



CASTLEBLAYNEY
REGENERATION FRAMEWORK PLAN FOR TOWN CENTRE LANDS

February 2025

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Prepared by

Shaffrey Architects



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Introduction



Main Street, Eugene Clerkin photographer, 1990s
Source: National Library of Ireland

Project Context

Town Centre Lands Regeneration

Castleblayney was selected in 2019 as one of six pilot towns in the country to participate in the Town Centre Living Initiative. As part of this initiative a report, A Town Centre for Living in Well, was completed in 2021. The provision of a regeneration plan for the town was a key recommendation of the report.

Monaghan County Council, as an action of the Carrickmacross / Castleblayney Municipal District Council, developed the brief for this regeneration framework plan which seeks to deliver a study / design strategy which identifies opportunities and generates interest in residential, commercial, mixed uses and development that will add vitality and vibrancy in the town centre. To achieve the optimum potential mixed uses for the study area the Council believes it is necessary to have a regeneration framework plan in place to guide future sustainable development approaches in this area of the town centre.

Status of Plan: This is a Framework Plan which provides a vision statement supported by project scenarios developed in response to research, survey and analysis of the town centre lands; stakeholder engagement, and development of focused regeneration aims and themes. Further design development and engagement is required if the scenarios are to be implemented.

Shaffrey Architects were appointed in April 2024 to prepare the regeneration framework plan for the selected area in the centre of Castleblayney. This area is bounded by Main Street to the south, Muckno Street to the east, McGrath Road to the northwest and Monaghan Road to the west.

This regeneration framework plan has been informed by the following activities:

- **Stakeholder Engagement**, through public and stakeholder engagement gathering feedback on perception of the town
- **Identification of assets and challenges**, using research and analysis of the town and discussions with stakeholders
- **Defining a number of Regeneration Aims and Themes**, to guide, assess and monitor specific projects and initiatives
- **Project Scenario proposals**, masterplanning of plan area interventions and developing design approaches and scenarios for projects.



Aerial map today with selected area for Regeneration Framework Plan highlighted. Source: google maps

Background Context

Main Street, Eugene Clerkin photographer, 1990s ,
Source: National Library of Ireland



Strategic Policy Alignment - International and National



Aerial map of Ireland locating Co. Monaghan. Source: google maps

In developing the Castleblayney Town Centre Lands Regeneration Framework Plan, particular attention was paid to its strategic alignment with the hierarchy of development policies and strategies which are expected to shape social, economic and environmental development in Castleblayney. Strategies and policies most directly relevant to this Plan are grouped into four scales below- International & European, National, Regional and Local.

International & European Policy, including:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- New European Bauhaus
- European Green Deal
- New Leipzig Charter - The transformative power of cities for the common good
- Davos Baukultur Declaration and Quality System

National Policy, including:

- Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework and National Development Plan (currently under review)
- Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns
- Climate Action Plan and Roadmap (2023)
- National Housing Policy (Housing for All, Housing Options for our Aging Population)
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines, 2011
- Design Manual for Urban Streets
- Urban Design Manual – Best Practice Guide (2009)
- Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2023
- National Biodiversity Plan
- Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2022-2024
- Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy
- Making Remote Work: Ireland’s National Remote Work Strategy
- Roadmap to Social Inclusion 2020-2025
- Enterprise 2025 Renewed

Strategic Policy Alignment - Regional and Local



Aerial map of Ireland locating Co. Monaghan. Source: google maps

Regional Policy, including:

Northern & Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES)

Local Policy, including:

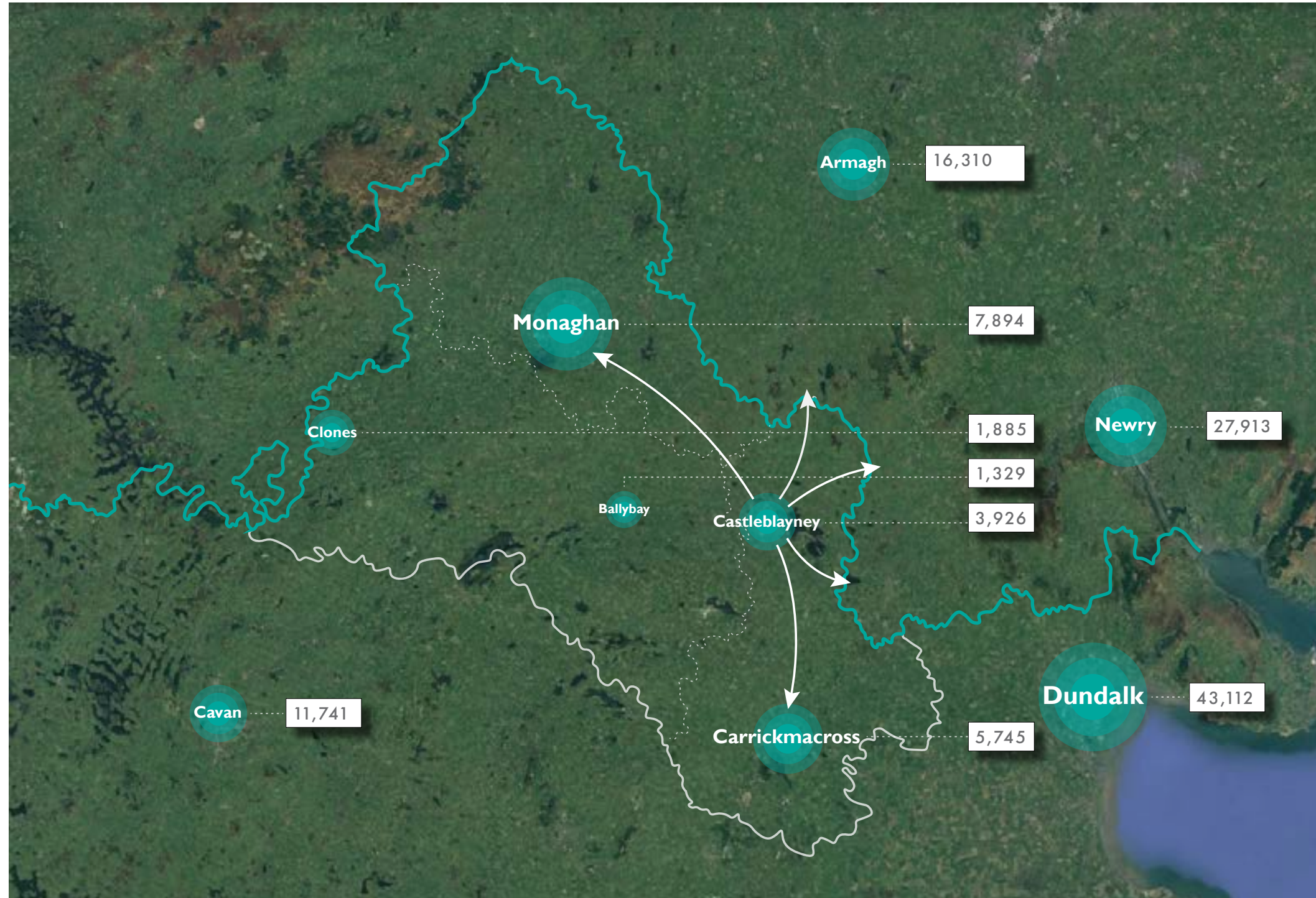
Monaghan County Development Plan, 2019-2025, with particular regard to:

- Chapter 12 Castleblayney Settlement Plan
- Chapter 15 Development Management which sets out standards for development, e.g., Urban Design in Towns and Villages; Shop Fronts
- SHO2 Carrickmacross & Castleblayney is a Specific Strategic Objective for Settlement Plan Towns of Carrickmacross & Castleblayney: *To promote the Strategic Towns as prosperous and thriving local development and service towns where the principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability including protection of the town's heritage and natural and built environment are enshrined*
- Development Plan Policies 9.6 and 9.9 regarding Regeneration & Development of Vacant Land, and Town Centres
- There are a number of relevant general Objectives for Town Centres - TCO 1; TCO2; TCO3; TCO 4; TCO 5; TCO 6; TCO 7; TCO 9
- The Castleblayney Settlement Plan Strategic Objective CBSO 1 is: *To promote Castleblayney as a prosperous and thriving local development and service town where the principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability including protection of the town's heritage, natural and built environment are enshrined*
- CBO 2 is: *To encourage new developments which refurbish existing buildings in order to regenerate the town centre and to eliminate dereliction*
- CBO 9 is: *To develop a townpark at Drumillard within the lifetime of this plan subject to the availability of resources*
- The Development Plan also includes policy objectives relating to Multi-Unit Residential Development; Car Parking standards, Landscaping.

Non-Statutory Plans, Studies, etc., including, inter alia:

- Castleblayney Community Audit, 2023 (audit undertaken in 2021)
- Castleblayney Public Realm and Economic Plan 2019 (Avison Young, Urban-Agency, Systra & Lotts)
- Historic Landscape Character Report 2008,
- Castleblayney Revitalisation Plan, 2021 (Shaffrey Architects & Space Engagers)

Regional / Local Context



Aerial map of Ireland locating Co. Monaghan. Source: google maps

Locating Castleblayney

Castleblayney is the third largest town in the county with a population of 3,926, based on the 2022 census, and is located on the national primary route from Dublin to Derry (N2). The national secondary route (N53) links the town of Dundalk, the gateway to the region. The town is influenced by the surrounding towns, in particular Monaghan, Dundalk, Carrickmacross and Armagh. Its proximity to the border (6km from town centre), has exerted a significant influence of the town over the years, and most recently following BREXIT.

Town Context



Aerial photo 2024 with selected site highlighted. Source: google maps

Regeneration Framework Plan Area

The selected area for the focus of this regeneration plan is located in the centre of Castleblayney, which incorporates the historic core of the town along Main Street and sits adjacent to the Market House.

Town Centre Context

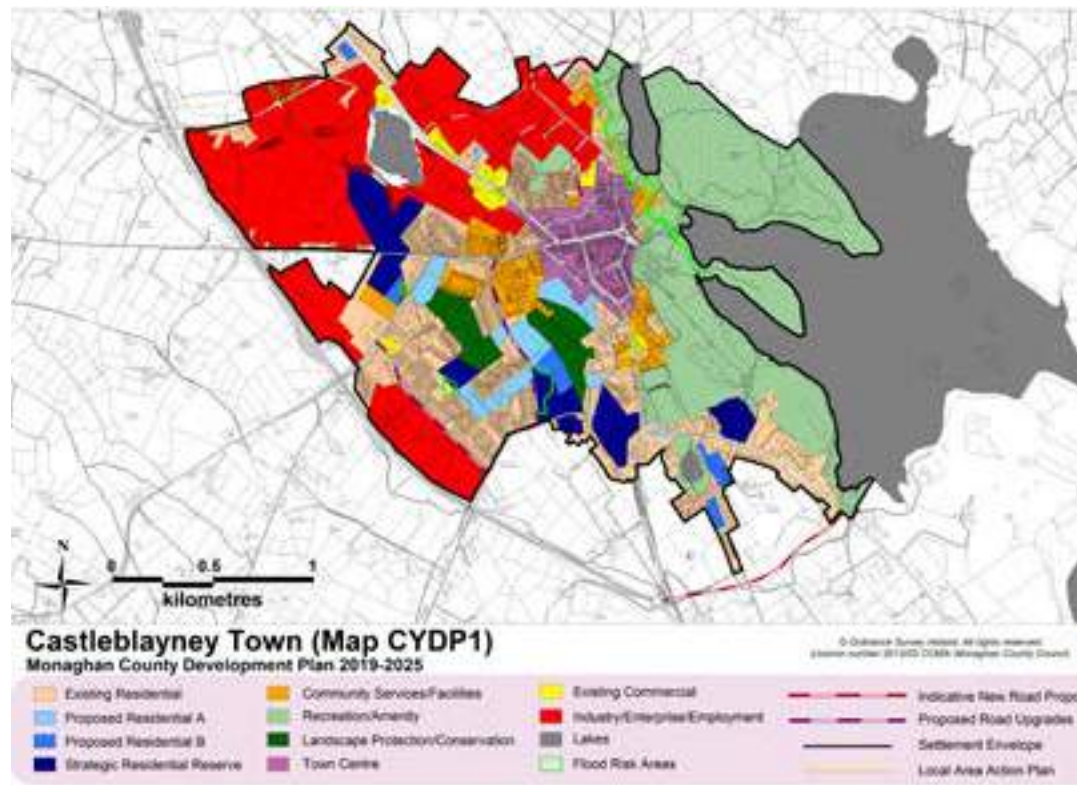


OS map 2024. Source: osi.ie

This regeneration plan area is bounded by -
Main Street to the south;
Muckno Street to the east;
McGrath Road to the northwest; and
Monaghan Road to the west.

However, the analysis, scope and project scenario proposals looked beyond the immediate Plan area to gain a better understanding of the town and context.

Development Plan Land Use Zoning Objectives



Castleblayney Town Land Zoning Use Map. Source: Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 - 2025

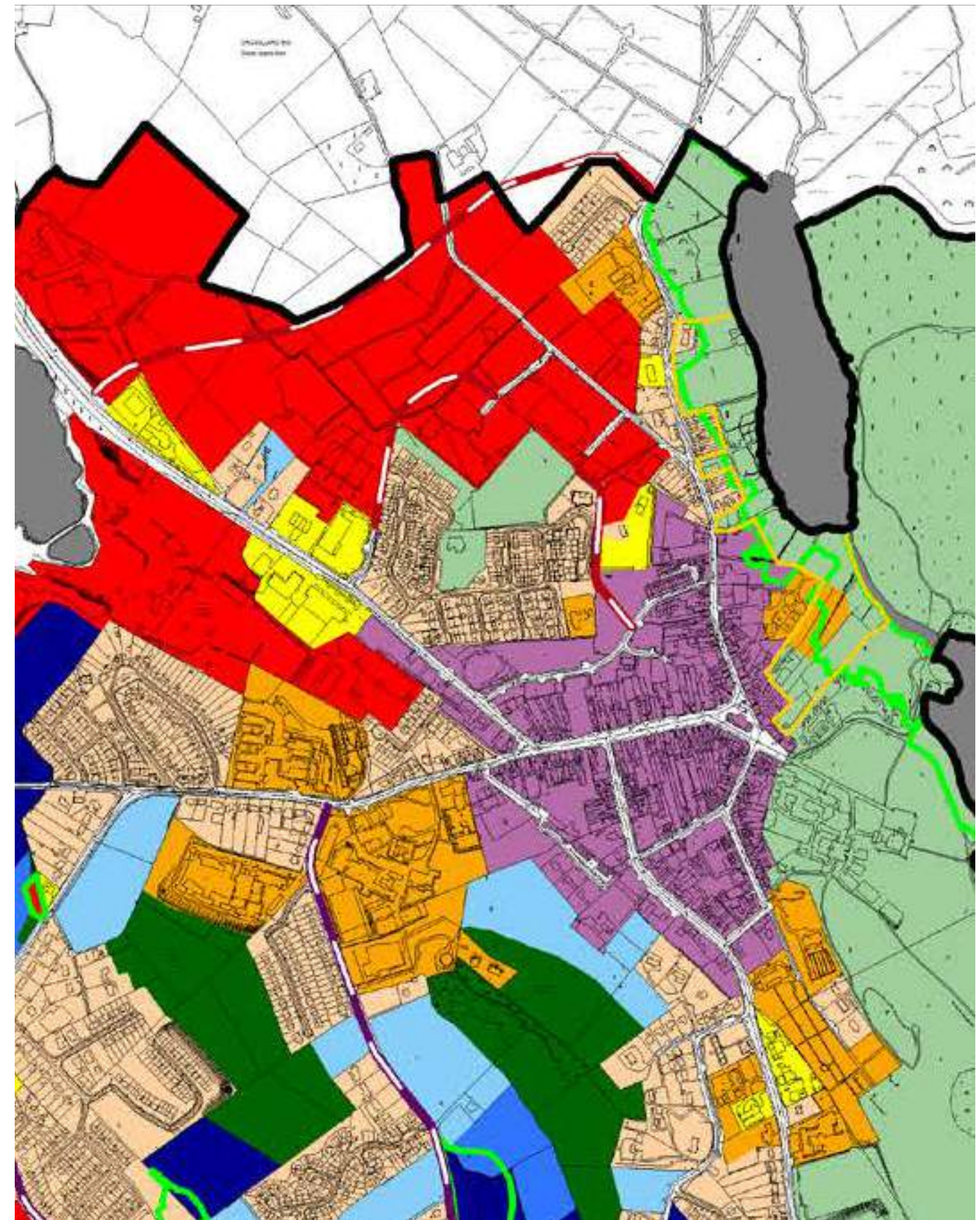
Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 - 2025

While the selected area is focused on the town centre of Castleblayney, the Development Plan was considered as to the wider impact on this area. A number of key considerations that relate to the selected area can be identified.

Site is zoned for Town Centre, this sets down the permitted and 'in principle' uses, and states: *To provide, protect and enhance town centre facilities and promote town centre strengthening. Principal permitted land use will be town centre related uses including retail, residential, commercial, social uses, cultural uses, medical/health uses, hotels, pubs, restaurants and other similar type uses*

Road objectives, include a number of urban road proposals which would reduce heavy goods vehicles traveling through the centre of Castleblayney. These would likely have a significant positive impact, particularly on Muckno Street and Main Street that currently experience a high volume of traffic which makes the street less safe and inviting. Stakeholder feedback identified these adverse traffic impacts which also include noise and poor air quality, all contributing to a somewhat hostile environment for residents.

Large Industry / Enterprise / Employment zoned lands, particularly to the north of the Regeneration Plan area. Some of these lands closer to the town centre could be suitable for residential use to encourage living within the town. The proposed connection between the Plan area and these Industrial zoned lands would provide a direct link into the town. This link may only need to be a pedestrian or cycle pathway to facilitate and promote active travel into the centre.



Town centre Land Use Zoning Map (detail) Source: Monaghan County Development Plan 2019 - 2025

Castleblayney Hinterland - influencing amenities

Lough Muckno - Muckno Estate



Aerial map 2024. Source: google maps

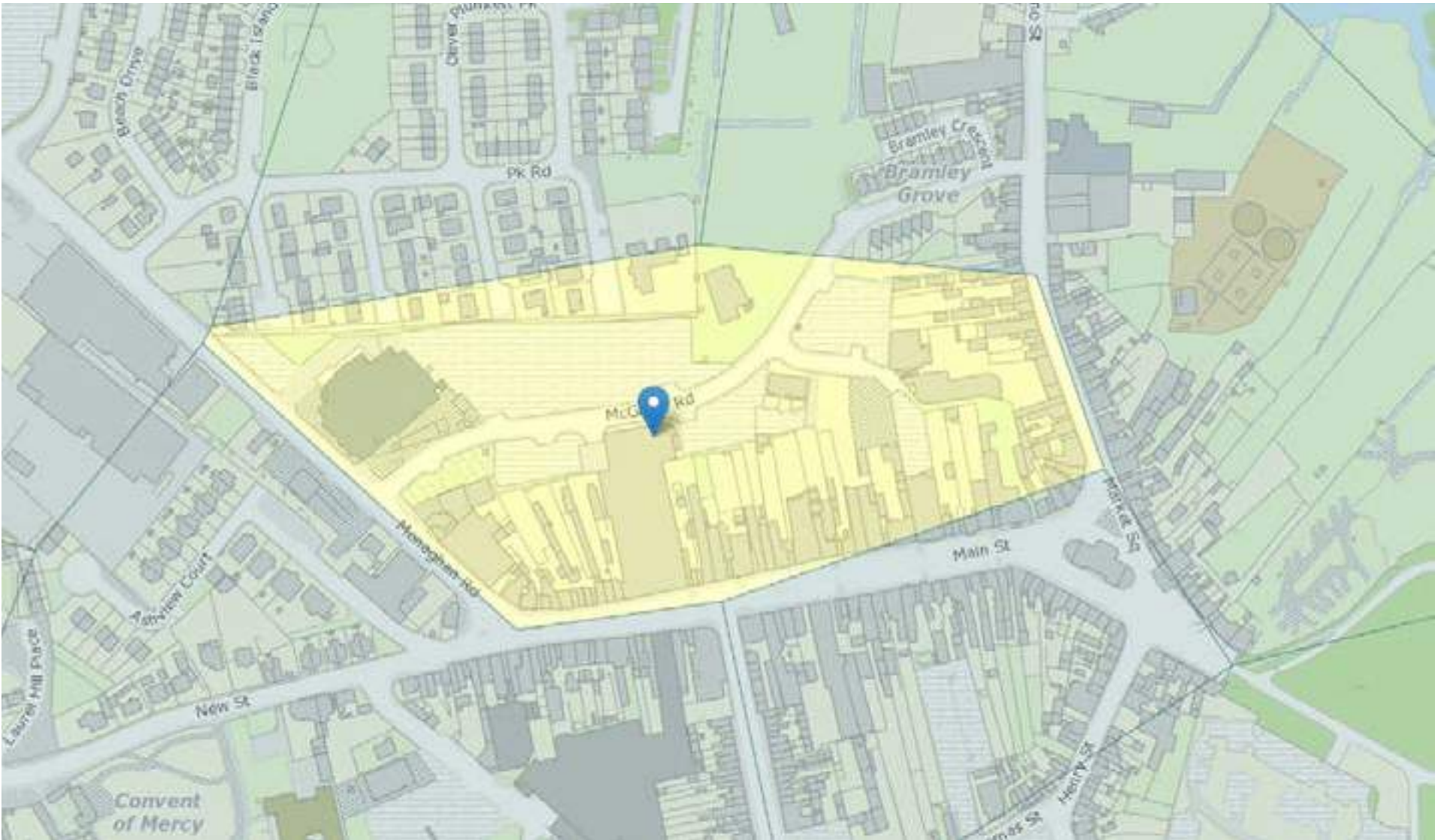
Town Centre
(Selected Area)

Concra Wood
Golf and Country
Club

As with the Development Plan, the wider hinterlands context is considered when analysing the selected area and considering proposals. Two local amenities are highlighted as having an important impact on the town centre.

