MOATE

TOWN CENTRE FIRST MASTERPLAN

Baseline report and Healthcheck

May 2023

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

Allies and Morrison

a2 architects

ARUP

REPUCON CONSULTING

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1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This document

Moate is one of the first towns in Ireland to benefit from the Government's Town Centre First Masterplan programme. The study has been undertaken by a local Town Team, Westmeath County Council officers and a consultant team led by Allies and Morrison.

This baseline document reflects the Collaborative Town Centre Healthcheck approach as defined by the Heritage Council, tailored to suit Moate's particular character and the contributions available. It sets out the research and consultation that has informed the development of the masterplan, including understanding the history and character of the town, the movement and accessibility issues, its demographics and the health of the existing shops and businesses on the Main Street.

The masterplan has also been shaped by national and local planning policies and the wider requirements to respond to sustainability and climate change, helping to make Moate a healthy and sustainable community.

Alongside this report there is a detailed consultation and engagement strategy document which sets out the community input to the process.

Introduction

Moate's Town Team

Key to the success of the masterplan is the local community and stakeholders who have come together to help shape and implement the masterplan.

The masterplan is driven by a Town Team supported by the Town Regeneration Officer and a multi-disciplinary technical team in Westmeath County Council.

The Town Team was formed at a meeting held at the Carmelite Pastoral Centre on 8 February 2023. In all there are 23 team members supported by additional volunteers on sub groups including representation of the following local groups and interests:

Community & Voluntary, Social Inclusion & Age Friendly, Environment/Climate Action/Biodiversity, Business/Commercial/Social Enterprise, Elected Members, Moate Action Group, Sport, Education, Youth, Tourism, Residents Associations, Arts/Culture, Heritage & Conservation, Agriculture / Transport

Our process

DECEMBER 2022 **JANUARY 2023** **FEBRUARY 2023** **MARCH 2023** **APRIL 2023** **MAY 2023**

key milestones

Design team appointed

Westmeath County Council appoint a design team led by masterplanners Allies and Morrison Ltd, and including transport consultants Arup; conservation architects A2 Architects; and tourism, sport, and recreation specialists Repucon.

STAGE 1 Engagement

Initial information and ideas gathering stage with local community and stakeholders, including:

- Stakeholder workshop event
- Drop-in event
- Public survey

Town Team is formed

Westmeath County Council undertook a process to identify individuals to be in the Town Team. Representatives from local interest and community groups were put forward and a Town Team was assembled. A sub-group has also been formed.

STAGE 2 Engagement

Emerging ideas and framework tested with local community and stakeholders, including:

- Stakeholder workshop event
- Three school workshops
- Public drop-in event
- Public survey

Review and sign-off

The draft masterplan will be presented for final edits and approval.

STAGE 3 Publication

Public presentation of the submission draft of the Town Centre First Masterplan.

Design team activities

- Site visits
- Photo surveys
- Desktop research
- Baseline analysis
- Policy context analysis

- Analysis of workshop worksheets and outcomes
- Analysis of post-it note comments from table-top map at drop-in event.
- Ideas distilling and development

- Ideas development
- Survey analysis
- Themes identified
- Draft vision developed

- Draft framework refined in response to feedback
- Further work developed in response to feedback
- Stakeholder 1-2-1s to help refine ideas

- Masterplan report is updated in response to feedback.

- Implementation toolkit developed.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment / Appropriate Assessment screening
- Production of final report
- Client review and final revisions.

2 CONTEXT

Context

WESTMEATH

Mullingar

MOATE

Athlone

DUBLIN

GALWAY

LIMERICK

Context

County Westmeath

**The introduction to Westmeath from the County Development Plan:**

Located in the heart of Ireland, County Westmeath covers an area of 1,756 square kilometres and is historically known as the 'Lake County', rich in arts, culture, heritage and natural amenities. These many natural amenities include the Hill of Uisneach, the mythological and sacred centre of Ireland, the River Shannon and Lough Ree, adjacent to Athlone, the River Brosna, Lough Owel and Lough Ennell, adjacent to Mullingar, with Lough Derravaragh, Lough Lene and Lough Sheelin in the north of the County. In terms of national and international tourism promotion, Westmeath's appeal is recognised and benefits from the dual promotion of Fáilte Ireland's 'Ancient East' brand proposition to the east of the County and 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' to the west.

Westmeath has an array of attractive towns and villages ranging from the thriving Regional Centre of Athlone, the County town of Mullingar, to the strong market towns of Moate and Kinnegad and the quaint and historical village's such as Multyfarnham, Glasson and Tyrrellspass.

The M4/N4 which traverses the County in a north-westerly direction offers the County ease of access to the greater Dublin area, with Dublin Airport and Dublin Port just one hour's drive from Mullingar. The M6 from Kinnegad, through Athlone provides further connection to Galway and the West. The N52, an important national secondary route traversing the County, further connects the north east with the Munster region. Significant rail infrastructure enhances this connectivity, with the DublinSligo railway line serving Mullingar and the Dublin-Westport/Dublin-Galway line serving Athlone.

Westmeath is also home to a strategic section of the Galway to Dublin National Cycle Network (NCN). Extending across the County from the Meath County boundary along the existing Royal Canal Greenway to Mullingar before connecting to 'The Old Rail Trail' for 42km to the town of Athlone.

There are four electoral areas in the County, Mullingar, Kinnegad, Moate and Athlone which in turn form the Mullingar-Kinnegad and Athlone-Moate Municipal Districts through which many of the local services are delivered by the Council.
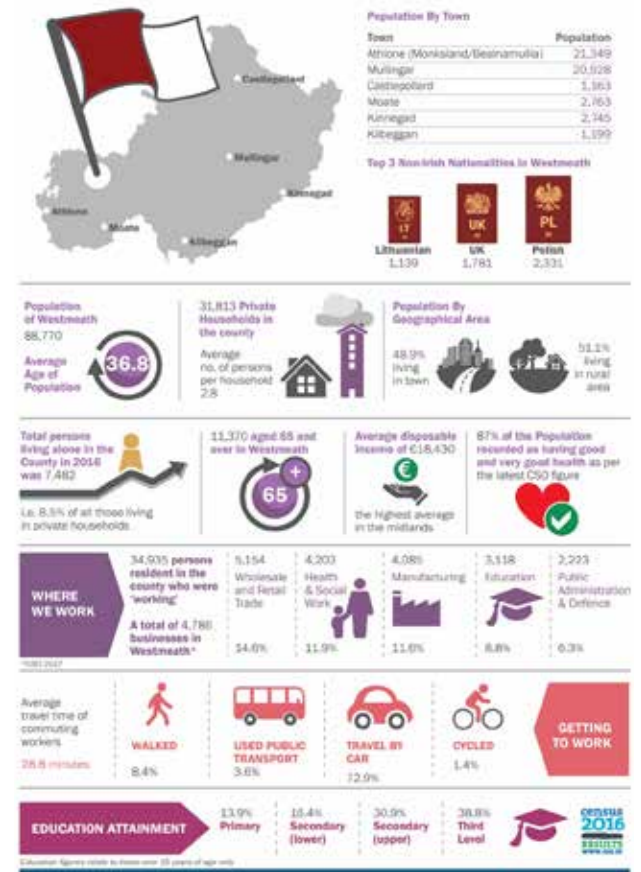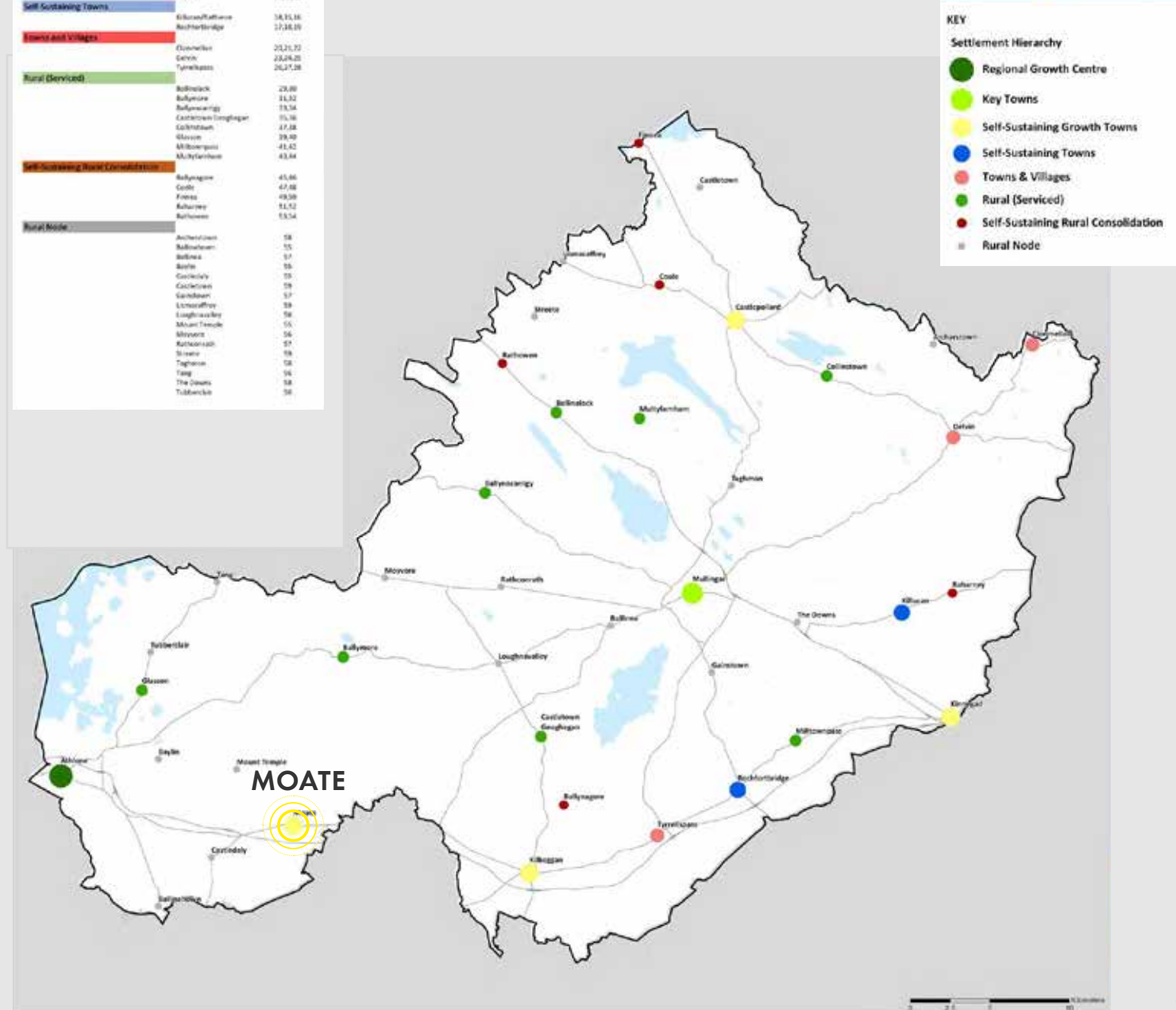
Context

Moate

The Regional Spatial and Economis Strategy defines 'Self Sustaining Growth Towns' as 'Towns with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining'. Castlepollard, Moate, Kinnegad and Kilbeggan form this tier of the settlement hierarchy.

Moate is the third largest population centre in County Westmeath. It experienced a major population increase of 44.6% between 2006 -2011 which was significantly above trends at the County, Region and State levels over the period. Between 2011 and 2016, the growth rate slowed to 1.17%. In 2016 there were a total of 1,151 resident workers in the town, with 559 total jobs (a ratio of 0.486), a significantly lower rate to that of Athlone and Mullingar. A significant proportion of the population commutes to Athlone on a daily basis.

The proximity and strength of Athlone as a neighbouring town has a significant bearing on Moate. As a larger destination it is able to provide some of the higher order services and activities which Moate can't sustain, but it does then draw activity and custom away from Moate. The future growth of Moate can help to address this challenge.
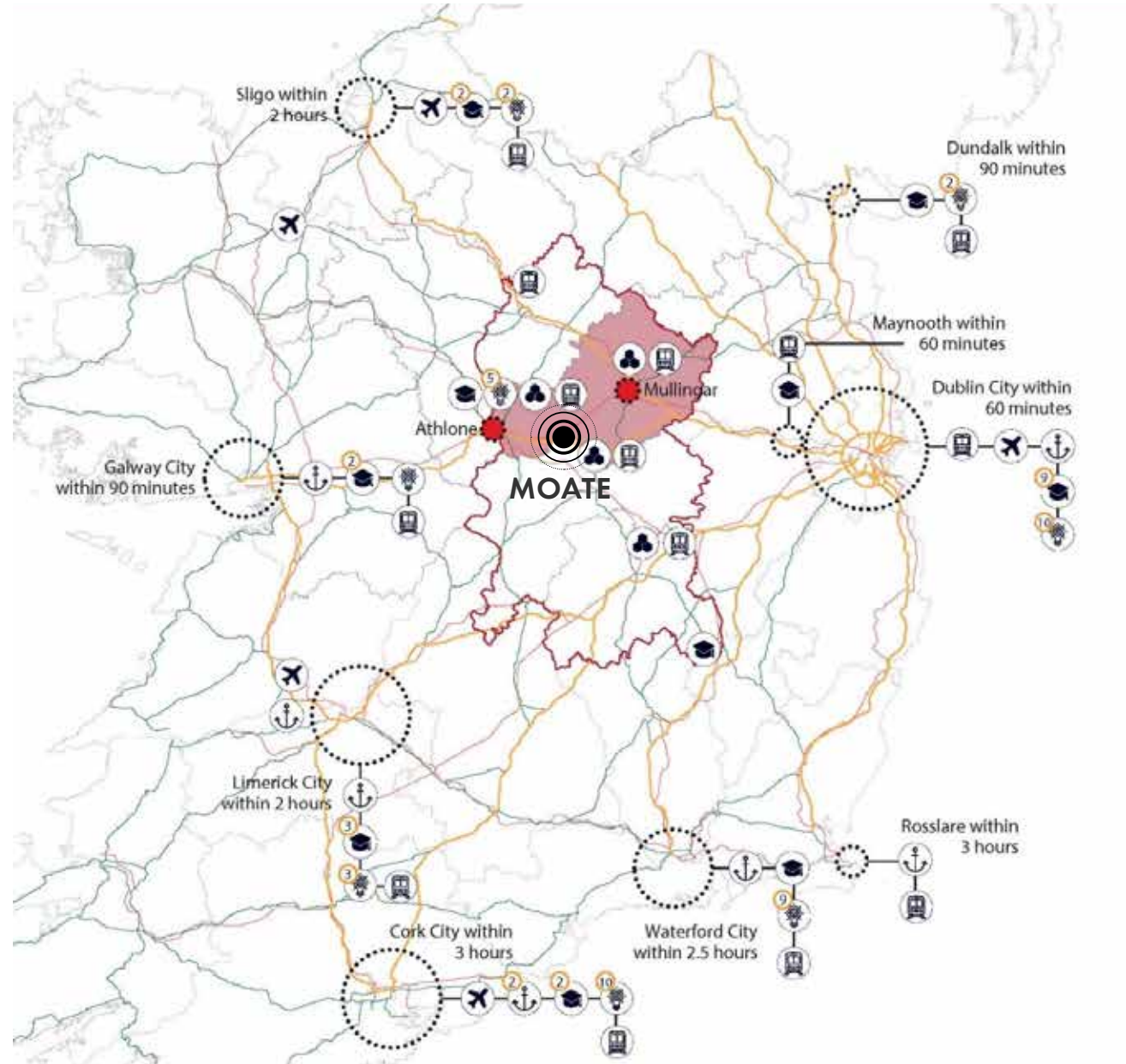
Context

Moate

Moate benefits from an accessible central location in Ireland. At a local level it is well connected with Athlone and Mullingar, but at a national level it also benefits from quick and high quality links to Galway and Dublin.

A notable aspect of Moate's name recognition in the national context is that before the development of the motorway, the Main Street used to form part of the east-west road from Galway to Dublin. Historically, this means that whilst Moate was a familiar place, it has historically been associated with traffic and congestion. A major success for local campaigners at the time of the motorway construction was to have both a western and eastern link into the town. This means that with the right quality of environment and amenity offer, visitors could be attracted to use Moate as a place to break their journey which offers a more characterful stop than the motorway services.

Westmeath County Development Plan Figure 5.1 Westmeath Economic Context

3 HISTORY AND CHARACTER

History

Moate has a long and varied history which forms part of its character today
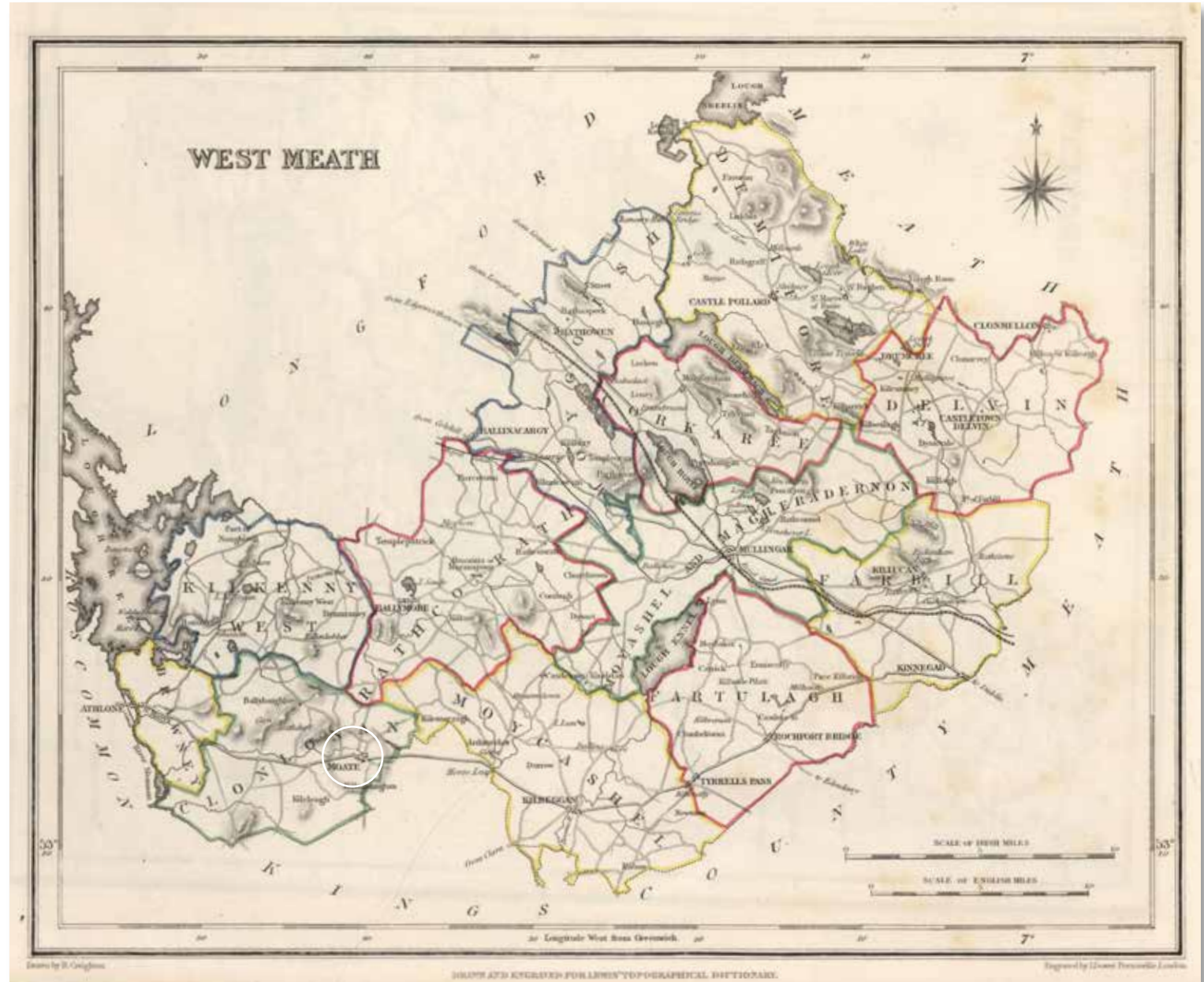
History

A significant historic town

This map of Couty Westmeath from 1846 illustrates Moate within the wider context of the Midlands, and clearly hints at the distinctive alignment of the Main Street even at this scale.

The map shows Moate as an important staging post on the main east-west route across Ireland from Galway to Dublin - something which has indelibly shaped the form of the town as a strong linear street with a focus on building frontages towards this main space.

The street that is created offers both local and strategic connections, as well as creating space for the meeting place and business of agriculture and commerce that rural market towns support.

The notations on the maps also hint at the rolling countryside which still forms an important and attractive part of the character of the area.

Map credit:David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries

Moate in the 1700's

Moate in the 1800s

Origins

1700s

1800s

1860s

1880s

The town of Moate takes its name from the Irish Móta, derived from the term Motte and Bailey. Moate owes its modern origins to Quakers who settled there and started industries at the end of the seventeenth century.
The town was an important marketplace and Quaker village. There are several extant examples of Quaker houses on the main street, which itself is typical of an Irish marketplace.

The Tuar Ard building began life as the Catholic Parish Chapel or Mass house circa 1770. Moate Community Development Association was formed in 1994 with a view to renovating St. Patrick's Hall. The early plan was to develop a theatre, art gallery, craft centre with incubation units, coffee shop and a resource centre. This development spanned a six year period and evolved into a much bigger project than originally anticipated. Finally in October 2000, Tuar Ard Arts / Enterprise Centre and Coffee Shop was officially opened by President Mary McAleese.

Circa 1828 the three-bay two-storey bow-fronted former court house and Bridewell was built. The courthouse remained an imposing feature on the Main Street despite its changing uses which included use as a town hall. In 1853 P. Egan's Traditional Irish Bar opened which is still in operation today.

St. Patrick's Church, has foundation stone which was laid in 1861, however it wasn't until 1867 that construction proceeded and building was completed 1871. St. Patrick's Church replaced an older church which is now the Taur Ard parish centre.

In 1883 the jail building that now holds the towns museum was build in the back of the court house that is now the town library.

The castle mound which gives its name to the town

Moate Courthouse

1844 Map of Moate (Moata) from the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

Moate in the 1900s

Modern Moate

1900s — **1950s** — **1980s** — **2000s** — **2016** — **Now**

In 1900 Moate golf club was founded. The club moved to its present site in 1940. The town has a long established Gaelic Football club known as the Moate All Whites. The team adopted there name and colours from the religious habits worn by the Carmelite White Friars.

Moate was known as a historic transportation route as it has the Midland Great Western Railway pass through the town, connecting Dublin and Galway between 1951-1987.

Opened in 1988, the Moate Museum contains over 1,000 artefacts relevant to the folk history of the town and its environs especially from the 1700s to the present. The exhibits include farm implements, machines, a traditional farm kitchen, a chapel and school, jail, archaeology display, blacksmiths forge, tradesman's workshops and an archive of local documents. The Museum of Moate Historical Society is in the old jail building at the rear of the Courthouse, in the centre of Moate.
In 1991 the Moate Business College was established, bringing further educational opportunities to the area.

