports the health and well-being of its residents and visitors. Prepare a Health and Well-being Audit to identify potential enhancement opportunities.

- Walks and trails

- Community events

- Spaces and buildings to support well being.

32

Greening and sustainable drainage

Prepare a plan to introduce, greening, planting, growing and sustainable drainage to create an attractive streetscape, improve biodiversity, create shaded areas, and help mitigate the effects of climate change such as flooding and extreme heat.

Key features:

- Biodiverse planting

- Sustainable urban drainage

33

EV charging

Urlingford should provide EV Charging Infrastructure as part of any public realm enhancements. EV Charging should be provided at key locations on Main Street and within the new Car Park.

Key features:

- Areas to provide pedestrian priority / crossing points will comprise raised tables / shared surfaces.

- Areas providing "mini public squares" will be constructed around key buildings or nodes.

- Highlight heritage of the area through designs for the public realm and ensure good wayfinding throughout

34

Circular economy

Embracing the circular economy approach to prevent, minimise and recycle waste.

Key features:

- The idea of the circular economy is to close the loop in this cycle thereby removing the need to extract (or cut off) new virgin products. Instead of disposal, goods and materials are reused so the cycle can start with recycled or refurbished materials rather than virgin ones. Yet, by focusing on the reuse, the traditional focus has been set on decreasing energy consumption and driving down emissions as a key to its success.

- Companies and governments both need to take action to accelerate the shift towards a holistic circular economy. From the business perspective, companies need to make the business case for the development of circular production models, invest in R&D to create sustainable substitutes and monitor and control material flows to eliminate excess waste. They also need to rethink consumption habits to cut waste, and support policymakers to develop policies relevant to current technologies.

06

implementation

6.0   Implementation

6.1   Delivery Action Plan

'Enabling the Place' is focused on prioritising investment and improvement opportunities. The Kilkenny County Council will use the Action Plan matrix outlined below to help them coordinate their work programme and organise their resources.

The majority of projects will require funding of some sort to support delivery. The wide range of potential funding sources are reviewed and the action plan highlights individual funding streams for individual projects.

The Delivery Action Plan strategy will be a tool for Kilkenny County Council and Urlingford Town Team to manage and keep under review.

Each of the identified projects is presented in the Delivery Action Plan below. The projects are organised bypriority and theme.

Additional funding streams that align with and support the delivery of these actions may arise over time and will be considered by Kilkenny County Council and the Town Team.

Priority   ●○○   Lower priority desirable but not critical
●●○   Medium priority - an important local project
●●●   High priority - a project of strategic importance to the town

Placemaking Theme	ID	Project	Description	Priority
Streets and Public Spaces	1	Public Realm Enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road (part) and New Road (part)	Preparation of a comprehensive public realm enhancement scheme in order to provide an attractive Town centre. The scheme will include widened pavements, will support active and sustainable travel choices designed to serve the whole community.	●●●
	2	Town Squares / Raised Tables	Key areas of public realm developed at key nodes or a civic buildings. The Town Squares would be developed as part of the public realm enhancement of Main Street, Mill Road (part) and New Road (part).	●●●
	3	Green Loop	Develop a green loop along the River Goul providing a dedicated cycle and pedestrian greenway for residents and visitors alike.	●●
	4	New Town Park	A new park located close to Main Street, along the proposed Green Loop and connected to the Community Centre would provide a dedicated public green space in the centre of the Town. It will include a playground and a pavilion (potentially providing for bike hire, tourism support and facilities to support park users).	●●
Movement	5	New Town Car Park	Develop a new car park to provide affordable, accessible and appropriate car parking in the Town Centre. The new car park will allow for public realm enhancement and provide a "park and walk/cycle" facility.	●●●
	6	Reducing the impact of on-street parking	Rebalancing the street to reduce the impact of on-street parking by providing spaces in a more compact arrangement, allowing the use of these spaces for short-stay visitors.	●
	7	Pedestrian and Cycle Network Improvements	New and enhanced footpaths are required on Mill Road to provide safe access to the Community Centre and beyond to the proposed Green Loop and existing heritage assets such as Urlingford Castle.	●
	8	School Street	It is proposed that at key times of the day the New Road becomes a 'School Street' creating a safer and calmer route to school for children travelling to school (potentially school traffic could travel in a 'one-way' manner using Lumper Lane). Set-down and pick up parking for the school is also proposed.	●●
	9	Explore Urlingford 'Bike Hub' Concept	A purpose built or refurbished hub facility could support these visitors and attract new business to the town. Bicycle Hire / Shared Bicycle Facility – Promote sustainable travel and enable visitors to explore the Town by providing a bicycle hire / shared bicycle facility with appropriately located parking/docking stations. Engage with Bolt or other to explore feasibility.	●
	10	Traffic Calming	Traffic calming measures to reduce speed of vehicles approaching town. A number of interventions including signage, speed bumps, and carriageway narrowing could be employed to achieve this.	●●●
	11	Wayfinding	Improve signage, facilities and services which support sustainable movement, interpretation of heritage. Also exploring technology as a way of improving overall ease and experience.	●

