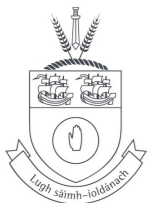


# Dunleer Town Centre First Plan

**DRAFT**

October 2023



Comhairle Contae Lú  
Louth County Council



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development



Lár Bailte ar dTús  
Town Centre First

**BDP.**

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# INTRODUCTION

1



## 1.1 PROJECT CONTEXT

### Message from Louth County Council

The Town Centre First (TCF) Plan, aligned with the National Planning Framework and Our Rural Future, redefines town development by prioritising community-driven revitalisation. Our towns, each uniquely sized and functioned, serve as essential economic, social, and cultural hubs, nurturing businesses and providing vital services, reflecting Ireland's heritage, and drawing residents and tourists. TCF policy acknowledges towns as catalysts for balanced regional growth, enhancing competitiveness, and attracting investment. It empowers towns, ensuring their resilience, vibrancy, and inclusivity in alignment with 21st-century needs. By making towns the core of community life, TCF Plan ensures sustainable growth and safeguards Ireland's resilience for future generations.

Dunleer, a TCF pathfinder town, forefronts this approach through a funded Town Centre First Plan, crafting a distinctive town vision and transformative interventions. A multidisciplinary integrated approach bringing together the development of places and destinations, develop a plan strategy for the Dunleer Town Centre over a 15-year period. This plan will look at potential for growth, repurpose of derelict and vacant sites, infrastructure enhancement, housing opportunities, and development potential of key sites within the town centre. It will seek to create a vibrant place for people to meet, relax, and connect with their area. The plan is intended to enable the delivery of a high-quality town environment through the support of public funding schemes such as Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) and Town and village Renewal Scheme (TVRS), to meet the growth that the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (LCDP) has identified for Dunleer.

### Preface

The Town Centre First policy aims 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.

### Background and Aim of the Plan

The Town Centre First Plan is a strategic document that outlines the essential elements for a thriving town and offers a roadmap for creating a cohesive town plan to stimulate social, cultural, economic and amenity regeneration. Dunleer, selected as one of the 26 towns nationwide in February 2022, has developed a distinctive TCF Plan under the Government's Town Centre First Policy, which aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres. The purpose of the plan to provide a vision for rejuvenation of the town centre as a desirable place to live, work and visit. It will act as a roadmap for Dunleer's plan-led path forward. The TCF Plan is underpinned by diagnosis of local strengths and challenges. It will be driven by the local community and businesses as part of the Town Team who will be supported by the local authority in its delivery. The plan will provide a basis for targeted Government funding available to support TCF implementation and to stimulate private investment.

The project's objective is to revitalise the town by repurposing derelict or vacant properties, activating the Main Street area in conjunction with green and blue infrastructure, and prioritising the delivery of housing.

The ultimate outcome of this plan will be the establishment of a dynamic and inclusive town centre, incorporating a diverse spectrum of pivotal places designed to meet the evolving needs of the community:

- Places that are shaped by the communities that live there, where local residents and the business community are enabled to define the future for their own towns and villages;

- Towns that embrace the opportunities and challenges presented by technological innovation, climate action and demographic change;
- Places that are the fulcrum of economic, social, cultural and recreational activity, with a sustainable mix of commercial, retail, service and hospitality offerings;
- Town centres that reflect the current and future needs of the local community, with quality public realm, sustainable mobility infrastructure and green spaces that facilitate vibrant, connected local communities and economies;
- Vibrant, accessible and lived-in town centres that are home to young and old, which are not seen as a second-best option to more peripheral locations.

## TCF Team

The plan addresses a wide range of issues, and as such, Louth County Council procured a multi-specialist design team which includes the following:

- BDP - Urban design, planning, architecture, ecology, landscape, sustainability and consultation advice
- Momentum - Movement and transport advice
- Destination Developers - Market and property, viability and delivery

The design team has liaised closely with Louth County Council's Town Regeneration Officer, and been supported by Dunleer's Town Team, composed of the following members:

- Laura Torris - Pavillon Centre
- Michael Durnin - Dunleer Traders Association
- Elizabeth Kearney - Energy Team
- Kevin Conway - An Garda Síochána
- Edmund Mathews - Dunleer Tidy Towns
- Pat Roche - Dunleer Tidy Towns
- Eugene Conlon - Energy Team
- Patrick Mulroy - Dunleer Community Development Board

Local councillors John Sheridan, Bernie Conlon, Pearse McGeough and Jim Tenanty have also participated in the process of developing the plan.

As advised by the TCF policy, the Town Team includes a balanced representation of local residents who are actively involved in a range of community groups (under the umbrella of the Dunleer Community Development Board) and initiatives. Their input and support in the development of the TCF Plan for Dunleer has been invaluable, particularly in terms of facilitating public and stakeholder engagement. The Town Team has provided a unique insight into key concerns and issues regarding the town centre, mobilised the local population and key stakeholders to take part in the development of strategies and objectives, and helped align current and future projects and initiatives with TCF Plan's proposals.



Fig.1 - Town Centre First Policy - February 2022



Fig.2 - Aerial view of Dunleer's Town Centre

## 1.2 PROJECT SUMMARY



### The TCF Plan for Dunleer

The development of a Town Centre First Plan for Dunleer is a unique opportunity to explore the perceptions the local community has of its town, and to set a shared ambition of shaping its future growth.

The TCF plan is a framework for revitalisation and adaptation. It has a multi-layered approach that brings together development strategies, town-wide proposals and actions, projects for buildings and open spaces, and community-led initiatives.

It will rely on a phased delivery in which each intervention will unlock the development of further projects. In this way it is not prescriptive, and will be able to adapt and change in response to future emerging issues. It will thus need to rely on a local long term stewardship (particularly by the Town Team) and the establishment of strong partnerships with both public agencies and bodies and private stakeholders.

This report sets out and explains the suite of strategies and proposals that conform the TCF Plan. As a headline summary, the plan will comprise:

**Strategies** - These will underpin the TCF Plan's proposals and set a framework for a holistic approach to revitalising the town centre.

**Strategic Opportunities and Interventions** - These identify town-wide interventions to, amongst others, improve accessibility and encourage active travel, enhance biodiversity, support new housing in the town centre, and establish frameworks for regeneration of different character areas.

**Projects and Initiatives** - Set out a suite of phased projects for buildings and open areas, scheduled across the TCF Plan's duration, and features progressive initiatives to enhance regeneration endeavours within the allocated time frame.

Fig.3 - Site plan for TCF Plan



## STRATEGIES



**A TOWN CENTRE  
FOR ALL, BY ALL**



**RETHINK AND REFRESH  
THE MAIN STREET**



**DUNLEERIFY THE  
TOWN CENTRE**



**LINK, CONNECT,  
MOVE, TRAVEL**



**BEYOND THE TOWN CENTRE:  
A NEW DESTINATION  
IN MID-LOUTH**

## STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

**A**

**Dunleer Loops  
and Links**

### A1 Loops

- A1.1 Central Loop
- A1.2 Northern Loop
- A1.3 School and River Loop
- A1.4 Rural Loop

### A2 Biodiverse Links

### A3 Park Link

### A4 Station Links

**B**

**Dunleer Urban  
Blocks**

### B1 Blocks

- B1.1 Ardee Road Yards
- B1.2 River Backlands
- B1.3 Ardee Road Gardens
- B1.4 Main Street Backlands
- B1.5 Station Approach
- B1.6 Barn Road
- B1.7 Dunleer North
- B1.8 The Forge

### B2 Housing

- B2.1 Ardee Road Yards
- B2.2 River Backlands
- B2.3 Ardee Road Gardens
- B2.4 Main Street Backlands
- B2.5 Station Approach

**C**

**Main Street and  
White River**

### C1 Main Street Works

### C2 White River Park

**D**

**Revitalisation  
Projects**

### D1 Dunleer Library

- D1.1 Dunleer Library and Library Square
- D1.2 White River Pocket Park
- D1.3 Learning Hub

### D2 Dunleer Station

- D2.1 Train Station
- D2.2 Visitors' and Mobility Hub

### D3 Corner House Pub

**E**

**Enhancement  
Initiatives**

- E1 Town Loops, Wayfinding & Healthy Travel Signage
- E2 Green Gateway Project
- E3 Street Decluttering, Street Furniture Strategy & Lighting Street
- E4 Streetscape Enhancement Strategy
- E5 Green Area Biodiversity, Landscaping Improvements & Tree Planting strategy
- E6 Built Heritage Scheme
- E7 Building Façade Improvement Scheme
- E8 Digital High Street
- E9 Community Festival & Street Party
- E10 Upgrade to the Existing Playground
- E11 Deep Clean Initiative of the Town Centre
- E12 Local Transport Link Service

COLLABORATION  
&  
COMMUNICATION

2

at old  
of road

MAIN STREET

More  
Events

~~More~~ Good  
activities

Good  
Activities  
for young  
people from  
4-6 pm

More Youth Projects  
Would be good to  
have in dunleer  
So young people  
aren't hanging around  
the streets day and night

Artistic viber/  
culture  
• Gallery at  
the corner

~~Architecture~~  
Architecture  
heritage of  
buildings along  
the main street  
(Plaster → Rocks)

Issues

likes

RD

ic

urch

## 2.1 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Effective engagement is a fundamental aspect of the development and delivery of the TCF Plan. It encompasses conveying the needs and desires of the local community and stakeholders, as well as communicating the plan's strategies and proposals.

To ensure comprehensive community engagement throughout the plan's development, a range of in-person and online community workshops were arranged in collaboration with the Town Team. These workshops served as platforms for active participation and collaboration. The consultation process started with a public exhibition held at the Market House in December 2022. The exhibition, together with a series of stakeholder meetings, provided an opportunity to gather valuable insights into the community's needs and aspirations. The engagement process was complemented with a web-based survey that was open to the public for four weeks. To enable access for all to the consultation, Louth County Council made available written forms for those who preferred the traditional option. In addition, focused thematic sessions were organised, specifically targeting key interest groups. Each session was co-chaired by a representative from the Town Team to ensure effective communication of concerns and a broader range of perspectives.

The engagement process is summarised in the timeline opposite. Further information of its outcomes and key messages is detailed in the subsequent pages of this chapter.

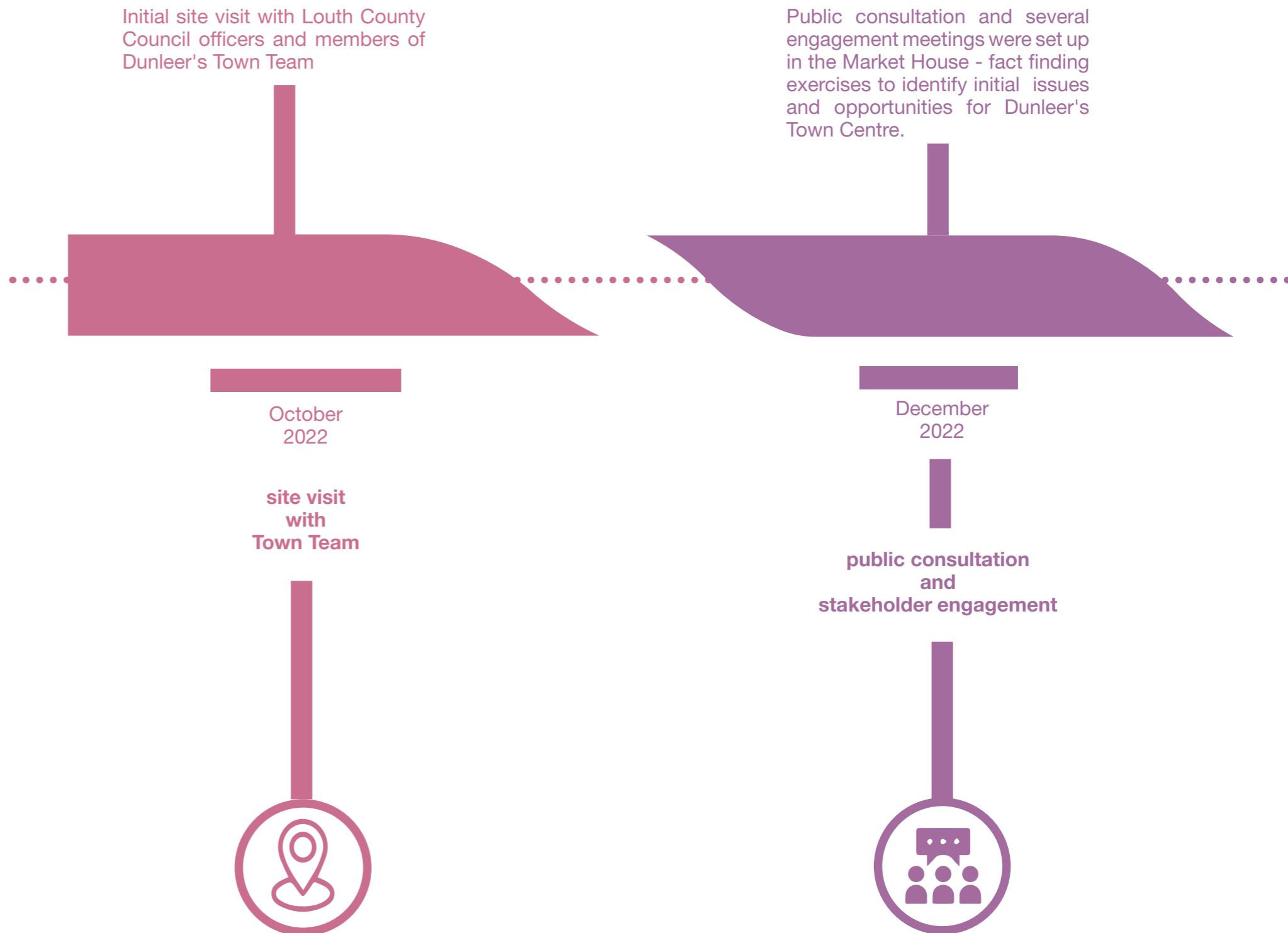


Fig.4 - Diagram shows the engagement process through the TCF plan's development process



January 2023

**conduct online survey**

Receives 188 responses

Online survey conducted over 2 months to enable the general public's involvement in the development of the TCF Plan and to express their concerns and needs in Dunleer. In the following section of this chapter, details about the survey will be outlined and explained.

Seven themed sessions were structured between February to April, each co-chaired by a Town Team representative to discuss different concerns of Dunleer. Information for these engagement sessions will be outlined and elaborated further in this chapter.

February - April 2023

**focused engagement sessions**



February - April 2023

**statutory engagement sessions**

Transport for Ireland  
Irish Rail  
Irish Farmers' Association

During the development process, we have been pro-actively and collaboratively working with other organisations, to ensure information gathered are evidently supported by certified bodies and to deliver high quality of research and analysis for the plan.

## 2.2 PLAN'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION - OPEN DAY

### Public Consultation and Engagement Meetings with the Town Team and Stakeholders

On December 1, 2022, a day of in-person engagement meetings was held at the Market House, involving the design team, Louth County Council, the Town Team, and other focus groups to discuss the development of the plan. Participants engaged in discussions about the current identity and role of the Town Centre, as well as identifying the key factors that will steer its future transformation.

On December 2, 2022, a public consultation, held at the Market House, was co-organised by the BDP consultant team, Louth County Council and the Town Team. This event provided an opportunity for the public to express their views regarding Dunleer's town centre. The exhibition included information boards that set out the plan's aims and objectives, together with identified issues, challenges and opportunities. It also featured a large aerial map of the town centre area on to which the public were asked to add commentaries of their perceived positives and negatives about the town centre, as well as initial ideas and proposals. Visiting public were also asked to complete a questionnaire as part of a survey of the town centre to inform the TCF Plan. The questionnaires included a QR code to access an online version that was open for four weeks.

Representatives from the design team, Louth County Council, and the Town Team were present throughout the event to explain the process, listen to ideas, and answer questions. The exhibition was widely publicised through direct email invitations to organized groups, local media, as well as flyers and posters in public locations.

The public consultation and engagement meetings provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Dunleer, while also acknowledging the diverse perspectives within the community.

**A MASTERPLAN FOR DUNLEER'S TOWN CENTRE**
1

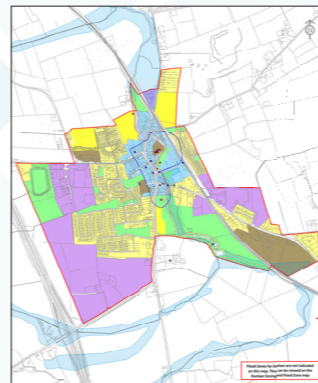

Following Louth County Council's success in securing secure funding from the Our Rural Future strategy, Dunleer is one of 26 towns in Ireland that is developing a Town Centre First Plan. It is envisaged that the Plan will cover the importance of "place-making", town centre living, the social and economic purpose of the town, and respond to emerging opportunities such as those linked to remote working, climate action and digitalisation.

**A community-based masterplan.**

**The Masterplan**  
The Masterplan is guided by the Town Centre First Policy which promotes, as a key aspect for its delivery, a robust collaborative approach involving Louth County Council, Dunleer's Town Team, and a wide group of local communities and businesses. This approach reflects the acknowledgement the diverse character of Irish towns and the need for a tailored plan that responds to local issues, needs and ambitions. The Masterplan is thus a tool that empowers communities and promotes stewardship in developing a vision for what we want Dunleer to be.

**A Plan For All and By All**  
The Town Centre First approach is unique in establishing a set of policy and planning tools for local decision-making. Today's exhibition and participatory consultation is part of this process. The masterplanning team is at the very stage of gathering information and fact finding that complements recent studies such as the Town Health Check of 2018, or the evidence base that supported the development of the Dunleer Local Area Plan 2017-2023. Much of this relies on how the community can help us understand the Town Centre and its role and relevance at the heart of Dunleer. This will allow to identify current and historic issues, learn from success stories, and identify opportunity areas. It is essential that we do not leave any stone unturned. Tapping into Dunleer's collective knowledge also opens up options of creating locally-based solutions that will inform a Plan for all, by all.

**Opportunities for the Town Centre**  
The Town Centre First Policy identifies a wide range of opportunities to drive future growth and development. These include adapting to the effects of climate change by supporting sustainability and resilience strategies, capitalising on the opportunities brought about by digitalisation and information technology, unlocking the benefits of high quality public space, promoting sustainable mobility, realising the existing cultural and heritage aspects of places, and supporting inclusive and empowered communities. In order to fulfil these and other opportunities in Dunleer it is essential that we understand the particular conditions of the town and its community. This can only happen as part of a collective endeavour.

Dunleer Composite Map from Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027  
Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Rural and Community Development


**HAVE YOUR SAY**
2

We want you to share with us what you know and think of your town centre, as no one understands a place better than those who live and breathe it daily. We propose a straight forward approach. At the centre of the room you will see a large plan of the town centre and its wider environment. We would like to ask you to use the coloured adhesive notes to state:  
 what you think is good about the town centre; what should be celebrated, embraced and used as a reference for future developments and actions?  
 what you dislike and would want to change?  
 what are your general thoughts and opinions about the town centre, and what do you suggest the masterplan should address?  
 The plan will eventually map multiple conversations, and at first sight highlight 'positive and negative' areas, as well as those with an opportunity for change.

**Comment**  
 What do you want to suggest for the Town Centre ?

**Highlight**  
 What do you dislike and would change about the Town Centre ?



**Celebrate**  
 What do you like and enjoy about the Town Centre ?




**ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**
3

As a prompt to identify current issues and challenges in the Town Centre we are showing images that illustrate negative perceptions of some of the spaces and how they are used and managed. Do you agree with these? What others would you include? Let us know!

vacancy and dereliction
traffic, congestion and parking
underutilised spaces



unsustainable pedestrian paths with no alternatives
road risks
dangerous junctions



**OPPORTUNITIES**
4

What opportunities can you see to support the growth and development of the Town Centre? How can it be made more sustainable, livable and inclusive? How do we encourage all age groups to spend more time in the Town Centre? What is the best strategy to promote economic growth for the benefit of all of the community?

safe and backless housing
enhanced pedestrian spaces
green and well cared Main Street

incredible parks
river walk
safe pedestrian and cycling routes




Fig.5 - Consultation boards



## Summary of Ideas and Comments

The word cloud below, composed from the words most frequently used in the feedback from the surveys and comments on the aerial photograph during the open consultation day, provides a snapshot of the key themes to be considered by the TCF Plan. The size of each word is proportional to the number of times it has appeared in the overall responses.



Fig.6 - Collating opinions and ideas around the 'big plan'

## 2.3 PLAN'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION - ONLINE SURVEY

### Online Survey

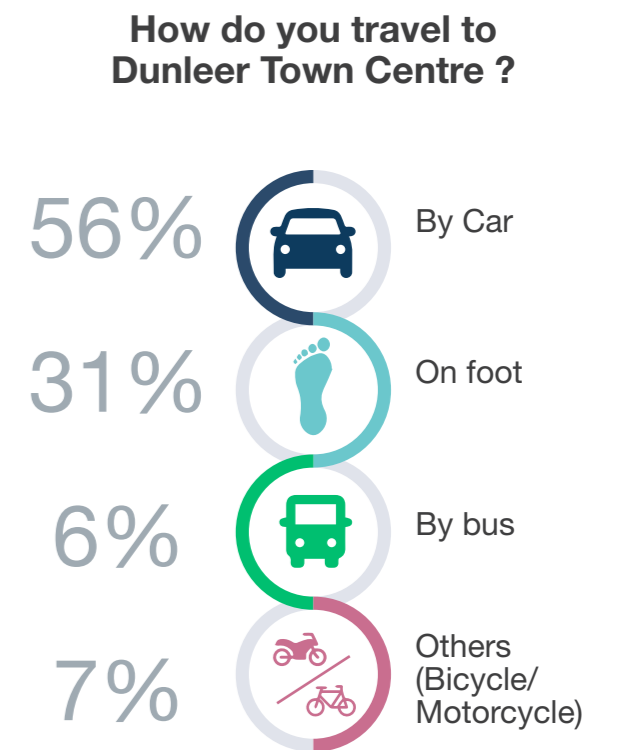
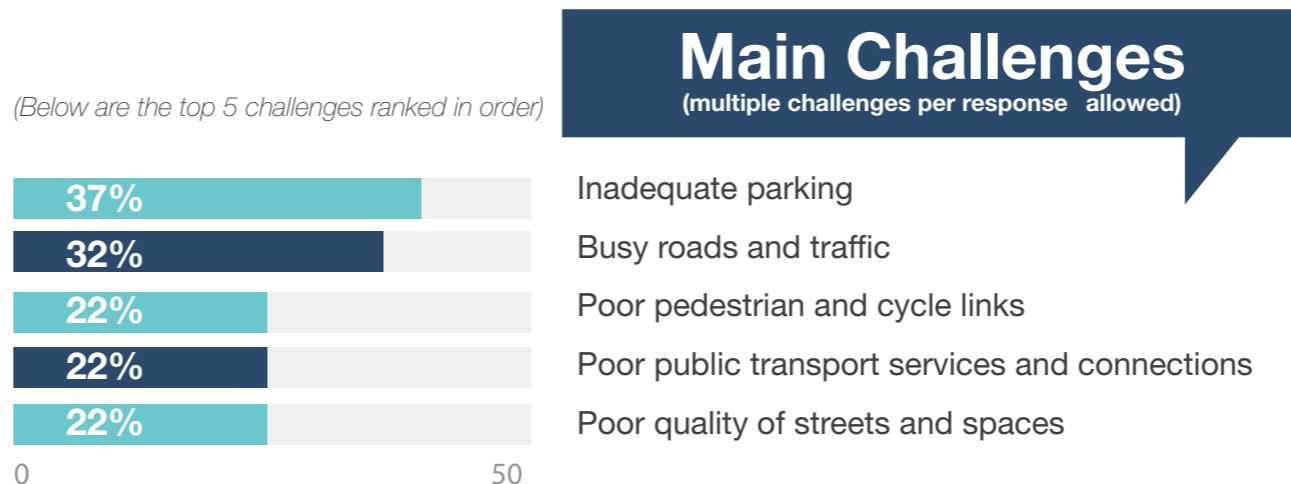
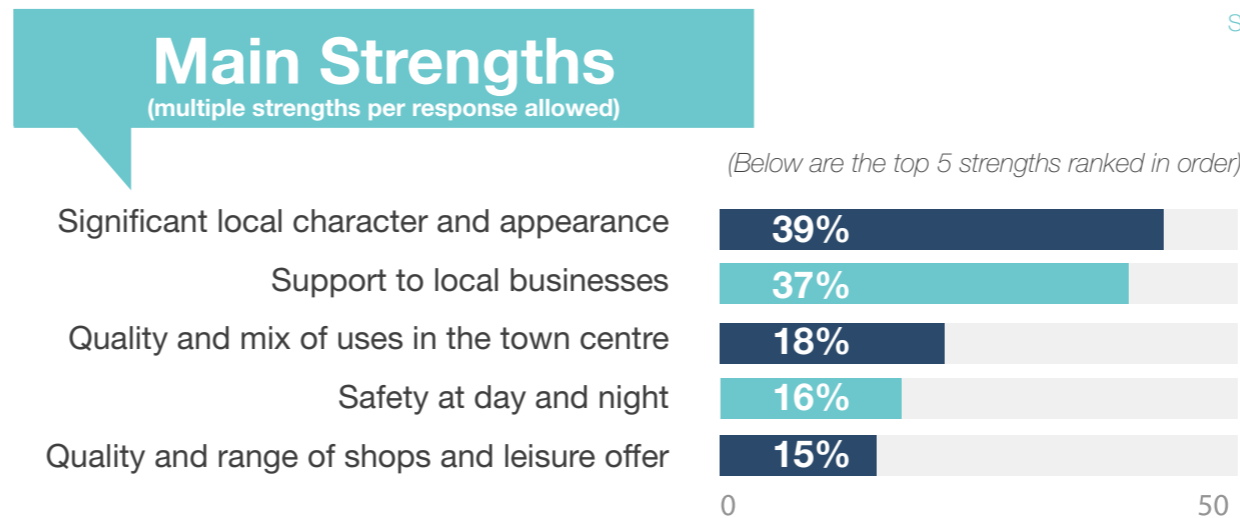
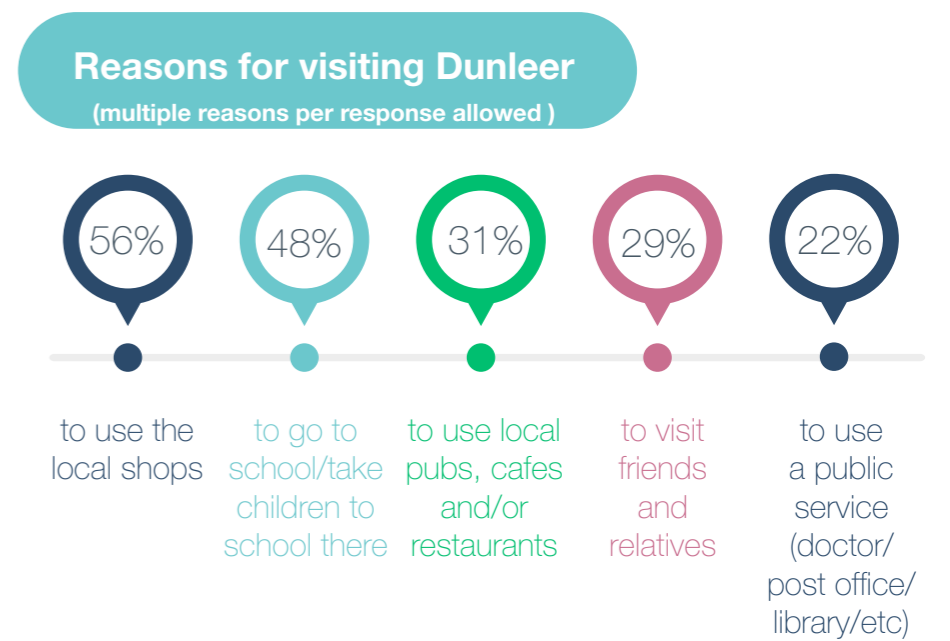
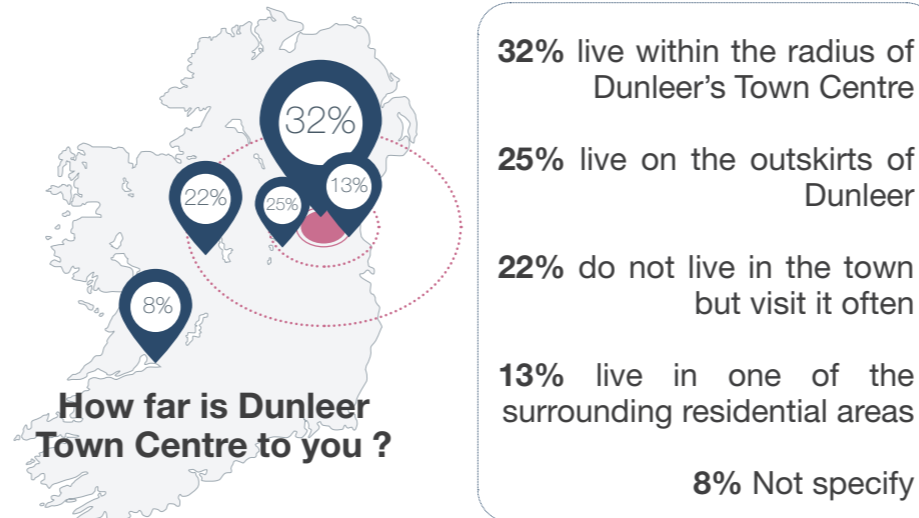
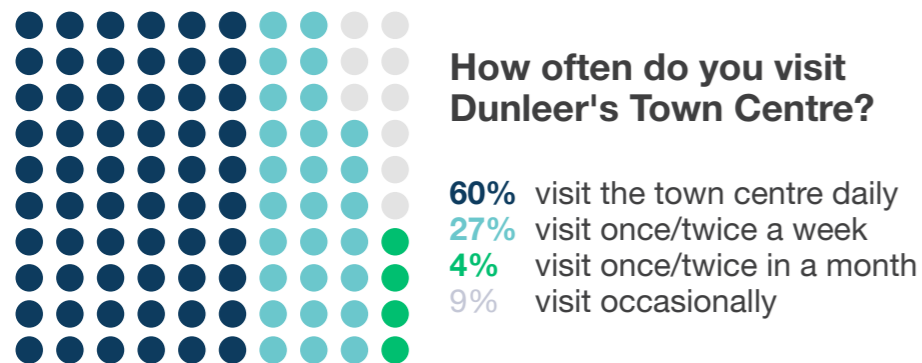
An online survey, conducted between December 2, 2022, and February 2, 2023, included a multiple choice questionnaire with a number of open ended questions. A printed format was also made available at the Market House and various shops in the town centre. In total, 188 submissions were received, split between 165 completed online surveys and 23 individual submissions from the open day.

### Key Metrics of Online Survey

The key statistics and metrics from the answers to the survey are illustrated in the following graphs, tables and diagrams:



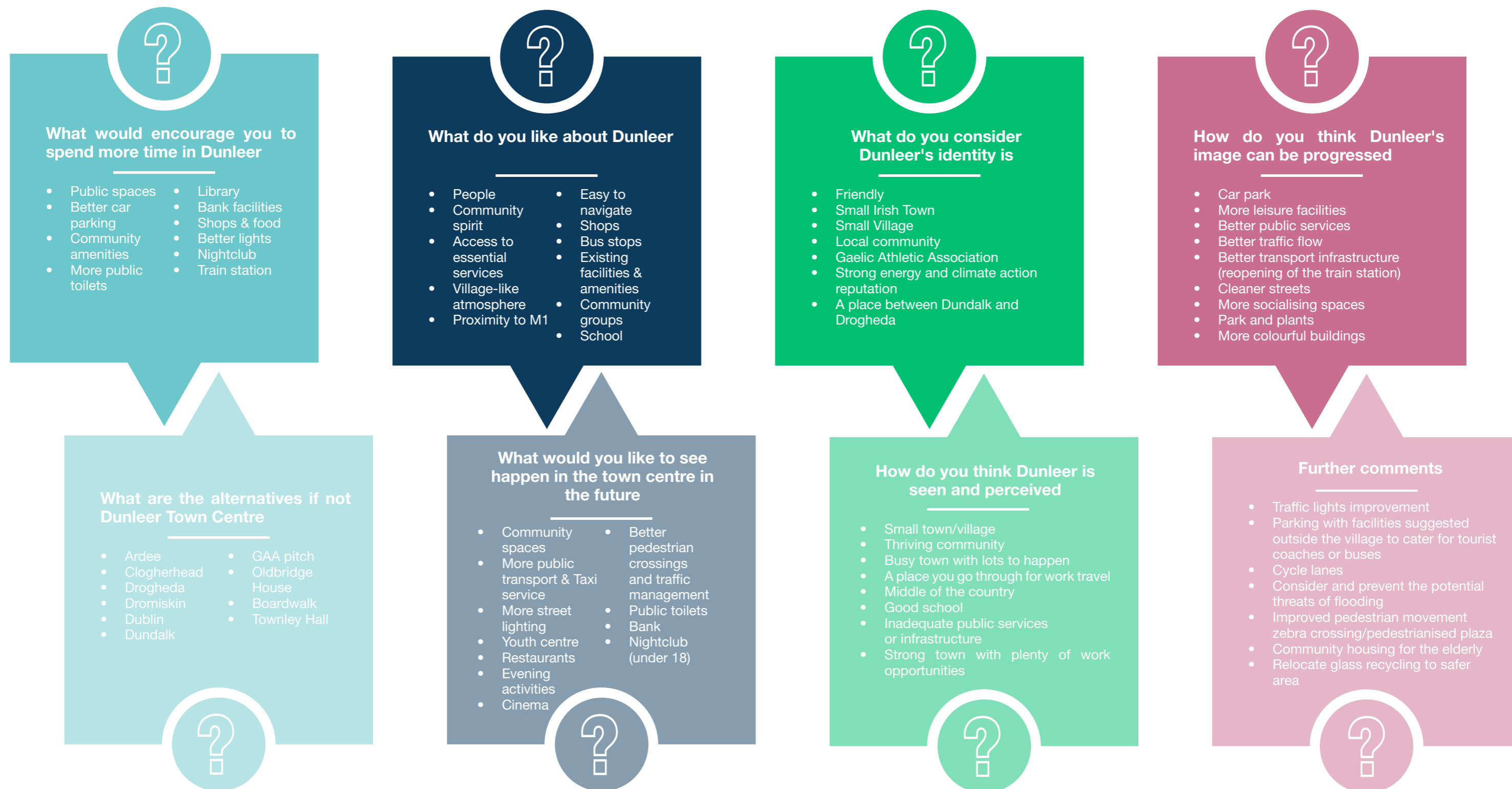
### What is your age?





## 2.3 PLAN'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION - ONLINE SURVEY

### Key Findings from Online Survey



## 2.4 PLAN'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION - KEY MESSAGES

### Key Themes

Responses to the public consultation was split almost equally between residents and visitors, with just under 50% of those who completed the online survey or the paper questionnaire living in Dunleer. Over 85% of respondents visit the town centre frequently (every day or 2 to 5 times a week), whilst almost 75% of visits are to use local shops or go to school / take children to school. This reflects Dunleer's role as a market town that services the wider community of its rural hinterland whilst supporting a growing residential population.

When respondents were asked to identify the town centre's main strengths from a selection of options, the greatest proportion of responses referred to its local character and appearance, support to local businesses, quality and range of shops and leisure offer, and safety at day and night. In relation to what respondents liked about Dunleer and its town centre, there was a clear support to its sense of community that has contributed to the achievements of a variety of community groups, and a recognition of the value of the close-knit nature of its local social networks. Other positive considerations included the presence of two highly achieving educational providers (some respondents even mentioned that Dunleer has the best secondary school in the country), and the benefits of the town's location half way between Dublin and Belfast with easy and convenient access from the M1 motorway.

On the other hand, participants identified several challenges or less favourable aspects about Dunleer Town Centre, which included the following:

- Inadequacy of car-parking;
- Busy roads and traffic (particularly on the Main Street);
- Poor pedestrian and cycle links;
- Poor public transport services and connections;
- Inadequate leisure offer (both daytime and evening);
- No attractions or supporting infrastructure to encourage visitors to visit Dunleer more frequently and spend more time in the town centre;
- Lack of public spaces or leisure facilities for young people to socialise.



## 2.5 PLAN'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION - THEMATIC SESSION

### Focused Engagement Sessions

A series of online stakeholder sessions were held between February and April 2023. Each session was co-chaired by a Town Team representative who collaborated in preparing theme-specific questions to discuss various concerns of Dunleer. The sessions were themed by participants and divided into seven thematic sessions, covering retail, public realm, youth, community, culture, sustainability, and beyond. During these sessions, participants discussed the current experience of the town centre, its image, and the key factors that will influence its successful transformation. The discussions also explored opportunities for improvement which will have an impact on the decision-making process for the plan. The following list presents the attendees for each category:

#### **Business and Enterprise**

Targets local businesses, traders, tourism, hospitality and retail sectors within Dunleer

#### **Political Representatives**

Political representatives including local councillors

#### **Town Team**

Targets members of the town teams

#### **Youth and Education**

Target school representatives (nursery, primary and secondary schools) and youth forum

#### **Sport, Leisure and Recreation**

Targets representatives of local sports clubs (e.g. the Athletics Club), facilities or organisations that provide sport, leisure and recreational opportunities in Dunleer

#### **Community and Voluntary Sector**

Including all organisations under the DCDB umbrella and voluntary sector organisations (inside and outside of Dunleer) including those involved in youth, family support and community development

#### **Culture, Heritage and Arts**

Targets those involved in providing culture, art and heritage based activity in Dunleer, including programmes and events



# UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

3



## 3.1 TOWNSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM

### The Plan Area

The study area for the town centre plan largely corresponds to that zoned as “Town Centre” under the LCDP and includes key buildings such as Dunleer Church (Col), St Brigid’s RC Church and The Market House. It is thus defined by Dunleer’s historic core, anchored around the Main Street and White River, with the Dublin to Belfast railway as a strong edge to the east.

The majority of buildings are aligned with streets and roads, creating well-defined urban frontages with no transition spaces (such as front gardens) between the public highway and the internal spaces. Back gardens and backlands are relatively large - a historic legacy of an agricultural settlement where residential plots would include working yards and a mix of kitchen gardens and orchards. Larger green areas include the town’s park, lands of both St. Brigid’s parish and the Church of Ireland, and large agricultural fields between the White River and railway embankment. A large part of the open spaces are grass lawns of relatively low ecological value. Richer ecosystems are located along the White River corridor, with a variety of wildlife and habitats, and along the railway embankments.

The White River is hardly visible from the Main Street, and has very limited accessibility from public areas. It is nevertheless a highly valuable asset for Dunleer, and a space that should be both enjoyed and looked after by the local community and visitors. The train station is adjacent to the town’s central core, but feels detached. Having been closed for a number of years, and with the planned relocation of the adjacent public library to the Main Street, there is a risk that a lack of footfall and associated surveillance may lead to antisocial behaviour.

Dunleer’s main employment and education hubs (west on Ardee Road and east along Barn Road (R170), are located outside of the town centre, together with the town’s housing estates. This generates considerable through traffic in the Main Street, and frequent congestion around key junctions. The TCF Plan will thus need to balance revitalising its historic core with addressing connectivity and accessibility beyond its central area.



Fig.7 - Map indicating the road network, important buildings and green spaces within this plan area. The red line boundary, is in response to the boundary of the Dunleer Composite Map from the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, which includes the Town or Village Centre and part of the allocated open space.

## 3.1 TOWNSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM

### Figure Ground Plan

The figure ground plan illustrates the town's pattern of settlement and its structure of clearly differentiated functional areas (town centre, residential estates, industrial parks, schools and open spaces). It helps to understand how Dunleer has grown and developed in time, and how it has evolved from a primarily agricultural village to a rural town with an important residential and industrial/business component.

Looking at the historic core two considerations become immediately apparent. Firstly, the large area of open or unbuilt space, as most of the built footprints are arranged in a linear structure. A second aspect is the irregularity of these as extensions and additions to the original buildings (garages, workshops, storage barns etc.) have created backlands with a variety of yards, courtyards and walled gardens.

The figure ground plan shows how the Main Street is mostly enclosed by a continuous built edge with the exception of the frontage to the large fields adjoining the train station. Interestingly there are numerous gaps between buildings. Though most of them are private alleys or passages, it demonstrates the potential to create more links between the Main Street and backlands.

The plan also highlights how the town centre turns its back to the White River, which cuts across it as a blue spine. Dunleer's corridors (streets, roads, river, green rail embankment) have little connection between each other. There is thus an opportunity to link them as part of a green/blue, ecological and active travel network.

Finally, the figure ground plan evidences Dunleer's different urban grains. Any intervention in the town centre will have to consider how the scale and structure of its built up areas and open spaces will allow to accommodate proposals to densify, intensify, support a greater mix of uses, enhance green areas and public spaces, improve accessibility, and establish a framework to deliver sustainability and zero carbon strategies.



Fig.8 - Figure ground map illustrating the building footprints, road network and water bodies in Dunleer's town centre.

### 3.1 TOWNSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM

#### Green and Open Spaces

A large proportion of the town centre's area (around 50%) is either green/blue space or public realm. The perception from the Main Street or Ardee Road is certainly very different, as most of open spaces are not visible or easily accessed from these streets. The diagram opposite highlights the existing structure of green and open spaces, and how they relate to vehicular and pedestrian routes and linkages. Their character and potential role within the town centre plan is summarised as follows:

**Main Street** - Defines the character and identity of Dunleer and its town centre. The space is dominated by through traffic (including buses, tractors and large trucks) and a high number of parked cars that often invade footways. This, together with the lack of street greening, makes it a relatively harsh environment for pedestrians. Nevertheless it is still the active heart of Dunleer. The plan should look at reinforcing its role as a place of confluence of the town's communities, residents and visitors.

**Private Green Spaces** - These include the residential backlands and large open spaces on either side of the station approach road. They have a variety of characters, but have in common the potential to be an active part in enhancing the town centre's ecology and biodiversity, accommodate new housing, or support new uses for the existing public green and blue spaces.

**River White Corridor** - A space of high ecological value at the heart of Dunleer that is nevertheless very difficult to access and enjoy as a natural amenity. New riverside pocket parks and a river walk can unlock the use of a valuable asset, ensuring this does not impact negatively the river's ecosystems and habitats.

**Green links** - There a number of potential pedestrian routes between the Main Street and the green and blue spaces. Linking the Main Street directly with the White River or park will help to transform it and make it a more attractive place to dwell and spend time.

