# Courtown and Riverchapel
# **Town Centre First Plan**

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# Executive Summary

The Courtown and Riverchapel Town Centre First Plan (TCFP) sets out a comprehensive and community-driven vision to guide the long-term regeneration of the town centre. Developed in alignment with the national Town Centre First Policy, the plan integrates economic, social, environmental and spatial strategies so Courtown and Riverchapel thrive as a vibrant, inclusive and climate-resilient coastal twin settlement.

## Vision

To shape a vibrant, connected, and climate-resilient town centre that supports a strong year-round community, celebrates its coastal and natural setting, and provides welcoming spaces for people to live, work, play, and thrive.

## Ten principles for regeneration

1. Community-led and inclusive regeneration
2. Year-round town centre vitality
3. Compact and connected development
4. Safe and attractive public realm
5. Strong social and community infrastructure
6. Climate resilience and sustainability
7. Local and diverse economic growth
8. Sustainable transport and access
9. Heritage-led placemaking
10. Collaborative governance and delivery.

## Five regeneration pillars

***Living Well Locally*** – Strengthen social infrastructure (health, education, housing, youth) for a growing and diverse population.

***Connected and Compact Town Centre*** – Enhance walking/cycling, improve the public realm, and support compact growth to reduce car dependence.

***Vibrant Coastal Economy and Enterprise*** – Diversify through sustainable tourism and enterprise, alongside marina-linked opportunities and circular economy actions.

***Natural and Built Resilience*** – Protect natural assets, restore biodiversity, and embed climate adaptation and heritage conservation.

***Culture, Capacity and Collaboration*** – Empower community and celebrate local identity through cultural infrastructure and governance.
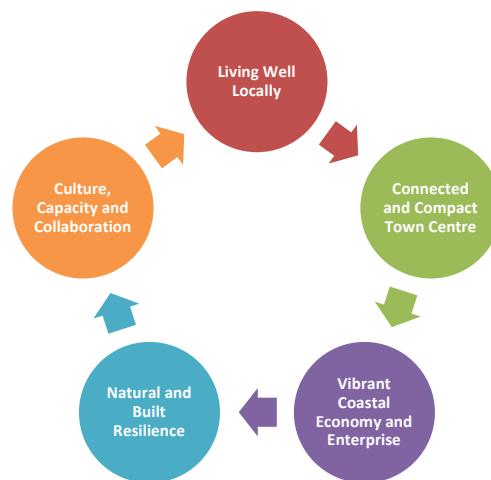


## Urban regeneration framework

A spatial framework sets out urban design and landscape concepts, an Urban Regeneration Framework plan, and identifies key regeneration blocks and sites to guide both public-space upgrades and private-domain redevelopment. This provides the physical structure for delivering the pillars and focusing investment where it has greatest impact.

## Key regeneration projects

Planned projects in development (outside this plan's area but important to town centre regeneration):

- Coastal Destination Courtown: Beach Nourishment & Marina Development Project (phased coastal protection, beach restoration and a future 198-berth marina).
- Riverchapel Community Centre (multi-purpose facility for health, youth, education and community services at the existing Riverchapel community complex).

**New key projects identified in this TCFP:**

1. *Community Needs and Demands Study* Evidence-base for health, education, recreation and wider community infrastructure needs (including a potential new multi-purpose centre in Courtown), feeding directly into statutory planning. *Traffic Management and Active Travel Study*

A town-wide framework for circulation, parking and road safety that prioritises walking, cycling and public transport, and underpins delivery of the above public-realm projects.

2. *Urban Space Improvement: Courtown Harbour & Main Street – destination space*
Create the social and cultural heart of Courtown with a high-quality, inclusive public realm, improved movement, and an all-season destination space integrated with active travel.

3. *Urban Space Improvement: The Parade & Main Street, Riverchapel*
Re-shape the everyday local centre with safer crossings, traffic calming, landscape and streetscape upgrades, and space for community life.

4. *Urban Space Improvement: Courtown–Riverchapel Greenlink (The Pig's Bank)*
A safe, attractive green/blue corridor connecting both centres: two-way cycle track, upgraded footpath, crossings, biodiversity enhancements and place-making.

5. *Coastal and Maritime Centre*
A multi-purpose hub for maritime recreation, heritage, coastal awareness, rescue services interface, community facilities and events, aligned with the wider marine tourism vision.

## Implementation and delivery

Delivery will be led by the Town Team and Town Regeneration Officer with Wexford County Council and partners. Prioritisation will consider targeted outcomes, deliverability (ownership/partnership/feasibility), and impact against the plan's vision and pillars. Progress will be monitored and reported to support funding bids, statutory planning and continuous learning and community capacity building.

The TCFP is a shared roadmap for transformative change. It reflects community ambitions and provides a practical framework for coordinated action, investment and innovation in the years ahead.

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The TCFP has been prepared to closely align to the principles of sustainable urban regeneration and the national Policy Approach to town centre regeneration.

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# 1

# Introduction

## 1.1 A longer term vision for regeneration

In spite of many challenges in recent years, the town centre of Courtown and Riverchapel remains the social, cultural and economic heart of the settlement. The town has experienced many changes which have impacted on the town centre. Although these changes have presented challenges and have highlighted vulnerabilities, they have also shown the resilience and commitment of the community to an enduring town centre regeneration.

This is the first Courtown/Riverchapel Town Centre First Plan (TCFP). It provides a longer-term vision for sustainable regeneration to 2040. The TCFP is the result of consultation and collaboration with the local community and the Town Team.

The TCFP sets out a broad strategy for a more integrated approach to social, economic and environmental town centre regeneration. It has been prepared in line with national Town Centre First Policy Approach for Irish Towns and better practice emerging nationally and internationally. Although the plan is non-statutory, it will nevertheless, play an important role in informing future statutory plans for Courtown/ Riverchapel. The TCFP also identifies priorities for transformative regeneration and key projects within a coherent framework for regeneration.

For a variety of reasons and for more than a generation, town centres across Ireland have suffered from processes or problems which could be described as stagnation or decline. This has undermined their viability and vitality as the heart of their communities and local economies. Urban regeneration is a process which seeks to address these processes and, in doing so, to bring about lasting change and improvement.

Courtown and Riverchapel is a linked settlement with an economic and social profile that is typical of many coastal and resort towns; notably a strong dependency on tourism and related services. Being a resort town, there are unique seasonal, socio-economic characteristics that need to be acknowledged and planned for. Larger changes in the international and domestic economic and business sectors have also impacted on the economic base of the town. This has had an effect on wealth and employment-generation and inevitably impacted on investment in the physical fabric of the town. The experience of living, working and visiting Courtown and Riverchapel has changed dramatically in recent years.

The town centre of Courtown and Riverchapel is the bellwether of the health of the town. Courtown and Riverchapel experienced significant development during and after the 'Celtic Tiger' and recovery years, resulting in an effective connection as a twin settlement. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted social and economic vulnerabilities for the community and local economy that still need to be addressed.

At national level, the recent *Town Centres First Policy Approach (2022)* and the *National Planning Framework (2024)* recognise the scale of the problems faced by town centres, and the impact of these problems not just on town centres, but on society more generally.

The current Local Area Plan for Courtown and Riverchapel also targets town centre regeneration in its range of policies and objectives. The new national policy and political consensus is clear and backed up by substantial funding for the regeneration and development of town centres. The focus is now on how these policies can be effectively translated into real change at the local level.

The TCFP is strategic in nature, providing a broader, more integrated and more coherent view of social, economic and environmental issues through a collaborative, plan-led and shared vision. The TCFP highlights key actions and projects which have the potential to be transformative and to make a positive and lasting impact on achieving the longer-term strategy for regeneration. Implementation is a critical aspect of regeneration and the TCFP expands on roles and responsibilities, management and monitoring, funding and further planning and design processes.

## 1.2 Purpose of Town Centre First Plan

The TCFP has been prepared to closely align to the principles of sustainable urban regeneration and the national Policy Approach to town centre regeneration. The purpose of the Plan can be summarised as follows:

- To establish key issues and opportunities for the Town Centre;
- To provide a longer-term vision and

strategy for regeneration;

- To set out a longer-term, integrated and coherent strategy for regeneration;
- To devise a physical framework for regeneration of the natural and built fabric and public spaces of the town centre;
- To identify key projects and actions which can act as catalysts for regeneration;
- To provide a focus for a collaborative process for regeneration, from plan-making to implementation;
- To build on local capabilities and capacities for regeneration;
- To underpin bids for funding and supports for town centre actions and projects; and
- To inform the preparation of future plans for the Town.





## 1.3 Structure of TCFP

The Plan is structured to recognise the rich and overlapping nature of issues and opportunities for the regeneration of the Town Centre. It includes:

- A vision for what the regenerated Town Centre will be in 2040;
- A set of principles which elaborate on the vision and underpin the specific strategies of TCFP;
- Five bespoke pillars for regeneration, developed around the themes of the coastal economy, natural and built heritage, community cohesion, sustainability and resilience and sustainable mobility;
- Strategies and actions to support each pillar;
- An urban design and landscape framework, showing the spatial and physical framework for regeneration of the built fabric and public spaces of the Town;
- Identification and activation of actions and projects to support the strategies; and
- A broad approach to delivery and implementation of the TCFP.

## 1.4 Preparation of TCFP

The TCFP was prepared over a number of months in line with the overall programme provided by the National Town Centre First Office. The process included survey and analysis, collaborative formation of a vision and principles, preparation of a set of overlapping regeneration strategies, a spatial and physical framework for regeneration, identification of transformative regeneration projects, and an approach to delivery and implementation.
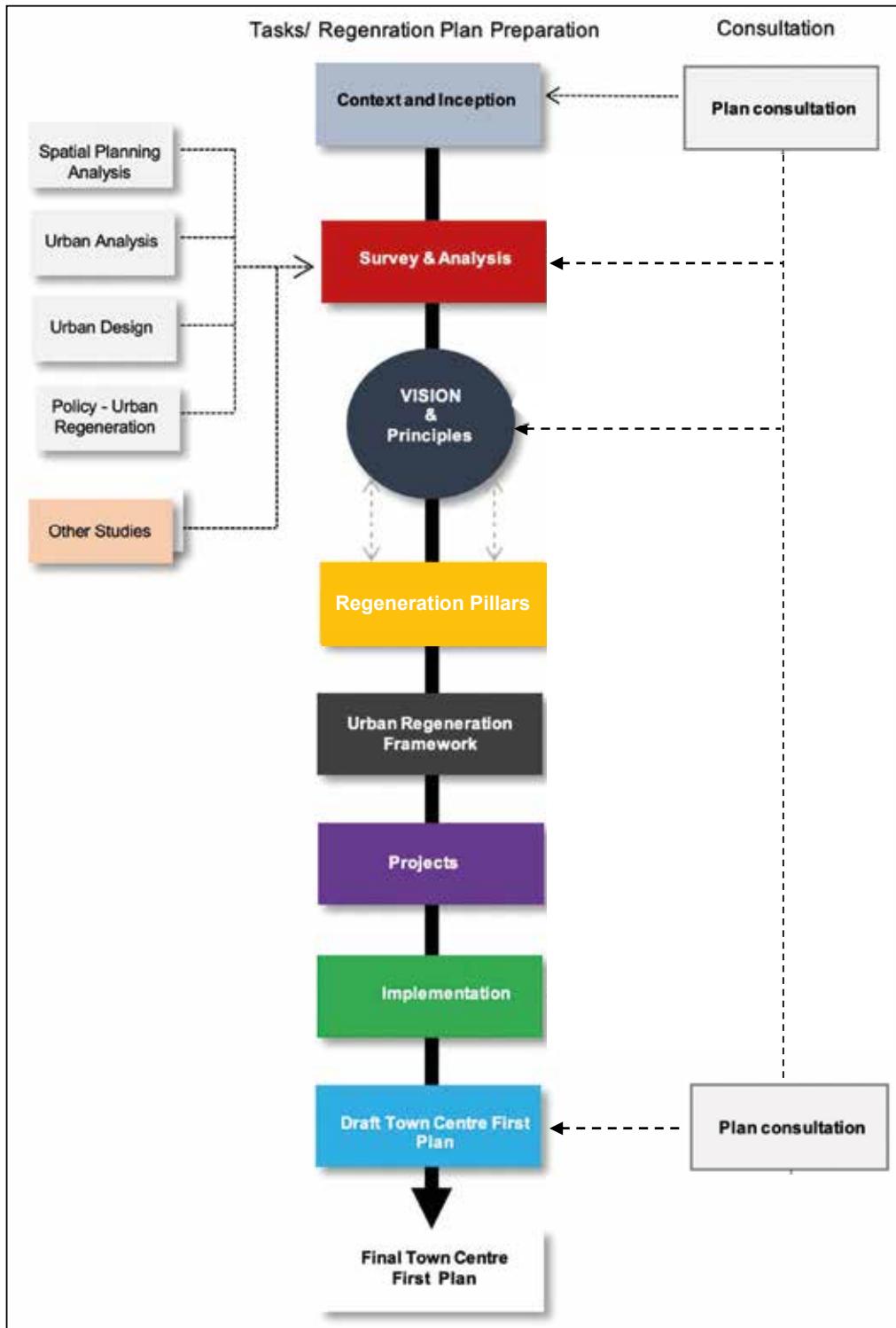
**Figure 1.1** The TCFP preparation process.

## 1.5 Consultation

The representative Town Team was established at outset of the plan preparation under the guidance of the Town Regeneration Officer. The Town Team provided project steering and advised on the overall approach to community and local consultation and made direct and valuable contributions at all stages of the plan preparation.

A consultation strategy was prepared to ensure that the wide range of views of the local community, businesses and key stakeholders were fully integrated into the preparation of the TCFP.

The key elements of the consultation process were:

- Open community consultations – initially by way of an open call for submissions at the issues and opportunities stage, and
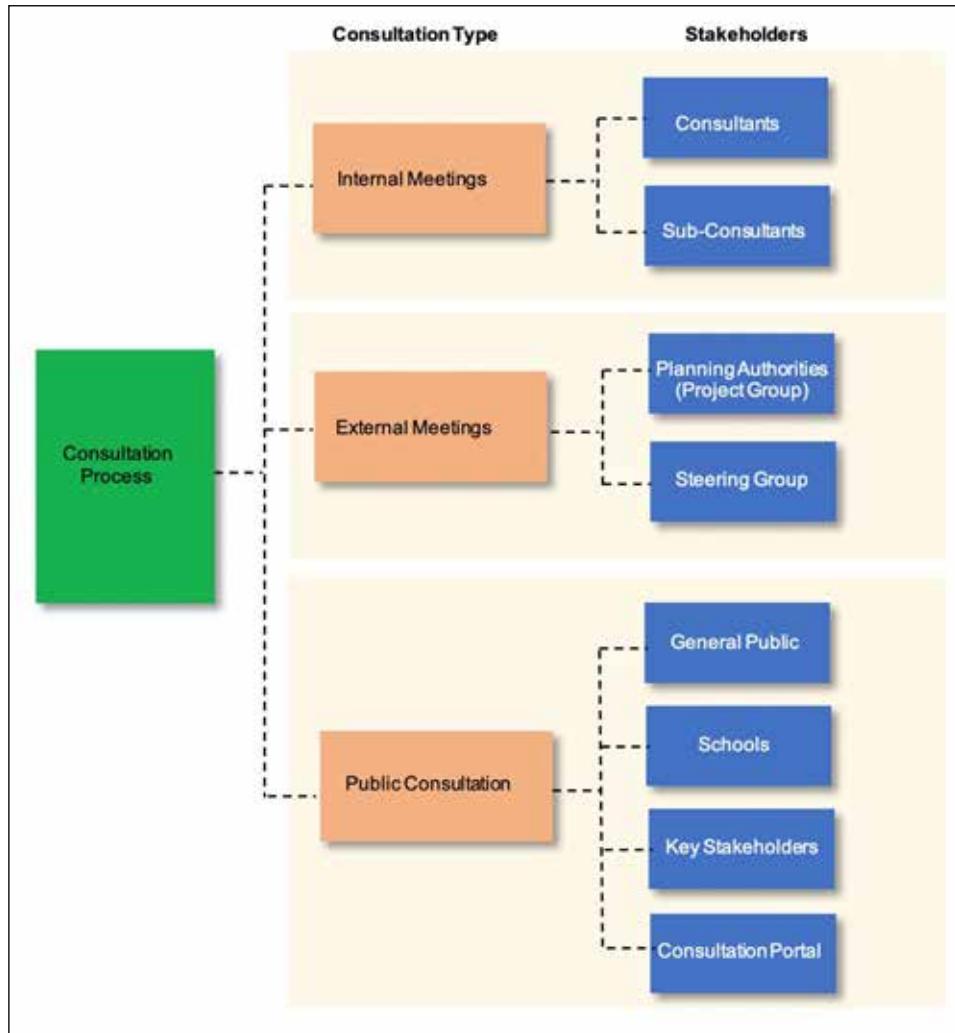
**Figure 1.2** The TCFP consultation process

subsequently, at this draft plan stage.

- Thematic consultation walkabout workshop for the community – this was a weekend dealing with issues and opportunities and key interventions for change.
- Focussed consultation – notably a local schools' workshop which explored issues and opportunities and perceptions of the town centre from the perspective of younger people.
- Meetings with key Town Centre stakeholders.

The consultation was carried out in close collaboration with the Town Team, the Town Regeneration Officer and officers of Wexford County Council, notably the Planning Service.





**Figure 1.3** (left to right) Local walkabout, mental map at schools' event, and workshop.

## 1.6 Overview of consultation

The consultation process uncovered an impressive range of local data, studies and insights. It was also clear that while there were different views on issues, opportunities and priorities, a great deal of consensus exists in the town about its future, the multi-facetted nature of regeneration and the sort of priorities and projects that could be transformative for the town centre. This section provides an overview of the findings of the consultation process. In addition, specific outcomes of the consultation are included throughout this plan.

The following wordclouds and table provide a summary of the themes and issues from the rich and detailed consultation process. The consultation process also addressed actions and priorities, and these are included in the pillars of this TCFP.



