Athboy

Public Realm Plan

February 2020

BDP.

Contents

1.0　Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

The Athboy Public Realm Plan sets out the future approach to the streets and spaces of the town.

The aim of the vision statement is to:

Improve the public realm of Athboy for all users through enhancing pedestrian movement, exploring new connections and linking amenity spaces. In addition the street scene should be enhanced by improving the layout, pedestrian crossings and car parking along with protecting the existing trees and vegetation.

The core of Athboy stretches along the main street with plenty of shops and businesses that cater to locals and a wider catchment area. With the main street catering to the needs of various people of all ages and abilities, the streetscape does not match the current requirements. While the Fair Green and the Cow Path provide public open space, it is limited on the main street. Connections to these open spaces can also be improved.

Over a number of chapters, this plan includes an understanding of the existing, influencing factors; a series of objectives; feedback received through engagement with stakeholders; and proposed interventions to achieve the vision for Athboy.

Chapter 4 explores interventions to achieve the rejuvenation of the Main Street in Athboy, enhancements to the Fair Green, and a proposed western masterplan. Site specific design considerations have been established to bring Athboy in line with the needs of modern Ireland. These include items such as accessibility and pedestrian movement that are in accordance with current building regulations and best practice. The plan objectives also seek to be sustainable and promote measures to combat climate change.

Potential enhancements identified in this report look to address vehicular domination and pedestrian permeability in the town. There is also a focus on improvement of the Fair Green and renovations to existing play areas.

A public consultation event for this report took place with invited stakeholders at Athboy Library on the 5th of March 2019. A summary of the event and points raised can be found in the Appendix in Chapter 6. The objectives that were developed are as follows:

1. **Improve footpaths and connections to all parts of the town.**

2. **Add more regular safe crossing points.**

3. **Remove echelon parking and replace with parallel parking on the main street.**

4. **Relocate the bus stop to the western end of the town.**

5. **Introduce timed parking restrictions.**

6. **Improve access to the community centre.**

7. **Identify and bring derelict sites back into use.**

8. **Extend circular route around the town.**

9. **Enhance the setting and interpretation of Athboy's heritage.**

10. **Rationalise street furniture.**

11. **Strategy to have underground wires.**

12. **Preserve and enhance trees and vegetation in appropriate positions in the town centre.**

13. **Set out guidance and specifications for materials, furniture, and other public realm fixtures.**

Project Ireland was launched on the 16th February 2018 is a high-level document that provides the framework for future development and investment in Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the next ten years, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, and the National Planning Framework which outlines the broader policy principles and priorities in planning for future population and economic growth to 2040. Public Realm Improvements, placemaking and brownfield development are central tenants of the NPF. The RRDF which forms part of Project Ireland supports ambitious and strategic projects which contribute to sustainable rural regeneration and development. The proposals put forward in this Plan adhere to and strive to implement the principals of the National Planning Framework.

The Fair Green, Athboy

1.2 Context

Athboy consists of an elongated commercial main street with lots of shops and businesses. There is a healthy combination of industry, trading and everyday use that makes Athboy a self-sustaining town which the wider catchment area benefits from.

Location

Located in the west of county Meath, Athboy comprises of Main Street, Upper Bridge Street and parts of the N51. The population as of 2016 is 2,445 people. The layout and scale of the town allows for a walkable experience on which visitors can see key historical buildings such as St James Church. Open green space can be found in the Fair Green and along the Cow Path past the playground.

The town possesses a relatively compact and legible town centre area arranged along an elongated Main Street encompassing many of the town's key buildings with diverse building styles. These consist mainly of commercial, institutional, office, residential and public buildings. Car parking is provided along the Main Street and Upper Bridge Street and tends to dominate kerbside space. The town in recent times has extended along the main approach roads, with significant residential development evident on the Oldcastle, Kells and Mullingar roads. The scale of the built environment is relatively low profile predominately 2 two-storey and single-storey developments.

Athboy and the surrounding environs are characterised by significant environmental assets. The most significant natural feature in the town is the Athboy River. There are also a number of significant tree stands and hedgerows in and around Athboy which should be retained and incorporated where possible into any future development proposals in the town.

New Aspirations

Although Athboy has a large population consisting of a busy traders group and active community this report will question if the public realm is there to match. Can improvements to the town be made to create a more user-friendly streetscape? Are amenity spaces as accessible and working as hard as they should be?

What is the 'Public Realm'?

The Public Realm is commonly defined as all areas between buildings, including streets, laneways and open squares that are accessible to the public. From the earliest times, public spaces have played an important role in the cultural, political, commercial, social and recreational development of communities. Extensively studied and written about, public spaces are simply places where people can meet, mix engage and exchange. Well designed and planned public spaces enhance the physical environment and improve the 'livability' and sustainability of urban or town centres. They provide a geographical focal point for the community and a place where residents and visitors alike can congregate for a variety of purposes.

The public realm in Athboy carries from the long Main Street and Upper Street, it's arterial routes and the open Fair Green.

The Need for a Public Realm Plan

In the event of funding becoming available, Meath County Council have committed to producing a plan for the allocation of funding within Athboy. Funding avenues available include Heritage Council Funding, Town and Village Funding and Rural Regeneration Development Funding.

It is hoped that this document will demonstrate a clear vision for the future of Athboy and the various ways in which such funding can be used to deliver projects that improve the quality of the public realm in Athboy.

Public Realm in Athboy

St. James Church, Athboy

1.3 The Value of Public Realm in Athboy

Athboy has a wonderful tradition of being a hub for trade in the area. There remains a wealth of shops and businesses that tender to the needs of a large catchment area while also providing open amenity space for its locals and visitors.