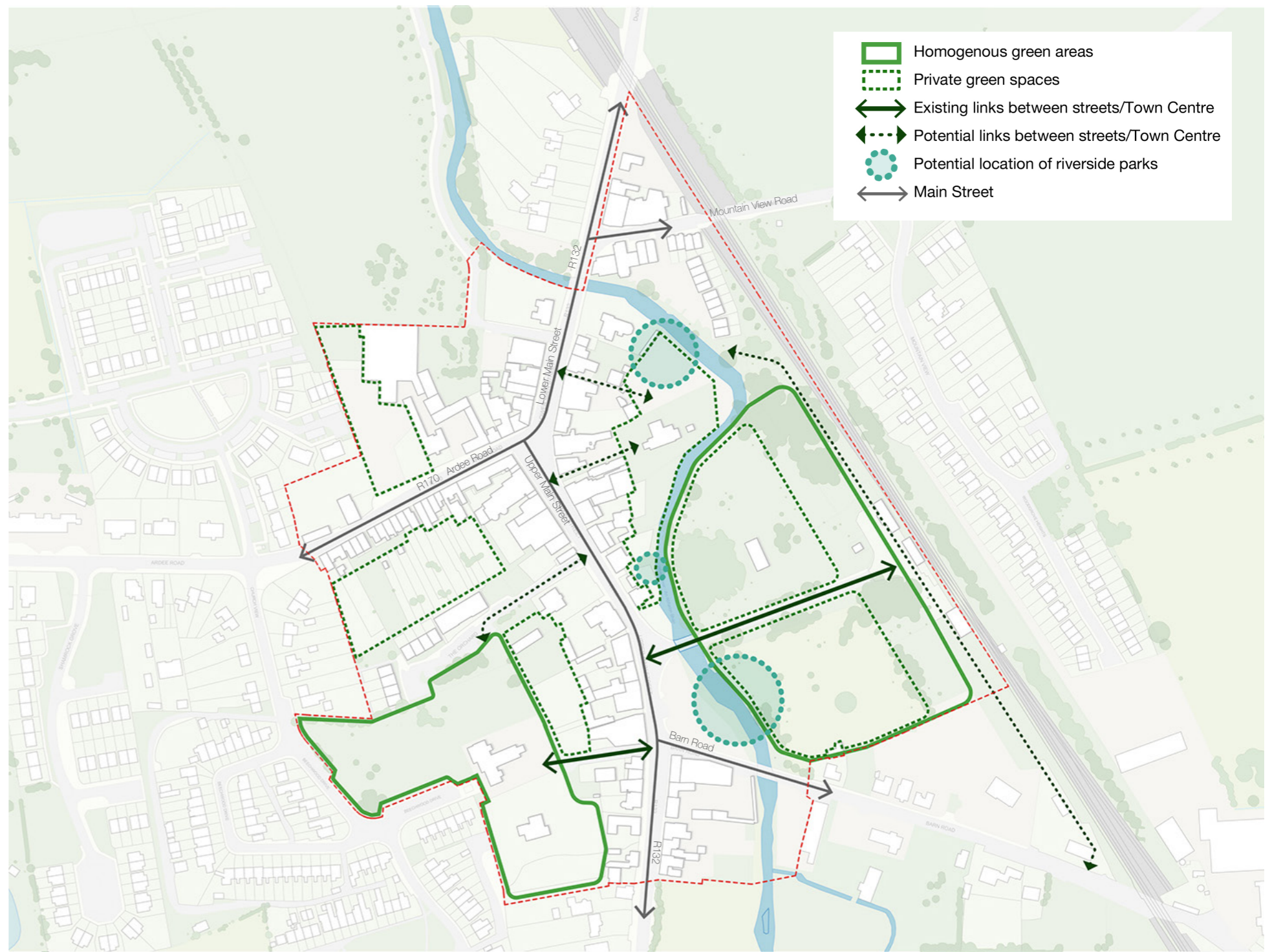


Fig.9 - Map illustrating the location of green and blue spaces in Dunleer's town centre.



## 3.1 TOWNSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM

### Links and Movement

One of the recurrent messages from the plan's public engagement is the poor condition and limited accessibility of some stretches of the footways in the Main Street and Ardee Road. As the diagram opposite illustrates, this occurs mostly along the eastern edge of the Main Street, where footways are often less than 1.5 metres wide (or don't even exist at all, as is the case of the location of the bus stop south of the junction between Barn Road and the Upper Main Street). Pedestrian accessibility is further worsened by the fact that cars are often parked on the footways.

Pedestrian routes along the footways are also affected by numerous vehicle entrances to service yards and surface parking areas in the backlands off the Main Street.

Access routes between the Main Street and neighbouring residential areas, green spaces, or the train station/public library are primarily for vehicular use, resulting in poor pedestrian permeability.

There is thus a need to improve accessibility to and within the Main Street, and integrate the town centre with Dunleer's housing, education and employment areas by enhancing permeability and ensuring pedestrian routes are safe.



Fig.10 - Map illustrating pedestrian links and routes in Dunleer's town centre.

## 3.2 TOWN CENTRE USES

### Land Uses\_Ground Floor Level

The Ground floor uses map for the town centre shows, unsurprisingly, the predominance of commercial and retail uses on the Main Street. Residential uses are primarily located at either end of the Main Street and on Ardee Road, where the cottages have a more balanced split of uses. It is interesting to note that there are practically no community, public or religious uses with an aspect to the street. Neither the Church of Ireland nor St. Brigid's Church have a frontage to the Main Street.

A further aspect to note is that there is a contrast between the footprint size of buildings on either side of the Main Street. Along the western frontage there are larger buildings (including the town's supermarkets and larger retail units), whilst to the east there is a predominance of residential typologies.

The map also shows a number of residential backland developments such as those on The Orchard and The Forge. These are useful references for potential infill projects that will help to densify the town centre and support a greater residential offer at the town centre core.

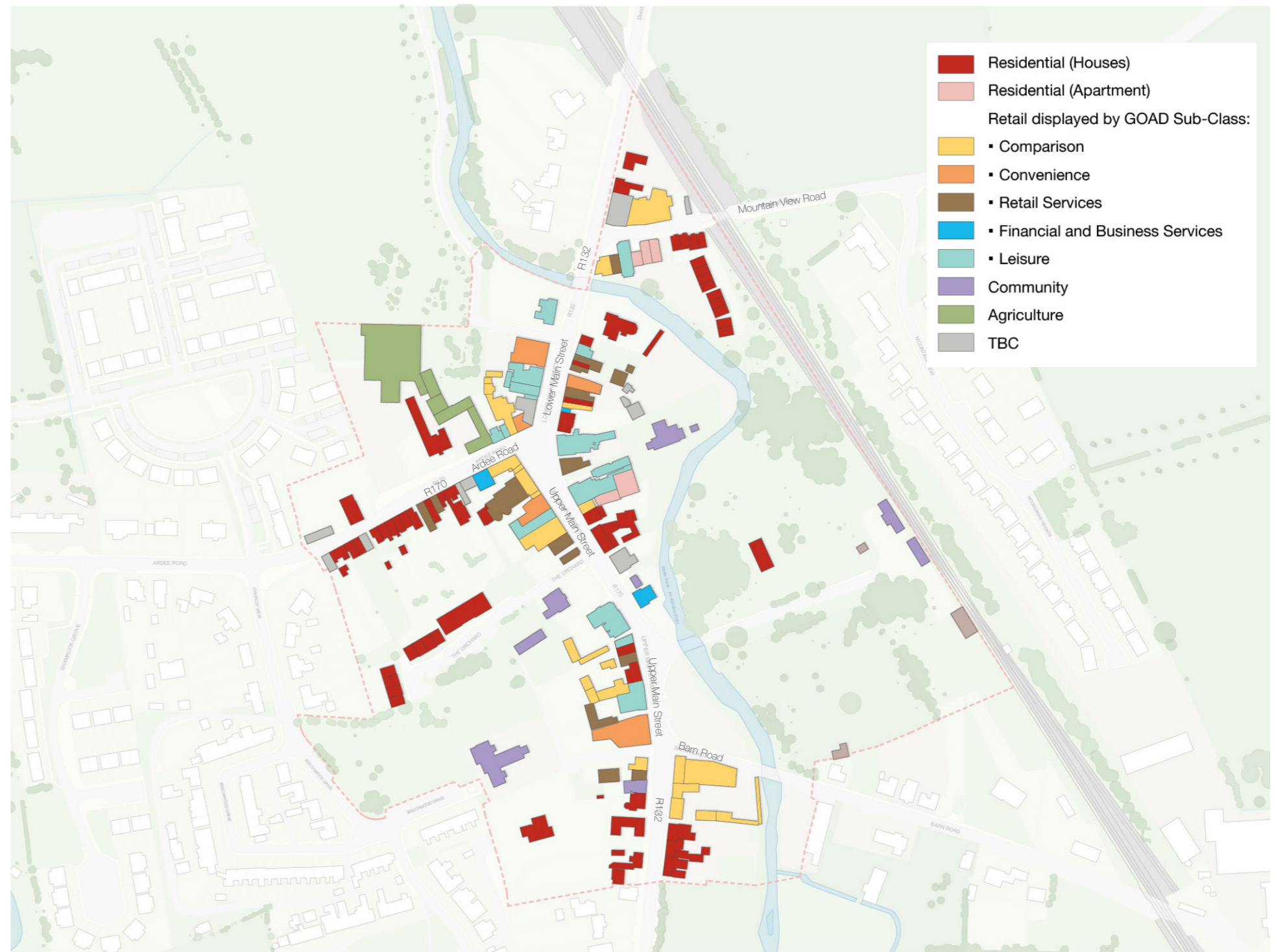


Fig.11 - Map of ground floor land uses in the Dunleer's town centre.

## 3.2 TOWN CENTRE USES

### Land Uses\_Upper Floors

The map for upper floor uses shows that for a large proportion of building the uses were unable to be identified. The majority of the space above commercial premises will be either vacant or used for storage. This highlights the potential to increase the density and mix of uses in the town centre, particularly with refurbishments for new residential accommodation.

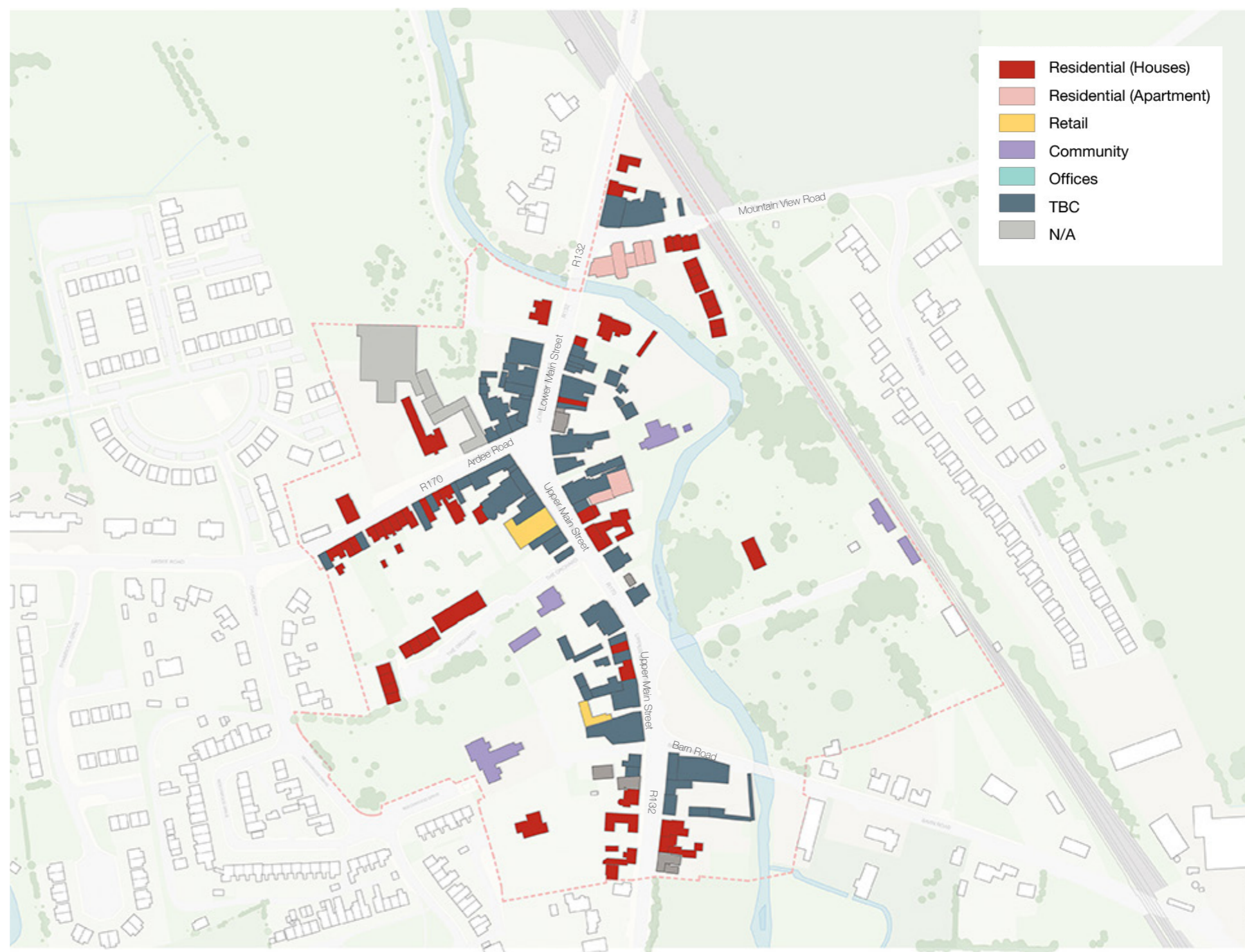


Fig.12 - Map of upper floor land uses in the Dunleer's town centre.

## 3.3 FRONTAGES AND VACANCIES

### Active Frontages

The town centre is a vibrant and active place. The diagram opposite shows how the majority of frontages to the Main Street are of retail or commercial uses. Unsurprisingly there is a higher concentration around the Ardee Road junction. This is also the area where the carriageway is the widest, highlighting a conflict between the spaces for vehicles and pedestrians.

There are a number of considerations to highlight:

- There is a strong node at the northern end of Lower Main Street (at the junction with Mountain View), with well established businesses such as Duffy's Toyworld drawing in a considerable amount of trade (much of it from outside of Dunleer). The TCF plan must aim to retain and reinforce activity there.
- In the Central section of Upper Main Street (at the location of the Market House and former Bank of Ireland), there is an active frontage 'void'. This can be planned as the location for uses that can complement retail, commerce or services. These could include cultural, community, or even some form of business hub that capitalises on local know-how and expertise, particularly in the field of energy.
- The large hardware storage yard at the corner with Barn Road creates a relatively long inactive frontage. The development of the TCF plan is an opportunity to explore alternative uses that may have a positive impact on the wider town centre.

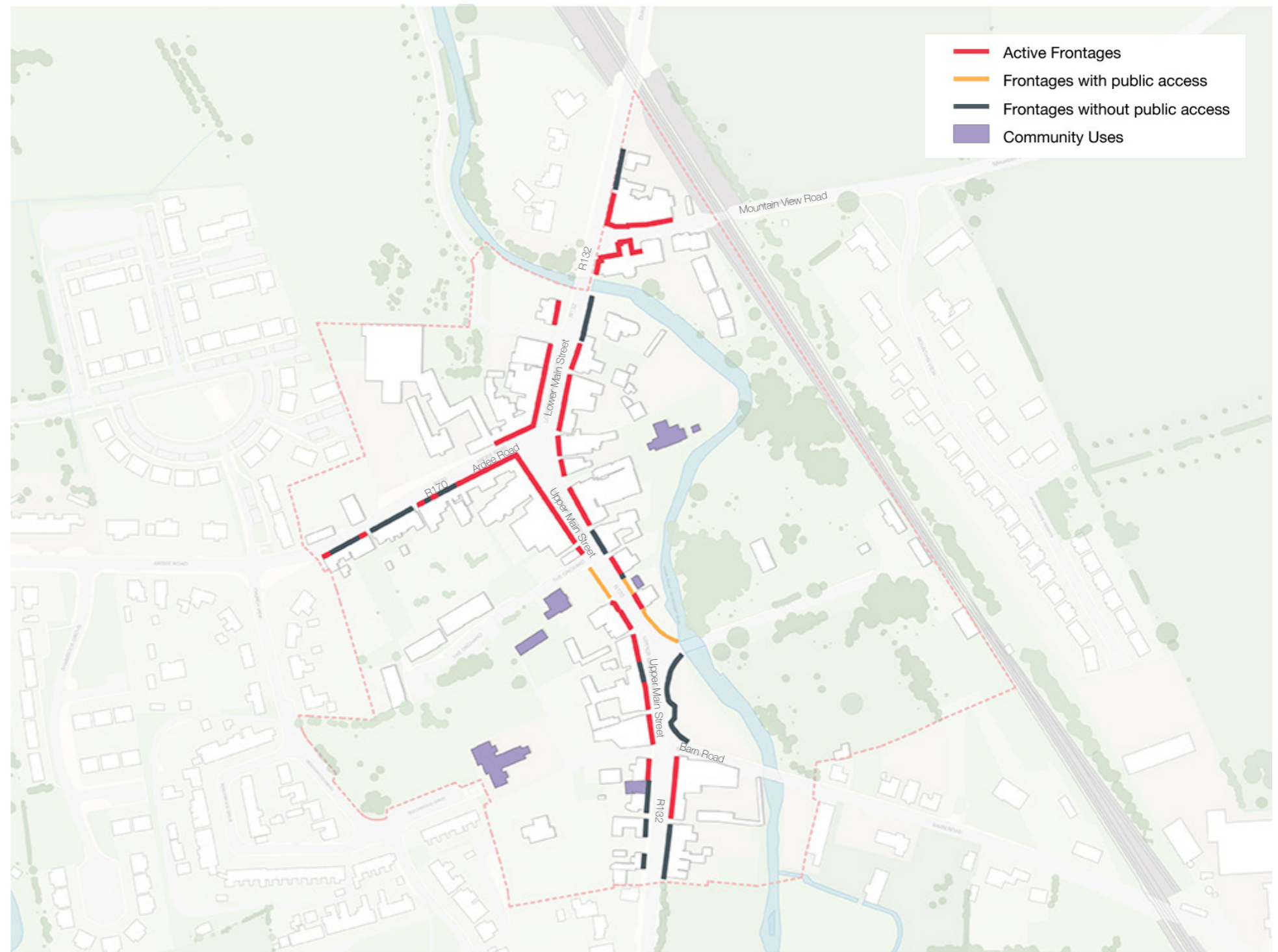


Fig.13 - Map illustrating types of frontages in Dunleer's town centre .

## 3.3 FRONTAGES AND VACANCIES

### Vacancies

Dunleer has a relatively low vacancy rate. There are, however, some considerations to be pointed out in relation to the diagram opposite:

1. The vacancy of two commercial units at the Lower Main Street / Mountain View Road junction are significant in that they weaken the anchor at the northern end of Dunleer's retail circuit. Both units are fairly large and visible from the R132 road, and effectively create a gateway to the town. Their vacancy can create a negative image of the vibrancy of the town centre.
2. The three vacant buildings in the block north of Ardee Road open up, if considered as a set of grouped properties, the potential to consider them as part of an overall intervention for the block as a whole. They all are prominent structures of Dunleer's townscape, with the added value of yards that can accommodate a variety of uses. The vacancies can thus be considered as an opportunity to deliver a relevant transformation at the core of the town centre.
3. The former Bank of Ireland building and adjacent properties on Upper Main Street not only have a significant frontage to the street, but also enjoy an aspect to the White River. A possible future use could allow for the creation of a new link between the Main Street and River.
4. The relocation of the current public library, added to the vacancy of the rail station can create unwelcoming issues in an area with poor surveillance. The TCF will need to consider ways to reactivate this area of the town centre.

Addressing the 'vacancy clusters' will benefit from an urban design approach. A strategic approach as part of the TCF plan should highlight the delivery of long term solutions and unlock wider benefits to the town centre.

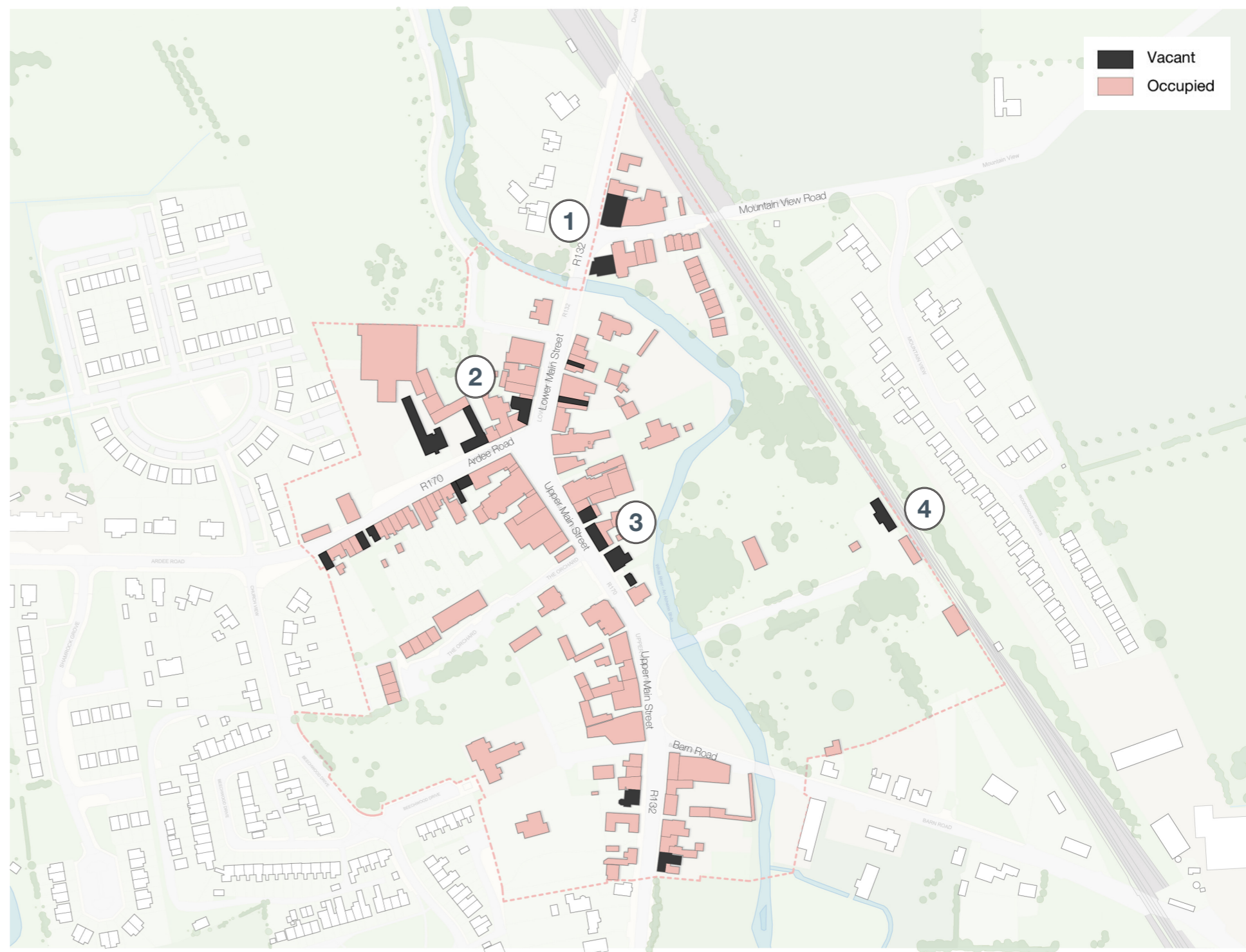


Fig.14 - Existing vacant blocks in Dunleer's town centre.

### 3.4 TOWN CENTRE BLOCKS

#### Dunleer Urban Blocks

Dunleer's Main Street (the old Dublin-Belfast Road), Ardee Road, White River and railway line create strong edges that have shaped the historic growth and development of the town centre. The previous pages in this section have looked at aspects of this development from a town-wide aspect. The following pages will focus on the town centre's character areas or urban blocks. Each block has a particular mix of uses, building typologies, structure of open spaces, urban frontage etc. If these are considered together, they can help identify opportunities for further development that will inform potential interventions for individual buildings and how these can best support the revitalisation of the town centre as a whole.

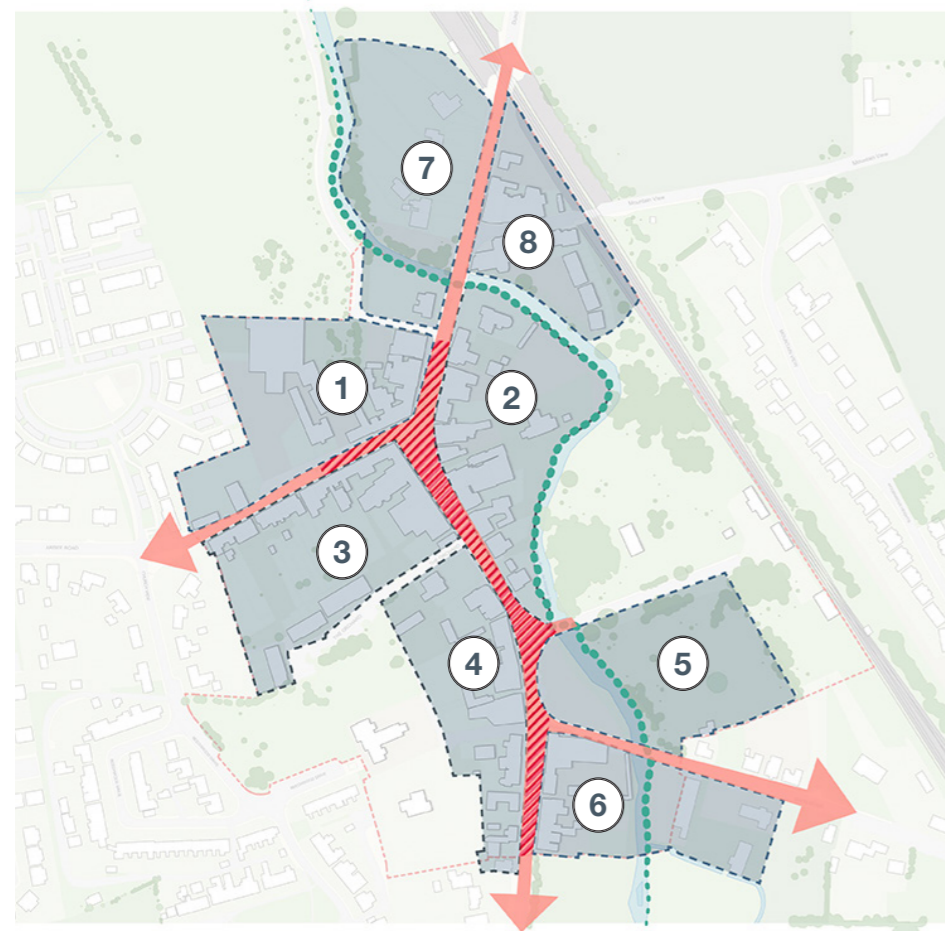
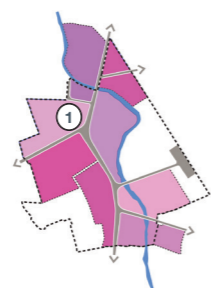


Fig.15 - Town centre urban blocks / character areas.

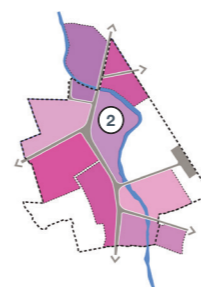
## 3.4 TOWN CENTRE BLOCKS



### 1. ARDEE ROAD YARDS



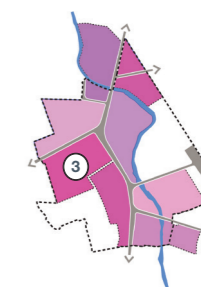
- Main Street frontage and yards
- Large single ownership
- Vacant buildings
- Streetscape renewal intervention from Tidy Town Team
- Potential land to be released for future development
- Gateway to future residential developments



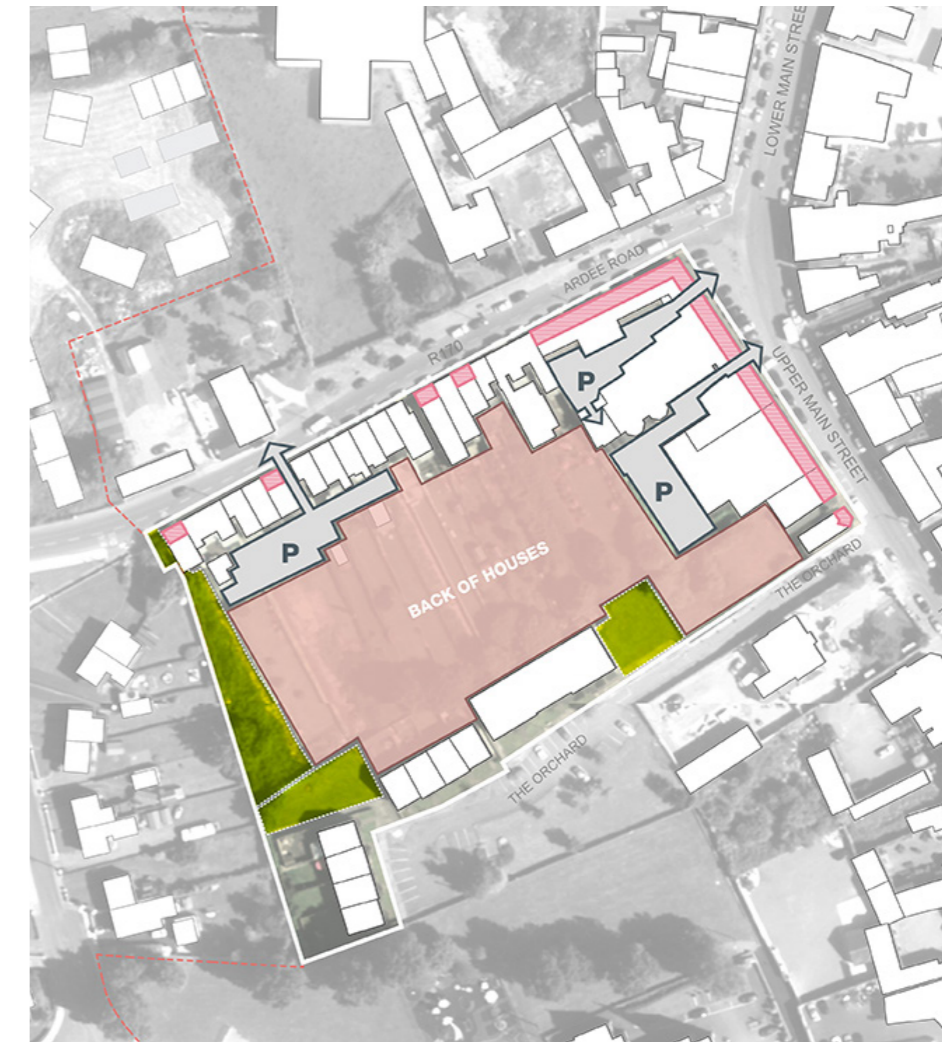
### 2. RIVER BACKLANDS



- Contrast between urban frontages and river frontage
- Continuous commercial and retail frontages facing the Main street
- Pedestrian linkages
- Large riverside gardens
- Existing important building asset - Dunleer Church of Ireland
- Existing Bank of Ireland - owned by Louth County Council (currently vacant)
- Disused public toilet
- Small open space along Main Street
- On-street parking dominates the road



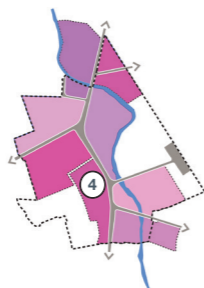
### 3. ARDEE ROAD GARDENS



- Mix of uses
- Large commercial component facing Main Street
- Small ground floor retail units along Ardee Road
- Vacancy
- Deep back gardens
- Accessible parking courts at the extended backlands
- Existing pocket green open spaces
- On-street parking dominates the road

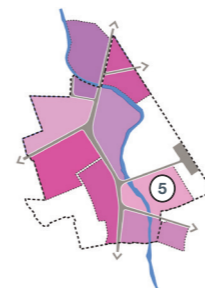
### 3.4 TOWN CENTRE BLOCKS

#### 4. MAIN STREET BACKLANDS



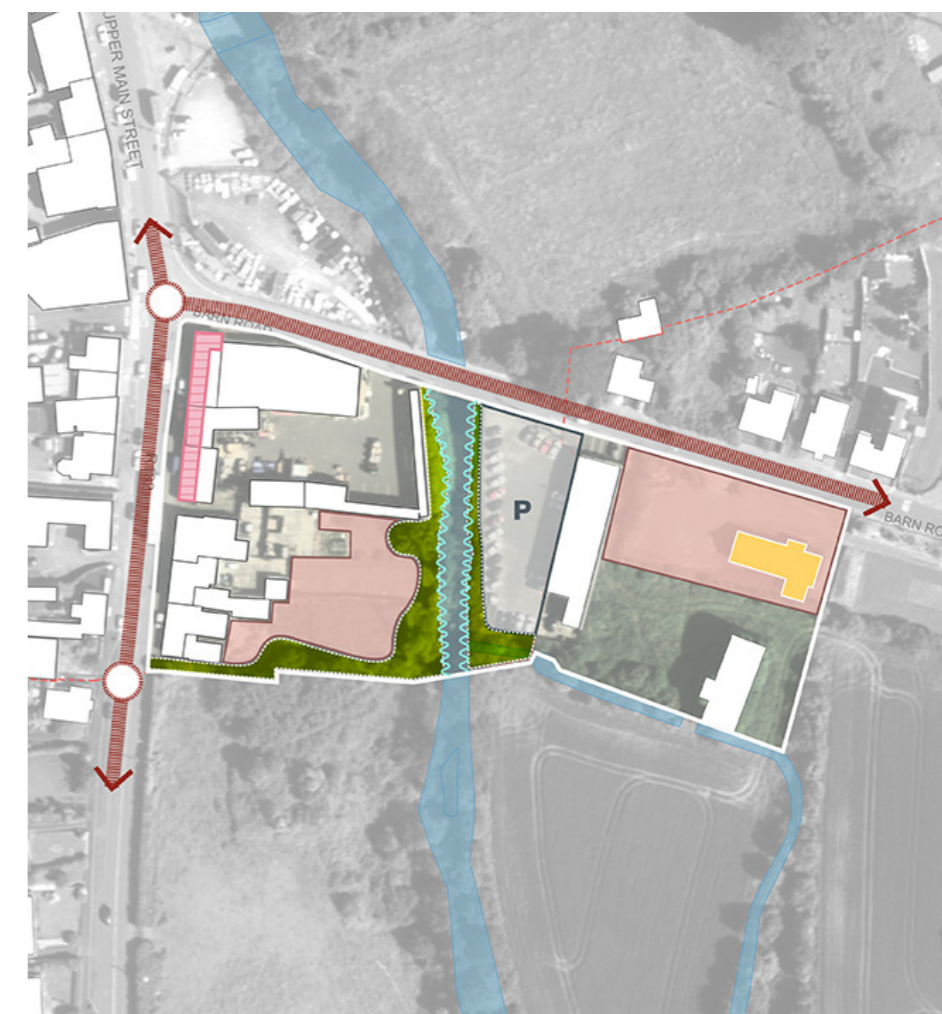
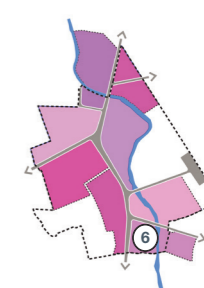
- Large back yards
- Commercial frontages
- Continuous building line along Main Street
- Two-storey terrace blocks with extended parking courts
- Route to Dunleer playground
- Accessible route to the St Brigid's Church
- Includes the Market House - the civic centre of Dunleer
- On-street parking dominates roads and alleys
- Potential links between Main Street and park

#### 5. STATION APPROACH



- Large field - town centre allocation
- Parking lot at the corner of the Station Road junction
- Land is partially used as a warehouse for the adjacent hardware shop
- Access to both river banks
- Protected Barn Road Bridge
- Outgrown vegetation along the river
- Threats to flooding
- Potential gateway in current goods yard

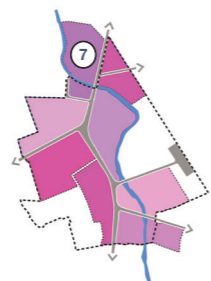
#### 6. BARN ROAD



- Mix of uses and typologies
- Key junction in Main Street
- Conflict between traffic and pedestrians - large vehicles frequently pass through Barn Road to industrial site further east
- Backlands behind terrace blocks
- Existing music and culture centre - Scoraíocht Lann Léire
- Potential Riverside walk



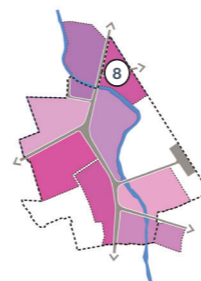
### 3.4 TOWN CENTRE BLOCKS



#### 7. DUNLEER NORTH



- Predominantly cottage houses with extensive front and back gardens facing Dundalk Road
- Entrance for large vehicles to the town centre
- Course of river running through
- Vacant plot adjacent to the river - potential visitors' car park
- Potential riverwalk



#### 8. THE FORGE



- Mix of uses and typologies
- Residential estate with a combination of houses and apartments
- Private parking courts
- Vacancy of commercial units
- Large block occupied by a toy shop with significant shopfront
- Existing riverside walk
- Potential link to the Train Station

## 3.5 HISTORY

### Evolution of Dunleer

Dunleer developed originally at the junction of the main Drogheda - Dundalk road and the road to Ardee. The main settlement pattern in 1835 was linear, bound to the east by the White River. The construction of the railway in the late nineteenth century influenced the growth of the town, with buildings developing to its east. Flax and flour mills were also built there around this time. However, the railway also seems to have acted as a barrier to the town's eastward expansion, as in the last thirty years, the more significant development has taken place to the west of Dunleer. This has largely been in the form of housing both public and private on the land behind the Catholic Church. Ribbon development has occurred in all directions.

In 1835, the town was surrounded by woodland. By 1865 this had changed, and the woodlands were transformed into formal gardens and parkland. Today these have all been built upon, with the exception of the large gardens off the Ardee Road which back onto the green area behind the Catholic Church. This is now one of the few public green spaces in the town but it lacks amenity and recreational features. Dunleer remains a fairly compact urban centre, still concentrated on the same junction as it was in 1835.

Dunleer has been a centre of industry from the 17th Century. At one time it had three water powered mills. Rosevale; which was a flax mill (location of today's Glen Dimplex on the Barn Road), Skibblemore; which was a steel pin manufacturing mill (later converted to flour milling) and Glebe Mill (operating since 1698) which is still producing stone ground flour in small amounts from time to time for the artisan trade. Dunleer has also been a centre of domestic appliance manufacturing since the late 1930s, and is still a centre of manufacturing, with two factories employing several hundred people. There is also a number of thriving services firms. In recent years, it has been known as the home of the award winning Lannleire Honey, which is produced there.



Fig.16 - Ardee Road and Bellew Mill Cottages. (Source: CLAHS, n.d)



Fig.18 - Aerial image shows the Parochial House at Main Street (Source: CLAHS, n.d)



Fig.17 - Dunleer and Environs 1835 Map. (Source: Ordnance Survey, Ireland, 1835)



Fig.19 - Cyclists riding through Main Street. (Source: CLAHS, n.d)



Fig.20 - Ardee Road junction. (Source: CLAHS, n.d)

## 3.5 HISTORY

### Dunleer Today

Dunleer's history is closely linked to early Christianity in Ireland. On the site of the present Church of Ireland, there are still three carved stones dating back to the monastery period that remain today. The monastery, which suffered attacks and was burned to the ground in 1148, was located approximately where Dunleer's Church of Ireland stands today. Another connection to early Christianity is St. Brigid, who, according to legend, regained her sight after bathing her eyes in a well in Dunleer. After a period of ruin, the area was evidently occupied by the Norman family of De Audley, with remnants of a Norman moat found on the southern side of the town. In 1513, a large piece of land, including the manor of Dunleer, was granted to John Barnewall, raising the town to the status of a Manor. It is possible that it was during this time that the settlement became known as "Dun" Leire, according to old records dating back to 1227. In summary, Dunleer is a place steeped in profound history that has shaped its culture and influenced the physical development of the town centre.

Regarding the map on the right, it indicates a list of protected structures in Dunleer Town Centre that hold historical value and have been conserved:

- **13830014:** House opposite Railway Station, built c.1870. A four-bay two-storey red brick house with yellow brick quoins, & string courses.
- **13830012:** St. Bridget's Hall
- **13830015:** Former Market House
- **13830003:** Five-bay House
- **13830005:** Dunleer Railway Station
- **13830009:** White River Watermill (not shown on map)
- **13830001:** House & Railings (excluding outbuildings) of a detached five-bay two-storey house, built c. 1780
- **13830002:** Dunleer Church of Ireland Church
- **13830004:** Single-span road-over-river bridge, built c. 1840.
- **13830007:** Single-span road-over-bridge, built c. 1850
- **13830008:** Detached three-bay two-storey house
- **13830013:** St. Brigid's Roman Catholic Church



Fig.21 - Map of protected structures in Dunleer.

## 3.6 TRAVEL AND MOVEMENT

### Baseline Analysis

At the time of the 2016 Census, Dunleer’s resident population was 1,822. 2022 Census data for Co. Louth shows a nearly 8% increase in population – so it is likely that Dunleer will have seen an increase in residents since 2016.

Dunleer has a large draw on surrounding areas, in part thanks to its main street, which includes retail, restaurants, pubs and public services. Its primary and secondary schools, and some large employers also draw residents from the wider county – there are two Glen Dimplex industrial estates in town.

Dunleer is located on the M1 and this gives the town excellent connectivity with other towns and villages in Co. Louth, including Dundalk and Drogheda, and further south, with Dublin. This connectivity is only by road – since train services travel through Dunleer but do not stop here.

### Walking and Cycling

- Many people in Dunleer walk to access shops and services. Many schoolchildren also walk between school and the town centre. People who drive into Dunleer also walk from their parking place to their destination. This is usually a short walk, since parking availability is very high.
- Footways are narrow, at around or under 1 metre, which often forces people to walk in line to avoid stepping on the roadway, or makes it likely that they will step on the roadway.
- There is no pedestrian crossing in the town, aside from a narrow hatched crossing near the primary school on Ardee Rd. Figure 22 shows the lack of crossing infrastructure, figures 23 and 24 narrow pavements or the lack of pavement altogether.
- Roads within the town centre are lit by lighting columns, but these are infrequent on the route from the secondary school along Barn Road, meaning some sections are unlit.
- Cycling is popular in Dunleer: the cycling club has over 150

members. Most cycling is recreational, and the coast is within cycling distance.