**Figure 1.4** Wordclouds from consultation exercises

| Theme | Issues |
|---|---|
| **Community facilities and services** | Persistent gaps in health, youth, childcare, older people's services. Lack of indoor, multi-purpose community space. Poor access to existing public and community services (e.g. GP, HSE, Túsla). Youth disengagement and social isolation. |
| **Town centre and public realm renewal** | Courtown's town centre lacks cohesion and vibrancy. Dereliction and disconnection around Bayview site. Lack of attractive public spaces or pedestrian areas. |
| **Beach and marine Infrastructure** | Coastal erosion and beach loss are critical issues. Strong public support for marina and water-sports hub. Marine sector seen as key to economic renewal. |
| **Transport and connectivity** | Poor internal links especially for walking and cycling (Courtown–Riverchapel). Weak active travel links to Gorey. Limited local bus services. |
| **Tourism and economic diversification** | Over-reliance on summer tourism. Need for year-round attractions and events. Insufficient hotel and food/service infrastructure to support development of tourism. |
| **Nature, recreation and heritage** | Underuse of woodland trails, cliff walks, riverbanks. Loss of green space and environmental degradation. |
| **Safety, cleanliness and accessibility** | Concerns over anti-social behaviour and limited Garda presence. Poor lighting, CCTV, and waste infrastructure. |
| **Governance, collaboration and funding** | Need for inclusive, cross-sector coordination. Confusion around grant supports and planning processes. |

**Table 1.1** A summary of the key themes and issues raised in the consultation.

| Location | Context / Mentioned in |
|---|---|
| **Courtown Harbour** | Walkabout start/end, tourism, heritage |
| **Riverchapel** | Service needs, school, health, transport |
| **Taravie Hotel** | Tourism, history |
| **Riverwalk** | Tourism, biodiversity, walking route |
| **Cliff Walk** | Tourism, slow tourism, environmental protection |
| **Promenade** | Tourism infrastructure, walkability |
| **Old Primary School Site** | Proposed medical centre location |
| **Business Park Site** | Proposed economic development zone |
| **Coastguard Site** | Heritage, community reuse |
| **Beach Area** | Seasonal tourism, natural asset |
| **Fire Station (near orchard)** | Community orchard as model |
| **Unused Tennis Courts** | Proposed for allotments/community garden |
| **Main Street** | Vacancy, retail, housing potential |
| **Courtown LTI Offices** | Workshop venue, civic hub |

**Table 1.2** A summary of the key locations and interventions identified by the community

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. . . 7,500 permanent residents, and approximately 25,000 residents during the height of the summer holiday season.

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# 2

# Courtown and Riverchapel today

## 2.1 The town centre area

Although the centres of Courtown and Riverchapel are not physically connected, they are located within 1km of each other and linked by the Branoge/Aughboy River valley. Together they constitute the heart of a larger connected settlement that is now home to around 7,500 permanent residents, and approximately 25,000 residents during the height of the summer holiday season.

There is no established or defined boundary for the Town Centre. However, there is a shared understanding in the local community that the town centre comprises the established mixed use and historic centres of Courtown and Riverchapel. The town centre notably includes areas zoned for Village Centre and other non-residential uses in the most recent statutory plan for the Town (Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan, 2015-2021, as extended).

**Figure 2.1** The TCFP area (Image: Wexford County Council)

## 2.2 Socio-economic profile

Although the town centre is relatively compact and not a census unit for population or employment data, it is useful to consider figures from the wider area to understand demographic trends. These figures reflect a broader context and are strongly influenced by changes in the suburban neighbourhoods surrounding the town centre

The town is largely contained within two electoral divisions, Ardamine and Courtown, which together recorded a population of 7,424 in the 2022 Census, a 17% increase from 6,324 in 2016. Courtown accounted for 3,012 residents, with Ardamine recording 4,410 and the faster rate of growth. This increase significantly outpaces both the Wexford County average (c.7%) and the national rate (c.8%). The CSO indicates a combined population of 4,365 persons in the Built-up Area (BUA) of Courtown, Riverchapel and Ardamine settlements. This figure would not account for single houses and ribbon development in the surrounding areas of the town. The current Local Area Plan estimated the area's 2011 population at under 3,000, highlighting rapid suburban expansion in both Courtown and Riverchapel over the past decade.

A defining feature of the town is its large seasonal population, accommodated in caravan parks, mobile homes, and holiday properties near the town centre and in the suburbs. Though not captured by census data, the peak summer population is estimated to be around 25,000, with approximately 18,000 seasonal visitors added to the permanent resident base.

Demographic data from 2022 shows that 22% of residents are under 15 and 18% are aged 65 or over, giving a high dependency ratio of 66%, well above the national average of 52.7%. Unemployment in Ardamine (10.5%) and Courtown (9.8%) exceeds the national average of 7%, while third-level education attainment (25% in Ardamine, 30% in Courtown) remains significantly below the national level of 42%. Approximately 16% of residents report having a disability, compared to 13.5% nationally, signalling the need for inclusive infrastructure and services.

These figures have clear implications for regeneration. Continued growth demands sustained investment in housing, infrastructure, and services. An ageing population will require enhanced health, mobility, and social care supports. Socio-economic disadvantage, reflected in education and employment data, highlights the need for targeted skills development and job creation. Above-average disability rates reinforce the importance of universal access and inclusive design in all aspects of town centre regeneration.

## 2.3 Historical development

Courtown and Riverchapel have evolved from early ecclesiastical sites and fishing hamlets into vibrant communities with rich histories.

The area's recorded history dates back to at least the 13th century. In 1278, the Manor of Curtun (now Courtown) was under lease to Andrew Avenal, marking its significance in medieval times. By the early 14th century, it was associated with notable figures such as Maurice MacMurrough and Thomas de Brotherton, reflecting its strategic importance in the region.

Riverchapel derives its name from a chapel situated by the Owenavorragh River. Local folklore suggests that this chapel was established in the early Christian period, serving as a spiritual centre for the surrounding community.

In the mid-19th century, during the Great Famine, Lord Courtown commissioned the construction of a harbour between 1839 and 1846. This initiative not only provided employment during a time of crisis but also transformed Courtown into a bustling fishing village. By 1852, the harbour accommodated numerous sailboats and yawls, becoming a pivotal point for maritime activities.

The arrival of the railway to nearby Gorey in 1863 significantly boosted tourism in the area. Courtown, with its picturesque beaches and newly built harbour, became a favoured destination for visitors from Dublin and the Midlands. This influx led to the development of amenities and the establishment of Courtown as a traditional seaside resort by the 1860s.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed substantial urban development, particularly in Riverchapel. Originally a small village, Riverchapel expanded rapidly, with the construction of large housing estates catering to commuters working in Dublin. This growth led to the merging of Riverchapel and Courtown, creating a contiguous urban area. By 2011, the combined population

had more than doubled since 2006, reflecting the area's transformation into a significant residential hub.
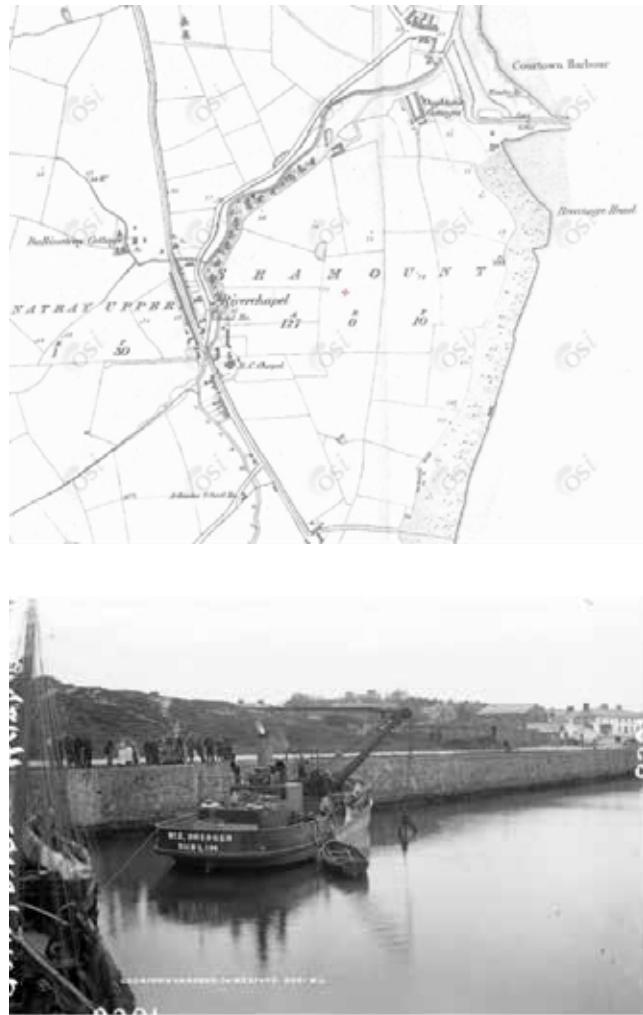
## 2.4 Town centre community

It is apparent that the most significant change in the profile of the town community has resulted from the continued suburban growth and development of Courtown and the remarkable expansion of Riverchapel north, west, south and southeast of The Parade in recent years. This has been largely driven by regional migration in response to issues of housing demand and affordability. This growth has outpaced the development of social and community infrastructure, creating development pressures, service deficits, and evolving community needs. The town centre includes key civic, retail, leisure and social assets and is the focus of ongoing regeneration efforts including the preparation and delivery of this Town Centre First Plan.

### *Community Representation*

The local community is represented though different processes and by a range of active local groups. The area is served by Courtown Community Council, which leads local advocacy, manages public engagement, and has authored the Smart Village Strategy and Circular Economy Plan. A dedicated Town Centre First Team comprising local residents, business owners, councillors, and council staff guides regeneration activities in the town centre and has provided strategic direction for this plan. There is also a strong presence of local sports clubs, heritage groups, and civil society organisations. Recent consultation included submissions from groups such as Vision for Courtown and Riverchapel Group, Meals on Wheels Gorey & Courtown, Riverchapel Parish Committee, Courtown Heritage Group, and Courtown Business Association. Local political representation falls within the Gorey-Kilmuckridge Municipal District of Wexford County Council, with local councillors active in community planning and funding mobilisation.

### *Community infrastructure and services.*

Courtown and Riverchapel suffer from a historical under provision of indoor community spaces, which has been exacerbated by substantial population growth and urban development. This has limited local service delivery and recent consultation suggests an increased dependency on community infrastructure and services in other areas such as Gorey. Currently, the former National School hosts the existing Riverchapel Community Centre, which provides valuable space for local groups and activities. It is however, limited in size and ancillary facilities. The proposed new Riverchapel Community Centre (at the current Riverchapel Community Complex) seeks to fill some of this gap with facilities for sports, youth services, training, health programmes, and agency collaboration. Several voluntary groups provide essential local services (e.g. Meals on Wheels, Seal Rescue Ireland, and youth clubs), but long-term service sustainability remains an issue. Public Wi-Fi, digital education, and co-working facilities are largely absent, but recent

strategies such as the Digital Town Blueprint propose targeted investment.

## Housing

The Digital Town Blueprint (Department of Rural and Community Development, 2024) noted almost 3,000 homes in the Townlands of the Courtown and Riverchapel. The town housing stock comprises a mix of permanent residences, bungalows, apartments, and mobile homes, many originally built for seasonal use. The town centre housing stock is smaller but more diverse than the suburban stock (and includes some apartments and townhouses). There is strong demand for affordable, year-round accommodation, but supply remains constrained. The LECP (2024–2029) and County Development Plan identify the area for consolidated infill development, focusing on sustainability, community integration, and resilience to coastal hazards. Social housing retrofitting and adaptive reuse are also key policy objectives.

## Seasonal Housing

Courtown retains a high proportion of holiday and seasonal dwellings (such as caravan, mobile home and holiday parks), which distorts housing occupancy and availability and creates challenges for service and infrastructure planning. Although accurate figures for this housing are not available, the community consultation revealed in the order of 7,000 such units in the town. While most of the seasonal housing is peripheral to the town centre, the longer-established parks are adjoining or nearby. Many homes are unoccupied outside summer months, while others have transitioned to year-round use without corresponding infrastructure upgrades. In addition, the need to better integrate this housing with the urban and coastal landscape, and provide for better amenities and active travel connections to local services and attractions has been recognised in local planning policy for many years. The community's circular economy and tourism strategies call for smarter management of vacant and underutilised properties, including potential reuse for community or enterprise purposes.







## Education

As discussed in the town centre profile, educational disadvantage is notable in parts of Riverchapel, with lower-than-average third-level attainment (Census 2022). Survey indicates that there are two providers of pre-school services in the town, with one located in the town centre at Riverchapel (old school on the Main Street). The current education provision at primary levels is limited to a single primary school in Riverchapel, the Riverchapel National School Star of the Sea.

This school is fully subscribed and constrained in terms of growth potential and surrounding play and sport areas. There is no secondary school in the town with pupils typically travelling for secondary education to Gorey. The Department of Education and Youth has been consulted on this plan and has indicated a preference to extend the existing national School if feasible, but will assist in looking at demand for a new or relocated primary and/or post-primary schools. Valuable further education is provided by Courtown Local Training Initiative Education Centre, adjacent to Main Street.

### Health

There is no primary health care centre in Courtown or Riverchapel and there is currently no GP or dentist located in the town. These services along with services such as counselling and mental health are located in, and generally accessed from, Gorey. The Healthy Wexford and Age Friendly strategies advocate for expanded primary care, active living infrastructure, and intergenerational wellbeing programmes. In terms of accessibility, these services would be appropriately located in the town centre.

### Summary of Town Centre Community

The Courtown and Riverchapel town centre community is young, diverse, and rapidly evolving. It faces intersecting challenges of deprivation, housing pressure, seasonal flux, and limited civic infrastructure, but it is also highly engaged, forward-thinking, and mobilised around regeneration. The community has articulated clear priorities, through recent studies and plans and the consultation for this plan. These are focussed on local services and infrastructure, youth services, inclusive public spaces, active transport, and digital innovation.

## 2.5 Town centre economy

### Tourism

The town is an established tourist destination. Tourism developed in the nineteenth century and expanded enormously in the post-war period with increased household mobility. Coastal tourism is the core element of the local economy, supporting services and retail businesses and providing both seasonal and permanent employment. The sector is highly seasonal, but consultation has revealed a widening of the season, with some expansion of year-round business and employment, and a desire to continue this trend. In addition to the



**Figure 2.3** Courtown LTI (source: https://gyng.ie/wp/gti/cyti/) and Riverchapel NS Star of the Sea.

natural and cultural attractions and supports, the survey for the plan identified substantial tourism-related attractions in the town centre and environs, including outdoor and indoor leisure and fitness facilities, services such as pubs, convenience shops, restaurants and takeaways, and accommodation including guesthouses and a single remaining hotel.

### *Recreation and leisure*

In addition to the natural features of the coast, harbour, rivers and woodlands, there are 5 larger outdoor leisure and recreation centres in, adjoining or adjacent to the town centre. Additional nearby outdoor recreation and play facilities include the golf course and outdoor adventure centres. There are also other visitor attractions such as the Seal Rescue Visitor Centre. Flanagan's Wharf at Courtown Harbour is a mixed-use venue in the town centre which offers year-round leisure and recreation. Courtown Adventure and Leisure Centre immediately north of the town centre in Courtown provides extensive indoor and outdoor recreation and leisure activities. Established amusement and adventure leisure operations (Pirate's Cove, Courtown Funpark and Courtown Amusement Centre) are clustered at Seamount/Aughboy River Valley. These operations are seasonal in nature reflecting holiday periods. Courtown Sailing Club was established in 1981 and is an important local development, recreation and education resource for the town. The club has been located on leased land on the South Beach since 1999.

### Holiday and Seasonal Accommodation

Courtown and Riverchapel have traditionally catered to a strong seasonal tourism market, and holiday accommodation remains a significant component of the town centre's land use. At present, the Taravie Hotel is the only fully operational hotel within the town centre. The Courtown Hotel is currently repurposed as a refuge accommodation centre. The former Bayview Hotel site has been cleared and is awaiting redevelopment. A planning application (Ref: 20240669) is currently under assessment by An Coimisiún Pleanála for a proposed hotel on the current public car park in Ballinatray Lower, Courtown and comprises a six-storey building with 136 rooms, and ancillary facilities.

Other accommodation is provided through smaller guesthouses and B&Bs. These include Harbour House Guesthouse and The Gallery B&B in Courtown, and Stonelodge B&B in Riverchapel. These facilities contribute to local tourism capacity but are modest in scale. The current shortage of modern, high-capacity hotel accommodation in the town centre is seen as a constraint to diversifying and expanding the visitor economy, particularly in the off-season. Upgraded and year-round accommodation is also identified in local consultation as a priority for regeneration and economic resilience.

### Local services and retail

Local services and retail are critical in meeting the needs of local communities and they play an important role in the local economy and employment creation. It is very clear that local services and retail uses in the town centre are limited in nature and extent to meet the large resident and seasonal population of the town. This is most likely a reflection of the proximity and dependence of residents on services and retail in Gorey and further afield.

Local services and retail in the town centre can be profiled as follows:

- Medium size convenience retail – one facility located in Riverchapel (Brooks Supermarket);

- Small convenience and newsagent – year-round in Courtown (3 units, including service station) one year-round facility located in Riverchapel and seasonal units (2 in Courtown).

- Post office in Courtown/Seamount (with convenience shop).

- Restaurant and takeaway located in Courtown (7 units), and Riverchapel (2 units).

- Public house located in Courtown (3 units) and Riverchapel (1 unit).

- Barbers/personal services located in Courtown (2 units), Riverchapel (2 units).

- Pharmacy and health in Riverchapel (1 pharmacy unit)

- Bookmakers in Courtown (1)

- Used car sales in Courtown (1)

The lack of a nighttime and evening economy in the town centre was raised in the consultation and is a key feature of tourism and planning policy in the County. There is a clear need to expand local services and retail in the town centre to address 'leakage' of activity and employment to other locations, such as Gorey.

### Business and professional services

As with local services and retail, business and professional services are noticeably under-developed and under-represented in the town (e.g. solicitors, accountants, banking, consulting etc.). There is evidence of a small number of home-business and creative type activities in residential areas surrounding the town centre. In addition, anecdotal evidence from the consultation for this plan has indicated a level of remote working since the pandemic.

At present, Courtown and Riverchapel do not exhibit the characteristics of an established knowledge economy but certain foundations exist, and there is clear potential to foster one with targeted interventions. A knowledge economy typically includes high levels of third-level education attainment and specialist skills, local innovation ecosystems or tech clusters, knowledge-intensive services, digital industries, or research institutions and a network of entrepreneurial, creative, or remote work activity.

Based on the demographic and socio-economic profile, third-level attainment is significantly below the national average (25–30% vs 42%), unemployment remains higher than average, there is a lack of digital or creative industry presence. While the Courtown LTI provides valuable further education, there is no dedicated higher level education presence (such as facilities or partnerships) in the town. However, key enablers are emerging including the planned Riverchapel Community Centre which includes flexible office space, training rooms, and digital infrastructure suitable for remote working hubs, community education, skill-building workshops and small business incubation. In addition, proximity to Gorey (a developing regional centre) and the commuter belt can be leveraged along with existing and potential support from Wexford Local Development (WLD) for training, enterprise support, LEADER, SICAP, Smart Villages programme (aligned to digital and community innovation), National broadband rollout enabling future remote work and digital learning.

### Creative economy

While a formal creative economy has not yet emerged in Courtown and Riverchapel, there is clear potential to support creative expression, enterprise and community participation through new facilities, cultural programming, and strategic partnerships. Supporting local arts and cultural activity can also contribute to regeneration, tourism diversification, and community wellbeing.

