

SIX MILE BRIDGE

TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN



June 2023



Rialtas na
hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



COMHAIRLE CONTAE AN CHLÁIR
CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Allies and Morrison





Acknowledgements

Clare County Council and the project design team would like to thank all those who have contributed their time, knowledge and ideas to this plan and plan making process.

The Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan was prepared under the direction of the Town Regeneration Officer of Clare County Council, and in collaboration with:

- Sixmilebridge Town Team
- Shannon Municipal District Elected Members, in particular Cllr. John Crowe and Cllr. P.J. Ryan
- Clare County Council Departments including:
 - Shannon Municipal District Executive Team
 - Town Centre First Team
 - Rural Development Team, in particular the Rural & Community Development Officers
 - Planning
 - Roads
- Clare Local Development Company



Thank you!



Town Team Foreword

To All in Sixmilebridge

This comprehensive Plan is the result of numerous meetings and consultations between Clare County Council and the members of the Sixmilebridge community and surrounds.

Our town has been chosen as the first town in County Clare to produce such a plan under the National Town Centre First Initiative. The Plan sets out the various ideas, dreams and issues we will look at over the next number of years.

The public have been very engaged in the project so far and this can only lead to the betterment of the town for all, increased business, better facilities and improved living conditions for residents of the surrounding area and visitors.

We as a team are committed to dealing with Clare County Council and other funding sources to ensure that, as the first town in County Clare to be awarded the funding for producing the Plan, we capitalise on our position.

We look forward to realising the full potential of a town in the enviable position of Sixmilebridge and to engage with members of the public, residents and business owners.

Hon The Bridge!




Sixmilebridge Town Team: Gwen Bowen, Monica Cahill, Thomas Cleary, Flora Crowe, Cllr John Crowe, Tim Crowe, Corey Downes, Gavin Downes, Niall Gilligan, Eoin Harrington, Gerardine Hassett, Ultan Heffernan, Yvonne Keogh, Bridget Madden, Eileen Moloney, Colette Myler, John Nihill, Mark Noonan, Eilis O'Nuallain, Caroline O'Sullivan, Cllr PJ Ryan, Tim Scanlon, Michelle Toomey (note - not all Town Team members present in photograph)



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- 2 Policy context
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- 5 Defining the Place
- 6 Enabling the Place

The background features a stylized map of Sixmilebridge town centre in shades of blue and teal. A prominent teal number '1' is positioned on the left side of the page. A river is depicted flowing through the town. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

This section provides an introduction to the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan in the context of the national Town Centre First policy. An overview of the process through which the plan has been produced is outlined together with an introduction to the Sixmilebridge Town Team

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

The Government's Town Centre First Policy (February 2022) is a major new policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into town centres. The policy lays the foundation for towns to develop a tailored plan by a Town Team in collaboration with the Local Authority. The policy is underpinned by a multi-billion euro investment programme spread across Government schemes. The Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan will subsequently provide a basis for the town to seek support from funding streams such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund, Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Active Travel Fund and Historic Towns Initiative.

Sixmilebridge is one of the early waves of towns to receive funding for a plan under the National Town Centre First Plan Initiative. Sixmilebridge was selected on the basis of successful community led initiatives to date, the challenges the town currently faces and the opportunities and potential that are unique to the town.

The plan is developed within the context of national, regional and local plans and through careful consideration of best practice publications.

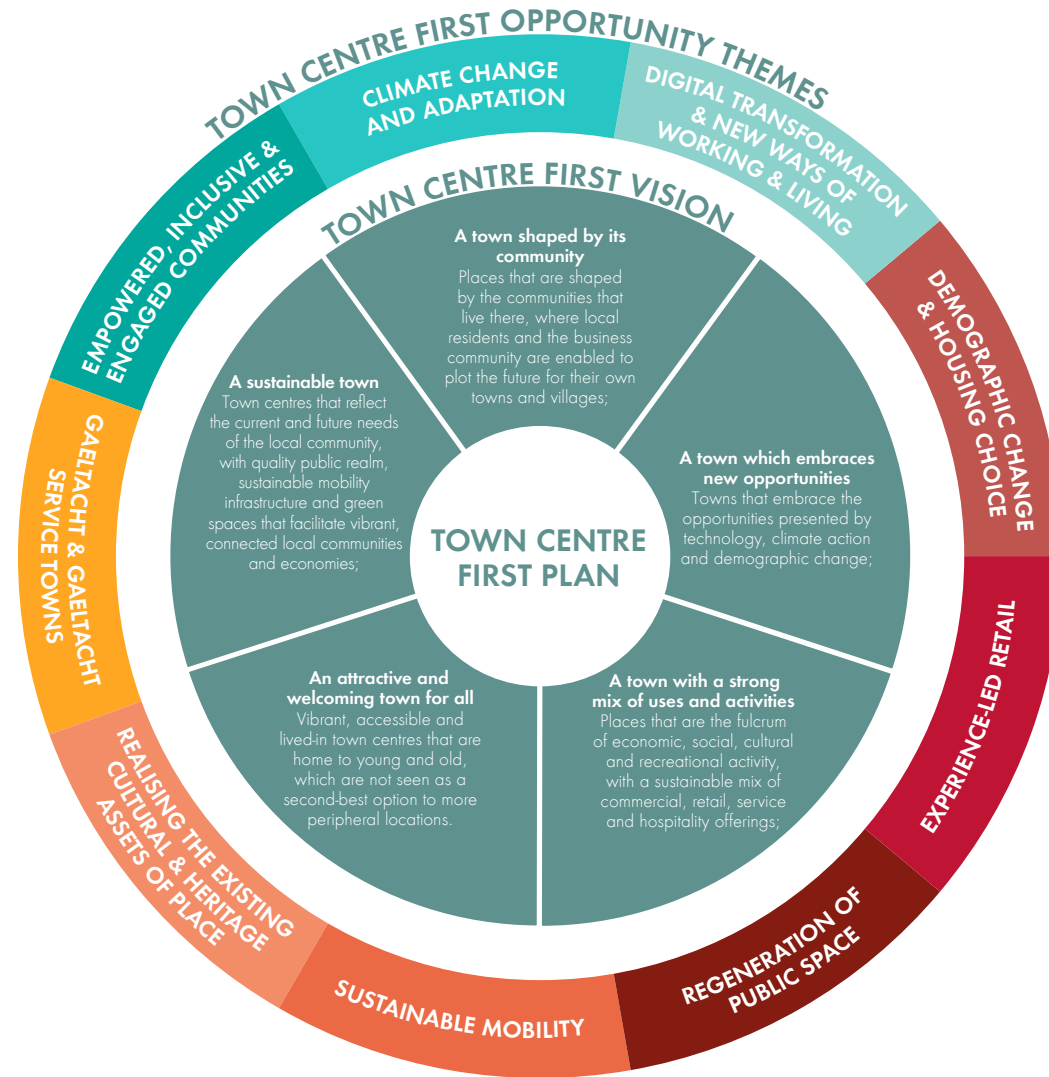


Town Centre First Policy

The Town Centre First policy approach is for places to be shaped by communities that live there and to embrace opportunities presented by technology, climate action and demographic change. The policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

The adjacent diagram presents an overview of the Town Centre First policy, encompassing the policy’s vision for successful town centre and a number of key policy themes.

It is important to ensure that the plan is prepared in direct response to this policy vision and themes. Specific plan themes most relevant to the plan for Sixmilebridge have emerged from analysis and engagement. We will highlight how these specific themes relate to and address the policy themes and vision in the sections that follow.



- THE TOWN CENTRE FIRST POLICY RECOGNISES THAT SUCCESSFUL PLACES:**
- Are characterised by an attractive public realm (streets, spaces and parks) that is designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell;
 - Contain a variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities, enable people to shop locally and meet the needs of the local community;
 - Provide a range of cultural, recreational and community spaces (that includes scope for periodic events and festivals) that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists;
 - Contain a well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces;
 - Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity;
 - Are attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop;
 - Are well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport, enabling a high proportion of journeys to be made by foot and/or bicycle from the immediate hinterland (e.g. the ‘10 minute town’ concept);
 - Manage traffic within central areas so that streets prioritise vulnerable users (pedestrians and cyclists), enabling them to move about safely and in comfort;
 - Provide a mix of housing typologies and tenures to cater for diverse communities in terms of age, income and mobility;
 - Utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle;
 - Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.

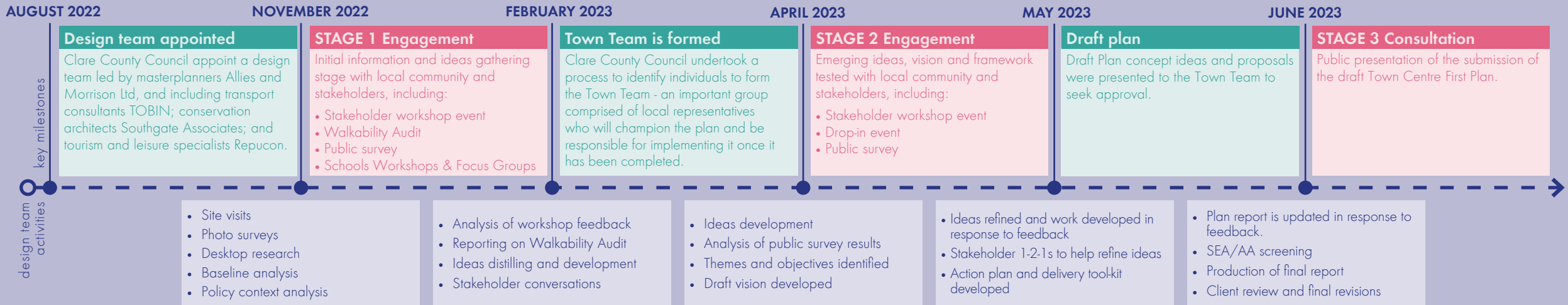
Producing the plan for Sixmilebridge

Working closely with the Town Team and community is a vital component of the plan process. The programme comprised of three key stages designed to encourage people to get involved at an early stage and stay involved to help shape the plan.

The plan builds on positive attributes of the town to ensure that Sixmilebridge develops as an attractive and desirable place to work, live, visit and invest. Taking account of feedback

received from the local community, it identifies opportunities for improvements by proposing strategies and projects in the short, medium and long term.

The Town Team, in collaboration with Clare County Council, will use the plan to implement improvements and seek funding to deliver positive change.



Sixmilebridge's Town Team

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

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

The process of selecting a Town Team began with an initial stakeholder group who were invited to attend a workshop to conduct a SCOT analysis for the town. This stakeholder group included local businesses, community groups, elected members and key representatives for youth, the GAA, the school, heritage, charities and residents, and acted as an informal Town Team in the initial phases of the plan development.

As part of the initial stage of engagement for the Town Centre First Project, the wider community were asked if they wanted to become part of the formal Town Team. Over 27 members of the community expressed their interest, as well as some of the initial stakeholder group members. A community information evening on the Town Centre First

Plan was facilitated by the Town Regeneration Officer and the Rural & Community Development Officer, with input from the Clare Local Development Company.

Participants completed an expression of interest form that helped to identify areas of interest and skills which could be brought to the Town Team. A number of subsequent meetings were organised to clarify roles within the town team, provide case studies on how other towns had secured funding for their communities, and a Chairman from another town team in Clare was invited to present his experience and learnings.

A formal town team was then established in April 2023 with 23 members, including working groups for project development. The Town Team has acted as a steering group, providing ongoing feedback on emerging ideas and projects, as well as developing a clear action plan for the Town Team to implement.





POLICY CONTEXT

The following section provides a high level review of the national, regional and local planning policy context, relevant to the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan, touching on:

- Relevant national and strategic policy
- The Local Development Plan review process together with key settlement plans
- The Community Development Plan 2019
- The national Climate Action Plan

A baseline report was produced in September 2022 which provides a more complete overview of relevant background analysis.

National, Regional and Local Planning Context

Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan has been developed within the national, regional and local policy context and therefore aligns with these planning policy documents. These key policy documents are set out here.

The Plan is an evidence based, non-statutory document and does not form public policy. The plan has been developed in collaboration with the Sixmilebridge local community, the Town Team and all other stakeholders within the community. It is intended that the strategy for development, and the key proposals as set out in the Plan, will enable the Sixmilebridge Town Team, in collaboration with Clare County Council, to leverage funding in order to implement the key actions for delivery as set out in Section 6 of the Plan.



NATIONAL

- Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework and National Development Plan
- Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025
- Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022
- Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme
- Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland
- Climate Action Plan 2023

REGIONAL

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES)
- Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)
- Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040

LOCAL

- Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029
- Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
- Clare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and emerging 2023-2029 Plan

National Planning 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, as well as non-statutory plans, must align with the shared National Strategic Outcomes of these plans.

Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 represents a blueprint for the post-COVID recovery and development of rural Ireland. It contains key commitments that deliver on the government’s aim to support the regeneration, re-population and development of rural towns and villages to contribute to local and national economic recovery, and to enable people to live and work in a high quality environment.

Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022

The Town Centre First policy approach seeks to support and complement a wide range of government policies impacting on towns and is central to the vision of Our Rural Future. It is a core policy objective of Town Centre First 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 policy lays the foundation for towns to develop their own planned path forward through a tailored Plan. 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.



National Planning Framework and National Development Plan



Our Rural Future Rural Development Policy and Town Centre First Policy

National Planning Context

Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland

Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland sets out a road map for the delivery of housing to 2030. It has a target of delivery of 33,000 homes nationally per annum broken down into private sector owner/rental housing, social housing, affordable housing and cost rental housing. Housing for All strongly supports the greater re-use and refurbishment of existing buildings and infill and brownfield sites activated to regenerate towns and bring people and activity back into towns. Housing for All is a key document for the Town Centre First approach and for the reactivation of vacant properties in towns.

Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme

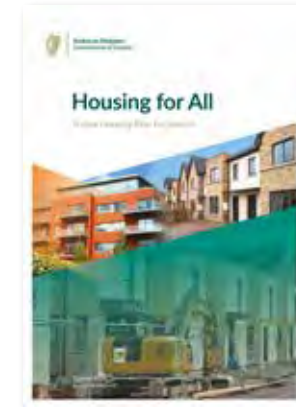
The Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme provides a framework for analysis and collaboration that seeks to understand the challenges faced by towns and build upon each town's heritage and unique character. The Health Check Programme raises awareness, understanding and appreciation of the critical role that historic town centres play and the wide-ranging impacts that their

vitality and viability have on socio-economic, environmental, cultural growth and development, and on quality of life for citizens and visitors alike.

Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. It further sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development.

The compact growth agenda outlined in the National Planning Framework is reinforced in CAP23 which promotes extensive retrofitting of existing premises and housing stock and the prioritisation of brownfield and compact development. Actions in CAP23 strongly align and support the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland's towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment and amenities by sustainable transport modes.



Housing for All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland



Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme



Climate Action Plan 2023

Regional Planning Context

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) provides a long-term, strategic framework for future physical, economic and social development and seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and NDP. To this end, the RSES sets out 11 Strategy Statements which are aligned with international, EU and national policy and which in turn set the framework for Development Plans and Local Economic and Community Plans.

The RSES Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) aims to strengthen the role of the Metropolitan Area as an international location of scale and a primary driver of economic growth in the Southern Region.

Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040

The Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040 (LSMATS) is a cross-county metropolitan scale document, which sets out the policies and objectives of the National Transport Authority, Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, at a level appropriate to that scale. The LSMATS presents a comprehensive analysis of the current transport situation and provides a long-term strategic planning framework for the integrated development of transport infrastructure and services for the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area.



Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy and Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan



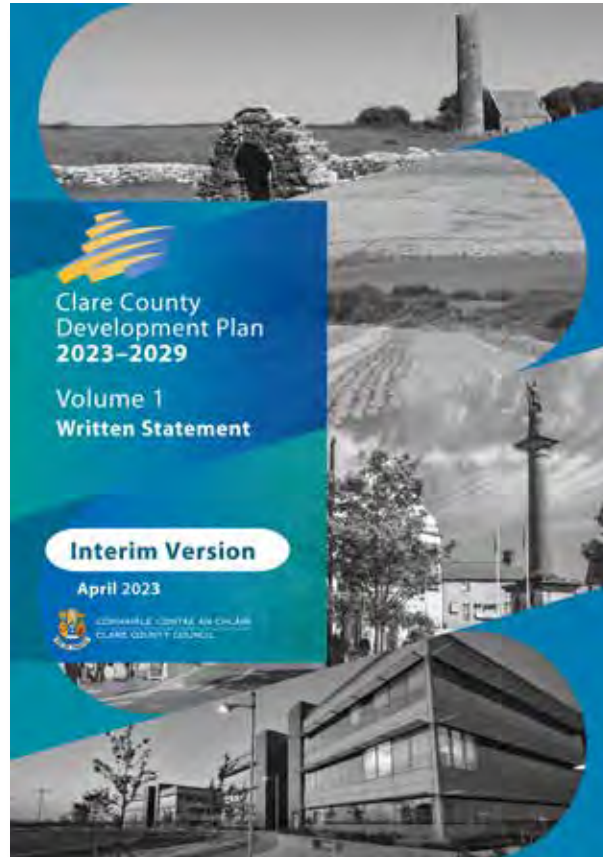
Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

Local Planning Context

Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

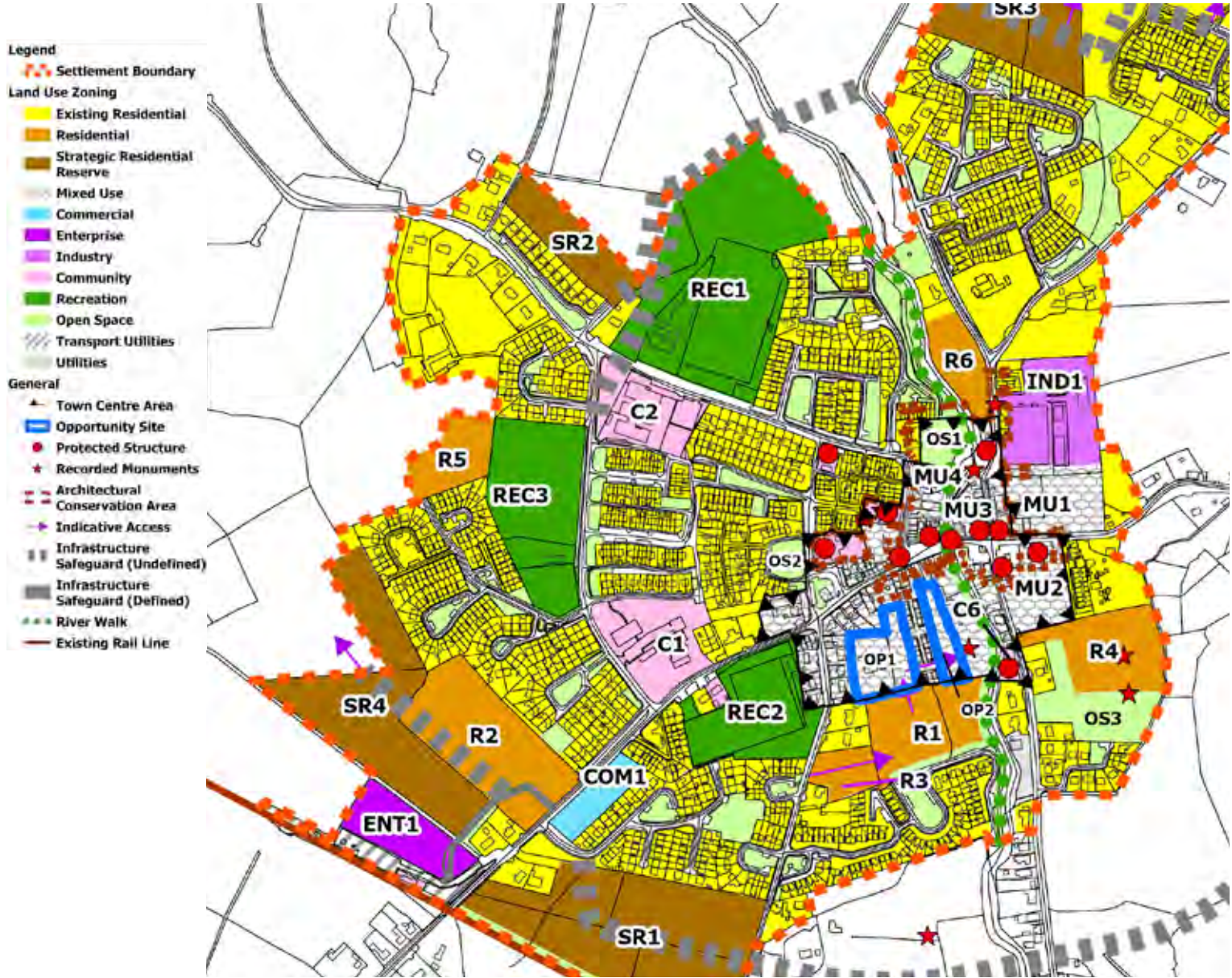
The recently adopted Clare County Development Plan (CCDP) 2023-2029 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Clare for six years whilst aligning with longer term national and regional objectives.

As part of the Clare County Development Plan Core Strategy, Sixmilebridge is identified as a Small Town within the Settlement Hierarchy. Volume 3 of the CCDP provides the settlement strategy for Shannon Municipal District which includes Sixmilebridge town. The land use maps overleaf are taken from the Development Plan and form an important part of the planning policy context under which the Plan has been prepared.

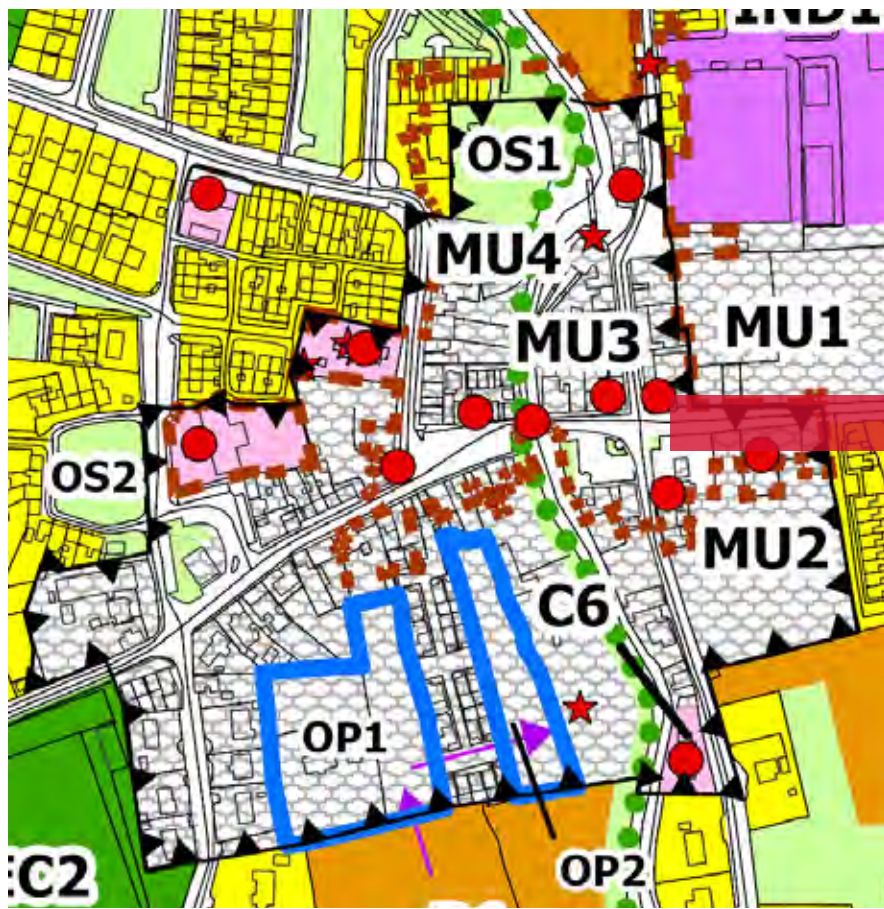


Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029





Land Use Settlement Plan - Volume 3b Shannon Municipal District Settlement Plans; Clare County Development Plan (2023 - 2029)



Central area zoom-in

Clare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and emerging 2023-2029 Plan

The Clare Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) sets out objectives to promote and support economic, local and community development both by Clare County Council and in partnership with other stakeholders. A consultation process has commenced on the development of a new LECP for County Clare. It is a policy of Clare County Council to work with the Clare Local Community Development Committee and all relevant stakeholders to seek investment in delivering the actions and stakeholder initiatives of the Clare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and any subsequent Plan.

Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 sets out the strategy of Clare County Council to adapt to the effects of climate change and to safeguard the biophysical infrastructure and well-being of the people and communities of County Clare. The objectives of the Strategy informed the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 and climate change mitigation and adaptation is a cross cutting theme throughout the Development Plan. Consequently, the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan has had regard to these policies and objectives with respect to climate action parameters and requirements that Clare County Council must adhere to.



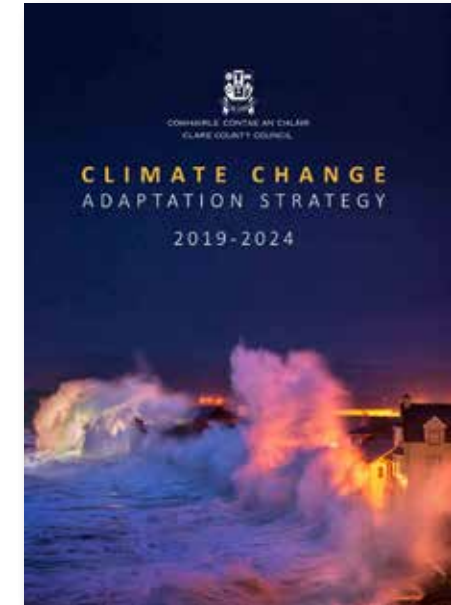
Clare Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and emerging 2023-2029 Plan

Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 (continued)

It is therefore an objective of the Plan to provide a sustainable planning strategy that supports the implementation of the Climate Action Plan and Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. This will be achieved by ensuring that the Plan promotes measures that build resilience to climate change and provides nature-based solutions that promotes and protects biodiversity.

The following is a list of key actions that seek to enable transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society, reduce car dependency, and promote sustainable mobility:

- To provide new and improved pedestrian and cycle linkages to connect with the train station.
- To improve pedestrian connections within the town, including linking the existing housing estates to the town centre, and provision and enhancement of safer pedestrian measures near the school from adjoining residential areas.
- To enhance public transport services to / from the town by bus or rail, including an increased more regular bus service from the town to Shannon and Limerick.
- To increase the number of Electric Vehicle Charging points and associated parking spaces in the town.
- The sustainable re-use and adaptation of existing vacant and derelict properties identified within the town centre providing for housing, jobs, amenities and services. This will add value to and enable Sixmilebridge town to become a more attractive place to live and work, thus mitigating the need to travel for work whilst allowing for existing buildings to be retrofitted.
- To seek to provide affordable small office space within the existing town centre through re-use / adaptation of existing vacant retail units.
- To adapt the existing Digi Hub to enable the development of a multi-service centre attracting community services to consolidate in one area, therefore mitigating the need for travel to other employment centres.
- To develop a Sustainable Energy Plan for Sixmilebridge to create a low energy and low carbon community and set up of local retrofit programme that will enable access to future funding streams to activate implementation actions.
- To assess the feasibility of developing a recreational park providing for walks, with the potential to integrate a river walk, outdoor gym and other community outdoor space e.g. community garden / allotments with biodiversity spaces incorporated to enable the protection and enhancement of existing nature spaces and eco systems.



Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

Community Development Plan

The Sixmilebridge Community Development Plan is the result of a process initiated in March 2019 with support from Clare Local Development Company (CLDC). It was developed using feedback received in response to a survey inviting local people to have their say on what would make ‘A Better Sixmilebridge’. Although it not a policy document, the plan does provide helpful context for the Town Centre First Plan.

A set of ‘community priorities’ have been included in the Sixmilebridge Community Plan, along with proposals to deliver them. The process was led by a group of volunteers from local community groups who worked closely with a facilitator whose role was to guide and inform the planning process.

The document sets out an appreciation of Sixmilebridge, including a range of information and data which helps to provide a comprehensive profile for the village.

It also sets out the results of the survey, with some of the key messages and priorities set out on this page.

Each respondent rated each of the below priorities in terms of their importance in improving Quality of Life. These are set out below, from most to least priority in improving quality of life in Sixmilebridge:

- 1. Safety for Pedestrians,**
2. Community Safety,
3. Built Environment,
4. Natural Environment,
5. Activities for Young People,
6. Culture and Heritage,
7. Fitness Activities,
8. Information Sharing on Clubs & Groups.

People were asked to rank how important the four suggested action areas were. These are set out below, with the most important listed first, however people felt these were all very important, with a marginally higher importance placed on improving public spaces and buildings.

- 1. Improve public spaces and buildings**
2. Provide information on local activities
3. Improve the natural environment and biodiversity
4. Improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists

The Plan culminates in a set of prioritised actions, including projects, a suggested lead group, and time-line for action.



Sixmilebridge Community Development Plan (2020 -2025) Prepared on behalf of the Community by a Voluntary Community Planning Group





The following section provides an overview of some of the analysis work that helps to underpin the Sixmilebridge Plan. This includes:

- A review of the town's historic evolution
- A review of the town's principal public spaces
- A review of movement facilities in the town
- A review of the character of the town
- A review of land use, vacancy and dereliction
- A high level demographic synopsis of Sixmilebridge
- The recent Sixmilebridge Town Centre Health Check
- Findings from the Digital Blueprint report

UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

Appreciating Sixmilebridge

Located within the Limerick-Shannon Metropolitan area and broadly equidistant between Limerick and Ennis, Sixmilebridge is directly connected to both of these larger towns by rail (Sixmilebridge Station re-opened in 2010). The town is also a short bus ride or drive to Shannon. The O'Garney River (Owengarney) passes right through the heart of the town.

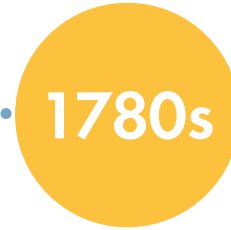
The town is one of the fastest growing in County Clare with a current population of 3,962. Its local shops and facilities serve locals with their day to day retail and community needs. The plan provides an opportunity to help manage planned growth and ensure that the quality of environment, public facilities and services receive the investment and improvement required to ensure that the needs of a growing local population are met.



THE STORY OF SIXMILEBRIDGE

Scéal na Droichead Abhainn O gCearnaigh

16th Century Sixmilebridge



The development of the town of Sixmilebridge was the result of its strategic location on a crossroads of the key land route west with a navigable river. In the aftermath of the 16th century Tudor conquest of Ireland, the approach to controlling such militarily strategic locations was through the use of a deliberate policy of 'plantation' of politically loyal settlers.

The creation of a plantation town at Sixmilebridge in the early 17th century was led by the Earl of Thomond, Donough O' Brien, the direct descendant of a long line of Gaelic kings, most notably Brian Boru, High King of Ireland.

The heritage of Sixmilebridge is steeped in manufacturing, with evidence that the town had been a significant centre for a number of industries. The town has been tied to the industrialisation of the wider area.

The river trade was an important aspect for the development of Sixmilebridge. In its early years the town developed a relationship with the Netherlands. The Dutch found the river very suitable for milling. The Tanning and shoe manufacture in 1630's (the sale of this industry has links with Dutch artist, Rembrandt) is where leather shoes were made and exported. Other products that were exported from Sixmilebridge port were soap and rape seed oil.

The town of Sixmilebridge takes its name from the Irish Droichead Abhainn O gCearnaigh meaning, 'bridge over the river Kearney/ O'Garney'. The earliest records of the name Sixmilebridge came from 1681 when Thomas Dineley visited the area and noted that the name derives from the village's distance from Limerick city which were six old Irish miles to Thomandgate Bridge in Limerick.



1654 map of Clare. Circle indicates an estimation of where Sixmilebridge is today. (Old Maps Ireland)

Background image: Historic image of Sixmilebridge (Date unknown- Sixmilebridge Historical Society)

Earliest of tall Irish houses, Mount levers Court is an 18th c. Irish Georgian country house nestled in Co. Clare just outside of Sixmilebridge. Built between 1733-1737 by John & Isaac Rothery, for Col. Henry levers. This house was built with bricks from Holland, illustrating the strong ties between the town and the Netherlands. Mount levers Court still brings tourism to Sixmilebridge to this day.



1737 Mount levers Court (Archiseek)

The Church of Ireland of Kilfinaghty parish was constructed in 1736. The church was built to serve the spiritual needs of the expanding Protestant population of Sixmilebridge.



Background image: Historic image of Sixmilebridge (Date unknown- Sixmilebridge Historical Society)

The river trade was an important factor in the development of Sixmilebridge. Boats from Amsterdam sailed up the O'Garney river almost as far as the town in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

By the early part of the eighteenth century the town had gone into decline and the river trade came to an end in 1784 with the building of D'Esterre's Bridge at Rosmanagher.

This map shows the importance of Sixmilebridge in 1783 as all traffic travelling to Ennis or Galway from Limerick had to pass through the town.

1783 map of Limerick to Galway. (Taylor and Skinner's Maps of the Roads of Clare, Clare County Library)

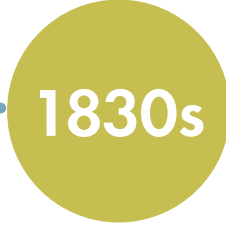
THE STORY OF SIXMILEBRIDGE

Scéal na Droichead Abhainn O gCearnaigh

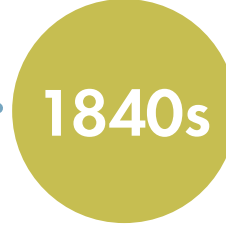
Victorian Sixmilebridge



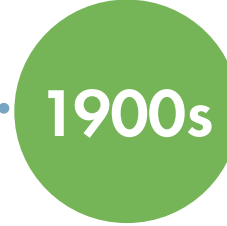
1800



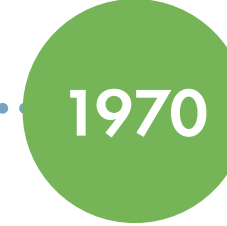
1830s



1840s



1900s



1970



Now

Many of the villages trade and economic turnover was caused by the villages access to the river. Unfortunately, in 1804 when the Bunratty Bridge was built, Sixmilebridge was no longer on the main road to the West. This caused a significant economic loss to the village.

By 1831 the town contained 229 houses and 1,491 inhabitants. Due to the reduced production and manufacturing the town started to decline. The markets were discontinued by 1837. A large corn mill which had been converted into a paper mill had ceased operation. Many of the old buildings in the town have been preserved and given alternative uses.

During the period of the 1840s and 50s, the population of Sixmilebridge rapidly declined due to famine and mass migration. The village's first railway station was built in 1859, bringing greater access to the village.

In 1904 the Sixmilebridge Hurling Club was founded. This community organisation brings all members of Sixmilebridge together. The club is now the second home to Clare GAA.



Crest of Sixmilebridge GAA club (Sixmilebridge GAA)

In 1970 The Church of Ireland closed due to the decline in the population in the town. In 1996 the church reopened as the award winning Sixmilebridge Library, with an extensive range of books. The library also offers services such as knitting classes, activities and events for adults and children, and a learning hub for the students of the town.

Today, the population of Sixmilebridge is 3,962 and is one of the main population centres of County Clare. Since 2010 the town became a stop along the 106.5 million Euro Western Rail Corridor project connecting Limerick and Galway, connecting the town to the West of Ireland once more. Due to its rich history and beautiful buildings, Sixmilebridge is a town with a strong community and excellent potential to grow.



Sixmilebridge 1893 (UCD Digital Library)



Map of Sixmilebridge from 1840 (Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland)



Sixmilebridge railway station built in 1859. (Sixmilebridge historical society)



Map of Sixmilebridge from 1899 (Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland)



Sixmilebridge Public Library (formerly The Church of Ireland of Kilfinaghty parish)



Sixmilebridge Today



1656-58 Down Survey

The new town of Sixmilebridge is represented by a church (large symbol), house and mill (the lower of the three symbols). The oil mill on the river at Ballintlea, south of the village is also marked. By the mid-1600's, the river had already become a site of increasing manufacturing activity.



1760 Lord Wilton's map (drawn by T.J. Westropp)

The orientation of the settlement shifted in this development phase toward a newly created formal town square, which drew together the 17th century market place into an extended public square which lay on both sides of the river.



1839 First edition Ordnance Survey map

The first edition Ordnance Survey map 1839, shows the development of the town. The area between the two churches remained largely undeveloped, while other developments and gardens began to fill the horseshoe shape of the possible 17th century village design.



c1918 Ordnance Survey of Sixmilebridge

The c1900 Ordnance Survey shows a relationship between the Market House and the Square is intact, with the Market House and Barracks still sitting in direct orientation to one another, however, by the 1918 Ordnance map, buildings had been erected on the edge of the Fair Green, which permanently block off the lower part of the 18th century Square.



17th Century Sixmilebridge



18th Century Sixmilebridge



19th Century Sixmilebridge



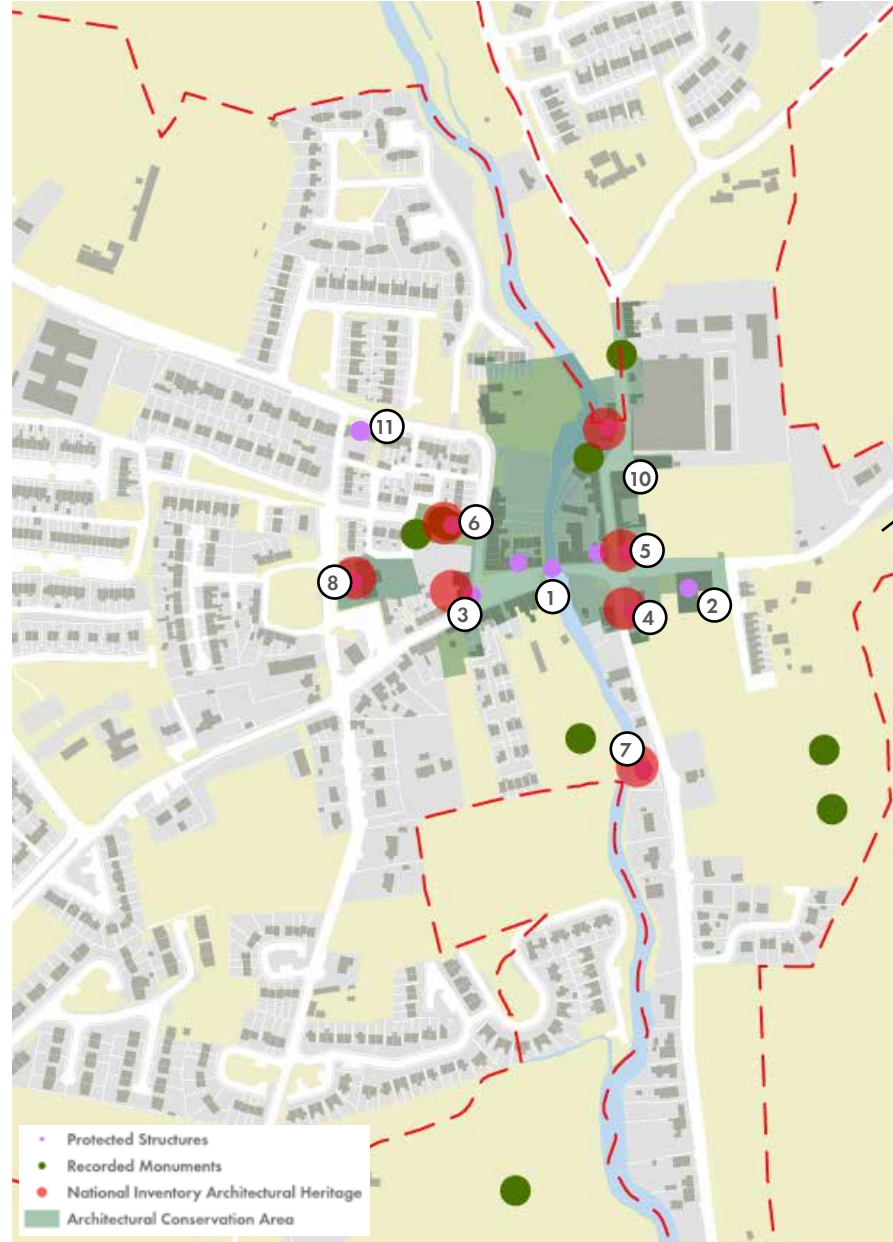
20th Century Sixmilebridge

Heritage assets of Sixmilebridge

Key buildings

Much of the town falls within an Architectural Conservation Area. Within this area, the town benefits from numerous historically important buildings, including:

1. **The Bridge** – dating from the early 17th century
2. **The Market House** – almost completely intact within the Auction Room building, also a protected structure
3. **Credit Union** (former Barracks) – a protected structure
4. **The Old House** – the former home of Brendan O'Regan and a protected structure
5. **Ivester House** – a protected structure
6. **Kilfinaghty Public Library** – former church and a protected structure, a protected structure
7. **Little Church of Cratloe** – Catholic church located south of the town centre, a protected structure
8. **St Finnachta's Church** – built 1812, a protected structure
9. **Mount Ievers Court** - the new Ievers house of 1733, a protected structure
10. **The Riverside (Mill) Inn, Frederick Square** – built around 1770, a protected structure
11. **The Old Courthouse** - site of historical significance and currently in use by the Men's Shed



Appreciating Sixmilebridge

Brimming with local character, Sixmilebridge is a charming small town which, despite some recent developments, has managed to maintain its special built character.

The O'Garney River passes through the very centre of the town, with Market Square having public spaces on either side.

Two storey painted buildings predominate in the historic core of the town, many with prominent stepped access as buildings navigate the sloping streets.

Stone, slate and limestone are used as building materials throughout Sixmilebridge. Rubble and cut limestone are both used to create different textures and levels of uniformity.

Key stones at the edge of buildings create a decorated edge and gives texture.

Natural colour palette from the stones contrasts with the colourful tones of paint on many of the buildings' rendered exterior walls.





Appreciating Sixmilebridge

With the O'Garney River passing right through the heart of the town, and with the commercial heart of Sixmilebridge thereby effectively lying in the river valley, central parts of the town are at risk of flooding.

A strategic Flood Risk Assessment was carried out, as part of the review of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029, which identified parts of the town centre within flood risk zones. This will need to be considered in any proposals for riverside improvements identified in this plan and any potential development sites in close proximity to the river.



Topography of the town



Flood risk zones in Sixmilebridge

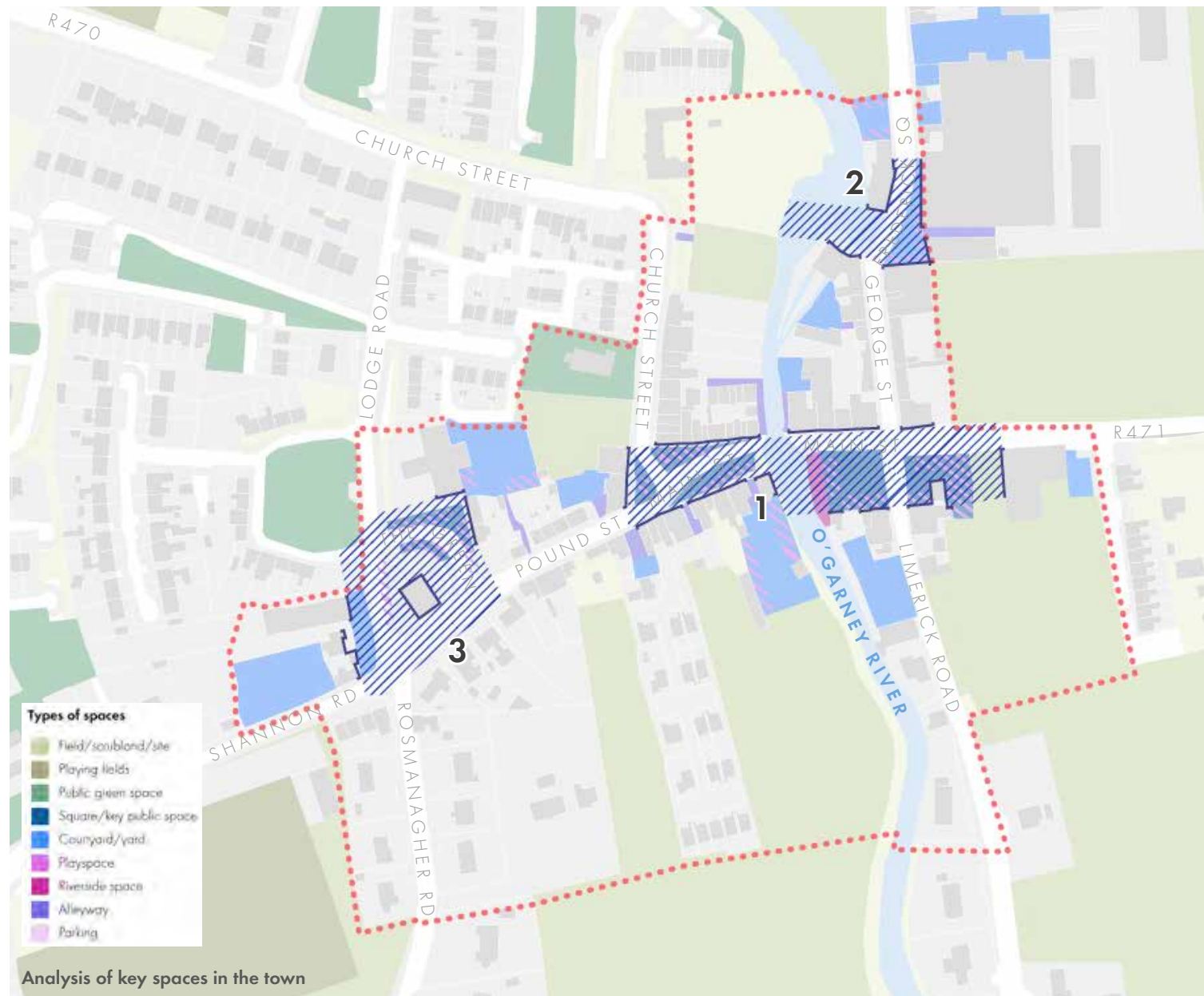
Flood Zone A - where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is highest (greater than 1% AEP (Annual Exceedance Probability) or 1 in 100 for river flooding)
Flood Zone B - where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is moderate (between 0.1% AEP or 1 in 1000 and 1% AEP or 1 in 100 for river flooding)

Open Spaces and Public Realm

Key spaces

Endorsed by earlier studies, the town has three key public spaces in the heart of the town. Some of these have already benefited from good levels of investment. Opportunities should be taken to continue and extend this investment programme, with the following spaces being the priority:

1. **The two market squares** - either side of the Owenagarney River historically developed as a result of the commercial interests of the town's then two controlling families – the Thomands and Ievers.
2. **Frederick Square** - key space south of Gleasons Bar, strongly framed by the historic former Mill Bar building and the weir. An important space on arrival from the north.
3. **The Green** - a prominent community space on the town's western approach, forming the setting of the town's principal church, St Finnachta's Catholic Church.





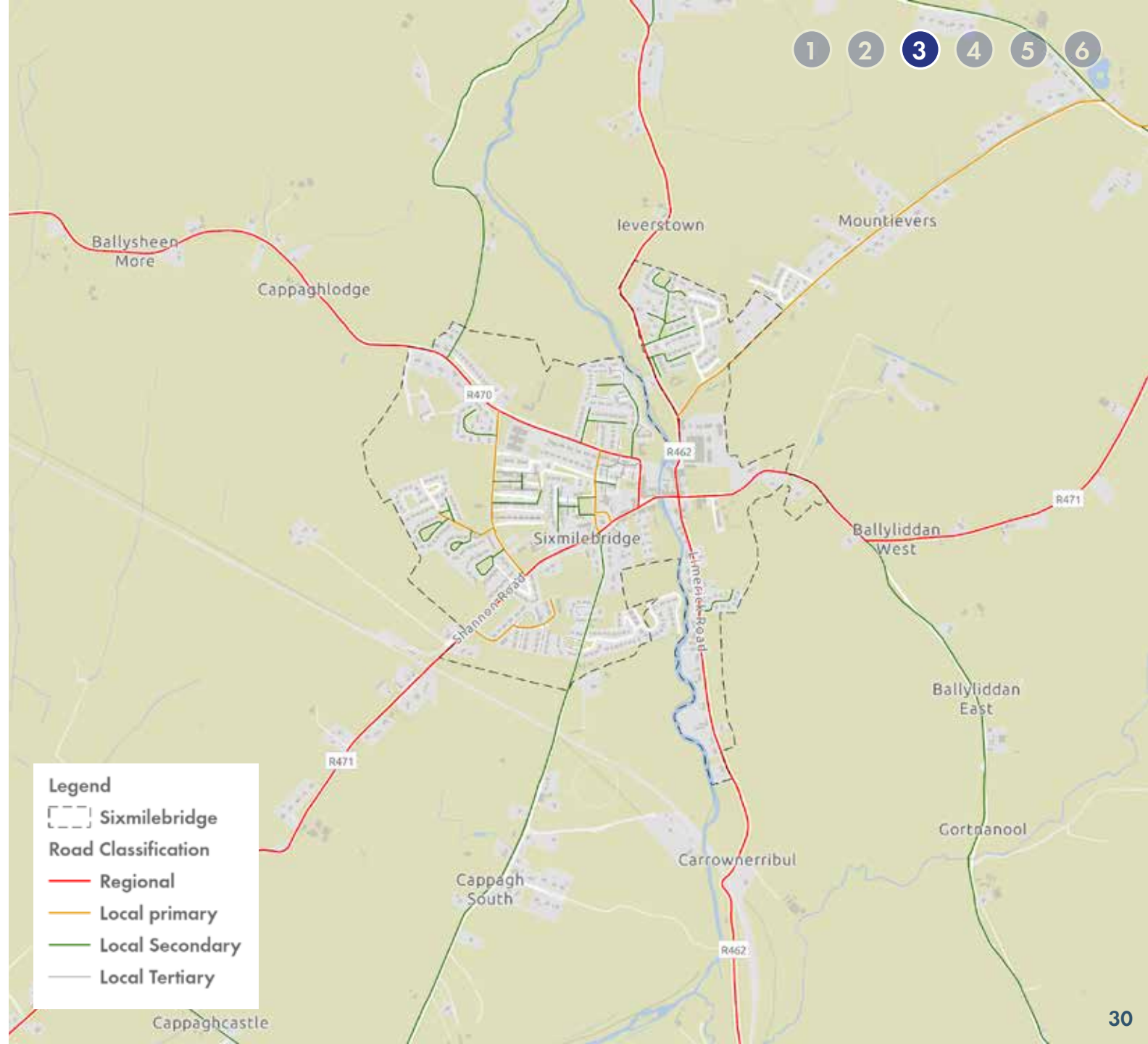
Vehicular Network

Sixmilebridge is a town well served by the strategic road network. The town centre marks the point where a number of regional routes - the R470, R471 and R462 - meet and cross.

The R470 connects the town to the west coastal region via a connection with Junction 10 of the M18. The town is accessed off the N18 via the R471, which passes through the town east-west, connects Shannon with Clonlara and O'Brien's Bridge with access to the M7 and routes to Dublin beyond. The R462 north-south, connects with Limerick to the south and Kilmurry, Kilkishen and Tulla to the north.

The County Development Plan proposes a relief road around the south of the town. A large volume of daily traffic from east Clare enters Sixmilebridge via the L3016-Broadford Road including traffic from Whitegate, Mount Shannon, Scarriff, Tuamgraney, Bodyke and Broadford. This places some strain on the historic road bridge itself, particularly given its narrow width.

Road traffic conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists at the bridge pinch point. There are no formal traffic calming devices installed at any of the approaches to Sixmilebridge although signs warning of the need to reduce speeds on the town's approach have recently been improved.



Pedestrian and Cycle Links

The majority of streets in Sixmilebridge are serviced by formal footpaths. All housing estates have formal pedestrian footpaths and roads linking them to the town centre. There is no designated pedestrian walkway to cross the O'Garney River.

There are no designated cycling facilities within the central area of Sixmilebridge, with cyclists forced to merge with vehicular traffic and the posted speed limit being 50km/hr throughout the town.

There is a designated free self-fix bicycle repair station within the town where cyclists can carry out a basic service on their bicycle.

There are no formal pedestrian walkways or cycleways linking Sixmilebridge to any of the surrounding towns at present.

There are sight distance issues for pedestrians seeking to cross the road near the Mill Bar and the Tigh Ui Ghliasan Pub due to bends in the road accompanied with lack of vehicle calming devices making it hazardous for pedestrians to cross in this area.

None of the existing pedestrian crossings are raised pedestrian crossings (to act as a traffic calming device to reduce vehicle speed) with the 50km/zone quite extended along the approaches to the town.