- There is no dedicated cycle lane in Dunleer, or traffic calming features.
- The speed limit is 50 km/h throughout the town, which poses a danger to people walking and cycling for narrow pavement widths and dedicated cycle lanes.
- No cycle parking was identified on the Main Street. Cycle parking would make it easier for people to stop in the town centre.
- The NTA’s 2022 Cycle Connects national cycle plan proposes two inter-urban routes through Dunleer, and a third route linking Dunleer to the coast. The NTA indicated during a workshop that the plan is open to engagement from local authorities. The Plan is set to be implemented from April 2023 onwards. Together with a new greenway for cycle touring, improved cycling infrastructure would encourage local people to take up leisure cycling and promote local tourism.



Fig.23 - Image of railway viaduct over Barn Road with narrow footway and one-way carriageway.



Fig.22 - Illustration of the vehicle-dominated area around the Main Street - Ardee Road intersection, and lack of pedestrian crossings.



Fig.24 - Image of Barn Road at the junction with Upper Main Street, highlighting the narrow footway which is the main pedestrian link between Scoil Uí Mhuiri and the town centre.

## 3.6 TRAVEL AND MOVEMENT

### Public Transport

- There are direct bus services to Drogheda, Dundalk and Dublin approximately every couple of hours during the day, as well as very infrequent (less than daily) services to other towns and villages in Co. Louth. Transport for Ireland also runs bus transport to and from schools, but an on-going consultation process identified issues with bus transport capacity, especially after school, meaning that some children were waiting in the town centre after school.
- There is no seating or shelter at bus stops, probably because pavements are too narrow to accommodate these at current bus stop locations. Narrow pavements also mean that bus users would be waiting for services very close to vehicle traffic, which can feel intimidating or dangerous.
- There is no pedestrian crossing at bus stops, which creates danger for pedestrians crossing the road, even more so when buses obstruct visibility.



Fig.25 - Image of bus stop in Upper Main Street, highlighting the lack of seating or shelter, and the excessively narrow footway. The lack of lay-by means the bus blocks the road when stopped.

### Traffic Counts

Driving is very convenient in Dunleer, and most people coming to Dunleer arrive by car. This makes Dunleer very car dominated, with nearly all the public space in the town dedicated to car traffic or parking. The table below shows results from the traffic survey.

Traffic counts were conducted in early 2023. The survey shows that roads in Dunleer are busy throughout the day. Traffic peaks in the morning and in late afternoon and early evening, and remains high during the interpeak, reflecting visits to shops and public services in the town.

Traffic flows are mainly along Main St and Ardee Rd, with many vehicles turning between these two streets, partly reflecting access routes to and from the M1, and to and from nearby localities to the east, including coastal communities. That said, the other roads that were surveyed were also busy with vehicle traffic.

Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic is very high in Dunleer, due to movements in and out, and between industrial estates located on either side of town. HGVs often share the road with pedestrians and cyclists, since footways are narrow (1 metre wide or under). This puts pedestrians and cyclists at a high risk of collision, injury and fatality. Feedback from local engagement highlighted that some drivers prefer not to drive through town at certain times, for example after school. More information on HGV traffic can be found in the table below.

Count timings were as follows:

- *Main St: Mon 6 Feb 05:00- Tues 7 Feb 04:00 (23 hours)*
- *Ardee Rd: Weds 18 Jan 05:00 - Thurs 19 Jan 05:00 (24 hours)*
- *Bard Rd: Mon 16 Jan 00:00 – Tues 17 Jan 00:00 (24 hours)*
- *Mountain Rd: Mon 6 Feb 05:00- Tues 7 Feb 04:00 (23 hours)*

	MAIN ST (OPPOSITE WOGANS)	ARDEE ROAD	BARN ROAD	MOUNTAIN ROAD
All Vehicles	6,298	6,327	4,083	2,564
Trucks and semi-trucks	635	698	417	127
Peak hour – all vehicles	17:00-18:00	9:00-10:00	17:00-18:00	16:00-17:00
Peak hour – trucks and semi-trucks	17:00-18:00	9:00-10:00	17:00-18:00	-
Peak hour – number of vehicles	630	586	527	259

Fig.26 - Table of traffic counts conducted in early 2023 along the Main Street

## 3.6 TRAVEL AND MOVEMENT

### Traffic Speeds

Driving over the speed limit is a relatively infrequent occurrence at all count points except Mountain Rd. Still, some vehicles travel at high speed, even in the town centre. This creates road danger for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles alike, including many children.

Despite general busyness, traffic queues at the main intersection are rare, even during the peak hour. This is suggested by the time gaps between vehicles, and traffic speeds close to average even at peak times.

### Parking

There is abundant on-street parking in Dunleer and an off-street car park, as shown on the map on page 39. Parking is used by traders and their customers, and by people who use local services. Many of them drive from elsewhere in the county.

Given that public transport services are currently relatively infrequent, and that appropriate walking and cycling infrastructure linking Dunleer to surrounding residential areas is not currently in place, it is important that people can continue to access Dunleer by car.

Louth County Council conducted a parking occupancy survey in Dunleer over two weekdays in January 2020 and April 2023, between 8am and 5pm respectively. Survey locations included the main streets around the central shopping areas and side streets on the main street, including public car parks. Car registration was noted every hour.

The survey counted approximately 254 parking spaces in Dunleer, broken down as follows:

- 156 on Main Street
- 40 on Ardee Road
- 38 on Station Road
- 12 in the off-street public car park
- 10 on smaller side streets west of Main Street

Of these 254 spaces, 166 were considered ‘useful’ by Louth County Council. Spaces were not considered useful if they more than a 2-minute walk from the town centre or are on streets that would not have sufficient widths to accommodate car parking – this is the case for the whole of Station Road.

Peak occupancy was measured at noon, when 90 of the 166 useful parking spaces were occupied. This represents a 54% occupancy rate, leaving 76 parking spaces available. 18 cars were parked for

the whole day, and around 30 vehicles were parked for periods of two hours or less.

A Google Street view survey conducted in August 2019 found approximately 55 free car spaces.

The report by Louth County Council pointed to an over-provision of parking by between 55 and 70 parking spaces. These spaces could be reallocated to widen pavements, add planting and more seating.

### Electric charging

While electric car users would usually have a charging facility at home, there are charging points available in Dunleer. Two charging points are available at the Lann Leire Pavilion recreation centre, installed by the Energy Team, and two more in the Market House.

	MAIN ST (OPPOSITE WOGANS)	ARDEE ROAD	BARN ROAD	MOUNTAIN ROAD
Average speed (km/h)	35	35	35	51
Average speed – peak hour (km/h)	30	34	31	50
Speed limit violations – all vehicles	159 (2.5%)	167 (2.6%)	104 (2.5%)	1331 (52%)

Fig.27 - Table of traffic speeds measured in the Main Street, Ardee Road, Barn Road and Mountain Road respectively.

# DUNLEER TOWN CENTRE

## BASELINE ANALYSIS



Fig.28 - Diagram summarising the transport and movement baseline analysis results for Dunleer. (Source: Momentum, 2023)

### 3.6 TRAVEL AND MOVEMENT

#### Opportunities

Figure 29 summarises priority solutions to make transport in Dunleer more sustainable, accessible and safer. In addition to the priorities shown on the map, it is proposed that engagement with Glen Dimplex focuses on re-timing HGV traffic to avoid school start and finish times. It is also proposed that car sharing is encouraged by designating a ride hailing bay in visible location in the town centre.

Some of these interventions are relatively low cost, such as adding in traffic calming and pedestrian crossings. Others will take longer to deliver, and require more funding and working with other partners, such as Irish Rail and the National Transport Authority, but would improve Dunleer’s strategic connectivity.

	Short term (1 to 5 years)	Medium to long term (+5 years)
<b>Road Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safer crossing at the Main St and Mountain Rd junction, including a raised table and pedestrian crossing</li> <li>• Safer crossing at Barn Rd and Main St junction, including a raised table and pedestrian crossing</li> <li>• Safer speeds in the town centre and in front of schools, through traffic calming (thanks to green chicanes, speed bumps, raised tables and pedestrian crossings)</li> <li>• Reduce HGV circulation at school start and finish times</li> <li>• A redesigned Ardee St/ Main St junction, with wider pavements and a raised table to slow vehicles and facilitate crossings</li> </ul>	<p>Put together a cycle network for Dunleer that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-urban cycle infrastructure proposed by the Cycle Connects plan,</li> <li>• A Greenway through Dunleer, working with Tourism Ireland</li> <li>• The accessible White River path link and other walking and cycling links shown in the map opposite and proposed in the Dunleer local plan</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new consolidated bus stop at the Main St/ Station Rd intersection, with a pedestrian crossing, sheltered seating and cycle parking</li> <li>• Wider pavements on Main Street and where possible, ensuring step free access, and that pavement space has sufficient circulation space (target 1.8m)</li> </ul>	

	Short term (1 to 5 years)	Medium to long term (+5 years)
<b>Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review afterschool minibus service to ensure sufficient capacity</li> <li>• Improve strategic connectivity by bus, by reviewing frequencies</li> <li>• Encourage car sharing by providing a ride hailing bay and meeting point in a central, visible location</li> <li>• Facilitate park-and-ride journeys by providing off-street car and cycle parking in locations that are convenient for bus users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-open the rail link</li> </ul>
<b>Parking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove unutilised parking provision along Main St, replace with planting, seating, cycle parking and wider pavements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further reduce on-street parking if availability allows</li> </ul>



# DUNLEER TOWN CENTRE OPPORTUNITIES

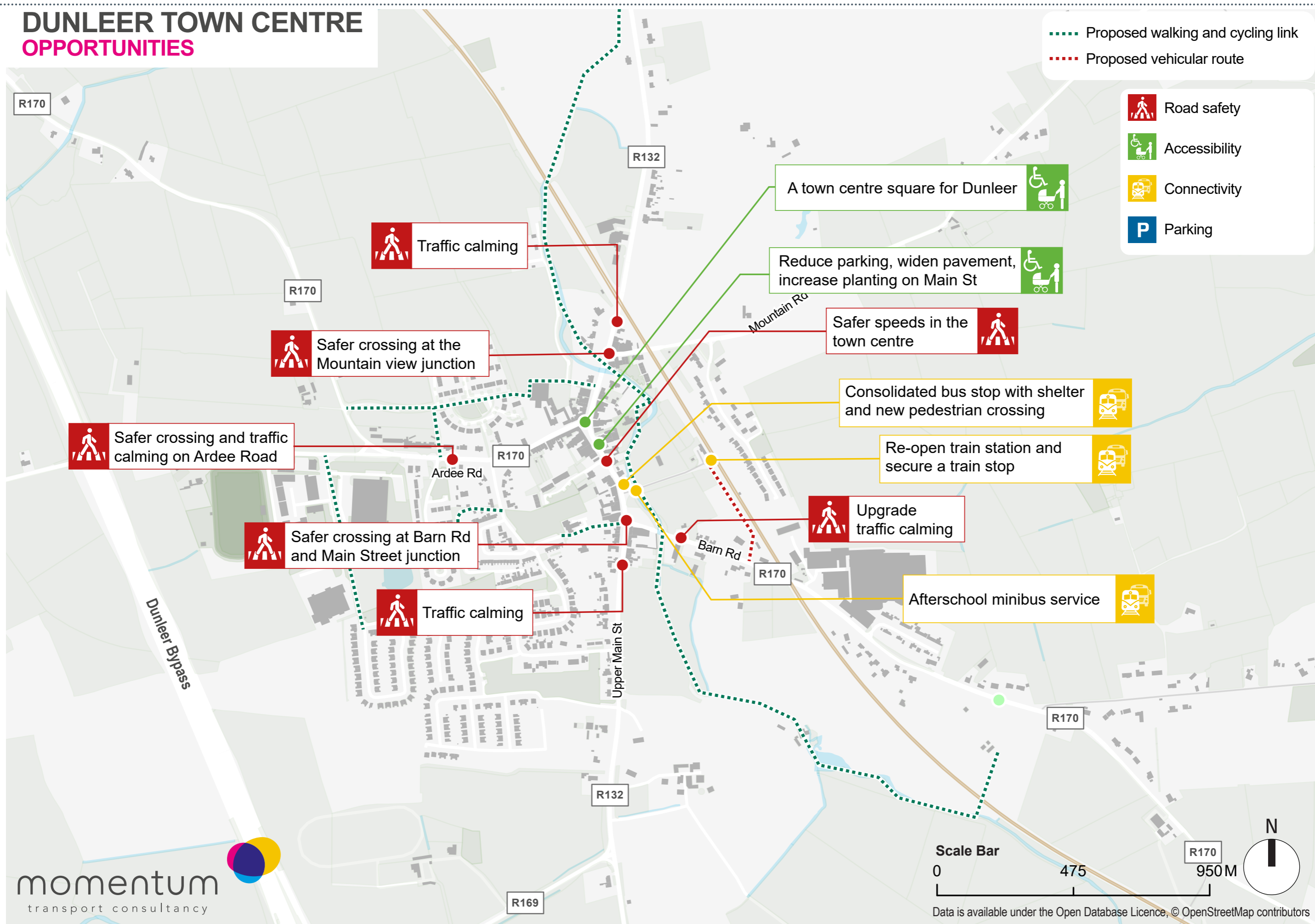


Fig.29 - Diagram summarising the key opportunities and proposals to regulate and improve traffic and mobility in Dunleer r. (Source: Momentum, 2023)

### 3.7 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC

#### Population pattern

Dunleer has grown rapidly in recent years, and the population has grown accordingly, with numerous new houses being built. This is borne out by the Irish 2006 Census, which revealed that Dunleer District Electoral Division (DED) had 2,340 people living in the town. This meant the population had grown by more than 30% in five years. The 2016 Census shows the present population of Dunleer DED to be 2,855. With the town experiencing renewed prosperity as a result of this growth, a wide range of shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes have been established in the thriving town centre. Dunleer's proximity to Drogheda, Ardee, and Dundalk, and its location as a crossroads on the main north-south economic corridor of Ireland have made this once rural village officially a town.

2006 Census – Dunleer District Electoral Division (DED) had 2,340 people living in the town, 30% growth in five years.  
 2016 Census – population was grown to 2,855.

This results in a total population of 2,855 in the town settlement and surrounding environs of approximately 6km to the West of the town centre. The town settlement of Dunleer itself has a population of 1,822. 4 small areas outside of Dunleer Electoral Division but within 3 km of Dunleer to the North and East of the town have a population of 1,337.

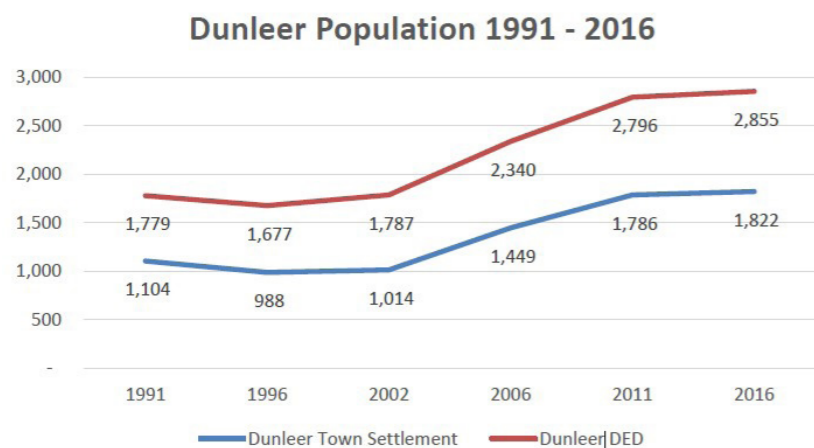


Fig.30 - Dunleer Population index between 1991 to 2016. (Source: CSO Census,

#### Age Distribution

The population has been analysed in 6 age categories; 0 to 19 years of age; 20 to 29; 30 to 44; 45 to 64; 65 to 79 and 80 years plus. Figure 31 and Figure 32 illustrate the Dunleer age structure. County Louth has a higher 0 to 19 age percentage of 32.1% compared to the State (27.5%) and Dunleer (28.7%).

In the 5 years to 2016 in Dunleer, the only age groups to decline in numbers are the 20-29 years and the 30-44 years category. The 20 to 29 age group fell by a significant number (17.4%) while the 30-44 age group fell by 7.1% or 55 individuals. Emigration may be a mitigating factor for the 20-29 age group along with movements to urban centres throughout the island. The 65-79-year-old group grew by a substantial 24.5%, while there was a significant 14.5% increase in the 45-64 age group. The 80+ age group grew by 3.8%, while the 0-19 group grew by 4.7% and remained the largest age group in Dunleer.

Fig 7 - 2016 Percentage Breakdown of Population Age Structure

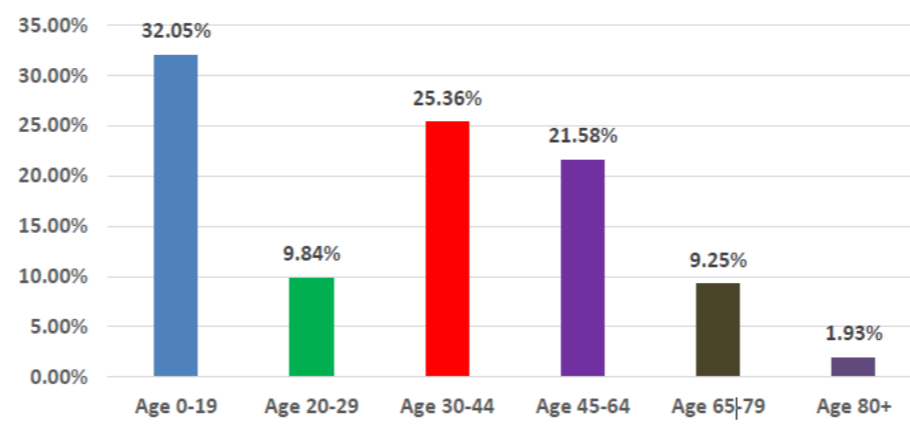


Fig.31 - Percentage breakdown by age structure in 2016. (Source: CSO Census,

Dunleer has a narrow row at the 20 – 24 age at 4.6% compared to the State average of 5.4% (which is also relatively narrow). The male row in this age group is only 1.9%. There are large numbers under 19 and it is imperative that the area retains the optimal amount of this age group in the long term to sustain the town going forward. Dunleer has high variance in its aged dependency ratios. The youth dependency is significantly higher than the County, Border and State averages (38.7%), while the elderly dependency is lower than these regions (17.5%). This variance has subsided since 2011.

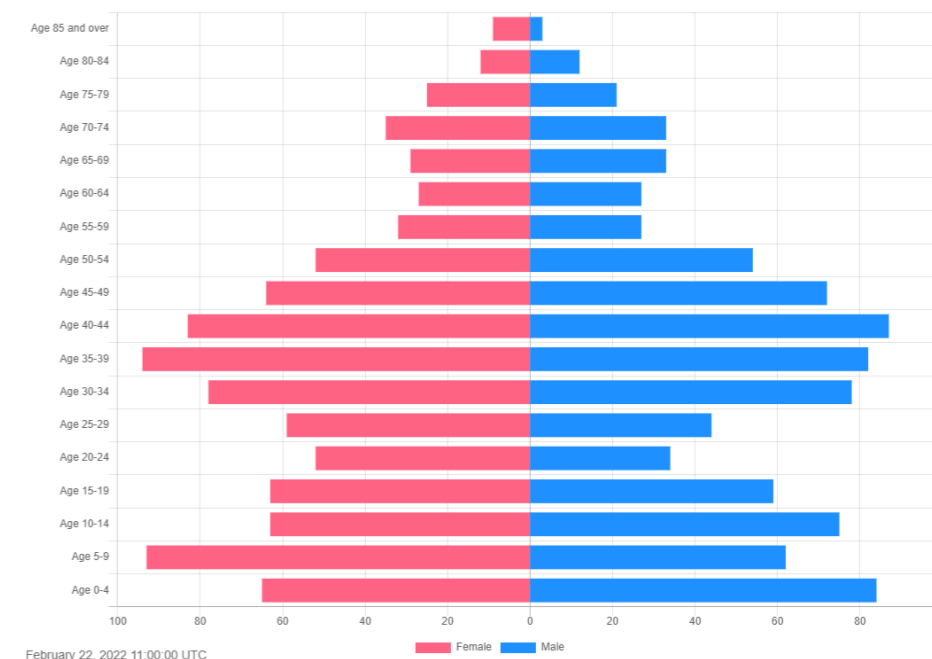


Fig.32 - Population pyramids comparing gender distribution among 18 age groups of Dunleer. (Source: CSO Census, 2016)

## 3.7 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC

### Household pattern

There are 777 families in the area representing 89.3% of the population and 1,147 children in total (including sons and daughters of all ages). A lower proportion than national average of families has just 2 members (34.4%), compared to the State (39.5%) and Louth (37.5%). Consequently, there are more large families than average with 16.2% with 5 members or more. 24.3% of families have no children, compared to 26.2% in Louth and 29.2% for the State.

### Economic Pattern

There are 1,316 individuals in the labour force representing 62% of those over 15 years of age. Of those in the labour force, 30.8% are in professional occupations (compares to 31.5% for Louth and 35.7% for the State). Administrative and secretarial occupations (9.8%) is similar to the county and national averages (9.6% and 10.0% respectively), Process Plant and Machine operatives (8.1%) and Elementary Occupations (9.4%) are similar to the county (7.6%, 9.8%) and national average (7.2%, 8.8%). Skilled Trades (17%) is significantly higher than the county (13.6%) and national average (13.9%) and Caring Leisure and other service is also higher

Household Size	Number of families in private households (Number)	Number of persons in private households (Number)	Number of children in private households (Number)
2 persons	267	534	78
3 persons	189	567	239
4 persons	195	780	408
5 persons	94	470	287
6 or more persons	32	198	136
<b>Total</b>	<b>777</b>	<b>2,549</b>	<b>1,147</b>

Fig.33 - Household pattern of Dunleer. (Source: CSO Census, 2016)

Occupation	Male	% Male	Female	%Female	Total	Percent
Managers Directors and Senior Officials	63	8.96%	35	5.71%	98	7.45%
Professional Occupations	73	10.38%	105	17.13%	178	13.53%
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	69	9.82%	60	9.79%	129	9.80%
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	24	3.41%	104	16.97%	128	9.73%
Skilled Trades Occupations	205	29.16%	18	2.94%	223	16.95%
Caring Leisure and Other Service Occupations	25	3.56%	100	16.31%	125	9.50%
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	23	3.27%	66	10.77%	89	6.76%
Process Plant and Machine Operatives	90	12.80%	17	2.77%	107	8.13%
Elementary Occupations	82	11.66%	42	6.85%	124	9.42%
Not Stated	49	6.97%	66	10.77%	115	8.74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>703</b>		<b>613</b>		<b>1,316</b>	

Fig.34 - Occupation pattern in relation to gender distribution in Dunleer. (Source: CSO Census, 2016)

## 3.8 PROPERTY MARKET AND ECONOMIC GENERATORS

### Business Space

- Reported that an estimated 800 people work in Dunleer, with the towns' population of 2,000. Indicates significant commuting into the town
- Primarily domestic businesses but in 2021 a new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) business located in Dunleer – Simply NUC
- Glen Dimplex biggest employer, HQ in the town and split across two sites:
  - - East at Glen Dimplex Irish HQ, combination of manufacturing, warehousing and office space, domestic.
  - - West at the Dunleer Enterprise Park close to the M1 and junctions.
- Potential for a contemporary town centre office offering, including co-working, FDI landing space, hybrid working opportunities, and shared office facilities to nurture more business activity
- Local progress in energy saving and retrofitting is a notable strength and Dunleer differentiator
- Some professional services accountants, lawyers in the town centre

### Domestic and International Occupiers

Occupiers include:

- Glen Dimplex (Electrical consumer goods), Domestic
- Simply NUC Europe (IT – computer hardware), FDI
- Sensor Tech (IT – computer hardware), Domestic
- SureTank (Industrial/Engineer – tanks/containers, Domestic)
- Crafted Spirits Distillery (F&B, alcohol) Domestic
- Neacy Mechanical & Electrical (Manufacturing), Domestic
- Restore Manage Consult, Business Services, Domestic
- ElectroTech/Eimard Electronics (IT, traffic control equipment, Domestic)
- Praxis (Health, Charity, Domestic)
- PolyDev (Health, biomedical Cosmetic contact lenses, Domestic)
- Foxhall Country Kitchens (Manufacturing & Retail, Domestic)
- Room One Machine Design (TBC)
- Retail Display solutions (Manufacturing, product display, Domestic)



Fig.35 - Image shows the board listing companies in the Dunleer Enterprise Park.



Fig.36 - Suretank's office in Dunleer - Founded in 1995, an engineering solutions company.

### Retail, Food & Beverage and Leisure

- Well catered for and potential for more independent shops. With a stronger story and as the town grows potential for some larger branded shops, perhaps supermarket and chain restaurants. Would the town want this, might they stay largely “independent”?
- Convenience retail – Spar, Centra, Butchers, Pharmacy, Hardware, Pubs (decreasing), Coffee shops (increasing), Limited restaurant offer
- No hotel, a small B&B offer – given business base, location and motorway access potential for stronger offer?
- Unlikely to be significant comparison retail. Potential as the town grows for increased independent/boutique retail
- Between potential development enhanced public spaces and wayfinding will help to shape the town centre experience for residents and visitors, especially more shoppers. This means on going urban design enhancements and better presentation of buildings

### Residential Prices

- May 2023: 28 properties for sale or rent
- Reflects the national situation of high demand and shortage of residential, especially multi-family
- No apartments and no properties for rent
- Average asking prices: €396,400; above the State average of €305,000 and continued to increase during 2022 and into Q1 2023
- Sample of asking prices/sqm for a single-family house (say 3 to 4 bedrooms): €2,594 sqm
- Development site south of the town with full planning permission for 35 units, mix of apartments and single-family homes
- Other sites reportedly progressing through the planning system c 300 units, primarily single-family homes, potentially 1,000 plus people

## 3.9 DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Digital technology is identified by the Town Centre First policy as an important tool to support successful places to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, improve accessibility to services, support daily social and commercial life, and provide new roles as part of a developing digital economy. The Dunleer TCF Plan will thus need to consider the town's current digital readiness and identify opportunities to use digitalisation and information technology to support the implementation of its strategic objectives.

A Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) for Dunleer, commissioned by Louth County Council and published in March 2023, provides an assessment of the town's initial digital readiness of infrastructure and service providers. It also allows to compare Dunleer to similar towns in Ireland and international benchmarks to highlight to stakeholders and the general public areas of improvement and guide future investment and project proposals. The DTB assessment considers the following seven dimensions:

- Infrastructure for Connectivity
- The Digital Economy and Digital Business
- Digital Public Services
- Digital Education
- Digital Technologies and Civil Society
- Digital Tourism
- Governance of Digital Town Initiatives

The outcomes and scoring for each of these categories are summarised as follows:

**Infrastructure for Connectivity** - This takes into account, amongst others, broadband and mobile connectivity, free public Wi-Fi, and rural digital hubs. Dunleer has 100% fixed broadband coverage, and near universal mobile broadband coverage. 4G and 5G provision does vary across its townlands with a limited number of providers. Free WiFi is available in municipal buildings and hospitality accommodation, but not throughout the town. Regarding digital hubs, Dunleer currently lacks any connected hub desks, meeting rooms or co-working spaces. These are key in promoting and supporting remote working and the opportunity for economic growth and development associated to it.

Dunleer's weighted score for connectivity infrastructure is 3.7 out of 5.

**Digital Business** - The appraisal of the use of digital technologies to support business activity is based the equally weighted dimensions of Website Technology Intensity Score (WTIS), digital technology take-up, and e-commerce take-up. From an analysis of 83 businesses located within 2 kilometre's of Dunleer's town centre, the overall DTB score for digital business is 1.0. There is evidently ample scope for improvement, and an opportunity to promote a greater use of digital technologies to drive the growth of Dunleer's business base.

**Digital Public Services** - The use of digital technology to support the provision of essential public services is assessed in the DTB by considering e-government readiness, e-health, and availability of open data. Whilst e-government scores high, both health services and the provision of public data in relation to Dunleer scored poorly, with a resultant overall score of 1.8.

**Digital Education** - The assessment refers to the use of digital technologies in both formal and non-formal education, and comprises four sub-dimensions: pre-primary, primary, post-primary, and digital skills and availability. The scoring takes into account indicators relating to, amongst others, the integration of digital technologies in the curriculum, teachers' professional training, leadership and policy, and digital technology infrastructure. The scoring the sub-dimensions varies greatly. Whilst post-primary education achieves a 5, primary and digital skills education score below 2. The overall score of 2.3 highlights the need for further investment in digital education, in particular for older segments of Dunleer's population.

**Digital Civil Society** - Civil society refers to the wide range of voluntary and community organizations that are involved in a variety of social, cultural, environmental, artistic etc. projects and initiatives. In Dunleer these include sports clubs, charities, political organisations, and other community groups. The way in which they make use of digital technology is assessed by the DTB based on three sub-dimensions: web intensity, digital technology take-up, and e-commerce take-up. The overall score is 1.8.

**Digital Tourism** - Digital technologies are playing an increasingly important role in attracting tourists to rural locations as Dunleer, and helping to deliver an attractive visitor's experience. The DGT's assessment of Dunleer's digital tourism dimension comprises three sub-dimensions: digital readiness of tourism businesses, smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure, and tourism destination website and maturity. Dunleer's overall score of 0.9 reflects the limited role that tourism currently has in the town's economic base. This is illustrated by the fact that only 4 tourism attractions and destinations have been identified in the DGT within 2 kilometres of the town centre.

**Governance of Digital Towns Initiatives** - This dimension refers to the governance mechanisms that enable the delivery of digitalisation policies and initiatives, and those that support and coordinate stakeholder engagement and participation. The DTB assessment is based on two types of governance mechanisms: vertical and horizontal integration. Vertical integration refers to the integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere, whilst horizontal integration relates to different elements of policy making or their integration with stakeholders. Each of these is assessed in relation of a number of indicators, with horizontal integration having a larger weighting than vertical integration (75% and 25% respectively).

In terms of horizontal integration, there is a clear lack of digitalisation initiatives coordinated with local entities such as the Dunleer Community Development Board. This is reflected in its score of 0. It must be pointed out that this score will have been updated by the establishment of a Town Team to support the development of the TCF Plan The Plan itself can include proposals to support digital capacity building that involve active participation by the town's community groups.

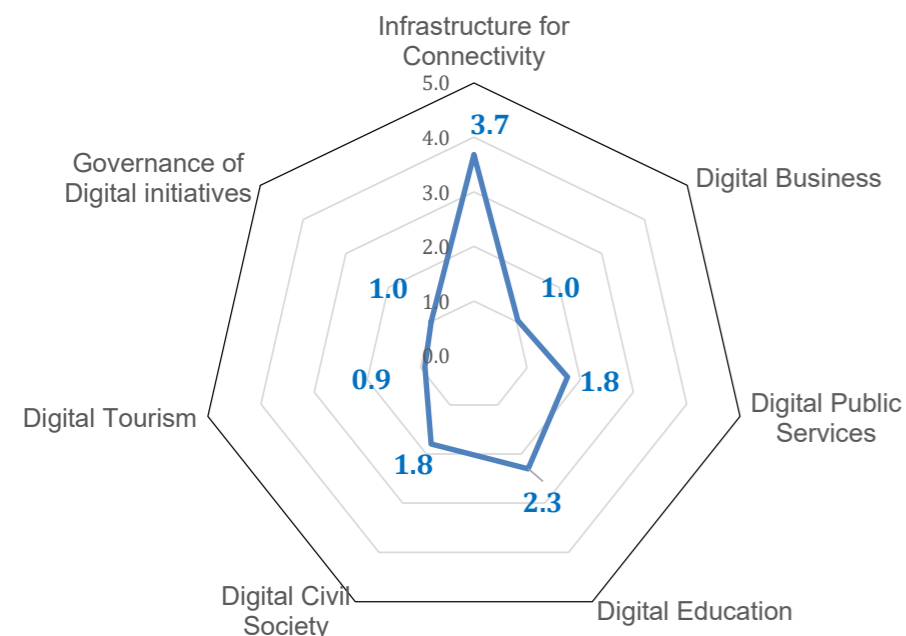
Regarding vertical participation, the selection of Dunleer as a participant in the TCF Programme has helped to push up the score to 4, despite the lack of a digital strategy for Louth.

The overall score for governance of digital initiatives is 1.0.

### 3.9 DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Digital Town Score.

Based on the assessment of the various dimensions described in the previous page, Dunleer's Digital Town Score is 39 out of 100. The table opposite summarises the scoring per sub-dimension, with the colour coding indicating which areas have non-existent, readiness (red), ad hoc or competitive readiness (yellow), and significant or leading readiness (green). There are clear areas to be improved, particularly in relation to the digitalisation of local businesses, public services, education, tourism and governance.



Digital Town Dimension	Sub-dimension			Dimension Score
	Score (out of 5)	W1 Weighting	Weighted score	
<b>Infrastructure for Connectivity</b>				3.7
Fixed broadband	4.5	35%	1.6	
Mobile broadband	4	35%	1.4	
Competition	4.5	10%	0.5	
Free Public WiFi	2.6	10%	0.3	
Digital rural hubs	0	10%	0.0	
<b>Digital Business</b>				1.0
Website Technology Intensity Score	0.9	33%	0.3	
Digital technology take-up	1.2	33%	0.4	
eCommerce take-up	1	33%	0.3	
<b>Digital Public Services</b>				1.8
e-Government readiness	3	40%	1.2	
e-Health	0.9	40%	0.4	
Open data	1	20%	0.2	
<b>Digital Education</b>				2.3
Pre-school	0.0	10%	0.0	
Primary	1.6	30%	0.5	
Post-Primary	5.0	30%	1.5	
Digital skills education availability	1.0	30%	0.3	
<b>Digital Civil Society</b>				1.8
Website Technology Intensity Score	2.1	33%	0.7	
Digital technology take-up	2.3	33%	0.8	
eCommerce take-up	1.0	33%	0.3	
<b>Digital Tourism</b>				0.9
Digital readiness of Tourism Businesses	0.8	60%	0.5	
Smart Tourism & Digital Infrastructure	0.5	20%	0.1	
Tourism destination website and maturity	1.7	20%	0.3	
<b>Governance of DT initiatives</b>				1.0
Horizontal integration	0	75%	0.0	
Vertical integration	4	25%	1.0	

W2 Dimension Weighting	Readiness Score		Readiness Score Contribution by each dimension
	Weighted score	out of	
20%	0.7	1.0	14.8
20%	0.2	1.0	4.0
15%	0.3	0.75	5.4
15%	0.3	0.75	6.9
10%	0.2	0.5	3.6
10%	0.1	0.5	1.8
10%	0.1	0.5	2.0
<b>100%</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>38.6</b>

Dimension Level	Readiness	Guideline Description
1	Non-existent	Digital Readiness is Non-Existent or at a Very Low Level.
2	Ad Hoc	Digital Readiness is Ad Hoc and Mostly Not Documented.
3	Defined / Competitive	Digital Readiness is Clearly Defined and Documented
4	Significant / Differentiating	Digital Readiness is Clearly Differentiating and Significant
5	Leading	Digital Readiness is Leading

Fig.37 - Dunleer Digital Readiness Dimension Score ( Digital Town Blueprint 2023 Town Report. Dunleer, Co. Louth).

Fig.38 - Digital Town Readiness Index with Weightings (Digital Town Blueprint 2023 Town Report. Dunleer, Co. Louth)

## 3.10 PLANNING POLICY

This page outlines a comprehensive overview of the national, regional, and local policies that form the basis of this plan. This material highlights the alignment of the plan with various policy documents and plans, including:

- National Planning Framework: Ireland 2040
- National Development Plan 2021-2030
- Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022
- Climate Action Plan 2023
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2027
- Making Remote Work: National Remote Working Strategy 2021
- Future Jobs Ireland 2019: Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy
- Ireland National Skills Strategy 2025
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midlands Regional Assembly 2019-2031
- Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Louth County Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026

In relation to the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, the TCF Plan refers to the Strategic Objectives, Policy Objectives (Housing, Economy and Employment, and Movement), and Strategic Settlement Strategy Policies for Dunleer listed in the table opposite (figure 39). The TCF Plan will also align with and respond to the economic and community goals set out in the Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 - 2022 for County Louth (see table in figure 40).

<b>EE 70</b>	To support the 'Town Centre First Approach' and the establishment of any future town centre management initiatives that seek to promote this approach.
<b>EE 75</b>	To promote the improvement of the environment and public realm of town and village centres through good design, landscaping, street furniture, improve mobility through traffic management, and co-operate with Tidy Towns Committees and other community groups in the implementation of environmental improvement schemes.
<b>EE 77</b>	To promote the provision and modernisation of residential accommodation over commercial premises in towns and villages in order to improve the vibrancy of their centres.
<b>SO14</b>	Reverse rural decline in small towns and villages through sustainable, targeted measures addressing vacancy and delivering sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes.
<b>SS15</b>	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area.
<b>SS 50</b>	To work closely with business groups and stakeholders to revitalise and reduce vacancy in the town centre area of Dunleer and to provide for town centre living.
<b>SS 52</b>	To work with local landowners and businesses in facilitating and carrying out public realm works in Dunleer including works to roads and footways and existing lane ways / cycle ways
<b>SS 53</b>	To examine the feasibility of providing additional off-street car parking locations in Dunleer.
<b>HOU 11</b>	To encourage and support a range of appropriate uses in town and village centres that will assist in the regeneration of vacant and under-utilised buildings and land and will re-energise the town and village centres, subject to a high standard of development being achieved.
<b>MOV 40</b>	To support the design and implementation of public realm projects in town and villages throughout the County that will make these locations more attractive and liveable spaces which are climate resilient and facilitates accessibility for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.

Fig.39 - Table outlining specific objectives from the adopted Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 that aligns with the development of this TCF's plan. (LCC, 2021)

Economic Goals		Community Goals	
<b>Foreign Direct Investment</b>	Promote and develop Louth as a key investment location on the Eastern Economic Corridor.	<b>Strong, Safe &amp; Flourishing Communities</b>	Enable well-being and quality of life to support safe, resilient, independent and engaged communities.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	Promote the growth of new and existing business in communities in Louth, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.	<b>Access to Education</b>	Ensure that everyone can access and participate in education, skills development and life long learning.
<b>Education &amp; Training</b>	Advance economic and social development by providing a targeted continuum of lifelong learning and skills development.	<b>Prosperous Inclusive Communities &amp; Places</b>	Create equality of opportunity for those experiencing poverty, isolation and social exclusion.
<b>Future-Focused Innovation</b>	Ensure that Louth will be a leader in business development, creating new models of flexible value and enterprise.	<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	Provide environments and conditions that support healthy, self-directed, fulfilled and purposeful lives.
<b>Business &amp; Indigenous Industry</b>	Deliver viable local economies underpinned by innovation and entrepreneurship.	<b>Nurturing Children &amp; Young People</b>	Nurture and develop our children and young people from early childhood to young adulthood.
<b>Tourism &amp; Heritage</b>	Ensure that Louth's unique Tourism offering positions it as a market leader of national significance.	<b>An Age Friendly Society</b>	Embrace and foster that rich contribution older people make to our communities.
<b>Agriculture, Food &amp; Fisheries</b>	Establish Louth as a premier producer in the Agri-Farming, Food and Fisheries sector.	<b>Entrepreneurship, Friendly Society</b>	Empower community innovation, entrepreneurship and enterprise to support urban and rural development.
<b>Broadband Connectivity &amp; Transport</b>	Ensure availability of high speed broadband connectivity County-wide to develop and sustain business and connect our communities.	<b>A Valued Environment</b>	Value and sustain our built heritage and natural environment to enhance the lives of those who live, work and visit in our County.

Fig.40 - Economic and community goals - Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022. (LCDC, 2015)

### 3.10 PLANNING POLICY

This TCF Plan will align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Below is a brief assessment highlighting the degree of applicability of the goals:



<b>SDG 1 - No Poverty</b>	The TCF Plan will provide assistance to tackle poverty by revitalising towns, creating jobs, affordable housing, and promoting social cohesion, contributing to comprehensive poverty elimination efforts.	Moderately Applicable
<b>SDG 2 - Zero Hunger</b>	The Plan fosters food security with local markets and support for farmers, empowering communities with sustainable food sources, in alignment with global hunger eradication and well-being objectives.	Moderately Applicable
<b>SDG 3 - Good Health &amp; Well-being</b>	The TCF Plan nurtures well-being through pedestrian-friendly town centres that prioritise walkability, active living and community interaction, promoting holistic health and mental wellness across all generations.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 4 - Quality Education</b>	The TCF Plan fosters inclusive, lifelong learning by transforming Dunleer's town centre into educational hubs with accessible facilities, cultural spaces, and programmes promote equitable quality education for all ages.	Moderately Applicable
<b>SDG 5 - Gender Equality</b>	Equal opportunities should be considered at all levels during the phases of development, occupation, and employment within the land development.	Less Applicable
<b>SDG 6 - Clean Water &amp; Sanitation</b>	The Plan should ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.	Less Applicable
<b>SDG 7 - Affordable &amp; Clean Energy</b>	The TCF Plan promotes affordable, sustainable energy access by advocating energy efficiency and collaborating with Dunleer's accomplished energy group, benefiting the entire community.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 8 - Decent Work &amp; Economic Growth</b>	The Plan should drive sustainable economic growth in town centre, fostering diverse local businesses, creating decent work opportunities and increasing footfall, contributing to inclusive prosperity and full employment.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation &amp; Infrastructure</b>	TCF Plan aims at improving resilient infrastructure in town centres, supporting sustainable industries and innovative practices, fostering inclusive growth and sustainable industrialisation for Dunleer.	Moderately Applicable
<b>SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities</b>	Plan reduces inequalities by promoting inclusivity, fairness, and stronger community connections, leading to social harmony and decreased disparities. The public realm should cater to all, including marginalised groups. It should prioritise accessibility, offering amenities and opportunities accessible without financial constraints.	Moderately Applicable
<b>SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities &amp; Communities</b>	The TCF Plan is developed based on core design principles that advocates sustainable practices and community engagement within town centres.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption &amp; Production</b>	Prioritise sourcing and supply chains that support local and global manufacturing, with a preference for redevelopment whenever feasible.	Less Applicable
<b>SDG 13 - Climate Action</b>	The plan integrates adaptive re-use to harness embodied carbon, with public realm enhancements prioritise green spaces and connections for sustainable way of life.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 14 - Life Below Water</b>	Conserve the White River and integrate it as part of the plan to promote sustainability. Landscaping and public realm design can incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) to capture and treat water effectively.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 15 - Life on Land</b>	The Town Centre First plan proposes a strengthening of the green and blue infrastructure network, supporting biodiversity and natural resources.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 16 - Peace, Justice &amp; Strong Institutions</b>	The Town Team plays a vital role in representing the community during plan development. Efforts from all disciplines in the locality are highly recognised.	Strongly Applicable
<b>SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals</b>	The Town Team and Local Authority will assist in steering with the SDGs as proposals are developed.	Moderately Applicable

Fig.41 - UN Sustainable Development Goals - indicates how the TCF Plan corresponds to 17 SDGs.