### Circular economy

The survey for this plan indicates that Courtown and Riverchapel does not have a developed or structured circular economy. However, there are indicators of emerging potential and community interest that could be leveraged to develop one through community-led initiatives and developments. Wexford Local Development

(WLD) through LEADER and SICAP supports social enterprises, eco-initiatives, and training programmes that could align with circular economy principle. While many seasonal businesses in Courtown (cafés, markets, amusements) follow traditional linear economic models, there is scope for eco-tourism, low-impact hospitality, and local supply chains to be promoted.

### Summary of the economic base

The economic base of Courtown and Riverchapel has undergone significant structural change in recent decades, shifting from a traditional tourism and fishing economy toward a more residential, service-based, and commuter-influenced economy.

Courtown historically relied on seasonal tourism. It was a popular Victorian seaside resort, its economy centred on holiday accommodation, amusements, hospitality, and fishing. In terms of fishing and maritime activity, the 19th-century harbour supported a local fleet, but this activity has declined sharply in recent decades, with the harbour now more recreational in function.

Tourism remains significant but seasonal. It is still a key contributor to the local economy during summer months, but it now provides mainly seasonal employment and is vulnerable to market and future climate changes.

Rapid residential development, especially in Riverchapel has transformed into a commuter and dormitory community, with many residents travelling to Gorey, Dublin, and other centres for employment.

Population growth has provided modest growth in retail and personal services (including local shops, cafés, healthcare, and education) but limited local enterprise or high-value job creation.

Lack of year-round economic anchors means that there are no major employers or locally-developed

knowledge-based industries. Unemployment remains above the national average, and education attainment is relatively low.

There are key implications for the regeneration of the town. Economic diversification is essential to reduce overreliance on seasonal tourism and housing-led growth. In addition, investment is needed in year-round employment sectors, including community services, health and social care, creative and circular economy initiatives and remote work hubs and enterprise supports.

## 2.6 Urban character and form

### *Landscape character and natural heritage*

The town centre of Courtown and Riverchapel has emerged where the coast, forested hinterland, agricultural land, and a former river estuary meet, creating a distinctive and varied landscape. Several identifiable landscape zones define its character: a compact urban core with civic potential; suburban areas with fragmented open spaces and underused landscape assets; coastal edges shaped by beaches, cliffs, rocky headlands, and dunes; and rural hinterlands with rivers, farmland, and woodland margins. These diverse zones contribute significantly to the town's identity, ecological value, and placemaking potential. The town centre is a hub for local woodland and coastal walking routes and trails.

Key features such as the Owenavorragh River corridor, established woodlands, and the coastal setting define the area's natural character. Courtown's original harbour village is shaped by its coastal proximity, with a curving quayside, gently sloping access roads, and wooded surroundings and remnants of the historic Courtown Estate. In recent years the erosion of the beach, an important natural asset, has impacted on the natural heritage and impacted the tourism. In contrast, Riverchapel lies further inland on flatter terrain, where recent residential development has expanded. The Aughboy River and valley form a valuable green corridor between the two centres. However, challenges persist: fragmented woodlands and coastal features, discontinuous river corridors, visually disconnected seasonal housing, and undefined settlement edges, particularly to the north and west.

A habitats survey, last completed for the Local Area Plan prior to 2015, highlighted the importance of ecological corridors and identified significant features such as treelines, dune scrub and woodland, watercourses, and semi-natural areas like mixed broadleaved woodland and fixed dunes. These were incorporated into the plan's zoning objectives. Updating this survey is now timely.

There are no Natura 2000 sites near the town centre. However, two proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) lie within the broader settlement: Courtown Dunes and Glen, and Ardamine Woods.

Courtown Dunes and Glen, in the north of the plan area, consists mainly of mixed woodland along the Owenavorragh River and a wooded dune ridge. Ardamine Wood, in the southeast, includes woodland, scrub, heath, and slopes leading to clay sea cliffs and rocky shores.

Although fragmented, the area provides a foundation for reinforcing town centre identity and reconnecting landscape and settlement through active travel routes, placemaking, and sensitive design.



**Figure 2.4** Suburban and town centre character areas survey - showing the small extent of town centre areas in blue and the extensive suburban areas in beige/orange.

### Urban character and structure

Courtown retains a strong historical core centered on its harbour, promenade, and early 19th-century buildings. In Riverchapel, the suburban form is organised around historic elements such as The Parade, the old graveyard, and former school, with surrounding estates following old country lanes and distributor roads.

The urban structure of the larger town is based on the original country approach roads to Courtown Harbour and Riverchapel village. The primary route structure of link roads is very limited and designated as the regional route (R742). The secondary route structure in the town is confined to local streets in the town including Ballinatray Lower/Harbour Court, and Main Street/Seamount in Courtown and Etchingham Heights and Middletown Valley and Ballinatray Lower in Riverchapel. The tertiary structure of local streets for local access dominates the urban route structure. This structure of routes is dendritic in nature, with extended and convoluted routes accessing suburban residential areas. There is a notable lack of dedicated pedestrian areas or cycle facilities in the town centre.

### Urban blocks

The urban block pattern of Courtown and Riverchapel reflects the evolution of a small rural town adapting to rapid suburban expansion. In the historic core of Courtown, the block structure remains relatively compact and regular, typical of traditional coastal settlements, supporting finer urban grain and walkable connections. In contrast, Riverchapel's centre is characterised by more irregular and fragmented block patterns, shaped by dispersed residential layouts and limited mixed-use development.

Surrounding both centres are extensive areas of suburban housing, with large, non-uniform blocks and a road network designed primarily for car movement. These neighbourhoods follow modern standards-based approaches, often with cul-de-sacs, low connectivity, and open space that is not fully integrated into the wider town structure. This pattern has contributed to car dependency and weakened the relationship between housing, services, and the town centre.

The current urban block structure will require retrofit for greater local permeability, and active travel routes to support a more cohesive and sustainable town centre.

### Urban Grain

Urban grain in Courtown and Riverchapel town centre reflects a mix of historic village patterns and more recent suburban housing layouts. Courtown retains a finer and more mixed urban grain, especially around the harbour and Main Street, where plots are small, narrow, and aligned to former maritime and market uses. This part of the town centre accommodates local retail and services within closely spaced buildings and narrow plots. These are characteristics that support diversity in local businesses and active street life.

By contrast, the urban grain in Riverchapel, outside of the Parade, is coarser and shaped largely by late 20th and early 21st-century residential estate development. Larger block sizes and lower densities predominate, although emerging community nodes, such as the Riverchapel Community Centre site, offer opportunities to retrofit finer grain and permeability into the suburban fabric. A more diverse mix of grain and building types across the town centre area can enhance walkability, support smaller-scale enterprises, and create more inclusive and flexible public spaces in the long term.

**Figure 2.5** Route structure for town, with regional routes in red, local link routes in orange and local streets and roads in yellow.



**Figure 2.7** Town Centre urban form, showing the buildings, urban blocks and frontages in the survey.



**Figure 2.6** Town Centre landscape structure – showing the main elements of the landscape in the survey.
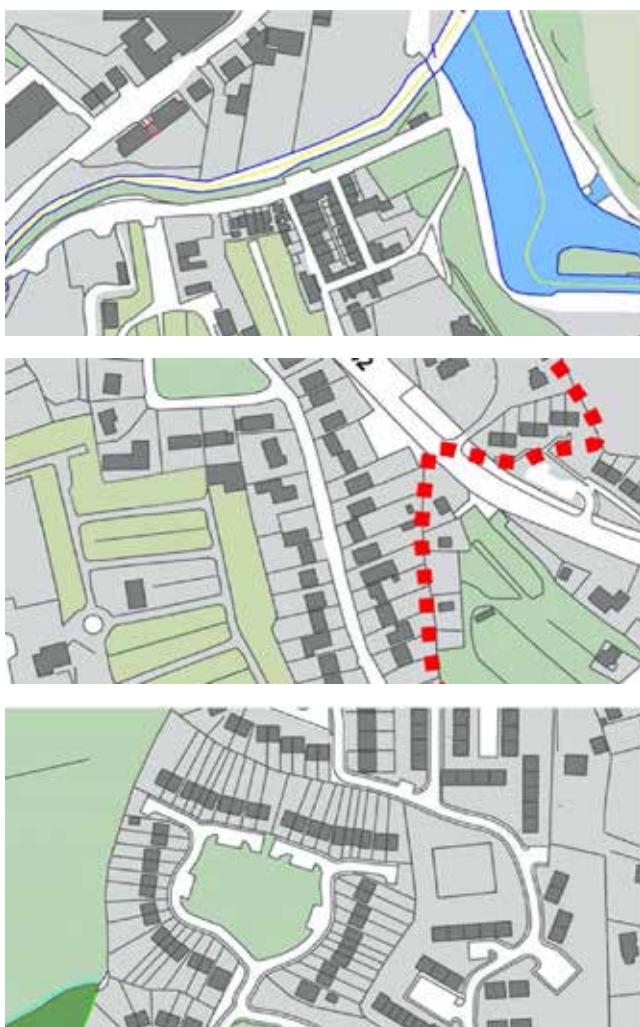


**Figure 2.8** Town Centre urban grain – examples of different plot and development types in the town.

## 2.7 Transport and Mobility

Courtown and Riverchapel town centre must be accessible, safe, and attractive for all who live in, visit, or depend on it. Yet, like many growing coastal towns in Ireland, transport development in the area has long been shaped by the dominance of the private car. Successive decades of housing-led expansion, much of it on greenfield sites, has created a highly car-dependent settlement pattern. The result is an overreliance on vehicular movement to access services, schools, retail, and community life, including those within short local trips. This has led to physically disconnected neighbourhoods, traffic congestion at peak times, and fragmented and poor pedestrian and cycling connections across both Courtown and Riverchapel.

Public transport access to the town centre is limited and indirect. While Courtown and Riverchapel are served by regional and local bus routes, including routes to Gorey, Wexford Town, and Dublin, the services are infrequent, lack real-time information, and do not integrate well with local walking or cycling networks. The nearest rail connection is in Gorey, approximately 7 km away, on the Dublin–Rosslare line, but there is no dedicated shuttle or feeder service to connect the town centre with the train station. During peak tourist periods, demand for public transport increases sharply, but the infrastructure and service frequency do not scale to meet this need. Consultation highlights a strong appetite for more reliable, connected, and regular public transport options, especially for those without car access, including younger people, older adults, and seasonal workers. Improved bus stop infrastructure, better signage, and integration with active travel modes would significantly enhance the role of public transport in supporting a more accessible and inclusive town centre.

The survey for this plan highlighted the need to refit the main streets and spaces of the town centre for active travel. Footpaths are often narrow or discontinuous, cycle infrastructure is almost entirely absent, and major junctions at Riverchapel Main Street/The Parade, the Courtown Harbour and Main Street, and important gateways such as Ballinatray Bridge lack pedestrian priority.

Through-traffic and parking congestion, particularly in summer, further diminish the comfort and safety of public spaces. The lack of a public transport interchange or real-time services creates additional reliance on cars, especially for those accessing Gorey and regional services. Public consultation confirms that traffic dominance, the absence of safe crossings, and the inaccessibility of key facilities (e.g. the beach, playgrounds, and shops) by foot or bike are significant barriers to local mobility.



Figure 2.9 (Left) Local permeability issues - showing areas where connections for pedestrians and cyclist are unavailable or poor (dashed black lines).

Several features of the existing road layout reinforce vehicle dominance including wide radii at junctions, car-centred street design (wide carriageways), and extensive areas devoted to surface parking, often at the expense of civic or green space. The town centre lacks a legible network of traffic managed, pedestrian-priority streets and active travel connections to surrounding neighbourhoods, the coast, and natural assets such as the Owenavorragh River.

The negative effects of car dominance and weak provision for active travel are cumulative, well

understood and result in less footfall in central areas, fewer opportunities for local business, reduced independence for children and older people, and environmental harm in the form of emissions, noise, and visual intrusion.

As with other towns now engaging with the Town Centre First approach, Courtown and Riverchapel must begin to pivot towards a more balanced, sustainable, and connected mobility model that supports place quality, economic vitality, and inclusive access. An important first step in taking action will be a more comprehensive understanding of movement and mobility in the town as part of a traffic management study.





## 2.8 Planning and regeneration context

The TCFP has been prepared within an established hierarchy of policy and plans, spanning national and local level. At national level, a range of policy areas have direct and indirect impact on the framing of the TCFP. Notable areas of recent public policy in areas such as climate action, energy, housing, the circular economy and sustainable transport and mobility also inform regeneration.

### Town Centre First

Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns (published by the Government in February 2022) is the overarching, cross-sectoral policy for the regeneration of town centres in Ireland. The policy brings together a range of different interests and perspectives around the challenges for town centres. Critically it:

- Sets out the broad policy and regulatory context;
- Acknowledges shared challenges and opportunities for town centres;
- Emphasises the need for collaborative approaches and shared vision for town centres;
- Addresses capacity and capabilities at local level;
- Guides the preparation and adoption of Town Centre First Plans (TCFPs); and
- Sets out a broad approach and framework for funding and implementation of TCFPs.

The Policy includes valuable case examples and methodologies for best practice in plan-preparation and delivery. The TCFP has been prepared to closely align with the policy and best practices included in the Policy.

### National level planning policy

The Draft National Planning Framework, 2024 (NPF) and relevant Planning Guidelines provide the basis of national-level planning policy for regeneration. The overall purpose of the NPF is to promote sustainable development through balanced regional development, more compact urban growth and a greater emphasis on place-making and integrated infrastructure delivery. The NPF includes important high-level National Planning Objectives for urban regeneration. The NPF with its link to the National Development Plan provides for plan-led, regeneration and development funds for urban areas through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF). There is also a set of planning guidelines at national level which guide plan-making and development management at regional and local level. Of greater relevance to the TCFP are guidelines for retail, housing,

urban streets and roads, heritage and flood risk management.

### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020)

The Southern Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2020) (RSES) is the regional level planning policy document for the Southern Region including Wexford. The RSES is guided by the NPF, applying national level policy to the region, and providing greater clarity around regional development, settlement and population distribution, regional-level housing and development, critical physical and social infrastructure and nature and built heritage conservation. The RSES also provides a regional context for other policy areas such as climate action, energy, and the circular economy.

### Wexford County Development Plan 2022–2028

Wexford County Development Plan sets out the broad strategy, policies and detailed objectives for the sustainable development of the County. In broad terms, the plan advocates for tailored population growth, considering existing development and the necessity for social and community facilities to keep pace with recent expansion.

The plan identifies Courtown and Riverchapel as Level 3a Service Settlements, recognising their significant growth and the need for corresponding infrastructure. It recognises the role of coastal and marine tourism in the economy of the county and outlines the context and policies for the development of coastal tourism, and the need to focus tourism related development in town centres, and to provide proper connections between accommodation and assets/attractions and local services. The plan includes county-wide and local policies and protections for the built and natural heritage, including protected structures. The plan also supports the development of community hubs and amenities that foster economic and social well-being. It prioritises delivery of physical and social infrastructure such as housing, community facilities, flood resilience, public realm, and employment as an important means for balancing population growth.



Figure 2.10 Planning and regeneration policy for Courtown and Riverchapel

### Courtown and Riverchapel Local Area Plan (LAP) 2015–2021 (Extended to 2026)

The LAP, extended to 2026, continues to guide development in Courtown and Riverchapel as a designated District Town. It recognises the role of the town as a tourist resort and a mixed-use settlement with a substantial and growing population. It also sets out strategic objectives for improved public realm, walking, nature and coastal path connections, local employment growth and town-centre vitality.

The LAP emphasises the need for enhanced community infrastructure to support the area's

growing population. Key objectives include the provision of multi-user community facilities, youth services, and adult education. The plan also highlights the importance of developing amenities that cater to both residents and visitors, given the area's role as a coastal destination.

The plan provides zoning objectives and specific local objectives for the town. The town centre area is mainly zoned Village Centre (VC) for mixed use development, but also includes zones for Leisure and Amenity (LA), Holiday Caravan/ Mobile Homes Parks (HCMP), Community and Education (CE) and Existing Residential (R).

Infill development opportunity sites are identified, including four such sites in the town centre area (Stopford House site, Bayview Hotel site, Red Row in Riverchapel and Beachside Estate expansion in Seamount. Specific local objectives include a site for a community pitch (at community complex), site for a new community education centre, potential public park, design statement for the former Bayview Hotel site, potential linear parks, Coastal path (at cliff walk), visual assessment of land, and locations for footpath and lighting to be provided.
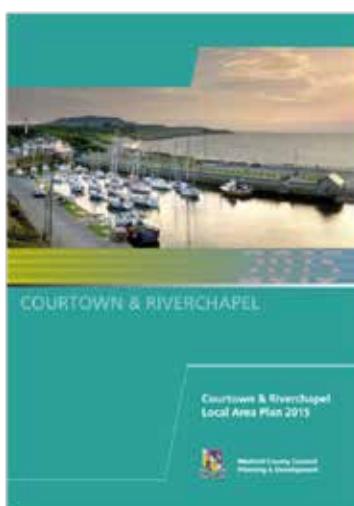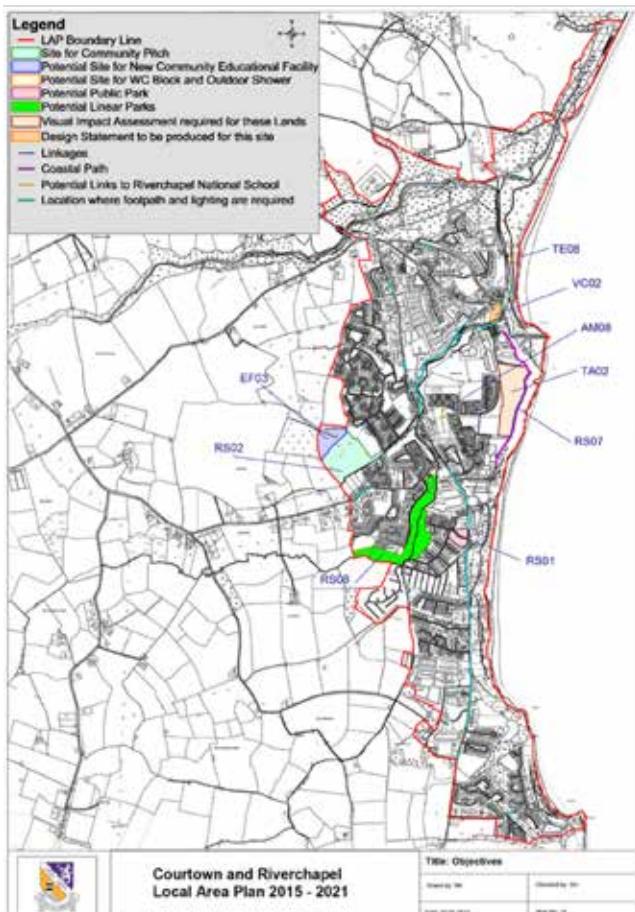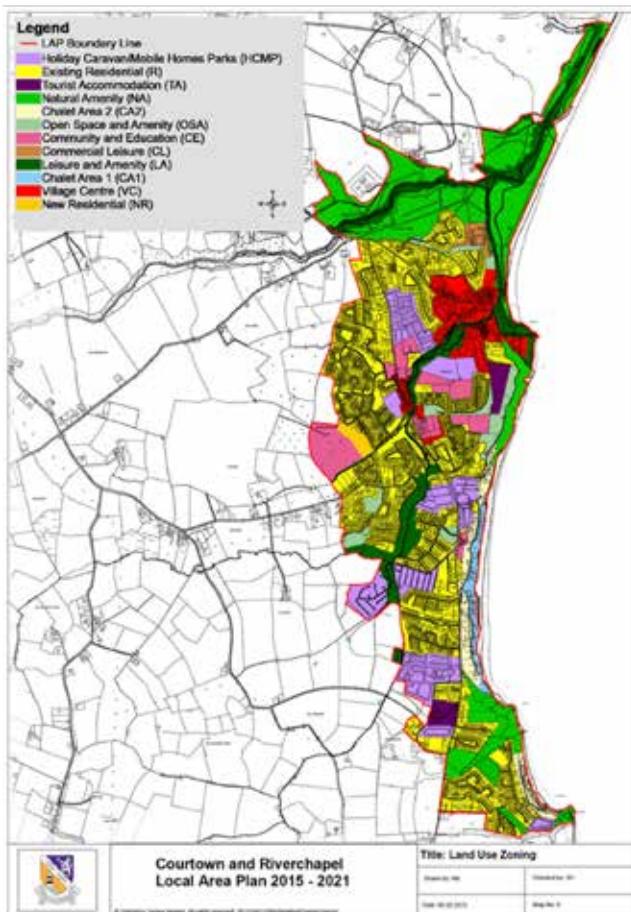




**Figure 2.11** Current land use zoning and local objectives (Courtown and Riverchapel LAP)

### Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2024–2029
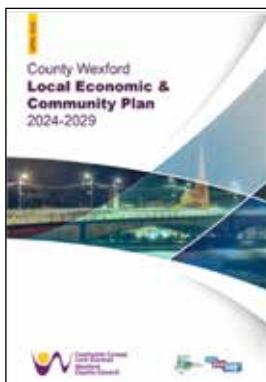
The Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2024–2029 presents an integrated strategy to improve quality of life, economic opportunity, and community wellbeing across County Wexford. It is structured around six high-level goals: inclusive community development, environmental sustainability, economic growth and resilience, improved health and wellbeing, education and lifelong learning, and strengthened local governance. The LECP outlines cross-cutting themes such as climate action, digital inclusion, and rural-urban balance, and it places a strong emphasis on place-based planning, community engagement, and interagency collaboration. Key economic priorities include supporting SMEs, advancing the circular economy, and boosting social enterprise and the creative industries.