In December 2009, the new M4 motorway connecting Galway to Dublin was completed. This motorway reduced the number of passersby coming through the town by a significant figure as Moate was previously one of the key town's on the route from Galway to Dublin.

In 2016 the old court house was refurbished and transformed into the towns library. The judge's box is retained and tunnels linking the old jail to the court house were discovered during construction offering an insight into local history. A historic space in the heart of the town.

Today, the population of Moate is 2763, a moderately sized town in Westmeath. Moate has become a quite town, with a strong community. It has a unique built heritage, excellent amenities such as a renovated library, lively local pubs and good schools.

The Moate All Whites crest (All Whites Facebook)

Main Street Moate around 1910

Patrick Kelly Memorial Park

In December 2008 the Patrick Kelly Memorial Park was opened in Moate, named after the only Irish soldier to die in combat on home soil since the end of the Irish Civil War.

Moate Main Street today

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An historical map of Moate inter-woven with the map of modern development showing how the historic town has grown through the Twentieth Century

Character

Moate's underlying form

As part of developing a detailed understanding of the form of the town, A2 Architects contributed a series of analysis sketches, including this one which draws out a reading of Moate's historic and underlying form.

This drawing helps to characterise the following key points:

1. The Main Street / Church Street spine as being the principle route through the town, with branching connections at each end and the Station Road access at the central point;

2. The deep historic role of the castle mound - the significance of which as a historic destination can still be read in the articulation of the Main Street alignment;

3. The long burgage plots which front onto the main street and stretch back to the open space beyond (many of which have now been subsequently developed out);

4. The role of the watercourse and green space crossing the eastern part of Main Street; and

5. The formal, but rather hidden nature of the square in the Newtown development.

Character

DUN NA SI

CULTURAL AREA
(including arts, culture, education and sports)

GREENWAY

MAIN STREET

HISTORICAL CHARACTER AREA

Map prepared by the Town Team identifying different land use character areas in Moate

Character

Growth and character

Moate's existing character reflects its evolution and development over many centuries. Whilst it retains a strong historic core and the particular historic identity of the Newtown as a cohesive area of built heritage, it also includes considerable change and development.

Our review of the character of the town has been broken down into four themes. These cover the distinctive historic characters, but also identify the form and characteristics of more modern types of development. The latter includes ribbon development of small groups and individual houses along the historic routes out from the town centre, and the modern planned estates which include stronger repetition of building design and are based around the construction of new streets and cul-de-sacs.

As well as the architectural character of the buildings, the relationship of buildings to the street varies considerably and has a major impact on the feel of an area. The nature of parking provision also has a large bearing on the character of the space and how welcoming it feels to pedestrians and cyclists.

Historic town centre

Newtown

Ribbon development

Modern estates

Character

Historic Town Centre

The predominant character of the town centre.

- A strong and persistent historic street form with a clear definition of street frontage broken by a handful of key elements such as the churches and Tuar Ard.

- Range of building scales and architectural quality.

- Overall impression of an historic character but with significant variations in building age, including some very recent building stock.

- A mix of uses, including shops and businesses in the heart of the Main Street but with some workspace and residential property as well.

- Deep plots which extend back from the road, many featuring secondary buildings and yards, some with yard access for parking off street and other reliant on on-street parking.

- Historically, the town centre backed onto open fields, but in some cases, now backs onto housing development.

Character

Newtown

A cohesive historic area east of the town centre.

- Strong area of historic character, dominant by attractive 18th Century buildings. More consistent scale and character than Main Street.

- Predominantly residential uses, along with the institutional buildings of the former Carmelite School.

- It is typical for properties to be set back behind a private front garden, separated from the street by a wall or hedge.

- The area is focussed on a central green space with a softer character than Main Street.

- Parking is typically accommodated on street.

Character

Ribbon development

Piecemeal development along the approach roads into the town.

- Development along the historic approach roads into the town ranges significantly in age, but predominantly dates from the Twentieth Century.

- Ribbon development was typically built out as individual plots, or small groups of homes, and is a natural extension of the historic pattern of development in the town centre.

- Most development of this kind tends to be set back from the road, with larger plots, detached or semi-detached homes and on-plot parking. As distance from the town centre increases, so does plot size and the reliance on car use.

- Architectural style and building form tends to vary, often from plot to plot. Bungalows are mixed with two-storey homes, and the sense of historic materials and proportions are less evident. The role of gardens and general open character provides a stronger linking element.

Character

Modern Estates

Modern housing

- Groups of homes built as single developments, often with strongly consistent design, materials and building type.

- Housing tends to have a clear building line and is set back with front and rear gardens.

- Strong predominance of two-storey scale with very consistent use of materials in defined areas.

- Estates tend to be inward-facing and lack connections to adjoining areas. Threshold/entrance features such as gateways can also lend an aspect of exclusiveness rather than integration.

- Parking for more modern and privately built estates tends to be on plot in garages or driveways, whilst older and publicly built estates tend to be focussed on street parking. Some homes feature rear access lanes to the gardens.

4 POPULATION

Population

Moate's population

The following information details the population of Moate, how it has changed in recent years and how it compares to the wider county of Westmeath and the national picture.

It uses data drawn from the 2016 census.

Moate Population Change

Census Year	Population
Census 2002	1,520
Census 2006	1,888
Census 2011	2,731
Census 2016	2,763

Preliminary results from Census 2022 available for the Electoral District in which Moate is situated indicate a population growth of 14.2% from 3,088 in 2016 to 3,526 in 2022. Preliminary Census 2022 results indicate the population of County Westmeath has increased by 8% from 88,770 to 95,840.

Moate's Population

Age Profile

	2011			2016		
	Moate	**Westmeath**	**State**	**Moate**	**Westmeath**	**State**
Population	2,731	86,164		2,763	88,770	
0-18	26.9%	28.0% 2	26.3%	28.0%	27.8%	26.3%
19-24	6.7%	7.4%	7.7%	5.5%	6.8%	7.0%
25-44	36.7%	30.6%	31.6%	32.9%	28.3%	29.5%
45-64	18.7%	22.6%	22.7%	21.1%	24.2%	23.8%
65+	10.9%	11.4%	11.7%	12.6%	12.8%	13.4%

Moate's Population

Principal Economic Status

	Moate	Westmeath	State
Persons aged 15 and over	1,145	35,289	
At work	53.9%	51.1%	53.4%
Looking for first regular job	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%
Unemployed	8.8%	8.6%	7.1%
Student	9.5%	11.3%	11.4%
Looking after home/family	7.3%	8.8%	8.1%
Retired	14.1%	13.9%	14.5%
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	4.6%	4.4%	4.2%
Other	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%

Persons at Work by Industry

	Moate	Westmeath	State
Total	1,145	41,255	
Agriculture forestry and fishing	1.3%	5.5%	4.4%
Building and construction	4.3%	5.6%	5.1%
Manufacturing industries	11.6%	12.9%	11.4%
Commerce and trade	22.7%	21.7%	23.9%
Transport and communications	8.0%	6.8%	8.5%
Public administration	7.1%	6.3%	5.3%
Professional services	23.7%	23.4%	23.5%
Other	21.0%	17.5%	17.8%

Moate's Population

Population by social class

	Moate	Westmeath	State
Total	2,763	88,770	4,761,865
Professional workers	5.2%	6.9%	8.1%
Managerial and technical	26.7%	26.6%	28.1%
Non-manual	16.8%	17.4%	17.6%
Skilled manual	14.2%	14.7%	14.1%
Semi-skilled	11.7%	10.8%	10.5%
Unskilled	2.9%	3.5%	3.6%
Gainfully occupied but unknown	22.2%	19.8%	18.0%

Persons at Work by Occupation

	Moate	Westmeath	State
Total	1,332	41,255	
Managers Directors and Senior Officials	7.5%	7.0%	7.4%
Professional Occupations	15.0%	15.9%	17.3%
Associate Prof and Technical Occupations	11.4%	9.7%	10.9%
Admin and Secretarial Occupations	9.5%	8.9%	10.0%
Skilled Trades Occupations	11.6%	15.5%	13.9%
Caring Leisure and Service Occupations	8.5%	7.9%	7.3%
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	7.4%	6.9%	6.8%
Process Plant and Machine Operatives	7.2%	7.6%	7.2%
Elementary Occupations	8.9%	8.8%	8.8%
Not stated	12.6%	12.0%	10.3%

Moate's Population

Education attainment

	Moate	Westmeath	State
No Formal Education	1.1%	2.1%	1.7%
Primary Education	7.7%	10.9%	10.8%
Lower Secondary	13.2%	15.3%	14.5%
Upper Secondary	18.6%	19.7%	18.5%
Technical or Vocational qualification	9.5%	9.2%	8.8%
Advanced Certificate/Completed Apprenticeship	6.7%	6.4%	5.9%
Higher Certificate	6.4%	5.2%	5.0%
Ordinary Bachelor Degree or National Diploma	7.1%	7.3%	7.7%
Honours Bachelor Degree Professional qualification or both	10.5%	9.4%	10.7%
Postgraduate Diploma or Degree	7.4%	7.3%	9.2%
Doctorate(Ph.D) or higher	0.3%	0.5%	0.9%
Not stated	11.0%	6.3%	6.4%

Moate's Population

Conclusions

Age profile

This data indicates that Westmeath and Moate have a slightly higher proportion of children than the national picture, which also corresponds with a slightly higher percentage of 25-44 year-olds in Moate. By contrast, the older age groups represent a slightly lower proportion that the national average.

Economic status

A slightly higher proportion of people are unemployed, including those looking for their first job, and the proportion of students is lower than the national picture.

Industries

The number involved in agriculture is notably lower than the national statistic, despite the wider Westmeath figure being higher than the average.

Social class

There is a notably lower proportion of professional workers in Moate than the county and national picture, but also a lower than typical proportion of unskilled workers. At the same time there is a larger than typical proportion for whom data is unknown.

Occupation

Moate's occupational breakdown corresponds broadly to the national and county trends, but with slightly lower proportions in professional and skilled trades.

Education

Moate's pattern of educational attainment corresponds well with the national and regional trend.

5 POLICY CONTEXT

Policy context

Introduction

Moate Town Centre First Masterplan will be developed within the context of a strategic planning framework. Key plans and policy are as follows:

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework and National Development Plan

- Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022

- Places for People - National Policy on Architecture 2022

- Realising our Rural Potential - Action Plan for Rural Development

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

- Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

- Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2015-2021

- Moate Action Plan 2018-2021
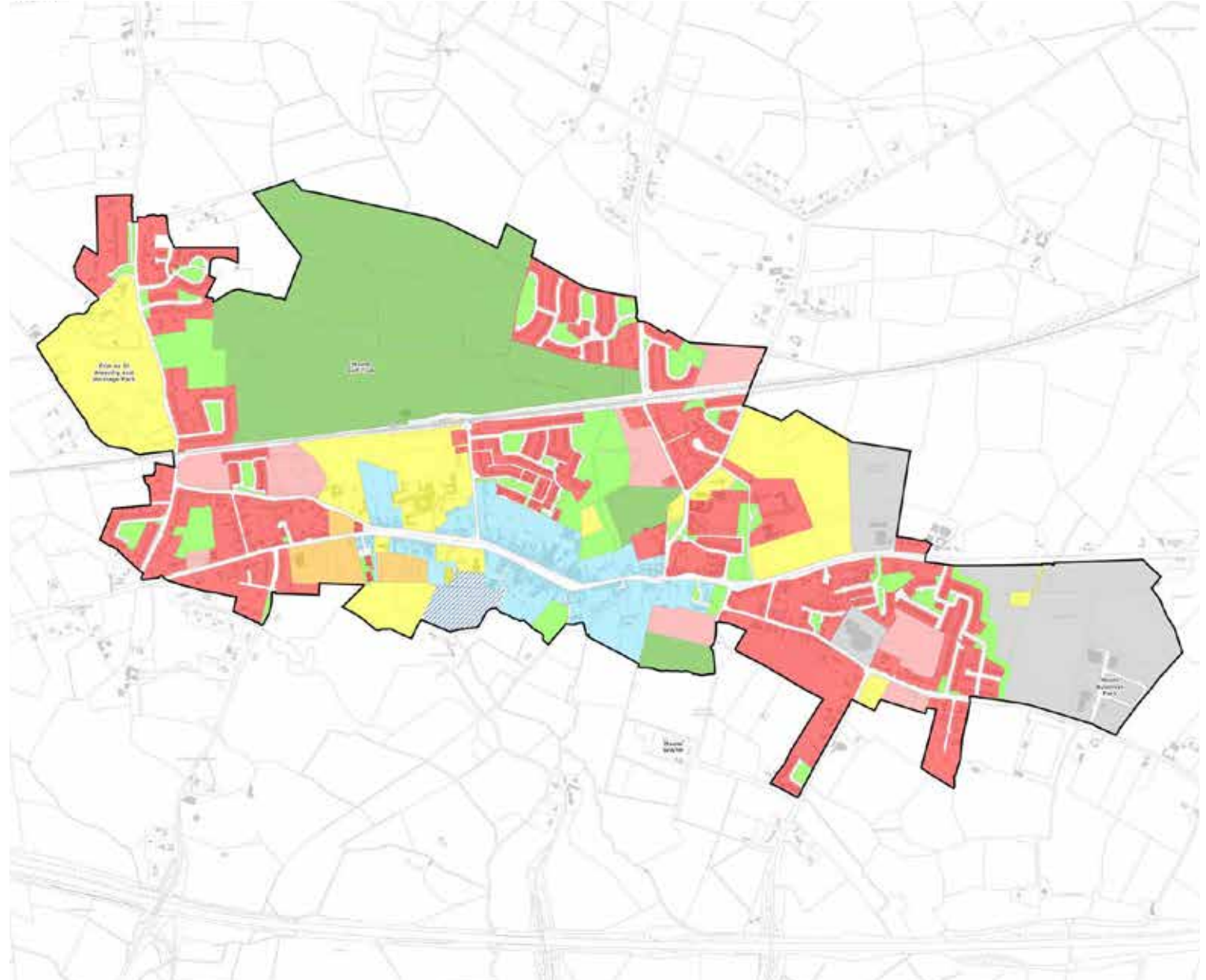
Policy context

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework and National Development Plan

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the government's strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to 2040. The NPF is partnered with the National Development Plan (NDP), which outlines a programme of investment. Regional and local plans must align with shared National Strategic Outcomes of these plans.
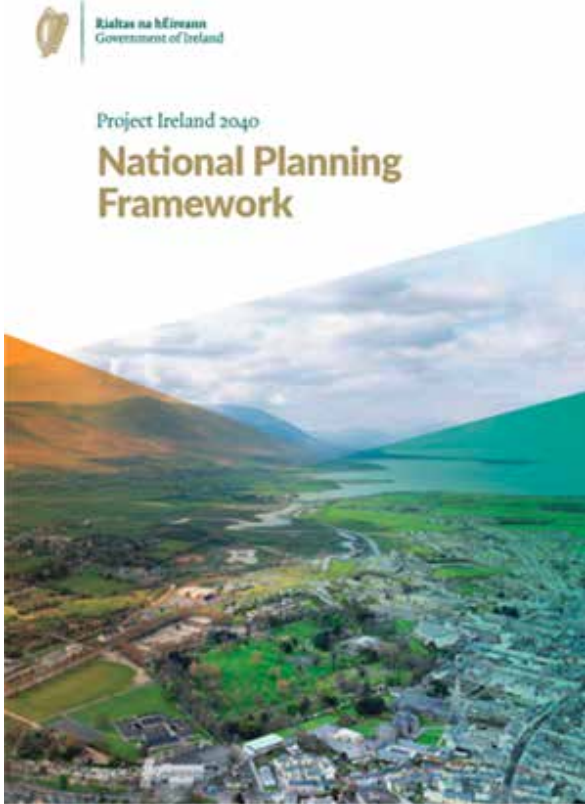
Policy context

Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022

Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns (TCF) provides a strategic and co-ordinated approach to the regeneration of Ireland's town centres. It is a core policy objective to 'create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community'. The TCF policy includes a focus on measures to tackle vacancy and dereliction, to create more vibrant and viable places, through greater occupancy for residential purposes and to encourage more business and footfall.

The policy is closely aligned with many National Strategic Outcomes such as Compact Growth, Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities, Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Amenities and the Transition to a Low Carbon Society.

The TCF policy lays the foundation for towns to develop, at a local level, their own planned path forwards. This is expressed through a tailored TCF Masterplan, underpinned by a clear diagnosis and analysis of strengths and challenges, together with a shared vision for future regeneration opportunities. Appendix 1 details publications to guide the preparation of masterplans: A Framework for Town Centre Renewal, the Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme and the RIAI Town and Village Toolkit.

Policy context

Places for People - National Policy on Architecture 2022

Places for People - National Policy on Architecture 2022 promotes quality architecture and design and outlines ways to deliver sustainable, high-quality buildings and public spaces. It promotes public engagement with architectural design and seeks to create resilient, vibrant and inclusive communities. It recognises the contribution that architecture can make to the implementation of National Strategic Outcomes and Town Centre First policy objectives.
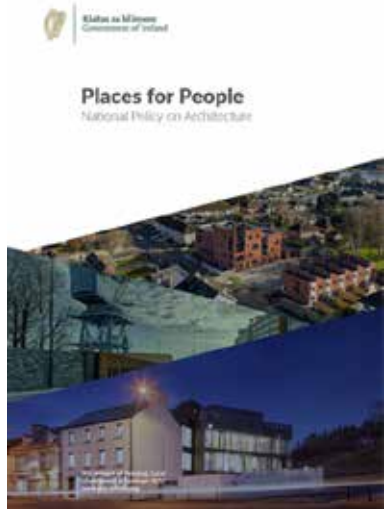
Realising our Rural Potential – Action Plan for Rural Development

Realising our Rural Potential – Action Plan for Rural Development places a focus on creating sustainable rural communities through a framework of supports at national and local level. The Action Plan takes a coordinated approach to economic and social development with a focus on the following:

• Supporting Sustainable Communities

• Supporting Enterprise and Employment

• Maximising Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential

• Fostering Culture and Creativity

• Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity

The Plan supports the implementation of strategies which will support local towns, villages and their environs.
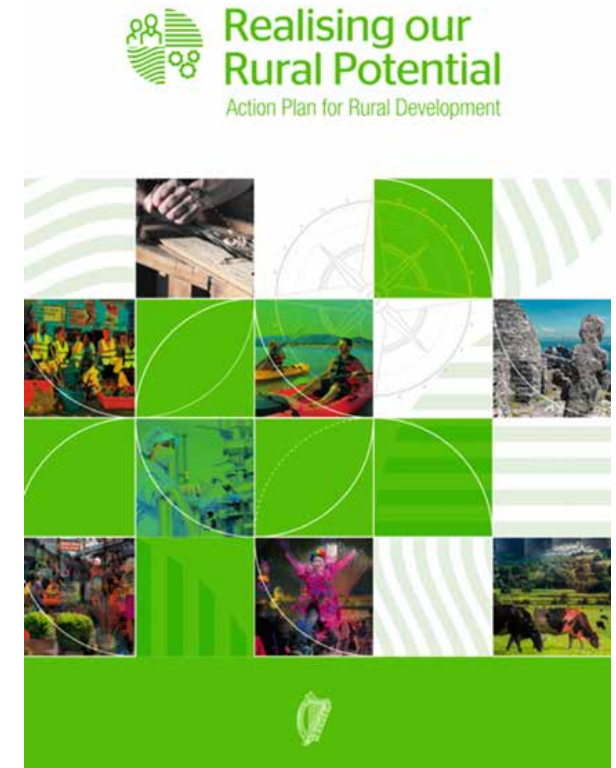
Policy context

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 developed by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) sets out a framework for the implementation of national plans at a regional level. The Strategy is underpinned by key cross-cutting principles: Healthy Placemaking, Climate Action and Economic Opportunity.

The RSES seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and NDP. To this end, the Strategy sets out 16 Regional Strategic Outcomes, which are aligned with international, EU and national policy and which in turn set the framework for development plans. These are illustrated in Fig. 2 and assist alignment with EU priorities to leverage funding and partnership opportunities.
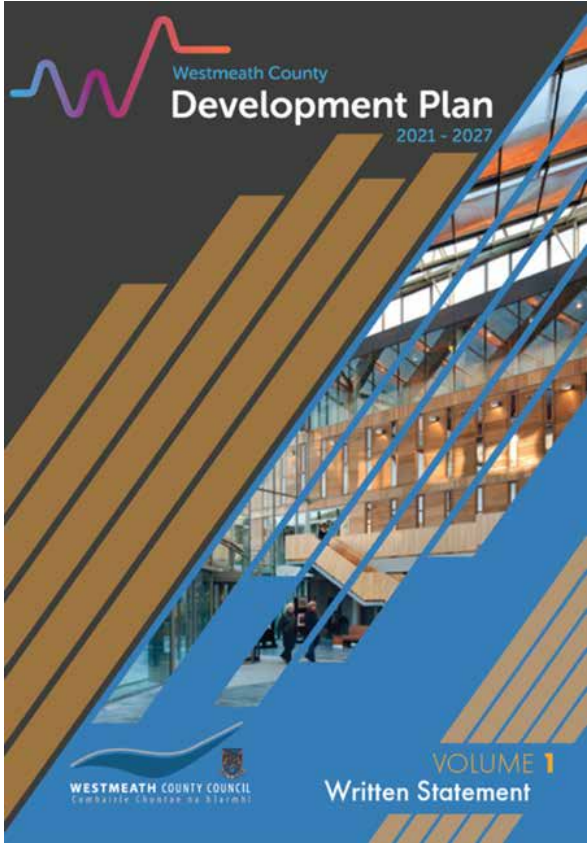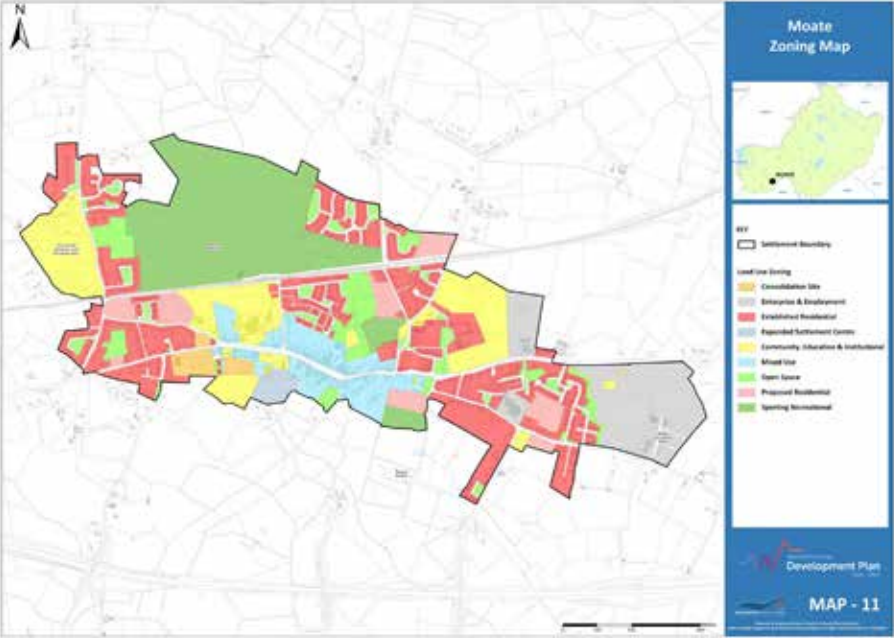
Policy context

Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Westmeath County Development Plan (WCDP) 2021-2027 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County for six years whilst aligning with longer term national and regional objectives. The Plan is committed to securing compact sustainable growth centred on the principles of regeneration, the achievement of successful and sustainable communities and to accelerate a transition to a greener, low carbon and climate resilient county.