### 3.11 SCOT ANALYSIS

The table below outlines the town centre's Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats, as defined in the Town Centre First Policy (2022). Key findings from the baseline audit have been grouped under each of the SCOT categories in order to inform initial aims and strategic approaches for the TCF plan.

#### Strengths

The features of the town are successful and set it apart from others

#### Challenges

The aspects of the town that puts it at a disadvantage and could be improved

#### Opportunities

What can be changes an how can the strengths of the town be built upon

#### Threats

What external factors could impede the success of the town

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Location and accessibility from the M1 (two junctions)	Parking	Opening up access to White River	Not sorting out car parking
Development lands	No real tourism/visitor attraction	Improved road and urban design	Other regional towns
Public owned opportunity sites	Permeability of the town	New uses for key vacant buildings in the town centre	Businesses leaving - dependency on a small number of businesses
Business base and excellence in industry	Limited modern work space - i.e. co-working	Stronger retail	Increased vacancy
White River as a landscape asset	Business base on periphery	Intensification within town centre	Lack of delivery
Small independent retail	No hotel	Reopening of the Station	Multiple land ownerships
Market House project and strong community groups	Limited night time economy	Infill housing for a range of tenures	Congestion and risk of traffic accidents - pedestrian safety
Eco/Energy experience & team	Signage & legibility	Enhance the biodiversity of large open areas, particularly in the housing neighbourhoods	Parking issues not being solved
Large secondary school	Lack of public space (playground or town square)	New space to study and socialise for youths	Flood risk
GAA grounds & sports hall	Can feel unsafe as a pedestrian - traffic speed/narrow pavements, lack of crossings	Review of parking in the town centre, including new visitors' parking	Inadequate social infrastructure as new housing drives population growth
Young population	Lorries passing east to west through the town centre	Build on local success on energy efficiency and decarbonisation	Failure to address the redevelopment of the station area

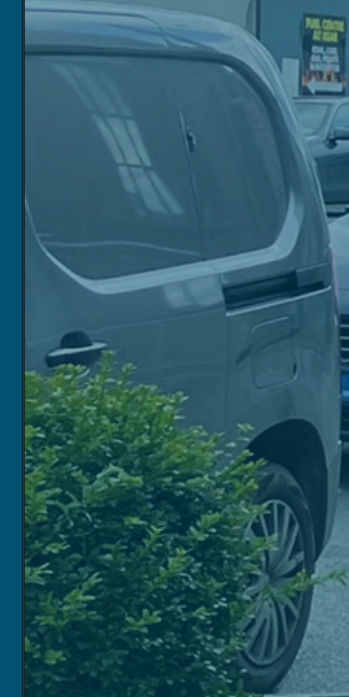
Fig.42 - SCOT table

# DEFINING THE PLACE

4



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## 4.1 VISION & OBJECTIVES

### The Town Centre First Approach.

The Town Centre First Plan establishes a holistic approach for how Dunleer can respond to existing and future challenges, capitalise on its assets to promote positive transformation, support community stewardship, review how the town's public realm and built environment can enhance its residents' health and wellbeing, and adapt to changes primarily brought about by climate change and technological development. The analysis carried out by the consulting team and the various engagement activities in liaison with Louth County Council and the Town Team have identified a wide range of issues which are summarised under the following headings:

**A Changing Community** - Dunleer is a dynamic town that has succeeded in recent years to attract new residents, consolidate its employment and business base, and expand its provision of primary and secondary school education. It is also a town with a strong sense of community. This is illustrated by the numerous community, educational, cultural and sporting activities that are hosted by different institutions and community groups (under the umbrella of the Dunleer Community Development Board) throughout the year. There is a risk, however, that growth and change can challenge the full integration of all social groups in Dunleer. The plan must thus ensure that there are spaces and facilities that can support an inclusive approach that is welcoming for all and encourages individuals to play an active role in shaping Dunleer's community and identity.

**Accessibility, Safety and Connectivity** - Throughout the engagement process it was widely acknowledged that traffic and parking have an impact on the image, use and accessibility of the town centre, particularly around the Main Street. Creating an environment that is more pedestrian friendly and establishing routes that can encourage more people to walk or cycle to and from the town centre would have a positive impact in relation to a wide range of issues - health and wellbeing, safety, sustainability, dwell time etc. A key consideration for the plan will thus have to be

rebalancing the share of space of streets and public realm between motorised vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This will have to be coordinated with the provision of adequate parking for visitors that ensures that Dunleer is 'open for business'.

**Town Centre Living** - Louth County Council has identified town centre living as a key element of a multi-dimensional strategy to attract more people to town centres and tackle problems related to vacancy and dereliction. Dunleer does not suffer greatly from these, but its town centre does offer a variety of opportunities to increase the housing density together with promoting more diverse economic, cultural and community uses.

**Climate Change** - Climate change impact mitigation and decarbonisation have to be at the core of the town centre plan. This is particularly pertinent in Dunleer in relation to the increased risk of flooding from the River White. Dunleer, through the work of organisations such as the Energy Team, has been proactive in promoting initiatives to inform the local community how they can contribute to develop and implement sustainability strategies. In this sense there is an opportunity to capitalise on the local know-how and commitment to contribute to achieve positive change. This will imply a variety of approaches, including retrofitting existing buildings, working with local industries to design strategies for circularity, enhancing the biodiversity of existing habitats and green spaces, or supporting initiatives for sustainable mobility.

**Local Success** - In many aspects Dunleer can be considered a successful and sustainable market town. It has a strong economic base with important employers such as Glen Dimplex or SureTank, good social infrastructure, excellent links to Dundalk, Drogheda and Dublin via the M1, and an active community. As a Self-Sustaining Growth Town (as defined in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-27) it has the prospect to continue growing and attracting further investment. The Town Centre First Plan will need to reinforce the current 'success drivers' whilst identifying what projects and interventions will be needed to underpin positive growth and transformation within the horizon of the project.

**Town Centre Uses** - Feedback from the public and stakeholder engagement highlights how different groups of Dunleer's population and regular visitors have particular expectations about what the town centre can offer. The TCF Plan will need to look at how a new 'town centre mix' can revitalise the area and support Dunleer's improvement as a place to work, live, care, learn and play. An important task of the plan will be to identify which uses can be brought into the town centre, which can be retained and diversified, and which should be displaced. This will imply assessing the viability of adapting existing buildings and redeveloping unbuilt areas, and understanding what interventions will allow the unlock of further development.

**Dunleer as a Destination** - Dunleer is not an established destination for visitors and tourists, despite its accessibility and location as a gateway to the Mid-Louth area. The TCF Plan offers an opportunity to think about what can be done to attract visitors and invite people to spend more time in the town. This may be through the enhancement of local amenities, promoting local distinctiveness (for example as Ireland's 'energy town'), or plugging into established touristic routes. In rethinking what the town centre aspires to be and in celebrating 'hidden' assets and spaces such as the River White corridor, Dunleer can develop a narrative that invites people to visit, enjoy, stay and return.

## 4.2 STRATEGIC THEMES

S1	A TOWN CENTRE FOR ALL, BY ALL	New community spaces - Opportunities for town centre housing - Establish links with education, culture, care - Events and initiatives that bring together local communities and encourage visitors to Dunleer
S2	RETHINK AND REFRESH THE MAIN STREET	Rebalance the share of space between pedestrians and vehicles - More pedestrian public spaces in and around the Main Street - Manage on street parking and create adequate parking provision for visitors
S3	DUNLEERIFY THE TOWN CENTRE	Develop an energy strategy for a decarbonised town centre - Retrofit, upcycle and reuse vacant and derelict buildings - Support schemes for community-based energy generation
S4	LINK, CONNECT, MOVE, TRAVEL	A network of walking and cycling loops - Enhance accessible pedestrian links - Safe routes between the town centre and schools - Improved public transport services between - A new sustainable transport hub for Dunleer
S5	BEYOND THE TOWN CENTRE - A NEW DESTINATION IN MID-LOUTH	Reinforce Dunleer's role as a market town - Destination Dunleer, new attractions for tourists and visitors - Attract investment to the town centre

## 4.2 STRATEGIC THEMES



### A TOWN CENTRE FOR ALL, BY ALL

*Understand what new uses and services can be located in the town centre in response to the changing needs and requirements of Dunleer’s residents and visitors. Think how the town centre can better serve the local population, become a meeting space for Dunleer’s different communities, be inclusive and responsive to demographic changes, and promote a sense of collective stewardship. Envisage how the town centre can work as a place of confluence that supports activities and events that bring together Dunleer’s community and invites others to visit, enjoy and engage.*

#### S1 Strategic Objectives:

##### S1 A\_

Promote new community spaces

##### S1 B\_

Identify opportunities for town centre housing

##### S1 C\_

Establish links with education institutions, cultural organisations, care providers and community groups

##### S1 D\_

Support events and initiatives that bring together local communities and encourage visitors to come to Dunleer



### RETHINK AND REFRESH THE MAIN STREET

*Rethink the Main Street as a space where pedestrians are the priority – a place that is safe, engaging, and encourages everyone to spend more time in the town centre. Bring to light the ‘hidden qualities’ of the Main Street – linkages to the River White, relations with backlands of buildings, link the interiors of certain spaces to the outside.*

#### S2 Strategic Objectives:

##### S2 A\_

Rebalance the share of space between pedestrians and vehicles

##### S2 B\_

Create more pedestrian public spaces in and around the Main Street

##### S2 C\_

Manage on street parking and create adequate parking provision for visitors

##### S2 D\_

Make the Main Street safe, accessible and inclusive for all pedestrians

##### S2 E\_

Design the Main Street as a green and blue space

The Strategic Themes bring together the issues identified during the analysis and appraisal stage and group them under 5 headings that broadly relate to community and people, the Main Street and adjacent environment, Dunleer’s links to the energy sector and environmental initiatives, movement and accessibility, and Dunleer’s wider regional role.

Each Strategic Theme is underpinned by a series of Strategic Objectives that identify specific actions, interventions and initiatives for the town centre. The list is not exhaustive or fixed - the idea is that it can be reviewed and refined and expanded during the lifetime of the TCF Plan - and serve to assess its effectiveness.



## DUNLEERIFY THE TOWN CENTRE

*Celebrate Dunleer's leadership in teaching, supporting and enabling communities to be more energy efficient; showcase the town's leadership in the energy sector and support innovation regarding mitigation of the effects of climate change.*

### S3 Strategic Objectives:

#### S3 A\_

Develop an energy strategy for a decarbonised town centre

#### S3 B\_

Build a Centre of Excellence for Climate Change in the town centre

#### S3 C\_

Retrofit, upcycle and reuse vacant and derelict buildings

#### S3 D\_

Support schemes for community-based energy generation



## LINK, CONNECT, MOVE, TRAVEL

*Make the town centre more accessible and develop interventions and initiatives that promote active travel to support healthier lifestyles.*

### S4 Strategic Objectives:

#### S4 A\_

Create a network of walking and cycling loops around the town centre

#### S4 B\_

Enhance pedestrian links between housing neighbourhoods and the Main Street

#### S4 C\_

Create safe routes between the town centre and schools

#### S4 D\_

Support and improve public transport service between Dunleer and local destinations

#### S4 E\_

A new sustainable transport hub for Dunleer



## BEYOND THE TOWN CENTRE: A NEW DESTINATION IN MID-LOUTH

*Redefine Dunleer's role as a self-sustaining market town moving forward. Enhance links with the communities in its catchment area and establish the town centre as a destination for the wider hinterland in Mid Louth.*

### S5 Strategic Objectives:

#### S5 A\_

Farmers Market and Food Hub – as a county/regional attraction for local producers

#### S5 B\_

Destination Dunleer – new attractions for tourists and visitors

#### S5 C\_

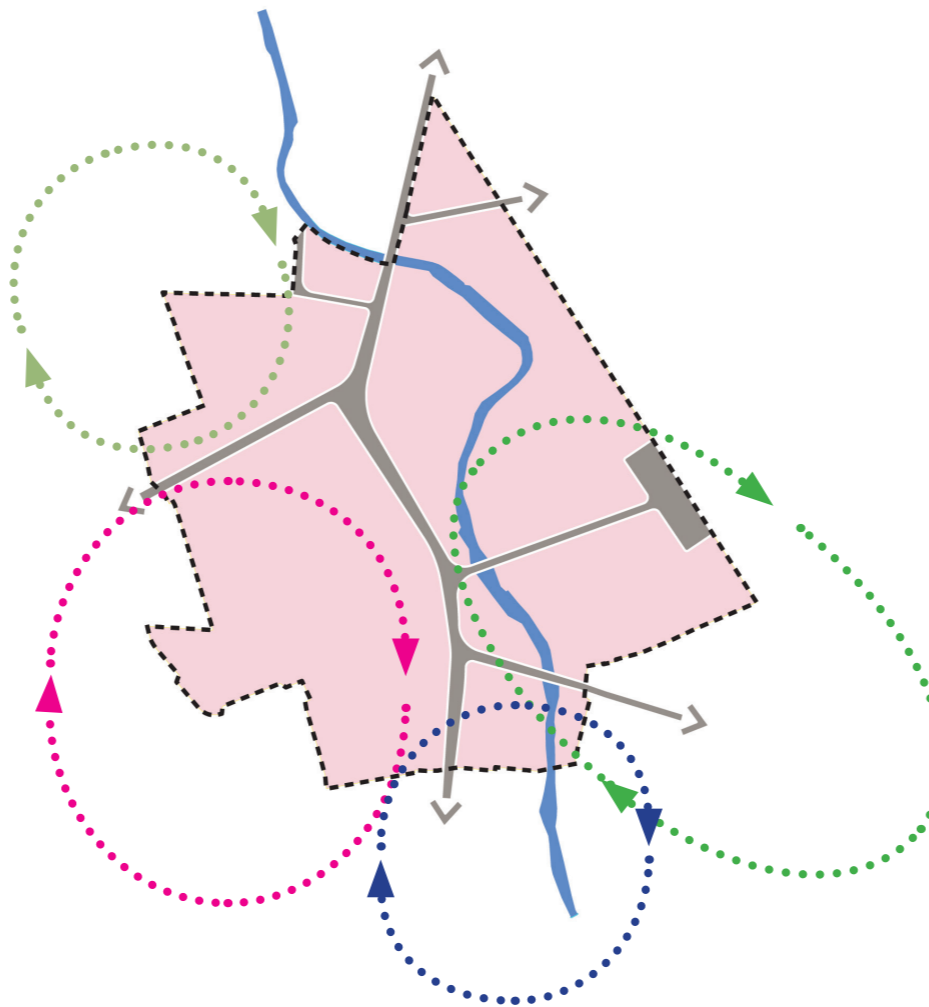
Attract investment to the town centre

## 4.3 FRAMEWORK

The plan is structured into five complementary spatial strategies. Two of them (A-Dunleer Loops and B-Dunleer Urban Blocks) look at working with existing elements and structures, identifying how relatively minor interventions can have a wider transformative impact across the town centre and the wider area of the town and its hinterland. Another two (C-Main Street and White River and D-Revitalisation Projects) look at more focused projects and interventions, both in the public realm and in buildings. The last one (E-Enhancement, Improvement and Collaborative Actions) look at small interventions with shorter term of development period, suggesting how the overall image of the town centre can be improved.

**A**

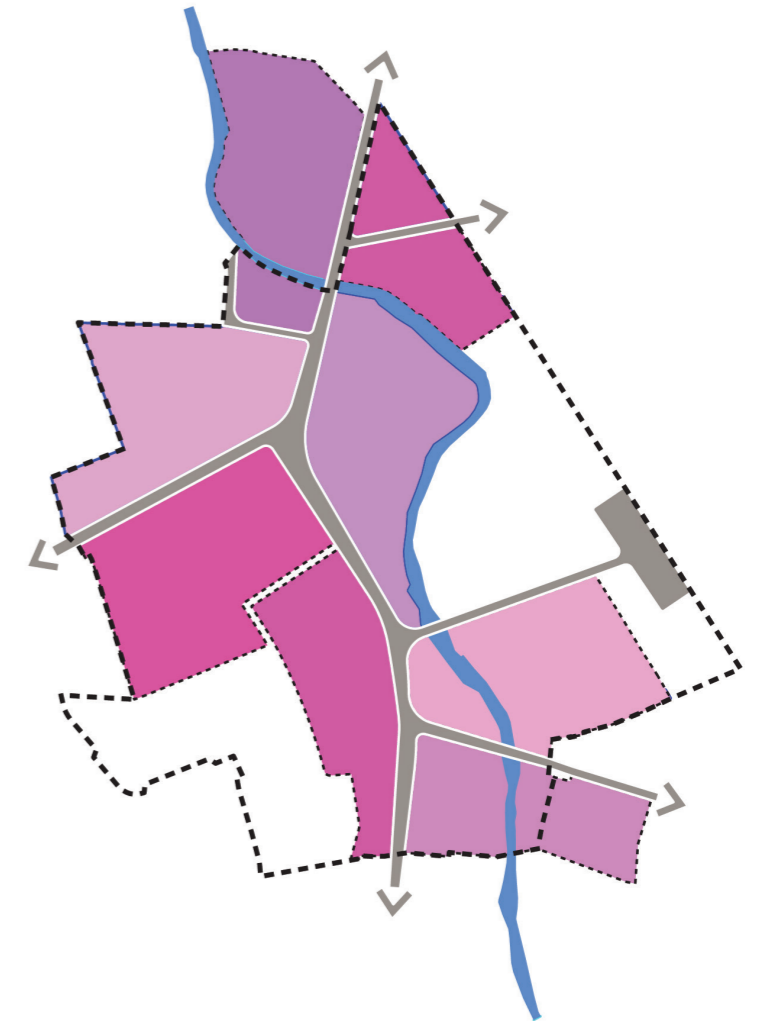
### Dunleer Loops and Links



The loops are pedestrian and cycling circuits that create safe routes and encourage active travel. They reflect the importance and value, highlighted during the Covid Pandemic, of enabling everyone to exercise (walking, running or cycling) and encouraging social interaction. They also help Dunleer's residents and visitors to enjoy the town's surrounding rich natural environment and built heritage. The proposed loops are mostly along existing paths or routes and thus require relatively little investment (wayfinding, lighting, seating areas and exercise posts)

**B**

### Dunleer Urban Blocks

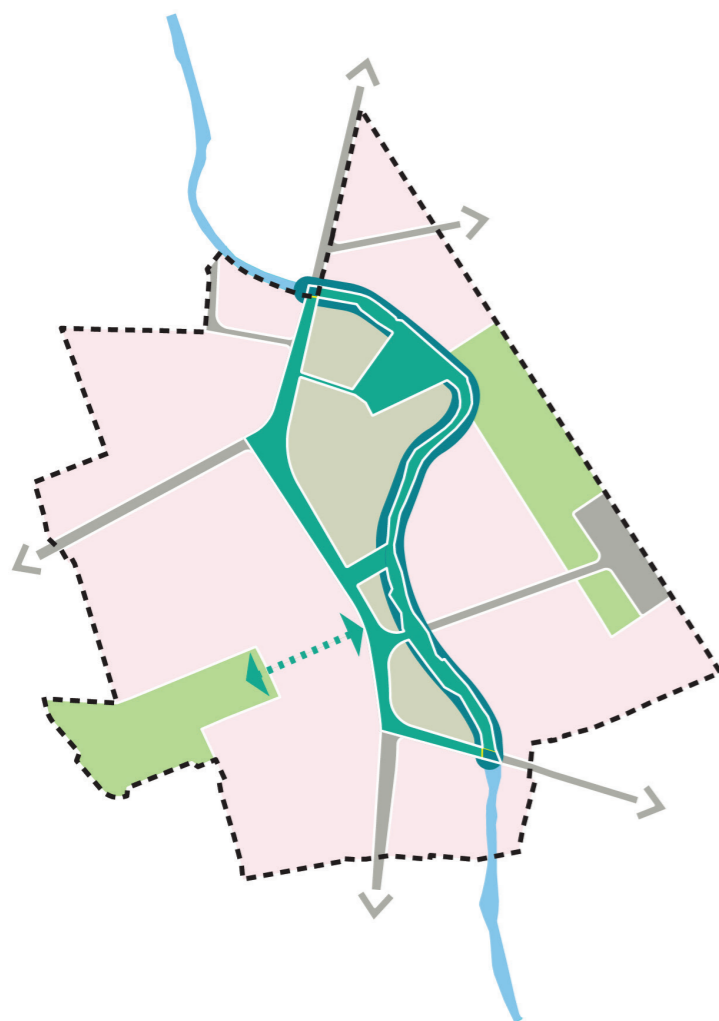


The town centre has a variety of character areas with distinct buildings, open spaces, frontages and edges. Dividing it into blocks helps to tease out local characteristics and identify specific opportunities for a variety of projects and interventions. These can complement town centre-wide proposals, whilst developing longer term strategies for focus areas that take into account particular conditions in relation to ownership, current uses of buildings, accessibility and linkages, and character of open or green spaces.



C

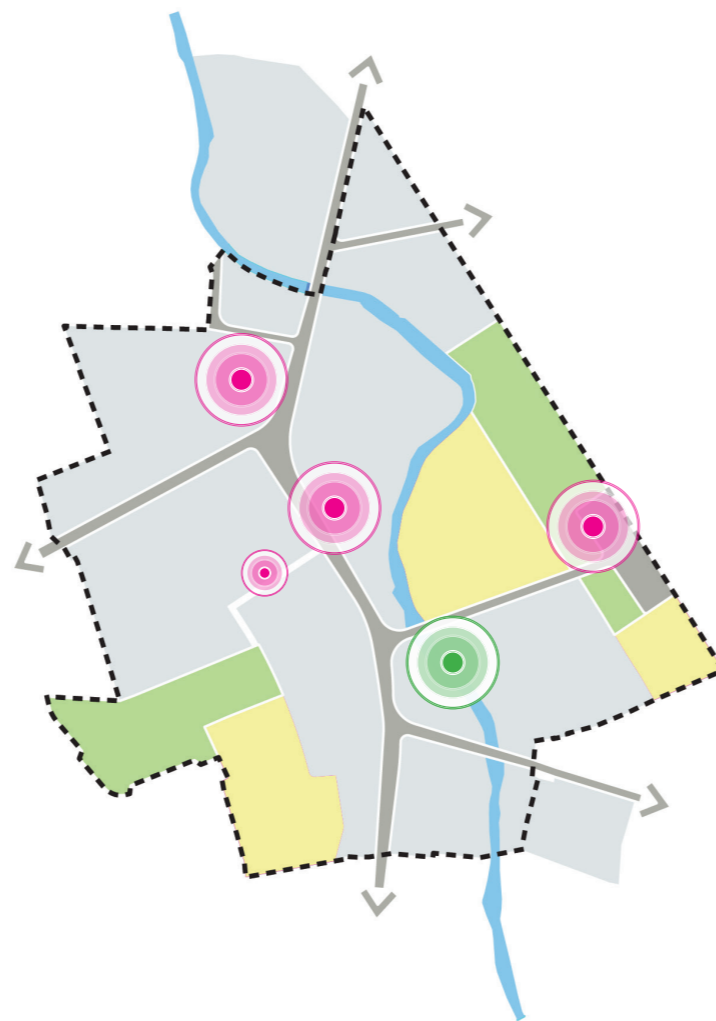
### Main Street and White River



The Main Street and White River are, despite being in close proximity to each other, two very different (almost opposite) spaces. The hardness and vibrancy of the street contrasts with the calmness and lush greenery of the river corridor. The proposed strategic approach envisages looking at these, and the spaces between them, as one project area or urban entity. A future 'soft core' for the town centre where the street opens up to the river, and the river becomes part of the public realm framework.

D

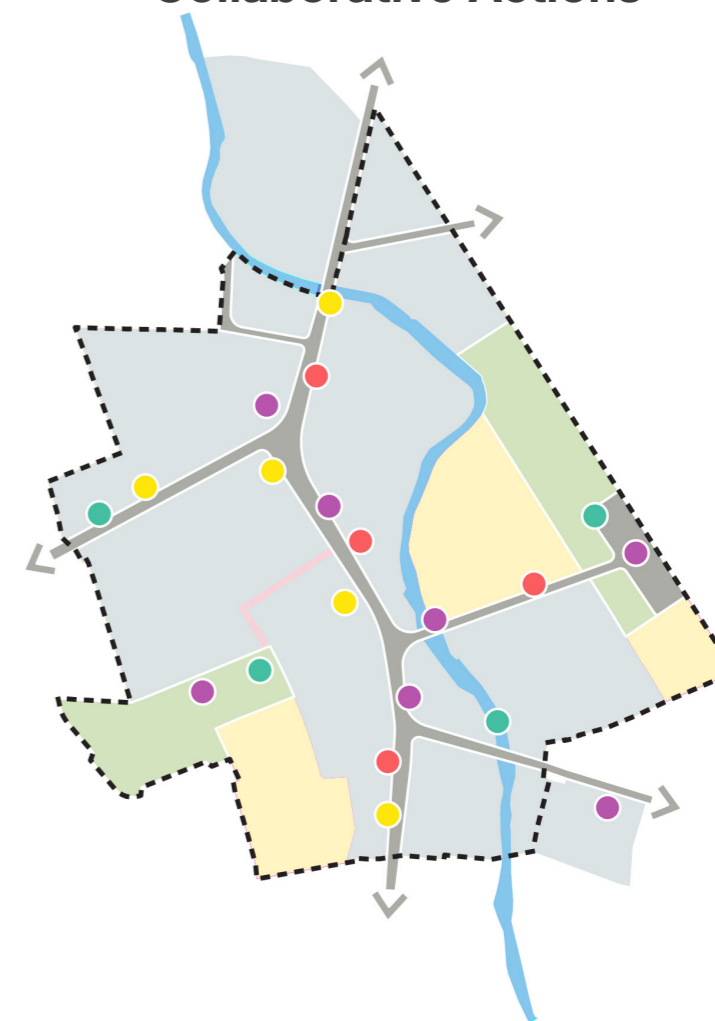
### Revitalisation Projects



These are key projects that will underpin the revitalisation of the town centre. They are all interventions in existing buildings and adjacent open spaces, together with a landscape project. They all have different ownerships and will require specific delivery, funding and management strategies. The Revitalisation Projects include the reuse of the railway station building and current Public Library, transformation of the old Bank of Ireland Building, adaptive reuse of the Corner House pub, and a new riverside park at the southern end of the town centre.

E

### Enhancement, Improvement & Collaborative Actions



A suite of potential interventions, often community-led, as early wins to complement and support projects that will be delivered over a longer period of time. These can be delivered by Town Team and local community groups such as the Tidy Towns Team or Ardee Hub, and respond to increasingly relevant themes such as the need to enhance biodiversity, support wellbeing, or promote the integration of Dunleer's different social and demographic groups.

## 4.4 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

### A DUNLEER LOOPS AND LINKS

#### A1

##### Loop Framework

The plan proposes a 'loop framework' of four circular routes that converge at the town centre. The loops vary in length and character, and open up a variety of options for walkers, runners and cyclists to move around Dunleer in a healthy and safe manner.

The principle behind the loops is to enhance existing paths, footways or roads through small interventions which can be implemented in collaboration with local community groups such as the Tidy Towns Team. These will include improving wayfinding, providing adequate lighting, and creating areas to rest, play and exercise that are accessible for all ages and abilities. The framework also refers to the Green Infrastructure Strategy included as Appendix 8 in the LCDP, and incorporates a number of the proposed green linkages from the Green Infrastructure Network previously proposed in the Dunleer Local Area Plan 2017-2023 (now superseded).

In defining the initial route it has been possible to identify key linkages or shortcuts that will improve pedestrian connectivity between different areas of Dunleer and its immediate hinterland. A key focus area has been the Main Street, where the network of loops will support the strategy to reduce the impact of cars in the street by encouraging more people to walk to the local shops and amenities, and spend more dwell time at the heart of the town.

**A1\_1 Central Loop** - Links the Main Street, local sports club (Lannleire Pavilion) and housing neighbourhoods

**A1\_2 Northern Edge Loop** - A pedestrian route around the edge of future housing developments that links to Scoil Bhríde Lann Leire

**A1\_3 School and River Loop** - Includes a safe route along the R170 to local secondary school (Scoil Uí Mhuiri) and a mile-long

**A1\_4 Rural Loop** - Runs along rural paths south of Dunleer

The Strategic Opportunity responds to Strategy S4 by establishing a network of walking and cycling loops around the town centre to enhance accessibility, promoting active travel and healthier lifestyles throughout Dunleer.

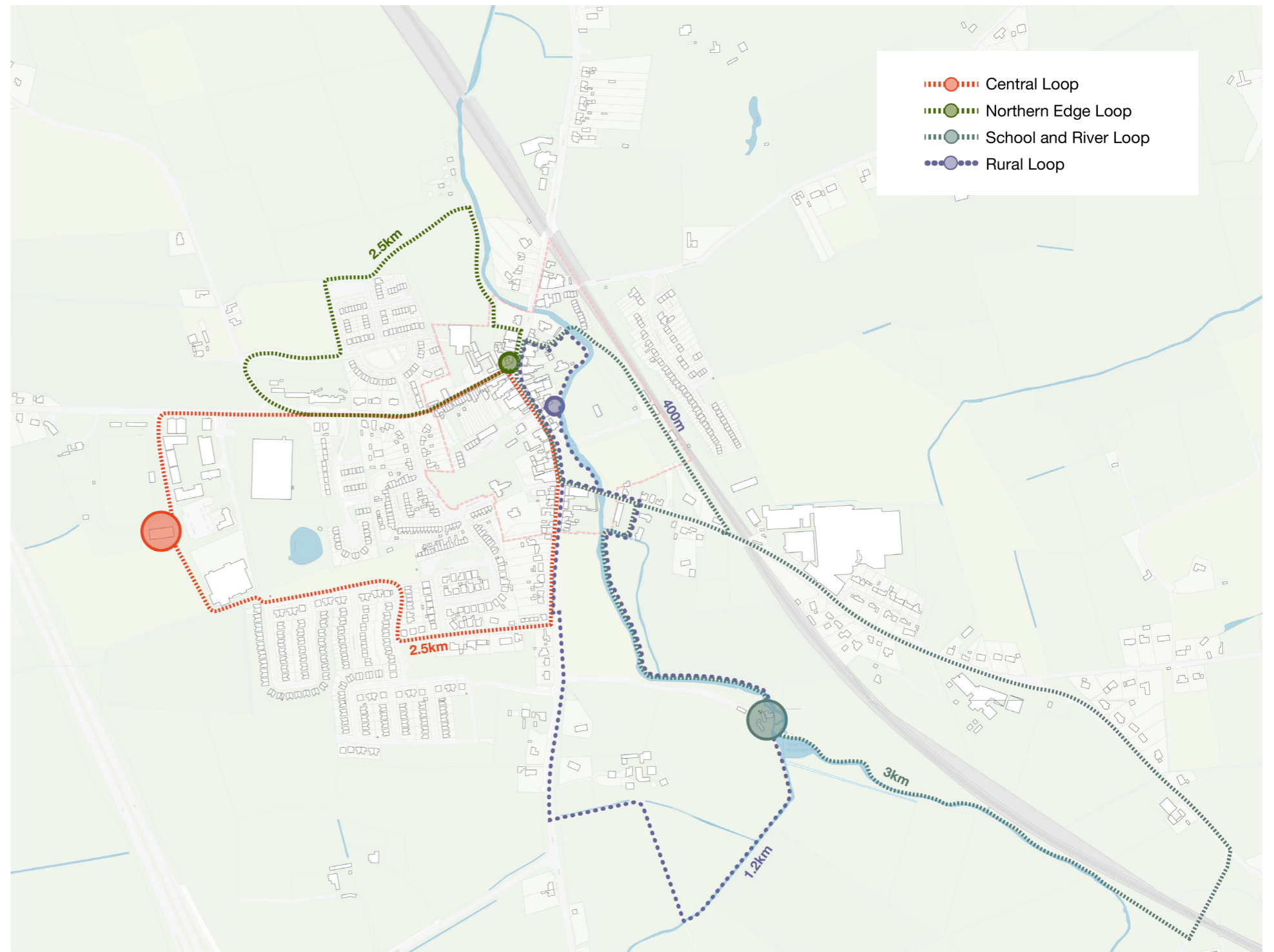


Fig.43 - Loop Framework

## 4.4 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

### A1

#### Loop Development

The loops bring together a number of strategies that look at ways in which Dunleer's system of open and green spaces can be enhanced and be better integrated with the town's built up areas and the activities that take place in them. In reference to the diagram opposite, some of the elements that further define the role and character of the loops include:

**Parks and green spaces** - The loops establish routes that run through and connect Dunleer's public open spaces. The majority of these open spaces are lawns with low biodiversity. The loop strategy includes enhancing them and supporting the development of richer ecosystems and habitats.

**New routes** - New routes and links create a denser pedestrian and cycling network in Dunleer. These include opening up a link between the park and Main Street via The Orchard, a path along the railway embankment, and a river walk along the eastern bank of the White River.

**Safe routes** - Primarily along the Main Street and Scoil Uí Mhuirí. The proposed interventions will include wider footways, a clearly marked cycling lane, pedestrian crossings and improved street lighting.

**New Landmarks** - The loops will connect with proposed interventions and future landmarks, including new public squares and restored buildings with new uses.

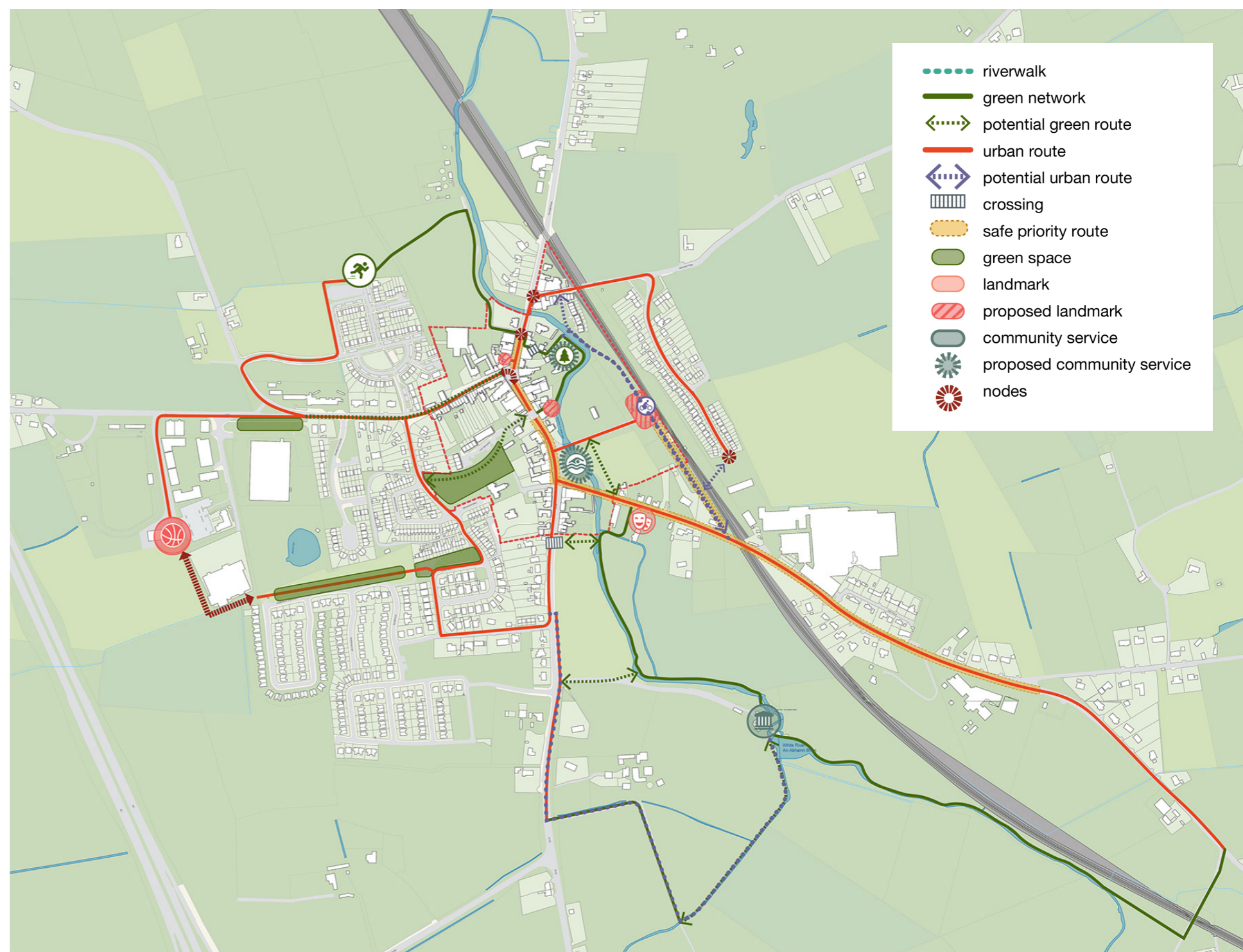


Fig.44 - Network of loops and pedestrian and green links.

## 4.4 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

### A DUNLEER LOOPS AND LINKS

#### A2

##### Biodiverse Links

The network of pedestrian loops will link Dunleer's main public open spaces. Many of these are currently grass lawns with relatively low ecological value. There is an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of these and establish a system of biodiverse links to be integrated with existing green and environmental corridors in the town centre. The new biodiverse parks can also incorporate sustainable surface water drainage systems as part of a town-wide strategy to mitigate current and future impacts of climate breakdown.

In addition to their environmental role, the biodiverse links can also underpin a variety of social benefits. These spaces can include play and exercise areas for all ages, provide public seating to encourage local residents and visitors to spend more time outdoors, or establish outdoor environmental classrooms to illustrate the ecological value of rich and varied ecosystems. An important aspect of the proposal is the principle that the development and management of the biodiverse gardens should be carried out by local community groups such as Tidy Towns, supported by the Town Team and Louth County Council. The stewardship of green spaces, most of which are located within residential neighbourhoods, will be a key element in responding to the TCF policy of promoting place-based locally-led approaches in implementing the TCF Plan.



Fig.46 - Map illustrating potential green links integrating biodiverse gardens at Rivervale Park.



Fig.45 - Biodiverse Garden at Ardee Road.



Fig.47 - Reference image shows the potential soft landscape treatment of biodiverse gardens.

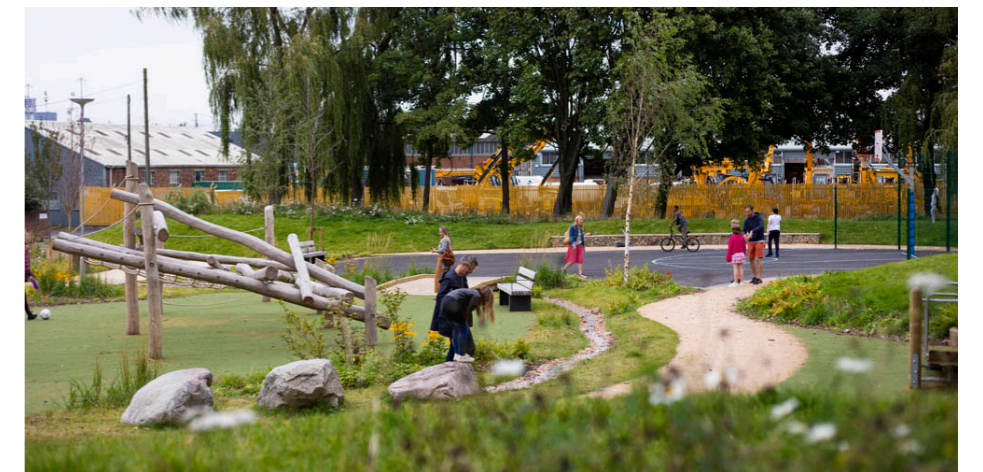


Fig.48 - Reference image shows the potential hard landscape of biodiverse gardens.

## 4.4 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

### A3

#### Park Link

A route between the Main Street and Dunleer's park. The proposal is to demolish a stretch of the existing wall between the northern corner of the park and rebuild it with a new alignment that marks a new public path whilst retaining the privacy of the existing housing area. The opened up corner is suggested to be developed as a wild flower meadow as part of a wider strategy to enhance biodiversity in the town centre. The biodiverse garden could incorporate adventure play elements, whilst the existing goals will be displaced further south of the garden.

The new route also creates the opportunity to define a second access to the planned Climate Change Centre of Excellence to be built at the back of the Market House. In this way it will have a public presence along what would be a well-used pedestrian route.

### A4

#### Station Links

A new path along the railway embankment will create an alternative route to the stretch of the R170 west of the viaduct for pedestrians and cyclists. At the same time, it can represent the first step in redeveloping the land around the train station to create a future Station Quarter.



Fig.49 - Diagram illustrating potential green pedestrian between the Main Street and The Orchard, and the opportunity for a public frontage for the planned Centre of Excellence for Climate Change



Fig.50 - Diagram illustrating potential Station Links.

# A DUNLEER LOOPS AND LINKS

BEFORE



- Potential to create a a more direct pedestrian route to the Main Street via the Orchard
- Potential to relocate the football pitch
- Grass lawn has poor biodiversity
- Current pedestrian link to the Main Street is via vehicular access to service yards

Fig.51 - Dunleer Park - walled boundary to Main Street backlands

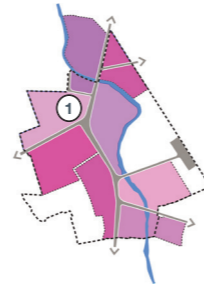
AFTER



Fig.52 - Illustration of proposed 'biodiverse link' to the Main Street via the Orchard

# B DUNLEER URBAN BLOCKS

The following pages identify development and regeneration opportunities for the Urban Blocks defined in chapter 3.4. The potential interventions will address, amongst others, existing and future uses, building typologies, open spaces, and urban frontages. Proposals are to be considered as part of a holistic approach for the town centre.



