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Boyle

Town Centre First Plan: Urban Design Analysis & Appraisal



Comhairle Contae
Ros Comáin
Roscommon
County Council



STUDIO MYCO

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01 Introduction

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Overview of this Study

Boyle has outstanding potential to draw on its unique character, impressive heritage, attractive riverside setting and surrounding scenic landscape to create a high quality living environment and become a key gateway town to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

Roscommon County Council appointed Studio Myco to deliver an urban design analysis and appraisal for Boyle town centre, in accordance with the Town Centre First Policy.

A range of information, documentation and surveys have already been compiled into a Town Centre Health Check, which forms the basis of the Town Centre First Plan analysis. This study synthesises and complements that information with a focus on the urban design analysis required as an intrinsic part of the Town Centre First Plan process. This study builds on the good work and ideas emanating from the Boyle 2040 Plan.

This report is structured as follows:

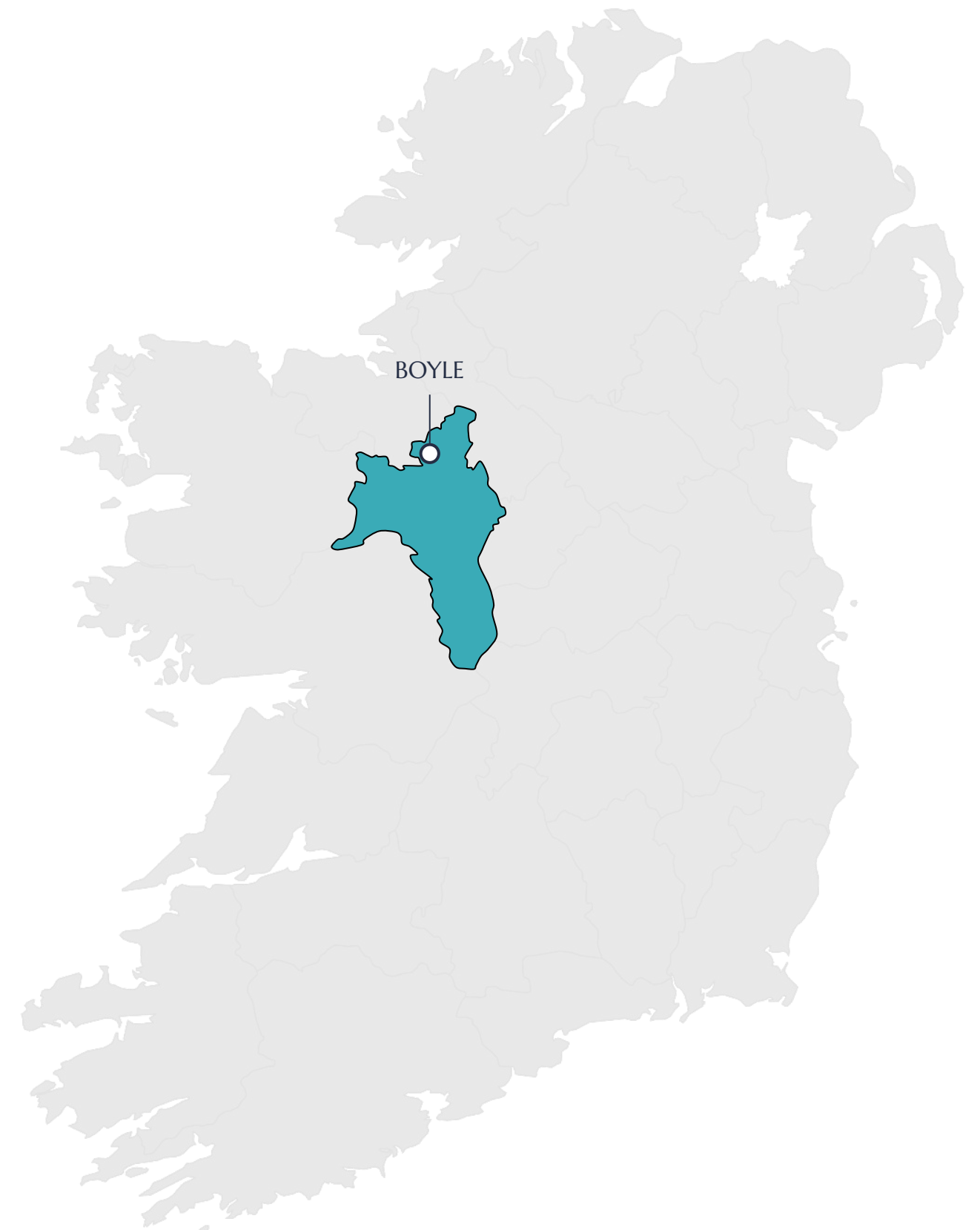
The Boyle Story: An overview of the town's context and its heritage.

Engagement Insights: A summary of the key insights emerging from community surveys undertaken by Roscommon County Council.

Urban Design Analysis: Using the guidance and framework set by the Town Centre First Policy, this chapter assesses the key issues and opportunities of the urban environment of Boyle town centre under the five themes of:

- Movement & Connections
- Nature, Landscape & Public Realm
- Land Uses & Economy
- Social, Community & Culture
- Built Form

Boyle Reimagined: Based on the issues and opportunities identified, proposals for key projects and supporting actions are set out, with the aim of creating a more viable, vibrant and attractive town centre for residents, businesses and visitors. Potential funding sources and recommended next steps are identified to help set the projects on the path to implementation.



Map of Boyle within Ireland and County Roscommon

Town Centre First Policy Context

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 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. It acknowledges that a “one size fits all” approach will not deliver the outcomes we all want for our towns.

The policy sets out 4 key elements for the development of the Town Centre First Plan:

- 1. Collaboration and Communication** - Identifying and engaging key stakeholders, from statutory bodies to local interest groups and citizens, to understand local needs and aspirations.
- 2. Understanding the Place** - Understand the context of the town and its heritage - including physical, demographic, social, economic, political, topographical and built environment, architectural data, along with historical and cultural stories and traditions.
- 3. Defining the Place** - Develop clear opportunity areas from the issues identified through the research and engagement that form the bedrock of an inspiring vision and deliverable goals with short, medium and long term interventions. These will be co-designed with stakeholders to build buy-in and civic ownership of the vision and proposed interventions.
- 4. Enabling the Place** - Identify opportunities for quick-wins and longer term implementation, management and monitoring, linking back to key strategic priorities, to ensure the plan is actionable, well supported and that social, economic and environmental benefits to the town and wider region are maximised.

The focus of this study is within Stage 2 Understanding the Place, specifically an urban design analysis, to provide a basis for high level recommendations for Defining and Enabling the Place.

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

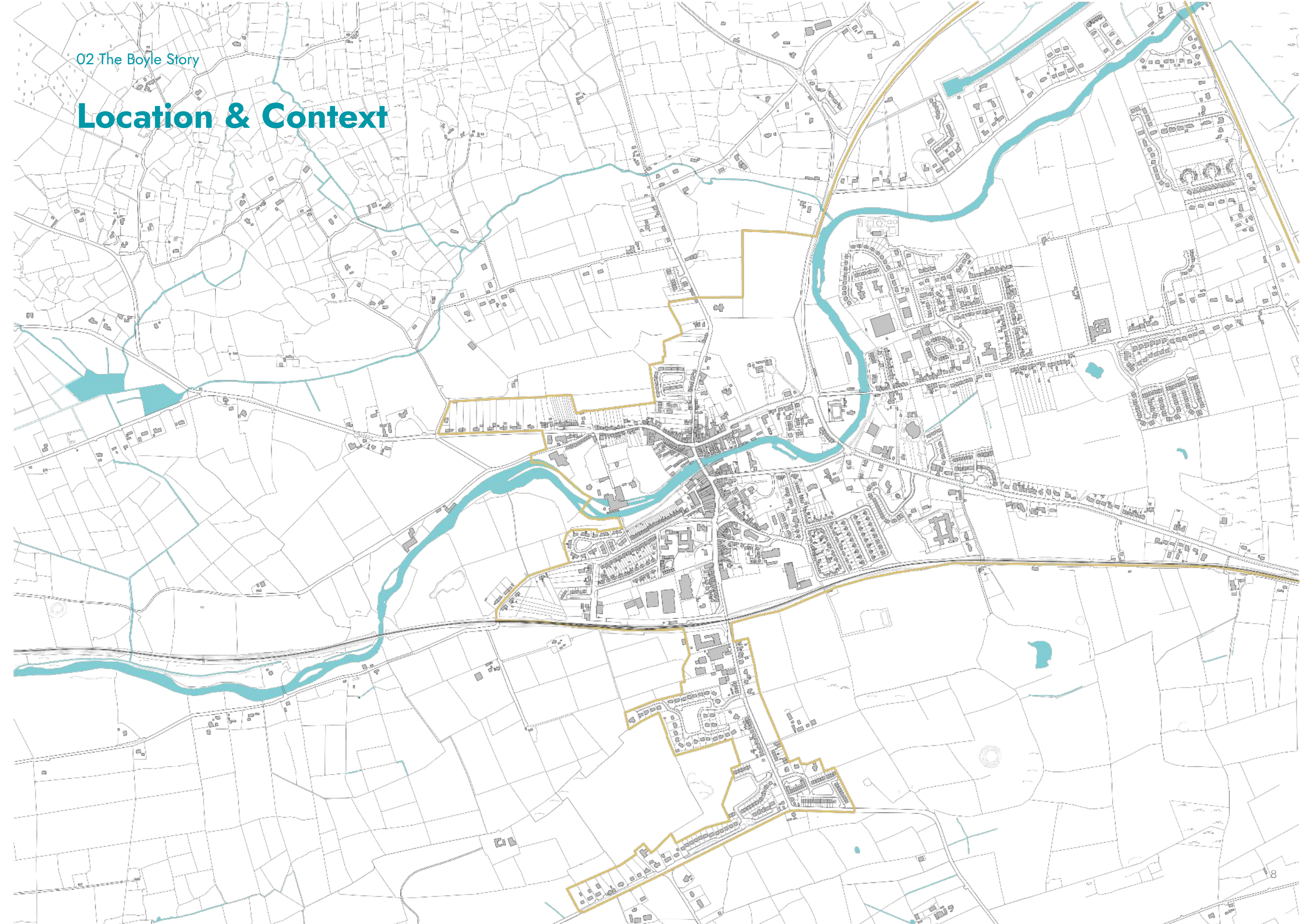
02 The Boyle Story

- 2.1 Location & Context
- 2.2 Character & History
- 2.3 Urban Morphology
- 2.4 Built Heritage
- 2.5 Cultural Heritage
- 2.6 Natural Heritage
- 2.7 Regeneration Context

Historical map of Boyle Published 1873
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Location & Context



Location & Context

Boyle is located in north County Roscommon at the foot of the Curlew Mountains and on the banks of the Boyle River, which connects the town to Lough Key, one of a chain of lakes on the Shannon River system. Boyle Harbour which forms part of this waterway is only a ten minute walk or three minute cycle from Boyle Town centre. The natural beauty of the Boyle River Valley and the manner in which the buildings of the town have historically respected this topography give the town its exceptional charm.

Its location in an area of great beauty and of immense historical and archaeological interest, with a strong outdoor, water-based leisure, heritage, culture and arts offer, make it one of the key destination areas of the County. Key attractions and events bring almost 200,000 visitors to Boyle and its hinterland annually (2022 visitor figures listed), including Lough Key Forest Park (150,000); King House (20,000); Boyle Abbey (6,425); and Boyle Arts Festival (11,000), amongst other attractions and events.

Boyle has traditionally served the shopping, professional services, business, civic and recreational functions of a wide rural hinterland. It is identified as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028, which means it provides a moderate level of jobs and services with good transport links and the potential for sustainable growth. In Census 2022, Boyle had a population of 2,915, which represented 4.1% of the County and an increase of 13.5% from 2016, a higher rate of growth than both the County and State (8.9% and 8.1% respectively). The Pobal Deprivation Index identifies Boyle ED as an area experiencing disadvantage.

Boyle is situated approximately 44 kilometres from Roscommon town, 16 kilometres from Carrick-on-Shannon and 40km from Sligo. Boyle town has easy access onto the N4 National Primary Route (Dublin to Sligo), with the N61 providing the north east link to the N4. The N61 National Secondary route runs through Boyle town centre and links Athlone, Roscommon and Boyle. The R294 Regional Road is the other main arterial road through the centre of the town, linking the N4 from the East, to the West of the town and onto Ballina. The L5058 links the town to the Lough Key Forest & Amenity Park amenity area via an over bridge on the N4. Boyle is served by the Bus Éireann Expressway and Bus Éireann Local services, with routes serving, amongst others, Carrick-on-Shannon, Roscommon Town, and Dublin. Boyle railway station operates a number of daily services on the Dublin/Sligo line.



"It is a place that is ready to fulfill its potential as a uniquely picturesque, connected and diverse gateway town to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands."

Boyle 2040



Character & History



The town of Boyle, which may have begun as a medieval monastic settlement, became a locally important industrial hub during the 17th century and prominent market town during the 19th and 20th century. Since the latter half of the 20th century, however, Boyle has lost many of the functions which gave it urban significance in the past. Today the town centre has reached a crossroads in its evolution as it struggles for a new identity and its share of the future economic success of the North and West Region.

Character & History

Medieval Boyle - The Abbey

Boyle Abbey to the east of the town centre and the Boyle River are iconic features of the town today and central to its early development. There may have been an earlier agrarian settlement centred on a natural fording point over the river to the Curlew Pass through the Curlew Mountains, along the approximate line of modern Green Street. However, the establishment of an urban settlement in Boyle is thought to have initially centered around Boyle Abbey, founded in 1161 by Cistercian monks.

17th & 18th Century - Great Mansions

Evidence of a town cannot be discerned before the late 16th century when it became an important location for the Dublin government on the road from Athlone to Sligo and in the conquest of Connaught and Ulster. A garrison was placed in the Abbey from 1595 until 1607, withstanding sieges by O'Donnell in 1596-7 and 1599-1600. Although probably not walled, it continued to be garrisoned throughout the 17th century, and remains of a bastioned fort, built in 1607, can be found to the north of the town centre.

In 1603 a lease of Boyle Abbey and its attendant lands was granted to Sir John King by James I and the town was incorporated as a borough in 1613. The King Family, Earls of Kingston, built six mansions over the next 200 years in the town and in Rockingham (where Lough Key Forest and Activity Park is located today), including King House from c. 1730, which still stands today as an iconic feature of this part of the story of Boyle.

The town of Boyle developed first around the junctions of Main St., Bridge St., Green St., and Eaton Lane in the early 17th century. It later extended to the south around the Crescent and Market Square, beginning in the late 17th century and into the 18th century. No houses in the town are known to date earlier than the eighteenth century.

Henry Fry arrived in Boyle in 1742 at the invitation of the Kings and set up a weaving industry in the town. He completed Frybrook House, a late Georgian mansion with Palladian references in 1753 and the house today dominates the townscape of the western part of the town centre. Freeman's Royal Hotel opened in 1788 with the King family's approval, on the south side of town near the bridge. It served from the mid 19th Century as a mail coach stop on Charles Bianconi's Dublin to Sligo route and later became known as the Royal Hotel.



Character & History

19th Century - Urbanisation

The early 19th century was a period of great activity and vibrancy in Boyle which underwent an economic boom based on trade and retailing. The period between 1810 and 1830 marked an unprecedented period of town building. The urban structure of Main Street, Bridge Street and much of Patrick Street was consolidated in this period and most of the buildings that survive along these streets today date from that period.

Much of this town building is attributed to Robert King, First Viscount Lorton who in this period had a country house at Rockingham, having moved from King House in the early 19th century. A new single-arch bridge was also built over the river (Sligo Road bridge) in 1817, as part of a national scheme for improving mail coach roads. This meant that the town centre was bypassed by through traffic and this was the start of a whole network of new roads though the grounds of the Abbey. Carrick Road was cut through c.1825 and Military Road laid out.

Charles Bianconi's Dublin to Sligo route was opened in the late 1820's and the Midland Great Western Railway arrived in 1862 which opened up more of the southern end of the town for terraced housing and added new bridges and workers' cottages to the townscape, including the iconic triple-arch stone bridge (Bridge Street), built c.1864. Patrick Street to the west was widened about this time and the old thatched cottages replaced with neoclassical Victorian terraces.

The population of Boyle town far exceeded its present population at its industrial height in the mid-19th century, reaching 3,433 in 1831. This larger urban population in 1831 occupied a much smaller area than the urban population of Boyle today (less than 57 hectares compared to the current footprint of about 465 hectares) and the historic town would have been a more vibrant and prosperous place due to the building, use and interaction density which this compact settlement pattern would have created.