As part of the WCDP Core Strategy, Moate is designated as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town which performs important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for its local rural hinterlands. The Plan identifies that regeneration opportunities in Moate, promoting the creation of local employment through the development of tourism and the expansion of services to meet the needs of residents and visitors, together with measures to visually enhance the public realm, historic character and setting through positive placemaking and plan-led interventions are key in realising the potential of Moate.

Policy context

Settlement Plan General Policy Objectives

CPO 8.127   Promote the development of Moate as a driver of economic growth in the area and fulfil its role as a designated Self-Sustaining Growth Town.

CPO 8.128   Support the expansion of services and facilities available to residents and the wider rural hinterland.
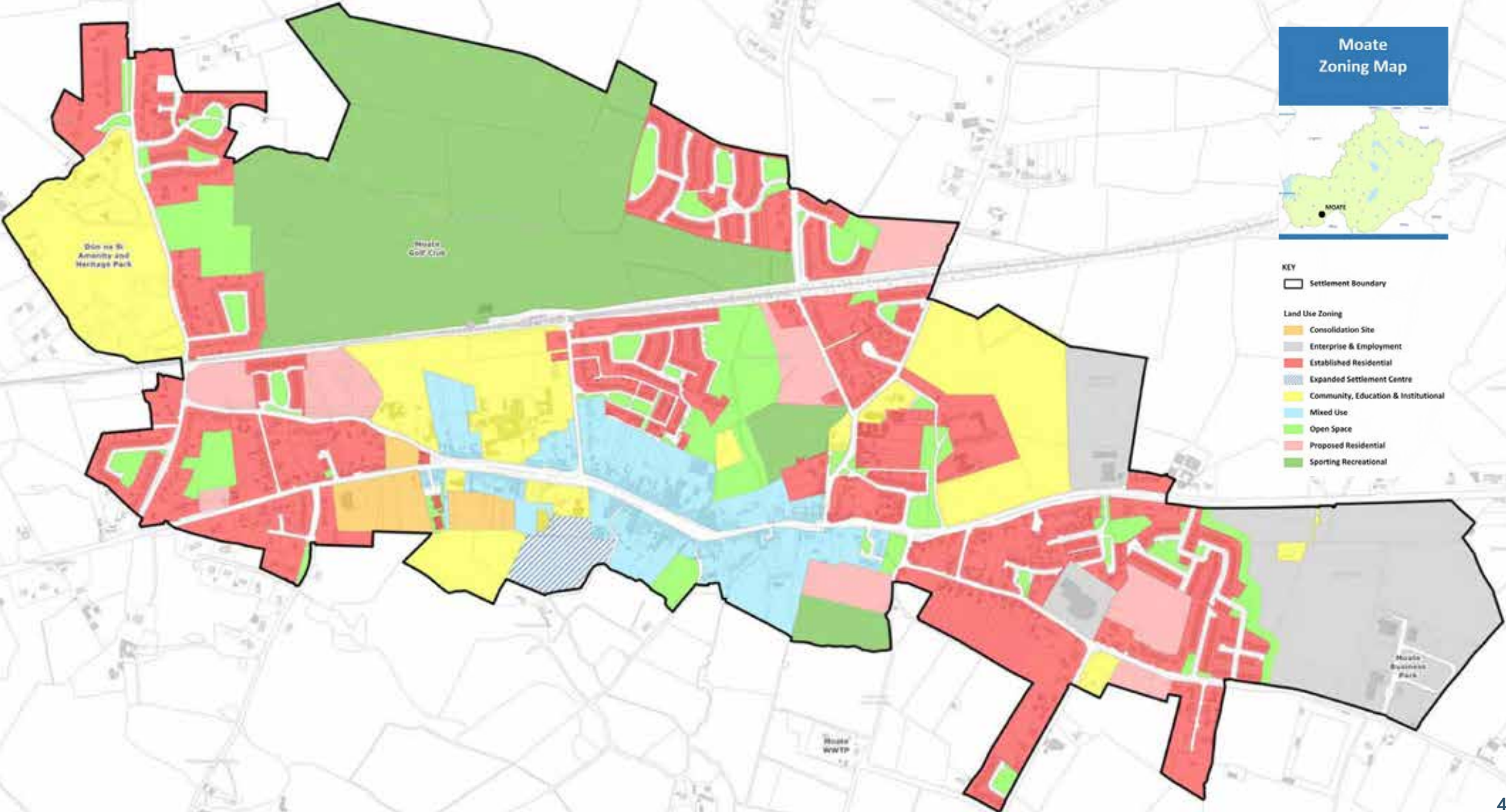
CPO 8.129   Through the engagement of community and wider private and public sector support and investment funds, including the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, promote and support the regeneration of Moate through identification of significant regeneration projects

CPO 8.130   Provide for the creation of sustainable communities in Moate by identifying sufficient land for new development, in particular housing, enterprise and employment, community and recreational uses.

Table 2.9: Core Strategy Table

Settlements	Population 2016	Population 2027	Population Change 2016-2027	Quantity of Land Area Required (Ha)	Proposed Residential ** (Ha)	Proposed Residential (Brownfield)	Proposed Residential*** (Infill)	Consolidation Sites (Ha)	Equivalent Area Proposed Zoned Residential	Housing Yield*
Tier 1 Regional Growth Centre										
Athlone (Ex. Roscommon)	16,612	22,154	5542	UAP		> 30%	> 30%			2590
Tier 2 Key Town										
Mullingar	20,928	26,003	5075	LAP		> 30%	> 30%			1340-2010
Tier 3 Self-Sustaining Growth Towns										
Castlepollard;	1163	1399	236	5.15	5.65	0.61	1.64	4.90	6.63	133-199
Moate;	2763	3325	562	12.26	11.68	5.62	5.22	3.95	12.47	249-374
Kinnegad;	2754	3303	549	11.98	11.26	4.25	3.24	3.92	12.04	241-362
Kilbeggan;	1288	1550	262	5.72	6.47	0	3.22	4.89	7.45	75-149
TOTAL				35.11	35.06	10.48	13.32	17.66	38.59	698-1,084
Tier 4 Self-Sustaining Towns										
Rochfortbridge	1473	1713	240	5.24	5.42			0	5.42	27-54
Killucan /Rathwire	1370	1593	223	4.87	4.37			3.04	4.98	25-50
TOTAL				10.11	9.79			3.04	10.40	52-104
Tier 5 Towns and Villages										
Clonmellon;	664	759	95	3.45	3.15			1.76	3.50	18-35
Tyrrellspass;	483	552	69	2.51	2.71			0	2.71	14-27
Delvin	740	845	105	3.82	4.76			1.02	4.96	25-50
TOTAL				9.78	10.62			2.78	11.17	57-112
Tier 6 Rural (Serviced)										
Multyfarnham, Ballymore, Ballynacargy, Ballinalack, Milltownpass, Collinstown, Glasson, Castletown-Geoghegan										
TOTAL				13.03	12.87			1.07	13.16	
Rural Remainder										
Rural WM	31,131	33,798	2667							

Moate Zoning Map

KEY

Settlement Boundary

Land Use Zoning

Consolidation Site
Enterprise & Employment
Established Residential
Expanded Settlement Centre
Community, Education & Institutional
Mixed Use
Open Space
Proposed Residential
Sporting Recreational

Policy context

Economic Development Policy Objectives

CPO 8.131   Support the consolidation and growth of existing enterprises and the development of employment opportunities within the town and encourage the smart specialisation approach to development which involves the clustering of distinct industrial sectors.

CPO 8.132   Facilitate the establishment of new enterprise and employment uses on lands identified for employment purposes.

CPO 8.133   Require all new enterprise development to be located within a landscape network and demonstrate high quality architectural built form that contributes to a positive sense of place and distinctiveness.

CPO 8.134   Development proposals on identified lands shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009' (See Map 13, Volume 2).

Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives

CPO 8.135   Provide for new residential development in accordance with the requirements of the Housing and Core Strategy.

CPO 8.136   Require that an appropriate mix of housing type, tenure, density and size is provided in all new residential areas to meet the needs of the population of Moate.

CPO 8.137   Encourage the appropriate redevelopment of brownfield and infill sites for residential uses within the footprint of the existing built-up area.

CPO 8.138   Support the development of a Primary School, including access roadway and associated infrastructure, on lands adjacent to the Community Centre on Church Street. Development proposals on land identified as being at risk of flooding shall be accompanied by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2009' (See Map 13, Volume 2).

Policy context

CPO 8.139   Work with the Irish Water and landowners to provide serviced sites for residential development within Moate (See Map 13, Volume 2).

CPO 8.140   Require proposals for new development to integrate with existing Green Infrastructure networks and contribute to the development and protection of overall Green Infrastructure assets.

Commercial and Retail Policy Objectives

CPO 8.141   Support the vitality and viability of Moate and facilitate a competitive and healthy environment for the commercial and retailing industry in line with the Westmeath County Retail Strategy.

CPO 8.142   Reinforce Moate Town Centre as the priority location for new commercial and retail development, with quality of design, integration and enhanced linkages being the key underpinning principles of an expanded mixed-use town core.

CPO 8.143   Support the provision of mixed-use developments in the town centre which create opportunities to live, work, shop, etc. within the town and reduce the propensity to travel by private car.

CPO 8.144   Encourage and facilitate the re-use and regeneration of derelict land and buildings for retail and other town centre uses, with due cognisance to the Sequential Approach.

Tourism Policy Objectives

CPO 8.145   Continue to encourage tourism related development in Moate.

CPO 8.146   Support activity-based tourism and use the marketing momentum behind Ireland's Hidden Heartlands to integrate its Tourism services into a strong and coherent offer that will build growing visitor numbers.

CPO 8.147   Support the development of Moate Railway Station as a tourist facility along the Old Rail Trail Greenway (See Map 13, Volume 2).

Policy context

CPO 8.148   Support the development of a Quaker Tourist Trail within the town to promote local history and cultural heritage.

CPO 8.149   Support initiatives to promote the Quaker Heritage of Moate.

Regeneration Policy Objectives

CPO 8.150   Secure and promote the consolidation of Moate Town Centre through encouraging the re-use and regeneration of lands and buildings along Main Street, with the key priority being the development of opportunity sites and ensuring their connectivity to the Main Street.

CPO 8.151   Support the redevelopment of identified Regeneration/Opportunity Site in the town (See Map 13, Volume 2).

CPO 8.152   Continue to identify sites in a poor state of repair or neglect under the Derelict Sites Act.

Placemaking Policy Objectives

CPO 8.153   Support the preparation and implementation of a Placemaking Strategy for Moate over the plan period.

CPO 8.154   Ensure that the town centre is accessible to all members of the community, including people with mobility issues, the elderly and people with young children.

CPO 8.155   Actively engage with the community, developers and other agencies to secure resources for the enhancement, renewal and regeneration of the public realm in Moate.

CPO 8.156   Prioritise the enhancement of the streetscape and heritage assets of the town centre, to continue environmental improvements, to sustain and improve its attraction for living, working, visiting and investment.

Heritage Policy Objectives

CPO 8.157   Promote and enhance existing archaeological, built and natural heritage elements associated with Moate and ensure their protection.

Policy context

CPO 8.158   Support the development of a dedicated Moate Heritage Trail incorporating the surrounding hinterlands to promote local history and cultural heritage.

CPO 8.159   Protect and maintain the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) in Moate and the buildings within the ACA and resist development proposals that would undermine the setting and interpretation of any structure located within the ACA.

CPO 8.160   Require works within the ACA in Moate to be carried out in accordance with the "Statement of Character" prepared for the ACA.

Chapter 7 Urban Centres and Placemaking, 7.4.2 Public Realm and Placemaking:

Public Realm and Place making Policy Objectives

CPO 7.1   Provide for a high-quality public realm and public spaces by promoting quality urban design that accommodates creative patterns of use having regard to the physical, cultural, and social identities of individual settlements.

CPO 7.2   Apply the following key attributes when considering public realm, public space enhancements and public seating:

- Accessible - connected and linked permeable spaces to ensure ease of movement.

- Functional - safe, adaptable and social environments to attract and foster activity.

- Attractive - visually pleasing spaces with high quality design, materials and installations (lighting, furniture and signage) based on a singular common design theme.

- Distinctive - reference to local context and building on the character and identity of place.

Healthy Placemaking Policy Objectives

CPO 7.3   Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes through the promotion of alternative modes of transport and 'walkable communities' whereby a range of facilities and services will be accessible within short walking or cycling distance.

Policy context

CPO 7.4 Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, through integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policies contained in development plans.

CPO 7.5 Support the vision and objectives of the National Sports Policy, including working with local sports partnerships, clubs, communities and partnerships within and beyond sport, to increase sport and physical activity participation levels locally.

CPO 7.6 Promote the development of healthy and attractive places by ensuring:

• Good urban design principles are integrated into the layout and design of new development.

• Future development prioritises the need for people to be physically active in their daily lives and promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces.

• New schools and workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks.

• The provision of open space considers different types of recreation and amenity uses with connectivity by way of safe, secure walking and cycling routes.

• Developments are planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, Green Infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.

Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives

CPO 7.7 Enhance the well-being and quality of life of the people of Westmeath through sustainable economic and community development.

CPO 7.8 Support the implementation of Local Authority Local Economic and Community Plans, in collaboration with Local and Economic Development Committees (LCDCs) and through the use of spatial planning policies, to seek to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the County.

CPO 7.9 Support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a

Policy context

range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

CPO 7.10   Support the development of sport and recreational facilities and community-related projects through the Council's Capital Programme.

Universal Design Policy Objectives

CPO 7.11   Require proposals for public realm enhancements to include inclusive universal design principles.

CPO 7.12   Require that new social infrastructure developments are accessible and inclusive for a range of users and provide for an age friendly society in which people of all ages and abilities can live full, active, valued and healthy lives.

CPO 7.13   Require that all new developments, including public open spaces, cater for disability needs by way of appropriate design of the built environment.

Placemaking for Climate Change Policy Objective

CPO 7.14   Require the incorporation of adaptable multi-functional and sensitive design solutions that supports the transition to low carbon, carbon resilient, sustainable and attractive environments.

Town Centres Policy Objectives

CPO 7.15   Support the use of targeted financial incentives to re-establish the role of town centres and encourage a greater take up of town centre development opportunities for retail, residential, commercial and leisure uses.

CPO 7.16   Seek funding to support the preparation of site-specific Public Realm Strategies to enhance the unique characteristics and assets of Westmeath's towns and villages.

Policy context

Town Centre Management and Place-making Policy Objectives

CPO 7.17   Prepare and deliver Placemaking and Visual Appearance Strategies for Athlone and Mullingar, in order to support their roles as Regional Centre and Key Towns respectively.

CPO 7.18   Promote the value of placemaking in town centres, by preparing a Placemaking Strategy for the towns of Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Moate and Kinnegad.

CPO 7.19   Provide for improvements to the appearance of streetscapes and revitalising of public spaces for example with cost effective, temporary uses that build on the longer-term vision for space.

CPO 7.20   Support investment in town and village centres so that they can become more diverse, sustainable and thriving places for communities to live, work and enjoy.

CPO 7.21   Ensure the best quality of design is achieved for all new commercial and residential development and that design respects and enhances the specific characteristics and heritage of the different towns and villages in the County.

CPO 7.22   Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town centres, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land.

CPO 7.23   Support and sustain the vitality and viability of town and village centres by ensuring that retail proposals enhance and positively reinforce the public realm.

CPO 7.24   Prioritise a Town Centres First collaborative and strategic approach to the regeneration of our villages and towns, using the Collaborative Town Centres Health Check (CTCHC) framework to gather data and lead actions.

CPO 7.25   Support the key attributes and strategies as detailed in the Framework for Town Centre Renewal 2017.

Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Development in Urban Areas Policy Objectives

CPO 7.26   Support and facilitate the ambitious regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield/infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands.

Policy context

CPO 7.27   In order to promote the development of brownfield / infill and back land sites, the Council will consider, in appropriate circumstances, the implementation of mechanisms such as the preparation of site development briefs, use of compulsory acquisition of lands and development incentives.

CPO 7.28   Monitor the development of greenfield land and rural housing in the open countryside versus brownfield / infill and back land development over the plan period.

CPO 7.29   Facilitate the delivery of sustainable, compact, sequential growth and urban regeneration in the town core of Key Towns by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of identified key town centre infill/brownfield/back land sites promoting sustainable higher densities.

CPO 7.30   Combine active land management with best practice planning policies to deliver compact urban growth through the delivery of innovative adaptable urban schemes.

CPO 7.31   Facilitate higher and increased building heights at suitable locations and in accordance with settlement hierarchy in line with 'Specific Planning Policy

Requirement' (SSPR) 1 of the 'Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities' (2018). In this regard, the locations for increased building height will be informed by a buildings height study and identified as part of the UAP and LAP to be prepared for Athlone and Mullingar respectively.

CPO 7.32   Promote regeneration and revitalisation of small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural areas.

Vacant Site Policy Objectives

CPO 7.33   Maintain and update a Vacant Sites Register in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 to include Tier 1 – Tier 3 settlements within Westmeath.

CPO 7.34   Facilitate the implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, in particular, by way of utilising site activation measures, including the provision of the Vacant Site Levy, as appropriate to assist in bringing forward vacant and/or underutilised 'residential' zoned land and 'regeneration' land into beneficial use within lands

Policy context

identified and zoned within the town boundary of all towns contained within Tier 1 – Tier 3 of the settlement hierarchy for Co. Westmeath.

Urban Regeneration Development Policy Objectives

CPO 7.35   Promote the consolidation of town centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused buildings and strategic sites and the establishment of a mix of uses incorporating green space considerations to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours.

CPO 7.36   Promote the utilisation of available funding to support the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks incorporating green space considerations.

CPO 7.37   Work with the National Land Development Agency in co-ordinating and developing large, strategically located landbanks, particularly publicly owned lands in Athlone and Mullingar.

CPO 7.38   Require all development proposals for strategic brownfield and infill sites to be accompanied by a site brief and/or masterplan that sets out a phased programme for the

regeneration of the site and demonstrates how the proposal will comply with National Guidelines that seek to integrate principles of good urban design, planning and placemaking.

CPO 7.39   Set out measures to reduce vacancy and the under use of existing building stock and support initiatives that promote the reuse, refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings within urban centres.

CPO 7.40   Use specific powers, such as the Vacant Sites register, to address issues of vacancy and underutilisation of strategic lands in town centres, including the implementation of the Vacant Sites Levy in accordance with the provisions of the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015.

CPO 7.41   Encourage pilot projects for the re-use of brownfield sites and encourage active temporary uses where feasible to encourage activation of vacant sites that require longer lead in time for regeneration.

Policy context

Rural Regeneration Policy Objectives

CPO 7.42   Support the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas and promoting the utilisation of investment opportunities such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

CPO 7.43   Support the viability of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes targeted in core areas.

CPO 7.44   Support the regeneration of rural towns and villages through identification of regeneration projects for rural villages and rural areas and promoting the utilisation of investment opportunities such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund.

CPO 7.45   Support the viability of small towns and villages through sustainable targeted measures that address vacant premises and deliver sustainable reuse and regeneration outcomes targeted in core areas.

Urban-Rural Interface Policy Objective

CPO 7.46   Protect the unique setting of towns and villages by providing for the maintenance of strong defined urban edges.

Place making for Business and Enterprise Policy Objectives

CPO 7.47   Require Design Statements for all new business and enterprise development proposals to present a strong and positive visual presence underpinned by sustainable and energy efficient development principles.

CPO 7.48   Require planning applications for business and enterprise proposals to be accompanied with a Mobility Management Plan to include a site-specific programme to facilitate and promote sustainable operational practices including the use of public transport services and an emphasis on walking and cycling.

Policy context

Place making for Residential Respite and Retirement Homes Policy Objective

CPO 7.49   Implement the following criteria when designing proposals for residential care homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation:

- Location/Placemaking - Locate new developments close (walking distance) to services and amenities.

- Physical Considerations – Employment of Universal Design standards.

- Technology - Integrate technology into developments, enhancing safety and security, health monitoring, comfort and social connectedness.

- Social Supports - Integrate social supports into developments, access to information, find non-health service-based solutions.

- The potential impact on residential amenities of adjoining properties.

- Adequate provision of open space informed by the need to cater for all levels of disability and in particular the needs of an ageing population and mobility impaired users, in line with Ministerial and Departmental guidelines.

- Apply standards outlined in the Housing Options for Our Ageing Population and the Housing Agency document 'Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Modes for an Ageing Population'.

- Provision of adequate parking facilities.

- Innovative high-quality design and materials.

Quality of Place Policy Objective

CPO 7.50   Promote the utilisation of the available funding e.g. Regional Enterprise Development Funds, Urban Development Fund and EU Regional Development Funds to support an attractive, healthy economic environment in the County.

Digital

Digital Town Blueprint

The Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) is an entry-level assessment for local authorities, chambers of commerce, and other local community groups interested in understanding the current digital readiness of their town. The DTB has been designed to help towns rapidly and cost-effectively:

- Understand their current digital town readiness and digital competitiveness;
- Compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks;
- Stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalisation.

Seven dimensions of analyses

The DTB analyses digital readiness across seven dimensions, accomplished through a combination of primary research, desk research, secondary data, key informant interviews and automated data collection techniques.

The seven dimensions are:

I. Infrastructure for Connectivity – the deployment of fixed and mobile broadband infrastructure and the availability of free public Wi-Fi and digital rural hubs.

II. The Digital Economy and Digital Business – the use of digital technology by local businesses and their level of sophistication.

III. Digital Public Services – the use and sophistication of digital technology by both local government and health, and the availability of local open data.

IV. Digital Education – the support for and use and sophistication of digital technology by education providers, and the provision of training and education in digital technologies across all levels.

V. Digital Technologies and Civil Society – the use and sophistication of digital technologies by community and voluntary groups in a town.

VI. Digital Tourism – the use and sophistication of digital technology to attract tourists and deliver a distinctive tourism experience.

VII. Governance of Digital Town Initiatives - the degree of coordination across the town on digitalisation including (a) integration across different elements of policy making, and across policy and other stakeholders, and (b) integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere.