## B1\_1

### Ardee Road Yards

#### Current Condition

- Mix of building types and yards or courtyards
- Vacant buildings include Corner House Pub and protected structure
- Frontage to Ardee Road creates potential for enhanced streetscape
- Potential new pedestrian routes to link with future residential development - 'Gateway Project'



#### Intervention

- Potential to revitalise the vacant building
- Transform into 'Yard housing' and courtyard co-working hubs
- Enhance the existing commercial frontages
- Potential for a holistic plan for the whole block as a key opportunity area in the town centre



## B1\_2

### River Backlands

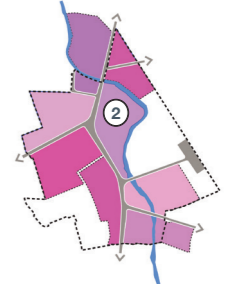
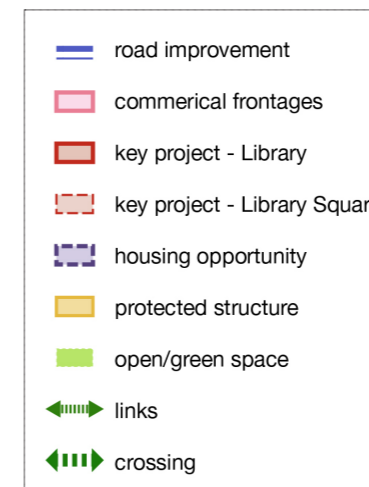
#### Current Condition

- Commercial frontages along Main Street
- Vacant building including the Bank of Ireland
- Potential to have linkages from Main Street to the river
- Potential to utilise backlands - using of vacant and back of buildings to create new spaces for the main street
- Opening up the frontage to the river
- Protected structure with historical value
- Potential to have new crossing



#### Intervention

- Improvement of main street includes the widening of footway and additional greening interventions along the commercial frontages
- Development of the new library and library square
- Future river pocket park
- Potential to have riverside housing and gardens
- Promote Main Street as blue and green infrastructure





## B1\_3

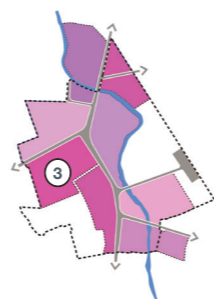
## Ardee Road Gardens

## Current Condition

- Mix of use and building typology
- Extensive backlands
- Potential to have a coordinated approach to enhance the biodiversity of the private garden
- Potential for new town centre apartments in parking courts with access to the Main Street
- Potential to have a coordinated approach to enhance the biodiversity of residential private gardens

## Intervention

- Wider footways to Main Street
- New public space at the corner of Ardee Road junction
- New commercial uses
- Upgrade to façades of commercial units
- Infill housing at backlands



## B1\_4

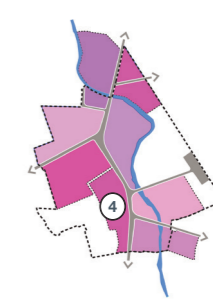
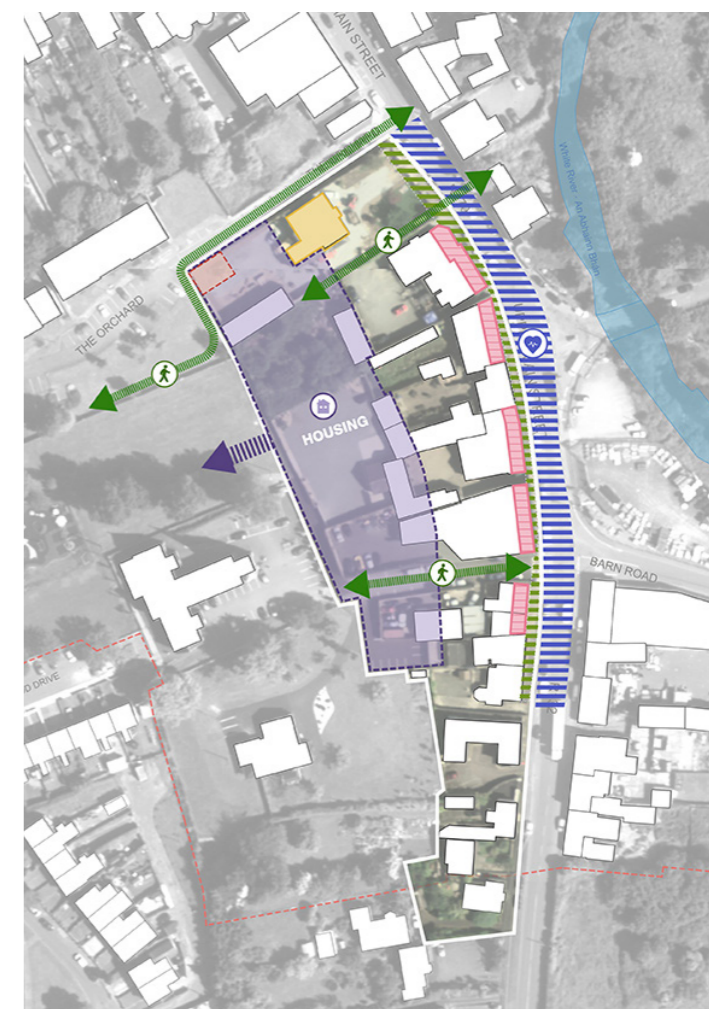
## Main Street Backlands

## Current Condition

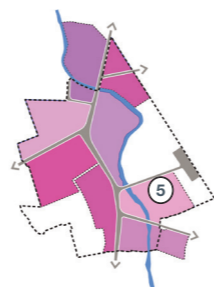
- Commercial frontages on the Main Street
- Potential to optimise use of courtyards
- Potential to work along the backyards to identify opportunities for new apartments
- Upper floor obtained for residential purposes
- Potential to create residential frontage to the park
- Potential for new pedestrian connection

## Intervention

- Road improvement
- Wider footways on Main Street
- Establishment of a Centre for Climate Change benefits for raising the awareness of climate change
- Suggestions of new public aspect to the centre and proposing new linkages to and from the park
- Park housing facing towards the park



# B DUNLEER URBAN BLOCKS



## B1\_5

### Station Approach

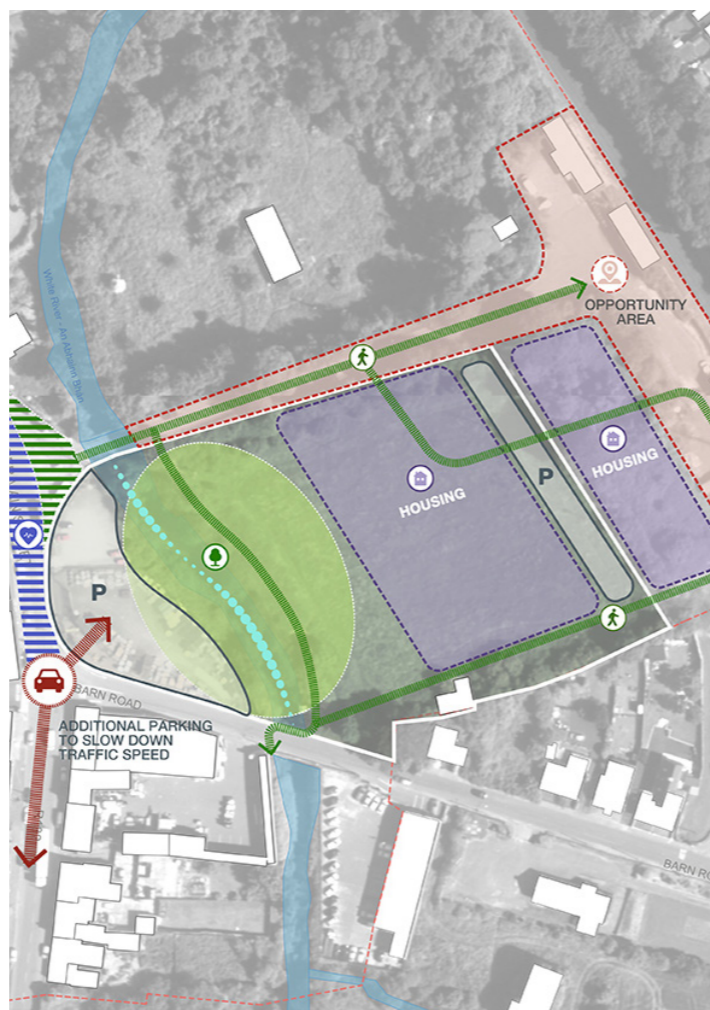
#### Current Condition

- Extensive land for future opportunity
- Potential linkages to opportunity areas and wider Dunleer
- Potential housing areas adjacent to the opportunity area



#### Intervention

- Road improvement to Main Street
- Development of the Riverside Park
- Visitors' parking with access from the Barn Road junction
- Station Housing to promote town centre living
- Station Housing can be linked to the potential redevelopment of the train station and former library building to create a new mixed use destination in the town centre



## B1\_6

### Barn Road

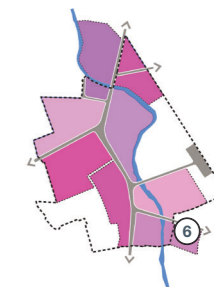
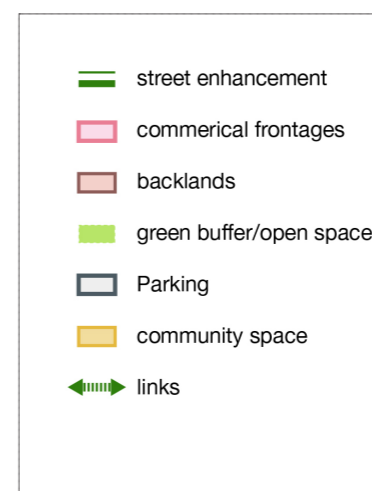
#### Current Condition

- Existing commercial frontages facing Main Street offer potential for improvement
- Potential for safer new pedestrian route
- Potential for new Green and Blue route
- Extensive backlands for future uses
- Existing music school as community space
- Underused open space next to the music school



#### Intervention

- New and wider footways on the Main street
- Improvement to frontages
- New links to complete the loop network
- Traders' car parking to be encouraged next to the music school (community space)
- Long term aspiration for new uses that are more suitable for the block's town centre location



**B1\_7**

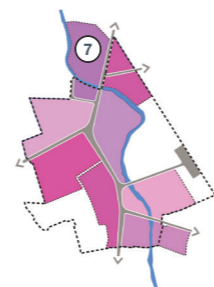
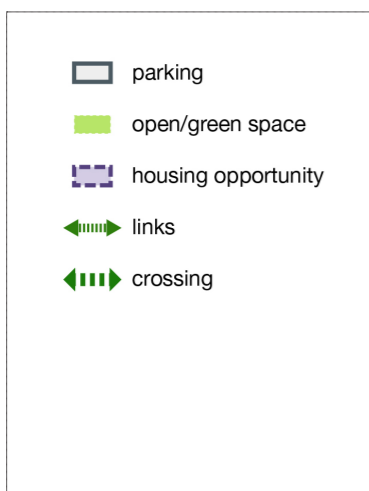
**Dunleer North**

**Current Condition**

- Potential to establish parking area on the unused land
- Proximity to the ring road where large vehicles enter Dunleer
- Proximity to the opportunity site of future housing
- Potential to be included as part of the river walk

**Intervention**

- Proposed roundabout junction to facilitate traffic issues
- A new visitor parking considering the roundabout junction
- Access to future housing
- Enhance route as part of the loop system
- New crossing to complete the river walk to further improve connectivity and accessibility in the area



**B1\_8**

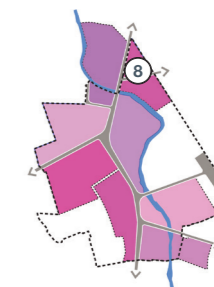
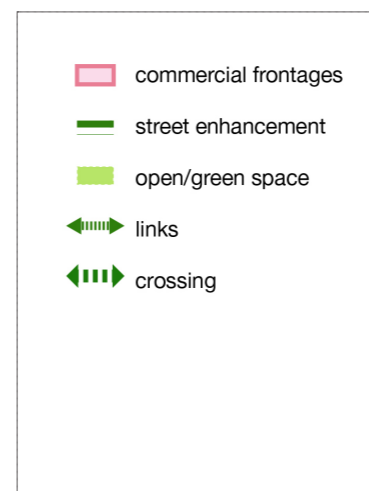
**The Forge**

**Current Condition**

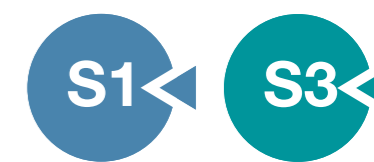
- Vacant commercial uses - opportunity to offer new commercial uses to tackle vacancy
- Potential new green and blue links - opportunity to integrate the northern and the rest of the Dunleer

**Intervention**

- Green and blue links to complete the wider loop network
- Proposed new crossing connecting to the Town Centre
- Reinforce the nodes as the north end of the retail circuit
- New visitor parking on the other side of the road potentially offers new footfall, as well as the new route, expecting to favour units to attract new businesses



# B DUNLEER URBAN BLOCKS



The Strategic Opportunity responds to Strategies S1 and S3 by identifying opportunities for town centre housing, making use of underutilised land, enabling the town centre to better serve the local population, promoting the use of vacant structures, and incorporating energy efficiency solutions to new buildings.

## Infill and Brownfield Housing - Overview

The TCF Policy identifies (and prioritises) the redevelopment of underutilised areas of town centres to provide a choice of housing types in response to Ireland's changing demography. The 'urban blocks approach' has allowed the identification of potential plots for residential developments. The following pages illustrate how these could be developed.

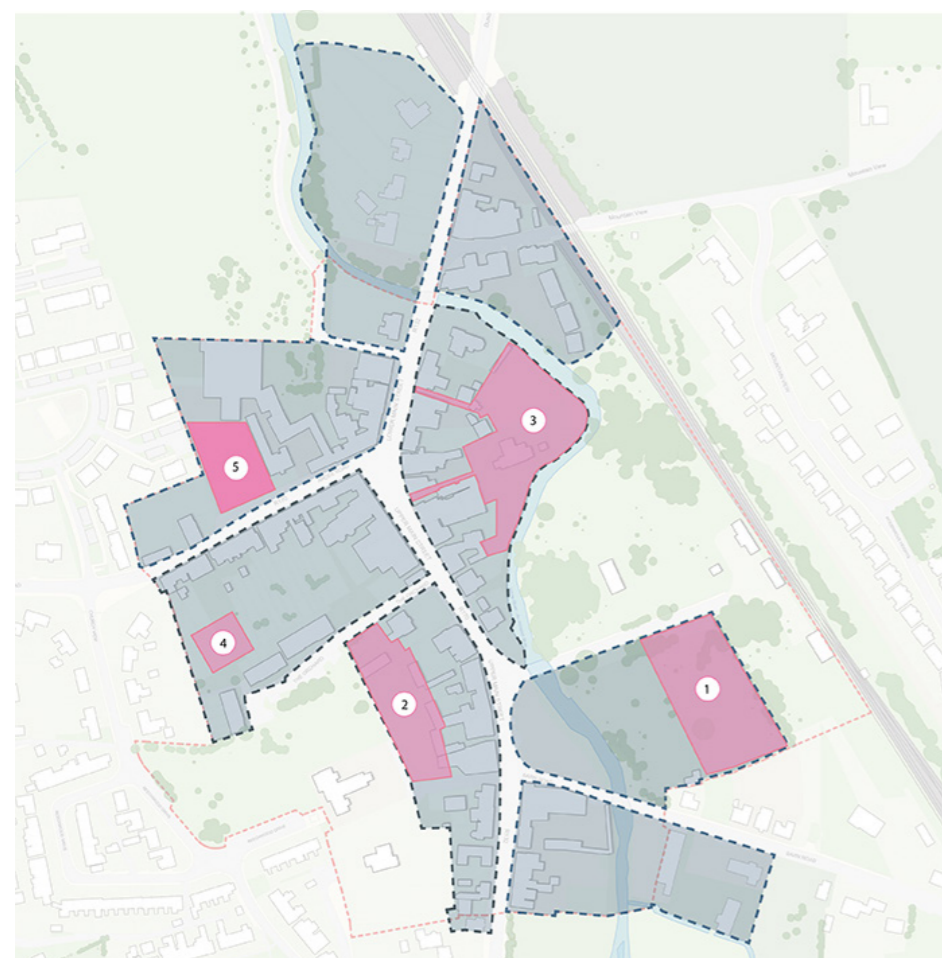


Fig.53 - Potential sites for infill housing

## B2\_1

## Station Housing

Under the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, residential is a permitted use within the “B1 Town Centre” land zoning category. The proposal has taken account of both physical and policy constraints (such as flood risk areas) which may impact the scale of the development’s feasibility at this location such as flooding, topography, possible re-use of the railway station and land ownership etc.

The layout of the housing blocks is suggested to be structured around a central pedestrian green spine linking the station with the new river park. Parking could be located at the rear (north) to minimise the impact of roads and impermeable surfaces as part of a sustainable surface drainage and flood risk mitigation strategy.

The indicative housing layout is based on an assumed density of 25 units/Ha as per Policy Objective SS 48 of the LCDP. The scheme has the flexibility to consider a higher density option in the future.



Fig.54 - Station Housing - indicative layout



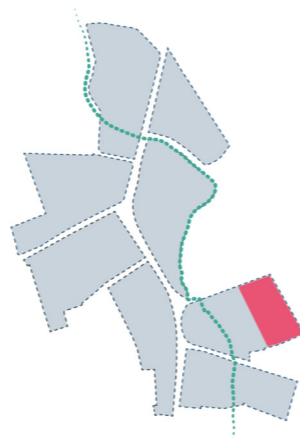
Fig.55 - Housing integrated with green area - seaside development in Palanga, Lithuania - Laurynas Žakevicius



Fig.56 - Pedestrian streets - Marmalade Lane, Cambridge. Mole



Fig.57 - Residential block in Aveiro, Portugal. RVdM Architects



## B2\_2

## Park Housing

This considers the potential to redevelop the backlands of Urban Block B4\_4 (Main Street Backlands). There is an opportunity to build infill housing with a south facing aspect to Dunleer's Park. The new residential developments could have a unique view to the public open space, redefining the character of the green area which would benefit from enhanced surveillance.

The Park House scheme would foster a strong connection between residents and the park, offering a green backdrop for a high-quality living experience, whilst providing housing at the heart of the town centre with direct access from the Main Street. The homes could cater for a variety of occupants, ranging from young families to elderly residents.

Careful consideration should be given to ensure that the scheme does not block existing views of the park from adjacent properties whilst protecting the privacy of neighbouring houses. It would be key to ensure that the architectural image responds to the unique qualities of the park side setting and surrounding context. The buildings should also consider design proposals that support biodiversity enhancement and prioritise sustainable design principles.



Fig.58 - Park Housing indicative layout

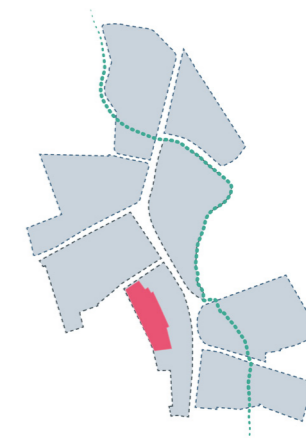


Fig.59 - The Old Dairy, London. Woodroffe Pappa Architects



Fig.60 - Image of potential architecture solution of Park Housing



Fig.61 - Graylingwell housing, Chichester, UK - JTP Architects

**B2\_3**

**River Housing**

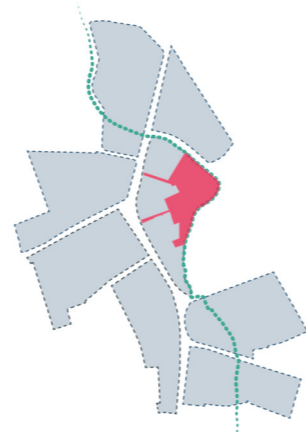
This proposed housing development aligns with the objectives set out in the Louth County Development Plan (LCDP) 2021-2027 in regard to providing suitable housing options for the elderly in town centres. The riverfront site is located in the Riverside Backlands Urban Block (B1\_2), adjacent to the Church of Ireland and within a unique setting of high natural value.

In alignment with the site's land zoning category of "G1 Community facilities" under the LCDP. This zoning category allows for nursing homes, retirement village and sheltered accommodation type developments, the proposed scheme is for 'step-down housing' tailored for the aging population, offering options for elderly to settle in a convenient location. The provision of this type of houses in town centre would allow residents access to essential amenities and services while remaining connected to their local community. This promotes a welcoming neighbourhood setting for older individuals to maintain a fulfilling lifestyle.

Any future residential development at this location will have to address any potential flood risk and comply fully with all relevant ministerial guidance and County Development Plan policies relating to flooding.



Fig.62 - Diagram illustrates the proposed River Housing



**B2\_4**

**Back Garden Infill Housing**

There is an opportunity in Block B1\_3 (Ardee Gardens) to redevelop part of the backlands of the Ardee Road cottages to provide small 'back garden' residential units. This approach aims to optimise the use of space and expand housing availability within established neighbourhoods.

The primary target demographic for this housing development would be first-time buyers. By providing affordable and accessible housing options, the project aims to enable individuals and families to enter the property market and establish a foothold in the town centre.

The Back Garden Infill Housing concept caters to renters without cars, providing them with convenient access to the vibrant town centre and its amenities within a short walking distance. By utilising available space and incorporating infill housing in back gardens, the proposal aims to enhance the urban fabric, create affordable housing options, and foster walkable neighbourhoods for residents who prioritise car-free living.

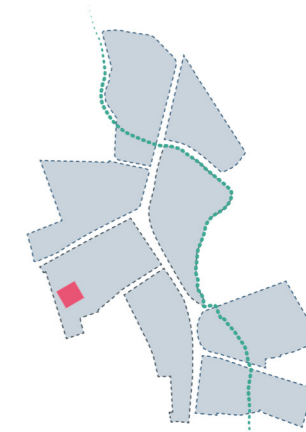


Fig.63 - Periscope Housing, Rotterdam. Joke Vos Architects



Fig.64 - Steepleton Retirement Community, Tetbury, UK.



Fig.65 - Steepleton Retirement Community, Tetbury, UK. Proctor Mathews Architects



Fig.66 - Back Garden Infill Housing indicative layout



Fig.67 - Forest Houses, Forest Gate, UK - Dallas Pierce



Fig.68 - Gap Housing, Bristol, UK. BDP Architects



Fig.69 - Tin House, London. Henning Stummel Architects

## B2\_5

## Courtyard Housing

The approach in Block B1-1 (Ardee Road Yards) looks at adapting the existing farm yard and transforming it into a high-quality courtyard housing development. The residential infill could introduce a new urban typology in Dunleer: a mid-density block that would underpin the revitalisation of the town centre.

The use of a communal courtyard would help deliver a sociable housing scheme that could combine a wide range of residential types and tenures such as muse houses, town houses or apartments. It would also allow to integrate shared communal amenities such as gardens or recreational areas with private domestic spaces. This arrangement would ensure that each housing unit maintains a sense of privacy, while still fostering a sense of community among neighbours.

The courtyard arrangement could facilitate the integration of environmental and sustainability strategies such as the use of soft landscaping to manage surface water, provide climate comfort or enhance biodiversity. Similarly, the community-focused design principles of the block could promote the installation of solar panels or heat pumps for the benefit of all residents.



Fig.70 - Courtyard Housing indicative layout

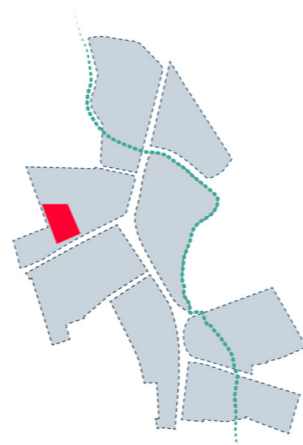


Fig.71 - Forest Mews, London. Stolon Studio



Fig.72 - BIGyard, Berlin, Germany - Zanderroth Architekten



Fig.73 - Kaolin Court social housing, London. Stolon Studio + Baca

# ENABLING THE PLACE

5





## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### **C** MAIN STREET & WHITE RIVER

Much of Dunleer's urban character and identity is marked by the streetscape of the Main Street (Dublin Road) and the environmental corridor along the White River. The plan envisages a holistic approach to reimagine the town centre in which street and river are integrated to form a unique 'hard and soft' core that celebrates both built and natural heritages. A series of proposed interventions address the rebalancing of the share of space in the Main Street between vehicles and pedestrians whilst maximising the benefits of delivering a blue and green infrastructure at the heart of Dunleer. These interventions collectively strive to seize the unique opportunity to "Dunleerify" the town centre, infusing it with distinct character and enhancing its overall appeal.

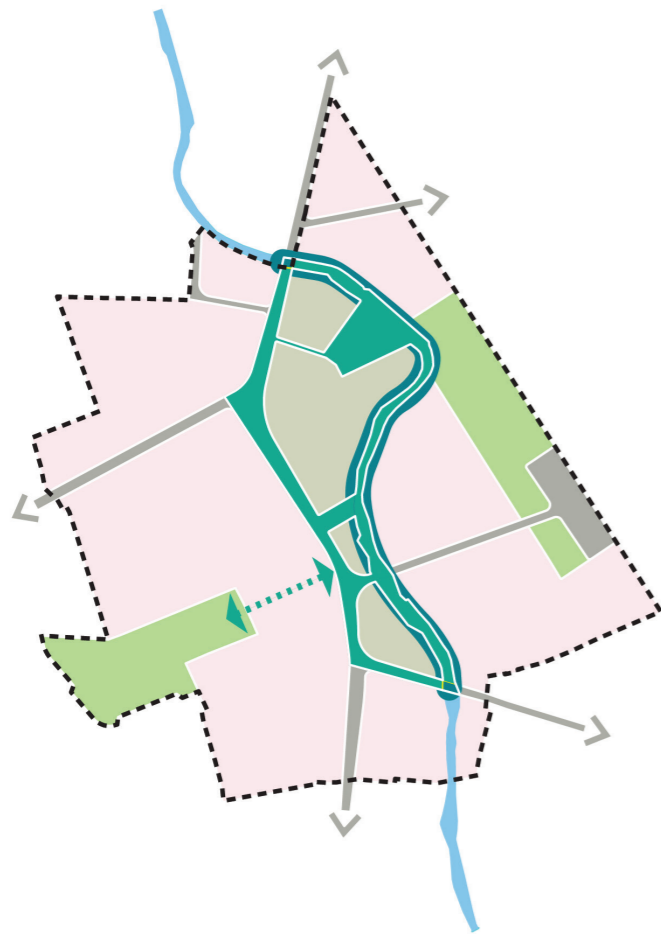


Fig.74 - Strategic diagram of Main Street and White River



Fig.75 - Aerial view of the Main Street from the south



Fig.76 - Aerial view of Main Street and White River



Fig.77 - White River - view of Station Road bridge



Fig.79 - White River running under the R132



Fig.78 - Bird's eye view photo of eastern part of the Main Street and White River



Fig.80 - White River at the Forge

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C1

#### Main Street Works

##### The Main Street Today

In common with the majority of towns in rural Ireland, Dunleer's Main Street is dominated by vehicular traffic and on-street parking. Vehicle trips include those generated by visitor's from the town's catchment area that use local retail and services, through traffic along the R132, Bus Eireann routes and school buses, agricultural vehicles, and trucks servicing local industry.

From the point of view of pedestrians, the prominence of space dedicated to vehicles contributes to the poor accessibility of certain areas of the Main Street and lack of public space to dwell and socialise. In addition, the absence of measures to implement the reduction of speed of motorised vehicles and inadequate provision of safe pedestrian crossings exposed to a high risk of accidents. The latter is particularly high on week days when large numbers of students from Scoil Uí Mhuiri make their way to the Main Street at lunch time or after school hours.

One of the primary factors contributing to the challenges on the Main Street is the prevalence of on-street parking. This widespread parking practice significantly hampers traffic flow and poses potential dangers to pedestrians. Images on the right depict the current condition along the Main Street, clearly illustrating the parking issue that has arisen. As a result, the road becomes excessively narrow, rendering it difficult for large vehicles such as trucks and tour buses to manoeuvre through the congested area.

From an environmental and placemaking point of view, the quality and attractiveness of the Main Street as public space is considerably poor. The harshness of the street's environment contrasts with the rich natural heritage of the town's neighbouring hinterland and ecological corridors such as that of the White River.



Fig.81 - Tractor circulating along the Main Street



Fig.84 - Roads in Main Street is too narrow that results in large vehicles overlapping



Fig.82 - Congestion in the Main Street at Bus Eireann stops



Fig.85 - Cars parked on kerbs in Ardee Road



Fig.83 - On-street parking is prominent in side streets



Fig.86 - School bus at the Main Street / Barn Road junction

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C1

#### Main Street Works

##### Opportunity

The TCF Plan identifies the following initial opportunities to address the Main Street's key issues regarding congestion, parking, accessibility and environmental quality:

- The integration of the main street with a new network of pedestrian routes and public/green spaces present exciting opportunities for the community.
- By creating a cohesive and interconnected system of pathways, this initiative opens up possibilities for improved accessibility and enhanced mobility. People will have the opportunity to navigate the main street and its surroundings on foot, promoting a healthier and more sustainable mode of transportation.
- By implementing efficient parking strategies, the community can optimise parking availability and ensure convenient access for vehicles along the main street, enhancing the overall shopping and visiting experience.
- Relocating bus stops at the Main Street encourages public transportation usage, reducing reliance on private vehicles and promoting a more sustainable and efficient transportation system.
- Decluttering the Main Street (eliminating unnecessary street furniture, signage etc.) to create a more visually appealing and functional main street environment, improving traffic flow and facilitating better navigation for vehicles.
- Implementing traffic calming measures to enhance road safety along the main street, protecting both pedestrians and motorists and reducing the risk of accidents.

##### Integrate Main Street

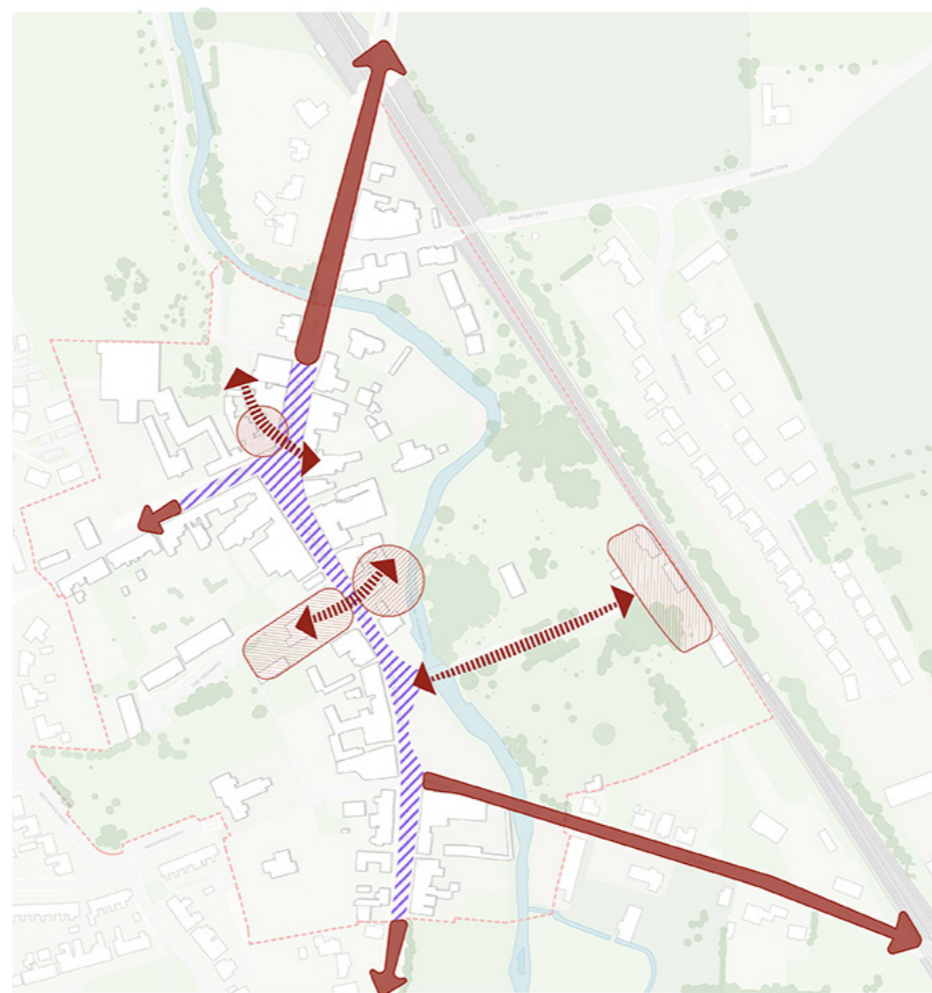


Fig.87 - Diagram illustrates the potential strategy to integrate the Main Street to improve permeability of the town centre.

##### Vehicular Movement

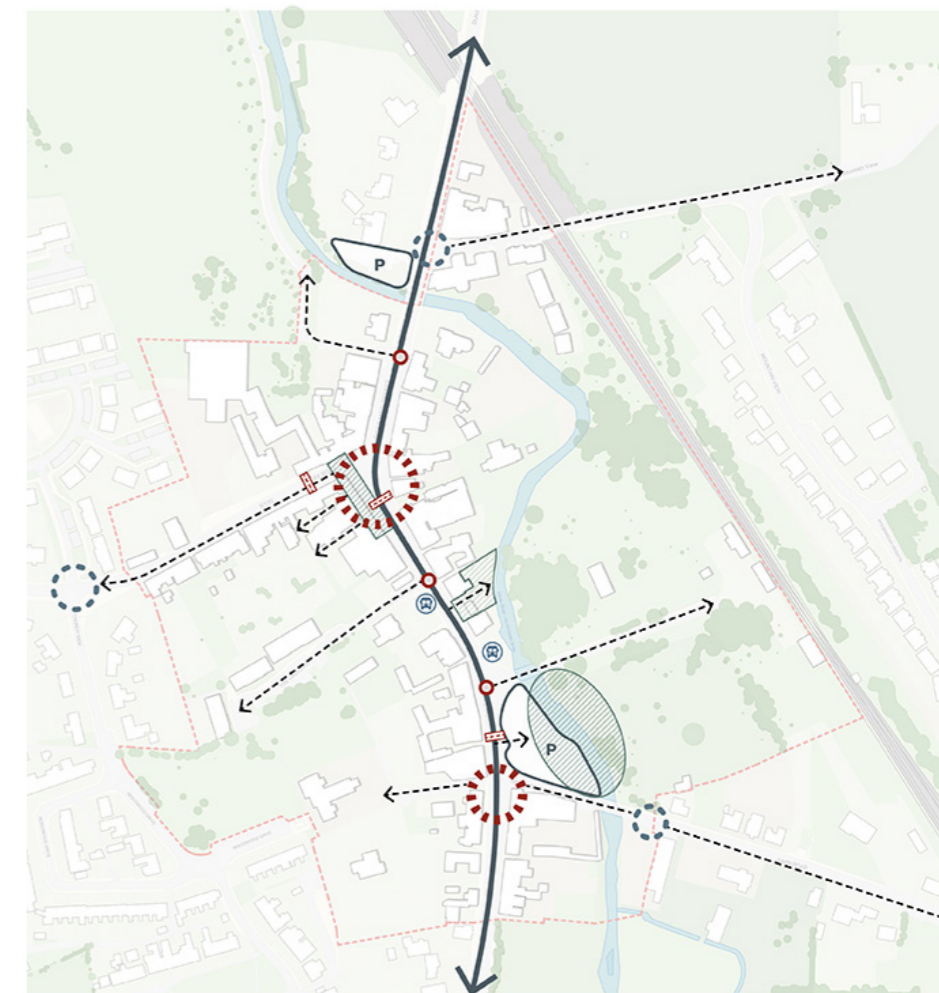


Fig.88 - Diagram illustrates the potential strategy of vehicular movement with additional parking, bus stops, key nodes and crossing.



The Intervention responds to Strategies S1, S2, S3 & S4 by rethinking the Main Street as a space where pedestrians are the priority, bringing the hidden qualities of the Main Street to establish links with education, culture, and care, making the town centre more accessible and supporting healthier lifestyle to make the community more energy efficient.

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C1

#### Main Street Works

##### Strategic Interventions in the Main Street

The plans opposite illustrate the current layout of the Main Street, and the interventions proposed by the TCF Plan. The overall aim of the proposal is to make the Main Street a more accessible, pedestrian-oriented and greener place whilst retaining its function as a vehicular route. The enhancement of the public realm is key to support the revitalisation of the town centre by creating spaces that will more inviting, and by generating a value uplift that will help attract more investment and businesses. Importantly, better and safer public spaces for pedestrians will help to reinforce the role of the town centre as a place for the community - one where residents of all ages will want to spend more time in to socialise and engage with neighbours and visitors.

The proposal is based on a series of interlinked interventions. The first is to define a clear carriageway with an adequate width to cater for the variety of vehicles that circulate along the Main Street (including coaches, lorries and tractors). At present these have to compete for space with vehicles parked on both sides of the street, leading to frequent congestion. In order to release some of the available space, on-street parking is to be limited to one side only (the western edge). This will ensure compliance with minimum design dimensions of parking bays, including accessible ones. The rearrangement of on-street parking will also be co-ordinated with the allocation of new pedestrian crossings at key locations in response to the prioritisation of enhancing pedestrians' safety.

Regarding footways, these will be of a minimum width of 1.8 metres and, where possible, incorporate sustainable urban drainage and planting. The proposed Library Square, together with the generous footway at the Main Street / Ardee Junction, will create two new focal spaces that will showcase the the benefits of rebalancing the share of space between vehicles and pedestrians. New urban furniture, public lighting and wayfinding will help to refresh the Main Street and reinforce the town centre's identity.

The interventions in the Main Street will be complemented with improved pedestrian links with the wider area of Dunleer, and the consolidation of a network of green and blue spaces that will incorporate Dunleer's historic street.



Fig.89 - Plan of existing layout of streets and roads in the town centre, and location of sections AA' and BB'



Fig.90 - Illustrative plan of proposed interventions in the town centre's roads and streets

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C1

#### Main Street Works

##### Proposed Urban Roads and Streets Strategy

The sections opposite illustrate how the design principles for the transformation of the Main Street are applied at different points along its length. The design of these is in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS, 2019), and pays particular attention to delivering a safe and comfortable streetscape that helps to regulate traffic speed and creating a comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The location of Sections AA' and BB' (which look towards the north) is indicated in the plans in the previous page. From the existing sections it is clear to see how the width of the width of carriageway and on-street parking varies along the length of Main Street, ranging from 10 metres to just over 11.6 metres. Carriageway widths also vary, at points being below 3 metres. Footways have no verges or planting, and at points considerably narrow. The sections explain why the Main Street often feels car-dominated, and why pedestrian accessibility is in certain areas poor.

The proposed sections illustrate a number of design principles. Carriageway widths are set at 3.5 metres, taking into account the need to cater for large vehicles that frequently circulate through Dunleer's town centre. More detailed studies could look at the feasibility of narrower carriageways. Regarding on-street parking, spaces are limited to one side of the street only. The resultant width is 9.5 metres, constant along the entire length of the street.

Footways are to be at least 1.8 metres wide, with clearly defined verges to clearly mark pedestrian spaces and refrain cars to park in them. In reference to DMUR's guidance to incorporate nature-based solutions to road and street drainage design, linear planting will be used as part of a sustainable urban drainage strategy. The adequate management of surface water run off is particularly pertinent in Dunleer as it has suffered a number of floods in the past years. Street planting will also contribute to improving the spatial quality and visual amenity of the Main Street, and clearly mark the priority of pedestrians as the most important occupiers and users of the public space.



Section AA' - Existing

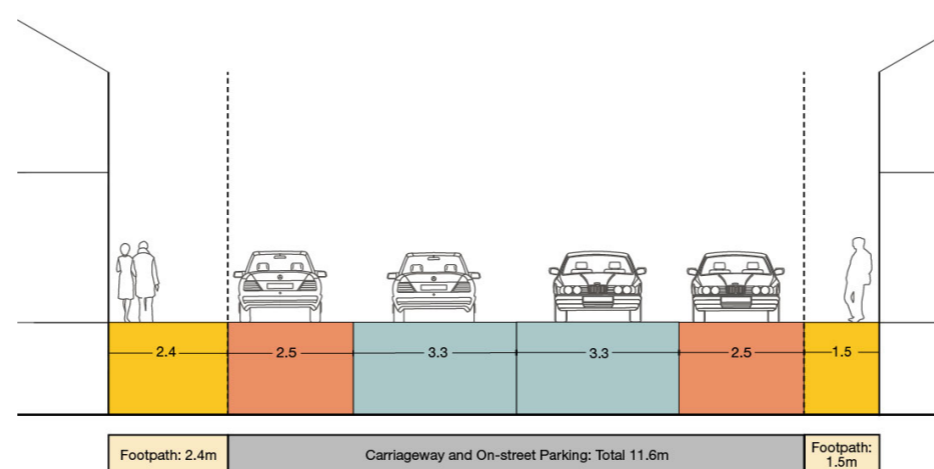


Fig.91 - Existing cross-section of Main Street - looking north

Section BB' - Existing

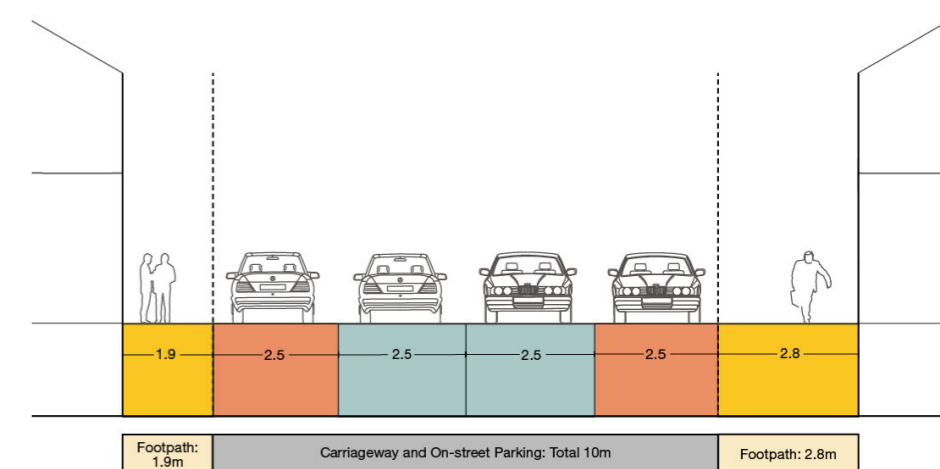


Fig.93 - Existing cross-section of Main Street - looking north

Section AA' - Proposed

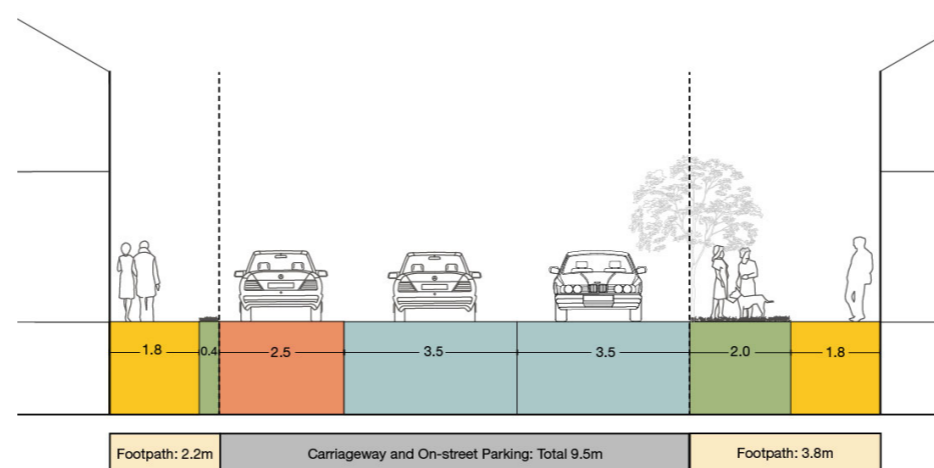


Fig.92 - Proposed cross-section of Main Street - looking north

Section BB' - Proposed

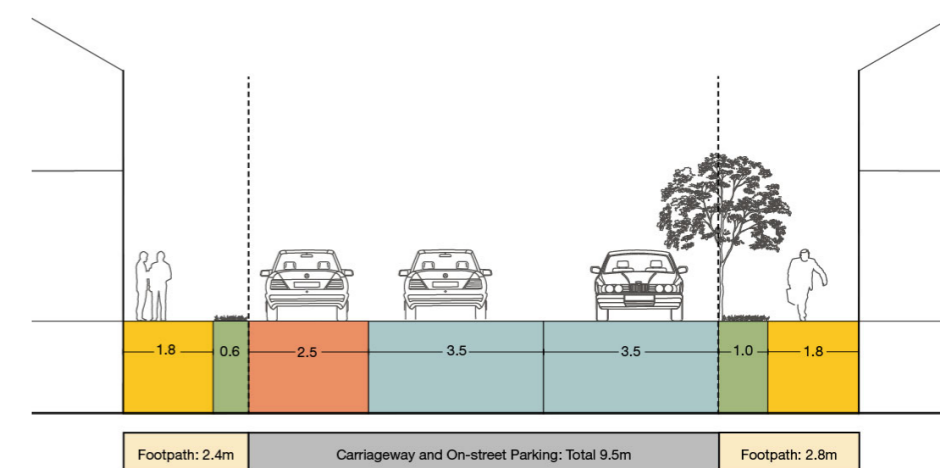


Fig.94 - Proposed cross-section of Main Street - looking north

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C1

#### Main Street Works

##### Proposed Parking Strategy

On-street parking in and around the Main Street is a sensitive issue. Whilst it clearly impacts how pedestrians can safely use and enjoy the street, it is also important to make it convenient for visitors to park, shop and spend leisure time in Dunleer. The TCF Plan proposes a strategy of relocating on-street parking spaces to new car parking areas, encouraging traders and their employees to make use of available spaces off the Main Street, and discouraging the use of the Main Street as a park and ride.