Lough Muckno - Muckno Estate, is a great amenity, right on the doorstep of Castleblayney. Access to the Muckno Estate, which opens out to Lough Muckno is directly from the town centre - Market Square. A separate Muckno Estate regeneration plan is being considered which can have a positive impact and can help to increase footfall between the town centre and Muckno Estate. It is critical that this Plan integrates any strategies and proposals for regenerating the Estate with regeneration of the town centre. The current direct connection is a key part of this, however careful planning regarding potential adverse impacts of increased vehicular traffic through the town is required. Functional connections between any future uses within Muckno Estate and existing and potential uses within the town centre can assist the positive regeneration of town and Estate. In the context of tourist and economic objectives, Muckno Estate should also remain a public amenity for the town and its citizens, easily accessible and adding to the quality of life in Castleblayney.

Concra Wood Golf and Country Club, is located close to Castleblayney and provides a positive sporting activity nearby. While stakeholder feedback noted the quality of both golf facility and the associated restaurant, it was also noted that its location contributed to the displacement of evening activity from the town centre. There is currently limited options for evening leisure - restaurants, cafes - in the town centre. Increased and diverse residential mix would increase demand, as might increased visitor numbers.



2022 Census interactive map. Note: boundary of CSO map varies from the selected area, however, can still be used to provides useful information. Source: CSO

The 2022 Census provides valuable information on the residential profile of Castleblayney and specifically the Regeneration Framework Planarea.

- 4.4% of the town population are located in the Plan area.
- Compared to the statistics for the wider town, the Planarea has a higher proportion of males.
- Statistics suggest there is a higher proportion of young families with a lower proportion of older adults.



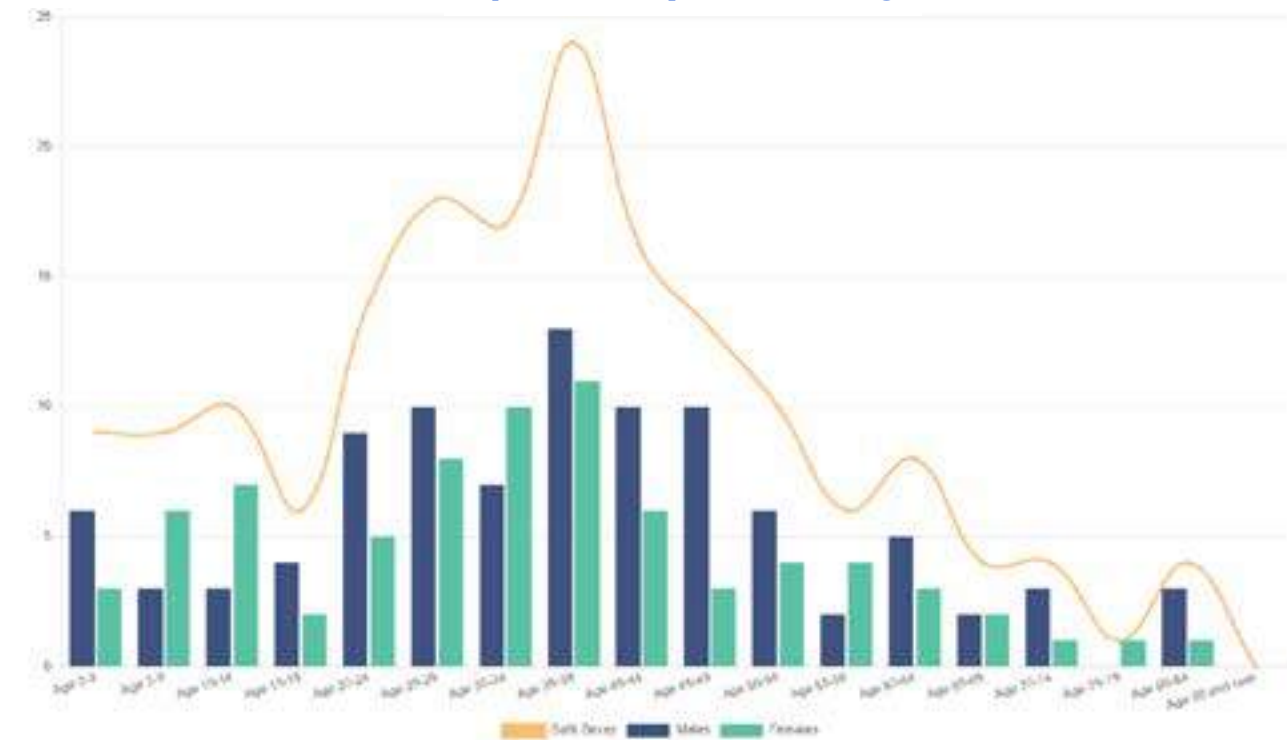
Gender Profile Statistics for Plan Area



Gender Profile Statistics for Town

Statistics for Plan Area

Population by Sex and Age

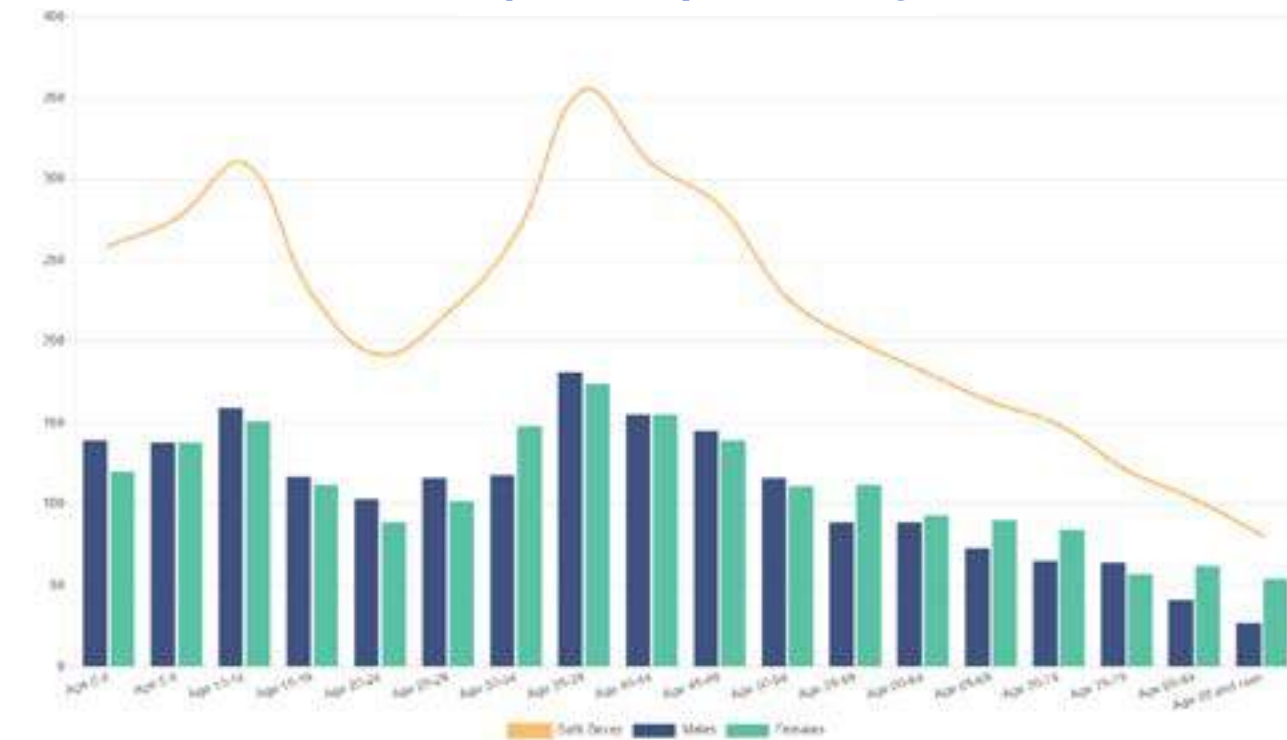


September 15, 2023 11:00:00 UTC

© Central Statistics Office, Ireland

Statistics for Town

Population by Sex and Age



September 15, 2023 11:00:00 UTC

© Central Statistics Office, Ireland

Private households by type of accommodation

Type of Accommodation	Private households (Number)	Number of persons in private households (Number)
House/Bungalow	4	7
Flat/Apartment	64	146
Bed-Sit	0	0
Caravan/Mobile home	0	0
Total	68	153

Showing 1 to 5 of 5 entries

September 15, 2023 11:00:00 UTC
© Central Statistics Office, Ireland
<https://data.cso.ie/table/SAP2022T6T1SA>

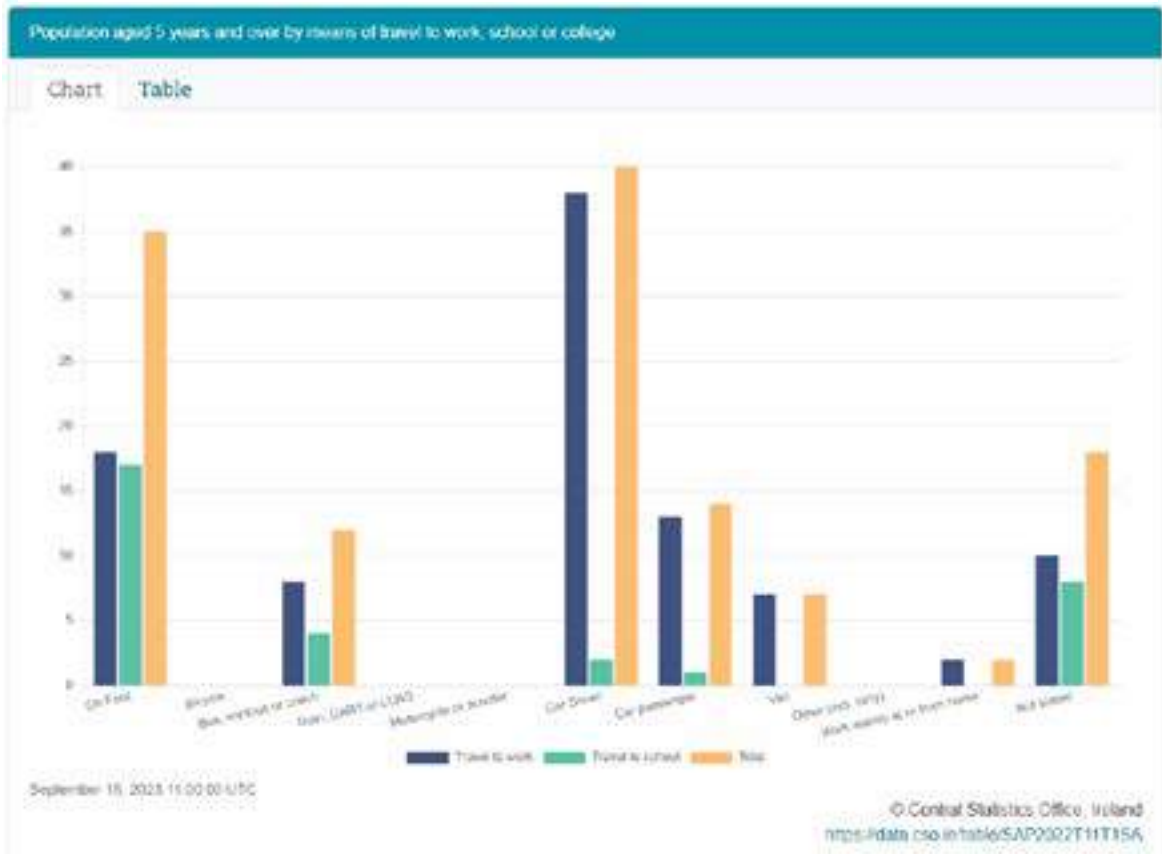
Private households by type of accommodation

Type of Accommodation	Private households (Number)	Number of persons in private households (Number)
House/Bungalow	1,333	3,434
Flat/Apartment	221	409
Bed-Sit	0	0
Caravan/Mobile home	0	0
Total	1,554	3,843

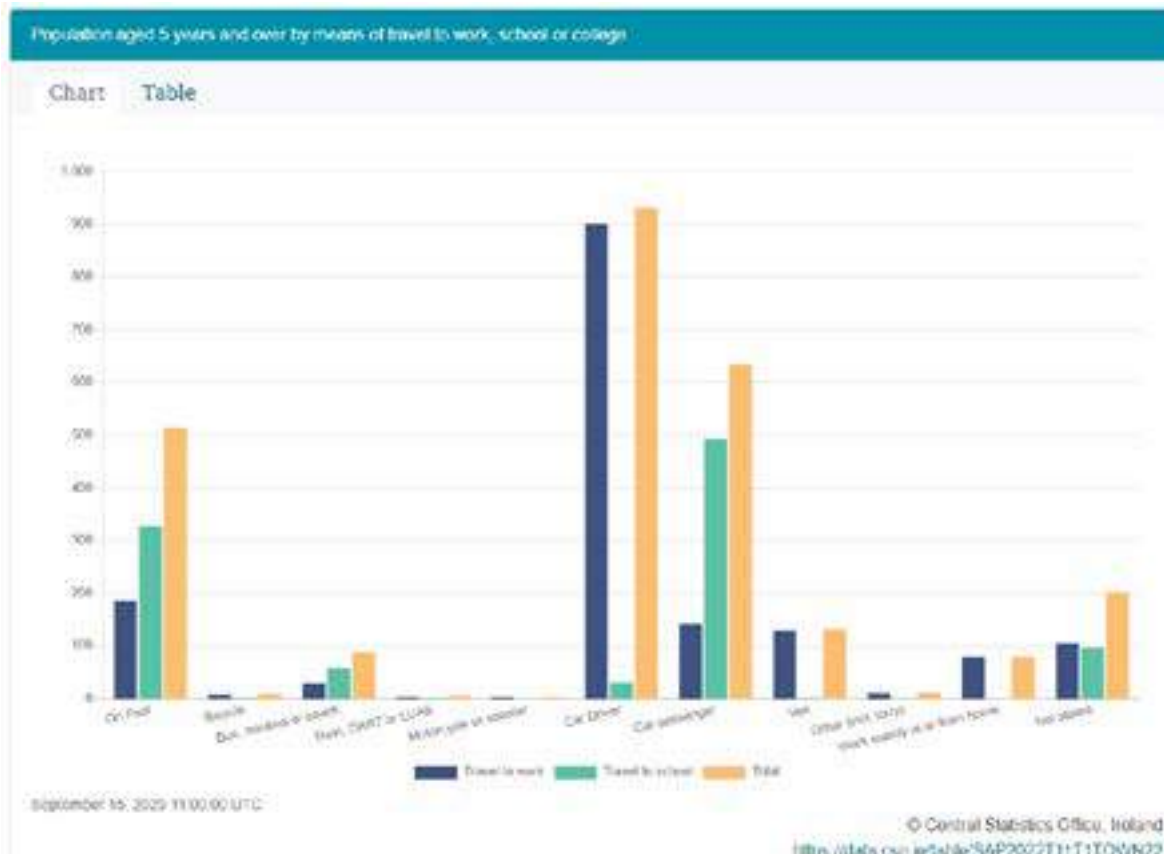
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<https://data.cso.ie/table/SAP2022T6T1TOWN22>

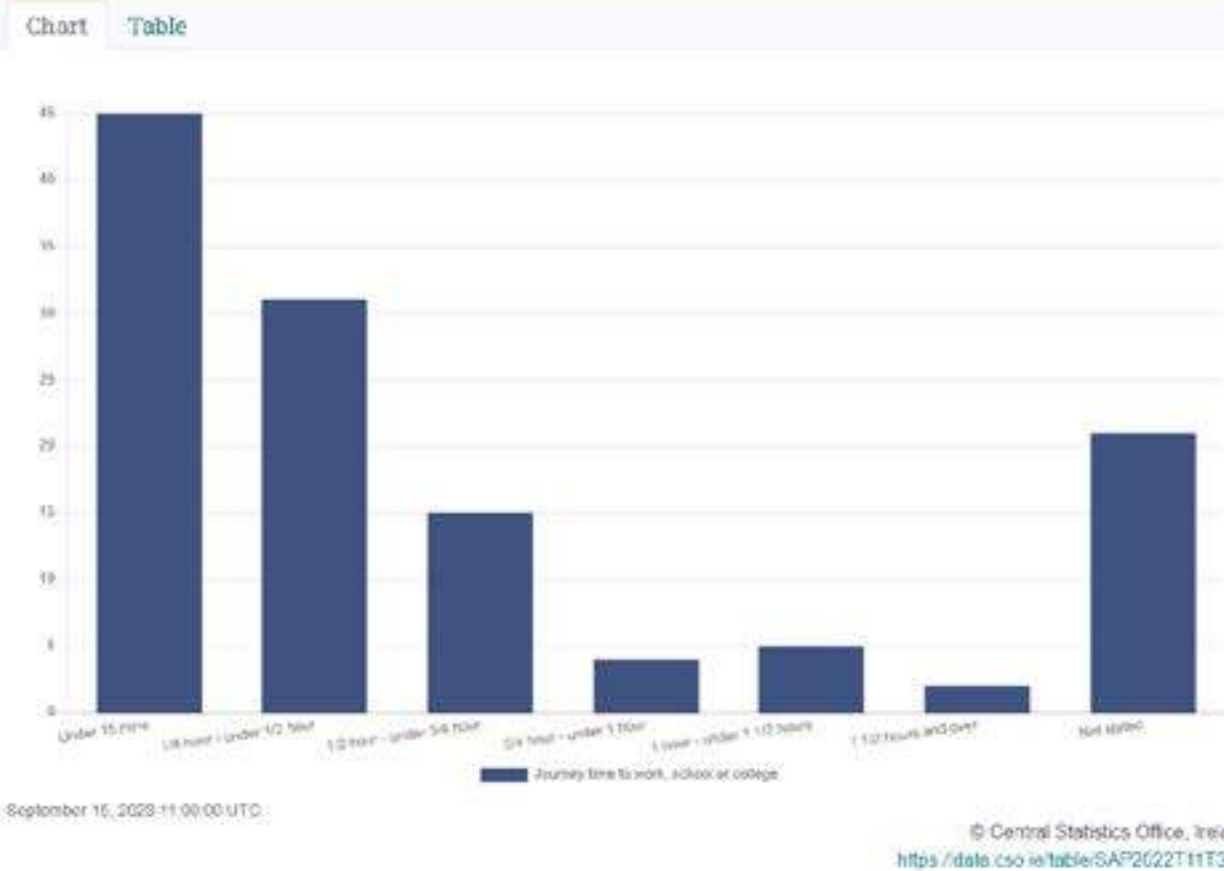
Travel to Work/School/College -Statistics for Plan Area