In the context of Courtown and Riverchapel, the LECP has clear relevance for town centre regeneration. It advocates for vibrant, liveable towns with high-quality public realm, inclusive infrastructure, and accessible services. Specific actions that align with local priorities include developing community and youth facilities, enhancing coastal resilience, promoting active travel and tourism, and supporting the digital and green economy. The LECP also encourages the use of Town Teams and local partnerships to deliver sustainable regeneration, making it a strong enabler for initiatives such as the Riverchapel Community Centre, the Smart Village strategy, and circular economy and wellbeing projects.

### Wexford Climate Action Plan 2024–2029
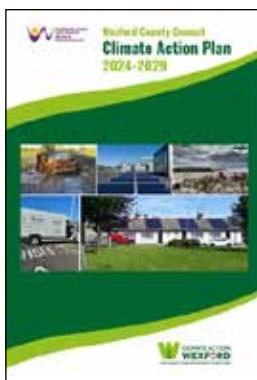
The Wexford County Council Climate Action Plan 2024–2029 sets out an ambitious, evidence-based strategy for achieving climate resilience and reducing emissions across the county in line with Ireland's national targets. The plan commits the Council to a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and a 50% increase in energy efficiency by 2030, covering five action areas: Governance & Leadership, Built Environment & Transport, Natural Environment & Green Infrastructure, Communities & Resilience, and Sustainability & Resource Management. It identifies critical local risks, particularly coastal erosion, flooding, and extreme weather event and outlines more than 130 targeted actions, including EV infrastructure, green procurement, energy retrofits, biodiversity protection, circular economy promotion, and deep community engagement.

The plan supports public realm improvements, energy-efficient retrofits, coastal flood resilience measures, smart mobility (e.g., walking/cycling infrastructure), and community-led sustainability projects. As a coastal area at heightened risk of erosion and sea level rise, Courtown and Riverchapel are well positioned to benefit from the plan's natural environment and green infrastructure objectives. Additionally, town-centre interventions like climate-conscious spatial planning, sustainable transport, EV charging, and resource-efficient public buildings are all explicitly supported under the Built Environment and Transport section. The plan's focus on mobilising communities through climate literacy, public art, green enterprise zones, and retrofitting schemes also provides an enabling context for integrated regeneration efforts that are climate-proofed and community-driven.

### Wexford County Council Corporate Plan 2019–2024

The Wexford County Council Corporate Plan 2025 is currently under preparation. The 2019–2024 plan sets out the strategic vision and operational priorities for the local authority, structured around four thematic goals of A Better Wexford, Clean and Green Wexford, Enrich Life in Wexford, and Excellence for a Model County. It commits to delivering inclusive, sustainable growth by supporting housing, infrastructure, community wellbeing, climate action, and economic development across both urban and rural areas. The plan emphasises innovation, strong governance, and community engagement, aligning with broader national strategies such as Project Ireland 2040 and Our Rural Future. Its relevance to town centre regeneration lies in

its focus on public realm improvements, digital transformation, active travel, and cross-sectoral collaboration to revitalise local communities and promote quality of life.

## County Wexford Tourism Strategy 2019–2023

This is the most recent county tourism strategy. It is a focused plan to enhance Wexford's tourism offer, strengthen its brand, and increase visitor numbers and economic returns. The strategy targets a 27% increase in tourism revenue and identifies six high-potential segments including cultural explorers, social energisers, and great escapers. Key actions include developing high-quality visitor experiences, promoting year-round tourism, and strengthening coordination through Visit Wexford and Taste Wexford branding. It emphasises the need for improved infrastructure, event programming, digital marketing, and enhanced visitor servicing, particularly in coastal and rural areas where tourism potential remains under-realised.

For Courtown and Riverchapel, the strategy's relevance is clear. It identifies the area as a priority for developing coastal and family-focused experiences, enhanced walking and cycling infrastructure, and upgraded accommodation. Town centres are seen as key nodes for tourism engagement, requiring investment in public realm, signage, heritage interpretation, and digital connectivity. The plan also promotes local food, arts, and festivals as tools to build distinctiveness and animate public spaces. Regenerating the town centre through placemaking, active tourism infrastructure, and local business engagement aligns directly with the strategic goals of building Wexford's tourism economy on authentic, community-rooted experiences.

## Wexford County Council Arts Plan 2023–2027



The plan was launched following a 2022-wide consultation, this five-year plan and sits under the Creative Ireland Programme. It is structured around themes: Creative Youth, Creative Communities, Creativity and Well-being, Creative Climate Action, and Creative Industries. It includes community activation programmes such as Cultural Companions, Arts Ability, Music Generation, and public realm art interventions during Climate Art Assembly. The plan supports regeneration through placemaking, destination-building, and creative enterprise activation in town centres.

## Wexford Age Friendly Strategy 2022–2026

The strategy refreshes the 2017–2021 strategy following consultation with over 650 residents aged 55 and over. It aims to improve access, mobility, public amenities, and intergenerational connectivity. It is delivered in partnership with Age Friendly Ireland and initiatives include Dementia Friendly Wexford. In terms of regeneration the strategy highlights the importance of inclusive public realm design, such as seating, toilets and signage for older and less-mobile residents.

## SMART Village Strategy (2023)

The SMART Villages initiative and the LEADER Programme promote innovative, community-led rural development. Key aspects include digital transformation by encouraging the adoption of digital technologies to enhance services and connectivity, economic diversification through supporting new business models and entrepreneurship and community empowerment by facilitating local decision-making and project implementation.

The Courtown Community Council's Smart Village Strategy for Courtown and Riverchapel (2023) was prepared under this programme and focuses on harnessing digital innovation to support sustainable regeneration, enhance local services, and empower community-led development. The strategy aims to address longstanding gaps in connectivity, digital infrastructure, and service access across the twin settlements of Courtown and Riverchapel.

The Smart Village approach aligns with national policies such as Our Rural Future and prioritises digital hubs, smart tourism, online community platforms, and digital upskilling for businesses and residents. It also emphasises stronger links between local stakeholders, including schools, health providers, and tourism operators, to foster a digitally connected, resilient, and inclusive local

economy.

The strategy supports a series of actions such as establishing a digital enterprise and learning hub in the town centre, launching a centralised community website, improving access to public Wi-Fi, and promoting smart signage and digital storytelling for visitors. It also outlines governance structures through which local groups, including the Town Team and the Community Council, can lead implementation and access funding streams.

### Courtown Community Council Survey Report (2022)

The Courtown Community Council Survey Report for the Smart Village Strategy provides a valuable insight into community issues that are relevant to town centre regeneration. The report highlighted strong community priorities around local infrastructure, sustainability, and essential services. Key findings show that 83.1% of respondents viewed social infrastructure as very important, while 59% emphasised the need for housing and sustainable neighbourhoods. Environmental and climate protection was a major concern for 74%, and 87% of respondents called for more investment in roads. In terms of future service needs, 90.8% wanted improved community facilities, and 89.2% sought better healthcare services. Youth, elderly, and community services were rated as top priorities for short-term development (i.e. in the next two years).

### Courtown Community Council Circular Economy Action Plan (2024)

The Courtown Community Council Circular Economy Action Plan (2024) outlines a comprehensive community-led strategy to respond to the environmental, social, and economic challenges facing Courtown, particularly those arising from climate change, coastal erosion, and declining biodiversity. Underpinned by the principles of eliminating waste, circulating materials, and regenerating nature, the plan positions circular economy practices as central to reimagining Courtown and Riverchapel's future.

It emphasises local resilience, stewardship, and place-based solutions, responding to the emotional and ecological impacts of losing the

beach, which was once the town's defining feature. The plan builds on CCC's ongoing initiatives including smart village strategies, eco-tourism efforts, and local partnerships with Seal Rescue Ireland and Meals on Wheels, proposing a model where circular economy and wellbeing go hand in hand.

The strategy proposes a co-designed action plan including pilot projects (e.g., repair cafés, sewing groups, heritage restoration), awareness campaigns, and education initiatives involving schools, second-home owners, and youth groups. CCC calls for the creation of a Circular Economy Co-Design Team to lead collaborative governance, supported by Wexford County Council. A particular emphasis is placed on storytelling, creative community participation, and small-scale circular practices like reuse, repair, and shared resources. Projects are to be evaluated using frameworks such as the UN SDGs, Doughnut Economics, and the 4 Returns model.

### Digital Town Blueprint (2025)



The Digital Town Blueprint (2025) assessment for Courtown and Riverchapel highlights a series of interconnected challenges and opportunities that are critical to the town centre's regeneration. While fixed broadband coverage is strong, mobile broadband quality and access to digital hubs and public Wi-Fi remain weak, especially in outer areas. Local businesses show low levels of digital maturity. Some 43% lack a website, and few use online sales, analytics, or booking tools. Civil society groups also underperform in digital presence, limiting their outreach and engagement capacity. Despite some use of social media, the tourism sector lacks coordinated digital infrastructure such as QR codes, AR, or mobile apps, and the town's tourism portal is underdeveloped. Similarly, public services and digital health tools are limited, and there are no digital education offerings locally, which deepens the digital divide for seniors and young people alike. Digital public services are almost absent beyond basic e-health functions, and no open datasets are available to enable community-led

innovation.

Despite these gaps, the area shows strong potential for regeneration through digital activation. Governance structures such as the Town Team, Smart Village group, and support from Wexford County Council position the town well to implement a coordinated digital strategy. Actions should include establishing a local digital hub, delivering targeted digital training (especially for businesses, seniors and young people), enhancing the town's digital tourism infrastructure, and relaunching the town portal with transactional and itinerary features. Investment in public Wi-Fi, digital health kiosks, and community-facing technology will help close service gaps and align with national and county strategies.

The report concludes with an overall Digital Readiness Index score of 58.6. This is slightly better than some other relevant benchmarks, and indicates that town centre regeneration can be rapidly be supported by improved readiness.

## 2.9 Key regeneration proposals

There are a number of current development proposals in the public and private domains in the town centre that will have a significant impact on town centre regeneration if implemented. They include:

- Courtown Beach Nourishment and Marina Development Project; and

- Riverchapel Community Centre.

### *Coastal Destination Courtown: Courtown Beach Nourishment and Marina Development Project*

Coastal Destination Courtown is a two-phase initiative led by Wexford County Council aimed at restoring the coastal environment and revitalising Courtown's tourism and marine economy. It is currently at an early proposal stage, with funding being sought to bring it to more detailed design stage.

Phase 1 proposes to restore approximately 500 metres of the North Beach through the importation of 225,000 m³ of sand and the construction of sediment control structures, including a 260m rock armour shorearm and a temporary groyne. These works are intended to address long-standing beach erosion and stabilise

the coastline. Phase 2, planned for around year five, would deliver a 198-berth marina, supported by coastal protection infrastructure such as vertical training walls and rock armour. Dredging will create suitable depths for navigation, and the reclaimed material will be used to form a new 1.2 hectare public green space. The project aligns with national policy objectives on coastal tourism, recreation, and climate resilience and is currently progressing through environmental assessment and community consultation stages.

### *Riverchapel Community Centre*

The Riverchapel Community Centre Feasibility Study (January 2022) outlines the urgent need and practical roadmap for developing a multi-purpose community facility in Riverchapel to serve both Riverchapel and Courtown at the current Riverchapel Community Complex (it should be noted that the name of the facility may change in consultation with the community as the existing Riverchapel Community Centre remains operational on Main Street). The study identifies significant gaps in social and community infrastructure, citing high population growth, socio-economic disadvantage, unemployment, and educational need. The proposed centre, to be delivered in phases, would include a two-court indoor sports hall, multipurpose activity rooms, consultation and office spaces, and future provision for a youth hub and café. It is designed to support health, education, youth, and social services in partnership with agencies like Túsla, Barnardos, WLD, and the HSE. The capital cost for Phase 1 is estimated at €1.83 million. The study aligns with key national and local policies including the Courtown-Riverchapel LAP, Rural Development Policy, and Wexford LECP, and proposes a community-led governance model through Riverchapel Community Complex CLG.

### Other current development proposals

Projects and proposals are typically advanced through the planning process, by way of planning applications. They are assessed against current planning policy, notably the relevant statutory plans for the town (The County Development Plan and the Local Area Plan). Projects and proposals may also be subject to appeal and decision by An Coimisiún Pleanála. Currently, there is a larger

and more significant planning application for a hotel under assessment. The preparation of the TCFP has regard to the current status of larger and more significant planning applications.
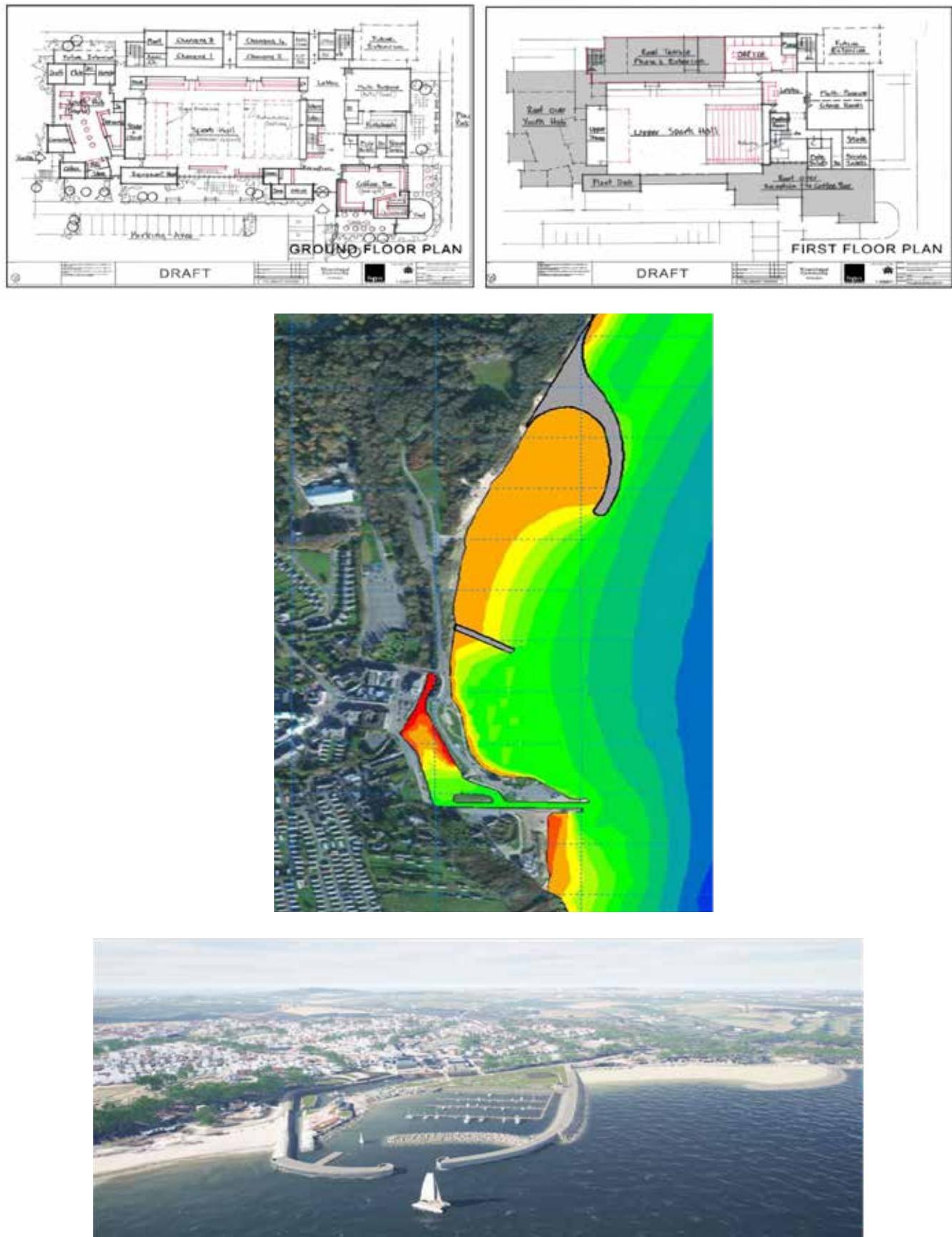


**Figure 2.12** Initial plans for the Riverchapel Community Centre (Top) and images of Coastal Destination Courtown - the proposed Phase 1 Beach Nourishment (Middle) and completed Marina Development (Bottom).

"

To shape a vibrant, connected, and climate-resilient town centre that supports a strong year-round community, celebrates its coastal and natural setting, and provides welcoming spaces for people to live, work, play, and thrive.