The accompanying map on the right illustrates the proposed changes. Two car parking areas are to be allocated at the land on the Barn Road junction, while another parking lot is situated at the northern part of the Main Street, opposite The Forge cluster. These designated parking areas will serve as alternative spaces to accommodate vehicles, thereby reducing the reliance on on-street parking.

By implementing this approach, the intervention aims to relocate a total of 69 spaces with 57 on-street parking spaces along the Main Street and another 12 spaces from the existing car park at the corner of Barn Road. The proposal compensates for this reduction by providing an additional 53-68 parking spaces at the two proposed car parking areas. This strategic redistribution of parking spaces aims to alleviate congestion, improve traffic flow, and enhance pedestrian safety along the Main Street.

The relocation of on-street parking to formal parking lots offers multiple benefits. It frees up space on the Main Street, allowing for improved traffic movement and reduced risk of accidents. Additionally, the provision of designated parking areas promotes a more organised and efficient parking system, enhancing the overall functionality of the street.

By implementing these measures, the plan seeks to create a more balanced and sustainable transportation system within the Main Street area. The reduction of on-street parking, coupled with the creation of designated parking spaces, will contribute to smoother traffic flow, enhanced pedestrian safety, and a more pleasant experience for all users of the Main Street.

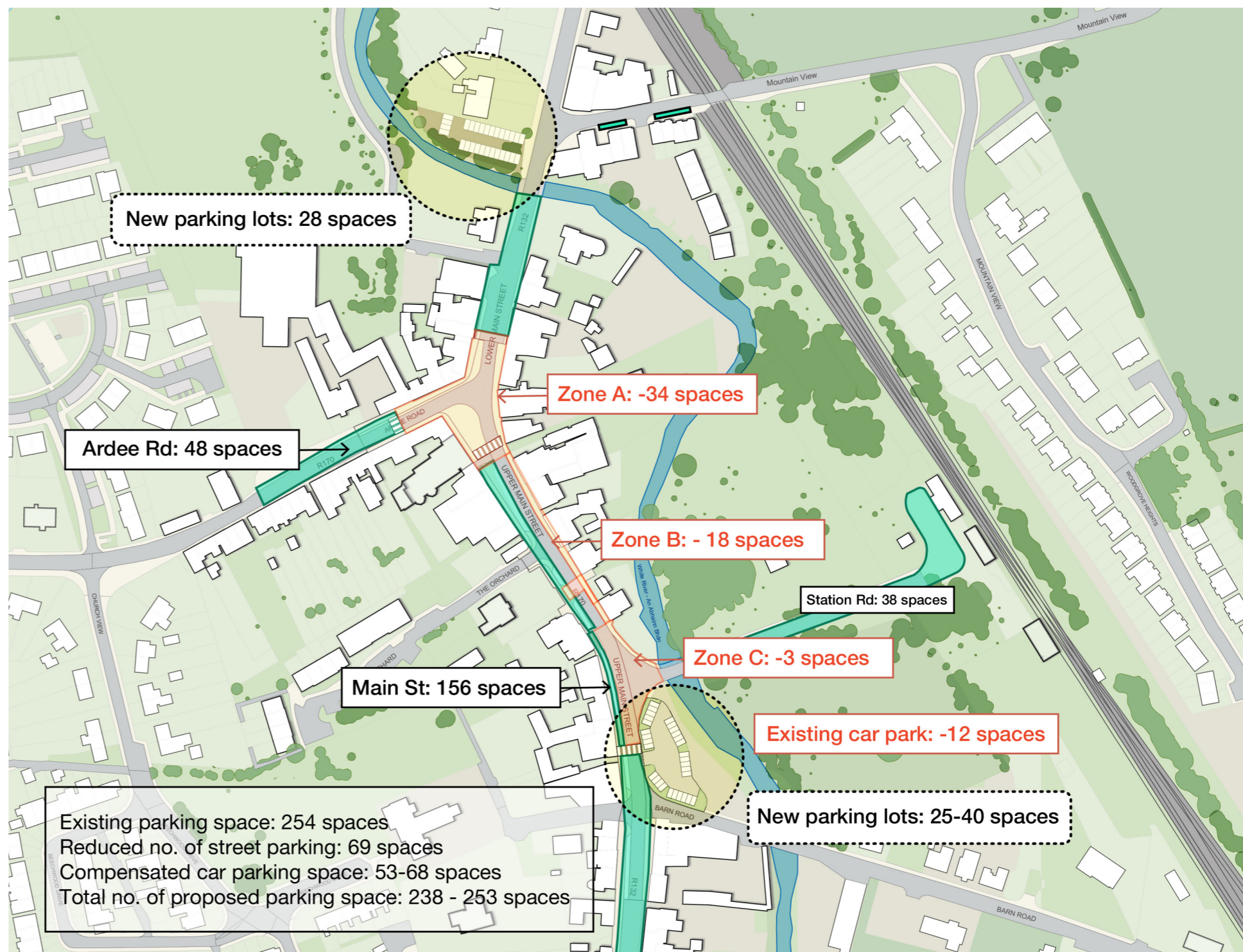


Fig.95 - Diagram illustrating the proposed parking strategy including the existing parking spaces, and relocation of a number of these spaces.



## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C1

#### Main Street Works

##### Proposed Main Street

To support the revitalisation of the Main Street, this plan puts forward three key measures:

1. **Widening footways with greening**
2. **Establishing additional public spaces**
3. **Creating green links**

These measures aim to enhance the pedestrian experience, create more pedestrian public spaces in and around the Main Street, and contribute to the loop network (see chapter 4).

The first measure involves widening the footways along the Main Street while incorporating greening elements. This approach not only increases the space available for pedestrians but also introduces green buffers that separate pedestrians from vehicles. By creating safer and more pleasant walking routes, this measure encourages people to choose walking as a preferred mode of transportation around the town centre.

The second measure proposes the creation of a public square at the corner of the Ardee Road junction. This square will offer a generous 300m<sup>2</sup> open space, inviting people to pause, engage with the surroundings, and enhancing the linear Main Street with a focal point for social interaction and leisure. The establishment of the public square will also act a junction tightening measure which will address the layout and geometry of the Ardee Road junction that currently prioritises the movement of vehicular traffic and unregulated parking of vehicles at the expense of other road users. The new junction design will facilitate and prioritise the safe passage of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

Lastly, the plan emphasises the importance of establishing green links throughout the town. These green links will be part of a network of walking loops, facilitating easier access to different areas of the town and promoting sustainable modes of transportation. By connecting the green network and incorporating pedestrian-friendly routes, the green links encourage residents and visitors to explore the town on foot while enjoying the biodiversity.

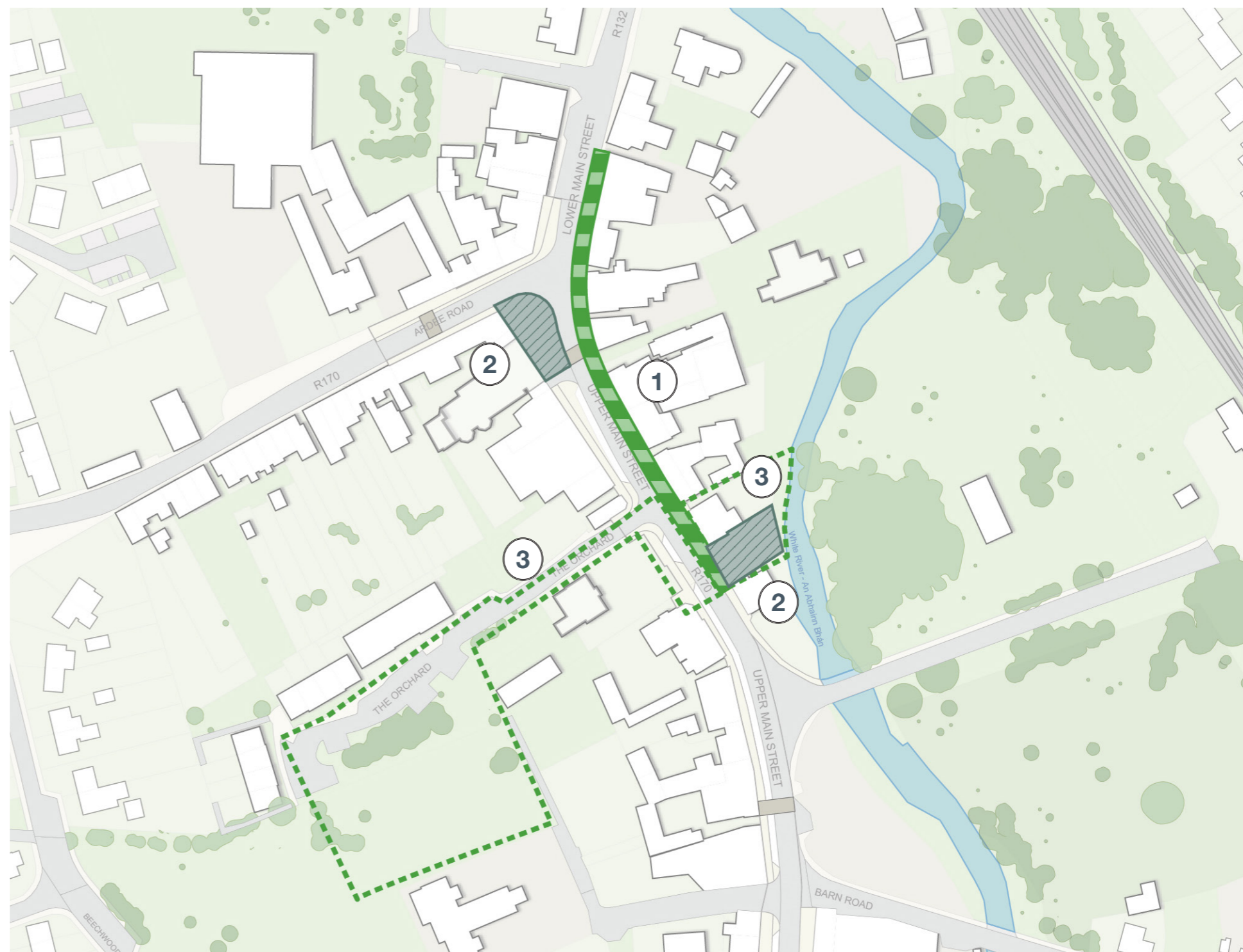


Fig.96 - Diagram illustrates the proposed strategy of the revitalisation of Main Street.



# MAIN STREET WORKS

BEFORE



- Traffic, congestion and pollution impact on the potential value of alternative uses of first floor buildings in the Main Street
- Parking around the Main Street / Ardee Road junction causes congestion and impacts negatively on the quality of public space
- Narrow footways that are often invaded by parked cars reduce pedestrian accessibility
- Main Street is a 'hard' environment that does not uplift the value of the existing buildings

Fig.97 - Google Image of the Main Street looking northwards towards the Ardee Road junction (Google Image, 2023).

C

MAIN STREET WORKS

AFTER

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Fig.98 - Artist illustration visualises the proposed Main Street and the Ardee Road junction



The proposals for the Main Street are based on a set of design principles that focus on improving traffic flow, enhancing walkability, adding green and blue spaces, and promoting sustainability. The key interventions are summarised below:

### 1. Improved Traffic Flow

- Carriageway width of 7 metres
- Reduced on-street car parking along eastern edge of the Main Street helps reduce congestion
- Displaced on-street parking spaces relocated to two visitors' car parks at either end of the Main Street
- Bus stops relocated close to the junction between Station Road and Main Street.
- New roundabout at the junction of Mountain View and Lower Main Street.

### 2. Enhanced Walkability

- Widen pedestrian footways
- Traffic calming measures including zebra crossings at the Barn Road Junction, Ardee Road Junction and Ardee Road.
- New and enhanced pedestrian links between the Main Street and Dunleer's residential, employment and education areas.

### 3. Green and Blue Spaces

- Widening of footways along Main Street creates space for the greening of stretches of the street and the use of sustainable urban drainage (SUDs).
- The realignment of the Main Street at the Ardee Road junction creates a large pedestrian area that can be redesigned as a small green square with good provision of seating to encourage both residents and visitors to spend more dwell time in the town centre
- The new Library Square links the Main Street with a riverside pocket park to be located downstream from the proposed Dunleer river park and beach.

### 4. Sustainability Strategies

- Linkages to a new system of biodiverse gardens.
- Encourage active mobility and improve public transport services (by, for example, relocating and delivering better bus stops) to reduce car dependency.

Fig.99 - Illustrative view of the proposed interventions in Dunleer's Main Street.



Fig.101 - Illustrative aerial view of proposed interventions in the Main Street and White River.

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C2

#### White River Park

##### Existing White River

The White River flows into Dunleer from the south-east where it turns northwards through the village centre and flows into the River Dee at Drumcar. The local topography is generally low lying drumlin formations with the White River sitting in a gently sloping valley running along a generally north-south axis. Dunleer has historically developed on the western face of this valley with later town expansions following the historic road bridges eastwards and northwards. The town sits at a higher elevation than the White River along its western embankment. The eastern embankment is characterised by flatter terrain comprising of several residential curtilages and large tracts of unused agricultural land.

The river flows across the town centre, with the first single span road Barn Road bridge which is a protected single span stone structure built in the 1850s. A short distance to north is the second bridge. The Station Road bridge is also a protected structure built in 1840s which connects the town centre with the former railway station.

Dunleer's town centre generally turns it back to the river. The images opposite illustrate how it is often hidden from view, concealed behind overgrown vegetation that lines both sides of its banks. This lack of visibility and accessibility hinders the river's integration with the Main Street and prevents it from becoming a prominent feature within the town centre. With no strategy or plan to integrate the river with the Main Street, the 'blue corridor' fails to be an active asset that enhances the quality of the wider urban context.



Fig.102 - White River disconnected from the Main Street



Fig.105 - Built heritage linked to the river - White River Mill



Fig.103 - Barn Road junction parking with frontage to the river



Fig.106 - View of White River from Station Road bridge



Fig.104 - Treatment of river embankment in the Forge



Fig.107 - View of White River from Lower Main Street

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C2

#### White River Park

##### Opportunity

The White River is widely recognised as a highly valuable asset for Dunleer and its town centre. Previous studies have looked at the feasibility of delivering a river walkway and route as a public amenity for both the local population and visitors. The TCF Plan has taken this idea on board and incorporated the walkway to the proposed network of 'Dunleer loops'. There is, however, further scope to consider how the river can enhance the character of a revitalised town centre for Dunleer. The TCF Plan proposes a twofold approach where new riverside parklets and parks expand Dunleer's network of public green spaces and establish new links (or re-establish historic ones) between the Main Street and the White River corridor. The diagram opposite illustrates how the layering of the new riverside public spaces, new pedestrian routes, and existing green areas can help rethink the town centre as a greener and healthier place that brings together urban and natural environments.

By integrating the White River with the Main Street, the plan aims to create a cohesive environment where the river becomes an integral part of everyday life. This can contribute to the overall attractiveness and liveability of the town centre for the benefit of both residents and visitors. Rethinking the future transformation of Dunleer through the role and character of its blue corridor opens up new ways in which the river can support social, cultural, educational or economic activities. Importantly, it can also redefine Dunleer as a destination that encourages visitors to spend more dwell time in and around the town centre.

The delivery of a 'river town' strategy for Dunleer will require a measured and careful approach that prioritises the protection of existing river habitats and ecosystems. At the same time it will help to design and test nature-based approaches to manage and mitigate the impact of climate change in the town centre. Its success will rely to great extent on the local community's stewardship of the new public spaces. One of the aims of the TCF Policy is precisely supporting and enabling the Town Teams to play an active part in delivering projects and initiatives. This strategy sets out an opportunity to do so.



Fig.108 - Diagram of proposed green and blue strategy

## 5.1 INTERVENTIONS - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER

### C2

#### White River Park

##### Proposed River Park

The Green Infrastructure Strategy of the Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 identifies the opportunity to create a network of interlinked parks and open spaces along both banks of the White River in the town centre. In reference to this the TCF Plan includes a proposal to create a river park at the southern edge of the 'Station Housing' site, opposite the existing car parking and hardware storage yard between Barn Road and the station access road. This would be a key 'green node' of a future river walk, and a unique public space to fully engage with the river's natural environment.

The River Park is envisaged as an amenity for both Dunleer residents and visitors. It would incorporate small picnic and play areas. A series of terraced platforms could allow the public to sit along the banks and enjoy being close to the water. Sensitively designed stepping stones would bridge both banks, and make it possible to create a natural pool.

In this way the 'rediscovery' of the White River can establish a unique space for both Dunleer's community and visitors that promotes health and wellbeing in a natural environment which is very much part of the town's historic identity.



Responds to S1, S2, S3, S4 & S5 strategies - By designing the Main Street as a green and blue space to make the town centre more accessible, creating new green linkages to support active travel and a healthier lifestyle, promoting energy efficient approach, creating a new community space to support events and initiatives that bring together local communities, making Dunleer as a destination to encourage new attractions for tourists and visitors.



Fig.109 - River Park within wider context of the potential development of the Station Approach / Barn Road site



## Illustrative proposal looking at section of the Train Station, Station Housing and River Park

1

2

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Fig.110 - Ana de Aviz river beach. Figueiro dos Vinhos. Portugal



Fig.111 - Natural river pool and stepping stones across the River Duoro. Spain



Fig.112 - Illustrative layout of the proposed Dunleer River Park



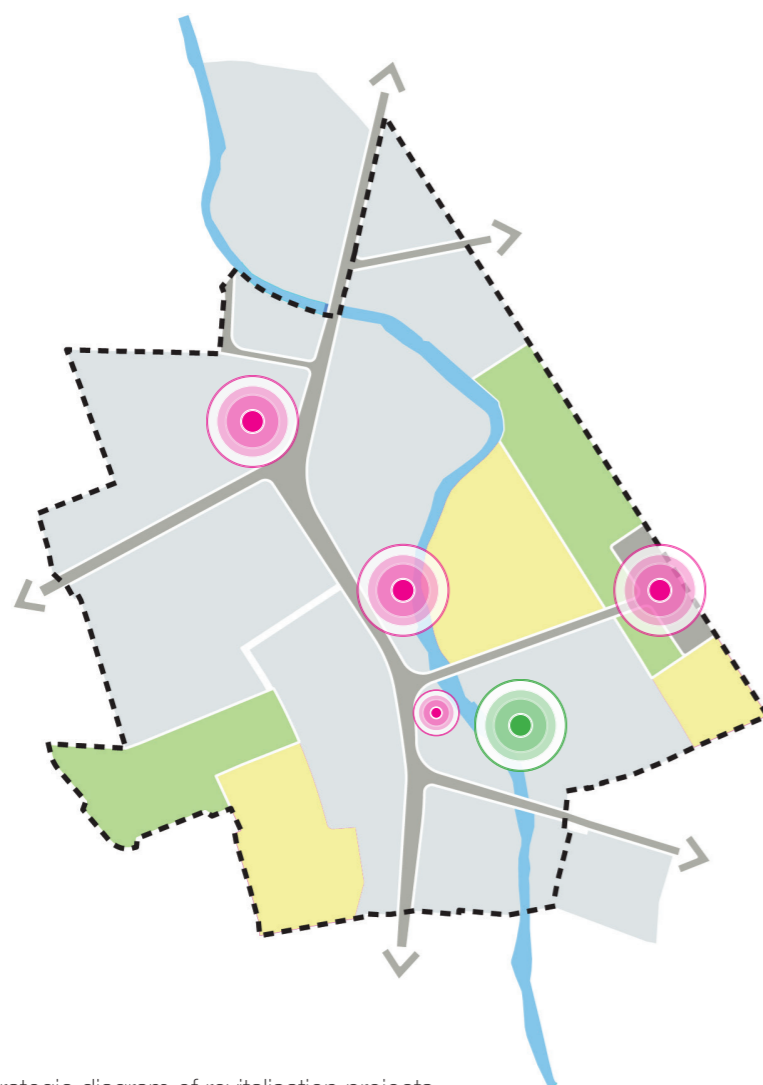
Fig.113 - River Avon Park. Christchurch, New Zealand



Fig.114 - River Avon Park, Christchurch, New Zealand

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D REVITALISATION PROJECTS



#### Project Criteria

One of the principal outcomes of the TCF Plan is the identification of a range of projects that will catalyse the revitalisation of the town centre and directly address problems such as vacancy and dereliction. The following criteria have informed the choice of these projects:

- Potential to change the current use of the buildings to accommodate new requirements and new uses for the wider benefit of the town centre and its community
- Addressing and reducing the number of vacant properties and avoiding future dereliction
- Potential to address, test and implement to Dunleers' TCF strategies
- Potential to promote wider benefits and to encourage further public funding or private investment
- Enhance social value
- Initial viability and management
- Visitor attraction - putting Dunleer on the map
- Bring together social, education, community, leisure and economy aspects

#### Delivering Town Centre Vibrancy

Four projects have been identified as focused interventions in the town centre. They are largely in public sector ownership. Each theme has a strong market and community context and are conceived to generate more vibrancy into the town centre. They unlock, leverage and repurpose existing assets, supportive of a low carbon growth.

Each project responds to a specific opportunity and will require a particular delivery mechanism. At the same time, they are part of a wider strategy that looks at reinforcing the role of the town centre and encouraging new uses to respond to emerging challenges. These include responding to new community requirements, supporting sustainability strategies, encouraging

new entrepreneurial initiatives, redefining Dunleer as a visitors' destination, and promoting town centre living for all age groups. The TCF Plan has thus set up a framework of coordinated projects that have an important role in revitalising the town centre and responding to future challenges and opportunities. These are summarised as follows:

#### Library and Square - Community

Repurposing of the former Bank of Ireland branch and public toilets into a local library and public square. Later phases could include the delivery of an after school club, shared working/co-working and community space, plus high-quality public spaces that open-up the White River.

The proposed project should also aim to establish a synergy with the Market House and establish a hub that supports community initiatives and enterprises. The delivery of a Centre of Excellence for Climate Change will not only provide a unique space to educate and inform about actions and initiatives to tackle the climate crisis, but also showcase local know-how and thought leadership in the field.

#### Train Station - Local Produce and Visitor Hub

Repurposing of the former railway station buildings into a multi-purpose space anchored by a farmers' market, plus space for simple accommodation and spaces focused on cycling and the tourist opportunities in the Louth countryside and coast.

#### Corner House Pub - Enterprise

The Corner House pub is in private ownership. The role of the TCF plan will be to identify initial interventions that will help to uplift the building's value and attract private investment.

#### New Homes

Development of a single and multifamily residential scheme in the field between the station buildings and the River White to include a public riverfront park.

Fig.115 - Strategic diagram of revitalisation projects

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D REVITALISATION PROJECTS

#### A Framework of Projects

The phased delivery of the Revitalisation Projects will consolidate a framework for the transformation and adaptation of the town centre. The TCF plan proposes for each project an initial brief and delivery strategy, set within a wider contextual approach that looks at how they can collectively reshape Dunleer's central core by introducing new uses, improving accessibility, protecting and enhancing habitats and ecosystems, and creating spaces that will encourage locals and visitors to spend more time in the town centre.

For each project there is a shared approach of mixing a variety of interventions. These include proposals for buildings, public realm, landscape and mobility. The proposals are underpinned by strategies regarding community, education, economy, wellbeing and sustainability. The projects are, in essence, small scale plans:

1. The public library anchors a new square that opens up the Main Street to the White River. Potential future extensions can provide more community and education uses that complement those of the Market House. A new pedestrian link between the Main Street and Dunleer's park via the Orchard effectively brings together river and park.
2. The coordinated management of the train station and current library building creates a focus for visitors and a place to promote local produce and crafts. The site can also be envisaged as a sustainable mobility hub. Importantly, the project can also help establish a safe route between Scoil Ui Mhuiri and the town centre.
3. The Corner House Pub can mix town centre living with co-working spaces. The yard can host a variety of activities that will support the town centre's vibrancy. The Corner House will be at the heart of a greener and pedestrian friendly High Street.
4. New housing as part of a future 'station quarter'. A riverside park celebrates the White River and creates a new space to play and dwell in a natural environment.

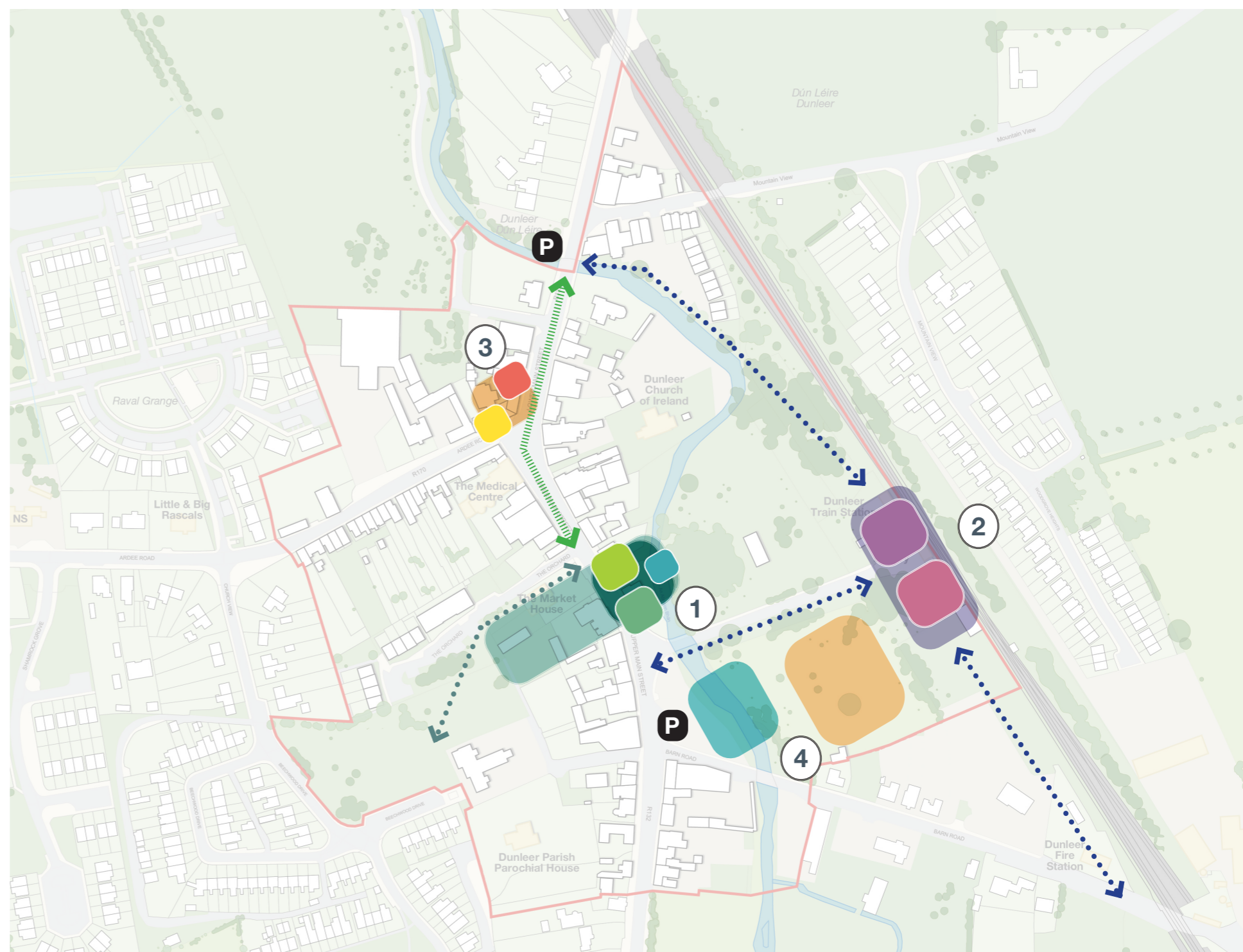


Fig. 116 - Diagram illustrating how the framework of the four revitalisation projects integrates with proposed parking spaces and new links.

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

# D1 DUNLEER LIBRARY + LIBRARY SQUARE + RIVER POCKET PARK + LEARNING HUB

### Former Bank of Ireland

The former Bank of Ireland building on Market Street has been recently acquired by LCC to relocate the public library from the station area. Located at the heart of the town centre, and directly opposite to the Market House, the future library will help to establish a community and public service core that will help to revitalise the Main Street.

The TCF Plan aims to capitalise on the opportunity that the Council's ownership of the building can

create in terms of unlocking potential wider benefits to the town centre, particularly when considering a joint redevelopment of the public toilet site.

The diagram below summarises the current condition of the area, which also includes a private right of way. The frontage to the Main Street comprises the Bank of Ireland building (with no particularly interesting architectural features), the fenced access to the path leading to the White River, and the public toilet with two colourful murals painted by local schoolchildren. The toilet

block is set back from the Main Street, creating a small public square that has been enhanced by the Tidy Towns Team with a large planter. A small bench under the existing tree creates one of the few spaces to sit and dwell in the town centre.

The buildings back on to the White River, which runs at a lower level than the Main Street. The river bank has a mix of overgrown shrubbery and a tarmacked surface parking area servicing the former Bank of Ireland building. The White River is hidden from view from the Main Street.

The opportunity is thus to connect, both visually and physically, the Main Street to the White River. This would also allow for the creation a new public square directly linked to the Main Street, and enhance the setting of the future public library. It is intended that this will be planned and delivered in a phased approach as one of the key elements of a wider regeneration and revitalisation of the town centre.

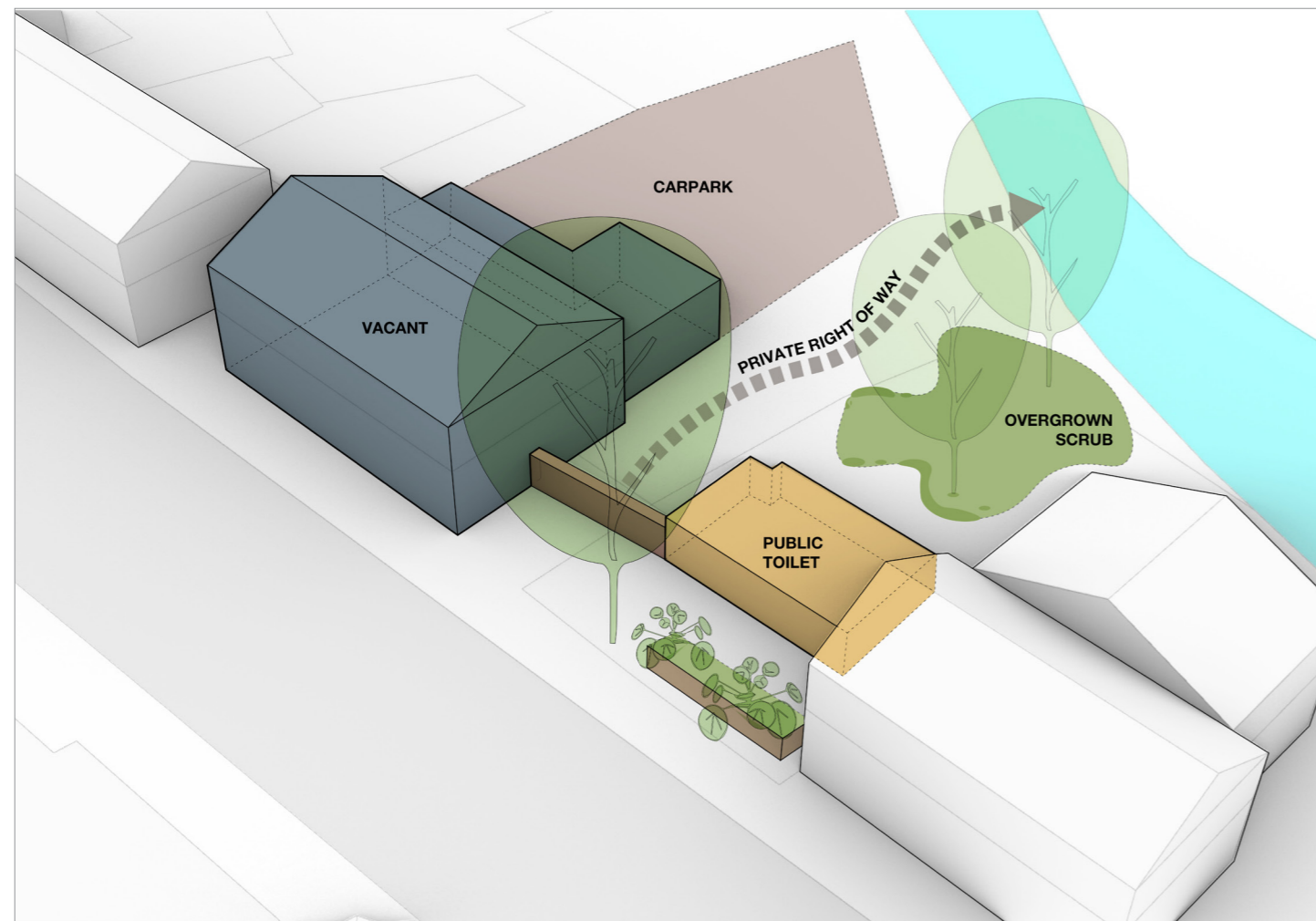


Fig.117 - Diagram illustrating the existing condition of the Bank of Ireland site



Fig.118 - Fenced access to private right of way



Fig.120 - Rear of former Bol building showcasing level change



Fig.119 - Frontage of public toilet with murals



Fig.121 - White River at the back of the opportunity area

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D1.1

## Dunleer Library And Library Square

### Proposed Strategy: Refurbishment of Library Building + Library Square

The initial phase of the proposal focuses on the revitalisation of the public square and the library as key focal points. The first step involves the demolition of the existing public toilet and fence, allowing for the expansion of the public square and its transformation with the inclusion of green elements.

Additionally, the creation of stepped seating along the building edge serves to establish a seamless connection between the future library and the square. In order to further enhance the connectivity between the library and the square, it is proposed to introduce a large window on the first floor of the library. This window would create an inviting void that visually integrates the library with the square, fostering a sense of openness and accessibility.

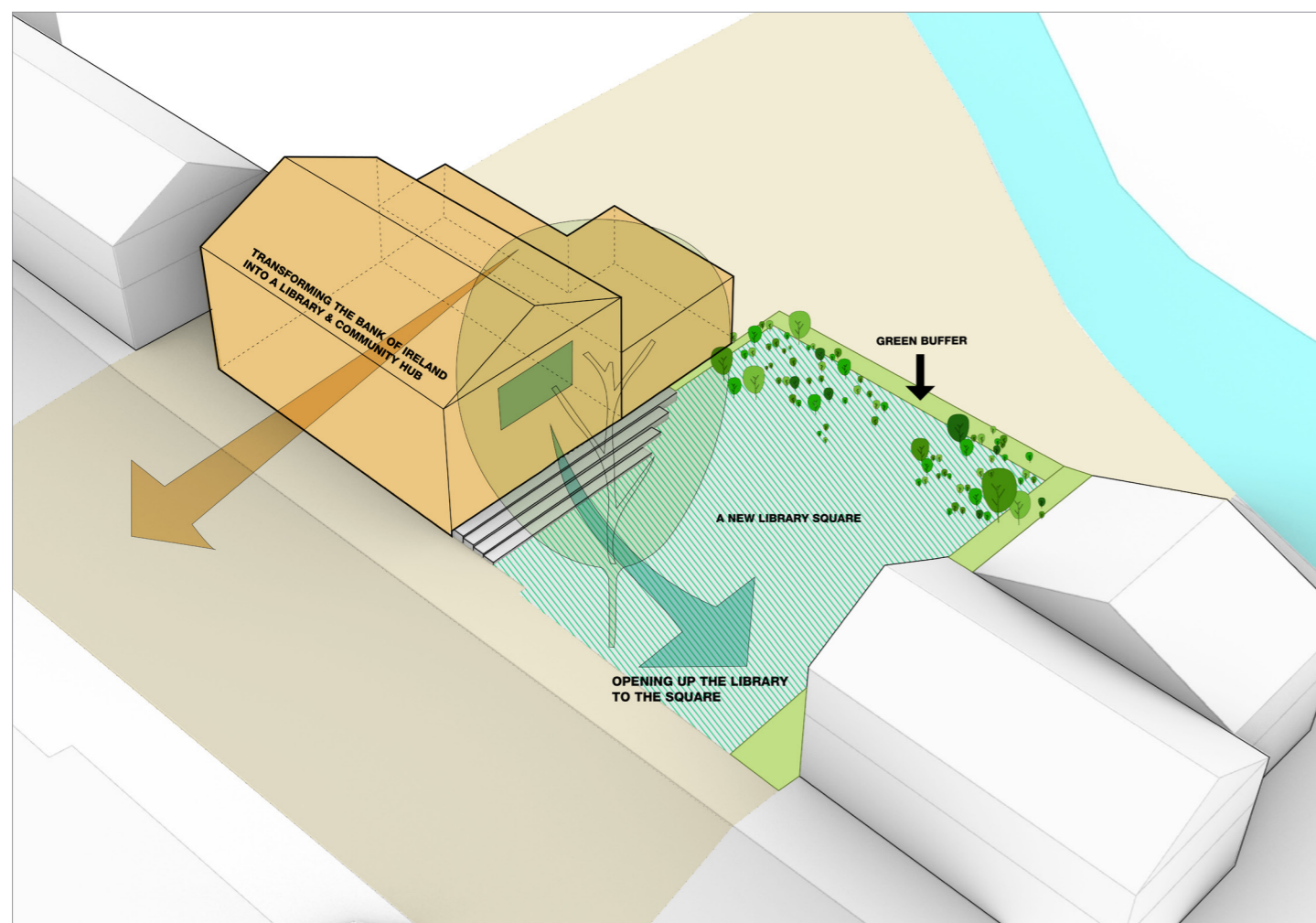


Fig.122 - 3D diagram of the proposed strategy of the library refurbishment and the establishment of the library square



The Intervention responds to Strategies S1, S2 and S3 by reusing the vacant building to develop a new place of confluence that supports activities, retrofitting backlands of buildings to create linkages to the River White and linking the interiors of certain spaces to the outside, altogether bringing Dunleer's community and invites others to visit, enjoy and engage.