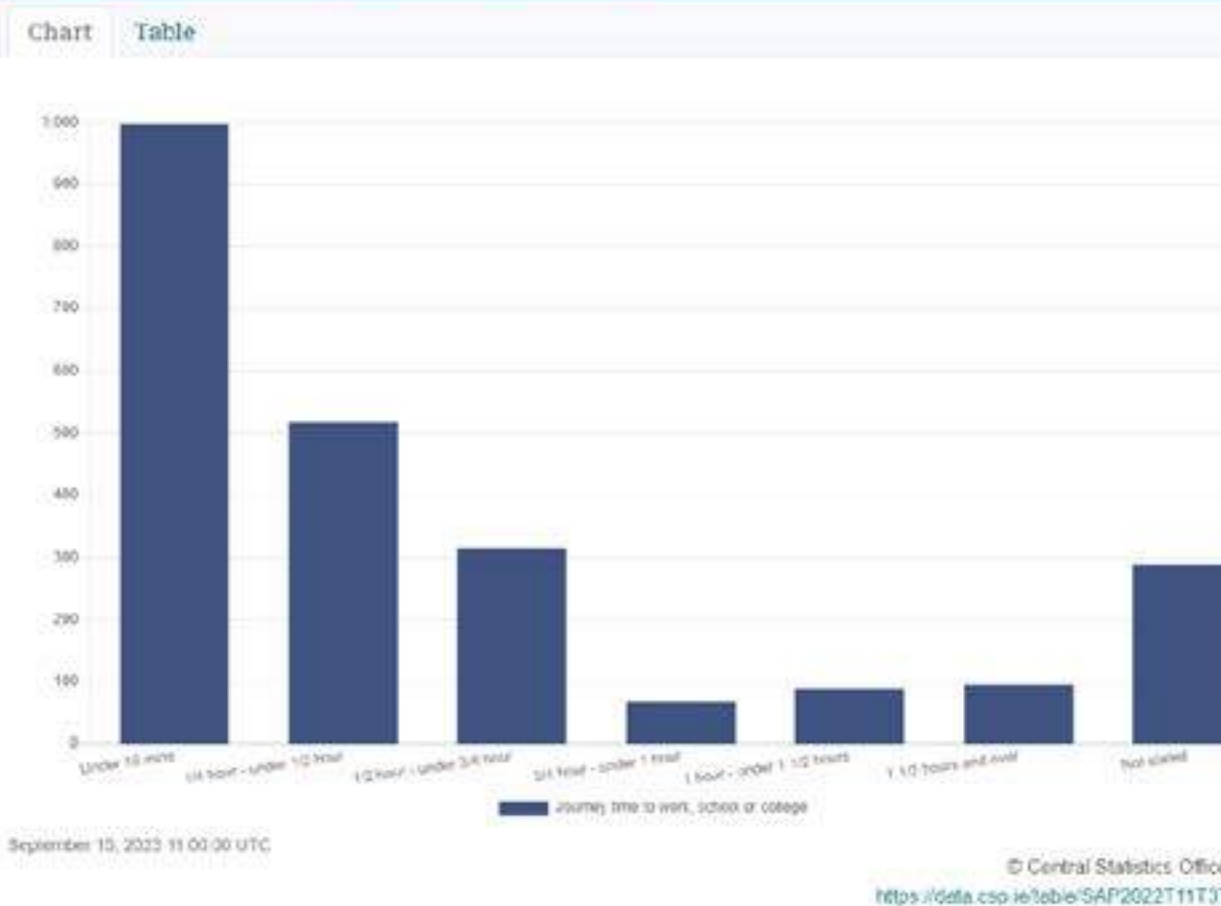
Travel to Work/School/College Statistics for Town



Population aged 5 years and over by journey time to work, school or college



Population aged 5 years and over by journey time to work, school or college



Pobal HP Deprivation Index



Survey 2016 - Marginally Below Average



Survey 2022 - Marginally Above Average

Using the census data, the Pobal HP Deprivation Index analyses three key categories - **demographic**, **social class** and **labour market situation**. Within these the categories analyses population change; age dependency; third level education; type of profession; unemployment rate; primary education only; and persons per room provide a profile of communities around Ireland.

The regeneration plan area has improved slightly from marginally below average to marginally above average between 2016 and 2022.

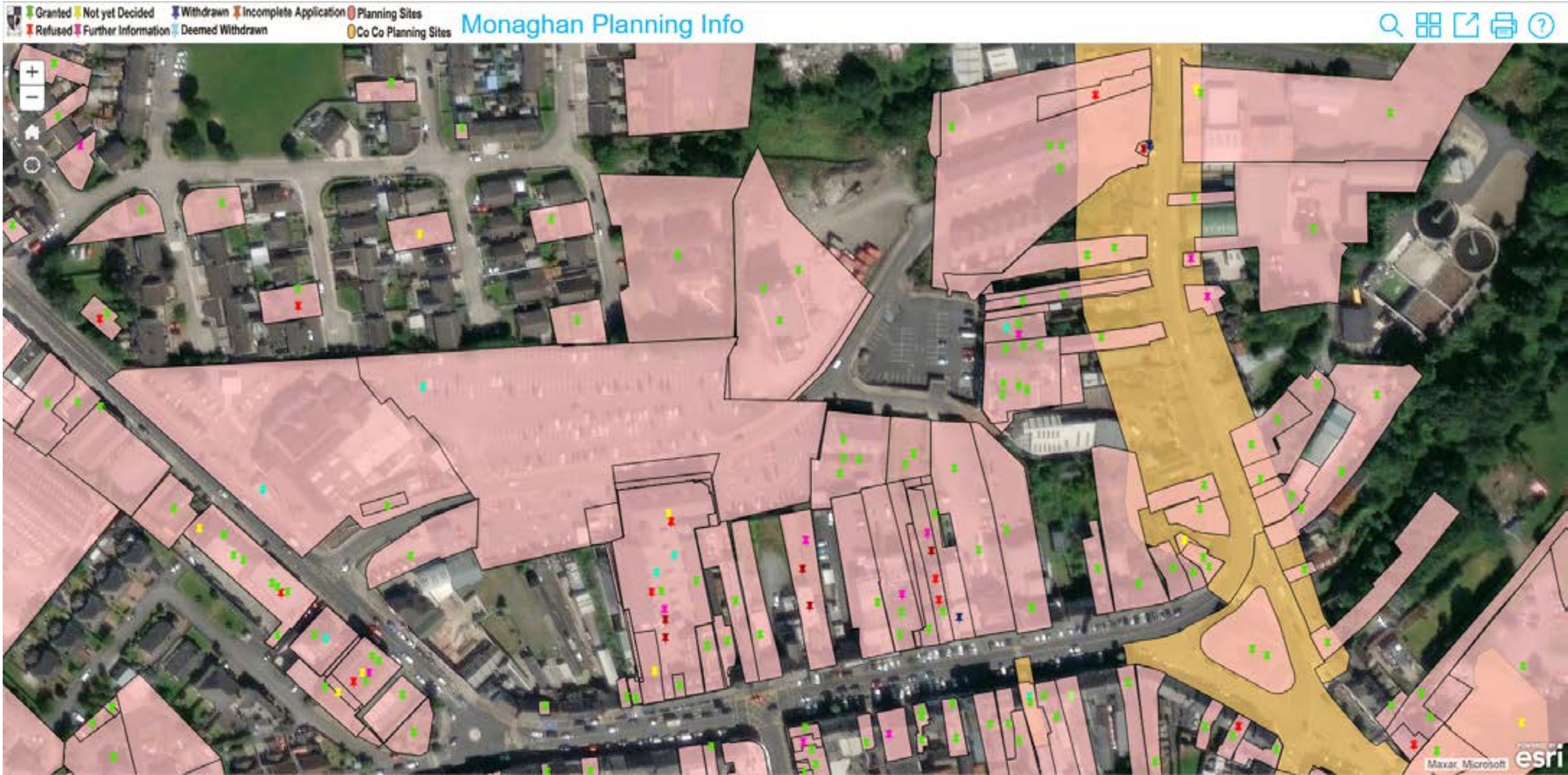
Planning Applications

A number of planning applications relating to the regeneration plan area have been granted or have recently been submitted. These applications provide an insight into the aims of the local residents and property owners within this area.

At the time of completion of the Regeneration Framework Plan (December 2024), some of these planning applications are still being assessed. While the Plan, therefore, to a large extent omits these sites from the project

scenarios, it is noted that the Project Scenario approaches could be extended into these sites.

The aerial orthographic below highlights the current planning status of lands within and around the Regeneration Framework Plan Area.

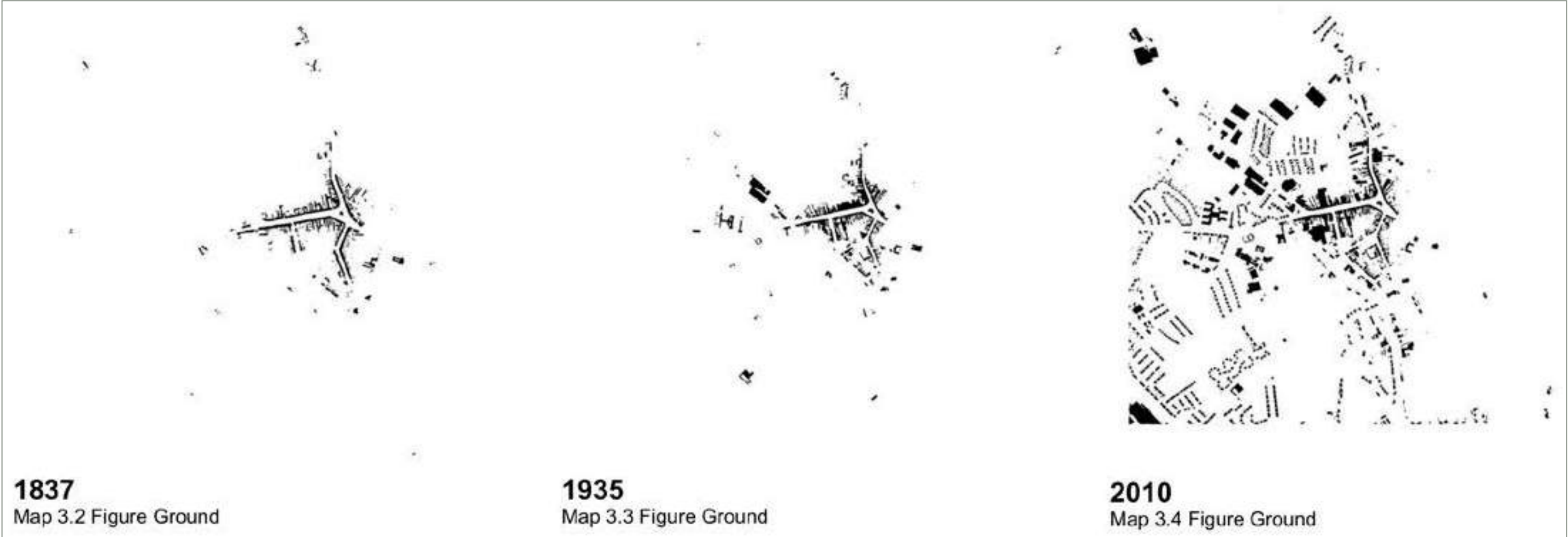


Historic Development and Character



25 inch OS map (1888-1913).
Source: osi.ie

Figure Ground Maps



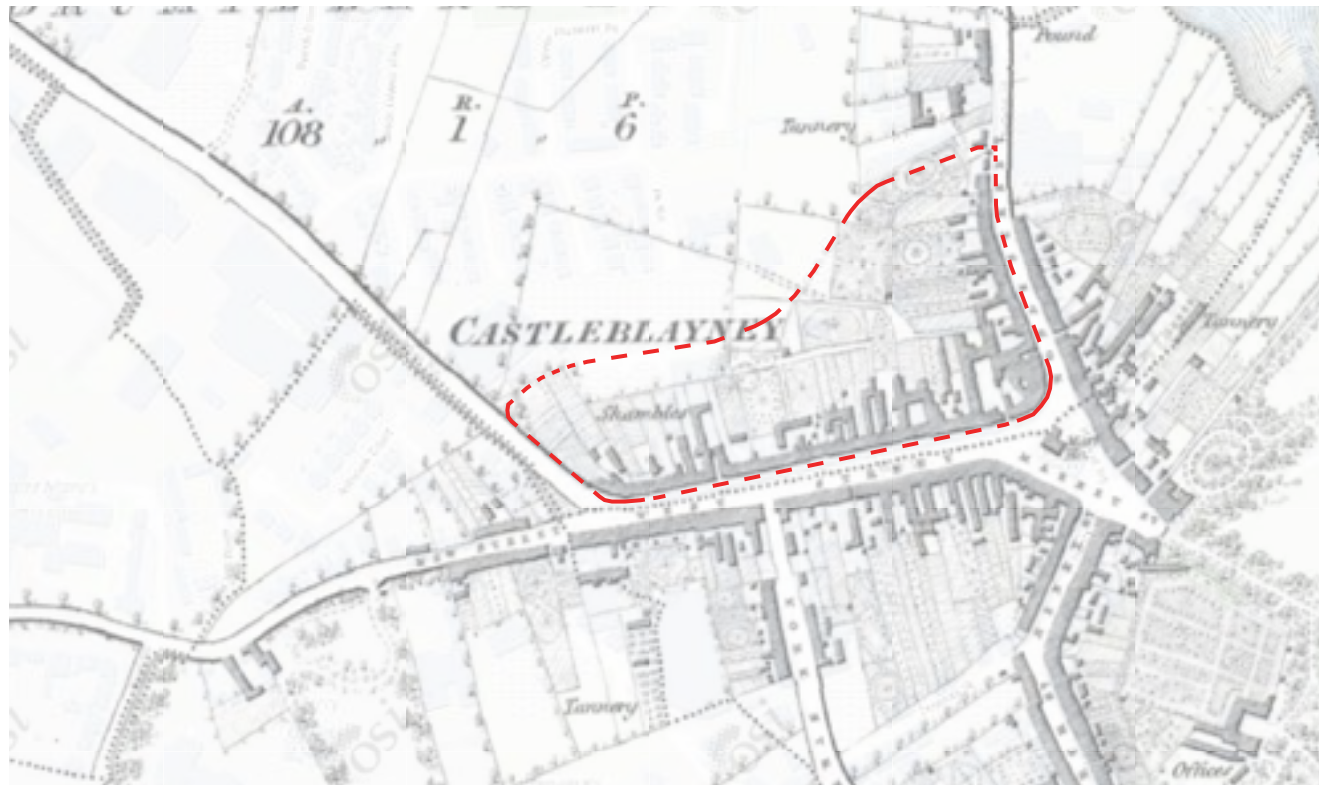
Castleblayney development figure ground.
Extract from the Castleblayney Landscape Characterisation Study,2012. (Sheridan Woods Architects and Urban Planners)

Comparison of the figure ground maps, based on the historic maps, show the evolution of Castleblayney from the early 19th century to the present day.

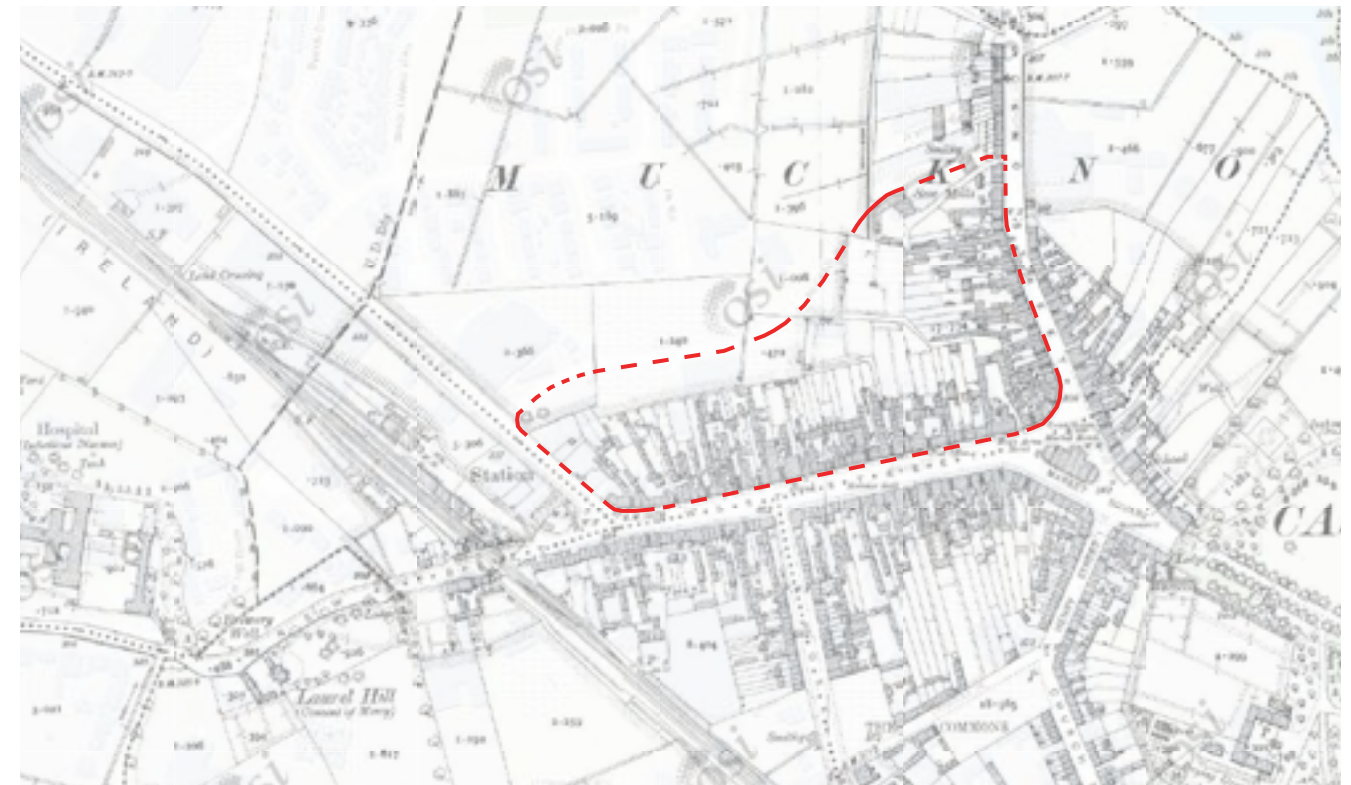
The comparison shows the form of the historic town centre has remained consistent since the early 19th century, particularly along Main Street and Muckno Street. The historic areas have a tighter urban grain whereas later 20th century development has a less defined urban grain. The historic streets and Market Square are strongly defined and contained urban spaces with a coherent architectural character.

The historic maps and aerial photos on the following pages specifically focus on the regeneration plan area and how this has developed over time. Of particular interest is the evolution shown in the aerial images, which highlight how the introduction of McGrath Road has fundamentally changed the backlands of the historic Main Street.