The river continued to be an important element of the town's development during this period, with the Boyle Mill complex constructed c. 1810 on the northern bank to the west of the town centre. This complex remains a key feature of the town today. Maps dated 1937 also show a brewery located on the river a little further west of the mill.



Bridge Street, Image Source: National Library of Ireland



Image Source: National Library of Ireland

Character & History

Contemporary Boyle - Suburbanisation

Following the boom of the 19th Century, the early 20th century was not a period of significant new development for Boyle. After the establishment of the state in the early 1920's architecture in Boyle followed the national and international trend towards modern building styles. These styles were typically manifested in Boyle town centre in shopfront re-detailing and upgrading works between 1930 and 1950 in the prevailing Art Deco and Art Moderne styles, some examples of which survive today.

From the mid-20th century, driven by the rise of the motorcar and suburban lifestyle, almost all new development (typically single use and detached or semi-detached) was laid out in areas more remote from the town centre, and consequently footfall diminished in and around the main streets in the town centre. The loss of population to suburban areas of Boyle gathered pace during the property and construction boom of the 1990's and first decade of the 21st century, and has been particularly profound in the northern end of the town centre, which has only a handful of residential addresses in the three urban blocks adjoining the River Boyle. The vitality of the town centre has been further hampered by the wider trends towards online and out-of-town shopping.

Around the turn of the century, conservation projects were undertaken to restore two buildings of great importance to the identity of Boyle town. After a prolonged period of neglect during the 20th century rendered King House uninhabitable, the house faced the prospect of demolition with plans discussed to turn the site into a carpark. Roscommon County Council acquired the property in 1987 and in 1989 commenced an extensive restoration of King House to return it to its early Georgian splendor. Boyle Abbey was also the subject of a restoration project between 2007 and 2011, which incorporated a glazed pavilion flanking an arcade of the Abbey.

In recent years, Roscommon County Council has continued to lead significant strategic investment projects in the town centre, including refurbishment of the Royal Hotel, energy efficiency improvements to King House, and various public realm enhancement schemes (further detail on the current regeneration context is set out later in this chapter).

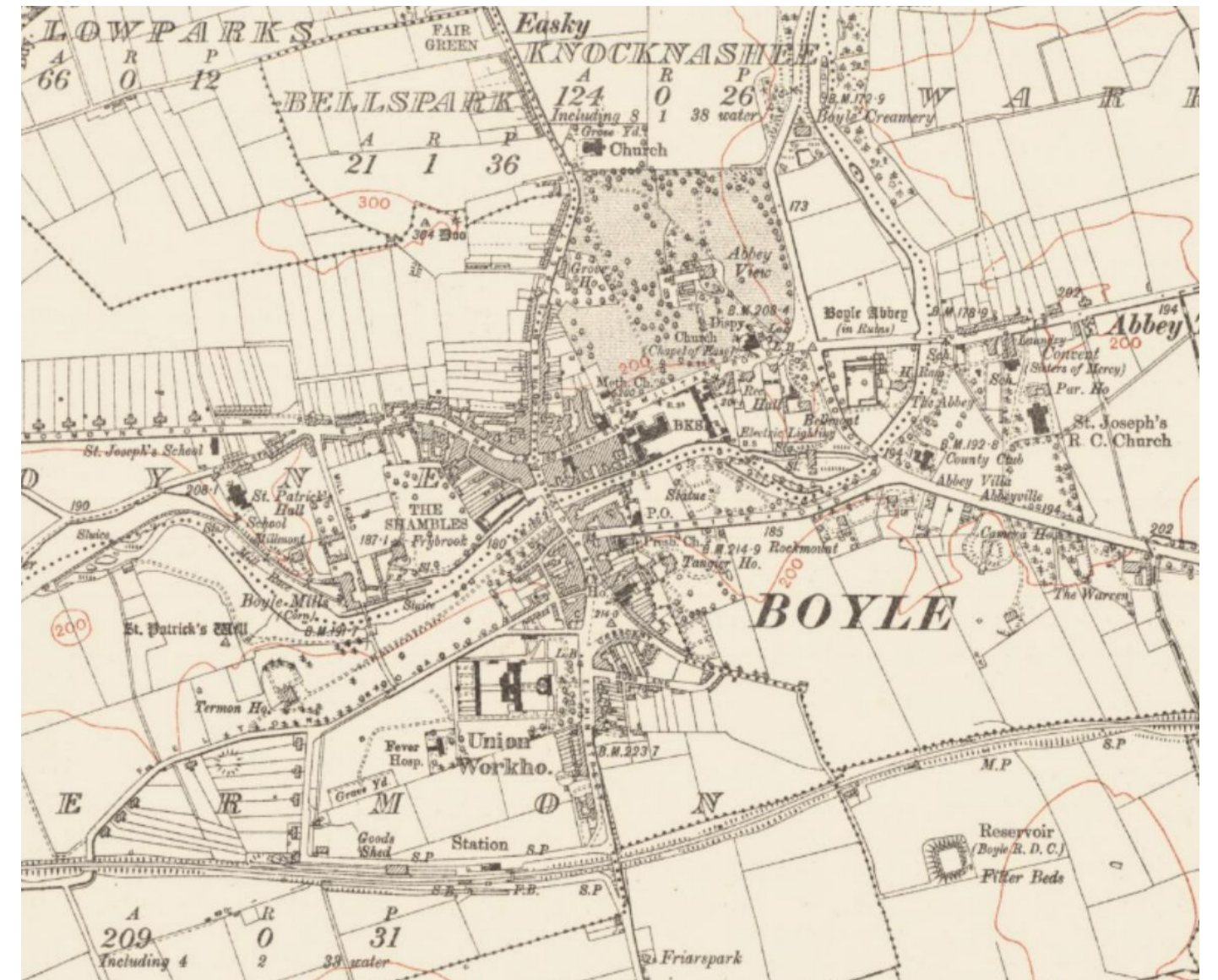


Royal Hotel before refurbishment



Royal Hotel after refurbishment

Urban Morphology



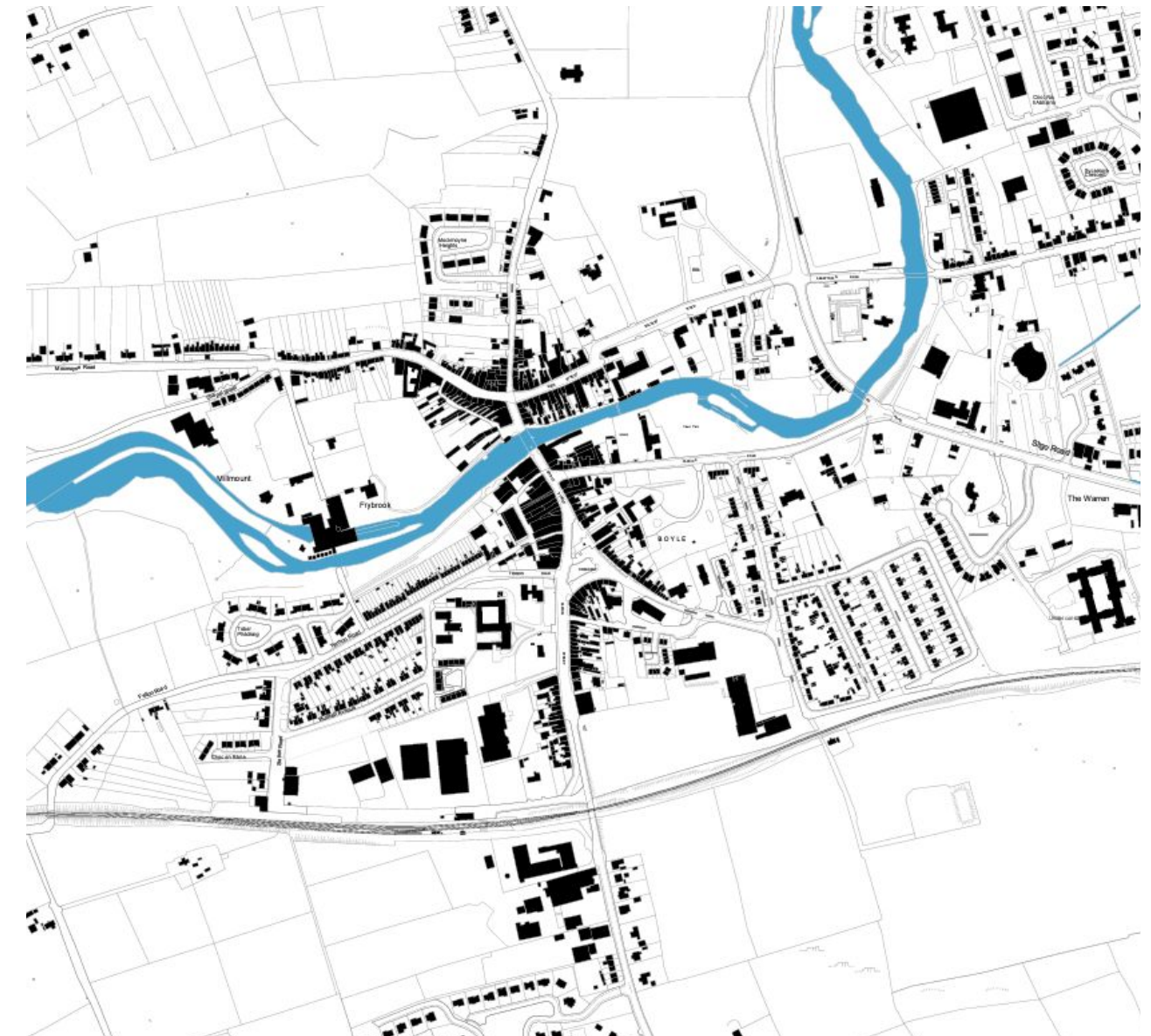
1837

Historical maps produced from surveying dated 1837 show Boyle well established around the Boyle River, with the key junction of Green St, Patrick St, Bridge St and Main St just north of the river, and the distinctive spacious junction known as the Crescent at the southern end of town, already in existence. The Abbey to the eastern side of town is clearly indicated as a prominent landmark, as is Abbeyview house and the Church in the north, Tanger House in the south east, Frybrook House and a Corn Mill to the west of the town. King House is labelled Infantry Barrack.

1912

A later map dated 1912 shows the infrastructural changes as a result of the introduction of the Midland Great Western Railway, which opened in 1862. This encouraged southward expansion of the town with terraced housing, new roads and bridges. New landmarks include The Shambles (previously called 'market'), Boyle Mills (previously 'Corn Mill') and the new Union Workhouse and Reservoir to the south. The town core structure remains relatively unchanged. St Patrick's Well is identified to the west of town on the south riverbank on both maps.

Urban Morphology



1835

At its industrial height in the mid-19th century, Boyle's population reached 3,433, which exceeds its current population. This urban population occupied a much smaller area than the urban population of Boyle today - less than 57 hectares compared to the current footprint of about 465 hectares. The compact urban form and well defined streets lined with terraced buildings, spanning north and south of the river helped to create a vibrant and prosperous historic townscape.

Today

The railway, which arrived in 1862, encouraged some southward expansion of the town. However it was only following the rise of the motorcar and suburban lifestyle of the 20th century, that the town underwent a dramatic physical expansion, with significant loss of residential population and activity within the town centre. More modern buildings tend to be detached or semi-detached and set back, leading to a loss of street definition and density.

Built Heritage

The architectural heritage of Boyle reflects its past as a thriving market town and trading hub, with buildings and streets shaped by the industries and trade that thrived in the area. Below sets out a summary of the key architectural styles and periods that define the built environment of Boyle today, with some significant heritage structures on the following page:

Georgian Architecture (1714–1830):

The urban structure of the town core around Main Street, Bridge Street and much of Patrick Street was developed during the major boom period between 1810 and 1830. Many of the buildings that survive along these streets today date from that period, and reflect the mercantile nature of the town, typically with shopfronts at ground floor and two floors of residential above. A number of two-storey terraced townhouses dating circa 1830 line the southern edge of the Crescent. These buildings exhibit Georgian characteristics, being terraced buildings with symmetrical facades, sash windows, and doorways framed by classical-style architraves. Georgian architecture is marked by simplicity, balance, and proportion, and these features are visible in the older areas of the town core. There are also several examples of grand, classically proportioned Palladian mansions built by prominent families and industrialists during this period, notably King House and Frybrook House which remain in the heart of town today.

Victorian Architecture (1837–1901):

During this period Boyle town centre experienced continued development of human-scale terraced buildings that define the streets, often with shopfronts at ground floor and one or two floors of residential above, with many surviving examples along Main Street and Patrick Street. Detailing from this period includes stucco quoins and window surrounds, stone sills, decorative stone brackets, fanlights and decorative cast iron street furniture, including various water pumps, post boxes and the fountain located on Bridge Street. The Railway Station, built c.1862, is a very fine example of Victorian railway architecture.

20th-Century and Modern Architecture:

Between 1930 and 1950, shopfront re-detailing and upgrading works reflected early modern styles, often referred to as Art Deco and Art Moderne, particularly along Main Street, Patrick Street and around the Crescent. The shopfronts of Mullanny's on Main Street and Sheerins on Patrick Street, faced in sleek vitrolite, chrome dressings and clear streamlined lettering are good remaining examples of the 'Art Moderne' style once so popular in Boyle. More recent expansion of the town the south and east is typically in the form of suburban-style detached and semi-detached houses, and low density buildings for retail, industrial, health and other single uses, typically with setbacks from the road and large areas of car parking.



Built Heritage

Boyle Abbey (12th Century):

Boyle Abbey which likely prompted the establishment of the settlement of Boyle was established here in 1161 as a Cistercian Monastery and is a good example of the Medieval Cistercian Architecture of the 12th century. The Abbey is located in the eastern edge of the town and has recently been restored to a high standard. The Abbey is primarily designed in the Romanesque style which prevailed in the 12th century though there is also evidence of the introduction of 13th century early gothic techniques. It is a designated National Monument.

King House (c.1730):

This substantial house with its impressive skyline is one of the most important structures in Connacht. The well-proportioned façade with its Palladian detailing and finely-executed stonework is attributed to the architect William Halfpenny, who built the house for Sir Henry King, who died in 1739. The house possibly incorporates the walls of a 17th century structure into its architectural fabric. Though built in the Palladian style, this fine house retains a 17th century fortified character, which must have served it well when it was used as a military barracks during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Following many years as a merchant's store, King House was saved from demolition in 1989 and restored to its former Georgian style by Roscommon County Council. The house is now open to the public as a museum bringing its history to life. Home to the Connaught Rangers museum as well as the Boyle Civic Art Collection, the house also plays host to musical, dramatic and cultural events and is a central location for the Boyle Arts Festival.

Frybrook House (1753):

Frybrook, set on a picturesque site by the River Boyle, is one of a few grand properties in Boyle. Simple Palladian motifs, engaged in the design of the house, such as the classical proportions, Palladian window and pedimented doorcase elevate this structure above the more modest architecture of the town. Henry Fry, who came to Boyle in 1742, built this house for his family and established a weaving industry on this site.

Royal Hotel (1788):

Freeman's Royal Hotel opened with the King family's approval on the south side of the river near the bridge, in 1788. From the mid 19th Century, Freemans also served as a mail coach stop on Charles Bianconi's Dublin to Sligo route and later became known as the Royal Hotel. It has been recently refurbished into an enterprise and exhibition space.



Built Heritage

Boyle Mills (c. 1810):

The water mill complex, with its associated structures including Millmount House, the millrace and mill pond, is of both technical and social importance and played a key role in the development of Boyle. Built c.1810 on the northern bank of the River Boyle, the four- and five-storey mill complex has pitched slated roofs with red brick chimneystack and cast-iron rainwater goods, squared stone walls, multi-paned metal windows with brick reveals, and timber battened doors running the height of the building. The mill complex, which contains other stone structures and also modern plant and silos, continues to be used and has been adapted to suit modern needs. The early mill buildings add character to the modernised site.

The Shambles (1826):

Within the heart of town, on Eaton Lane, is the triple-arched limestone entrance to 'The Shambles' market yard, built in 1826 at the expense of Viscount Lorton. The entrance remains largely intact, with finely-executed stonework and decorative cast-iron gates, flanked by pedestrian doorways recessed in round-arched openings leading to shops. The stone boundary wall and remains of old sheds for trading with cast-iron pillars and corrugated-iron roofs can also be found. This site has maintained its original function over time and is still occupied by several retail outlets.

King-Harman Monument (Clocktower) (c.1880):

This freestanding three-stage limestone tower with clock was erected c.1880 by the tenants of the Boyle and Rockingham Estate to the memory of the Honourable Laurence Harman King-Harman, second son of the Viscount Lorton who died in 1875. This ornate and functional clock tower is of social importance to the town of Boyle and is also an attractive piece of street furniture, situated in a prominent location of the town within the open space of the Crescent.