### PHASE 1

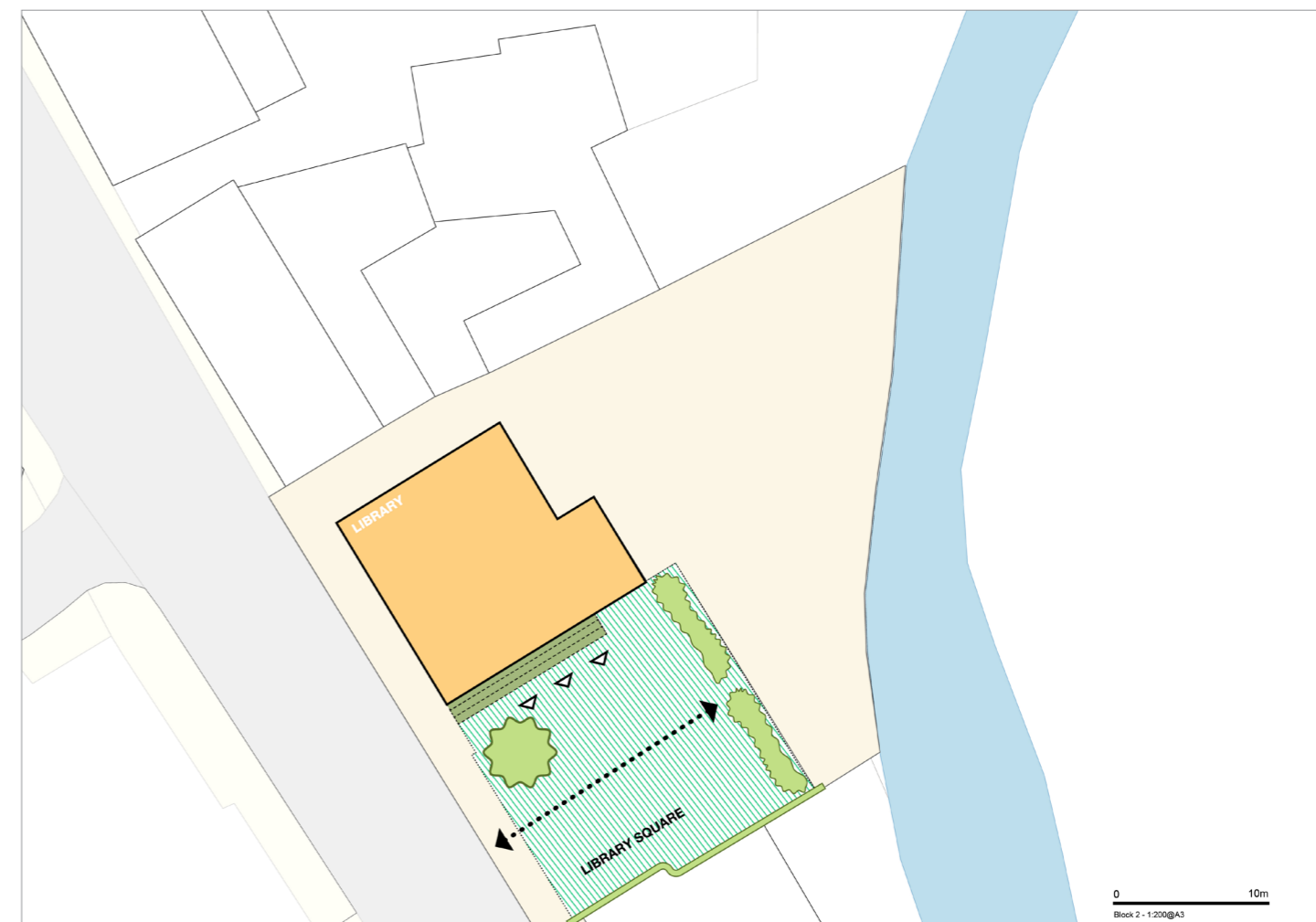
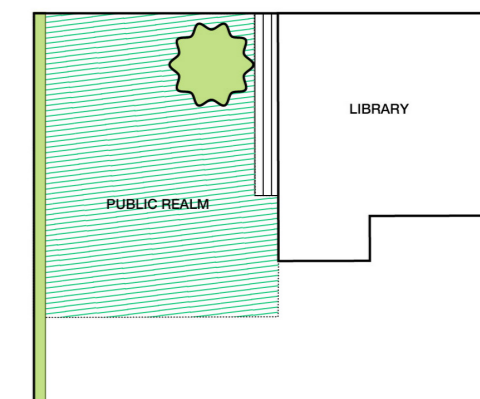


Fig.123 - 2D diagram of the proposed layout of the library refurbishment and the establishment of the library square

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D1.2

#### River Pocket Park

##### Proposed Strategy: Establishment of the River Pocket Park

Once the library and the square are fully operational, the project will aim to strengthen the connection between Main Street and the White River. As well as creating a vibrant and animated space for all, the public square will serve as serving as a gateway the river and its natural environment. This expansion presents an exciting opportunity to develop the surrounding land into a riverside pocket park.

The riverside pocket park will be carefully designed to offer a tranquil and inviting space for visitors and pedestrians alike. It will provide a respite from the bustling Main Street, inviting people to explore and enjoy nature. The park will be designed so as to integrate with the river's natural environment whilst creating an accessible route that will allow everyone to 'walk down to the water'.

By creating this riverside pocket park, the project aims to encourage community engagement, leisure activities, and appreciation of the biodiversity.

The development of the riverside park will enhance the overall attractiveness of the area, potentially attracting more visitors and stimulating economic activity in the vicinity.

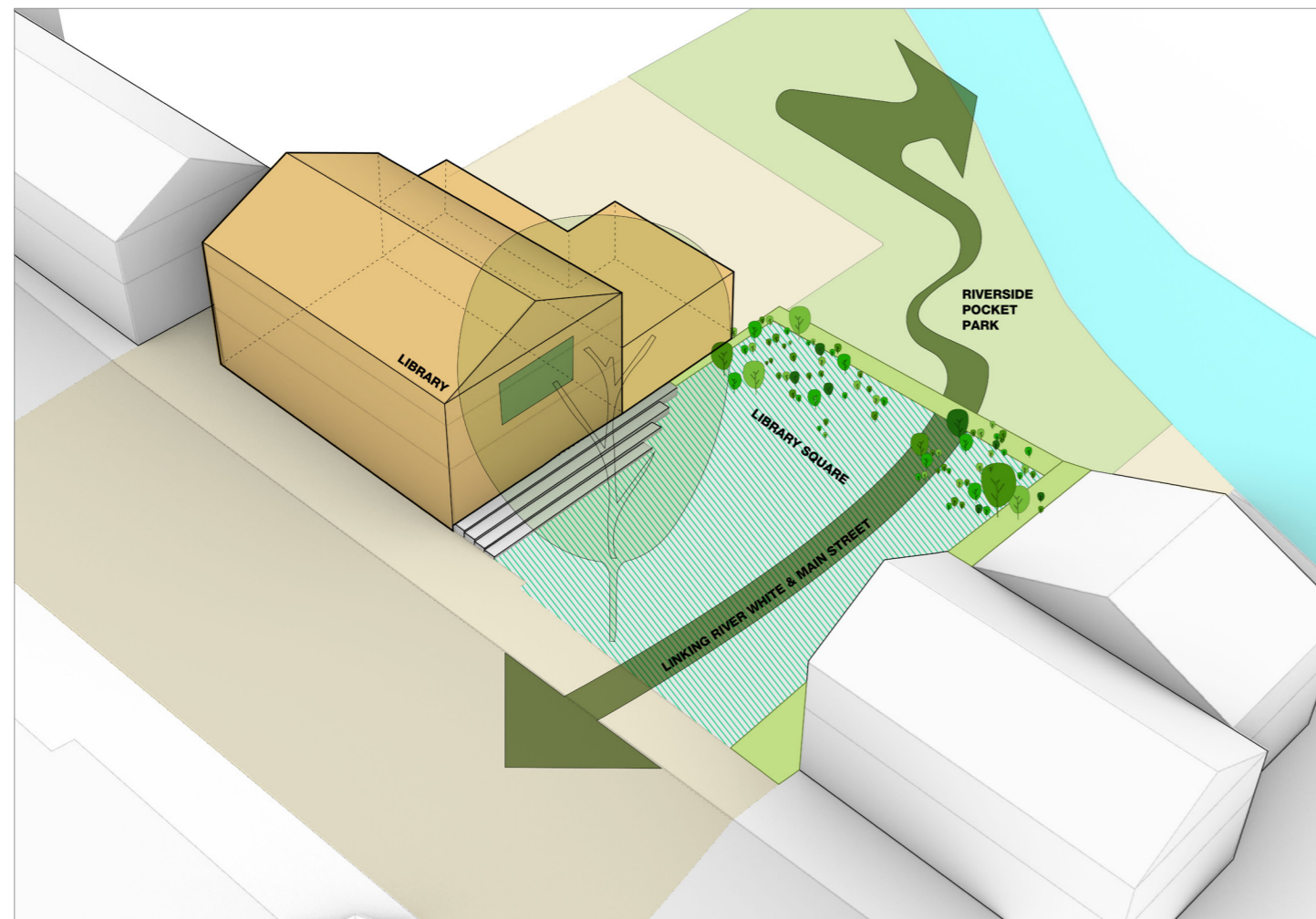


Fig.124 - 3D diagram of the proposed strategy for the River Pocket Park

##### PHASE 2

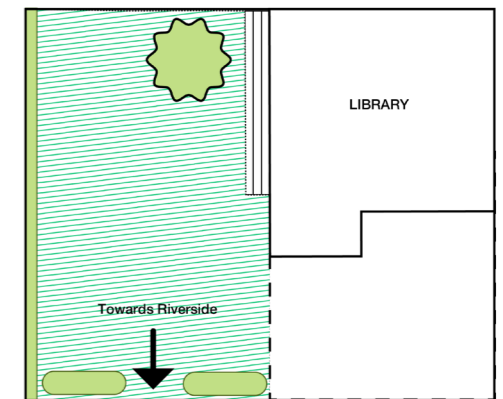


Fig.125 - 2D diagram of the proposed layout of the River Pocket Park

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D1.3

#### Dunleer Library & Learning Hub

##### Proposed Strategy: Extension of Library Building

In the long term, the project envisions an expansion of the library to provide additional space that can accommodate a variety of uses. The design principle focuses on extending the rear of the library by introducing two multi-storey associated structures. This extension will result in the creation of elongated gallery spaces running adjacent to the edge of the public square.

Furthermore, the extended library will connect to another structure featuring a spacious atrium that offers panoramic views of the river. Additionally, a ground-floor terrace will provide direct access to the riverfront. This design approach aims to enhance the circulation within the building and establish a stronger connection with the river.

Such a connection will offer greater flexibility in transforming the library's purpose and adaptability to evolving needs.

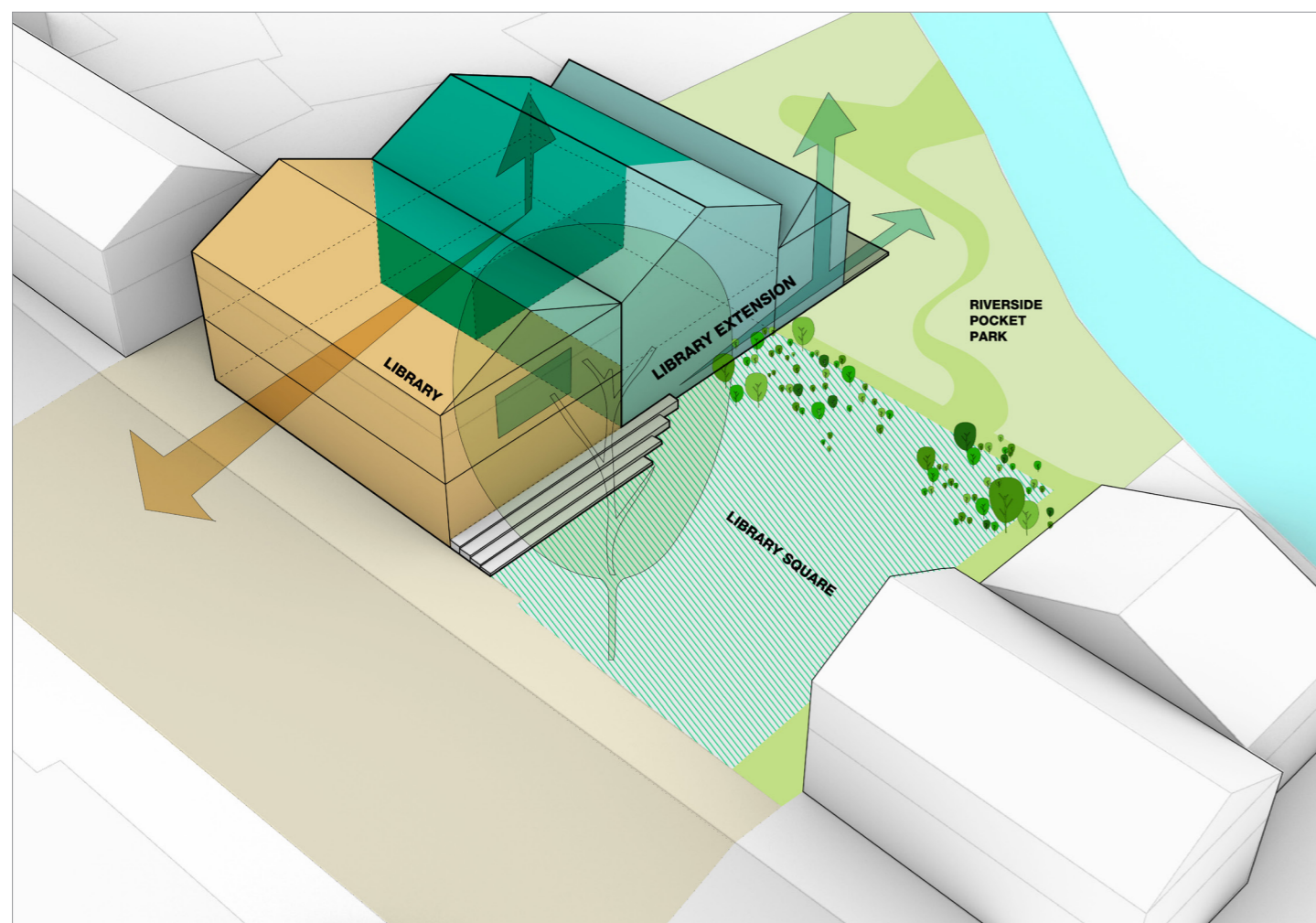
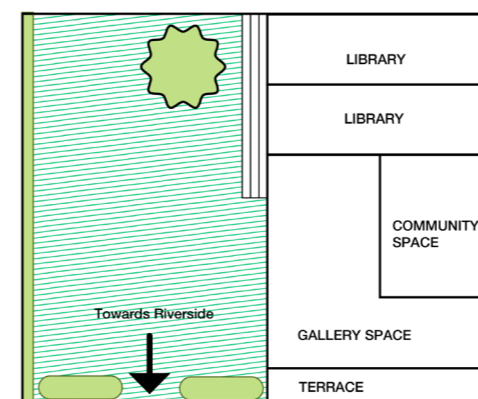


Fig.126 - 3D diagram of the proposed strategy for the extension of the Library Building

##### PHASE 3



##### Phase 3 - Proposed Elevation

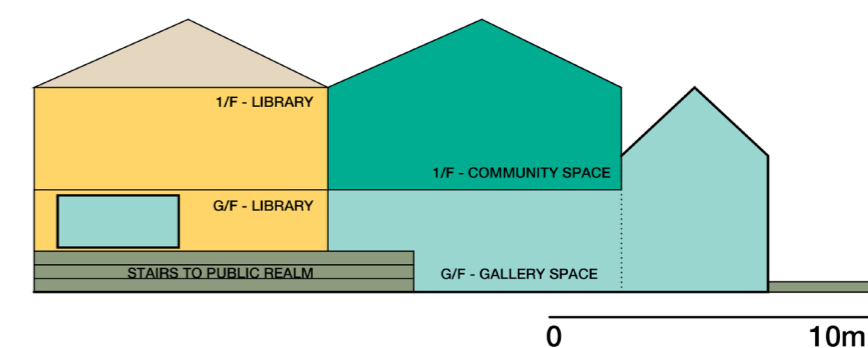


Fig.127 - Diagrammatic elevation of the Library and potential extensions.



Fig.128 - 2D diagram of the proposed layout of the library extension

**D1**

**DUNLEER LIBRARY + LIBRARY SQUARE + RIVER POCKET PARK + LEARNING HUB**



**Potential**

The phased delivery of all components of the proposal will allow the design proposal to mature in time and adapt to future requirements and opportunities. The success of the long term project will rely on the stewardship of Dunleer's community and Town Team.

The images below (Fig.126-130) illustrate how the proposal could bring together learning and social spaces, a multi-use public square and a riverside pocket park to create a 'Dunleerified' place.



Fig.129 - Facade as public space. Cultural Centre Jonkhove, Belgium. Jozef Legrand, Dertien 12



Fig.131 - Square as outdoor living room. Community Centre in Wielen, Poland. Neostudio Archs.

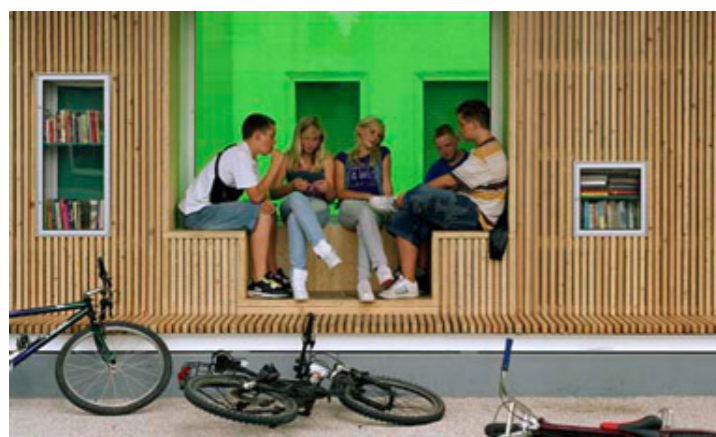


Fig.130 - Square as library extension. Open air library, Magdeburg, Germany. KARO architekten



Fig.132 - Square as outdoor cinema. Community Centre in Wielen, Poland. Neostudio Archs.



Fig.133 - View of the existing Library and public toilet block from the Main Street

**BEFORE**



AFTER



Fig.134 - Artist's illustration of the Library and Library Square from the Main Street

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D2 TRAIN STATION, VISITORS' & MOBILITY HUB

#### Existing Train Station

Dunleer train station is tucked away at the end of Station Road, with a canopy of trees lining both sides along the road. The existing train station has remained unused for nearly four decades, with the structure standing as a relic alongside an adjacent library building and a few remaining structures. The train station itself comprises a single-story brown brick building, which currently sits idle.

Adjacent to the train station is a two-story library building, painted in white and facing Station Road, currently unoccupied. The station and library are surrounded by a sizable open space, offering approximately 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> of potential area for redevelopment.

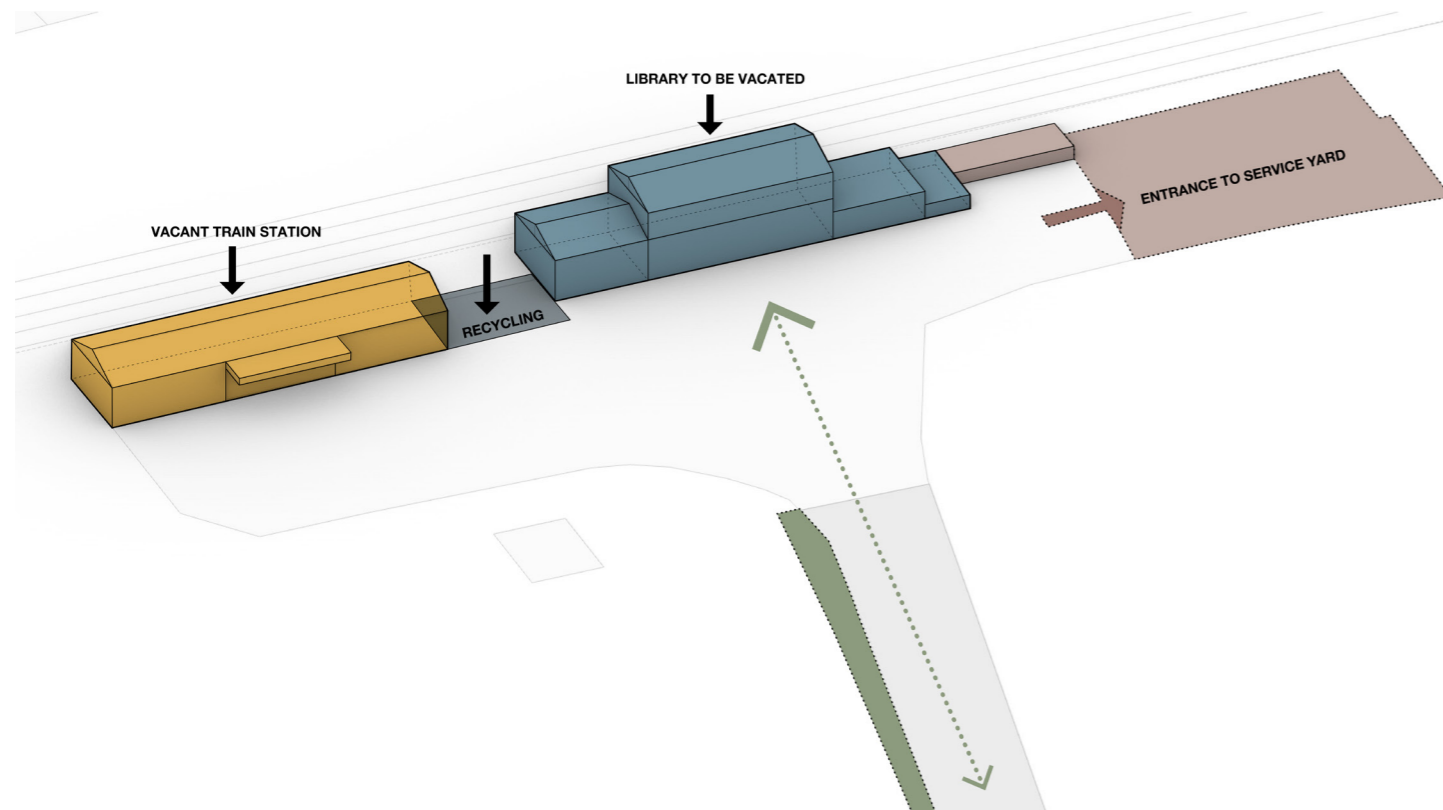


Fig.135 - Diagram of the existing condition of the train station

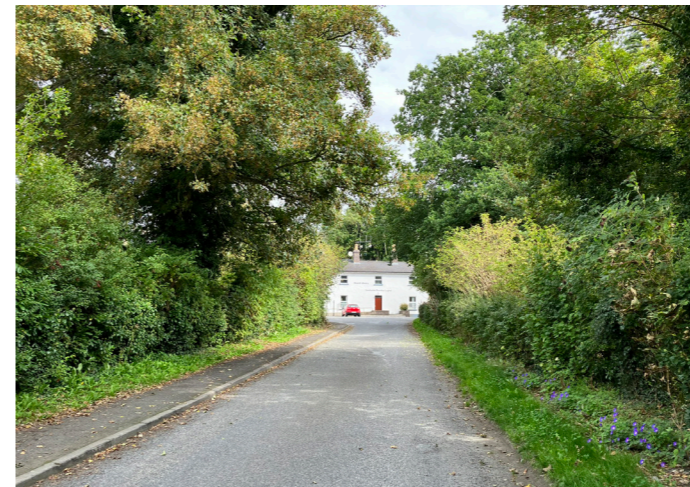


Fig.136 - View of Dunleer's Library from Station Road



Fig.139 - View of existing train station



Fig.137 - View of the existing Library



Fig.140 - View of the existing train station



Fig.138 - View showing route to the Irish Rail service yard



Fig.141 - View of entrance to the service yard

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D2

## Train Station, Visitors' & Mobility Hub

### Proposed Strategy: Station Hub

The TCF Plan has identified the need to address vacancy in the station area following the relocation of the current library. Engagement with CIE and Iarnród Éireann has confirmed the possibility of promoting new uses for the existing buildings as long as these do not interfere with rail-related operations.

The following pages illustrate how the buildings and external spaces could be used. The development and refinement of a spatial framework for the station area would rely on focused engagement

with relevant stakeholders, including potential investors or public agencies linked to public funding.

The initial proposal is to develop a Station Hub with distinctive yet complementary uses for the two buildings. The station building, which would not be used if the train service in Dunleer was to be re-established, is envisaged as a circularity hub for the production and sale of local produce. The library and associated spaces can be adapted as a sustainable hub and visitors' centre, enabling Dunleer to become a gateway for tourism in Mid Louth.

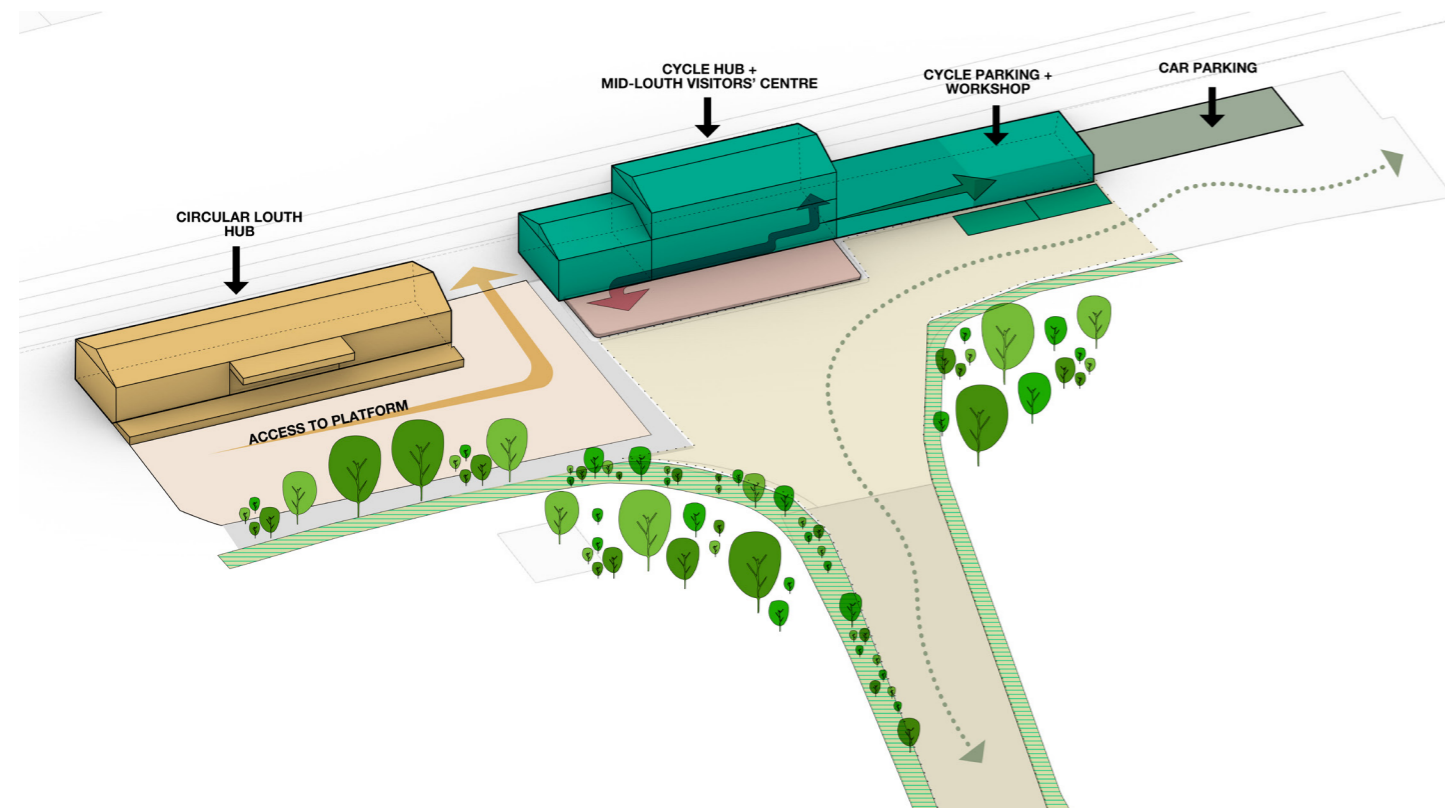
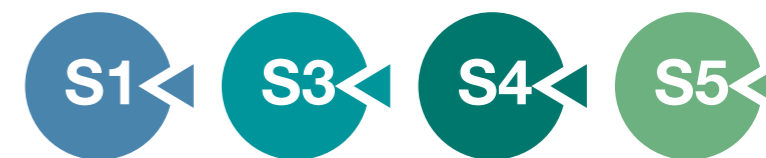


Fig.142 - 3D diagram of the proposed Station Hub



The Intervention responds to Strategies S1, S3, S4 & S5 by reusing the derelict train station and retrofitting the vacated library to support a new sustainable transport hub for Dunleer, holding market to sustain the development of a decarbonised town centre, and establishing links with education, culture and care.

### Circular Hub

- Reuse of the existing train station as a hub to establish circular economy
- Support local activities such as Farmers' Market and Food Hub
- Flexible use of building to support learning for Youth
- Retain access to the railway platform to ensure there is no constrain to the current operations or future reopening of the station

### Visitors' and Mobility Hub

- Reuse of the existing library to support sustainable mobility, such as cycling, in the wider Dunleer and Mid-Louth area.
- Establish a visitor's centre to support the rebranding of Dunleer as a tourism destination linked to established and new routes in Louth.
- Install electric vehicle chargers and create a local recycling centre.

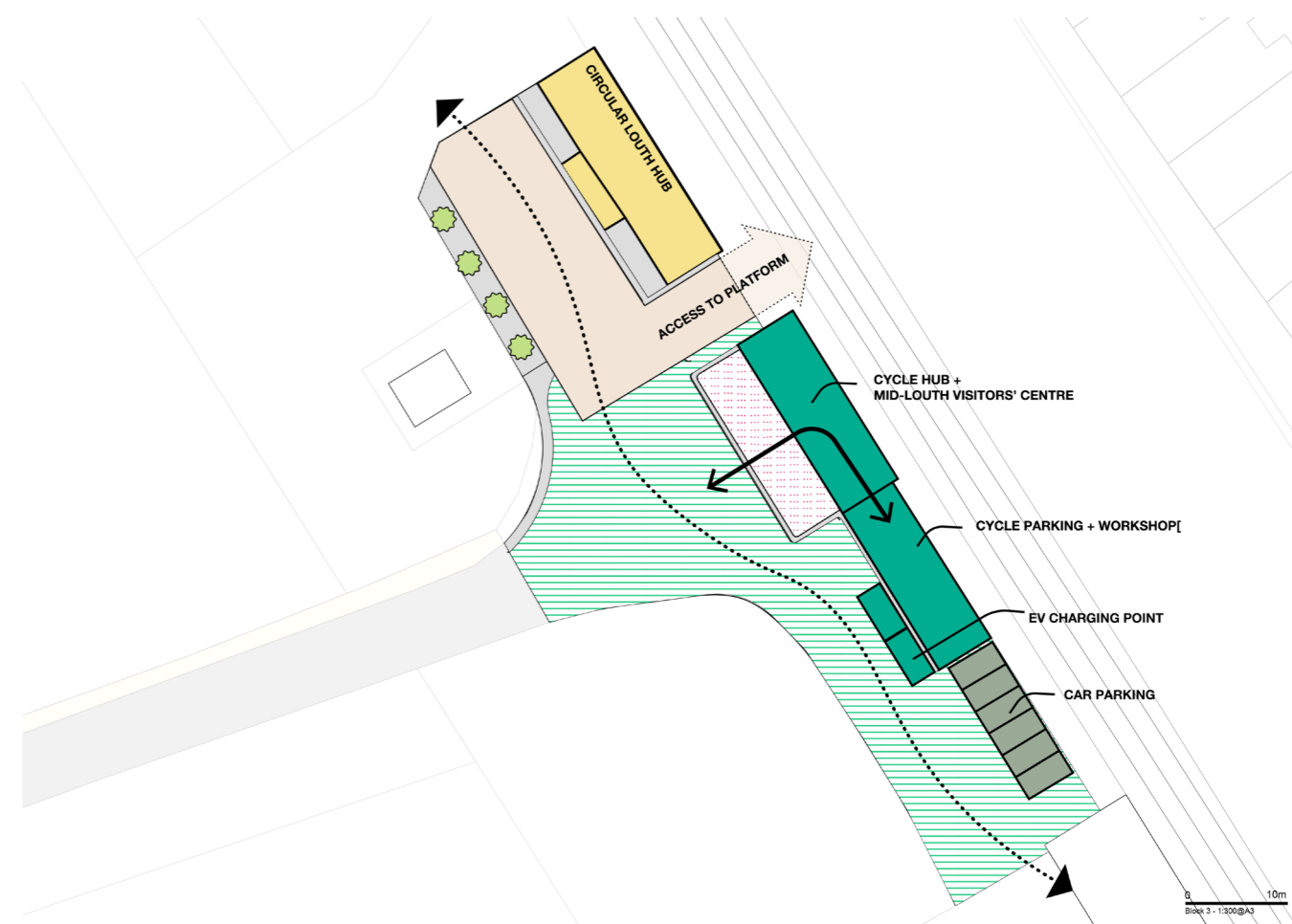


Fig.143 - 2D diagram of a potential layout of the Station Hub

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D2\_1

#### Train Station

##### Potential Circular Hub at Train Station

- Creating new community spaces for local groups
- Establish links with education and culture
- Reinforce the role of Dunleer as a market town
- Support local economy
- Develop a circular economy for greater resilience
- Provide opportunity to tourism to attract investment
- Reuse of vacant asset

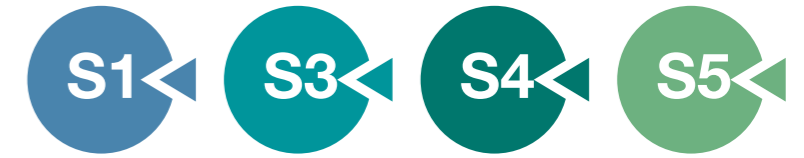


Fig.146 - Zero waste shop as potential use in the circularity hub



Fig.149 - Active community uses



Fig.144 - Transformed rail station platform. Proposal for Greystones Station



Fig.147 - Example of consumers' group



Fig.150 - Farmers' market - Covington, Virginia, USA



Fig.145 - Mix of uses in a train station. Gare du Pallet



Fig.148 - Drogheda Street Market



Fig.151 - Reference image of potential community activities at the space outside

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D2\_2

#### Visitors' & Mobility Hub

##### Potential Visitors' and Mobility Hub at the Former Library Building

- Retrofit of vacant library into a mixed-use transport hub
- Enhance flexible use of buildings with better circulation
- Develop a community-based sustainable transport hub
- Connecting the wider loop network to support tourism with a Visitor Information Centre
- Linking the train station to the Main Street with a more visible entrance to the library

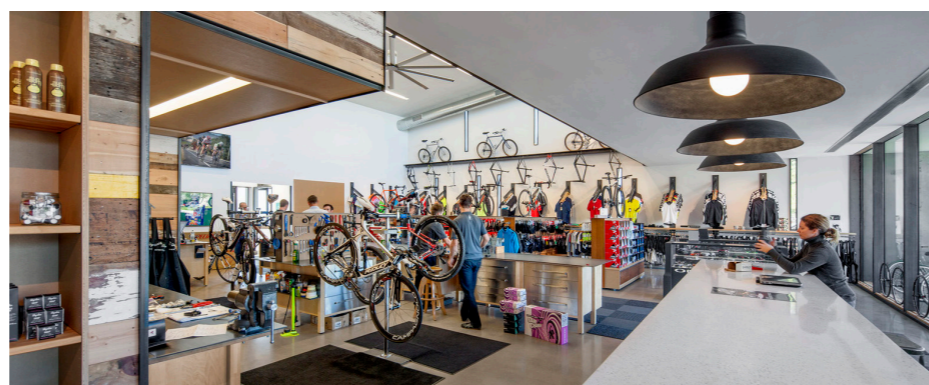
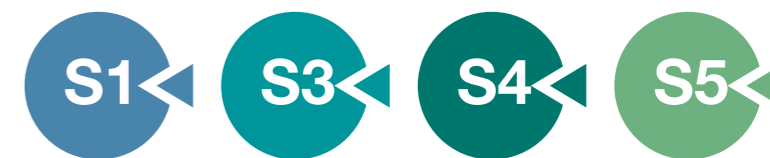


Fig.154 - Cycle hub and workshop

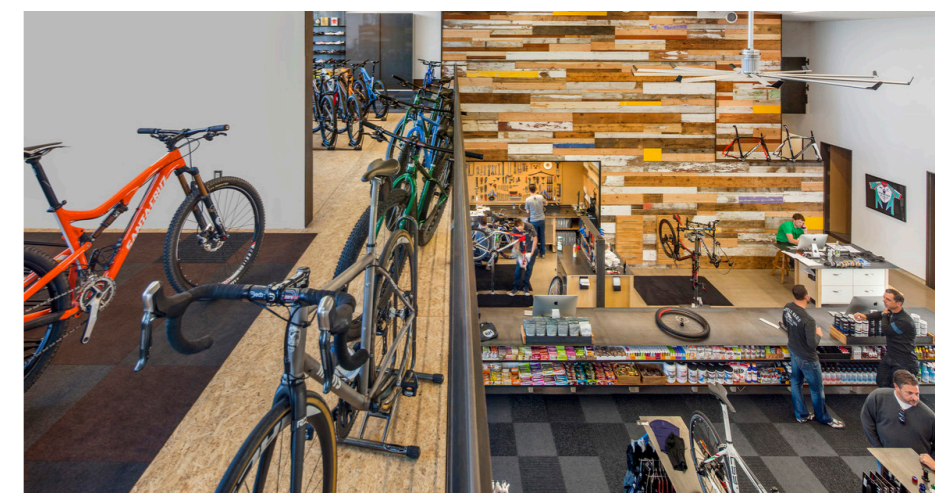


Fig.157 - Reference image of potential space design of the Cycle Hub



Fig.152 - Dundee Cycle Hub

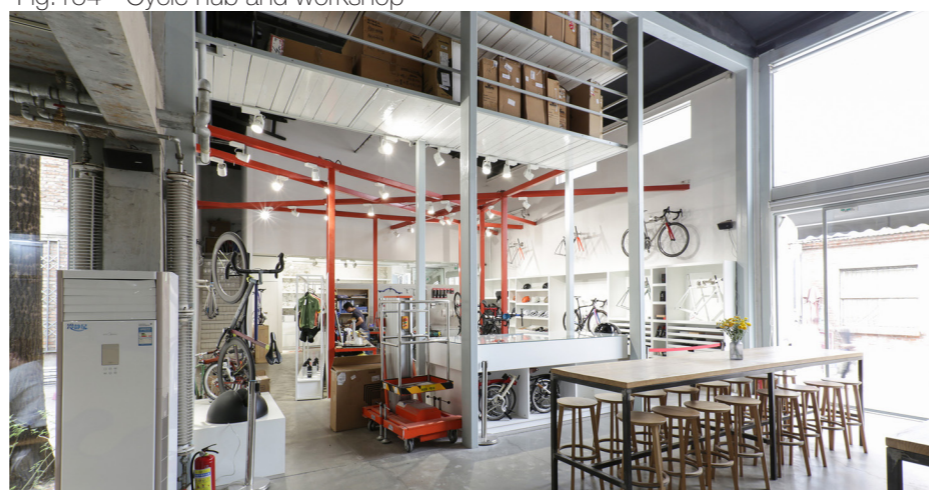


Fig.155 - Mixed-use design of a cycle storage shop



Fig.158 - GlashusEtt energy centre, Stockholm, Sweden.



Fig.153 - Hackney cycle hub and cafe



Fig.156 - Distrito Fijo Cycling Club, Mexico City- cafe, showroom and repair shop.



Fig.159 - Natuurcafe - Driebergen-Zeist station, Netherlands. Energy-generating revolving door

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

### D3 CORNER HOUSE PUB

#### Existing Corner House Pub

The Corner House, is in a prominent position at the junction of the Main Street with Ardee Road. The ground floor is organised around a yard that has a direct access to the street. Two large spaces (the pub and a storage block) have an aspect to the yard, which in the building's latest refurbishment was filled with ancillary uses. The upper floors are divided into a series of rooms. The building has been vacant for a number of years, but can be adapted to a variety of uses.

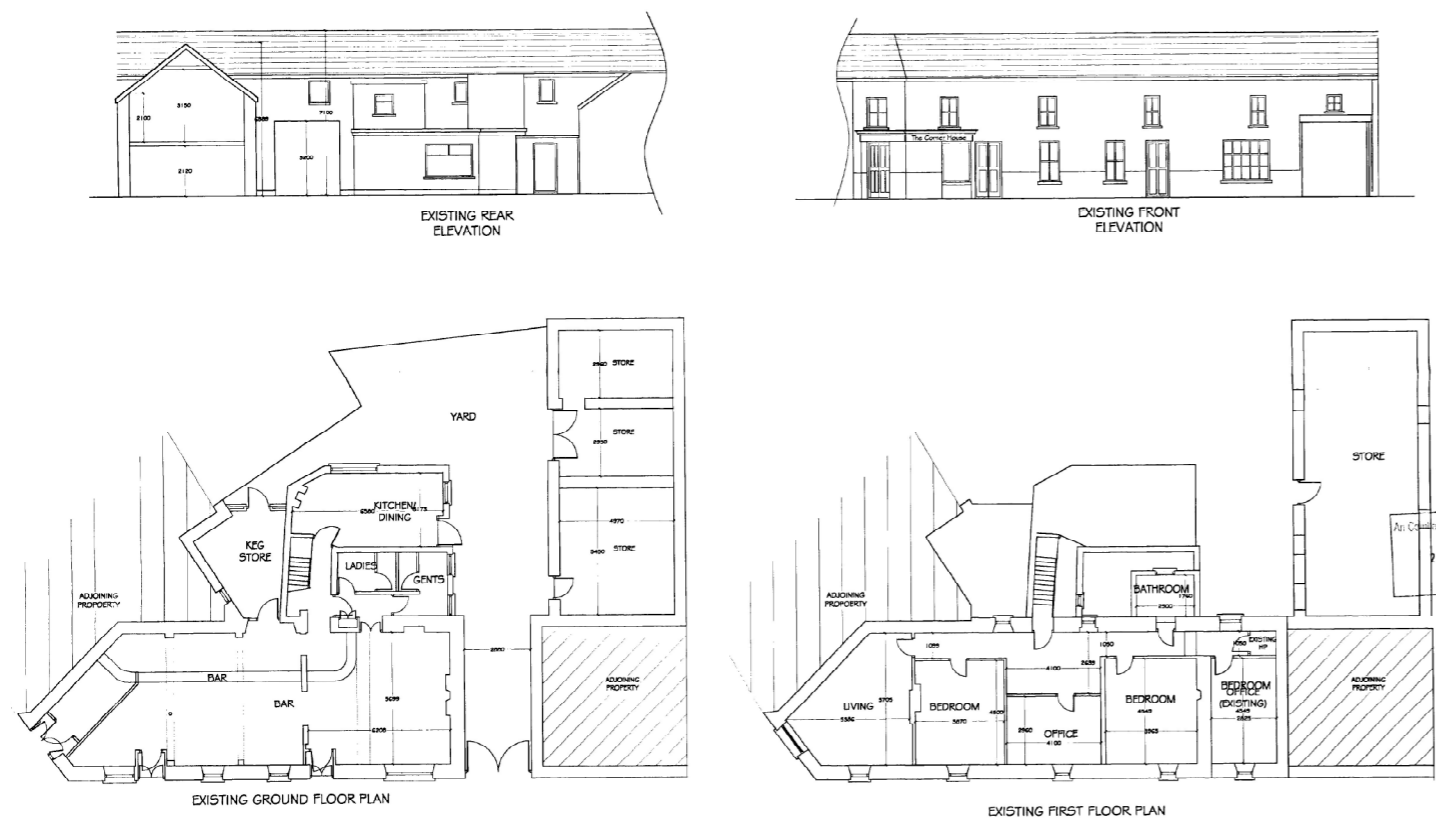


Fig.160 - Existing floor plan and elevations of the Corner House Pub

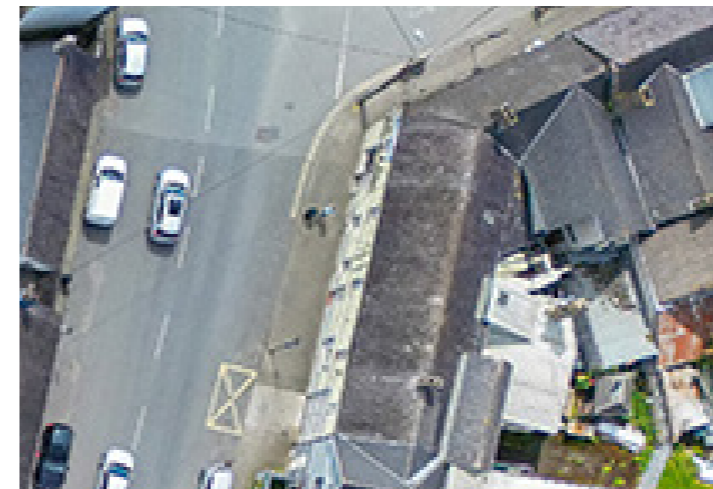


Fig.161 - Aerial view of the Corner House Pub



Fig.164 - View to the Corner House Pub from the east



Fig.162 - Existing facade condition of the Corner House Pub



Fig.165 - Bird's eye view of the Corner House Pub



Fig.163 - View to the Corner House Pub from the south



Fig.166 - Road congestion outside the Corner House Pub

## 5.2 INTERVENTIONS - REVITALISATION PROJECTS

D3

### Corner House Pub

#### Proposed Strategy: Enterprise Yard

The TCF Plan proposes a strategy for an intervention in the pub that provides flexibility to accommodate a variety of uses. This is based on making the most of the building's diverse spaces, and of how these can be brought together or developed independently from each other. At ground floor, three large open spaces (the former pub, storage block and yard), with direct access from the Main Street can host an enterprise centre with a variety of uses such as a co-working hub, makers' workshops, youth cafe, retail outlets

or market. The upper floor levels, divided into smaller rooms, can be used in a variety of ways, including shared office spaces, study rooms or even town centre apartments.