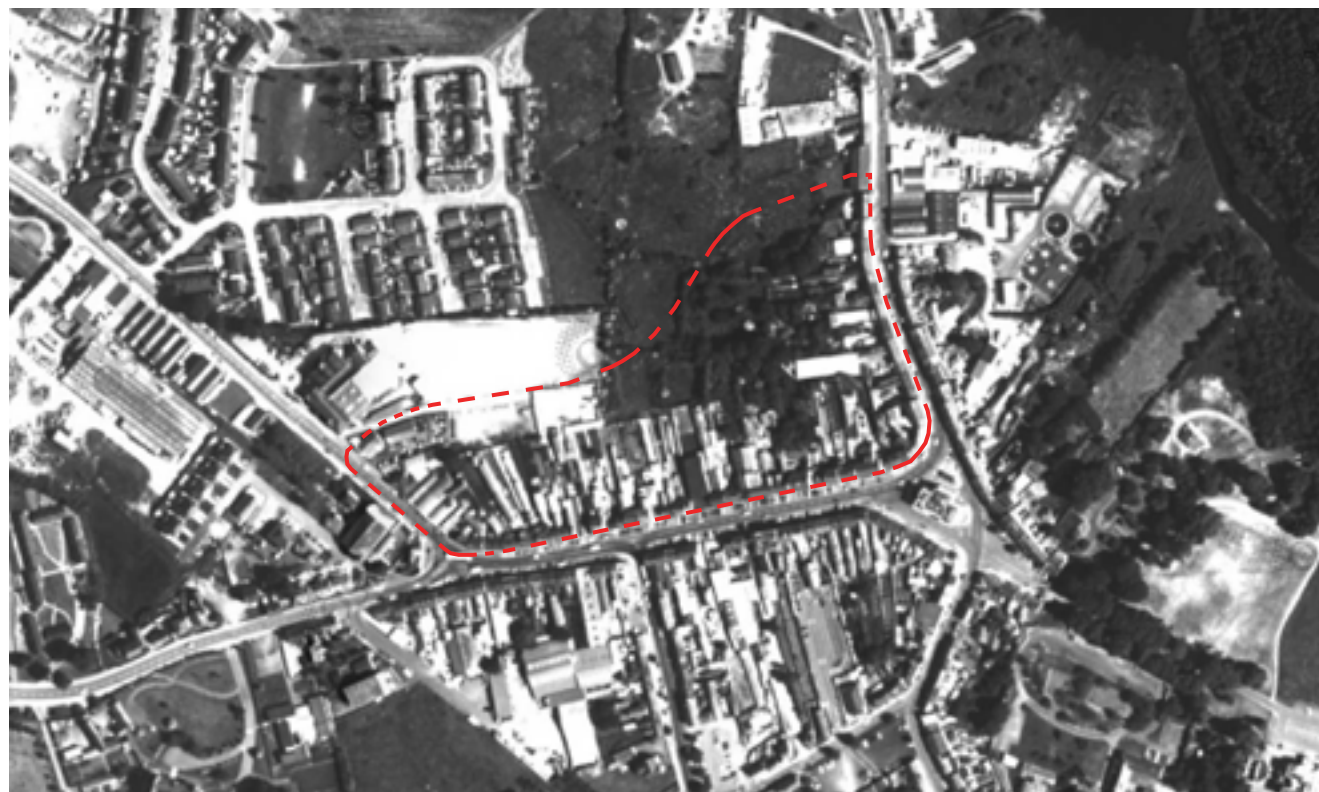
Development Chronology - historic maps and aerial photography



6 inch OS map (1837-1842). Source: osi.ie



25 inch OS map (1888-1913). Source: osi.ie



1995 aerial view. Source: osi.ie



1996-2000 aerial view. Source: osi.ie

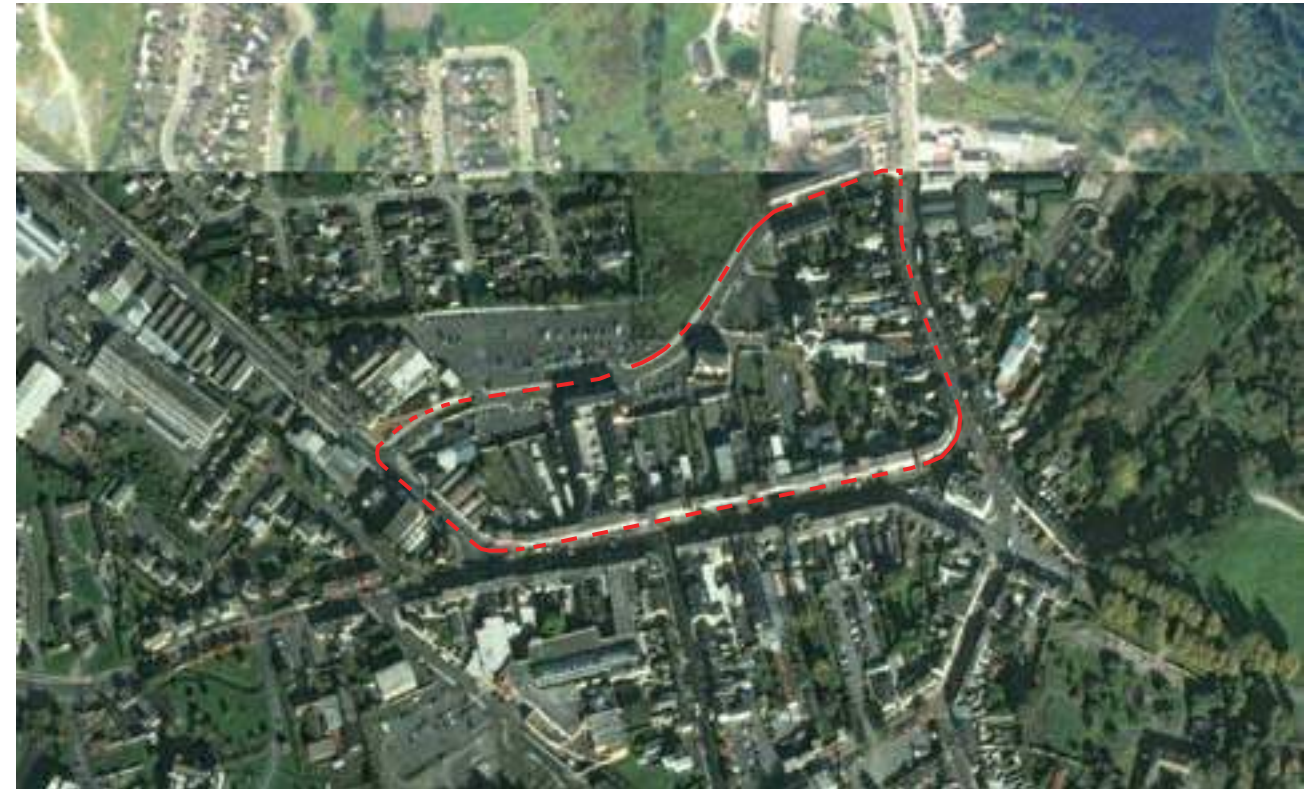
Note that the early stages of McGrath Road are apparent, to the east, with the new housing off Muckno Street and access road opening up the backlands.

Development Chronology - historic maps and aerial photography



2001-2005 aerial view. Source: osi.ie

Access road off Muckno Street has been extended further west to serve a new public car park.



2006-2012 aerial view. Source: osi.ie

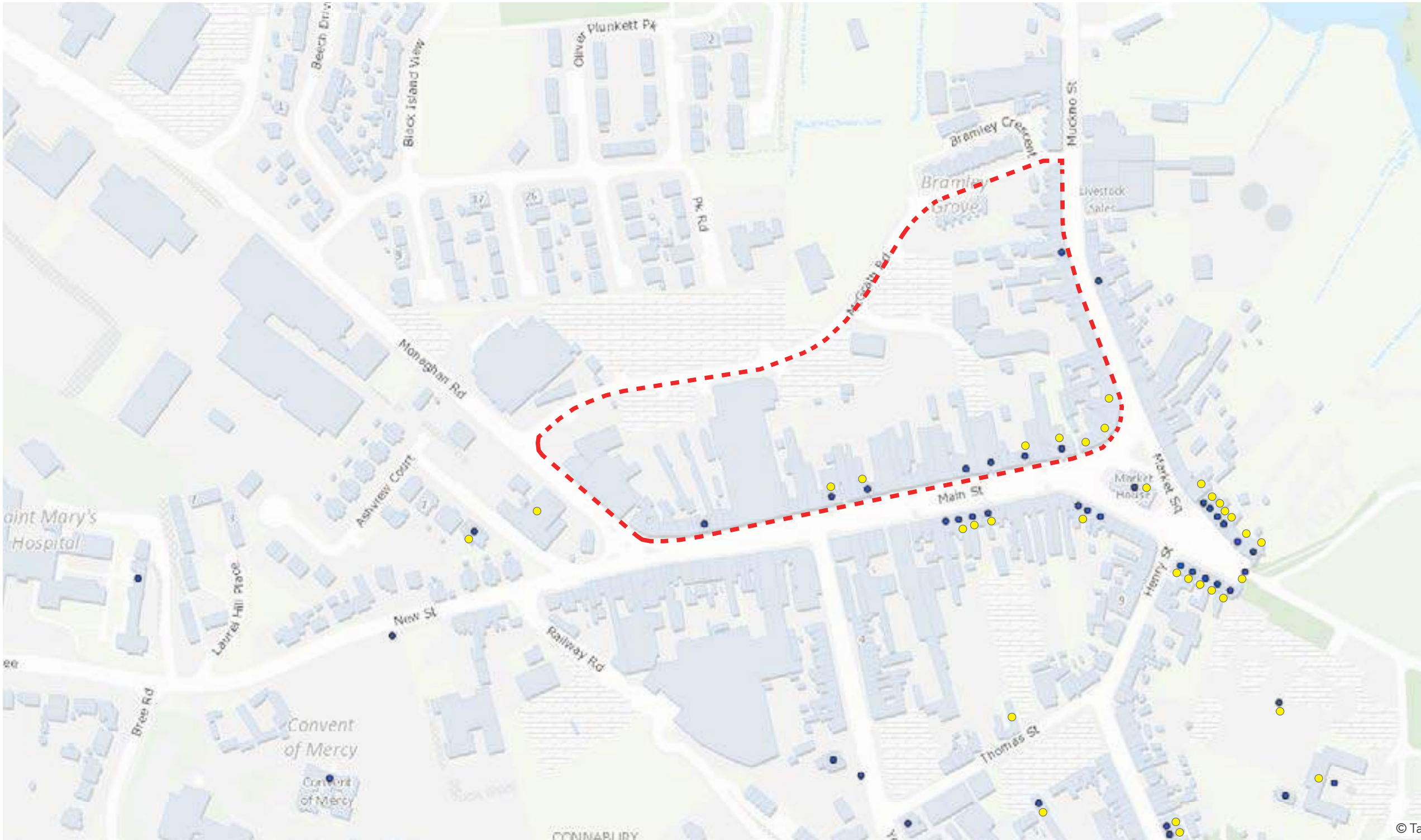
By 2012 McGrath Road has been completed connecting Muckno Street with Monaghan Road. While this access road was the outcome of forward planning, set out in previous Development Plans, provision for pedestrian connection between the off-street car parking provided along McGrath Road and the commercial centre/historic Main Street of Castleblayney was not planned, albeit the link provided through the shopping centre. Equally the public realm and general environmental quality along McGrath Road has not been subject to a coordinated design vision. As a result, development appears to have occurred in a somewhat piecemeal manner.



2024 aerial view. Source: google maps

(left) Note the Ridge building - a new purpose built enterprise centre to accommodate small businesses within the town. It has been very successful leading to a demand for a 'Ridge v.2.0'. While successful functionally, and providing a well designed new building, its immediate setting is dominated by car parking with little provision for pedestrian movement and no tree or other planting.

Built & Archaeological Heritage



Castleblayney Historic Environment Map. Study Area Highlighted in red
Base Plan Source: buildingsofireland.ie

Key

- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage: Structures recorded as being of Regional or higher importance
- Protected Structure (Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025)

Currently there are no Architectural Conservation Areas in Castleblayney, however the group of buildings adjacent to the entrance to Lough Muckno are designated as a proposed Architectural Conservation Area in the Development Plan 2019-2025.. Future consideration should be given to assessing the suitability of the historic centre - Main Street; Muckno Street and Market Square - for designation as an ACA.

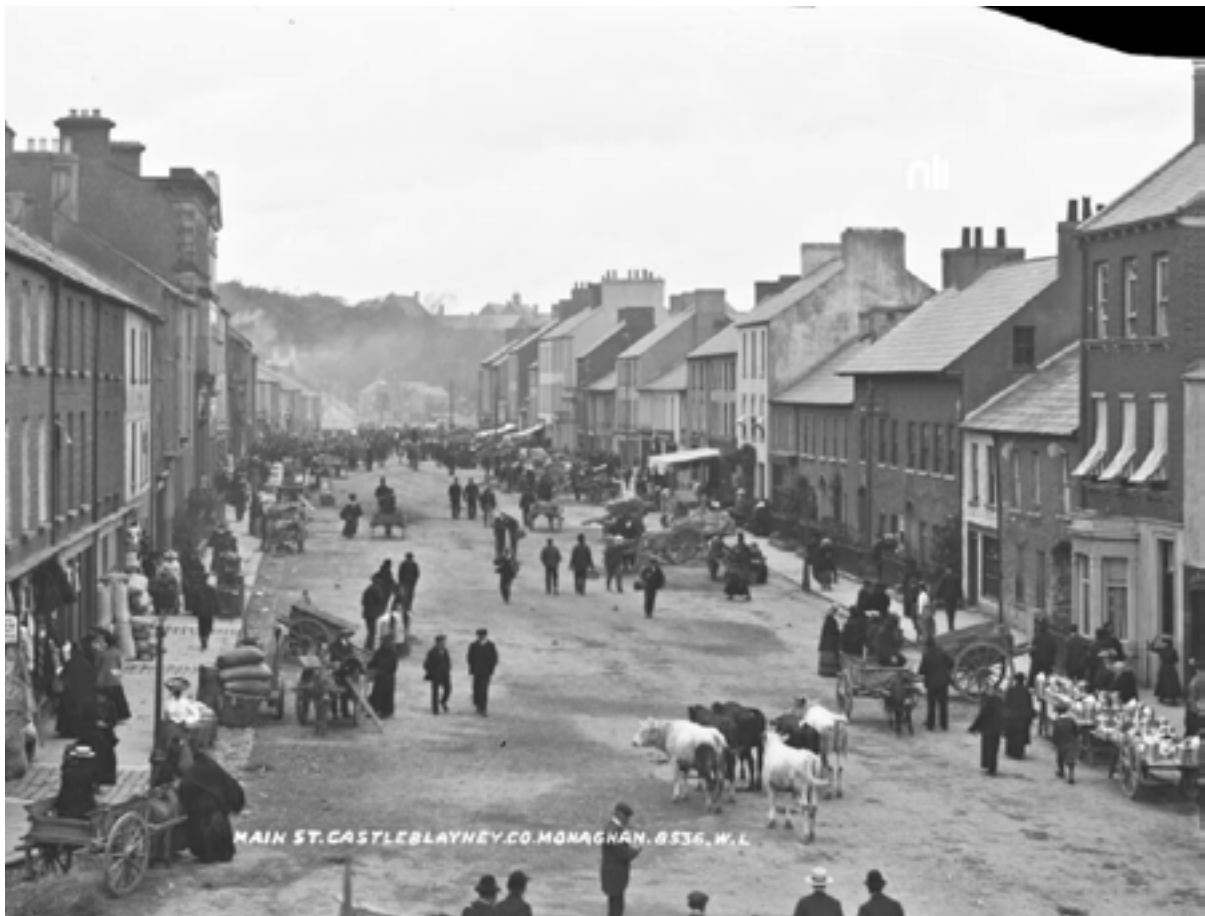
Historic Photographs



Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan Historic aerial photograph. Year: 1955
Source: Morgan, Alexander Campbell, National Library of Ireland

Left: This aerial photograph from the 1950's shows the strong architectural and spatial coherence of Castleblayney, the landmark Market House and Market Square beyond which lies the significant Muckno Estate and Lake - a landscape of cultural and natural heritage value. In the near-ground is the railway line, no longer operational, but indicative of the extensive railway network connecting small and large towns in Ireland at this time.

Right: late 19th/early 20th Century - lively street view from east end of Main Street looking west towards the railway station. Close viewing shows several brick facades, and many well-dressed men and women and well-stocked businesses.



Lawrence Collection (Robert French), ca 1841-1914, National Library of Ireland



Lawrence Collection (Robert French), ca 1841-1914, National Library of Ireland

Left: Similar view to top right photograph but showing a quieter street. The railed open areas on right (north) side show the basement and suggest the influence of the typical Georgian building typology.

Right: Similar view taken in 1990's - the dominance of the car along with associated vehicular traffic infrastructure is notable.



Main Street, Eugene Clerkin photographer, 1990s, National Library of Ireland

Historic Photographs



Lawrence Collection (Robert French), ca 1841-1914, National Library of Ireland

Left: View from railway station eastwards along Main Street. The view shows the gradual increase in building scale and sophistication eastwards with the clock tower of the Market House as a landmark in the distance.

Right: view from alongside the Market House towards Muckno Street - many building seen here survive today along with the mix of uses - residential and shops/businesses.



Lawrence Collection (Robert French), ca 1841-1914, National Library of Ireland



Lawrence Collection (Robert French), ca 1841-1914, National Library of Ireland

Left and Right are similar views of the Market House, Market Square and towards Muckno Street. Approximately 100 years separate the views and yet not much has changed visually. Nonetheless the social, cultural, political and economic changes in this time have been considerable and impactful. And further change again has occurred since the 1990s.



Market House towards Muckno Street, Eugene Clerkin photographer, 1990s, National Library of Ireland

Recent Photographs



Market Square, Muckno Street, Main Street and Henry Street, 2019
Photograph Source: Magnaparte

The Market House

The Market House occupies a prominent location in the town and sits adjacent to the regeneration framework plan area.

The building is currently derelict, however, funding has recently been obtained for the renovation of the Market House and surrounding public realm. The proposals for the building and streetscape can connect successfully with proposals for the regeneration framework plan area.



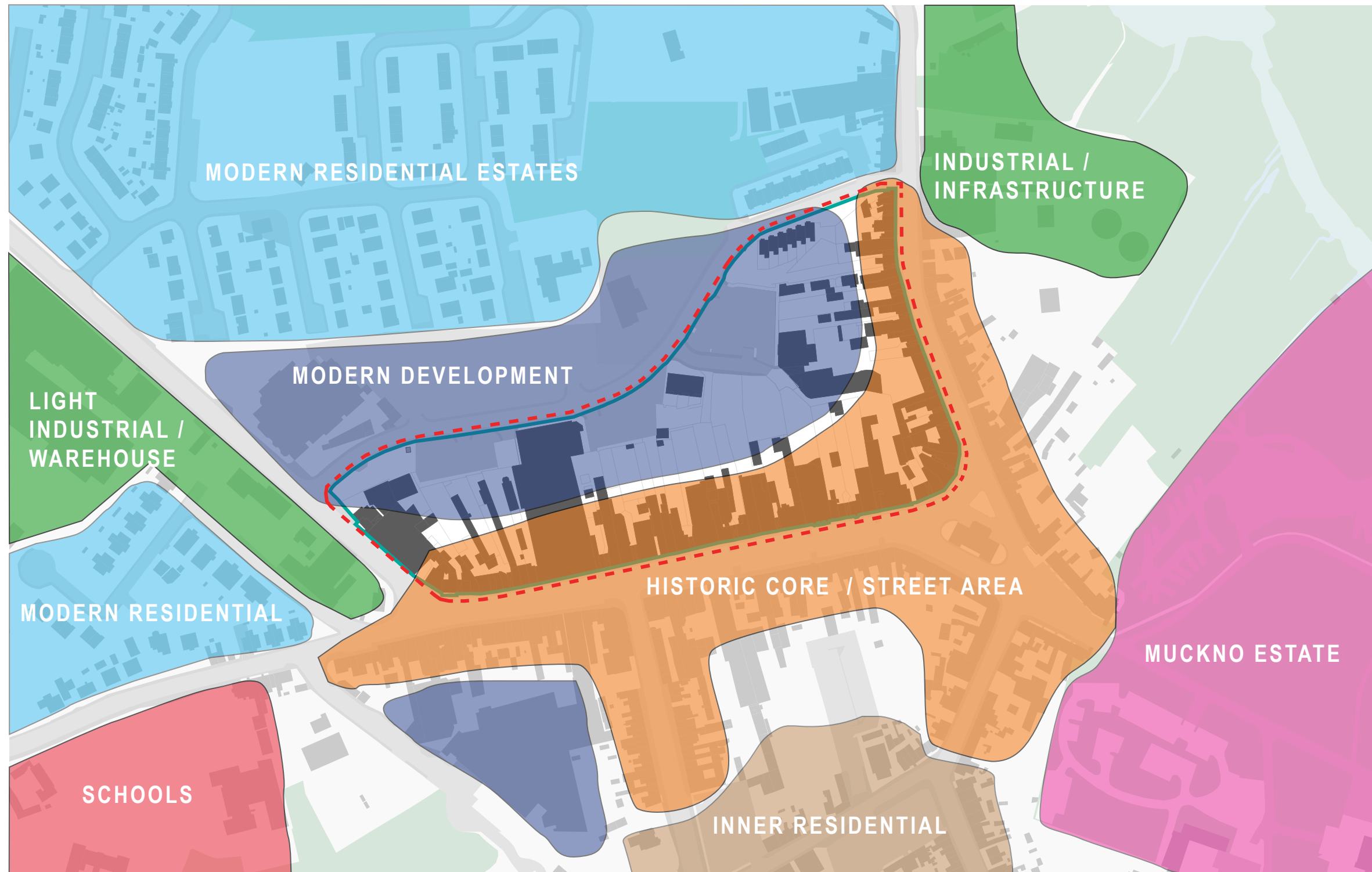
Big Tom Statue Unveiling, September 2018:
Thousands turned out to at the Market Square to celebrate the life and career of Castleblayney musician Tom McBride.
Photograph Source: Mark Richards Photographer

Market Square, Main St. & Muckno St.