Socio-Economic

The main street in Athboy and its abundance of shops and businesses affords locals opportunities to work, shop and go about their daily routines. What people experience as they move through Athboy can have an impact on how often they do it or how likely they are to repeat it. Enhancements to the layout of car parking, the widening of footpaths and introducing greenery to the public realm of a town such as Athboy can improve people's perception of the town significantly.
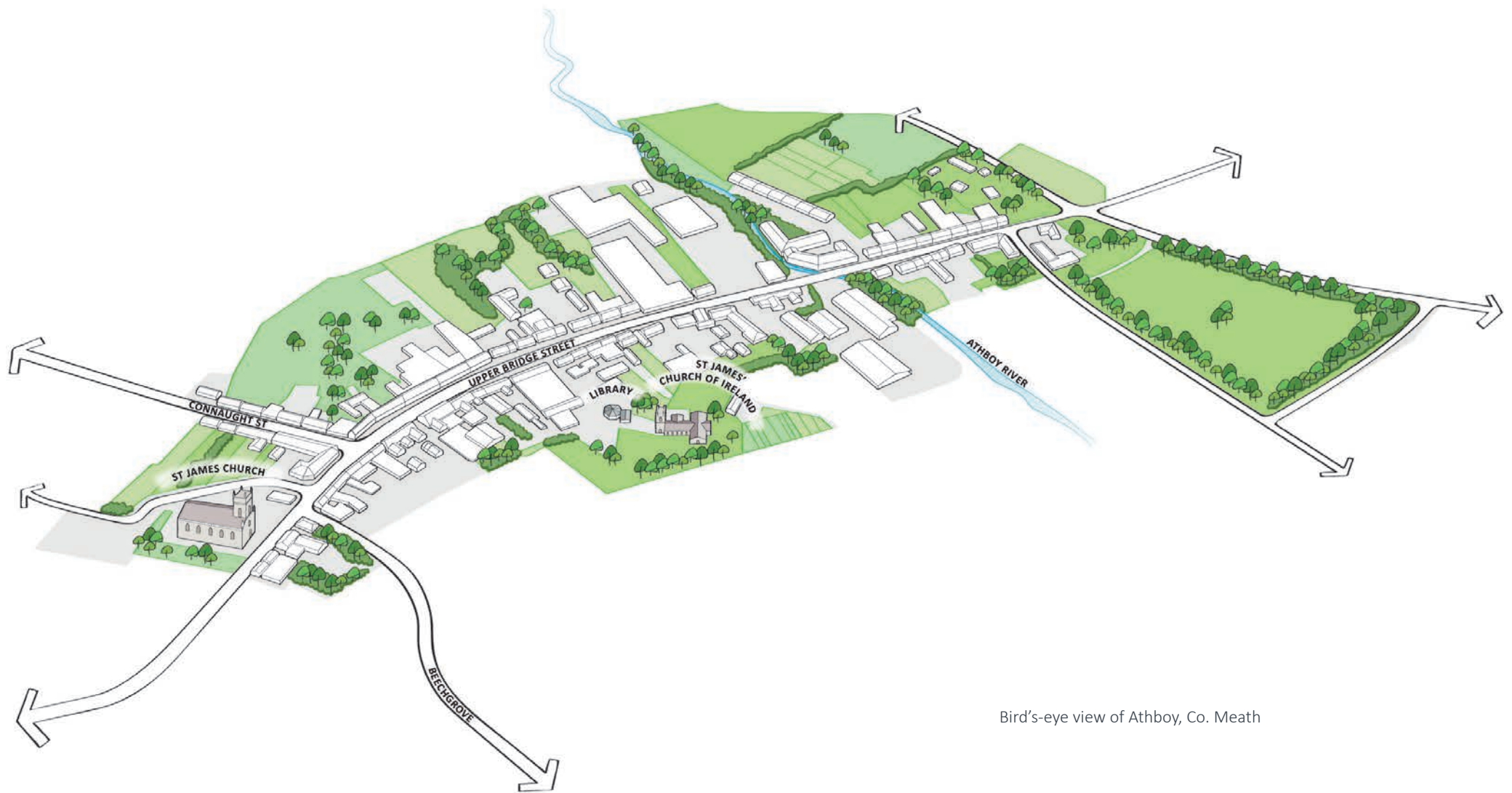
Environmental

The collective level of greenery for Athboy is boosted by open amenity space such as the Fair Green and the Cow Path. However, there remains a lack of biodiversity and vegetation along the main street. Worldwide there is a collective effort to rethink our towns and cities through encouraging more street tree planting and other forms of soft landscape. Athboy should be no different and would benefit from well-thought design that respects the existing character.

Functional

The public realm must be functional in order to achieve the foregoing. This means to encourage walking and cycling through better links and provision, improving orientation through wayfinding and signage and making Athboy inclusive for all users. It is important to also rationalise movement and transport. In doing so can lead to more outdoor space associated with retail and leisure.

Athboy, 1901

https://athboy100.files.wordpress.com/

UPPER BRIDGE STREET

ATHBOY RIVER

LIBRARY

ST JAMES'
CHURCH OF IRELAND

CONNAUGHT ST

ST JAMES CHURCH

BEECHGROVE

Bird's-eye view of Athboy, Co. Meath

1.4 The Existing Situation - The Issues

Main Street, Athboy comprises of a busy high street environment. It is well-used daily by locals and others in the wider catchment area. However, car parking and a large carriageway have created a discontinuous narrow arrangement of public open space.

Picture 1:
- Wide carriageway.
- Overhead cables.
- Lack of usable street furniture- i.e. seating, litter bins.
- Lack of greenery.

Picture 2:
- Angled parking can be imposing on public space and seem disorganised.
- Lack of visibility to the other side of the street due to continuous car parking.
- Lack of seasonal greenery.

Picture 3:
- Vacant buildings give a bad impression of the town to visitors.
- Rogue advertising should be removed and enforced.
- Lack of holistic approach to shop-front signage.

Picture 4:
- There is a lack of uncontrolled crossings throughout.

Picture 5:
- Poor crossing points at certain junctions.
- Overhead cables.

Picture 6:
- Disorganised parking.
- No accommodation for pedestrians and less-able users.
- Lack of street trees.

1.4 The Existing Situation - Site Layout

1. Carriageway

2. Secondary access roads to off-street parking

3. The Fair Green

4. Pedestrian space

5. St James Church

6. Existing trees

7. Athboy Library

8. St. James' COI

N51

Upper Bridge Street

Main Street

Connaught Street

The Courtyard

N51

N

0 5 10 20 50m

ATHBOY

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2.0 Strategic Public Realm Plan to Achieve the Vision

2.1 A Shared Vision for Athboy

Although public open space is limited on the main street in Athboy, enhancements can be made to maximise pedestrian space and to encourage better use of the public realm.

Objectives

The below points are the key objectives that will drive the public realm rejuvenation of Athboy.

The Vision Statement

"To improve the public realm of Athboy for all users through enhancing pedestrian movement, exploring new connections and linking amenity spaces. In addition the street scene should be enhanced by improving the layout, pedestrian crossings and car parking along with protecting the existing trees and vegetation".