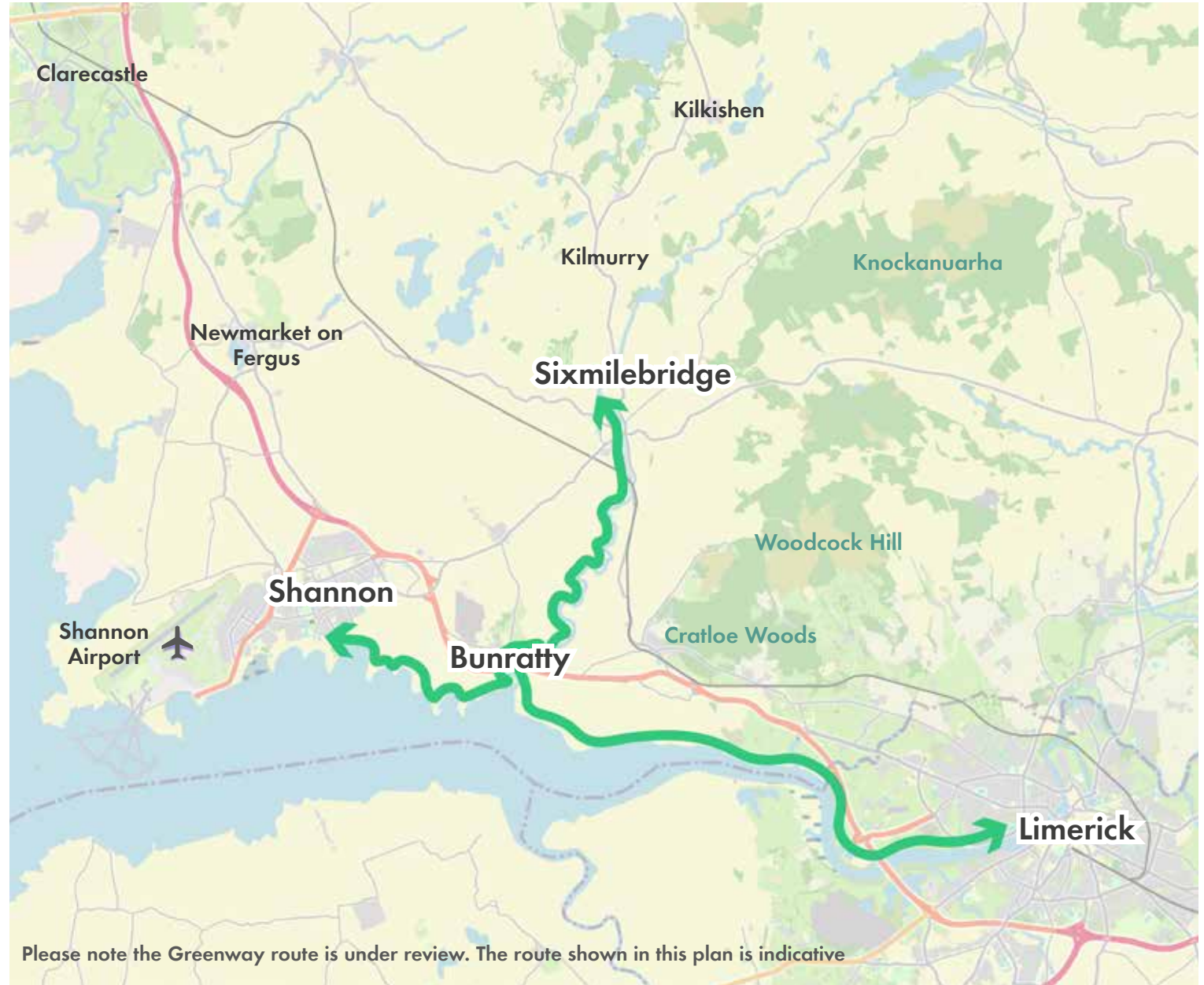


Shannon to Bunratty, Sixmilebridge and Limerick Greenway

Clare County Council has been awarded funding from Transport Infrastructure Ireland for a number of Greenway projects across the county. Clare County Council will use this funding to advance these projects to the planning and design stage ahead of construction.

A total of €300,000 has been awarded for the Shannon to Bunratty/Sixmilebridge/Limerick Greenway alongside further development of the various sections of the West Clare Railway Greenway and the Limerick to Scarriff Greenway.

Residents and visitors in County Clare will benefit from the recreational opportunities and improved connectivity that this investment in Greenways will deliver.





Public Transport Facilities and Services

Rail

In terms of rail, Sixmilebridge has an operational railway service, on the Limerick-Ennis line, which was reopened in 2010 as part of the Western Rail Corridor project. The station located on the Shannon Road less than 1 km from the village, and has the serviced routes:

- Dublin (Heuston) - Limerick and Ennis
- Galway - Limerick
- Galway - Limerick (Connections with Cork and Tralee)
- Waterford - Clonmel - Limerick Junction (Connections with Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway)

There are an average of 18 rail departures from Sixmilebridge per day, with services going towards Limerick Colbert and Galway. Sixmilebridge is the closest rail station to Shannon, located approximately 6km east from the town centre. Rail capacity is currently restricted by the single track line and lack of a 'passing-loop', the feasibility of which has previously been considered.

Bus

There are two bus stops located in the town of Sixmilebridge (opposite Bill McGregors Pub and Opposite the Post Office) that serve the 343 bus route, which links Sixmilebridge to Ennis. Shannon and Limerick.

Bus route 343 operated by Bus Eireann stops at Sixmilebridge 4 times per day, providing connections between Sixmilebridge and Shannon Town Centre from where onward connections to Limerick City, Ennis and Galway are available. The 343 Limerick-Shannon-Ennis route also serves Cratloe and operates on an hourly basis.

It is noted that the Shannon Town and Environs LAP includes an objective to link Shannon Airport with Sixmilebridge station via a direct shuttle bus in the short-term.

There are also some local taxi operators with their businesses based in Sixmilebridge and Shannon Airport is within 20km of Sixmilebridge.





Car Parking

There are two off-street car parks in the town - a car park on the east side of the Market Square in the core town centre, and a car park at the railway station. The railway car park offers electric vehicle charging facilities.

Additional less formal off-street parking spaces are available on the site to the rear of St Finnachta's Catholic Church.

More informal on-street public parking areas are available throughout the town.

Timed parking in central areas is not generally enforced which results in parking stays that often exceed their timed period. Anecdotal evidence suggests that central parking spaces are used as an informal park and ride for car sharing commuters.

Total existing parking:

- Car parking spaces: 107
- Designated wheelchair spaces: 5
- Designated e-charge spaces: 2

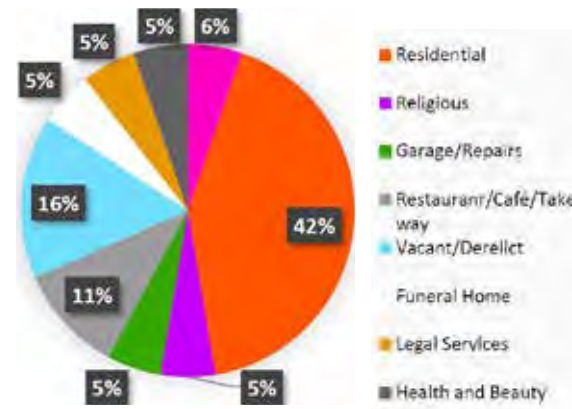


Sixmilebridge Town Centre Health Check 2022

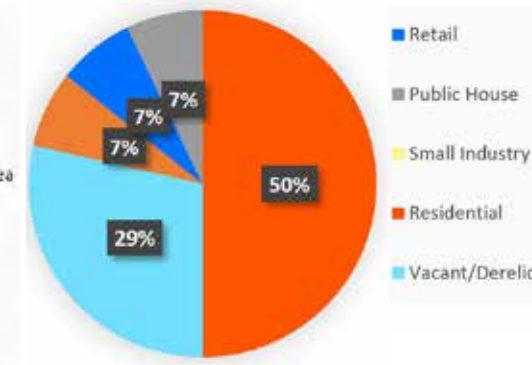
The Sixmilebridge Town Centre Health Check sets out an analysis of the uses of buildings, including where these are vacant or derelict, for areas of the town centre.

The results indicate a significant amount of vacancy or dereliction within the town centre, particularly in The Square, George Street, and Pound Street. Residential uses tend to dominate the areas on the periphery of the business and retail core. Small industries also play a significant role in the use of buildings in George Street.

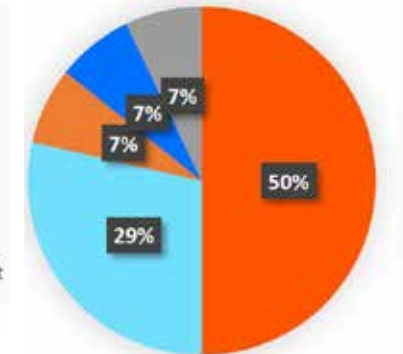
Limerick Road



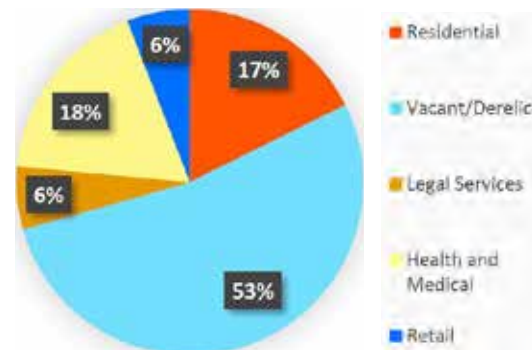
George Street



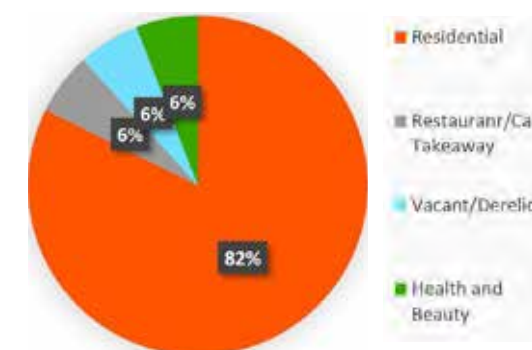
Pound Street



The Square, George Street



Rosmanagher Road



Sixmilebridge Town Centre Health Check (2022)
Conducted by the Planning Department of Clare County Council

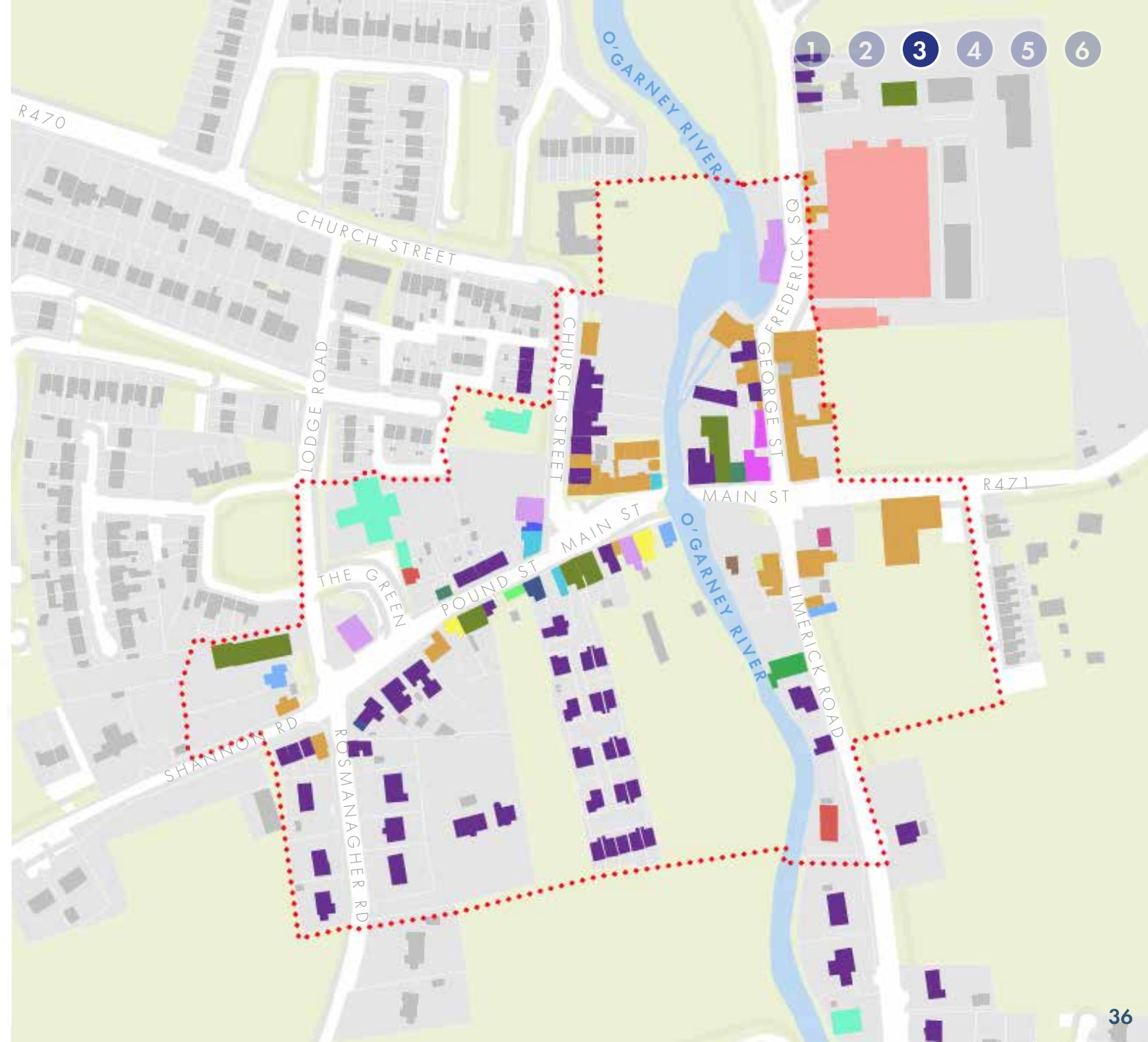


Land Use

(Town Centre Health Check, 2022 and updated in 2023)

A land use survey was carried out as part of Clare County Council’s Sixmilebridge Town Centre Health Check 2022. The health check reveals the clustering of commercial uses in the heart of the town, mainly focused on the Shannon Road, Pound Street, Main street axis. Employment uses are discretely clustered with the Industrial Park to the northeast of the town at Frederick Square.

An assessment of the levels of both vacancy and dereliction was undertaken as part of this health check. As part of the work undertaken during the preparation of this Plan, survey analysis of vacancy and dereliction was updated in 2023.





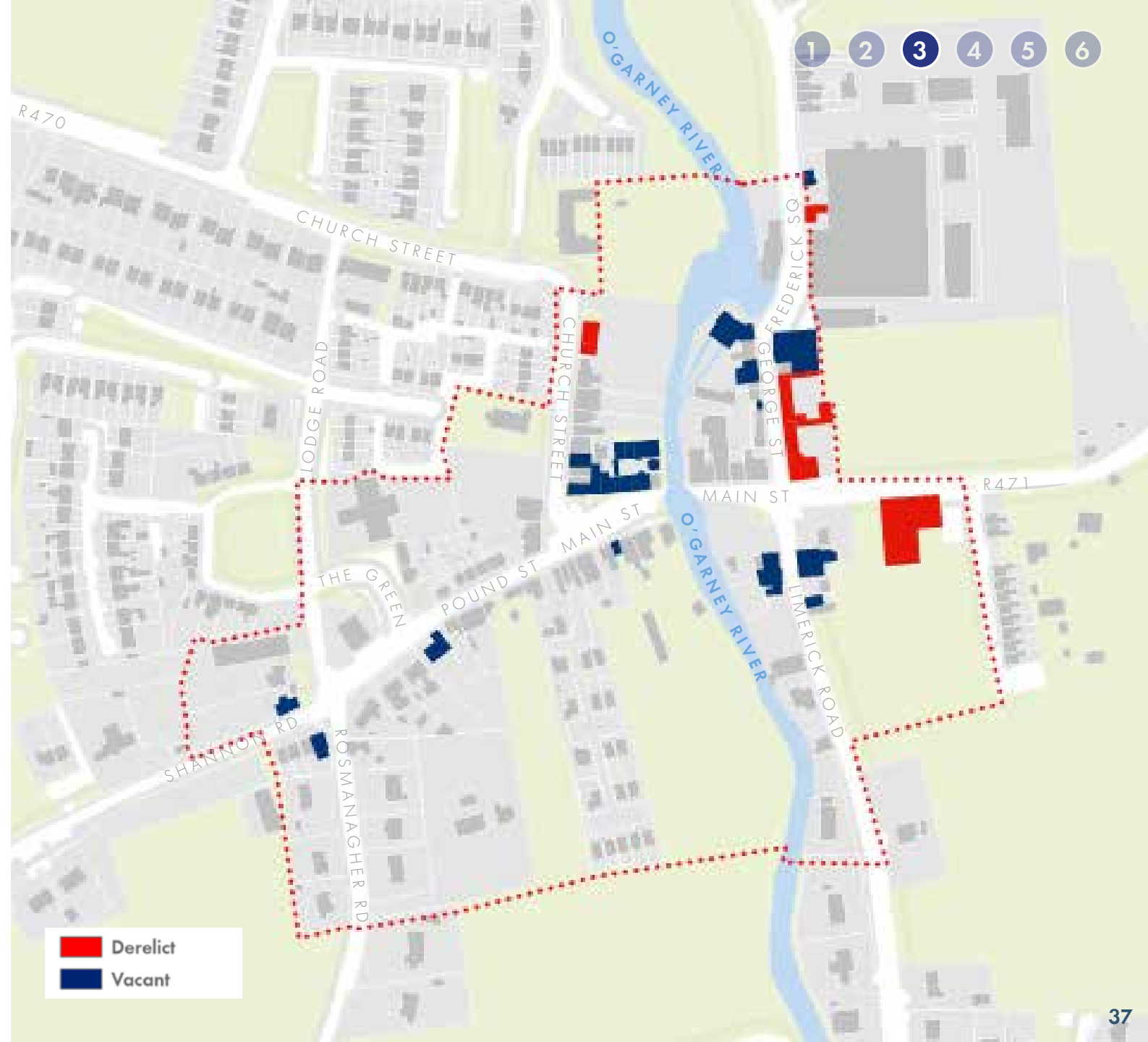
Town Centre Vacancies

(Town Centre Health Check, 2022 and updated in 2023)

Figures from the 2022 survey indicate that the level of vacancy and dereliction across the town centre area is 23% overall, with 32 individual buildings of the 139 surveyed identified as being either vacant, derelict or both. It should be noted that this survey has been carried out on a property-by-property basis and is not a measure of overall vacant or derelict floorspace. A small unit would have the same impact on the survey results as a large unit.

The updated 2023 survey suggests that the overall level of vacancy and dereliction has increased overall, with 38 individual buildings being identified as being either vacant, derelict, or both. A note of caution might be added to these results however, with the potential for the most recent survey being more comprehensive and therefore identifying some small vacant properties which might skew the figures somewhat.

It should also be noted that whilst some key buildings remain vacant they are known to have recently changed hands and efforts are being made to secure their futures. Three high profile examples of this are the former auction rooms building, Ieverstown House and the former Mill Bar.





Town Centre Vacancies by Use

(SAUL, 2021)

This map was developed by the SAUL IU (SAUL School of Architecture University of Limerick Intelligence Unit research group) in 2021. The findings remain copyright of SAUL. The research project was funded by Clare County Council.

13 Vacant Retail Sites

- 1 Mill Bar 435m²
- 2 Barber Shop 43m²
- 3 Old Mill Partially Vacant 163m²
- 4 Iverstown House 284m²
- 5 Old House Pub 140m²
- 6 Vacant Retail Unit 55m²
- 7 Retail Unit left of Crowes 36m²
- 8 Crowes Ground Floor Orange Street 87m²
- 9 5 Ground Floor Retail Units Main Street 295m²
- 10 5 Vacant Retail Units behind these units 240m²
- 11 Breens Bakery 153m²
- 12 Single Storey Shed 93m²
- 13 Corry's Corner 67m²

8 Residential Buildings

- 1 3 Thomond Terrace 15m²
- 2 Cottage 212m²
- 3 4 Incomplete Townhouses Church St 1561m²

4 Industrial Spaces

- 1 3 Mill Yard Warehouses 2988m²
- 2 Industrial Warehouse Unit 414m²



Community and Sports Facilities

Sport plays a central part in town life with high-standard facilities in GAA and soccer.

Sixmilebridge GAA Club is one of the largest GAA clubs in the county, with GAA and Camogie teams across juvenile and adult grades. O'Garney Park includes a floodlit pitch and 1,000-seat stand, hosting county and inter-county matches across a range of age-grades. Facilities at a second pitch at Cappagh Lodge are currently being enhanced through the provision of an indoor playing facility which will deliver the largest indoor arena in the region outside Limerick.

Bridge United AFC cater for children and adult soccer players, competing primarily in Clare-based leagues. The club's existing pitch and clubhouse have been recently supplemented with the development of an astroturf training area and sprint track. Installation of floodlighting to the main pitch is planned.

In addition to sporting activities, Sixmilebridge Youth Club and 14th Clare Scout Group provide opportunities for local children. The Youth Club operates from the GAA hall with a focus on the stage and acting, while the Scout troop

based in the old Station House offer activities for all school-age children.

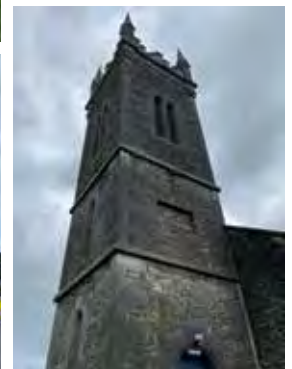
Further amenities in the town include a community playground and public library.

Of interest to visitors, there is a local heritage walk linked by a network of plaques remembering events and people in the town's history.

Trail-heads for the 12 O'Clock Hills walking routes, which also serve as an informal trail-head for cyclists, are approximately 6km east of the town.

Sixmilebridge provides the largest range of services to visitors to the trail and is a popular coffee stop for cyclists and cycling clubs from the wider Ennis, Shannon and Limerick city areas.

The European EuroVelo 1 Route long distance cycle route passes through the centre of the town with an information board and bike maintenance stand installed on Main Street.





Description and Demographic Synopsis of Sixmilebridge

taken from Healthy Families Healthy Communities

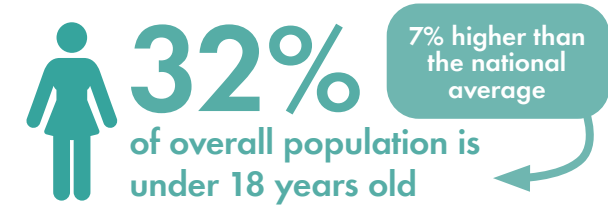
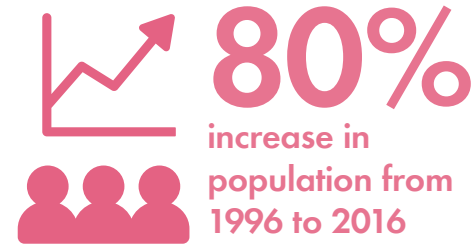
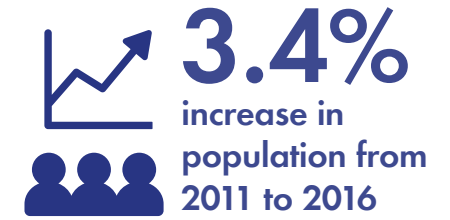
The town has a range of retail, commercial and community facilities, including shops, public houses, sports facilities, churches, a post office, primary school, community centre, childcare facility, library and medical centre.

There is one primary school located in Sixmilebridge. Students travel to Limerick, Shannon, Ennis or Tulla for secondary school education. A railway connection with Limerick / Ennis / Galway was reopened in 2010, however there is a very poor bus service to Shannon.

Sixmilebridge Community and District Services runs the main community facility in the village. It operates primarily on a social enterprise model, providing a childcare service, community education and older people's programmes. There is a small youth club in the town but, otherwise, no facilities for youth outside of sporting ones. Planning permission has been granted to develop a new Primary Health Care Centre on the outskirts of the village.

Demographics (Census 2016) Population

- The settlement of Sixmilebridge comprises the Electoral Divisions of Sixmilebridge and Mountievers, with a combined population of 3,962, an increase of 3.4% from 2011 to 2016.
- Sixmilebridge's population increased by 80% between 1996 to 2016. It experienced significant residential development in this period.
- The population of under 18 years old account for almost 32% of the overall population, almost 7% higher than the national average
- Sixmilebridge has the highest proportion of both 5 - 12 year olds and 0 - 24 year olds in Clare.
- The percentage of people aged over 65 years of age is 9%, 6% lower than the Clare average.



Census 2016 data

Nationality & Ethnicity

- 90% of Sixmilebridge’s residents claim Irish nationality.
- 86% of residents describe themselves as White Irish, 1% higher than County Clare (85%)
- Just under 2% of the population identify as Black, Black Irish, Asian or Asian Irish (Clare: 2.39%)

Household Type

- 21% of the population live in rented accommodation (Clare: 21%) and just under 7.5% live in public housing (Clare 7%).

Social Deprivation

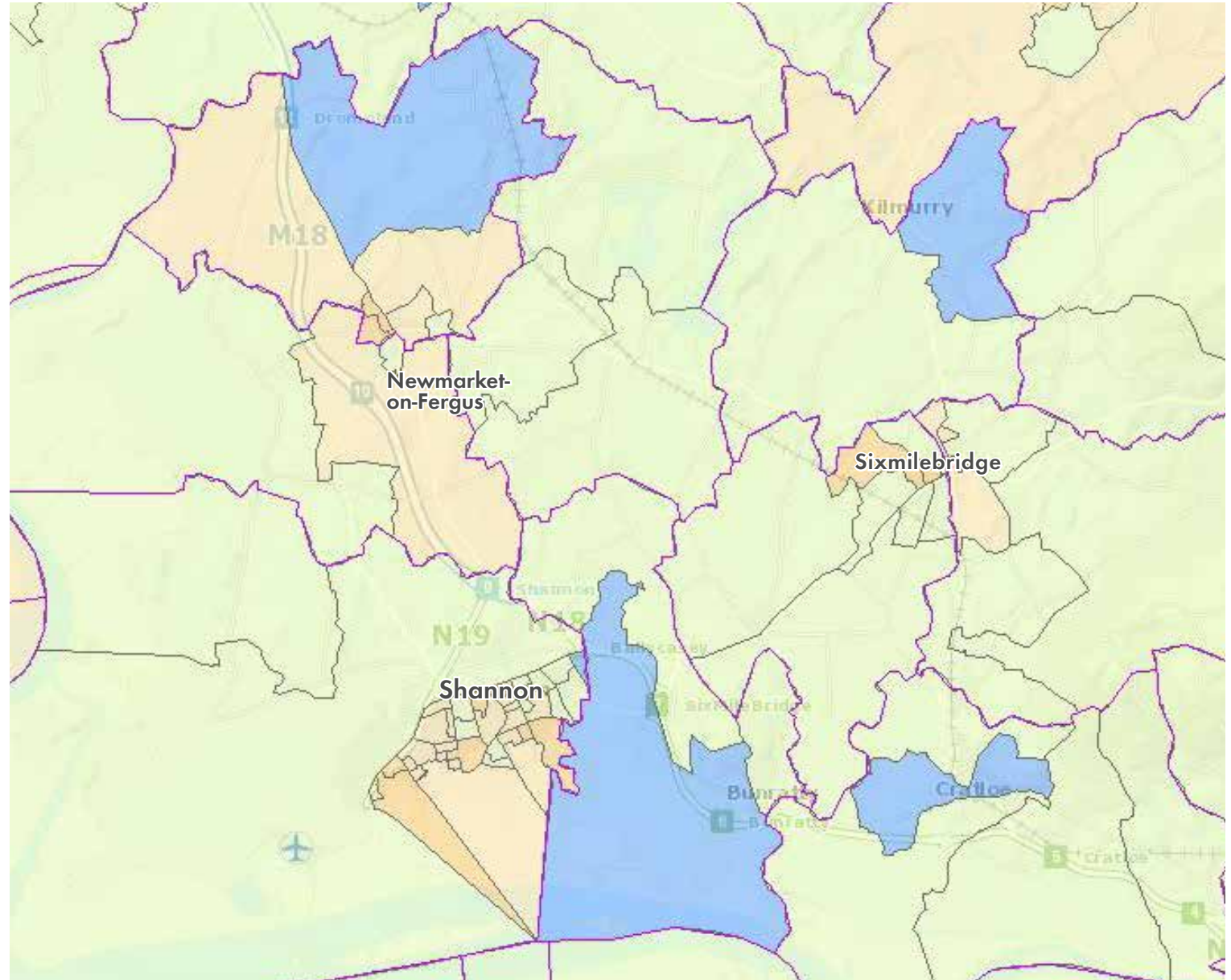
The map shown here illustrates South Clare’s deprivation profile. Areas in blue indicate high affluence scores while areas in medium yellow indicate high deprivation scores. It indicates that Sixmilebridge suffers from high levels of deprivation, and low levels of affluence compared to neighbouring towns. The below table provides a breakdown of relevant data for the three areas.