Castleblayney has a strong tradition of music and drama, clearly demonstrated by the large gathering for the unveiling of the Big Tom statue seen in the adjacent photograph. The town hosts other annual events,, such as the Mucknomania Festival, which focuses on sport, music and art.

The spatial qualities of Market Square alongside new civic and cultural uses in the restored Market House, enhanced community, recreation and tourism amenities within Muckno Estate and the recent new library, can all bring synergies with the regeneration plans for the Plan Area, in particular the Muckno Street area which currently suffers from notable vacancy and dereliction..

Character Areas



This map highlights a diversity of character areas within the town centre. These are primarily distinguished by either prevailing use and function, or by their architectural character and age. The streets and public spaces are critical connectors between the character areas and safe and pleasant connection between residential areas, the schools, Muckno Estate, and the Historic Core is an important objective.

Important/Strategic Buildings & Uses



The buildings highlighted here have been identified as having strategic importance, either due to their function, their architectural heritage value and/or their prominent location. While some are in active use, making an important contribution to the town, others are vacant or under-performing. These buildings have also been identified as they exemplify the diversity of architectural and use character within the Plan area.

Car parking



Plan showing the main car parking in town centre, including off-street and on-street parking along Main Street.

Carparking Location and Type

There are a variety of car parks located in, around and near the town centre. These include the large privately owned carpark to the Glencarn Hotel, smaller public car parks directly off McGrath Road, and on-street parking.

Some of the car parks are more successfully integrated than others with discrete entrances, retention of historic boundary walls, tree planting, and an orderly reuse of backlands for the main surface area, such as the carpark to the south of Main Street, accessed off Thomas Street with a direct pedestrian link onto Main Street.

The provision of well located car parking in towns such as Castleblayney is an important consideration, as is the manner of its design and integration within the public realm of the town. Currently there is little or no tree or other planting provided within the McGrath Road car parks. The introduction of such amenity along with other useful infrastructure (e.g. electric vehicle charge points; seating and other street furniture) could be provided while maintaining ample parking to serve the town's needs. Parking along Main Street is dense and can be difficult for pedestrians to negotiate. Careful reordering would allow for a more pleasant pedestrian experience (including all ages and abilities), while also addressing need for access to short term parking for businesses and other services on Main Street.

Stakeholder Engagement

McGrath Road looking east



Stakeholder Engagement

Two phases of stakeholder engagement were undertaken. Firstly, a number of stakeholder and public consultations were undertaken as part of the analysis stage of the regeneration framework plan. Local business owners, residents, town organisations, and public representatives were consulted during this process. While not all land owners or residents were able to engage with this process, the information provided by those who could was invaluable to gaining a better and more focused understanding of the town's needs and opportunities.

Secondly a series of follow up meetings were held with property owners whose lands are more directly impacted by the project scenarios set out in the Regeneration Framework Plan. An online presentation of the draft Plan was given by the consultant team on 18 December 2024, and this was followed by in person, one to one, meetings in Castleblayney attended by property owners and/or their agents (architects).

The insights and feedback from the stakeholder engagement carried out in the first stage of engagement are set out on the following page. Feedback to the second stage engagement is also covered in Chapter 7, which indicated general support for the Regeneration Framework Plan and a response range from 'openness' to 'positive interest' regarding the proposed project scenarios.



An important strand of the stakeholder engagement was meeting with property owners/building occupants within the Plan area. Between the two stages of engagement much of the Plan area property owners were engaged.

There was a generally positive response, as highlighted on the plan (left which highlights the properties where the owners and/or their agents were met). This stakeholder engagement was helpful in providing specific background information to inform the preparation of the Plan project scenarios. Along with wider stakeholder consultation it provided important insight on the wider town.

The second stage engagement indicated general support for the Regeneration Framework Plan as drafted.

Stage One Engagement: What you told us: a summary

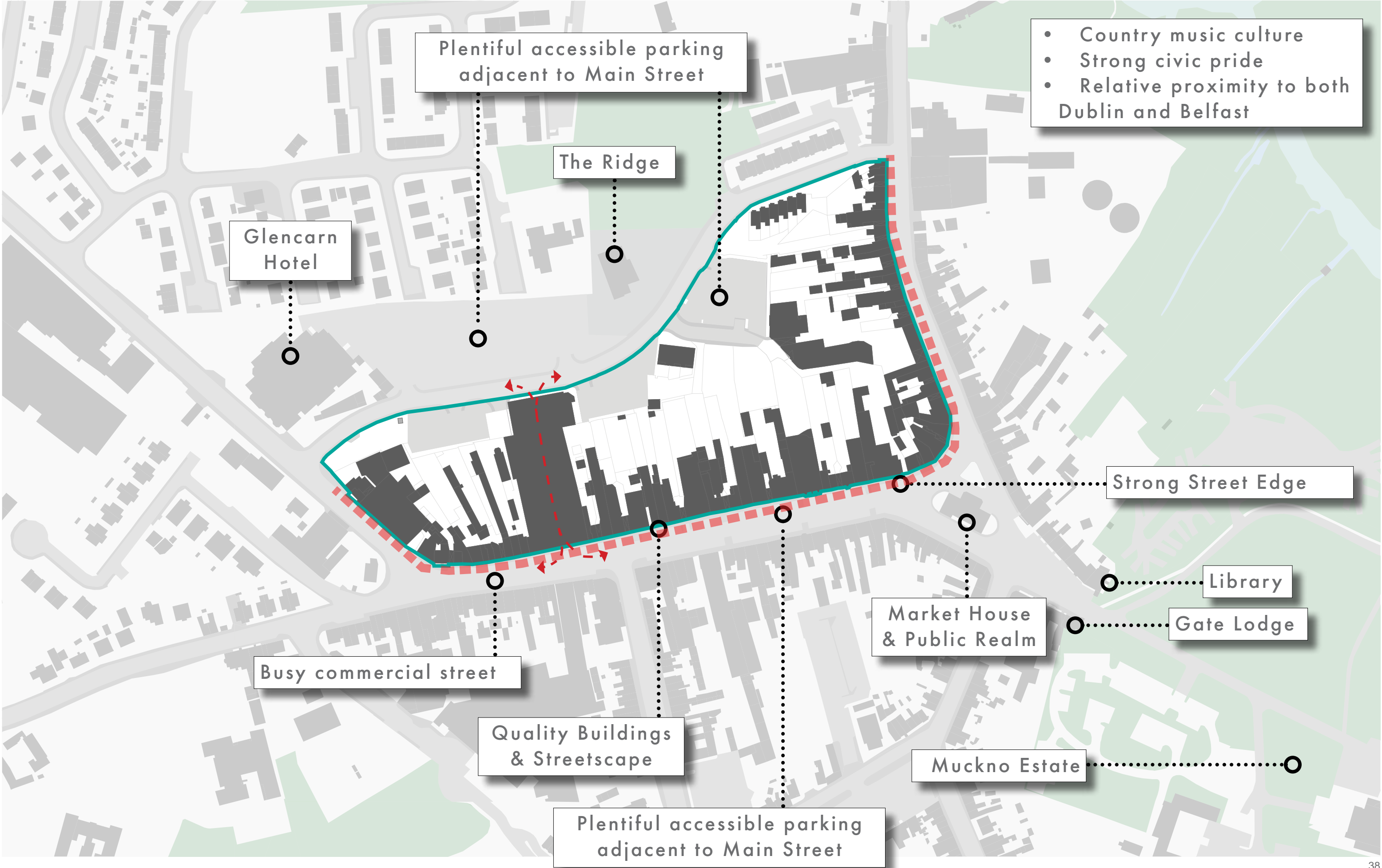
A number of specific issues were raised during the stakeholder engagement.

- There are a number of owner-occupied **‘living over the shop/business’ families** who gave positive feedback , particularly commenting on the benefits of living in the town centre.
- Some businesses doing well, others less so. Former include butchers, coffee shops, Supervalu, toy shop and homewares/gift shop. The latter includes pubs, hotel
- **Night-time economy** is poor, town very empty. Reasons include:
 - No public transport, few taxis (1 or 2)
 - At home entertainment cheaper and increasingly catered for
 - Increasing options for (cheaper) take-away, oven-ready, food.
 - Cost of living encourages staying at home
 - Behaviour changes during pandemic are persisting.
- **Car parking poorly organised**, especially on Main St– free on-street parking used all day by business employees. Means easy parking for shoppers not available
- Muckno Street is challenged by several factors – **traffic, general environmental quality, vacancy**.
- Western end (Monaghan Road) busier than eastern end (Muckno Street). Clear distinction
- **Market House refurbishment very positive**, good expectations
- Library positive for town (some have not used it)
- Muckno Estate a very good amenity for town residents. Well used. Water quality of lake is a concern and limits its use (e.g., no swimming areas possible).
- **The Ridge is very successful** and positive impact for some, no impact for others
- Hotel limited operations – different reasons given for this. It currently operates dining functions at Thursday to Sunday only. The leisure centre with swimming pool is operating.
- Lack of EV chargers noted.
- Proactive Tidy Towns Committee - **facade improvement grants utilised**
- Some plans for possible future developments shared which indicated positive belief in town vitality and viability. These also highlighted challenges in balancing high cost of development and potential over-intensification of development proposals such that any resulting projects do not result in poor quality outcomes.

Site Assets and Qualities



Assets



Assets

The positive aspects of the town centre should be encouraged, promoted and enhanced.

Strong historic streetscape and spatial enclosure, particularly along Main Street and Muckno Street, with the west end of Main Street more commercially active.

Positive civic projects, such as the new library building and proposed Market House refurbishment and reuse works.

Proximity of hotel, although limited operations currently, can provide valuable visitor and resident services to the town centre.

The Ridge, is proving successful with a second ridge building under consideration.



Active Nodes and Linkages



Developing on from the positive aspects of the town centre, a number of active nodes and routes have been identified. These nodes and routes either currently exist or can be realised, or enhanced in conjunction with upcoming projects.

The regeneration framework plan area can play a key role in promoting three key nodes lying just outside the boundary of the plan area - The Ridge, the Market House, and the commercially active west end of Main Street. Alongside this the route from Muckno Estate to Main Street and beyond is a positive connection between important amenities which can be improved and enhanced.

The carpark along McGrath Road provide ample, well-located, parking close to Main Street, though there are currently limited connections between the two.

Parking Provision

Car parks highlighted with number of parking spaces



Large car park with significant capacity



Multiple car parking locations

The Ridge
37 car spaces

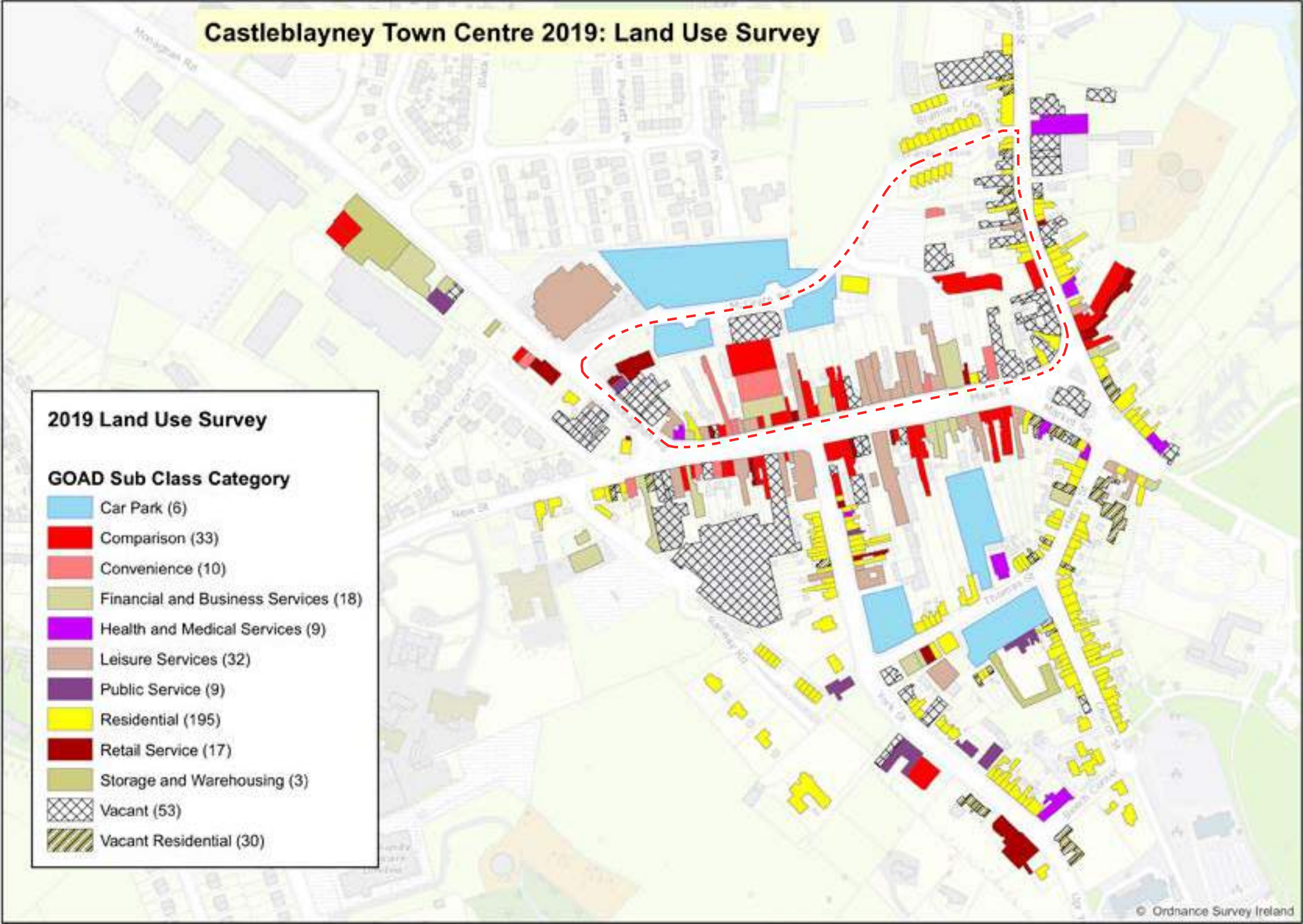


Car park integrated well into town block



Challenges / Weaknesses



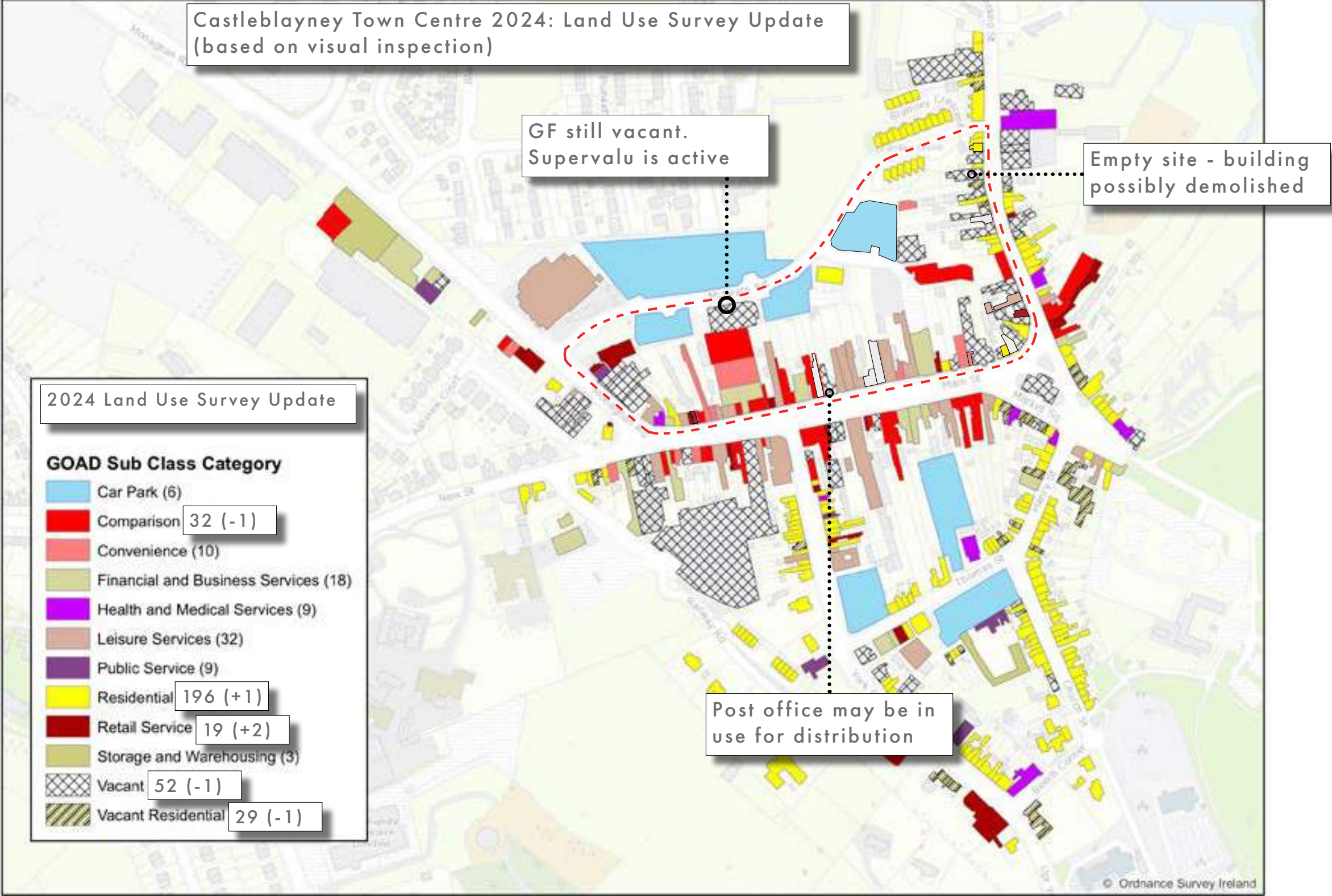


Castleblayney Town Centre 2019 - Land Use Survey
Source: Monaghan County Council

Land Use Survey 2019

A land use survey of the town centre was carried out in 2019, which included the regeneration framework plan area. It uses a methodology developed for the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check initiative initiated in Ireland by the Heritage Council. This is a useful tool to monitor vibrancy of town centres. It has been updated as part of this study and helps to identify where and what occupancy changes have occurred and where long-term vacancies might persist. In 2019 of the approx 70 properties fronting onto the Plan area streets (Main St, Muckno St, McGrath Rd, Monaghan Road, over 26% were vacant/partially vacant. While this is in line with vacancy recorded in other Irish towns, it is notably higher than found in other European states.