Priority

●○○ Lower priority desirable but not critical
●●○ Medium priority - an important local project
●●● High priority - a project of strategic importance to the town

Placemaking Theme	ID	Project	Description	Priority
Heritage and Identity	12	Shopfront Enhancement	Carry out shopfront enhancement utilising government supports and funding. Preparation of a shopfront enhancement strategy should be considered which includes site-specific guidance for Urlingford.	●●●
	13	Town Gateways	The Northern Gateway and the Southern approach to the Town should be redesigned in order to provide an attractive approach to the Town. The use of sculpture and / or public art should be considered in combination with planting.	●●
	14	Celebrate Heritage	Celebrate and realising Urlingford's culture and heritage by preparing a Culture and Heritage Strategy for the Town. Identify, adapt, conserve / restore and reuse historic buildings and use interpretation and heritage trails to tell the story of the Town.	●●
Built Form and Land Use	15	The Old Bank	The Old Bank is centrally located with a number of public amenities close by such as parking, schools and retail, making it an ideal location for a co-working space with a cafe or restaurant on the ground floor.	●●●
	16	Community Centre	The Community Centre is in need of refurbishment to bring it up to a standard that will ensure it continues to be used by the community of Urlingford.	●●●
	17	Improved Local Convenience Retailing	Engage with national businesses in order to understand the feasibility of establishing a grocery store / supermarket at the site of the former Josephine's Restaurant.	●
	18	Hotel Accommodation Feasibility Study	A feasibility study should be undertaken to explore the potential of an existing or a new (infill) building to provide a boutique hotel or hostel accommodation, in turn supporting potential tourism initiatives in the Town.	●
	19	Promote Compact Town Centre Development	The Urlingford Town Centre First Plan shows how a range of potential development sites might come forward.	●●●
	20	Provide a mix of well-designed housing types	**Backland / Infill housing opportunity -** Opportunity for infill / backland housing providing a range of housing types throughout the town.	●●
			Self-build homes opportunity - A number of sites within the town provide an opportunity for housing as individual development or self-build housing.	●●
Vibrancy	21	Targeting Programme to Address Vacancy & Dereliction	This is a key priority under the national Town Centre First policy framework. A Vacancy and Dereliction Survey has been prepared alongside this plan. Feedback from the local community also revealed the issue as a local priority for those who live and work in the town.	●●●
	22	Business Development Officer	Appoint / recruit a Business Development Officer for the Town. The Business Development Officer role should be located at the Bank (working hub) to support new and existing and new businesses, individuals and organisations in the Town. The Business Development Officer would play a key role in liaising with the LEO.	●●

●○○ Lower priority desirable but not critical
●●○ Medium priority - an important local project
●●● High priority - a project of strategic importance to the town