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

Digital Town Blueprint

2023 Town Report

Moate, Co. Westmeath

16 March 2023

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Findings summary

Based on the analysis undertaken as part of this process, Moate has been given an overall Digital Town Score **43**.

The findings therefore suggest that Moate's "Digital Readiness is Clearly Defined and Documented", and that: "There is clear evidence of digital readiness. Use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities are documented and planned."

A key objective of the analysis is to provide an insight into key indicators for improvement at a town-level. The numbers individually have very little meaning without comparators however as presented do show gaps between performance today and potential in the future. The findings note that "KPIs are competitive relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages."

The spider diagram shown opposite provides a summary of Moate's digital readiness in each of the dimensions of analyses.
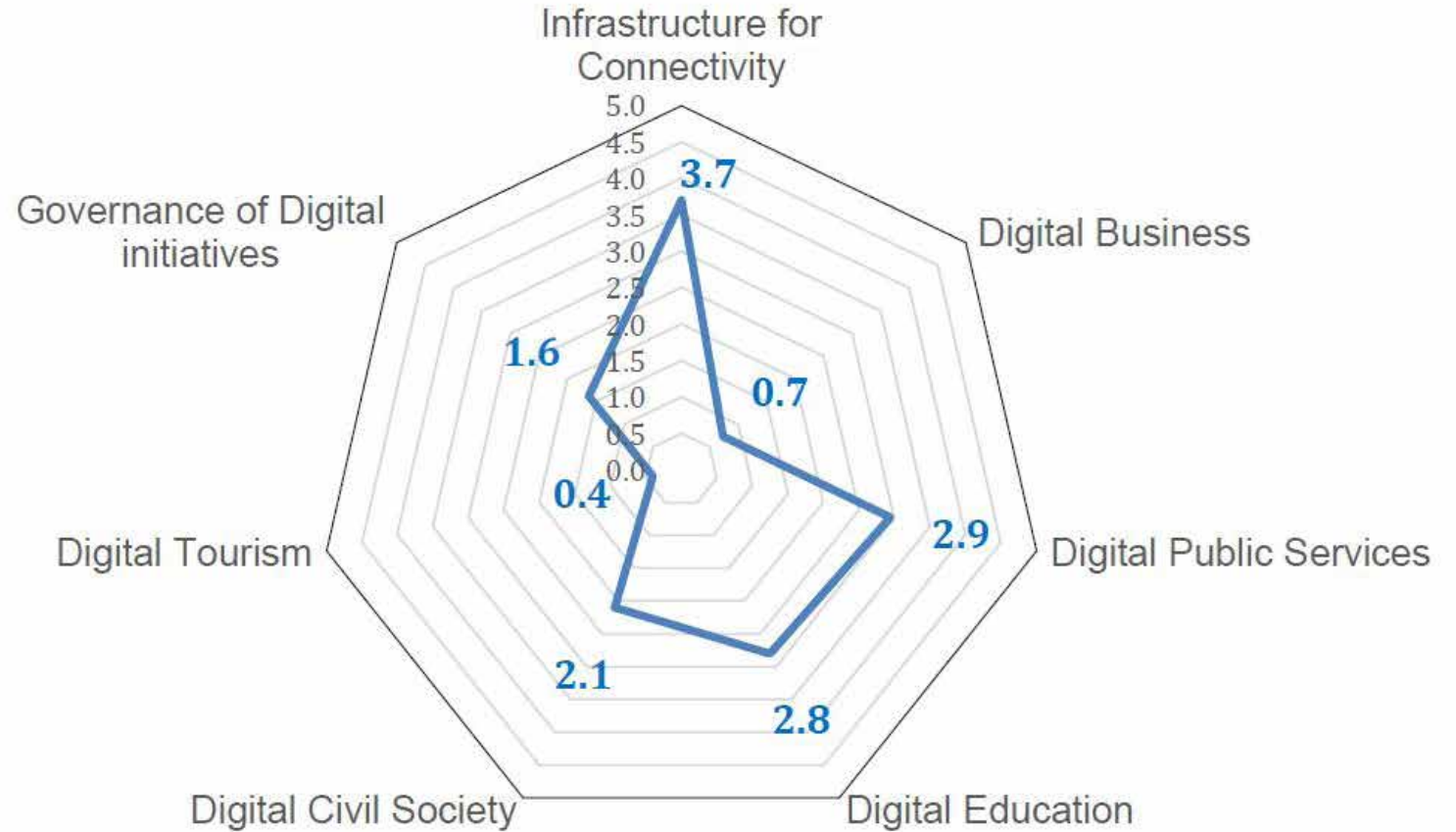
Digital Town Blueprint findings

Infrastructure for connectivity

Infrastructure for connectivity includes broadband and mobile connectivity, free public Wi-Fi, rural digital hubs, amongst others. Increased connectivity can contribute positively to economic growth and household income levels, and can result in increased employability, retail transactions, time-savings, and other community benefits.

The connectivity dimension of the DTB presented in this report consists of five indicators weighted as follows:

• Fixed broadband (35%)
• Mobile broadband (35%)
• Competition (10%)
• Free public Wi-Fi (10%)
• Rural digital hubs (10%)

Moate scored well on most of the indicators for this dimension. It did, however, score poorly in relation to Rural Digital Hubs. Connected Hubs is an initiative under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme operated by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The National Hub Network provides a vehicle for individual hubs to come together under a shared identity to maximise the economic opportunity of remote working.

Four indicators are used to measure rural digital hubs - (i) the availability of a connected hub, (ii) the number of connected hub desks available for use, (iii) the number of connected hub meeting rooms available for use, and (iv) availability of other spaces dedicated to co-working - Moate scored 0 in all.

2.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for infrastructure for connectivity is **3.7**.

Table 8 Infrastructure for Connectivity Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Fixed broadband	35%	4.5
Mobile broadband	35%	3.7
Competition	10%	4.5
Free public Wi-Fi	10%	3.8
Rural digital hubs	10%	0.0
Overall score	100%	3.7

So what?
Could Moate explore the creation of a rural digital hub through the Connected Hubs initiative?

So what?
Could new shared workspaces proposed as part of the TCFM become rural digital hubs listed on connectivityhubs.ie.?

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Digital business

The adoption and use of digital technologies provides clear benefits to businesses in rural towns including cost savings, operational efficiency, information technology (IT) resilience and scalability, easier access to new markets, and marketing effectiveness, amongst others. 27 Digital technologies can represent the basis for a competitive advantage for small to medium sized businesses and enable them to compete with larger firms.

The digital business dimension comprises three sub-dimensions with equal weighting:
• Website Technology Intensity Score;
• Digital technology take-up;
• E-commerce take-up.

Moate generally scored poorly in most indicators for this dimension, particularly in relation to Web Technology Intensity Score. Businesses should explore further opportunities to utilise web technology to boost their economic activity.

So what?
Could Moate businesses make better use of technology to help boost economic activity?

3.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital business is **0.7**.

Table 11 Digital Business Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Website Technology Intensity Score	33.3%	0.5
Digital technology take-up	33.3%	0.7
E-commerce take-up	33.3%	1.0
Overall score	**100%**	**0.7**

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Digital public services

Governments play a key role in our society by providing citizens and businesses with access to a range of essential public services. Digital technologies can improve transparency, responsiveness and efficiency in the delivery of these services.

E-health is a specific type of service that is a high priority for digitalisation, and this digitalisation accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local healthcare providers (e.g., general practitioners and pharmacists), play a central role in facilitating access to and delivery of care in rural areas as they represent the main point of contact between the healthcare system and citizens.

Another aspect of digital public services that is often not considered explicitly is the availability of open data. This involves making data, in this case public sector information (PSI), freely available in open formats and ways that enable public access and facilitate exploitation. A host of benefits are associated with open data which includes providing the scope for faster government decision making, better resource allocation, efficient and effective delivery of more personalised public services, increased citizen participation, and greater private sector innovation.

Following DESI, the digital public services dimension comprises three subdimensions:
- E-government readiness;
- E-health;
- Open data.

4.5 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital public services is **2.8**.

Table 23 Digital Public Services Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
E-government readiness	40%	4.0
E-health	40%	2.6
Open data	20%	1.0
Overall score	**100%**	**2.8**

So what?
Could Westmeath County Council provide more accessible open data for Moate, and establish an open data policy?

So what?
Could Moate's healthcare providers make better use of Website Technology?

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Digital education

Digital education refers to the use and sophistication of digital technologies for teaching and learning in formal and non-formal education within a community, and the infrastructure required to support such provision. The adoption and use of digital technologies in education is driven by a variety of rationales. They can help prepare citizens to participate, work and function more fully in a society permeated by digital technologies, increase accessibility to education, differentiate educational institutions, and increase the efficiency, cost effectiveness and quality of education delivery, amongst others.

The education dimension comprises four sub-dimensions with the following weightings:

• Pre-primary - 10%;
• Primary - 30%;
• Post-primary - 30%; and,
• Digital skills education availability - 30%

The results indicate that Pre-primary businesses in Moate are not making best use of Website Technology to promote and enhance their business.

The findings also indicate that Moate would benefit from having more digital skills educations outside of pre-primary, formal primary and post-primary education. Existing availability of digital courses is limited, and findings suggest that the following should be explored as part of an expanded digital skills education programme in the town:

• digital skills courses for young people
• digital skills courses for seniors
• other digital skills courses

5.6   OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for education is **2.8**.

Table 38 Digital Education Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Pre-primary	10%	0.0
Primary	30%	3.5
Post-primary	30%	4.9
Digital skills education availability	30%	1.0
Overall score	**100%**	**2.8**

So what?
Could Moate's pre-primary businesses make better use of Website Technology?

So what?
Could Moate provide more opportunities to enhance digital skills for younger and older generations?

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Digital civil society

Civil society includes a wide range of organizations with varying roles and purposes including those involved in culture and recreation, education and research, health, social services, environmental sustainability, development and housing, law advocacy and politics, philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism promotion, international activities and promotion, religion, business and professional etc.

They play an important role in society by promoting community engagement and citizenship values, advocating distinct interests and diverse points of view, delivering services, and creating economic value. For example, in 2018, there were over 19,500 such organisations registered in Ireland with nearly 200,000 voluntary directors or trustees and paid employees; they are a significant economic force with over €10.9 billion in annual turnover.

Civil society is a critical part of the social fabric throughout Ireland, and one might argue especially in rural communities whose identity may be linked to a local parish, sports club, or other social activity.

The civil society dimension measures the use of digital technologies by voluntary bodies or social groups serving the needs of the Moate community. It includes sports clubs, charities, political organisations, and other community groups.

The civil society dimension comprises three sub-dimensions:

• WTIS
• Digital technology take-up
• E-commerce take-up

6.3 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for civil society is **2.1**.

Table 41 Digital Civil Society Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Website Technology Intensity Score	33.3%	2.5
Digital technology take-up	33.3%	2.8
E-commerce take-up	33.3%	1.0
Overall score	100%	2.1

So what?
Could Moate's voluntary and social groups make better use of Website Technology to enhance their important function and role in the town?

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Digital tourism

Tourism is a significant economic sector in Ireland. It is often the only major source of employment outside of agriculture in many rural areas. It is a key element of Irish rural development policy and features prominently in both the National Planning Framework, Our Rural Future, and Town Centre First.

Digital tourism is often confused with smart tourism although they share the same goals i.e. supporting innovation and driving positive transformation within destinations using technology, data analysis and digitalisation. Whereas smart tourism is concerned with connecting the digital and physical world, digital tourism is building wider digital connections between organisations, people, and places. In this sense, digital technologies not only play an important role in helping visitors discover, experience, and develop a long standing relationship with a place, in this case, a rural town.

The tourism dimension seeks to measure the use and sophistication of digital technology to attract tourists and deliver a distinctive tourism experience. The digital tourism dimension comprises three sub-dimensions:

• Digital readiness of tourism businesses;
• Smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure;
• Tourism destination website and maturity.

In DESI 2022, Ireland was the top ranked country in the EU for the integration of digital technology dimension.

The study assessed Moate's tourist attractions for their digital readiness and found that none of the 4 attractions and destination sites identified had a web presence.

The study also identified a lack of smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure in the town and at primary tourist destinations in the town, as well as a lack of a Tourism destination website with important tourist information.

7.5 OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for digital tourism is **0.4**.

Table 47 Digital Tourism Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Digital readiness of tourism businesses	60%	0.5
Smart tourism and digital tourism infrastructure	20%	0.5
Tourism destination website and maturity	20%	0.0
Overall score	**100%**	**0.4**

So what?
Could Moate's better harness Website Technology to better promote its tourist attractions and destinations?

So what?
Could Moate develop a Tourism Destination Website and social media presence to better promote its tourism potential?

Digital Town Blueprint findings

Governance of digital town initiatives

The delivery of complex and multifaceted policy objectives such as digitalisation requires significant coordination among a wide range of stakeholders. As such, it requires appropriate governance mechanisms that enable widespread participation while also guiding the implementation of the policy objectives. The Governance of Digital Town Initiatives measures two types of governance mechanisms - horizontal and vertical integration. Horizontal integration refers to integration across different elements of policy making, and across policy and other stakeholders. Vertical integration of policy making refers to the integration across different levels within the governance or policy sphere.

Coordination of digitalisation measures the extent to which different digitalisation initiatives within a town are coordinated. One potential coordinating entity was identified for the coordination of digital initiatives in Moate, Moate Action Group (MAG), although evidence of current digital activity is limited. MAG is a voluntary organisation aimed at improving Moate town; their primary digital presence is a Facebook page.

There is free outdoor public Wi-Fi at the Tuar Ard Arts Centre in Moate however there is no rural digital hub listed on connectivityhubs.ie. All other digital initiatives would seem to be coordinated by Westmeath County Council and state agencies

8.4   OVERALL SCORE

Based on the above analysis, the overall DTB score for governance is **1.6**.

Table 52 Governance of Digital Initiatives Dimension Scores

Indicator	Weight	Score
Horizontal integration	75%	0.5
Vertical integration	25%	5.0
Overall score	**100%**	**1.6**

So what?
Could Moate's Town Team or MAG help to better coordinate digital initiatives in the town?

So what?
Could funding be applied for to support digital initiatives?

So what?
Could a citizen participation plan for digitalisation initiatives be established for Moate?

6 MOVEMENT

Movement

Overview

The R446 regional road bisecting the town used to serve the Dublin-Galway route and had high levels of car traffic at the time. After constructing the M6 bypass to the south of Moate, the town has experienced a significant decrease in external traffic, and the possibility to enforce the 50km/h speed limit through the town. This has opened the opportunity to redefine its Main Street (R446) for the benefit of the town's population and visitors.

Public transport is limited, with no railway station serving the town and a level of local and regional bus service which does not have the frequency or speed of service to compete on level terms with car travel.

Active travel facilities within the town are varied in quality and are mainly supported by the implementation of the Old Rail Trail Greenway project. The greenway extends 42km from Mullingar to Athlone forming part of the proposed 277km Dublin to Galway National Cycle Network (NCN). This has provided Moate with a safer cycling environment and increased the connectivity to residential settlements located in the periphery.

There are also a number of bike stands on the Main Street. Planned proposals to enhance the walking and cycling facilities between the greenway and Main Street (R446) along Station Road are supported by the county council.

Walking infrastructure in Moate is mostly available on Main Street with footpaths on both sides of the road and three signalised crossings located in front of the public library, near the junction with Station Road, and the secondary school. The footpaths are not of high quality and are not consistent along Main Street where parking spaces dominate the street frontage. The continuity of the footpaths is often obstructed by vehicular access points. Lack of adequate crossing and walking facilities is prevalent in the rest of the town with wide junctions allowing for higher speeds of vehicular traffic.

Movement

Public transport

With regards to public transport infrastructure, Clara station is the closest train station to Moate, almost 11km away. Moate is served by only one bus stop along the Main Street, which is about approximately 2km in length through the town. It is located centrally within Moate and is provided with shelters in both directions. However, it appears insufficient to provide adequate cover to the town's catchment, with under-served areas within the town, as illustrated in the Figure 3. Table 1 shows the routes that serve the bus stop and their frequency and Figure 5 shows the existing bus network in the county and also Moate.

Bus	Origin-Destination	Frequency
70	Galway - Athlone - Moate - Mullingar - Dundalk	Once a day
190	Drogheda - Navan - Trim - Mullingar - Moate - Athlone	Ten times daily
73	Waterford – Moate - Athlone - Longford	Twice a day
763	Galway - Ballinasloe - Athlone - Moate - Dublin	Eight times daily
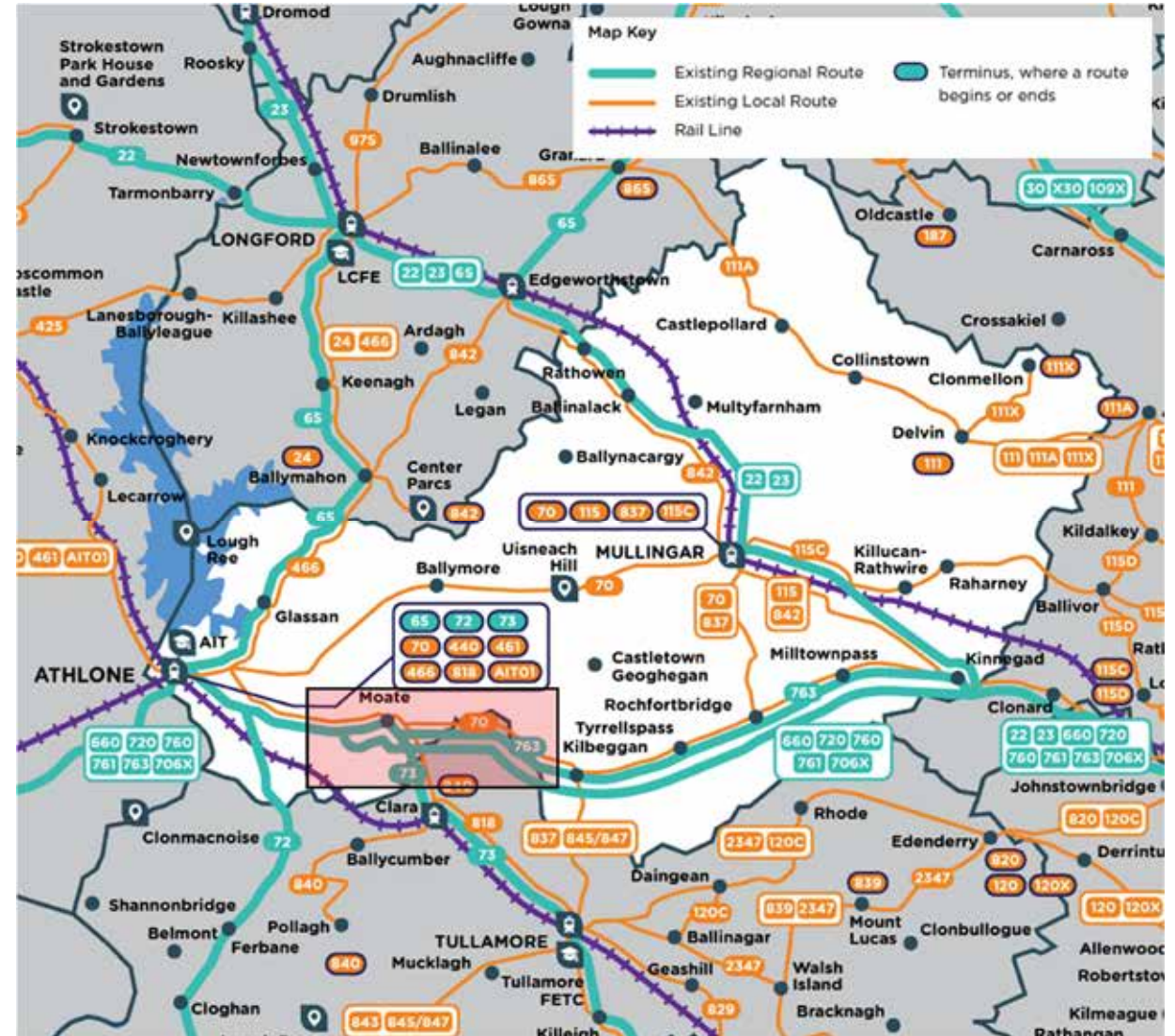
Movement

Public transport

A new bus network is planned to serve Moate as part of the National Transport Authority's (NTA) Connecting Ireland initiative. The improvements to the bus network will ensure enhanced level of public transport supply for Moate and nearby towns. The proposed bus routes and service frequencies within County Westmeath and Moate are as follows:

29 (replacing 70 & 190) - Drogheda - Navan - Trim - Mullingar - Moate - Athlone

Minimum service frequency of 60 minutes

15 (replacing 73) - Athlone - Moate - Tullamore - Portlaoise - Abbeyleix -Kilkenny

Minimum service frequency of 2 hours

23 (replacing 763) - Galway - Oranmore - Loughrea - Ballinasloe - Athlone - Moate - Dublin

Minimum service frequency of 2 hours
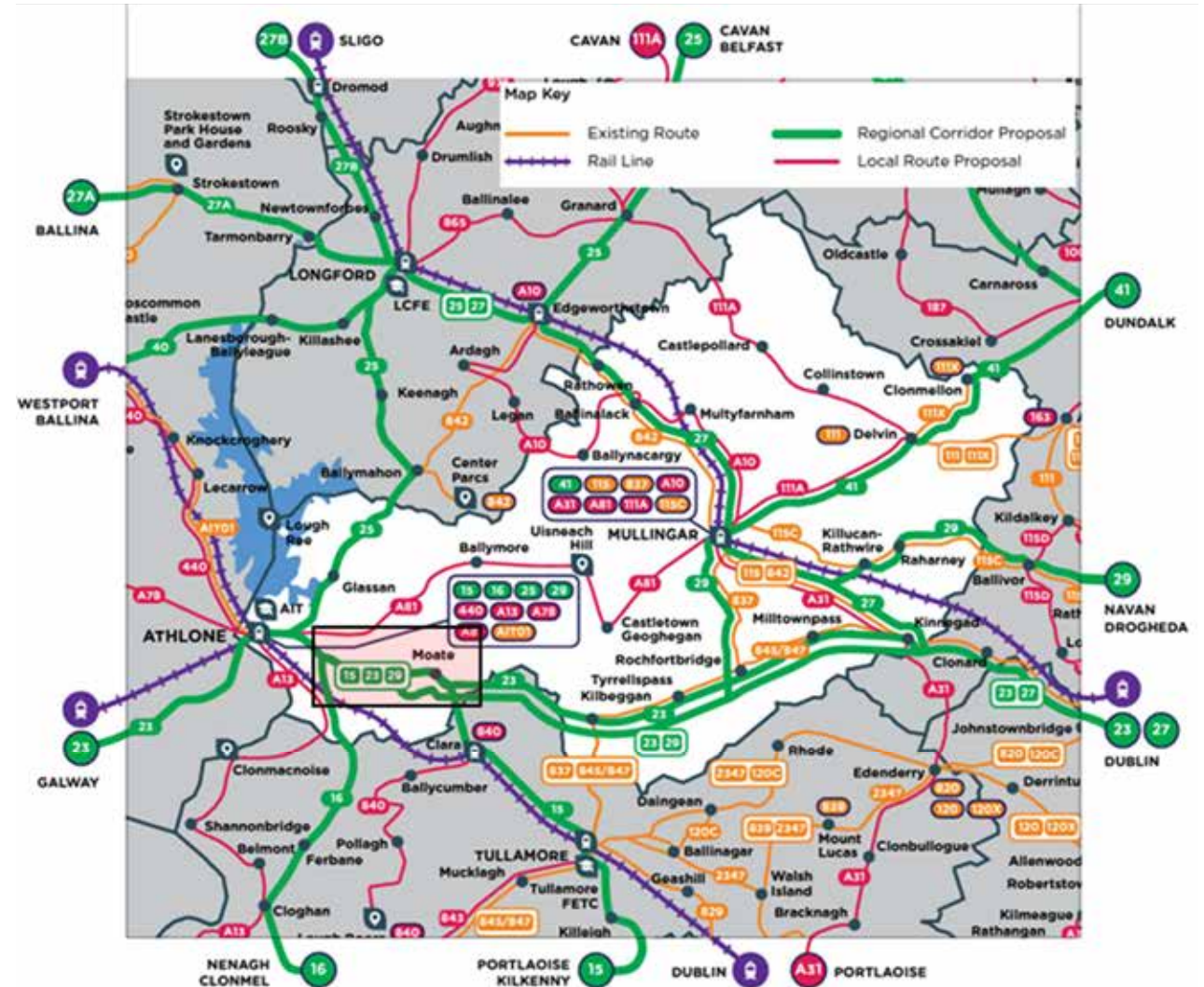
Movement

Car ownership and modal share

Household car ownership

Car ownership is high in Moate with 84% of households owning at least one car. This mirrors the reliance of Moate residents on private vehicles, as discussed earlier. This is consistent with the transport characteristics of similar rural towns, and reflects the context of poor public transport service and limited active travel infrastructure in the town.