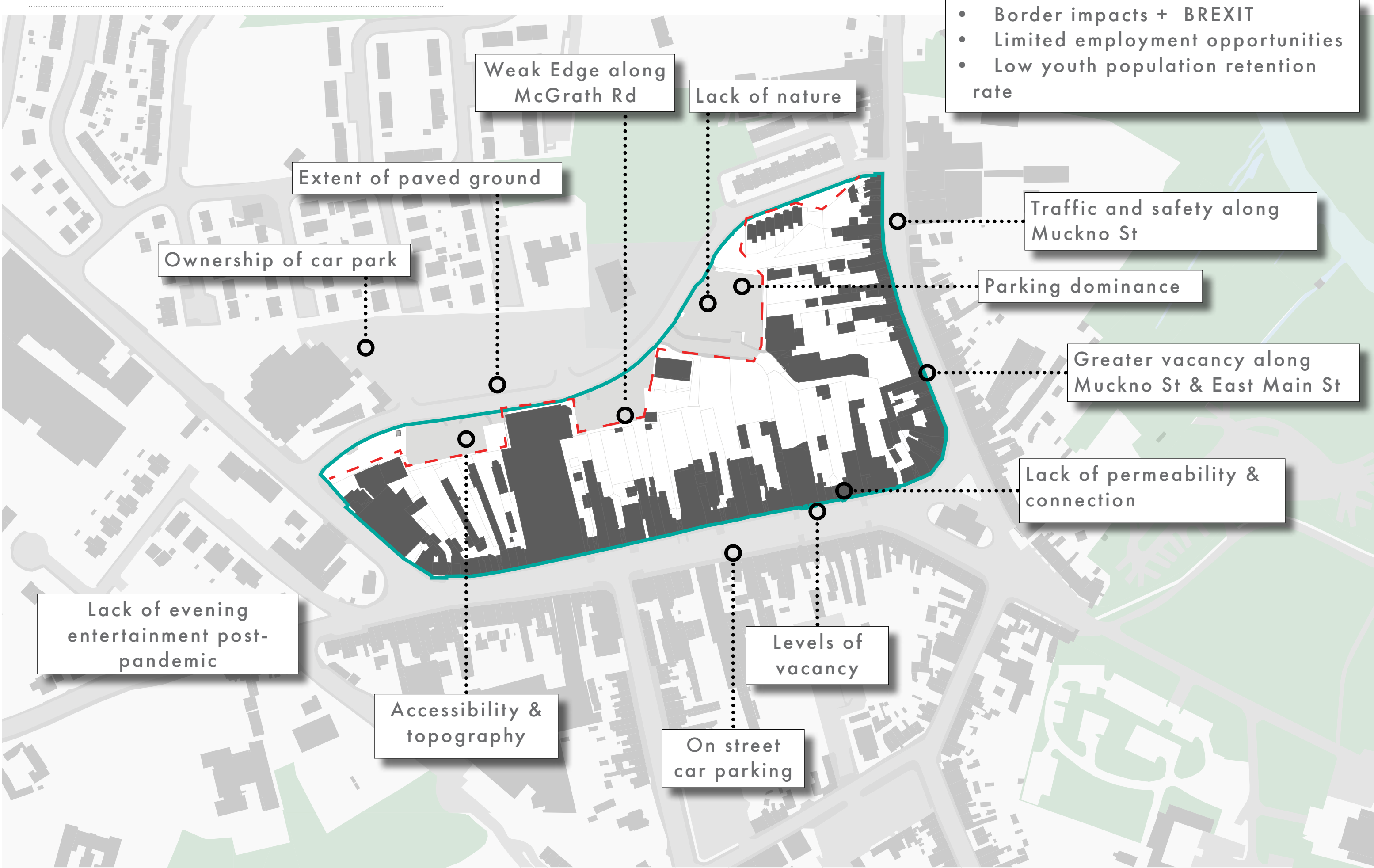
Vacancy



Updated Land Use Survey

A high-level update was carried out to assist in updating the 2019 land use survey. This was a visual survey and focused on the regeneration framework plan area only. What is noticeable in both 2019 and 2024 surveys, is the vacancy rate on Muckno Street is greater than along Main Street, which has remained more or less the same since 2019. Occupancy along Main Street is greater and more stable west of the Main St junction with the Dublin Road. Some 2019 vacant units have been brought back into use, which is a positive, however, there are still a significant number of vacant units in the town centre. It is worth noting that this is unfortunately typical of many small towns throughout Ireland currently. The vacancy rate of properties fronting onto the Plan area remains substantially the same as in 2019.

Challenges



Challenges



Aims, Themes & Projects Towards Regeneration



Castleblayney Library - a successful new facility for the town
Source: Craftstudio Architecture

Regeneration Framework Plan Aims

This section sets out a number of Aims which have emerged from the research, field work and stakeholder engagement process. These aims underpin and inform the emerging project scenario proposals which are presented in this section of the Regeneration Framework Plan.

Enhance and make better use of what already exists

- Promote the positive elements of the town as an attractive place for people to live in and visit;
- Enhance the town's strong civic pride by bringing back into use many of the vacant attractive properties
- Use and reuse existing resources, including the built environment, as a priority
- Work with existing active organisations within Castleblayney

Support wider town

- An active and lively town centre benefits the entire town community and wider hinterland.
- Connect with associated regeneration projects outside the Plan area - e.g., Market House & Public Realm, and Muckno Estate - and ensure these projects connect with the town centre Regeneration area.
- Increase numbers and demographic diversity of people living in the town centre, ensuring housing and associated public realm is of good quality to sustain a settled community.

Improve environment

- Regeneration projects to make a positive contribution to nature and biodiversity
- Improve energy efficiency within the town centre lands, including existing buildings. Integrate appropriate nature-based solutions in public realm and development projects.
- Make the area more beautiful. (creating positive and enriching places and experiences for people, beyond functionality - ref. The New European Bauhaus).
- Safer, cleaner, calmer town centre
- Consider all users (accessibility and inclusivity)
- Improving environment for living well in town centre

Funding opportunities

- Seek to match projects with available funding schemes (EU, Regional, National and Local funding)

Regeneration Framework Project Themes

The Regeneration Framework Plan has developed a number of Project Scenarios which could be implemented in phases or in combination. These project scenarios respond to, and align with, the Regeneration Framework Plan Aims listed previously. They are schematic and show one approach, further investigation, design development and feasibility studies may refine these. However, they are envisaged as a suite of initiatives which can be delivered by public and private sectors, or in partnerships. The holistic and joined up approach is important to ensure potential individual projects combine with others to improve the overall. Collectively they can lead to a greatly enhanced physical environment, more active use of existing buildings and space, including a mix of amenity, commercial and residential uses; a more pleasant and easily connected pedestrian environment. The project scenarios are set out under 7 themes as described below and on the following pages:

A Projects improving permeability between Main St & McGrath Rd

B Backlands developments - opportunities for housing

C Main St & McGrath Road Carparking - improvements & interventions

- Reorder parking / Recover space for pedestrians
- Enhance environment through planting, public realm interventions and amenity oriented facilities

D Increasing residential (reuse of existing vacant and new infill buildings)

E ‘Ridge v.2’ potential to reuse and extend cluster of existing underused/vacant buildings

- Cluster of existing underused buildings

F Bring vacant buildings back into use & improve energy efficiency

G Shopfront and Facade improvements

Project Scenarios

Following the research, engagement and analysis stage a number of locations within the Plan area were identified as suitable for interventions.

The Plan on this page presents an overview of what could be achieved if all project scenarios were implemented. This provides a form of Regeneration Framework Plan Vision.

One of the key project themes is to introduce improved (pedestrian) permeability between the Main Street and McGrath Road. This will have multiple benefits, from linking Muckno Estate to the Ridge and the residential areas to the north, to making better use of the McGrath Road car parks, to opening up the backlands for (re) development.

To achieve the improved permeability the focus is on using existing, historic arched openings on Main St, and a historic lane adjacent to the former Hope Arms. Delivering these links forms part of a number of specific Project Scenarios described on the following pages and it is envisaged these through routes would form part of the implementation of these projects.

Finally, while not an identified Project Scenario for this plan, the proposed new link road from the Monaghan Road (R983) to the Keady Road (R181) which is provided for in the current Monaghan County Development Plan, is considered an important development to achieve the Regeneration Framework Plan aims, in particular improving the environment along Main Street and Muckno Street.



Project Scenarios

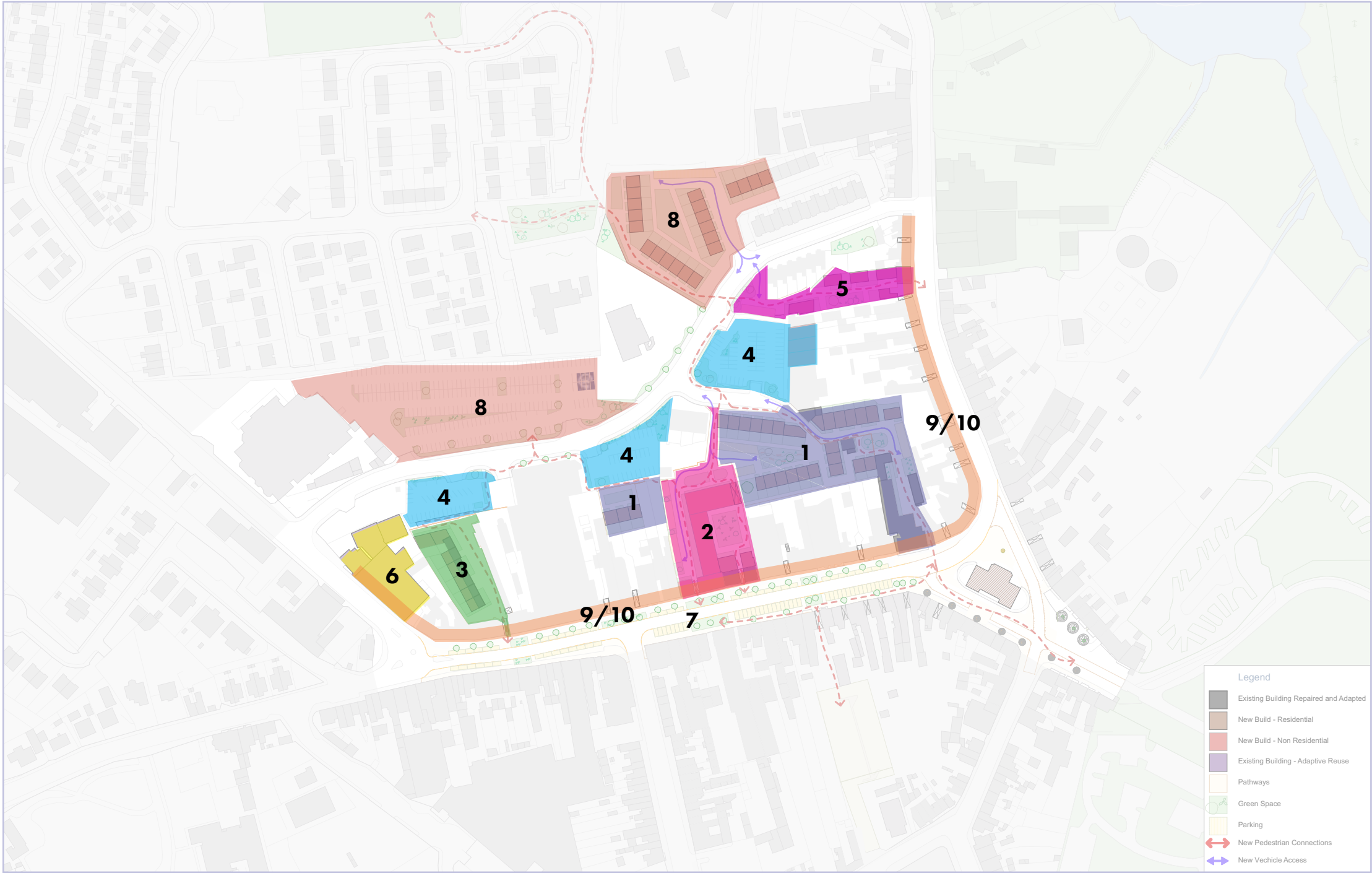
Some project scenarios cover several plots and current ownerships. Some of these could be developed incrementally, others would more likely involve implementation as a single larger project. Some require removal and/or modification of outbuildngs or extensions to existing properties on Main Street. This will require more detailed survey to establish the extent and approach to any required interventions and should be developed in conjunction with associated reuse and backland infill projects.

The Regeneration Framework Plan Vision has taken a full Plan area view, while aware of property boundaries, in order to explore how small and larger scale development projects might help achieve the Plan aims. While there has been productive engagement with many property owners in the Plan area, stakeholder engagement has not been possible with every owner where project scenarios are proposed.

The Project Scenarios are presented individually on the following pages.

The phasing of implementation suggested by the order in which the Scenarios are presented is not proposed as the only sequence that could be undertaken, and multiple phases could be carried out concurrently.

- Project 1:** Hope Arms Hotel & Backlands
- Project 2:** The Ridge v.2 + infill
- Project 3:** The Shambles
- Project 4:** Enhancing Carparks - space for nature
- Project 5:** Muckno Street Infill
- Project 6:** Bogues Garage
- Project 7:** Main Street Improvements
- Project 8:** Hotel Carpark & Infill Housing
- Project 9:** Tackling Vacancy
- Project 10:** Shopfront & Facade Improvements



Regeneration Project Scenario 1: Hope Arms Hotel and Backlands

Hope Arms Hotel & Backlands

The proposed new pedestrian route between the Market House and The Ridge is a key element to unlock the potential of this town centre block.

The Hope Arms Hotel is a impressive building, of both architectural and historical importance, strategically located in the town. The Monaghan County Record of Protected Structures states:

- *The Hope Arms Hotel Located on Main Street directly opposite the entrance to Lough Muckno this former hotel is registered as being operational since 1824. The building’s plain frontage belies its impressive interior and detailed fittings. It also has an attractive set of wrought-iron railings. Its most notable guest was Charles Stewart Parnell who resided in the hotel in 1883 during the Monaghan By-Election of that year.*

The building has suffered recent (2024) partial collapse and requires sensitive and significant repair works to bring it back into active use. The heritage value of the building warrants investment in its recovery which should be undertaken by a suitably experienced and skilled design and contractor team. Conservation and design skills are required to deliver creative well-informed and sustainable solutions.



Regeneration Project Scenario 1 - Hope Arms Hotel and Backlands

Stakeholder engagement in preparing the Regeneration Plan indicated the potential reuse of the former Hope Arms Hotel for short-term, holiday type accommodation - possibly a hotel, guesthouse, or 'restaurant with rooms' type function. Adjacent historic outbuildings might also be adapted for similar type uses creating a small cluster of visitor/tourism focused facilities, identified as currently lacking in the town.

Infill residential units are proposed to the rear of the historic buildings, forming a series of intimate courtyards and providing passive surveillance onto the re-established historic lane which runs from Main St/Market Square, through the Hope Arms lands and connects onto McGrath Road.

The location of the residential units and small green space seeks to integrate historic structures, boundary walls, mature tree, in the backlands, working within these constraints to provide an authentic and characterful development. Suitable scale, form, massing and approach to public realm is suggested in the selection of precedent project examples below.

The precedent projects also illustrate how well designed housing can provide passive surveillance onto shared space streets/lanes while striking an effective balance of privacy for the resident and sense of safety for the pedestrian who might chose this route to connect from a car park on the McGrath Road to the refurbished Market House, or for shopping on Main Street, or to an activity within Mukcno Estate.

Vehicular access is proposed (blue line on plan) from McGrath Road applying a shared surface approach (Ref DMURS). There would be no vehicular access from Market Square. The pedestrian route (red line on plan) connects through from Market Square to McGrath Road.



This Project Scenario reactivates existing vacant properties, underused backland areas, potentially obsolete structures and, surviving historic fabric and landscape of interest across several land ownerships.

It shows how these elements can combine to provide appropriate new uses in the town centre and create an enhanced environment, at a scale which is comfortable in the Castleblayney context. This scenario will support the Market House and Square Refurbishment and can assist in achieving the Regeneration Framework Plan aims.



(top) Saint Vincent de Paul, Gorey
Source: Paul Keogh Architects



(right) Prigel Street, London
Source: Peter Barber Architects



Regeneration Project Scenario 2 - The Ridge v.2 plus adjoining infill housing

The Ridge v.2

A second Ridge development is under consideration for Castleblayney in the town centre. The first Ridge facility has been very successful and stakeholder feedback indicated a demand for a second ‘Ridge’ and a desire for it to be in the town centre, and, if feasible, to involve the reuse of currently vacant properties.

This Regeneration Project Scenario proposes to develop The Ridge v.2 within the former Post Office building (a protected structure) and site, and extending across adjoining properties to the east. It is proposed to reuse and adapt the existing buildings with new built extensions to the rear to provide a facility of similar, or greater, floor area to the current building. This would not only provide for the much needed second Ridge building, but would secure a positive use for the Post Office building and also ensure that employment generating activity is maintained within the heart of the town.

The location of the Ridge 2 could also facilitate a new public route, or routes, between Main Street and McGrath Road. This also opens the possibility for housing infill around a planted open space to the east of the proposed Ridge v2, and further housing to the rear of properties to the west of the Post Office

The principle of adapting adjoining empty, or underused buildings on Main Street, developing purpose designed rear extensions, integrating pedestrian routes and forming landscaped courtyard spaces within the depth of the backland plots, could be adapted to other locations, giving some flexibility of location for a Ridge v.2.



Regeneration Project Scenario 2 - The Ridge v.2



The scenario proposed for The Ridge v.2 incorporates four historic plots on Main Street. The approach is to integrate these, retain and adapt existing buildings on Main Street and redevelop the backland plots. In this scenario the Post Office building (a protected structure). is retained and the adjacent flat roofed two storey amusements building is adapted (or potentially replaced), and extended to accommodate The Ridge v.2 building within the centre of the town. The existing three storey building to the east of these (The Kitchen) is retained, with later flat roof rear extension replaced with a more compact extension, to support a continued bar/retail/commercial ground floor use with residential on the upper floors.

Public routes are created through the existing archway entrances off Main Street, linking onto McGrath Road via the backlands. The proposed form of the Ridge 2 provides for limited parking within the Post Office plot. The Ridge 2 rises to three storeys along Main Street, dropping to two storeys along the middle section of the rear extension, and rising again to three storeys at the rear.

The rear extensions form new public and semi-public planted courtyards which are part of the pedestrian spine connecting Main Street and McGrath Road. The formation of the public route creates a direct link between the carpark to the south and the first Ridge building and beyond.

The plan to the left also shows how opening up the rear backlands for The Ridge v2 development can also support adjacent infill housing opportunities to the rear of several Main Street plots. These could also be live/work units thus supporting remote working opportunities.

Regeneration Project Scenario 3 - The Shambles

The Shambles

The Shambles is the historic name (ref early OS Maps), given to an area to the west of Main Street. This project scenario introduces another new pedestrian link between Main Street and McGrath Road, this time to the western end of Main Street.

There are existing historic linear outbuildings in the rear plots which could be retained, extended and converted to residential, studio/workshop (light office or craft studio type), or live/work type uses. As with other new pedestrian connections proposed, providing building uses along the pedestrian route can help activate the link and for greater sense of safety through passive surveillance provided by the building uses.

In this scenario it is not envisaged to provide vehicular access into the backland plot as this is not feasible without excessive intervention. Parking contributions, or off-site parking may be feasible.

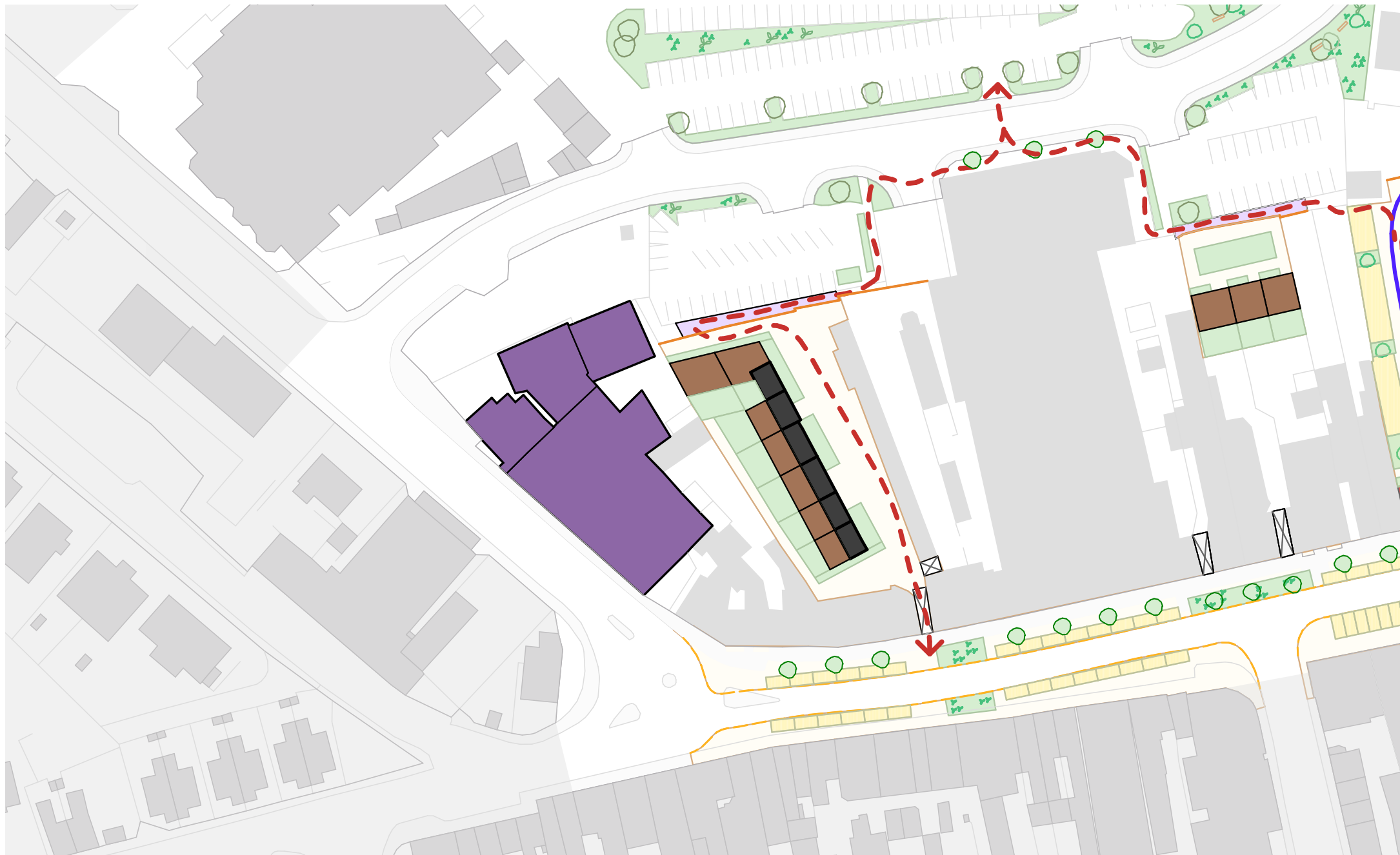


Regeneration Project Scenario 3 - The Shambles



The shambles represents another backland infill residential development, however, incorporating existing historic outbuilding structures. Retaining these outbuildings not only uses existing built resources/fabric, it also creates a more unique character, distinct from the other new-build infill developments proposed in this regeneration framework plan. The outbuildings are an important part of the history of this area.