"

# 3

# Vision and Principles

## 3.1 Vision statement

The vision for the TCFP was drawn from different sources including the consultation process, relevant plans and policy, the studies carried out for the TCFP, and best practice and the experience of other towns of town centre regeneration. The following statement reflects this vision:

**To shape a vibrant, connected, and climate-resilient town centre that supports a strong year-round community, celebrates its coastal and natural setting, and provides welcoming spaces for people to live, work, play, and thrive.**

## 3.2 Ten principles for town centre regeneration

The vision for the Town Centre is underpinned by a set of principles, which in turn underpin the regeneration strategies, and the urban regeneration framework of the TCFP.



They are:

1. **Put people first** by ensuring regeneration is community-led, inclusive, and responsive to local needs across all age groups.

2. **Support a year-round town centre** by promoting permanent population growth, employment, and services beyond the summer season.

3. **Encourage compact and connected development** that reinforces the town centre and improves walkability between neighbourhoods and key destinations.

4. **Enhance public realm and placemaking** to create attractive, safe, and inclusive spaces for community life and social interaction.

5. **Invest in essential community infrastructure** such as health, youth, education, and cultural facilities that strengthen wellbeing and social cohesion.

6. **Promote climate resilience and sustainability** through nature-based solutions, coastal protection, energy efficiency, and low-carbon development.

7. **Grow a diverse and localised economy** by supporting small businesses, digital innovation, creative sectors, and circular enterprise models.

8. **Prioritise sustainable transport and access** by improving active travel, public transport connections, and reducing car dominance in the town centre.

9. **Celebrate and protect local identity and heritage** through context-sensitive design, conservation, and storytelling.

10. **Ensure collaborative delivery and accountability** by aligning actions with local leadership, Town Centre First structures, and transparent monitoring.

# 4

## Regeneration Pillars

## 4.1 Introduction

The section introduces the pillars for regeneration for the town centre. These are also explained in a spatial context through urban design and landscape concepts. These concepts show how the pillars can be delivered in a coherent way across the town centre and the larger town.

The consultation for the plan highlighted the need to ensure that the wide range of issues, themes, actions and priorities were coherently gathered into understandable, actionable and measurable categories. It was decided with the Town Team to use a framework of regeneration pillars, supported by objectives and action. The regeneration pillars for the town centre are:

**Pillar 1: Living Well Locally**

**Pillar 2: Connected and Compact Town Centre**

**Pillar 3: Vibrant Coastal Economy and Enterprise**

**Pillar 4: Natural and Built Resilience**

**Pillar 5: Culture, Capacity and Collaboration**



**Pillar 1: Living Well Locally**

This pillar focuses on making Courtown and Riverchapel a great place to live all year round. It prioritises diverse housing, access to healthcare, education, and youth services, and the development of high-quality community infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing and changing population.

**Pillar 2: Connected and Compact Town Centre**

This pillar supports the transformation of the town centre into a walkable, accessible and vibrant place. It aims to improve mobility through active travel, reduce car dependency, connect neighbourhoods and green spaces, and promote compact, high-quality development within the urban core.

**Pillar 3: Vibrant Coastal Economy and Enterprise**

This pillar strengthens the town centre's economic role by promoting sustainable tourism, supporting small businesses, and enabling local enterprise. It includes the regeneration of key sites, the development of a marine hub and marina, and support for the circular and evening economies.

**Pillar 4: Natural and Built Resilience**

This pillar ensures that the town's regeneration is environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient. It emphasises the protection of natural assets, restoration of biodiversity, conservation of heritage buildings, and the integration of green and blue infrastructure in all future development.

**Pillar 5: Culture, Capacity and Collaboration**

This pillar supports community empowerment, pride of place, and cultural expression. It fosters intergenerational engagement, local leadership, and collaborative governance, while celebrating Courtown and Riverchapel's identity through arts, storytelling, and creative placemaking.

## 4.2 Pillar 1: Living Well Locally

Courtown and Riverchapel have experienced rapid population growth over the past two decades, with the 2022 Census showing a 17% increase since 2016, which is well above county and national averages. This growth has brought significant pressure on services and infrastructure, with the Riverchapel Community Centre Feasibility Study (2022) and Town Centre consultation identifying critical gaps in primary healthcare, youth services, community space, and childcare. The area also records high age dependency ratios, below-average third-level attainment, and elevated unemployment—

indicators of structural disadvantage.

Access to health, education, and community services is fragmented, with many residents reliant on Gorey for basic needs. The absence of a dedicated primary care facility, youth drop-in centres, or accessible lifelong learning opportunities has a direct impact on wellbeing and opportunity, especially among young families, older residents, and new arrivals. The feasibility study for a new Riverchapel Community Centre (at the current complex) and survey findings strongly support the provision of new multi-purpose, inclusive infrastructure within walking distance of the town centre. It is clear however, that a proper baseline for community needs and demands needs to be prepared for Courtown and Riverchapel as a whole. This is most appropriately done as a study to inform the statutory planning process, specifically, future settlement plans within the County Development Plan.

This pillar sets out to address these challenges by creating a liveable and inclusive town centre that serves its growing, year-round population. Actions focus on establishing community infrastructure, enabling healthcare and care services, enhancing youth provision, and integrating lifelong learning, making the town centre a hub for daily life, resilience, and wellbeing.

| Objective | | Actions |
|---|---|---|
| LWL01 | Increase housing supply, variety and efficiency | Target town centre regeneration blocks for housing in mixed use development. Take opportunities to redevelop vacant and seasonal housing for diverse tenure and needs; repurpose holiday parks adjacent to the town centre for year-round residential use. |
| LWL02 | Establish local community needs and demands. | Carry out community needs and demands assessment for the town to determine current and longer-term needs. |
| LWL03 | Deliver integrated healthcare and care services | Work with HSE on provision of primary/day care. Investigate services co-located with civic/community uses. |
| LWL04 | Strengthen education and lifelong learning | Work with providers to increase primary education capacity, through additional facilities and/or a new primary school; explore secondary provision with providers; expand adult and digital learning. |
| LWL05 | Provide quality community infrastructure | Deliver the proposed Riverchapel Community Centre. Integrate suitable community uses within a new coastal and maritime centre in Courtown. |
| LWL06 | Support youth and family wellbeing | Develop youth hubs, inclusive play spaces, and parenting and wellbeing supports. |

**Table 4.1** Pillar 1 Objectives and actions

## 4.3 Pillar 2: Connected and Compact Town Centre

The built form of Courtown and Riverchapel is fragmented, shaped by decades of car-based suburban expansion. Consultation feedback and the Digital Town Blueprint (2025) highlight poor pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, disconnected neighbourhoods, and a lack of active transport options, which all contributing to high car dependency and congestion, especially in summer. Key public spaces remain underused or unsafe due to narrow paths, uneven surfaces, poor lighting, and the dominance of vehicle traffic.

The existing town centre is compact in scale, but it lacks permeability and coherent linkages to housing areas, schools, and natural assets. Despite some historic streetscapes and an attractive harbour, wayfinding is weak and walking routes are incomplete. Many residents and visitors noted in surveys that safe access to the beach, playgrounds, and river walks is hindered by gaps in the footpath network and poor traffic management. The analysis for the plan highlighted the need for a wider and more comprehensive study for traffic management and active travel for Courtown and Riverchapel to underpin the objectives and actions. This is most appropriately done as a study to inform the statutory planning process, specifically, future settlement plans within the County Development Plan.

This pillar aims to reconnect the town through walkable, accessible and climate-conscious design. It supports the creation of a low-carbon mobility network linking both settlements, improved active travel infrastructure, and a shift toward compact, mixed-use growth focused around the town centre. Public realm improvements will provide a more inclusive, welcoming and sociable environment for all.



| Objective | | Actions |
|---|---|---|
| CTC01 | Establish a proper baseline for traffic management and active travel. | Carry out an active traffic management and active travel study to guide greater use of active travel options. Ensure that the study is sensitive to unique seasonal characteristics. |
| CTC02 | Design an accessible and inclusive public realm | Upgrade footpaths, crossings, signage and public spaces; integrate universal design; initiate trial, active travel measures in selected areas, such as pedestrianisation, circulation measures and controlled access. |
| CTC03 | Enhance active travel and local connections | Link Courtown and Riverchapel via a new Greenlink at the Pig's Bank; complete the waterfront promenade; restore cliff walks; connect to surrounding walking routes. Prioritise safe routes to school. |
| CTC04 | Promote low-carbon mobility and reduce car dependency | Prioritise the delivery of cycling and e-bike infrastructure, an incremental approach to relocation of surface car parking and shuttle bus services. |
| CTC05 | Guide compact and high-quality development | Develop an urban design and landscape framework; prioritise infill and adaptive reuse, identify key regeneration blocks and sites, and areas for sequential growth and consolidation of the town centre. |

**Table 4.2** Pillar 2 Objectives and actions

Connected and Compact Town Centre

## 4.4 Pillar 3: Vibrant Coastal Economy and Enterprise

Courtown and Riverchapel's identity as a seasonal seaside resort has shaped its economy and infrastructure. However, this reliance on summer tourism and static holiday-home use has contributed to underused town centre assets, high commercial vacancy in the off-season, and limited year-round employment. The Wexford Tourism Strategy (2019–2023) and recent consultation work both highlight the opportunity to reposition Courtown and Riverchapel as a destination for sustainable, year-round coastal tourism and marine-based enterprise.

Coastal Destination Courtown: Courtown Beach Nourishment and Marina Development Project provides a major opportunity and catalyst for economic diversification. The addition of an independently-delivered multi-purpose Coastal and Maritime Centre and marina facilities, alongside coastal protection works and visitor infrastructure, could act as a catalyst for potential for eco-tourism, water sports, marine training, and environmental interpretation. At the same time, local employers, businesses and creatives are calling for pop-up spaces, markets, evening economy options, and support for small business innovation.

This pillar seeks to revitalise the town centre economy by activating key sites, expanding tourism and event programming, developing enterprise hubs, and embedding circular economy practices. It will strengthen Courtown and Riverchapel as a place for local enterprise, cultural activity, and visitor engagement cross the all seasons.







| Objective | | Actions |
|---|---|---|
| VCE01 | Support small enterprise and town centre vitality | Establish enterprise as part of the new civic and community hubs; enable seasonal markets, 'meanwhile' uses for vacant and underused buildings and sites, pop-ups and food stalls in new and improved urban spaces. |
| VCE02 | Promote sustainable tourism and the visitor economy | Ensure tourism development is of benefit to both residents and visitors. Develop a year-round calendar of events; support eco-tourism and wellness offerings. Promote heritage through signage, trails and storytelling. |
| VCE03 | Deliver Courtown as a marine tourism destination | Secure funding to advance the beach nourishment; integrate regeneration actions and projects with the marina project; regain Blue Flag status; establish a multi-purpose, coastal and maritime centre. |
| VCE04 | Unlock strategic development sites and reactivate vacant and underused buildings. | Target the redevelopment of the key regeneration blocks and sites. Prioritise the redevelopment of the former Bayview Hotel site; activate underused/vacant buildings. |
| VCE05 | Make the town centre the hub of a new circular and evening economy | Enable upcycling and reuse, community and social enterprise; plan and support evening economy and night-time activity, supported by a new destination space and more street space for the community and visitors. |

**Table 4.3** Pillar 3 Objectives and actions



Vibrant Coastal Economy and Enterprise

## 4.5 Pillar 4: Natural and Built Resilience

Courtown and Riverchapel's location on western side of the Irish Sea, between dunes, cliffs, the River Owenavorragh and Aughboy/Branoge and woodlands gives it a remarkable natural setting. Yet this environment is increasingly under threat. Erosion has led to beach loss, biodiversity decline, and increased vulnerability to flooding. The Wexford Climate Action Plan (2024–2029) identifies the area as highly exposed to climate risks, calling for coastal adaptation, dune protection, and habitat restoration as urgent priorities. General policies and protections for the natural and built heritage are included in the County Development Plan.

At the same time, the town's built heritage, such as the Old Coast Guard House, the canal slip, and traditional streetscapes, show signs of neglect or underuse. Notably, the Aughboy River, a critical connecting corridor in the town centre, has suffered from poor water quality, littering and poor maintenance for many years. The Riverchapel Circular Economy Plan and Smart Village Strategy advocate for place-based stewardship, green infrastructure, and restoration of both the natural and built environment as key tools for climate and community resilience.

This pillar frames town centre resilience as a foundation for town centre regeneration. It supports nature-based solutions for flood protection and green-blue infrastructure, while safeguarding ecological corridors, restoring riverbanks, and celebrating built heritage through interpretation and adaptive reuse. These actions will help ensure that the town centre is more environmentally sustainable, climate-ready, and rooted in its unique character.





| Objective | | Actions |
|---|---|---|
| **NBR01** | Protect natural assets and landscapes | Safeguard dunes, The Glen, river corridors and coastal ecosystems. Promote an assessment of coastal erosion. Address water quality and maintenance at the Aughboy River corridor. Update ecological and habitats studies. Ensure appropriate environmental assessment of regeneration actions. |
| **NBR02** | Foster biodiversity and community stewardship | Create pollinator corridors; launch environmental volunteer and awareness programme. |
| **NBR03** | Adapt to climate change | Deliver nature-based coastal protection and green infrastructure. |
| **NBR04** | Promote green-blue infrastructure | Integrate water-sensitive and climate-resilient design into town centre developments and public space improvements. |
| **NBR05** | Conserve heritage and promote awareness | Preserve and enhance the built heritage; create interpretive trails and maritime heritage experiences. |

**Table 4.4** Pillar 4 Objectives and actions

## 4.6 Pillar 5: Culture, Capacity and Collaboration

Community engagement throughout this process revealed strong local pride, volunteerism, and a deep connection to the town's maritime and social history. Yet it also highlighted gaps in cultural infrastructure, creative opportunities, and spaces for civic life. The Wexford LECP (2024–2029), the Courtown Community Council Smart Village Strategy, and survey findings consistently called for investment in storytelling, arts, and collaborative planning structures.

There is no public cultural venue or dedicated space for exhibitions, workshops, or creative enterprise. Young people and older residents alike requested shared spaces for intergenerational activity, digital creativity, and cultural expression. The use of storytelling, murals, trails, and interpretation, especially around the harbour and natural landmarks, was frequently suggested as a way to foster identity and animate public space.

This pillar recognises the role of culture and community in shaping a resilient and distinctive town. It proposes actions to support local leadership, enable volunteering, embed creativity in placemaking, and celebrate heritage in visible and interactive ways. It also seeks to build long-term governance and delivery capacity through collaborative structures such as the Town Team and other community forums.

| Objective | | Actions |
|---|---|---|
| CCC01 | Empower local leadership and volunteering | Support community training, recognition and engagement pathways. Develop volunteer capacity programmes. |
| CCC02 | Strengthen intergenerational and inclusive engagement | Facilitate shared spaces and learning for all age groups. |
| CCC03 | Celebrate place through arts and storytelling | Commission murals, art, and interpretation panels; co-locate maritime history displays. |
| CCC04 | Enhance town identity and placemaking | Develop a shared brand and online image for Courtown and Riverchapel; guide public realm improvements. |
| CCC05 | Promote collaborative governance | Sustain a representative Town Team and cross-sector partnerships for delivery. |
| CCC06 | Promote and develop links and partnerships with other coastal towns and networks. | Lead on the creation of a new national coastal communities forum. |

**Table 4.5** Pillar 5 Objectives and actions

"

**Urban design and landscape concepts are used to ensure that actions and projects are approached in a coherent way across the town centre.**

"

# 5

# Framework for Regeneration

## 5.1 Introduction

Section 4 introduced the pillars and urban design and landscape concepts for the regeneration for the town centre. These pillars include objectives and many actions. This section provides the more detailed physical framework for regeneration for the town centre. It comprises:

- Urban design and landscape concepts
- Urban regeneration framework plan
- Key projects

Urban design and landscape concepts are used to ensure that actions and projects are approached in a coherent way across the town centre. The urban regeneration framework shows how these concepts might be realised in the town centre, bringing together the changes needed in the private and public domains. Key projects are selected as priorities for advancement, as these are considered to be those of greatest need and regeneration potential at this time. The projects may be grouped as packages for the purposes of funding at the delivery stages to ensure that investment is targeted, multi-dimensional, integrated and impactful.
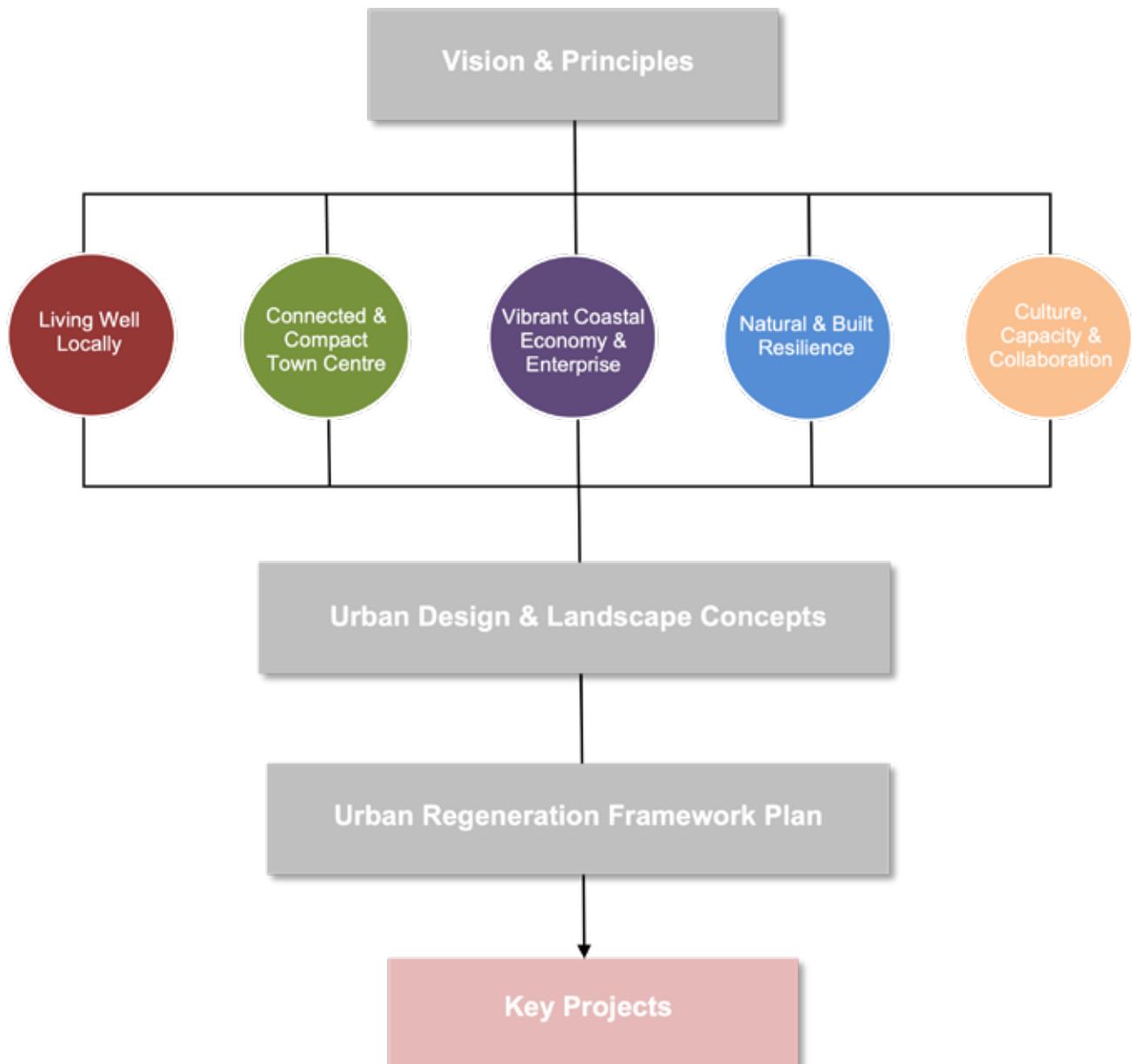