Placemaking Theme	ID	Project	Description	Priority
	23	Broadband	Urlingford must prioritise the provision of Fibre Broadband in the Town. Improving local connectivity to principal communication (broadband), is essential to promote new economic opportunities from digital connectivity.	●●●
	24	Cycling and walking trails	– Design and implement cycling and walking trails and loops. Active Tourism initiatives should highlight historic assets. Consider inclusion of off-road biking areas within proposed Green Loop.	●
	25	Heritage Trail	Tell Urlingford's stories using interpretation, signage, wayfinding.	●
	26	Explore Potential for a New Culture and Events Centre	Potentially related to Action 17, a feasibility study to explore the potential for a new culture and events centre in the town. With so many heritage assets and with its strategic location close to Kilkenny, and with links between these centres being improved, the business case for a new cultural and events centre should be explored.	●
	27	Events	Enhance the town's programme of events and activities which celebrate aspects of the town's identity and appeals to a range of people in the community as well as visitors.	●●●
	28	'Place-Brand', Promotion And Marketing	Commission marketing and branding strategy for the Town.	●●●
Sustainability and Resilience	29	Governance	Support groups and organisations established to improve and develop the Town of Urlingford including the Town Team and the Tidy Towns. Consider establishing a 'Neighbourhood Watch' Network with input from KCC and local Gardai.	●●●
	30	School Capacity	Ensure sufficient school capacity and designate sufficient lands surrounding the existing National School in order to allow for extension of same.	●●
	31	Health and well-being	Provide the spaces, buildings, services and facility and amenity necessary to provide a Town that supports the health and well-being of its residents and visitors. Prepare a Health and Well-being Audit to identify potential enhancement opportunities.	●●●
	32	Greening and sustainable drainage	Prepare a plan to introduce, greening, planting, growing and sustainable drainage to create an attractive streetscape, improve biodiversity, create shaded areas, and help mitigate the effects of climate change such as flooding and extreme heat.	●
	33	EV charging	Urlingford should provide EV Charging Infrastructure as part of any public realm enhancements. EV Charging should be provided at key locations on Main Street and within the new Car Park.	●
	34	Circular economy	Embracing the circular economy approach to prevent, minimise and recycle waste.	●

Funding

Introduction

Town Centre First Policy is supported by a targeted investment programme. This includes the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, a dedicated fund committed by the Government in Project Ireland 2040 and through funding streams within government programmes. This report reviews funding options which may be targeted to support delivery of the plan proposals.

1. Key Town Centre First Funding Options

Key funding options identified in the Town Centre First Policy document that can deliver impactful change are as follows:

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) supports the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. The fund is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with a commitment of €1 billion in funding up to 2027. Funding is awarded by a competitive bid process. The RRDF supports ambitious investments of scale to deliver town centre regeneration including projects which aim to repurpose derelict, disused or heritage buildings, deliver remote working and enterprise spaces, build or transform libraries, deliver tourism infrastructure and generally support greater activity, footfall, business and residency.

Housing for All Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund

Housing for All aims to improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. There are two schemes under the Housing for all Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund to support housing delivery which are managed and administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties. Under the Ready to Build Scheme, Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate to individuals who want to build their own home.

European Regional Development Fund

The European Regional Development Fund 2021–2027 programmes set out an investment strategy for €853 million, of which €396 million is financed by the EU. Funding is managed by Regional Assemblies to ensure alignment with Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and to support Local Authorities in delivering the sustainable regeneration of towns and urban centres. The fund aims to address regional imbalance, sustainable economic development, environmental sustainability and build low carbon and climate resilient communities. Tackling vacancy and dereliction in towns, in support of the TCF approach is a particular emphasis of this fund.

Funding

Active Travel Grants Programme

The Active Travel Grants Programme administered by the National Transport Authority supports strategic pedestrian and cyclist routes, access to schools, permeability links, urban greenways, minor public transport improvement projects, dedicated infrastructure schemes such as the Safe Routes to School Programme and behavioural change programmes such as Green Schools. In 2022 the programme allocated €289 million funds to Local Authorities for over 1200 walking and cycling infrastructure projects nationally.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides grant funding to support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000. Applications are submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development though Local Authorities and the scheme focuses on projects that have a positive impact in terms of place making and town centre regeneration. Projects funded have included the regeneration of banks, courthouses, cinemas and halls for community use, the development of public plazas, town parks, playgrounds, community gardens and dog parks. The scheme also funds projects at pre-development stage and the acquisition of suitable vacant or derelict properties that could be taken into public ownership and converted for community use. It has also provided specific funding to enhance streetscapes and shopfronts under the streetscape enhancement initiative.

