

Portlaw Town Centre First Plan



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

PORTLAW TOWN TEAM

the paul hogarth company

HALL BLACK DOUGLAS



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

PORTLAW TOWN TEAM

the **paul hogarth** company

HALL BLACK DOUGLAS



SECTION 1: Introduction**p.04**

- Welcome to Portlaw
- Town Centre First
- Role of this Plan
- Policy Context
- Socio-Economic Context

SECTION 2: Understanding Portlaw**p.06**

- Location and Regional Context
- History
- Urban Design Analysis
- Portlaw Community Strategic Plan
- Town Team Workshops

SECTION 3: The Town Centre First Plan**p.12**

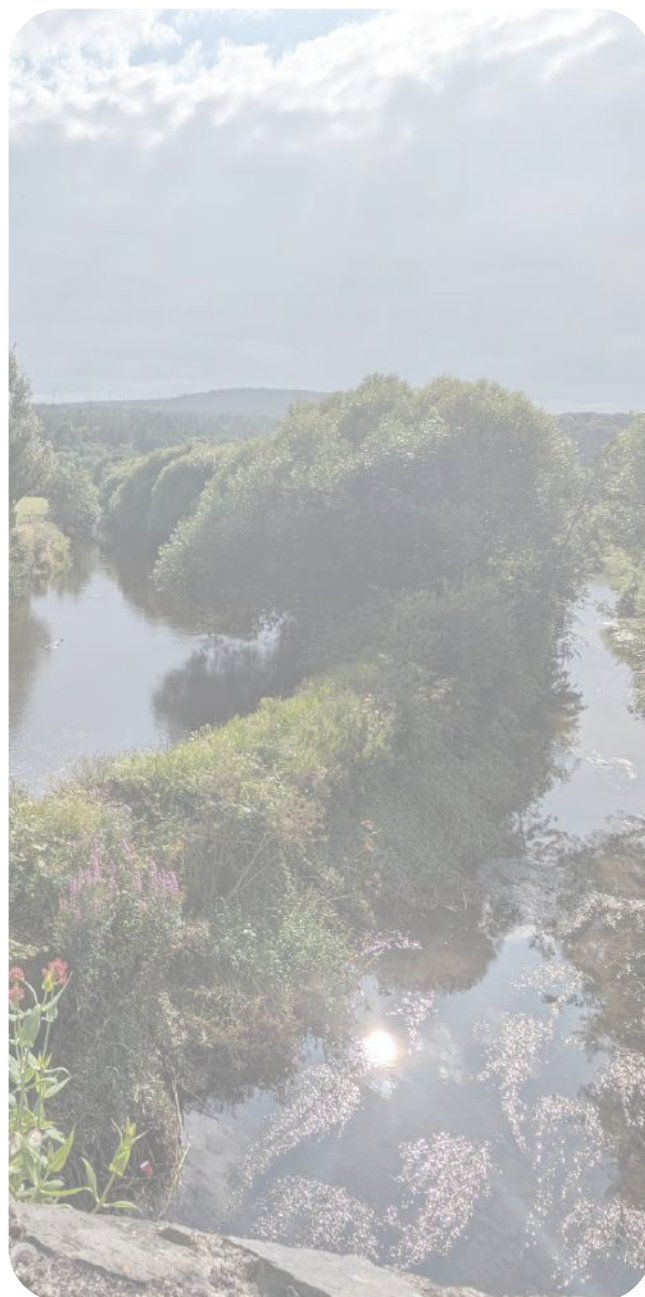
- Vision & Aims
- Plan Layout
- (Living in) Portlaw is...
 - ...continuing the story
 - ...exploring nature
 - ...being part of the community
 - ...encouraging innovation
- The Town Centre First Plan
- Action Plan

SECTION 4: Conclusion**p.36**

- Conclusion

APPENDIX**p.40**

- Consultation Findings
- Town Team Members
- Town Analysis



Introduction

Welcome to Portlaw

Portlaw, County Waterford, is a truly unique place. Laid out by the **Malcomson** family in 1841, its 6 oldest streets emanate from a central square and are lined with houses to a design found nowhere else in Ireland, if not beyond. Yet Portlaw is not only a special place in history. It is home to a thriving community of nearly 2000 people who take great pride in their town and hold passionate ambitions for its future.

This document sets out a vision for Portlaw shaped by the community. It is based on an extensive process of local engagement and research and identifies a series of actions through which positive change can be brought about.

Town Centre First

The Town Centre First Policy was launched by the Irish Government in 2022. It aims “to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community”. It recognises the many challenges being faced by traditional town centres, but also the important social and economic role they have to play in Ireland’s future. The policy sets out an innovative approach to addressing issues and opportunities, including the establishment of local Town Teams.

In response to this policy, Portlaw was selected by Waterford County Council to be the first settlement in the County to produce a Town Centre First Plan. This plan has been written and researched by appointed urban design consultants, The Paul Hogarth Company and Hall Black Douglas architects. Together they worked through a series of consultations and workshops with the public and members of the newly formed Portlaw Town Team.

Role of this Plan

The plan is aimed at everyone with an interest in the future development of Portlaw, including local groups and businesses, the local authority, central government and agencies, and private developers.

The Town Centre First Plan is a non-statutory document that will be used to inform decision-making, funding applications and the delivery of projects. All actions that emerge from the plan will be subject to approval processes as necessary, including adherence to planning policy. This plan should be regularly reviewed and updated, so that future opportunities are in-line with the Portlaw’s vision for its future, and vice versa.



...Introduction

Policy Context

Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region is a 12-year strategic regional development framework to guide change. It establishes a broad framework for the way in which society, environment, economy and the use of land should evolve.

Waterford City & County Development Plan 2021-2028 tells the story of where and how Waterford will grow and continue sustainable social, environmental, and economic growth well into the future, with a focus on creating vibrant and resilient communities. The plan aims to be concise and visionary, setting out targets of what to change. The vision is for Waterford City and County to continue to grow and evolve to become an even more attractive, prosperous, resilient, and sustainable place, anchored by Waterford City and Metropolitan Area as the regional capital and economic driver of the region. Portlaw sits within the Urban Town category within the settlement hierarchy, as a town of above 1,500 population that provides a housing employment and/ or service function.

This plan looks towards the future of the town. Therefore, it is essential that any proposals as part of this plan consider the ongoing climate crisis. Additionally, the residents of Portlaw have already expressed a desire to take an active role in moving towards environments that are more sustainable and based on green initiatives. Accordingly, many of the projects in the TCF plan consider the sustainable development goals; through an emphasis on active lifestyles, innovation and biodiversity, amongst others.

Socio-Economic Context

Portlaw has a population of 1,881 (2022) made up of 921 males and 960 females, which has increased from 1,742 in 2016. A large proportion of the age profile falls within the 5-19 and 30-49 age categories, highlighting the popularity of the town with families. There are a large proportion of families with 1,2 and 3 children, with a sum of 363 families out of a total of 503 families. The majority of the population identify with Ireland as their birthplace (1,872) with the remainder spread across the United Kingdom (97), Poland (31), India (6), Other EU (45) and rest of the world (28).

A total of 808 of the population aged 15 and over work as their principal economic status, with 224 retired, 145 students, 125 looking after home/family, 78 unable to work due to sickness or disability and a small number of long term unemployed (47) and short term unemployed (26). A total of 550 commute to work or school by car, and 220 as car passengers. A total of 157 people travel to work, school, or college by foot, 9 by bicycle and 190 by bus.

The general health of the population of Enfield is predominantly 'very good' with 971 and 'good' with 642, in comparison to a small number considered bad health (31) and very bad (7).



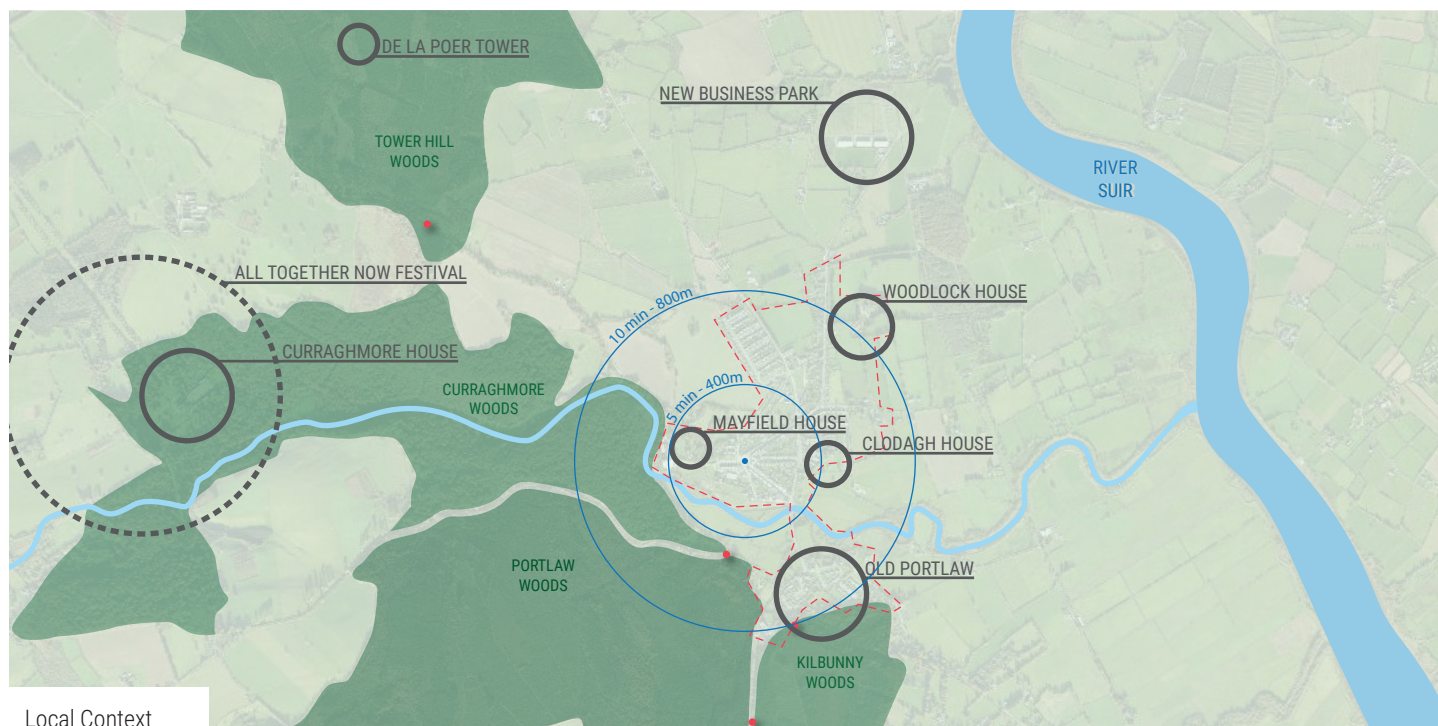
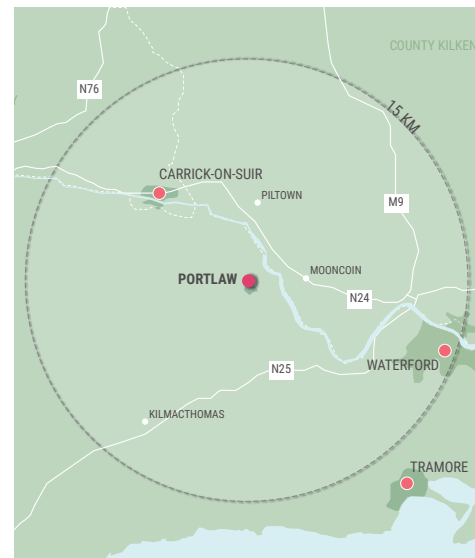
Understanding Portlaw

Location and Regional Context

Portlaw is well located in proximity to Waterford (20km) and Carrick-on-Suir (12km). It is connected both through a regular bus service and by road via the nearby R680. However, it is not directly on any major traffic routes, therefore benefiting from relatively limited through-traffic.

Within a local context, Portlaw is surrounded by 4 distinct and attractive woodland-areas associated with the historic Curraghmore Estate and commercial forestry managed by Coilte. Limited access is enjoyed by locals, but holds much potential for the future.

Portlaw is situated on the banks for the Clodiagh River as it flows east to join the River Suir. A stretch of disused canal can be found alongside, linked to the industrial history of the town.



Local Context



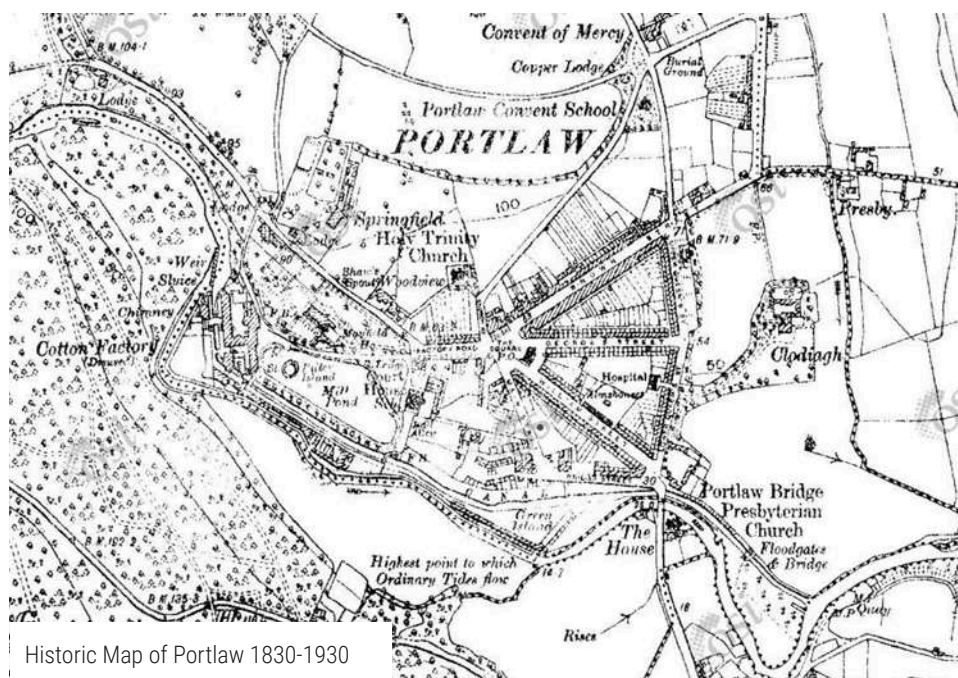
...Understanding Portlaw

History

Portlaw has a fascinating history, some knowledge of which provides important context for understanding the town as it is today. While some evidence exists of much earlier human activity, it was the arrival of industrialist David Malcomson and sons that marks the beginning of Portlaw's establishment of as a modern day settlement. The Malcomson's came to Portlaw from Clonmel to establish one of the island's first cotton factories. It was constructed next to the River Clodagh on the site of a former Cotton Mill and augmented by a canal built to transport raw materials into Portlaw to export produce well beyond.