1
Improve footpaths and connections to all parts of the town.

2
Add more regular safe crossing points.

3
Remove echelon parking - Make all parking parallel on the main street.

4
Relocate the bus stop to the western end of the town.

5
Introduce timed parking restrictions.

6
Improve access to the community centre.

7
Identify and bring derelict sites back into use.

8
Extend circular route around town.

9
Enhance the setting and interpretation of Athboy's heritage.

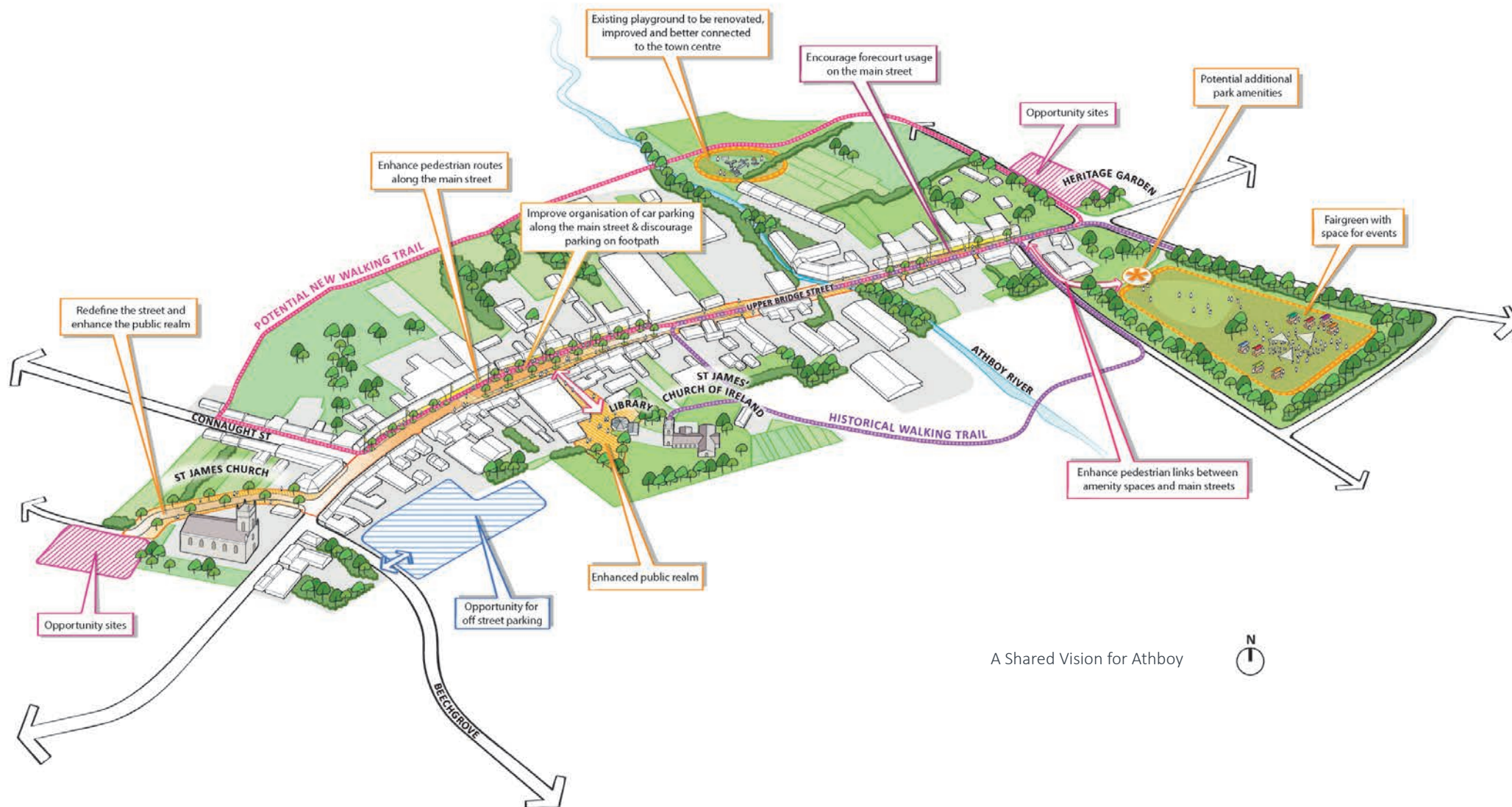**10**
Rationalise street furniture.

11
Strategy to have underground wires.

12
Preserve and enhance trees and vegetation in appropriate positions in the town centre.

13
Set out guidance and specifications for materials, furniture, and other public realm fixtures.

Existing playground to be renovated, improved and better connected to the town centre

Encourage forecourt usage on the main street

Potential additional park amenities

Opportunity sites

HERITAGE GARDEN

Enhance pedestrian routes along the main street

Fairgreen with space for events

Improve organisation of car parking along the main street & discourage parking on footpath

POTENTIAL NEW WALKING TRAIL

Redefine the street and enhance the public realm

UPPER BRIDGE STREET

ATHBOY RIVER

St James' CHURCH OF IRELAND

HISTORICAL WALKING TRAIL

Enhance pedestrian links between amenity spaces and main streets

CONNAUGHT ST

LIBRARY

ST JAMES CHURCH

Enhanced public realm

Opportunity sites

Opportunity for off street parking

BEECHGROVE

A Shared Vision for Athboy

N

Gateways

Gateways to highlight a clear sense of arrival in Athboy should be created. This can be achieved via minimal signage and changes in materials.

Primary Roads

Regular crossing points are required on Main Street and Upper Bridge Street to enhance pedestrian movement. On-street parking should be reviewed with diagonal parking removed along this route and time restrictions introduced in the central areas. Users who wish to stay for long periods in the town such as staff and traders should be encouraged to use off-street parking options. The carriageway should be reduced to a maximum of 7.3m to help calm traffic speeds and improve the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists.

Secondary Routes

These routes can better accommodate pedestrian movement with improved pedestrian crossings and wider footpaths where possible. A consistent palette of materials should be used along with way finding and information on the local points of interest such as the Fair Green.

Key Spaces

Main Street, itself a key space can be enhanced through the narrowing of carriageways, widening of footpaths, and enhancements to public open space. Other key spaces such as the Fair Green, the Playground and around the library can be improved to create a sense of place and identity within Athboy.

Legend:
- Gateways
- Primary roads
- Secondary roads
- Key space

2.3 Movement, Access, Parking and Circulation

Priority Vehicle Flow

The east-west route will be retained though enhanced to better accommodate pedestrian flow through the town.

Give Way Flow / Secondary Routes

Like the Main Street, pedestrian movements along secondary routes can be enhanced by introducing a more consistent palette of materials. At the church, the arrangement will largely depend on the layout of the new bus stop.

Time Restricted Parking on Main Street

With many cars parked on the Main Street for long periods of time, time restricted parking would open the town up to more users per day, help local businesses and potentially increase trading in the town centre.

Unrestricted Parking

Unrestricted timed parking will still be provided where physically appropriate for those who need longer durations of parking. This can be commuters to Dublin or traders and their staff. Areas for unrestricted parking should be clearly marked out to promote their use.

Pedestrian Crossings

Additional pedestrian crossings located at regular intervals will make pedestrian movement more comfortable for users of all ages and abilities.

Potential Pedestrian Circular Route

A potential complete pedestrian circle around the town that takes in historical sites and open amenity space will be explored.
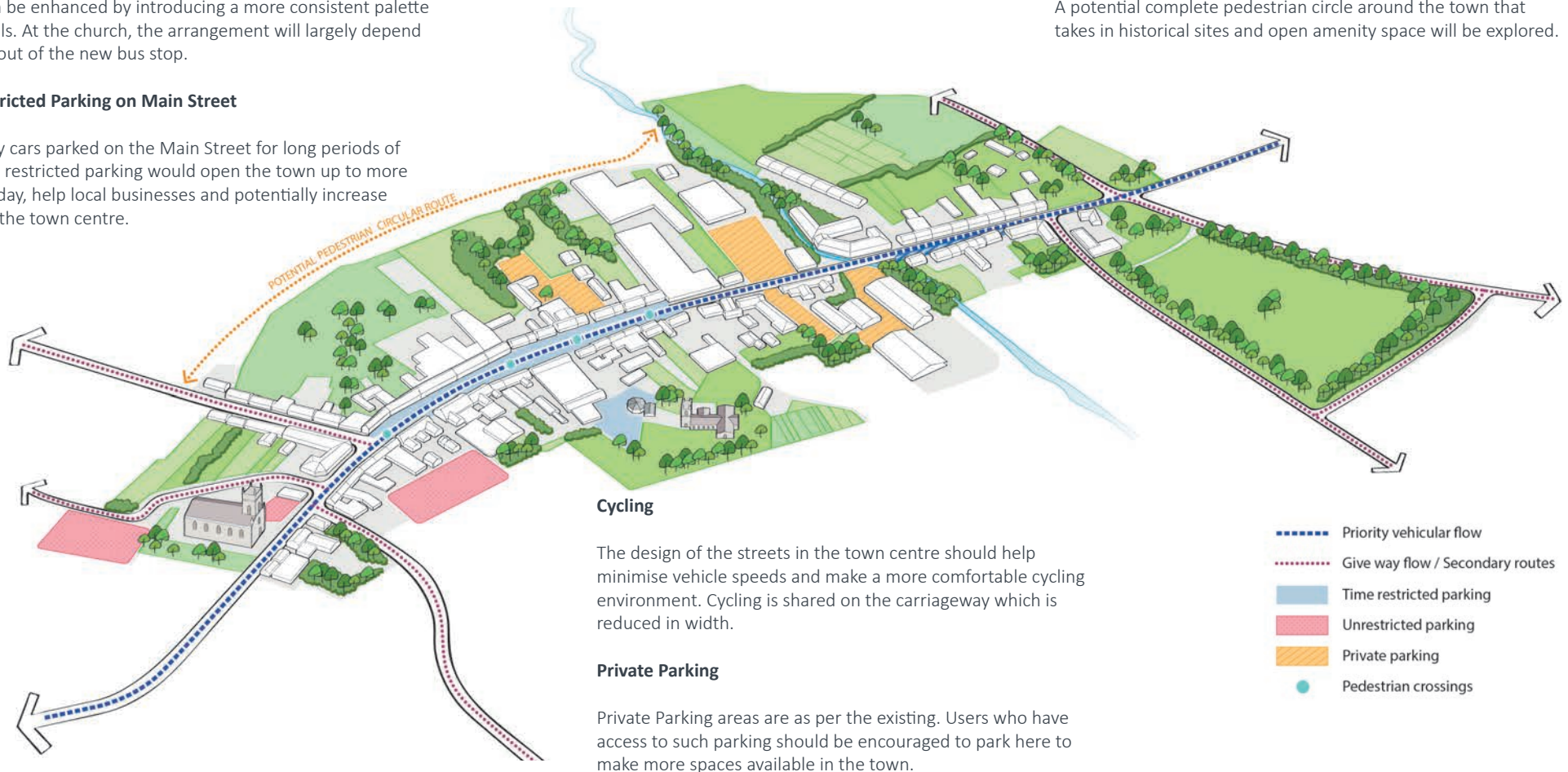
Cycling