Legend:
- No Cars
- 1 Car
- 2 Cars
- 3 Cars
- 4 or more

1%, 4%, 16%, 36%, 43%
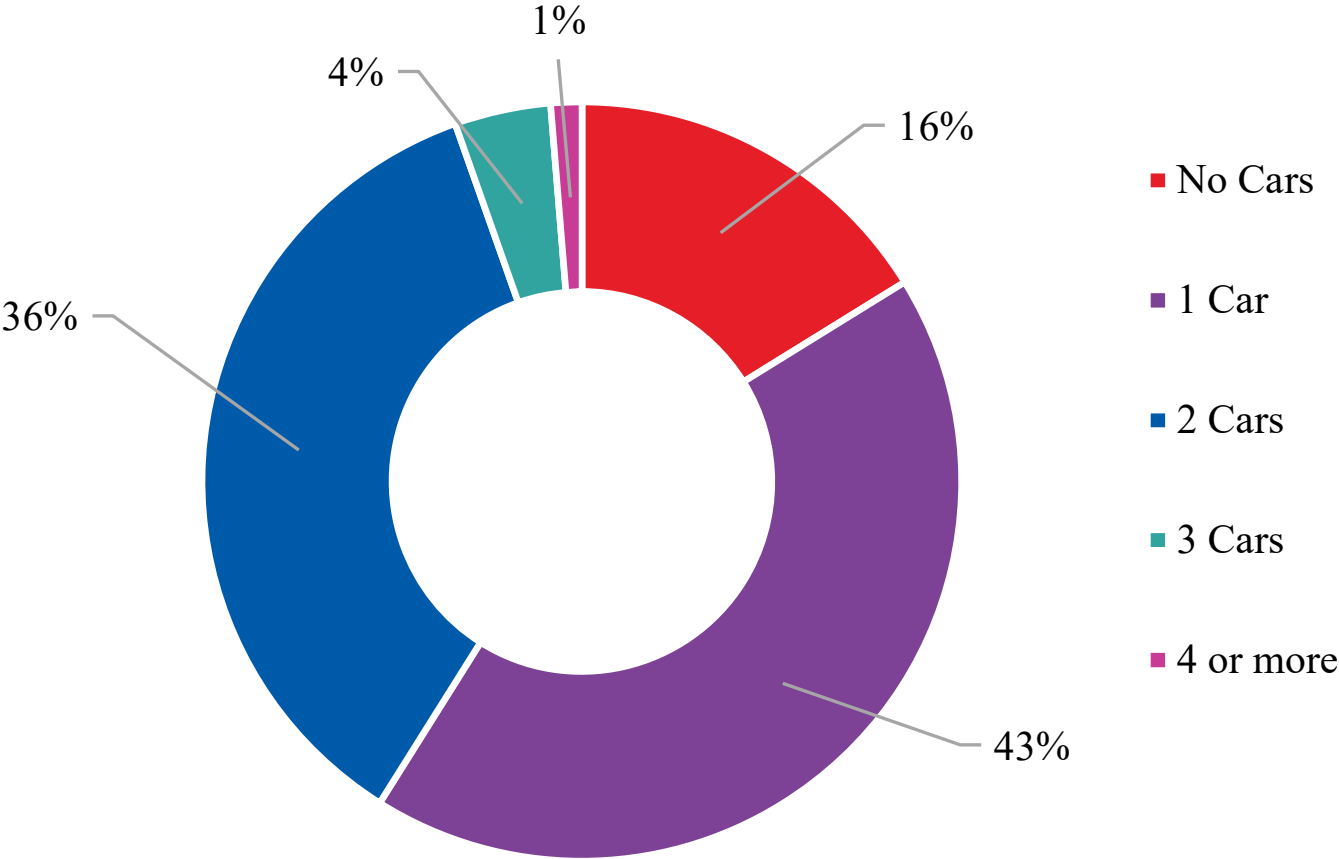
Movement

Modal split - work trips

Moate's residents are shown to be heavily dependant on car travel for work commutes. Car use accounts for 79% of trips - significantly higher than the national average of 66%

Broader car trip data

Analysis of the origin-destination data available for trips in Moate shows that journey duration for 41% of trips is less than 15 minutes and that approximately half of these are trips within the town.

A further 37% of trips are between 15 and 30 minutes, or which around a third are commuting trips to Athlone. Considering the national average of journey time as 28.2 minutes, the majority of trips made by Moate residents are significantly shorter.

- Walk
- Cycle
- PT
- Private car
- Work from home
- Not Stated
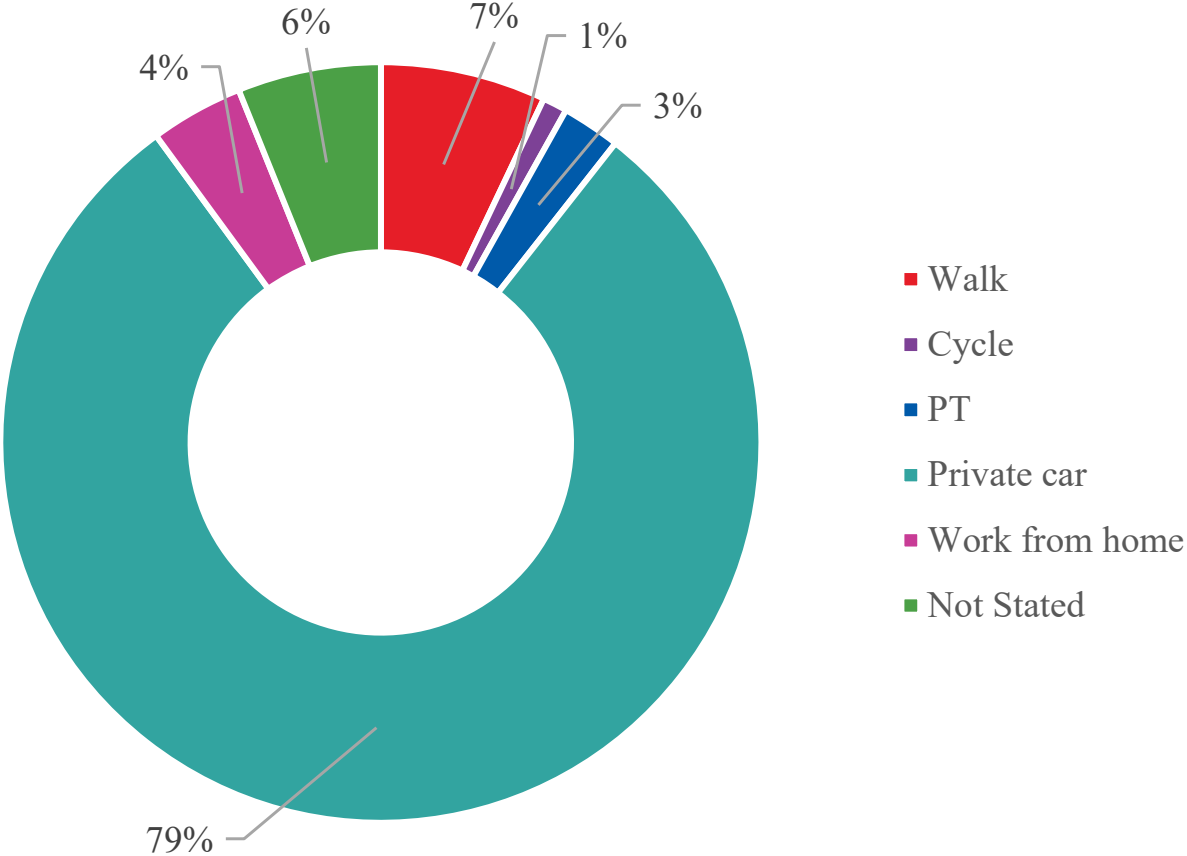
Movement

Modal split - school and college trips

The modal split for trips to school or college shows that just over half of the trips to school are made by car. However, reflecting the compact nature of the town and the central location of the schools, the proportion of pupils walking and cycling is relatively low at only one third.

- Walk
- Cycle
- PT
- Private car
- Not Stated

29%

4%

11%

52%

4%
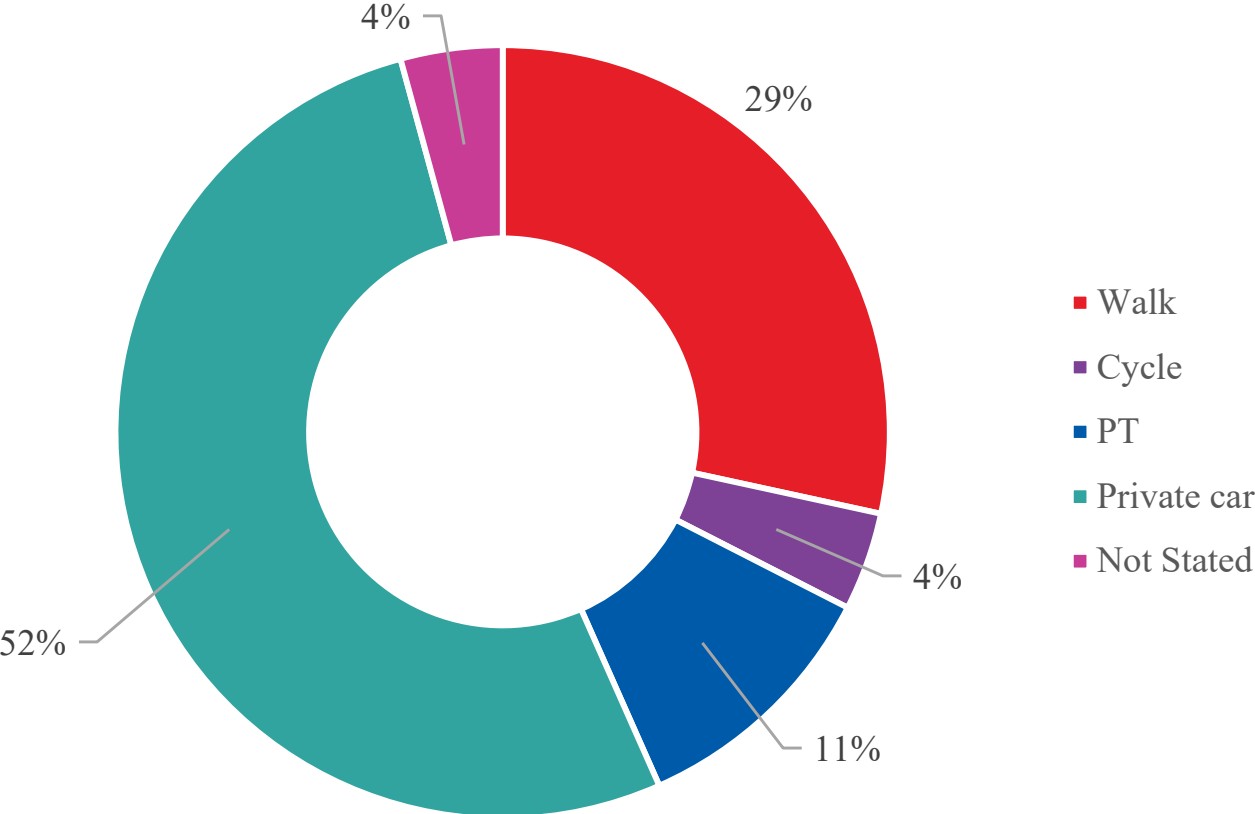
Movement

Active travel

Walking and cycling distances

This map shows the areas which can be reached from a starting point of the Library within both a 15 minute walk and a 5 minute cycle ride (known as isochrones). Walking and cycling are particularly important for the 16% of households with no car.

It demonstrates that the town is relatively compact and accessible, and that, combined with a relatively flat terrain, it should be feasible for a relatively high proportion of journeys to be made by accessible modes, providing a safe and attractive environment is created.

It is particularly noted that some areas of the town are relatively isolated through the lack of direct connections. And that some elements of green space create a barrier to direct routes which could be addressed to further improve journey times. Similarly, whilst the Greenway is useful for longer trips east-west, it currently forms something of a barrier to local trips.

15 minute walk

5 minute cycle
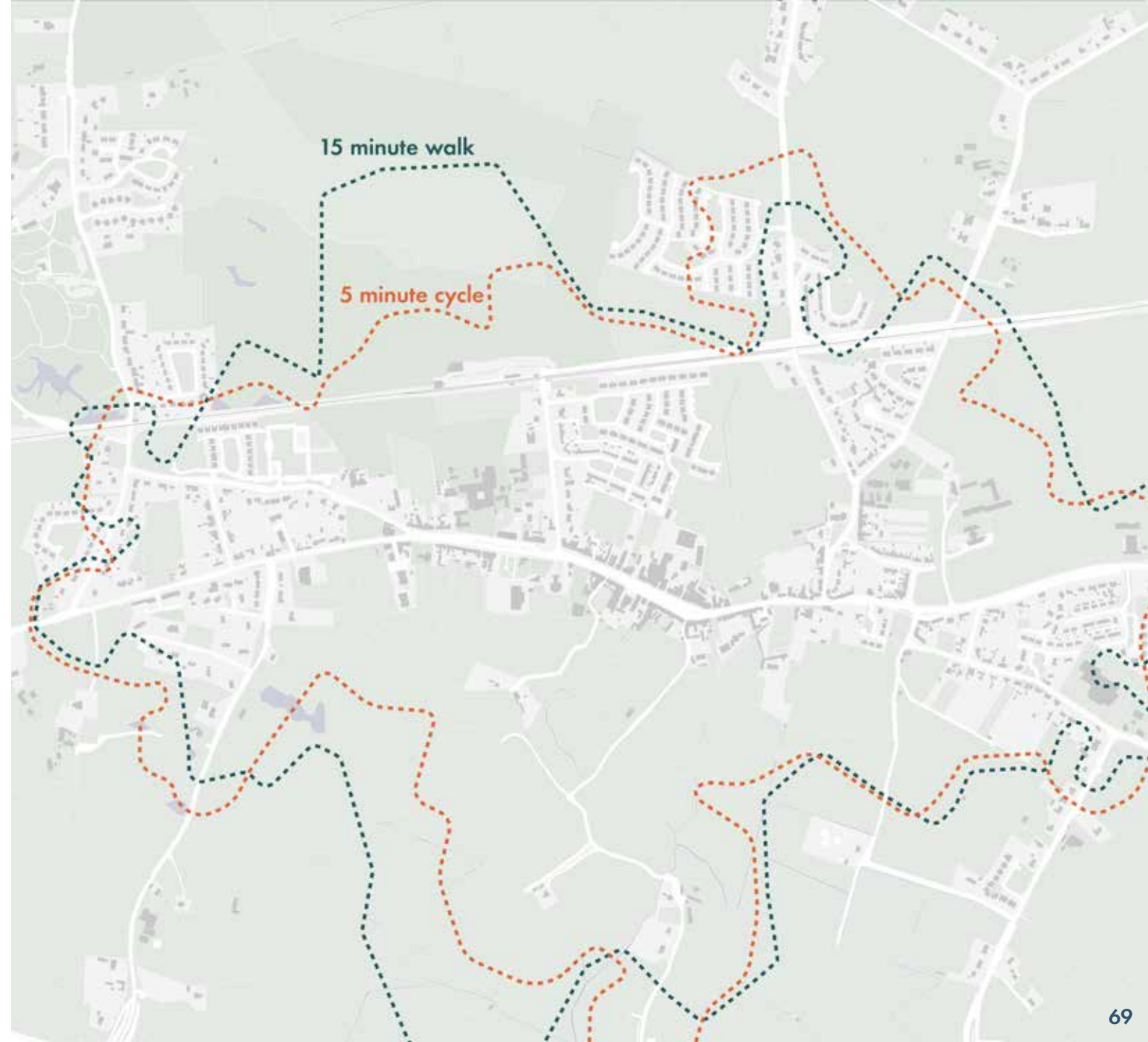
Movement

Rail trail

The Old Rail Trail (The Greenway) that passes through Moate connects Athlone in the west with Castletown and Mullingar in the east along 43km of former railway line.

Moate's location 14km from Athlone which is an important visitor destination and employment centre given the Greenway an important role to play as both a leisure route for rides which connect to Moate and beyond, but also as a potential commuter route for people wishing to cycle to Athlone. The route is flat, well-surfaced and maintained and for a regular commuter is a 45 to 60 minute ride. The advance in assisted bikes in the form of e-bikes is making this kind of inter-town commuting on routes like the greenway an attractive prospect in many similar contexts, and provides the opportunity to incorporate exercise and wellbeing into every day.

Movement

Issues

- Poor quality of footpaths and pedestrian crossing facilities;

- Inadequate cycling infrastructure;

- High level of car dependency;

- Wide junctions that interrupt pedestrian routes and reduce safety;

- Excessive space devoted to parking on the Main Street;

- Parking cars on pedestrian footpaths at school drop-off or collection times;

- Low frequency of bus service and availability of only one bus stop along the Main Street; and

- Unfavourable public transport journey times compared to car travel.

Opportunities

- Compact town centre that makes active travel attractive and feasible;

- Town centre public realm scheme along Main Street that can potentially facilitate a pedestrian-friendly environment;

- Plans to improve pedestrian and cycling facilities along Station Road to the greenway;

- Plans to improve bus frequency as part of Connecting Ireland scheme that will increase connectivity within Moate and also to major nearby towns;

- Attracting (at least part of) the large share of commuters to Athlone to public transport;

- Attracting (at least part of) employees of the Business Park and Nursing Home as two major employment hubs to sustainable modes; and

- Wide Main Street that provides enough space to be allocated to wider footpaths and cycling infrastructure.

Parking

Existing parking

Like many similar towns, Moate is very dependent on car travel, which in turn means that parking is a particular concern for the town centre.

The wide central street which forms the spine of the town has historically been a place for movement and activities such as markets. Today, much of the space is taken up by parking in various configurations.

Alongside the on-street provision, the large car park at Tuar Ard provides a significant number of free spaces, but a few minutes walk away from the core of the street.

Taken together, this represents approximately 300 public parking spaces in the town centre.

The following section sets out some of the key observations and issues for parking in the town.
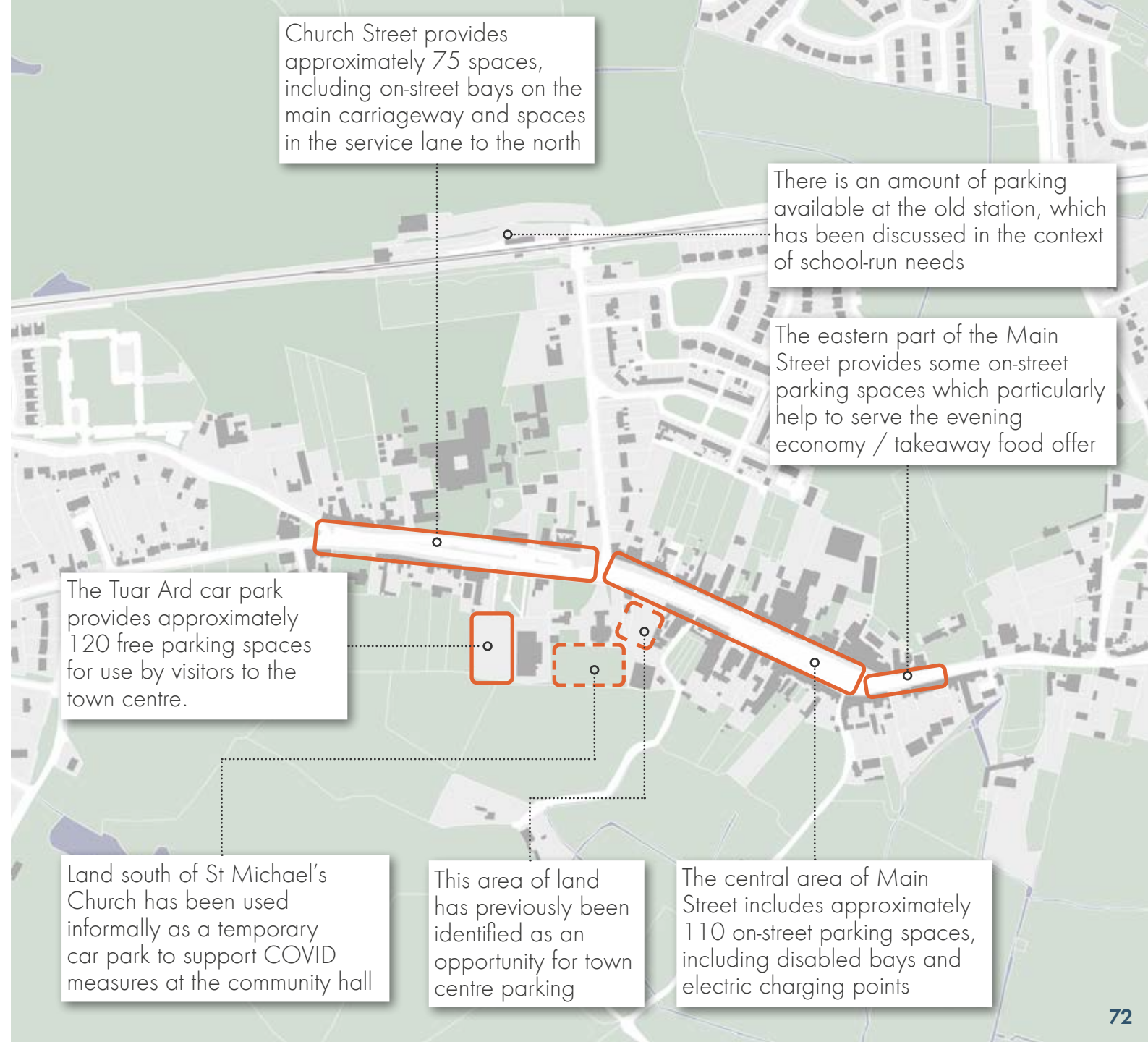
Church Street provides approximately 75 spaces, including on-street bays on the main carriageway and spaces in the service lane to the north

There is an amount of parking available at the old station, which has been discussed in the context of school-run needs

The eastern part of the Main Street provides some on-street parking spaces which particularly help to serve the evening economy / takeaway food offer

The Tuar Ard car park provides approximately 120 free parking spaces for use by visitors to the town centre.

