

Castlerea

Town Centre First Plan

February 2026



Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First



Comhairle Contae
Ros Comáin
Roscommon
County Council



Castlerea
Co. Roscommon, Ireland.

 Studio Myco

Town Team Foreword

Castlerea is a town we are deeply proud of. It is a place shaped by strong community spirit, rich heritage, and a long tradition of people coming together to support one another. From our local businesses and community groups to our volunteers, clubs and organisations, the heart of Castlerea has always been its people.

This Town Centre First Plan represents an important moment for our town. It reflects the voices, ideas and hopes of the community, gathered through consultation and engagement, and it sets out a clear and positive vision for the future of Castlerea's town centre. We are delighted to have worked closely with Roscommon County Council and the project team in shaping a plan that is rooted in local knowledge, ambition and care for our town.

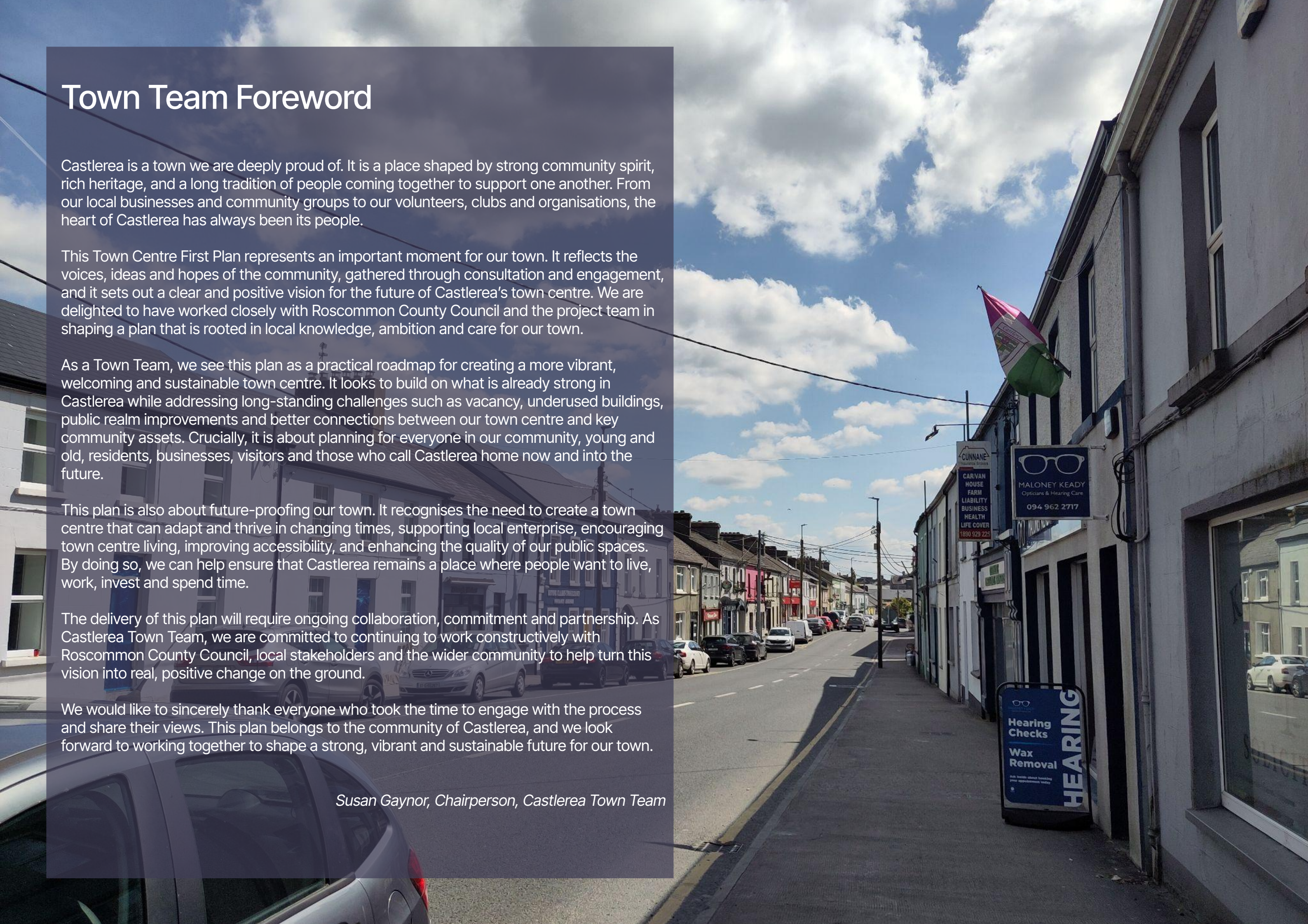
As a Town Team, we see this plan as a practical roadmap for creating a more vibrant, welcoming and sustainable town centre. It looks to build on what is already strong in Castlerea while addressing long-standing challenges such as vacancy, underused buildings, public realm improvements and better connections between our town centre and key community assets. Crucially, it is about planning for everyone in our community, young and old, residents, businesses, visitors and those who call Castlerea home now and into the future.

This plan is also about future-proofing our town. It recognises the need to create a town centre that can adapt and thrive in changing times, supporting local enterprise, encouraging town centre living, improving accessibility, and enhancing the quality of our public spaces. By doing so, we can help ensure that Castlerea remains a place where people want to live, work, invest and spend time.

The delivery of this plan will require ongoing collaboration, commitment and partnership. As Castlerea Town Team, we are committed to continuing to work constructively with Roscommon County Council, local stakeholders and the wider community to help turn this vision into real, positive change on the ground.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to engage with the process and share their views. This plan belongs to the community of Castlerea, and we look forward to working together to shape a strong, vibrant and sustainable future for our town.

Susan Gaynor, Chairperson, Castlerea Town Team



Contents

01 | Introduction

- 1.1 Setting the Scene
- 1.2 Project Process
- 1.3 Policy Alignment
- 1.4 Regeneration Context

02 | About Castlerea

- 2.1 Location & Context
- 2.2 Socio-Economic Profile
- 2.3 Character & History
- 2.4 Built Heritage
- 2.5 Facilities & Amenities
- 2.6 Vacancy & Dereliction
- 2.7 Transport & Connectivity
- 2.8 Summary of Findings

03 | Collaboration & Communication

- 3.1 Engagement Process
- 3.2 Community Survey Insights
- 3.3 Business Survey Insights
- 3.4 Public Consultation

04 | Defining the Place

- 4.1 The Vision
- 4.2 Themes & Objectives
- 4.3 Key Projects

05 | Enabling the Place

- 5.1 Implementation Overview
- 5.2 Action Plan
- 5.3 Funding Sources

Introduction

- 1.1 Setting the Scene
- 1.2 Project Process
- 1.3 Policy Alignment
- 1.4 Regeneration Context

01

Setting the Scene

The Castlerea Town Centre First Plan outlines a strategy for the town's future revitalisation. It aims to create a more attractive, welcoming and resilient town centre by addressing vacancy and dereliction, improving the public realm, and stimulating economic growth and development.

The Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving Roscommon County Council, the Castlerea Town Team, and architecture and urbanism practice Studio Myco. Extensive stakeholder engagement was central to the Plan's development. Activities such as co-design workshops, surveys, and stakeholder interviews gathered wide-ranging views on the town's physical, social, economic and cultural qualities.

This process, alongside in-depth research, analysis and policy alignment, underpinned the development of the Plan's overarching vision, themes, objectives, and key projects - ensuring it is rooted in real stakeholder insight. The delivery of the Vision is supported by an implementation plan (Chapter 5: Enabling the Place) which outlines timescales, budgets, lead and supporting stakeholders for each project/objective, as well as possible funding sources.

Whilst the Plan takes into account the wider context of Castlerea Town, its primary focus is on the town core (see map opposite). This central area has been defined as the key study area to ensure that interventions and proposals are targeted towards enhancing the vitality, functionality, and overall experience of the town centre. By concentrating on this core, the Plan aims to address the needs of local businesses, visitors, and residents, while also considering the town centre's relationship with its surrounding areas.



Map of the Town Core (Study Area) outlined in black dashed line

Project Process

The Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

The Town Centre First Policy recognises that successful places are:

- Characterised by an attractive public realm (streets, spaces and parks) that is designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell;
- Contain a variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities, enable people to shop locally and meet the needs of the local community;
- Provide a range of cultural, recreational and community spaces (that includes scope for periodic events and festivals) that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists;
- Contain a well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces;
- Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity;
- Are attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop;
- Are well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport, enabling a high proportion of journeys to be made by foot and/or bicycle from the immediate hinterland (e.g. the '10 minute town concept');

- Manage traffic within central areas so that streets prioritise vulnerable user (pedestrians and cyclists), enabling them to move about safely and in comfort;
- Provide a mix of housing typologies and tenures to cater for diverse communities in terms of age, income and mobility;
- Utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle;
- Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors. Use vacant and derelict buildings for reuse.

An important aspect in the Project Process was ensuring that this Plan reflects and responds to the guiding vision set out by the Town Centre First Policy.

Appendix 8 of the Town Centre First Policy sets out four key elements for the development of a Town Centre First Plan, which have guided the process undertaken to develop this plan:

1. Collaboration and Communication
2. Understanding the Place
3. Defining the Place
4. Enabling the Place

The diagram on the following page provides further detail under each of these stages.

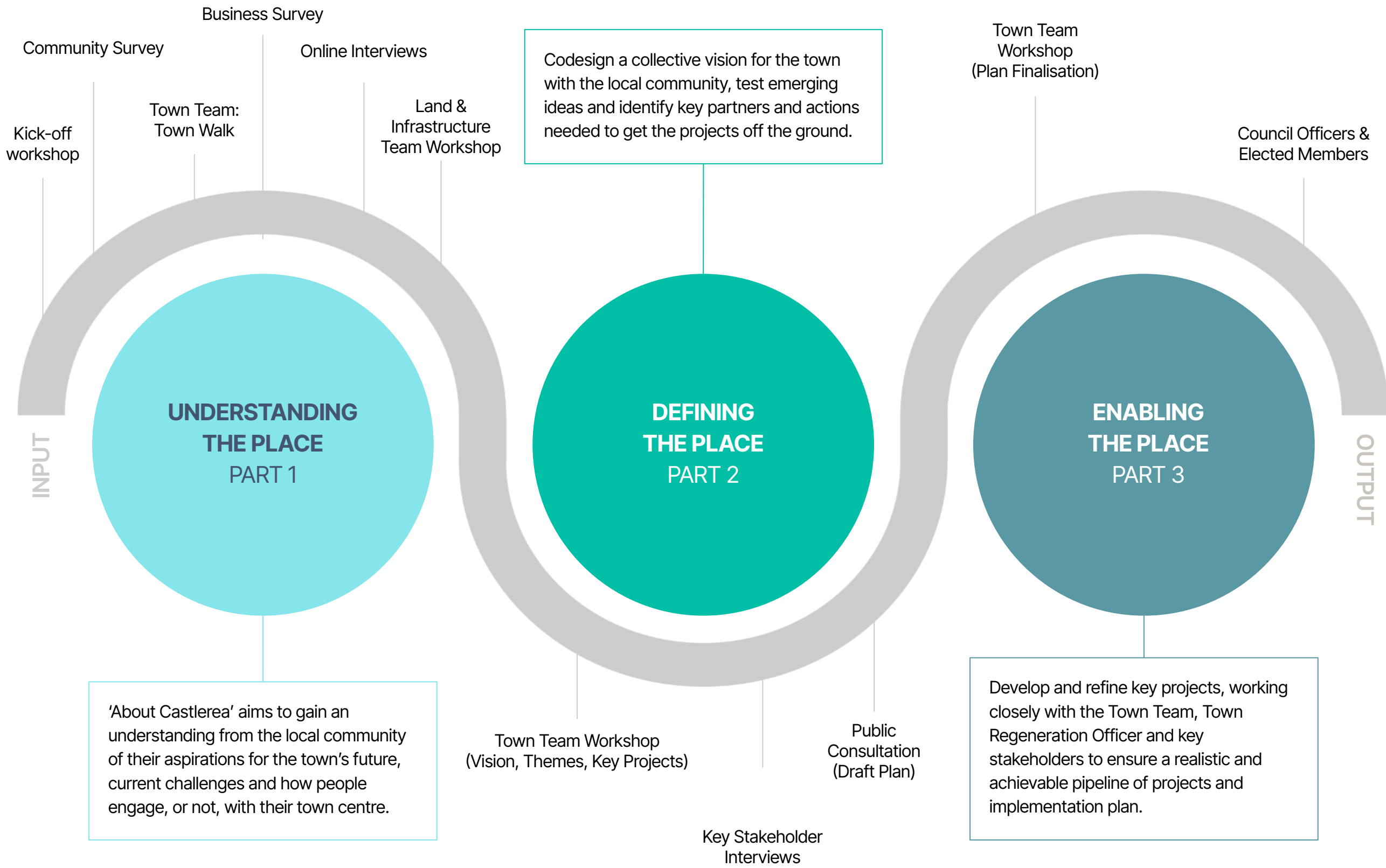
"The Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community".

Town Centre First Policy



Project Process

The diagram below sets out the key steps in developing the Castlerea Town Centre First Plan:



Policy Alignment

The following is a high level review of the global, national, regional and local policy context which has informed the development of this Plan.

Global Policy Context

UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals |

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) define the strategic global challenges, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environment, prosperity, peace and justice, that we need to address to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.



National Policy Context

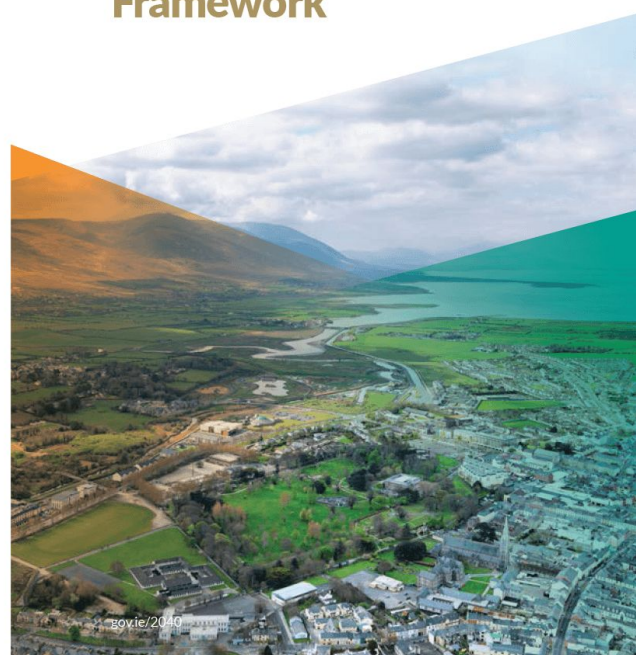
Project Ireland 2040 | Project Ireland 2040 is the Government's overarching vision and policy initiative to make Ireland a better country for all. The strategy ensures the alignment of investment plans with 10 National Strategic Objectives for 2040 in a considered, cohesive and defined manner. The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) combine to form Project Ireland 2040. The NPF sets the vision and strategy for the development of the country to 2040 and the NDP provides the enabling investment to implement that strategy.

Climate Action Plan 2024 | The compact growth agenda outlined in the NPF is reinforced through Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2024 (the third annual update) which provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050. It promotes extensive retrofitting of existing premises and housing stock and the prioritisation of brownfield and compact development. The actions committed to in the Climate Action Plan 2024 strongly support the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland's towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment and amenities by sustainable transport modes.



Project Ireland 2040

National Planning Framework



Town Centre First Policy 2022 | This Policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. It represents a new approach to the development of our towns where local communities and local businesses can be central to reimagining their own towns and planning their own futures. The policy recognises that each town is unique and thus requires unique solutions to address the challenges and opportunities they face. The policy is underpinned by a multi-billion Euro investment programme spread across Government schemes. The Town Centre First Plan provides a basis for multiple stakeholders to seek funding from such schemes. The policy sets out four elements for the development of a Town Centre First Plan, which have guided the process for this Plan: Communication & Collaboration, Understanding the Place, Defining the Place and Enabling the Place.

Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025 | contains key commitments that deliver on the government's aim to support the regeneration, re-population and development of rural towns and villages to contribute to local and national economic recovery, and to enable people to live and work in a high quality environment.

Housing for All | sets out a road map for the delivery of housing to 2030, with a target delivery of 33,000 homes nationally per annum. It strongly supports the greater use, activation and refurbishment of existing buildings, infill and brownfield sites to regenerate towns and bring people and activity back into towns.

Tourism Policy Framework 2025-2030 |

Ireland's new Tourism Policy Framework for the period to 2030 aligns with Fáilte Ireland's ambition to foster and develop a sustainable visitor economy that channels tourism revenue into communities across the country, enabling them to flourish and thrive, and making them better places to live and visit. It also promotes the environmental sustainability of tourism businesses, aiming to meet government targets for carbon emissions and energy efficiency.

Heritage Ireland 2030 | Heritage Ireland 2030 is Ireland's national heritage plan - a framework for the protection, conservation, promotion and management of Ireland's heritage for the next decade and beyond. It recognises the fundamental importance of heritage to our society, well-being and economy. It is structured around three themes: communities, leadership and partnerships, reflecting the importance of ongoing collaboration between government and communities, heritage organisations, individuals and local authorities in caring and planning for our shared heritage.

Making Remote Work: National Remote

Working Strategy 2021 | The Strategy's objective is to ensure that remote working is a permanent feature in the Irish workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits. Policies include investment in remote working hubs and infrastructure, including broadband, in underserved areas to underpin the development of the national hubs network.

Policy Alignment

Regional Policy Context

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy | The RSES 2020 - 2032 provides a high-level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the relevant economic policies and objectives of Government.

Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023-2027 | Fáilte Ireland's Strategy provides a strategic framework for the sustainable development of tourism destinations in the region. It sets out a vision for the Hidden Heartlands to become: "One of Europe's leading regenerative tourism destinations (top 10 ranking), a place where tourism works to create flourishing places and thriving communities. The region has become well known as a sustainable destination where visitors can reconnect with nature while taking time out to reconnect with family and friends."

The Upper Shannon, Shannon-Erne, and Border Destination and Experience Development Plan 2025-2030 | is a five-year sustainable tourism plan for Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon north of, and including, Roscommon Town. It sets out a six strategic objectives for the destination and a vision which encompasses:

- Nature is at the heart of the Destination (particularly the lakes)
- Ecotourism and slow adventure as hallmarks of the tourism experience
- A growing network of accredited greenways, blueways and trails

Local Policy Context

Roscommon County Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 | The County Roscommon Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 (LECP) aims to capitalise on the county's strengths, address challenges, and leverage opportunities with a vision that Roscommon is a location of choice to live, visit, learn, work and play. The LECP is a statutory plan prepared under the Local Government Reform Act of 2014 and sets out the framework needed to promote and support the economic development and local and community development over the six-year period. The plan was informed by a detailed socio-economic profile of the county along with extensive public and key stakeholder consultation. The LECP also translates national and regional goals to the local level.

County Roscommon Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 | The Roscommon County Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) is prepared under the Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 in support of the National Climate objective; "transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy". The LACAP will pursue locally based actions to adapt to a changing climate and reduce emissions towards making Roscommon County a more sustainable place to live, work and visit. Adopted in January 2024 by the elected members, the plan is a statutory document and will remain in force for five years.

Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 | The Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) 2022-2028 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Roscommon for six years whilst aligning with longer term national and regional objectives. As part of the Roscommon County Development Plan Core Strategy, Castlerea is identified as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town within the Settlement Hierarchy. Volume II of the RCDP provides Settlement Plans for Self-Sustaining Growth Towns, including Castlerea.

The Vision for Growth in the Castlerea Settlement Plan is to:

"Support the growth of Castlerea as a food development destination, capitalising on its growing agri-food, locally produced and speciality artisan market, which will collectively enable the town to establish a more diversified and sustainable local economy."

This vision is further detailed as followed:

- To promote the sustainable growth of the town and further strengthen its base in the local produce and culinary sector - Castlerea Community Hub, having opened An Chistin in recent years, has established itself as a centre providing state of the art facilities for developing the local food and hospitality offer within the region;
- For the town to support economic development and job creation based on opportunities associated with Castlerea's strengthening local agriculture and artisan food related industry;

- Develop as a high amenity value town, maximising its potential to become a sustainable and resourceful location for commercial activity, recreation and leisure; and
- Develop and enhance the delivery of supporting infrastructure, facilities and amenities to support and develop a sustainable economic and residential base.

The RCDP's Settlement Plan for Castlerea also includes 15 policy objectives for the town. Specific objectives relating to the Town Core area include:

CA 5 Promote the development of the Town Core as an intensive, high quality, well-landscaped and accessible environment. Facilitate an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, service, tourism, enterprise, public and community uses that provides a range of services, facilities and amenities to serve the local community and visitors to Castlerea.

CA 6 Promote the development of the identified Town Centre Residential Opportunity sites for the delivery of new residential development. Development shall be of high architectural quality, and designed in a compact form, and shall demonstrate adherence to the 12 urban design principles set out in the 'Urban Design Manual – A Best Practice Guide' (2009) in order to ensure the creation of quality, attractive, and well connected residential area.

CA 7 Encourage residential use of vacant upper storey space over commercial premises on the main thoroughfares of the Town Core.

CA 8 Encourage the regeneration of derelict buildings and appropriate mixed use development on infill sites, including residential development and upper floor apartments.

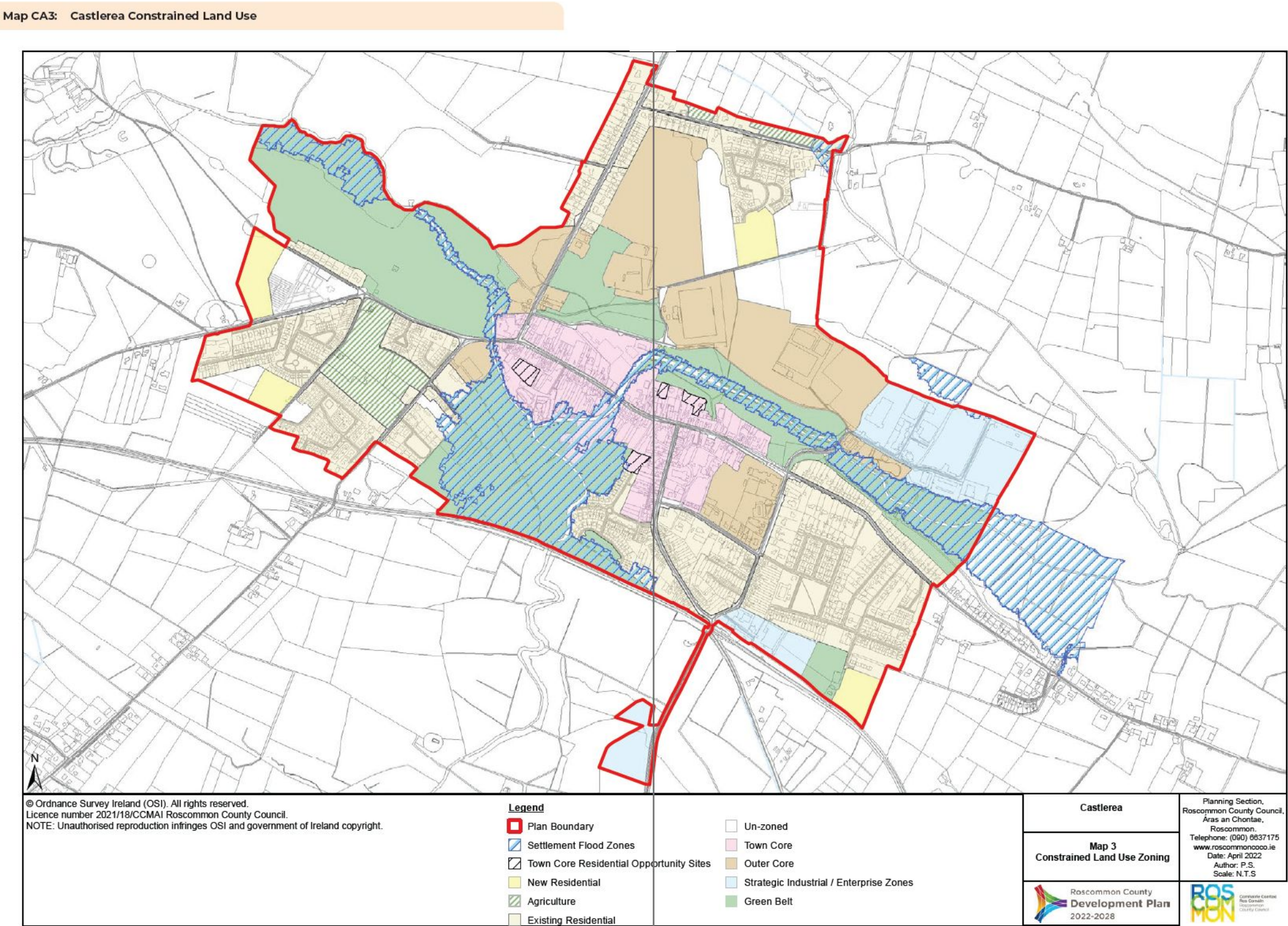
Policy Alignment

Local Policy Context (continued)

Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 - 2028

The RCDP also includes land use zoning maps for Castlerea, shown opposite. The Town Core zoning (flanked primarily by Green Belt zoning) is most relevant to the study area of this Town Centre First Plan. The strategic vision for the Town Core Zone is to develop a high quality built environment, which is more walkable and diverse in its range of residential, commercial and social offering. For the Green Belt, the key objectives are protection from inappropriate development and to ‘Maintain greenbelt lands as a visual and environmental buffer to preserve the natural amenity of the area and to maintain the agricultural character of lands identified as being utilised specifically for agricultural purposes.’

The Settlement Plan incorporates a Flood Risk and Protection Strategy. The Constrained Land Use Zoning Strategy aims to facilitate the appropriate management and sustainable use of flood risk areas while recognising that existing development uses within these zones may require modifications and/or extension. This constrained zoning derives from the recommendations set out in the SFRA undertaken for the Plan. The constrained zoning limits new development, but provides an opportunity to facilitate small scale expansion of existing premises. Such proposals arising within the Constrained Land Use Zone may be acceptable provided that it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the development will not give rise to significant flooding issues, will not obstruct important flow paths, introduce a significant additional number of people into flood risk areas or entail the storage of hazardous substances.



Castlerea Land Use Map, Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028

Regeneration Context

The following map sets out a number of recent Planning/Part 8 Applications that have been considered during the development of the Plan. A brief summary of each has been provided below:

1 | Main St / Patrick Street / R371 (ref 23414)

PART 8 - Permission for Castlerea Traffic Safety Scheme. New and upgraded pedestrian crossings, footpath improvements, street lights.

Pending decision

2 | Riverside Walkway, Main Street / The Demesne (ref 2560218)

Path upgrades including converting steps to ramp, new public benches and meeting area

Conditional Approval 2025

3 | M Cooney & Sons Ltd., Main St (ref 23294)

Demolish existing derelict buildings and construct new commercial premises and storage shed with car parking and landscaping.

Conditional Approval 2024

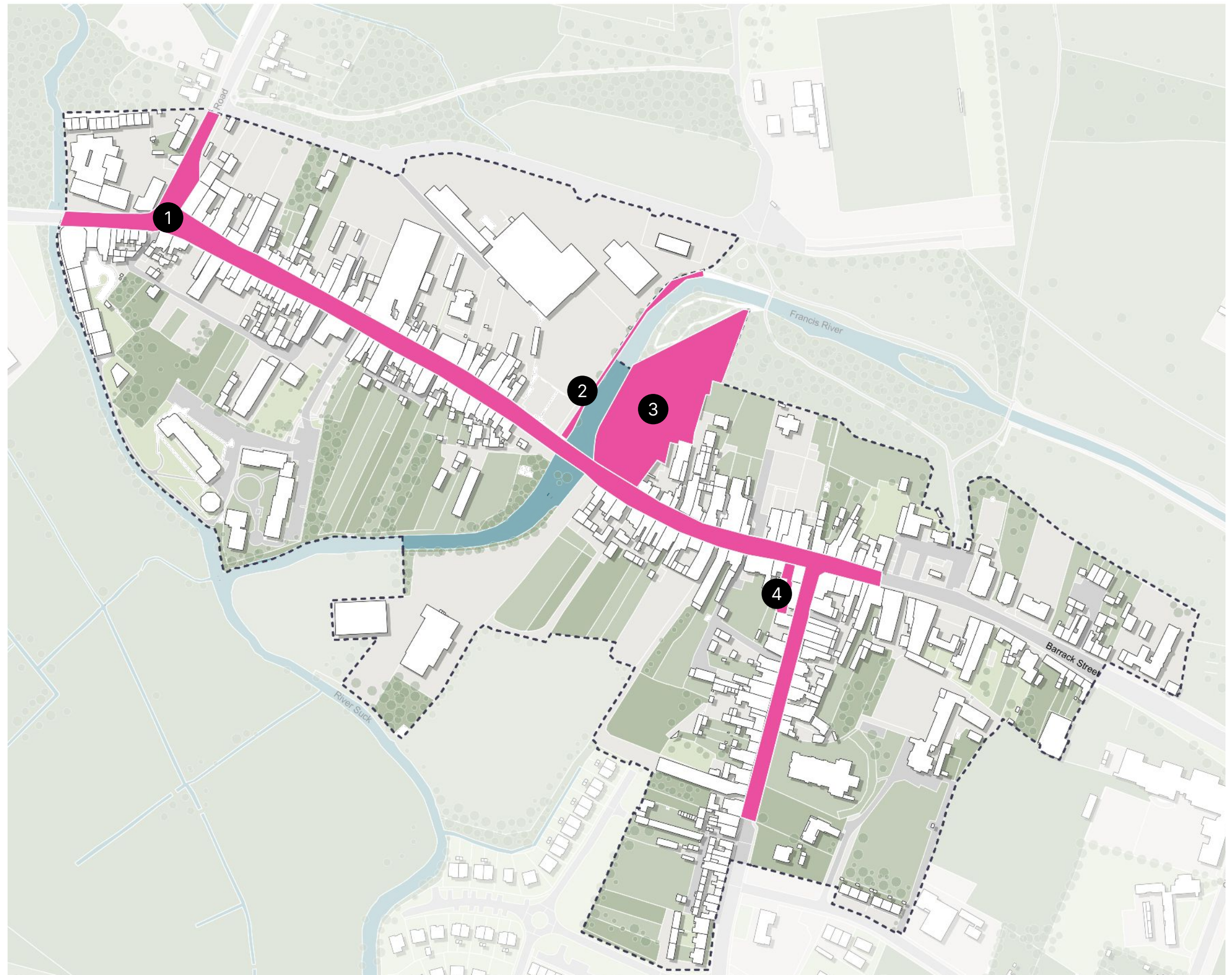
4 | Main St (ref 2560167)

Renovation works to protected structure - ground floor retail and first floor living accommodation.