Reflecting his quaker values, David Malcomson was inspired by the building of model villages to house workers in New Lanark, Scotland, as well as similar endeavours in Northern Ireland and England. So in 1841 he set about building the model village of Portlaw. Its unique layout drew upon baroque planning principles, with 5 streets radiating from a central civic space. The plan was highly functional, proving an efficient network through which workers could walk from their house to the square and onto their work place via 6th street called Factory Road. In addition to houses (built with a unique Portlaw Truss roof construction), the town also had a hospital, school and courthouse, providing a degree of care and comfort well beyond the typical provisions of the era.

Portlaw's economic fortunes were to subsequently wax and wain with the closure of the cotton factory in the late 19th Century and the opening of Ireland's largest tannery in 1935, providing employment for another 50 years. While today the majority of residents now work outside of Portlaw, the town's unique urban layout, landmark buildings and its strong community spirit are a legacy of this fascinating past.



Historic Map of Portlaw 1830-1930



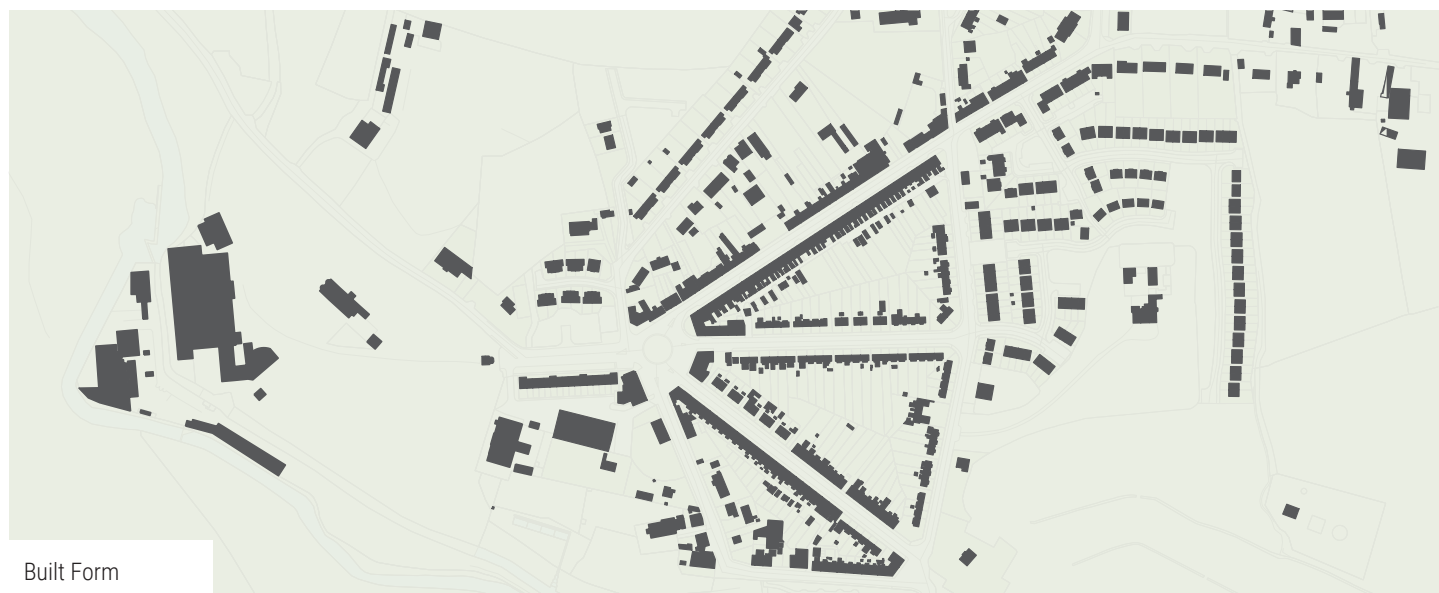
Understanding Portlaw

Urban Design Analysis

Much still remains of Portlaw's industrial history and its original urban form, despite the replacement of vacant row houses in the mid 20th century. As such Portlaw has a very distinctive character defined by its architecture and its spaces, as well as good views to the surrounding countryside. Four of these streets (Brown Street, George Street, William Street, and Main Street) are largely characterised by the rhythm of 1- and 2-story continuous frontages, creating a look and feel that is distinctive to the town.

Some of the town's other landmark historic buildings have survived, most notably those facing Malcomson Square, as well as Holy Trinity Church and Clodagh House. Yet unfortunately, others have not fared so well, most especially the Mayfield House and the former tannery / cotton factory. These fine buildings are in a very poor state of repair and will require much investment to be returned to their former glory. Three other important derelict buildings in Portlaw Town Centre are the fine Presbyterian Church on the River Clodagh, the former Courthouse to the rear of buildings off Factory Road and the gatehouse at the head of Factory Road. These structures, all of which have an important part of the Portlaw story to tell, must be conserved and in time should be restored.

Portlaw is fortunate to have some attractive green and blue spaces, most notably the surrounding woodland and the river and canal. These are located very close to the town centre and provide attractive scenery and habitat for wildlife. Much potential exists to enhance these spaces and importantly, the physical relationships between them and the centre of the town. Furthermore the canal and its associated infrastructure of locks and bridges, have potential for restoration and interpretation in the future.



...Understanding Portlaw

Urban Design Analysis

In addition to the surrounding woodlands and areas around the canal and river, other green assets include; the grotto on Factory Road, Clodagh House grounds, and the playground, as well as a number of grassy areas in Portlaw's residential neighbourhoods. These play an important role in an otherwise relatively dense, urban area and hold potential for enhancement.

While the streets and urban spaces of Portlaw are so intrinsic to the town's unique character and identity, the quality of the public realm is variable and poor in places. A key issue for many of Portlaw's streets is the visual impact of overhead cables, as well as a lack of trees, which is surprising given their abundance in the vicinity.

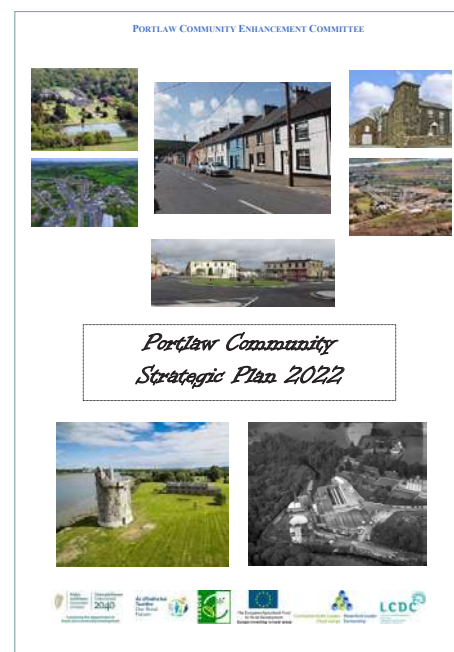
Another key issue for Portlaw is Malcomson Square. This space is, and always has been, the centrepiece of the town. Yet it is currently dominated by extensive road infrastructure in the form of a large round about, junctions and slip roads. Despite this layout and the dominance of vehicles, the space is used by the local community as an informal meeting place. Considerable potential exists to enhance Portlaw's public realm and therefore, the quality of experience for those living and visiting there.



Understanding Portlaw

Portlaw Community Strategic Plan

In 2022 the Portlaw Community Enhancement Committee published the Community Strategic Plan for the town. This valuable document sets a series of goals, objectives and actions for Portlaw, ranging from increased tourism to improved healthcare. Many of the Strategic Plan's objectives are incorporated into this Town Centre First Plan, while others remain highly relevant and complement its proposals. A key feature of the Strategic Plan was an extensive survey of the local community. To avoid unnecessary duplication, the results of this recent survey are also used to inform the Town Centre First plan. Summarised below, they reveal local recognition of Portlaw's strong community spirit, its rural setting and its history. Yet also, the findings highlight concerns around derelict buildings, maintenance in the town and socio-economic challenges facing local people. Opportunities are also highlighted by the public, including capitalising on Portlaw's natural and heritage assets.



What do the members of your household feel are the three best things about living in Portlaw?

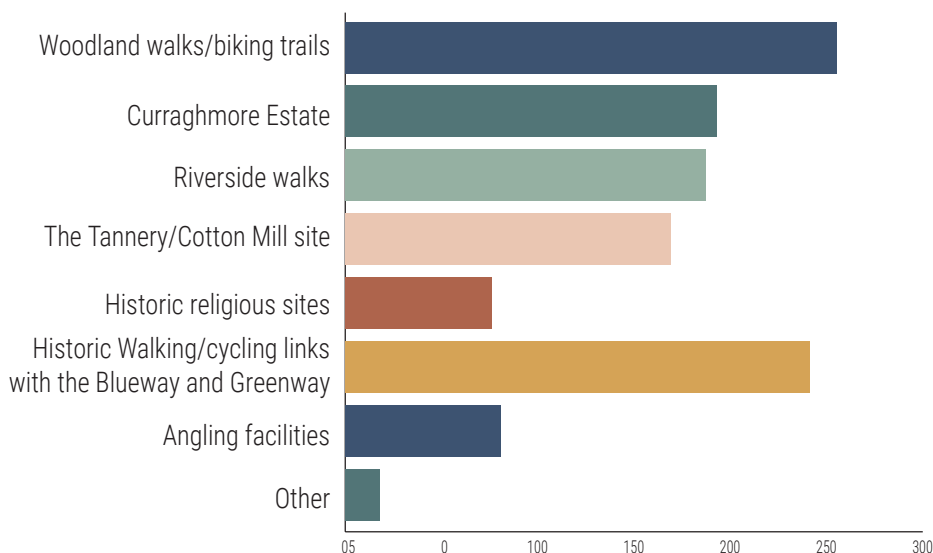
Access to **amenities**
 Closeness to **countryside**
Community spirit
 Essential shops and chemist
Facilities for children
 Feeling of **safety**
 Friends and **friendliness**
 GP
History
 Library
 Local **facilities** overall
 Local shops
Proximity to Waterford
 and other large towns
 Pubs
Quiet and peaceful
 Reasonable **cost of living**
Rural feel
Scenery and scenic walks
 School
Smallness
Sports including GAA and Soccer
 Tommy's shop
Woods and woodland walks

What do the members of your household feel are the three best things about living in Portlaw that most need to be improved?

Air quality
 Anti-social behaviour
Cost of activities too high
Derelict buildings
 Drug addiction

Fouling of footpaths
 Litter and dumping
 Overall **cleanliness**
 Road surface quality

Which of the following would your household be happy to see developed for tourism purposes?



...Understanding Portlaw

Town Team Workshops

To jointly develop the Town Centre First Plan, a series of workshops were conducted by the Portlaw Town Team. The findings of community surveys and urban design analyses were reviewed and discussed in detail. All were in agreement that, with its abundance of historic and natural assets, Portlaw holds significant untapped potential to be improved first and foremost as a place to live, but also as a place to visit which would bring value to the local economy.

The scale of ambition for Portlaw was also considered, given that some significant challenges lie ahead. For example, resolving historic land contamination associated with the former Tannery, or restoring historic buildings such as Mayfield House will require capital and take time. Yet while work on these major challenges is required, the Town Team also recognised that a role exists for many other complementary initiatives that would help improve Portlaw in the shorter term and bring benefits to all who live there.

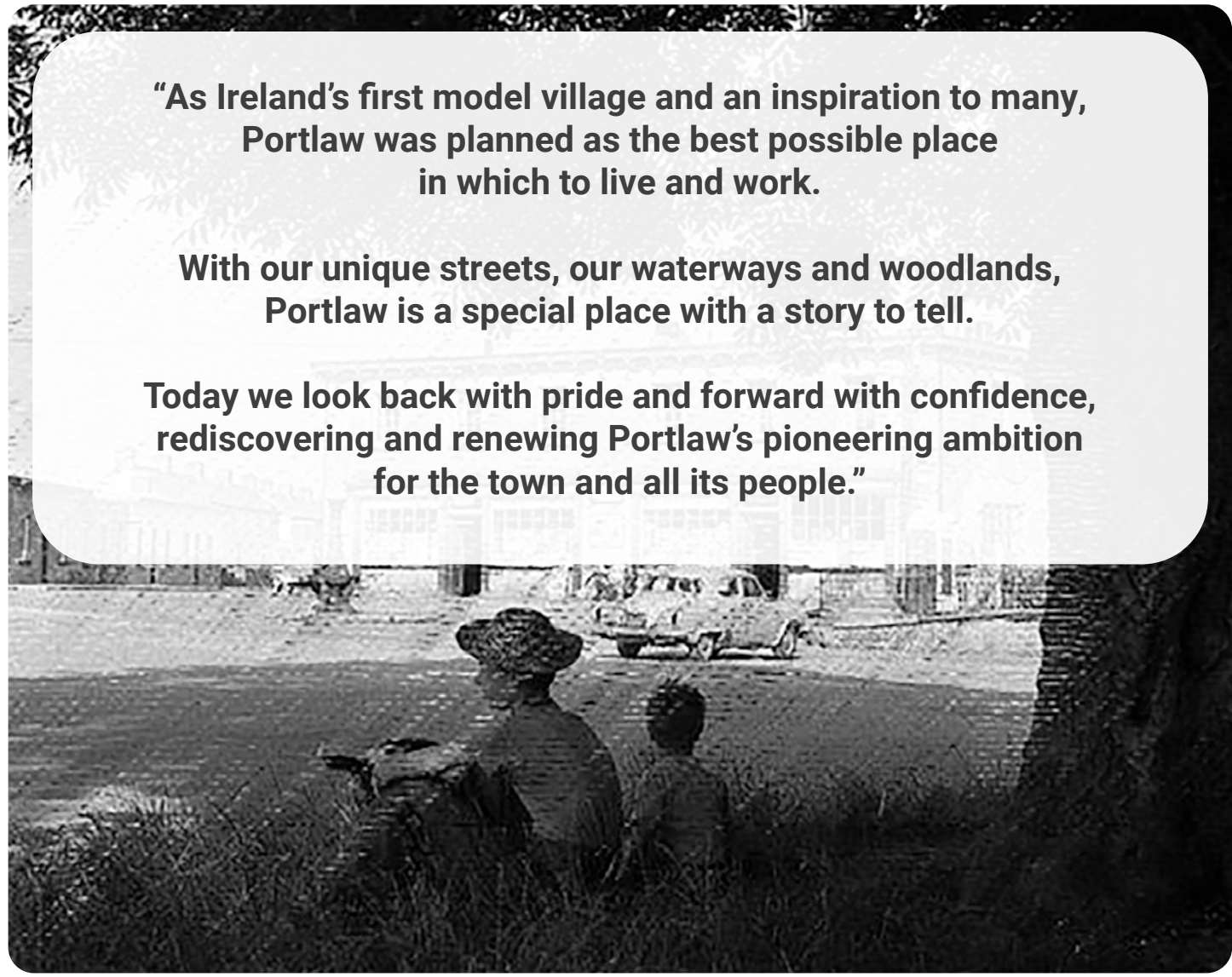


The Town Centre First Plan

The Vision

It is important to have a shared vision for the future of Portlaw. This provides a common goal for all those interested in making improvements and developing the town, be it through a multi-million euro investment, the formulation of new planning policies, or in planning a valuable community initiative.