Table 5: Breakdown of Deprivation Score Data per Area²⁵

	Average Deprivation Score (DS)	Lowest Deprivation Score (DS)	Number of Small Areas (SA) with DS less than -10	Combined Population of these SAs	Total Population
Shannon(Clenagh)	-2.34	-12.93	8*	2,052*	10,299
Sixmilebridge & Mountievers	2.34	-14.51	2	626	3,962
Newmarket-on-Fergus	-1.25	-19.81	2	564	1,966

*there are also 3 Small Areas in Shannon with DS of -9, with a combined population of 725

Breakdown of Deprivation Score Data per Area



South Clare Deprivation Profile (Pobal)

Digital Town Blueprint

A Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) Audit was conducted by DCU as part of the Town Centre First initiative to understand the current digital readiness of Sixmilebridge. The Town Centre First policy recognises that successful places utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle, and integrate digital technology into daily commercial and social life. Digital technology can improve the quality and accessibility of services, and can be used to address challenges faced by our towns, providing them with new roles in the digital economy.

The DTB was 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.

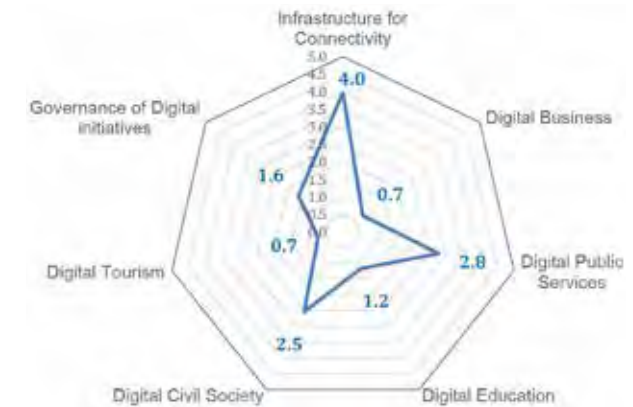
Each Town Centre First pathfinder town was scored against key criteria, including Infrastructure for Connectivity, Digital Business, Digital Public Services, Digital Education, Digital Civil Society and Digital Tourism.

Sixmilebridge scored high in terms of infrastructure with strong fixed broadband and the presence of a Digital Hub in the town centre (see below chart), which is part of the DigiClare Strategy and Connected Hubs initiative. The town team identified the need to promote this service more in the community to increase usage and support the development of local start-ups in Sixmilebridge.



Table 7 Rural digital hub indicators

Indicator	Sixmilebridge
Connected hub in town	Yes
Number of connected hub desks available for use	10
Number of connect hub meeting rooms available for use	0
Availability of other co-working spaces	Yes



Sixmilebridge Digital Town Readiness Dimension Score

Digital Town Blueprint

It also scored well on digital public services in terms of e-Government readiness, with opportunities to improve on e-health. Digital Civil Society, assessed the use and sophistication of digital technologies by community and voluntary groups in a town. A Sixmilebridge destination site, sixmilebridge.org, was identified with social media pages linked to this. The website is aimed at the local community with information on local news and events, COVID-19, elected representatives, and sports. It was noted however, that there were opportunities to improve and support transactions and two-way communication on the website, and enhance information rather than redirecting to other websites. The audit also noted that citizens in Sixmilebridge have limited opportunities for digital skills development outside the formal education system and library service. There is scope for the provision of Coderdojo or similar initiatives to improved the digital capacity of the wider community.

The OECD, Harnessing Digital: The Digital Ireland Framework, and the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 notes that the integration of digital technologies in the curriculum and use thereof by teachers is critical for the development of digital skills and digital literacy. Sixmilebridge does not have

a secondary school however, the primary school which has over 500 students, participated in the audit and scored highly across many of the indicators including the use of apps for communication with students, providing homework online, running courses for students on using the internet safely to protect their privacy. Similar to the wider community, there were opportunities to enhance student training around updating software, coding and creating websites and blogs.

The audit highlight a low level of digital readiness under two key categories: Digital Business and Digital Tourism. Whilst 45% of businesses in Sixmilebridge had a social media presence, only 6% businesses were selling online with limited use of analytics tools or online advertising. The Tourism assessment was only conducted within 2km of the town centre in line with the Town Centre First Policy, and assessed tourist attractions including natural amenities or heritage sites, festivals and events, and commercial businesses, amongst others. Seven such attractions and destination sites were identified for Sixmilebridge.

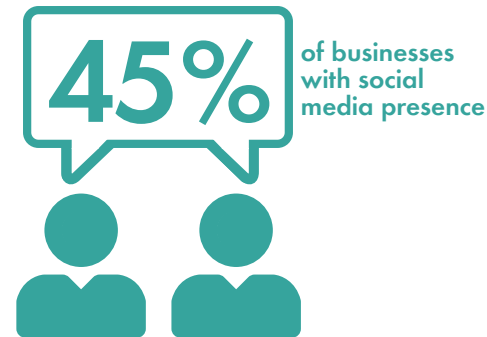


A Sixmilebridge destination site, sixmilebridge.org, provides information on local news and events, COVID-19, elected representatives, and sports.

Digital Town Blueprint

Proposed Digital Enhancement Opportunities for Sixmilebridge:

- 1) Increase awareness of the Digital Hub in Sixmilebridge e.g. run a local marketing campaign and consider the internal layout to facilitate the potential for a single office unit to support those working remotely in the town
- 2) Set up and run Digital Coderdojo Programmes for Youth and the wider community
- 3) Local Enterprise Office to host business advice clinic and information session on the Trading Online Vouchers, Digital Start Programme, Digital Marketing programmes and LEO mentoring programme amongst other services in Sixmilebridge. There is also opportunity to host a specific digital marketing training programme for local businesses in the Digital Hub.
- 4) To enhance digital infrastructure and move towards the Smart Towns concept, there is opportunity for the town to implement key initiatives including:
 - a. setting up e-parking information signs
 - b. installation of QR codes on key sites along a planned Heritage Trail to provide tourists with digital information
 - c. installation of smart solar-bench providing 24/7 charging for phones and wearable devices
 - d. installation of EV Charging Points in Public Parking areas





SCOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Historic character, features and assets
- Unique heritage and stories
- Owengarney River
- GAA and other sports facilities
- Local services and facilities
- Public realm works
- Train station and links
- Proximity to Shannon Airport
- Proximity to Shannon Free Zone
- Proximity to Bunratty
- Proximity to 12 O'Clock Hills
- Proximity to key employment centres - Ennis and Limerick
- EuroVelo Route 1

CHALLENGES

- Vacancy
- Dereliction
- Lack of activity
- Dominance of vehicles
- Negative perceptions of safety
- Pedestrian accessibility
- Cycle accessibility and safety
- Limited shops
- Limited cafés and restaurants
- Limited evening economy
- Lack of public green space
- Underutilisation of river
- Limited activities for young people
- Lack of play space
- Limited public transport
- Lack of public amenities - street furniture, bins, lighting and public toilets

OPPORTUNITIES

- Shop front enhancements
- Town centre living
- Public realm improvements
- Traffic calming and management
- Improved parking management
- Restoring, reusing and adapting vacant or derelict historic buildings
- Accessibility and inclusivity
- New walking and cycling river crossing
- More and better community spaces
- Improved play facilities
- A variety of activities for young people
- More and enhanced public green spaces
- Greening and planting to enhance climate resilience
- Capitalising on the river as asset
- Cycle tourism
- Improved public transport service

THREATS

- Poorly considered development which has long term implications on the town
- Poor maintenance of historic structures
- Lack of funding opportunities
- Loss of services and facilities
- Climate change



COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

The following section provides a summary of the engagement stages through which the local community of Sixmilebridge engaged directly with the plan making process, providing invaluable feedback on emerging themes and project opportunities.

Two principal stages of community engagement were facilitated, with workshops, on-line surveys and pop-up market stall events.

The results have helped the plan respond positively to community concerns and priorities.

Fewer cars everywhere... more green and places to walk.

So focused on cars right now...would love to see it more pedestrian focused and encourage more walking.

Not enough shops, I have to leave the town to get what I want.

More little events around the village and in different areas around the village. Christmas Market, farmers market, flea-market... showcase clubs and get them involved.

More public seating!

Sixmilebridge is a good sized small town!

Too many empty buildings!

The square is too congested and traffic should be removed from the centre of the village.

Sports, pretty village great pubs. Situated close to Bunratty and tourists if they could get here by foot or cycle path.

Make the village more youth friendly...

Highlight river and use as green space/amenity... could be seating, picnic benches etc. Walking path along riverbank.

Make more of a feature of the river...

There are very little sheltered areas in the town.

Sixmilebridge has a lovely village feel.

Engagement Process and Events

Engagement with the local community, key stakeholders and Town Team has been integral to the plan process. An extensive engagement strategy has helped to inform the ideas and projects which the plan is comprised of.

The diagram below sets out the key stages and events which have taken place as part of this process. The following pages help to describe these, and the feedback received, in greater detail.



Stage 1 Engagement

Information Gathering

The first stage of engagement for the Sixmilebridge's Town Centre First Plan took place from October - December 2022, and included a Walkability Audit, stakeholder workshops and meetings, and a public survey.

This was an initial information gathering exercise which sought the knowledge, views and aspirations of local people. Feedback informed the design team's analysis and understanding of the town, the themes which underpin the strategy and helped to shape the initial ideas and emerging strategy.

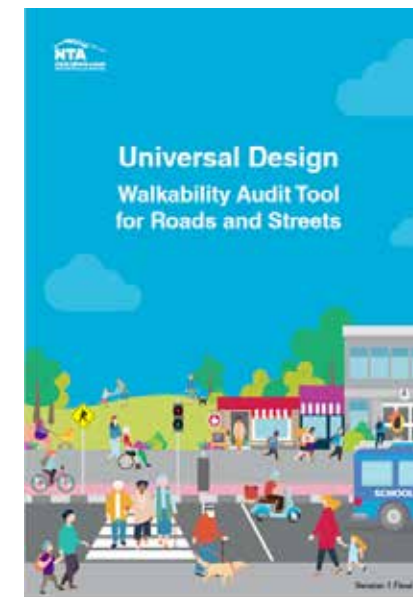
A **Walkability Audit** of Sixmilebridge was carried out on Tuesday 4th of October 2022. It was undertaken by a group of approximately 15 participants comprised of representatives from the local community and local groups with a diverse range of ages and abilities including, for example, parents with buggies, children, wheelchair users, older people and people with impaired vision. Many of the participants had local knowledge and use the town centre regularly, and were familiar with the particular challenges faced when navigating the town's streets and public spaces.

Participants were given a walkability survey booklet and questionnaire structured around a set of themes.

The methodology for the audit was based on the National Transport Authority publication, Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool, published in 2021. The key results are set out on the following pages.

A **Stakeholder Workshop** took place later that day including representatives from the local community and community groups, business owners and the Elected Members. The event included a presentation to introduce the project and some initial analysis of the town. Participants were then invited to break into smaller groups and provide their views, with conversations structured using themed worksheets.

A **Public Survey** was launched in November 2022, which provided local people with the opportunity to provide feedback about the town based around the following themes: Quality of streets and spaces; Movement and connections; History and heritage, Town facilities and services, Identity and placemaking, Employment and economy. 107 people completed the survey. The survey was hosted on the council's website and made available, in hard copy, at the local library. All forms of engagement were widely advertised using flyers, social media and the council's website.



Universal Design Walkability Audit Tool (2021)



Walkability Audit participants

A **School Workshop** took place in January 2023. Members of Clare County Council's project team visited St. Finnachta's National School and undertook a focused workshop session with students and teachers in order to collect an informed view of the town from the perspective of the town's children.

The workshop lasted approximately 45 minutes and included the following exercises:

Mental Map – the students were invited to draw a map of the town, and asked to note down the places which they thought were important, as well as any ideas they had of the what they wanted to see in the town. The aim of this exercise was to understand what landmarks/facilities/services etc. stand out for them.

Emoji Mapping – the students were divided into groups and provided with a map of Sixmilebridge Town Centre. A range of 'Emoji face' stickers were then provided to students to be placed around things they like or don't like about the town, and to promote further discussion around this.

Vote Box – a private voting box was left with the students to allow them to provide feedback on one thing they would like to see in Sixmilebridge in the future, or that they think Sixmilebridge needs.



Walkability Audit

This page summarises the outcomes from the Walkability Audit. Participants were split into two groups and each group followed a predetermined route around the town which took in some of the town's key destinations and community facilities.

The objective of the walkability audit is to increase awareness of the specific spatial needs of people with a wide range of ages and abilities, including for example, parents with buggies, older people, and persons with disabilities, and to capture their needs and desires in relation to their experience of using their local roads and streets.

The findings have helped to form an evidence base, gathered through public participation, to inform potential solutions to issues relating to walkability in and around Sixmilebridge.

The following actions have been prepared in response to the key feedback which came out of each of the themed topic:

1. Widen the width of footpaths to increase accessibility levels.
2. Improve surface quality of roads and footpaths, ensuring they are even.

3. Introduce traffic calming measures, such as carriageway narrowing, surface treatments, pedestrian crossing and signage.
4. Increase the number of dropped curbs.
5. Introduce more formal pedestrian crossings - supported by tactile paving, lighting, etc.
6. Increase street lighting for pedestrians to enhance the night-time use of the centre.
7. Improve maintenance and monitoring of parks and play areas.
8. Introduce subtle planting which prevents backs of vehicles encroaching onto pavement space when parked.
9. Improve cycling provisions in the town such as cycle lanes and designated bike parking facilities. Increase the promotion of walking and cycling to school initiatives.
10. Improve building façades, paying particular focus to the derelict buildings in the town.
11. Investigate opportunities to create safe, designated loading and delivery facilities for larger vehicles and for vehicles carrying disabled passengers.



FOOTPATHS



FACILITIES



CROSSING THE ROAD



ROAD USER BEHAVIOUR



SAFETY



LOOK AND FEEL



OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL GATES



Walkability Audit Themes participant ratings

Participants were invited to rate their respective routes in terms of the above themes. The above results show the average ratings across the two routes and demonstrates particular issues relating to footpaths and crossing the road.



Stakeholder Workshop What You Told Us

Parking: Parking is the top issue mentioned. Views on how it should be addressed often differ with many believing more parking is needed, and others seeking parking in better locations. People frequently mention illegal parking outside the Centra and Post Office, and the impact this has on traffic and pedestrians. Some would like to see a large car park constructed in the town centre, while others have noted they would like less parking in the centre and cars removed from the square.

Traffic management: There is a general consensus that traffic needs to be managed more effectively, particularly around the bridge. Slowing traffic down on the approach, through the town centre, and around the school is mentioned, with some expressing a desire to remove traffic from the town altogether with the implementation of the bypass. Others noted that large trucks should be prevented from driving through the town.

Pedestrian and cycle river crossing: A key issue raised throughout is the need for either a widened bridge, or new pedestrian and cycle bridge to help improve connectivity and respond to issues around safety with the current arrangement.

River walk: Many people mentioned their desire for a river walk and cycle route, with a desire to see this taken through to Bunratty, Shannon, and the 12 O’Clock Hills. Other respondents mentioned the desire for walking and cycling routes, highlighting the need for safe routes including lighting.

Improving and prioritising the pedestrian experience: Many respondents expressed a desire for more widened and improved footpaths, crossings, lighting and improved safety through addition of barriers. Discussions implied that there would be community support for traffic management measures which delivered an improved pedestrian experience.

Community events: Many would like to see more community events take place in the town - including markets, fetes, festivals and attractions. Including opportunities to capitalise on existing visitors and attract more visitors.

Safety: Concerns around safety were mentioned - particularly in relation to drugs. A desire for a greater Gardai presence was also noted.





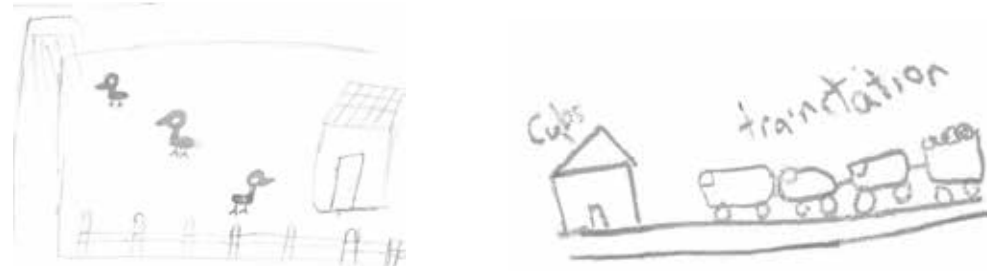
Schools Workshop Key Findings

The following sets out the key findings from the workshop undertaken with 62 pupils and 3 teachers from St. Finnachta's National School on the 20th January 2023.

Sixmilebridge's Strengths

The following is a list which highlights what the pupils consider to be strengths in Sixmilebridge:

- Great soccer pitch.
- The Garda Station.
- Good school, *"it helps us learn but get too much homework."*
- The Cosy Cottage.
- The ducks - *"like feeding the ducks."*
- The church - *"need it to make our confirmation and the elderly like going there."*
- Gala Chipper.



Sixmilebridge's Weaknesses

Broken into themes, the following lists the weaknesses of Sixmilebridge.

Transport

- Train station - *"too small, too little rail."*
- Bus stop - *"more frequent bus service with direct routes to Shannon, Ennis and Galway."*
- No buses, bus stop beside the post office. Put a bus stop at the train station.

Car parking

- Overall, very little car parking in the town centre, cannot park there in the morning time.
- More general car parking is needed, including disability spaces, age-friendly spaces and parent and child spaces.
- More electric vehicle charging spaces needed.
- No safe parking near the Centra store i.e. funeral home.
- Need to enforce double yellow line car parking.

Infrastructure

- Footpaths and roads are unusable in parts of the town.
- Make path and pedestrian crossing at Centra.
- Street lighting: very old/poor - needs to be improved/upgraded.
- Lack of bins.
- No public toilets.

Street Lights





Recreation and leisure

- The playground is destroyed and needs to be fixed.
- No basketball court – the one in the park is destroyed.
- It would be nice to walk along the river – build a walkway along river and provide a picnic area where the ducks are.
- Put a team in place to take care of the park.
- The park 'playground' is in the wrong location.
- No where to hang out.
- More green areas needed to play in.
- Need a Gaelic football team.
- There is nothing to do - need a games house, kids club, pool table.
- Fix the playground and use the green behind it for a skate park.

Built environment

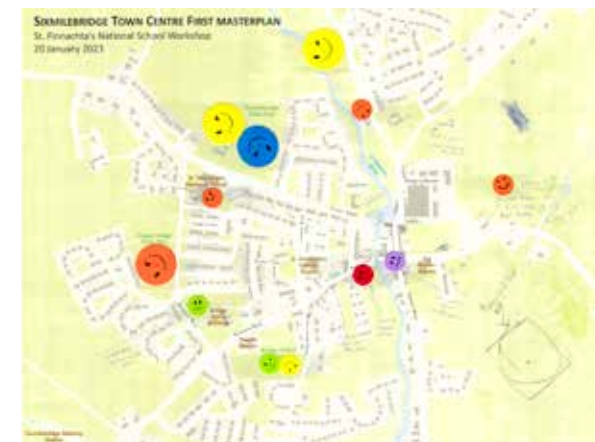
- Run down houses need to be done up.
- Auction Room should be used as a cinema.
- Loads of empty shops.
- The main street needs more shops, cafes and restaurants.

Retails & commercial

- Need more shops e.g. Aldi - have to go all the way to Shannon or Limerick which is a waste of diesel.
- More shops and restaurants such as Eason, Subway, Burger King, McDonalds, Penneys, comic book store, art shop, fancy dress shop, sports shop such as Elverys, Life Style Sports.
- Need art gallery.
- Put a Subway in the vacant old blue shop.
- Penney's – provide summer jobs for young people.

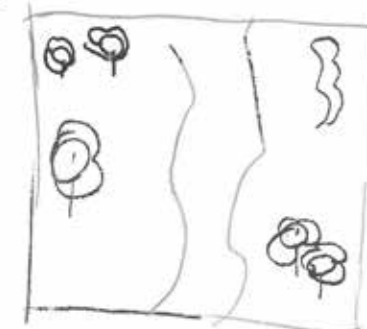
Safety & security

- Don't feel safe going to the train station, there is loitering and lots of rubbish.
- Vandalism.
- The guards could do more.
- Cars speed out of Fredrick Square.
- Loitering behind the Church.



because there's nothing to do apart from hurling and soccer

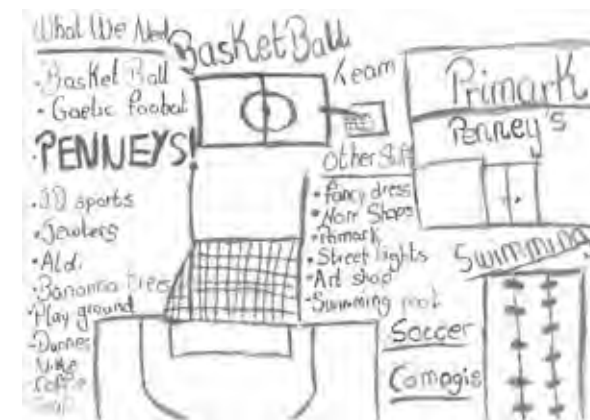
garden with flowers



Idea Box

The question was put to the pupils “if you were Mayor of Co. Clare for one day, what one thing would you do for Sixmilebridge? The following are the responses received from all of the pupils:

1.	Games room / arcade - for something to do instead of sports.	17.	Use all the buildings that aren't used into shops or houses. Hill top should be a restaurant, Mrs Breen's should be Starbucks, clothes shop, Pennys, Tesco, Dunnes and make more houses and extend the park.	36.	Shopping centre, supermarket etc, Dealz, Euro Giant etc.	55.	More clothes / sports shops.
2.	Re-build the Centre road.	18.	More shops like Lidl in the unseen places.	37.	A lot more cameras around the Bridge.	56.	Games room for something to do, other than hurling or soccer.
3.	A new supermarket.	19.	Fix all the broken things in the playground and make it a small bit bigger because people can get hurt with the broken things.	38.	Public bathrooms.	57.	More shops e.g. food, clothes because there is not any clothes shops and not many food shops.
4.	Bus station next to the train station and put all train lines direct from Limerick to Shannon Airport, Dublin Airport, Cork Airport and direct train services to every big city in Ireland and northern Ireland.	20.	Better / fixed playground.	39.	Cinema, basketball court, shopping centre	58.	If I was the Mayor for one day, I would definitely add a big shopping centre.
5.	More cameras around for more security.	21.	More open hours for the library.	40.	New sports shop when shop is moved to Auction House e.g. Life Style Sports.	59.	Penneys (sort out Sixmilebridge train station).
6.	Spar shopping centre and cafes.	22.	Grocery stores.	41.	Parking.	60.	Basketball court / team boys and girl's teams (sort out the train station).
7.	New playground because it has been destroyed and we are not able to use it and we have to go to Newmarket on Fergus and Shannon.	23.	An indoor playground.	42.	More cafes for people to hang out with friends, more parking spaces.	61.	Stadium.
8.	Sports shop.	24.	Indoor basketball court and fix the park.	43.	Basketball court, shopping centre.	62.	Technology.
9.	More shops.	25.	Clothes stores, car parking, food store, comic store.	44.	Cinema and leisure centre.		
10.	Supermarket and car park.	26.	A shopping centre with a few shops in it.	45.	A leisure centre with a cinema.		
11.	Get rid of Tasty Bites.	27.	An indoor soccer pitch.	46.	I would like to fix the park because lots of small children play in the park.		
12.	A games house / arcade / bowling alley / Lazer tag as there is nothing to do on weekends with friends if you don't like sport.	28.	More shops.	47.	Pennys, sort Bridge Kids (messers area).		
13.	Create a place for teenagers to socialise.	29.	More cafes in Sixmilebridge.	48.	We need a game house with a pool table, table tennis etc because there is nothing to do apart from hurling and soccer.		
14.	Games room / arcade for something to do.	30.	Equestrian centre / riding / livery for horses - a lot of people living in the Bridge have to travel far just to get to them, the other option is buy farmland.	49.	More zebra crossings and red lights.		
15.	New buildings, take down old buildings, boring nothing to do bar hurling and soccer.	31.	Basketball court.	50.	More toilets.		
16.	Supervalu.	32.	Parking lots / spaces.	51.	Basketball court.		
		33.	Clothing store (shoes, anything really).	52.	More shops like Lidl or Aldi.		
		34.	Parking more parking.	53.	Primark.		
		35.	Fix the park, or a better park or place to walk.	54.	Build a shopping centre (with a Penneys) and add a Starbucks where Mrs Breen's was.		



Survey Key Results

You said the top three **barriers** to using Sixmilebridge are...



1. **Inadequate parking**
2. **Inadequate retail offer**
3. **Busy roads and traffic**



We asked... "What **themes** are your **top priority** for Sixmilebridge?"



you said...

Town facilities and services was your top priority



and...

Quality streets and spaces

We asked... "What would be an appropriate **solution** to resolve **congestion on the bridge?**"



74% of you said...

Create a new pedestrian and cycle bridge

Your top three **priorities** for improvements to **enhance town centre facilities** are....