Pending Decision

Key

■ Planning Application



Map of recent planning applications in Castlerea town centre

About Castlerea

- 2.1 Location & Context
- 2.2 Socio-Economic Profile
- 2.3 Character & History
- 2.4 Built Heritage
- 2.5 Facilities & Amenities
- 2.6 Vacancy & Dereliction
- 2.7 Transport & Connectivity
- 2.8 Summary of Findings

Location & Context

Castlerea (Irish: An Caisleán Riabhach) is the third largest town in County Roscommon. It is located in the west of the county, approximately 30 kilometres northwest of Roscommon Town.

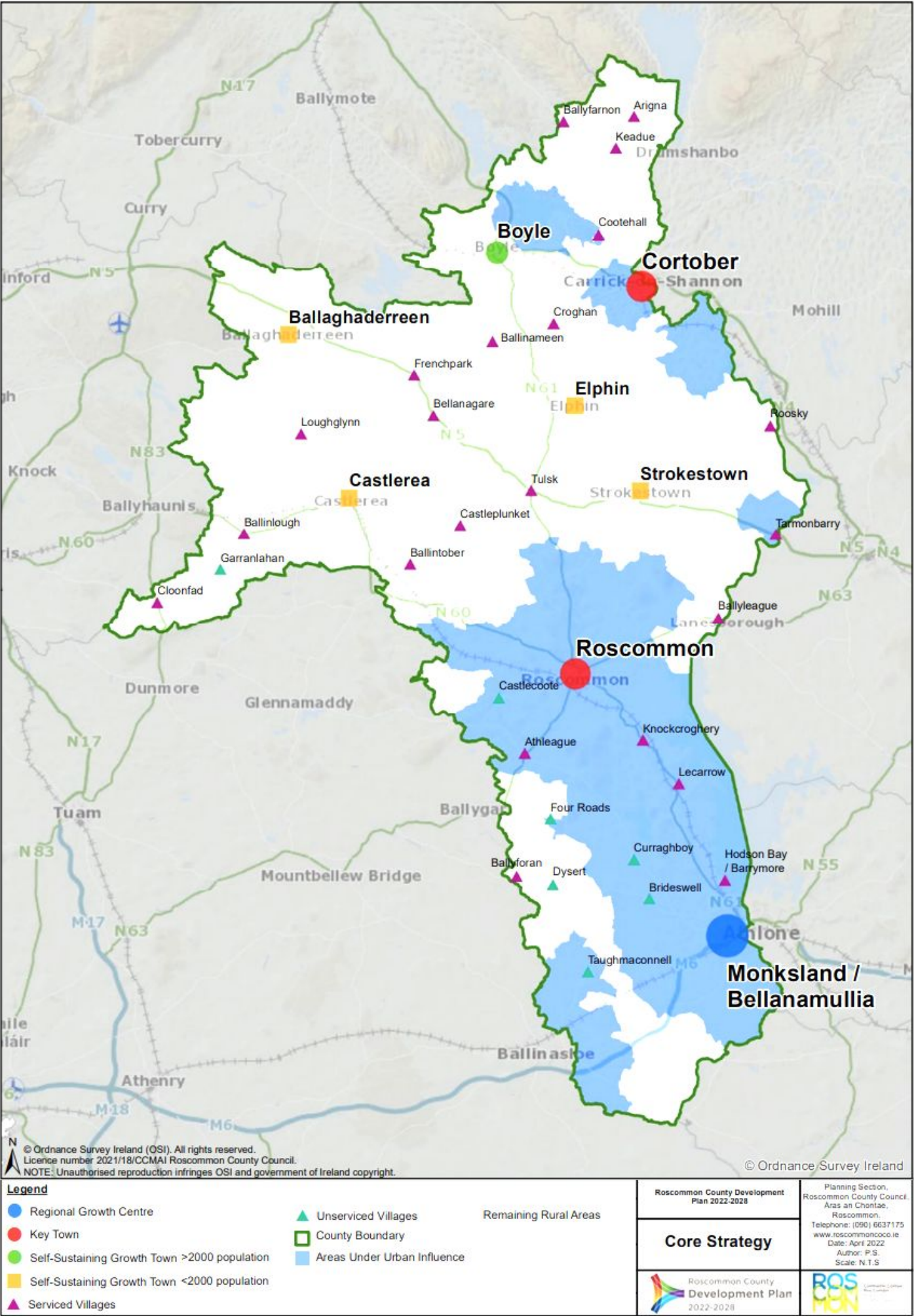
The main road through the town is the national secondary road N60, from Roscommon town onward to County Mayo. Other roads include the R361 to Boyle and the R377 to Castleplunket. The Castlerea railway station, which opened in 1860, is on the Westport-Dublin main line and connects to Dublin Heuston, Ballina and Westport. Ireland West Airport Knock is located nearby, approximately 30 kilometres to the north west.

Castlerea is the largest market town within West Roscommon and has a long-established central shopping area which is an important retail centre within the County. The weekly active livestock mart acts as a focal point for the rural and agricultural community, bringing in people from the surrounding towns and villages, and maintaining strong links with the region's agricultural economy. Agriculture thus remains an important part of the economy and built environment of Castlerea, with the mart playing a key role in the life and identity of the town.



Map of Republic of Ireland and Co.Roscommon

While Castlerea acts as a local service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland, a significant proportion of people living in the area also commute to towns such as Longford, Carrick-on-Shannon, and Roscommon for employment. Castlerea is part of the West Region, a primarily rural area that has historically faced challenges with population decline and has been a focus for economic and social development initiatives led by the Western Development Commission (WDC).



Location & Context

Castlerea is set within a rich agricultural region, with many areas of natural beauty, natural heritage, and conservation importance. Nearby natural protected areas include the Bellanagare Bog Special Protection Area (SPA) to the north, Drumalough Bog, Cloonchambers Bog, and Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog (all proposed Natural Heritage Areas).

The area is popular for walking trails with Castlerea serving as the trailhead for the Lung Lough Gara Way. The Beara-Breifne Way and the Suck Valley Way - a 100km long trail starting and finishing in Ballygar - also passes through the town.

Two rivers flow through Castlerea. The River Suck intersects the north western end of the town centre flowing adjacent to the site of 'The Old Mill' under the N60 and along the backlands of Main Street and St Patrick's Street. The River Francis, flowing from the north through the Demesne, meets the River Suck in the backlands of Castlerea.

Key

 Special Protection Areas

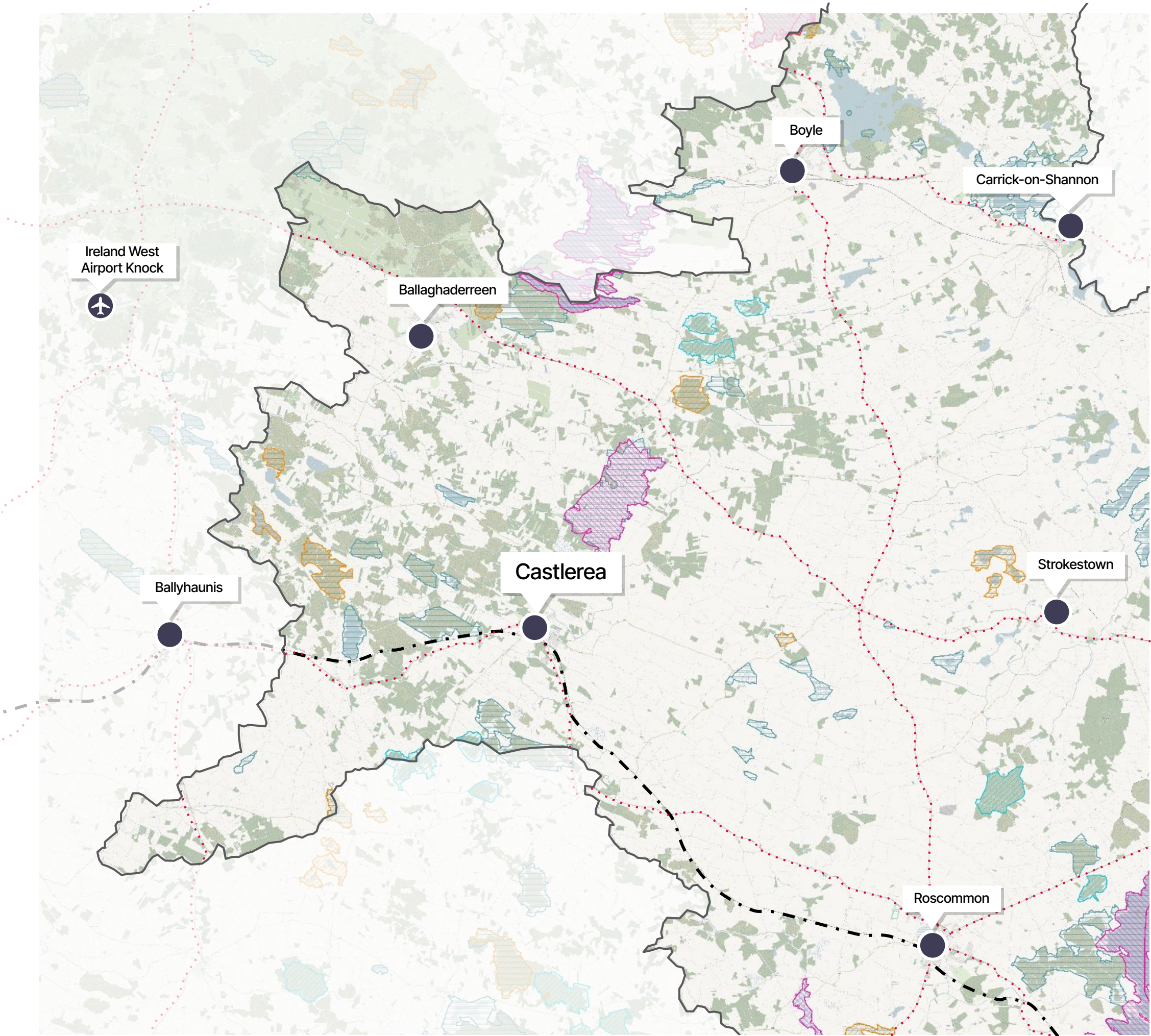
 Special Area of Conservation

 Natural Heritage Areas

 Proposed Natural Heritage Areas

 Railway Line

 National Road



Map indicating Roscommon Protected Natural Heritage Areas

Location & Context

Castlerea town is anchored by a mix of independent businesses, community facilities and public spaces, with the Demesne and Somers Park providing high-quality recreational areas immediately adjacent to the core. The Demesne, once the estate of the Sandford family, forms an extensive riverside park and walking landscape connected to the Suck Valley Way, with routes leading towards Clonalis Woods and views of the historic Clonalis House. Somers Park, opened in 2018, has quickly become a central community space, supported by local stakeholders and named in recognition of the Somers family's contribution to industry and employment in the town.

Castlerea maintains a strong culture of local enterprise. The Enterprise Castlerea Hub (located in a renovated former factory) has become a flagship community-led project providing flexible work, training and event space. The Hub has evolved significantly, most notably through the development of An Chistin, a dedicated food training centre and incubation hub that now hosts start-up food businesses and specialist training programmes. Together, these facilities have positioned Castlerea as a regional centre for food innovation and small-business development.

Nearby cultural and recreational amenities further enrich the town. Trinity Arts Centre provides a focal point for arts, heritage and community events, hosting performances, workshops and exhibitions throughout the year. Castlerea also benefits from one of Ireland's few heated outdoor swimming pools, a long-established summer facility that continues to draw families and visitors, complemented by recent upgrades to improve safety and accessibility.

Castlerea's reputation for heritage and storytelling is reflected in several local attractions. The Castlerea Railway Museum holds the country's largest private collection of railway artefacts, curated by volunteers and available for guided tours by appointment. On the outskirts, Clonalis House - home to the O'Connor family, direct descendants of Ireland's last High Kings - offers one of Ireland's most significant historic house experiences, renowned for its extensive library, artefacts and family archives. The town is also home to Castlerea Golf Club, a long-established parkland course set within a tranquil riverside landscape at the edge of the town.

Community events form a major part of Castlerea's identity, with an abundance of festivals, fundraisers, markets and cultural activities taking place throughout the year. The best-known is the Castlerea Rose Festival, one of Ireland's longest-running family festivals. Its success is rooted in decades of volunteer effort, creativity and inclusiveness, with events that have ranged from traditional celebrations to more unconventional attractions, all designed to engage residents and visitors of all ages.

Further afield, Castlerea sits within a wider landscape of agricultural activity and rural enterprise, supported by the long-established Castlerea Livestock Mart, which continues to play an important economic and social role in the region.

Additional information on community groups, events, facilities, local history and visitor attractions is available through Castlerea.ie, which serves as a central resource for residents and visitors, showcasing the town's activities, organisations and ongoing developments.



The Demesne



The Hub and An Chistin



Somers Park



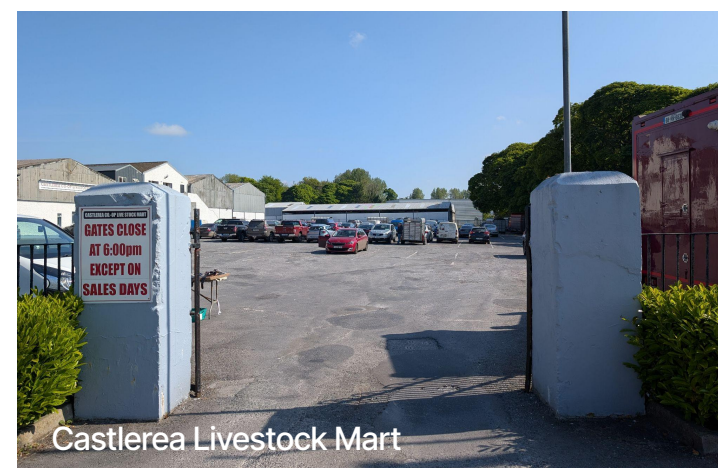
Castlerea Outdoor Swimming Pool



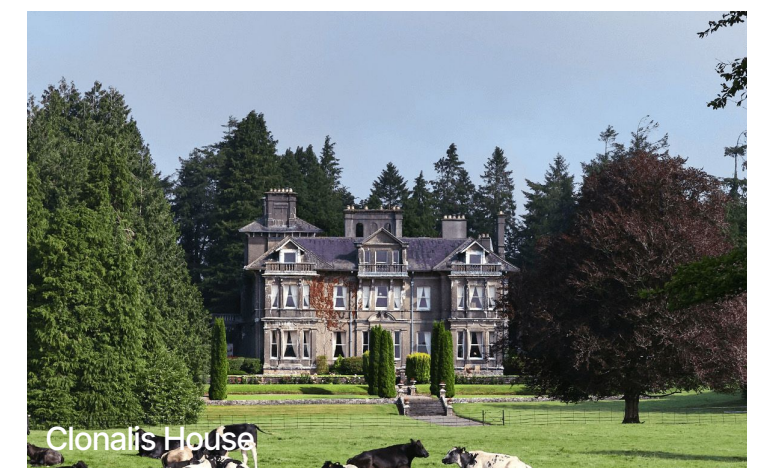
Castlerea Station



Trinity Arts Centre



Castlerea Livestock Mart



Clonalis House



Castlereagh Rose Festival passing through the town centre

Location & Context

8

Despite recent successes, attractions, and regeneration projects in Castlerea, many are located within the town's wider settlement boundary. While these amenities are important for residents and visitors, their position outside the Town Core - the focus of this Town Centre First Plan - highlights the need to strengthen connections between the two. A key aim of the Plan is to harness the vibrancy of these surrounding areas to stimulate activity within the town centre, ensuring it remains the heart of Castlerea.

Key

1. The Demesne
2. Outdoor Swimming Pool and Somers Park
3. The Hub and An Chistin
4. Trinity Arts Centre
5. Castlerea Station
6. Castlerea GAA
7. Castlerea Livestock Mart
8. Clonalis House
9. Castlerea Golf Club
10. Railway Museum

Town
Core



The Hub offers a significant indoor space for a variety of community events and performances.

Socio-Economic Profile

This page summarises the socio-economic and demographic context of Castlerea:

Population

According to Census 2022, Castlerea had a population of 2,348, making up 3.3% of Roscommon's total of 70,259. Between 2016 and 2022, Castlerea's population grew by 356 people (17.9%), a rate notably higher than Roscommon (8.9%) and the State (8.1%)

Age Profile

The age structure of Castlerea showed notable shifts between 2016 and 2022. The age cohort 10–14 saw the largest increase, rising by 1.83%. In contrast, the 55–59 age group experienced the largest decrease, falling by 1.57%. This highlights a need to focus on the needs of children and young people within future planning and development in the town.

Ethnicity

Castlerea was more ethnically diverse than both Roscommon and the State in 2022, with 22.4% identifying as ethnicities other than White Irish (Roscommon: 16.1%, State: 18.4%). White Irish made up 77.6%, followed by White Irish Travellers (1.1%), Other White (13.0%), Black or Black Irish (1.6%), Asian or Asian Irish (3.6%), and Other ethnicities (3.3%). The diverse needs, preferences and priorities of different cultural groups needs careful consideration.

Health

In 2022, 82.5% of Castlerea residents reported their health as good or very good, which was lower than Roscommon (87.8%) and the national average (88.9%). This represented a small increase of 0.2% since 2016. Health outcomes showed gender variation: 83.9% of males reported good or very good health, compared to 81.0% of females.

Education

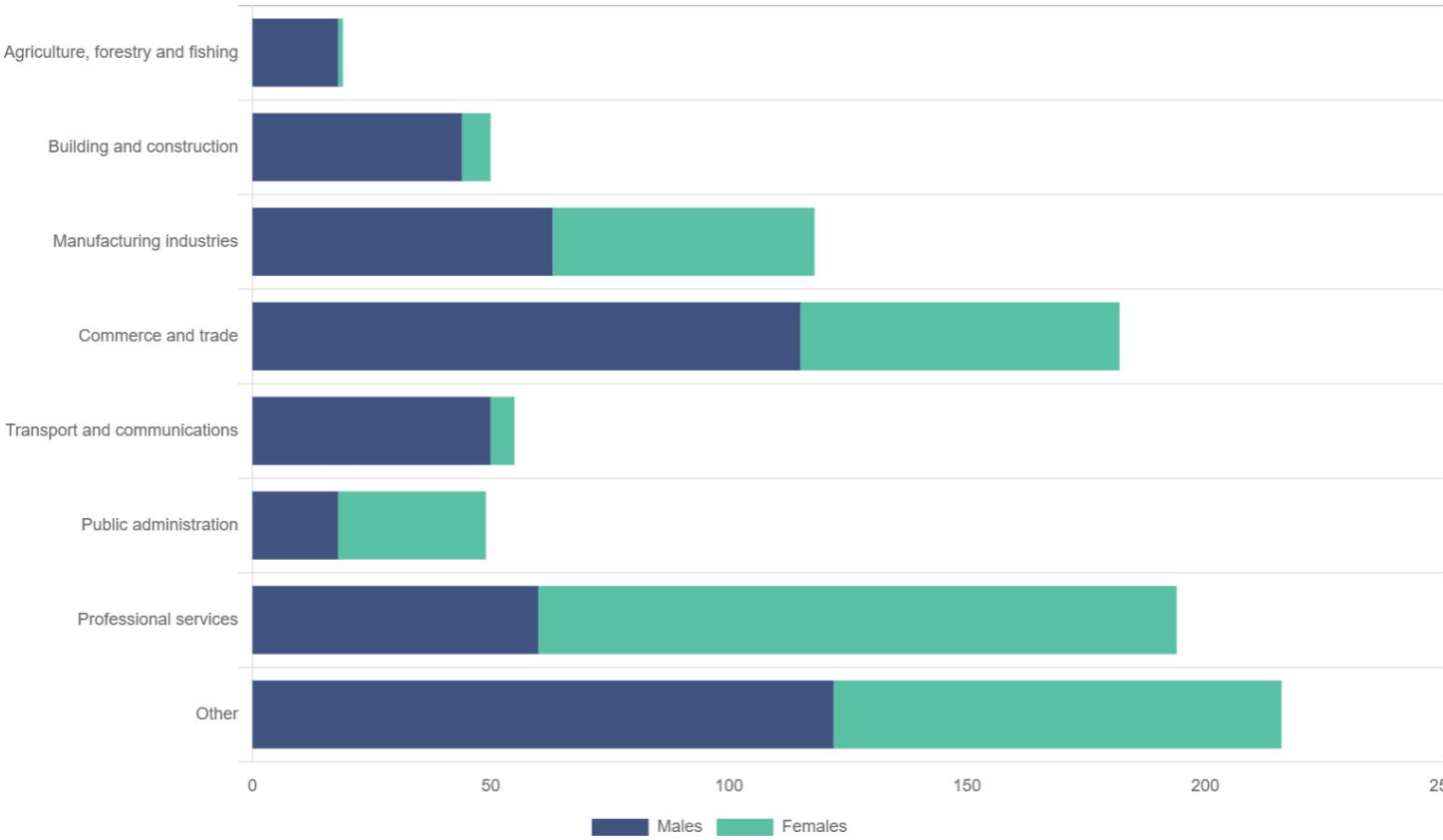
Castlerea had more people with lower education levels than Roscommon and the State, with 4.2% having no formal education and 10.4% with only primary, in 2022. Only 27% had third level education, below county (36%) and national (48%) averages.

Employment

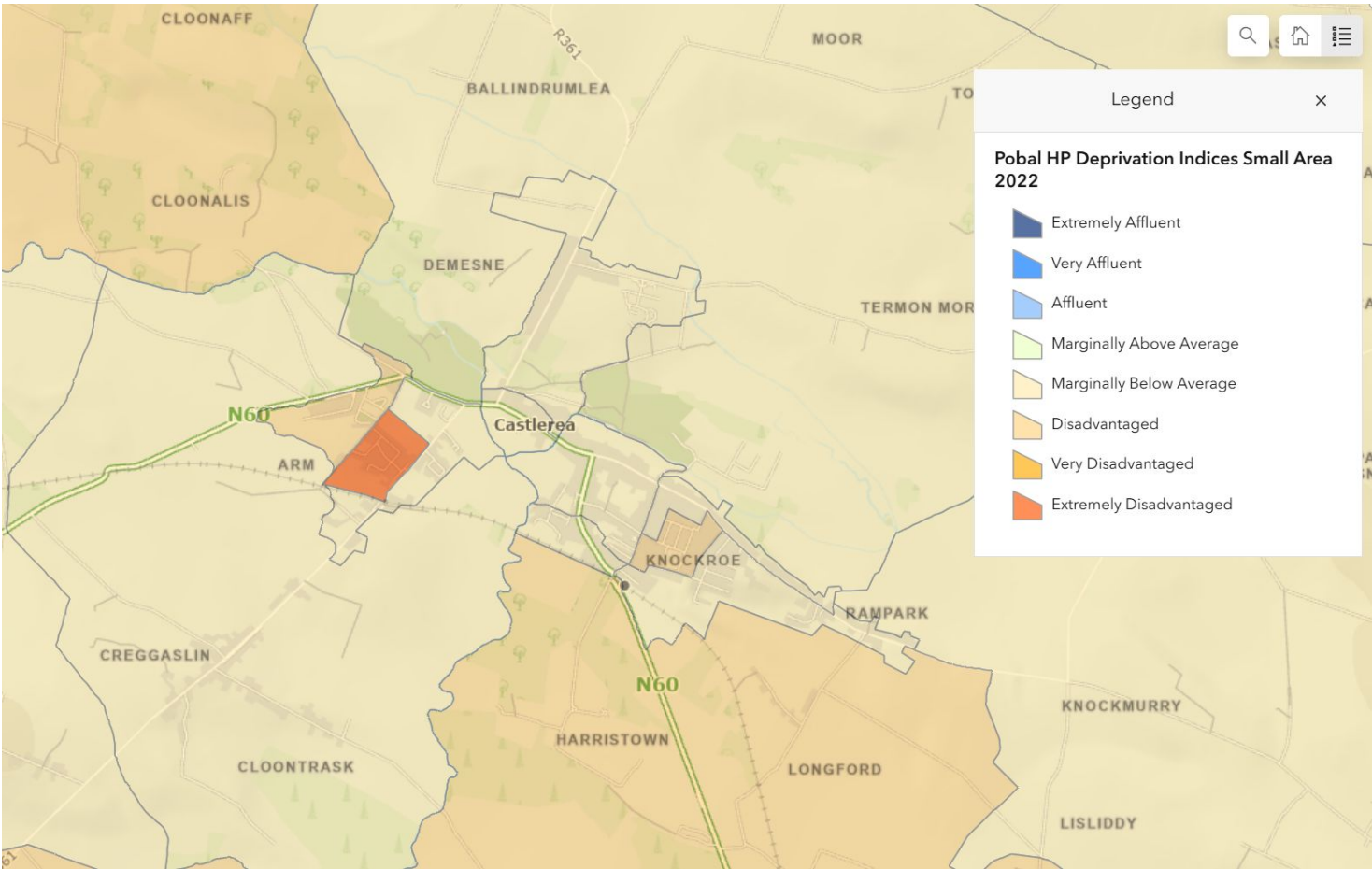
Castlerea's labour force participation rate was 50.1%, below the County and national averages of 57.6% and 61.2%. In 2022, female unemployment in Castlerea stood at 10.3%, while male unemployment was 15.4% (compared to County rates of 7.9% and 8.8%, respectively, and a national average of 8%). The biggest employment sectors in Castlerea included Professional Services (22%), Commerce and Trade (21%), and Manufacturing (13%). The most common occupations included Skilled Trades (11.3%), Professionals (10.8%) and Process, Plant & Machine Operatives (10.5%). A key employer in the town is Harmac Medical Products (medical device manufacturing), while other significant companies in the region, in the manufacturing, agri-food, and healthcare sectors, draw employees from Castlerea.

Deprivation

The Castlerea Electoral Division (ED) was classified as marginally below average in terms of deprivation, with a score of -9.58, which is more deprived than the county average of -1.97 (Pobal 2022). Castlerea had a higher lone parent ratio (21.65%) compared to the county average (14.74%), indicating greater socioeconomic pressures on families. One Small Area in the southwest of town was classified as Extremely Disadvantaged, with a lone parent rate of 65%, age dependency rate of 39% and unemployment rates around 30%.



Census 2022 Employment Industries in Castlerea, Source: Central Statistics Office, Ireland



2022 Deprivation by Small Area in Castlerea, Source: Pobal HP Deprivation Index

Character & History

A Brief History

Castlerea derives its name from a castle, which stood on the banks of the River Suck, at the point where it joins the River Cloonard. This was "Caislean Riabhach", the ancient castle of the O'Conors, around which the town developed. Castlerea has a rich history, encompassing the last High King of Connaught and the first President of Ireland, Dr. Douglas Hyde. The present town of Castlerea was built in the 14th century. Prior to this, the town was situated in Ballinapark in the townland of Arm on the Galway road, approximately one kilometre from the present town. Ruins of dwelling houses and a church from the 'Old Town' can still be seen.

One of the earliest records of settlement stems from the formation of a monastery at Kilkeevan by Saint Patrick in 433-434 AD. This monastery was entrusted to St. Kevin, thus the name Kilkeevan. It continued to be a place of worship until the year 1537, and is still used as a burial ground to this day. Castlerea is home to the O'Conors, the last high kings of Connaught. Clonalis House, which is situated to the north west of the town, is the ancestral home of the O'Connor Don family, which provided Kings and High Kings throughout Ireland's history until the 12th Century. The house is located just outside the town on the banks of the Suck River.



Historic image of Main Street, Castlerea

Historic Timeline



1652

Act of Settlement |
The Castlerea lands were granted to Captain Theophilus Sandford, a Cromwellian officer.



1600s

An Estate Town |
Under the Sandford family, Castlerea emerged as a planned estate-centred settlement.

c. 1640

Castlerea House |
The House was built on a previous Medieval Castle site.

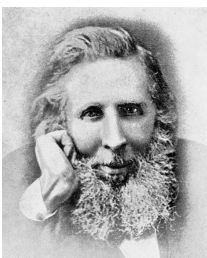
1800s

Thriving Market Town |
Castlerea becomes home to industries, including a distillery (91,000L/Year), a brewery and a tannery operated under the Sandfords.



c.1825

Castlerea Market |
It was constructed to replace an earlier, smaller market house from 1616, to serve the bustling weekly markets.



1815

Birth of Sir William Wilde |
Renowned surgeon, historian, and father of Oscar Wilde.



1840-1842

WorkHouse |
WorkHouse built to shelter poor, However during the famine it became overcrowded.



1860

Railway Station |
Integrated Castlerea into national transport via the Dublin - Westport line.



1895

Fire destroyed Castlerea House |
The main block of Castlerea House was destroyed by fire in 1895 and replaced by a single-story structure and later demolished in 1960.

Character & History

Modern History

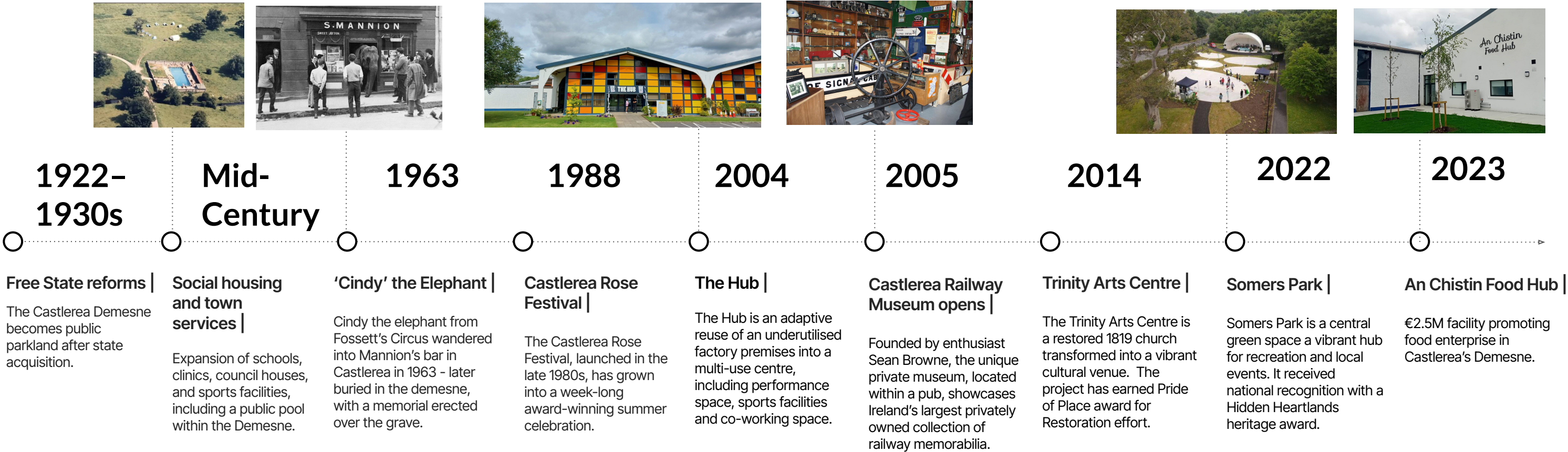
Castlerea today is a town where history and community shape the built environment. Its urban form has shifted from estate-based private land to inclusive, multi-use public space. The former Sandford demesne is now a public park with river trails, a sensory play area, and Ireland’s first fairy village. Trinity Arts Centre, once a Church of Ireland building (1819), has been reimagined as a thriving cultural venue hosting concerts, workshops, and the annual *Rose of Castlerea* festival. The Castlerea Railway Museum built around a salvaged 1955 diesel locomotive, sits beside the now-closed Hell’s Kitchen bar, an example of passionate, grassroots conservation.