Climate Adaptation/Retrofitting Initiatives

The government's commitment to climate action is supported by funding to meet 2030 and 2050 climate targets. For example Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide sustainable energy grants to help homeowners, business owners, communities and industry reduce energy costs and greenhouse emissions. Local Authorities are funded in undertaking a programme of insulation retrofitting of the least energy efficient social homes. The Regional and Local Road Grant Programme support the maintenance of public roads in towns. The Active Travel Grants programme also provide supports for more sustainable travel modes to local schools, residential areas and places of employment.

Historic Towns Initiative

The Historic Towns Initiative is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council, it aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of historic town centres. The initiative has two streams of funding: Capital works to repair and enhance the heritage of town through heritage-led regeneration projects that address dereliction and residential vacancy, the conservation of landmark buildings, streetscape and public realm conservation led projects; Funding for heritage-led regeneration plans to determine conservation focused interventions for a town.

Table 1 - Overview of Key Town Centre First Funding Options

Fund	Lead	Area of focus	Funding Level	Operation	Fund	Lead	Area of focus	Funding Level	Operation
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund	Department of Rural and Community Development	Vacancy, dereliction, town centre residency, enterprise development	€500,000 minimum for projects. Up to 80% of the total project value. Contributions by applicants	Grant	Town and Village Renewal Scheme	Department of Rural and Community Development	Place making, town centre regeneration	€20,000 to €500,000 under main scheme	Grant, 90% of the total cost of a project, the remaining 10% by Local Authority and/or community and/or Philanthropic contributions
Housing for All Cróí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Vacancy, dereliction, housing delivery	€30,000-€50,000 under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant	Grant				Up to €400,000 under building acquisition measure	Grant, 100% of purchase cost
			Up to €30,000 under the Ready to Build Scheme	Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate				€100,000 to each town selected under streetscape enhancement initiative	Grant
European Regional Development Fund	Regional Assemblies	Regional imbalance, sustainable regeneration, environmental sustainability, low carbon and climate resilient communities	Determined on a case by case basis	EU funding matched by a set percentage of national funding.	Climate Adaptation/ Retrofitting Initiatives	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Local Authority, National Transport Authority	Climate adaptation	Determined under various programmes. Up to 100% of project value	Grant
					Historic Towns Initiative	Heritage Council, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Heritage-led regeneration	€150,000 - €250,000 for stream 1 heritage led regeneration projects	Grant, match funding of 20% by Local Authority or owners
Active Travel Grants Programme	National Transport Authority	Active travel	Determined under various programmes	Grant				Up to €40,000 for heritage-led regeneration plans	Grant, match funding of 20% from Local Authority

2. Other Funding Supports

There are a wide range of government schemes, many of which are administered at local level, that can provide investment and support the Town Centre First approach. These are advertised as they come available during the year. Key schemes administered or supported by the Local Authority are outlined in **Table 2**.

Local Authority resource allocations from its annual budget can support the plan and the Local Authority Development Contribution Scheme can provide contributions for public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area. Specific state grants to Local Authorities by various government departments for particular services such as for roads or recreation facilities can, subject to availability, support the plan **(Table 2)**.

Work with partners such as the Heritage Council, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, National Transport Authority, Fáilte Ireland, LEADER and initiatives such as Tidy Towns, Pride of Place can also support the delivery of the plan in collaboration with the community **(Appendix 1)**.

Table 2 - Other Funding Supports

Fund	Details	Lead
Repair and Leasing Scheme	The Repair and Leasing Scheme provides upfront funding of up to €60,000 per unit (including VAT) for any works necessary to bring privately owned property up to standard and in return the property owner agrees to lease the dwelling to the Local Authority or an Approved Housing Body.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Buy and Renew Scheme	The Buy and Renew Scheme supports Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in purchasing and renewing housing in need of repair and makes them available for social housing use. It is a complementary initiative to the Repair and Leasing Scheme.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund	The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund provides public off-site infrastructure to relieve critical infrastructure blockages. This is to enable the delivery of housing on key development sites and in urban areas of high demand for housing. Funding is provided on a matched funding basis, with the exchequer providing 75% of the cost of the infrastructure and the Local Authority providing the other 25%.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Serviced Sites Fund	The Serviced Sites Fund provides key facilitating infrastructure on public lands to support the delivery of affordable homes to purchase or rent.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Community Enhancement Programme	The Community Enhancement Programme provides small grants to community groups to enhance facilities in disadvantaged areas. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development