Backland development once again unlocks the potential to introduce a new public link between the Main Street and McGrath Road. There is a significant level difference between the backland plot and the adjacent car park which will require provision of a sensitively integrated ramp and steps. These should be conceived and designed as landscape elements, with consideration of durable materials, potential to introduce planting, seating, etc.



Regeneration Project Scenario 4 - Enhancing the Carparks

Enhancing the Carparks - making space for nature

The carparks within the regeneration framework plan area along McGrath Road are typically quite sterile, fully paved, with little or no landscaping provided. There is little sense of place and no provision for seating, or to have a pleasant outside lunch/coffee break for someone working in the surrounding buildings. These kind of outside opportunities need to be factored into the design of public spaces found along McGrath Road. Equally, the extent of paved surface, with no tree or native planting, excludes opportunities to nature/biodiversity or to provide more sustainable approaches to surface water drainage, which are being promoted nationally through climate action and biodiversity policy

The proposition in this Project Scenario is to alter the car park layouts to enable introduction of pockets of native planting, including trees and potential swales to take surface water. These landscaped pockets are placed close to the road edge and within the car parks, exploiting corners and any space with the opportunity to ‘de-pave’ and plant. Over time, the planting will soften the overall environment and some can also create mini-parks to accomodate some seating for small informal outdoor seating when the weather allows.

As part of this scenario the gap site fronting onto the northeastern-most carpark is to be infilled with a mixed use development of commercial at ground floor and residential above, similar to the adjacent properties, consolidating this edge and providing more active uses.



Regeneration Project Scenario 4 - Enhancing the Carparks



Introducing landscaping - native tree and other planting to the existing carparks along McGrath Road would greatly improve the environment along this route. Currently the hard surfaces create a harsh environment, which does not encourage places of pause or rest. In each of the carparks the spaces have been altered to provide a band of landscaping along the road edge. This is done with limited loss of carparking spaces, perhaps over time the planted area might increase, where pressure for parking may reduce

At key junctions the landscaping expands out to create a wider public space where a cluster of trees could grow and seating placed to provide a space for locals to rest or have a coffee/lunch.



Peace Gardens Dublin, Source: DFLA

Regeneration Project Scenario 5 - Muckno Street Infill

Muckno Street Infill

To the northeast of the Plan area there is a long linear site where the original building onto Muckno Street has been demolished.

The proposed infill development reinstates the street edge and provides a residential development to the rear. This development also incorporates the neighbouring plot to provide suitable space between units and allows for a planted shared garden space.

This proposal identifies the potential benefit of two neighbouring properties being developed together to maximise both developments while still ensuring an appropriate level of residential amenity space is provided,

The infill development can also allow for pedestrian access for residents from Muckno Street and off McGrath Road. This route is not envisaged as a public route.



Regeneration Project Scenario 5 - Muckno Street Infill



As the existing building along the street has been demolished, this project proposed to infill this plot to reinstate the strong street edge.

To the rear a series of individual houses provide accommodation along the long linear plots, incorporating a generous shared garden space that allows the individual units a sense of spaciousness.

The proposal benefits from the neighbouring plot owners coming together for the benefit of both to maximise the volume of development, while also sharing generous open space that would be difficult to achieve if developed as single plots.

Locating the carparking to the rear of the site frees up the central open space for more landscaping and usable amenity space.



3D sketch model of infill site proposal

Regeneration Project Scenario 6 - Bogues Garage

Bogues Garage

To the west end of the Plan area the former Bogues garage building is currently vacant, with the roof removed. This project looks to reinstate the distinctive vaulted roof and refubish the buildings so they can be returned to an active commercial use.

A previous proposal to redevelop the site as a multi-storey apartment block over ground floor retail/commercial with basement parking did not proceed. Stakeholder engagement indicates such an approach is not currently feasible. Therefore, the approach suggested in this scenario takes a more modest approach to reactivating this substantial and strategically located site.

The approach retains, reuses and adapts what is an interesting example of a vernacular industrial structure once common in Irish towns, but which is now fast disappearing. Creatively upgraded, this large empty shed could accommodate a range of uses which might suit the larger volumes, or could be subdivided into smaller units, thus extending commercial uses onto Monaghan Road and introducing the possibility of multiple occupants and users, such as a gym, workshop space, etc.



Regeneration Project Scenario 7 - Main Street Improvements

Main Street Public Realm Improvements

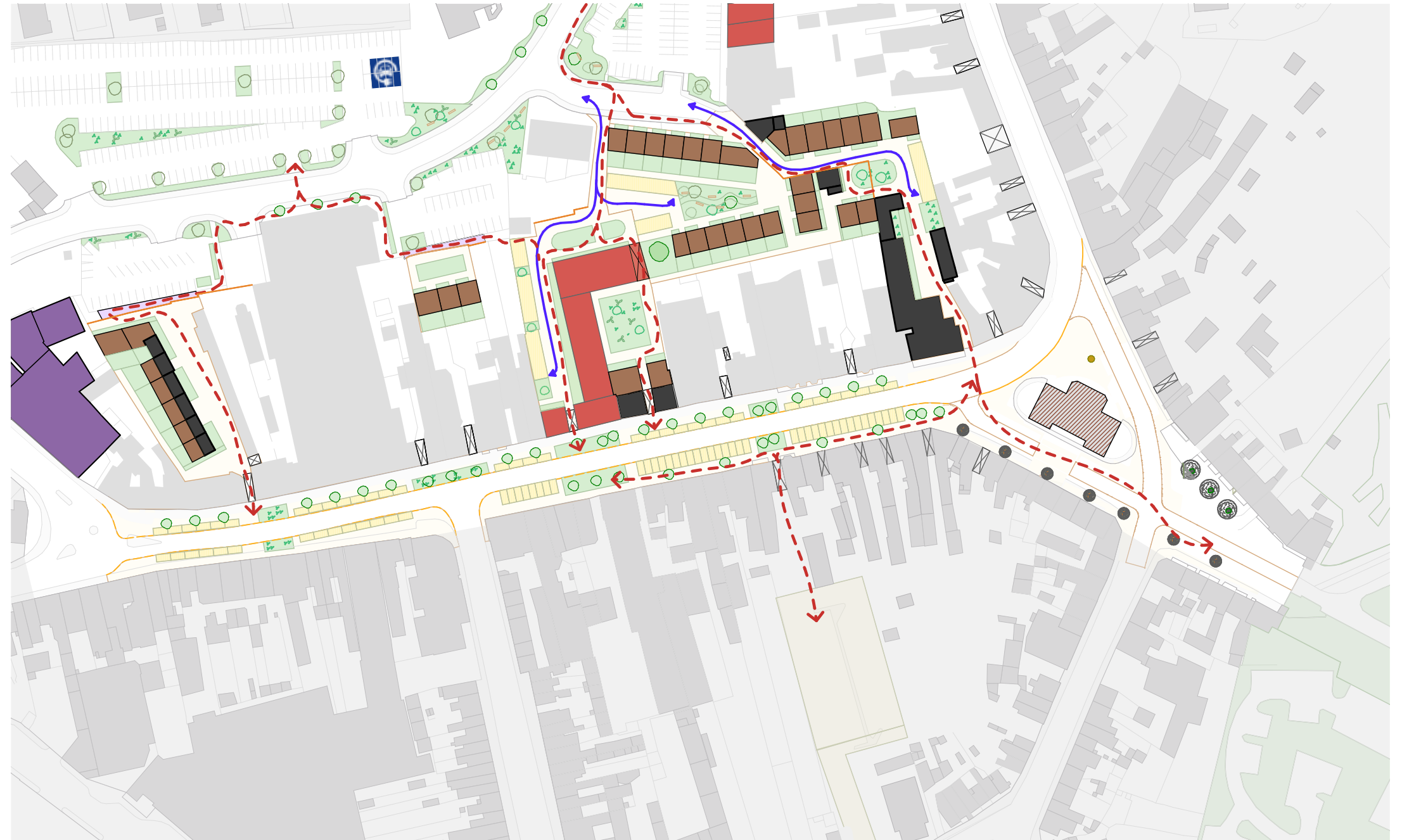
Although the Main Street is outside the regeneration plan area, it has a significant impact on the town centre.

The proposals put forward in the Castleblayney Town Public Realm and Economic Plan 2019 seek to improve the environment for pedestrian users through widening pavements, additional tree planting and adding safe places to cross.

In this project scenario the 2019 proposals have been adjusted to align with the wider vision of the regeneration framework plan. In particular, the widening of pavements coincide with the proposed new pedestrian routes introduced between Main Street and McGrath Road, thus creating more generous spaces where greater pedestrian activity is anticipated. The pavement in front of the buildings identified for The Ridge v.2 project scenario, is widened with tree planting and seating to provide a south facing space which building occupants and visitors might enjoy and use. It also invites more public-facing uses to occupy the ground floor units.

These interventions link up with the proposals for the Market Square streetscape around the Market House. Together they create a pleasing and attractive public space along the route between the entrance of Muckno Estate and west along Main Street.

For towns like Castleblayney which want to improve their attractiveness to visitors (tourists and local users) and residents, providing quality street environments is a critical component towards success.



Left: Main St, Castleblayney - currently little quality space for pedestrian users. Right & far-right - Clonakilty and Westport, where public realm improvements, including generous planting, quality materials and carefully located pavement widening, has created pleasant street environments contributing to both towns' successful regeneration.



Regeneration Project Scenario 8 - Hotel Carpark + Infill Housing

Hotel Carpark

As with the interventions to the Main Street, the proposals to the hotel carpark are outside the boundary of the regeneration framework plan area.

However, as the carpark is a prominent element along McGrath Road and plays an important role in the town, it is proposed to address this carpark in a similar way to those carparks on the south side of McGrath Road.

Additional landscaping is introduced, particularly along McGrath Road with EV charging points provided for. Additional trees are planted along McGrath Road where they don't exist, such as in front of the shopping centre and along the street edge of The Ridge complex.

This project scenario also proposes a residential infill scheme on the Local Authority owned lands immediately east of The Ridge. The scenario envisages this development integrating a pedestrian and cycle link to connect to existing residential and commercial areas to the north, as well as any future new public park and housing which may be developed here . The new housing is set around an open landscaped shared space, again providing opportunity to introduce nature-based approaches for surface water drainage, and/or play and recreation spaces.

Together, these interventions, while modest, can greatly improve the environment along McGrath Road, as well as providing for well connected additional housing within the town centre.



Hotel car park - poor street edge, no planting, unpleasant walking experience



LA site adjacent to The Ridge - potential to enable links to north



NTA SuDS for urban streets



Grey to Green, Sheffield - nature-based planting introduced



Sandyford, Dublin housing scheme (Shay Cleary Architects) - around landscaped green area.

Regeneration Project Scenario 9 - Tackling Vacancy

Tackling Vacancy

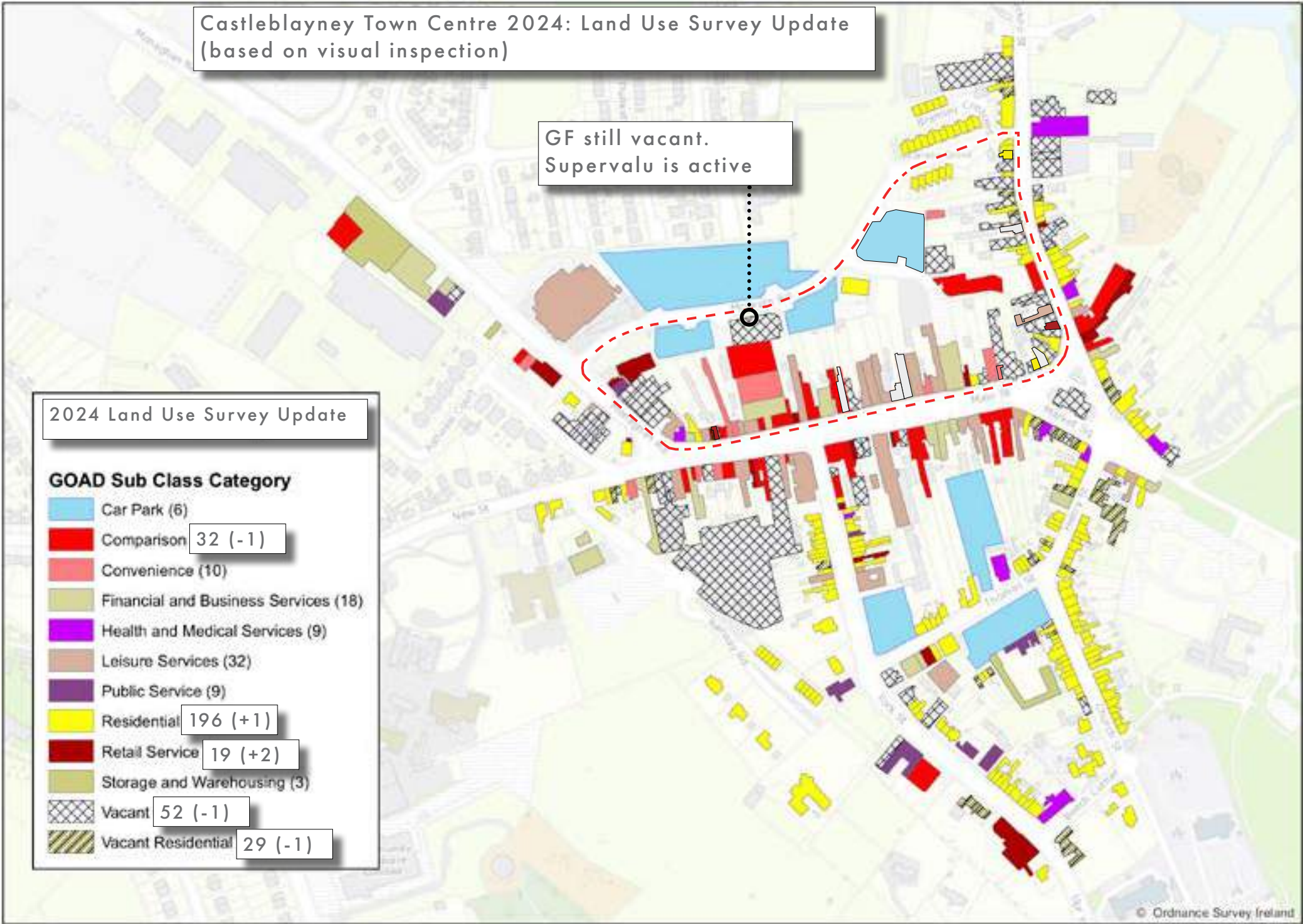
Alongside the proposals for new interventions in the town, the regeneration framework plan identifies a series of opportunities to work with the existing building stock and built heritage of the town. These recognise the critical need to use existitng (built) resources as part of effective sustainable development, as well as tackle vacancy which has a negative impact on any town’s economic and social wellbeing.

These could be advanced as an individual projects or part of a wider scheme of independent but connected works. Refurbishing, repairing and adapting existitng buildings should exploit opportunities for energy efficient retrofit as well as adapting for older age groups. It can also offer opportunities for live/work units, reusing empty ground floor shop units and supporting remote working.

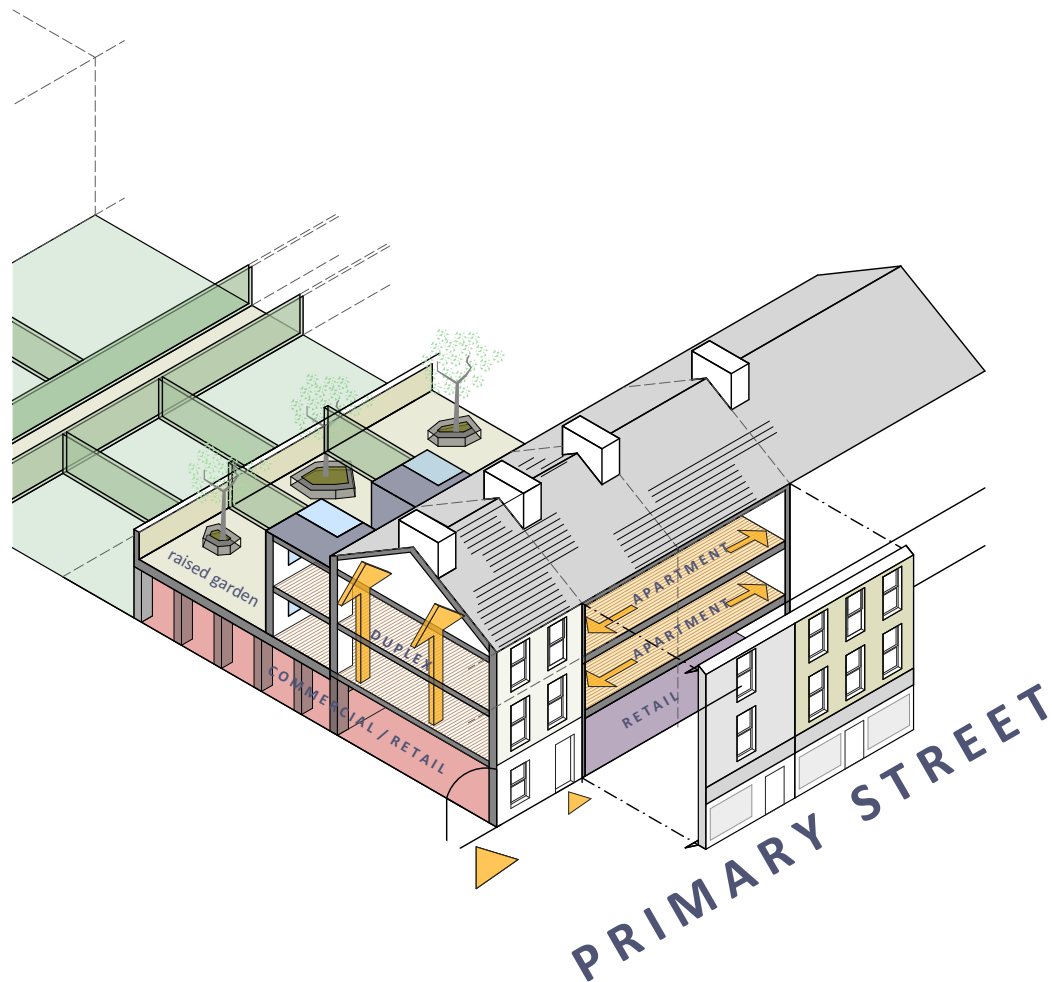
Section 8 of the regeneration framework plan provides an overview of potential sources of support funding and guidance which could help to unlock these improvements as relatively early and quick wins.It is important to note that the public realm improvements and other regeneration project scenarios of this Plan, can help increase interest in tackling vacant properties.



Vacant buildings on Main Street and Muckno Street



Regeneration Project Scenario 9 - Tackling Vacancy



Concept proposal for residential over commercial / retail unit
Source: Shaffrey Architects

Promote active street frontage

- Reintroducing commercial or retail into vacant shop fronts provides a more active streetscape.
- Derelict or boarded-up shop fronts do not instill a sense of confidence or safety in an area
- Providing residential above the shop creates passive surveillance and makes the street feel safer throughout the day and night.