Boyle River Bridges (various):

Abbeytown Bridge, built c.1200, is said to be one of Ireland's oldest bridges. This simple five-arch masonry bridge retains its original form and symmetry and is a significant part of Boyle's architectural heritage, complementing the setting of adjacent Boyle Abbey. To its west is the Sligo Road bridge, built in 1817, which forms a visually-striking backdrop to Abbey House. The ashlar masonry and large single arch attest to the high-quality engineering and building techniques of the nineteenth century. The masonry execution on the triple-arch Boyle Bridge on Bridge Street, built c. 1864, is also notable. The upstream and downstream cutwaters create a pleasing symmetry, combined with its decorative features such as the balustrade and voussoirs, making this a very attractive architectural element at the very centre of Boyle.



Image Source: National Library of Ireland



Boyle Crescent c.1900, Image Source: National Library of Ireland

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Built Heritage

Boyle Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)

The Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) in Boyle is architecturally significant because of its town planning history through the widening and improving of ancient paths and routes, the addition of new streets and bridges and the strategic location of public buildings at key points and towards the ends, but not at the ends, of the streets. Its physical layout points to the way key elements of the town such as the marketplace, bridge, rear access lanes, large dwellings and public buildings related to each other. The designation of historic areas as ACAs under Section 81 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 is a way to protect the character of historic areas. The aim of such designation is to protect their special characteristics and distinctive features while encouraging suitable contemporary development. Under Section 82 of the Act, the carrying out of works to the exterior of a structure located in an ACA is exempted development only if those works would not materially affect the character of the area. External works, including new development, that would affect the character of the area will require planning permission, creating an additional element of protection.

Record of Protected Structures (RPS)

There are 62 protected structures in Boyle, entered on the current Record of Protected Structures (RPS). These structures are safeguarded under Ireland's Planning and Development Act 2000 to ensure their preservation for future generations. The RPS is maintained by the local authority, in this case, Roscommon County Council, and includes buildings, monuments, and features that are deemed of architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social, or technical interest. Included within this list are Boyle Abbey, King House, Frybrook House, Boyle Mill Complex, The Shambles entrance gate, Railway Station, Post Office, Clock Tower, fountain, 2 bank buildings, various bridges, churches, cast iron post boxes and water pumps, houses, house/shops and townhouses (particularly around Main St and The Crescent).

Buildings of Architectural Significance (NIAH)

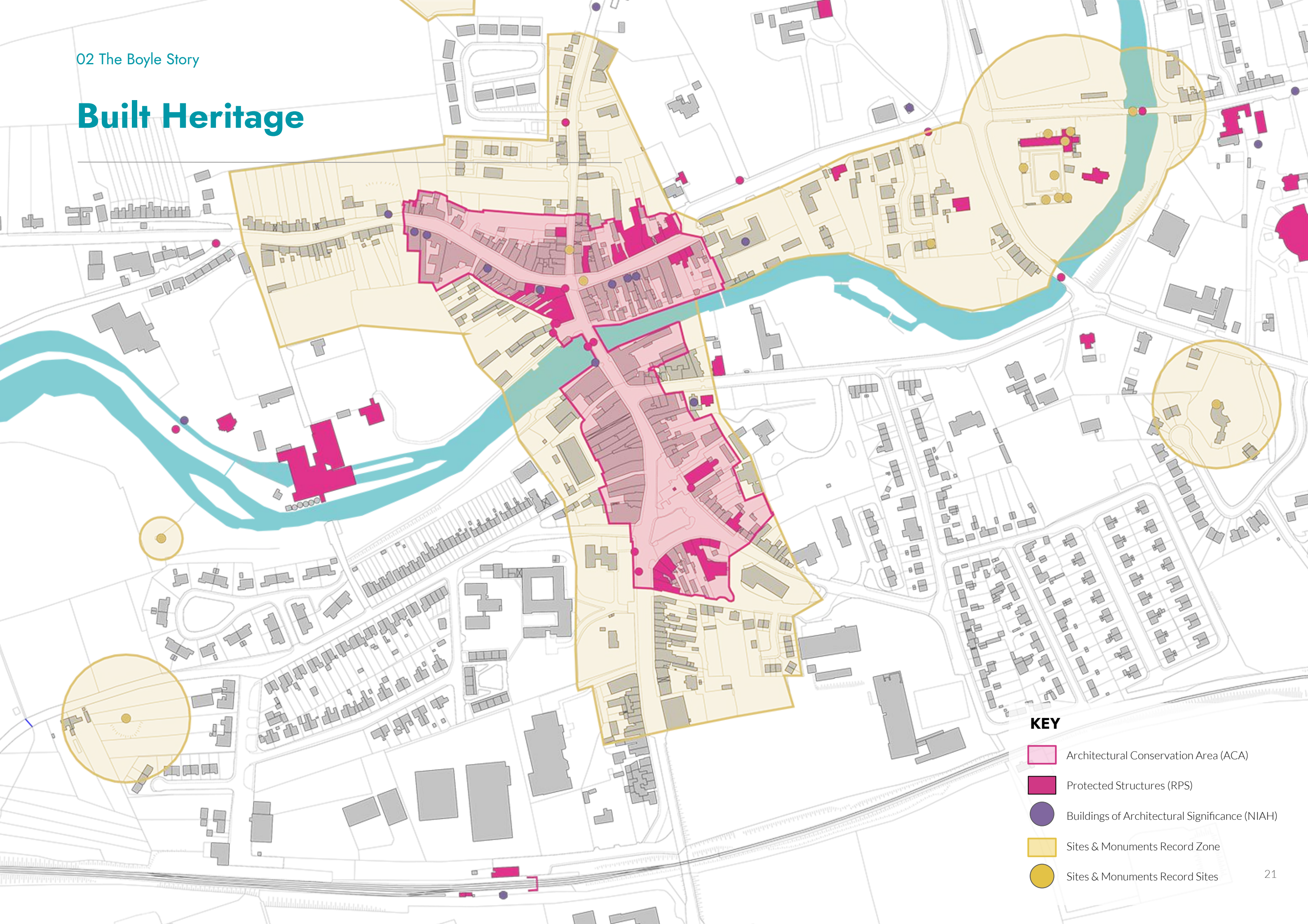
While there are 62 specific structures within Boyle which are afforded the statutory designation of Protected Structure, the town incorporates a wide array of buildings of architectural distinction which contribute to the architectural heritage of the area, as identified in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH).

Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is the statutory list of recorded archaeological monuments established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Boyle Abbey is a National Monument in the ownership of the State, which means the prior written consent of the Minister is required for any works at or in proximity to the monument.



Built Heritage



KEY

-  Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)
-  Protected Structures (RPS)
-  Buildings of Architectural Significance (NIAH)
-  Sites & Monuments Record Zone
-  Sites & Monuments Record Sites

Cultural Heritage

Local Folklore - St Patrick's Well

In Boyle there is a well known locally as "St Patrick's Well." It is said in the locality that St Patrick blessed this well. This well is situated on the bank of the Boyle River, to the western edge of town near the Mill, and the river itself is only about two yards from the well. In the olden times the well was much visited by pilgrims but no pilgrims have visited it during the past few hundred years. Situated in the front of the well there is a flagstone with two impressions in it. The people of the locality say that it was on this flagstone that St Patrick knelt and that the two impressions were made by St Patrick's knees. About fifteen yards from the well and situated in the river there is a big stone and this stone is shaped like a chair. Local people say that St Patrick sat on this stone while he washed his feet in the Boyle River.

There is a story told by the old people of Boyle in connection with St Patrick's Well. After St Patrick's visit to the well there appeared in the well a large trout which for centuries evaded the baits and nets of local and foreign anglers. One day however a soldier who was stationed at Boyle barracks decided to try his skill with the rod with the result that he caught this famous trout. He brought the fish to the barracks and gave it to the cook to prepare for supper. The cook put the gridiron on the fire and put the fish on the grid-iron.

When the fish was on the fire for about one minute it gave one jump through the cook house window made its way to Boyle River and swam back to its old haunts. There are people to this day who say they saw the fish and they refer to him as the trout with the mark of grid-iron bars on its back. But during recent years this fish has disappeared. Some people say that he can be seen in his old haunts on every St Patrick's Day.

Another reason a pilgrimage used to be made to St Patrick's well was that whoever suffered from knee ailments and who knelt in the impression made by St Patrick's knees would be cured of knee ailments.

The site is recorded in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), and shown in the map on the previous page.

Note: The above folklore was sourced from "The Schools' Collection, Volume 0234, Page 157-8" by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Images opposite sourced from Sean O'Dowd on realboyle.com.





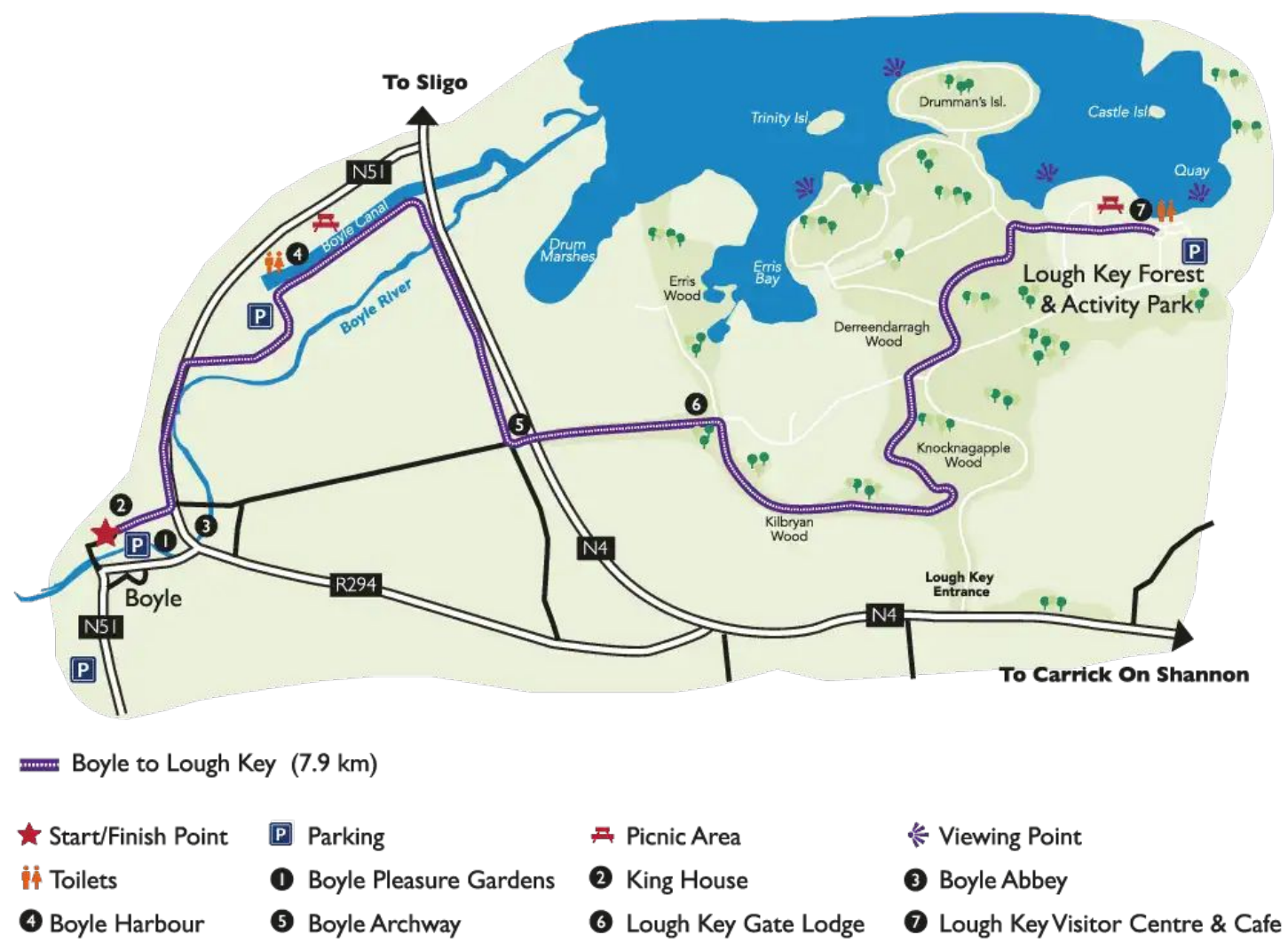
Natural Heritage

Boyle is located in an area of great natural beauty, at the foot of the Curlew Mountains. The town’s location on the banks of the Boyle River is fundamental to its character and identity. The river connects the town to Lough Key, one of a chain of lakes on the Shannon River system. Various walking routes and cycleways provide access between the town and wider natural landscape, including the Boyle to Lough Key Cycleway, a scenic 7.9km route for walking and cycling which connects Boyle town to Boyle Marina, along the banks of the Boyle Canal, through woodland and onto the magnificent Lough Key. The Miners Way & Historical Trail is a 118km network of walking paths which wind their way through adjoining parts of Counties Leitrim, Roscommon & Sligo, taking in Boyle, Lough Key, Lough Allen and Lough Arrow.

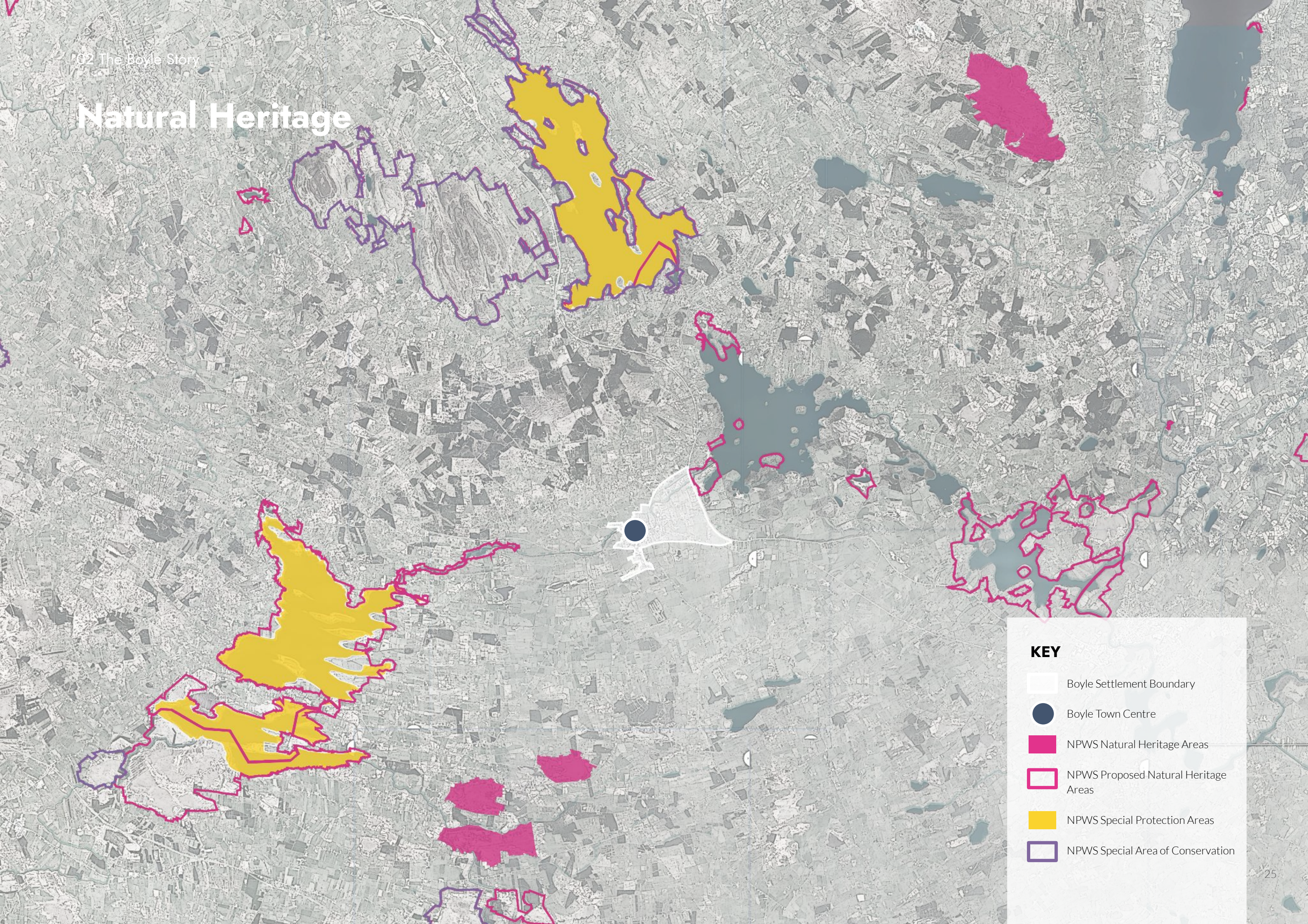
Lough Key Forest and Activity Park, which attracted 150,000 visitors in 2022 is an outdoor recreational attraction located just 3km from Boyle. The 2020-2030 Masterplan sets a clear vision for the park, building on its current recreational identity, assets, facilities and activities, and a plan to develop a suite of new and enhanced product offerings. It identifies the mission statement as follows: “Lough Key Forest and Activity Park will evolve to become a world class, sustainable, family orientated, outdoors adventure experience, harnessing the splendor of the mature woodland, the navigable Shannon system and the promise of Boyle becoming a unmatched destination in Ireland’s hidden heartlands.” It is a key strategic objective to “integrate with Boyle to create a new destination of scale on the northern part of the Shannon system within Ireland’s hidden heartlands.”