Fund	Details	Lead
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme	The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. It is co-funded by the government and European Social Fund Plus and managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality Business Scheme	This scheme provided a level of financial support to tourism and hospitality businesses to purchase or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating in 2021.	Fáilte Ireland
Regional Festival and Event Fund	The Regional Festival and Event Fund supports festivals and participative events. The events must help to drive domestic and international tourism arrivals, win bed nights, stimulate local economic activity, and help to improve the visitor experience. The fund has qualifying conditions and is evaluated on a competitive basis.	Fáilte Ireland
Destination Towns	The Destination Towns initiative seeks to develop the tourism potential of towns and to create a sense of place in towns, attracting visitors to the area and helping to provide the necessary infrastructure to support regional growth in the tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland's Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns provides a practical aid to guide the development of a destination town.	Fáilte Ireland
Community Centre Investment Fund	This fund supports community groups to upgrade and develop their community centre facilities. The scheme is administered directly by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Grants were available under 3 categories in 2022: Small scale projects/improvements to facilities €10,000 to €25,000; Larger scale projects €25,001 to €100,000; Major projects €100,001 to €300,000. A minimum contribution of 5% of the total project costs was required from applicants own funds for category 2 and 3.	Department of Rural and Community Development

Fund	Details	Lead
Sports Partnership	Funding provided through Sports Partnership includes for the provision of sports equipment such as kits for school children. In 2023, €10,365,000 was allocated to Local Sport Partnerships nationally.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Arts Programme	The Arts Office sets out a programme for funding, developing and promoting the arts in County Clare. Opportunities for funding arise throughout the year, as government departments offer funding schemes.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Arts Council |
| Creative Ireland Projects | Creativity in the Community projects enable local community engagement with creativity to support individual and community well-being, social cohesion, and economic development. Place-making is central to the initiative. Grants range between €500 to €2,000 under the 2023 scheme. | Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Creative Ireland |
| Built Heritage Investment Scheme | The Built Heritage Investment Scheme assists owners of heritage structures, including those on the Record of Protected Structures and in Architectural Conservation Areas, to conserve and repair historic structures by providing match-funded grants. The 2023 scheme awarded up to €15,000 for a standard project and up to €20,000 for a thatched structure project. | Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage |
| Historic Structures Fund | The Historic Structures Fund aims to conserve and enhance heritage structures and historic buildings, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public. Grants in 2023 were offered under three streams. Stream 1 offered grants from €15,000 up to €50,000, with a maximum of 80% awarded relative to eligible costs; Stream 2 offered grants from €50,000 up to €200,000 for larger enhancement, refurbishment or reuse projects, with a maximum of 50% awarded relative to eligible costs. Stream 3 offered grants of between €5,000 to €10,000 to support conservation repairs and small capital works to vernacular structures. | Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage |

Fund	Details	Lead
Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme	Local Authorities support and facilitate community groups in their applications to the Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to support capital projects that improve access and inclusion to heritage sites; that apply good heritage practice to the management of places, collections, or objects (including buildings). The scheme also supports the purchase of essential equipment. This scheme is intended to enable communities and heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to continue their work or to start new initiatives. The Heritage Council allocated in the region of €1.5 million to the 2023 scheme.	Heritage Council
Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives	Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives includes the target to upgrade 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2 / cost optimal equivalent or carbon equivalent by 2030. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide grants to help upgrade homes and Local Authorities are undertaking programmes to retrofit least energy efficient social homes.	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Local Authority
Biodiversity Action Plan Grant Scheme	This scheme to Local Authorities supports biodiversity projects and the implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans that align with actions under the National Biodiversity Action Plan. €3m was made available to the 2023 scheme nationally.	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Community Monuments Fund	The Community Monuments Fund aims to protect and promote archaeological heritage, supporting community development, traditional skills, jobs, tourism, regional and rural development. €6m was made available for the 2023 fund nationally.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme	The Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme includes support for the rapid roll out of new and improved active travel infrastructure in towns and villages.	Department of Transport
Development Contribution Scheme	The Local Authority Development Contribution Scheme enables contributions to be levied on new development and provides funding towards capital work programmes on a range of services, including roads, amenity, community, recreation and parking.	Local Authority