Portlaw was created in the early 19th Century courtesy of a bold vision. The Town Centre First Vision Statement invites to rediscover that ambition, to draw upon the town's considerable assets and to make Portlaw the best possible place in which to live and work once more.



“As Ireland’s first model village and an inspiration to many, Portlaw was planned as the best possible place in which to live and work.

With our unique streets, our waterways and woodlands, Portlaw is a special place with a story to tell.

Today we look back with pride and forward with confidence, rediscovering and renewing Portlaw’s pioneering ambition for the town and all its people.”

...the Town Centre First Plan

The Aims

So how can we realise the vision for Portlaw? The four following aims set out priorities for Portlaw; raising awareness and celebrating the town's unique significance, make the most of natural assets, further strengthening the community and looking forward to the future by welcoming innovation.

These aims provide the framework upon which Town Centre First actions can be developed and delivered for the good of everyone in Portlaw.

Living in Portlaw is...

...continuing the story

celebrating our revitalised heritage and identity

...exploring nature

caring for and enjoying our waterways, hills and spaces

...being part of the community

providing a quality of life for everyone in Portlaw

...encouraging innovation

pioneering the next exciting chapter of our story

The Town Centre First Plan

The Plan Layout

The Town Centre First Plan for Portlaw comprises 12 key projects, structured by the 4 aims set out for the town. These projects vary in scale and ambition, but share the common objective of realising the vision for Portlaw.

Some projects will require significant investment from either the public or private sectors. It is recognised that these are ambitious and will take time, but that pursuing them regardless is essential for the future of Portlaw. Large projects will require associated approvals such as planning consent, and are likely to be delivered in phases.

Other projects contained within the Town Centre First Plan for Portlaw are smaller in size and are ideally suited for delivery by a range of parties from the public, private and community sector. These should be prioritised and funding sought for their delivery.

Accordingly, the Town Centre First projects are presented as short and long term actions.

Towns do not of course, stand still. It is recognised the future opportunities will emerge during the lifetime of this plan, be it due to new government initiatives or private sector interest. The framework for the Town Centre First Plan is designed to accommodate new ideas, as long as they complement and connect with the proposed initiatives outlined here.

...continuing the story

- a** The Heritage Centre and Trail
- b** Mayfield House and the Tannery
- c** Our Story

...exploring nature

- d** The Woodland Trails
- e** The River and Canal Corridor
- f** Our Green Spaces

...being part of the community

- g** The Square & Factory Road
- h** The Community Hub
- i** Our Revitalised Historic Buildings

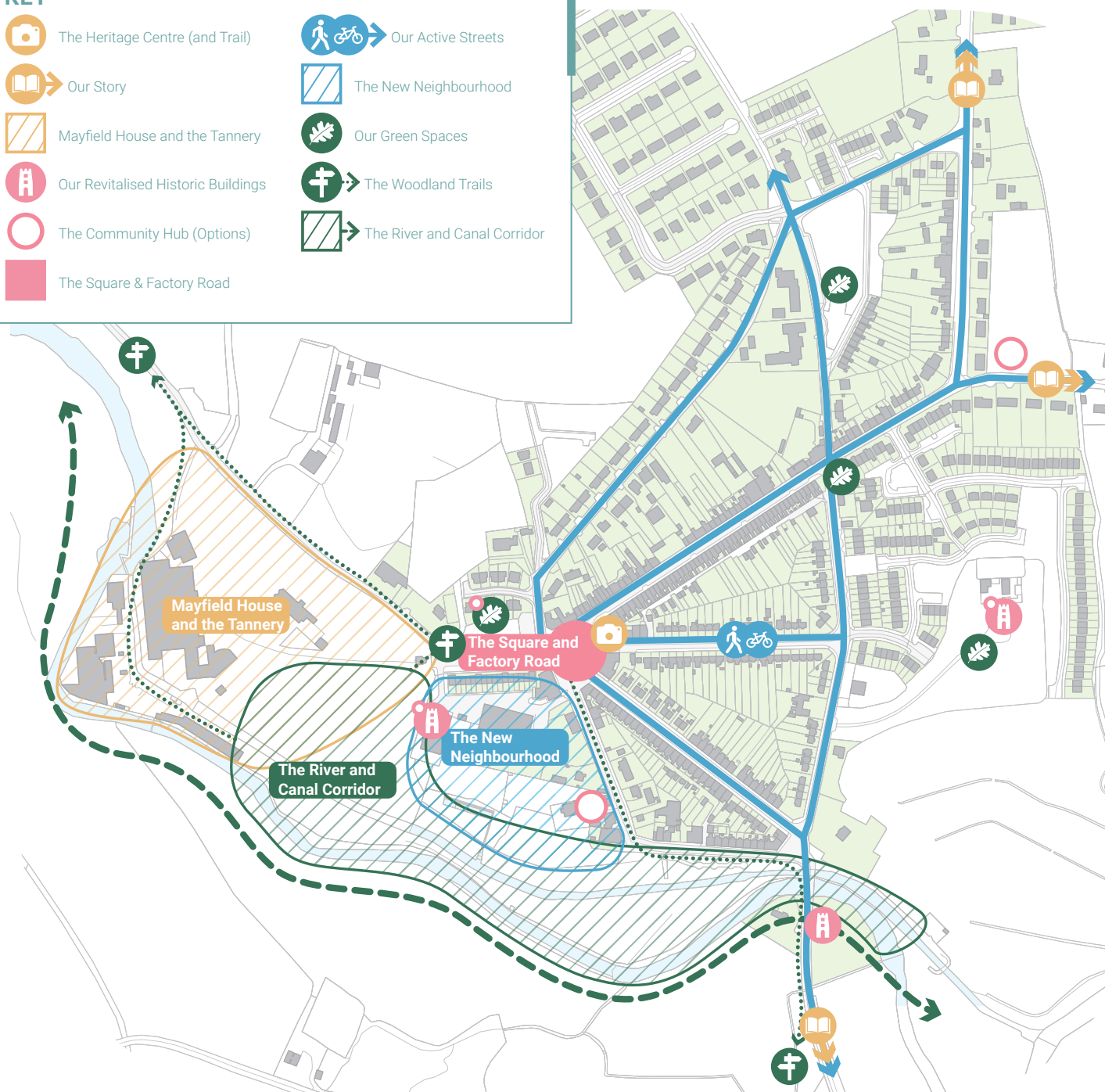
...encouraging innovation

- j** The New Neighbourhood
- k** Our Active Streets
- l** Future-Proofing Portlaw

...the Town Centre First Plan

KEY

- | | |
|---|--|
|  The Heritage Centre (and Trail) |  Our Active Streets |
|  Our Story |  The New Neighbourhood |
|  Mayfield House and the Tannery |  Our Green Spaces |
|  Our Revitalised Historic Buildings |  The Woodland Trails |
|  The Community Hub (Options) |  The River and Canal Corridor |
|  The Square & Factory Road | |



TCF Plan: *Continuing the Story*

...Continuing the Story

The projects on the following pages have an emphasis on Portlaw's ongoing story. They aim to build on Portlaw's identity by exploring and sharing its residents' stories. The town has a history that is unique in Ireland and this should be celebrated and communicated.

Portlaw's Many Stories



*...Continuing the Story***a The Heritage Centre and Trail****Interpretation and animation of Portlaw's unique history.**

Portlaw has a wealth of heritage and stories to tell. Efforts are already ongoing in the community to preserve and archive these stories at the Heritage Centre. However, through this TCF project the opportunity exists to share these stories and resources with a wider audience of locals and visitors.

Project Actions

01. Progress Interpretative Strategy and implement trail over a phased period.
02. Develop Heritage Centre business case and review development options.

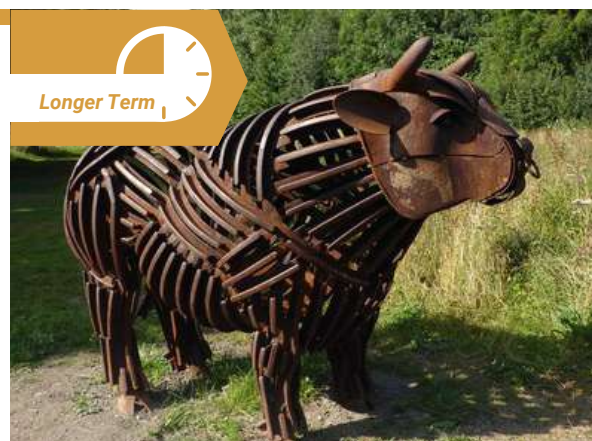
**Shorter Term**

Create a compelling Heritage Trail around the town, comprising innovative signage, artworks, audio tours and events.

Using the Heritage Centre's resources and catalogue, stories, artwork and other creative forms of interpretation can be installed for public display as part of a heritage trail. These pieces should capture the imagination and spark interest and conversations for locals and visitors alike. When bringing forward the heritage trail, special care should be given to sharing stories from all facets of Portlaw's ongoing story.

Develop the Heritage Centre further, with improved access, opportunities for larger interpretive pieces and additional locations and spaces.

Longterm the Heritage Centre is an asset that can develop with enhanced resources and public access. This could happen in its current location, at a new location or in conjunction with other developments in the town. The new Heritage Centre should archive and display Portlaw stories and bring attention to what makes the town unique. Portlaw's history should be brought to life through interpretative elements. Its resources should be complementary to the Heritage Trail, and vice versa.

**Longer Term**

TCF Plan: *Continuing the Story*

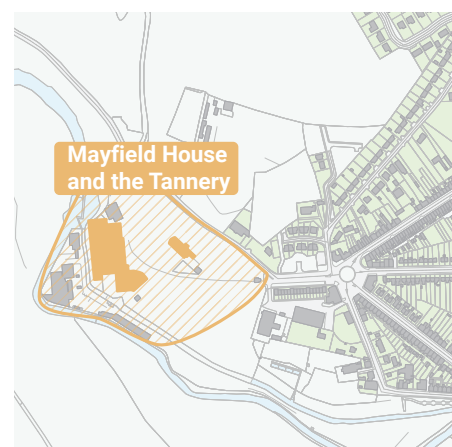
b Mayfield House and the Tannery

Redeveloping and rediscovering the potential of Portlaw's source of pride.

Mayfield House and the former Cotton Mill and Tannery have been a cornerstone of the history of Portlaw. Through its ups and downs they have remained landmarks for the residents of the town. However, in recent times they have fallen into dereliction. Through the TCF process it has been concluded that these markers of Portlaw need to be revitalised and reintegrated as a part of Portlaw's future.

Project Actions

01. Enhance setting, including main entrance and gatehouse
02. Identify and develop areas for safe public access
03. Progress comprehensive development



Shorter Term

Enhance the setting of Mayfield House and the Tannery, identifying opportunities for appropriate community access, interpretation of heritage and improved biodiversity.

Through collaboration with stakeholders and landowners, the Mayfield house and tannery site should be reimagined as a community asset. This should include discussions about public access to (parts of) the site, and opportunities for informal recreation in the setting. Initiatives here can look at creating a park setting with spaces for people and nature through biodiversity and rewilding. The Gatehouse is the connection between the Town Centre and the site and the quality and prioritisation of its restoration sets the tone for the rest of the area.

Restore and develop Mayfield House and the Tannery through sustainable uses that contribute to the economy and vitality of Portlaw.

Whereas in the short term, the main potential of the site is in its landscape setting, in the long term the historic buildings should be restored or reimagined. Through collaboration with private, public and community investors, restoration works can be undertaken with the aim of finding appropriate uses for the buildings, to secure their future maintenance. The restoration efforts should be cognisant of the history and heritage-aspects, while finding modern uses through reinvention, as Portlaw has done many times before.

Longer Term



*...Continuing the Story***Our Story****Defining and communicating the Portlaw story for locals and visitors.**

Portlaw has a strong sense of identity and a wealth of history and stories. Within its community this is well-known and shared between people. However, the story of Portlaw is unique and should be a draw for new residents and visitors alike. This TCF project aims to set out the process of recounting the story and determining how Portlaw wants to be promoted in the future.

Project Actions

01. Develop a Portlaw Place Brand
02. Design and deliver high quality town gateway features
03. Deliver place branding initiatives

**Develop the Portlaw brand, so that its unique qualities can be effectively communicated.**

In collaboration with the community and professionals, Portlaw can identify how it would like to present itself to visitors. With its wealth of assets through its history, surrounding woodlands, river and canal, and the community initiatives, the Portlaw brand should be representative of all that it has to offer and to invite locals and visitors to the town. The outcome of this process will be a comprehensive place brand to include key messaging and style guides, as well as plans for physical, graphic and online roll out.

Communicate the Portlaw brand through town gateway features and community and business initiatives.

Initiatives under the new Portlaw brand aim to further establish Portlaw as a place for locals and visitors alike. Clearly defining the entrances to Portlaw through gateway features (such as interpretative artwork) and providing for visitors in the town centre through community and business opportunities will be a vital part of this project. This could also include collaborating with pre-existing events in the Portlaw area, as well as, initiatives and facilities that are specific to Portlaw.