The design of the streets in the town centre should help minimise vehicle speeds and make a more comfortable cycling environment. Cycling is shared on the carriageway which is reduced in width.

Private Parking

Private Parking areas are as per the existing. Users who have access to such parking should be encouraged to park here to make more spaces available in the town.

POTENTIAL PEDESTRIAN CIRCULAR ROUTE

Legend:
- Priority vehicular flow
- Give way flow / Secondary routes
- Time restricted parking
- Unrestricted parking
- Private parking
- Pedestrian crossings

3.0 Approach to Components

3.1 Paving

All paving in Athboy should be of high quality and suitable to withstand the function of the area. Durability, lifespan and visual appreciation should all be considered when specifications are being determined.

The approach to paving in Athboy should be holistic with one consistent detail between both gateways of the town. Consistency will improve the legibility of the town for daily users and visitors. An offset of two meters should be taken from each building line. This two-metre band will be natural stone, granite or similar, laid on a rigid concrete base with mortar bedding and joints. Small unit slabs are suggested for ease of use, weight and cost for such areas, nominally 60mm thick. Where natural stone is being used in near driveways, thicker setts should be used.

The choice of natural stone is made for the following reasons:
• Appropriate to the heritage of the area.
• Durability- when laid on a concrete base, it will achieve a long lifespan with minimal maintenance.
• Stone products appreciate in value with natural weathering.
• Depending on colour and source, the material cost difference to concrete products is minimal.

Between the natural stone paving and kerb line, a resin bond surface is proposed. This surface provides aesthetically pleasing, weather resistant solution that is also more cost efficient than natural stone. A long lasting, durable surface that can also have permeable options.
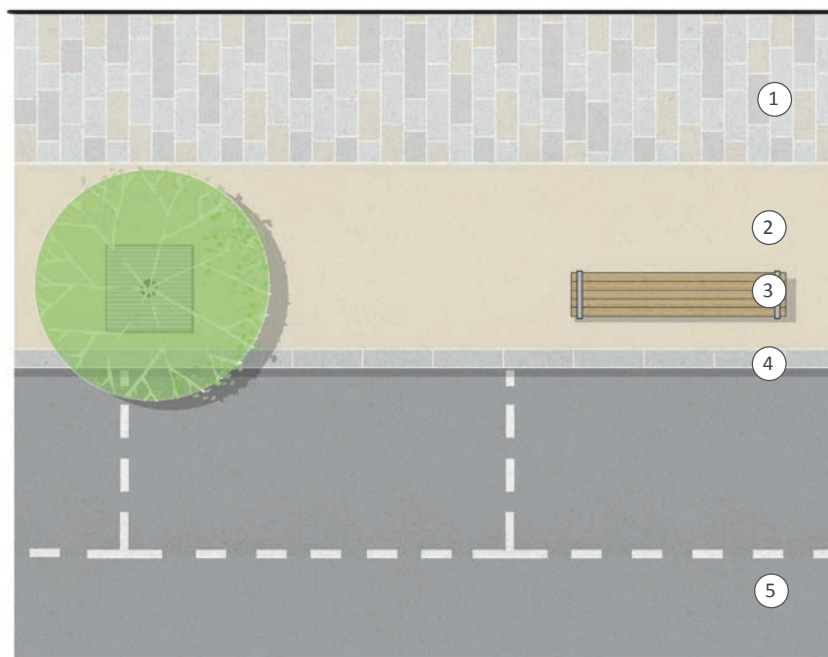
Typical Paving Arrangement:

① Natural Stone Along Building Line
② Resin Bond Surface
③ Seating
④ Silver-granite kerb
⑤ Carriageway

Natural Stone Offset from Buildings

The vehicular carriageway should be a high quality asphalt laid between granite kerbs. Kerbs should be a maximum 100mm high, lowering to a minimum 50mm where a shared environment is more appropriate. It is essential to use radius sections, quadrants and dropped kerbs within the design.

The small unit slabs or setts allow ease of laying and achieving levels tying in to both thresholds and crossing points without the need for triangular cuts, which should be avoided. All paving falls are to be compliant with Building Regulations and universal design standards.

Drainage units, manhole covers and other components in the paving should be flush with surrounding areas. They should be integrated within the design to avoid trip hazards.

Paving infill covers are not required. However there should be a maximum 10mm gap between the frame and outer paving.

3.2 Street Furniture

All elements of street furniture in Athboy should be designed into the public realm and not as an afterthought. Coordination and combination between elements should be considered, to avoid visual clutter. Contemporary materials such as stainless steel are to be avoided with timber and neutral colours preferred. An increase in shop forecourts should also be considered when locating site furniture along Main Street and Upper Bridge Street.

Generally all items of street furniture should be from a standard palette and neutral in design – the exception being when singular items of street furniture are considered as art and are site-specific. Sockets should be used were possible to allow for ease of maintenance and replacement if required.

Seating: A variety of seating options should be incorporated, including benches with armrests and backs, benches as seating platforms, ledges and steps. Seating must not impede natural movement, while seating arrangements should encourage social interaction- especially where traders introduce forecourt seating. Materiality and context should be considered when selecting seating.

Bins: Should be located at key junctions and spaced at regular intervals along the streets. They should be neutral in design and part of a coordinated street furniture palette.

Bollards: The use of bollards should be avoided wherever possible. Where necessary, they should be 1.1m high, slender and coordinated with other pieces of street furniture.

Cycle stands: Should be located a regular intervals along the street and be a standard metal hoop.

Feature Seating

Forecourt Seating

Litter Bins

Typical Street Bench

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3.3 Vegetation

The visual appearance and user experience of Athboy will be significantly enhance through the introduction of street trees and planting that provide seasonal variation and greenery where deemed appropriate. This will also increase biodiversity levels where vegetation is lacking.

Following an appraisal of the existing street trees and considering the lack of other vegetation on Main Street, the below proposals are to be considered:

• Street Trees- these are to be introduced in order to 'green' the town centre and provide vitality to spaces that is currently lacking. A full appraisal of Athboy's existing trees should be undertaken to determine the current health of existing trees and what trees may need to be replaced as part of any future work.
• Planted ledges / boxes - these must be integrated with building façades and only used where they will further enhance both the building and street scene.
• Shrubs and flowers in appropriate contained areas can provide seasonal interest and variety throughout the year.