Land south of St Michael's Church has been used informally as a temporary car park to support COVID measures at the community hall

This area of land has previously been identified as an opportunity for town centre parking

The central area of Main Street includes approximately 110 on-street parking spaces, including disabled bays and electric charging points

Parking

Key issues

Parking on Main Street

Parking on Main Street utilises a significant proportion of the space, responding to the variations in width with combinations of parallel parking and parking laid out in bays where the road is widest.

Although the street is signed as having a three hour time limit on parking, in practice this is rarely enforced, and so drivers are able to park for relatively long stretches of time. The key user groups include:

• Shoppers and visitors who require short-stay parking, particularly focussed towards the Supervalu where demand is the highest;

• People with businesses or jobs in the town centre, typically parking for longer periods of time;

• People parking for the day to take a long distance bus to commute to Dublin or Galway; and

• Overnight parking for people who live on the street or are staying at the Hotel.

As well as parking, there is also a need for large vehicles to be able to make deliveries, including drays to the pubs and hotel, and large vehicles making deliveries to businesses such as the florist. The layout of the parking and access space also takes account of a number of premises that have vehicle access onto their premises, either via side passages or archways.

Whilst the majority of the street benefits from a relatively wide pavement on the north side, and reasonable pavements to the east of the old post office, the south side of the street between the library and old post office lacks good pedestrian space. There is both limited provision for pedestrians in terms of protected space and accessible cross-overs and also the risk of vehicles over-running or parking on the pavement space.

Parking

Key issues

Parking on Church Street

Church Street is a very wide space, with a more open character than Main Street. The layout is also notably different with a distinct main carriageway for through-traffic and a secondary access lane on the north side which provides space for loading, servicing and parking. This includes servicing the post office and medical centre.

The western end of the service lane provides large bus lay-bys which are particularly used by buses setting down and collecting from the school.

At the western end of the street the parking is less structured and a wide road is used informally, both for parallel parking and also end-on parking.

A key issue which appears to be particularly prevalent on Church Street is that of pavement parking. Whilst this is probably perceived as making use of a generous pavement width, it introduces a danger for pedestrians which is particularly concerning around the school, and also risks creating accessibility issues by inadvertently blocking routes for wheelchairs, buggies, or mobility scooters.

Parking

Key issues

Parking on Station Road

Parking on Station Road is a key problem with regard to the school and nursery set-down and pick-up, with sharp peaks in congestion and activity at these key times.

The street is effectively a cul-de-sac which also gives access to a large area of housing, and to the golf club. Whilst it has a reasonable road width, it has relatively narrow pavements, creating the potential for conflict between people walking to school and those in cars.

Observing the street at various times of day including the peak times it is noted that the area does become very congested, and that vehicles both park and drive onto the already narrow footway, putting pedestrians at risk.

Addressing this situation has been identified as a key challenge for the town, and one where a resolution could significantly help to improve safety.

Accessibility

Walkability Audit

Summary

On 22nd March 2023, a Walkability Audit of Moate town centre was undertaken to help inform the town centre first masterplan process and to assist Westmeath County Council in understanding where future improvements should be considered.

A group of 34 people from the local community took part, representing a range of ages and abilities. Many of the participants use the town centre regularly and are therefore familiar with the particular challenges faced when navigating streets and public spaces.

The objective of the walkability audit was to understand how the environment of Moate is accessed, understood and used, to identify key issues, and capture the needs of local people in relation to their experience of using their local roads and streets. The findings then inform a set of actions.

The group was divided into 5 sub-groups and each given a pre-determined route to walk or wheel, shown in the adjacent plan. Each person was given a booklet - The Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool. This included a set of themed questions to assist them in assessing the accessibility, or walkability, of each route.
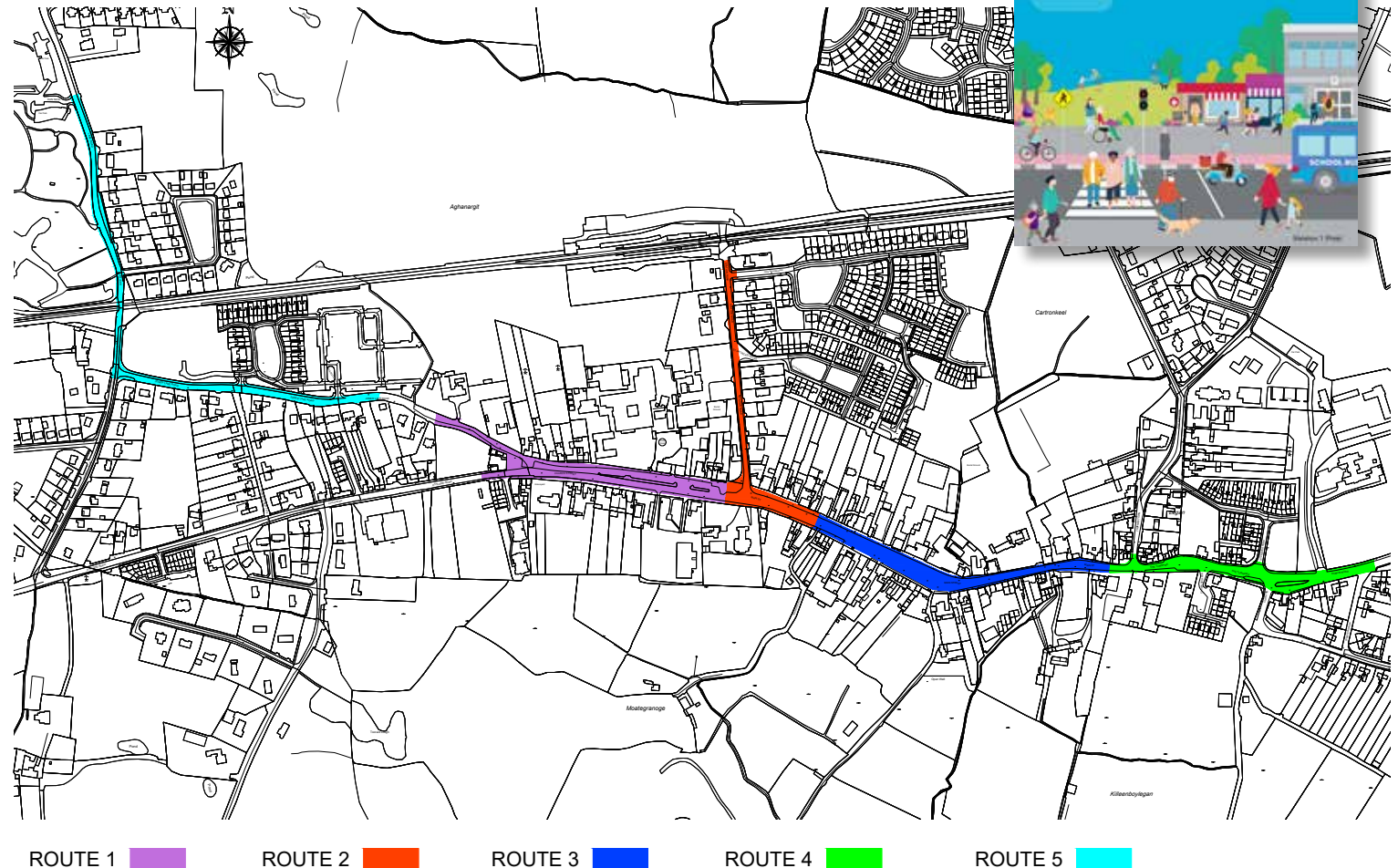
ROUTE 1 ROUTE 2 ROUTE 3 ROUTE 4 ROUTE 5

Accessibility

Assessment

Route 1 • Route 2 • Route 3 • Route 4 • Route 5

Walkability Audit Themes

The Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool uses a set of themes in order to structure questions and gain relevant feedback from participants. Participants were asked to score features of the environment under the following themes:

- Footpaths
- Facilities
- Crossing the road
- Road user behaviour
- Safety
- Look and feel
- Outside the school gates

The following pages provide a summary of the findings from the Walkability Audit.

Footpaths

Participants generally rated footpaths as "OK". No participants rated any of the footpaths as "good". Routes 4 and 5 were rated the lowest of the routes in terms of footpath quality. Route 2 was rated the highest of the routes with everyone in this group rating it "OK".
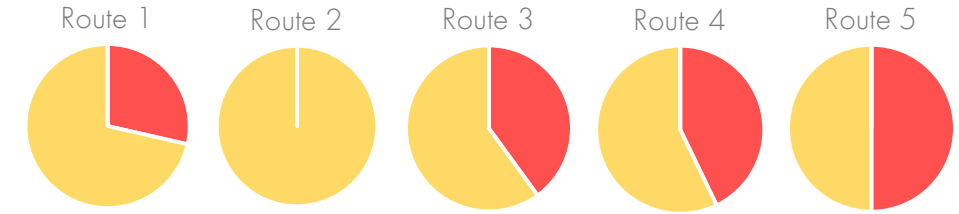
The main problems participants reported in relation to footpaths related to the following issues:

- Footpaths are not always continuous
- They are not wide enough for all
- People need to step off on to the road

On Routes 4 and 5, participants also reported that there is no footpath.

A number of issues were highlighted in related to the surface condition of footpaths. Those most frequently highlighted were:

- Uneven surfaces (eg entrances, driveways)
- Cracks on the footpath
- Steps that cause difficulty
- Ponding or flooding on the footpath
- Evidence of poor repair work

Issues were most commonly raised in relation to Routes 1 and 2.

Participants identified issues in relation to obstacles on the footpath. Those most frequently highlighted include:

- Lighting columns / poles
- Vehicles parked on footpath
- Edge of footpath is hard to see

Overall score for Footpaths
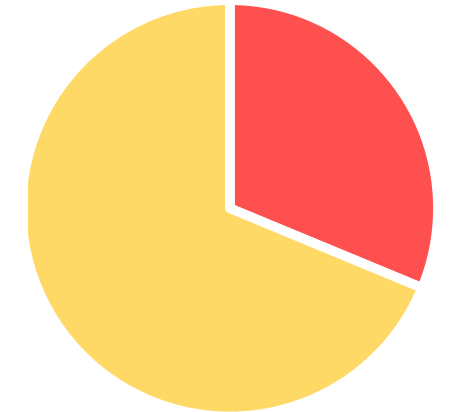
■ Poor ■ OK ■ Good

Accessibility

Assessment

Facilities

Overall, facilities in Moate were rated 'Poor'. The routes which scored the lowest in terms of their facilities were Routes 1 and 4. Only Route 5 was rated 'Good' by partipants, but most considered it 'Poor', while Routes 2 and 3 were mostly rated 'Good' by participants.

When asked which routes were too far to walk to local services, participants indicated that Routes 4 and 5 were most limited in their access to services, whereas Route 2 was indicated by most partipants as having no real problems.

All routes, apart from Route 4, were indicated as having no toilets available. However, it was noted that the toilets on Route 4 cannot be used by the general public. Some participants indicated that Route 3 had no real problems, but it was also noted that the toilets lacked suitable baby changing areas and were not suitable for those with wheelchairs or mobility issues.

In relation to public seating and rest areas, the most frequently noted problems were:

- There are not enough places to stop and rest
- There is no seating
- Seating located too near heavy traffic
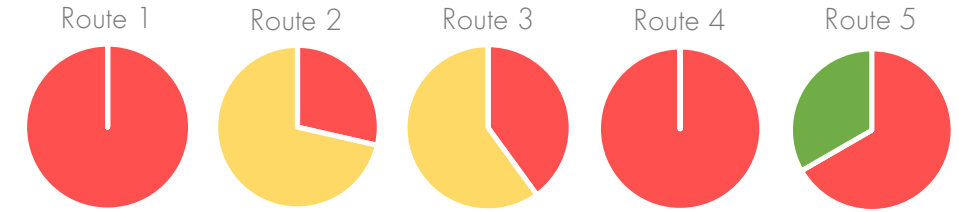
The routes with the poorest provision of resting and seating facilities were Routes 1, 2 and 4. These routes were noted as not having enough places to stop and rest. Route 3 was rated as the best route for resting and seating facilities.

Bin facilities were lacking in almost all routes, with Route 1 and Route 2 most frequently noted as having not enough bins. Route 3 was rated best in terms of provision of bins, but was identified as the one route where bins are full and overflowing.

Parks and/or playground facilities were indicated as lacking on Routes 2 and 3. Route 4 was noted as having the worst parks and/or playground facilities, with facilities not being well maintained noted as the main problem.

When asked about problems with parking facilities, the three most commonly raised issues were:

- No designated car parking for older / disabled persons
- Not enough cycle parking
- No safe, designated loading and delivery facilities for large vehicles

Routes 1, 4 and 3 had the most problems. No route was indicated as having problems in relation to paying for parking.

Overall score for Facilities

■ Poor ■ OK ■ Good
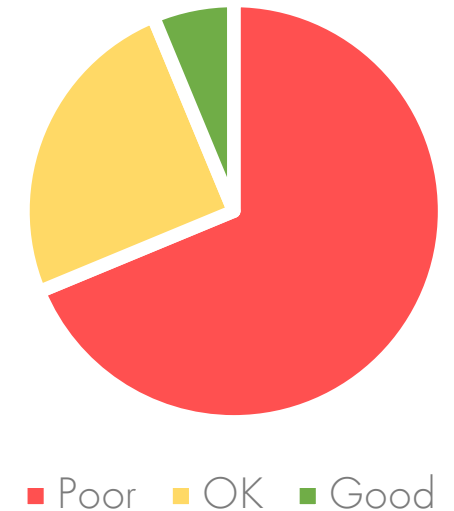
Accessibility

Assessment
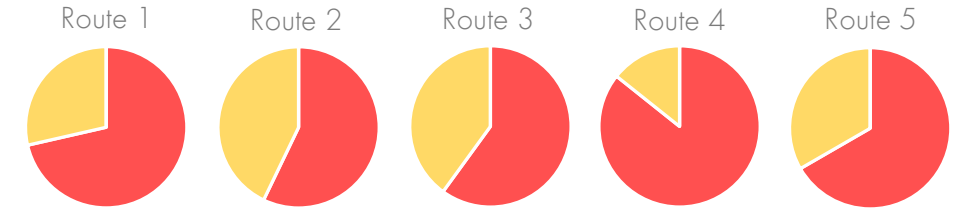
Crossing the road

Overall, crossing the road in Moate was rated as 'Poor'. No route was rated as 'Good' by any of the participants. Route 4 was given the lowest rating by participants.

When considering the main problems at pedestrian crossings with signals, the two biggest issues highlighted were:

• There are not enough pedestrian crossings
• There are no audible cues at crossings

Route 1 was rated as having the most problems with signalised crossings, with the main issues being:
• There are not enough pedestrian crossings
• There are no countdown facilities on crossings
• There are no audible cues at crossings

Route 5 had the fewest issues.

Other issues noted across all routes include:
• There are no countdown facilities on crossings
• Crossings do not offer direct connection to where I need to go
• Crossings not level i.e. kerbs
• Pedestrian signals do not give enough time to cross road

In relation to informal pedestrian crossings (no signals), the key issues noted were:
• There is no tactile paving at informal pedestrian crossing points
• Obstacles (such as parked cars) block my view of traffic where I need to cross
• The speed of traffic makes it hard to cross the road
• The road surface is uneven/has potholes
• The amount of traffic makes it hard to cross the road (no gaps in traffic)

Route 4 was noted as having the most issues in terms of informal pedestrian crossings, with the key issue indicated as 'obstacles (such as parked cars) block my view of traffic where I need to cross'.

Route 1 had the fewest issues overall in terms of non-signalised crossings.

Overall score for Crossing the road
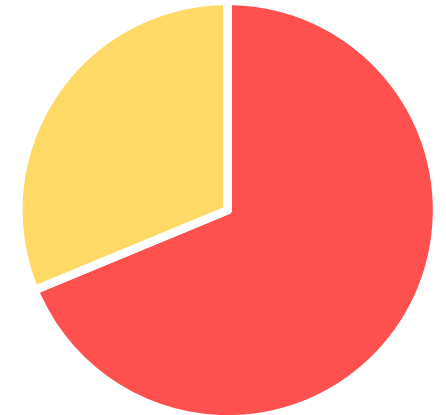
■ Poor   ■ OK   ■ Good

Accessibility

Assessment

Road user behaviour

The assessed routes in Moate were generally rated as 'Poor' overall, but participant ratings were more mixed than in the previous themes. Routes 1 and 5 were rated the best in terms of road user behaviour with at least half of participants giving a rating of 'Good' or 'OK'.

In relation to problems with driver behaviour, the issue identified most frequently by participants was 'driving too fast'. Route 2 was identified as the one route where 'there are no real problems' with road user behaviour. Routes 3, 1 and 4 were the routes identified with the most issues, with driving too fast identified as the key issue on these routes.

Other key issues identified on the lowest rated Route 3 were:
• Failing to stop at red lights or stop signs; and
• Driving too close to cyclists or pedestrians

'Stopping in traffic to set-down or pick up passengers' was identified as a key issue on Route 4.

When assessing poor parking practices, Route 2 and Route 1 were rated poorest overall. Route 5 presented the least amount of issues.
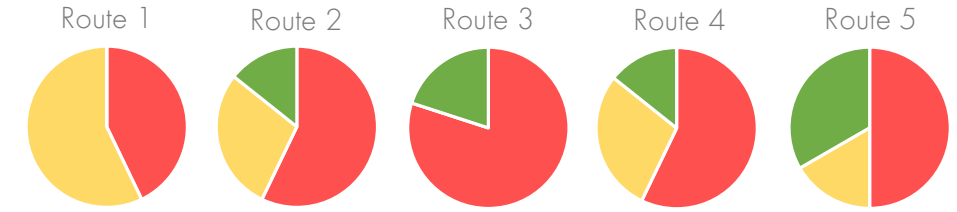
The main issue noted was 'parking on footpaths (either fully or partially blocking them)' - this was a key issue on Routes 2, 4, 1 and 3.

Other issues raised in relation to Route 2 included:
• Parking at junctions obstructing people crossing
• Parking across dropped kerbs used by wheelchairs and buggies
• Parking outside of designated car parking areas

Key issues raised in relation to Route 1 were:
• Parking in accessible/designated parking spaces without a disabled persons parking permit; and
• Blocking buses, bus stops or bus lanes

When asked if there are any issues with cyclist and scooter-user behaviour, Route 3 and Route 2 were identified as having the most issues. The two key issues identified across these two routes were:
• Cycling on footpaths
• Parking bikes or scooters in places that block the footpaths

Another issue which was raised in relation to Route 3 was 'Travelling dangerously on shared footpaths / greenways'.

Overall score for Road user behaviour

■ Poor   ■ OK   ■ Good
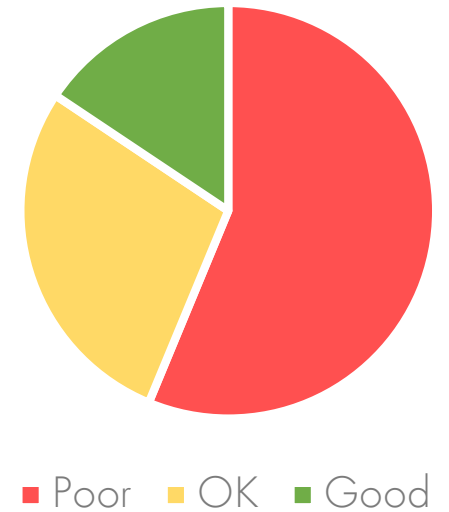
Accessibility

Assessment

Safety

Overall, participants rated safety in Moate as 'OK'.

The route rated lowest in terms of safety was Route 4. Route 4 was rated the safest route by participants. No participants gave Routes 2 and 5 a 'Poor rating.

In relation to personal safety, Route 4 was identified as having many more issues than other routes. The key issues highlighted for this route were:
• Derelict and unoccupied buildings; and
• A lack of visible Garda presence

A lack of visible Garda presence was the top issue noted across all routes, with this noted as a key issue on Route 1.

Other issues raised include:
• Hidden alleyways and blind corners
• I feel unsafe at night time; and
• A lack of activity and people

In relation to layout and clarity, Route 2 was identified as having the most problems. The key problems in relation to this route include:

• Street is cluttered and confusing
• Street signage is overly complicated
• Street signage is difficult to read (e.g. faded, dirty, small letters)

The issues most frequently identified across all routes were:
• Street signage is damaged
• Street signage is difficult to read (e.g. faded, dirty, small letters)
• Street is cluttered and confusing

Route 4 was identified as having the most issues in terms of street lighting when it's dark. The key issues raised were:
Lack of street lighting in some areas
Street lights are not bright enough

These issues were also raised in relation to Route 3.

Route 5 was identified as having 'no real problems' with lighting. Routes 1 and 2 also had minimal issues identified in relation to lighting.

Overall score for Safety

■ Poor   ■ OK   ■ Good
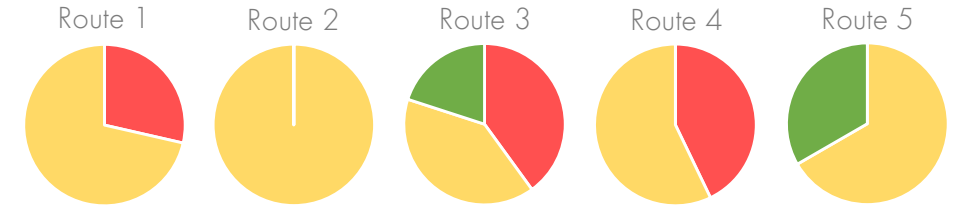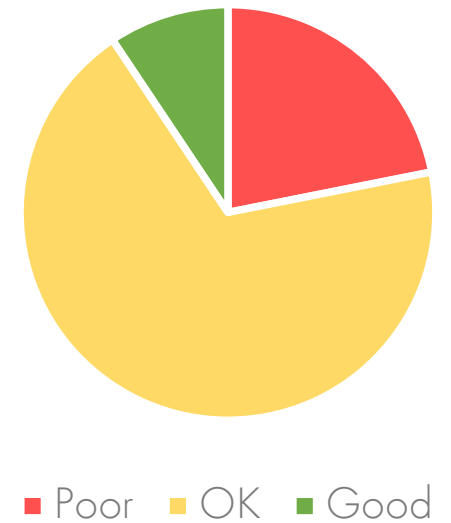
Accessibility

Assessment

Look and feel

Overall, participants rated Moate's look and feel as 'Good'. Route 5 received the highest overall rating, with participants either rating this route as 'OK' or 'Good. Route 4 was rated the lowest rated, with 71% of participants rating this route as 'Poor'.