Somers Park and the Demesne regularly host local events, from music to commemorative gatherings, including the grave of Cindy the elephant, a town mascot fondly remembered and honoured. Economic activity blends tradition and resilience. The Castlerea Livestock Mart, founded as a farmer co-op in 1976, now runs weekly cattle sales across three rings, drawing buyers from a 40-mile radius. Nearby, the Enterprise Hub supports clubs, childcare, and the An Chistin culinary school.



Aerial view of Main Street, Castlerea (1973)

Historic Timeline





Former Castlereia Market now in use as a Pharmacy

Character & History

Evolution of the Town

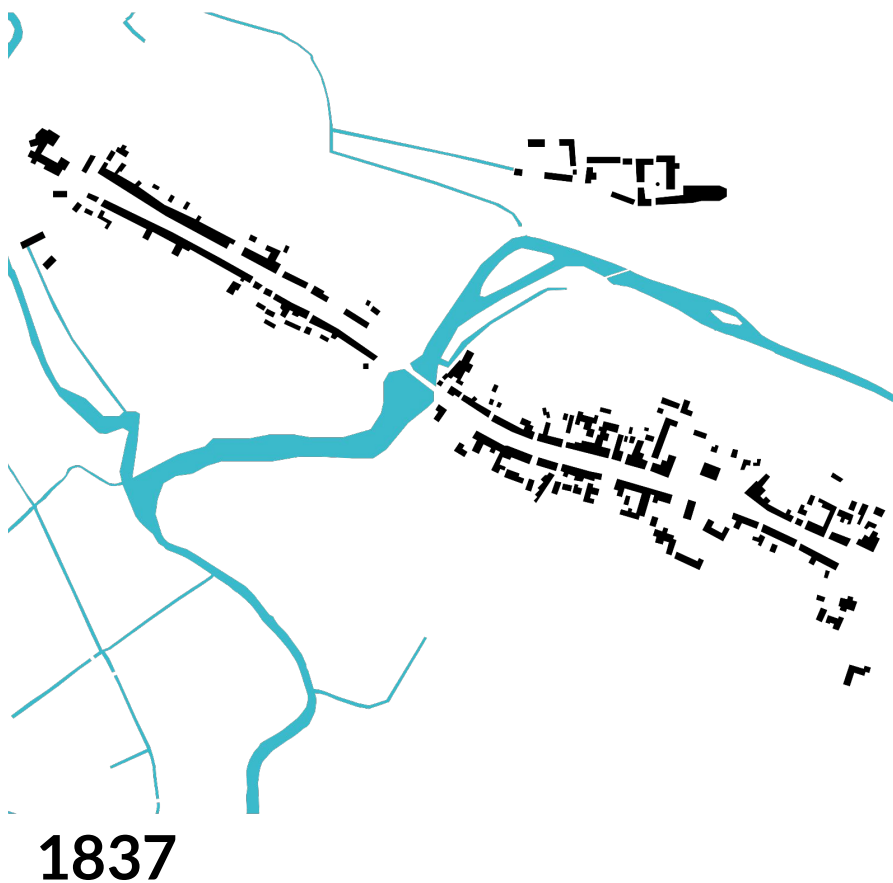
The town has a predominantly linear structure with the retail core fronting onto the N60 and the inner section of the R377. The residential development associated with the town has traditionally been quite central and on all approach roads to the town as frontage development and more recently in the form of residential housing estates and apartments within the backlands of the town and on the urban fringes. Topographically the Castlerea area is relatively low-lying and slightly undulating and the town itself is formed around the confluence of the Suck and Francis Rivers. The commercial town core is focussed on the N60 route which passes through the town in a north west/south east direction

Much of its present streetscape appears to have been formed in two distinct periods; the first between 1800 and 1830 and the second 1860 and 1880. Suburbanisation during the 20th century, driven by the advent of the car, has led to the expansion of the town with linear frontage development on all approach roads and residential estates in the eastern and western backlands. This peripheral development has primarily been residential development without commensurate expansion of the core commercial area and the challenge moving forward is to stimulate commercial growth and limited expansion of the core commercial area.



Aerial view of Castlerea showing linear form, 1954

Urban Morphology Mapping



Built Heritage

The following page sets out a number of the significant buildings within the study area (town core), their importance recognised by being listed on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The description has been developed from the appraisals listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH):

St. Patrick's Church, 1896 | St Patrick's Church, designed by George Goldie, is a prominent limestone church marked by its tall tower and roadside presence. Its detailed stonework, stained glass and well-crafted interior elements, including a Caen-stone and marble altar, give it a strong architectural and heritage presence in the town.

Castlerea Market, c.1825 | Erected around 1825 by the Mount-Sandford family, it was originally designed as a covered market or 'shambles', forming a central hub for trade and commerce in the growing town. Local farmers and merchants would gather here to sell produce, livestock, and goods, making it a vital part of the rural economy. It contributed significantly to the development of Castlerea as a market town. Currently it functions as a pharmacy.

The Old Bridewell, c.1820 | The Old Bridewell in Castlerea was constructed around 1820 as a local prison, part of the British penal system in 19th-century Ireland. The term "bridewell" refers to a small jail, often used for short-term holding of offenders. It is now in use as a house, with a 1940s garage to the front.

Gate lodge, Demesne, c.1830 | Originally part of Castlerea House (demolished), it served as an entrance building and has since been repurposed for community use, while still forming the entrance to Castlerea town park.

Post Office, 1911 | This one-storey red-brick building on Main Street was erected in 1911 as the town's post office. Architecturally it is a modest Edwardian structure – a "diminutive post office from 1911 in corporate red brick" with limestone trim and its original harp motif on the parapet. In 2018 the building was sold and restored as a restaurant.

Bank of Ireland, c. 1920 | This large stone-faced building was constructed around 1920 as the Bank of Ireland branch on Main Street. It is a finely detailed Queen Anne Revival style bank. For many decades it housed bank offices; after the Bank of Ireland branch relocated (to The Square), the historic bank premises have been repurposed for commercial use.

Byron Brothers, c. 1820 | Built in the early 1800s, this three-storey terraced building on Main Street was originally home to Byron Brothers Ltd., a local drapery and clothing retailer. Featuring Georgian architecture with sash windows and high ceilings, it retains its historic charm despite shopfront updates.

J.J Tuohy, c. 1800 | The former J.J. Tuohy shop is a two-storey corner building dating to c. 1800. It retains many original features, including sash windows and a distinctive stone doorcase with a decorative fanlight. Converted to a shop around 1930.



St. Patrick's Church, 1896



Post Office, 1911



Castlerea Market, c.1825



Bank of Ireland, 1920



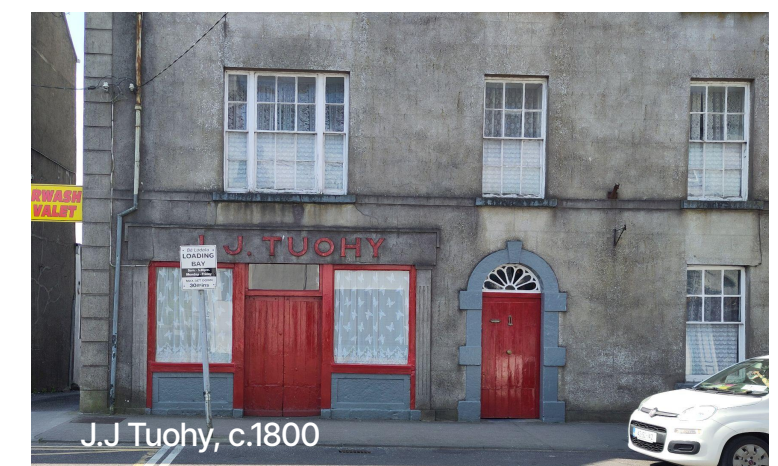
The Old Bridewell, c.1820



Byron Brothers, c. 1820



Gate lodge, Demesne c.1830



J.J Tuohy, c.1800

Built Heritage

The map opposite illustrates the existing heritage protection measures within Castlerea town centre. Lower Main Street and Patrick Street fall within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), which encompasses a significant concentration of Protected Structures, particularly around the former Market Square - the historic town centre.

Upper Main Street, by contrast, lies outside the ACA but contains several notable heritage assets recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), as well as one Protected Structure - Rafferty's Building. Its location outside the ACA means that development in this area is subject to fewer statutory protections, despite its potential to influence the streetscape and character of the town core.

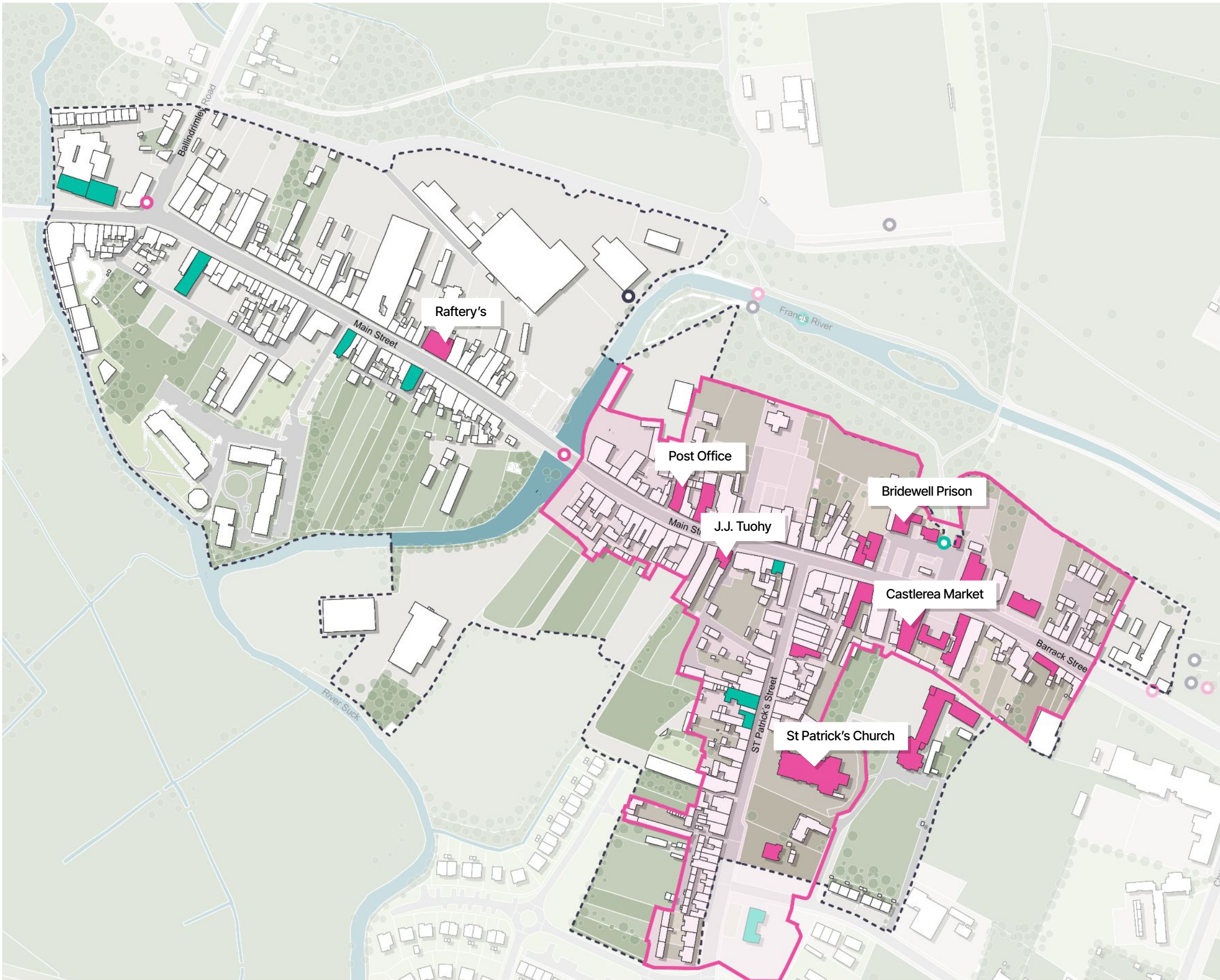
Key

Architectural Conservation Area

Protected Structures

NIAH Listed

Sites and Monuments Record



Map indicating Heritage Protection Measures in Castlerea town centre



Upper Main Street lies outside of the Architectural Conservation Area, reducing protection measures on the streetscape and existing building stock.

Facilities & Amenities

Castlerea town centre provides a solid base of convenience and everyday services that serve not only the town itself but also the surrounding rural catchment and nearby smaller settlements. The backbone is formed by a mix of long-established, family-run businesses - including convenience stores such as Robert Flynn's and Benny's Deli - complemented by a centrally placed supermarket (Cahill's SuperValu, with backland parking) and a LIDL on the town's outskirts. Together with smaller independent shops, this offers ample convenience retail provision for local residents.

Essential public services are well represented: there is a postal service (An Post), two banking institutions (Bank of Ireland, AIB), a public library, a Garda station, three pharmacies, a medical centre, and a funeral director (Gaynor's). These collectively ensure that day-to-day needs and essential services remain accessible within the town centre.

In terms of retail, hospitality and leisure: independent retailers and specialist shops (for example a wedding shop and boutique retail like Angie's Attic), cafés and restaurants (including Hester's Golden Eagle, Bombay Palace and Hell's Kitchen, the latter also linked to the Railway Museum) help sustain a modest but diverse retail sector. Castlerea offers some nightlife and eating-out options, though the evening economy remains limited - the closure of bars such as Caulfields and a lack of larger indoor or outdoor event venues has constrained regular larger-scale gatherings. For visitors and short-stay guests, Tully's Hotel (roughly 20 guest rooms) and a number of bed & breakfasts on the outskirts offer accommodation close to the core.

Leisure and amenities add further value. There is a nine-hole course at Castlerea Golf Club (established 1905), an outdoor swimming pool, children's playground, a public library, and sports pitches including a soccer pitch and a GAA pitch at O'Rourke Park. The local GAA club also maintains squash and handball courts. The social well-being of younger residents is supported by the Neighbourhood Youth Project (NYP), a youth venue in town.

The Demesne, as previously mentioned, is a large park accessible from Main Street, which provides green space and leisure opportunities. Castlerea is also the trailhead for a number of regional walking routes, including the Suck Valley Way and the Lung Lough Gara Way, while the Beara-Breifne Way passes through the town - together offering strong potential for walking tourism and outdoor recreation.

Educationally, Castlerea supports a youthful population through a cluster of schools close to the town centre: two primary schools (St. Anne's Convent National School and St. Paul's Boys National School), a special-needs school (St. Michael's Special Needs School), and a second-level school (Castlerea Community School, with around 500 students), providing for primary, secondary and special education.

On a more structural level, it is notable that in recent years some former commercial premises (especially at street-front level) have been converted into housing. While this reflects adaptive reuse and may respond to changing demand, it has had the unintended effect of reducing ground-floor commercial vibrancy in parts of the town centre.



Benny's Deli



Public Library



Tully's Hotel



Robert Flynn Convenience Store



Weekly Livestock Mart held in Castlerea



Supervalu in the town centre backlands



Hesters 'Golden Eagle' Bar & Restaurant



Castlerea Railway Museum

Facilities & Amenities

The following map provides an overview of the facilities and amenities located within the town core. Additional observations include:

- Retail and Hospitality facilities are dispersed fairly consistently across the Retail Core, as defined in the RCDP, whereas Community, Public and Health Facilities are largely clustered around Lower Main Street and Market Square - which would reflect the development of this part of town as the Civic Centre.
- There are two primary entrances into the Demesne from the Town Centre - one at Market Square and one adjacent the Mart, which leads to a boardwalk along the river.
- Castlerea Community School is the most central school in Castlerea, located within the Town Core boundary.

Key

- Community & Public Facilities
- Retail & Hospitality
- Education
- Recreation Facilities
- Health
- Religion
- Retail Core



Map of facilities and amenities in Castlerea town centre



Adaptive reuse of former Post Office Building to house Bombay Palace Indian Restaurant

Vacancy & Dereliction

Vacancy in Castlerea Town Centre

During a 2025 site visit, the Design Team completed a survey of vacant properties and sites within the town centre. Vacancies are spread across upper and lower Main Street and St. Patrick's Street. A number of buildings also appear vacant or derelict but are understood to be occupied for residential use.

Whilst commercial vacancy is a national issue, with the GeoDirectory Commercial Buildings Report recording a rate of 14.6% in Ireland in Q2 2025, Connacht has the highest rate of the four provinces at 18.6%, with County Roscommon averaging a retail vacancy level of 17.8%. Although a specific vacancy rate for Castlerea is not available in this study, a survey undertaken in December 2020 for the RCDP Retail Strategy recorded a retail vacancy rate of 30.3% (30 of 99 units), significantly above both national and county levels.

Vacancy levels are notably higher among historic and Protected Structures, including prominent buildings such as Byron Brothers and Callachans, along with Hanley Hall and the former school building opposite Market Square (one unit currently occupied). This may reflect the additional permissions, complexity and capital costs associated with retrofitting older buildings.

The Roscommon County Development Plan (RCDP) Retail Strategy identified the existing building stock of the town centre as a key action of the Strategy, which included:

- A focused effort is required to encourage the re-occupation of town centre properties, particularly along Main Street Upper/Lower and Patrick Street. This would improve the overall vibrancy and general appearance of the town.
- A number of shop frontages (both occupied and vacant) along Main Street and Patrick Street could be enhanced to improve the streetscape.

Underutilised Town Centre Plots

Castlerea's historic development as a market town has created narrow burgess plots and extensive backland areas behind Main Street that remain largely underused. The RCDP Retail Strategy highlights the importance of directing new retail and commercial development towards the town centre to consolidate activity. It also highlights significant undeveloped backlands, particularly to the rear of Main Street and St. Patrick's Street, along with the River Island site, that offer potential to accommodate new retail or other appropriate town-centre uses. While reoccupying existing buildings should remain the priority, these areas also present opportunities for off-street parking to relieve pressure on Main Street and St. Patrick's Street.

Overall, Castlerea's urban form is relatively intact, with few vacant plots within the streetscape. A long-term vacant site beside Benny's Deli, however, occupies a prominent arrival point and continues to detract from the town centre's overall appearance.



Byron Brothers



Callachans



Former School Building



Vacant building (Former Seven Days shop)



The Stagger Inn



Hanley Hall



Vacant Plot, Upper Main Street



River Island and Former Nightclub Site

Vacancy & Dereliction

The following map provides an overview of the vacant buildings and underutilised or vacant town centre plots, identified during the site visit in April 2025.

Please note, this information should be validated with a more detailed vacancy survey for the town centre.



Key

-  Vacant Buildings
-  Underutilised Town Centre Plots

Map of vacant buildings and plots in Castlerea town centre



The vacant Byron Brothers building is a Protected Structure along Main Street falling into dilapidation

Transport & Connectivity

Overview

Castlerea's town centre is heavily shaped by traffic movement, with the dominance of vehicles creating an environment that is challenging for pedestrians and limiting the quality of public space. The town is served by Castlerea Train Station on the Dublin–Westport line and by regional bus routes, providing an important non-car transport offer, but movement within the town centre itself remains largely car-oriented.

Vehicular Movement

The N60 national road runs directly through the town centre along St. Patrick's Street and Upper Main Street. This results in continuous traffic flow, including frequent large trucks and HGVs which are particularly imposing on the town centre streetscape and environment.

At the Hell's Kitchen junction, one of the main arrival points into the town centre, vehicles enter at relatively high speeds. Combined with limited pedestrian crossings, this creates an unsafe and uncomfortable environment for those on foot.

Pedestrian Movement

Pedestrian movement and accessibility are constrained by the car-dominated street layout. Although footpaths are generous in some areas, pinch points caused by poles, street clutter and uneven surfacing make navigation difficult, particularly for people with mobility needs or those using prams or buggies.

There are only two controlled pedestrian crossings in the town centre, both located on Lower Main Street. During an April 2025 site visit, the Design Team identified at least three additional desire-line crossing points (see map overleaf).

DMURS highlights that regular crossing opportunities are an effective means of slowing traffic and improving pedestrian priority.

Surface car parks, including those at the Mart, Market Square and several backland sites, are also challenging for pedestrians. Access routes often lack lighting, footpaths or clear pedestrian priority at junctions, resulting in poor legibility and safety concerns. Encouraging parking in backland areas is desirable, but improvements to pedestrian access and visibility are required to make them function effectively.

Connectivity to Demesne and Backland Sites

The town's proximity to the Demesne is a significant asset, but connections from the town centre are limited. Two primary routes link the town to the Demesne:

1. **Market Square**, where access is visually and physically hindered by the large surface car park and the shelter.
2. **The Boardwalk**, accessed via a narrow kissing gate and steps adjacent the Mart, restricting use for people with mobility difficulties. Upgrades are planned to improve accessibility, but the approach remains dominated by surface parking and could be more welcoming.

Backland sites more generally have limited and sometimes hidden entry points. Utilising these entries and access points, entries and archways has potential to function as a key movement corridor, helping relieve on-street parking pressures while improving permeability through the town centre.



2no pedestrian crossings exist on lower Main St



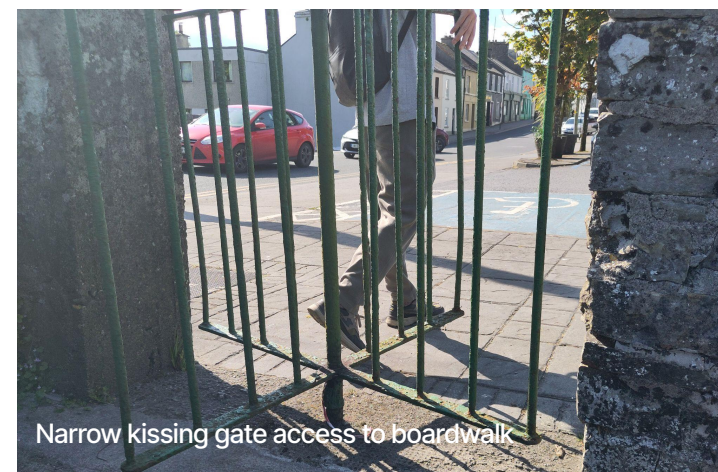
Poor connectivity between Demesne and town centre



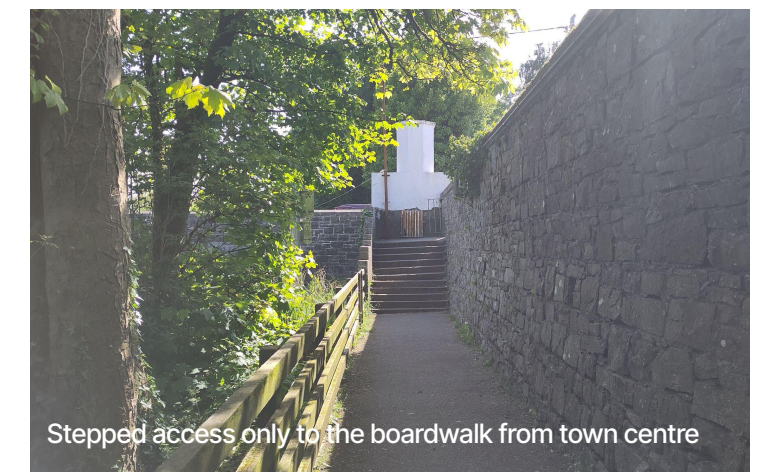
Main St/Patrick St junction lacks pedestrian crossing



Hell's Kitchen junction lacks pedestrian crossing



Narrow kissing gate access to boardwalk



Stepped access only to the boardwalk from town centre



Entries provide access to backland plots



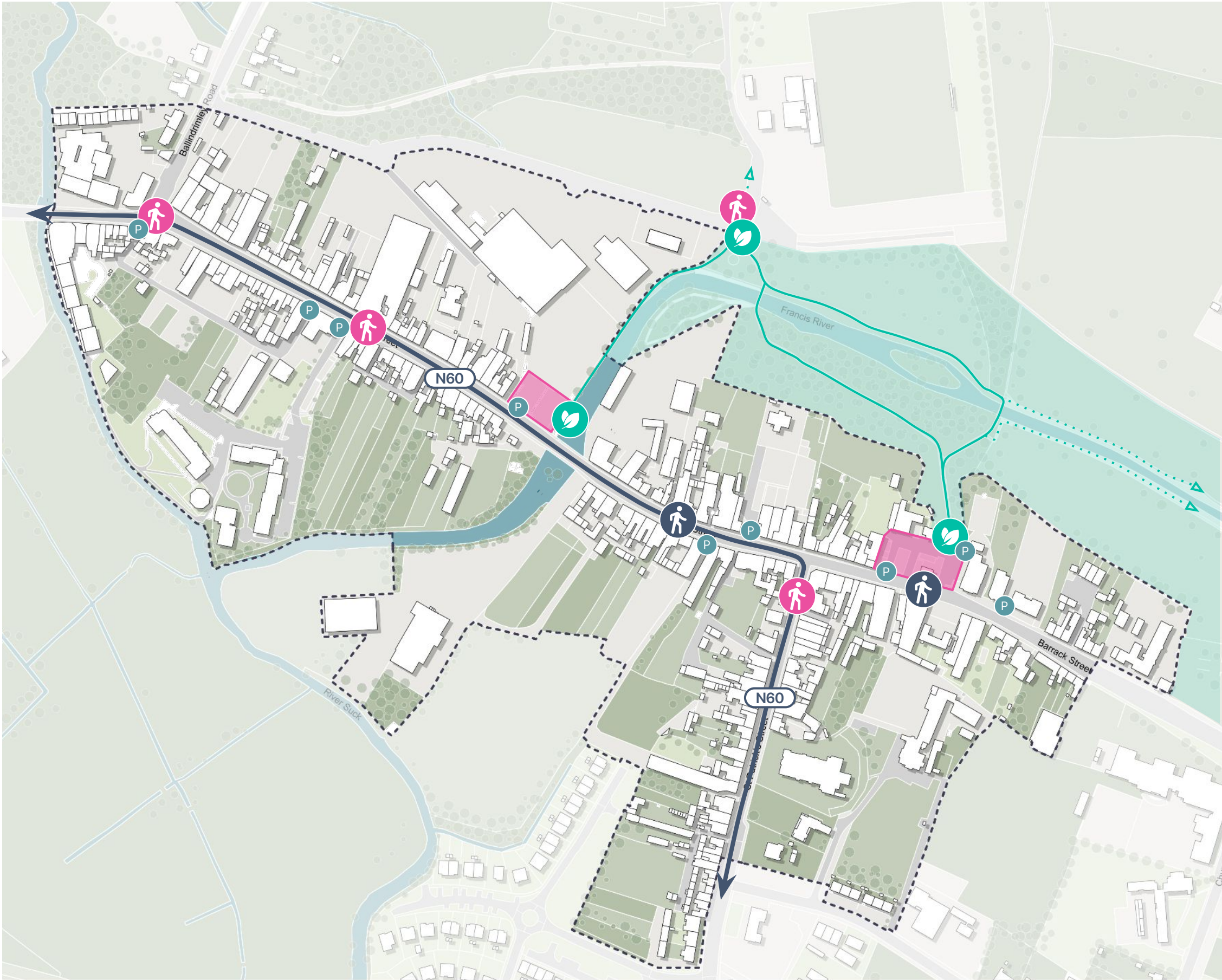
Paving is fairly wide throughout town centre

Transport & Connectivity

The map opposite provides an overview of the vehicular and pedestrian movements within Castlerea Town Centre. This includes informal crossing points or desire lines (red), where pedestrians cross most frequently. These locations should be considered for a zebra crossing, with or without flashing beacons, to improve safety.

Key

-  National Road
-  Surface Car Parking Access Points
-  Existing Pedestrian Crossings
-  Desirable Pedestrian Crossings
-  Key nodes to Demesne
-  Surface car parks impacting access to Demesne



Map of existing movement and connections in the town centre



Entrance to Demesne is obstructed by busy surface car park in former Market Square

Car Parking

Overview

This section outlines the current car parking provision in Castlerea town centre. There are approximately 570 spaces available, comprising a mix of public and private surface car parks, backland parking areas and on-street spaces. Despite the overall quantity of parking, several inefficiencies limit how well the system functions.

A key issue is the lack of marked parking bays, both on-street and within backland surface car parks. Without marked spaces, significant gaps occur between vehicles, reducing overall capacity - potentially by as much as 20%. Parking restrictions are also limited. With few time controls (such as two-hour limits) on public car parks and on-street spaces, surveys have identified vehicles remaining all day or overnight, particularly in Market Square, where proximity to local businesses and schools makes long-stay parking more attractive. Recent parking surveys undertaken by Roscommon County Council identified that **70%** of cars parked at 10:45am on Wednesday 23rd July 2025 remained in the square by 12:45pm.

Access to some backland car parks is another constraint. Narrow entrances can discourage drivers from using these areas due to concerns about manoeuvrability or potential damage to vehicles. As a result, well-located but tight-access sites remain underused. Similarly, the location of certain free public car parks affects their attractiveness. The car park beside the Mart, for example, is notably underutilised, likely due to its slightly more peripheral position relative to the town centre.

Roscommon County Council carried out car parking audits in July 2025 to understand occupancy levels more clearly.

Surveys took place at three intervals - 10:00–11:00, 11:00–12:30 and 13:00–14:30, across a seven-day period:

- Day 1: Wednesday 16th July 2025
- Day 2: Friday 18th July 2025
- Day 3: Monday 21st July 2025
- Day 4: Wednesday 23rd July 2025
- Day 5: Saturday 26th July 2025
- Day 6: Tuesday 29th July 2025
- Day 7: Thursday 31st July 2025

The car parks included in the audit are referenced on the accompanying map.