Consideration is needed for locating trees

• Where possible plant trees in ground on both sides of the road, of an appropriate species, in suitable created tree pits and ground conditions.
• Utilise trees to aid in wayfinding and to create identity to spaces by selecting different species for each type of space; significant streets; nodes and green spaces.
• Tree locations should be carefully considered in order to complement adjacent buildings and spaces, and so as not to block or hinder views, or obstruct CCTV.


Appropriate Window Boxes

• Trees should have a clear stem of 2.2m and reach a mature height of 10-15m with a uniform canopy.
• Trees should be planted in tree pits that are specifically detailed to accommodate street trees and to better tolerate town centre conditions with root barriers to protect underground utilities.
• Trees should be in groups of the same species.
• Trees should not impede pedestrian movement.
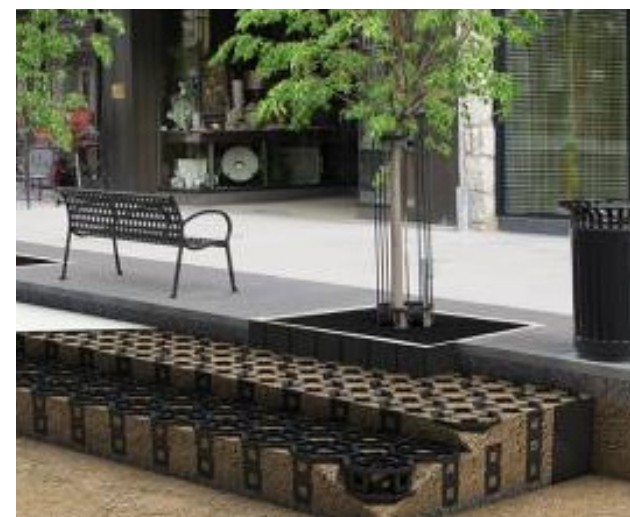
Suitable Suggested Street Tree Species

• *Tilia cordata* 'Streetwise' / 'Greenspire'.
• *Carpinus betulus* 'Streetwise' / 'Fastigiata Frans Fontaine'.
• *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'.
• *Gleditsia triacanthos*.
• *Prunus avium* 'Plena'.
• *Acer campestre* 'Elsrijk'.
• *Sorbus aucuparia* 'Asplenifolia'.

Street Trees

Below-ground Soil Cells

3.4 Lighting

Future lighting strategies for Athboy should be carefully considered to enhance spaces, increase their time of use and provide a feeling of safety. Lighting can also be used to create a character that is sympathetic to the existing.

To achieve the above, consideration should be given to the following:

A standard palette should be agreed to provide ambient light to prescribed lighting levels. This being a column or wall mounted fitting which is neutral in design so as to not compete with the existing architecture. New light columns should also be used to absorb other requirements such as CCTV provision, festive lighting and Wi-Fi requirements if deemed necessary as part of any future works. Contemporary features are to be avoided along with materials such as stainless steel.

Subtle character changes along streets and within spaces should be incorporated within an overall masterplan. This can emphasise focal points along Main Street, pedestrian open spaces, gateways and provide interest while moving through the town.

Lighting the streets

High-level building mounted luminaires where appropriate - these provide ambient light levels and should be discretely positioned on buildings with respect to the architecture and only used where appropriate.

Columns- where new columns are required, these will need to be carefully positioned and blend into the street scene. They will add interest and scale in appropriate locations ensuring they must not impede pedestrian movement or block key views. A neutral style of column and luminaire is proposed appropriate to the setting and context.

Uplighters to Trees
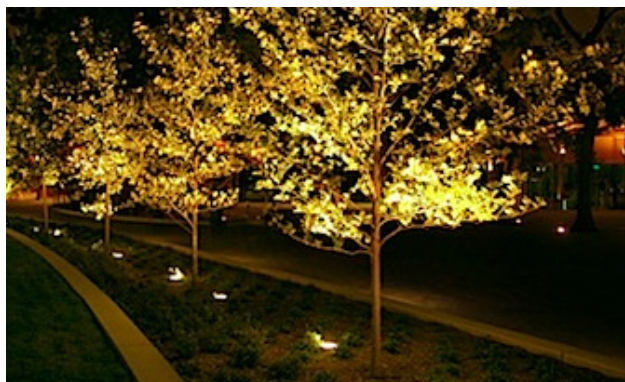
Unobtrusive Luminaires

Architectural lighting of selected buildings

Athboy has a number of buildings with interesting façades worthy of lighting. This can either be with integrated fitting on the facade itself where appropriate or from nearby columns.

Feature lighting

Feature lighting can help define the public realm at night. The value of this needs to be considered on a case by case basis in line with the Council's Energy Action Plan. Provision for festive lights should also be made throughout the town centre.

Standard Light Columns of Neutral Design

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3.5 Wayfinding and Signage

There are opportunities in Athboy to introduce a range of signs providing direction, interpretation and information. These should be strategically placed throughout the town so as not to add clutter to the public realm.

Directional Signage

To maintain a minimal theme that is in keeping with the wider strategy for the town, directional signage should be minimal with a careful choice of materials that do not compete with items of historical significance in the area such as the church and other buildings of significance. It is important to identify starting points from which pedestrian visitors are most likely to begin walking through the town and then where the main routes for pedestrians will be. Directional signage can then be placed at points that meet or where there is a change in direction. Starting points or destinations might include:

• Tourist information points.
• Bus stop.
• Public car parks.
• The Fair Green.
• Athboy Historic Walk.
• Historic buildings- i.e. St. James Church.
• Interpretation Points.

Unauthorised signs should not be allowed on any directional sign posts. Directional signage in general should be kept to a minimum to avoid clutter.

Contemporary materials such as stainless steel should be avoided. All signage must fit in with an overall colour and material palette that is in harmony with other items such as lighting, benches, litter bins etc.

Historically Appropriate Fingerpost Sign

Commemorative In-Ground Signage
standard.co.uk

Wayfinding Signage

Interpretation Signage

Signage used for interpretation should be from one coherent family. Like directional signage, it should be minimal in appearance and consistent throughout the town. A variety of installation types include installing interpretation signage in-ground, on buildings or on posts where necessary.

All interpretation signs should be kept simple and clear. Clutter and over-use of interpretation signage should be avoided.

MCC Policy on Shopfronts

When considering shop fronts, traders should be encouraged to reference policies outlined in the 'Shopfront and Signage Guidelines' document produced by Meath County Council.

This document encourages shop-owners and traders to use hand-painted fascia lettering and logos in a style and colour that harmonises with the shop. Such signage should also help to portray its use. The installation of roller shutters located behind the line of glazing in shopfronts is also suggested by the guidelines.

4.0 Athboy in Interventions

4.1 The Issues

The Main Street in Athboy has the potential to be of a higher public realm standard. Listed below are some of the public realm issues encountered in Athboy.

Picture 1:
- Disorganised angular parking.
- Narrow pavements, uneasy pedestrian circulation.
- Lack of shop forecourt opportunity.

Picture 2:
- Narrow pavements, uneasy pedestrian circulation.
- Poor and uneven surfacing.

Picture 3:
- Dominance of car parking.
- Lack of safe and irregular pedestrian crossing points.
- Overground utility cables.