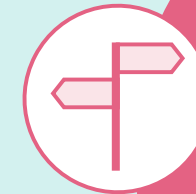
1. **Eateries**



2. **Supermarket**



3. **Youth space and activities**



Your **top priorities** for improvements to streets and spaces in Sixmilebridge:

Signage and wayfinding

Provision of bins



We asked... "Do you think any of the following themes could be explored to **promote Sixmilebridge as a destination?**"



1. **Culture, music and entertainment**



2. **History and heritage**

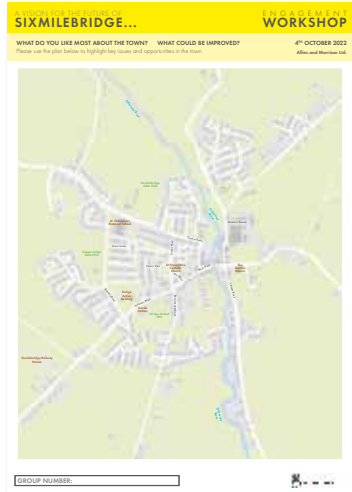


3. **Cycle or walking trails tourism**

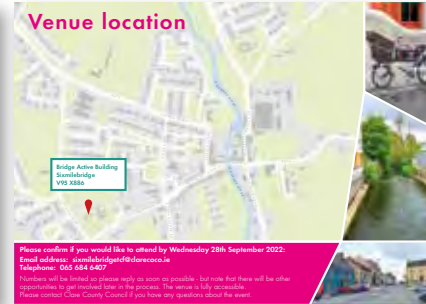


Engagement Materials

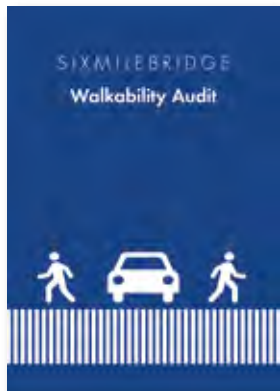
Materials



Flyer to promote the workshop



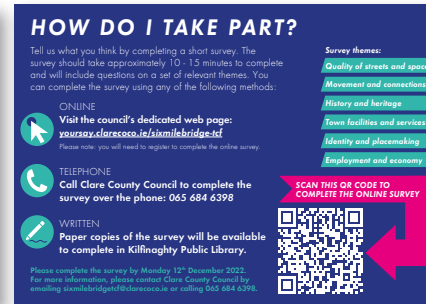
Worksheets



Walkability Audit Questionnaire booklet



Flyer to promote the survey

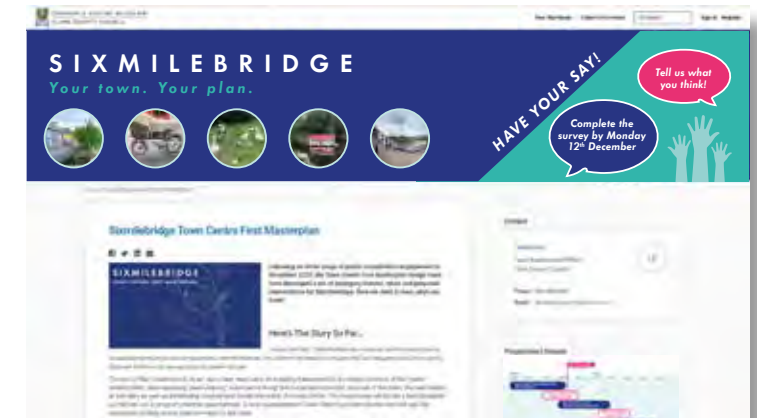


Facebook advert

Online



Online survey



Clare County Council's "Have Your Say" platform

Stage 2 Engagement

Ideas Testing

The second stage of engagement for the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan took place in May 2023 and included a pop-up event, public survey, stakeholder workshop and meetings.

The purpose of this stage of engagement was to test the emerging ideas for the plan, which had been informed by the earlier stage of engagement as well as the team's analysis of the town and stakeholder conversations.

A pop-up event in the Town Square was held on 6th May 2023 between 10am and 2pm to enable members of the public to speak to the design team, find out more about the emerging ideas, and to provide feedback.

An online survey was also available to gather feedback from the public, which was open for two weeks from 28th April 2023.

As well as this public engagement, a workshop with the Town Team took place on 5th May 2023. Stakeholders were asked to respond to the emerging ideas and create a deeper dialogue to sharpen the vision for the plan.



Stakeholder Workshop with the Town Team

The Town Team event was held on Friday 5 May 2023 from 7pm to 9pm in the Bridge Active Complex Building in Sixmilebridge. Sixteen members of the Town Team attended the event. Following a presentation, the Town Team was divided into two groups, facilitated by members of the design team and Clare County Council. They were invited to give their thoughts on emerging ideas and to complete worksheets with themed questions. Comments are summarised by theme.

MOVEMENT & ACCESS

- A new pedestrian bridge in the town centre is a priority, a suggestion was made to revisit its alignment.
- Attendees wanted to see streets not just spaces improved including from Frederick Square to the Square and for parking at the back of the Catholic Church to be improved.
- There was a desire to develop a link to Bunratty by a river walk and kayaking.

PUBLIC REALM & ENVIRONMENT

- Public realm improvements were welcomed and the Green was considered to have good potential as a community space. Suggestions were made to factor in usage and maintenance issues, to have a streetscape fund to enhance shopfronts and to promote healthy living by developing an outdoor gym.
- There was a desire for better connections from housing estates to the town centre and to enhance the entrance and signage to the industrial area.

COMMUNITY, GROWTH & INVESTMENT

- Attendees wanted to see better youth facilities and community space. There was a desire to promote the multi-use of facilities and venues for community activities, festivals and events.
- While housing is a priority, attendees wanted to see facilities in the town centre, in particular retail and a supermarket. There was a desire for a secondary school for a growing town.



Please note: Since this diagram was created, the themes have been updated in response to feedback from the engagement process. The updated themes are set out later in this report.



- A market was welcomed and the car park at the back of the church was suggested as a possible location. Attendees wanted to see the plan support attracting business into the town centre. A suggestion was made for the Council to also consider a rate reduction to encourage business.

HERITAGE CULTURE & IDENTITY

- There was a desire among the locals to develop a town that keeps people within the town through their lives, to have a high quality and safe environment, to support health and well-being and to have an accessible environment.
- The heritage trail was welcomed. Attendees wanted to see the courthouse included on the plan map and suggestions were made to develop the courthouse as a multi-use facility, to examine the potential of a heritage/ community facility in the former O'Regan home and to have an artist's hub.

TOP PRIORITIES

At the end of the event each group presented top priorities to the wider group. Priorities to be incorporated into the plan are listed below:

- A new footbridge in the town centre
- A new supermarket
- Revitalising the square
- Improving streets including from Frederick Square to Town Square
- Youth facilities and open space
- A new secondary school in the town
- Making more use of the Courthouse
- Multi-use of existing facilities and venues
- Potential heritage/community facility that builds on O'Regan legacy





Pop-Up Consultation Event

The pop-up consultation event was held on Saturday 6 May 2023 from 10am to 2pm in the Town Square. The event was staffed by members of the design team and Clare County Council, giving people an opportunity to talk about emerging ideas and to give feedback on post-it notes that were attached to a map. The event engaged high numbers of people and 87 comments were recorded. Comments are summarised by theme below:

MOVEMENT & ACCESS

Footbridges: There were comments about a need for a footbridge in the town centre. Suggestions were made to have it closer to the road and that it could be an architectural feature. A footbridge to link housing with the school was also welcomed.

Traffic: Comments were made on the need for better traffic management in the square and for reduced speeds on approach roads. There was some concern about visibility at junctions and a desire for a bypass.

Connections: Proposals to enhance connections were welcomed. There was a desire for a better pedestrian link from the train station and for better walking and cycling links from housing to the town centre or to school.

Parking: A new car park near the proposed supermarket was welcomed. Suggestions were made to keep space in the square for people with disabilities and elderly, to factor in parking space for mass at the Green and to improve the car park to the rear of St. Finnachta's Church, including access and signage.

Public Transport: Comments included a desire for improved public transport and to strengthen public transport links between the industrial estate, train station and airport.





PUBLIC REALM & ENVIRONMENT

Town park and river: The proposed new town park and river walk linking Sixmilebridge to Bunratty were welcomed. Suggestions were made to have an outdoor gym and a base for kayaking and canoeing. Flooding is an issue and there is a desire to work with the Council and OPW to maintain the river.

Public realm improvements: Proposed public realm improvements were welcomed. There were some concerns about anti-social behaviour. Suggestions were made to support biodiversity, incorporate cycling into street furniture and to consider a covered outdoor space for activities.

Recreation: The proposed location of a playground in the town centre was welcomed and many commentators desired recreational spaces for teenagers. Suggestions were made to develop walking and cycling routes linking the town to the hinterland. There were also suggestions for a community garden and a dog park.

COMMUNITY, GROWTH & INVESTMENT

Town centre facilities: There were comments that the town centre needs local shops, small office space and services. Commentators welcomed the market in the square and the proposed supermarket.

Housing: Suggestions were made to develop town houses in the town centre, have housing for the young and elderly, to consider housing for the elderly close to the town centre and to have community facilities close to housing.

HERITAGE CULTURE & IDENTITY

Identity: There were comments that Sixmilebridge has a great community spirit, is a great place to live and is a favourite place for cyclists to stop. Commentators suggested a social plan to tackle anti-social behaviour, support the development of youth facilities, clubs and evening courses.

Heritage and culture: Commentators liked how the town's character and heritage were celebrated in the plan. Comments included promoting events and developing routes to historic assets in the hinterland.





Survey Key Results

73%

agree or strongly agree with the vision statement.

The most supported themes were...

improving local community facilities and services



improving the quality of the riverside and key town spaces



We asked... "what projects should be prioritised?"

1. Delivery of a new river bridge crossing
2. New town centre supermarket and parking
3. Supporting the new Greenway riverside walk

The most supported **town centre facilities** are:

You said the **top ideas you supported** were:



Bringing vacant and derelict land and property back to use

and...



Community and youth facilities

and...



More festivals, market and events

want to see a new bridge for pedestrians in the centre of town

79%



73% new supermarket



72% new market



70% trail-head for walkers and cyclists



87% support a new public square

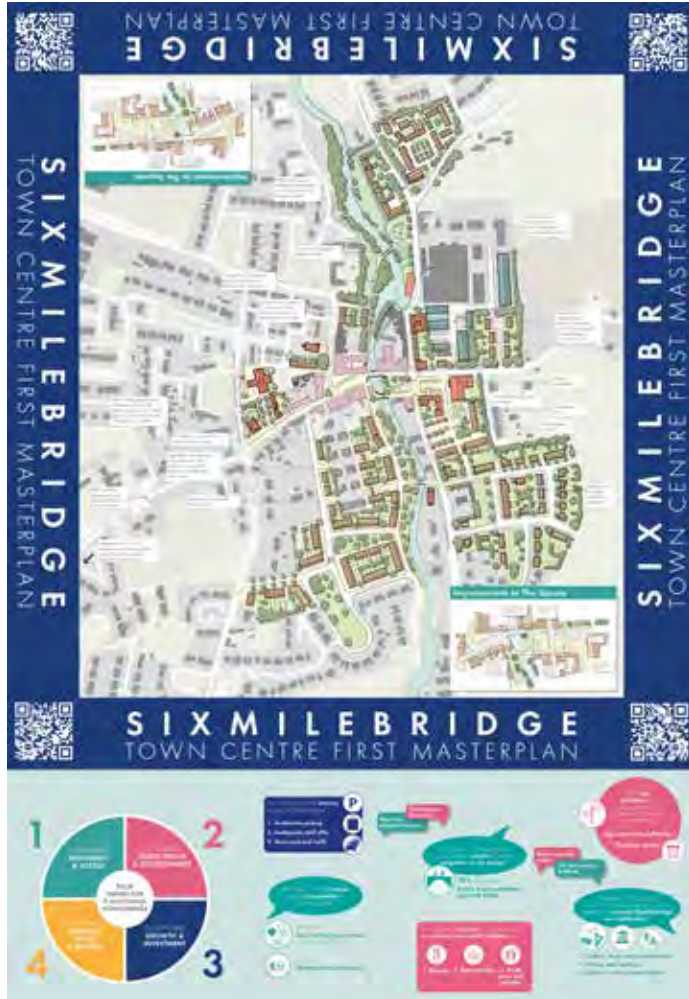


51% only support it if a new supermarket car park is delivered



Engagement materials

Pop-up - Saturday 6th May



Tabletop plan



Flyer



Banner



Information leaflet


Online - Friday 28 April - Sunday 14 May



Online survey



Clare County Council's "Have Your Say" platform

The background of the slide is a stylized map of Six Mile Cross, a village in North East Scotland. The map is rendered in a light teal color against a dark blue background. It shows a network of streets, a central square, and a winding river or stream that flows through the village. The map is slightly faded and serves as a subtle backdrop for the text.

This 'Defining the Place' section brings together all the analytical and engagement work undertaken and puts forward a vision for Sixmilebridge which will be delivered through the delivery of a wide range of project ideas and opportunities. The project opportunities are organised under four cross-cutting themes which have themselves also been crafted in direct response to community feedback

DEFINING THE PLACE



A Vision for Sixmilebridge



Underpinned by its unique social history, built heritage and riverside setting, the growing town of Sixmilebridge will benefit from **improved local shops, community facilities and employment opportunities**. Existing **heritage buildings will be brought back into productive use** and **new river crossings** and **public open spaces** will radically improve the relationship between the town and the O'Garney River.

Supported by measures designed to limit the impact of through traffic, **the town's key public spaces will be transformed**. A **new market square** and river crossing in the commercial heart of the town will help to **attract more people and activities to the centre**; an **improved space at The Green** will help to bring together and **support key local community facilities**; and the space on Frederick Square will be a **high-quality new entry** to Sixmilebridge alongside an **expanded industrial and business campus**.

Themes and Objectives

The themes and objectives for the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan have emerged and evolved iteratively through the various stages of engagement. Workshop sessions with the Town Team led to further refinement. Being careful to ensure the Sixmilebridge plan themes relate to the national Town Centre First policy context and objectives, four themes have been identified, each with their respective objectives.

The national Town Centre First policy agenda is centred around promoting and securing sustainable futures for the country's towns and villages. By reflection, environmental, economic and social sustainability is at the heart of the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan.

The four Sixmilebridge themes are as follows:

1. SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND MOVEMENT

Revolving primarily around the 'environmental' aspects of sustainability, this theme relates to the desire to deliver physical improvements to the historic town through enhancements to the key spaces, car parks and the road network.

2. SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE, IDENTITY & VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Community feedback has highlighted the fascinating stories behind Sixmilebridge's evolution and growth. The town is the birthplace of Brendan O'Regan and a short trip away from the tourism hotspot of Bunratty. There are opportunities to celebrate these associations and linkages.

3. ENTERPRISE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Through investment, the town centre can help to better support local people for their daily retail and community service needs whilst also supporting new and small businesses to thrive. This creates a more sustainable local economy.

4. YOUTH & THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

A particular priority for the Town Team - this social sustainability is an often neglected but essential aspect of sustainability. Supporting young people in the town will help to ensure that Sixmilebridge meets the needs of its local community 'from cradle to grave'.

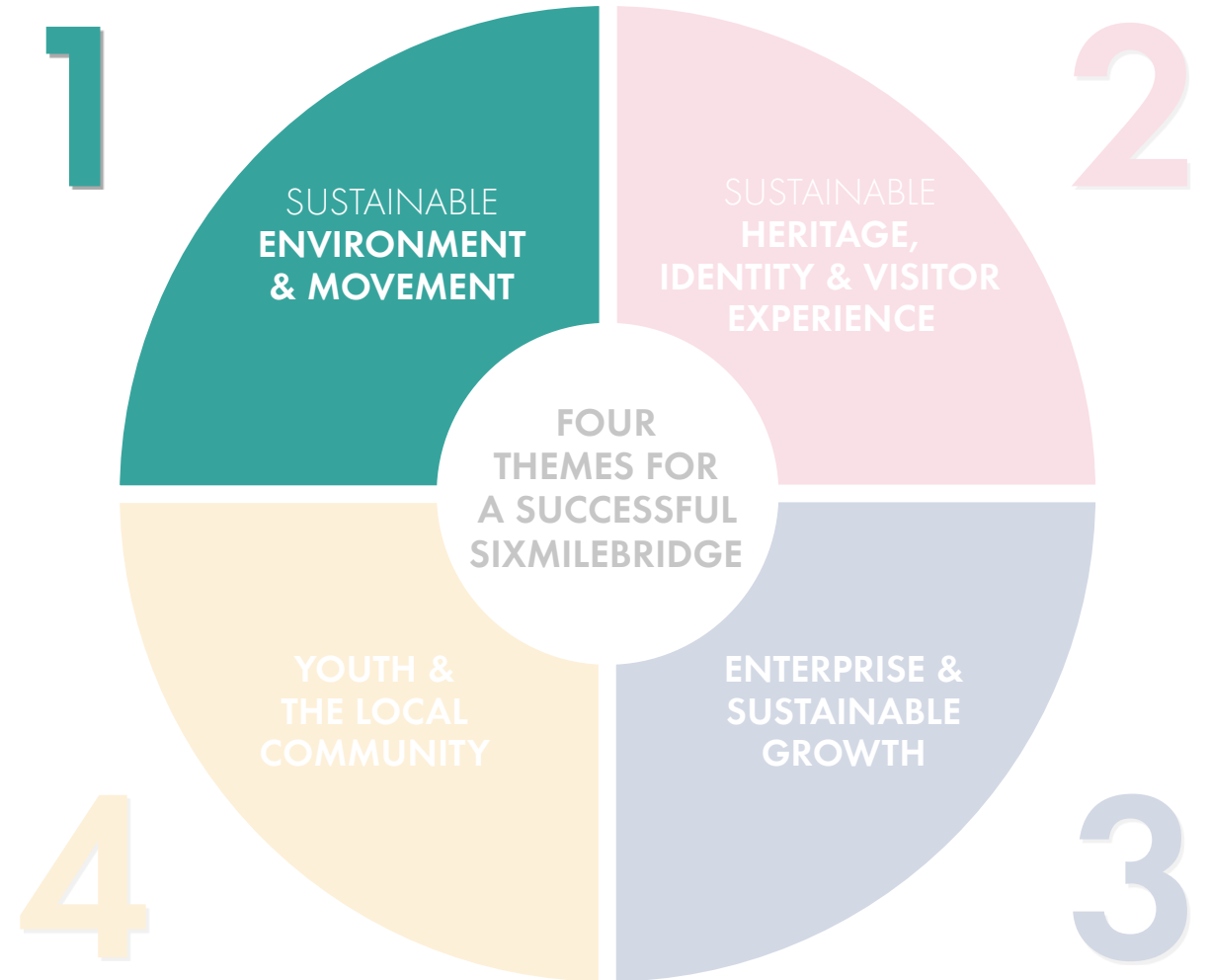


SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT & MOVEMENT

The O’Garney River is the town’s principal environmental asset. The narrow historic bridge over the river is however perhaps the town’s principal constraint. Considering ways to tackle the resulting congestion and conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, cars and lorries has been flagged as a high priority for the plan throughout its preparation.

Reflecting these issues, the plan’s objectives under this theme are:

EM1	Improve access to, access across, and the environmental quality along the O’Garney River
EM2	Targeted public realm improvement projects for the town’s key spaces
EM3	Calm traffic on the town’s principal approach roads and improve the town’s ‘walkability’
EM4	Improving public transport services and facilities
EM5	Balance the need to manage car parking alongside other priorities for the historic centre

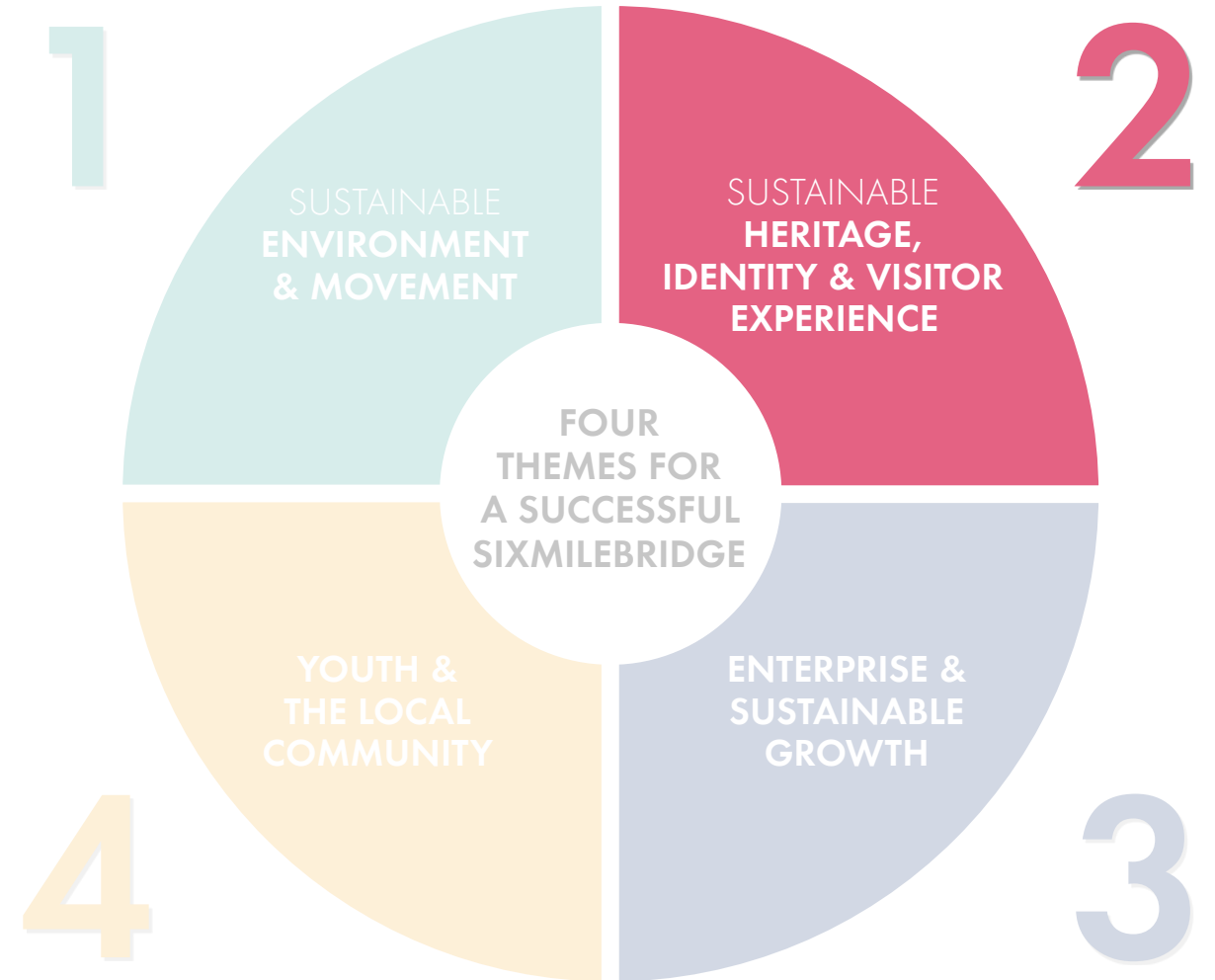


SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE, IDENTITY & VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Sixmilebridge has a fascinating history and some wonderful heritage assets. There is a sense that, through better promotion and improved facilities, the town's historic and environmental assets have the potential to support the local economy.

The plan's objectives under this theme are:

HIVE1	Improved promotion of the town
HIVE2	Develop a refurbishment programme to bring the town's heritage assets back into use
HIVE3	Improve leisure access to the river and links with Bunratty to help complement the area's visitor economy
HIVE4	Deliver dedicated spaces for cultural and community events
HIVE5	A targeted programme to address vacancy and dereliction in Sixmilebridge

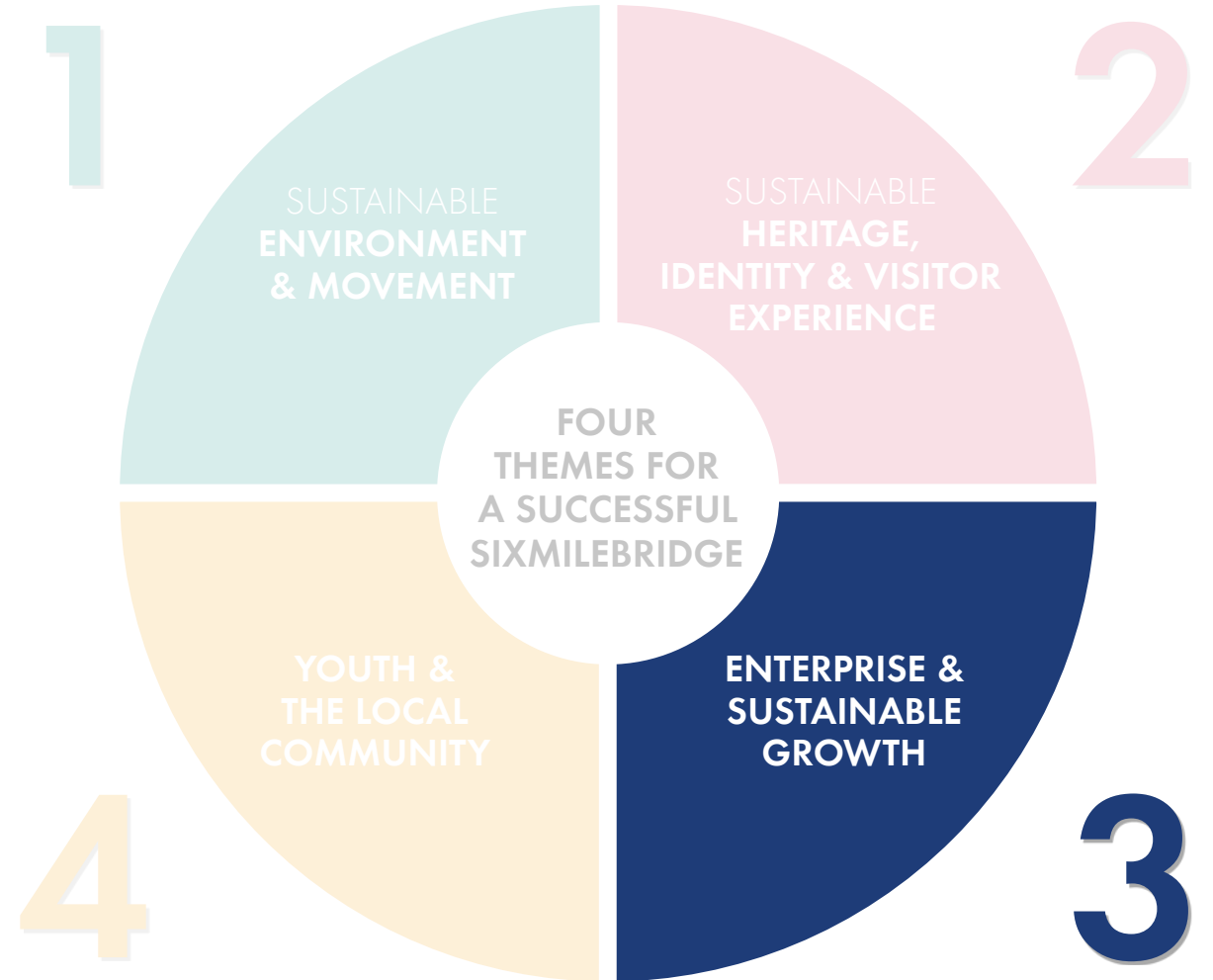


ENTERPRISE & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Located within easy reach of the major retail and employment centres of Shannon, Limerick and Ennis, Sixmilebridge itself is also an important retail and local enterprise centre. The industrial estate supports a diverse range of jobs and a Digi-hub Remote Working Space has recently been provided. There is also scope for the convenience retail offer to improve to meet growing local demand.