Fund	Details	Lead
Local Enterprise Office	The Local Enterprise Office provides training, mentoring programmes and a range of financial supports designed to assist with the establishment and/or growth of businesses including the LEO Client Stimulus Fund, LEAN Micro, feasibility grants and business expansion grants.	Department of Rural and Community Development Enterprise Ireland
Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme	The Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme benefits smaller or start-up social enterprises which do not necessarily have the capacity to compete for larger grants, but which nonetheless have a need for upgraded/additional equipment to help them to deliver their services. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee. In 2022 approximately €30,000 was awarded to social enterprises.	Department of Rural and Community Development

Fund	Details	Lead
Heart of the Community Fund 2023	The Heart of the Community Fund is for not-for-profit organisations delivering vital services/support that promote and support peace, culture, education and community development. Grants between €5,000 and €25,000 were available in 2023. The fund also provides organisational investment grants.	The Ireland Funds
Community Water Development Fund	The Community Water Development Fund is open to community and voluntary groups to assist in the protection and management of water quality. Examples of projects funded include feasibility studies, surveys and plans, biodiversity signage, water conservation measures, invasive species control, riparian management and planting, training workshops and citizen science initiatives. The fund is administered by LAWPRO on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. €500,000 was available under the 2023 fund.	Local Authority Waters Programme
Play and Recreation Funding Scheme	The Play and Recreation Funding Scheme supports the refurbishment of existing play and recreation facilities and new play and recreation facilities. Under the 2023 scheme Local Authorities could nominate one project for funding and funding was capped at €18,000 per project. The award of funding was contingent on the Local Authority match funding at least 25% of the amount provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Fund	Details
Rural Development Programme (LEADER)	The Rural Development Programme, widely known as LEADER, provides capital funding for rural development and job creation, with a focus on climate change and sustainability of the rural environment. The programme applies to designated LEADER areas.
Dormant Accounts Fund	The Dormant Accounts Fund can support the development of services to support the personal and social development of persons who are economically or socially disadvantaged; the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged; persons with a disability.
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways	Funding under this strategy to Local Authorities and state agencies aims to integrate Greenways into town centres by ensuring funded projects bring access from a Greenway to places of education, employment and entertainment in town centres.
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme supports the provision of outdoor recreation infrastructure in the countryside that contributes to healthy active lifestyles and the economic and tourism potential of the area for both local communities and tourist visitors alike. In particular, the scheme provides funding for trails, cycleways, greenways, blueways, bridleways, as well as outdoor amenities located near rivers, lakes and beaches. The scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development in partnership with Fáilte Ireland. Approximately €15 million was available under the 2022 scheme, with funding provided under four categories based on the size of the investment requirement.
Work with Fáilte Ireland	As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to assist the long-term sustainable growth of tourism and to help develop destinations. It also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business initiatives and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow.
Tidy Towns	The Local Authority works with community groups and Tidy Towns to enhance the environment and make it a safe, clean and greener place, facilitating knowledge sharing, expertise led insights and coordinates actions to support Tidy Towns groups.

Environmental Assessments

Appropriate Assessment

Under Council Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive), where it cannot be excluded that a project or plan, either alone or in-combination with other projects and plans, would have a significant effect on a European Site, the same shall be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Plan is not directly connected with, or is necessary for, the management of any European Site, and consequently was subject to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening process.

The findings of the AA Screening were presented following the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

It was considered that the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan will not give rise to any potential for significant effects on European Sites, primarily due to its consistency with the policy objectives and environmental protective objectives contained with the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027, and associated assessments, including a full Appropriate Assessment, and therefore a full Appropriate Assessment for the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan is not required.

All future projects and developments arising from the implementation of the Plan will be subject to the Appropriate Assessment process to ensure they will not adversely affect the integrity of these European Sites.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report for the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan was prepared by Kilkenny County Council. The Screening Report had due regard to the criteria contained within Schedule 2A Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Final SEA Screening Report took into account the consultation responses from prescribed Environmental Authorities and assessed for changes between the Draft and Final Plan, and on balance, determined that a full SEA for the Plan is not required in accordance with the SEA requirements under the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers of 27 June 2001 and the Assessment of Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment; and European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004), as amended.

The SEA Assessment was undertaken in consideration of the findings contained with the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

Turley