In terms of Moate's attractiveness, a number of issues were identified across all of the routes. Route 1 was identified as having the most problems, with 'A lack of things to see and do' and 'Litter' identified as the top issues. Routes 4 also had a number of issues, primarily 'Poorly-maintained building façades and shopfronts'. 'Vacant and derelict buildings' was also a key issue on Route 3 and 4.

The issues most commonly raised across routes include:
- A lack of places for shade and shelter
- Connections to other streets are poor
- A lack of street trees and planting
- Street clutter (e.g. unnecessary signage etc)
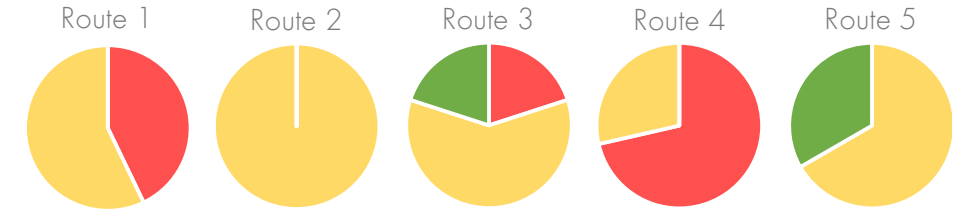
Participants were asked if there any issues with air quality on the routes. 'Fumes from traffic' was the most commonly noted issue, particularly in relation to Route 1 and 3. 'Chimney smoke' was also noted as an issue on Route 3. Route 3 was rated the poorest for air quality across the routes. No issues were found on Route 2.

When asked if there are any sources of excessive noise on the routes, the top issue noted by participants was 'Motor traffic'. This was most relevant on Routes 4, 1 and 3. The only other issue identified in relation to noise was 'Crowds of gatherings of people' identified in relation to Route 4.

Overall score for Look and feel

■ Poor   ■ OK   ■ Good

Accessibility

Assessment

not applicable (no school)
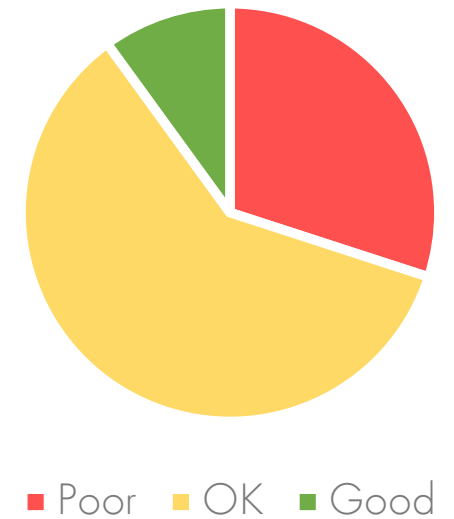
Outside the school gates

Participants' assessment of the routes under this theme vary from route to route, but overall Moate is considered 'OK' when considering the environment outside the school gates. Route 5 was considered the best route overall, while Route 4 was rated poorest. Route 3 was discounted from this assessment because there is no school along this route.

When considering the main problems when walking to school, Route 1 was noted as having the most issues. The key issues with Route 1 were noted as "There is too much traffic" and "There are no 'Walking Buses' or 'Park and Stride' initiatives".

Routes 2 and 4 also had a number of issued identified. On Route 2, the key issues related to narrow footpaths: "The footpaths are not wide enough to walk with family and friends" and "I sometimes need to step onto the road when the footpath is busy". The issues on Route 4 reflect the most commonly raised issues across all of the routes, which are:
• There are not enough safe crossings to get to school
• Footpaths are lacking at both sides of the road

When asked what problems there are with parking and traffic arrangements, Route 1 was noted as having the

greatest number of issues. The key issues noted in relation to Route 1 were:
• There are no sheltered waiting areas for parents or guardians
• There is not enough space for buses to safely drop-off pupils.

The key issues raised across all routes were:
• There are no sheltered waiting areas for parents or guardians; and
• There are not enough cycle parking spaces within the school.

There were no issues noted in relation to Route 5.

Participants were asked if there were any issues in relation to Student Safety and Air Quality. Route 1 was, again, noted as having the most amount of issues. No issued were recorded for Route 5 in relation to this topic. The top issue raised for Route 1 was "Drivers are driving too fast". The top issues raised across all routes were:
• Drivers park on footpaths
• Drivers park or wait on double yellow lines/at bus stops
• No 'School Street' initiative to improve safety and reduce emissions
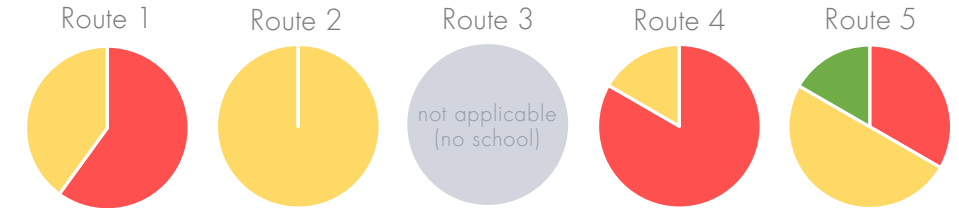
Overall score for Outside the school gate

■ Poor   ■ OK   ■ Good

Accessibility

Assessment

Route 1   Route 2   Route 4
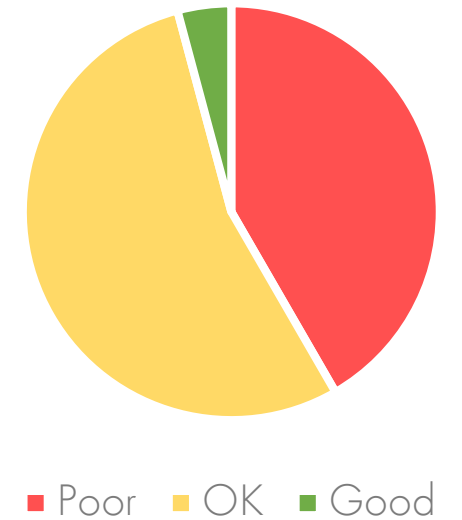
Outside the school gates

The final question of this theme asked participants if they felt, if conditions improved, students would:
- Walk more to school with friends and family
- Use the bus or train to go to school
- Use the car less
- Feel safer around the school gates

Overall it was felt that, if conditions improved, students would be more likely to:
- Walk more to school with friends and family; and
- Use the car less.

The results for each route are captured in the adjacent charts. No results were recorded for Route 3 (no school) or Route 5.

On Route 1, participants felt that if conditions improved, students would be more likely to:
- Walk more to school with friends and family; and
- Use the car less.

Some also felt that students would feel safer around the school gates.

On Route 2, most participants felt that students would be more likely to:
- Walk more to school with friends and family
- Use the car less

On Route 4, most particpants felt that, if conditions improved, students would be more likely to:

Walk more to school with friends and family
- Feel safer around the school gates
- Some paricipants also felt that student would use the car less, and use the bus or train to get to school.
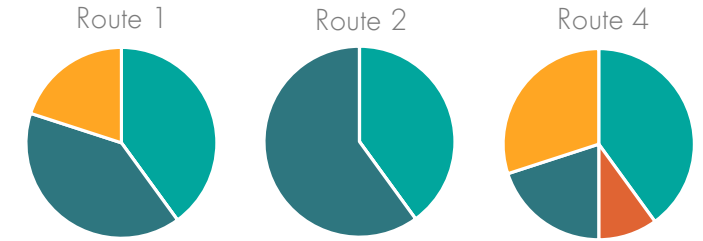
Overall views on behavioural change in getting to and from school

- █ Walk more to school with friends and family
- █ Use the bus or train to go to school
- █ Use the car less
- █ Feel safer around the school gates

Accessibility

Assessment

Route 1   Route 2   Route 3   Route 4   Route 5

How enjoyable was your walk?

Participants were asked how enjoyable their route was to walk.

In general, participants found the experience very enjoyable. Only one participant indicated that their route (Route 4) was not enjoyable. This has largely been read as a reflection on the consultation process rather than a reflection of the quality of the streets which were examined.

The route rated most enjoyable by participants was Route 1, closely followed by Route 2. Route 4 and 3 appear to be the least enjoyable routes, but were generally rated 'OK' by participants.
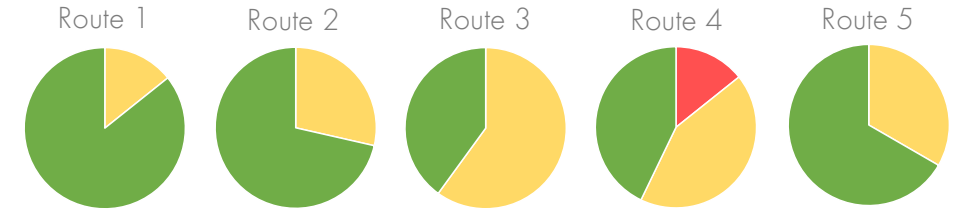
How enjoyable was your walk?
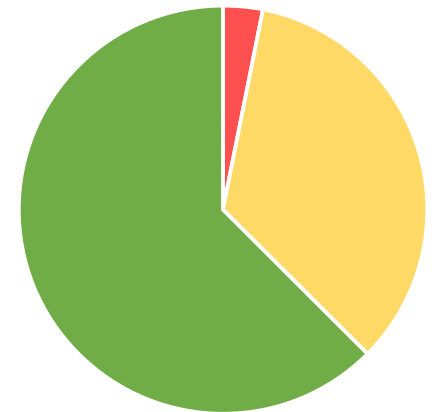
■ Not enjoyable

■ OK

■ Very enjoyable

Accessibility

Summary of all themes

"Very informative and worth while. The issues identified when addressed will create a very pleasant enjoyable place to live."
- participant comment (Route 5)

"This town has so much potential. I love it."
- participant comment (Route 4)

Overall score for Footpaths
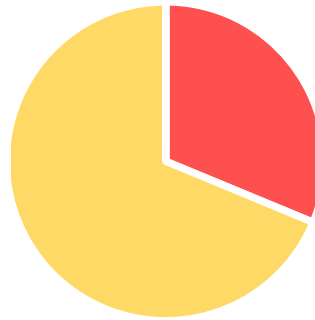
Overall score for Facilities
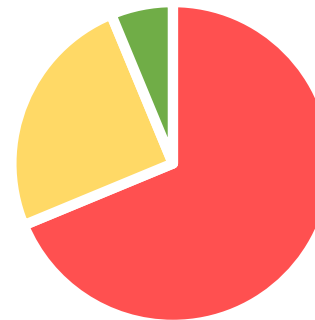
Overall score for Crossing the road
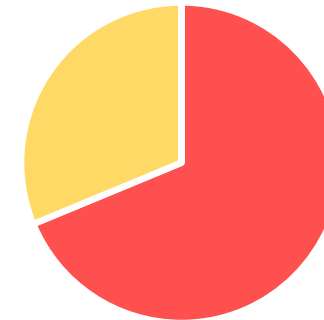
Overall score for Road user behaviour
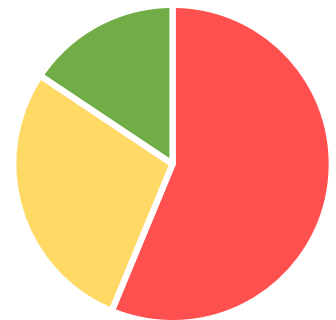
Overall score for Safety
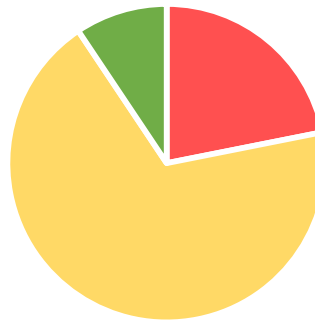
Overall score for Look and feel
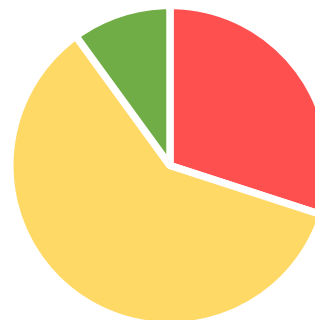
Overall score for Outside the school gate
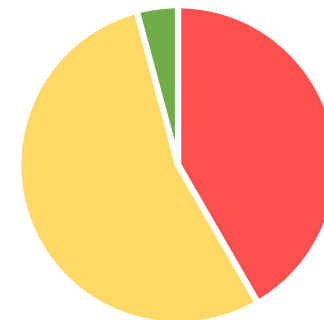
How enjoyable was your walk?
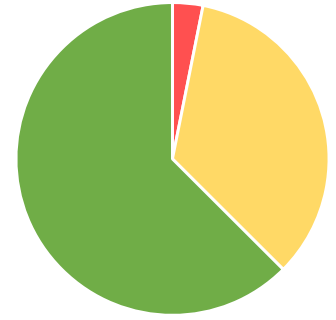
Poor   OK   Good

7 HEALTHCHECK SUMMARY

Town centre healthcheck

Introduction

As part of the baseline work to inform the masterplan the team has undertaken a healthcheck process tailored to the local context. Ths following section details the findings of survey work, site study and contributions from the Town Team and other local stakeholders.

It forms a starting point for the masterplan and will provide a framework to measure improvement over time.

Land use and vacancy
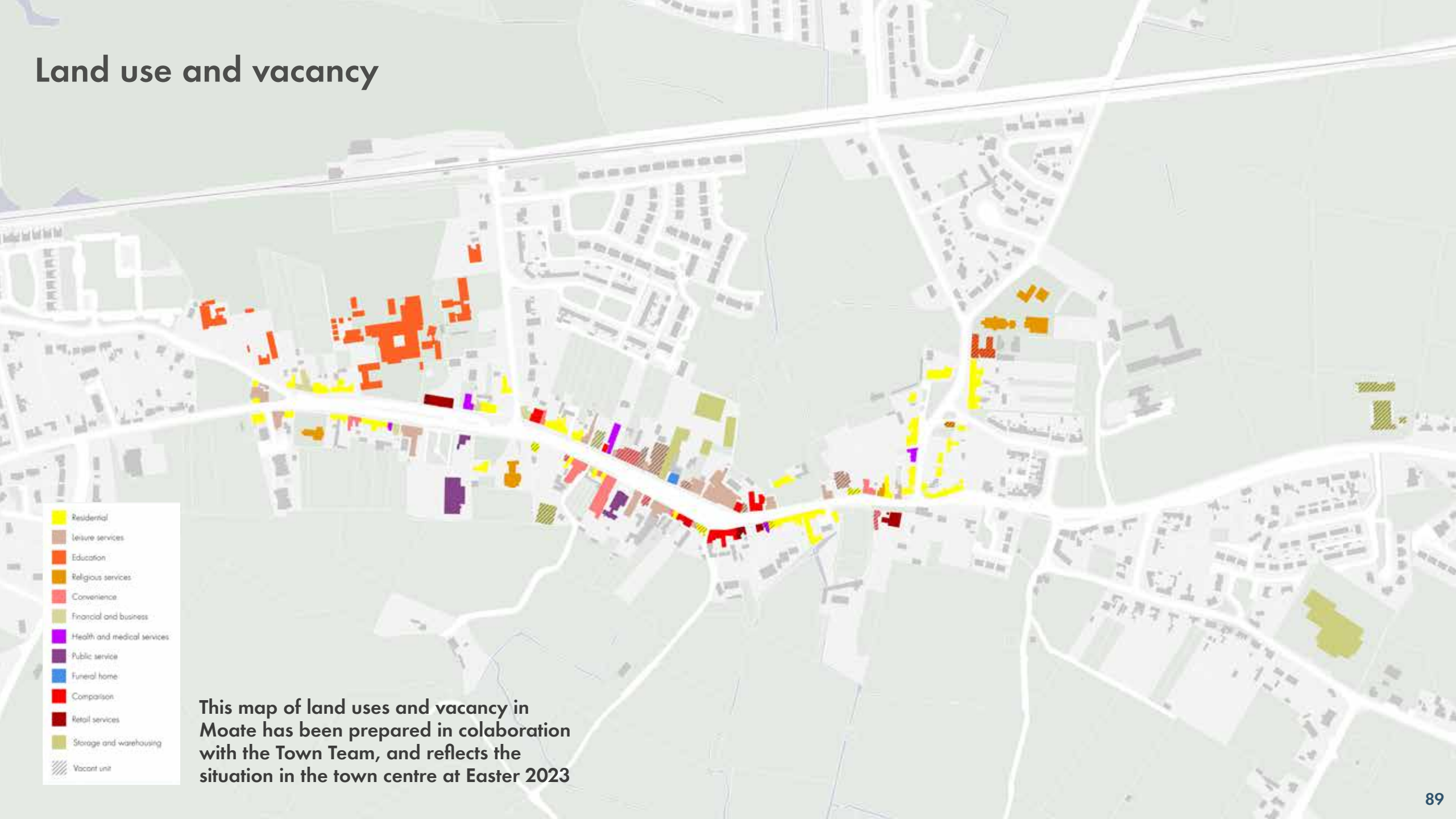
Legend:
- Residential
- Leisure services
- Education
- Religious services
- Convenience
- Financial and business
- Health and medical services
- Public service
- Funeral home
- Comparison
- Retail services
- Storage and warehousing
- Vacant unit

This map of land uses and vacancy in Moate has been prepared in colaboration with the Town Team, and reflects the situation in the town centre at Easter 2023
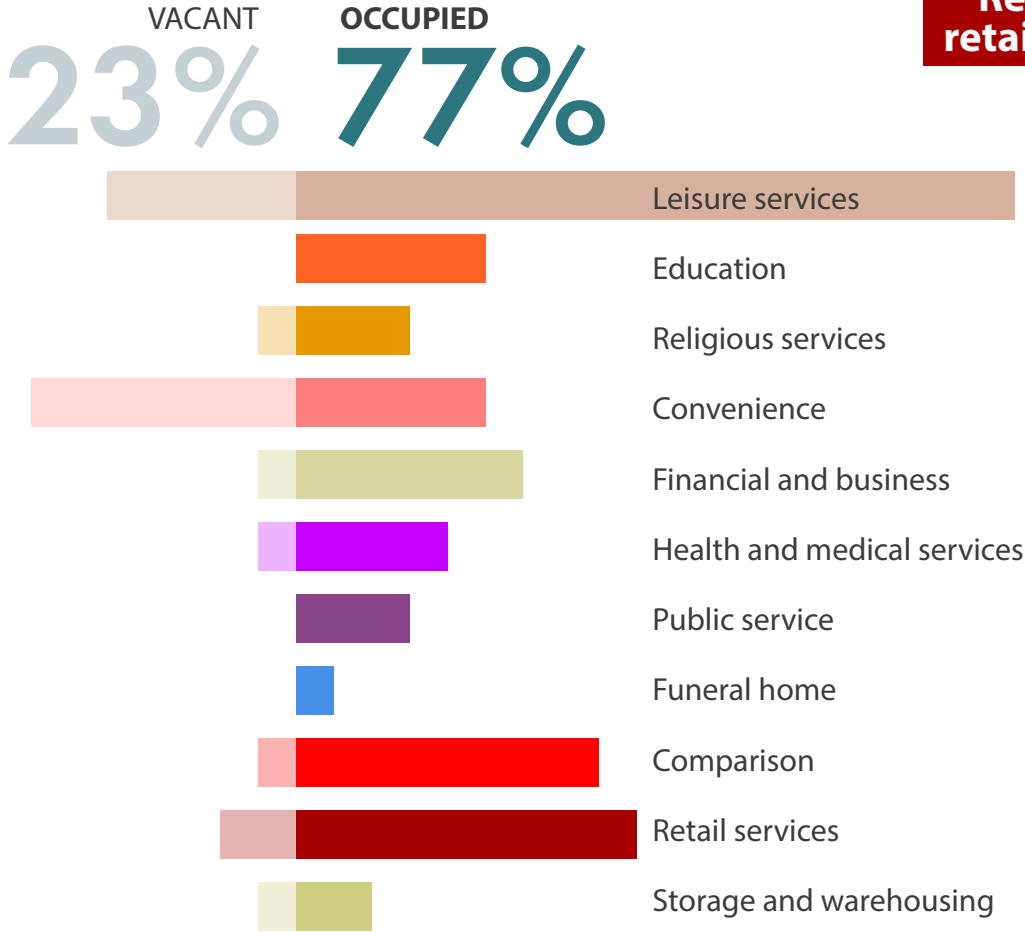
Town centre healthcheck

Land use and vacancy

Moate Town centre includes a mix of 84 different non-residential premises, predominantly focussed on the widest part of Main Street as the heart of the town.

Within the overall vacancy rate of 23% are key figures such as the high vacancy of over 50% for convenience shopping - borne out by the consultation responses on the need for more food shopping.

The dominance of leisure services includes public houses, restaurants, fast food and takeaways. Whilst the number of premises is large, respondents noted the lack of better quality evening economy offer including restaurants.

In terms of services, Moate offers a good range of local services and support uses which are of benefit to both businesses and residents. However, the closure of the last bank in the town has had a significant impact. Whilst the future potential of the building is important, the return of financial services to the town would be particularly beneficial.

38%

Retail and retail services

VACANT
23%

OCCUPIED
77%

Leisure services

Education

Religious services

Convenience

Financial and business

Health and medical services

Public service

Funeral home

Comparison

Retail services

Storage and warehousing

Town centre healthcheck

Vacancy and dereliction

Vacant and derelict units in the town centre have been identified as one of the most significant concerns for the residents of Moate.