The plan's objectives under this theme are:

ESG1	Support Sixmilebridge's all-day retail economy with a new supermarket and new evening uses
ESG2	Increase Awareness of the Sixmilebridge Digi-hub and expand usage to support local businesses and their training needs
ESG3	Supporting existing and provide new flexible and affordable workspaces for new, small and growing businesses, potentially supporting Sixmilebridge as a centre for rural innovation
ESG4	Address vacancy within the Industrial Estate and assess feasibility to develop into a Rural Innovation Hub building on the strengths of the town.

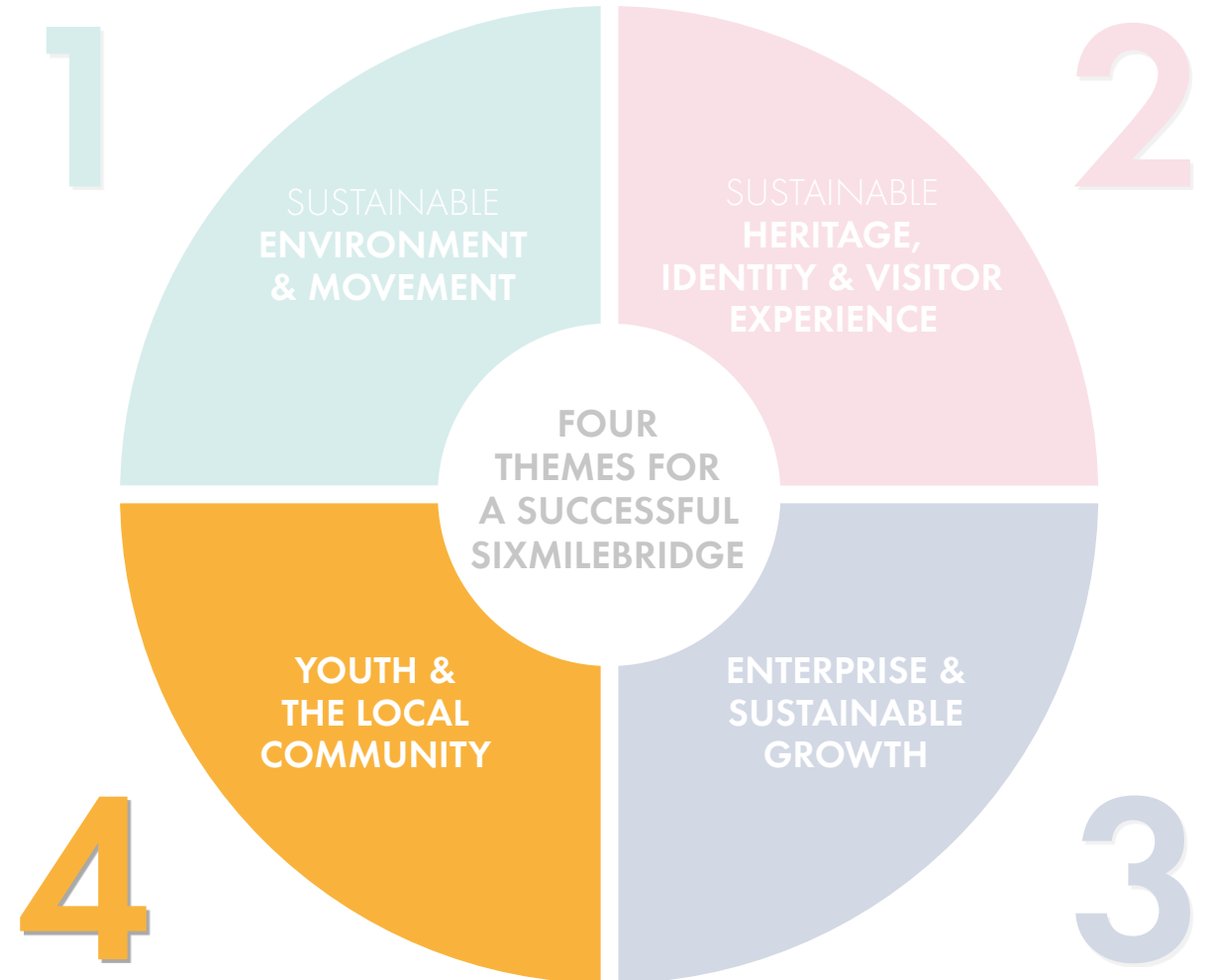


YOUTH & THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The town is growing quickly. Considering the needs of young people in the town has emerged as a major priority for the plan and something the Town Team are determined to address. Investment in community infrastructure must reflect the increasing needs of a growing local population.

The plan's objectives under this theme are:

YLC1	Provide more dedicated flexible built spaces for local community activities
YLC2	Provide new and improved outdoor spaces and facilities for local young people and the wider community
YLC3	Ensure growth in the town's population is supported by necessary community health, education, and other infrastructure
YLC4	Take a pro-active multi-agency approach to tackling anti-social behaviour
YLC5	Ensure through-life local housing needs are met

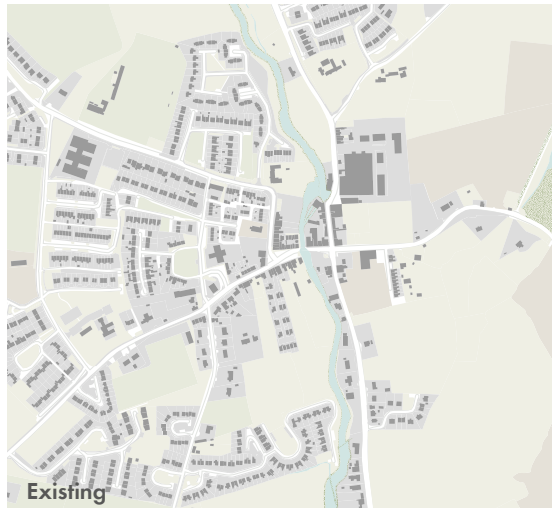




Plan Framework

This overall plan drawing brings together opportunities for investment, improvement and development across a wide range of potential locations. The plan is not a blueprint, rather a flexible framework which seeks to set out how opportunity sites might come forward in a manner which responds positively to context and creates good quality, connected and integrated places.

Some particular ideas and opportunities are highlighted across the following two pages before individual plan project ideas are outlined for the town.



Sixmilebridge plan framework



Plan Framework

New riverside public space providing local leisure and amenity

Riverside walk providing links into the town centre for residents

Remodelled road alignment to reduce traffic speeds and create additional pedestrian space

Existing development completed to deliver four new homes

Existing group of buildings expanded and enhanced as housing for older people or step down housing

New homes with frontage overlooking the public space and river

New pedestrian bridge to link together the riverside walk and to improve access to the town centre for residents

New mixed use development including co-working space, studios, workshops and light industry, supported by yards providing servicing and parking

New housing

See following page for southern area

See preceding page for northern area

See detailed proposals

Sensitive infill development

Revised road layout and parking square

Possible location for potential community/commercial use

New housing and mixed use development potential

New pedestrian bridge and improved riverside public space

New residential development helping to create new connections from existing residential areas towards the riverside and the town centre

Enhanced green space created by extended existing area

Supermarket in restored historic auction house building with servicing to the rear and parking to the front and south

New housing, including clear pedestrian links north-south connecting adjoining areas of development

New housing, including clear pedestrian links north-south connecting adjoining areas of development and anticipating further links with longer term opportunities

Enhanced green space created by extending existing area

New pedestrian bridge crossing from the church grounds, extending the riverside park and creating links to the town centre from the surrounding homes





1



SUSTAINABLE
ENVIRONMENT
& MOVEMENT

- 1 Improve local parking
- 2 Footpath improvements and 'walkability' improvements
- 3 Traffic calming
- 4 Improvements at Town Square
- 5 Improvements at The Green
- 6 Improvements at Frederick Square
- 7 Façade and shopfront improvements
- 8 Town centre footbridge
- 9 Wider pedestrian and cycle network improvements
- 10 Strategic movement study for Sixmilebridge
- 11 River management
- 12 Public transport enhancements

1

Improve Local Parking

With very little control or enforcement, many parking spaces in the centre fill up early and remain used throughout the day. The blocking of parking in this way affects both businesses and local residents by making short stay parking hard and filling up the main public spaces. Parking has been highlighted as a key local issue to be addressed.



Remove parking outside Centra so traffic flows better.

Zero tolerance on street parking!

You said **inadequate parking** was the main **barrier** to using Sixmilebridge



Actions include:

- Provision of a new dedicated and purpose-built public car park: To be located adjacent to the centre of the town to support improved retailing. This increase in public parking capacity will help to release some central spaces to help improve the environmental quality of the town's public realm and riverside environment.
- Review of parking provision and controls: A parking strategy is required to help ensure spaces are being used in the most appropriate way to support the town centre economy and community. A review of the provision of off-street and on-street parking controls should be undertaken, to prioritise short-stay visits to the most central areas, with longer-term parking on more peripheral locations. A review of bus/lorry parking needs to be considered, where overnight stays are accommodated.
- Parking enforcement: Any new charging or control regimes should be enforced through regular visits from parking enforcement officers.
- Install of EV Charging Points in Public Parking areas.

2

Footpath Improvements and 'Walkability' Improvements

Clare County Council has already delivered some improvements to pavements and public realm to central areas of the town. These have been successful in enhancing the street-scene and providing a safer and more comfortable pavement experience for all users. Key streets already improved include Pound Street, Main Street and the most central areas of Church Street. The main town square west of the river has seen investment and improvement as part of this scheme.



Actions include:

- Extending this recent programme of street improvements: Priority streets include central areas on the east side of the river including George's Street.
- Implementation of the Walkability Audit recommendations: A Walkability Audit study was undertaken as part of the Sixmilebridge TCF Plan process. Priority locations where pedestrian accessibility and facilities were poor and in need of improvement were identified. Some improvements have already been made and this work should continue.

56% of the Walkability Audit participants **found the overall condition of the footpaths to be poor.**



3

Traffic Calming

The conflict between through traffic, heavy good vehicles and walkers and cyclists has been identified as a key issue to be addressed. Some traffic calming measures are already in place on the western approach. To help address conflicts between all road users and to help create more priority for people in central areas, further traffic calming measures should be delivered.



Fewer cars everywhere... more green and places to walk.

The square is too congested and traffic should be removed from the centre of the village.

Actions include:

- Calming measures on the four principal approach corridors:
- Western approach on Shannon Road - in light of the ongoing growth of the town, there may be merit on considering additional calming measures between the Station and the Bridge Active Centre.
- Northern approach on the R462 - a new pedestrian crossing facility has recently been delivered by Gleeson's Bar. However, with the prospect of a northern river crossing and new housing development, calming measures should be considered north of the new pedestrian crossing. There was call from the local community for the 'Ducks Crossing' sign to be reintroduced.
- Eastern approach on the R471 - with the prospect of a new supermarket and car park east of the town, trips are likely to increase in this area. Traffic calming should be introduced 'upstream' of this.
- Southern approach on the Limerick Road - the location would need to be reviewed in view of the prospect of further phases of housing development along this approach corridor.
- A range of measures: Speed restrictions, raised tables, pinch points, crossing improvements, cycling facilities, lighting and signage improvements, are all likely to have a role to play in helping to calm traffic on the town's major approaches.
- Traffic calming measures should be informed by traffic count surveys which should be undertaken at the principal approach corridors.

You said...

Busy roads and traffic was one of the top three **barriers** to using Sixmilebridge.



So focused on cars right now... I would love to see it more pedestrian focused and encourage more walking.

How this could work...



Traffic calming improvements, Castlebar Co. Mayo

4

Improvements at Town Square

The Town Square is the town's primary open space and commercial heart. The space is fundamental to the character of the town and its shape and form can be linked with key landowners in, and phases of, the town's evolution. With better public access to the water on the eastern side of the Square, the existing car park and riverside green space presents a major opportunity to delivery a significant environmental improvement to the heart of the historic core of the town.

Regeneration of the business square beside the river the courtyard is under used. Use as a weekend farmers market?



Particular opportunities include:

- A new dedicated pedestrian bridge crossing across the river. Further studies will be required given the significant environmental, levels, heritage and other constraints. See Action 8. This will radically improve the town centre experience for pedestrians.
- Larger and improved public open space, with improved access to the river.
- This new space would be flexible and capable of supporting events and markets.
- Some parking could be retained in this central location, particularly for people with disabilities and age friendly spaces.
- A review of the parking arrangements outside the current 'Centra' retail unit is required as informal parking here causes delay and congestion.
- Retail units should be brought back into use, being suitable for cafe and bar uses and others that bring life to the centre in the day and into the evening.
- New designs for the Square should be subject of a mini design competition, with the involvement of local people.



Quality streets and spaces was one of your top priorities for Sixmilebridge

How this could work...



Asna Square, Clonakilty

Clonakilty's town square has been transformed from a traffic dominated space to an integrated shared space and focal point for the town. The design ensures vehicle movement is slow and drivers are aware of pedestrian movement. Clearly demarcated spaces that follow the line of footpaths also provide pedestrian only areas.

While the space is still traversed by traffic, it is multi-functional and facilitates a wide range of community interactions and events. Footfall has increased enabling more economic and cultural activities. Improvements have helped increase occupancy and property values.





5

Improvements at The Green

Adjacent to St Finnachta's Catholic Church, The Green is a key community space in the town, but is currently part of the road network. Studies should be undertaken to explore the potential to make Lodge Road two-way as it meets Shannon Road. This would release the space outside the Parish Office so it could be dedicated to community parking and events, and no longer part of the local road network.

Particular opportunities include:

- Creation of a new flexible, landscaped community space for events and gatherings.
- New two-way junction between Lodge Road and Shannon Road. Given the limited visibility at this junction, design work will be required to ensure road safety issues are addressed.
- The space could still have a parking role but could be designed to host a range of other activities and events.



An area for outdoor musicians during Summer evenings...



Artist's impression of The Green showing creation of a potential new community event space



Quality streets and spaces was one of your top priorities for Six Mile Cross



Artist's impression of The Green showing creation of a potential new community event space



6

Improvements at Frederick Square

Framed by business spaces, the former Mill Bar which is currently being refurbished and the O'Garney River weir and 'Duck Inn' south of Gleeson's Bar, Frederick Square is Sixmilebridge's main employment space and a prominent threshold space on the town's northern approach. There is an opportunity to improve the space and create better facilities for pedestrians as well as breakout space for workshop activity and outdoor seating for the pub.

Actions include:

- New pavement space to complement recent improvements on the west side of the road.
- Hard landscaping to provide flexible and durable spaces outside the pub and the business units to support spill out activities.
- Tree planting given the prominence of the space at one approaches the town from the north.
- Improved vehicular egress arrangements across the space to support business activities.
- The objective is to strengthen this employment role of this area, with scope to expand business spaces south behind the George's Street premises.



Artist's impression of Frederick Square showing improved public realm and refurbished employment spaces



7

Façade and Shopfront Improvements

The vacancy and dereliction survey identified numerous properties, many within the Sixmilebridge Architectural Conservation Area. Sixmilebridge is the sixth largest town in County Clare and is growing rapidly. The character of the commercial heart of the centre is characterised to some extent by the quality of the shopfronts of commercial premises.



Actions include:

- Undertake a high level survey of commercial premises with the Sixmilebridge Architectural Conservation Area to identify frontage properties that are in need of sensitive refurbishment.
- Work with local businesses and property owners to explore options for improvement.
- Liaise with Clare County Council Heritage Officer to ensure planned improvement works are appropriate from a heritage and conservation perspective.
- Support local business owners to secure grant funding for implementation.
- Finally, any refurbishment of derelict buildings should take the potential for nesting swifts into account and that provision of Swift bricks/boxes should be included in any such plans.

How this could be done...



Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative Project

The award winning Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative was a collaboration between Donegal County Council, Ramelton Georgian Society, Dedalus Architecture and local property owners. Conservation works were undertaken on fourteen properties and included roof and chimney repairs, addressing structural issues, the installation of cast-iron rainwater goods, reinstatement of windows and doors and the repair and reinstatement of shopfronts.

Glove Factory, Tipperary Town

Renovated as part of the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI), a programme led by the Heritage Council, in association with local authorities. Here a derelict factory in the town centre underwent a significant upgrade to apartment building with potential ground floor retail unit, as part of the scheme. The funding allocated to the project by the HTI was 160,000, which was a substantial contribution toward the costs of the conservation works involved.

8

Town Centre Footbridge

The provision of a new dedicated footbridge over the O'Garney River in the central part of the town was perhaps the single most well supported project opportunities identified by the local community during the production of the plan. Strong views were expressed about the potential alignment, with most support expressed for a separate structure south of, but very close to, the existing road bridge.

Actions include:

- Undertake technical feasibility studies into different bridge alignments, exploring the technical, heritage and other design considerations.
- Liaise closely with relevant landowners, heritage groups and other stakeholders throughout.
- Engage with the community at key stages of work.
- Design must be sensitive to the various heritage constraints, including potential impact on the setting of the historic road bridge.
- A new footbridge may present an opportunity to reinstate the original tree species at the eastern side of the road bridge.
- The design should be co-ordinated with the prospect of associated wider improvement works of the public spaces either side of the bridge (see Action 4).
- The opportunity to improve the appearance and setting of the historic road bridge should be explored, with potential measures including realignment of the water main pipes, removal of the tiled structure currently concealing this water infrastructure and potential lighting.
- The Owenagarney River provides a vital wildlife corridor through the town and to the local environment. Tree lines and existing hedgerow along the river should be retained.



Artist's impression of the Square showing possible new footbridge and new town square

Note: bridge tree not shown in image above but to be retained

If I was Mayor for the day, I would build a new footbridge over the river...

We asked... "What would be an appropriate solution to resolve congestion on the bridge?"

74% of you said...

Create a new pedestrian and cycle bridge





9

Wider Pedestrian and Cycle Network Improvements

With so much housing growth anticipated and planned in the town, opportunities for improvements to the wider pedestrian and cycle network should be considered. Opportunities exist for further new pedestrian and cycle bridge crossings north and south of the central area which would better connect growing communities in these areas. Such connections would deliver very significant improvements in terms of safe routes to numerous neighbourhoods and estates in the town.

Create footpaths to all housing areas as some don't have footpaths all the way...

**Actions include:**

- Explore locations north of the centre in the open land north of Gleeson's Bar.
- Provision to be co-ordinated in conjunction with potential new residential development and the prospect of a new riverside open space/town park.
- Lands to the south of the centre are also identified for housing growth and would benefit from a new bridge connection.
- A bridge in the vicinity of Little Church of Cratloe would be welcome, subject to heritage and other technical issues.
- Explore opportunities to make use of the Oil Mill Bridge as part of wider pedestrian route improvements.
- Further engagement with the local community and relevant stakeholders will be critical. It should be noted that the northern alignment received significant support during engagement.

10

Strategic Movement Study for Sixmilebridge

With the town earmarked for continued growth and with transport issues having been identified as the priority issue for the town, a strategic movement study should be commissioned for the town.

Issues to be addressed should include:

- Public transport provision (see Action 12).
- The potential development of a new ring road to the south of the town.
- Key junctions on the main approaches to The Square.
- General traffic management issues including speed limits.
- Car parking provision and management.



11

O'Garney River Management

Sixmilebridge has a history of flood events. Community feedback has highlighted that there may be water management issues associated with the management of the waters of the O'Garney River, including issues with management and maintenance of the weir north of the road bridge.



Actions include:

- Liaise with relevant water and environmental authorities and stakeholders.
- Carry out a feasibility study to examine existing flood risk.
- Consider opportunities for further measures associated with a flood relief scheme.
- Consider implications of future housing developments in the vicinity of the river.
- Consider ongoing river maintenance and dredging to reduce the risk of flooding.
- The Owenogarney River provides a vital wildlife corridor through the town and to the local environment. Tree lines and existing hedgerow along the river should be retained.

12

Public Transport Enhancements

Sixmilebridge is well served by public transport and benefits from a railway station with direct services to Limerick, Ennis and Galway. A number of bus services pass through the town, providing links with Shannon Airport and town centre.



Actions include (in conjunction with Action 10):

- Consideration of improved rail services and facilities including services to Limerick.
- Rail capacity is restricted by the single track line. An investigation into the benefits and feasibility of such a rail 'passing-loop' has been undertaken. Consider the outcomes and implications of this investigation and feasibility study in future rail service improvement proposals.
- Addressing potential misuse of the railway station car park and its facilities.
- Consider improved local bus services, in particular improvements to services to Shannon Industrial Estate and Sixmilebridge Train Station.



2

- 13 New Sixmilebridge 'place-brand', promotion and marketing
- 14 Heritage trail
- 15 Bunratty/Sixmilebridge/Limerick Greenway
- 16 River-based activities for young people and visitors including Blueway route
- 17 Targeting programme to address vacancy & dereliction
- 18 Explore potential for culture and events centre
- 19 Sixmilebridge as a trail-head

13

New Sixmilebridge 'Place-Brand', Promotion And Marketing

The town is considered something of a hidden gem. Much more could be done to promote the town and its assets and attractions through devising a co-ordinated 'place-brand' approach.

Actions include:

- The Town Team would be best placed to lead the initiative through the establishment of a marketing and communications working group.
- Establishment, design and ongoing management of a dedicated website and social media channels.
- Run regular branding and event campaigns via social media, web and print, including music festival, heritage week etc.
- Management of regular events, exhibitions and festivals (see Action 33).



14

Heritage Trail

Research and engagement undertaken as part of the plan production has highlighted a wealth of heritage assets across the town. The Sixmilebridge Historical Society has advanced ideas on the establishment of a heritage trail around the town.



You said that Sixmilebridge's *history and heritage* could be explored to help promote Sixmilebridge as a destination.

Actions include:

- Enabling and facilitating the Historical Society to be the lead agent for this project.
- Working with the Town Team to help promote the trail - supported through on-line and printed resources.
- Liaising with property owners about extending the programme of plaque mounting on key landmark buildings.
- Installation of QR codes on key sites along a planned Heritage Trail to provide tourists with digital information.



15

Bunratty/Sixmilebridge/Limerick Greenway

The concept of a Shannon to Bunratty/Sixmilebridge/Limerick Greenway connection is gathering momentum. Transport Infrastructure Ireland funding has already been secured for this initiative and work is in progress on its phased delivery.



River Walk with nature and historical trail

Make more of a feature of the river...



A river walk or cycle route was one of the most frequently mentioned aspirations by respondents.

Actions include:

- Initial phases will seek to provide a dedicated route – part on- and part-off carriageway – between Bunratty and Sixmilebridge.
- This may raise the potential for the town to tap into Bunratty’s strong visitor economy (see Action 19).
- Working with developers as riverside sites come forward for development to secure riverside access as part of this walking and cycling link.
- Explore opportunities to leverage the river asset and potentially deliver a Blueway route.

16

River-Based Activities for Young People and Visitors incl. Blueway

Improving connections with the O’Garney River is one of the plan’s principal objectives. Discussions with the Town Team have identified the aspiration to develop a Greenway base, behind Gleeson’s Bar, for kayaking and canoeing, extending to Castle Lake and Doon Lake. A wider Blueway route along the river corridor should also be explored.



Such an initiative would have links with a number of relevant potential actions in this plan, including:

- O’Garney River management (Action 11)
- Bunratty/Sixmilebridge/Limerick Greenway (Action 15)
- Scout River-base (Action 29)
- Town Park and Community Garden (Action 34)

Considerations:

- The Owenogarney River provides a vital wildlife corridor through the town and to the local environment. Tree lines and existing hedgerow along the river should be retained.

17

Targeting Programme to Address Vacancy & Dereliction

This is a key priority under the national Town Centre First policy framework. A Vacancy and Dereliction Survey has been prepared alongside this plan. Feedback from the local community also revealed the issue as a local priority for those who live and work in the town.

Clean up the empty premises in the village

Paint, paint & paint properties and businesses, particularly in central areas.

Colour schemes for the buildings.

Scheme to encourage the use of all the empty retail units.

Development of derelict sites...



Actions include:

- On the back of the recent vacancy survey, identify individual land and property owners.
- Seek to engage these owners and discuss issues associated with bringing the land or premises back into use.
- Liaise with the Heritage Council and other relevant stakeholders to identify and target potential financial support.
- Develop a targeted plan to reactivate those properties from a heritage, commercial, community and residential perspective.
- Prioritise particular heritage assets in the town including the birthplace of Brendan O'Regan's – potentially to bring it into use as a multifunctional visitor/community centre (see Action 18).
- Finally, any refurbishment of derelict buildings should take the potential for nesting swifts into account and that provision of Swift bricks/boxes should be included in any such plans.

18

Explore Potential for a New Culture and Events Centre

Potentially related to Action 17, a feasibility study to explore the potential for a new culture and events centre in the town. With so many heritage assets and with its strategic location close to Ennis, Limerick and Bunratty, and with links between these centres being improved, the business case for a new cultural and events centre should be explored.

Actions include:

- Working alongside relevant Council services and departments, including leisure and tourism and economic development.
- Exploring scope for specific heritage buildings to be refurbished.
- Liaising with relevant funding agencies to explore how public sector financial support might be found to support the project.



19

Sixmilebridge as a Trail-head

Sixmilebridge is already on the EuroVelo 1 cycle route and regularly sees large groups of cyclists passing through its central area. The town's character, riverside environment and the space and facilities within the central area all support a strengthening of this role in the future – for long distance visitors as well as local leisure cyclists.



Actions include:

- In conjunction with the establishment of the Greenway (Action 15), provide improved facilities to support cycle groups passing through the town, with facilities to encourage them to spend time and money.
- Opportunities for local businesses to support the establishment of a new family-friendly circular walking and cycling leisure route with Bunratty - with cycle hire facilities and refreshments supported by marketing and information.
- This opportunity could also be developed in conjunction with Action 24.
- Install smart solar-bench providing 24/7 charging for phones and wearable devices (see also Action 20).