A new Kayak Launch Deck and a Floating Swim Dock have recently been installed at the Doon Shore on Lough Key, named one of the Top 10 Must Visit Swim Spots in Ireland, with various other water-based activity infrastructure upgrades planned or delivered in the area, including new floating pontoons at Boyle Marina. Within the town, Boyle Pleasure Grounds, is a public park, originally laid out alongside the river by the King Family for their own recreation in the late 18th century, and recently upgraded to provide an improved public park in the heart of town.

In the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, Boyle town is situated in a Landscape Character area designated Very High Value, while the area directly around Lough Key is designated Exceptional Value, with an associated Scenic Route. The surrounding landscape contains a number of designated natural heritage protection areas, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are part of a European-wide network of sites called Natura 2000 that are given legal protection for their habitats and species, as well as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) under the Irish Wildlife Act, further recognising the ecological value of these habitats for wildlife.



Natural Heritage



KEY

- Boyle Settlement Boundary
- Boyle Town Centre
- NPWS Natural Heritage Areas
- NPWS Proposed Natural Heritage Areas
- NPWS Special Protection Areas
- NPWS Special Area of Conservation

Regeneration Context

Boyle has a proactive Town Team that include business owners, individuals and residents working collaboratively with local government to improve Boyle town. To date, the Team has assisted in securing over €12m in grant aid for Boyle and has been instrumental in a number of public realm and infrastructural enhancements in Boyle. The Town Team and Roscommon County Council have recently led a number of strategic investment projects within Boyle, that have been considered as part of the town centre regeneration context. Key town centre projects since 2018 are summarised below and indicated on the map opposite:

	Project	Status
1	Public Realm enhancement outside the Shambles, Main Street footpaths and seating for plaza at riverside	Complete
2	Boyle Cycle Corridor linking town to Lough Key	Complete
3	Historic Town Initiative on Main Street (south side)	Complete
4	Conversion of derelict Royal Hotel building into An Ríoga Enterprise Centre and Exhibition Space, alongside development of a riverside promenade	Complete
5	King House energy efficiency works, upgrades to King House exhibitions and streetscape improvements	Complete
6	Sculpture trail and Pleasure Grounds improvements, calisthenics outdoor gym, streetscape improvements and installation of new lighting	Complete
7	Development of new Boyle Community Library located to the rear of the Royal Hotel Redevelopment together with a Sensory Garden, and car parking	In progress
8	Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement Scheme including new paving, lighting and landscaping along Bridge Street, Shop Street, and the Shop Street public car park adjacent to the Post Office.	In progress
9	Lawns Area Improvements (part of Boyle 2040 Urban Loop walking route)	In progress
10	Pleasure Grounds multi-use games area	Complete
11	Boyle Traffic Safety Scheme (including new raised zebra crossings on either end of Main Street, upgrade of existing crossings, and a one-way system on L50571)	In progress



Regeneration Context

The vision for Boyle has already been clearly set out by the community, Town Team and key stakeholders through strategic and planning policy processes, including Boyle 2040, the 2024-2028 Community and Economic Plan for Boyle, the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028, the Local Community and Economic Plan for the County, the Lough Key Forest and Activity Park Masterplan 2020-2030, and the emerging Boyle Local Area Plan.

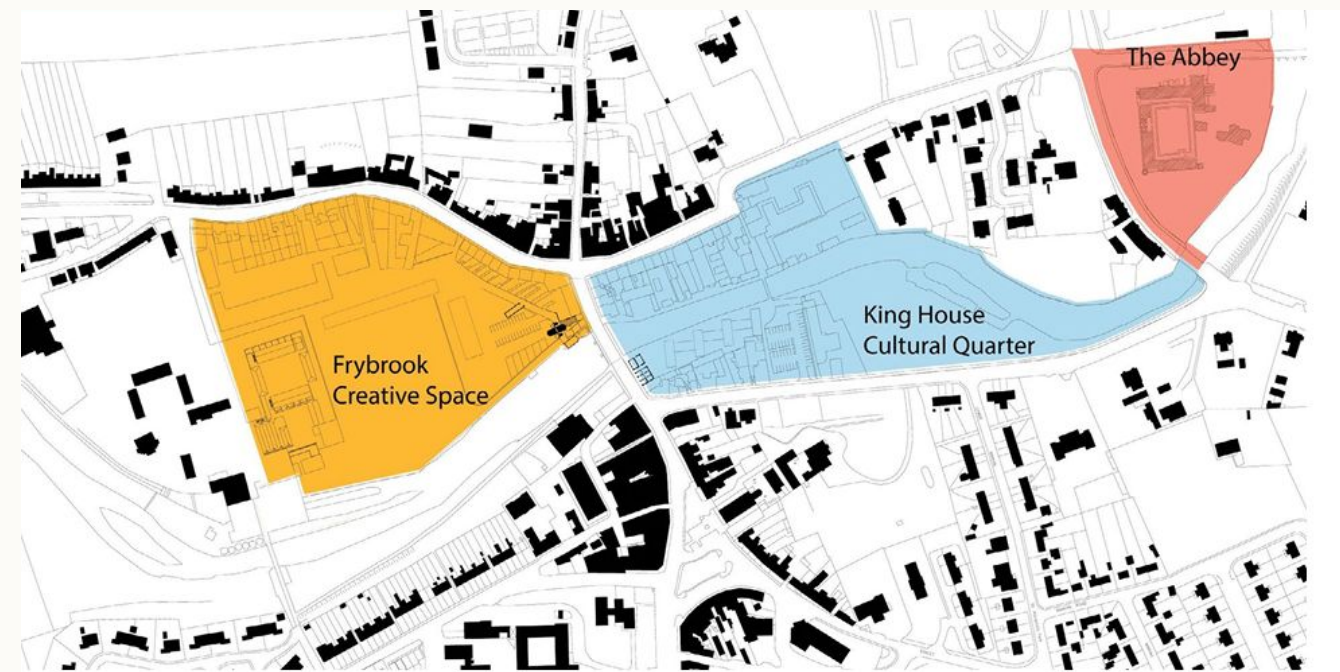
Boyle 2040 presents a vision and framework for the comprehensive social and economic regeneration of Boyle town centre to support it to attract investment, create jobs, enhance the quality of life for citizens in the town, and improve the experience for visitors to the town and the wider hinterland. It is an expression of the ambitions that exist within Boyle Town Team to create a re-imagined, unique and interesting town centre. It is a robust re-imagining of the town centre as a place of vibrancy and progress appropriate to its potential to transition to a place of greater prominence in the life and economy of the North and West Region.

The Boyle 2040 document sets out a range of town centre focused capital projects designed to enhance the functionality of the town, respect its heritage character and create the conditions to grow the settlement and its economy. A few of these projects have already been fully or partly realised, such as the Royal Hotel redevelopment and the partial creation of the Urban Loop riverside walkway. The strategic vision and many ideas in the plan have helped inspire and inform the key projects and actions identified as part of this report.

The **Boyle Community and Economic Plan 2024-2028** is structured around four themes (Town Appearance and Presentation; Tourism, Arts, Culture and Events; Economic Development and Business Support; Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion) with an associated action plan for each. These have similarly helped shape the proposals within this report, ensuring that the vision and priorities of local stakeholders are reflected and all initiatives in the town are aligned.

"Boyle Town Team envision this area driving the economy and community of Boyle town, becoming an urban place which is diverse in use and population with a built environment scaled to the pedestrian and accommodating to traffic, whilst enhancing the experience of users of other modes such as walking and cycling. The vision is for a place residents can be proud of and visitors are drawn to with a lively, liveable and socially cohesive public realm."

Boyle 2040



"Boyle and its hinterland: a place which promotes and protects its built heritage and natural environment and is a quality place to live, learn, play, earn, create and innovate."

Boyle Community and Economic Plan 2024-2028 Vision

03 Engagement Insights

- 3.1** Overview
- 3.2** Movement & Connections
- 3.3** Nature, Landscape & Public Realm
- 3.4** Land Uses & Economy
- 3.5** Social Community & Culture
- 3.6** Built Form

Overview

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 Policy recognises that successful places will:

- Optimise connectivity and accessibility to promote sustainable mobility.
- Manage traffic to reduce the impact of private vehicles on public spaces and living environments.
- Enhance public spaces to create attractive, accessible streets for all, including those with disabilities.
- Encourage a mix of uses to generate activity, supporting both daytime and nighttime economies.
- Promote diverse housing options and opportunities for rightsizing over time.
- Explore climate action opportunities in urban development.
- Embrace digital transformation and new ways of working post-pandemic.
- Maximise the potential of cultural and heritage assets.
- Refurbish or repurpose vacant and derelict buildings for reuse.

The Policy also outlines **five key themes**, or assessment criteria, for exploration during the development of a Town Centre First Plan to better understand the challenges facing the town, and the subsequent opportunities for change. The themes and a brief description of each is provided opposite.

The following pages summarise the key needs and aspirations of the local community, gathered through surveys conducted online and on the streets within the town in late 2024, structured into the 5 themes.



Movement and Connections

The accessibility of the town and ease of movement to, from and within the town centre, including the impact of traffic and parking provision on the pedestrian experience.



Nature, Landscape and Public Realm

The quality and extent of public spaces and street furniture within the town centre, including green infrastructure, landscaping and green spaces for people and nature.



Land Uses and Economy

The type and level of activity within the town centre, including the mix of uses, variety of shops/services and levels of vacancy/dereliction.



Social, Community and Culture

How the town celebrates its unique identity and caters to both the local community and visitors through facilities, attractions and events.



Built Form

The quality of streetscapes, buildings and features that contribute to the unique identity and character of the town centre.



Movement and Connections

Assessment Criteria:

The accessibility of the town and ease of movement to, from and within the town centre, including the impact of traffic and parking provision on the pedestrian experience.

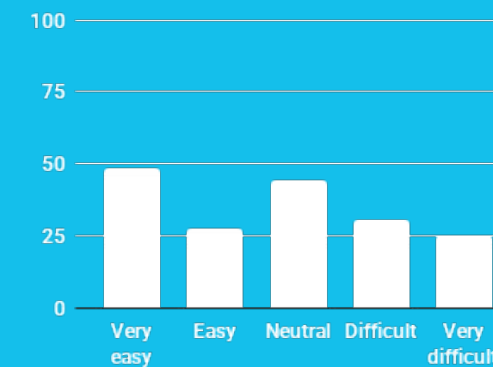
Engagement Insights Summary:

- **Travel modes:** Most people (71%) travelled to the town centre by private car, followed by walking (23%) and public transport (3%).
- **Parking:** Parking is an important consideration for the town centre, with 47% of people saying that parking is not readily available and in good locations (and 20% neutral), and similar proportions saying that parked cars impede walking (47% agreeing and 21% neutral). The majority completely agreed (25%) or agreed (25%) that parked cars screen out shopfronts (17% neutral), highlighting that on-street parking is an issue.
- **Last mile:** After parking, 96% of respondents who drive get to their destination on foot.
- **Connectivity:** The majority of respondents agree (32%) or completely agree (21%) that it is easy to reach the centre of the town from the neighbourhoods.
- **Shortcuts:** 43% of people take a route for ease rather than it being a structured pathway (e.g. a short cut).
- **Footpaths:** 51% of respondents think the footpaths are maintained, e.g. suitable for buggies/ wheelchairs/mobility scooters.
- **Accessibility:** According to respondents, the easiest way to get around Boyle is by foot, followed by car and then bike. It is more difficult for those using a wheelchair, mobility scooter or pram/buggy, or with other mobility impairments.

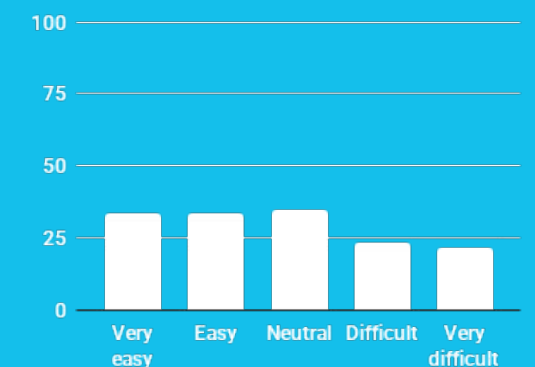
Accessibility & Inclusivity

How easy is it to get around Boyle?

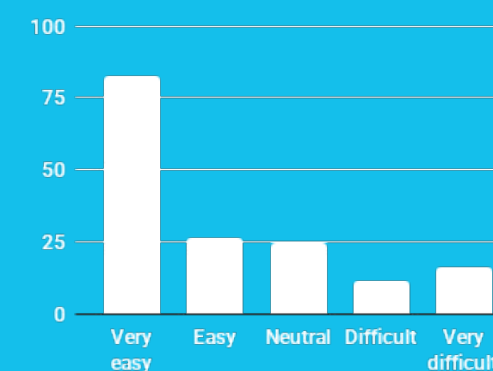
By Car:



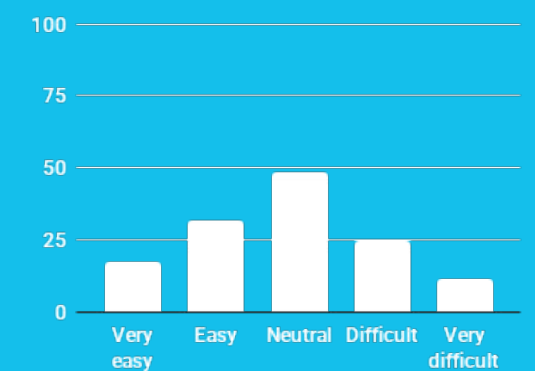
By Bike:



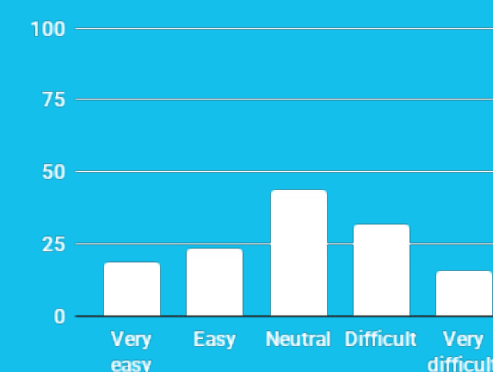
On Foot:



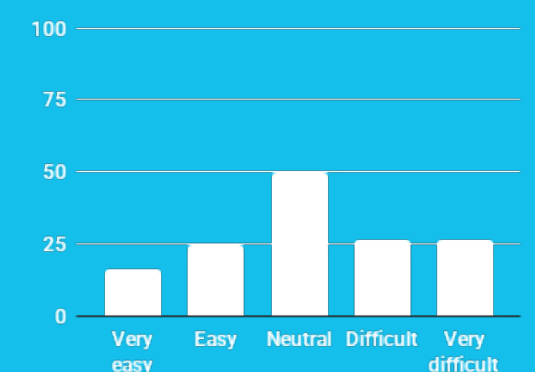
Wheeling a pram/buggy:



Wheelchair/mobility scooter user:



Other mobility impaired user:





Nature, Landscape and Public Realm

Assessment Criteria:

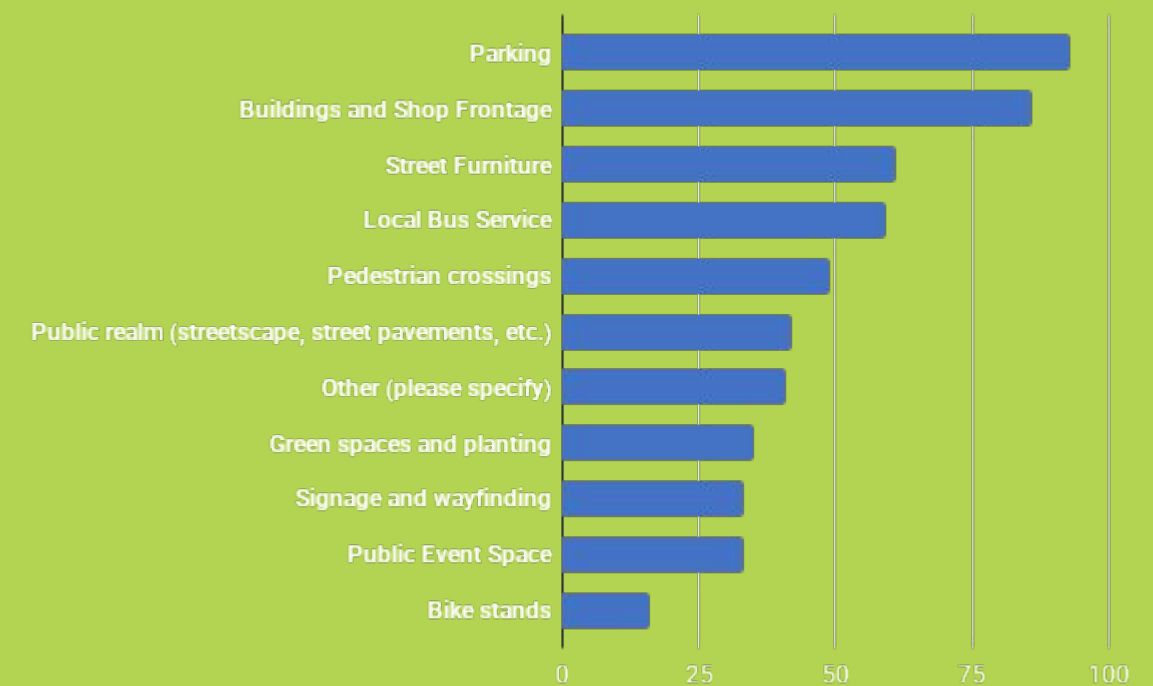
The quality and extent of public spaces and street furniture within the town centre, including green infrastructure, landscaping and green spaces for people and nature.