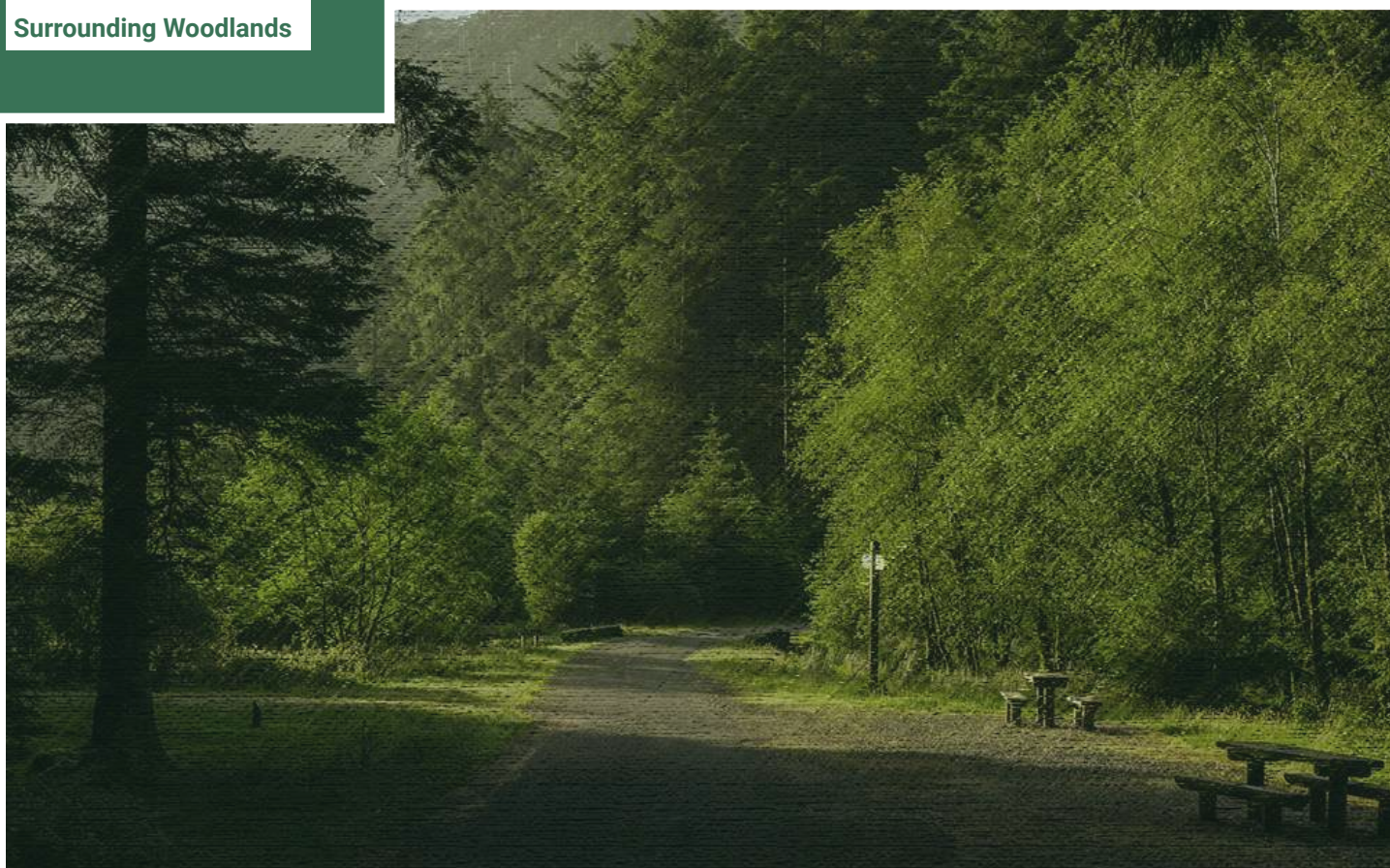


TCF Plan: *Exploring Nature*

...Exploring Nature

The projects on the following pages explore Portlaw's green and blue natural assets, with which it is intricately linked. These projects consider the natural environment that the town is surrounded by, as well as the landscaped green areas that sit within it.

Surrounding Woodlands



*...Exploring Nature***d The Woodland Trails****Improving access and wayfinding to the surrounding woodland trails.**

The surrounding woodlands are one of Portlawn's great green assets. While locals already have informal access to parts of these woodlands, expanding and formalising the trails through collaboration would increase accessibility for people and simultaneously protect the natural environment.

Project Actions

01. Formalise woodland path network in partnership with landowners
02. Implement mapping, signage and path improvement projects

**Shorter Term****Formalise access to the woodland trails with landowners and develop wayfinding through maps and signage.**

While informal maps and access points already exist, initiatives that formalise the trails and access points would make the woodlands more accessible for everyone. Having a better understanding of where people are using the woodlands, and where they would like to, would also facilitate conversations with landowners and wildlife protection agencies. Proposals must tie in with regional plans for greenways in the area, ensuring that visitors are encouraged to engage with the town centre and all it has to offer.

Create formal trail infrastructure, including signage, trailheads, and interpretation points where appropriate.

As access is formalised and improved to the woodlands, the trail infrastructure can be developed further. This should include trailheads with maps, seating and bins; some may also include larger visitor facilities such as toilets or bike hires. Additionally, town centre signage guiding visitors towards the trails should be designed to connect Portlawn and the woodlands. Trail infrastructure should also include improved resurfacing of the trails and lighting. All interventions should be based on ecological advice to curtail impact on wildlife.

Longer Term

TCF Plan: *Exploring Nature*

e The River and Canal Corridor

Making the most of the Town's blue assets.

The River Clodagh and the Portlaw Canal are an integral part of the town's story. They also provide important natural habitats and the opportunity to experience nature on the doorstep of the town. A balanced approach is therefore required to look after and enhance these waterways, while opening up appropriate access and interpretation.

Project Actions

01. Conduct Community wildlife projects along the river and canal
02. Improve access paths
03. Deliver River and Canal paths, bridges and lock restoration.



Shorter Term

Explore opportunities to further enhance the biodiversity and improve safe access to the blue corridor.

Based on a comprehensive ecological survey, initiatives should be forthcoming to protect and enhance the flora and fauna to be found in and along Portlaw's watercourses. Involving the community will be a key part of such initiatives, helping increase local knowledge and skills. In addition, improving safe access to this area in partnership with landowners should be pursued.

Restore the canal and river corridor, including a greenway and pedestrian bridge.

Opening more comprehensive foot and cycle access to the river and canal should be explored in conjunction with wider plans for a greenway in the Portlaw area. This may include bridge access to the island and restoration of the old canal lock. Importantly, connections between this area and the town centre should be made as strong as possible so that local businesses can benefit from visitor footfall.



Longer Term

*...Exploring Nature***f Our Green Spaces****Creating beautiful and biodiverse town spaces that are pleasant environments for people and nature.**

Portlaw is surrounded by many green spaces, but also possesses several within the town's footprint. These include the playground, the Clodagh House grounds and community gardens and several grassy areas around Portlaw. The actions under this project explore the future potential of these spaces, building on the excellent work over the years by Portlaw Tidy Towns.

Project Actions

01. Initiate Community Space Projects
02. Enhance Portlaw Street Trees
03. Upgrade Clodagh House Gardens
04. Deliver Playpark upgrade

**Initiate community projects to improve the biodiversity of existing spaces.**

Residential green areas have lots of potential and initiatives under this project should encourage residents to reimagine the green areas in their neighbourhoods. The potential of these areas is to provide recreation, play, and other community space, as well as, increasing biodiversity and sustainable urban drainage. Additionally, planting street trees would improve the street's appearance and can contribute to traffic calming. These community-driven interventions should be based on ecological advice to maximise the contribution they make.

Creating spaces that are biodiverse, encourage natural play and support the community throughout.

The playground and Clodagh House are focal points for the community that provide important amenities. An enhancement of these spaces could preserve and expand on their existing uses. These designs should happen by professionals, in collaboration with the community, to encourage natural play, community uses, increased biodiversity, and wildlife protection in the area.



TCF Plan: *Being part of the community*



...Being part of the Community

...Being Part of the Community

The projects on the following pages aim to complement Portlaw's existing community by augmenting the spaces within which communities can thrive.

Portlaw's Square



TCF Plan: *Being part of the community*

g The Square & Factory Road

Re-establishing the civic space at the core of Portlaw Town Centre.

Malcomson Square lies at the heart of Portlaw town centre. It used to be a place that facilitated the movement of a great number of pedestrians, serving as the historic link between the workers' homes and the factory. At the time of writing, the space is dominated by a large roundabout and parking bays. The TCF process identified that this square should re-establish people in the heart of Portlaw.

Project Actions

01. Re-imagine the square through events and activities.
02. Bring forward a comprehensive redesign of the square



Animate the square through an events programme, prioritising the needs of people in the space.

Potential exists to further animate Malcomson Square in the short term, building on the success of past activities and events there. This would explore greater use of the space and involve examining how the space can be modified to make it suitable for more events and activities. Pilot schemes to reduce road space and increase pedestrian space could be trialled in advance of more comprehensive changes.

Redesigning the square to be a high quality civic space that prioritises people, vibrancy and safety, this includes space for everyday activities and events.

A redesign of Malcomson Square should fundamentally change the way the space is used and give far greater priority to pedestrians, cyclists, greenery and outdoor seating. This should be conducted by a professional design team working closely with the local community and Waterford City and County Council. The resulting projects should be delivered to the highest standard of design, materials and workmanship.

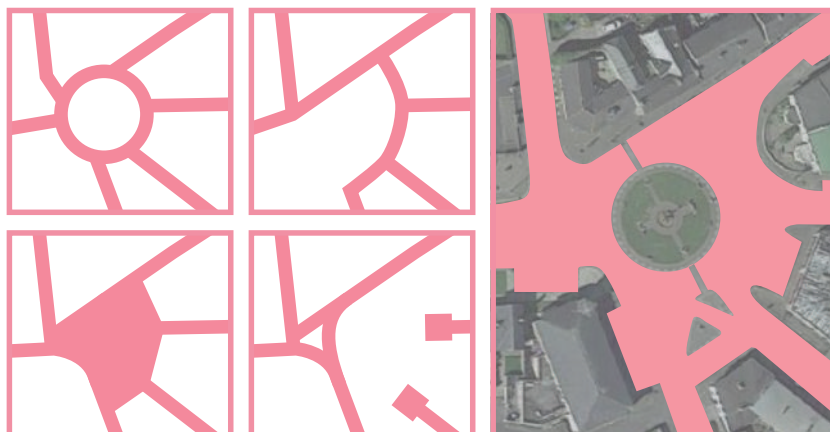


...Being part of the Community

The Circular Square

Redesigning Malcomson Square presents a transformational opportunity for Portlaw as this central space in the heart of the town is put to better use. The square is currently occupied by an oversized roundabout, junctions and slip lanes, providing capacity for volumes of traffic that far exceed anything that could be expected in Portlaw. Great potential exists, therefore, to reallocate space from cars to people, making for a much more welcoming and safer space in the heart of the town.

Designing a new square will require a process of detailed analysis and engagement. The unique street layout of Portlaw is such that a unique solution should be found for this space. Whether or not it could be fully pedestrianised is open for debate, although a reduction in through traffic and a change to traffic flows is inevitable. Given the space available, there is ample room to find a solution that provides large areas for people and cycling, while also managing traffic and parking. The question will be: What is the right balance for Portlaw and what kind of town centre do we wish to create?



Concept options for design

Existing space dedicated to cars

It is recommended that such a collaborative design process is led by a Landscape Architect supported by a transport engineer (i.e. not the other way around). Engagement with all residents and businesses in the area will be fundamental, as will 'setting the bar high' by drawing inspiration from European squares. The project should only be delivered once adequate funding is in place to afford high quality materials throughout, such as natural stone paving, semi-mature trees and bespoke artworks.



Reimagined Portlaw Square

TCF Plan: *Being part of the community*

h The Community Hub

Providing the Portlaw community with a multi-purpose community hub, that is inclusive, safe and lively in design.

Portlaw currently lacks a good quality indoor space within which the community can gather, meet and hold events and activities. Such a facility would help further cement Portlaw's strong community spirit and the welcome of everyone in the community young and old.

Project Actions

01. Determine the use, size, cost and location of a new hub
02. Deliver and manage Portlaw Community Hub



Shorter Term

Organise, plan and design a new Community Hub for Portlaw.

The need for a multi-purpose hub building needs to be fully explored in detail to determine the type and size of space that is required and how it would be managed. The hub should complement other community facilities already in the town. An appropriate site for the building must also be identified. It will be important for Portlaw that this facility is located in the town centre, helping to bring life and animation at different times of the day and week. While first and foremost a community facility, the hub could also have an income generating role that would help sustain its running costs. (e.g. events space, cafe)

Construct and manage the new hub.

A new community hub for Portlaw should be a building of high quality design that is flexible in use. This would help to ensure its relevance is maximised for all the community and the wide range of local groups and organisations who would make use of the space. Maintaining accessibility will be a key consideration, ensuring that everyone is able to freely use the facility. With running costs and the environment in mind, the building should also be efficient in its use of energy, with scope for the integration of renewable sources.

Longer Term



*...Being part of the Community***i Our Revitalised Historic Buildings**

Reviving Portlaw's historic buildings by improving frontages and bringing appropriate uses and vibrancy to vacant properties.

Portlaw has a diverse stock of historic buildings: civic, residential and commercial in nature. This sort of historic wealth comes with a responsibility to take care of it. This TCF project identifies ways to undertake initiatives that preserve, revive and enhance Portlaw's heritage buildings.

Project Actions

01. Identify and survey buildings in need of improvement
02. Engage with owners to identify viable uses and means of improvement
03. Enhance and restore town centre buildings and frontages

**Shorter Term**

Assess the condition of Portlaw's historic properties to identify necessary conservation works and work with owners and the community to find appropriate uses for the longer term.

Town centre buildings in need of improvement must be identified in a methodical fashion and constructive engagement sustained with owners. Particular focus is required on buildings of heritage significance and those in prominent locations that have a detrimental impact on their surroundings. Assistance may be required to assess the condition of properties and identify conservation requirements, as well as exploring the potential for new, sustainable uses.

Restore and redevelop Portlaw's historic structures and frontages.

The longterm initiatives will be assessed on an individual basis per building or group of buildings in Portlaw. However, these initiatives are likely to include frontage improvement schemes, restoration works on vacant structures, and community or commercial occupation of historic structures. Actions should be taken with mindful consideration of their historic context, but allow for natural evolution into the future. They should be inclusive and accessible through high quality of design and take care of the historic elements of the buildings.

**Longer Term**

TCF Plan: *Encouraging Innovation*

...Encouraging Innovation

The projects on the following pages consider changes in Portlaw's future. They examine Portlaw's aspirations in relation to changing lifestyles, sustainability and growth.

Space to walk and socialise



...Encouraging Innovation

i The New Neighbourhood

Augmenting the Town Centre through a new neighbourhood with the former Courthouse at its core.

To the south west of Malcomson Square is an area of land that is currently underdeveloped. With plans in place for the existing engineering works there to be relocated to a new facility, the opportunity exists to create a new town centre neighbourhood that greatly adds to Portlaw.

Project Actions

01. Create a masterplan for a new town centre neighbourhood
02. Bring forward development to include mixed type and tenure housing



Shorter Term

Work with landowners to develop a masterplan for a new town centre neighbourhood, including courthouse restoration and older people's housing.

Great care is required to ensure any redevelopment of this central area is of a high quality and has a design that is befitting of such a historic location. A site masterplan process would help to ensure a comprehensive approach to the site incorporating the principles of good urban design. In Portlaw town centre a predominance of terraced town housing is likely most appropriate, creating well defined streets, spaces and pedestrian through routes. The restoration of the derelict former court house presents a major opportunity to create a focal point.

Bring life back to the Courthouse and developing a thriving town centre neighbourhood.

In realising the development of this area, the opportunity exists to provide much needed housing in Portlaw town centre. Consideration should be given to the provision of mixed type and tenure housing that supports a diverse and vibrant community. Age friendly housing is likely to be well suited to this town centre location within walking distance of shops and other amenities.

Longer Term



TCF Plan: *Encouraging Innovation*

k Our Active Streets

Making Portlaw a walking, cycling and public transport town, while accommodating the needs of the car.

Portlaw has several qualities that already encourage walking and cycling. Firstly, it has a compact urban form and is relatively flat. Secondly traffic within Portlaw is largely heading to a destination within Portlaw and not passing through to elsewhere, reducing the overall number of vehicles on the road. Therefore, Portlaw is ideally positioned to become the walking and cycling town.

Project Actions

01. Introduce small street level improvements
02. Advance town centre streetscape redesigns



Promote active lifestyles and sustainable transport through small interventions that prioritise walking and cycling and improved bus services.