You said you thought **cycle or walking trails tourism** could be explored to **promote Sixmilebridge as a destination...**





- 20 Digi-hub investment
- 21 Rural enterprise and innovation centre
- 22 Business support and training
- 23 Industrial Park investment
- 24 Explore Sixmilebridge 'Bike Hub' concept
- 25 Improved local convenience retailing and Shop Local campaign
- 26 Sixmilebridge Market
- 27 Promote compact town centre development

20

Digital Hub Investment

The Sixmilebridge Digital Hub was recently established in the Credit Union building in the Market Square. In view of the findings of the Digital Blueprint report, further investment is needed to promote this facility.



Actions include:

- Improve signage outside Digi-hub and create awareness of it as a 'Business Centre' for start up/entrepreneurs/remote workers.
- Repurpose some of the space to create meeting and training room spaces.
- Use the facility as a base for Open Day for Local Businesses promotion sessions.
- Use the facility (and other suitable venues) to host youth digital skills training sessions such as Coderdojo.
- Long Term Future Potential to expand the Digital Hub and incorporate within the Rural Innovation Hub.
- Work with stakeholder partners to implement the findings and recommendations of the Digital Blueprint report for Sixmilebridge, including:
- Set up and run Digital Coderdojo Programmes for Youth and the wider community.
- Opportunity to host a specific digital marketing training programme for local businesses in the Digital Hub (see also Action 22).
- Install smart solar-bench providing 24/7 charging for phones and wearable devices (see also Action 19).

How this could work...



The Stable, Weston-Super-Mare

An award-winning community business space, café and event space that has grown and developed over five years to provide more than 7,000 sqft of facilities across five buildings, including a 19th Century conversion. Operated and owned as a not-for-profit community interest company, the enterprise centre is aimed at supporting start-up businesses and social enterprises, community projects and employability programmes.

21

Rural Enterprise and Innovation Centre

There are inspirational examples of comparable towns and locations which have benefited from targeted investment in particular industries or sectors through partnership working between the public and private sectors. With land identified in the County Development Plan for employment activities and with the town benefiting from such a good strategic location between Shannon, Limerick and Ennis, Sixmilebridge might be well placed to benefit from such an initiative through the development of a rural enterprise and innovation centre concept.

Actions include:

- Liaise with existing local businesses to understand the issues and opportunities associated with owning and running a business or enterprise in the town.
- Learn from and visit other developments or initiatives which have successfully delivered such centres.
- Undertake research and prepare a proof-of-concept study and business plan to test and refine the concept.

How this could work...**Áine Hand Made Chocolate, Stradone village, County Cavan**

Áine Hand Made Chocolate was set up in Stradone village, County Cavan in 1999. Nearly half a million bars of chocolate are made every year and the company has become a household name. The company employs ten people and has 25 'Great Taste' awards to its name. Export markets include the UK and the United Arab Emirates and the company has a strong on-line presence

**Hazel Mountain Chocolate, County Clare**

Hazel Mountain Chocolate, based along the Wild Atlantic Way, offers guided tours of its chocolate factory, workshops, a shop and café. They have received numerous awards and honours from the Academy of Chocolate to the Great Taste awards and have featured in Ireland's top 10 food attractions.

**Moher Hill Open Farm and Leisure Park**

Moher Hill Open Farm and Leisure Park, located beside the Cliffs of Moher, opened its doors in 2000 comprising of 6 acres and since then has expanded and developed into a 15 acre family farm and zoo. The farm was created to teach and educate visitors about animals, both those traditional to Irish farms and those from a more exotic origin. Over the years it has developed a range of facilities including a mini-golf course, bouncing castle, in-door and out-door play areas.

22

Business Support and Training

Through liaison with local businesses, a tailored training programme could be devised to meet local training needs and business support. This will help support new businesses in the town find their feet and build a business network.



Actions include:

- Liaison with existing local businesses to better understand their business support and training needs.
- A review of wider business support and training programmes across County Clare with a view to incorporating Sixmilebridge into existing programmes.
- Investment in local business premises to ensure training spaces are fit for purposes (see Action 20 and 21).
- Local Enterprise Office to host business advice clinic and information session on the Trading Online Vouchers, Digital Start Programme, Digital Marketing programmes and LEO mentoring programme amongst other services in Sixmilebridge. There is also opportunity to host a specific digital marketing training programme for local businesses in the Digital Hub (see also Action 20).

23

Industrial Park Investment

The existing Industrial Park at Frederick Square is the town’s largest concentration of business space and the source of much local employment. The estate is however in need of investment and improvement. There is a need to tackle vacant units within the Industrial Estate in order to expand the employment opportunity of the town.



Actions include:

- Review and improve business signage across the estate and on individual premises.
- Review branding signage for industrial area and potential for renaming area as “Old Mill Yard” to help create stronger sense of place, identity and profile.
- Review the internal road infrastructure and access and make improvements to support business operation, safety and security.
- Any improvements should be made in conjunction with those progressed under Action 6.



24

Explore Sixmilebridge 'Bike Hub' Concept

Owing to Sixmilebridge's location on the Greenway connecting Bunratty and Limerick and with the town already attracting a large number of cycling groups, there may be an opportunity to capitalise on the town's growing profile as a hub for cyclists and walkers. A purpose built or refurbished hub facility could support these visitors and attract new business to the town.

Actions include:

- Learn from successful locations which have established themselves as hub locations for visiting cyclists and walkers.
- Example locations include Staveley Mill Yard in Cumbria and Kilmacthomas Workhouse on the Waterford Greenway.
- Liaise with local cycling groups and business owners to explore the potential opportunities.
- Approach retailers and operators to raise awareness and attract investment.



How this could work...



Staveley Mill Yard, Lake District

A collection of businesses, both industrial and retail, which together have created a unique and vibrant working community, only a few miles from the heart of the Lake District.

The Mill Yard is ideally situated for businesses wanting to operate within the Lake District. Staveley Mill Yard also boasts a unique selection of shops and caterers making it a popular stop for both passing visitors and locals.



Kilmacthomas Workhouse on the Waterford Greenway

Once a famine workhouse, the building is now a heritage site which has been converted into a range of new businesses to support cycle tourism, including bike hire and a place for bike repairs mid-way on the greenway. The converted structures also contain a business centre, a successful coffee shop/restaurant, events space, bathroom facilities, a falconry, a distillery and visitor accommodation.

25

Improved Local Convenience Retailing and Shop Local Campaign

The town currently only benefits from convenience stores of a smaller size which chiefly perform an everyday and top-up shopping function. Many residents travel out of the centre to undertake their larger weekly shop. A larger supermarket in the town centre would help better meet local convenience retail needs for a rapidly growing town. This would reduce trips to other places and help to keep shoppers in the town where they are more likely to also support other businesses.



Actions include:

- Support a new supermarket in principle: The plan supports the principle of a larger new supermarket in a town centre location. This will encourage more sustainable patterns of local movement.
- Dedicated off-street car park: Any new retailing would need to be supported by a nearby off-street car park, with local on-street parking controls helping to reduce congestion.
- Refurbishment of historic structures: New retail space within heritage structures will need to be designed sensitively to respect the historic integrity of the building and its setting.
- ‘Shop Local’ campaign: Any major new retail development could precipitate the launch of a ‘Shop Local’ campaign to raise awareness of local retailing and encourage local people to support local businesses.

26

Sixmilebridge Market

Alongside new convenience retailing under Action 25, the concept of a regular Sixmilebridge Market received community support. A new fresh produce market could be hosted in the town’s improved key spaces, most particularly the Market Square (see Action 4).



Actions include:

- Liaison with traders: Liaise with local producers and traders to understand opportunities for including Sixmilebridge in the network of local regular fresh produce markets in the region.
- Infrastructure and operation issues: Consider design issues that might support the establishment of a market in The Market Square, such as storage of market stalls, power supply considerations and refuse management.
- Marketing and promotion: Ensure local people and the wider communities are aware of any such initiative, as part of Sixmilebridge’s ‘Place-brand’ initiative (see Action 13).



27

Promote Compact Town Centre Development

The Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan shows how a range of potential development sites might come forward.

- **Housing:** There are clusters of housing sites which have the potential to make an important contribution to addressing the housing crisis.
- **Employment:** Space south of the Industrial Park has scope for employment and mixed-use development to help create additional floorspace for new, existing small and growing businesses.
- **Retail and community:** Central areas would be suitable for retail and community uses, with an emphasis on the refurbishment of derelict or vacant existing properties or new build opportunities.



Housing



Employment



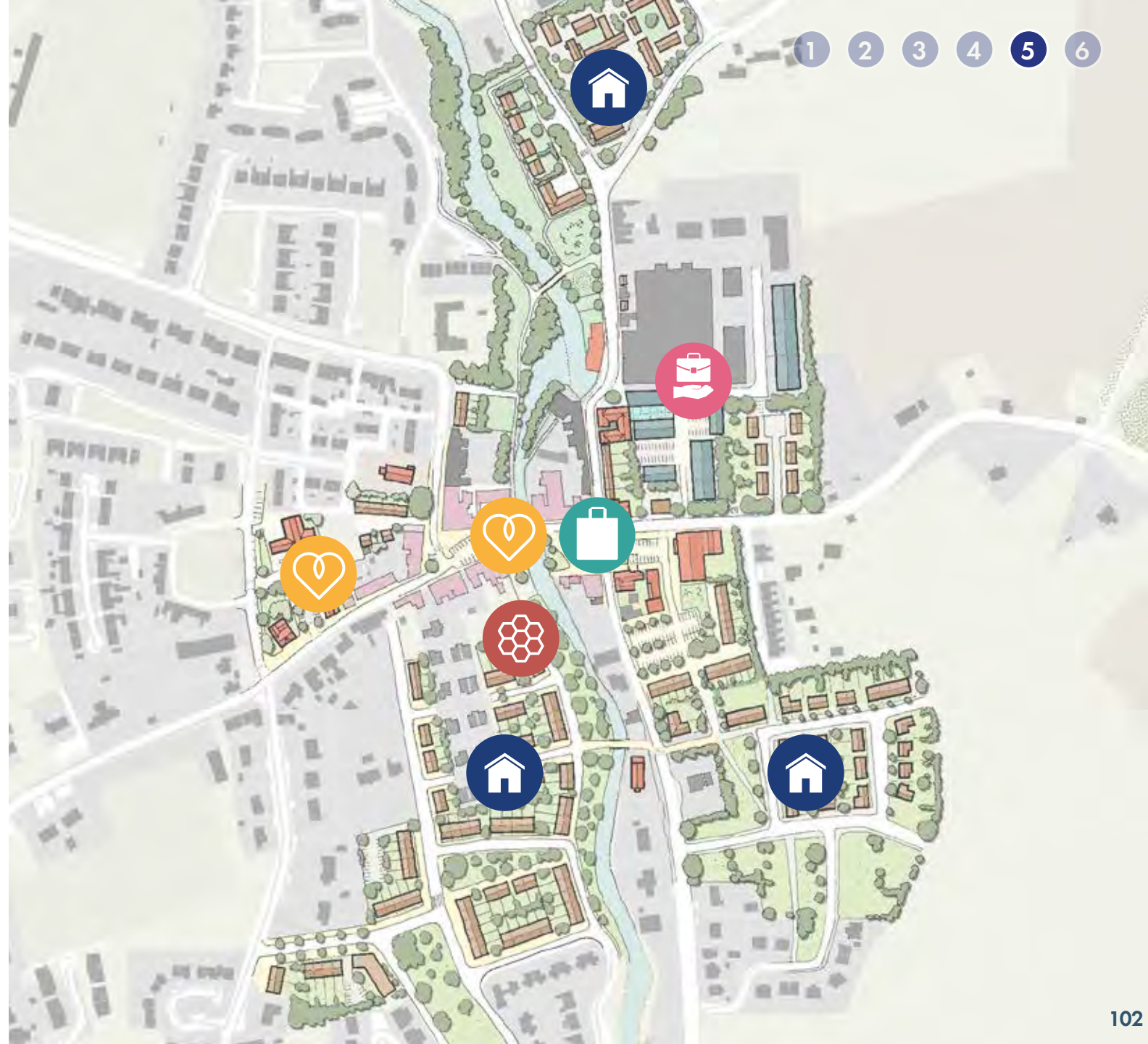
Retail



Community



Mixed-use





4

YOUTH &
THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY

- 28 Youth café
- 29 Scout/Community Riverbase
- 30 Multi-use community facility
- 31 Develop a Social Community Plan
- 32 Feasibility studies for community infrastructure
- 33 Programme of events
- 34 Town Park and Community Garden
- 35 Multi-functional Community Sports Facility
- 36 Development opportunities and new 'step down' housing
- 37 Sustainable Energy Plan
- 38 Refurbishment or reprovision of playground

28

Youth Café

The Sixmilebridge Youth Cafe is an important and popular facility which provides catering training opportunities for local people in the town. The Town Team have identified the need for an expansion of the existing facilities within the Bridge Action Centre.

Actions include:

- Review the existing facilities to understand scope for expansion.



29

Scout/Community Riverbase

The local Scouts currently occupy the former Sixmilebridge railway station building. This location is somewhat divorced from the communities that the Scouts serve. The local Scout group has long held aspirations to develop a river-based activity programme. This initiative would require a new riverside facility.

Actions include:

- Raising awareness: Making clear with relevant stakeholders the Scouts' aspirations to establish a new 'River Base'.
- Align with other projects: Progress this concept in conjunction with other youth and community project opportunities identified in this plan, including Action 30 and 34.
- Review development opportunities: A number of riverside sites are likely to come forward to new development in the next few years. Each will need to carefully consider how the river can be improved in terms of open space and access. These developments might play an important role in enabling a new Scout River Base.



30

Multi-Use Community Facility

The need for new multi-use and flexible community facilities has emerged as a top priority for the local community. This objective might be met through investment in existing facilities such as the Courthouse building, or new build provision. Opportunities for bringing the youth and elderly together could be considered as part of this.

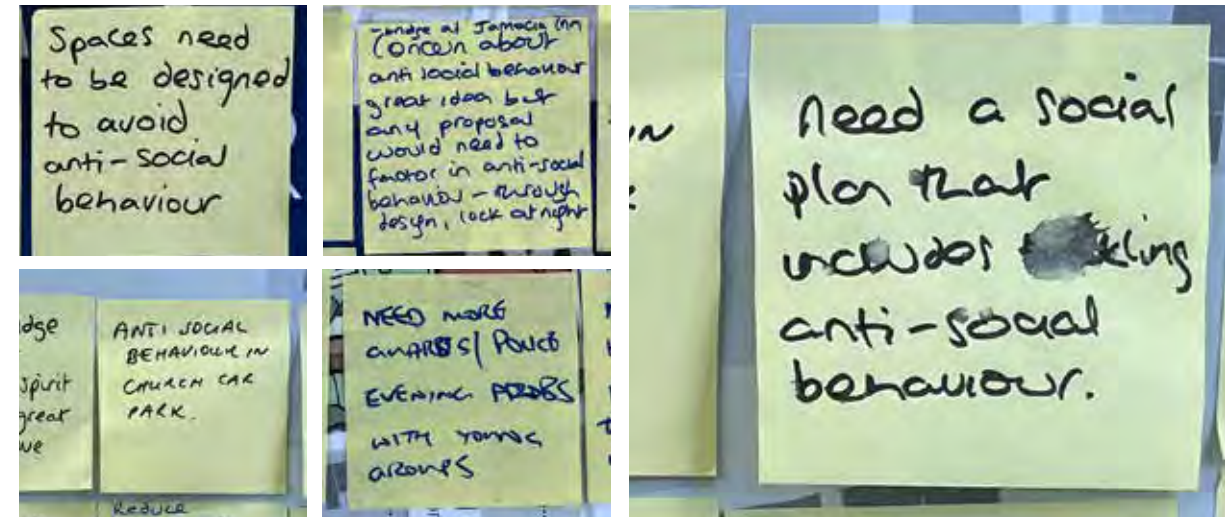
**Actions include:**

- Liaise with the network of local community groups to assess their space and facility requirements.
- Review local provision including an assessment of the Bridge Active Centre.
- Assess the feasibility and opportunity to enhance the community usage of the Courthouse building.
- Complete a feasibility study to assess the potential requirement for a Family Resource Centre in Sixmilebridge. Similar to the Ennistymon Hub, is there opportunity for this to become a multi-functional community centre (potentially related to Action 18 and 20).
- When a preferred option begins to emerge, work with stakeholders to prepare a business plan.

31

Develop a Social Community Plan

Anti-social behaviour is an issue across the town. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this may be a result of the capacity and provision of community infrastructure, leisure and sport facilities failing to keep pace with the ongoing housing growth in the town. Building on the 'Healthy Families Healthy Communities Report (2021) - Supporting Children and Families in South Clare who are Affected by Familial Drug and Alcohol Use', a Social Community Action Plan should be developed to help address some of the associated issues.



32

Feasibility Studies for Community Infrastructure

The town has grown significantly in recent years and is earmarked for further phases of growth, including the proposed Primary Care Centre under review by the HSE currently. It is essential that the provision of community infrastructure keeps pace with this residential population growth. There is no secondary school in the town. Many separate journeys across the region are therefore made to access nearby secondary schools by local children and their families.

Feasibility studies should be undertaken to assess local provision and future needs, particularly in relation to education and community health services. Working with partners and service providers, any existing or anticipated gaps in service provision should be addressed, through improvements and investments in existing, or the delivery of new, services and facilities.



33

Programme of Events

Preparation of the plan has demonstrated that Sixmilebridge benefits from an active and engaged local community who care passionately about their town and its future. The COVID pandemic has demonstrated the value and resilience of local communities and the importance of events that bring the local community together.



Sixmilebridge St Patrick's Day parade (credit: Sixmilebridge GAA)

Actions include:

- In conjunction with improvements to key public spaces, most particularly the Market Square and The Green, the Town Team and other local groups should conceive a programme of events for the town.
- These could range from regular farmer's markets to musical and cultural events.
- An events programme would be kept under continual review and promoted through local channels (see Action 13).

34

Town Park and Community Garden

Evident throughout the consultation process, across the community, has been a strong desire for open space and a town park. This should be identified in close proximity to the town centre to enhance pedestrian movement. With the town growing and riverside sites coming forward for development, there is opportunity to consider the town's relationship with the O'Garney River as part of open space areas for the community. As new developments emerge that may require a flood risk assessment and / or flood mitigation measures, there may be opportunities to open up new riverside spaces.



Actions include:

- Feasibility study into development of outdoor park for walks, outdoor gym, dog park and other community outdoor space.
- Study should be conducted alongside the progress being made on the Greenway initiative, with the potential to integrate a river walk.
- The concept should include a community garden to grow plants and vegetables and biodiversity spaces to support local ecology.

35

Multi-functional Community Sports Facility

Sixmilebridge has a number of established sports clubs with multiple age-group teams competing in GAA and football leagues. Whilst these clubs are community assets, feedback has highlighted the need to engage young people in a wider range of leisure and sport activities to promote healthy lifestyles and build community cohesion.

Actions include:

- Liaison with existing established clubs to review the extent to which access to their facilities might be opened up for wider community benefit.
- Undertake a feasibility study to explore the potential provision of a multi-use Community Sports Facility.
- Potential facilities might include all weather soccer and other pitch-based sports, an athletics track, skateboard park, outdoor gym and an active trail.
- This project should be explored in conjunction with assessments on the potential need for a new secondary school.



Skate park, Asplan Viak, Oslo Norway



Pump track/BMX track, London

36

Development Opportunities and New 'Step-Down' Housing

Whilst many potential housing sites are identified in the County Development Plan, community feedback has revealed a particular need for 'step-down' or retirement housing. With the town centre providing a good range of retail and community services, sites close to the central area served by existing pedestrian linkages would be well suited to this tenure.

How this could work...



Fosters Estate, Extra Care Housing, Hendon, London

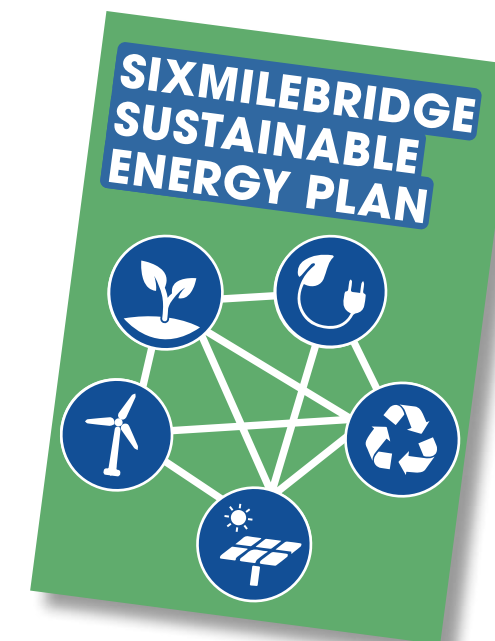
Fosters Estate is a housing estate adjacent to Hendon town centre in London. As part of a masterplan for the estate, the need for extra care housing was identified. A corner of the site originally used for low density and poor quality sheltered housing was identified and a bespoke housing development was designed to provide housing to local people, particularly older people who wish to downsize.

Shared on-site facilities, the provision of a mix of private and share amenity space and proximity to community services in the town centre all contributed to a development that will provide homes for lots of older local people in housing need on land that was previously not efficiently used.

37

Sustainable Energy Plan

Develop a Sustainable Energy Plan for Sixmilebridge to create low energy and low carbon communities and set up a local retrofit programme. As council housing stock is refurbished, opportunities for the establishment of district or community heat networks should be explored. This will require liaison with energy providers and potentially the establishment of a Sixmilebridge Energy Service Company (ESCo).



38

Refurbishment or Reprovision of Playground

A key theme which reoccurred throughout the engagement process, raised by adults and children, was the need for a new or refurbished playground. The existing playground is in a poor state of repair and is often the focus for anti-social behaviour. A newly refurbished or reprovided playground which builds in features to lower the risk of antisocial behaviour, and the subsequent impact this can have on the space and the young people who use it, would be highly beneficial to the town.

Actions include:

- Redesign of space to include more modern, durable and inclusive play equipment.
- Consider options for the ongoing management and maintenance of the space.
- Consider features which could help deter or reduce antisocial behaviour. See also Action 31.
- Consider opportunities for overlooking.



Ballywaltrim Wicklow



Tymon Park Dublin

How this could work...



© The Children's Playground Company Ltd



© The Children's Playground Company Ltd

Cratloe Wood Community Playground

Durable wooden play equipment at the Cratloe Woods play facility, integrated into the surrounding woodland.

O'Regan Playground, Newmarket

O'Regan Playground has been created with Robina wood and includes a Pirate Ship, climbing areas, slides, ropes and poles, as well as mini-diggers, see-saws, hammocks, tyre swings and zip-line. The Park also has a sensory garden, an inclusive area aimed as a sanctuary for people with disabilities

Situated alongside the Mill Race River and using all natural materials, the playspace integrates well with its natural context. It is a welcoming community area that belongs to the community, who helped fundraise and build it.



Elephant Park, London

The background of the slide is a dark blue aerial map of a town, showing streets, buildings, and a winding river. A large, semi-transparent teal number '6' is positioned on the left side of the map. The text is white and positioned on the right side of the map.

'Enabling the Place' is focused on prioritising investment and improvement opportunities. The Town Team will use the Action Plan matrix outlined below to help them coordinate their work programme and organise their resources.

The majority of projects will require funding of some sort to support delivery. The wide range of potential funding sources are reviewed and the action plan highlights individual funding streams for individual projects.

The Delivery Action Plan strategy will be a tool for the Town Team to manage and keep under review.

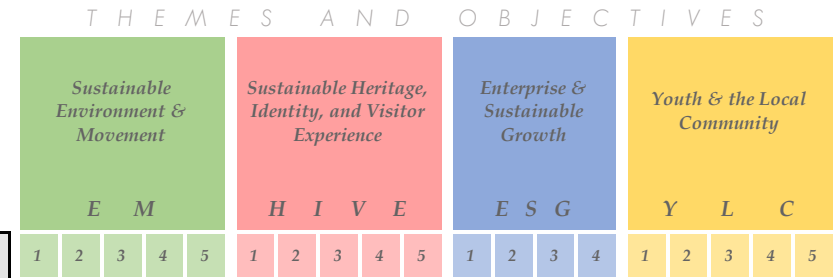
ENABLING THE PLACE



Delivery Action Plan

Each of the identified projects is presented in the Plan Delivery Action Plan below. The projects are organised by priority theme and attributed a short, medium or longer term time-scale. Projects are also assigned an assessment of their respective priority and whether they are of local, county/ regional or national significance. The potential lead and partner stakeholders are identified alongside potential funding sources.

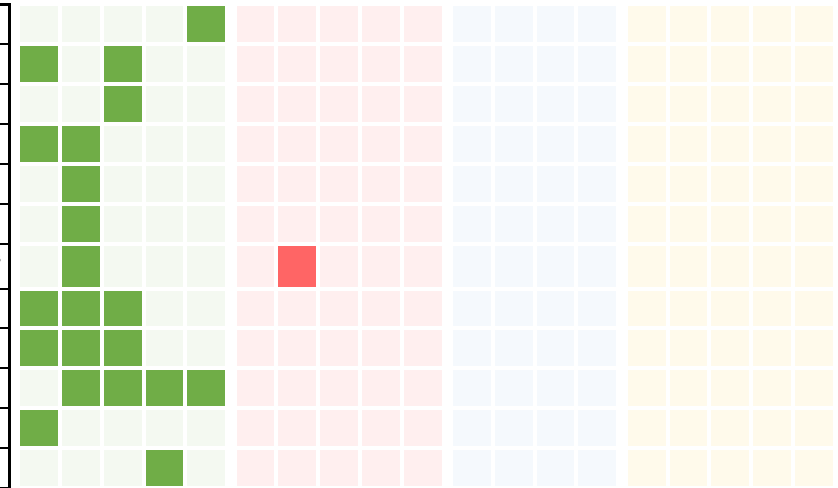
Additional funding streams that align with and support the delivery of these actions may arise over time and will be considered by the Town Team. The final part of the Action Plan link each project back to the objectives under each theme. This highlights how some projects will deliver benefits not only across multiple objectives but sometimes across multiple themes.