The enhancement of the footways adjacent to the building should rise the Corner House's value profile. The yard can be envisaged as an extension of the public realm - almost a square at the heart of a compact, mixed-use urban block at the heart of Dunleer's town centre.

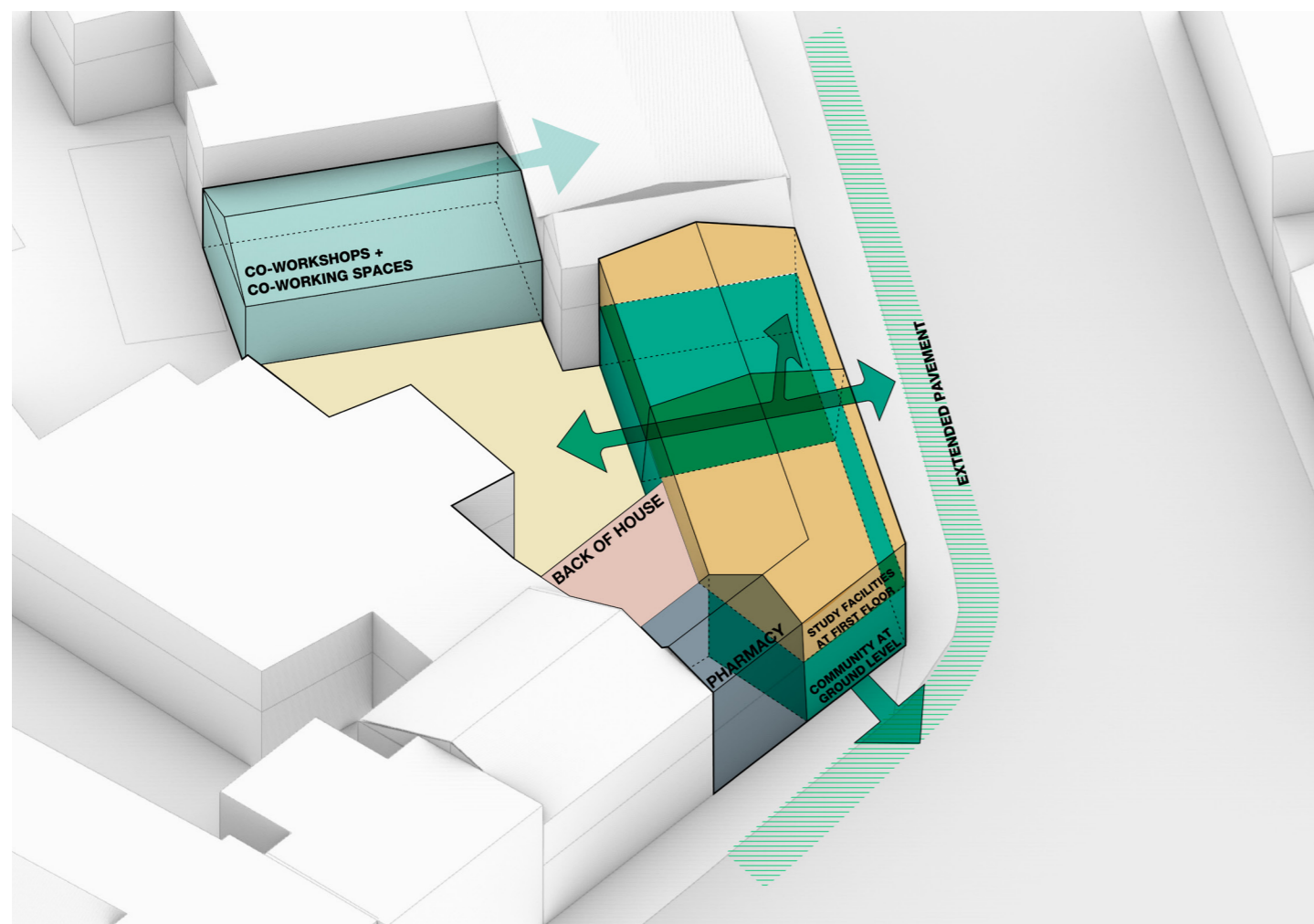


Fig.167 - 3D diagram illustrating how the Corner House Pub could be used as an Enterprise Yard

Ground Floor

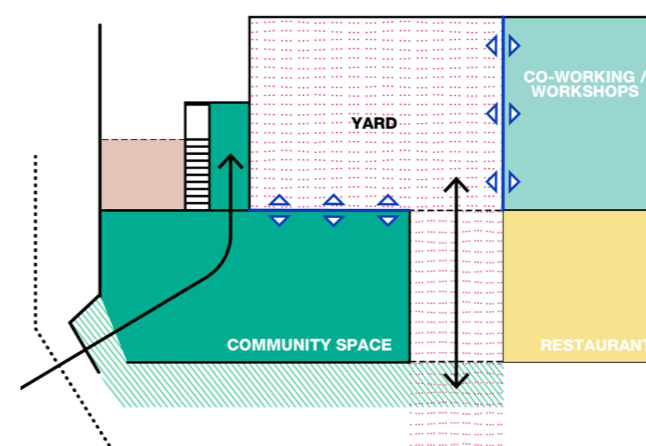


Fig.168 - Schematic proposed ground floor layout

Upper Floor

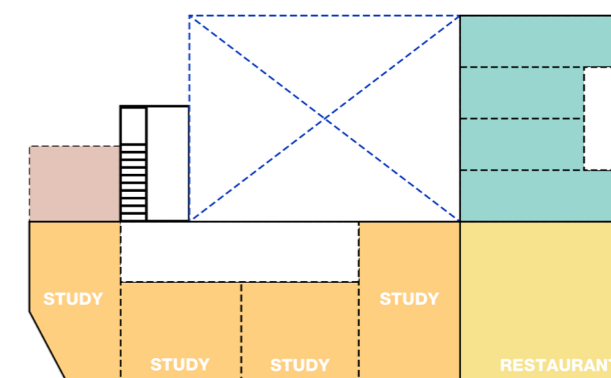


Fig.169 - Schematic proposed first floor layout



Fig.170 - Angel Yard, adaptive reuse. Enfield, London. UK



Fig.172 - Altrincham market - a driver for town centre



Fig.171 - Office in a yard. RCFM, Basita, France



Fig.173 - Youth hub (retrofit of former youth club). Enfield, London. UK



The Intervention responds to Strategies S1, S2, S3 & S5 by reusing the vacated corner pub to refit into a new enterprise and community hub, creating more pedestrian spaces in and around the Main Street, allowing better economic and cultural linkages within Dunleer, and attracting further investment to the town centre.

## 5.3 INTERVENTIONS - ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

### **E** ENHANCEMENT, IMPROVEMENT & COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

The following pages showcase potential projects and early wins that will help enhance the town centre's townscape and quality of public realm, help drive more vibrancy into the heart of the town and improve its value profile to support attracting private sector investment. Key objectives would include:

- Consolidation of car parking for different users
- Traffic calming and bus stop arrangements
- Urban design upgrade, pocket parks, access to White River, walking loops
- Wayfinding to support more walking and cycling
- Tell the Dunleer stories. Vision, place brand strategy to articulate where Dunleer is going, show purpose and meaning that residents and businesses can get behind.
- Help to articulate a sustainable growth village and help Dunleer have stronger and more productive discussions with others in public and private sector. Refreshed brand identity then flows as does high quality website (business strengths/ opps, visitor and residential opportunities. Might this be “energy/environmental/retrofitting story?”
- Property audit of the town centre, what is vacant at ground and upper floors and how might the space be brought into productive use – residential, commercial, community
- High quality town centre map and location of facilities. Print and Online PLUS populated town noticeboards
- Position Dunleer as a tourism hub village for the central Louth area towards Irish sea – Countryside to Coast. Cycling hub has potential, perhaps a sub set might be electric bikes



Fig.174 - The Grace Gifford Plunkett Garden of Remembrance and Reflection - example of a project initiative delivered by a local community group - Tidy Towns



## 5.3 INTERVENTIONS - ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

### E1

#### Town Loops, Wayfinding & Healthy Travel Signage

**Proposal:** A town centre wayfinding and signage initiative. This will provide a well designed way of navigating and learning more about the town centre.

Adequate signage will make the routes safer and accessible for walkers of all ages, help runners by signalling route lengths, and provide engaging and useful information (on history, environment, culture, community etc) of the local area

This plan highlights both the existing loop walks that are already in use and highlights how these could be extended and brought together. Improved wayfinding will ensure that the proposed pedestrian and cycling loops will be used to their full potential.

This will not only benefit local residents but also invite visitors to spend more time exploring Dunleer and discovering all it has to offer.



Fig.175 - Wayfinding and public real signage examples

### E2

#### Green Gateway Project

**Proposal:** To build on the existing gateway designs on the edge of the town and provide a welcoming and unique entrance to Dunleer.

This intervention can rethink the way art pieces or elements of local historic or cultural significance are used to welcome those who are arriving to the town. The proposal is to complement the existing St. Bridgid's and Mill Wheel welcome signs in Dunleer with new 'green gateways' that highlight local commitment to prioritise sustainability and decarbonisation when thinking of the town's future development.

The green gateways can reflect the 'Dunleerification' of the town centre, and be designed as, for example, green biodiverse walls, information stations that showcase local environmental indicators, or artistic installations that showcase the local environmental heritage.



Fig.176 - Welcome to Dunleer sign

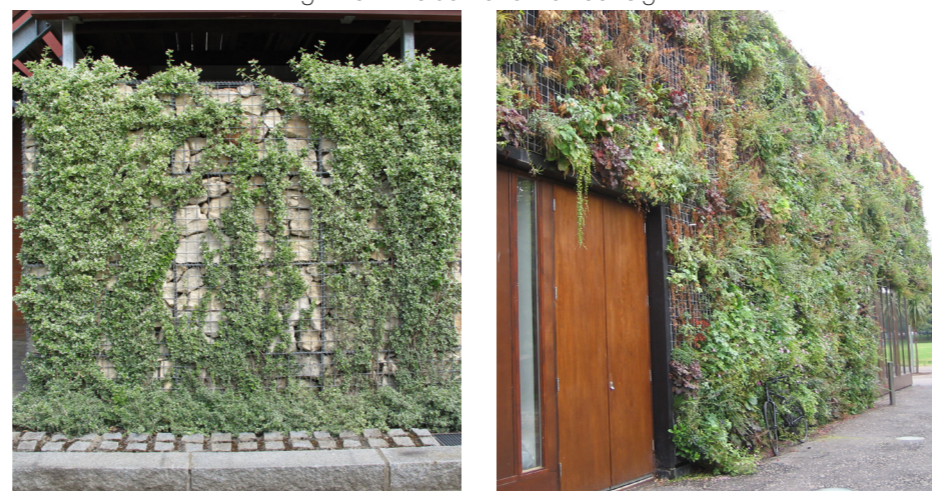


Fig.177 - Examples of green walls

### E3

#### Street Decluttering, Street Furniture Strategy & Lighting Street

**Proposal:** To make the town centre's public realm safer, more attractive and inviting, and accessible for all by reorganising the existing seating, bins and other street furniture.

Actions may involve removing unnecessary obstacles, organising street furniture such as benches, bike racks, and waste bins to enhance pedestrian flow, and implementing appropriate lighting to ensure safety and create a welcoming atmosphere especially the night time. By adopting a cohesive design approach, the street decluttering and furniture strategy can transform the town centre into a more enjoyable and sociable place.



Fig.178 - Public realm lighting

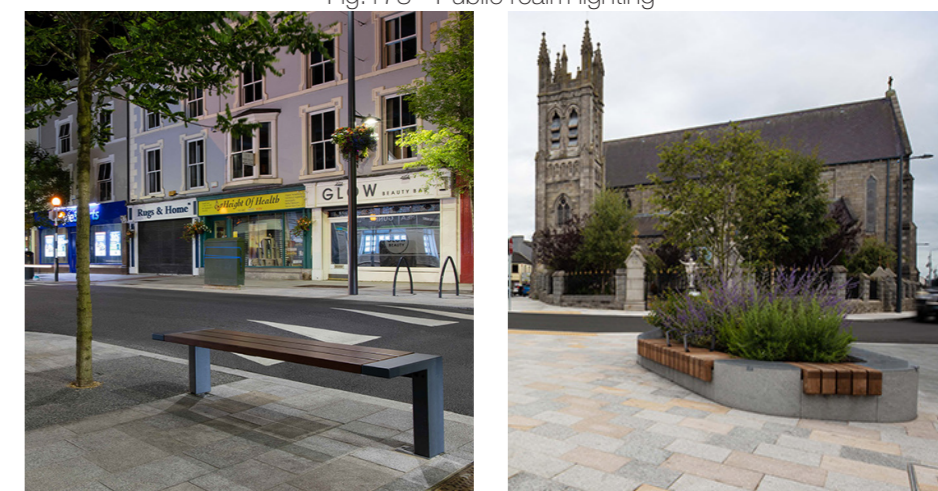


Fig.179 - Public seating in Dundalk

## 5.3 INTERVENTIONS - ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

### E4

#### Streetscape Enhancement Strategy

**Proposal:** To revitalise the town centre by painting buildings and installing street art along the Main Street.

Grants are in place under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme fund and others which could be targeted to create a renewed vibrancy to the town centre.

The initiatives primary focus is to support the upgrade and enhancement of the streetscape, which contributes to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the town centre.

This is a project that could have a relatively quick turnaround and low cost but provide a real positive contribution to economic growth.

An aesthetically improved streetscape has been proven to foster local pride, attract footfall, and boost local businesses.

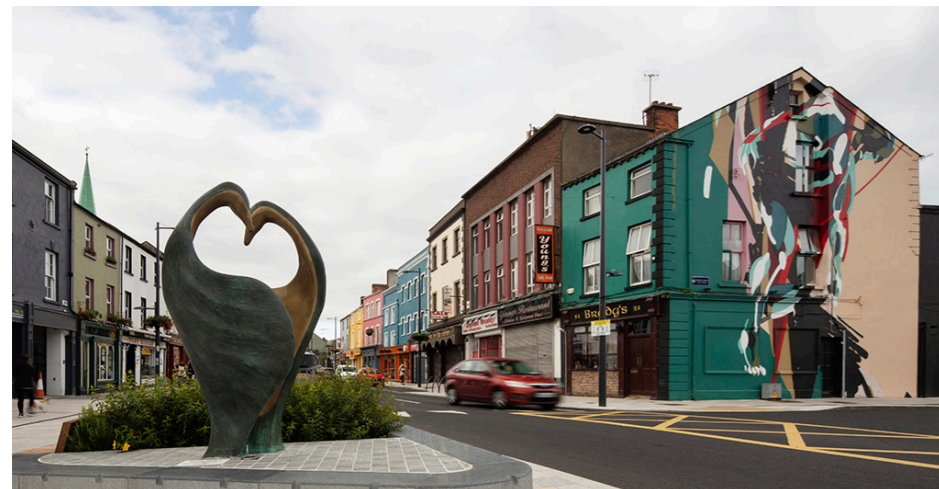


Fig.180 - Image of improved streetscape in Dundalk



South Dublin County Council has recently proposed a Shop Front Grand Scheme, to supplement 50% of the overall cost of works for independently owned shops fronting public streets through the scheme.

Fig.181 - Image shows the Shopfront Grant Scheme from South Dublin County Council

### E5

#### Green Area Biodiversity, Landscaping Improvements & Tree Planting strategy

**Proposal:** To provide additional greening and planting at strategic locations in the town centre.

The consideration of areas that could benefit from additional planting ranging from very small pocket parks to larger sensory gardens. These would be spread throughout the town providing a more biodiverse and landscaped identify to Dunleer.

Prioritising green spaces, biodiversity, and tree planting enhances the environmental quality and overall appeal of the town centre. Also, implementing sustainable landscaping practices such as soft landscape enhancement with additional greening along the main street and a better hard landscaping system. Moreover, a tree planting strategy with a thoughtful selection of tree species and proper maintenance can support climate change mitigation.



Fig.182 - Reference image of biodiverse gardens



Fig.183 - West Gorton Sponge Park, Manchester. UK.

### E6

#### Built Heritage Scheme

**Proposal:** Focus on existing Conservation funding streams to maintain and upgrade existing protected buildings.

The Building Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structures Fund (HSF) are funds that relate specifically to protected and vernacular buildings and can be applied for annually through Louth County Council.

The schemes provide grants ranging from €2,500 to a maximum of €15,000, under the BHIS and from €15,000 to €200,00 under the HSF with both requiring match funding from the building owner.



Fig.184 - Oriel Centre (former Dundalk Gaol), repair works funded by HSF.



Fig.185 - Image of Kinlough Catholic Church in Leitrim

Leitrim County Council have, under the Built Heritage Scheme, granted €15,000 to the Kinlough Catholic Church for the mitigation of damp as part of the scheme.

## 5.3 INTERVENTIONS - ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

### E7

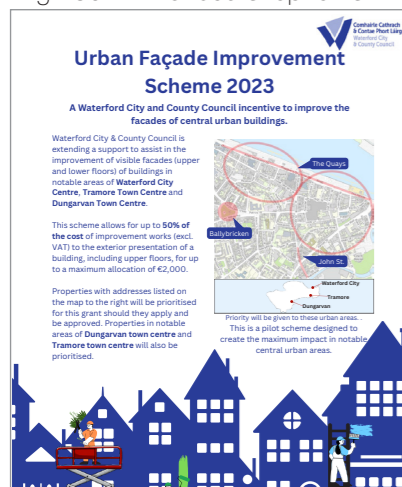
#### Shopfront Improvement Scheme

**Proposal:** A Louth County Council shopfront improvement scheme has been running since 2016 and is open annually to expressions of interest from businesses in the county.

This scheme seeks to enhance the aesthetic appeal and character of the town centre by revitalising shopfronts. Shopfronts are one of the most important elements in determining the character, quality and perception of retail streets in towns. Louth County Council has published a Shopfront Design Guidelines booklet to assist the scheme.



Fig.186 - Enhanced shopfronts in Dundalk



Waterford City and County Council recently proposed a pilot scheme assist the improvement of façade in the designated central urban areas, allocating financial allowance up to 50% of the cost of improvement works for those properties.

Fig.187 - Reference image of Urban Façade Improvement Scheme by the Watford City and County Council.

### E8

#### Digital High Street

**Proposal:** The creation of a digital high street through an e-commerce platform to enable local shops and businesses to expand their reach and engage with customers online.

Town centre high streets have been negatively impacted by the growth of online shopping in recent years. As part of the government's response to post-pandemic growth, this plan is attempting to transform Dunleer with modern and effective community actions.



Fig.188 - Reference image of Chesterfield Digital High Street

In reference of the Chesterfield Digital High Street, the scheme proposes the following strategies:

- Dedicated Digital High Street Business Adviser support
- Creation of a fully search engine optimised e-commerce website
- One year's membership of the Chamber of commerce
- Regular events and webinars to increase digital know-how of the local and businesses

### E9

#### Community Festival & Street Party

**Proposal:** A one off or annual event which brings business to the town and garners a sense of community

Community festivals or street parties bring residents and visitors together, fostering a sense of belonging and boosting local tourism. This may include planning engaging activities, live performances, local food vendors, and art installations to showcase the town's culture and create a vibrant atmosphere that attracts people to the town centre.

Collaborating with community groups, artists, performers, and local businesses can ensure a diverse and inclusive event that celebrates the town's identity. Taking reference from the Clonakilty Street Carnival, an annual festival to celebrate the local food and culture with local businesses co-hosting the event with sponsors and volunteers.



Fig.189 - Image of Clonakilty Street



Fig.190 - Face painting at Clonakilty Street



Fig.191 - Image of mixed-music festival



Fig.192 - Image of street food festival

## 5.3 INTERVENTIONS - ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES

### E10

#### Upgrade to the Existing Playground

**Proposal:** Upgrade and possible redesign to the existing playground.

Enhancing the existing playground will create a safe and engaging space for youth to gather, children and families to enjoy. Actions could include replacing outdated equipment with modern, inclusive structures, adding interactive play elements, improving safety features such as rubberised surfacing, incorporating seating areas and shade structures for caregivers.



Fig.193 - Reference image of modern playground with landscape treatment

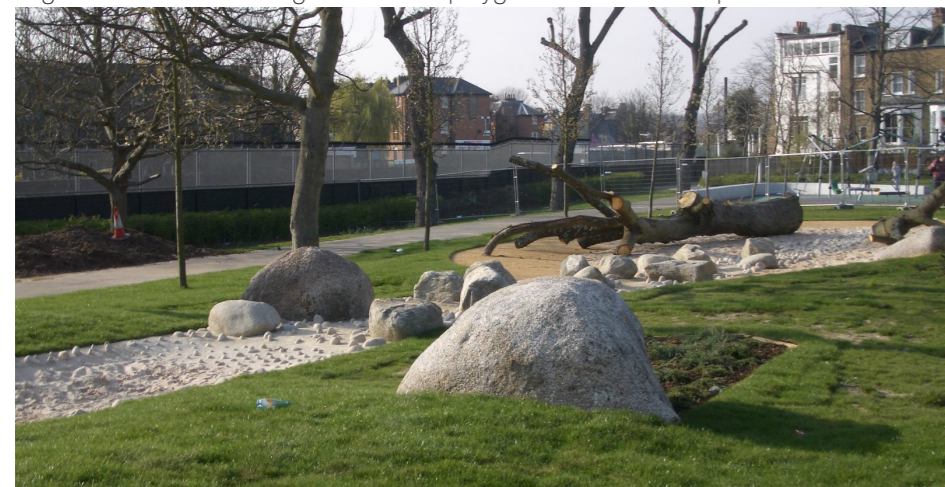


Fig.194 - Reference image of modern open space with organic settings

### E11

#### Deep Clean Initiative of the Town Centre

**Proposal:** A deep clean to the public areas and street furniture items within the town centre.

This is a low cost and simple initiative that has been proven to work elsewhere that can provide an immediate visual boost. Works generally include deep cleaning of public infrastructure and building facades to restore their appearance.



Fig.195 - Image of intervention by the Tidy Town Team



Fig.196 - Image of a mural wall drawing on a derelict public toilet in Dunleer

### E12

#### Local Transport Link Service

**Proposal:** The initiative aims to establish a local transport network connecting residential areas and rural hinterland.

This network comprises electric buses and community cars, providing convenient and affordable travel options. The focus is on fostering community connectivity by offering regular rural bus services and door-to-door bus services. Additionally, community cars could be available, with the flexibility to alter routes for passengers with mobility challenges, upon pre-booking.

Overall, the initiative seeks to enhance transport accessibility and inclusivity for communities in both urban and rural areas.



Fig.197 - Reference images of local link service supported by the Transport For Ireland

## 5.3 INTERVENTIONS - ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES



Fig.198 - Aerial view of western Dunleer - potential location of community-led interventions

## 5.4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### Delivering Town Centre Vibrancy

Dunleer has a strong base to help deliver a successful Town Centre First plan. An initial focus should be on the practical initiatives. These are primarily urban design interventions plus the parking issue. These are the must haves – the low hanging fruit to be grasped. They can be controlled by LCC, Town Team and local community groups, and will support catalyst repurposing, improvement and development projects.

Initial projects and interventions should focus on the land and property in the public sector. Their start and completion will, like all good regeneration, shift perceptions and cause a reaction that will see the private sector get involved. This should be complemented by setting out a strong development story for Dunleer to strengthen market position. Actions to follow would include:

- Prepare a Dunleer dashboard of relevant data and advocacy messages for the town and emerging projects
- Have conversations with existing occupiers and operators on their needs and how they might grow in the town
- Speak with IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland to tell the strong story and associated messages of how businesses have been successful in Dunleer
- Are there Greater Dublin Area businesses who might wish to have a lower cost, high quality regional town centre location?
- Could there be more retail occupiers, restaurants and perhaps a hotel/serviced accommodation?
- Elevate Dunleer and get others to see the town differently and create aspiration to grow demand

The TCF Plan for Dunleer establishes a framework to support Dunleer's transformation and positive growth. The strategic opportunities and interventions that have been identified and explored in the development of the plan set up a clear vision of how the town can prosper in a sustainable way over the next 15 years. The delivery process will involve a further refinement of the proposals in liaison with relevant stakeholders. Enhancing the town centre's vibrancy will rely on collaborative processes at all levels, and involve, amongst others:

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES					
Intervention Strategy	Code	Name	Time Framework	Phased	Stakeholders
<b>A - DUNLEER LOOPS AND LINKS</b>					
	A1_1	Central Loop	<i>short term</i>	yes	LCC / Town Team
	A1_2	Northern Loop	<i>medium term</i>	yes	LCC / Town Team
	A1_3	School and River Loop	<i>short term / medium term</i>	yes	LCC / Town Team
	A1_4	Rural Loop	<i>medium term</i>	yes	LCC / Town Team
	A2	Biodiverse Links	<i>short term</i>	yes	LCC / Town Team
	A3	Park Link	<i>short term / medium term</i>	no	LCC / Town Team
	A4	Station Links	<i>medium term</i>	yes	LCC / Town Team
<b>B - DUNLEER BLOCKS</b>					
	B1_1	Ardee Road Yards	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_2	River Backlands	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_3	Ardee Road Gardens	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_4	Main Street Backlands	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_5	Station Approach	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_6	Barn Road	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_7	Dunleer North	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B1_8	The Forge	<i>medium term / long term</i>	yes	Private / Public
	B2_1	Station Housing	<i>medium term</i>	no	Private / CIE
	B2_2	Park Housing	<i>medium term</i>	no	Private / Public
	B2_3	River Housing	<i>medium term</i>	no	Private / LCC
	B2_4	Back Garden Infill Housing	<i>medium term</i>	no	Private / Public
	B2_5	Courtyard Housing	<i>medium term</i>	no	Private / Public

Fig.199 - Indicative delivery time frame for the Dunleer TCF Plan strategic opportunities

## 5.4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- Government departments and agencies
- Regional Assembly
- Louth County Council and other relevant local authorities
- Private landowners, investors and developers
- Local and regional community groups
- Non-governmental organisations
- Town Team

Monitoring the delivery of the TCF Plan will be in coordination with the National Oversight and Advisory Group (NOAG) as defined in the TCF Policy. NOAG will also support engagement across Government and national stakeholders, helping, amongst other aspects, to enhance the capabilities of the Town Team as a key actor in the implementation of the framework's proposals.

### Development Process Actions

**Project Business Planning and Viability** - Undertake business planning to show a Profit and Loss (P&L) for the projects and out turn to support future application to Government for funding. Might there be an “enabling or project development measure” (funding) potential for the key revitalisation projects? Assemble high level design iterations, and budget costs project viability so that projects can be targeted to the most suitable funding stream.

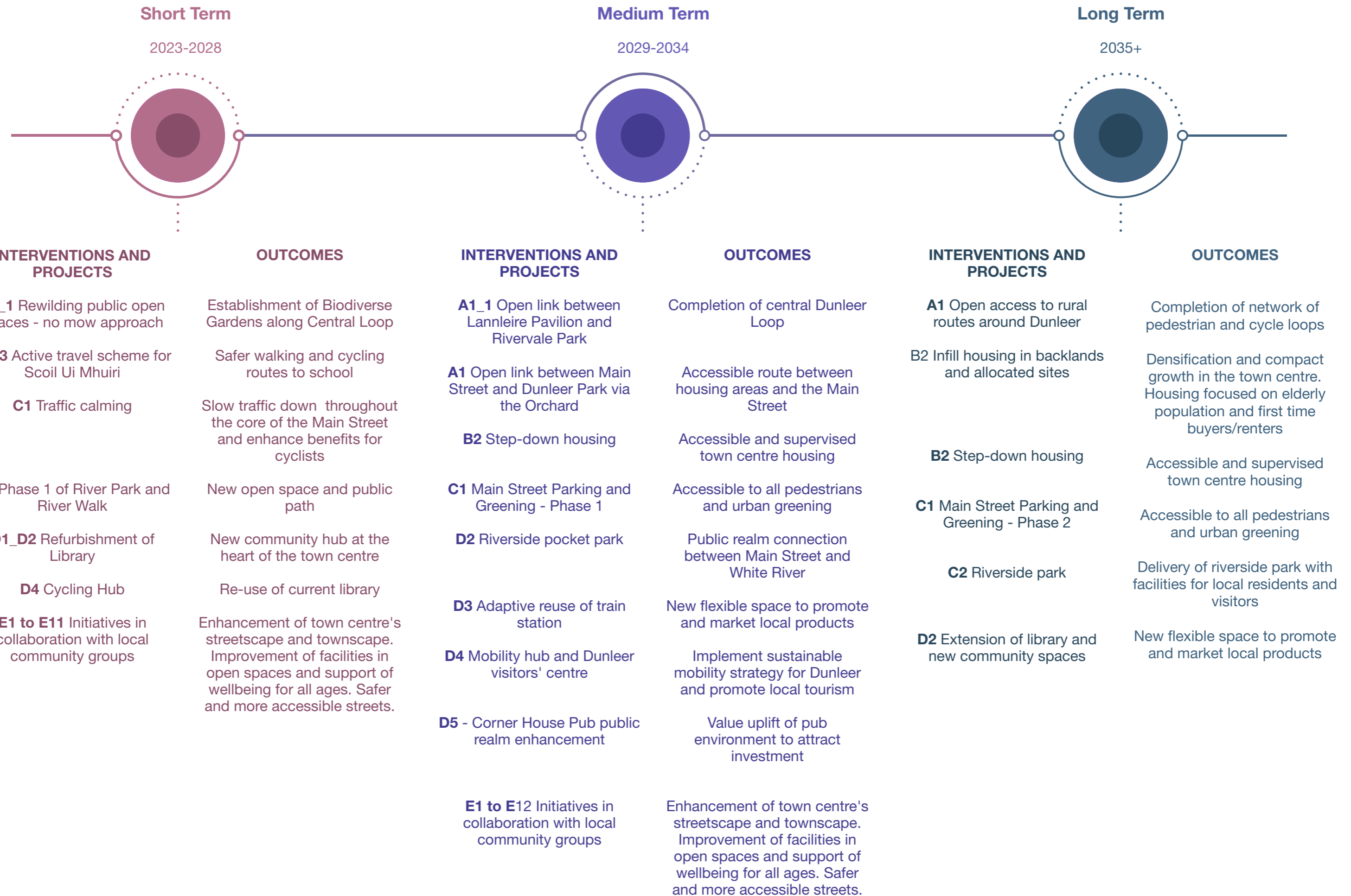
**Partner Conversations “Boosterism for Dunleer”** - There should be clarity on value propositions and what it will mean to these organisations, work with local businesses, people and stakeholders. Take these messages and a fresh story to key influencers and decision makers. Set out how Dunleer can provide a solution to the objectives of organisations such as the IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland etc. What financial ask will be from government and what it will mean in terms of benefits for delivering on Government agenda.

### “Economic Impact” - The Public Spending Code approach?

Understand the potential quantitative and qualitative impact of the development proposals. It is important to illustrate what is possible and what are the long term outcomes and benefits of the proposed projects (additional sales, visitors, dwell time, business growth, new jobs and overall additionality).

INTERVENTIONS					
Intervention Strategy	Code	Name	Time Framework	Phased	Stakeholders
<b>C - MAIN STREET AND WHITE RIVER</b>					
	C1	Main Street Works	medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	C2	White River Park	medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team / Private
<b>D -PROJECTS</b>					
	D1_1	Dunleer Library and Learning Hub	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	D1_2	Library Square and River Pocket Park	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	D2_1	Train Station	medium term	yes	LCC / CIE
	D2_2	Visitors' and Mobility Hub	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / CIE
	D3_1	Corner House Pub	short term / medium term	no	Private
<b>E -ENHANCEMENT, IMPROVEMENT AND COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS</b>					
	E1	Nayfinding and Healthy Mobility Signage	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	E2	Green Gateway Project	short term / medium term	no	LCC / Town Team
	E3	Street Decluttering, Urban Furniture Strategy and Street Lighting	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	E4	Streetscape Enhancement Strategy	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	E5	Green Area Biodiversity Landscape Improvements and Tree Planting	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	E6	Built Heritage Scheme	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	E7	Building Façade Improvement Scheme	short term / medium term	yes	LCC / Town Team
	E8	Digital Main Street	short term / medium term	no	LCC / Town Team
	E9	Community Festival & Street Party	short term / medium term	no	LCC / Town Team
	E10	Upgrade to the Existing Playground	short term / medium term	no	LCC / Town Team
	E11	Deep Clean of the Town Centre	short term / medium term	no	LCC / Town Team
	E12	Local Transport Link Service	short term / medium term	no	LCC / CIE

Fig.200 - Indicative delivery time frame for the Dunleer TCF Plan interventions





## 5.5 POTENTIAL FUNDING MECHANISMS

The strategic opportunities and interventions as set out in the Town Centre First Plan will require both public funding and private investment in order to deliver their objectives and to ultimately realise the Vision for Dunleer. Funding mechanisms will require a joined-up and coordinated approach, often with a variety of stakeholders. It is envisaged that the Town Team will have an important role in the preparation of public funding applications

### Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

RRDF focuses on promoting the revitalisation and regeneration of rural towns and villages. It also aims to promote people to attract people to live in rural areas by promoting facilities and infrastructure in terms of remote working, connectivity, town centre residency, economic and enterprise development etc.

- Towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000, and outlying areas
- Funding of over €278m for 191 projects across Ireland, worth a total of €376m
- 69% of approved projects will develop or deliver a town centre regeneration project.
- Category 1 fourth call announced in December with strong emphasis on town and village regeneration

### Town & Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)

- Funding to support the revitalisation of our towns and villages
- €113 million approved for almost 1,400 projects since 2016: €19 million in last few weeks
- Refocused Scheme in 2021 to support Our Rural Future
- Emphasis on vacancy & dereliction, and town centre living
- Bringing vacant properties back into use as remote working hubs
- Green spaces and recreational amenities
- Funding levels increased maximum grant from €200,000 to €500,000
- Project development measure introduced
- Budget increased by €2 million in 2022.

and engaging with potential investors.

An initial overview of funding opportunities of TCF projects process is outlined below. New funding and investment streams, not currently in operation, may become viable options in future years and will be considered.

### Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

- Development and enhancement of outdoor recreational infrastructure such as walking trails, forest walks, beaches, bogs, lakes, blueways and local greenways.
- Open for applications
- 3 measures: €30,000, €200,000, €500,000

### European Regional Development Fund

- Emphasis on the tackling of vacancy and dereliction in towns, in support of the Town Centre First approach, will be considered for the 2021-2027 programme
- Managed in Ireland by Regional Assemblies
- 8% of Ireland's total provision must be dedicated to urban areas
- Allocation of funding for the 2021-2027 period amounts to circa €396 million
- National co-financing the total two ERDF programmes will amount to over €853 million over the period;
- Of which €396 million is financed by the EU
- The programme will focus on three strategic outcomes:
  - o Developing smarter more competitive region
  - o Supporting actions to scale up energy efficiency measures for those in energy poverty
  - o Supporting the sustainable regeneration of towns and urban centres using a Town Centre First Framework

### National Transport Authority's (NTA)

#### Active Travel Grants Programme

- Investment programme to increase the number of walking and cycling networks so that walking, cycling and public transport will account for 50% of all journeys made by 2030
- €290 million Euros was allocated in 2023 by the NTA
- Aims to have delivered in excess of 1,200 projects equating to 1,000km of combined cycling and walking routes nationwide by 2025

### MISCELLANEOUS

- Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) fund
- Investment supports from the forthcoming ERDF programme for Towns via the Regional Assemblies
- Active Travel Fund
- Climate adaptation/retrofitting
- Built Heritage supports such as the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI).

## 5.6 MONITORING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

### Monitoring the TCF Plan Delivery

Monitoring the TCF Plan's progress in responding to its strategic objectives and delivering projects is an important aspect of the framework document. A periodic assessment of the regeneration process will allow to not only measure the degree of success in implementing its supporting interventions, but also to identify the need to make changes or adjustments in response to varying circumstances, new opportunities, availability of funding streams or any other relevant factor. This section for Dunleer Town Centre emphasises the role of evaluating progress in line with the guiding strategies of the TCF Plan. As stipulated in the Town Centre First policy the Town Team will have a key role in overseeing the Plan's delivery, stakeholder communication, and any required updates. This approach guarantees that the community remains engaged and retains stewardship of the regeneration process for Dunleer Town Centre.

The evaluation process will be based on regular evaluations and measurements against a set of performance indicators tied to the TCF Plan's strategic themes. They may include, but are not limited to:

#### S1 - A town centre for all, by all

- Provision of new community spaces (indoors and outdoors).
- Upgrade of Dunleer playground.
- Delivery of collaborative actions and community initiatives outlined in section E of the Plan's interventions strategies. These include biodiverse gardens, streetscape enhancement and building facade improvement.
- Improvement of Dunleer's Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) scoring with actions such as the digital high street initiative.
- Delivery of town centre housing.
- New community events.

#### S2 - Rethink and refresh the Main Street

- Greening of the Main Street - enhanced biodiversity, improved surface water drainage and better protection to climate conditions.
- Enhanced wellbeing linked to improved environmental conditions and access to the White River
- Improved universal accessibility to the Main Street.

- Delivery of enhanced public realm, including the new Library Square.
- Reduced congestion and impact of on-street car parking
- Reduced number of private vehicle trips to the Main Street by local residents.
- Reduced vacancy of commercial units and upper floors
- Variety of new businesses and economic activities in the Main Street.
- Increased footfall and dwell time.

#### S3 - Dunleerify the town centre

- Implementation of energy efficiency and decarbonisation strategies in the adaptive reuse of vacant and derelict buildings
- Improve energy efficiency of street lighting and use of renewable energy providers.
- Schemes for community-based energy generation.
- Provision of electric vehicle charging points.
- Enhanced biodiversity and increased variety of ecosystems around the town centre.
- Improved infrastructure to support recycling and circularity strategies.
- Education and training schemes for all age groups in relation to sustainability, climate action and green transition.

#### S4 - Link, connect, move, travel

- Increase of walking and cycling trips
- Growth of network of safe pedestrian and cycling routes between the town centre and the wider area of Dunleer and its hinterland.
- Enhanced accessibility to the town centre.
- Provision of visitors' car parking spaces.
- Length of 'Dunleer loops'.
- Development of network of local public transport services linking Dunleer with nearby towns and rural hinterland.

#### S5 - Beyond the town centre - a new destination in Mid-Louth

- Increased number of visitors to Dunleer.
- Increase in number of visitors' facilities and attractions in and around the town centre.
- Increase in number of yearly cultural and sporting events, local fairs and markets, community festivities etc. that will attract visitors to Dunleer.

- Integration with tourism and visitor's routes within the Mid-Louth region and wider Louth area.
- Private investment in tourism-related business.

The final set of indicators will be defined by the Town Regeneration Officer in liaison with the Town Team.

## 5.7 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT (AA) AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCREENING

### Appropriate Assessment Screening

This stage one screening for AA of the Dunleer Town Centre First Plan demonstrates that the plan is not likely to have any significant effects on any European site.

The AA screening process has considered potential effects which may arise as a result of the implementation of the project. Through an assessment of the pathways for effects and an evaluation of the project characteristics, taking account of the processes involved and the distance of separation from the European sites, it has been evaluated that there are no likely significant adverse effects on the qualifying interests, special conservation interest or the conservation objectives of any designated European site.

The TCF Plan is consistent with the Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 which was subject to an AA screening as well as the Louth County Development Plan which was subject to a Stage 2 AA, both of which found no likely significant effects on European sites.

Following detailed review and assessment it is considered that the Dunleer Town Centre First Plan will not result in likely significant effects to European Sites. This assessment is derived from consideration of the following factors:

- The plan is a non-statutory plan and wholly consistent with the landuse zoning objectives of the Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 which was subject to an AA screening.
- The plan sits beneath the Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 as

well as the Louth County Development Plan within the statutory planning hierarchy.

- The TCF proposals aim to prioritise the published objectives of the Dunleer LAP that relate in particular to the overall enhancement of the town centre.
- The scale, nature and extent of the TCF strategies and proposals will not give rise to any land use activities that could result in impacts to European Sites not already addressed as part of the Dunleer LAP AA.

It is concluded that the proposed public realm project is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on any designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated. Consequently, a Stage Two AA (NIS) is not required.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

Following detailed review and assessment it is considered that the Dunleer Town Centre First Plan will not result in significant adverse environmental effects and therefore, does not require further assessment of the likely effect on the environment of the implementation of the TCF Plan through SEA. The assessment is derived from consideration of the following factors:

- The TCF Plan is non-statutory and is consistent with the land-use zoning objectives of the Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 and the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- The Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 was subject to an SEA and

AA Screening in 2017. The Louth County Development Plan was subject to a full SEA and AA in 2021.

- The TCF Plan sits beneath the Dunleer LAP 2017-2023 as well as the Louth County Development Plan within the statutory planning hierarchy.
- The proposals within the TCF aim to prioritise the objectives of the LAP which relate in particular to the enhancement of the town centre.
- The TCF Plan has been determined not to give rise to likely significant effects on the conservation management objectives of European Sites of Dundalk Bay SAC and SPA.
- The scale, nature and extent of TCF strategies and proposals and the absence of significant adverse environmental effects arising from these.

This determination will be finalised upon consultation with the environmental authorities.