**Figure 5.1** From vision to key projects

## 5.2 Urban design and landscape concepts

The urban design and landscape concepts provide a coherent physical or spatial structure for the delivery of the regeneration pillars. They allow a better understanding of how actions and priorities will be implemented and where they are located. The concepts cover settlement, landscape and mobility.
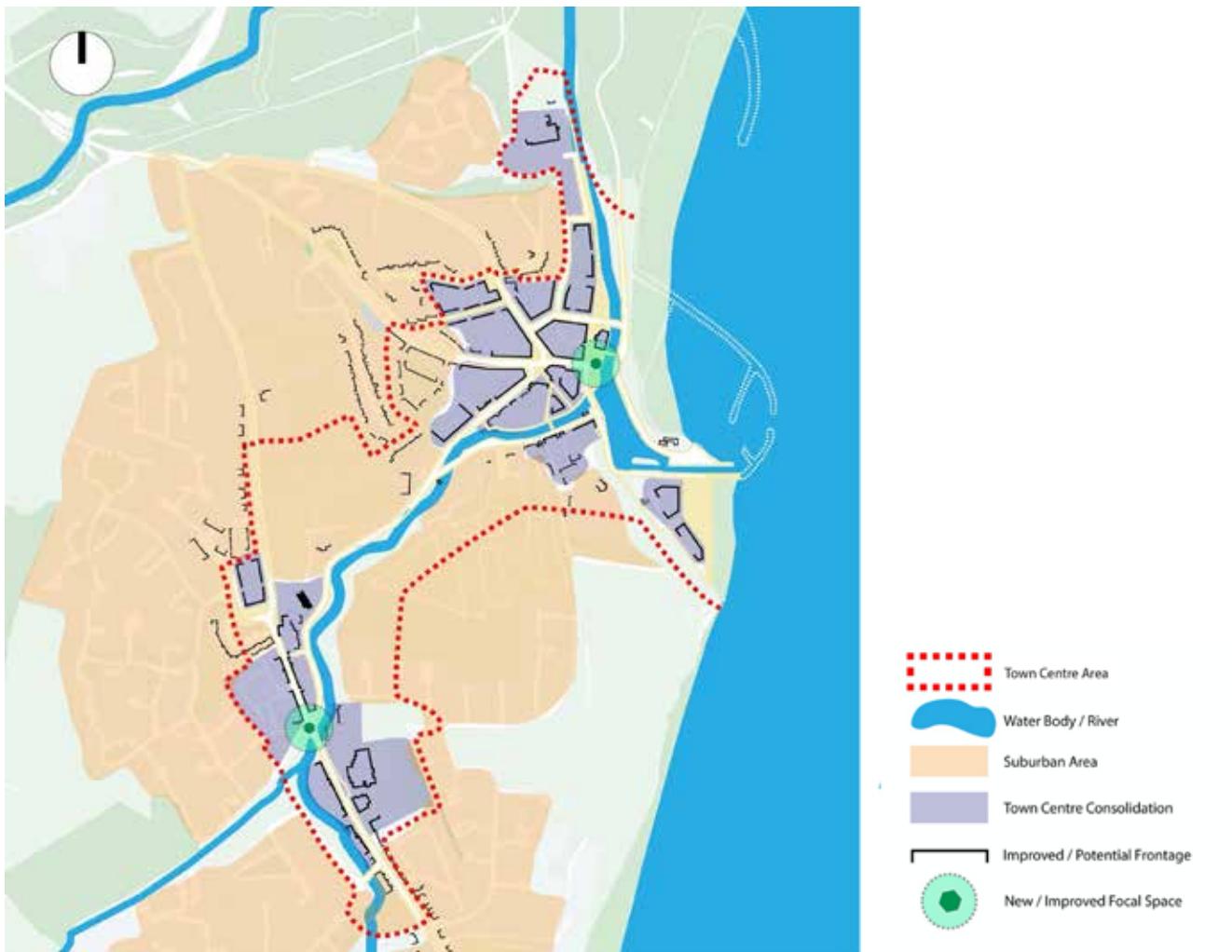


**Figure 5.2** Consolidating the town centre areas for mixed use (purple), improving the built form, and consolidation surrounding residential areas, connecting with the coastal zone.

| Concept | Details |
|---|---|
| Settlement | • Strengthen town centre character areas. |
| | • Introduce new focal spaces for civic, cultural and community uses. |
| | • Improve the coherence and connectivity of street networks through redevelopment and landscape and public space improvement. |
| | • Address areas of weak street frontage in the town centre. |
| | • Promote compact, sequential growth focused on infill development and redevelopment – identifying town centre consolidation and expansion areas for the longer term. |
| | • Facilitate the incremental transition in key locations from seasonal to permanent housing. |
| | • Encourage diverse and mixed-use development, with improved continuity, enclosure, and urban space definition. |

**Table 5.1** Settlement concepts

**Figure 5.3** The principal elements of the landscape concept.

| Concept | Details |
|---------|---------|
| Landscape | • Create multifunctional landscapes supporting recreation, ecology, and mobility [Green and blue infrastructure (GBI) of corridors and hubs].<br><br>• Provide access to natural landscapes from urban areas.<br><br>• Restore ecosystems and enhance biodiversity.<br><br>• Incorporate nature-based solutions for water management and climate resilience.<br><br>• Prioritise beauty, character, and natural coherence in all urban and peri-urban landscapes. |

**Table 5.2** Landscape concepts.

**Figure 5.4** The principal elements of the route structure

| Concept | Details |
|---|---|
| Mobility | • Address seasonal traffic congestion and reduce car dominance in the town centre. |
| | • Promote modal shift toward walking, cycling, and public transport. |
| | • Establish a legible and continuous pedestrian and cycle network. |
| | • Ensure local level permeability through the town centre and with adjoining areas. |
| | • Carry out selective priority permeability projects to support active travel. |
| | • Introduce an active travel zone in the town centre, to include measures for traffic management, public space expansion and enhancement, improved pedestrian safety measures and crossings, and reduced on-street car parking. |
| | • Introduce selective and incremental pedestrianisation. |
| | • Introduce new traffic circulation regimes to include one-way movement and local and disabled access zones. |
| | • Improve connections between Riverchapel and Courtown via a new "green spine" with dedicated cycle and pedestrian facilities, supported by a revised local traffic circulation regime. |
| | • Relocate strategic car parking outside core areas. |
| | • Ensure permeability at existing cul-de-sacs and in all new development. |
| | • Connect by active travel residential areas to schools, civic infrastructure, and the coast. |

**Table 5.3** Mobility concepts.

## 5.3 Urban Regeneration Framework

The Urban Regeneration Framework is a coherent structure within which urban regeneration projects relating to the private domain (typically lands in different types of ownership that are suitable for redevelopment, refurbishment or development) and public space (including all space intended for movement, public access or use) can be placed within a longer-term context. The Framework also shows a preliminary approach to layout and design, but this is by way of a preliminary and broad concept only. A key feature of the Framework are the blocks and sites identified for consolidation of the town centre in a sustainable and compact way. Each element of the Framework will be subject to further concept and detailed design, before being advanced as a regeneration project.



**Figure 5.5** Urban Regeneration Framework.

### 5.3.1 Town Centre consolidation and expansion

Larger urban blocks and specific sites are identified for the consolidation of the town centre in a sustainable and compact way. The core urban blocks in Courtown and Riverchapel are established and essential to the function and character of the town centre. The emphasis here should be on sensitive infill and adaptive reuse. The identified regeneration sites provide an opportunity for more comprehensive redevelopment. Many of these are already identified in the current Local Area Plan and some of these sites are of such scale that they provide options for the location of key projects such as the Coastal and Maritime Centre. In most cases the development of these sites should include an element of mixed use along with new homes. Each of these sites should be subject to urban design statements, including spatial concepts, built form and urban space masterplanning when developing and submitting proposals into the development management process. Other areas surrounding the town centre will be needed to allow for the sequential growth and expansion of the town centre in the medium to long term – but these areas will need to be the subject of a statutory planning process.
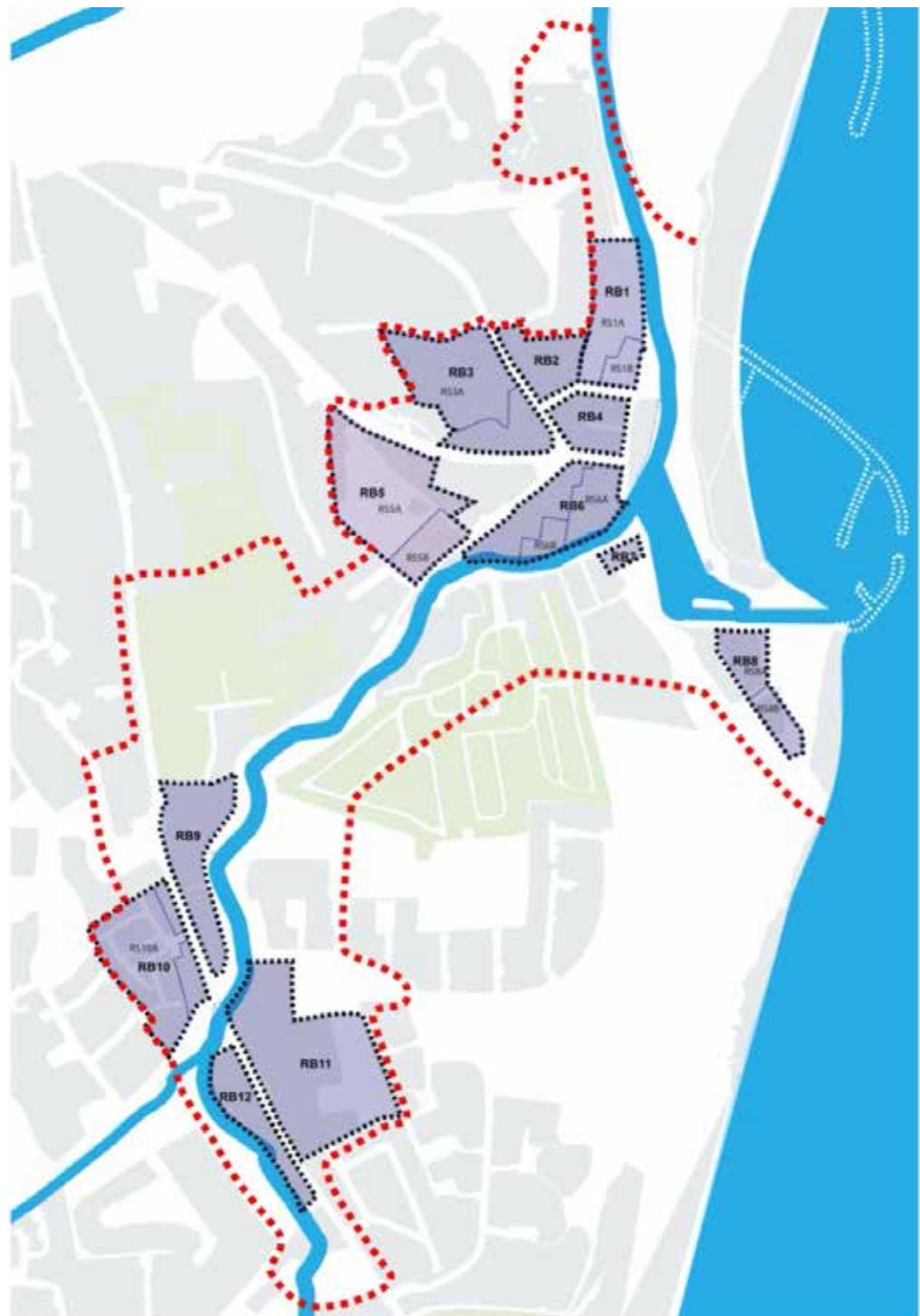
**Figure 5.6** Location of Town centre regeneration blocks and sites (Riverchapel (LHS) and Courtown (RHS)

| Regeneration block and site | Type | Details |
| --- | --- | --- |
| RB1 – RS1A | Consolidation of town centre | Existing public car park. Current application for hotel. Also potential for mixed use development and potential for later expansion of coastal and maritime centre activities (subject to site development). |
| RB1 – RS1B | Consolidation of town centre | Potential location for the coastal and maritime centre. Careful integration with canal and margins. |
| RB2 | Consolidation of town centre | Potential for redevelopment for increased density including some mixed use. |
| RB3 – RS3A | Consolidation of town centre | Redevelopment of the Stopford House lands. Mixed use development with potential for inclusion of community uses (subject to community needs and demands assessment). New permeability. |
| RB4 | Consolidation of town centre | Regeneration of the core block of the Courtown Harbour, through incremental, sensitive mixed-use infill and adaptive reuse. |
| RB5 – RS5A | Consolidation of town centre | Redevelopment of substantial backlands for mixed use development with potential for inclusion of community uses (subject to community needs and demands assessment). New permeability. |
| RB5 – RS5B | Consolidation of town centre | Redevelopment of existing leisure/commercial development for mixed use development. New permeability. |
| RB6 – RS6A | Consolidation of town centre | Redevelopment of substantial prominent site (former Bayview Hotel) for mixed use development. Critical inclusion of active ground floor uses to Main Street and the Harbour/Seamount. Potential for inclusion of community uses (subject to community needs and demands assessment). New permeability including riverside promenade and bridge. |
| RB6 – RS6B | Consolidation of town centre | Potential to extend redevelopment of RS6A along new riverfront promenade, subject to access and permeability, and conservation of biodiversity. |
| RB7 | Consolidation of town centre | Prominent site on the harbour/Seamount. Current planning application for assisted living and ground floor commercial unit. |
| RB8 – RS8A | Consolidation of town centre | South beach regeneration of former Harbour Master's House and curtilage. Potential location for the coastal and maritime centre. Minimise carbon and ecological footprint. |
| RB8 – RS8B | Consolidation of town centre | South beach regeneration of current sailing club complex for recreational uses. Minimise carbon and ecological footprint. |
| RB9 | Consolidation of town centre | Regeneration of the core block of the Riverchapel, through incremental, sensitive mixed-use infill and adaptive reuse. |
| RB10 – RS10A | Consolidation of town centre | Redevelopment of substantial backlands for mixed use development with potential for inclusion of community uses (subject to community needs and demands assessment). New permeability. |
| RB11 | Consolidation of town centre | Redevelopment of low density residential and commercial development for mixed use development. Explore expansion of school curtilage and shared use of space at Beachside development (with Dept of Education and Youth, and as part of a community needs and demands assessment). New permeability from Main Street to Beachside and Aughboy River corridor. |
| RB12 | Consolidation of town centre | Regeneration of the Main Street of the Riverchapel, through incremental, sensitive mixed-use infill and adaptive reuse. |

**Table 5.4** Key regeneration blocks and sites

## 5.4 Town centre key projects

This section identifies the key projects which, along with those already outlined in the TCFP (specifically Coastal Destination Courtown and Riverchapel Community Centre), have the potential to act as catalysts for social, economic and physical regeneration. These projects provide critical multi-purpose, community, economic and enterprise projects and the restructuring and improvement of public spaces. Projects for the restructuring and improvement of public spaces relate to lands in public ownership. These can include footpaths, streets (carriageways), grassed areas, amenity spaces, open spaces, and any 'left-over' spaces. These projects can also target land which is zoned or intended for public access or use. While the precise impact of an individual project or a package on town centre regeneration is difficult to establish, their alignment with the vision and strategies and framework of the TCFP can be clearly shown. Other key projects include studies to guide future statutory decisions around community infrastructure and services and active travel. Each project will need to be the subject of further feasibility study and /or briefing. This will be a key element in the delivery of the plan.



| | |
|---|---|
| **1** | Urban Space Improvement; Courtown Harbour & Main Street |
| **2** | Urban Space Improvement; The Parade and Main Street, Riverchapel |
| **3** | Urban Space Improvement; Greenlink / Pig's Bank |
| ⬤ | Alternative Locations for Coastal and Maritime Centre |
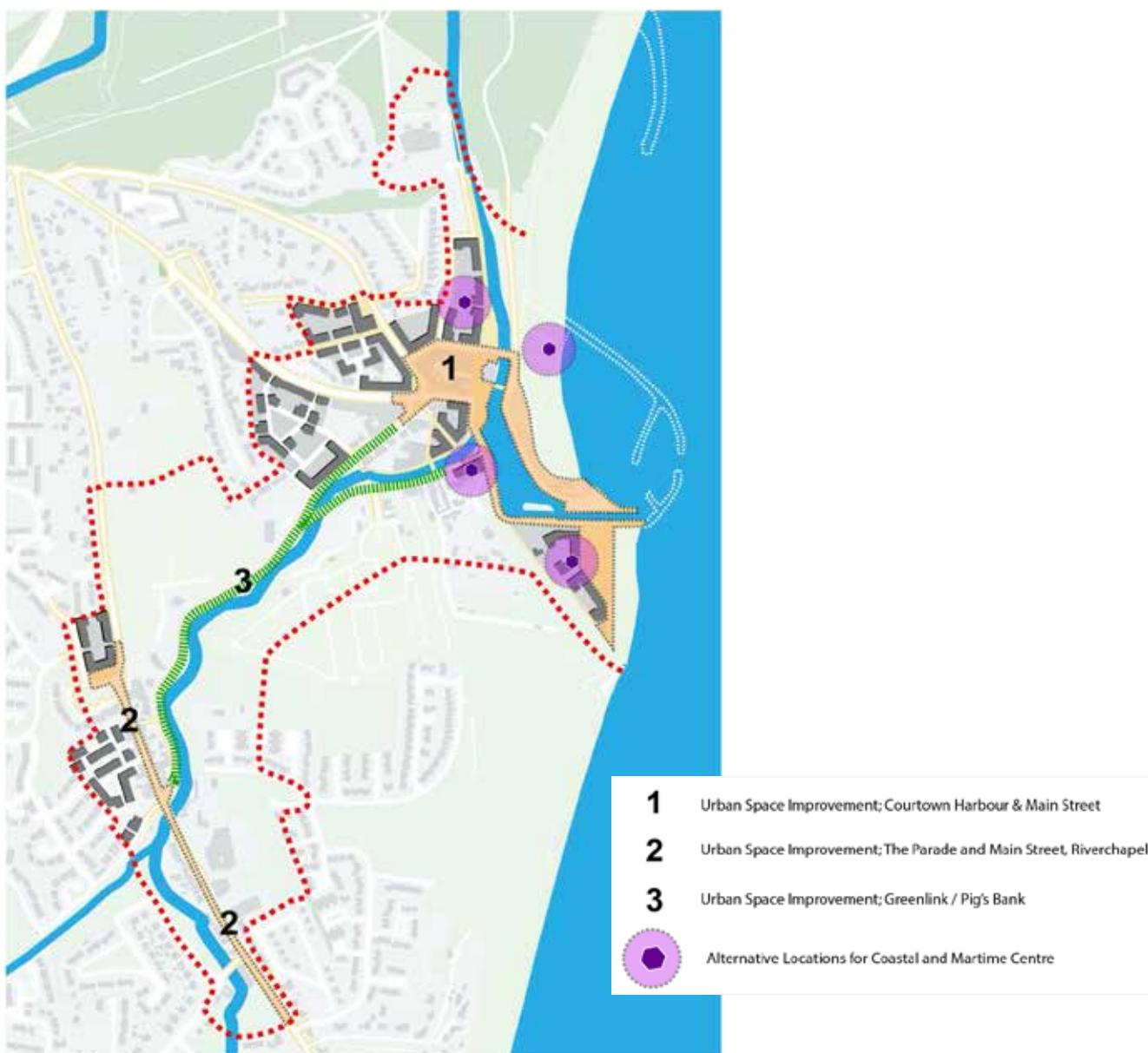
**Figure 5.7** Location of key projects