Engagement Insights Summary:

- **Public Green Spaces:** The majority of respondents (50%) think that Boyle is adequately served by Public Green Spaces (parklets / parks / walks / places to sit) and a further 29% say it is well served.
- **Condition of Green Spaces:** 25% of respondents agree that green spaces are in good condition, 18% disagreed and 29% were neutral.
- **Public Grey Spaces:** 40% of people feel that the town is adequately served by Public 'Grey' Spaces (performance/ community spaces) and a further 14% say it is well served (though 35% selected inadequate).
- **Parking, street furniture, pedestrian crossings and public realm** improvements are popular ways to improve the way Boyle functions.
- **Seating:** Views were mixed on whether there is sufficient public seating for people to rest/relax/socialise with others (24% completely disagree, 21% agree and 31% were neutral).
- **Signage:** Similarly, there was mixed sentiment about the levels of signage, with 41% neither agreeing nor disagreeing that it is sufficient.
- **Noise:** 28% were neutral on noise levels in the town, 26% completely disagreed that the town is noisy, while 14% completely agreed.
- **Climate Action:** The most popular climate actions were increased public transport services, retrofitting of buildings, and charging points.

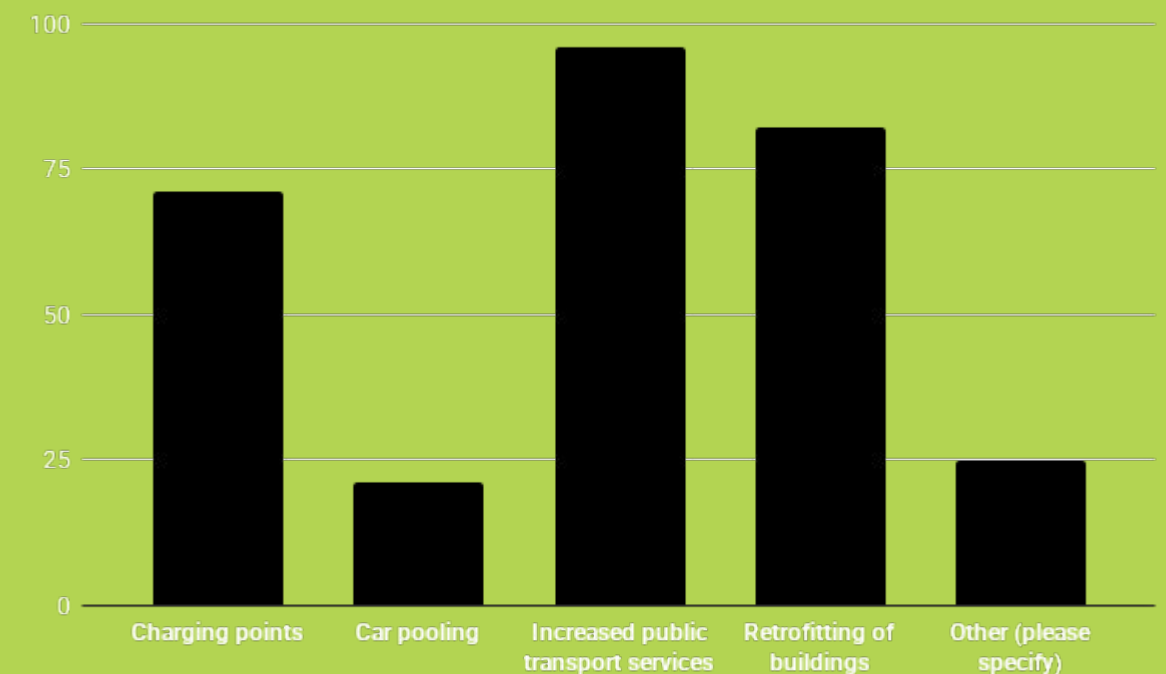
Improving the Public Realm

What would improve the way Boyle functions?



Climate Action

How can Boyle help to combat climate change and adapt to a changing climate?





The type and level of activity within the town centre, including the mix of uses, variety of shops/services and levels of vacancy/dereliction.

- **Addressing dereliction and vacancy** was seen as the most important action to improve Boyle as a place to live and work, followed by parking.
- **Improvements as a place to live and work:** Other popular actions to improve Boyle include more parking, improvements to aesthetic aspects of buildings and shopfronts, more cafes, and a food market (indoor/outdoor). Other ideas suggested by respondents included a hotel, more cafes and restaurants, more shops, and public toilets.
- **Youth Services:** The majority of respondents think Boyle is either adequately (39%) or well served (27%) by Youth Services (schools, other educational facilities, sports facilities, other recreational facilities).
- **Family Facilities:** Views were more mixed on whether the town is adequately served by Family Facilities (schools, childcare, community meeting places, dining out, playgrounds, public toilets/baby changing), with 45% saying they are inadequate, 7.5% saying not available, 32% saying adequate and 16% saying the town is well served.
- **Older Persons Facilities:** Views on Older Persons Facilities (easily accessible meeting places, public seating indoor and outdoor, community meeting places) were similarly mixed (43% inadequate, 36% adequate).
- **Shopping and Retail:** 38% of respondents think the town is inadequately served by Shopping and Retail (supermarkets, butchers, chemist, hairdressers), but 36% think it is adequate and 22% say it is well served.

What would improve Boyle as a place to live and work?





How the town celebrates its unique identity and caters to both the local community and visitors through facilities, attractions and events.

- **Reason for Visiting:** Aside from living in the town (69%), the most common reason for visiting is shopping (16%), followed by work (15%) and services (10%).
- **Attraction:** Boyle attracts people from a fairly large catchment, with 28% travelling 1-3km, 10% 4-6km, 12% 7-10km, and 16% of respondents travelling more than 10km to get there. 64% of those people visit every day, and another 20% 2-3 times per week, most commonly staying for a short period of time (27% for less than 1 hour and 22% for 1-2 hours).
- **Sense of Safety and Security:** Most people feel either completely safe (43%) or safe (21%), however 13% feel completely unsafe.
- **Friendliness:** Boyle is considered a friendly town, with 53% of respondents saying it is very friendly and 23% saying it is friendly.
- **Youth Facilities and Services:** Most people (53%) feel there are inadequate free spaces for young people to hang out, with a further 13% saying these are non-existent. Similarly, paid activities for youth (youth clubs/activities that are fee based) are seen by the majority as either inadequate (44%) or non-existent (12%). Overall, the level of youth services in the town is seen as inadequate (46%) or somewhat adequate (37%). The most common places where young people are seen congregating is in the Pleasure Grounds park, the Crescent, pubs, playground, around the river and An Ríoga, and outside shops.

Where do you see young people congregating?





Assessment Criteria:

The quality of streetscapes, buildings and features that contribute to the unique identity and character of the town centre.

Engagement Insights Summary:

- **Buildings & Shop Frontage:** Improvements to aesthetic aspects of buildings and shopfronts is seen as an important way to improve the way that Boyle functions, alongside parking and street furniture.
- **Building Design:** Views were mixed on whether buildings are well designed, possibly reflecting poor condition, but valuable heritage/form.
- **Streetscape:** Views were mixed on whether streets are wide enough to be easily navigated by all users (narrow streets/footways in places), and slightly more negative on whether streets are clean and well-kept.
- **Neighbourhoods:** There were mixed views on whether residential areas/neighbourhoods are well planned and designed, highlighting the need for future neighbourhoods to have an appropriate density, mix of uses and typologies, high quality design, and good connectivity to amenities.
- **Most common favourite places** in Boyle include the Pleasure Grounds Park, King House, Lough Key Forest Park, River Walk, Canal/Marina, Boyle Abbey and pubs. Top reasons for selecting these places include natural features, being calm and tranquil and being well designed spaces with places to sit and meet others.
- **Top suggestions for places that could be improved** include Main Street and Patrick Street, the Crescent, parks and green spaces, the riverside, as well as parking, traffic and footpaths / pavements / pedestrian crossings. The top reasons for selecting these are that places are dirty and unkempt, poorly designed, and there is too much traffic.

Places to Celebrate & Improve

Name your 3 favourite places in Boyle:



Name up to 3 places that could be improved:



04 Urban Design Analysis

- 4.1** Overview
- 4.2** Movement & Connections
- 4.3** Nature, Landscape & Public Realm
- 4.4** Land Uses & Economy
- 4.5** Social Community & Culture
- 4.6** Built Form
- 4.7** Urban Design Analysis Summary

Overview

Building on the insights gathered through community engagement, further urban design analysis was conducted through site walks, observations, and desktop research. The following pages explore the key issues and opportunities facing Boyle town centre in further detail, using the five assessment criteria set out below. Each assessment includes a summary of key findings and accompanying site observation photos, which should be read in conjunction with the analysis map on the following page.



Movement & Connections

The accessibility of the town and ease of movement to, from and within the town centre, including the impact of traffic and parking provision on the pedestrian experience.



Nature, Landscape & Public Realm

The quality and extent of public spaces and street furniture within the town centre, including green infrastructure, landscaping and green spaces for people and nature.



Land Uses & Economy

The type and level of activity within the town centre, including the mix of uses, variety of shops/services and levels of vacancy/dereliction.



Social, Community & Culture

How the town celebrates its unique identity and caters to both the local community and visitors through facilities, attractions and events.

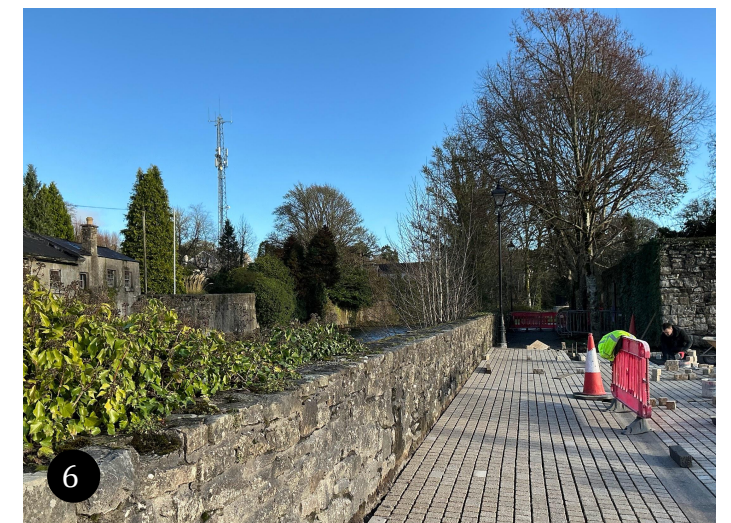


Built Form

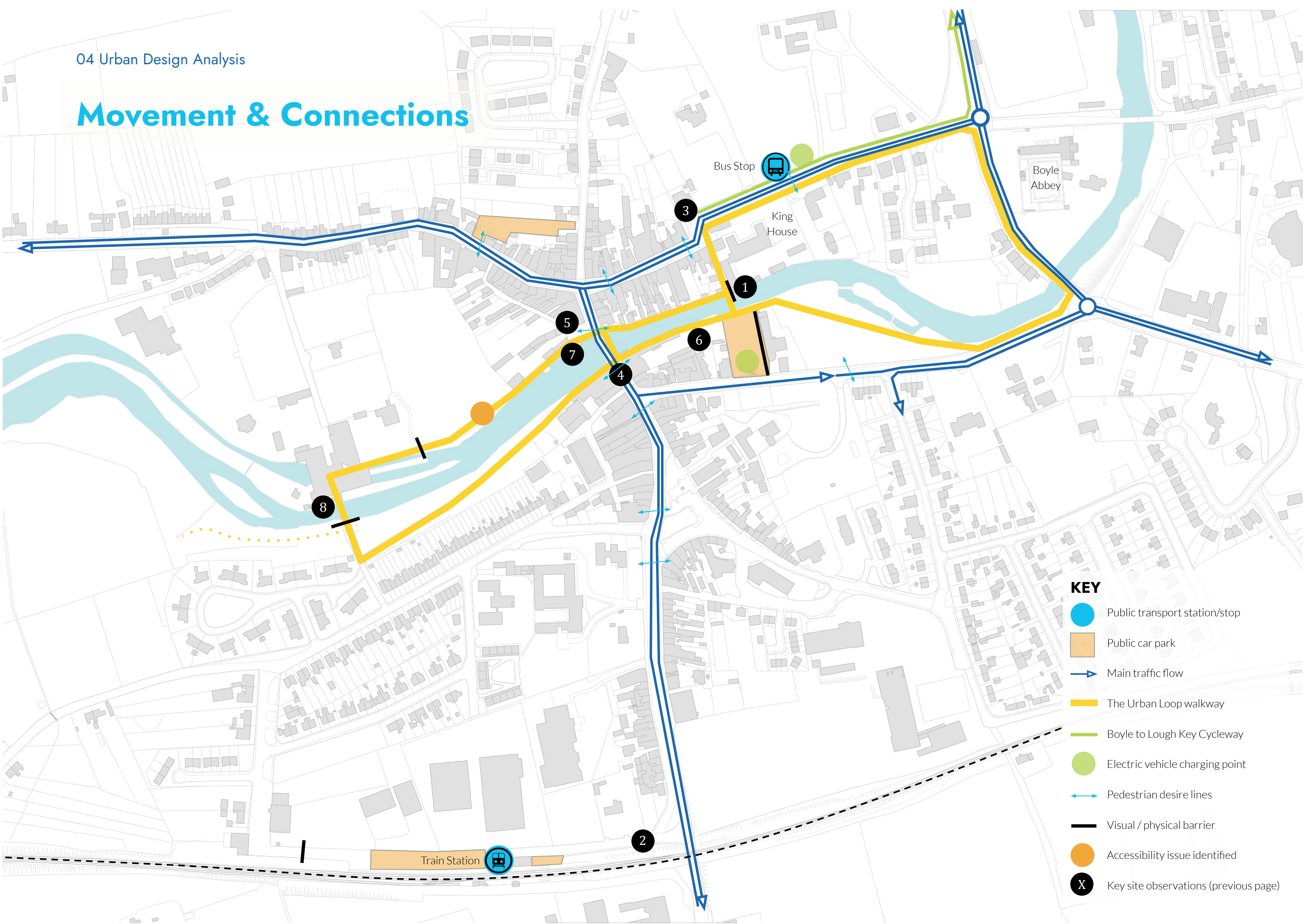
The quality of streetscapes, buildings and features that contribute to the unique identity and character of the town centre.