Picture 4:
- Irregular parking arrangements.
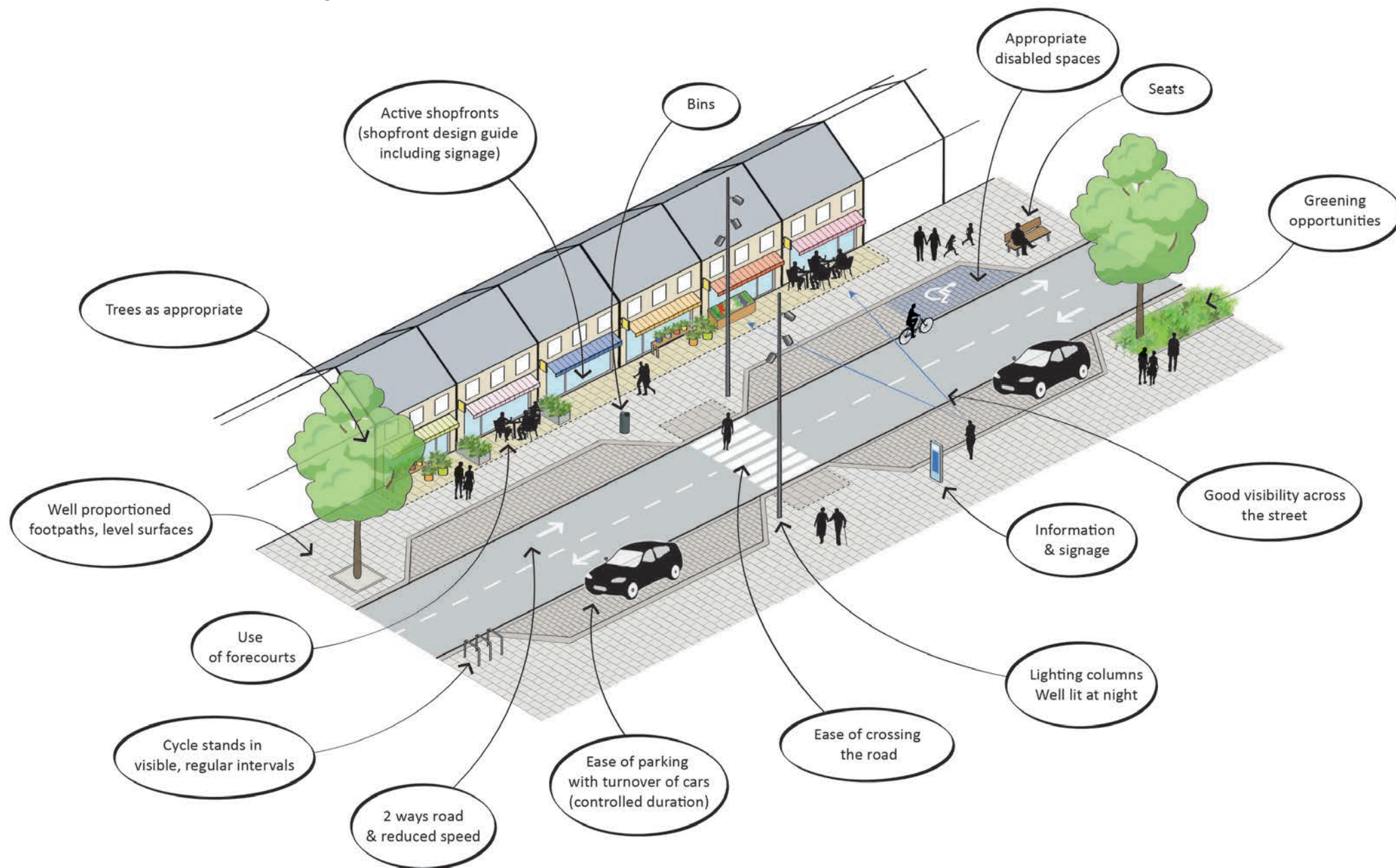- Narrow footpaths.

Picture 5:
- Lack of safe pedestrian crossing points.
- Overground utility cables.

Picture 6:
- Confusing road layout for all users.
- Narrow pavements, uneasy pedestrian circulation.

4.2 What Makes a Good High Street?

Appropriate disabled spaces

Seats

Active shopfronts (shopfront design guide including signage)

Bins

Greening opportunities

Trees as appropriate

Well proportioned footpaths, level surfaces

Good visibility across the street

Use of forecourts

Information & signage

Cycle stands in visible, regular intervals

Lighting columns Well lit at night

Ease of crossing the road

2 ways road & reduced speed

Ease of parking with turnover of cars (controlled duration)

4.3 Main Street, Athboy

The proposals for Athboy come from a change in how we approach the design of public open space. Through the reorganisation of parking bays and with a consistent approach to the material palette and street furniture, Athboy can be enhanced for locals and visitors.

Before and after illustration of the enhanced Main Street:
- Introduction of parallel parking.
- Creation of active forecourts where possible.
- Resurfaced footpaths and realigned carriageway.
- Removal of clutter and cables.
- Tree planting where possible to new wider footpaths.

Before and after illustration of the enhanced Main Street:
- Creation of pocket spaces with timber benches with arm and backrests.
- Resurfaced footpaths and realigned carriageway.
- Removal of clutter and cables.
- Provision of new zebra crossing.
- Tree planting where possible to new wider footpaths.
- Provision of new wider disabled parking bays.

Before and after illustration of approach to parking bays:
- Introduction of parallel parking.
- Creation of active forecourts where possible.
- Resurfaced footpaths and realigned carriageway.
- Removal of clutter and cables.
- Tree planting where possible to new wider footpaths.

Objectives Addressed

1. Improve footpaths and connections to all parts of the town.
2. Add more regular safe crossing points.
3. Remove echelon parking- make all parking parallel on the main street.
5. Introduce times parking restrictions.
9. Enhance the setting and interpretation of Athboy's heritage.
10. Rationalise street furniture.
11. Strategy to have underground wires.
12. Preserve and enhance trees and vegetation in appropriate positions in the town centre.
13. Set out design guidance and specifications for materials, furniture, and other public realms fixtures.

① Introduction of parallel parking bays

② Retained trees

③ New pedestrian crossings

④ Realigned carriageway

⑤ Benches and groups of cycle stands

⑥ New disabled parking bays

⑦ New tree planting where possible

⑧ Wider footpaths

⑨ New surfacing

4.4 The Fair Green, Athboy

Athboy Fair Green is a key green open space for the town, that offers possibilities of gathering and events in close proximity of the town centre. The regeneration proposal includes the enhancement of the general quality of the space, as well as the creation of new activity areas and the promotion of biodiversity.

Issue relating to the character of the Fair Green:

- Lack of diversity in the character of the space, monotony.
- Inappropriate low planting, bushes blocking views and movements.
- Lack of quality and maintenance of the pathways and equipment including benches and litter bins.
- Poor visibility and attractivity of the entrances: the space is uninviting.
- Lack of play opportunities, including natural play.
- Poor wildlife garden with very little planting.

Opportunities relating to the character of the Fair Green:

- Large green open space offering opportunities for outdoor activities, games, community events, etc.
- Good specimens of mature trees throughout the space and especially around the edges of the Fair Green, providing a good green cover.
- Good distribution of the entrances around the perimeter of the space.
- The Fair Green is defined by a low dry stone wall that participates positively to the character of the space.