Action / Project	Term	Priority	Significance	Lead	Partners	Funding
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SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND MOVEMENT

1	Improve local car parking	S	***	Loc	CCC		RRDF; TVR
2	Footpath improvements and 'walkability' improvements	S/M	**	Loc	Town Team; CCC		Active Travel; CCC
3	Traffic calming	S/M	**	Loc	Town Team; CCC		Active Travel; CCC
4	Improvements at Town Square	S/M	***	C/R	Town Team; CCC		RRDF; TVR; IAF Reimagine Creative Ireland
5	Improvements at The Green	M/L	**	Loc	Town Team; CCC		RRDF; TVR; IAF Reimagine Creative Ireland
6	Improvements at Frederick Square	M/L	***	Loc	Town Team; CCC		RRDF; TVR; IAF Reimagine Creative Ireland
7	Façade and shopfront improvements	S/M	***	Loc	Town Team	CCC; CLDC	TVR; Paint Scheme Grants; Shop Front Grants Clare Local Area Grant Scheme
8	Town centre footbridge	S/M	***	C/R	Town Team; CCC		Active Travel; RRDF; CCC
9	Wider pedestrian and cycle network improvements	M/L	**	Loc	CCC	TT; TI; NTA	Active Travel; Safe Routes to School; TVR
10	Strategic movement study for Sixmilebridge	S/L	***	C/R	TI; CCC		Active Travel; CCC
11	River management	M/L	***	Nat	OPW; CCC		CFRAM Programme; LAWPRO Community Water Development Fund
12	Public transport enhancements	M/L	*	C/R	Iarróid Eireann; Bus Eireann; TI; CCC	Shannon Airport Group; An Garda Síochána	DOT



- Term**
- S** Short term: 0 - 2 years
 - M** Medium term: 2 - 4 years
 - L** Long term: 4+ years
- Priority**
- *** Lower priority - desirable but not critical
 - **** Medium priority - an important local project for Sixmilebridge
 - ***** High priority - a project of strategic importance to the town and wider region

- Significance**
- Loc:** Local
 - C/R:** County / regional
 - Nat:** Addressing an issue of national importance or significance

- Agency**
- STT** Sixmilebridge Town Team
 - CCC** Clare County Council
 - Private** Private landowners and developers
 - DOT** Department of Transport
 - SEAI** Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland



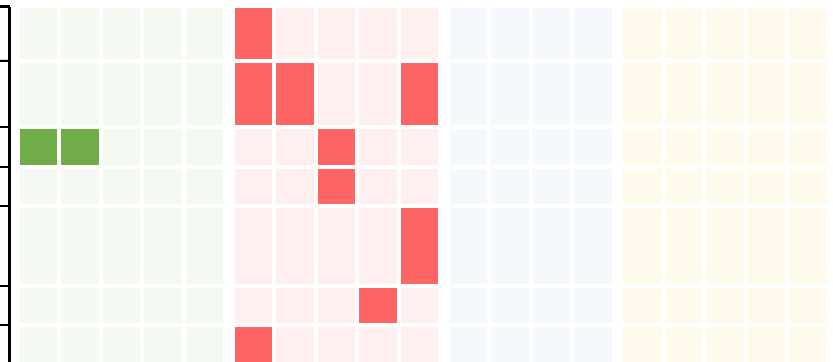
T H E M E S A N D O B J E C T I V E S



Action / Project	Term	Priority	Significance	Lead	Partners	Funding
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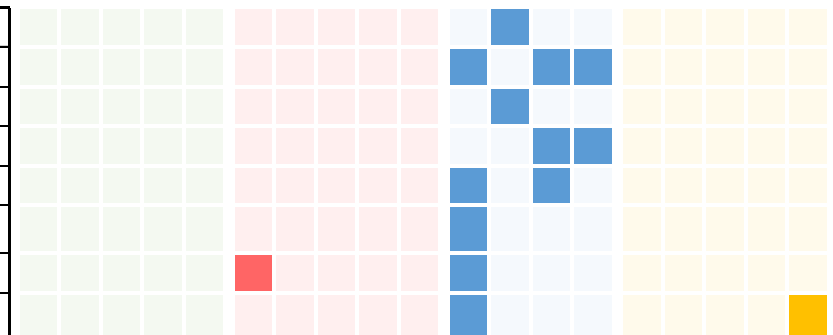
SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE, IDENTITY AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

13	New Sixmilebridge 'place-brand', promotion and marketing	S	**	C/R	Town Team	CCC; CLDC; Heritage Council	Heritage Council, Leader, Failte Ireland, Clare Local Area Grant Scheme
14	Heritage trail	S	*	C/R	Town Team; Sixmilebridge Historical Society	CCC; CLDC; Failte Ireland; Heritage Council	Heritage Council; Leader; Failte Ireland, MD Small Community Grant Scheme; ORIS
15	Greenway	M	**	C/R	TII	Failte Ireland; CCC; Town Team	DOT; Failte Ireland, ORIS; Active Travel
16	River-based activities for young people and visitors inc Blueway	M	**	Loc	CCC; Town Team	Failte Ireland / CCC / Town Team	ORIS; Failte Ireland; TVR
17	Targeting programme to address vacancy & dereliction	S	***	C/R	CCC; Town Team	Heritage Council	Private Sector; Vacant Homes Grant; Historic Towns Initiative; Built Heritage Initiative Scheme; Historic Structures Fund; TVR; RRDF; SEAI Grant
18	Explore potential for culture and events centre	M/L	***	C/R	Private Sector	Town Team; CCC; Failte Ireland	Private Sector
19	Sixmilebridge as a trailhead	S	*	C/R	CCC; Town Team	Failte Ireland	Active Travel; TVR; RRDF; Failte Ireland



ENTERPRISE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

20	Digihub investment	S	**	C/R	CCC	Town Team	RRDF; TVR
21	Rural enterprise and innovation centre	S/M	**	C/R	CCC	Town Team	RRDF; TVR
22	Business support and training	S	***	C/R	CCC; LEO	Town Team	LEO, Failte Ireland
23	Industrial Park investment	S/M	*	Loc	Town Team	CCC	Active Travel; RRDF
24	Explore Sixmilebridge 'Bike Hub' concept	L	*	C/R	CCC; CLDC; LEO	Town Team	Leader; RRDF; LEO Grant
25	Improved local convenience retailing and Shop Local campaign	S/M	***	Loc	Town Team; Private sector	Town Team; Private sector. Local businesses	Private sector; Local businesses
26	Sixmilebridge Market	S	**	C/R	Town Team	CCC; LEO; CLDC	LEO; Leader
27	Promote compact town centre development	M	**	Loc	CCC, Private sector		Private sector



S Short term: 0 - 2 years
M Medium term: 2 - 4 years
L Long term: 4+ years

* Lower priority - desirable but not critical
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STT Sixmilebridge Town Team
CCC Clare County Council
Private Private landowners and developers

DOT Department of Transport
SEAI Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland



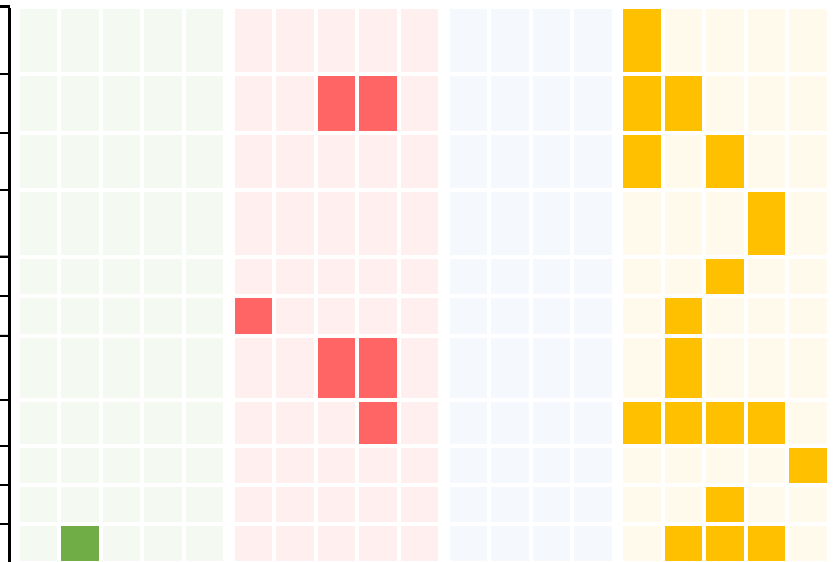
T H E M E S A N D O B J E C T I V E S



Action / Project	Term	Priority	Significance	Lead	Partners	Funding
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YOUTH AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

28	Youth café	S	*	Loc	Clare Youth Services; CCC; Town Team	Shannon MD Small Community Grant Scheme; DAF	
29	Scout/Community Riverbase	S	**	Loc	Scouts	CCC	Sport Ireland; MD Small Community Grant Scheme; Heart of the Community Fund; ORIS
30	Multi-use community facility	M/L	***	Loc	Town Team	CCC	Community Centres Investment Fund; RRDF; Heart of the Community Fund; TVR
31	Develop a Social Community Plan	S/M	***	Loc	Multi agency (HSE; Clare Youth Service; CCC; CLDC)	Town Team	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
32	Feasibility studies for community infrastructure	M	***	C/R	Dept of Education, HSE	CCC; Town Team	Leader
33	Programme of events	S	**	C/R	Town Team	CCC; Local businesses	Shannon MD Small Community Grant Scheme; Heart of the Community Fund
34	Town Park and Community Garden	S	**	Loc	Town Team; Sports Organisations	CCC	ORIS; TVR; Play and Recreation Funding Scheme; Local Biodiversity Action Fund; Shannon in Bloom
35	Multi-functional Community Sports Facility	S/M	**	C/R	Town Team; Sports Organisations	CCC; CLDC	Leader; ORIS; Sport Ireland
36	Development opportunities and new 'step down' housing	M	***	C/R	CCC/Town Team		RRDF/Housing Funding
37	Sustainable Energy Plan	M	**	C/R	Town Team; CLDC	CCC	Leader; SEAI
38	Refurbishment or reversion of playground	S	**	Loc	Clare Youth Services; CCC; Town Team		Shannon MD Small Community Grant Scheme; DAF; TVR



S Short term: 0 - 2 years
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Funding

Introduction

Town Centre First Policy is supported by a targeted investment programme. This includes the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, a dedicated fund committed by the Government in Project Ireland 2040 and through funding streams within government programmes. This report reviews funding options which may be targeted to support delivery of the plan proposals.

1. Key Town Centre First Funding Options

Key funding options identified in the Town Centre First Policy document that can deliver impactful change are as follows:

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) supports the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. The fund is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with a commitment of €1 billion in funding up to 2027. Funding is awarded by a competitive bid process. The RRDF supports ambitious investments of scale to deliver town centre regeneration including projects which aim to repurpose derelict, disused or heritage buildings, deliver remote working and enterprise spaces, build or transform libraries, deliver tourism infrastructure and generally support greater activity, footfall, business and residency.

Housing for All Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund

Housing for All aims to improve Ireland’s housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. There are two schemes under the Housing for all Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund to support housing delivery which are managed and administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties. Under the Ready to Build Scheme, Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate to individuals who want to build their own home.

European Regional Development Fund

The European Regional Development Fund 2021–2027 programmes set out an investment strategy for €853 million, of which €396 million is financed by the EU. Funding is managed by Regional Assemblies to ensure alignment with Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and to support Local Authorities in delivering the sustainable regeneration of towns and urban centres. The fund aims to address regional imbalance, sustainable economic development, environmental sustainability and build low carbon and climate resilient communities. Tackling vacancy and dereliction in towns, in support of the TCF approach is a particular emphasis of this fund.



Funding

Active Travel Grants Programme

The Active Travel Grants Programme administered by the National Transport Authority supports strategic pedestrian and cyclist routes, access to schools, permeability links, urban greenways, minor public transport improvement projects, dedicated infrastructure schemes such as the Safe Routes to School Programme and behavioural change programmes such as Green Schools. In 2022 the programme allocated €289 million funds to Local Authorities for over 1200 walking and cycling infrastructure projects nationally.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides grant funding to support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000. Applications are submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development through Local Authorities and the scheme focuses on projects that have a positive impact in terms of place making and town centre regeneration. Projects funded have included the regeneration of banks, courthouses, cinemas and halls for community use, the development of public plazas, town parks, playgrounds, community gardens and dog parks. The scheme also funds projects at pre-development stage and the acquisition of suitable vacant or derelict properties that could be taken into public ownership and converted for community use. It has also provided specific funding to enhance streetscapes and shopfronts under the streetscape enhancement initiative.

Climate Adaptation/Retrofitting Initiatives

The government's commitment to climate action is supported by funding to meet 2030 and 2050 climate targets. For example Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide sustainable energy grants to help homeowners, business owners, communities and industry reduce energy costs and greenhouse emissions. Local Authorities are funded in undertaking a programme of insulation retrofitting of the least energy efficient social homes. The Regional and Local Road Grant Programme support the maintenance of public roads in towns. The Active Travel Grants programme also provide supports for more sustainable travel modes to local schools, residential areas and places of employment.

Historic Towns Initiative

The Historic Towns Initiative is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council, it aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of historic town centres. The initiative has two streams of funding: Capital works to repair and enhance the heritage of town through heritage-led regeneration projects that address dereliction and residential vacancy, the conservation of landmark buildings, streetscape and public realm conservation led projects; Funding for heritage-led regeneration plans to determine conservation focused interventions for a town.



Table 1 - Overview of Key Town Centre First Funding Options

Note: Table is based on current programmes. Objectives and funding levels can vary per call for applications.

Fund	Lead	Area of focus	Funding Level	Operation
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund	Department of Rural and Community Development	Vacancy, dereliction, town centre residency, enterprise development	€500,000 minimum for projects. Up to 80% of the total project value. Contributions by applicants	Grant
Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Vacancy, dereliction, housing delivery	€30,000-€50,000 under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Up to €30,000 under the Ready to Build Scheme	Grant Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate
European Regional Development Fund	Regional Assemblies	Regional imbalance, sustainable regeneration, environmental sustainability, low carbon and climate resilient communities	Determined on a case by case basis	EU funding matched by a set percentage of national funding.
Active Travel Grants Programme	National Transport Authority	Active travel	Determined under various programmes	Grant

Fund	Lead	Area of focus	Funding Level	Operation
Town and Village Renewal Scheme	Department of Rural and Community Development	Place making, town centre regeneration	€20,000 to €500,000 under main scheme	Grant, 90% of the total cost of a project, the remaining 10% by Local Authority and/or community and/or Philanthropic contributions
			Up to €400,000 under building acquisition measure	Grant, 100% of purchase cost
			€100,000 to each town selected under streetscape enhancement initiative	Grant
Climate Adaptation/ Retrofitting Initiatives	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Local Authority, National Transport Authority	Climate adaptation	Determined under various programmes. Up to 100% of project value	Grant
Historic Towns Initiative	Heritage Council, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Heritage-led regeneration	€150,000 - €250,000 for stream 1 heritage led regeneration projects	Grant, match funding of 20% by Local Authority or owners
			Up to €40,000 for heritage-led regeneration plans	Grant, match funding of 20% from Local Authority

2. Other Funding Supports

There are a wide range of government schemes, many of which are administered at local level, that can provide investment and support the Town Centre First approach. These are advertised as they come available during the year. Key schemes administered or supported by the Local Authority are outlined in **Table 2**.

Local Authority resource allocations from its annual budget can support the plan and the Local Authority Development Contribution Scheme can provide contributions for public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area. Specific state grants to Local Authorities by various government departments for particular services such as for roads or recreation facilities can, subject to availability, support the plan (**Table 2**).

Work with partners such as the Heritage Council, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, National Transport Authority, Fáilte Ireland, LEADER and initiatives such as Tidy Towns, Pride of Place and Clare Comhairle Na nÓg can also support the delivery of the plan in collaboration with the community (**Appendix 1**).

Table 2 - Other Funding Supports

Fund	Details	Lead
Repair and Leasing Scheme	The Repair and Leasing Scheme provides upfront funding of up to €60,000 per unit (including VAT) for any works necessary to bring privately owned property up to standard and in return the property owner agrees to lease the dwelling to the Local Authority or an Approved Housing Body.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Buy and Renew Scheme	The Buy and Renew Scheme supports Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in purchasing and renewing housing in need of repair and makes them available for social housing use. It is a complementary initiative to the Repair and Leasing Scheme.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund	The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund provides public off-site infrastructure to relieve critical infrastructure blockages. This is to enable the delivery of housing on key development sites and in urban areas of high demand for housing. Funding is provided on a matched funding basis, with the exchequer providing 75% of the cost of the infrastructure and the Local Authority providing the other 25%.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Serviced Sites Fund	The Serviced Sites Fund provides key facilitating infrastructure on public lands to support the delivery of affordable homes to purchase or rent.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Community Enhancement Programme	The Community Enhancement Programme provides small grants to community groups to enhance facilities in disadvantaged areas. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development



Fund	Details	Lead
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme	The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. It is co-funded by the government and European Social Fund Plus and managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality Business Scheme	This scheme provided a level of financial support to tourism and hospitality businesses to purchase or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating in 2021.	Fáilte Ireland
DigiClare	DigiClare supports communities by providing flexible, affordable and local office facilities and high-speed broadband connectivity. The Sixmilebridge Hub opened in February 2022.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Regional Festival and Event Fund	The Regional Festival and Event Fund supports festivals and participative events in County Clare. The events must help to drive domestic and international tourism arrivals to Clare, win bed nights, stimulate local economic activity, and help to improve the visitor experience. The fund has qualifying conditions and is evaluated on a competitive basis.	Fáilte Ireland
Destination Towns	The Destination Towns initiative seeks to develop the tourism potential of towns and to create a sense of place in towns, attracting visitors to the area and helping to provide the necessary infrastructure to support regional growth in the tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland's Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns provides a practical aid to guide the development of a destination town.	Fáilte Ireland
Community Centre Investment Fund	This fund supports community groups to upgrade and develop their community centre facilities. The scheme is administered directly by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Grants were available under 3 categories in 2022: Small scale projects/improvements to facilities €10,000 to €25,000; Larger scale projects €25,001 to €100,000; Major projects €100,001 to €300,000. A minimum contribution of 5% of the total project costs was required from applicants own funds for category 2 and 3.	Department of Rural and Community Development

Fund	Details	Lead
Sports Partnership	Funding provided through Sports Partnership includes for the provision of sports equipment such as kits for school children. In 2023, €10,365,000 was allocated to Local Sport Partnerships nationally.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Arts Programme	The Arts Office sets out a programme for funding, developing and promoting the arts in County Clare. Opportunities for funding arise throughout the year, as government departments offer funding schemes.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Arts Council
Creative Ireland Projects	Creativity in the Community projects enable local community engagement with creativity to support individual and community well-being, social cohesion, and economic development. Place-making is central to the initiative. Grants range between €500 to €2,000 under the 2023 scheme.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Creative Ireland
Built Heritage Investment Scheme	The Built Heritage Investment Scheme assists owners of heritage structures, including those on the Record of Protected Structures and in Architectural Conservation Areas, to conserve and repair historic structures by providing match-funded grants. The 2023 scheme awarded up to €15,000 for a standard project and up to €20,000 for a thatched structure project.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Historic Structures Fund	The Historic Structures Fund aims to conserve and enhance heritage structures and historic buildings, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public. Grants in 2023 were offered under three streams. Stream 1 offered grants from €15,000 up to €50,000, with a maximum of 80% awarded relative to eligible costs; Stream 2 offered grants from €50,000 up to €200,000 for larger enhancement, refurbishment or reuse projects, with a maximum of 50% awarded relative to eligible costs. Stream 3 offered grants of between €5,000 to €10,000 to support conservation repairs and small capital works to vernacular structures.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage



Fund	Details	Lead
Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme	Local Authorities support and facilitate community groups in their applications to the Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to support capital projects that improve access and inclusion to heritage sites; that apply good heritage practice to the management of places, collections, or objects (including buildings). The scheme also supports the purchase of essential equipment. This scheme is intended to enable communities and heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to continue their work or to start new initiatives. The Heritage Council allocated in the region of €1.5 million to the 2023 scheme.	Heritage Council
Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives	Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives includes the target to upgrade 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2 / cost optimal equivalent or carbon equivalent by 2030. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide grants to help upgrade homes and Local Authorities are undertaking programmes to retrofit least energy efficient social homes.	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Local Authority
Biodiversity Action Plan Grant Scheme	This scheme to Local Authorities supports biodiversity projects and the implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans that align with actions under the National Biodiversity Action Plan. €3m was made available to the 2023 scheme nationally.	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Community Monuments Fund	The Community Monuments Fund aims to protect and promote archaeological heritage, supporting community development, traditional skills, jobs, tourism, regional and rural development. €6m was made available for the 2023 fund nationally.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme	The Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme includes support for the rapid roll out of new and improved active travel infrastructure in towns and villages.	Department of Transport
Development Contribution Scheme	The Local Authority Development Contribution Scheme enables contributions to be levied on new development and provides funding towards capital work programmes on a range of services, including roads, amenity, community, recreation and parking.	Local Authority

Fund	Details	Lead
Local Enterprise Office	The Local Enterprise Office provides training, mentoring programmes and a range of financial supports designed to assist with the establishment and/or growth of businesses including the LEO Client Stimulus Fund, LEAN Micro, feasibility grants and business expansion grants.	Department of Rural and Community Development Enterprise Ireland
Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme	The Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme benefits smaller or start-up social enterprises which do not necessarily have the capacity to compete for larger grants, but which nonetheless have a need for upgraded/additional equipment to help them to deliver their services. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee. In 2022 approximately €30,000 was awarded to social enterprises in County Clare.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Clare Local Area Grant Scheme	The Clare Local Area Grant Scheme, previously known as the Community Support Scheme, provides funding for local communities to assist them with various projects that fall within the relevant categories of the scheme. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee. For 2023, applications were invited under nine grant support categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Realm Initiatives and Amenity Projects (Max Grant €2,000) • Maintenance of Open Spaces in Private Housing Developments • Community Playgrounds (Max Grant €3,000) • Burial Ground Maintenance and Provision (Max Grant €600 for maintenance and €8,000 for provision of extension) • Best Kept Local Authority Estate (Max Grant €500) • Arts (4 categories of grants, €1,000 for 3 categories) • Irish Language (Max Grant €800) • Tourism Marketing and Promotion • Sustainable Tourism 	Department of Rural and Community Development
Shannon Municipal District Small Community Grant Scheme	The Municipal District of Shannon provides grant assistance under its Small Community Grants Scheme. The objective of the scheme is to encourage and support local community organisations and community groups active in the cultural, artistic and community development areas of the district. €24,000 was allocated to this scheme in 2022.	Municipal District



Fund	Details	Lead
Shannon In Bloom	The 'Shannon in Bloom' initiative with the community forms part of 'Clare in Bloom' and has planted over 50,000 pollinator friendly bulbs across the Shannon Municipal District.	Municipal District
Heart of the Community Fund 2023	The Heart of the Community Fund is for not-for-profit organisations delivering vital services/support that promote and support peace, culture, education and community development. Grants between €5,000 and €25,000 were available in 2023. The fund also provides organisational investment grants.	The Ireland Funds
Community Water Development Fund	The Community Water Development Fund is open to community and voluntary groups to assist in the protection and management of water quality. Examples of projects funded include feasibility studies, surveys and plans, biodiversity signage, water conservation measures, invasive species control, riparian management and planting, training workshops and citizen science initiatives. The fund is administered by LAWPRO on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. €500,000 was available under the 2023 fund.	Local Authority Waters Programme
Play and Recreation Funding Scheme	The Play and Recreation Funding Scheme supports the refurbishment of existing play and recreation facilities and new play and recreation facilities. Under the 2023 scheme Local Authorities could nominate one project for funding and funding was capped at €18,000 per project. The award of funding was contingent on the Local Authority match funding at least 25% of the amount provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Appendix: 1 – Other Funding Programmes and Initiatives that can Support Plan Delivery

Fund	Details
Rural Development Programme (LEADER)	The Rural Development Programme, widely known as LEADER, provides capital funding for rural development and job creation, with a focus on climate change and sustainability of the rural environment. The programme applies to designated LEADER areas.
Dormant Accounts Fund	The Dormant Accounts Fund can support the development of services to support the personal and social development of persons who are economically or socially disadvantaged; the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged; persons with a disability.
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways	Funding under this strategy to Local Authorities and state agencies aims to integrate Greenways into town centres by ensuring funded projects bring access from a Greenway to places of education, employment and entertainment in town centres.
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme supports the provision of outdoor recreation infrastructure in the countryside that contributes to healthy active lifestyles and the economic and tourism potential of the area for both local communities and tourist visitors alike. In particular, the scheme provides funding for trails, cycleways, greenways, blueways, bridleways, as well as outdoor amenities located near rivers, lakes and beaches. The scheme is funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development in partnership with Fáilte Ireland. Approximately €15 million was available under the 2022 scheme, with funding provided under four categories based on the size of the investment requirement.
Work with Fáilte Ireland	As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland’s role is to assist the long-term sustainable growth of tourism and to help develop destinations. It also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business initiatives and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow.
Tidy Towns	The Local Authority works with community groups and Tidy Towns to enhance the environment and make it a safe, clean and greener place. Clare Tidy Towns Network facilitates knowledge sharing, expertise led insights and coordinates actions to support Tidy Towns groups.
Clare Age Strategy Programme	The Age Strategy Programme works to provide walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for older people to participate in community activities.

Fund	Details
Clare Comhairle Na nÓg programme	Clare Comhairle Na nÓg provides an opportunity for young people in the 12-18 age range to identify the issues that are important to them and bring forward ideas and suggestions for bringing about change.
Healthy Clare	Healthy Clare aims to improve health and well-being in County Clare, in line with Healthy Ireland, ‘A Framework for Improved Health and Well-being 2013-2025’.
Clare Keep Well campaign	The Clare ‘Keep Well’ campaign connects the public to information about local resources and initiatives available under Keep Well Themes: Keeping active; Keeping in contact; Switching off and being creative; Eating well and Managing your mood.

Environmental Assessments

Appropriate Assessment

Under Council Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive), where it cannot be excluded that a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects and plans, would have a significant effect on a European Site, the same shall be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Plan is not directly connected with, or is necessary for, the management of any European Site, and consequently was subject to the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening process.

The findings of the AA Screening were presented following the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

It was considered that the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan will not give rise to any potential for significant effects on European Sites, primarily due to its consistency with the policy objectives and environmental protective objectives contained with the Clare

County Development Plan 2023-2029, and associated assessments, including a full Appropriate Assessment, and therefore a full Appropriate Assessment for the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan is not required.

All future projects and developments arising from the implementation of the Plan will be subject to the Appropriate Assessment process to ensure they will not adversely affect the integrity of these European Sites.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report for the Sixmilebridge Town Centre First Plan was carried out. The Screening Report had due regard to the criteria contained within Schedule 2A Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Final SEA Screening Report took into account the consultation responses from prescribed Environmental Authorities and assessed for changes between the Draft and Final Plan, and on balance, determined that a full SEA for the Plan is not required in accordance with the SEA requirements under the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) of the European Parliament and of the Council of Ministers of 27 June 2001 and the Assessment of Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment; and European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (S.I. No. 435 of 2004), as amended.

The SEA Assessment was undertaken in consideration of the findings contained with the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

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Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners accepts no responsibility for comments made by members of the community which have been reflected in this report.

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