Key

- 1. 10 Spaces
- 2. 26 Spaces (unmarked)
- 3. 70 Spaces
- 4. 42 Spaces (unmarked)
- 5. 15 Spaces (unmarked)
- 6. 7 Spaces (unmarked)
- 7. 9 Spaces (unmarked)
- 8. 17 Spaces
- 9. 38 Spaces
- 10. 40 Spaces (unmarked)
- 11. 17 Spaces (unmarked)
- 12. 32 Spaces
- 13. 15 Spaces (unmarked)
- 14. 42 Spaces
- 15. 8 Spaces
- 16. 64 Spaces
- 17. 13 Spaces
- 18. 3 Spaces (unmarked)
- 19. 14 Spaces
- 20. 24 Spaces (unmarked)
- 21. 48 Spaces
- 22. 18 Spaces

Total: 570 Spaces



Map of car parking in Castlerea town centre and references used for Car Parking surveys



Undesignated on-street parking



Surface car park at former Market Square



Narrow backland access

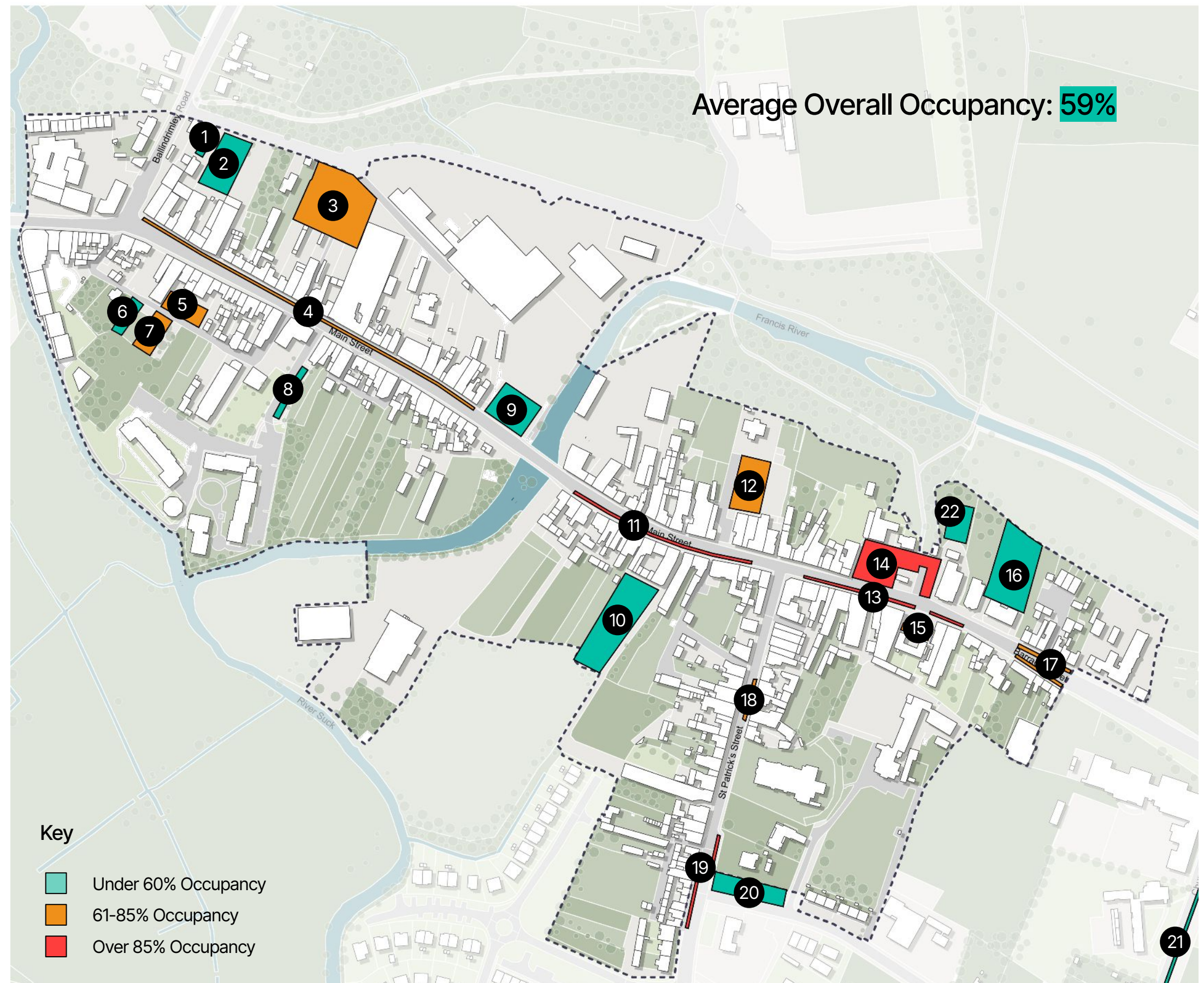
Car Parking Surveys

Overview

The map opposite summarises average occupancy across Castlerea's car parks over the 7-day period surveyed. Overall occupancy was **59%**, indicating substantial underuse of town centre parking during this period. The following pages provides further breakdown of occupancy, comparing three scenarios for publicly available car parks - Main Street surface car parks, backland car parks and on-street spaces - to highlight current usage patterns. A summary of the findings is provided below:

- Market Square vs Mart car park:** Market Square (ref 14) recorded the highest occupancy at over 85%, reflecting its central location and access to key destinations. In contrast, the Mart car park (ref 9) was largely under 60% occupancy across most days, Occupancy was highest on Thursday, which would reflect an increase in usage during the Livestock Mart.
- Underutilised backland car parks:** Two large backland car parks - Tully's Pharmacy (ref 10) and the Council Offices (ref 17) - remained below 60% occupancy throughout the week - under 25% on several occasions. Potential reasons include distance from Main Street, low visitor awareness, and access or egress constraints.
- High demand for on-street parking:** Upper Main Street (ref 4) and Lower Main Street (ref 11) were consistently highly occupied, indicating strong demand for on-street parking. The absence of time restrictions may contribute to long-stay parking, while marked spaces could improve efficiency.

Note: A more comprehensive survey conducted at various times of the year may be required to fully understand existing use and capacity.



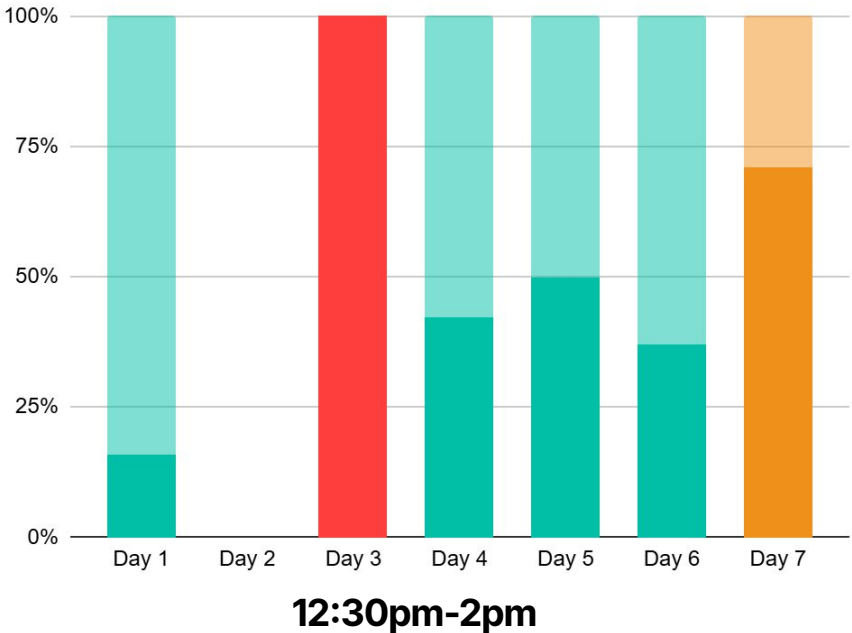
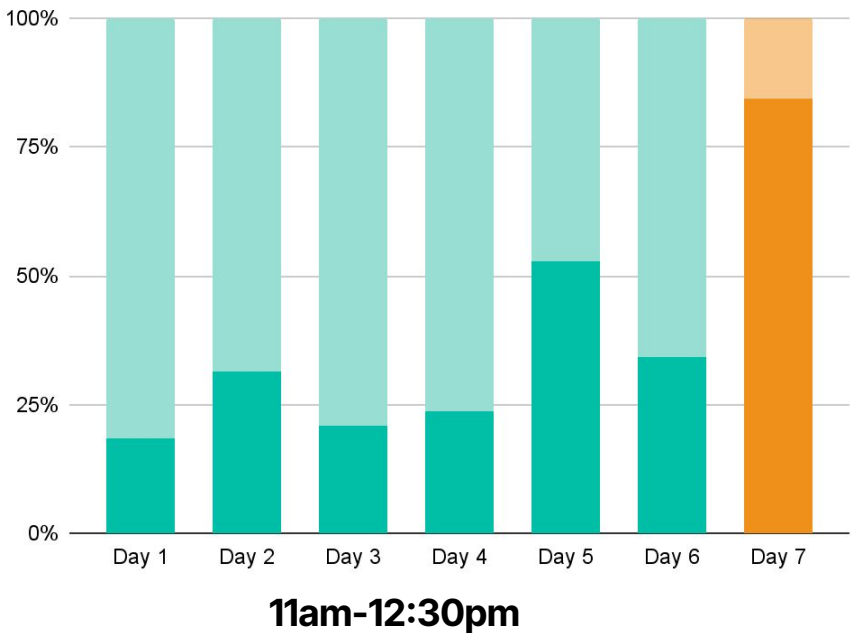
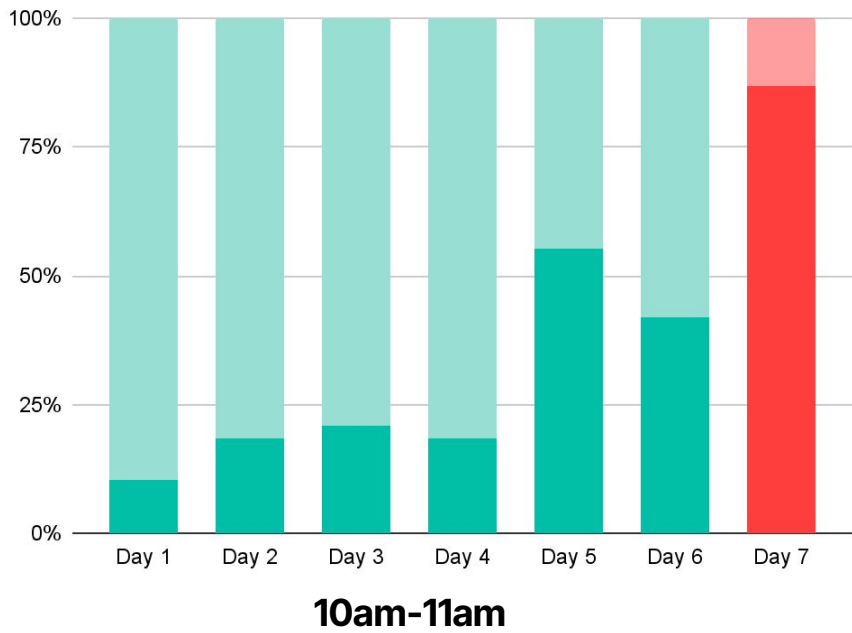
Map of 7-day average occupancy across Castlerea town centre car parking areas

Car Parking Surveys | Main St. Surface Car Parks

Mart | Location Reference 09

Total Spaces: 38 Bays

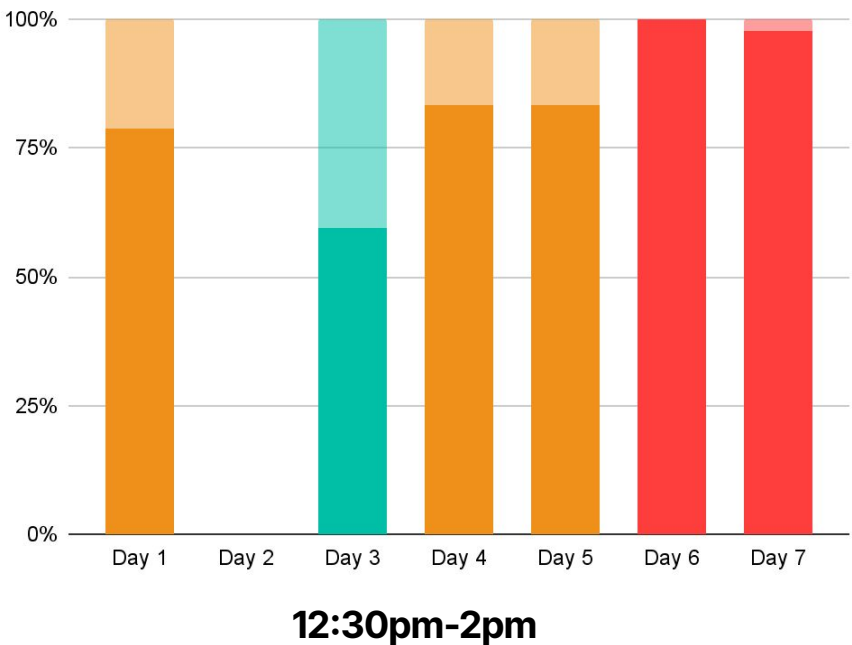
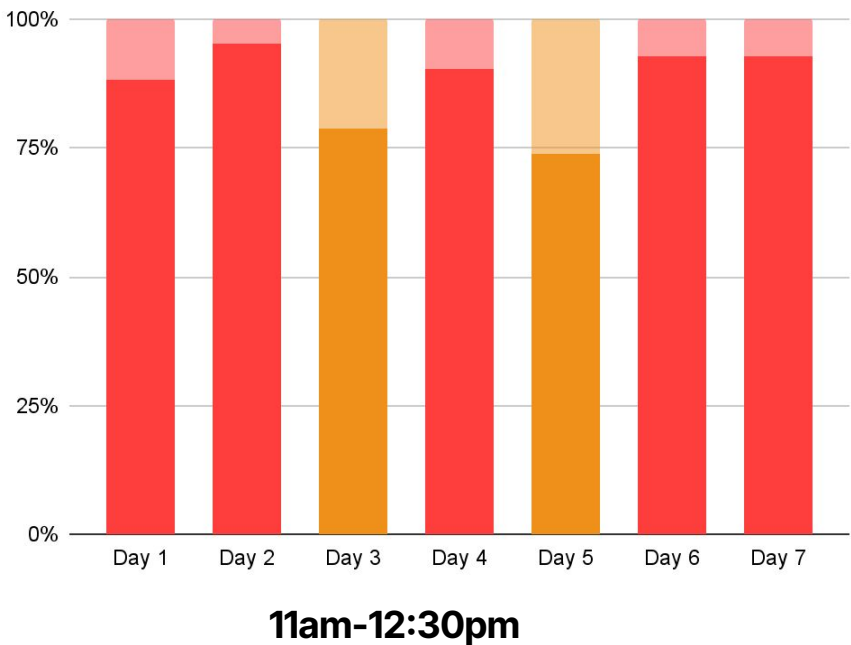
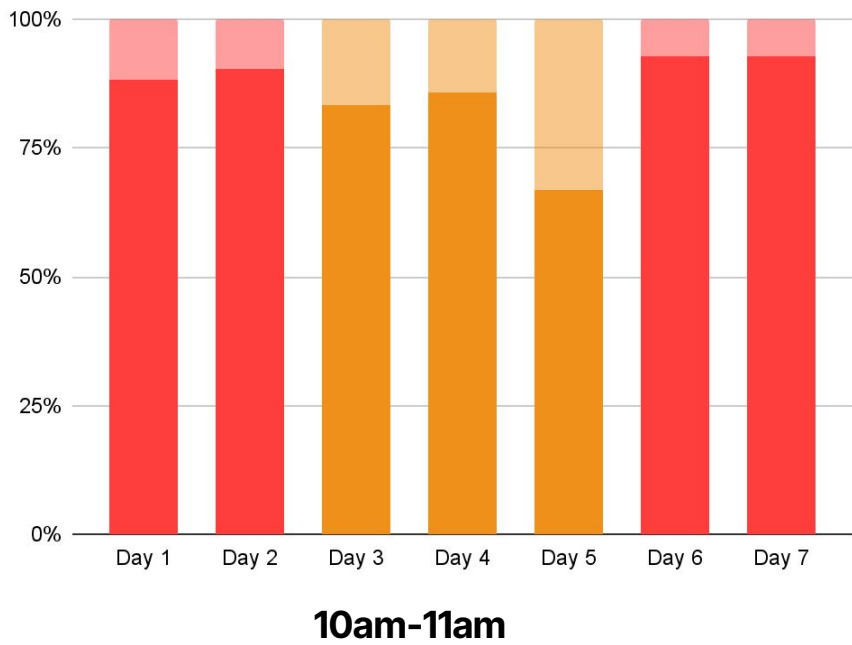
Average Occupancy (7-days): 26%



Market Square | Location Reference 14

Total Spaces: 42 Bays

Average Occupancy (7-days): 88%

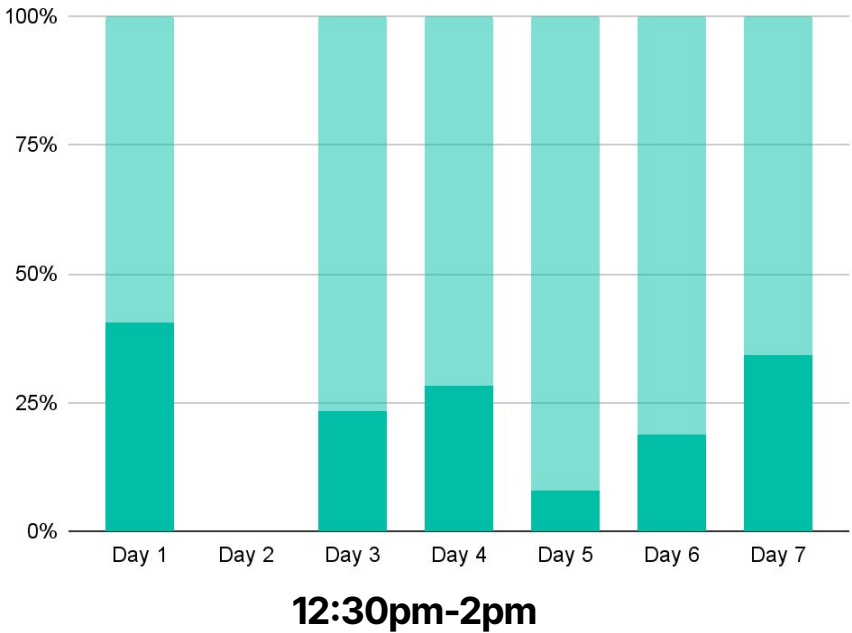
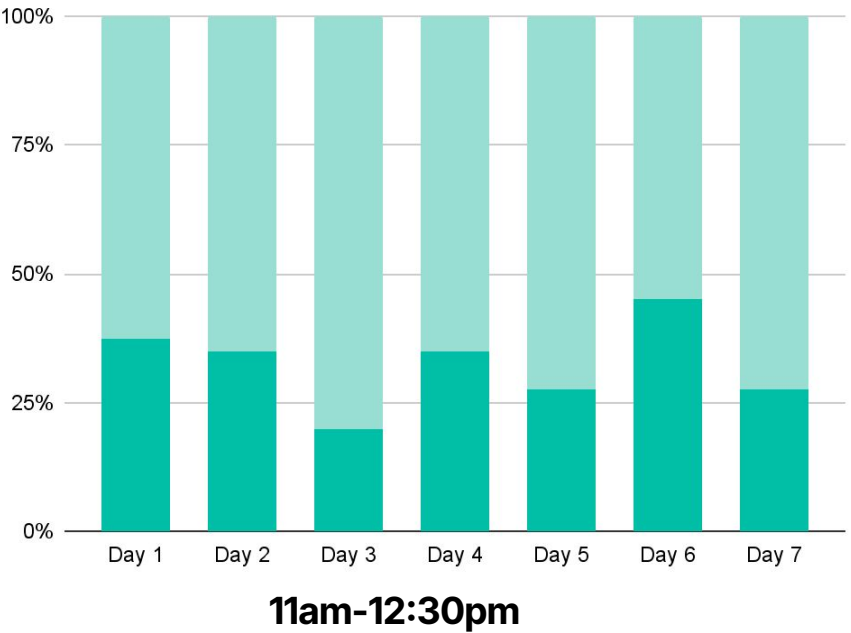
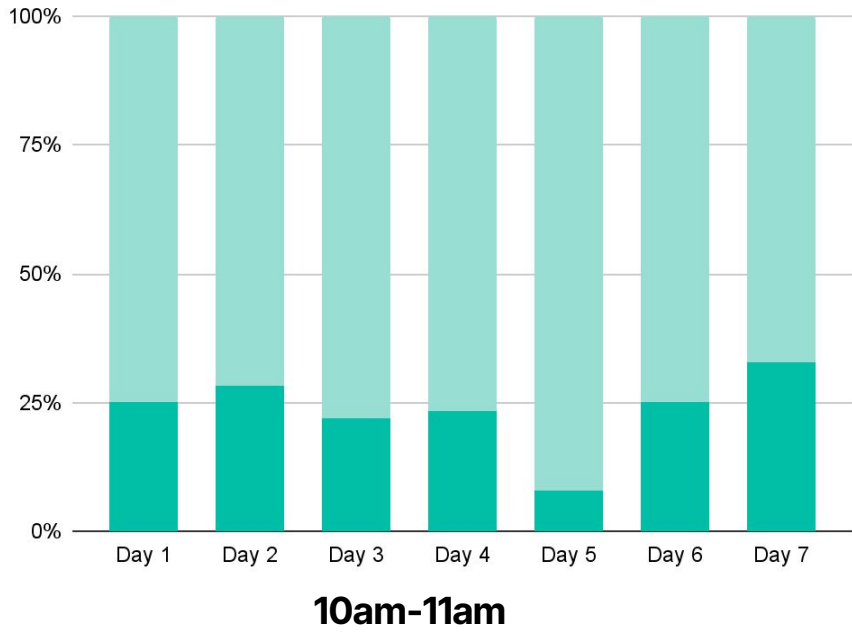


Car Parking Surveys | Backland Surface Car Parks

Council Offices | Location Reference 17

Total Spaces: 64 Bays

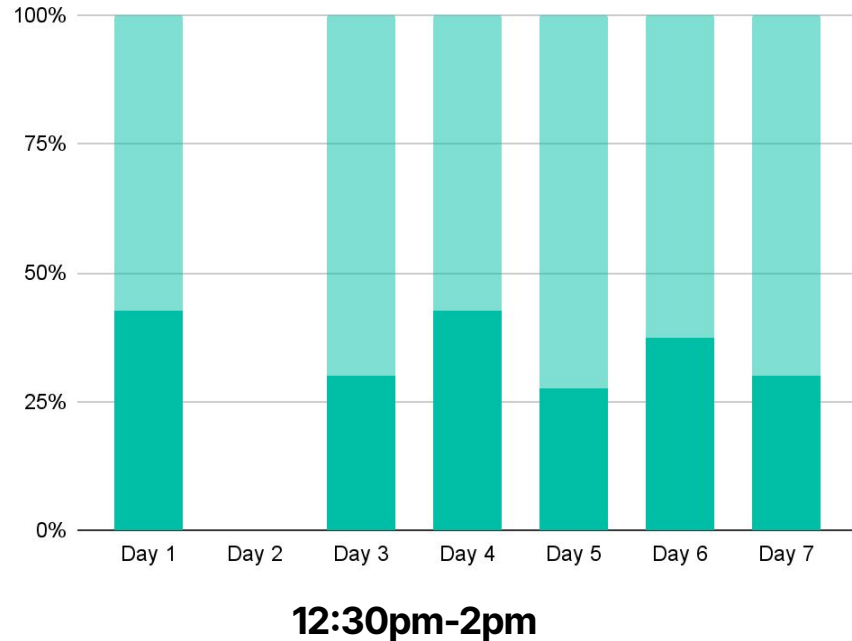
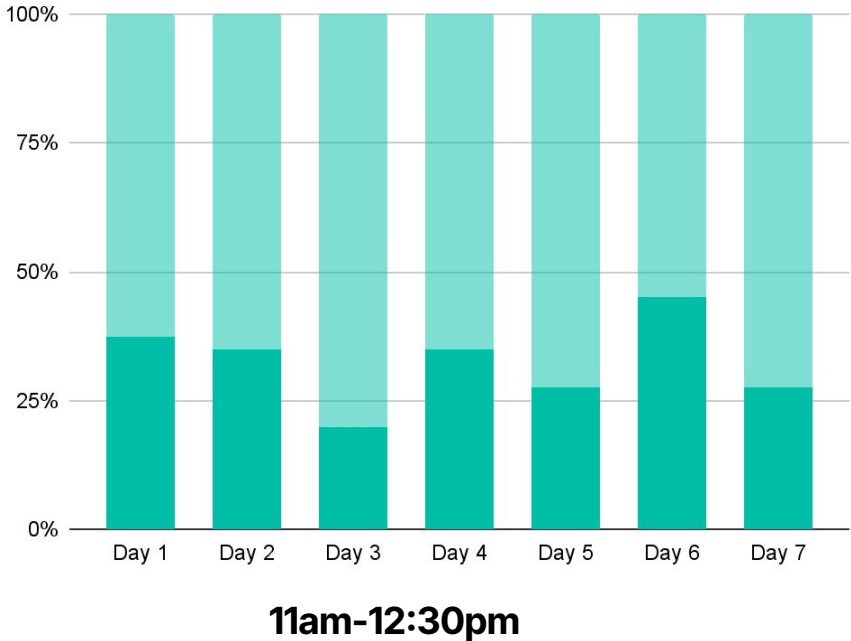
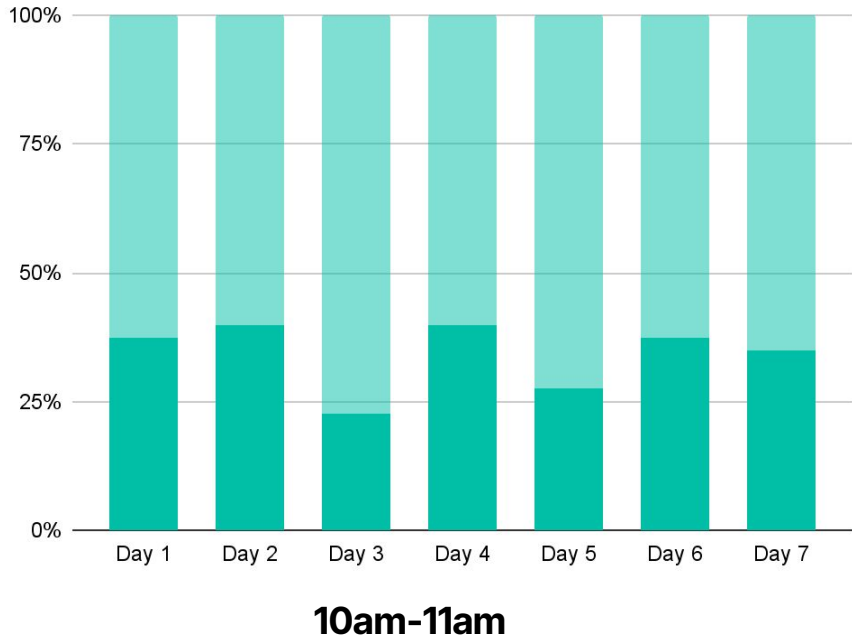
Average Occupancy (7-days): 36%



Tully's Pharmacy | Location Reference 10

Total Spaces: 40 Bays

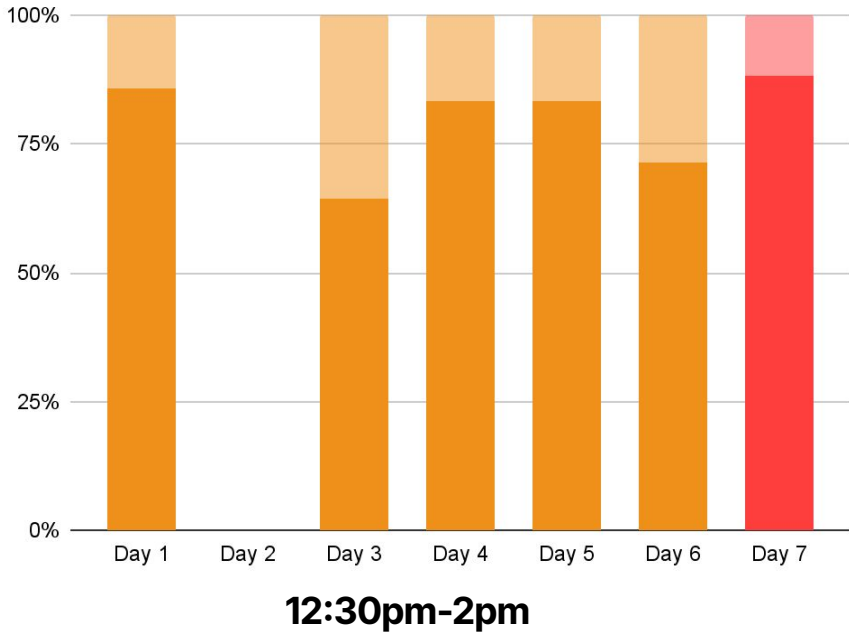
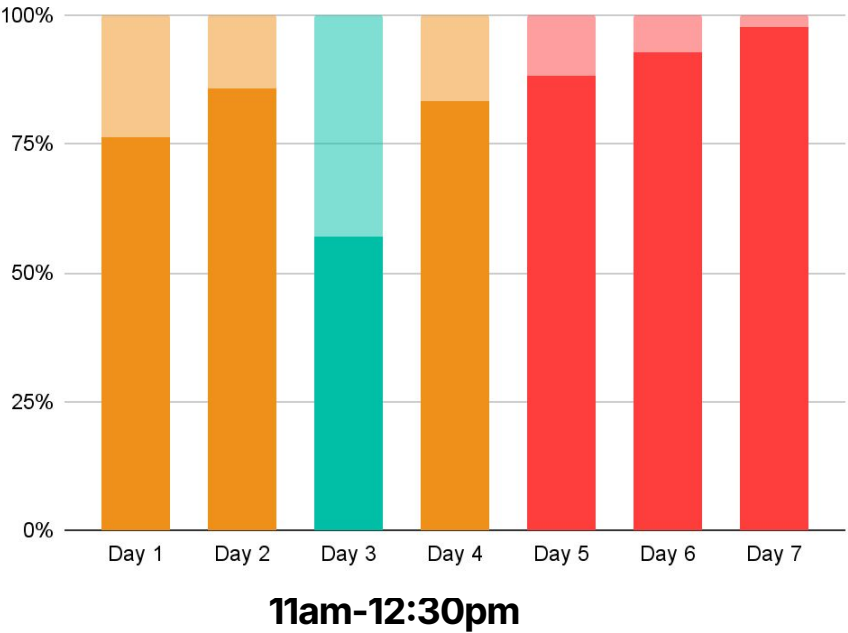
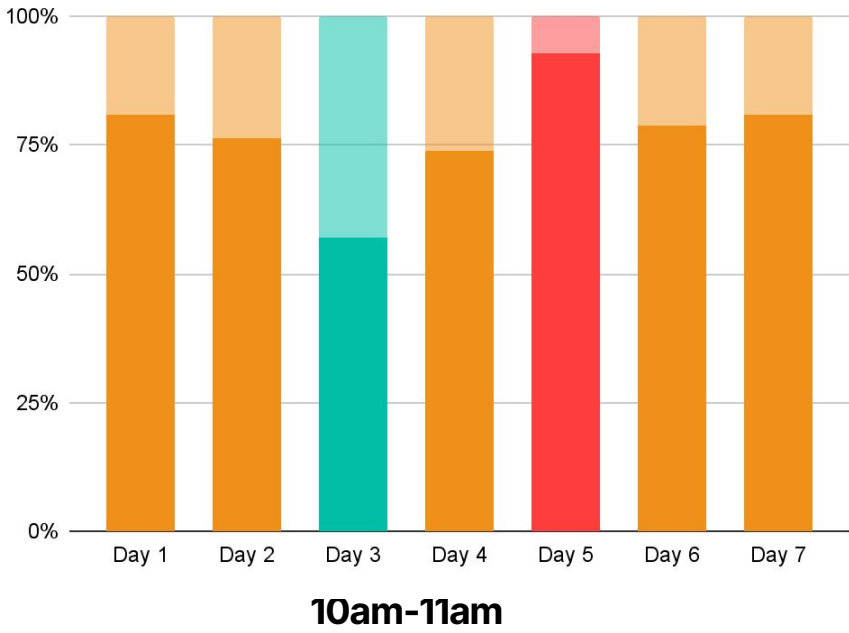
Average Occupancy (7-days): 43%