Movement & Connections

- **Compact, walkable town centre:** The study area included within the map on the following page contains roughly the areas that are within a 10 minute walk of the town centre, with a fair amount of homes within walking distance of the town centre (this excludes the residential areas beyond this map, to the east and south).
- **Disconnected train station:** The train station falls just outside the 10 minute walking area, but is surrounded by low density warehousing which lacks vibrancy, making the station feel disconnected from the town centre (photo 2 opposite).
- **Conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles:** The corner of Main Street opposite King House (photo 3) is busy with traffic and has limited sightlines, making this a potential conflict zone for cars, cyclists and pedestrians, requiring traffic calming. Fortunately, the ongoing Boyle Traffic Safety Scheme already addresses this issue through the proposed installation of raised zebra pedestrian crossings on either end of Main Street.
- **Footpaths / pedestrian crossings:** A number of footpath upgrades and pedestrian crossings have been recently installed (photo 4 and 6) or are planned, which will significantly improve accessibility for all through measures such as level surfaces, dropped kerbs, and tactile paving. A key pedestrian desire line requiring a safe pedestrian crossing point is on Bridge St directly opposite the Shambles and connecting to the riverside walk opposite (photo 5).
- **Cycleway starting / ending point:** The cycleway to Lough Key is a major asset, however this route to / from Lough Key is not obvious from the town centre, and there doesn't seem to be a defined start / end point for visitors to transition into either walking or continuing cycling around the town centre (around photo 3).
- **Cycling infrastructure:** Cycle parking is limited, but some stands were observed near the Shambles (photo 5). None were observed at the train station.
- **Physical / visual barriers:** The Urban Loop walkway (photos 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) provides an attractive riverside route connecting east-west across the town centre, but it is interrupted at Frybrook House / The Mills complex (photo 8). This walkway is partly muddy track (around photo 7 towards Frybrook House), which may not be accessible for users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams/buggies. The building on the south bank between the Pleasure Gardens and carpark (photo 6) creates a visual barrier towards the park although it is possible to pass behind it.
- **EV charging points:** There are a few EV charging points available, including at the carpark next to the Pleasure Grounds and near the bus stop, although there were none observed at the train station.
- **Public wifi and fibre** is available across most of the town.



Movement & Connections

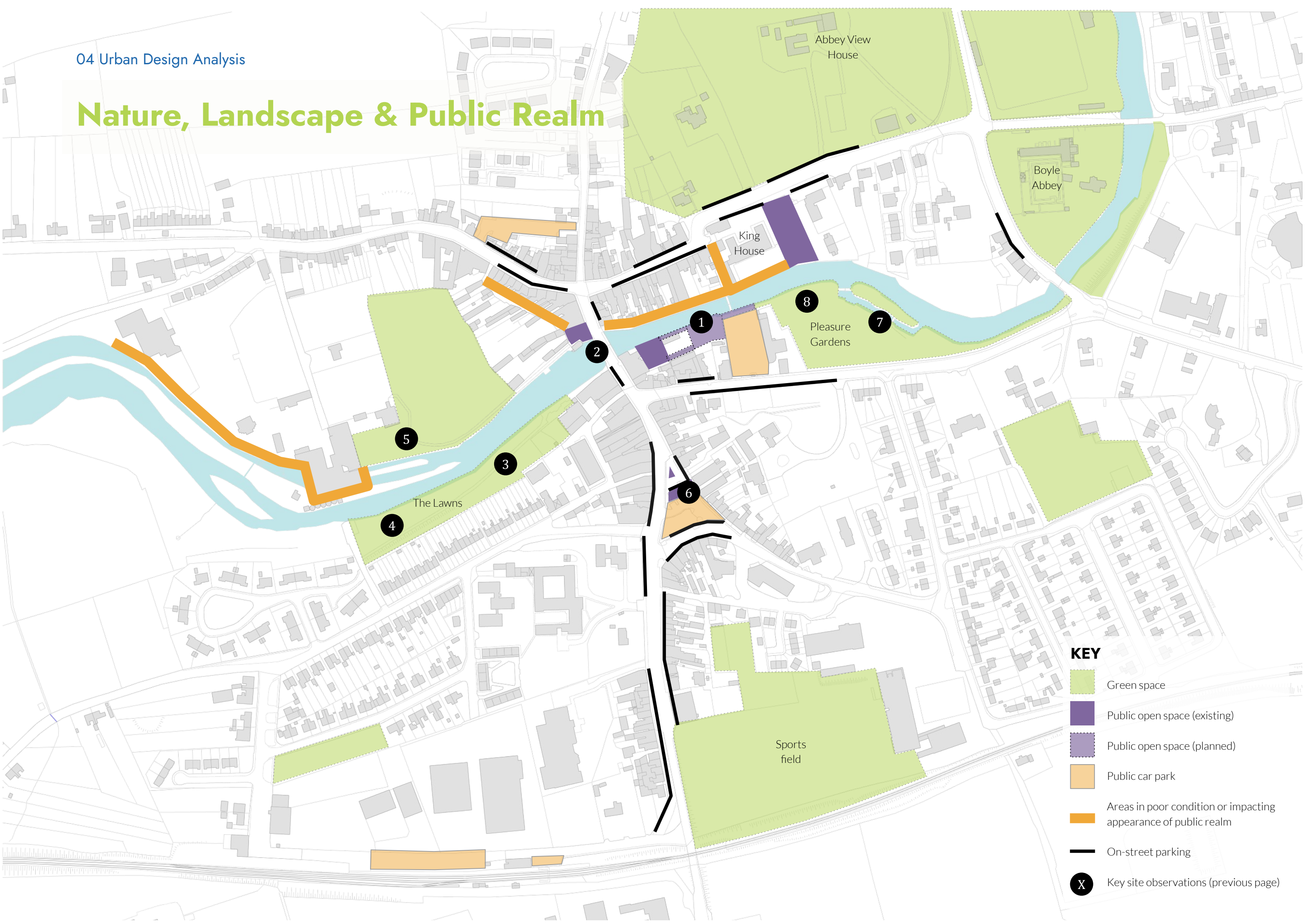


Nature, Landscape & Public Realm

- **Riverside setting and green spaces:** The River (photos 1, 2, 3 and 7), Pleasure Grounds (photos 7 and 8) and The Lawns (photos 3 and 4) (which benefit from recent / planned enhancements) are important amenities, providing space for nature, relaxation and recreation within the town centre. There are also significant green spaces within prominent sites, such as Boyle Abbey, Frybrook House (photo 5) and Abbey View House, which add to the overall green infrastructure, tree canopy cover, natural character and attractiveness of the town centre.
- **Planting:** There are some examples of colourful planting enhancing the appearance of the town centre, led by the Tidy Towns group.
- **Lack of continuous riverside walk:** The river is a key asset and the proposed / partly existing Loop walkway harnesses this, though this is currently interrupted by private land ownership around the Mills complex / Frybrook House (photo 5).
- **Properties backing onto the river:** Particularly along the northern banks of the river east of Bridge Street, many properties present storage sheds, overgrown gardens, blank walls and unattractive gates onto the riverside walkway, creating a lack of vibrancy and limiting the potential use and enjoyment of public space adjacent to the river (photos 1 and 2). Recent / planned developments along the southern bank, including the Royal Hotel and new Library are addressing this issue, creating public walkways and spaces along the riverside (photo 1).
- **Poor condition of properties impacting experience of public realm:** particularly on the northern river bank, Eaton Lane, The Shambles area, and Mills complex.
- **Need for functional town square / public spaces:** Improvements to the public realm around the Crescent (photo 6) could create a much needed substantial public space for people to meet and dwell, and possibly for events. The planned public realm around the new library adjacent to the Royal Hotel will add to the valuable (currently limited) riverside public space. The courtyard in King House acts an enclosed semi-public space, hosting markets on Saturdays.
- **Car-dominated streetscape:** The streetscape of the town centre is dominated by motor vehicles, with on street parking lining large parts of Main Street, Patrick Street, Bridge Street / N61 towards the station, Carrick Street, and the roads surrounding the Crescent (photo 6) in particular.
- **Limited age friendly public seating / rest points:** Armed seating at regular points along key routes such as the riverside walk and Main Street would be valuable.
- **Lack of identity:** A consistent materials palette or "Design Guide" for elements like paving, street furniture, lighting, signage / wayfinding could better reflect the town's heritage and create a more welcoming and cohesive public realm.



Nature, Landscape & Public Realm



KEY

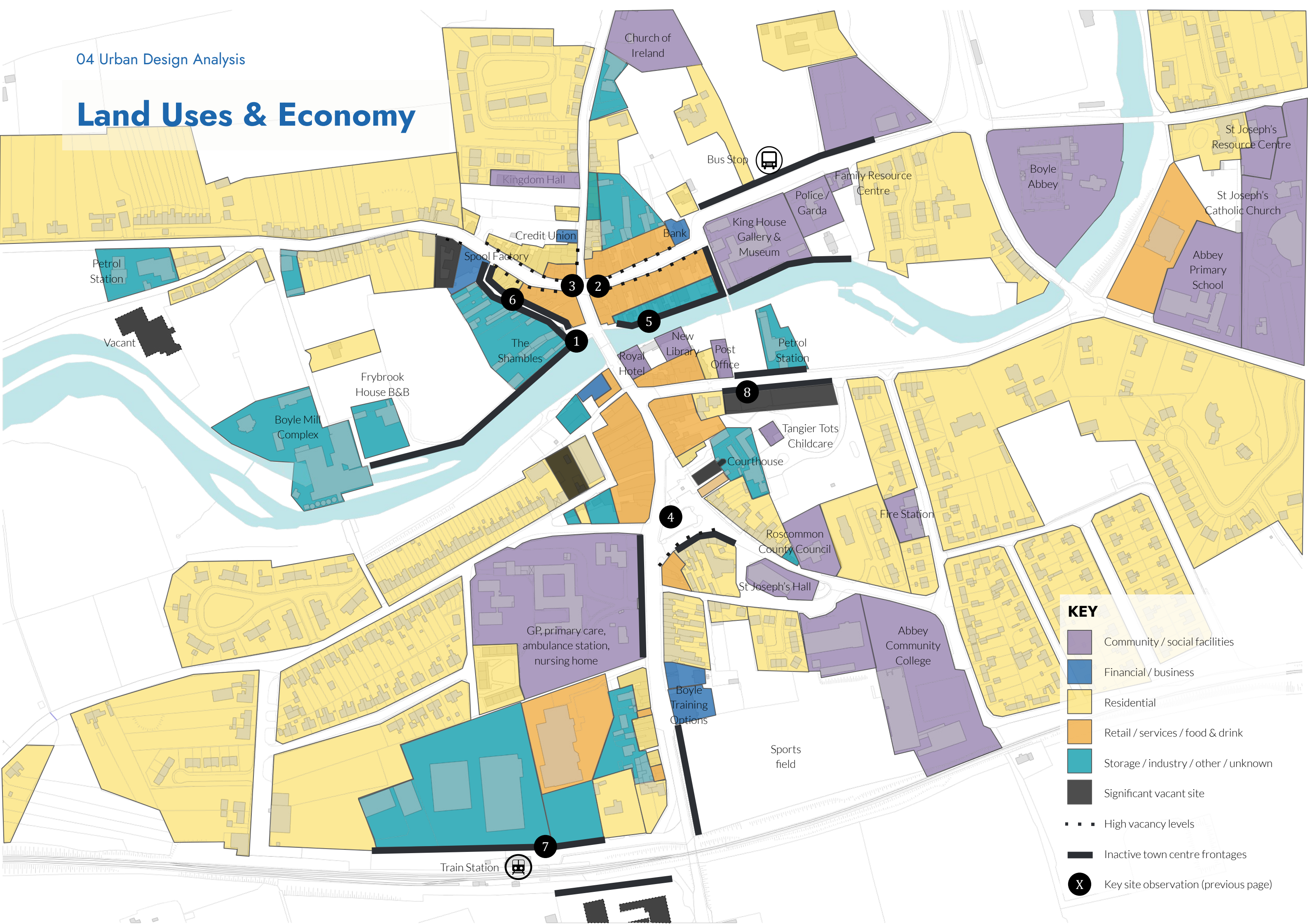
- Green space
- Public open space (existing)
- Public open space (planned)
- Public car park
- Areas in poor condition or impacting appearance of public realm
- On-street parking
- Key site observations (previous page)

Land Uses & Economy

- **Significant vacancy:** In Q2 2024, Boyle had the 4th highest commercial vacancy rate of all towns in the country (at 27.7%, up 0.1% from Q2 2023). The northern town centre, in particular, has fallen into sharp decline in terms of visible commercial activity in the main streets with very high levels of vacancies observed in Main Street and Patrick Street (photos 2 and 3) and the bottom of Green Street.
- **Retail and services presence:** The town has a range of retail, health and financial services, including convenience retailers, pharmacies, dentists, solicitors, a bank, credit union and post office, encouraging use of the town centre. The largest occupier of commercial units in Boyle is the Services sector (46.6%), followed by Retail and Wholesale (29.4%), Health (9.8%) and Public Admin (4.9%). Comparison provision in the town is relatively limited and is predominantly characterised by independent retailers (with Boles of Boyle dating back to 1886).
- **Food and drink:** There are a few pubs and takeaways, primarily concentrated around Bridge Street and Patrick Street, but limited cafes and restaurants.
- **Opportunity for covered food market at The Shambles:** This underused asset (photo 1) could be revitalised as a food market, to activate the town centre during the daytime and evening, and complement the existing farmers market which operates from King House, partnering with local farmers and food suppliers.
- **Limited visitor accommodation:** Aside from Frybrook House B&B, there is a lack of visitor accommodation within the town centre, which restricts visitor numbers, dwell time and economic activity.
- **Lack of vibrancy around station:** While the train station is within walking distance of the town centre, the surrounding low density warehousing and residential development create a lack of activity along this key route (photo 7).
- **Inactive frontages:** create a lack of vibrancy in areas of the town centre, particularly around the bus stop on Main Street, Eaton Lane (photo 6), the north bank of the river (photo 5), the lane next to King House, and area around Tangier House / the petrol station on Shop Street (photo 8). Many properties have storage sheds in poor condition facing onto lanes / the river (photos 5 and 6).
- **Town centre living:** There is a significant opportunity to encourage upper floor town centre living (such as vacant properties along Patrick Street and Main Street) to increase activity levels and provide an alternative housing typology to the low density housing developments on the periphery of the town.
- **Ground floor residential uses within main streets** can create an issue of inactive frontages in the town centre. This was observed, together with commercial vacancies at ground floor, around the Crescent (photo 4).