### 5.4.1 Community needs and demands study

This project will establish an evidence-based understanding of current and future community service requirements in Courtown and Riverchapel. It will examine provision across health, education, recreation, and community facilities, identifying critical gaps and opportunities. The assessment will guide investment in services such as a new multi-purpose centre, healthcare and education facilities, and will feed directly into the County Development Plan to ensure that infrastructure keeps pace with population growth.

| Item | Detail |
|---|---|
| 1 Local centre role and vision | The assessment will establish a clear evidence base for community service and infrastructure provision in Courtown and Riverchapel, supporting their role as sustainable centres meeting the needs of a growing population. |
| 2 Community facilities | Assessment of demand for new and improved community facilities, including a potential multi-purpose centre in Courtown, youth and cultural spaces, and facilities to support community development. |
| 3 Health services provision | Review of primary healthcare capacity in partnership with the HSE, including provision of GP services, medical rooms, and allied health services to meet future needs. |
| 4 Education needs | Analysis of primary and post-primary school provision with the Department of Education and Youth, ensuring alignment with demographic growth and projected demand for places. |
| 5 Wider community infrastructure | Consideration of wider community needs such as childcare, eldercare, sport and recreation facilities, and social services to support quality of life and inclusion. |
| 6 Delivery and phasing | The assessment will inform short-term service improvements, while providing a long-term framework to guide statutory planning and investment through the statutory process of the County Development Plan. |

**Table 5.5** Indicative items for inclusion in the community needs and demands study.

### 5.4.2 Traffic management and active travel study

This project will provide a comprehensive framework for traffic management and mobility in Courtown and Riverchapel. It will assess circulation, car parking, and road safety, while developing strategies to prioritise walking, cycling, and public transport. The study will underpin active travel measures, support more sustainable and safer journeys, and create an evidence base to inform both local improvements and the next County Development Plan.

| Item | Detail |
|---|---|
| 1 Local centre role and vision | The study will inform the development of a comprehensive transport and mobility framework for Courtown and Riverchapel, strengthening their role as accessible, walkable centres. It will promote safe, sustainable travel choices and reduce reliance on the private car, while ensuring appropriate provision for residents, visitors and businesses. |
| 2 Active travel and mode shift | The study will identify opportunities to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport (notably local bus services and shuttles). It will develop a mode shift strategy with safe routes to schools, segregated cycle facilities, and improved pedestrian access to key destinations. |
| 3 Traffic management and parking strategy | Analysis of current traffic circulation, car parking capacity and demand, and road safety issues. Options will include traffic calming, reconfiguration of road layouts, one-way systems, and a long-term parking strategy to support the vitality of the centres. Cycling parking and hubs will be an important part of the strategy. |
| 4 Integration with public realm | The study will coordinate with public realm projects, ensuring that traffic management measures support safe, vibrant and inclusive spaces. It will also inform the phased delivery of the new destination space at Courtown Harbour and Main Street, and the necessary street improvements at The Parade and Main Street in Riverchapel. |
| 5 Link to statutory planning | Outputs will provide evidence to directly inform County Development Plan processes, ensuring active travel and traffic management are embedded in statutory policy. |
| 6 Delivery and phasing | Short-term actions may include tactical measures (e.g. temporary traffic calming, wayfinding, cycle parking, temporary pedestrianisation, junction and crossing improvements for pedestrians and cyclists). Medium to long-term measures will deliver permanent infrastructure and policies. |

**Table 5.6** Indicative items for inclusion in the traffic management and active travel study.

### 5.4.3 Urban Space Improvement: Courtown Harbour & Main Street destination space

Courtown Harbour and Main Street together represent the historic, civic and commercial core of the town. With strategic investment and design, these areas can serve as a more vibrant, inclusive and climate-adaptive town centre. The improvement of this urban space will contribute significantly to the year-round liveability and appeal of Courtown.

| Item | Detail |
|---|---|
| 1. Strategic role and vision | To position the harbour and main street as the social and cultural heart of Courtown through improved connectivity, appearance, safety, and active use. To provide a multi-purpose, all season, destination space for the town centre within an active travel zone for the town centre. |
| 2. Public realm priorities | Deliver a high-quality, accessible and attractive public realm that supports pedestrians, reduces car dominance, and integrates coastal climate resilience through greening and design. |
| 3. Key interventions | Upgrade the harbour promenade and improve public access to the quayside.<br>Install seating, greening and lighting along Main Street<br>Enhance intersection spaces with raised crossings or civic nodes<br>Integrate public art, interpretive signage, and local identity features |
| 4. Movement and access | Improve walkability and sustainable transport by introducing traffic calming, reducing car priority, adding cycle infrastructure, and ensuring inclusive access to beach, marina, and green corridors. This will be supported by the proposed traffic management and active travel study. |
| 5. Activation and placemaking | Encourage street-level vitality by supporting spill-out zones for cafes, enabling pop-up retail and market spaces, and programming seasonal cultural events that activate public space throughout the year.<br>Coordinate with redevelop of key regeneration blocks and sites. |
| 6. Heritage and character | Preserve the unique harbour and maritime character by retaining key structures, enhancing the setting of the Old Coast Guard House, and using materials and finishes that reflect coastal identity. |
| 7. Delivery and phasing | Short-term tactical interventions (e.g., paint, furniture, temporary programming) should be paired with medium-term capital works such as surfacing, junction redesign, and marina integration. These should align with wider regeneration packages and tourism infrastructure projects. |







**Table 5.7** Urban Space Improvement: Courtown Harbour & Main Street
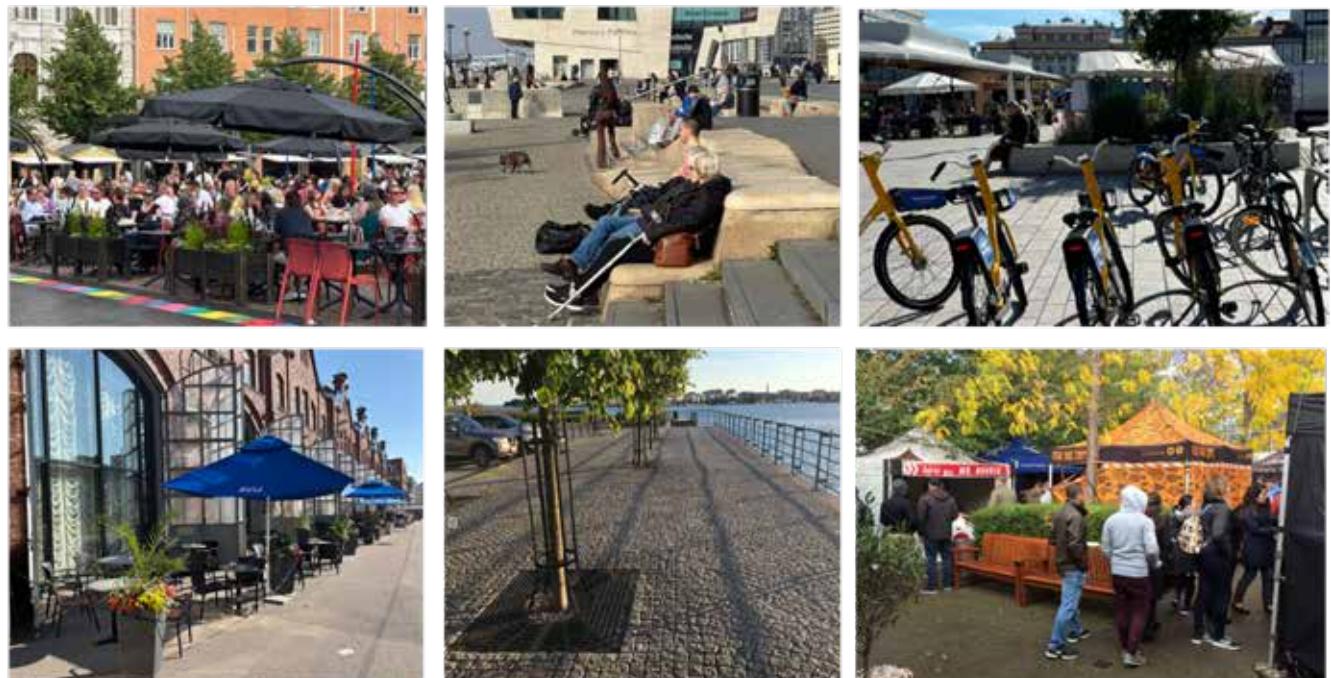
**Figure 5.8** Urban Space Improvement: Courtown Harbour & Main Street, showing indicative plan and images at the harbour and preliminary zone for the destination space.

### 5.4.4 Urban Space Improvement: The Parade & Main Street, Riverchapel

The Parade and Main Street in Riverchapel serve as a key local centre and everyday hub for residents. This area connects homes, schools, shops and services, and holds potential as a more walkable, vibrant and inclusive civic space. Improvements here should enhance everyday functionality, safety, and community character.

| Item | Detail |
|------|--------|
| 1. Local centre role and vision | The goal is to reinforce The Parade and Main Street as the heart of Riverchapel through human-scaled design, improved public space, and support for social life. It should become a more legible and welcoming place for walking, meeting, and gathering—particularly for older people, children, and families. |
| 2. Streetscape and public realm enhancements | Proposals should include tree planting and low-maintenance landscaping, more seating, new or improved footpath surfaces, and subtle civic space features. Wider pavements and raised junctions could help rebalance space toward pedestrians and community use. |
| 3. Safe access and movement | Key priorities include safe pedestrian crossings—particularly at school routes and junctions—better lighting, and traffic calming measures. A shared surface or reduced-speed zone could encourage safer interaction between users and reduce vehicle dominance. Consider upgrade of junction at Church/Red Row to pedestrian and cycle friendly signalled junction. |
| 4. Community and commercial activation | The area would benefit from spill-out zones for cafes or pop-up uses, such as seasonal stalls or community noticeboards. Tactical projects like street painting or micro-gathering spaces could build identity and activity quickly. |
| 5. Heritage and identity | Signage and small-scale interpretation can tell the story of the old village, graveyard and former school. Any design should use locally appropriate materials, colours and planting to reflect Riverchapel's evolving character. |
| 6. Delivery and phasing | Short-term improvements might include tactical placemaking (paint, planting, benches, wayfinding), while longer-term works could focus on paving, junction redesign, and surface upgrades. These works should be coordinated with the development of the Greenlink/Pig's Bank, Riverchapel Community Centre and broader active travel improvements. |



**Table 5.8** Urban Space Improvement: The Parade & Main Street, Riverchapel
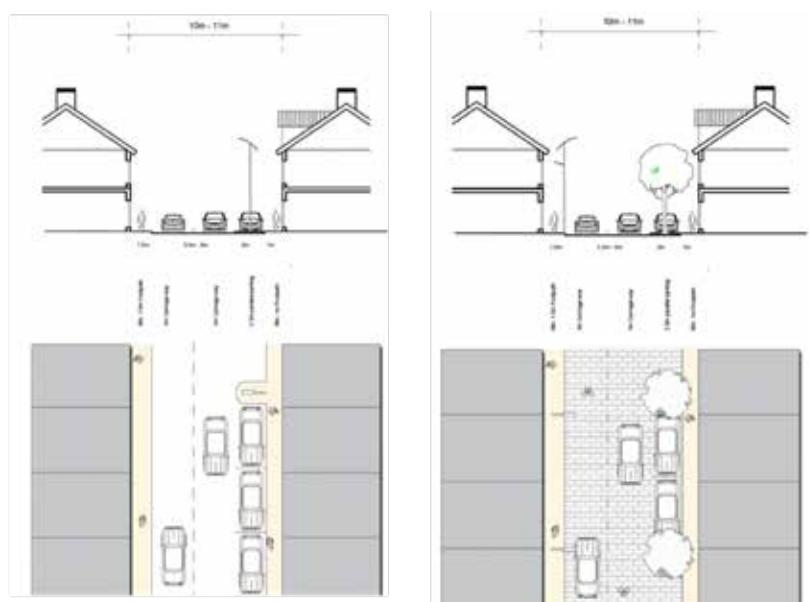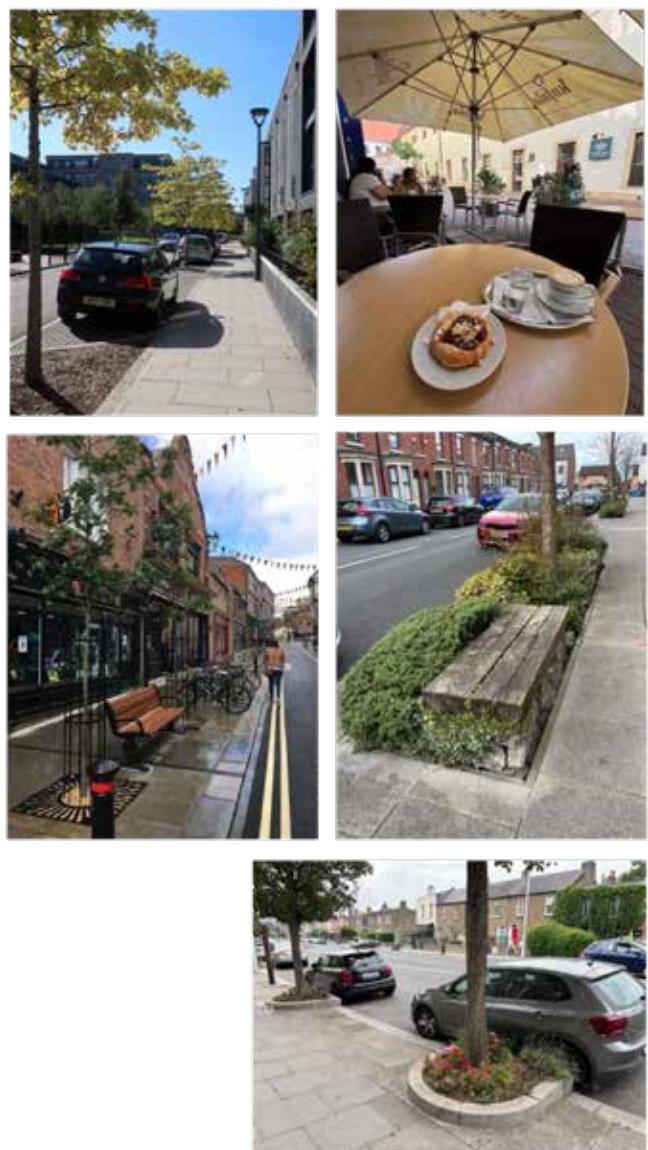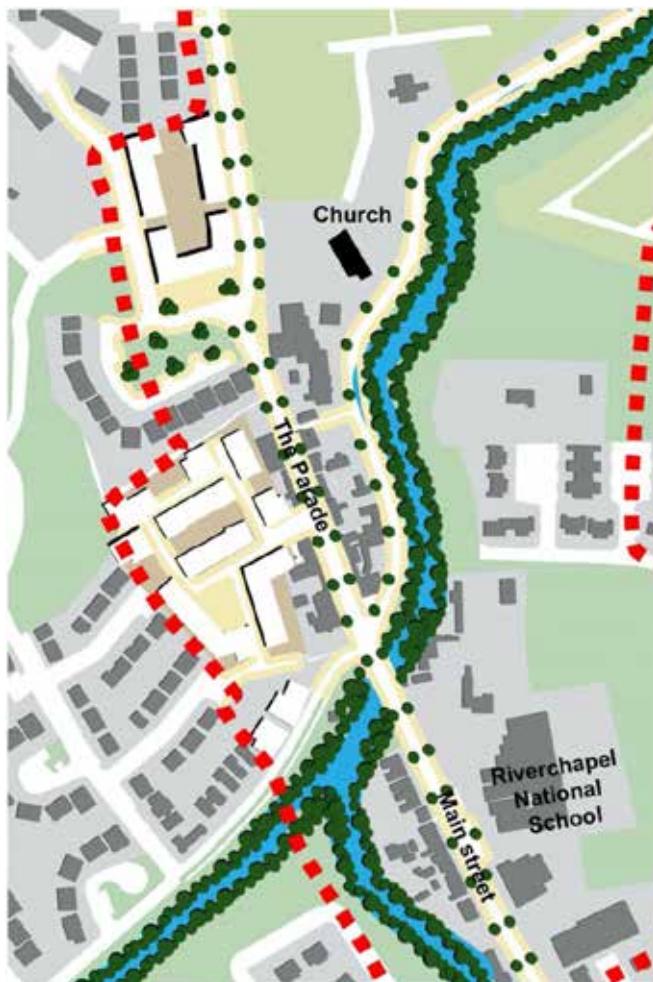
**Figure 5.9** Urban Space Improvement: The Parade & Main Street, showing indicative plan, sections and images.