Car Parking Surveys | On-Street Parking

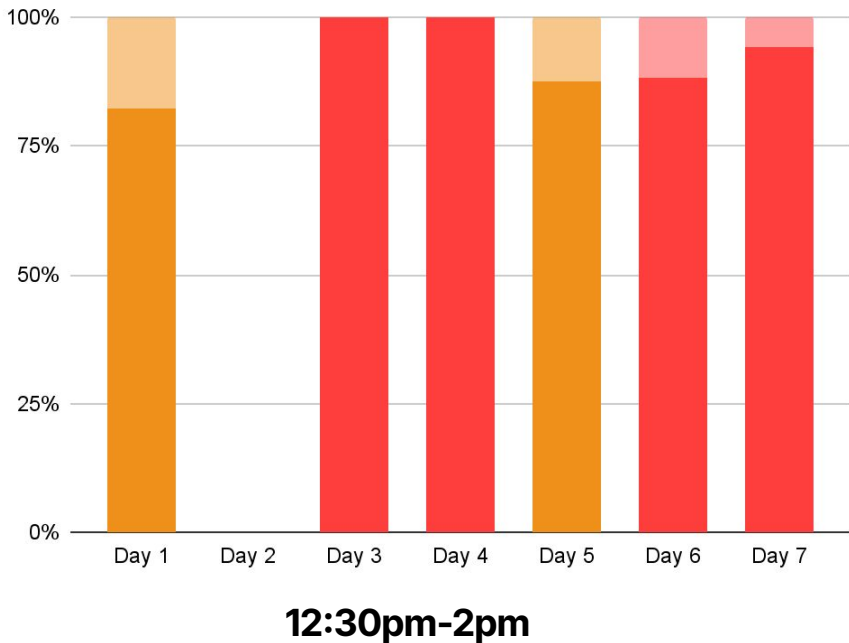
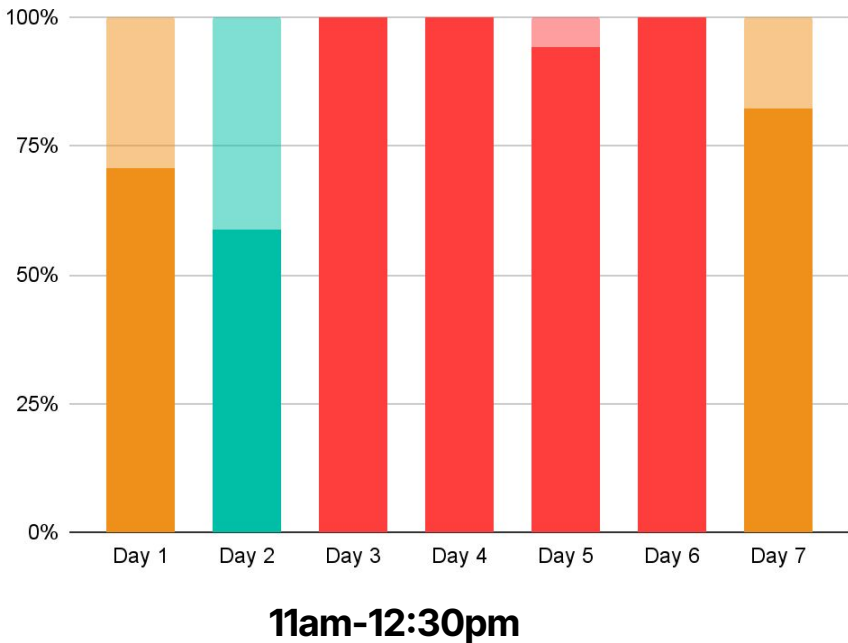
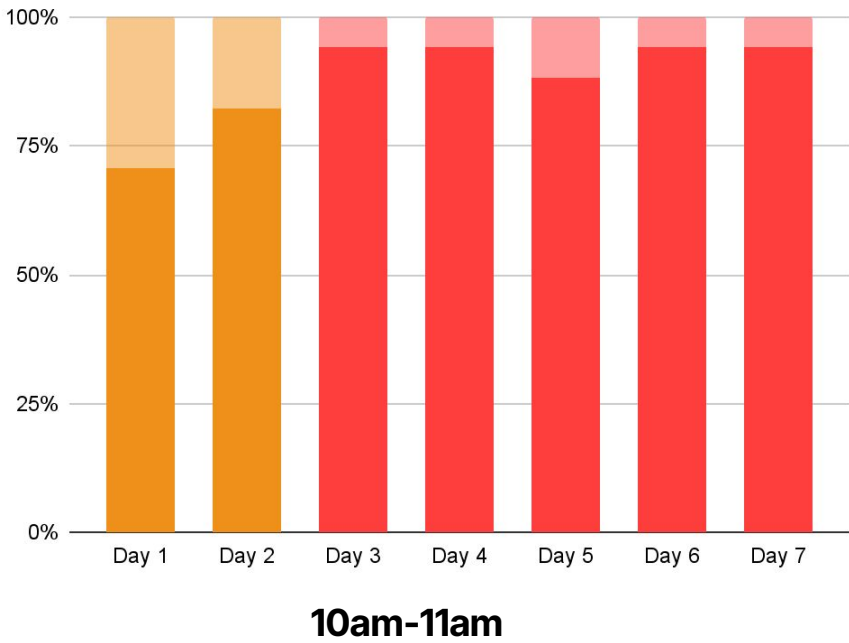
Upper Main Street | Location Reference 04

Total Spaces: 42 Spaces
Average Occupancy (7-days): 82%



Lower Main Street | Location Reference 11

Total Spaces: 17 Spaces
Average Occupancy (7-days): 90%



Summary of Findings

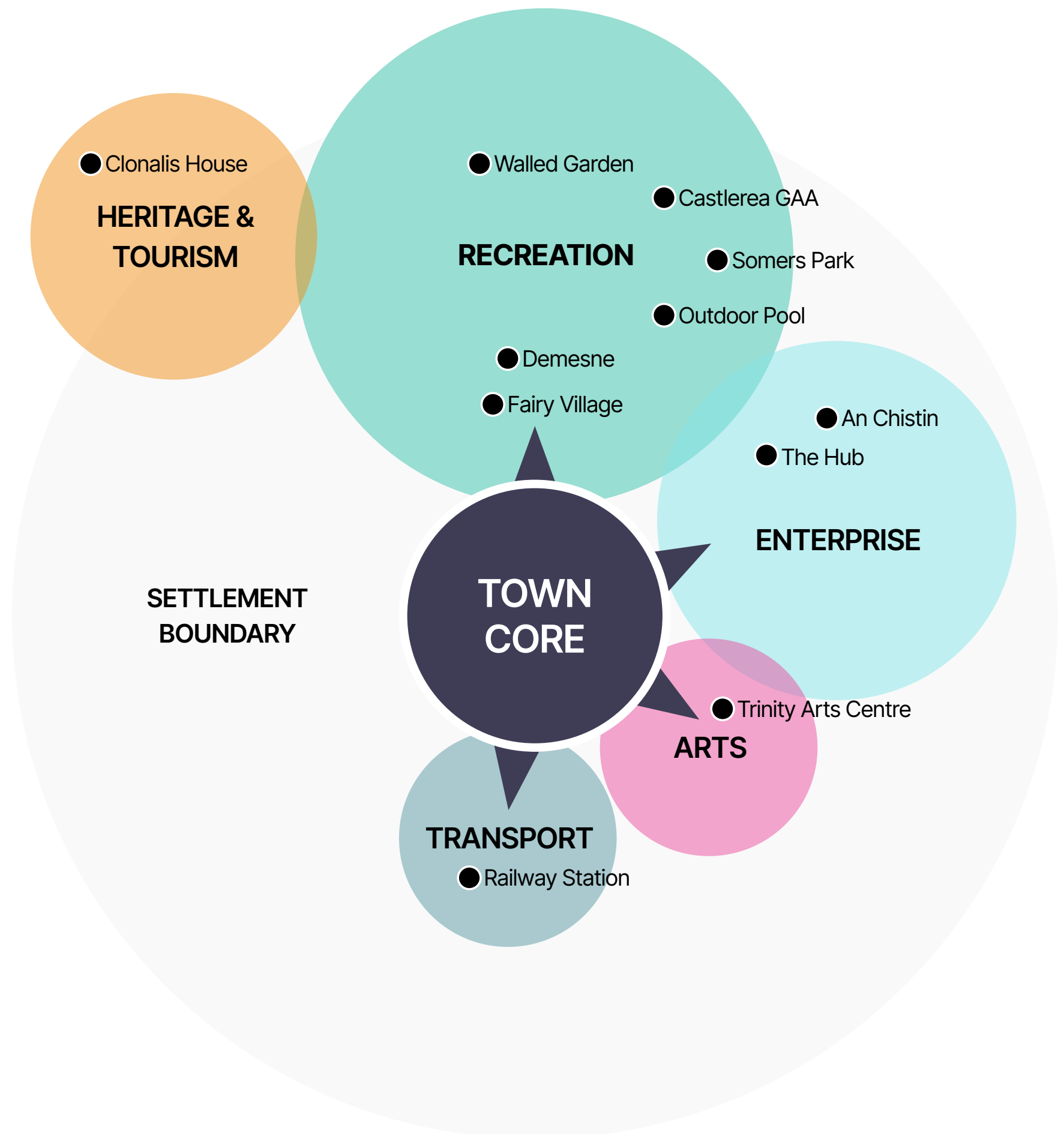
The following pages present a concise summary of the research and analysis, examining the challenges and opportunities facing Castlerea town centre. This included desktop research, urban design analysis, surveys, and town walks to assess urban form, traffic, parking, activity levels, and patterns of vacancy and dereliction.

As shown in the accompanying diagram, Castlerea is structured around a central town core, surrounded by community facilities and activity zones forming the wider settlement boundary. While the town core provides essential services that define its role and identity, strengthening connections to these peripheral zones could help stimulate footfall, economic activity, and overall vibrancy within the centre.

The Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 highlights the town's potential as a food development destination:

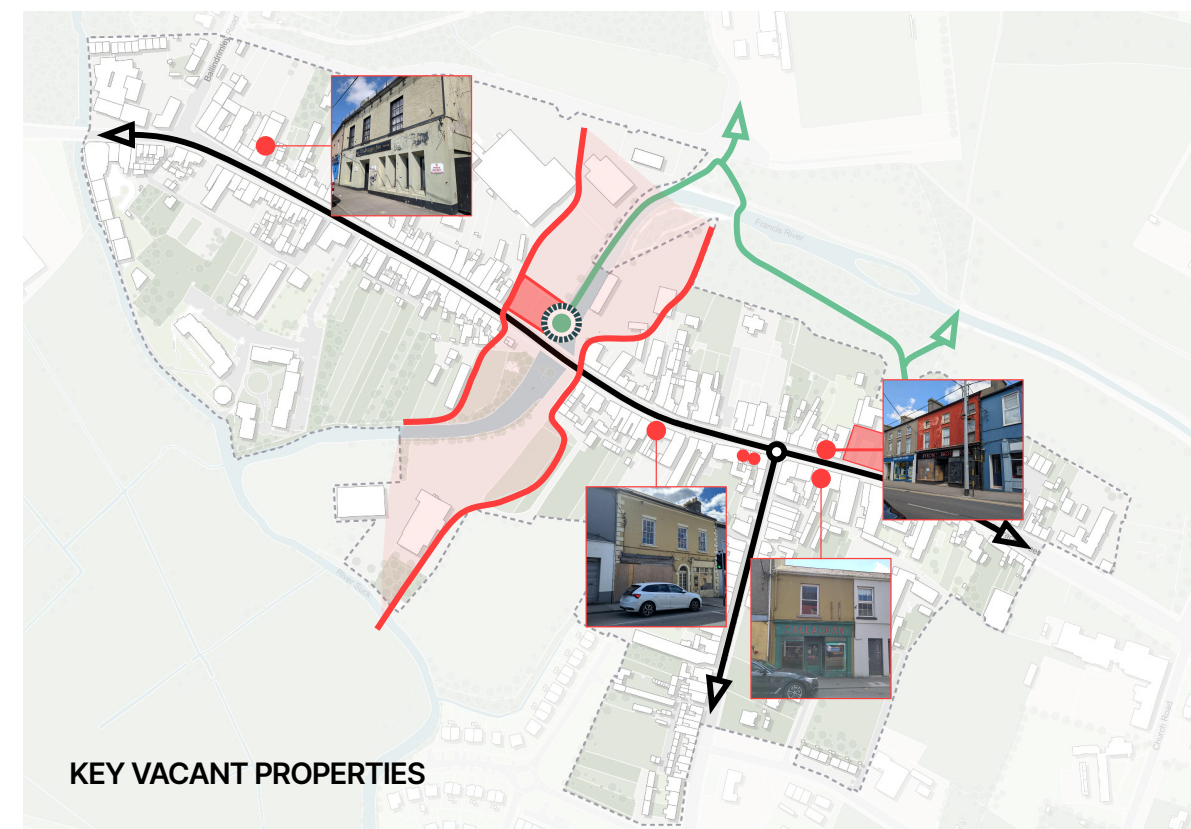
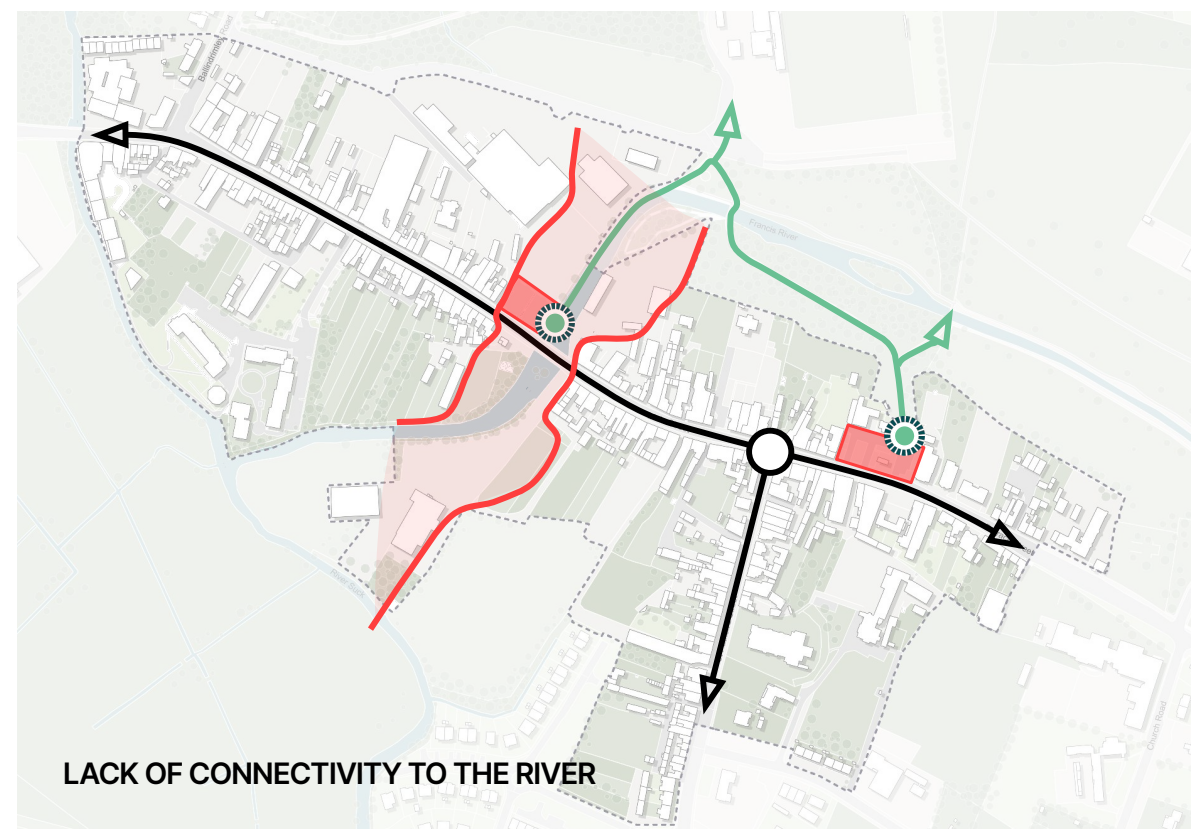
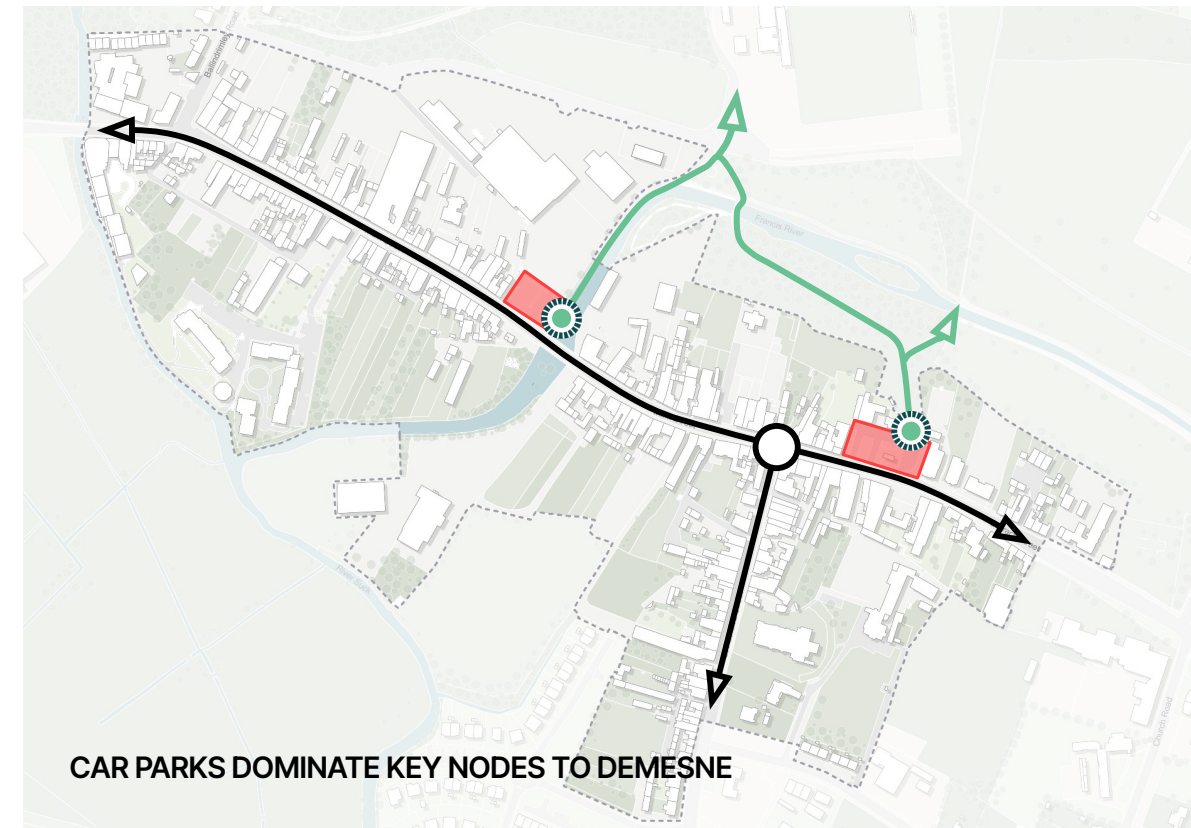
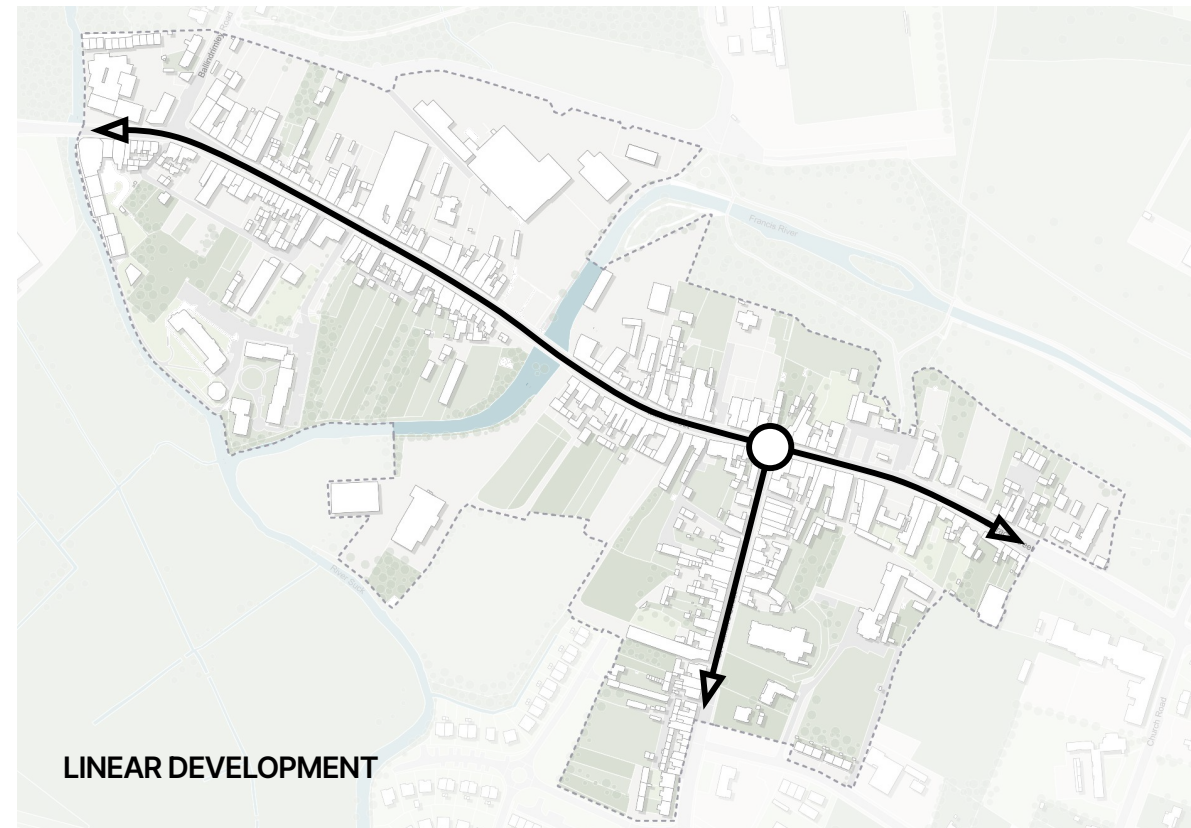
“Support the growth of Castlerea as a food development destination, capitalising on its growing agri-food, locally produced and speciality artisan market, which will collectively enable the town to establish a more diversified and sustainable local economy.”

Building on the success of An Chistin culinary school, start-up businesses in the food sector and other local artisan food establishments, such as Benny's Deli, alongside Castlerea's heritage as a market town, presents an opportunity to create a distinctive identity and draw for the town centre, reinforcing its role as both a local hub and a destination for visitors.



Zonal Diagram of Castlerea Settlement Boundary

Summary of Findings | Urban Design Analysis



Summary of Findings | Site Observations



Summary of Findings | SCOT Analysis

Strengths

- Compact, walkable and legible town centre
- Relatively flat topography, ideal for walking and cycling
- Access to the Demesne from town centre
- Linear form and (typically) generous footpaths support navigation
- Railway station close to town centre
- Wealth of natural resources and recreational facilities close to town centre
- Presence of key independent retailers within the town core
- Essential services in the town centre - Post Office, Convenience stores etc
- Reasonable provision of hospitality venues, including bars, restaurants and Tully's Hotel
- Growing agri-food, locally produced and speciality artisan market, including An Chistin Cookery School
- Active weekly Livestock Mart sustains Castlerea market town tradition
- Strong community network
- Regular events and programmes, such as Castlerea Rose Festival
- Hub and Trinity Arts Centre provide purpose-built events spaces
- Railway museum
- Large number of facilities and amenities (pool, demesne) for locals and visitors
- Well-defined street enclosure and traditional plot layouts
- Market town form remains legible and could be reactivated
- A number of traditional shopfronts and heritage buildings still exist

Challenges

- On-street parking disrupts pedestrian flow and visual quality
- Inefficient, undesignated parking strategy
- Limited pedestrian crossings and poor access to the Demesne, obscured by surface parking and shelters
- High traffic speeds and volumes on the regional road reduce comfort and safety
- No civic space in the town core for events
- Riverfront is underused and dominated by industrial scale and use
- Lack of greenery, soft landscaping, and outdoor seating in town core
- High vacancy and dereliction, especially in historic and protected properties
- Ground-floor residential use reduces town centre vibrancy
- Evening economy is limited
- No anchor tourist attraction to draw sustained visitors
- Limited visibility of the food/enterprise sector in the town core
- Most community and cultural facilities located outside the centre
- No regular town-centre market (e.g. farmers market)
- Few dedicated facilities for young people
- No large indoor venue in the town core
- Many historic shopfronts are in poor condition or unsympathetically redeveloped
- Key heritage assets are underused or inappropriately used
- Recent modern developments undermine the historic character

Opportunities

- Enhance Demesne gateways with pedestrian-first design and signage
- Consolidate and manage surface parking to improve efficiency and free space
- Improve walkability and connectivity across the town centre
- Create a green corridor along the river, restoring riverfront for biodiversity, flood resilience, and recreation
- Reimagine Market Square as a flexible civic space for events and markets
- Introduce climate-resilient landscaping and SUDS features to town core streetscape
- Reinforce a modern market town identity through local food, crafts, and produce
- Activate vacant and underused buildings for pop-ups, makerspaces, and food ventures
- Use An Chistin/Food Hub to stimulate food enterprise within the town core
- Encourage residential and live/work use of upper floors
- Partner with community and cultural groups to animate vacant buildings and public spaces
- Host regular markets and town-centre events to boost vibrancy and dwell time
- Expand youth and intergenerational facilities in the town core
- Provide design guidance for shopfronts, signage, and building conversions
- Develop a covered indoor market - acting as an economic and social hub for the town
- Develop visitor experiences and trails linked to local history and the Sandford estate

Threats

- Car dominance in town centre may limit placemaking or pedestrianisation efforts
- Reluctance to use backland parking may overburden on-street capacity
- Vehicle speeds on upper Main Street pose safety and placemaking concerns
- Flood risk on lower river backlands limits development potential
- Hard landscaping and surface runoff increase flood vulnerability
- Biodiversity loss if green spaces are poorly managed during regeneration
- Continued dereliction or inappropriate development risks long-term viability of town core
- Continued conversion of commercial premises to residential use will impact town character and vibrancy
- Significant derelict or underutilised heritage assets in private ownership
- Financial cost of restoring heritage buildings may deter investment
- Independent retail sector remains fragile in changing market conditions
- Most community and cultural facilities located outside town core
- ACA and Protected Structure status may restrict adaptations needed for new uses
- Continued dilapidation of heritage properties without remedial works may fall into state of disrepair
- Upper Main Street lacks heritage protection, located outside of the ACA
- Pressure from volume housing development may conflict with town's traditional form

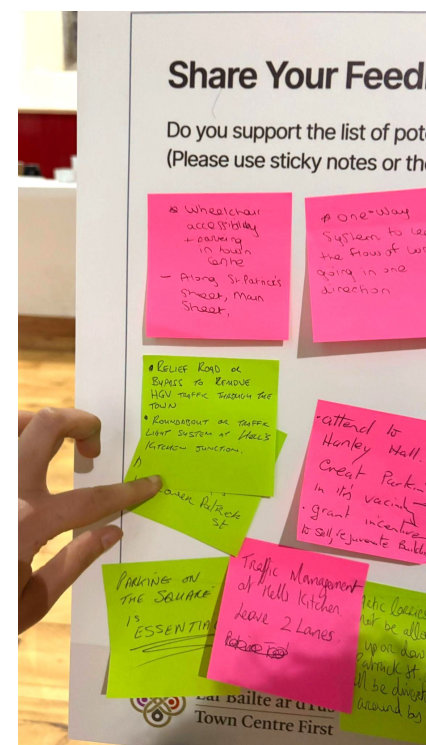
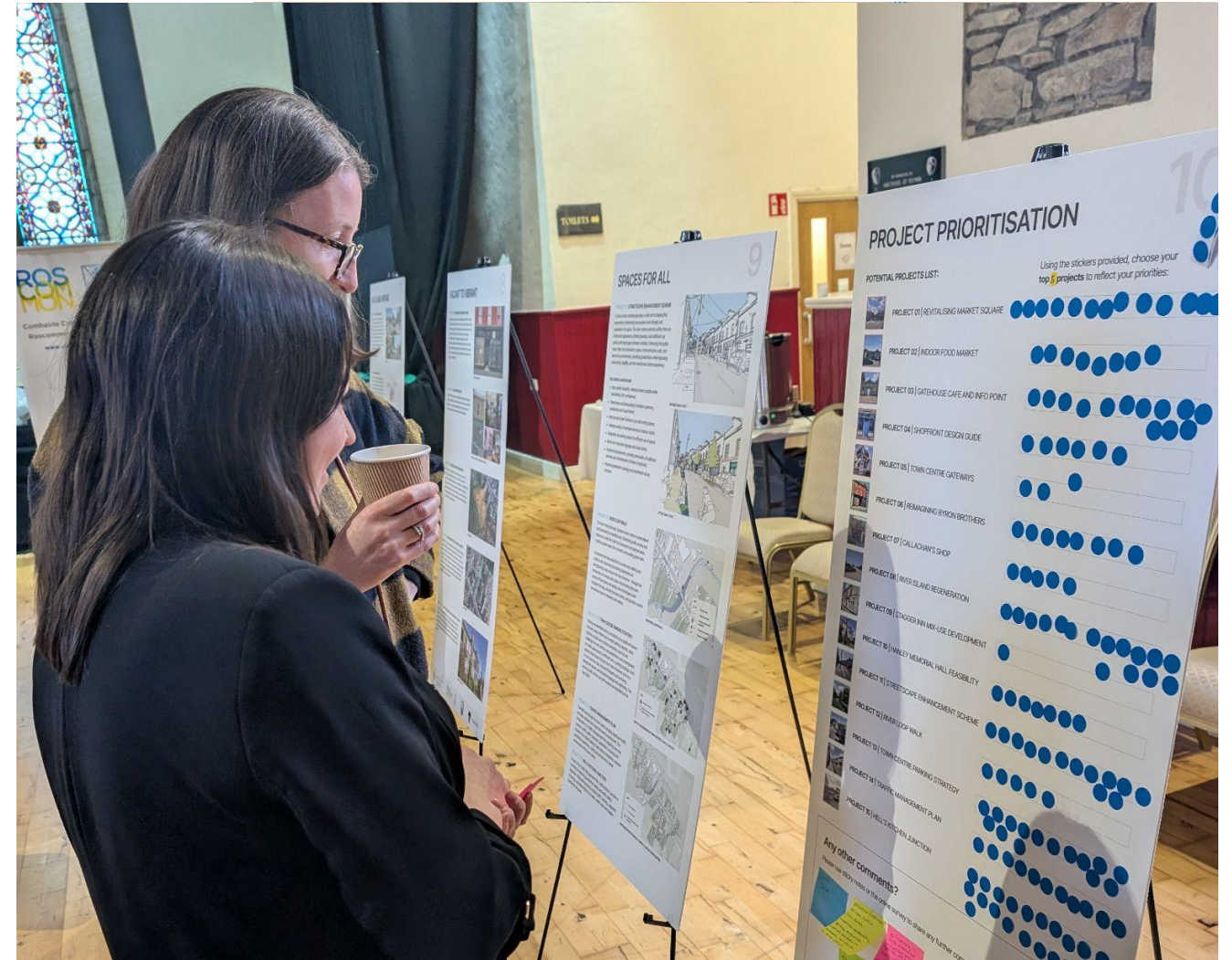
Collaboration & Communication

- 3.1 Engagement Process
- 3.2 Community Survey Insights
- 3.3 Business Survey Insights
- 3.4 Public Consultation

Engagement Process

To support the development of the Town Centre First Plan, and to ensure the needs and aspirations of residents, businesses and stakeholders were fully reflected, a series of engagement activities were carried out throughout the project. These are illustrated on the following page and summarised below:

- Surveys and Questionnaires:** A community survey was undertaken in December 2024, both on-street and online, generating over 250 responses. A business survey followed in May 2025, with more than 40 responses from local enterprises.
- Town Team Meetings:** The Town Team were engaged at key stages to help guide the project, including a Kick-off Meeting, town walk, a Co-Design Workshop focused on project prioritisation, and a final review session.
- Online Interviews:** Targeted interviews were held with key stakeholders to help refine priority projects. This included discussions with council officers, notably Roscommon County Council's Land and Infrastructure Team, bringing together expertise across transport, planning, engineering and infrastructure.
- Public Consultation:** A public consultation event to present and refine the Draft Plan took place on Thursday 9th September at the Trinity Arts Centre, 4–7pm, attended by approximately 80 people. An online survey remained open for a further week to capture additional feedback on the emerging proposals.
- Local Businesses Meeting:** Following the public event, a dedicated meeting with local business owners was held to discuss and further refine key projects prior to finalising the Plan.