View of the existing Fair Green
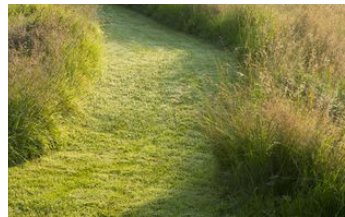
Reference images

Design principles

1 Redefine and resurface the paths throughout the Fair Green, following the lines of the existing paths. Path for vehicle to be 3.5m wide, pedestrian paths to be 1.2m wide. All paths to have timber edging, 19mm x 200mm to follow curves and radii, no right angles.

2 Create a space in which people can spend time by providing high quality seating, including social clusters of benches at entrances and a feature seating area in the centre of the green.

3 Enhance the visibility and the character of the space through the provision of interpretation board, signage and public art.

4 Promote and improve biodiversity by creating large areas of un-mown grass and potentially wildflower meadows.

5 Offer opportunities for informal play with grass mounds and natural play including ephemeral mown paths running through the high grasses.

6 Enhance the character, quality and biodiversity of the space by redesigning the natural garden space at the centre of the green.

7 Ensure of the good use of and safety of the space by providing litter bins at the entrances of the park, lighting to the vehicle path to the north and by removing the clumps of shrubs to improve visibility and movement.

8 Conduct a tree survey to monitor the condition of the existing trees.

Approach to wildlife garden

- Provision of timber benches with arm and backrests.
- Resurfaced paths with timber edging.
- Creation of a wildlife garden that includes sweeps of planting and public art.
- Provision of feature seating.
- Un-mown grass stripes to all edges of the Fair Green to create biodiverse green buffers.

Before and after illustration of the wildlife garden

Typical arrangement of the entrances

Before and after illustration of an entrance

- Provision of timber benches with arm and backrests, as well as litter bins to all entrances.
- Resurfaced paths with timber edging.
- Removal of shrubs blocking pedestrian movements from the entrance.
- Un-mown grass stripes to all edges of the Fair Green to create biodiverse green buffers.

Approach to natural play

Before and after illustration of the natural play area

- Provision of timber benches with arm and backrests and interpretation board.
- Resurfaced paths with timber edging.
- Removal of shrubs and clutter.
- Provision of grass mounds for informal play.
- Un-mown grass stripes to all edges of the Fair Green to create biodiverse green buffers.

① 3.5m wide path suitable for vehicular access.	⑦ Areas of Un-mown grass to improve biodiversity.
② Lighting columns on vehicular path.	⑧ Retained central lawn for events.
③ Typical 1.2m wide footpaths with timber edging.	⑨ Feature seating area.
④ Bins to all entrances.	⑩ Timber benches along paths.
⑤ Wildlife garden with varied planting and public art.	⑪ Timber benches facing each other at entrances.
⑥ Grass landforms - natural informal play.	⑫ Green buffer of existing trees and un-mown grass.

4.5 Western Masterplan

The Western end of Main Street and Athboy has been identified as a preferred position for the relocation of the bus stop. Proposals should also address other issues in this area such as the lack of provisions for pedestrian movement and undefined car parking.

Key features of the following proposals look to:

- **Improve pedestrian movement for all users:** appropriate and consistent selection of materials; wider footpaths; drop kerbs and crossing points where physically appropriate.

- **Defined Parking:** clear areas of parking in areas separated from the carriageway.

- **Street Trees and Greenery:** appropriate street trees with a 2.2m clear stem; shrubs and other planting that have seasonal interest; planting that offers an increase in biodiversity.

- **Accommodation of New Bus Stop:** location does not impede existing traffic flow; removes issues from parking on Main Street.

- **Relocated clothes / bottle bank:** recycling area relocated to church car park.

- **Future Development:** proposed in lands north of the bus stop; potential for a new multi-use development.

ATHBOY
BUS STOP ARRANGEMENT OPTION 01

1. Proposed bus shelter
2. Proposed bus stop area
3. Proposed new green areas & tree planting
4. Proposed parking bays / Potential bus stop
5. Relocated bottles / clothes bank

Potential Future Development Site

Pub car park

Pub

Childcare Centre

Church car park

Solicitors

Solicitors' car park

St James Church

Car park

Local shop car park

School car park (?)

Local shop car park (?)

Local shops

ATHBOY
BUS STOP ARRANGEMENT OPTION 02

① Proposed bus shelter

② Proposed bus stop area

③ Proposed new green areas & tree planting

④ Proposed parking bays / Potential bus stop

⑤ Relocated bottles / clothes bank

Potential Future Development Site

Pub car park

Pub

Church car park

Solicitors

Solicitors' car park

St James Church

Childcare Centre

Car park

Local shop car park

School car park (?)

Local shop car park (?)

Local shops

ATHBOY
BUS STOP ARRANGEMENT OPTION 03

1. Proposed bus shelter
2. Proposed bus stop area
3. Proposed new green areas & tree planting
4. Proposed parking bays / Potential bus stop
5. Relocated bottles / clothes bank

Potential Future Development Site

Pub car park

Pub

Church car park

Solicitors

Solicitors' car park

Childcare Centre

St James Church

Car park

School car park (?)

Local shop car park

Local shop car park (?)

Local shops

5.0 Conclusion and next steps

5.0 Conclusion and next steps

The process for every individual public realm project is complex and unique to each location. It is dependent on the site constraints, engagement, approvals and ease of change. These all need to be carefully considered with each and every proposed intervention.

This guide is a first step towards improving the public realm in Athboy, it needs to be embraced and followed to encourage positive change in the town centre.

The key steps are as follows:

- **Programme:** It is suggested that a five-year programme is put in place to ensure momentum and achieve the overall goal of making improvements to the public realm in the town centre. This should identify the process and identify tasks against target dates.

- **Identify sources of funding:** Project Ireland is a clear source of funding which supports ambitious and strategic projects which contribute to sustainable rural regeneration and development. Other sources will include Failte Ireland and The Heritage Council.

- **Ongoing review of change in line with the Public Realm Plan:** The public realm plan provides a guide to all interventions within the pubic realm for both the Council and 3rd parties. All changes should be reviewed to ensure they are in line with the aspirations.

- **Design:** It is fundamental that all public realm schemes are design-led with integrated engineering, not the reverse. Design quality must be paramount and suitable consultants must be procured from inception.

- **Delivery:** The process of delivering public realm is complex and involves many stakeholders. Schemes need to be budgeted properly, resourced by an experienced team and delivered to specification.

6.0 Appendix

6.1 What People Have Told Us?

6.1 What People Have Told Us - Stakeholder Consultation - 5th March 2019

Attendees
Local Traders
Local Community Representatives
Local Councillors
Local Residents

Gap Analysis Discussion and Additional Comments

Footpaths
- Tight footpaths
- Condition outside the town is not positive
- Should be top priority

Pedestrian Crossings
- Side roads can be hectic
- Poor ease of moving around – can be very dangerous!
- Echelon / nose in parking is quiet dangerous, leads to poor visibility and accidents:
    - o An accident waiting to happen
    - o Next to school development

Street furniture
- Very few cycles racks and bins
- Bins can be quite full on weekends
- Social issues surrounding bins
- Dog foul is a problem.
- No litter warden
- Quality is poor with no recycling bins
- Benches – could there be more? More may attract people late at night.
- Benches are used a lot during Fleadh Ceol
- Resting benches needed for older people.
- Seating should be in the right place.
- Athboy should be an age friendly town.

Trees and Greenery
- There are no trees on Connaught Street
- Main Street is not well-maintained
- Maintenance is an issue in the town
- The Fair Green is a huge positive for the town
- Planters – Tidy Towns are currently applying for funding. These will be recycled plastic and have reservoirs
- Trees and planters needed on Connaught street.

Play
- Playground is not in a good location
- Small children's play is needed.