A survey of the town centre, which is mapped on the following page, highlights both the number and significance of the empty buildings, including significant landmarks such as the Old Post Office and the Old Bank. Beyond this, there are also a range of empty shops and homes.
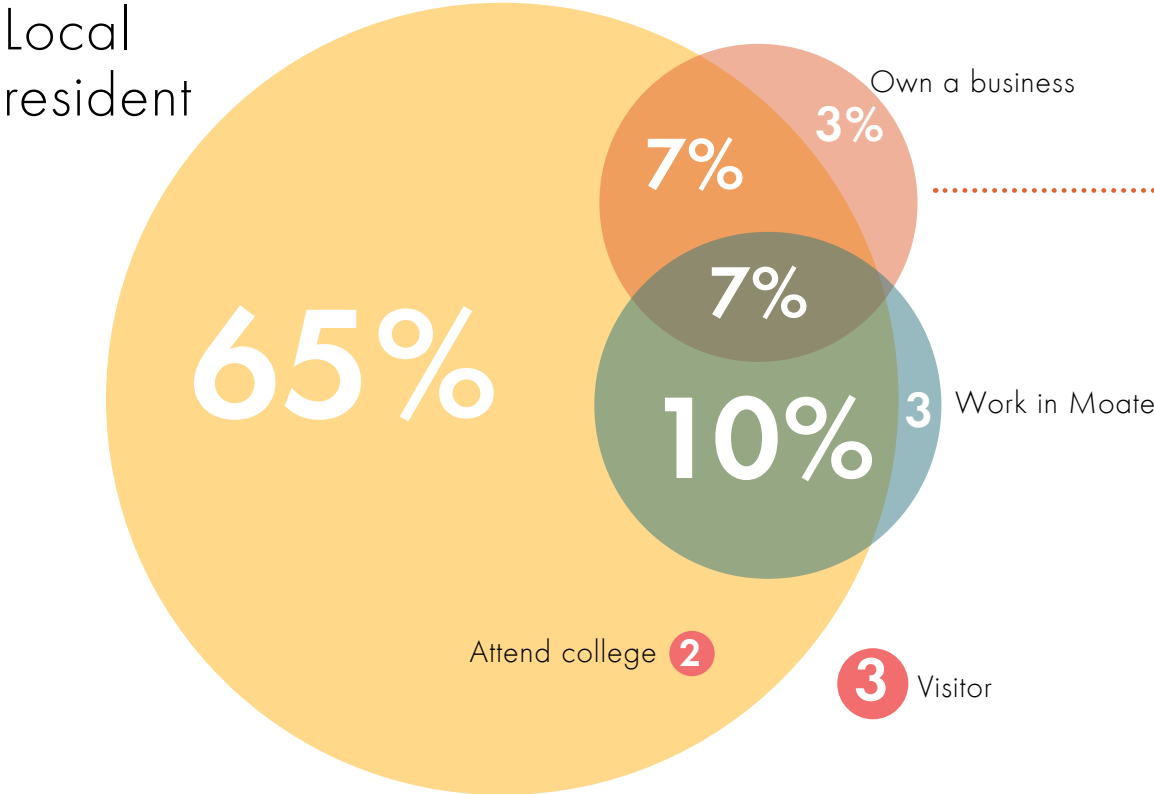
The survey work has been undertaken by the project team and reviewed by the Town Team and reflects the state of the town at April 2023.

Alongside the presence of vacant units, there are also a number of vacant parcels of land in and around the core town centre which also have the potential to contribute to the revitalisation of Moate.

Town centre healthcheck

Who responded to the town centre survey?

Local resident

Own a business

7%   **3%**

7%

65%

10%   **3** Work in Moate

Attend college **2**

3 Visitor

Breakdown of business representation

Construction
Hospitality and leisure
Manufacturing / maintenance
Retail
Other

Professional

Town centre healthcheck

Local business confidence

We asked local businesses how positive they were about the current state of commercial activity in Moate town centre along with their views on the future:

We also asked local businesses what they though the most important interventions would be to support commerce in Moate town centre:

Resolving dereliction
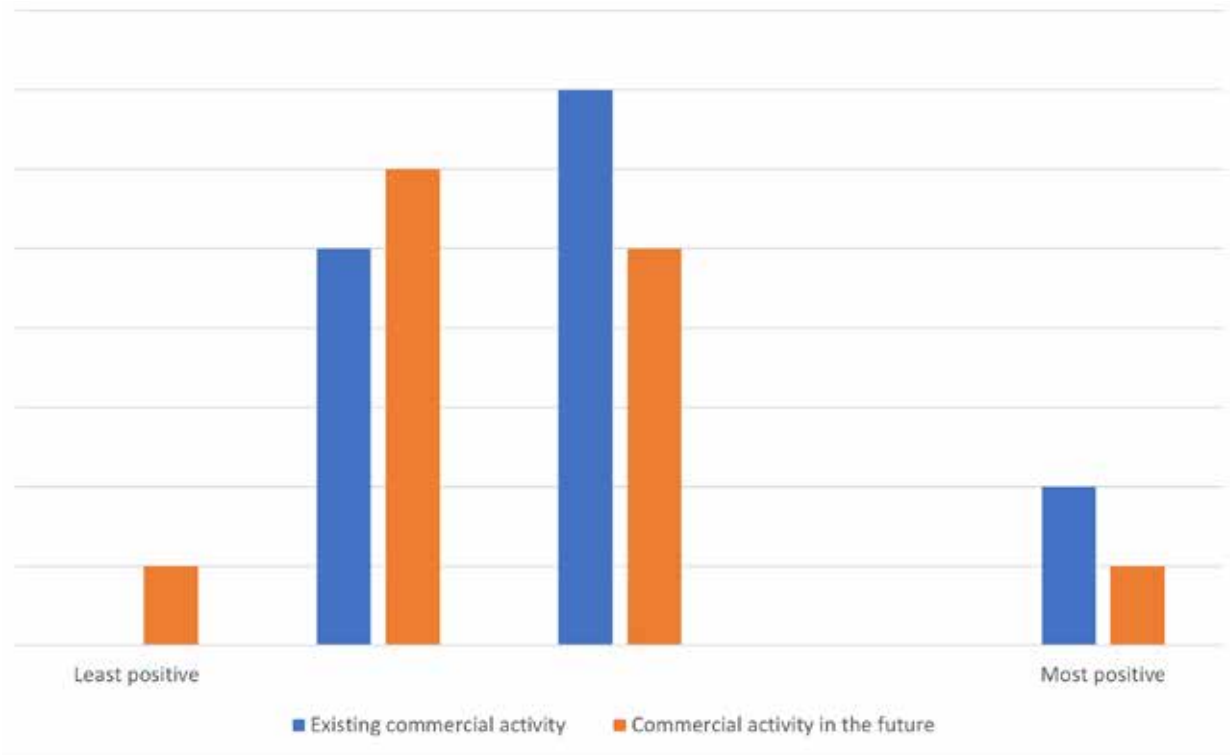
Improved access to businesses

Tourism promotion

Shop front enhancement

Pop-up events such as markets and festivals

It was noted that resolving dereliction and making improvements to shop fronts are very closely related options, and together form a clear priority from local businesses
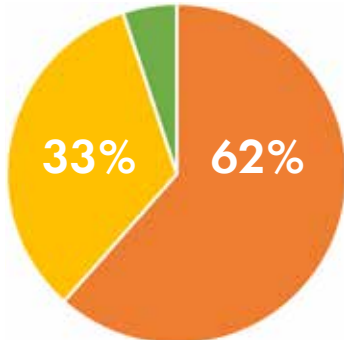
Town centre healthcheck

Most of the people responding to the survey live within a walkable distance of the town centre

- Under 1km
- 1-3km
- 4-6km
- 7-15km
- 16-30km
- 31-49km
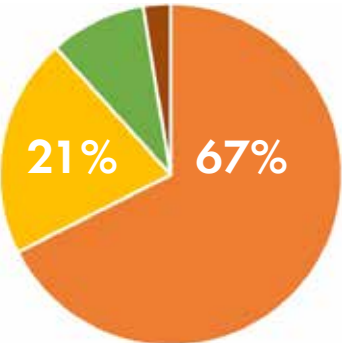
23% **57%**

BUT

33% **62%**
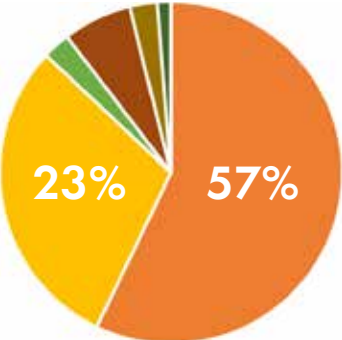
More of them choose to drive than to use any other mode of transport

- Car
- Walking, wheeling or cycling
- Public transport

People tend to visit the town centre frequently

- Daily
- 2-5 times per week
- 1-2 times per week
- Rarely

21% **67%**

AND

local services
shopping
school work

Local shops and services are the main reason to visit

Town centre healthcheck

Getting around

People responding to the survey noted that overall it is relatively easy to get around in Moate.

Perceptions from the survey responses are that walking is relatively easy, which could reflect the relatively compact size of the town. The survey results are consistent with the walkability audit elsewhere in this document in identifying that the town centre presents challenges in mobility for people with any kind of special requirements.
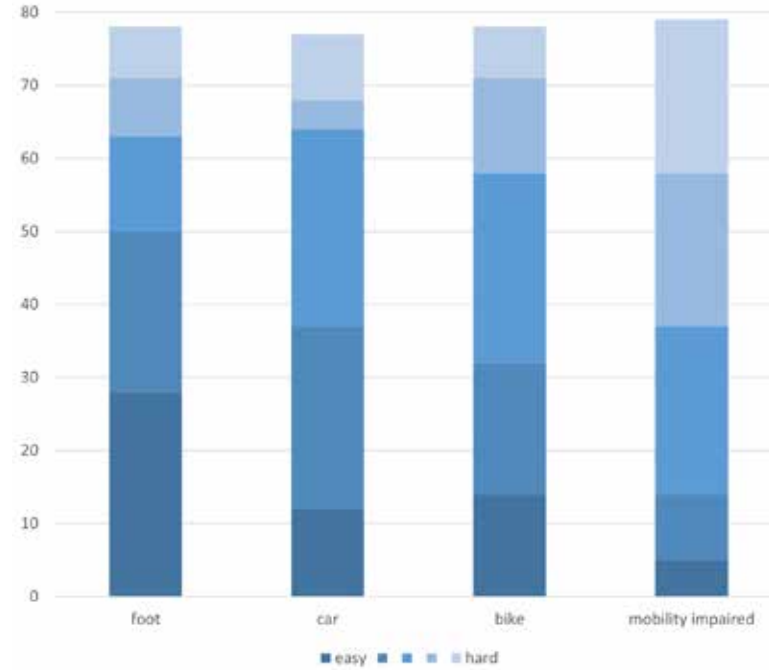
The Greenway is a valuable asset for the town in terms of both local trips and for visitors from the wider area.

The survey results reveals that the most popular forms of use are for leisure and exercise. The relatively low use for access to work and schools suggests potential for growth in usage with improved facilities and links.

Further data on the use of the Greenway is also available from a count of pedestrians and cyclists, suggesting that walking accounts for approximately two thirds of the mode split. Whilst pedestrian use is consistent across the week, cycling use doubles at weekends.
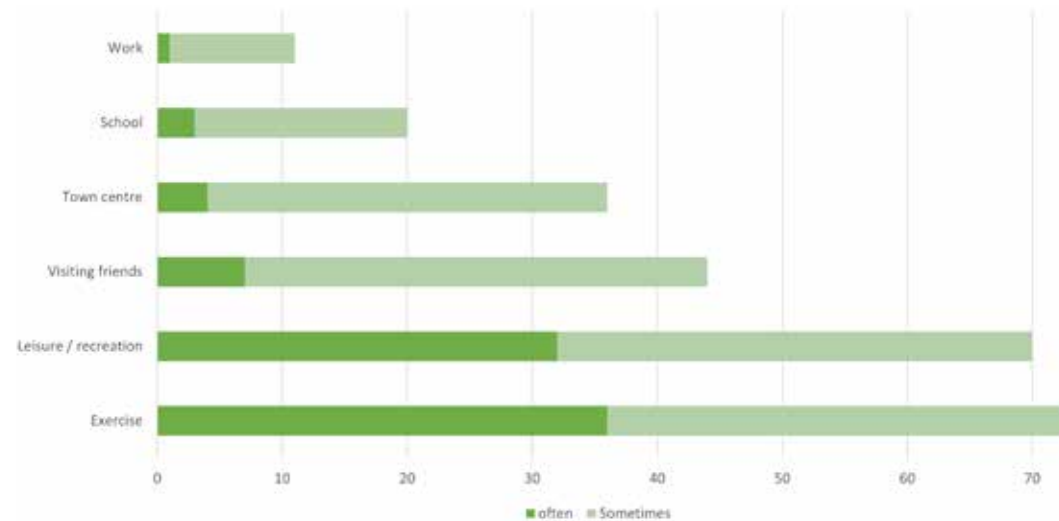
Athlone is the town which attracts most visits from people in Moate, covering a range of activities.

pubs and dining

Shopping

Services

Work

Education

Sports

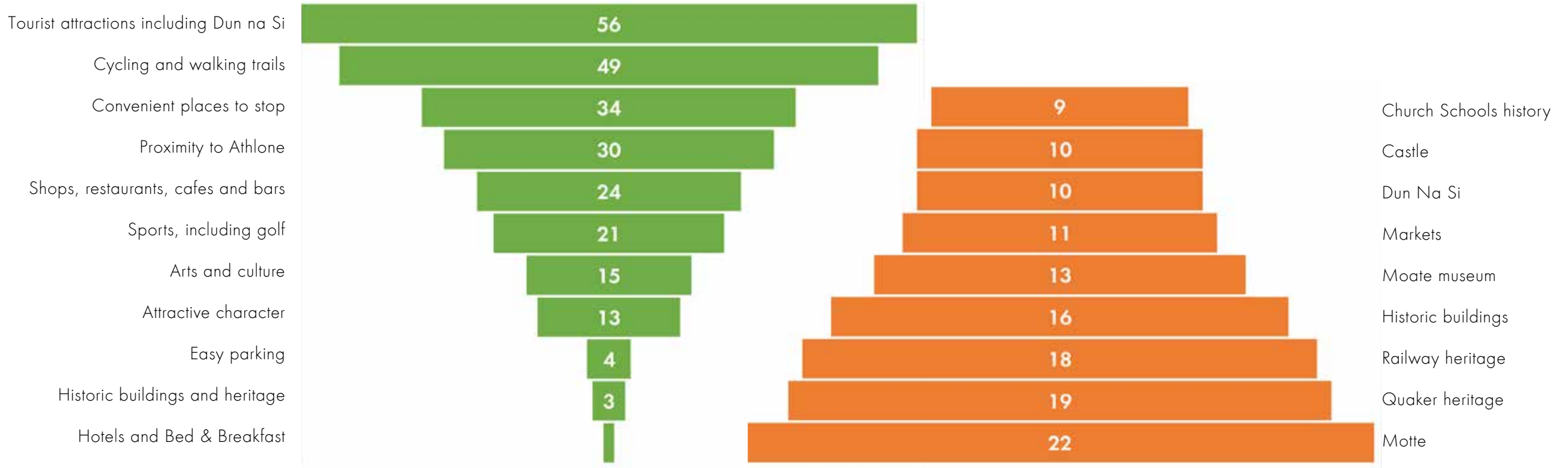Community or club

Leisure

Arts and culture

Athlone

Glasson

Mullingar

MOATE

Dublin

Galway

Tullamore

96

Town centre healthcheck

What currently attracts visitors to Moate?

Category	Value
Tourist attractions including Dun na Si	56
Cycling and walking trails	49
Convenient places to stop	34
Proximity to Athlone	30
Shops, restaurants, cafes and bars	24
Sports, including golf	21
Arts and culture	15
Attractive character	13
Easy parking	4
Historic buildings and heritage	3
Hotels and Bed & Breakfast	

Value	Category
9	Church Schools history
10	Castle
10	Dun Na Si
11	Markets
13	Moate museum
16	Historic buildings
18	Railway heritage
19	Quaker heritage
22	Motte

What aspects of Moate's history and heritage could be promoted and celebrated?

Town centre healthcheck

What does Moate town centre need to attract *young* people to spend more time there?

What does Moate town centre need to attract *older* people to spend more time there?

Town centre healthcheck

Existing challenges

Parking is recognised as the biggest challenge facing the town centre followed closely by the issue of derelict and vacant buildings.

A range of other issues including leisure uses, the quality of the streets and spaces and the wider town centre offer were all given roughly equal weighting in the review, with roads and traffic being listed as the least important issue.
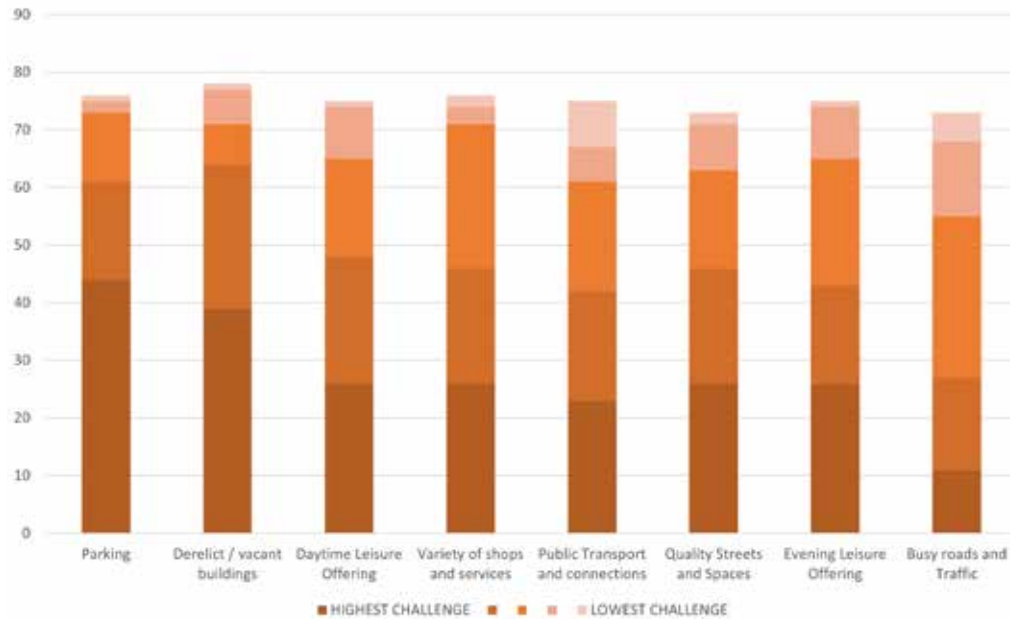
Priorities for improvement

The importance of the biggest challenges facing Moate is recognised in the priority given to parking, traffic, buildings and shop fronts in the identification of priorities for the masterplan
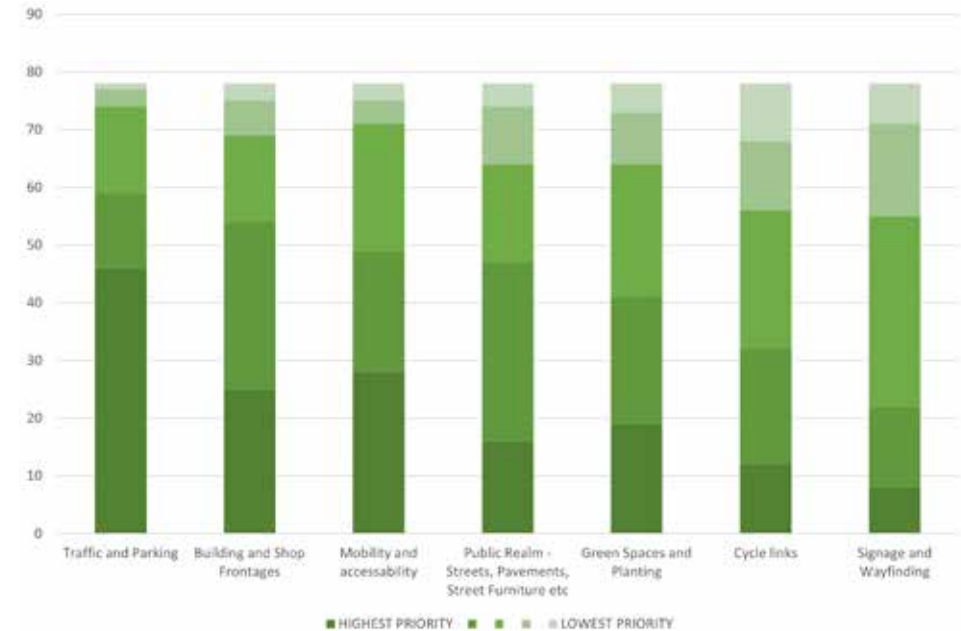
Town centre healthcheck

Key themes

The following summary draws together the key findings from the overall healthcheck process. As part of the initial stage of consultation the project team contacted all the business premises in the town centre. The following summary of the key issues draws on conversations, workshops and questionnaire responses regarding the health of the town centre shops, services and facilities.

Banking and cash points

Businesses and their customers in the town are significantly limited by the lack of a bank and the absence of a cash machine. Whilst cashless transactions are relatively straightforward for many people, cash still remains important for a significant proportion of the community, particularly older people.

Town centre healthcheck

Key themes

Food shopping

Moate suffers for the lack of a larger food store in the town centre and a lack of local competition for customers, and as a result loses trade to other larger towns. This in turn has a knock-on impact on shops in the town centre. Supervalu is an important shop for groceries, but is not a very large store. It also lacks parking and relies on a handful of on-street spaces outside the shop. These factors together limit the ability for people to use it as a suitable shop for a weekly grocery run. The town does benefit from a number of high quality specialist shops including two butchers, a confectioners and a florists.

Evening economy

The evening economy of the town is regarded as poor. Although there are a number of takeaways and a couple of fast food options as well as a choice of public houses, there are no restaurants or evening leisure options in the town. As a community venue, Tuar Ard offers an occasional programme of music, film and comedy. The relatively weakness of both food and leisure offer means that growth in both elements would be required to achieve a more attractive evening economy.

Town centre healthcheck

Key themes

Sport and youth leisure

The lack of leisure facilities has a notable impact on younger people. The Moate Community Youth and Community building adjacent to Tuar Ard is noted as having been a well-used venue for youth activities including clubs and sports, but due to lack of funding and also in response to the centre being used as a COVID vaccine centre, the facility is now not offering activities for young people. By contrast, the sports facilities associated with the community school and college are significant, but not necessarily available for community use.

Parking

There are perceptions that there is insufficient parking in the town centre. This is despite the presence of over 300 car parking spaces. This perception may relate to the way in which spaces are used rather than the overall quantity available, with convenient spaces on Main Street often appearing to be blocked by long-staying vehicles and not available for short-stay errand parking. The public car park at Tuar Ard is regarded as relatively inconvenient for the shops and services on Main Street.

Town centre healthcheck

Key themes

Workplace trends

There is potential for Moate to respond to the growing trend for flexible working including options such as more space small businesses and co-working space. This could support people who may wish to be based locally some of the week, and limit longer commutes to fewer days. This has the advantage of helping to retain working people in the town through the week, which in turn can help to support local businesses including cafes and restaurants. In supporting the presence of businesses in the town, the speed and bandwidth of digital infrastructure also needs to be increased.

Visitor accommodation

Moate lacks visitor accommodation. Whilst there are some local options available, including smaller bed & breakfast premises and The Grand Hotel retains some rooms, the nearest obvious accommodation for overnight stays is Athlone. As an illustration to this point, the consultant team working on this study have been unable to stay in the town during the course of their site visits and consultation trips.

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