Land Uses & Economy

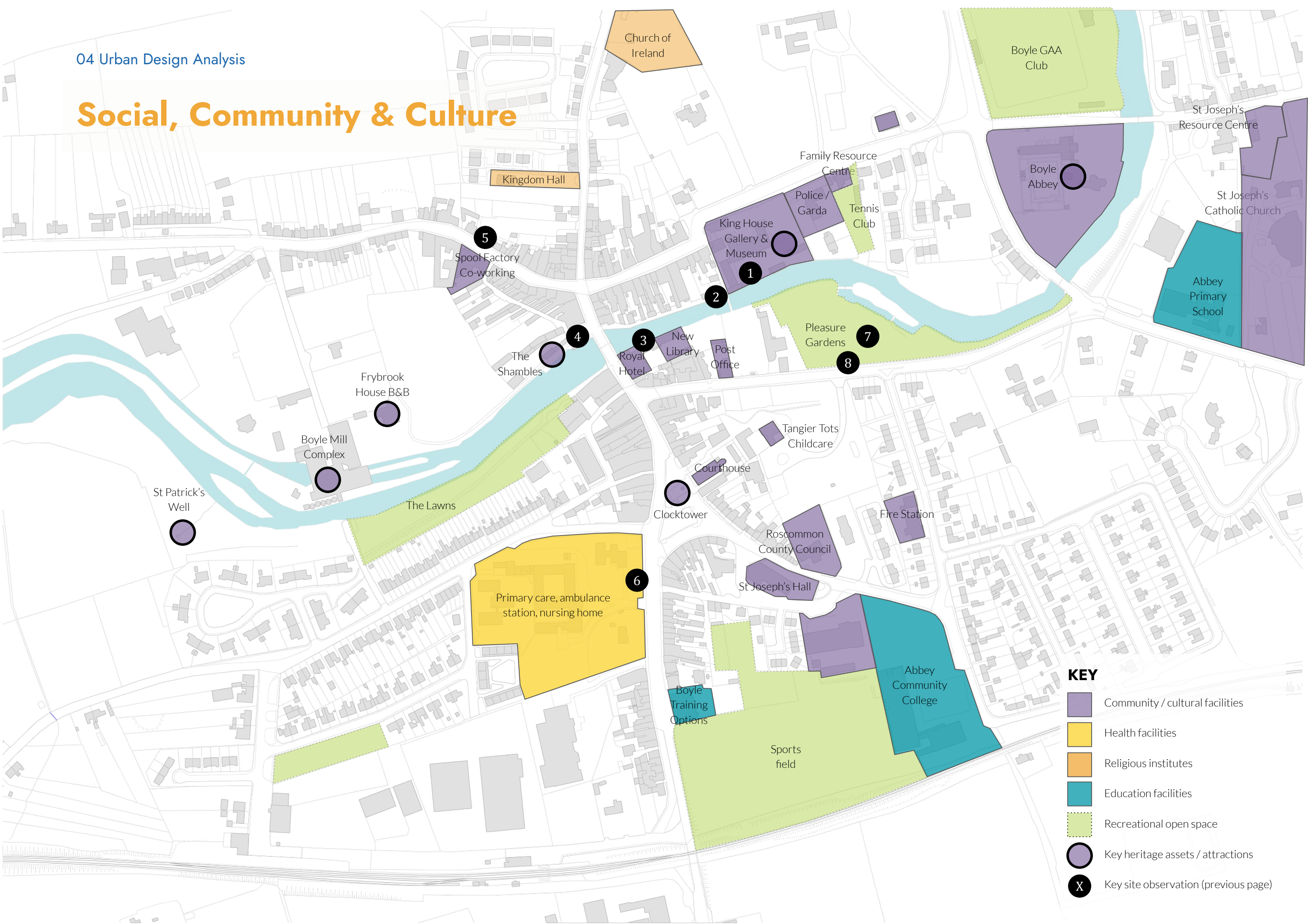


Social, Community & Culture

- **Outdoor recreational spaces:** These include the Pleasure Gardens (photo 7) with outdoor fitness, calisthenics gym and planned new multi-use games area, The Lawns green space and associated riverside walk, Boyle GAA Club, Boyle Community Tennis Club, and a large sports field at Abbey Community College.
- **Health and social care:** Quality provision including the Family Resource Centre, Roscommon Youth Service, and the Primary Care Centre / Nursing Home to the south of the town core (photo 6). Various dental practices nearby, pharmacies within the town centre, and a further GP practice just north-east of the map.
- **Good range of community and enterprise facilities:** Facilities within the town centre include the refurbished Royal Hotel / An Rioga enterprise and cultural hub (photo 3), planned new library building adjacent to this, and Spool Factory co-working and meeting space (photo 5),
- **Boyle Arts Festival:** A significant annual event for the town, running since 1983, the Festival includes traditional and contemporary music, art exhibitions, drama, poetry, film, comedy and children's events, making use of various venues around the town, and attracting 11,000 visitors in 2022. Other cultural events include St Patrick's Day Parade, Summer Show and the Pike Angling Festival.
- **Heritage sites and attractions:** Significant heritage attractions within the town centre include the 12th C Boyle Abbey and 18th C King House, which has been restored into a gallery and museum with a cafe alongside it (photos 1 and 2).
- **Community facilities and attractions:** are concentrated in the eastern part of town (east of Bridge Street). There are opportunities to enhance the heritage assets of The Shambles (photo 4) and The Mills Complex to create key destinations to draw footfall to the western part of the town along the Loop riverside walkway.
- **Making heritage more visible and accessible:** Making use of The Loop walkway which connects key attractions and heritage assets across the town, there is an opportunity to create and promote a heritage trail, with interpretation panels / QR codes and associated wayfinding to make information accessible and engaging.
- **Limited facilities for young people:** There are limited facilities for young people to engage with the town centre, particularly free / unpaid spaces. Enhancements to parks and public spaces, as well as indoor facilities, tailored for young people would be valuable e.g. social seating, swings, outdoor and indoor games. Planned upgrades to the basketball area in the Pleasure Grounds and the recently completed outdoor gym partly address this issue.
- **Welcoming gateways and public art:** There is some public art in the form of sculpture around the Pleasure Gardens and the Otter statue on the riverside (at photo 2). There is opportunity for more welcoming gateways to the town, for example using public art, colourful planting, lighting and other interventions.



Social, Community & Culture

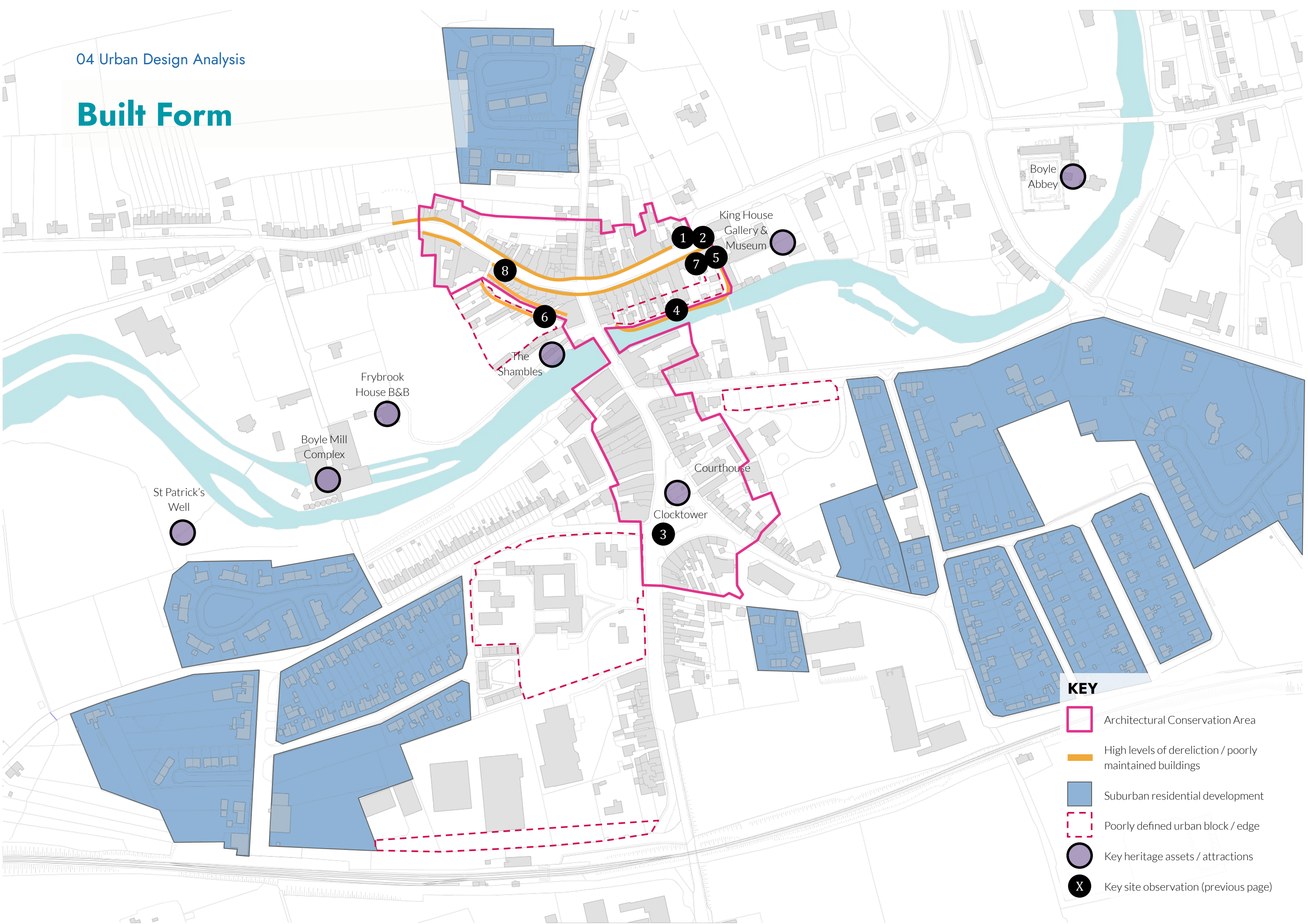


Built Form

- **Abundance of natural and built heritage:** Boyle benefits from the rich heritage of the town and region, including the nearby Lough Key Forest Park, the river and green spaces within the town and built assets such as Boyle Abbey and King House (photo 2), all of which contribute to a strong sense of place and a unique identity.
- **Distinctive historic character of the town core:** The town core around Main Street (photos 1, 2, 5 and 7), Patrick Street (photo 8), Bridge Street and the Crescent (photo 3) has a distinctive historic character (designated an Architectural Conservation Area) and many attractive surviving historic shopfronts (photos 7 and 8). This historic urban grain includes a number of small laneways and pedestrian routes which create interesting vistas and add to the appeal of the town today (photos 4 and 5). There is an opportunity to further celebrate and define this historic core through clear gateways, a consistent public realm materials palette, and enhanced heritage interpretation / signage.
- **Dereliction and poor maintenance of building fabric:** Within the town centre, there are a significant number of vacant, inactive and degraded buildings that are impacting the attractiveness and character of the town. These are most prevalent around Main Street (photo 1), Patrick Street (photo 8), Eaton Lane (photo 6) and the river (photo 4).
- **Disruption to urban blocks:** There are a number of vacant plots and properties with storage sheds or warehouses facing streets within key areas of the town centre that impact the definition of urban blocks and disrupt the streetscape. This includes the areas directly opposite the train station and the entrance to the Pleasure Grounds on Shop Street, the southern side of Eaton Lane (photo 6) and the northern river bank between Bridge Street and King House (photo 4), offering opportunities for infill development.
- **Typology and set-back of modern development:** A significant example of more modern development within the town centre is the health facilities complex. Whilst the town centre typically comprises continuous terraces of two and three-storey Georgian and Victorian buildings, this development comprises detached and semi-detached buildings with large setbacks from the street, which interrupts the definition of the urban block.
- **Modern building materials and interventions:** Within the designated Conservation Area, planning permission is required for any significant changes to the exterior of a building, such as windows, doors and shopfronts, which should match the original style and material of the buildings. Attention should also be paid to materials and methods of building alterations to historic fabric, including gutters, fascias, downpipes and windows.
- **Suburban nature of residential development:** although all areas shown on the map are roughly within 10 minutes walking distance of the town centre, the predominant modern residential typology is suburban, with relatively low density, detached or semi-detached buildings set back from the street edge.



Built Form



KEY

-  Architectural Conservation Area
-  High levels of dereliction / poorly maintained buildings
-  Suburban residential development
-  Poorly defined urban block / edge
-  Key heritage assets / attractions
-  Key site observation (previous page)

Urban Design Analysis Summary

The key issues and opportunities facing Boyle town centre under each of the five assessment criteria can be summarised as follows:



- Compact, walkable town centre
- Disconnected train station
- Conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles
- Limited cycling infrastructure
- Physical / visual barriers
- Urban Loop walkway interrupted
- Limited EV charging points
- Accessibility issues identified



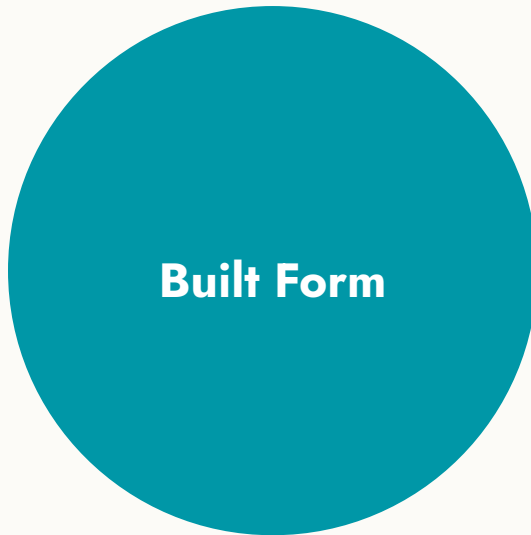
- Riverside setting, quality green spaces and planting
- Lack of continuous riverside walk
- Properties backing onto the river
- Poor condition of properties
- Need for functional town square / public spaces & public toilets
- Car-dominated streetscape
- Limited age-friendly seating
- Lack of consistent public realm identity / materials



- Significant vacancy
- Retail and services presence
- Limited choice of restaurants and cafes
- Opportunity for covered food market at The Shambles
- Lack of visitor accommodation
- Lack of vibrancy around station
- Inactive frontages
- Opportunity to encourage town centre living



- Outdoor recreational spaces
- Good availability of health, social, community and enterprise facilities
- Boyle Arts Festival is a significant asset and attraction for the town
- Heritage sites and attractions
- Opportunity to enhance town gateways, wayfinding and heritage interpretation
- Limited facilities and spaces for children and young people



- Clear identity and abundance of natural and built heritage
- Distinctive historic character and significant heritage assets within the town core
- Dereliction and poor maintenance of building fabric along main streets
- Disruption to urban blocks though vacant plots, storage sheds, and setbacks
- Suburban nature of residential development

05 Boyle Reimagined

- 5.1** Key Opportunity Sites
- 5.2** Key Projects
- 5.3** Action Plan
- 5.4** Next Steps

Key Opportunity Sites

1. The Shambles*

Opportunity for a covered food market/food and drink/retail destination with public toilets.

2. Eaton Lane*

Creative studios offering activities for young people as well as artist's / crafts studios, and supporting public realm improvements such as street art, lighting, paving and planting.

3. Northbank*

Cafes, spill-out activity, evening uses, public realm enhancements, public art, wrapping around corner / lane leading up to King House (key corner plot). Temporary pop-ups to activate/test ideas.

4. Hotel / Visitor Accommodation

Consider better tourism promotion and information (through town website, social media, QR code-based heritage trail) alongside support for further privately run visitor accommodation.

5. Mill Complex / Urban Loop Walkway

Public realm upgrades to complete/improve The Loop walk experience including through the Mill Complex.

6. Shop Street Opportunity Site

Residential development opportunity on infill sites opposite Pleasure Gardens/temporary parking.

7. Train Station*

Activate land around train station, perhaps starting with meanwhile / mobile uses eg. coffee/food trucks and public realm enhancements to make this route more vibrant and encourage its use.

8. Health Centre Area

Activate street edge / explore redevelopment potential of freestanding residential property at southeastern corner to create a more defined and active street edge condition (route to station).

9. Vacant / Derelict Buildings in Town Centre

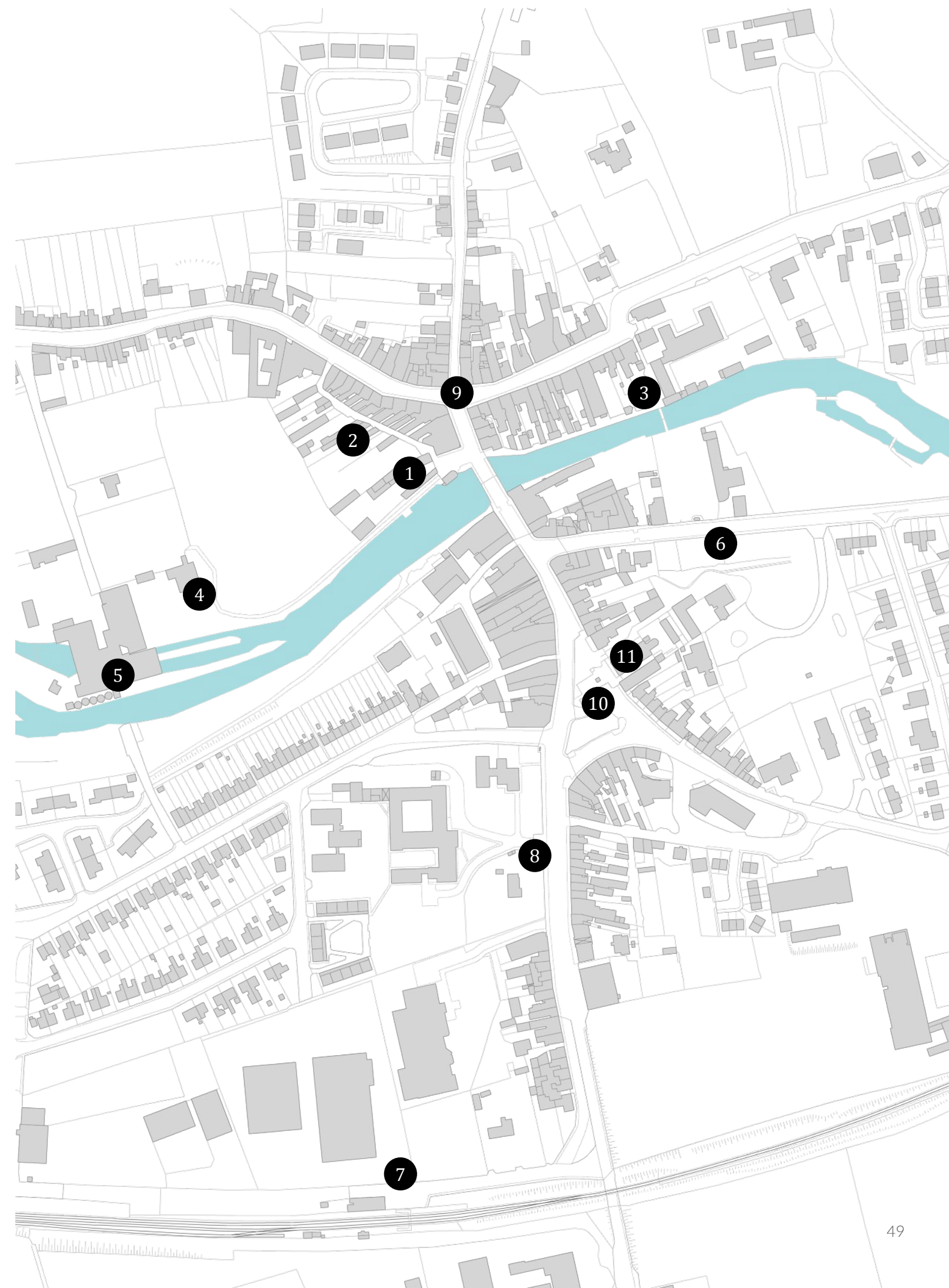
Opportunities to encourage town centre living e.g. over shop properties along Patrick/Main Street Shopfront improvement scheme to improve aesthetics of main streets and attract investment.