- Area in the Fair Green identified for playground. The Fair Green is owned by the Town. This means insurance for a play area is difficult to secure.
- If funding goes ahead for changes to the Fair Green this will be a huge positive to the town.
- The town could benefit from a second play area, potentially in garden behind Credit Union
- A central location is key for the playground
- Natural play areas would be great

The Fair Green
- Tops of paths are horrible
- The paths are natural and unobtrusive
- Yet, buggies and wheelchairs are a struggle to use on the current paths
- Paths need to be wheelchair friendly
- Character is important to maintain
- Lighting may affect security but could have a negative effect on wildlife
- Is it possible to light the paths without lighting the trees?
- Anti-social behaviour is a problem in the park.
- The trees are wonderful. They create a "hedge effect" around the park.
- Existing trees should be kept when thinking about a future strategy for the park.
- Pollinator plan to be considered
- The park should be more wild with biodiversity and wildflower meadows

Bus stand
- There is a lack of bus bays in town
- Bays are on the main street
- Bus stops on street for 10 mins once every hour
- Poor access towards bus through parked cars
- Bus stop should be located in the car park
- No facility for bus stop
- Should be important as it's the on public transport service to Dublin

Ease of finding a parking space
- People use town as a car park
- 2hr restriction needed. This gives people plenty of time to do things and allows more people to come and go
- There is a need to stop 'all-day parkers'
- No paid parking!

- 10-15min zones should be considered
- Accessible / universal access / disabled bays should be considered. 2 new bays recently added
- Loading bays – ratio to be reviewed. There is only one loading bay at the minute
- The issue of people using disabled bays when they shouldn't be needs to be addressed

Cycling
- Currently very dangerous
- Head on parking and cars reversing into street is very dangerous
- Parallel parking would mean losing spaces but would be safer for cyclists

Off-street parking
- Nightclub – ownership issue – huge potential for off-street parking
- Potential better use of sites
- 'All-day parkers' should be using off-street facilities
- Businesses parking in the town all day is big issue

Derelict sites
- Should be highlighted as opportunity zones

Heritage
- Interpretation and more signage needed.
- Huge amount. This area was known as the edge of the Pale in the past.
- Potential for renovation of derelict buildings to be used and museums should be considered

Identity
- Big arrival sign needed to make people aware that they have arrived in Athboy
- Easy to pass through
- Identity and heritage there.
- Huge community spirit
- The hub has been great for the town
- The new community centre should be added to the BDP map
- Plagued by heavy passing traffic that will not stop unless there is a good reason

Events
- The town is good at running events
- There is a digital notice board available online but no physical sign

- Any physical notice board should be located at the church

Shopfront Signage / Strategy
- Mixture of materials – not standardised
- No brand, no flow to things
- Seems messy
- Town is only so long
- BOI to Connaught street is the main extent
- Standard needed – some are nice
- Many are rented premises with no pressure on tenants to look after the shopfront
- Plastic signs look awful
- Many shopfronts could benefit from a wash / clean even
- New signs needed with dual language – more signs as gaeilge needed in the town

Approach signs
- Need to highlight town
- Last sign on motorway before exit for Athboy doesn't mention Athboy
- Town should be extended

Community groups
- May be difficult for new people
- Meet and greet - get together are needed wit new members of community

Street lighting
- Very poor – terrible overall- Especially towards Connaught Street
- Overhead utility cables were criticised tidy town report
- Hanging baskets could be used on light columns

Trim road / Connaught Street
- Not designed for the size of vehicles travelling through
- Footpaths to small at corners
- Cow park should be included in scope
- Indiscriminate parking at chipper is a big issue
- Double yellow lines not paid attention to

Other issues to be resolved
- Church car park near recycle bins is underused
- Former stage coach stop near St. Mary's
- Design of the Stables at the Fair Green
- Access to the community centre – could pedestrian access to gym be reinstated?
- Derelict school is an issue – kids opening windows.
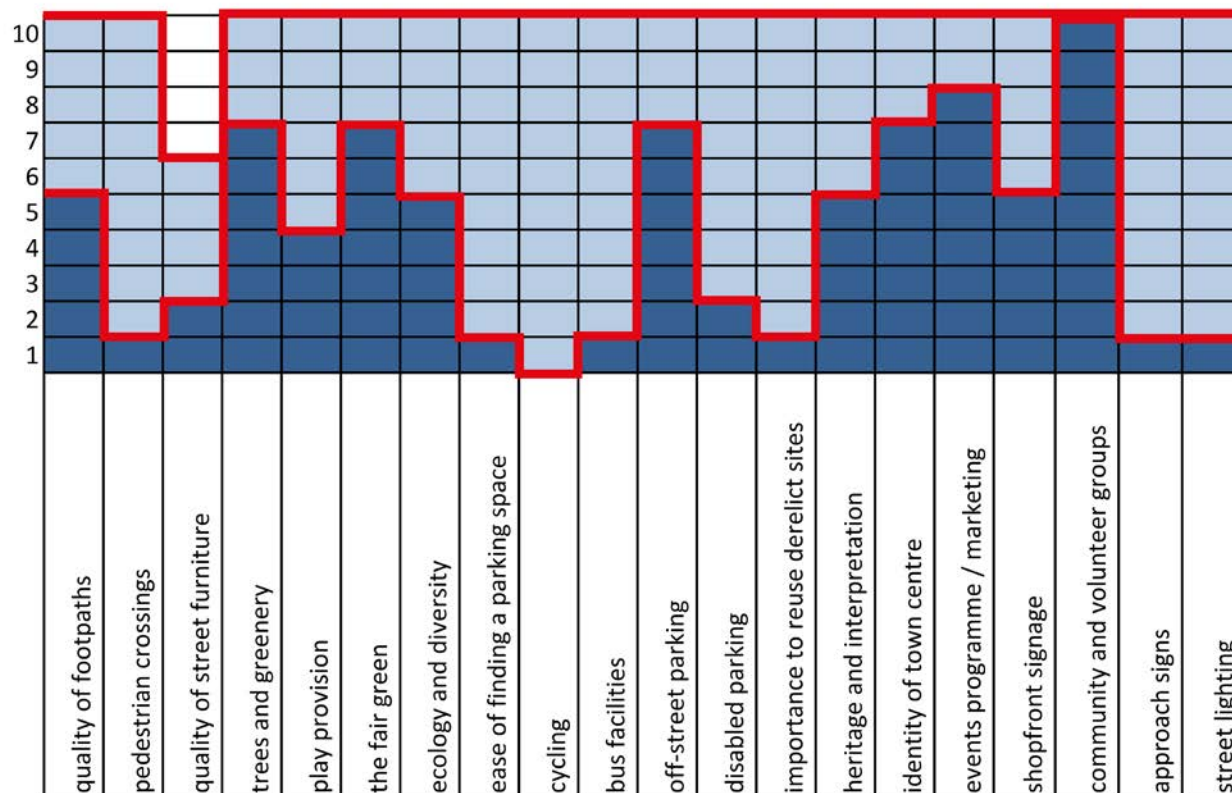
Gap Analysis Results

Our vision
- Missing natural heritage
- Archways – encourage people to open them up
- Plan for access road at Connaught road; access road to north should be shown (McCann and Burn Road).

Our objectives
- Cow Path loops
- Scope to include protection of trees in town
- Cutting down trees in Ireland is too common now
- Approaches to components – elements and protection needed#

AOB
- Is there scope to improve hard services for play
- A huge chance to improve town

BDP.

Blackhall Green,
Stoneybatter,
Dublin,
D07 V0RF,
Ireland