Community Survey Insights

In December 2024, Roscommon County Council undertook an extensive community survey to support the development of the Town Centre First Plan. 250 members of the local community responded to the online survey and in-person questionnaires, with the key insights summarised below:



What do you like most about Castlerea?

- The Demesne
- Swimming pool
- Somers Park
- Supervalu
- Lidl
- Benny's Deli
- Hesters
- Josie's Café
- The Hub
- Hell's Kitchen



Which places could be improved in Castlerea?

- Market Square
- Car parking
- Traffic and crossings
- Vacant and derelict buildings
- 'Hell's Kitchen' junction
- River Island area
- The Demesne
- Swimming pool
- Hanley Hall
- Main Street



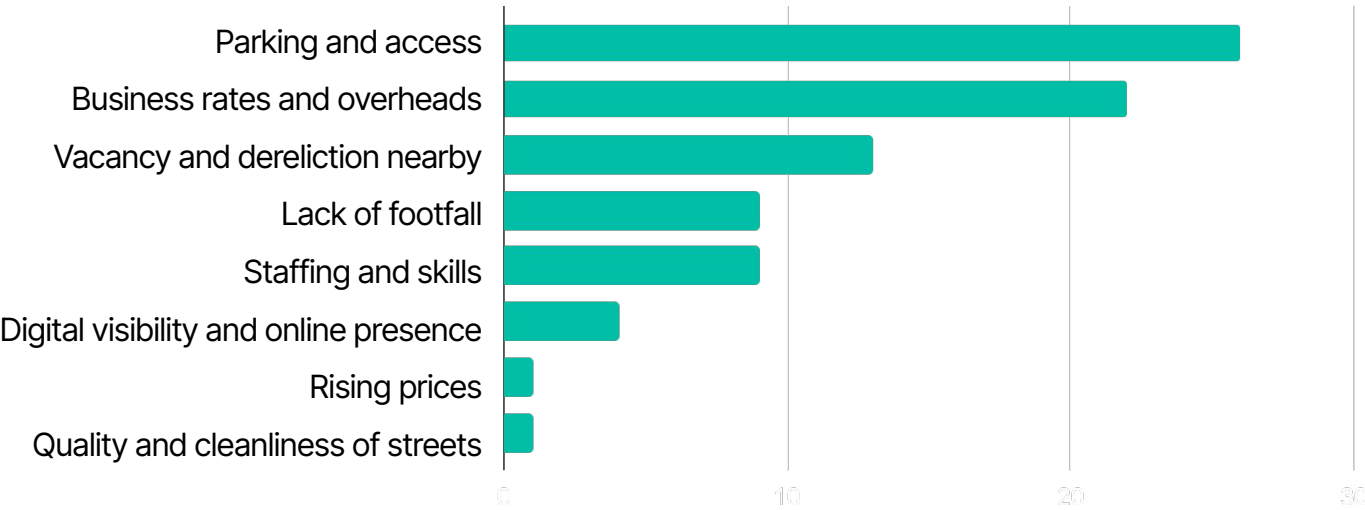
What are your top priorities to improve the Town Centre as a place to live and work?

- 01 Addressing vacancy and dereliction
- 02 More car parking
- 03 Aesthetics to buildings and shopfronts
- 04 A food market (indoor/outdoor)
- 05 More Cafés
- 06 More leisure and sports facilities
- 07 Quality of public realm
- 08 More frequent local bus service
- 09 More accessible public transport
- 10 Quality and amount of street furniture

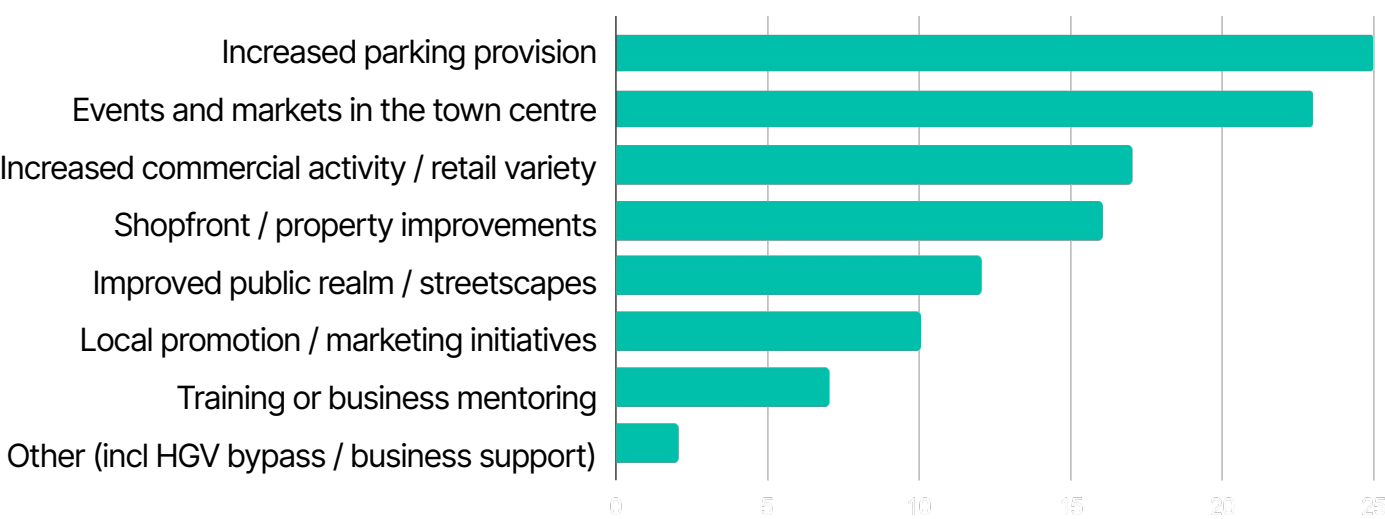
Business Survey Insights

In May 2025, an online survey was distributed to local businesses within Castlerea town centre. 40 local businesses responded to the survey, with key insights summarised below:

What are the biggest challenges facing your businesses right now?



What actions do you feel would be useful to solving these challenges?



Is there anything else that could improve the town centre as a place for businesses to thrive?

Perhaps improving and/or promoting car parking behind businesses to free up the main street

An attractive entrance to the Demesne making this more visible

More off-street parking and short-term on-street parking incentives are needed, especially for older customers and those with mobility issues

Better signage or way of linking the town's amenities that are not obvious from the main street (eg, river & park)

Improve the Town Square with a water feature and a grander entrance to the Demesne

A farmers market on a Saturday be a great addition to the town

A scheme that would help owners to renovate buildings over shops for residential use, bringing new life to the town centre

Better quality signage (signwriter) on shop fronts (removal of cheap correx signs or bad vinyl graphic)

More variety of shops

Look at big spaces for parking, like riverisland. Creating something here would do wonders for the town

More attractive facades, protection and improvements to the existing heritage buildings in the townscape

More trees and perennial planting throughout the town

A pedestrian crossing near Supervalu

Quality art initiatives that could tell the story of the town's history

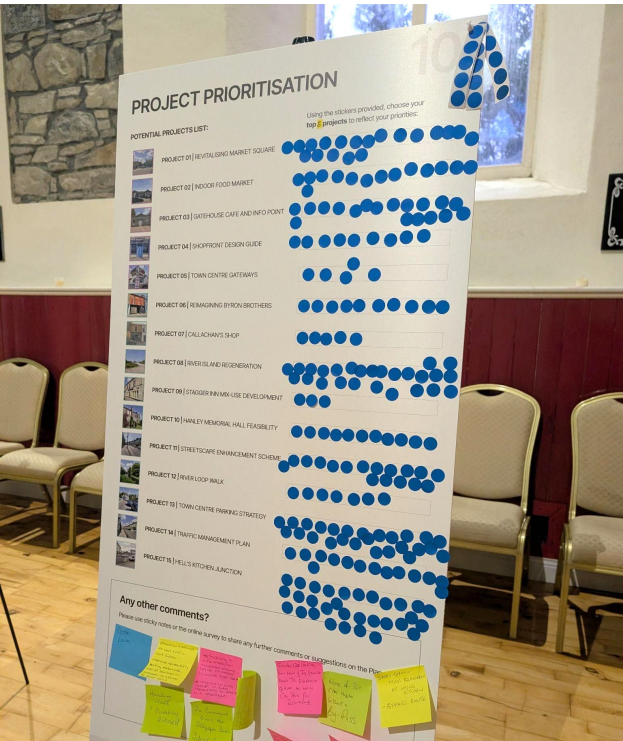
The flow of HGV on St Patrick street impacts on my business preventing clients getting there on time and causing noise pollution

Public Consultation

Overview

A public consultation event to present the Draft Plan took place on Thursday 9th October at the Trinity Arts Centre, 4–7pm, attended by approximately 80 people. An online survey remained open for a further week to capture additional feedback on the emerging proposals, with the full presentation available on Castlerea.ie.

This included a series of large presentation boards with interactive activities to ascertain support for the vision, objectives, potential projects and project prioritisation - which required attendees to select their top 5 projects - with over 320 votes cast both in person and via the online feedback form.



Overall Feedback – Summary

- Broad support for the overall vision, themes and objectives of the Town Centre First Plan.
- Strong backing for proposals to improve Market Square, enhance Main Street and St Patrick's Street, strengthen links to the Demesne, and upgrade public spaces.
- Many respondents feel the Plan could restore vitality, attract more visitors, and support independent businesses, building on Castlerea's growing identity as a food and community hub.

Key Concerns - Market Square

- Parking in the square is viewed as essential for business viability, accessibility (including age-friendly access), and everyday function.
- Widespread concern about any reduction/removal of parking, changes to the shelter on Market Square, or restrictions to traffic movement.

- Respondents highlighted the need for further engagement with businesses and the community before any redesign.
- Market Square must be considered holistically, including parking, traffic circulation and operational needs.

Overall Message

- The Plan is generally supported but must balance placemaking ambitions with practical requirements.
- Market Square proposals will need careful refinement to ensure improvements do not compromise accessibility, business needs or the square's community function.

Results from project prioritisation



Public Consultation

Do you support the vision, themes and objectives for the town? Is there anything missing?

I see the plan as a rehash of old plans that were rejected by part 8 vote of local councillors a few years ago. 1400 towns people rejected the demolition of the shelter by signing a petition . So these plans are against the wishes of the people of Castlereagh.

Some excellent ideas with the square and the 2 main streets needing the required investments. A water feature at the square or castlereagh sign in big letters for photo opportunities and visitors to share would be an idea. Obviously money is an issue but some symbol that if a picture circulates everyone knows that's the beautiful castlereagh.

No don't agree with the Square redevelopment plan has no consideration for businesses on or near square. It's not a practical solution. It needs more consideration and negotiation with existing business owners on and around the square. Drawings for square are unrealistic and will have to be changed.

Light up the Demesne and can create seasonal events for family entertainment.

I support it

Yes. The plan looks fantastic. It would be nice to also see some more life in St Patrick's street again with premises there reopening such as Kate's Bar, The Forge, The Horse & Jockey etc. It once was a lively and busy street with great nightlife.

Cars must be allowed to drive around/through the square

Age friendly parking in square to get to bank and post office.

Very concerned about taking parking off of the square.

Parking in the market square is very important for the businesses.

Has to be traffic around the square. More parking and less trees on the square.

Leave the town square as is.

Huge potential when creating new parking facilities to cover with solar panels. This doubles up on efficient land use and provides covered parking.

Remember the importance of a hotel

Public Consultation

Do you support the list of potential projects identified? Are there any you feel are missing?

Yes excellent ideas and projects.maybe crazy golf in demesne or something which attracts more tourists .River needs to be better presented maybe lights at the river.

None missing. Don't agree at all with square development. Parking needs to be left on square & availability for traffic to drive through is of most importance for businesses.

Traffic lights at Hell's Kitchen Junction. One way system from Delany's corner down by Patrick St Church and up new road or church road.

I support them but needs additional local negotiations and considerations.

Traffic management of Hell's Kitchen - leave 2 lanes.

Huge potential when creating new parking facilities to cover with solar panels. This doubles up on efficient land use and provides covered parking.

Leave parking on square. No trees. Remove side walls on shelter.

By-pass town (lorries). More sign posting to historical buildings and to the railway station.

Articulated lorries should not be allowed up or down Patrick St. Should all be diverted around by school.

Yes, absolutely. I think improving the streetscape and removing overhead clutter will massively improve the look of the town.

Parking in the square is essential.

Parking in the square is essential. Shelter to be retained. Coffee shop a no-go if not opened daily.

Move market square to Flynn's Yard.

Defining the Place

- 4.1 | The Vision
- 4.2 | Themes & Objectives
- 4.3 | Key Projects

The Vision

Modern Market Town Concept

Castlerea combines the traditional layout of a market town with the landscape heritage of an estate town, anchored by the historic Demesne just minutes walk from its civic core. Whilst the physical structure of the town centre remains, modern development, car dominance and shifting consumer habits have eroded many defining qualities of the market town, and links between the town centre and Demesne.

By reconnecting with this heritage and building on Castlerea's growing reputation as a food destination, through its agri-food base, local produce, artisan markets, and the continuing success of the Mart, the town can re-establish itself as a market town and model for a resilient, diversified, and sustainable local economy.

Key Aspects of a Historic Market Town:

- Market square at heart of the town;
- Market house for large gatherings and trade;
- Central civic buildings;
- Compact, walkable urban form;
- Distinct town centre identity;
- Mixed-use shopfronts and streetscapes with independent retailers and artisan trade;
- Connection with the surrounding hinterland, with local services and trade shaped by the region's agricultural products, raw materials, and industries.

How can it look today?

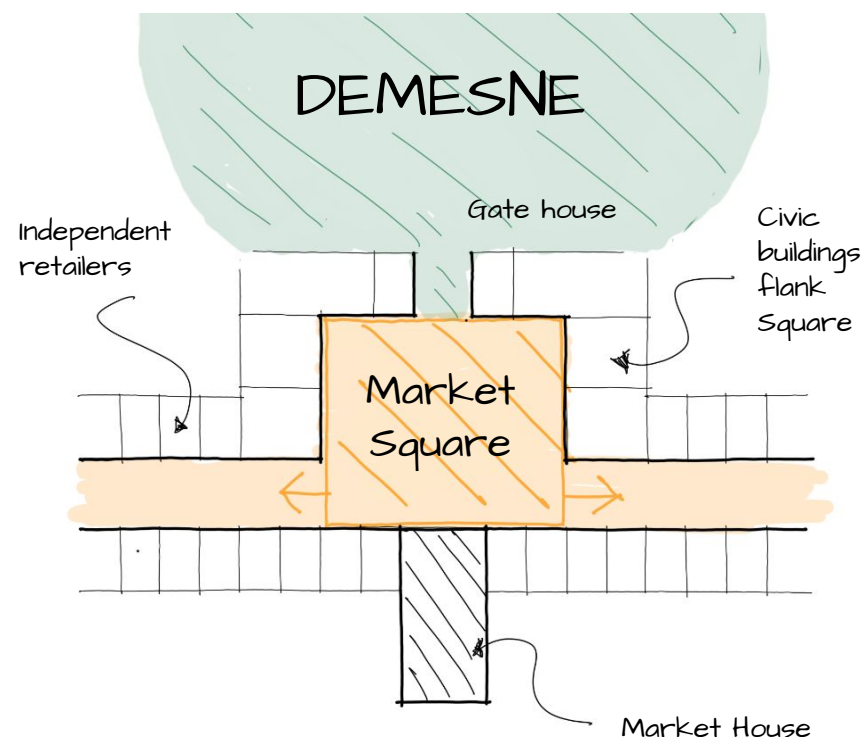


Attractive, accessible, mixed-use streetscapes that are welcoming for all users, and which celebrate Castlerea's heritage, identity, and local businesses

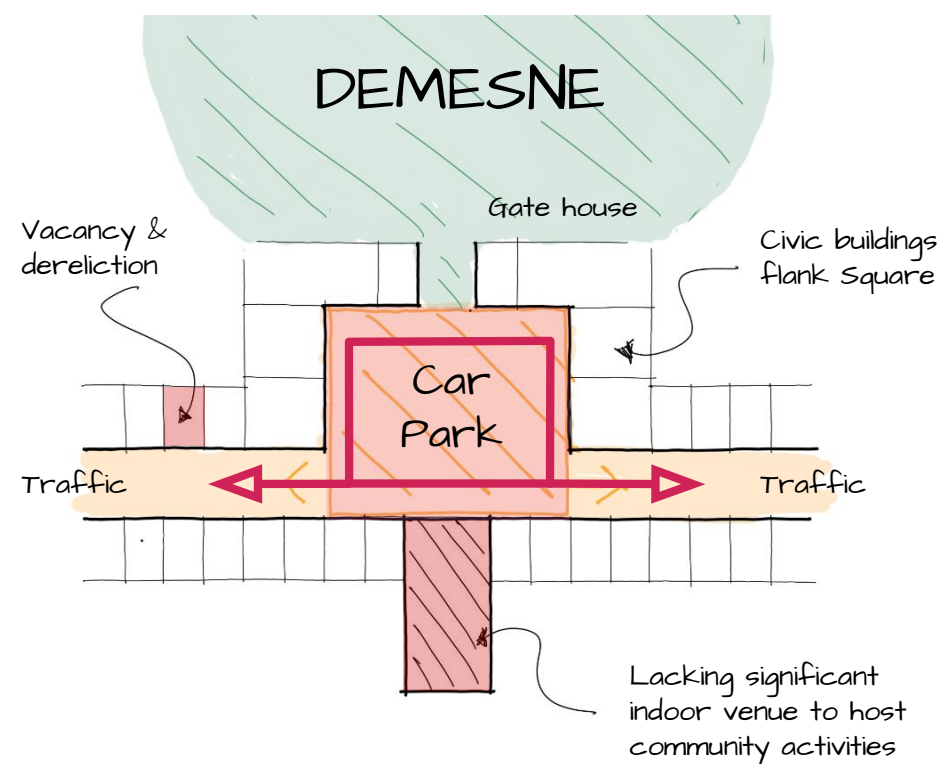


Flexible civic space at the heart of the town for hosting events and increasing footfall and dwell time, while enabling convenient parking

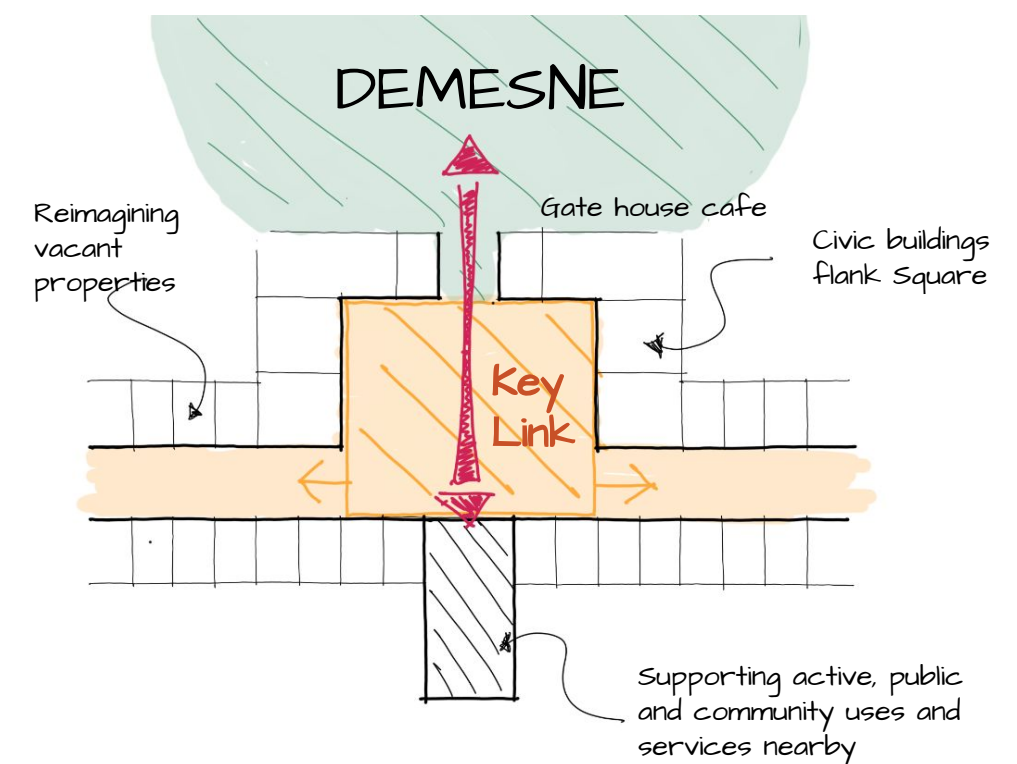
Concept Diagrams:



Historic | Castlerea



Modern-day | Castlerea



Future Vision | Castlerea

The Vision

Vision Statement

Castlerea Town Centre will reinvent itself as a modern market town with a twist – a vibrant centre where heritage and innovation meet. Rooted in its proud market-town traditions, the town will celebrate and revitalise its historic spaces while harnessing the energy of its emerging artisan food and craft scene.

Through reimagined public spaces, thriving independent businesses, and strong connections to the demesne, wider town and its rural hinterland, Castlerea town centre will become a distinctive, welcoming hub of culture, commerce, and community life.

The following three themes will form the backbone of future regeneration projects:



Revitalising Heritage

Theme 01 | Reinforce Castlerea's identity as a distinct market town by restoring its built heritage, traditions, and cultural assets while reinterpreting them for a contemporary context.

Vacant to Vibrant

Theme 02 | Transform underused and vacant spaces into opportunities for business, culture, and community life, creating a thriving and resilient local economy.

Spaces for All

Theme 03 | Rebalance the town centre to prioritise people, community, and nature, creating welcoming, accessible and sustainable spaces for all users, including pedestrians and road users.

Themes & Objectives

Themes	Revitalising Heritage	Vacant to Vibrant	Spaces for All
Aims	Reinforce Castlerea’s identity as a distinct market town by celebrating its heritage, traditions, and cultural assets while reinterpreting them for a contemporary context.	Transform underused and vacant spaces into opportunities for business, culture, and community life, creating a thriving and resilient local economy.	Rebalance the town centre to prioritise people, community and nature, creating welcoming, accessible and sustainable spaces for all users, including pedestrians and road users.
Objectives	• Re-establish the Market Square as the social and commercial heart of the town, balancing heritage character and parking requirements with new civic and business uses. • Create stronger spatial and functional links to the Demesne and river, making heritage, recreation, nature and commerce part of a unified town centre experience. • Develop Castlerea as a regional hub for artisan food and craft, drawing on the town’s trading history and emerging food culture as a modern economic driver. • Enhance and safeguard historic shop frontages and streetscapes, encouraging sensitive reuse and design that strengthens Castlerea’s unique character. • Build a cohesive town centre brand and identity rooted in local heritage, storytelling, and architecture.	• Reduce long-term vacancy by supporting mixed-use adaptation of vacant buildings (including residential, retail, cultural, community, leisure and business uses). • Encourage independent retailers, entrepreneurs, and pop-up shops to test ideas, animate streetscapes, and diversify the retail offer. • Stimulate the night-time economy through cultural programming, dining, and entertainment, creating a town centre that is active beyond trading hours. • Deliver a feasibility study and pilot projects on the River Island site as a focal point for recreation, events, and riverside activation. • Promote temporary and flexible uses (markets, festivals, exhibitions) in vacant or underused plots to build vibrancy while awaiting longer-term investment.	• Enhance walkability and connectivity by improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, while accommodating and improving necessary car access and parking. • Reimagine streetscapes and public spaces to support gathering, play, and everyday social exchange, reinforcing Castlerea as a true civic centre. • Integrate green infrastructure and biodiversity (planting, pocket parks, riverside and Demesne connections) into the town fabric to create attractive, resilient spaces. • Provide inclusive, accessible designs that support all ages and abilities, ensuring the town centre works as a social hub for the wider community. • Celebrate Castlerea as a gateway to its rural hinterland, embedding markets, festivals, and rural linkages into the town’s public realm.

Key Projects

OVERVIEW

The following pages present 13 key projects, identified as having transformative potential in achieving the vision of this Town Centre First Plan. Each project is aligned with the overarching themes on the previous pages.

KEY

1. Town Centre Parking Strategy
2. Streetscape Enhancement Scheme
3. Shopfront Renewal Initiative
4. Vacant Buildings Revitalisation Programme
5. River Loop Walk
6. Revitalising Market Square
7. Town Centre Gateways
8. Reimagining the Old School House
9. Hanly Memorial Hall Feasibility Study
10. Stagger Inn Mixed-Use Development
11. Traffic Safety Scheme
12. River Island Regeneration
13. The Gatehouse Cafe & Info Point

-  Key Town Centre Gateways
-  Key Demesne Gateways
-  Potential Zones for Additional Public Car Parks
-  River Loop Routes

Town Centre Parking Strategy

Project Description

Parking was identified during community and business consultation as a significant issue in the town centre. Castlerea has a growing population, large catchment area, and a number of town centre properties have been converted to residential use without on-site parking, resulting in increased demand for town centre parking. While there is significant parking capacity overall, many surface car parks are in private ownership, have access challenges for both vehicles and pedestrians, and undesignated on-street spaces lead to inefficient use. Some of the existing car parks are at or near capacity most days, while others are underused, and there are some areas of the town centre that have very limited parking, such as St Patrick's Street.