10. The Crescent

Explore public realm enhancements to create additional space for people to sit, meet and socialise, for events, and greening, while improving the aesthetics of the town and ensuring ease of parking.

11. The Courthouse

A proposal is currently being developed by the Town Team to revitalise the vacant Courthouse building.



Key Projects

Project Name

The Shambles

Location

Bridge Street / Eaton Lane

Project Overview

Opportunity for a covered food market/food and drink/retail destination within the Shambles, addressing the need highlighted through engagement and urban analysis for additional cafes, restaurants and shops, social spaces for all ages, as well as public toilets and baby changing facilities to ensure the town centre is inclusive and welcoming.

Reference Example

St George’s Market, Belfast

Key Challenges

- The Shambles gateway is a protected structure so would need to be carefully integrated into the design and construction (adding to the sense of place and heritage)

Key Opportunities

- Draw activity and footfall to the western side of town along the Urban Loop Walkway.
- Complement other initiatives, such as the existing Farmers Market, perhaps working with local food producers in the region to provide an outlet through cafes, restaurants and shops, and with the potential artist / craft studios project within Eaton Lane.
- Opportunity to provide another performance / events venue for Boyle Arts Festival

Themes Addressed



Key Projects

Project Name

Art on Eaton Lane

Location

Eaton Lane

Project Overview

Explore potential to convert vacant sites and existing structures into creative studios offering activities for young people, older people, as well as artist’s / crafts studios. Supporting public realm improvements such as street art, lighting, paving, and planting, particularly murals on blank walls, could help enliven the space in the shorter term and improve the sense of safety and attractiveness of this area of the town centre.

Reference Example

Kinsale Pottery and Arts Centre
OBA Art Walk, Oneonta, USA

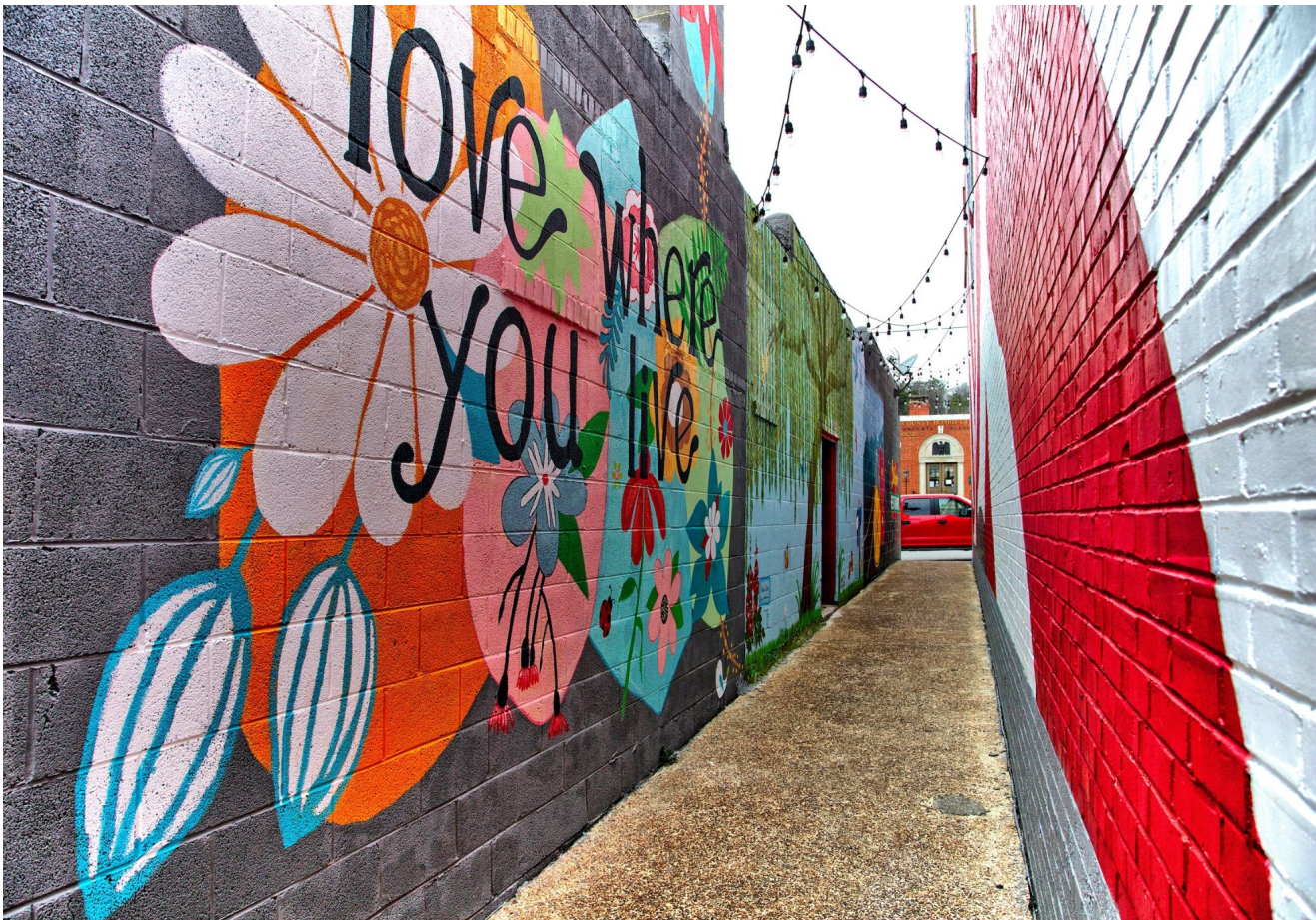
Key Challenges

- Private land ownership and existing ‘back-of-house’ uses.

Key Opportunities

- Opportunity to get local artists, young people and volunteers of all ages involved in co-design, painting, planting, etc. to build sense of community pride and ownership
- Potential to create an ‘art walk’ of murals throughout the town, linking key areas along the Urban Loop Walkway, such as the North Bank and Mill Complex, perhaps highlighting local heritage, folklore, culture and people, and the Boyle Arts Festival.

Themes Addressed



Key Projects

Project Name

North Bank Activation

Location

North bank of Boyle River

Project Overview

Activate North Bank with cafes, spill-out activity, evening uses, public realm enhancements, and public art, wrapping around corner / lane leading up to King House (key corner plot). Temporary pop-ups to activate/test ideas. Current library in King House will become vacant when new premises available, offering an opportunity for additional exhibition / cultural space.

Reference Example

Haggerston Towpath, London

Key Challenges

- Private land ownership
- Very narrow pathway limits ability for spill-out seating, public realm furniture, while maintaining accessibility for all users (including users of wheelchairs and buggies), requiring clever design around existing yards, openings, etc within structures.

Key Opportunities

- Enhance this unique riverside location in the heart of the town centre
- Increase footfall and activity, sense of safety, and use of Urban Loop Walkway
- Potentially improve viability of backland development, with active uses at ground floor

Themes Addressed



Key Projects

Project Name

Train Station activation

Location

Boyle train station and approach road

Project Overview

Activate land around train station, perhaps starting with meanwhile / mobile uses eg. coffee/food trucks and public realm enhancements to make this area more vibrant and encourage its use. Consider community planting and placemaking projects around the station and along the route into the town centre. In the longer term, consider development opportunities along this road/on private land, and possible connection into Station Road residential area, to increase permeability, activity and passive surveillance / sense of safety.

Reference Example

Energy Garden, London Overground stations

Key Challenges

- Private land ownership, private parking bays, inactive boundary fencing, and narrow street limit the space available for public realm interventions and food trucks.

Key Opportunities

- A more active and attractive train station and stronger connection into the town centre could encourage train use and reduce car dominance for residents and visitors.
- Community-led planting / placemaking provides volunteering opportunities.
- Explore community energy opportunities inspired by the Energy Garden model.

Themes Addressed



Action Plan

Initiative Name	Description	Timescale	Budget Range	Lead/Partners	Next Steps
The Shambles	Opportunity for a covered food market/food and drink/retail destination within the Shambles, addressing the need highlighted through engagement and urban analysis for additional cafes, restaurants and shops, social spaces for all ages, as well as public toilets and baby changing facilities to ensure the town centre is inclusive and welcoming. This should complement other initiatives, such as the Boyle Arts Festival and existing Farmers Market, perhaps working with local food producers in the region to provide an outlet through cafes, restaurants and shops, and with the potential artist / craft studios project within Eaton Lane.	Medium Term (within 5 years) - Long Term (5 years +)	Medium - High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, local food producers and businesses, Boyle Arts Festival	Discussions with landowner of the Shambles and existing businesses. Explore pop-up food options and artistic interventions during Boyle Arts Festival to test the ideas.
Art on Eaton Lane	Explore potential to convert vacant sites and existing structures into creative studios offering activities for young people, older people, as well as artist's / crafts studios. Supporting public realm improvements such as street art, lighting, paving, and planting, particularly murals on blank walls, could help enliven the space in the shorter term and improve the sense of safety and attraction.	Quick Win (within 1 year) - Long Term (5 years +)	Low (public realm) - Medium (creative studios, depending on scale and complexity of specific site)	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local artists and craftspeople, young people and volunteers, Boyle Arts Festival	Explore potential partners and funding for mural project - potentially suitable for TVR funding.
North Bank Activation	Activate North Bank with cafes, spill-out activity, evening uses, public realm enhancements, and public art, wrapping around corner / lane leading up to King House (key corner plot). Temporary pop-ups to activate/test ideas. Current library in King House will become vacant when new premises available, offering an opportunity for additional exhibition / cultural space.	Quick Win (within 1 year) - Long Term (5 years +)	Low (temporary / public realm)- Medium (new uses, depending on scale and complexity of specific sites)	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local artists and craftspeople,, local businesses , Boyle Arts Festival	Discussions with landowners of units along North Bank to gauge appetite. Explore pop-up food options and artistic interventions during Boyle Arts Festival to test the ideas.
Hotel / Visitor Accommodation	Consider better tourism promotion and information, including accommodation (through town website, social media, QR code-based heritage trail) alongside support for further privately run visitor accommodation (potential for over shop B&Bs, and perhaps previous army barracks within King House).	Quick Win (within 1 year) - Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low (online) - Medium (new uses, depending on scale and complexity of specific sites)	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, Failte Ireland.	Explore options for a simple branded town social media presence / website dedicated to tourism promotion.
Mill Complex / Urban Loop Walkway	There is existing planning permission to convert the Mill Complex into a whiskey distillery, tasting room and retail outlet, which would serve as an attraction on this side of town. This should include public realm upgrades to complete/improve The Urban Loop walk experience and connectivity to town.	Quick Win (within 1 year) - Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowner	Discussions with Mill Complex landowner and Roscommon County Council Planning Department.

Action Plan

Initiative Name	Description	Timescale	Budget Range	Lead/Partners	Next Steps
Shop Street Infill	Potential residential development opportunity on vacant infill site/s on Shop Street opposite the Pleasure Gardens. Development here would help activate this part of the town centre, while encouraging town centre living, all of which could improve commercial viability of businesses within the town centre. This central site may also present an opportunity for alternative or additional public parking in the short term (subject to negotiations with private land owner).	Quick Win (within 1 year) - Long Term (5 years +)	Low (parking) - Medium (new uses, depending on scale and complexity of specific development)	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowner	Discussion with landowner. Explore options for development here within site constraints, including potential for permanent residential development and short-term accommodation for motorhomes.
Train Station Activation	Activate land around train station, perhaps starting with meanwhile / mobile uses eg. coffee / food trucks and public realm enhancements to make this area more vibrant and encourage its use. Consider community planting and placemaking projects around the station and along the route into the town centre, including colourful wayfinding, planters, and public art. In the longer term, consider development opportunities along this road/on private land opposite the station, and possible connection into Station Road residential area, to increase permeability, activity and passive surveillance / sense of safety.	Quick Win (within 1 year) - Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local food / coffee truck businesses, Tidy Towns	Explore potential Active Travel grant funding opportunities. Discussions with local food / coffee truck operators to gauge appetite for a trial period, possibly during the Boyle Arts Festival. Discussions with Tidy Towns group about potential volunteer capacity and funding for flower planters.
Health Centre area Activation	Activate the street edge of this urban block (which is set back / relatively inactive and sits along the route between the town core and the train station) by exploring redevelopment potential of the freestanding residential property at the southeastern corner to create a more defined street edge, perhaps higher density / multiple residential with potential for commercial / active ground floor, potentially something to complement health & wellness use. Potential for more welcoming pocket park on existing green space outside the health centre, encouraging public use / socialising. This should align with / continue the potential community planting and placemaking projects around the station and along the route into the town centre (which passes by this site).	Medium Term (within 5 years)	Low (public realm) - Medium new uses, depending on scale and complexity of specific development)	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, local food / coffee truck businesses, Tidy Towns	Discussions with landowner and Health Centre. Discussions with Tidy Towns group about potential volunteer capacity and funding for flower planters.

Action Plan

Initiative Name	Description	Timescale	Budget Range	Lead/Partners	Next Steps
Addressing Town Centre Vacancy & Dereliction	There are many opportunities for refurbishment and town centre living e.g. over shop properties along Main Street and Patrick Street. Consider running a shopfront improvement scheme (focused within the Conservation Area to start, then the rest of Patrick Street). Explore creating a heritage design guide to align future development and improvements to shopfronts, windows, doors, gutters, roofs, chimneys, and other features within the Conservation Area, and ensure levels of maintenance and design / methods / materials of intervention are appropriate and enhance the appreciation and character of the historic built fabric.	Medium Term (within 5 years)	Medium / High	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, private landowners, Heritage Council	Consider potential Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) / Heritage Council funding streams for conservation-led works and repairs within the Conservation Area.
The Crescent	Explore public realm enhancements to create additional space for people to sit, meet and socialise, for events, and greening, while improving the aesthetics of the town. Any potential future project should be co-designed with local businesses and residents to ensure a balance between cars and pedestrians, and support activity and turnover for local businesses. Explore nearby alternative parking options on less prominent sites (such as Shop Street) which may allow The Crescent to become more free to act as a useable public space for people of all ages and abilities, while improving the heritage appreciation and attractiveness of this part of the Conservation Area.	Medium Term (within 5 years) - Long Term (5 years +)	Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team, local businesses	Emerging project to reuse the vacant Courthouse building (see below) could help to activate the Crescent and perhaps act as a catalyst for further improvements to the Crescent public realm to support increased pedestrian activity, socialising and relaxing in this area.
The Courthouse	A proposal is currently being developed by the Town Team to revitalise the vacant Courthouse building.	Medium Term (within 5 years)	Medium	Roscommon County Council, Town Team	Continue developing project proposal to secure funding.

Next Steps

A collaborative approach to town centre regeneration is critical to success. Partners, stakeholders and the community must be kept informed, engaged and ideally involved in further co-design and delivery of interventions to embed a sense of collective pride and ownership, and ensure Boyle’s rich built, natural and cultural heritage is accessible and beneficial to all.

Strategic leadership on implementation will come from Roscommon County Council, including the further development and feasibility testing of the key transformative projects. However, many other local stakeholders have key roles to play in bringing to life of these projects, the supporting projects listed in the action plan and the collective vision to create the future Boyle.

The existing proactive and positive Town Team, and joint working between the Town Team and Roscommon County Council to deliver improvements to the town, provides a fantastic foundation for further development and implementation of the proposals within this report.

Potential Funding sources for delivery of the identified projects could include:

- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
- Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund
- European Regional Development Fund
- Active Travel Grants Programme
- Town and Village Renewal Scheme
- Climate Adaptation/ Retrofitting Initiatives
- Historic Towns Initiative

Some suggested key performance indicators are set out opposite to help guide design, delivery and monitoring of the identified actions.

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 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 local experience, history and culture
- ❑ 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 and authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of the community

This report (including any enclosures and attachments) has been prepared for the exclusive use and benefit of Roscommon County Council as the commissioning agent and solely for the purpose for which it is provided. We do not accept any liability if this report is used for an alternative purpose from which it is intended, nor to any third party in respect of this report. Our analysis has been undertaken based on information supplied to us by Roscommon County Council including previous reports and data prepared by third parties. Where we have relied on information provided by third parties we take no responsibility for the accuracy of that information.



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Roscommon
County Council



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