Because the larger infrastructure of Portlaw already encourages active travel, actions under this project are expanding on this base. Interventions should include traffic calming measures and provide for accessibility. Street furniture, like seating and bike parking, will also further promote walking and cycling. Finally, temporary interventions can start to lay the foundation for more substantive changes. Examples of this could be reclaiming parking bays for public spaces, planters to enhance streetscapes, or cycling tours through Portlaw.

Redesign key streets to improve access and greenery, while providing facilities for walking, cycling, buses and electric vehicles.

Longterm proposals for this TCF project should include the redesign of key streets as part of a larger walk and cycle network. In order to provide safe space for walking and cycling, continuity within the network is important. On busier streets this should mean protected cycle lanes and wide footpaths, where possible. While on quieter or residential streets, the focus should be on traffic calming. The design of streets should be of the highest quality with natural stone paving, street trees and furniture, along with appropriate lighting and the undergrounding of overhead cables.



...Encouraging Innovation

■ Future-proofing Portlaw

Readying Portlaw for the future through improved digital connectivity and green energy infrastructure.

Since its establishment, Portlaw has had a reputation for embracing innovation and new technologies. As the challenges of climate change mount, so too does the need for action. For residents and businesses, opportunities to adopt new technologies will help make Portlaw more sustainable, while bringing benefits for all.

Project Actions

01. Develop digital strategy to include improved broadband and town centre WiFi
02. Implement town centre energy efficiency and green energy measures
03. Increase public EV charging point provision



Shorter Term

Bring forward specific projects to improve connectivity and energy efficiency, including town centre WiFi and building insulation.

Improved digital connectivity and energy efficiency measures can be brought forward in tandem in Portlaw Town Centre. Informed by a strategy, digital advances may include an improved online presence for Portlaw and the provision of free WiFi in public spaces. Meanwhile energy efficiency projects should centre around the insulation and weatherproofing of properties, as well as the adoption of energy saving technologies as appropriate.

Work with utility providers to ensure strong electricity, broadband, water & sanitary services, while examining the potential of town centre district renewable energy.

For the longer term it will be important to ensure that Portlaw has good quality utility infrastructure that safeguards supply and enables growth. Innovate potential solutions, such as district renewable energy systems or hydro power, should be welcomed in Portlaw town centre, helping to reduce carbon footprint and energy costs for residents.

Longer Term



The Town Centre First Plan

Implementation and Delivery

The Town Centre First Plan for Portlaw has identified 12 overarching projects and a series of actions associated with each. The plan is ambitious, but achievable through collaborative working between stakeholders and coordinated project delivery. A range of potential funding sources exists for publicly funded projects include the Rural Regeneration Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Fund and LEADER Funding. Further sources of funding are available for specific themes, such as heritage restoration and environmental projects.

Using the Action Plan below, a process of regular review and monitoring is required to identify opportunities, prioritise projects and work in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders.

TOWN CENTRE FIRST PROJECTS		Potential PRIORITIES	Potential BUDGET	Potential Key STAKEHOLDERS
<i>...continuing the story</i>				
a	The Heritage Centre and Trail	medium	€€€	Heritage Centre, WCCC, Heritage Council
b	Mayfield House and the Tannery	very high	€€€€	Landowners, WCCC
c	Our Story	medium	€€	WCCC, Failte Ireland
<i>...exploring nature</i>				
d	The Woodland Trails	very high	€€	Landowners, Coilte, WCCC
e	The River and Canal Corridor	high	€€€	WCCC, Landowners
f	Our Green Spaces	medium	€-€€	WCCC, Tidy Towns
<i>...being part of the community</i>				
g	The Square & Factory Road	very high	€€€€	WCCC, Businesses
h	The Community Hub	very high	€€€	WCCC, Local Groups
i	Our Revitalised Historic Buildings	medium	€-€€€	Building owners, WCCC, Heritage Council
<i>...encouraging innovation</i>				
j	The New Neighbourhood	high	€€€€	Landowners, WCCC
k	Our Active Streets	high	€€-€€€	WCCC
l	Future-Proofing Portlaw	high	€-€€€	WCCC, Businesses

*...the Town Centre First Plan***The Heritage Centre and Trail****Project Actions**

01. Progress Interpretative Strategy and implement trail over a phased period.
02. Develop Heritage Centre business case and review development options.

Mayfield House and the Tannery**Project Actions**

01. Enhance setting, including main entrance and gatehouse
02. Identify and develop areas for safe public access
03. Progress comprehensive development

Our Story**Project Actions**

01. Develop a Portlaw Place Brand
02. Design and deliver high quality town gateway features
03. Deliver place branding initiatives

The Woodland Trails**Project Actions**

01. Formalise woodland path network in partnership with landowners
02. Implement mapping, signage and path improvement projects

The River and Canal Corridor**Project Actions**

01. Conduct Community wildlife projects along the river and canal
02. Improve access paths
03. Deliver River and Canal paths, bridges and lock restoration.

Our Green Spaces**Project Actions**

01. Initiate Community Space Projects
02. Enhance Portlaw Street Trees
03. Upgrade Clodagh House Gardens
04. Deliver Playpark upgrade

The Square & Factory Road**Project Actions**

01. Re-imagine the square through events and activities.
02. Bring forward a comprehensive redesign of the square

The Community Hub**Project Actions**

01. Determine the use, size, cost and location of a new hub
02. Deliver and manage Portlaw Community Hub

Our Revitalised Historic Buildings**Project Actions**

01. Identify and survey buildings in need of improvement
02. Engage with owners to identify viable uses and means of improvement
03. Enhance and restore town centre buildings and frontages

The New Neighbourhood**Project Actions**

01. Create a masterplan for a new town centre neighbourhood
02. Bring forward development to include mixed type and tenure housing

Our Active Streets**Project Actions**

01. Introduce small street level improvements
02. Advance town centre streetscape redesigns

Future-Proofing Portlaw**Project Actions**

01. Develop digital strategy to include improved broadband and town centre WiFi
02. Implement town centre energy efficiency and green energy measures
03. Increase public EV charging point provision

Conclusion

Conclusion

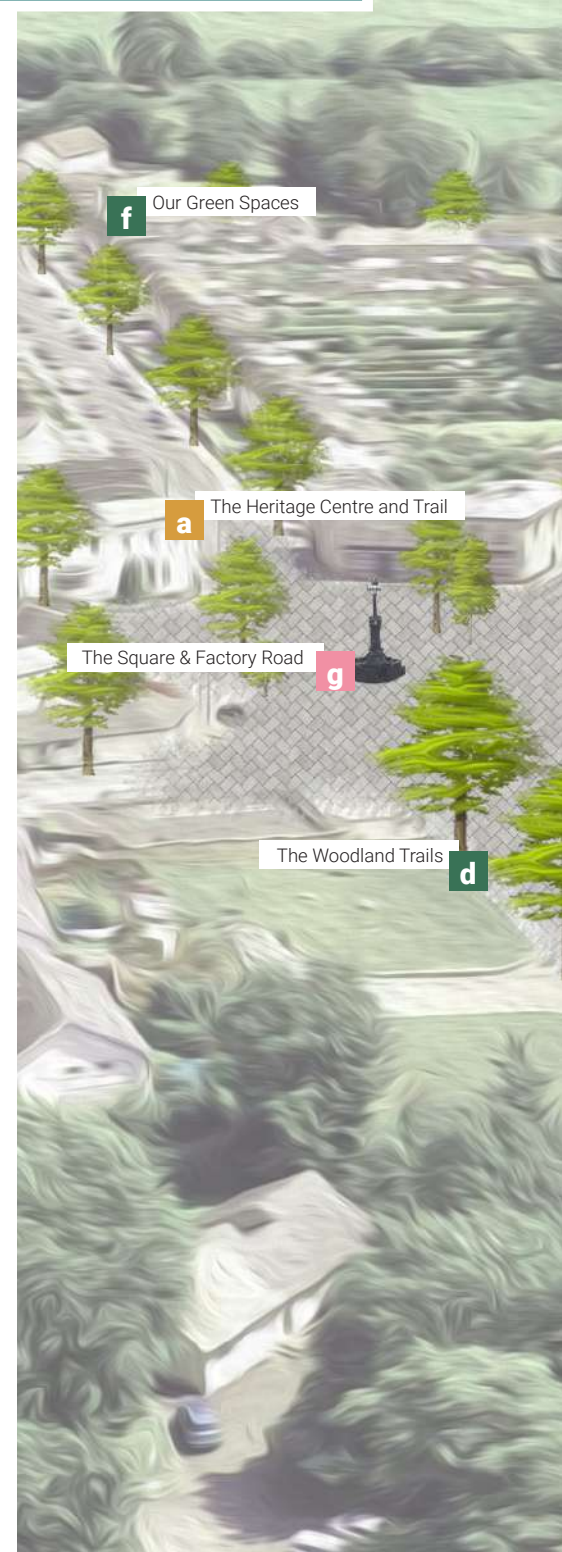
This Town Centre First Plan sets out a compelling vision for Portlaw that looks back with pride and forward with confidence. Through the realisation of its projects, the opportunity exists to not only to put Portlaw 'back on the map' for its unique heritage and story, but also and most importantly, to improve the town for everyone as a great place in which to live and work.

A hallmark of the approach behind the development of this plan has been a genuine collaboration with the local community. Without their input this Town Centre First Plan would not accurately reflect local aspirations. All involved in its preparation would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the community for their invaluable contributions.

In many regards the hard work starts now. Portlaw's collaborative spirit and 'can do' attitude will be vital in progressing the proposals set out in this ambitious plan towards phased delivery on the ground. The fulfilment of this vision will require working closely with Waterford City and County Council, government departments and agencies and private landowners. Larger projects will require funding, approvals, time and patience, while smaller projects will also demand resources and coordination.

Yet by working together and building momentum in a step-by-step approach, an exciting prospect awaits Portlaw. This truly unique town is poised for the latest chapter in its fascinating history, putting the local community and their town centre first.

Living in Portlaw is...



...Conclusion

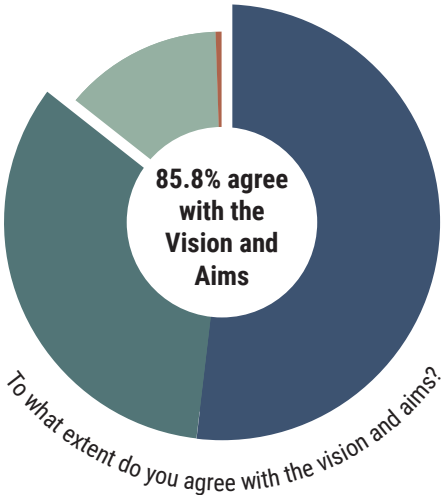


Appendix: Consultation Findings

Consultation Process

As part of the TCF process, public engagement was undertaken through Town Team workshops, a public consultation process, as well as using the findings from previously (and recently) completed community surveys.

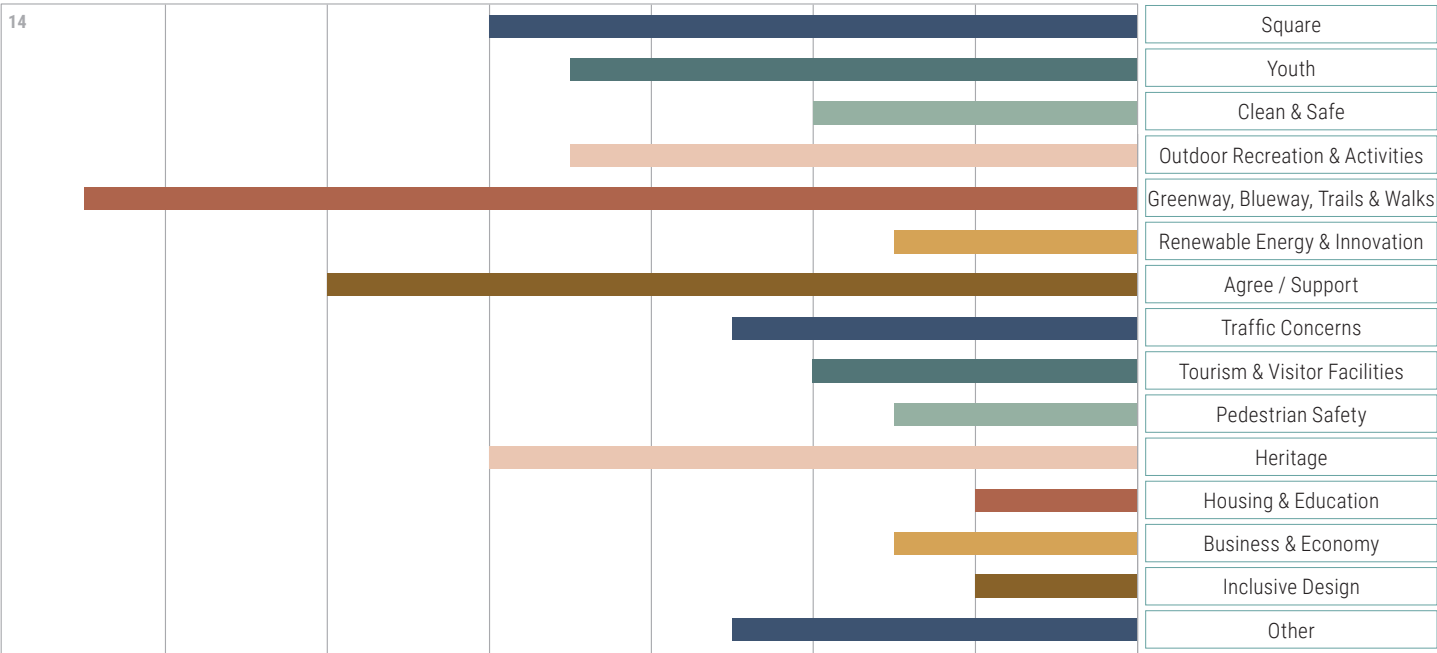
The public consultation process gathered 190 responses during its 2-week run in the summer of 2023 and included an online survey, as well as an in-person event in the Portlaw square. The purpose of the consultation was to gather feedback on the draft TCF Plan. The results of the survey are available over the following pages.