A Town Centre Parking Strategy could address these issues through both short-term measures - such as a 2-hour maximum stay, designated spaces, and enhanced surfacing, signage and wayfinding - and longer term interventions, including exploring potential for new off-street car parking areas, such as:

- Backlands sites to the north and south of Main Street
- The Council car park behind the Courthouse
- As part of the Stagger Inn mixed-use development (in Council ownership)

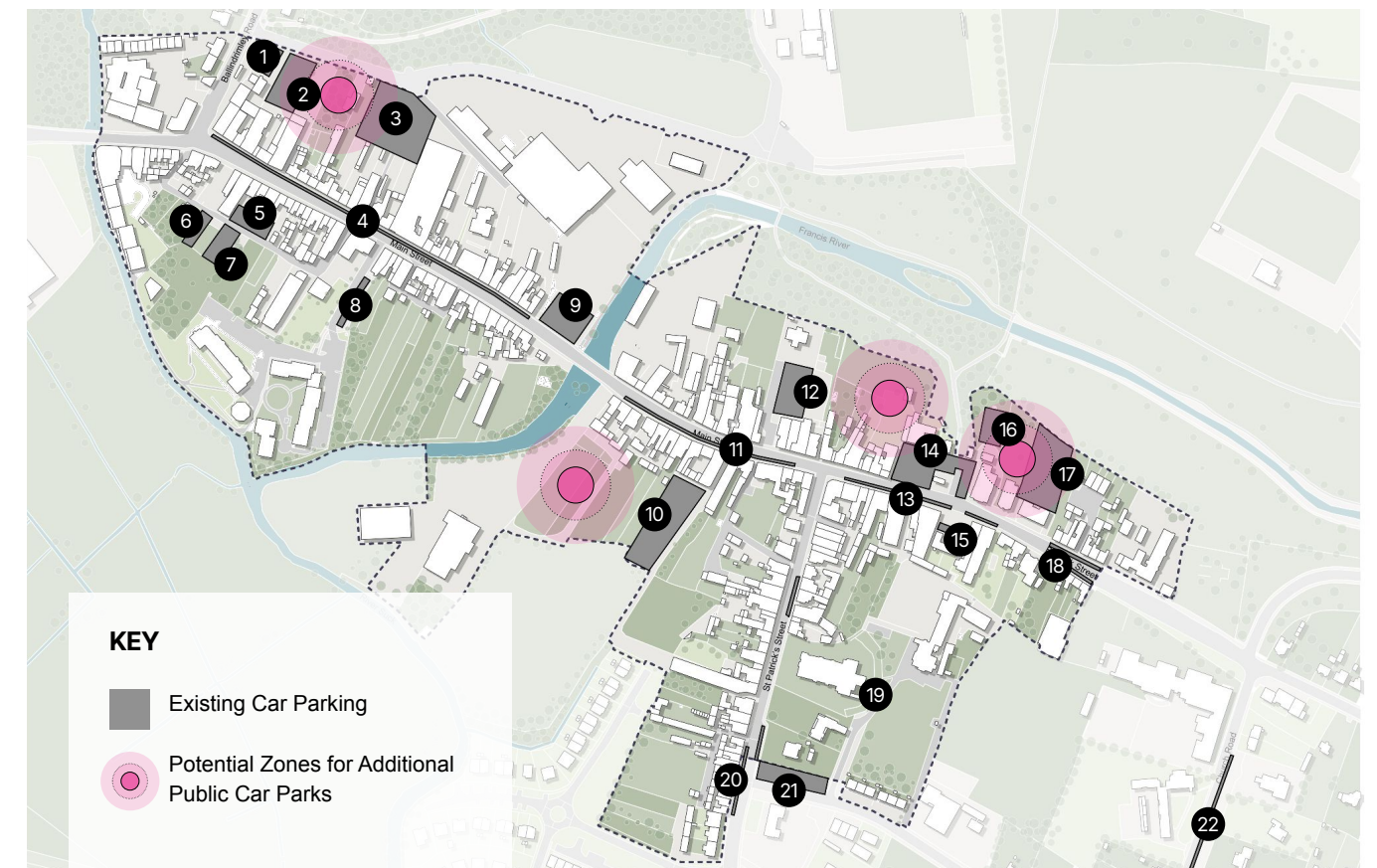
Improvements to the accessibility, safety, appearance and maintenance of pedestrian routes between parking areas and main streets - including surfacing, accessibility, lighting, public art, greening, signage and wayfinding - will be key to promoting optimum use. A parking campaign could help ensure people are aware of the various parking options and etiquette, as well as safe pedestrian links.

The delivery of this key project would help unlock many other opportunities for revitalisation of the town centre.

Spaces
for All



Existing on-street car parking on Main Street



Map of car parking in town centre | Public and private

Streetscape Enhancement Scheme

Project Description

Town centre streetscapes play a vital role in shaping first impressions, influencing how people move through and experience the space. Castlerea town centre currently suffers from an incohesive and cluttered appearance, limited greenery, and inefficient car parking with large gaps between vehicles.

A **Streetscape Enhancement Scheme** offers the potential to create a more attractive, safe, and welcoming environment for residents, businesses and visitors, while improving overall functionality, accessibility and resilience of Castlerea town centre. Key actions could include:

- Improved and widened footpaths to ensure safe and comfortable movement for all users, particularly wheelchair users, people with buggies, older residents and those with mobility challenges (while maintaining a 6m carriageway and as much short-stay on-street parking as possible, to support local businesses);
- Undergrounding overhead wires and removal of redundant signage to enhance the visual appearance of the town and reduce street clutter;
- Installation of benches and quality street furniture, creating places for people to rest, meet and spend time in the town centre;
- Integration of street trees, sustainable drainage and landscaping to introduce greenery, biodiversity and visual interest, and mitigate flood risk;
- Clearly designated car parking spaces to allow for more efficient use of existing parking and better traffic flow;
- Improved pedestrian crossings and prioritisation at key junctions.

A closely linked initiative is **Shopfront Improvements**, including restoration of traditional elements and reinstatement of historic shopfronts to protect and enhance the town centre's character and heritage (see next Key Project for detail on this);

Spaces
for All



Before | Main Street



After | Main Street (artist impression)

Streetscape Enhancement Scheme

Case Study | Clonakilty, Co.Cork

Although a relatively small town in West Cork, Clonakilty is widely recognised as a key tourism hub for the region. In recent years, comprehensive streetscape enhancements have transformed the town centre into an attractive, accessible and cohesive place, benefiting local residents, businesses and visitors. The public realm improvements have strengthened Clonakilty's identity, enhanced walkability, and reinforced its role as a vibrant social and economic centre for West Cork.

Shopfront Renewal Initiative

Project Description

Castlerea town centre contains rich built heritage, which is at risk from vacancy, dereliction and conversion. Lower Main Street and Patrick Street fall within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), which encompasses a significant concentration of Protected Structures, particularly around Market Square. Upper Main Street, by contrast, lies outside the ACA but contains several notable heritage assets recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH).

The Town Centre First Policy encourages increased town centre population and reuse of buildings for mixed uses, but this must be done in a manner which protects and enhances heritage and character. Castlerea town centre would therefore benefit from a comprehensive Shopfront Renewal Initiative, comprised of two key elements:

Phase 1: Shopfront Design Guide

A heritage and shopfront design guide would assist property owners in maintaining and enhancing the historic character of the town centre. Guidance should cover:

- Traditional features, shopfront elements and conservation principles;
- Principles for modern interventions that respect heritage;
- Appropriate conversion of former shops into residential units / other uses;
- Best practice examples e.g. The Merchant's Store, Kilrush (see bottom right).

Phase 2: Support for Shopfront Improvement Works

A campaign to raise awareness of grants, advice and other supports available would help encourage uptake of improvements from property owners and businesses.

Where buildings are being renovated, architectural features such as chimneys should be retained to preserve the traditional character and heritage of the townscape.



Historic shopfronts at risk in Castlerea



Successful shopfronts in Castlerea



Case Study | The Merchant's Store, Kilrush

Successful conversion of historic former shop into visitor accommodation

Revitalising
Heritage

Vacant Buildings Revitalisation Programme

Project Description

Closely linked to the previous key project covering Shopfront Renewal, there are a number of historic buildings in Castlerea town centre that are in a state of vacancy and significant dereliction, which not only risks loss of this valuable built heritage, but also detracts from the overall vibrancy and appearance of the town centre.

Alongside the Shopfront Renewal Programme, which focuses primarily on retaining and enhancing the shopfronts / facades of buildings, there are also opportunities for more comprehensive redevelopment of some properties to bring them back into active use, and support the Town Centre First Policy objective of encouraging a range of complementary uses in town centres. Two key examples include:

Byron Brothers

Byron Brothers is a vacant, protected structure within the town centre. While in poor condition, much of its historic fabric remains, offering an opportunity for heritage-led regeneration and to set a benchmark for similar properties. Potential uses include a multi-use community, cultural, services, and/or commercial space for Castlerea's emerging artisan food producers, and possibly town centre living at upper levels.

Callachan's Shop

Callachan's Shop preserves a traditional shopfront and signage, offering a glimpse into Castlerea's past. Its modest scale makes it ideal for a pop-up shop, providing creatives / start-ups a low-risk opportunity to test and grow their businesses. Town centre living could be explored at the upper floor, while retaining the shopfront below.

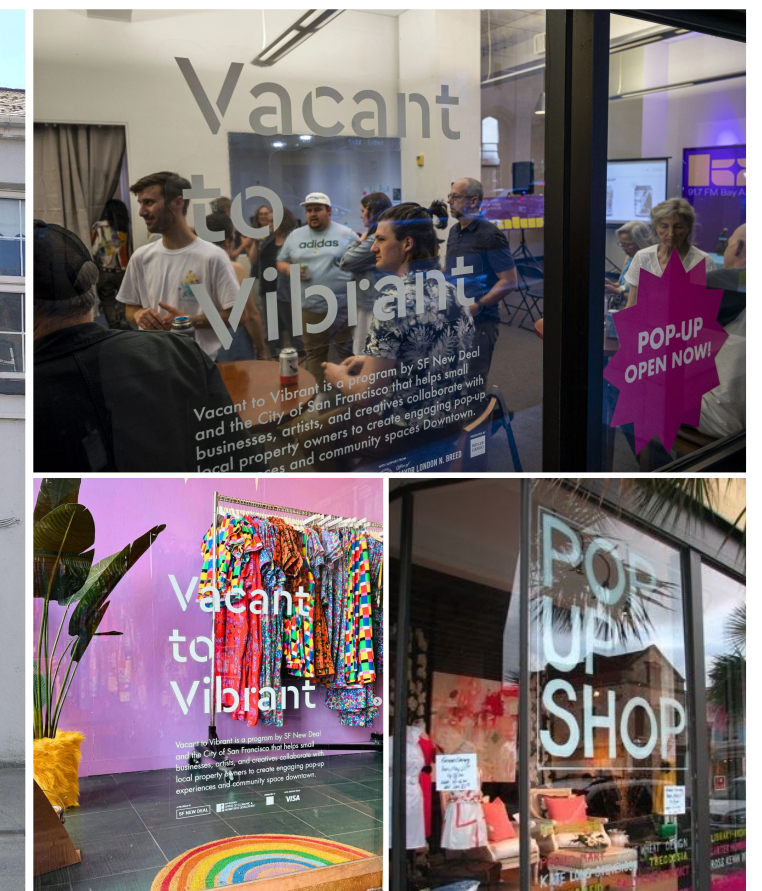
Revitalisation and reinstatement of these key historic buildings and shopfronts, and other vacant or derelict buildings, could act as a catalyst for wider renewal.



Current condition of Byron Brother's



Current condition of Callachan's shop



Moodboard of vacant to vibrant schemes

Vacant to Vibrant

River Loop Walk

Project Description

The river running through Castlerea town centre and the Demesne is a fantastic natural asset, but is currently underutilised and largely dominated by neighbouring industrial uses and inactive boundaries rather than amenities that could enhance the riverside experience for residents and visitors.

Enhancing public access and interaction along the riverside could help integrate the river better with the town centre and with the Demesne's recreational areas, creating a green spine that connects to surrounding green belts and scenic walks - including the Castlerea Demesne Trail, a 6km loop trail (roughly 90 minutes) that features historical and natural scenery, including the grave of 'Cindy the Elephant', and the broader Suck Valley Way, a 105km, 5-day walking trail.

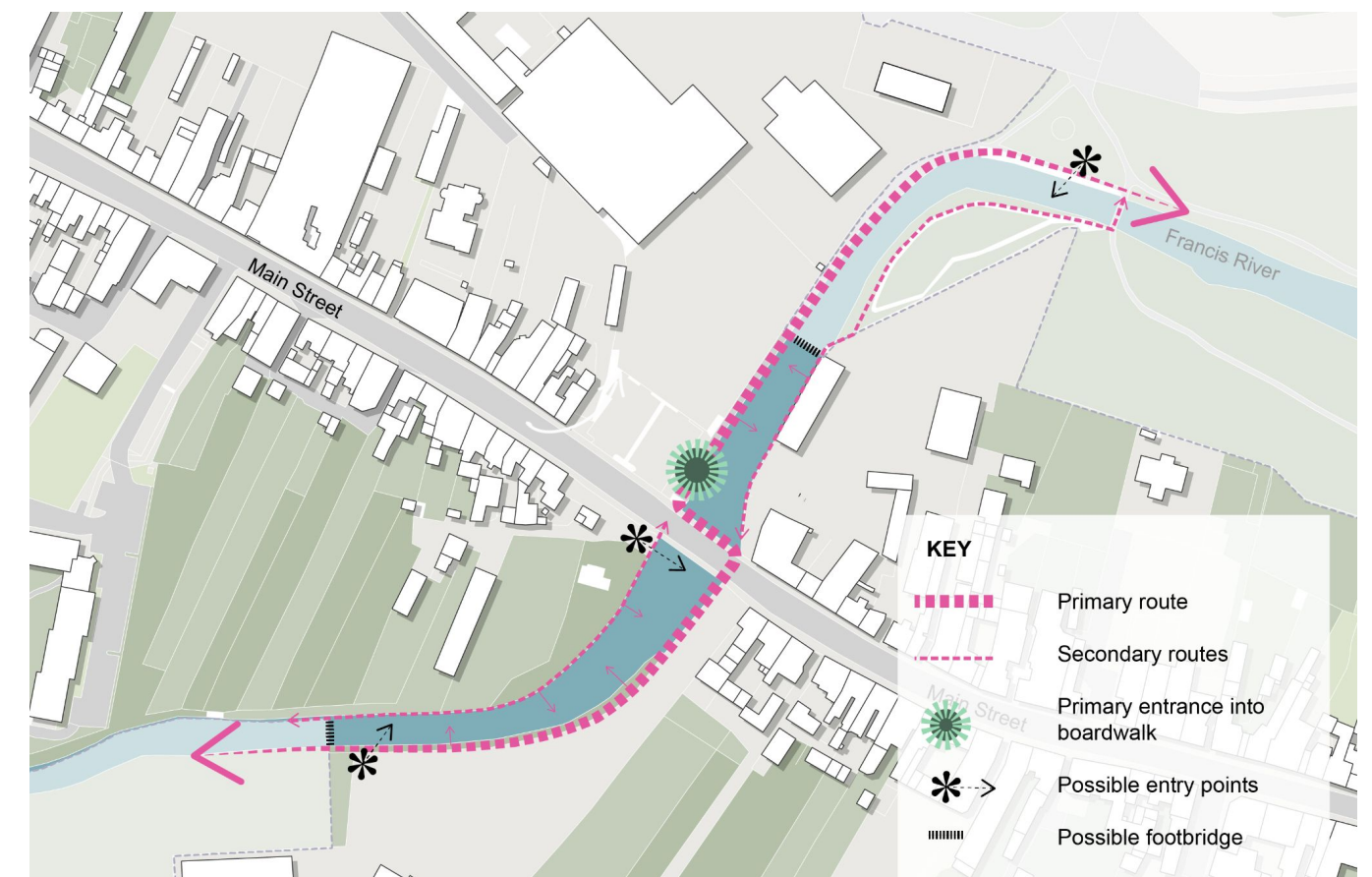
A proposed River Loop Walk would form a continuous scenic walking and cycling route, improving the existing river walk and strengthening a key entrance into the Demesne, while bringing further activity and appeal to Castlerea town centre. This could be delivered as 3 Phases:

- **Phase 1 (plans in place):** Improvements to the existing walkway to provide a more accessible and useable boardwalk.
- **Phase 2:** Enhancements to the entrance to the boardwalk (currently via the parking area next to the bridge) through lighting, signage, landscaping and clearly marking it as an entrance to the Demesne and River Walk.
- **Phase 3:** Extension of the walk to incorporate the lower section of River Island and adding new footbridges to complete the loop, with clear and consistent signage, lighting and materials, including interpretive signage to highlight the natural heritage and biodiversity value of the river and its recent rewilding.

Spaces
for All



Existing river walk



Proposed route of River Loop Walk

Revitalising Market Square

Project Description

This project proposes reimagining part of Market Square as a vibrant public plaza, restoring its role as the focal point of the town centre and celebrating the gateway to the Demesne as well as surrounding historic buildings. The scheme would create a more attractive, flexible, multi-use space that can be used primarily for parking day-to-day, as well as hosting occasional markets and events.

Interventions to be explored could include:

- High-quality, robust paving and landscaping, including additional greening, seating, lighting, and retractable bollards for events;
- Undergrounding of overhead wires and removal of other visual clutter;
- Improving and potentially relocating the “Hut” shelter;
- Enhancing visual and physical connectivity to the Demesne and highlighting its entrance, with safe routes for pedestrians and clear wayfinding.

If the **Town Centre Parking Strategy** is successfully implemented, and adequate parking is provided in nearby backlands with pedestrian access to the Square, the potential for alternative uses such as markets and events in the Square could be realised and possibly increased over time. Accessible car parking spaces (blue badge), age-friendly parking, and parking for adjacent businesses should be retained.

Several locations in Ireland utilize shared surface parking areas that temporarily convert into market spaces, farmer's markets, or community event spaces - designed to enhance town centre vibrancy while maintaining essential parking infrastructure. A prominent example is **Bantry Market (Co. Cork)**, where the main town square/car park in the centre of Bantry is transformed into a bustling market every Friday, and functions as a car park during the week.



Market Square today



Case Study | Bantry Market, County Cork



Moodboard of successful public plaza layouts

Revitalising
Heritage

Revitalising Market Square

Case Study | Bantry Market, Co.Cork

Located at the heart of Bantry, the town square functions as a flexible, multifunctional public space, accommodating everyday parking alongside regular market use and community activity. The space is historically linked to Bantry's role as a market and fair town, reflecting a long-standing tradition of trading and social exchange within the town centre, even if not formally laid out as a planned market square. Today, this heritage is continued through the ongoing use of the square for markets, supported by additional parking provision within close proximity that operates effectively alongside the space.

Town Centre Gateways

Project Description

The gateways into a town centre (usually along major roads and other transport routes) are critical to forming positive impressions for residents, businesses and visitors entering the town. This can help support community pride, sense of place and even stimulate greater investment and economic activity in the town centre.

This project focuses on enhancing key entrances to Castlerea town centre through relatively simple public realm interventions, such as landscaping, planting, lighting, signage, public art, and sculpture.

These should be designed to celebrate the unique heritage and identity of Castlerea, building on existing work that has been done to create town branding and graphics, and weaving these into the public realm through elements such as consistent signage / wayfinding, co-ordinated colour and materials palettes, and locally distinctive public art. The fascinating local story of Cindy the Elephant could provide one avenue of inspiration for unique elephant themed art / signage.

Engagement with local artists, youth, schools, volunteers and community groups, such as Castlerea Tidy Towns, to help design, create and maintain these gateways would help foster local identity, ownership and pride.

Key gateways into Castlerea town centre include:

- Approach from N60 to Main Street at the river crossing;
- Approach from N60 to St. Patrick's Street at Hanley Hall;
- Approach from R37 to Barrack Street at the Garda Station;
- Approach from the R361 towards Hell's Kitchen Junction.

Revitalising
Heritage



Current appearance of Gateways into Castlerea town centre



Precedent images of colourful flowers and community planting



Precedent images of signage and branding

Existing Castlerea branding

Reimagining the Old School House

Project Description

The former Castlerea school is a notable underused historic building and Protected Structure, located centrally opposite Market Square. It is currently mostly vacant and overrun by a large amount of parked cars, which detracts from its appearance, heritage appreciation and connectivity to the surrounding town centre.

Given its excellent location, on-site and nearby parking, ground-level access, and proximity to key services including the bank, GP, pharmacy, post office, hotel and other town centre amenities, **there is potential to restore and enhance the Old School House, for adaptive reuse** for a number / mix of potential uses, including:

- A day care centre for older people & service users (e.g. those with dementia);
- A multi-use community / cultural / services hub;
- Pop-up shops and space for small start-ups and local makers.

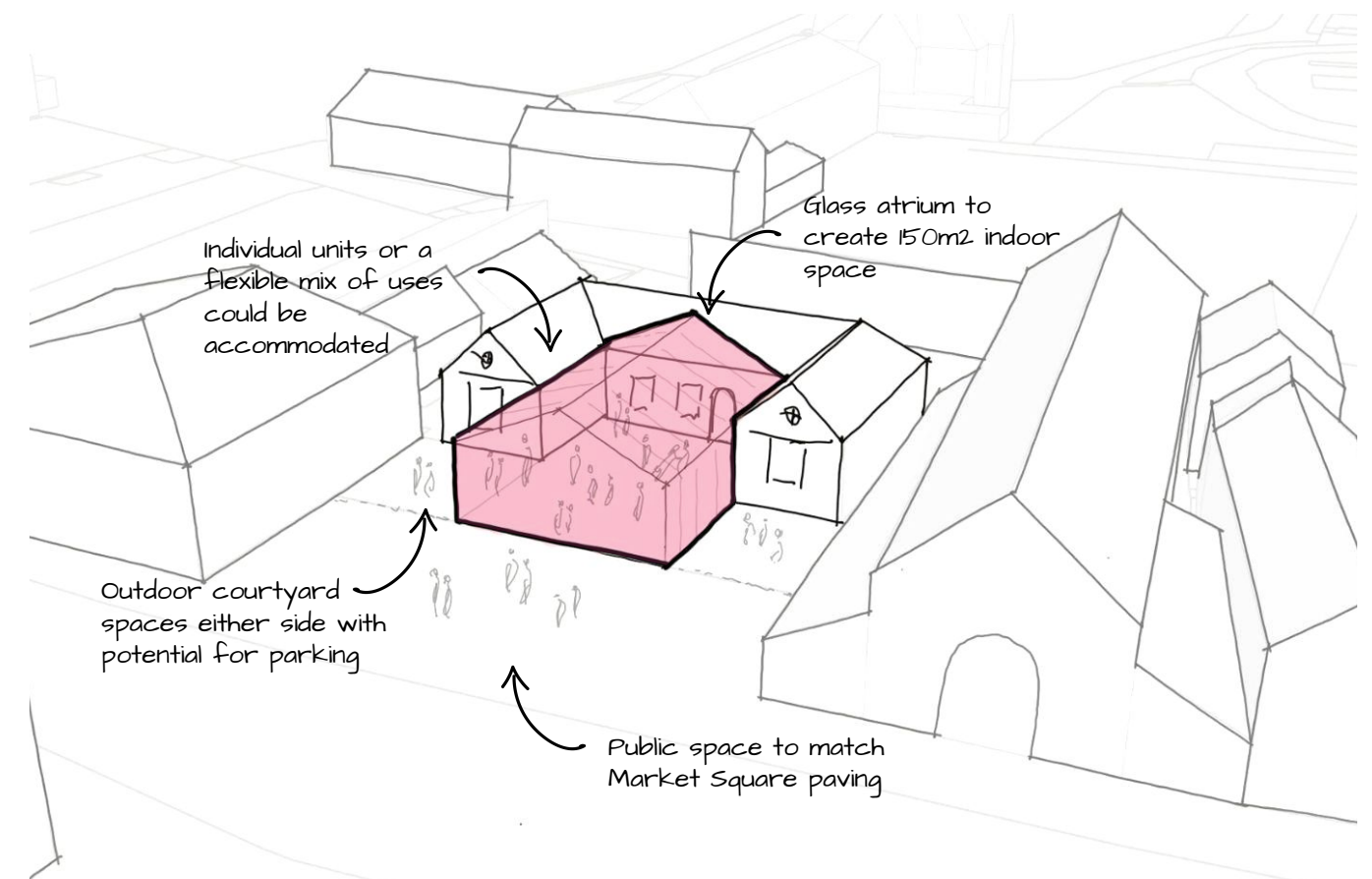
The design of the enhanced building (see concept sketch opposite) could include a 150m² open-plan indoor space underneath a glass atrium integrated into the building's 'U' shape, with surrounding units / flexible floorspace opening up to spill out into this central space. A public plaza at the front should match Market Square's enhanced paving, with blue badge / age-friendly parking to either side, while the rear external space could provide additional useable space and a garden area.

A Feasibility Study and Concept Designs would need to be conducted to test the viability of potential uses for the building, and sustainable operating models, as well as the feasibility of improvements and alterations to the historic structure to enable reuse while respecting the building's significant heritage value and protected status. This represents a strong **opportunity to provide a much-needed community facility while bringing meaningful daily activity into the town centre.**

Revitalising
Heritage



Current condition of the Old School House



Concept sketch of adaptive reuse of the Old School House

Hanly Memorial Hall Feasibility Study

Project Description

Located just outside the town core at a key gateway along St. Patrick's Street, Hanly Memorial Hall is a significant historic property that is currently vacant and in a state of dereliction, detracting from the vitality and impression of the town centre.

Built in 1908, Hanly Hall originally served as a national school. Over the years, it has served many uses, including as a badminton and snooker hall for local young people. It is noted on the NIAH database as "a handsome and symmetrical structure. Its rendered exterior is enriched by colourful red brick dressings, terracotta ridge tiles and modest timber barge-boards, resulting in an appealing design. The statue and fine railings enhance the setting of the school."

The current owners, the Brothers of Charity, are developing plans to refurbish and convert Hanly Hall, possibly into day services or a micro enterprise/office space. These proposals may also include the construction of a new, two-storey detached community residential dwelling along with car parking.

While retrofitting this structure would require substantial investment, **improvement and revitalisation of the building and surrounding landscaping** would strengthen its role within the town centre, both in terms of providing needed spaces and facilities, and as a prominent landmark at a key gateway to the town centre.

While it is not a Protected Structure, ensuring respectful restoration of the building's heritage will be important, alongside bringing it as far as possible up to modern standards in terms of accessibility and sustainability, including energy efficiency and consideration of biodiversity / green infrastructure enhancements to the gardens.



Current condition of the Hanly Hall



Case Study | Monkstown Parish Schoolhouse, Co.Dublin
Restored for community and heritage activity and sits adjacent to Monkstown Parish Church

Vacant to
Vibrant

Stagger Inn Mixed-Use Development

Project Description

The Stagger Inn site, a substantial vacant property with extensive backlands on Upper Main Street and in Council ownership, represents a prime opportunity to deliver much-needed housing and revitalise this key part of the town centre.

Its scale and location make it ideally suited for a **mixed-use development** that prioritises new residential units - potentially including age-friendly or lifetime homes - supported by well-designed parking areas and clear pedestrian linkages that re-connect the site to Main Street.

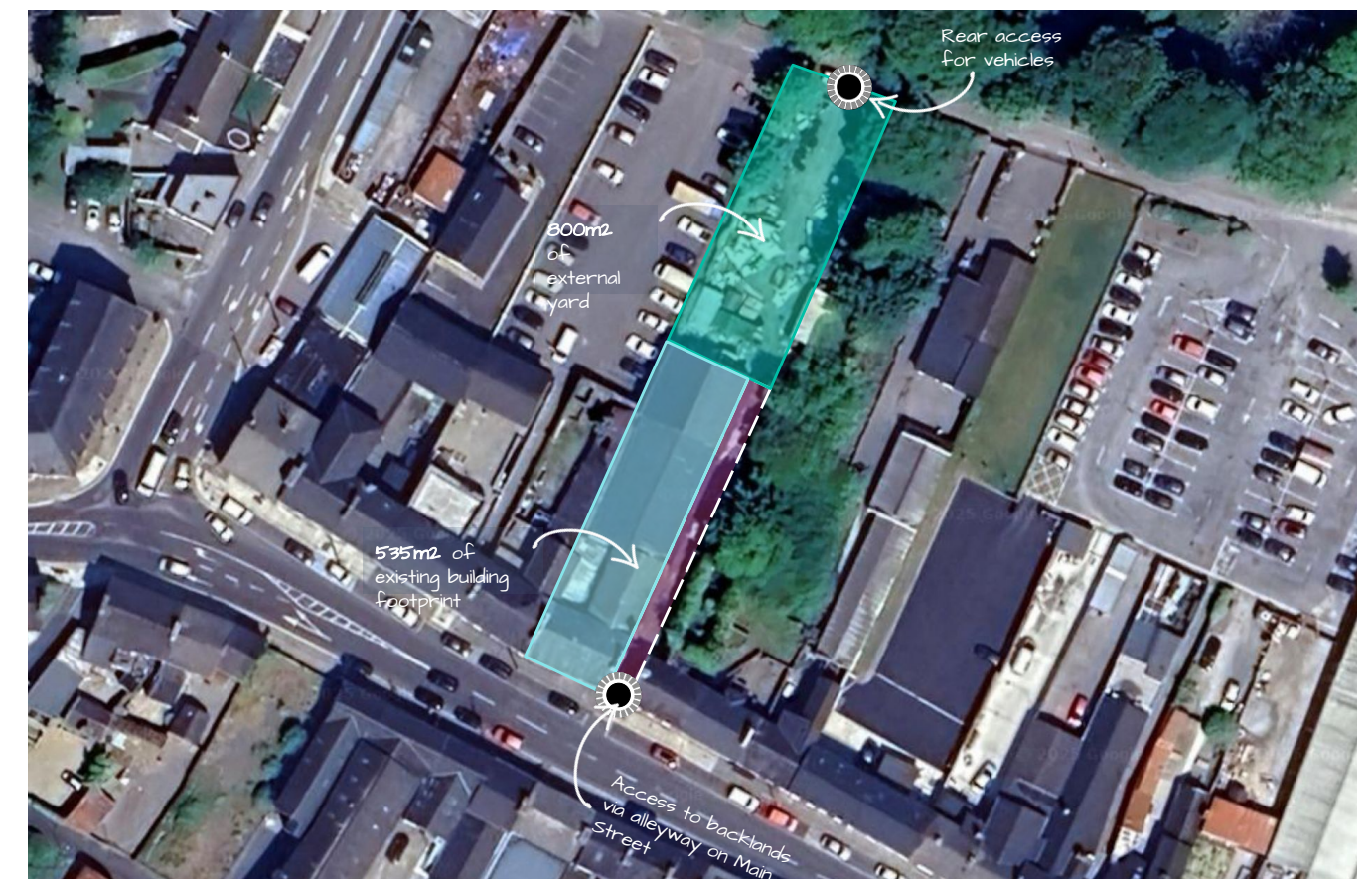
Development of the Stagger Inn lands would significantly enhance the northern approach to the town centre, creating an attractive and active gateway that strengthens the overall streetscape and complements existing nearby businesses such as Benny's Deli. By introducing **new housing and improved access**, the site would generate footfall, increase local activity, and help stimulate wider economic and social regeneration in this part of the town.

The backland area offers a valuable opportunity to provide some **rear car parking**, improving convenience for residents and visitors. In addition, a pedestrian laneway linking the development directly to Main Street would promote permeability, encourage walking, and reinforcing the traditional fine-grain urban pattern that characterises the town centre.

With thoughtful design, particularly in relation to the character and streetscape of Main Street, and a clear focus on connectivity, town-centre living, and integrated parking solutions, the Stagger Inn site has the potential to become a catalyst for renewal, strengthening the social, economic, and physical fabric of the town.



Current condition of The Stagger Inn



Site diagram of The Stagger Inn site

Vacant to
Vibrant

Traffic Safety Scheme

Project Description

The N60 national road runs directly through Castlerea town centre along St. Patrick's Street and Upper Main Street. This results in continuous traffic flow, including frequent large trucks and HGVs which are particularly imposing on the town centre's safety, streetscape and environment. At the Hell's Kitchen junction, one of the main arrival points into the town centre, vehicles enter at relatively high speeds. Combined with limited pedestrian crossings - there are only two controlled pedestrian crossings in the town centre, both located on Lower Main Street (see map) - this creates an unsafe and uncomfortable environment for those on foot, as well as a congested experience for road users.

This could be addressed through a **Traffic Safety Scheme** involving:

- Signalisation of the two main junctions (see map opposite) - **Hell's Kitchen Junction and the Main Street / St. Patrick's Street Junction** - to improve traffic and pedestrian safety.
- Designated controlled crossing facilities to be provided along Main Street at locations where crossing safely can be difficult in peak traffic (possible crossing locations based on high level observations of desire lines indicated in the map opposite, subject to further investigation and detailed design).