Reinstate living over retail / workspace

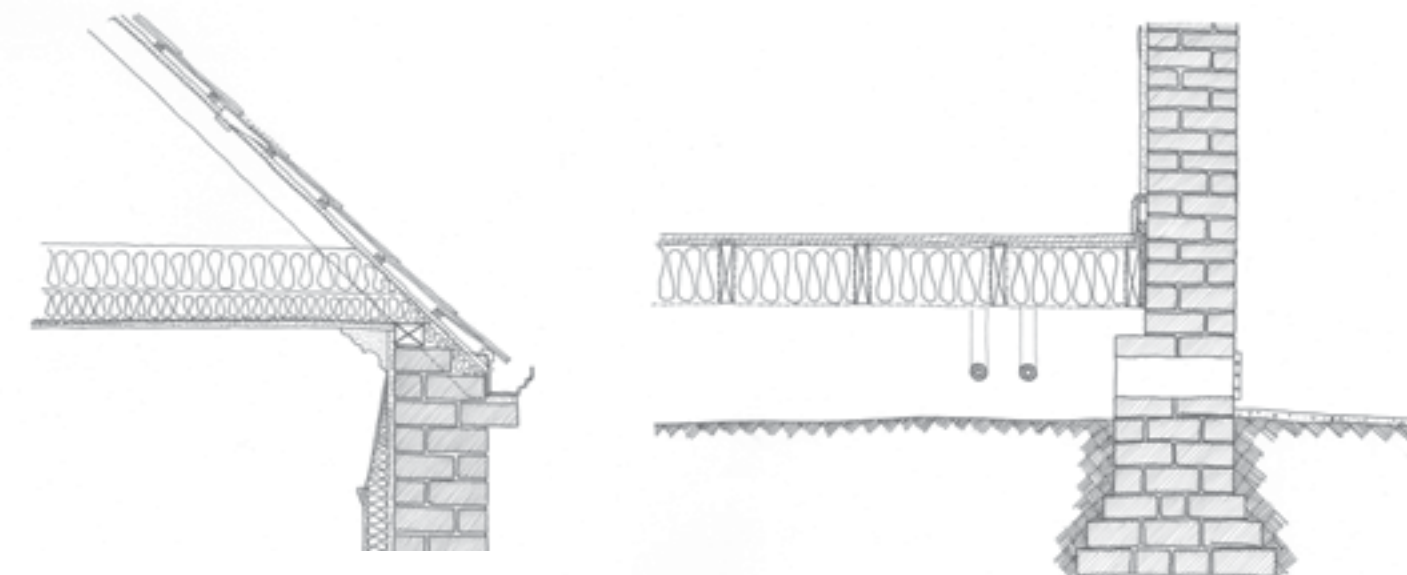
- Make living in the town centre attractive by provide amenities associated with out of town living, such as private external space and larger units.
- Generally better to have a small number of larger residential units at upper levels. Often providing a single residence over the ground floor, makes it easier for building regulation compliance and makes for better quality living spaces.
- Where there is restricted open space for residential units, the flat roof of a ground floor rear retail extension can be constructed to accommodate a roof garden for the upper level residential unit.
- In some instances the ground floor shop might be incorporated into the residential use, or provide an associated working space. Care required to ensure important retail functions are not lost from the main commercial streets of Castleblayney.

Interconnect adjacent properties

- Where small buildings share similar floor levels, interconnection can help to maximise space and provide for larger family units
- Connecting two buildings can provide wider frontage residential units which can aid subdivision while maximising natural light.

Energy Efficiency

- Energy improvements to existing building fabric and services should be incorporated into any refurbishment works. Refer to the recently published [**Improving Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings, Guidance for Specifiers and Installers, 2023 \(IEETB\).**](#)



Details showing typical intervention details to address energy improvements in traditionally constructed buildings
(from IEETB Advice Guidance, DHLHG - drawings by Shaffrey Architects)

Regeneration Project Scenario 10 - Shopfront and Facade Improvements

Shopfront and Facade Improvements

Vacant, derelict, poorly presented or maintained shops have a negative impact on the image and perception of any town. Castleblayney suffers from similar examples as many towns around Ireland. A shopfront enhancement strategy should be considered which develops site-specific guidance for Castleblayney.

Guidance should include how shopfronts should be improved or repaired in terms of their materiality, form, colour and quality that is in-keeping with the local character.

Government funding streams are available for such schemes and owners should be made aware and encouraged to avail of these schemes. Castleblayney Tidy Towns Committee also run a facade painting scheme which is an important local scheme of value.

General guidance

Improvements to shopfronts include:

- Promote collaboration between property owners to paint and maintain shopfronts in a unique but consistent local character
- Identifying derelict and poor condition shopfronts and engaging with owners to seek grant funding for repair or restoration
- Arrange traditional skills training demonstrations (e.g. Irish Georgian Society Traditional Skills events)
- Arrange training and demonstrations in creative shopfront displays



Moran & Co Shopfront Refurbishment, Westport - this availed of conservation grants and led to the repair of an iconic shopfront in Westport. In addition to funding assistance to carry out works, conservation grants also provide expert advice (Photographs: Siobhan Sexton, Mayo County Council)

Right: Fennelly's, Callan, Co. Kilkenny - a creative and sensitive repair and reuse of a traditional shopfront. Traditional interior fittings have been retained and the historic rear yard and outbuildings provide additional space and character.



Streetscapes & Shopfronts Initiative 2021

Explore expanded initiative to include Castleblayney

Improve streetscape as part of tackling building vacancy

Improving the streetscape, whether that is shopfronts, vacant commercial units, or derelict residential dwellings will have a hugely positive impact on the perception and confidence of the town. It also enables ongoing use and operation of local businesses and helps maintain a strong living population in the town centre.

Next Steps - Approaches to Implementation



Next Steps - Approaches to Implementation

Status of Regeneration Framework Plan

The Regeneration Framework Plan is not a statutory plan, however it provides a vision and approach to support regeneration of the study area. The Plan has identified a range of project scenarios which can be further developed towards implementation. This section sets out some important 'Next Steps', and also provides information on sources of information and guidance and potential sources of support funding which some of the projects may be eligible for. This section also provides high level design guidance which is intended to support the standards and policies of the Monaghan County Development Plan.

Stage Two Stakeholder Engagement

The Draft Plan and Project Scenarios were presented to property owners and/or their agents with one-to-one meetings after the plan was presented online. Not all property owners invited attended. Feedback from those who did attend indicated overall support for the Regeneration Framework Plan. With regard to the project scenarios there was a range of responses from positive interest in advancing these, to an openness to further engagement as part of implementation. There were no objections raised to the plan and project scenarios by those who attended this stage two engagement. If advancing any of the project scenarios further engagement will be necessary including those who have not been involved to date.

The draft Regeneration Framework Plan was presented and noted at the Carrickmacross/Castleblayney Municipal District on 24th February 2025.

Implementation

Delivery will be by both public and private sectors, however, the principal driver will be the Local Authority and its Regeneration Unit as well as the Carrickmacross / Castleblayney Municipal District.

Ongoing consultation and engagement with property owners, property users, other stakeholders and public, will be essential

as projects develop. This will help establish feasibility of project scenarios and their refinement.

Detailed surveys and assessments of buildings and sites will be required to provide accurate specific information which will allow the project scenarios to be tested and developed. Input from other professional disciplines will also be necessary, such as engineers, quantity surveyors, legal experts, etc.

While the project scenarios presented in this Regeneration Framework Plan are set out as individual or small cluster developments, adopting a joined up, holistic, approach through all phases/stages of implementation is necessary to deliver optimal outcomes. For example, applying a consistency in general design, materiality and public realm/landscape interventions can, if of sufficient quality, result in greater coherence and legibility of place making and urban identity. Within a general design and material framework, a level of diversity can add important interest and distinctiveness. This diversity does not need to be forced, as each development will bring its own specific nuances and characteristics.

Monitoring quality and effectiveness of any development will be critical to overall success. This will need attention from initiation of any project, through design stages to completion and occupation. The Regeneration Unit in Monaghan County Council will be key to guiding the oversight. To assist with this, the Regeneration Framework Plan has set out a monitoring table/checklist on the following page.

In February 2025 Monaghan County Council obtained a high-level Order of Magnitude Costing of the Regeneration Plan, prepared by McQuillan Chartered Surveyors. This high level OMC indicated a total estimated construction cost range for the ten project scenarios in the order of €44,703,750.00 - €53,644,500.00. As design information is developed further, these costs can also be refined and broken into more detail.

Sources of Information and Guidance

Below are some specific resources which can also assist all involved in taking the project scenarios of this Plan forward towards implementation:

- [Urban Design Manual](#)
- [URBACT Toolbox](#)
- [New European Bauhaus: beautiful, sustainable, together](#)
- [Davos – Baukultur Quality System](#)
- [Place Value and the Ladder of Place Quality](#)
- [European Quality Principles for EU funded Interventions with Potential to Impact on Cultural Heritage](#)

Video Links

- [Reimagine Session – Town Centre First in practice - IAF Re-Imagine](#)
- [RIAI Old Town New Place](#)
- [RIAI Old Town New Home – What the Buildings Told us](#)
- [IAF Re-Imagine - New Life for Old Buildings](#)

Approaches to Implementation - Sources of Funding Support

Grant Funding Streams

Currently in Ireland there are several grant schemes which may be suitable for the type of projects set out in this Regeneration Framework Plan. The funding schemes are operated by several organisations including Government Departments; Regional Assemblies. Local Authorities; National Agencies (e.g., SEAI, the Heritage Council), and NGOs and Community Organisations.

The target beneficiary for funding streams varies from Local Authorities, to Community Organisations, to private property owners. Most have particular requirements for eligibility and many will require specialist professional services and/or certification.

The funding environment in Ireland has been quite dynamic in recent years, therefore it is important to check out for any new schemes, changes in schemes, and where some schemes may discontinue.

The following lists a range of grants currently operating (December 2024).

Town Centre Focus:

- [Thrive Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme](#) - ERDF funding administered through the Regional Assemblies, this funds projects which will embed principles of the New European Bauhaus. THRIVE offers 100% grants to local authorities under two strands:
 - Strand 1: Grant amounts of between €40K and €200K towards integrated urban strategies and project pipeline development
 - Strand 2: Grant amounts of between €2M and €7M towards the renovation and adaptive reuse of vacant or derelict heritage buildings in public control or ownership
- [Rural Regeneration and Development Fund](#)
- [Town and Village Renewal Scheme](#)
- [Historic Towns Initiative](#)
- [Anti-Litter and Anti-Graffiti Grant Scheme](#)

Building Focus

- [Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant](#) (Croi Conaithe Towns Fund)
- [Expertise Grants for Vacant Traditional Homes](#)
- [SEAI / Home Energy Efficiency Grants](#)
- [Repair and Leasing Scheme](#)

- [Buy and Renew Scheme](#)
- [Built Heritage Investment Scheme](#) (BHIS), The Built Heritage Investment Scheme can assist with the repair and conservation of structures that are protected under the Record of Protected Structures or are in Architectural Conservation Areas or the amenity of a National Monument. There are a number of grant schemes covering buildings, shopfronts, maintenance works. It is funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and accessed through the Local Authority. Contact Monaghan County Council
- [Historic Structures Fund](#) (HSF)
- [Housing Aid for Older People Grant](#)
- [Heritage Council Funding Schemes](#)
- [Irish Georgian Society Conservation Grants Programme](#)

The Tidy Towns also provide some small funding for facade painting schemes.

Quality Guidance for Building Interventions and Repairs - Scale, massing, form, materiality & quality

Below sets out some quality guidance to support the Regeneration Framework Plan.

Repairs & Refurbishment

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage publish a useful series of Advice Guides for repairing traditional building typologies. These provide practical advice on understanding principles, materials, repair techniques and useful resources. These can be accessed at the [Buildings of Ireland Resources](#) webpage.

New Developments

Scale: well proportioned developments should integrate comfortably with the existing scale and context of the town centre. This guidance does not set specific building heights, however it is envisaged that new buildings will generally vary from 2 to 3 storeys. At strategic locations where height will not impact adversely on surrounding environmental and residential amenity, 4 storeys may be appropriate - e.g corners. Building scale should balance opportunity for providing increased density within an established setting. New building heights should avoid causing complete and constant shade to open spaces which are intended for public use.

Massing: should help to create new streetscapes and public spaces through a mix of intimate and generous spaces.

Forms: developments to consider the forms of traditional town structures that can be interpreted in a contemporary way to create distinctive, well considered new additions to the town centre.

Materiality of buildings: traditional, durable materials, well detailed and designed, considering how they will weather, perform and appear, over time.



Above: the above examples of new infill development within urban areas shows an approach to scale (building, shared streets, public spaces), massing, quality of materiality and detailing, integration of existing mature trees which are of relevance to the Castleblayney Town Centre Regeneration Framework Plan Area. These examples show how quality buildings, public realm and landscape can help create very pleasant environments to be in.

Quality Guidance for Integration of landscape and public realm

Public realm: streets, courtyards - materiality and planting:

Aim to retain and integrate existing mature trees - using these as place-makers can be effective and sustainable. Integrate SuDS principles using generously planted verges, swales and permeable ground finishes. Exploit opportunities to create pockets of planted areas/grassed areas. Plant native species and adopt management approaches which support and enhance biodiversity.

Layouts, vehicle access and parking:

align with approaches set out in [DMURS](#), using shared spaces concepts for the smaller infill housing schemes in backlands areas. Keep the scale of these infill developments to a size which supports the use of shared spaces for access roads and parking areas. Create clustered areas of parking with tree planting.

Integrate historic boundary walls, paving and other streetscape elements:

Where possible the retention and integration of historic urban fabric can greatly enhance the character of towns centre developments. Old stone walls can also support small, non-destructive, plants and insects which contribute to biodiversity.

Siting of public seating:

to consider sun and shelter as well as comfort and usability. Simple, well made and well-located solutions can add immeasurably to the enjoyment of these types of places. Consider all age groups, providing handrails and backrests.

Opportunities to enhance nature and biodiversity:

Every development should be required to incorporate provision for nature and biodiversity. This may involve tree and other planting. Even the smallest spaces can contribute. It is important that the selection of species enhances local biodiversity and so generally native types will be more appropriate than non-native. Ensure adequate space is given for roots and species are selected for the particular.

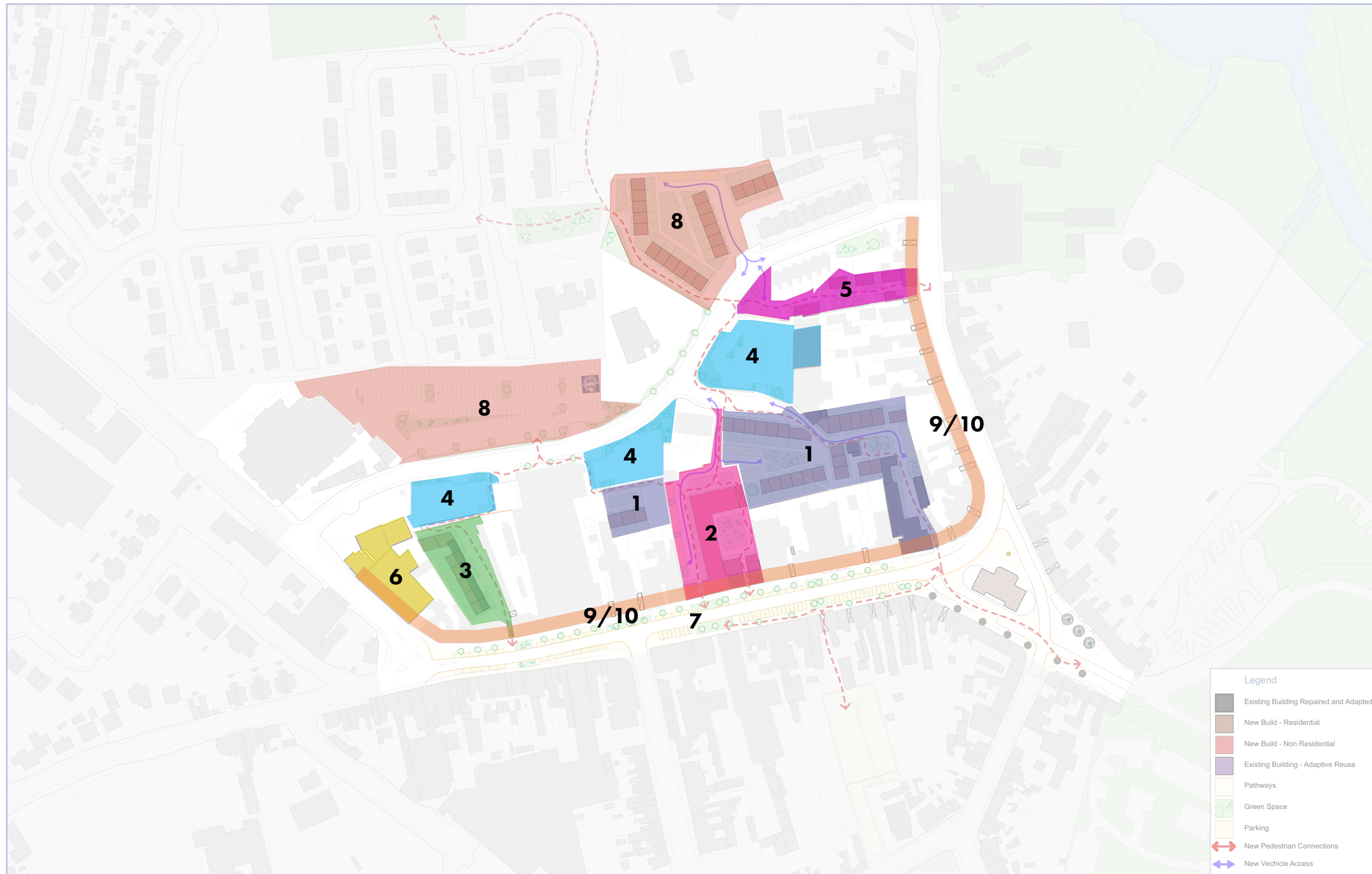


Town Centre Regeneration Framework Plan - Review Checklist

This Checklist is provided as monitoring tool to assess how the Project Scenarios, where advanced, align with the Aims and Design Guidance of this Regeneration Framework Plan. Not all criteria will be relevant to every Project, however it is important that the **REGENERATION & QUALITY AMBITIONS** of the Plan are supported, monitored and implemented.

PROJECT SCENARIOS (Ref Key Map on page 70)											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
AIMS											
Enhance and Make Better Use of what already exists	Promote/use positive elements to make attractive to live in & visit										
	Enhance civic pride by reusing vacant heritage properties										
	Use/Reuse existing resources - priority carbon reduction action										
	Work with active organisations										
Support Wider Town	Active, lively town centre benefits whole town and hinterland										
	Connect to regeneration projects outside Plan Area										
	Inceease Nos & demographic diversity of people living in townt through quality housing & public realm										
Improve Environment	Projects make positive contribution to nature & biodiversity										
	Improve energy efficiency, integrate nature-based solutions										
	Make area more beautiful (Ref NEB)										
	Make a safer, cleaner, calmer town centre										
	Consider all users (accessibility and inclusivity)										
	Improve environment for living well in town centre										
Funding Opportunities	Match projects with available support funding schemes										
DESIGN GUIDANCE											
Repair & Refurbishment	Following DHLGH Advice Guidance										
New Developments	Scale										
	Massing										
	Form										
	Materiality										
Quality of Landscape & Public Realm	Public Realm, Streets, Courtyards - materiality & planting										
	Layouts, vehicular access and parking										
	Integrate historic elements										
	Seating and other street furniture										
	Opportunities to enhance nature & biodiversity										

Town Centre Regeneration Framework Plan - Project Scenarios Reference Map



Project Scenario 1: Hope Arms Hotel & Backlands

Project Scenario 2: The Ridge v.2 + infill

Project Scenario 3: The Shambles

Project Scenario 4: Enhancing Carparks - space for nature

Project Scenario 5: Muckno Street Infill

Project Scenario 6: Bogues Garage

Project Scenario 7: Main Street Improvements

Project Scenario 8: Hotel Carpark & Infill Housing

Project Scenario 9: Tackling Vacancy

Project Scenario 10: Shopfront & Facade Improvements