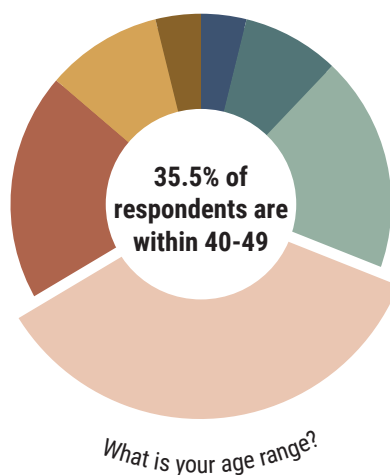
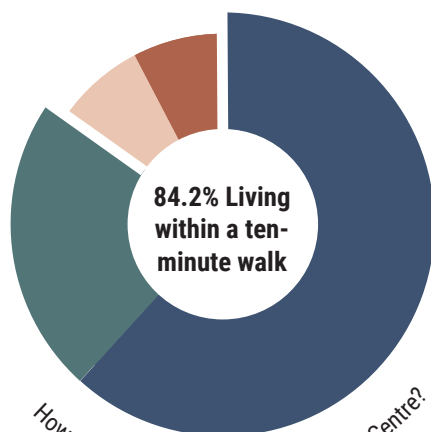
strongly agree	52.6%
agree	33.2%
neutral	13.7%
disagree	0.0%
strongly disagree	0.5%

190 responses

Please add any comments or ideas for the Vision and Aims: (69 responses)



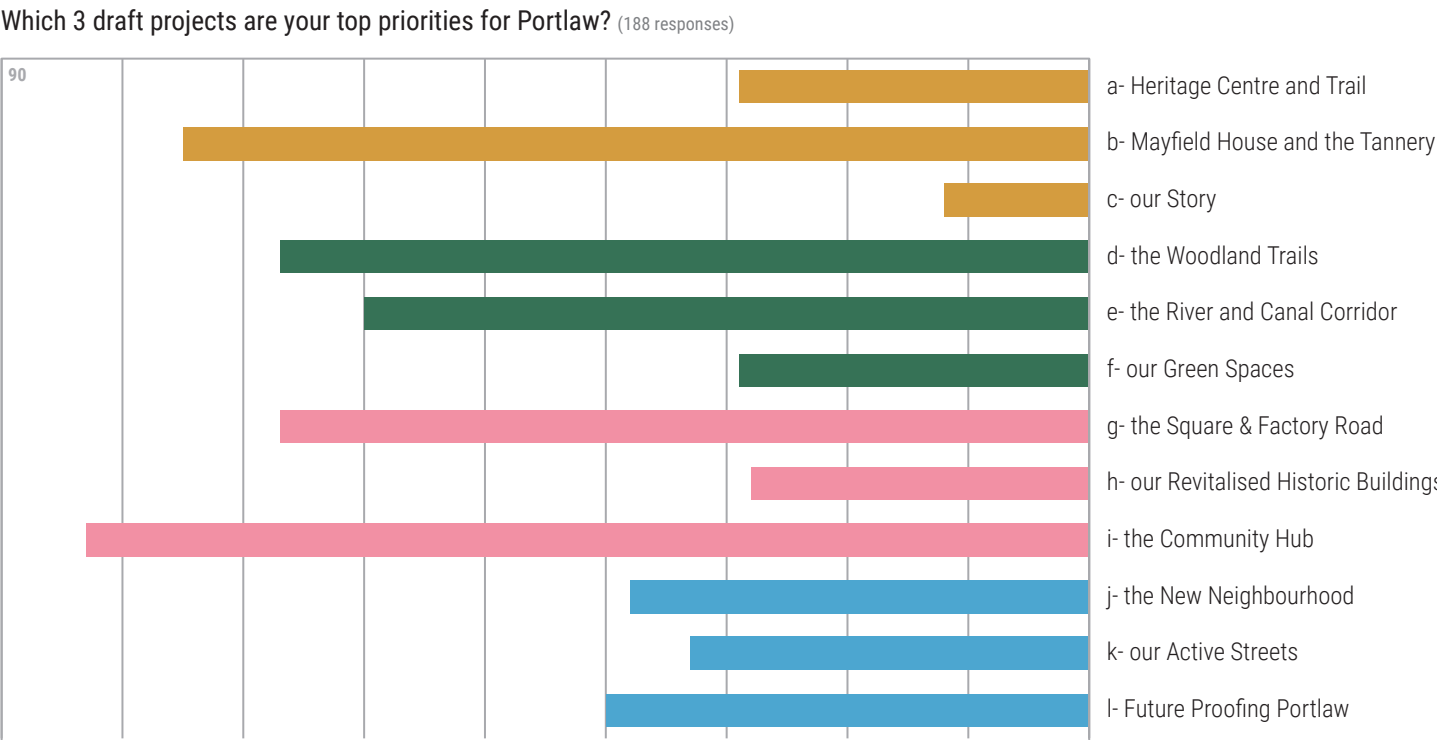
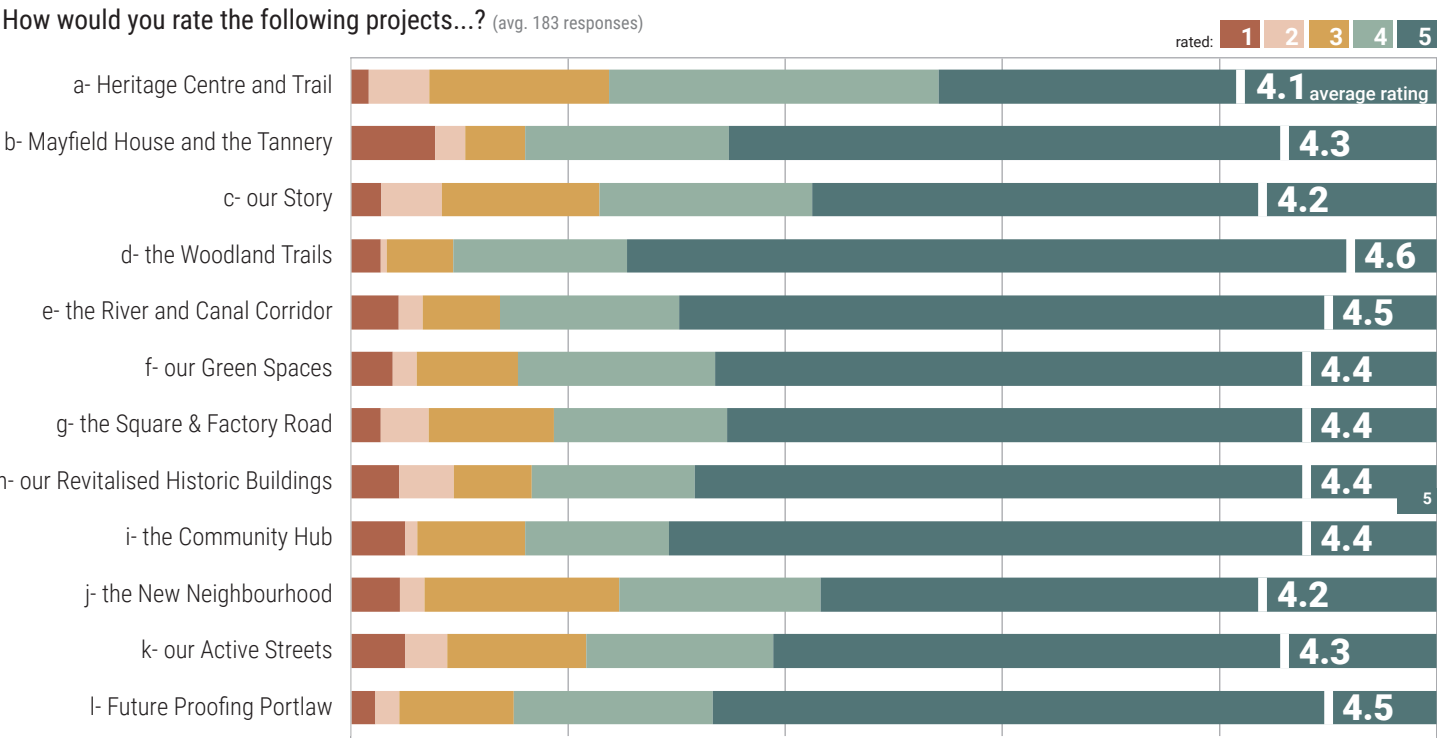
Consultation Findings



(continued) Please add any comments or ideas for the Vision and Aims: (69 responses)

- “I love the idea of a revamp on The Square, giving more to the pedestrian, recreational space, events etc.”
- “Portlaw needs more clubs, activities for children and teens within the village”
- “More bins, especially dog waste bins”, “more planting to help soften and air quality”
- “this town needs some serious makeover like outlets, parks, well planned trails, connectivity and leisure activities.”
- “Linking the blue way and greenway through the village would bring huge benefits and footfall to the area”
- “Is district heating and option for the town?. Renewable energy options for town to make it carbon neutral”
- “The vision looks fantastic.”, “None - all suggestions excellent”, “I agree with the plans”
- “Please improve entrances to village, slow down traffic and stop lorries parking in the square”
- “Need to put Portlaw on the Map - see what our unique town and area has to offer”
- “People walking signs on curraghmore road to facilitate the walking trail through clearys lane.”
- “Preserve the industrial heritage and make provision for town trails and woodland walks”
- “More housing, many young couples and families looking to purchase homes in portlaw”
- “More business opportunities needed to keep people spending locally.”
- “More inclusion for disabled community members”, “More facilities for the elderly”
- “More focus on the future than harking back to the past”, “Very generic and aspirational”

Appendix: Consultation Findings



Consultation Findings



Appendix: Consultation Findings

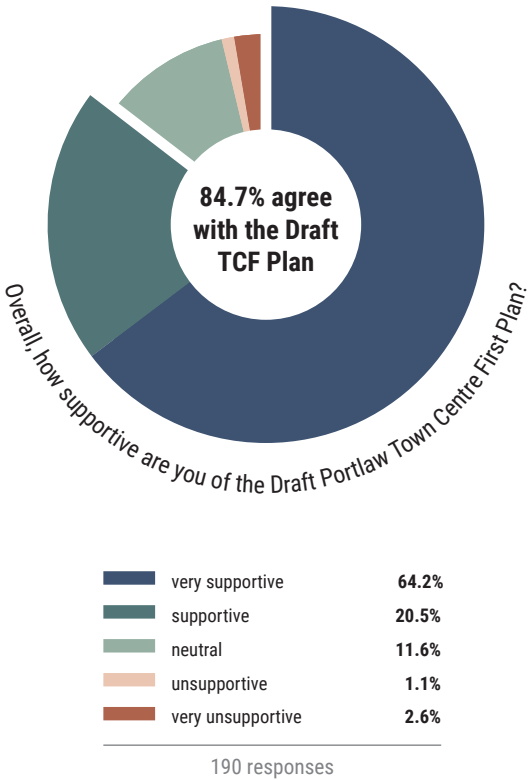
Overview of Consultation Findings

The consultation findings based on the draft TCF plan for Portlaw showed an overall support of the plan; around 85% of respondents supported both the Vision and Aims, as well as, the Draft Plan.

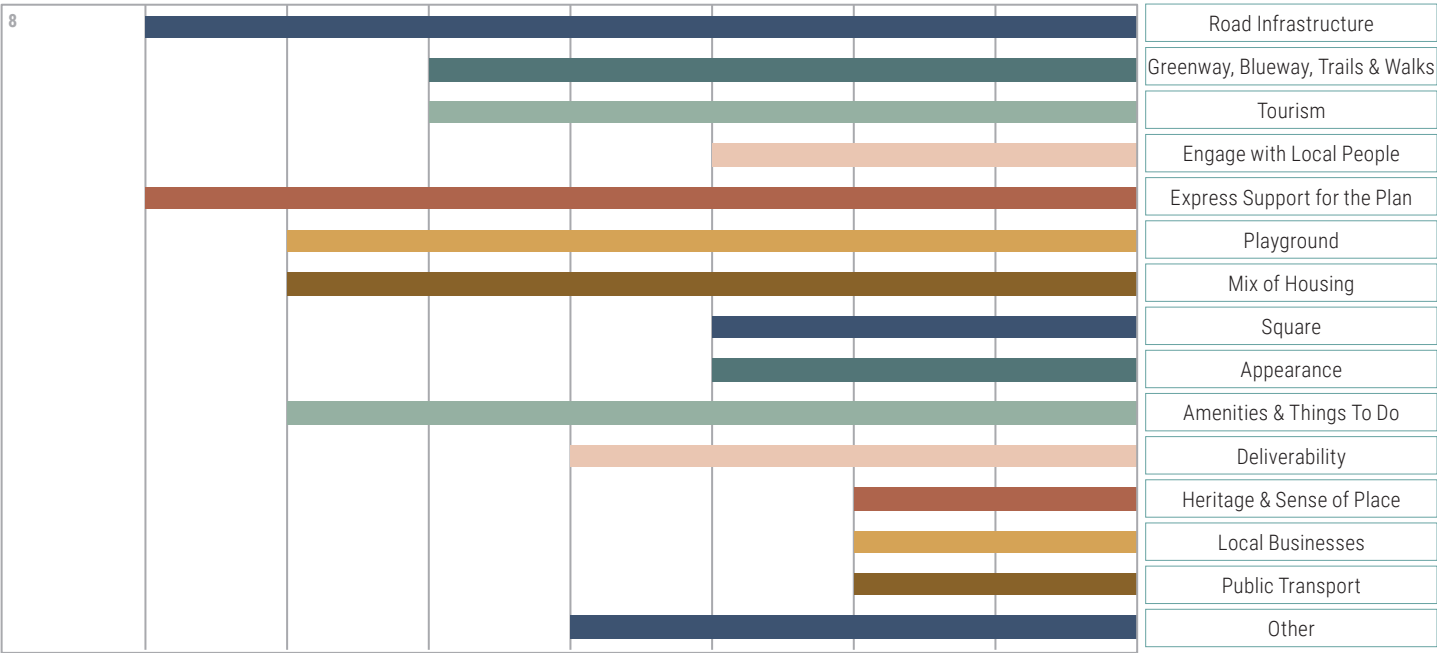
Within the multiple-choice questions, the green projects such as ‘the woodland trails’, ‘the river and canal corridor’, and ‘Future Proofing Portlaw’ rated highest out of 5, cementing the TCF findings around Portlaw’s desire for a green future. When asked about their priorities for the town, the desire for more community spaces such as ‘the Community Hub’, ‘the Square & Factory Road’, and ‘Mayfield House and the Tannery’ stood out as particularly important, in addition to the three green projects mentioned above.

Responses to open-ended questions largely echoed the above findings, but also gave further suggestions through which the projects could be enriched; in particular, emphasis was put on inclusivity and accessibility. Respondents expressed that it is especially important to provide facilities for the younger and older groups of the Portlaw population within the plan. Further suggestions included opportunities to increase vibrancy, like markets, events, and commercial ventures.

Overall, the consultation findings didn’t significantly alter the proposed projects, but instead supplemented their descriptions and created additional depth in the final document.



Do you have any other comments or ideas for projects in the Draft Town Centre First Plan? (64 responses)



Consultation Findings



(continued) Do you have any other comments or ideas for projects in the Draft Town Centre First Plan? (64 responses)

- “I think the flow of traffic through the village is unsustainable in the long term.”
- “I feel starting with leisure centre and woodland trail will be a big success and it has big demand ... of the town”
- “Campervan parking in village. Campsite in town - similar to that in Graighnemanagh”
- “A plan that everyone can see before hand and have a say in its development going forward”
- “Thank you all for your amazing effort and contribution to Portlawn”, “Plenty of potential”
- “Improve playground, redevelop basketball court, astroturf pitch, running track around it, seating for families.”
- “Would be good to incorporate living hub for the elderly”, “New houses affordable houses for the young”
- “If the square was used for a type of local market area once a month where local vendors can sell their product/...”
- “The entrances to village all need to be refurbished especially Coolfin side, tidy the wall by doctors well...”
- “Something to be added which would be activity based”, “Café and Hub would be great”
- “Quite Happy with projects in the pipe line but worried about time it will take”
- “Don't loose the Towns uniqueness”, “To keep the tannery and mayfieldhouse as it is...”
- “Encourage / market more local businesses”, “Funding for new business start ups”
- “Just more transport in and out of portlawn with later bus times”
- “I await the results of the ideas outlined in the drawings; what traffic..? Will residents...? ...?”