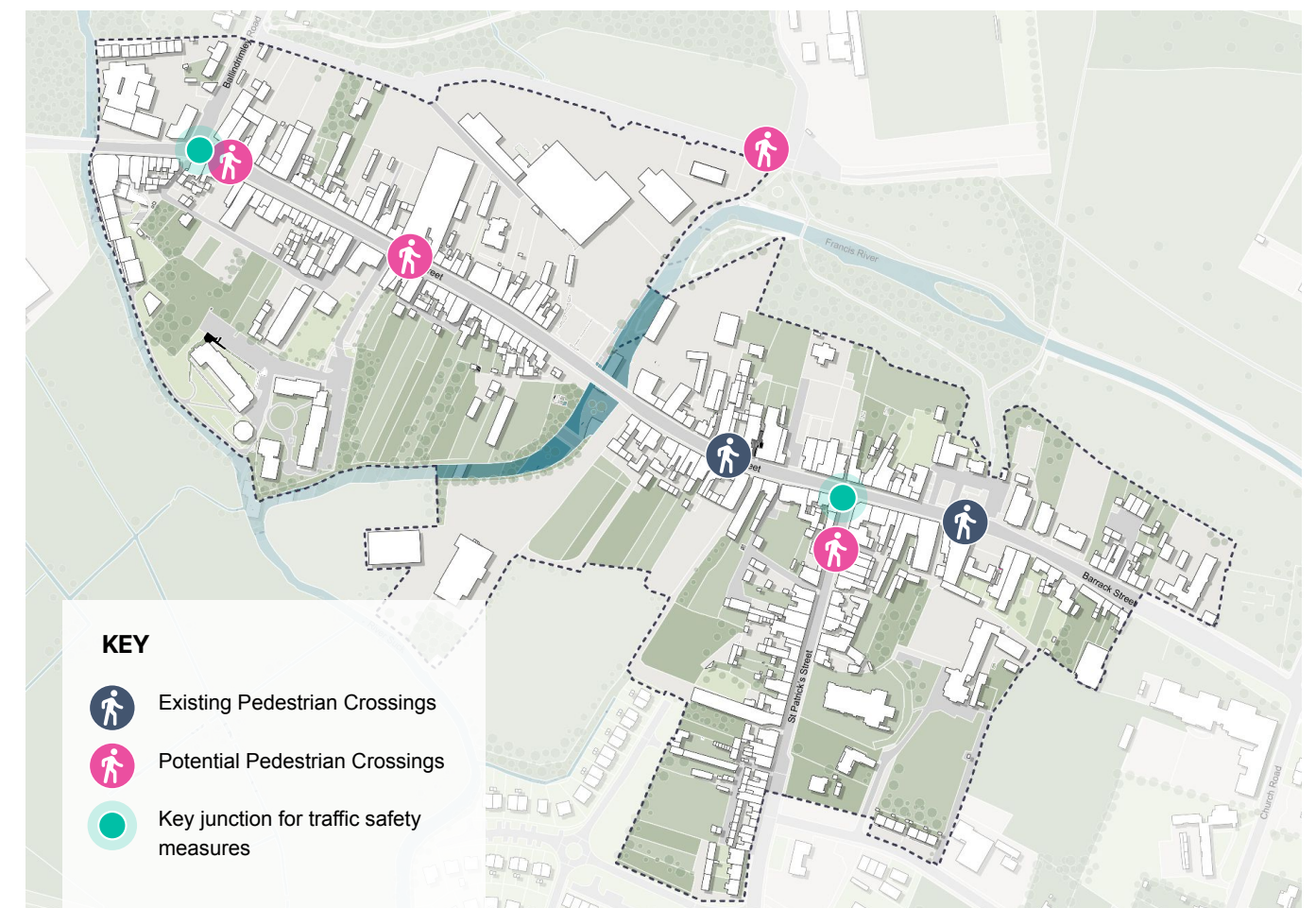
These measures could help to reduce congestion, improve pedestrian safety and experience, and enhance the overall accessibility and environment of the town centre. This would support greater footfall, dwell time, and economic activity.

While not currently being considered formally by any public bodies, a **potential relief road to enable heavy traffic to bypass the town centre** may be worth exploring, as highlighted through community and business surveys.

Spaces
for All



Hell's Kitchen junction today



Map indicating key junctions and crossing points within the town centre

River Island Regeneration

Project Description

River Island is a significant, underused 10-acre site in the town centre, strategically located at the bridge between Upper and Lower Main Street, alongside the river and opposite the Livestock Mart and boardwalk entrance to the Demesne. It includes two notable existing structures, one of which is a former nightclub.

Despite challenges such as flood risk, this represents a very important development opportunity for the town centre, that should be carefully planned, phased and coordinated, with input from Roscommon County Council, to help align with the vision, objectives, and other key projects identified within this Town Centre First Plan.

A Feasibility Study and comprehensive Site Masterplan could explore a mix of uses, including recreational and leisure facilities, medium-density town centre housing, car parking, and creation of a riverside park / public green space.

The **proposed River Loop Walk** would continue along this portion of the river, with potential for associated uses and businesses, such as a coffee cart or small cafe. Potential complementary leisure and recreational activities on the site could include both indoor activities within the buildings, as well as river-based activities.

Before reuse of any existing structures, an assessment of structural integrity and potential to refurbish to modern standards is likely needed.

Parking and safe access for both pedestrians and vehicles must be considered early in the layout, including access to Main Street, integration of the River Loop Walk, as well as backlands access to Patrick Street, to help improve connectivity and permeability across different areas of the town centre.

Vacant to
Vibrant



Current condition of River Island



Site diagram outline access and key features

The Gatehouse Cafe & Info Point

Project Description

The Gatehouse, located at the gateway between the Demesne and Market Square, is a historic Protected Structure that forms part of the Clonalis House/Castlerea House and Demesne estate. It is currently vacant but appears to be in fairly good condition.

Given its location at the primary entrance to the Demesne from the town centre, it offers an ideal site for a **small cafe and visitor information point**. This would help contribute to the vitality of Market Square throughout the week, celebrate the story and heritage of Castlerea and the Demesne, orientate and inform visitors about attractions, amenities and businesses in the town, and entice both residents and visitors to spend more time enjoying Castlerea town centre.

The project could incorporate a cafe within the existing building, flexible outdoor seating to help animate the area to the front overlooking Market Square, and wayfinding and tourism information features, perhaps using interactive digital boards and/or QR codes to optimise the limited space available.

The cafe might operate as a small front-of-house / outlet for local artisans and producers, helping to connect and support local enterprises in Castlerea. The architectural heritage of the building itself should be preserved with any refurbishment, while enabling accessibility and energy efficiency as far as possible.

This project should align closely with the **Town Centre Gateways project**, to ensure a consistent approach to public realm and wayfinding interventions, such as landscaping, planting, lighting, signage, public art, and sculpture, that celebrates the unique heritage and identity of Castlerea.

Revitalising
Heritage



The Gatehouse today



Restoration of former Gatehouse into a café

Enabling the Place

- 5.1 | Implementation Overview
- 5.2 | Action Plan
- 5.3 | Funding Sources



Implementation Overview

A collaborative approach to town centre regeneration is critical to success. Partners, stakeholders, businesses and the wider community must be kept meaningfully informed and involved in further design, development and delivery of interventions.

Early and ongoing engagement will help build trust, encourage local buy-in, and ensure projects reflect the real needs and priorities of those who live, work and do business in Castlerea.

The existing proactive and positive Town Team, and joint working between the Town Team and Roscommon County Council provides a fantastic foundation for further development and implementation of the proposals within this report. Genuine collaboration, transparency and open communication are essential to the success of this Plan.

Strategic leadership on implementation will come from Roscommon County Council and the Town Team, including further development and feasibility testing of the key transformative projects as funding becomes available. However, many other local stakeholders have key roles to play in bringing to life of these projects and the collective vision for Castlerea future.

Private landowners and businesses are particularly important stakeholders in Castlerea. Any future feasibility testing, evolution and design of the ideas presented in this report, including many of the key projects, will require consultation and support of landowners and other key stakeholders before they can be progressed. When any works are carried out, consideration should be given to to minimise disruption to businesses and customers.

The key performance indicators opposite provide a starting point for measurement of progress over time.

The remainder of this chapter sets out an action plan (with priority, timescale, budget, key stakeholders, key actions and next steps for each of the key projects) and identifies a series of potential funding options that might be explored to help bring this vision and plan to life.

Key Performance Indicators:

- ★ The numbers of buildings and structures conserved, restored, refurbished and brought back into active use
- ★ Amount of floor area brought back into use
- ★ Areas of public realm enhanced
- ★ Changes in footfall / visitor numbers
- ★ Satisfaction of visitors and the likelihood of repeat visits
- ★ Impact on tourism spend in the town
- ★ Numbers of jobs created and the quality of those jobs
- ★ Amount of investment from public or private sources
- ★ The viability and competitiveness of businesses in the town
- ★ The level of pride and ownership by the community of their town centre
- ★ The extent of engagement of the local community
- ★ The strengthening of local economic and social structures
- ★ The level of respect and appreciation for the heritage, culture, traditions and distinctiveness of the community
- ★ Affordability, accessibility and inclusivity of buildings, public realm and events programmes

Action Plan

Key Project	Theme	Potential Timescale	Budget Scale	Key Stakeholders	Key Actions & Next Steps
Town Centre Parking Strategy		Strategy: Quick Win (within 2 years) Delivery: Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low / Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents	• Progress as a priority in order to unlock other key projects in the town centre. • Commission a comprehensive parking audit and strategy, covering detailed recommendations for both short term interventions (e.g. time limits, designated spaces, enhanced surfacing, signage and wayfinding) and longer term projects (e.g. potential for new off-street car parking areas). • Continue engaging with local landowners, businesses and the public to build insights and buy-in for a shared strategy. • Seek funding and designs to deliver improvements to the accessibility, safety, appearance and maintenance of pedestrian routes between parking areas and main streets, such as surfacing, lighting, public art, greening and signage. • Run a parking campaign to ensure people are aware of the various parking options and etiquette.
Streetscape Enhancement Scheme		Medium Term (within 5 years)	Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, National Transport Authority, Active Travel & Accessibility stakeholders, Green Infrastructure & Climate Resilience stakeholders, local businesses and residents	• Engage key stakeholders at local, regional and national level to explore funding options that may unlock delivery, either in parts or as a comprehensive scheme. • Consider appointing a design team to ensure a clear and coherent overall design vision and streetscape enhancement plan, which respects Castlerea's built heritage and existing businesses. • Improve and widen footpaths to ensure safe and comfortable movement for all users, particularly wheelchair users, people with buggies, older residents and those with mobility challenges (while maintaining a 6m carriageway and as much short-stay on-street parking as possible, to support local businesses). • Underground overhead wires and remove redundant signage to enhance the visual appearance of the town and reduce street clutter. • Install benches and quality street furniture, creating places for people to rest, meet and spend time in the town centre. • Integrate street trees, sustainable drainage and landscaping to introduce greenery, biodiversity and visual interest, and mitigate flood risk. • Clearly designate car parking spaces to allow for more efficient use of existing parking and better traffic flow. • Improve pedestrian crossings and prioritisation at key junctions.
Shopfront Renewal Initiative		Design Guide: Quick Win (within 2 years) Works: Medium Term (within 5 years) - Long Term (5 years +)	Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents, local history / heritage experts	• Seek funding and appoint a suitably qualified consultant, with heritage expertise, to develop a Shopfront Design Guide. This might form part of a wider Heritage-led Regeneration Plan for Castlerea, which further develops some of the potential heritage-led projects and actions identified in this Town Centre First Plan. • Ensure local businesses and land owners who may be impacted are aware of and consulted on the guide and its deliverability. • Develop a campaign to raise awareness of grants, advice and other supports available to help encourage uptake of improvements from property owners and businesses. • Where buildings are being renovated, ensure architectural features such as chimneys are retained to preserve the traditional character and heritage of the townscape.

Action Plan

Key Project	Theme	Potential Timescale	Budget Scale	Key Stakeholders	Key Actions & Next Steps
Vacant Buildings Revitalisation Programme		Medium Term (within 5 years) - Long Term (5 years +)	Medium / High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents	- Engage with private landowners to gauge interest and feasibility of undertaking refurbishment works to key properties, such as Byron Brothers and Callachan's Shop. These could act as demonstrator projects for other vacant and underused properties in the town centre. - Conduct a full audit of other potential properties that are vacant, underused and / or derelict and which could benefit from this programme. - Investigate potential funding streams available to support these works. - Ensure alignment with the Shopfront Renewal Programme.
River Loop Walk		Phase 1 & 2: Quick Win (within 2 years) Phase 3: Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low / Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents, Active Travel stakeholders	- Deliver Phase 1 works (Improvements to the existing walkway to provide a more accessible and useable boardwalk). - Appoint a design team to develop concept plans and cost estimate for Phase 2 works (Enhancements to the entrance to the boardwalk (via the parking area) through lighting, signage, landscaping and clearly marking it as an entrance to the Demesne and River Walk). - Engage with any private landowners impacted by the potential Loop Walk / Phase 3 (Extension of the walk to incorporate the lower section of River Island and adding new footbridges to complete the loop, with clear and consistent signage, lighting and materials, including interpretive signage). - Investigate feasibility, flood risk and potential route for Phase 3, possibly as part of wider masterplan for the River Island Site. - Progress Planning Applications and detailed designs for Phases 2 and 3 once feasibility and concepts have been agreed. - Seek funding for delivery of works.
Revitalising Market Square		Medium Term (within 5 years) - Long Term (5 years +)	Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents, stakeholders at The Hub	- Progress the Town Centre Parking Strategy in order to unlock this project. - Continue engaging with local businesses, residents and other stakeholders to build support for a flexible, multi-use square. - Consider temporary reduction of parking for an event to test how this might work. - Appoint a design team to develop concept designs, including high-quality, robust paving and landscaping, greening, seating, lighting, and retractable bollards for events. - Underground overhead wires and remove other visual clutter. - Improve and potentially relocate the "Hut" shelter. - Enhance visual and physical connectivity to the Demesne and highlight its entrance, with safe routes for pedestrians and clear wayfinding. - Submit Part 8 Planning Application. - Seek funding for delivery of works.

Action Plan

Key Project	Theme	Potential Timescale	Budget Scale	Key Stakeholders	Key Actions & Next Steps
Town Centre Gateways		Quick Win (within 2 years)	Low / Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, Castlerea Tidy Towns, local businesses and residents, artists, community groups, schools, youth, volunteers	• Seek grant funding sources for improvement works, planting, and public art to determine what is possible to deliver and when (likely in parts though options for a more comprehensive gateways enhancement project could be explored). • Work with local stakeholders such as Castlerea Tidy Towns, local artists and schools to design, deliver and maintain enhancements.
Reimagining the Old School House		Feasibility Study: Quick Win (within 2 years) Works: Medium Term (within 5 years)	Medium / High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, heritage / conservation experts, local businesses and residents	• Engage landowners to gauge interest and help shape the project to align with the vision of this Town Centre First Plan. • Undertake a Feasibility Study and Concept Designs to test the viability of potential uses for the building (possibly including community / health / social services / retail), and sustainable operating models, as well as the feasibility of improvements and alterations to the historic structure. • Given it's protected status, engage early with Heritage / Conservation officers and appoint suitably qualified experts to advise on the Feasibility Study and Designs. • Submit a Planning Application. • Seek funding for detailed design and delivery.
Hanly Memorial Hall Feasibility Study		Planning Application: Quick Win (within 2 years) Works: Medium Term (within 5 years)	Medium / High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, Brothers of Charity, local businesses and residents	• Town Team to engage Brothers of Charity to offer support and shape the project to align with the vision of this Town Centre First Plan. • Planning Application to be submitted.
Stagger Inn Mixed-Use Development		Feasibility Study: Quick Win (within 2 years) Works: Medium Term (within 5 years)	Medium / High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents	• Commission Concept Designs to determine the most appropriate mix of uses, layout, and access, as well as cost estimates. • Submit Part 8 Planning Application. • Seek funding for detailed design and delivery.

Action Plan

Key Project	Theme	Potential Timescale	Budget Scale	Key Stakeholders	Key Actions & Next Steps
Traffic Safety Scheme		Delivery: Could be delivered within 2 years once approved	€1 million	Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Roscommon County Council, National Transport Authority, Town Team	• A preliminary design has been completed on a traffic safety scheme (signalisation of the two main junctions and designated controlled crossing facilities along Main Street) that meets all the safety benefits required for TII funding, though it has not yet been approved. Revisit this design and consider what is needed to move forward. • Submit Part 8 Planning Application. • Should the proposed scheme receive planning consent, appoint a consultant to commence detailed design. • Explore a potential relief road to enable heavy traffic to bypass the town centre.
River Island Regeneration		Feasibility Study: Quick Win (within 2 years) Works: Medium Term (within 5 years) - Long Term (5 years +)	Medium / High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local businesses and residents, potential leisure operators	• Engage with any private landowners, businesses and neighbours of the site, as well as potential leisure and recreational operators. • Commission a Feasibility Study and comprehensive Site Masterplan to explore a mix of uses, including recreational and leisure facilities, medium-density town centre housing, car parking, and creation of a riverside park / public green space. • Submit Planning Application. • Seek funding for detailed design and delivery. • Ensure alignment with the potential River Loop Walk project.
The Gatehouse Cafe & Info Point		Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low / Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, Town Trust, local businesses and producers	• Engage the Town Trust to ascertain long term plans for the building and discuss interest / potential for the proposed cafe and visitor information point uses. • Given it's protected status, engage early with Heritage / Conservation officers and appoint suitably qualified experts to advise on any designs. • Irrespective of building uses, investigate potential for wayfinding and tourism information features at this key gateway between the Demesne and town centre, perhaps using interactive digital boards and/or QR codes. • Align closely with the Town Centre Gateways project, to ensure a consistent approach to public realm and wayfinding interventions

Funding Options

Fund	Description
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund	The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) supports the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. The fund is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with a commitment of €1 billion in funding up to 2027. Funding is awarded by a competitive bid process. The RRDF supports ambitious investments of scale to deliver town centre regeneration including projects which aim to repurpose derelict, disused or heritage buildings, deliver remote working and enterprise spaces, build or transform libraries, deliver tourism infrastructure and generally support greater activity, footfall, business and residency.
Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund	Housing for All aims to improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. There are two schemes under the Housing for all Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund to support housing delivery, these are managed and administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties. Under the Ready to Build Scheme, Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate to individuals who want to build their own home.
European Regional Development Fund	The European Regional Development Fund 2021–2027 programmes set out an investment strategy for €853 million, of which €396 million is financed by the EU. Funding is managed by Regional Assemblies to ensure alignment with Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and to support Local Authorities in delivering the sustainable regeneration of towns and urban centres. The fund aims to address regional imbalance, sustainable economic development, environmental sustainability and build low carbon and climate resilient communities. Tackling vacancy and dereliction in towns, in support of the Town Centre First approach is a particular emphasis of this fund.
Town and Village Renewal Scheme	The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides grant funding to support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000. Applications are submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development through Local Authorities and the scheme focuses on projects that have a positive impact in terms of place making and town centre regeneration. Projects funded have included the regeneration of banks, courthouses, cinemas and halls for community use, the development of public plazas, town parks, playgrounds, community gardens and dog parks. The scheme also funds projects at pre-development stage and the acquisition of suitable vacant or derelict properties that could be taken into public ownership and converted for community use. The scheme also provides specific funding to enhance streetscapes and shopfronts.
Climate Adaptation/ Retrofitting Initiatives	The government's commitment to climate action is supported by funding to meet 2030 and 2050 climate targets. For example Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide sustainable energy grants to help homeowners, business owners, communities and industry reduce energy costs and greenhouse emissions. Local Authorities are funded in undertaking a programme of insulation retrofitting of the least energy efficient social homes. The Regional and Local Road Grant Programme support the maintenance of public roads in towns. The Active Travel Grants programme also provide supports for more sustainable travel modes to local schools, residential areas and places of employment.
Active Travel Grants Programme	The Active Travel Grants Programme administered by the National Transport Authority supports strategic pedestrian and cyclist routes, access to schools, permeability links, urban greenways, minor public transport improvement projects, dedicated infrastructure schemes such as the Safe Routes to School Programme and behavioural change programmes such as Green Schools.
Historic Towns Initiative	The Historic Towns Initiative is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council, which aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of historic town centres. The initiative has two streams of funding: Capital works to repair and enhance the heritage of town through heritage-led regeneration projects that address dereliction and residential vacancy, the conservation of landmark buildings, streetscape and public realm conservation led projects; and Funding for heritage-led regeneration plans to determine conservation focused interventions for a town.

Funding Options

Fund	Description
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)	The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding to develop new outdoor recreational facilities in rural locations. It also provides support to repair, maintain and enhance existing outdoor recreational facilities. The scheme recognises the importance of active healthy lifestyles and supports activities like walking, trekking, cycling, kayaking and hiking. The scheme helps to develop economic and tourism potential in rural areas, and it funds facilities that benefit both local communities and visitors. Local community and voluntary groups can submit proposals to their local authority for consideration. Projects led by commercial businesses are not considered.
Rural Development Programme (LEADER)	The EU Rural Development Programme, widely known as LEADER, provides capital funding for rural development and job creation, with a focus on climate change and sustainability of the rural environment. The LEADER programme is administered at a local level by Local Action Groups (LAGs), which contain local representatives from the community, public and private sector. Each group is responsible for selecting and awarding LEADER funding to projects within their geographical area in accordance with the local development strategies they develop themselves. The LEADER programme accepts applications based on projects which improve: Economic Development and Job Creation; Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion; and Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation.
CLÁR	CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. This funding assists in building the resilience of these rural communities. These grants are administered by Local Authorities for the Department of Rural and Community Development. CLÁR 2025 was launched on 4th April 2025. The programme will be delivered through the following three separate Measures: Developing Community Facilities and Amenities; Mobility, Cancer Care, Community First Responder and Meals on Wheels Transport; and 'Our Living Islands'.
PEACE PLUS	The PEACE PLUS Programme builds on PEACE and INTERREG EU funded programmes and aims to strengthen peace and prosperity within and between the border counties of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The programme aims to address social, environmental and economic challenges and has a community-led focus. The programme has a total budget of €1.1 billion from 2021-2027 and targets investment in six key thematic areas: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities; Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation; Empowering and Investing in Our Young People; Healthy and Inclusive Communities; Supporting a Sustainable and Better-Connected Future; Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration.
Fáilte Ireland Supports	As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to assist the long-term sustainable growth of tourism and to help develop destinations. It also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business initiatives and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow.
Regional Enterprise Development Fund	The Regional Enterprise Development Fund, administered by Enterprise Ireland, supports significant regional initiatives that build on sectoral strengths and/or to better leverage identified resources to improve enterprise capability, in order to help sustain and add to employment at county, regional and national level.
Tidy Towns	Tidy Towns is an annual competition that honours Ireland's tidiest and most attractive cities, towns and villages. Voluntary and community groups come together and work on visual improvements to their neighbourhood so they can vie for a prize. This scheme supports their efforts by helping to fund some of the improvement works. Residents associations and community groups who are entering their town, village or neighbourhood in the Tidy Towns competition can apply for funding under this scheme. The Tidy Towns competition has a number of different categories, and the grant should help the town or village to compete for at least one of these. It can fund projects like hedge and grass cutting, planting, painting. Projects that support biodiversity and environmental sustainability are encouraged. Projects that involve construction are not eligible for this scheme.

Funding Options

Fund	Description
Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS)	The Built Heritage Investment Scheme 2026 (BHIS) is for the repair and conservation of structures that are protected under the Planning and Development Acts. This scheme aims to support: a significant number of projects across the country, and the employment of skilled and experienced conservation professionals, craftspeople and tradespersons in the repair of the historic built environment Grants of between €2,500 and €50,000 are available. The scheme also incorporates streams for vernacular buildings and historic shopfronts, which were previously part of the Historic Structures Fund, as well as a ‘micro’ grant stream for works of routine maintenance and minor repairs. The fund is administered through Local Authorities.
Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme	Operated by the Heritage Council and open to voluntary or community groups and not for profit non-governmental organisations, this scheme offers grants between €500 and €25,000. A broad range of project types are eligible for funding under the scheme including: Conservation works to collections, objects or places, including natural heritage projects e.g. control of invasive species or habitat restoration works; conservation works to buildings; Surveys, reports, plans, and audits to inform the future management of buildings and monuments, habitats, collections, or objects; Alterations to buildings and places of architectural heritage significance to improve accessibility for people with disabilities; and Projects that help people engage more with their heritage e.g. interactive maps, videos, virtual exhibitions, podcasts, websites.
Community Monuments Fund	The Community Monuments Fund provides funding for the care, conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments. Stream 1: Grants up to €100,000 for essential repairs and capital works for the conservation of archaeological monuments. Stream 2: Grants of up to €30,000 for the development of Conservation Management Plans/Reports and detailed Specification of Works aimed at identifying measures for conservation of archaeological monuments and improving public access. Stream 3: Grants of up to €30,000 for the enhancement of access infrastructure, interpretation projects (including virtual/online), and small scale emergency conservation works at archaeological monuments.
Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS)	Under the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS), the local authority or an approved housing body, will provide funding to carry out repairs to a property that has been vacant for 12 months or longer to bring it up to rental standards. An interest free loan of up to €80,000 (including VAT) is available to repair each individual home leased to the local authority. For example, where a vacant former shop is converted into 4 homes, a loan of up to €320,000 is available. In return, the refurbished homes will be leased to the local authority or an AHB and the property owner will receive a regular income based on a percentage of market rent, with the loan repaid as a reduction in the lease payment over an agreed term.
Buy and Renew Scheme (BRS)	The Buy and Renew Scheme supports local authorities in purchasing and renewing housing units in need of repair and making them available for social housing use. It is a matter for each local authority to determine a property’s suitability for social housing. It aims to help tackle the problem of dereliction and to improve an area’s appearance. As a complementary initiative to the Repair and Leasing Scheme, it provides the option for suitable properties to be purchased rather than leased, if that is the property owner’s preference.
The Local Enhancement Programme (LEP)	The Local Enhancement Programme (LEP) provides capital supports essential for many small community groups and organisations, particularly those who serve disadvantaged areas. In 2024 the LEP replaced the Community Enhancement Programme which was first launched in 2018 and provided capital funding to assist thousands of community groups across the country.
Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF)	The Local Biodiversity Action Fund (LBAF), operated by the NPWS, provides grants to support biodiversity projects in all 31 local authorities in Ireland, including education, bird conservation, invasive species management, and wetland surveys. To be eligible, projects must align with actions from the National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) or target Invasive Alien Species listed under the EU IAS Regulation, and local authorities must provide co-funding. Funding is awarded annually through a grant application process to local authority Biodiversity Officers and Heritage Officers.

Funding Options

Fund	Description
Play and Recreation Schemes	A capital grant-funding scheme for play and recreation provides capital funding to support new and existing play and recreation facilities for children and young people. The total amount of funding made available each year is €250,000. A maximum grant of €20,000 is allocated to each local authority. Local authorities are invited to apply for funding for projects, which provide: new and innovative play and recreation spaces and facilities (new and innovative projects can include new facilities, equipment, designs and /or the utilisation of non-traditional play spaces), or refurbishment or upgrading of existing play and recreation spaces and facilities
Arts Council Funding	Arts Grant Funding supports individual artists and organisations across multiple artforms to carry out multiple activities over a fixed period. The Arts Council invests in artists, organisations and arts infrastructure through a variety of competitive funding schemes, supporting artists and organisations to make excellent work.
Per Cent for Art	The Per Cent for Art scheme is a government initiative, first introduced in 1978, whereby 1% of the cost of any publicly funded capital, infrastructural and building development can be allocated to the commissioning of a work of art. Since 1997 this scheme has been made available to all capital projects across all government departments. Capital programmes where the Per Cent for Art scheme applies include: • public housing projects (social and affordable schemes) • transport and roads • environmental schemes such as drainage schemes, pump stations and reservoirs • public buildings such as libraries, public offices, schools, hospitals, medical centres, prisons, arts buildings - cinemas, theatres, art centre • conservation works carried out to public buildings and sites • urban and village renewal schemes
Arts Festivals Investment Scheme	With the support of the Arts Council, the Arts Festival Investment Programme provides financial support to festivals that provide opportunities for the public to access high quality arts events, that develop the work of artists and/or develop artforms, that have a long-term strategy that considers programme, audience and festival management. In particular, the scheme looks to support arts festivals that collectively encompass a wide range of artforms and locations across the county.
Strategic Tourism Festival Investment Scheme	Fáilte Ireland has been supporting festivals to generate tourism for many years. The objective of this scheme is to support, develop, and deliver a diverse and compelling portfolio of uniquely Irish tourism-led festivals and events to maximize the benefits of tourism festivals for the tourism economy and local destination. Stage 2 of the 2026-2028 programme is now closed, though there may be future rounds.
Community Festival Investment Programme	Leitrim County Council provides financial support to organisations in Leitrim that produce unique, high-quality festivals that engage with the fabric of the county, providing valuable opportunities for residents and visitors alike to come together, to celebrate and to explore new experiences. The purpose of the community festival strand is to support the development of festivals that encourage a strong sense of community, social inclusion and engagement of the wider community. Leitrim County Council has advertised its three separate sources of support for festivals – Tourism, Arts, and Community – together so that festivals can look at the different priorities, requirements and assessment criteria of each strand before choosing which one is the most appropriate for the applicant to pursue.
Social Enterprise Funding and Supports	Since the establishment of the Department in 2017, specific supports for social enterprises have been provided through the Social Enterprise Measure of the Dormant Accounts Fund. Funding is also provided to social enterprises under for the Social Enterprise Development Fund, which was established in 2018 by Rethink Ireland (Formerly Social Innovation Fund Ireland (SIFI)) in partnership with Local Authorities Ireland and IPB Insurance. Rethink Ireland provides social enterprises at all stages of their development with a number of supports including cash grants and a range of non-financial supports. Social enterprises can also benefit from funding under a number of other programmes, including the Community Services Programme (CSP), Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) and LEADER.

Town Team Statement

The Castlerea Town Team supports the Town Centre First Plan in principle and welcomes the clear strategic vision it sets out for the sustainable development and long-term vitality of the town. This support is grounded in the expectation that, as funding opportunities are secured and detailed designs are advanced, the Castlerea Town Team will remain fully informed and meaningfully engaged at every stage of the process.

The Castlerea Town Team strongly emphasises the importance of genuine collaboration, transparency, and open, two-way communication. It is essential that the wider business community and the public are kept actively informed and updated on evolving plans, designs, and proposed works as they are being developed, throughout the process and in advance of decisions being finalised. Ensuring early and ongoing engagement will help build public confidence, strengthen local ownership of projects, and support the successful delivery of initiatives in a way that truly reflects the needs, priorities, and ambitions of the Castlerea community.

Castlerea Town Team



With thanks to the Castlerea Town Team, the local community and businesses for their input to help shape this plan.