### 5.4.5 Urban Space Improvement: Courtown and Riverchapel Greenlink – The Pig's Bank

The road connecting the centres of Courtown and Riverchapel (R742) runs along the Aughboy river and valley (the Pig's Bank) and provides an important movement and green and blue infrastructure corridor for the town. This route will be upgraded, subject to a traffic management study to provide a functional and amenity walking route, a two-way cycle track and one-way traffic at the Riverchapel section. The improvements will enhance permeability and promote more sustainable and safer mobility in the town centre. It will also provide an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the corridor, and provide opportunities for environmental awareness and education.

| Item | Detail |
|---|---|
| 1. Local centre role and vision | The vision is to create a safe, attractive, and vibrant green corridor connecting Courtown and Riverchapel, enhancing the identity of the Pig's Bank as a shared natural asset. The upgraded route should promote walking and cycling, provide inclusive access for all ages and abilities, and encourage community ownership of the Greenlink as a key part of town life. |
| 2. Green infrastructure and biodiversity | Interventions should focus on riparian habitat restoration, native tree planting, pollinator-friendly landscaping, and management of invasive species. Biodiversity enhancement will be integral to the design, using the corridor as a living classroom for schools and residents to engage with nature and climate resilience initiatives. |
| 3. Safe access and sustainable mobility | Key improvements will include widening and upgrading the existing footpath, introducing a two-way segregated cycle track, and reconfiguring traffic flow to one-way at the Riverchapel section. Safe pedestrian crossings, upgraded lighting, and clear wayfinding will promote safer and more sustainable journeys between the two centres. |
| 4. Public realm and community spaces | Opportunities will be explored to introduce riverside walking, small gathering points, rest areas with seating, and interpretation features along the route. These spaces could host public art, storytelling elements about the Pig's Bank and Aughboy river, and small installations for environmental awareness, fostering community pride in the corridor. |
| 5. Heritage and identity | Signage, art, and interpretative features should celebrate the history and ecological character of the Pig's Bank and the Aughboy river. Design should respect and enhance the natural setting, using locally appropriate materials and subtle interventions to reinforce the area's unique identity. |
| 6. Delivery and phasing | Short-term actions could include tactical upgrades like temporary traffic calming, signage, lighting, and community planting days. Medium to long-term phases should deliver the full walking and cycling route, structural path improvements, and ecological enhancements, coordinated with the traffic management study and broader active travel strategies. |



**Table 5.9** Urban Space Improvement: Courtown and Riverchapel Greenlink – The Pig's Bank

**Figure 5.10** Urban Space Improvement: Greenlink – The Pig's Bank, showing an indicative plan, sections and images.

Existing (below left) and indicative sections (below right)
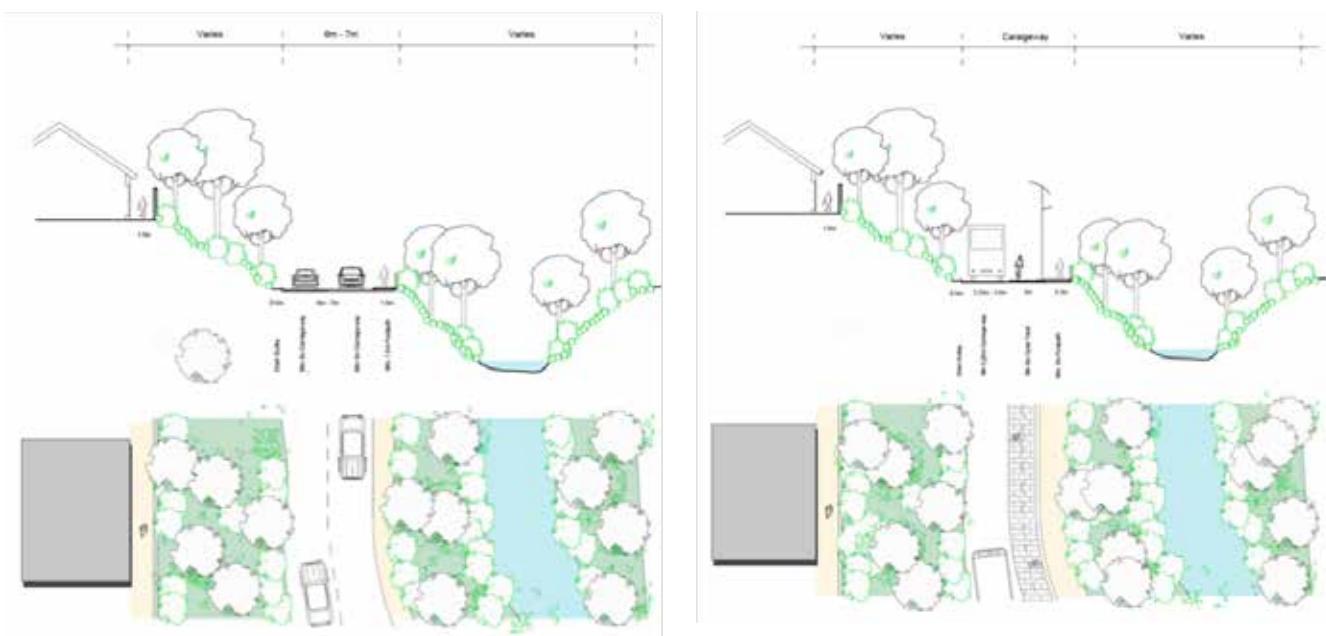
### 5.4.6 Coastal and Maritime centre

A multi-purpose Coastal and Maritime Centre for Courtown and Riverchapel will consolidate and expand all coastal and maritime activities in the town centre and provide hub for the expansion of tourism and employment. It integrates maritime recreation, cultural heritage, coastal awareness, and community engagement in support of local regeneration and tourism development.

The concept should also be expanded to the broader social, economic and coastal community concerns. The preferred locations are South Beach, Seamount/The Harbour, Public car park at Ballinatray Lower (currently subject to planning application) and as part of Phase 2 of the Marina Project (see Figure 5.5). The table below identifies the potential uses and activities.

| Category | Uses and Activities |
|---|---|
| Maritime recreation & learning | Boat and sailing training classrooms<br>Sea kayaking and paddleboarding base<br>Changing rooms and gear storage<br>Youth marine activity programmes |
| Heritage & interpretation | Maritime and coastal heritage exhibition<br>Local history displays (fishing, harbour, estates)<br>Oral histories and digital storytelling<br>Interpretive signage and artefacts |
| Coastguard & rescue services | Shared hub with Courtown Coast Guard (subject to consultation and suitability).<br>Marine safety demonstrations<br>Public awareness events (e.g. water safety, tides) |
| Environmental & climate education | Potential to host a Centre for Coastal Communities<br>Coastal erosion, climate change and marine biodiversity displays<br>Citizen science stations<br>Potential partnership with Seal Rescue Ireland |
| Community & visitor facilities | Reception and info point (incl. marina)<br>Community meeting room or classroom<br>Public toilets, showers and accessible facilities<br>Small café or refreshment kiosk |
| Events & programming | Maritime-themed festivals and exhibitions<br>School outreach and guided tours<br>Outdoor amphitheatre/space or viewing deck for events |
| Retail & enterprise | Gift and local produce shop (books, crafts, eco-products)<br>Marine/heritage themed art and merchandise<br>Pop-up space for marine or tourism start-ups |



**Table 5.10** Categories of uses and activities for the Coastal and Maritime Centre

| | |
| --- | --- |
| **The Edge, Whitehaven, Cumbria, UK (2025)**<br>The Edge is a new coastal activity centre developed in partnership and led by the Harbour Commissioners. It incorporates watersports, cycle and walking basecamp, café/bar, accommodation, small conference space/small music venue/exhibition space, a workshop, café, public event space, public toilets and showers, accessible spaces. Ancillary spaces are provided for storage of leisure craft etc. The centre provides equipment hire, classes etc. | Images: www.edgecumbria.com<br> |
| **Esbjerg Maritime Centre, Esbjerg, Denmark (2022)**<br>Commissioned by Esbjerg Municipality, the centre has a sports focus, providing a combined home to all marine activity associations in Esbjerg, including recreational fishing. The centre provides education and training. It has accessible public and visitor spaces. It is constructed in the harbour and is connected to a marina | Images: Esbjerg Kommune and www.dezeen.com<br><br> |

**Table 5.11** Selected recent case examples (UK and Denmark)

# 6
## Delivery

## 6.1 General

This chapter outlines the delivery of the shared vision through implementation of the Town Centre First Plan (TCFP) for Courtown and Riverchapel. The plan represents a milestone in a long-term process of renewal that will require a coordinated, collaborative and consistent approach. The regeneration of the town centre will be driven by strategic investment, strong local leadership, and active community engagement. While the preparation of this plan marks an important first step, it must now be followed by concerted action to deliver tangible, lasting outcomes.

## 6.2 TCFP and the Regulatory Process

The TCFP is a non-statutory, multi-dimensional framework aligned with the national Town Centre First Policy. It provides a broad vision for the regeneration of Courtown and Riverchapel and identifies key themes, objectives, and project packages that support sustainable, inclusive development. While not a statutory plan, the TCFP will play a critical role in shaping future statutory plans for the town, and will guide investment strategies, spatial planning, and project implementation in the town centre. The plan complements related strategies in mobility, climate action, enterprise, housing, and tourism.

## 6.3 Institutional Roles

Urban regeneration is inherently cross-sectoral and multi-level. At the national level, policy and funding are shaped by Government Departments and agencies including the National Town Centre Regeneration Office (LGMA), Fáilte Ireland, and the Heritage Council. The Southern Regional Assembly supports consistency across planning policy and administers funding such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for sustainable urban development.

At the county level, Wexford County Council plays a critical role as planning authority, infrastructure provider, and delivery agent for housing and community facilities. It leads the development and delivery of the County Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan (2024–2029), both of which underpin the TCFP. The Council is also responsible for development management, regeneration delivery, and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.

Crucially, the Council has appointed a Town Regeneration Officer and convened a Town Team to lead on strategy and delivery. These structures ensure cross-disciplinary working, support for funding bids, and strong integration between the community, businesses, and local government.

## 6.4 Partnership, Collaboration and Town Teams

Successful regeneration depends on broad-based collaboration, with a strong local partnership at its core. The TCFP promotes the establishment of a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and inclusive Town Team, as supported by the Town Centre First policy. In Courtown and Riverchapel, this team represents a wide spectrum of community, business, youth, service providers and local authority voices, with particular efforts to engage traditionally underrepresented groups. The membership of the Town Team is reviewed periodically to optimise community representation. The Town Team may in the future decide to form sub-groups under its aegis, for issues such as for local heritage, or for the implementation of specific actions.

The Town Team work alongside the Town Regeneration Officer and the wider Council to oversee implementation, ensure accountability, and advocate for local priorities. It will also play a role in public engagement, fundraising, and liaising with service and infrastructure providers as projects are developed.

## 6.5 Key Projects

Section 5 of the TCFP outlines the framework for regeneration of Courtown and Riverchapel, with a focus on coherent spatial concepts and key projects. Along with the identified key projects, there are important planned projects currently in the planning and development stages (notably the proposed Coastal Destination Courtown: Courtown Beach Nourishment and Marina Development Project, and the new Riverchapel Community Centre, and significant planning applications).

Priority for the new projects has not been established as yet given the changing economic and funding contexts. However, it will be based on the following three criteria:

- Targeted investment with clear and tangible outcomes;

- Deliverability in terms of ownership. partnership and business case/feasibility;

- Impact, measured against the vision, principles and pillars of this plan.

Urban regeneration is most effective where projects and actions are integrated and multi-dimensional. For this reason, priority projects in public space and the private domain can be grouped as packages for the purposes of funding proposals. Packages ensure that public and private investment is combined and that it is optimised (i.e. targeted, deliverable and impactful).

Additional site-specific and smaller-scale projects may be progressed in parallel, where alignment with plan vision and principles  and community support is strong. A general regeneration aim is to deliver short-term wins while laying the foundation for long-term transformation.

## 6.6 Funding regeneration

Realising the regeneration of the town centre will require public and private investment in both the public and private domains. Delivering the TCFP will depend on aligning projects with appropriate funding streams at national, regional, and local levels. A multi-fund approach will be required, combining regeneration, housing, climate action, mobility, sport, culture, heritage, and digital supports. Courtown and Riverchapel are well placed to access diverse funding opportunities due to their scale, coastal setting, and socio-economic profile. Currently, potential funding avenues include:

- Housing and vacancy: Croí Cónaithe (Towns and Cities), Affordable Housing Fund (AHF), Cost Rental Equity Loan (CREL), Secure Tenancy Affordable Rental (STAR), Repair and Lease, Buy and Renew.

- Rural and community development: Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS), LEADER, Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

- Climate and energy: Climate Action Fund, Circular Economy Fund, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA).

- Mobility: National Transport Authority (NTA) Active Travel / Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme, Department of Transport Pathfinder Projects, Regional and Local Road Grants.

- Sport and recreation: Sports Capital and Equipment Programme (SCEP), Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF).

- Tourism, culture and heritage: Fáilte Ireland, Heritage Council, Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS), Historic Structures Fund (HSF), Community Monuments Fund (CMF), Arts Council, Creative Ireland, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS).

- Justice and safety: Community Safety Innovation Fund (Department of Justice).

- Digital and smart villages: Connected Hubs Fund, Smart Villages / Smart Rural initiatives.

- Infrastructure enablers: Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), Uisce Éireann Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme (STVGP).

These sources can be combined in project "packages" to maximise eligibility, co-funding, and delivery impact. Further details in a non-exhaustive list are set out in Appendix A.

## 6.7 Capacity Building and the Pathfinder

Courtown and Riverchapel is a pilot town supported by the National Town Centre Regeneration Office.  Funding has been secured to assist in commissioning the preparation of the plan.   The Town Team will seek to achieve 'Pathfinder Town' status under the Town Centre First framework.  Similar status could be sought through the NTA's Active Travel programme.  The TCFP and its delivery would meet the criteria for pilot status: community-led visioning, integrated strategy, clear regeneration packages, and alignment with LAP and County Development Plan objectives and processes.

Pilot or pathfinder designations would support resource allocation, structured mentoring, and prioritised access to national support programmes. It would also place Courtown and

Riverchapel among a learning network of peer towns working to build capacity, deliver early projects, and embed innovation in regeneration practice.

## 6.8 Urban Place Management and Marketing

Effective town centre regeneration is not only about capital investment, but also about how places are programmed, maintained, and experienced. Urban place management involves coordinated oversight of town centre appearance, vibrancy, safety, events, and engagement. It aims to make the town centre more welcoming, active and inclusive every day.

In Courtown and Riverchapel, the Town Regeneration Officer will play a key role in this work, supported by the Town Team and Council departments. This includes coordinating events, supporting local branding and storytelling, working with traders and service providers, and ensuring high standards of maintenance and public realm care.

Marketing should reinforce the distinct identity of Courtown as a coastal destination and Riverchapel as a growing community hub. Promotion will align with the local tourism strategy, Visit Wexford, and community-led cultural programming.

## 6.9 Knowledge Sharing and Networking

The TCFP process is designed to be part of a national learning journey for Irish towns. Participation in the Town Centre First network managed by the Town Centre First Office under the direction of the National Town Centre First Advisory Group provides important peer support and knowledge sharing. It also provides the opportunity to make connections with similar town centres - to share experiences, access advice, and learn from best practice.

Knowledge exchange will be essential in adapting solutions to the unique coastal, seasonal and service challenges faced by the town. The Town Team will be encouraged to engage in mentoring, training, and collaborative projects at regional and national levels.

A national centre for coastal communities

Coastal communities face unique challenges that require bespoke approaches to achieve sustainable regeneration. It is early in the process of regeneration for coastal towns in Ireland but it is clear that there is a need to share specific experiences and knowledge around the mechanisms of change in coastal communities. This is a necessary first step in finding solutions to address issues and to harness opportunities. While this can be initiated through the national Town Centre First Office, there is also a strong potential to create a dedicated centre where experiences and approaches can be shared and where further research, policy and practice can be shaped and advocated for.

The centre could be an advocate at national level for a coherent cross-departmental and agency approach to policy and practice (e.g. Marine Institute, MARA/Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht). It could advocate for a dedicated agency or funding stream for coastal communities (e.g. UK Government's Coastal Communities Fund for sustainable economic growth and jobs). It could also collaborate to create a dedicated centre for research and education with higher level education providers who are currently active in areas of social and economic research for coastal areas (e.g. Centre for Coastal Communities at Essex University, UK). It could be an important 'anchor tenant' for the proposed Coastal and Maritime Centre.

## 6.10 Monitoring and Review

Monitoring will ensure accountability and adaptation as the TCFP progresses. Annual reviews will measure progress against core objectives, while more strategic updates will coincide with statutory planning review cycles (The County Development Plan is now on a 10 year cycle). Metrics will be defined early by the Town Team and Town Regeneration Officer.

Monitoring will include qualitative and quantitative data: community satisfaction, delivery of capital projects, business activity, housing and infrastructure outputs, and town centre vitality. Regular reporting will inform funding bids and Council decisions and ensure that lessons are built into future planning efforts. Outcomes will be shared transparently with the community.

# Appendix A – Potential grant funds/funding sources

| TCFP Pillar / Project | Relevant Funds/Funding Sources |
|---|---|
| Pillar 1: Living Well Locally | • Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)<br>• LEADER Programme (Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale)<br>• Sports Capital and Equipment Programme (SCEP)<br>• Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF)<br>• Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)<br>• Health Service Executive (HSE) and Túsla partnerships<br>• Affordable Housing Fund (AHF)<br>• Cost Rental Equity Loan (CREL)<br>• Secure Tenancy Affordable Rental Scheme (STAR)<br>• Croí Cónaithe (Towns) – Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant (VPRG)<br>• Croí Cónaithe (Towns) – Ready-to-Build Sites<br>• Croí Cónaithe (Cities) – Apartment Viability Gap Funding<br>• Buy and Renew Scheme<br>• Repair and Lease Scheme<br>• Warmer Homes Scheme (SEAI/ERDF) |
| Pillar 2: Connected & Compact | • Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)<br>• National Transport Authority (NTA) Active Travel / Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme<br>• Department of Transport Pathfinder Projects<br>• Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)<br>• Climate Action Fund<br>• Regional and Local Road Grant Programme |
| Pillar 3: Vibrant Coastal Economy & Enterprise | • Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)<br>• Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)<br>• Fáilte Ireland Regional Tourism Investment Schemes<br>• LEADER Programme<br>• Connected Hubs Fund<br>• Circular economy funding – Circular Economy Fund (Govt.), Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme, EPA Green Enterprise pilot project grants, Local Authority micro-grants, Circular Communications Grant (Circular.ie) etc. |
| Pillar 4: Natural & Built Resilience | • Climate Action Fund, Community Climate Action Fund (through WCC)<br>• Fáilte Ireland (Coastal and Marine Tourism)<br>• Heritage Council Grants<br>• Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)<br>• Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)<br>• Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)<br>• Community Monuments Fund (CMF)<br>• Built Heritage Investment Scheme<br>• Historic Structures Fund (HSF) |
| Pillar 5: Culture, Capacity & Collaboration | • Arts Council Grants<br>• Creative Ireland Programme<br>• Heritage Council Grants<br>• LEADER Programme<br>• Smart Villages / Smart Rural Initiatives (EU and National)<br>• Community Safety Innovation Fund (Department of Justice) |
| Cross-cutting "Quick Wins" | • Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)<br>• Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) –feasibility, enabling works.<br>• Wexford County Council co-funding<br>• Creative Ireland Programme |
| Infrastructure Enablers | • Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)<br>• Uisce Éireann Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme (STVGP) |