Appendix: *Town Team*

Town Team Members

NOVEMBER 2023

- Mr. Ger Crotty
- Mr. Thomas Larkin
- Mr. Michael Henebry
- Ms. Therese Keyes
- Ms. Jennifer Long
- Ms. Niamh Tobin
- Mr. Paudie Coffey
- Mr. Fred Kelly
- Mr. Ray Murphy
- Mr. Alan Walsh
- Ms. Laura Corcoran
- Mr. Derek Delaney
- Ms. Michelle Murphy
- Mr. Jonathan Mullen
- Mr. Brian Barron
- Cllr. Declan Clune



Town Team



Appendix: *Town Analysis*

Portlaw's Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats

As per the TCF process and as a part of the analysis of the town, the Town Team provided input on the town's Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats. These informed the development of the TCF Plan and projects.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural amenities/ River / Curraghmore • History/ Heritage • Horse Riding amenities • Clubs/ Groups • Population • People • Tannery Site • Sense of Community is strong • Location • Forest Areas/ River • Valley • Curraghmore • Landscapes • Proximity to Waterford • Woodland • Clodagh House • Unique urban form • Resilience + Pride • Heritage • Welcoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tannery Site • Community buy-in • Funding/ Investment • People • What to change/ update • Economic Climate (Private investment) • Lack of housing -> Buy/rent, how do we clarify demand? • Infrastructure capacity • Lack of nursing home accommodation

Town Analysis

Opportunities

- Tannery site
- Canal/ River Clodagh
- Woods/ Trails/ Mountainbiking
- Clodagh House
- Camping AIRE
- Curraghmore
- Mayfield
- Strong population base
- Greenway & Blueway
- Location
- Proper sports hall –
community hall/ multi-purpose/
stage
- Open spaces, outdoor gym, basketball
court
- Play area
- Houses for older people
- Youth hostel
- Core area/ the square

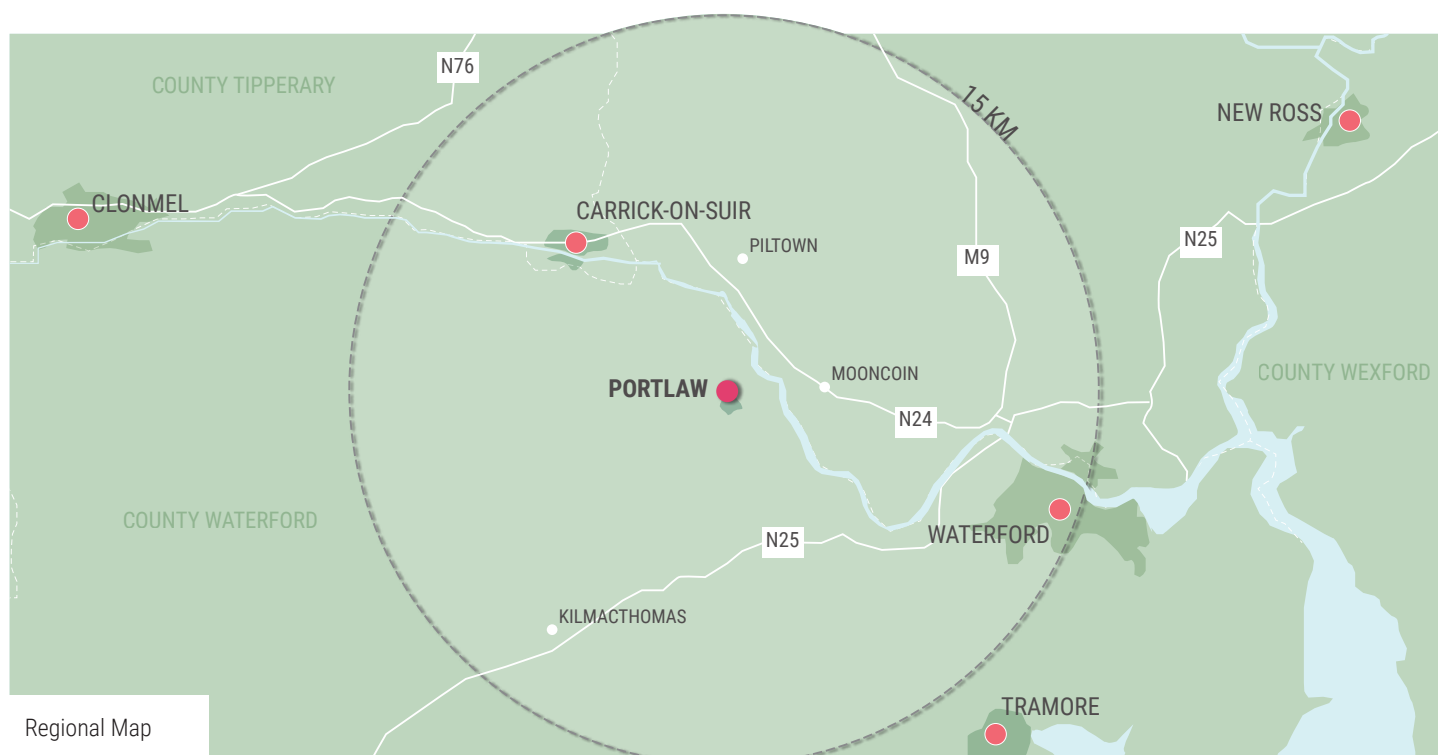
Threats

- Ownership issues
- Changes/ Community buy-in
- Planning application
- Heritage structures
- Lack of new housing
- Losing group momentum

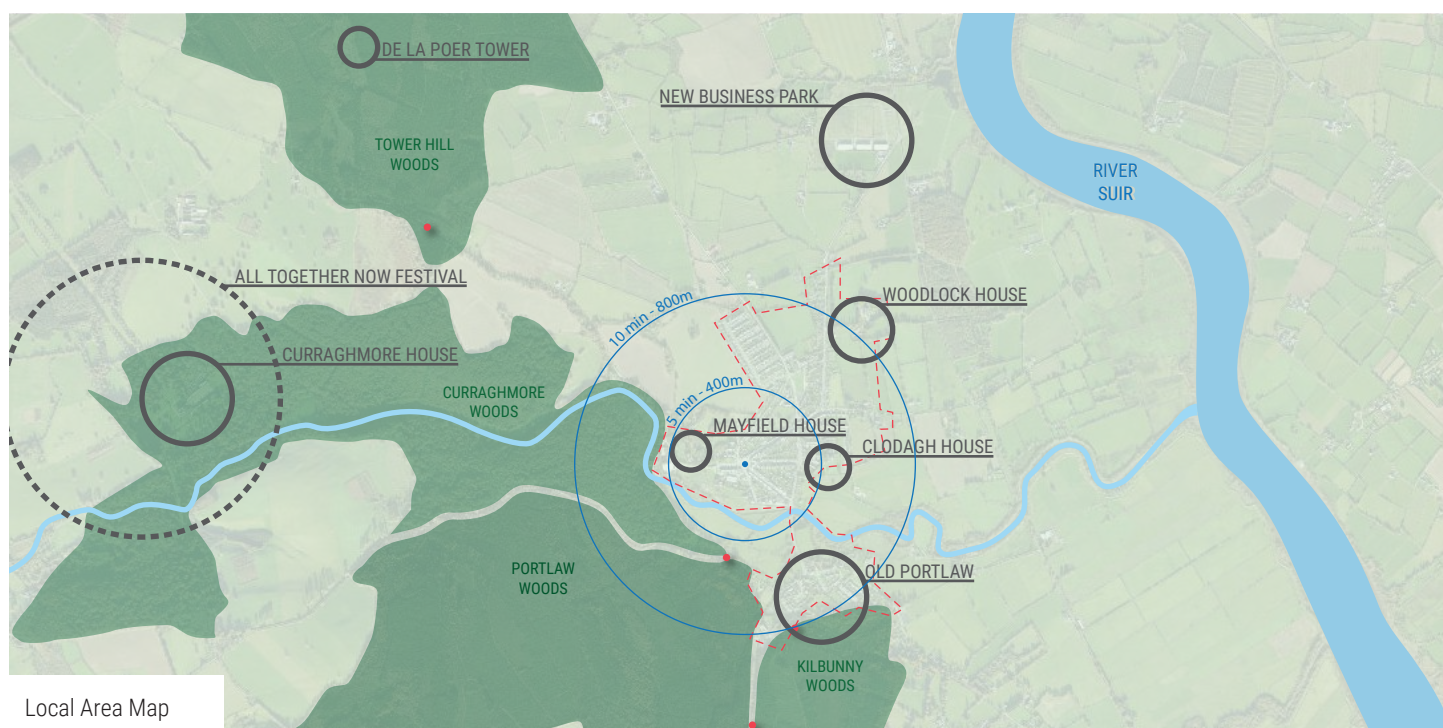
Appendix: *Town Analysis*

Site Analysis

In support of the proposals brought forward in the TCF plan, an analysis of the town was undertaken. The findings of this analysis, in conjunction with the consultation findings and town team workshops provide the rationale for the plan and the projects. The following pages provide an overview of the analysis that was undertaken during the TCF process.

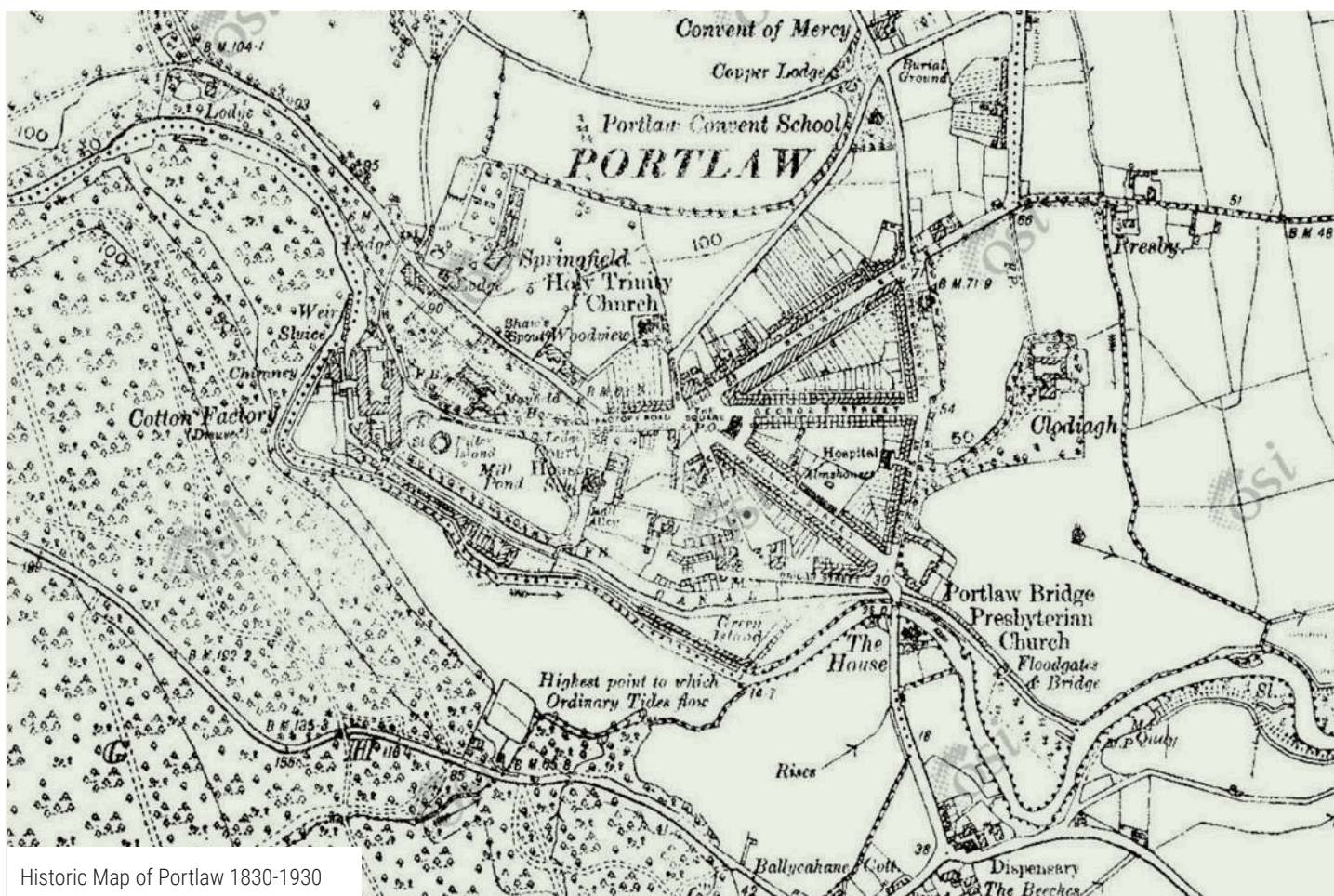
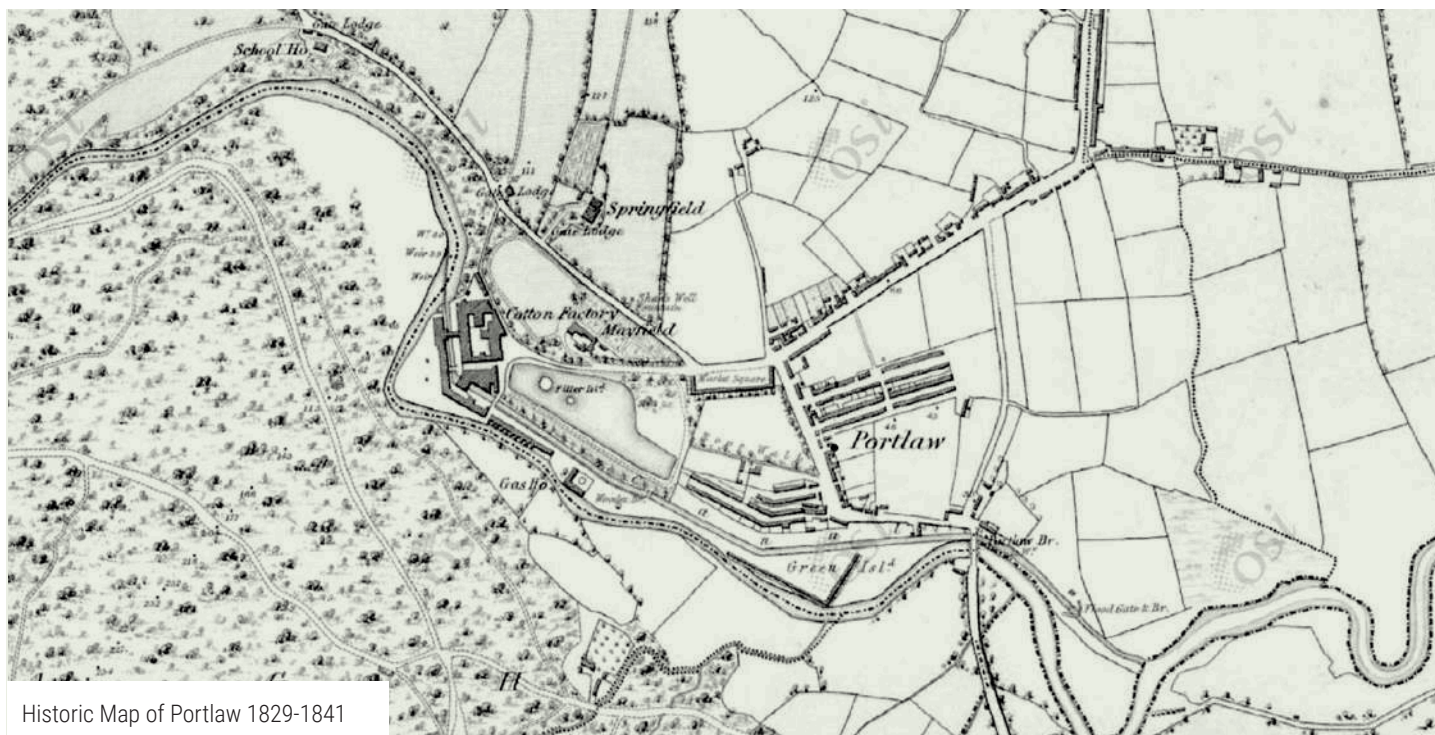


Town Analysis



Local Area Map

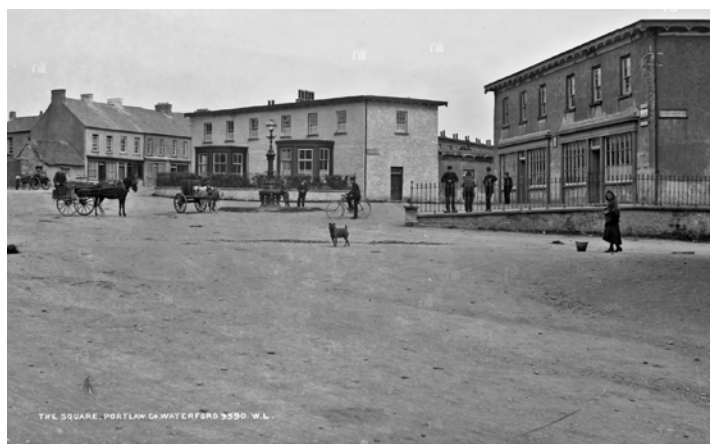
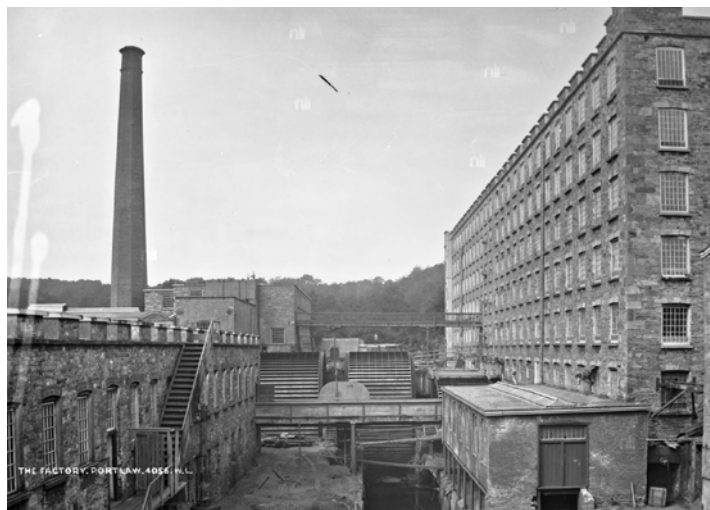
Appendix: *Town Analysis*



Town Analysis



Historic Map of Portlao 1829-1841



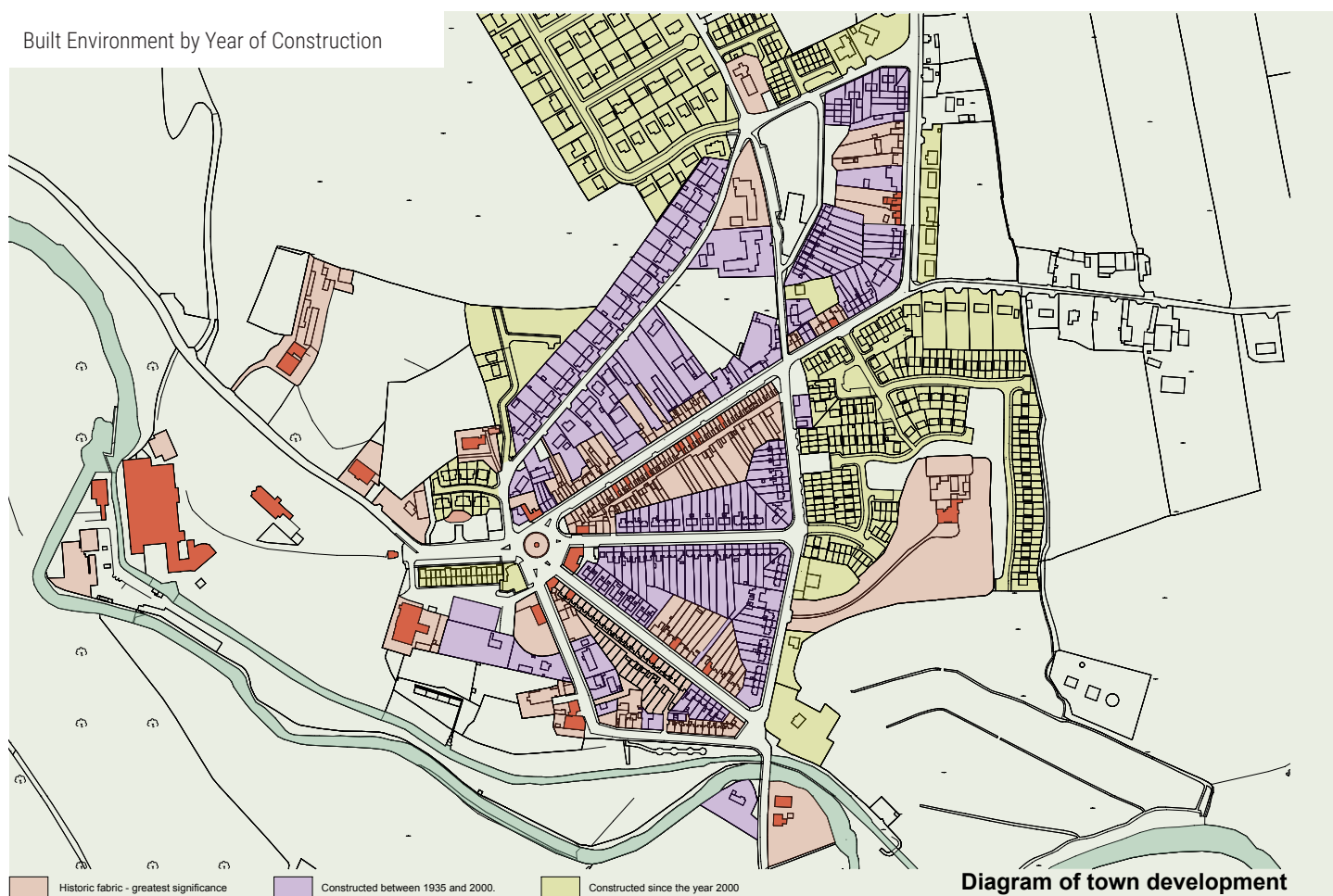
Appendix: *Town Analysis*



Town Analysis



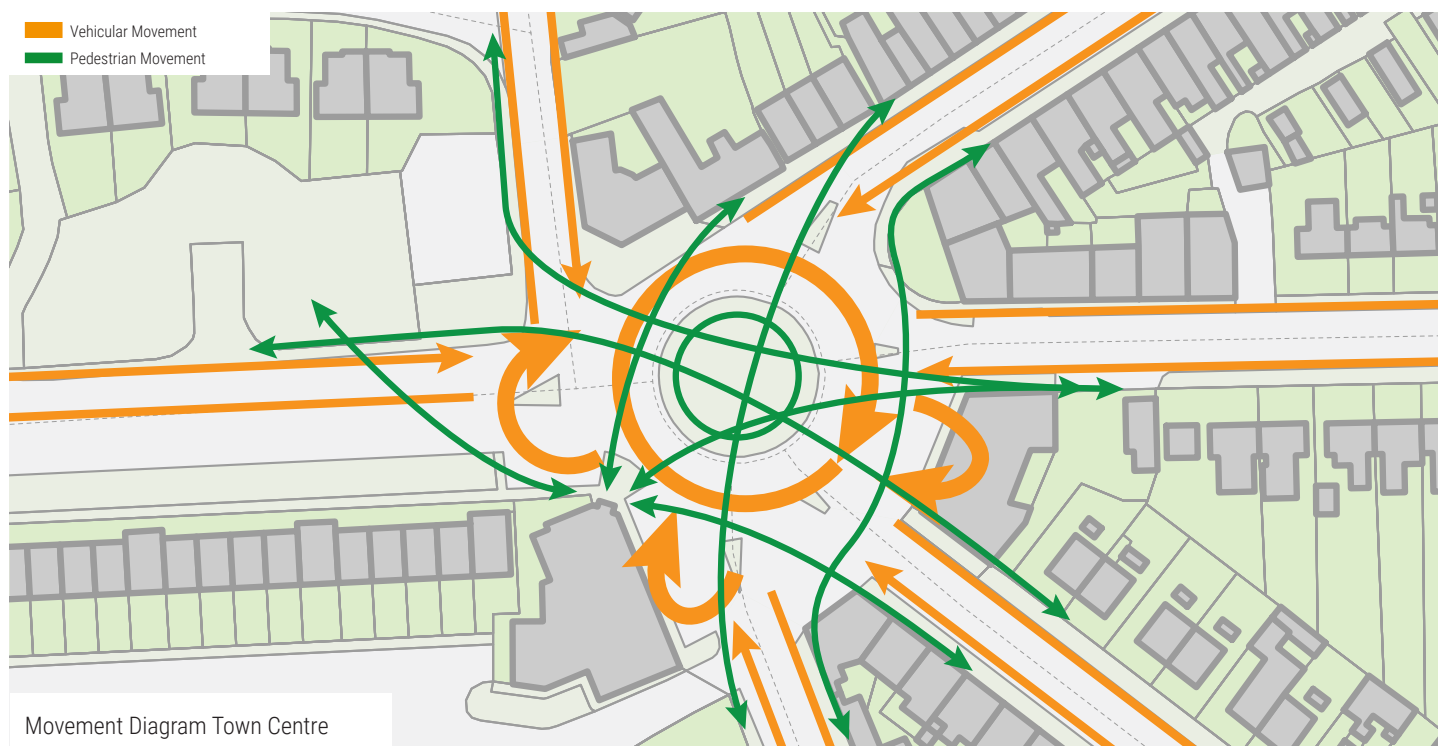
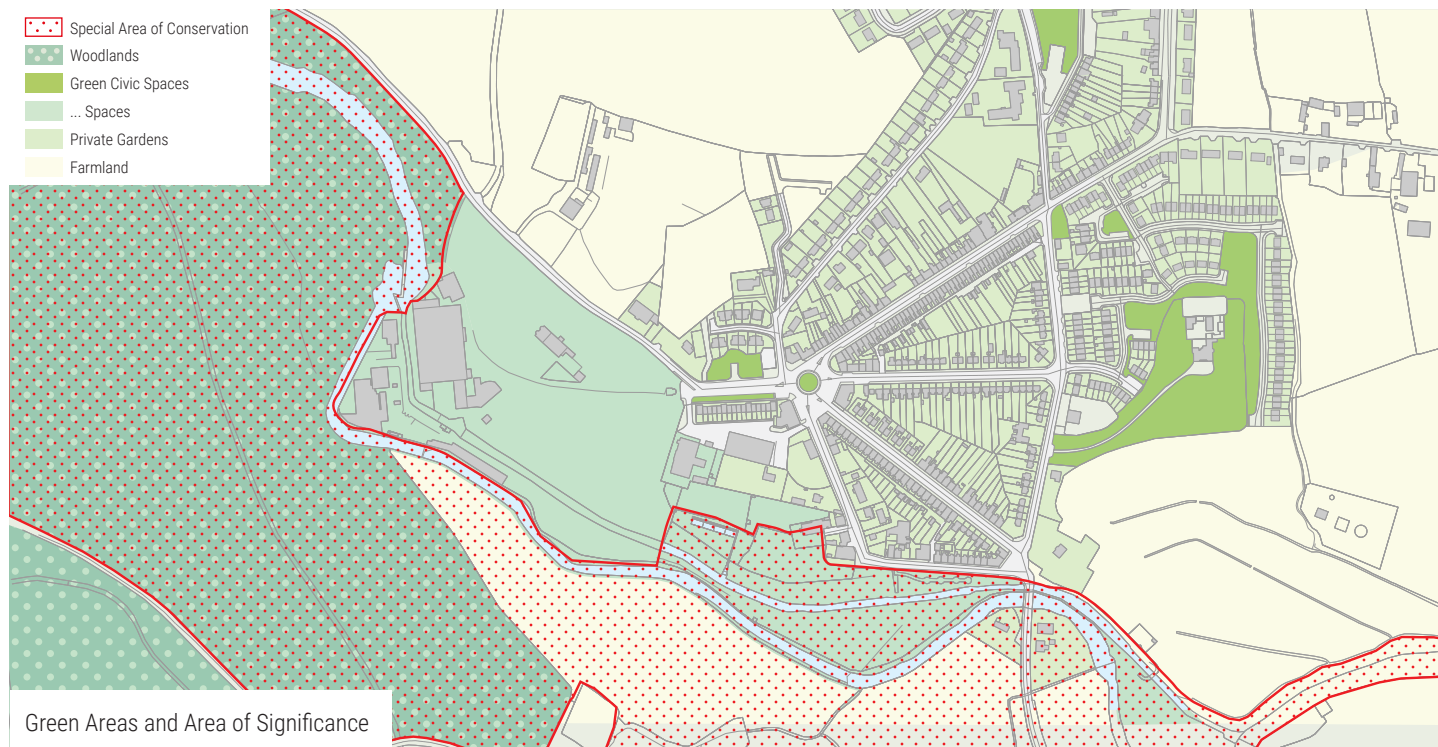
Built Environment by Year of Construction



Appendix: *Town Analysis*



Town Analysis





Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

PORTLAW TOWN TEAM
the **paul hogarth** company
HALL BLACK DOUGLAS

