



Ballyragget

DRAFT

Masterplan





Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

DRAFT



Kilkenny County Council
Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh

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Acronyms

ACA	Architectural Conservation Area
c.	Circa (Approximately)
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DHC	Department of Health and Children
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
HSE	The Health Service Executive
K	Thousand
KCC	Kilkenny County Council
KCDP	Kilkenny County Development Plan 2014-2020
km	Kilometres
LAP	Local Area Plan
m	Meters
M	Motorway
NDF	Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan
NPF	Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework
No.	Number
Ref.	Reference
R	Regional
RSES	Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy
SRA	Southern Regional Assembly

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Vision

“The vision for Ballyragget is to embrace its unique urban form and utilise the built and natural heritage assets to build on the town’s established historic context and character to enhance the town as an attractive place to live, work and do business.”



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Masterplan for Ballyragget

Kilkenny County Council (KCC) appointed Turley in association with a multi-disciplinary team (see Section 1.3) to prepare a Masterplan for the town of Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny.

The purpose of the Masterplan is to guide the development of Ballyragget into the future and to influence and deliver on real change for the Town to make it a more attractive destination in which to live, work, visit and do business.

Ballyragget is a small town in north Co. Kilkenny, an area which is a predominantly rural in character. By virtue of its location proximate to various national and regional access roads, the town has the potential to fulfil a more significant role and it is envisaged that this Masterplan will guide development and re-imagine Ballyragget so that it can ultimately realise its full potential.

The Masterplan sets out an overall vision, strategy and most significantly, commitment for the proper planning and sustainable development of Ballyragget. A multi-disciplinary integrated approach bringing together the development of places using co-design, urban design, transport planning and landscape architecture were used to develop the Masterplan for the Town.

1.2 Context

The origins of this masterplan flow from the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan which was adopted on the 3rd September 2021; the Plan came into effect on the 15th October 2021.

Notwithstanding the requirement set out in the Plan, since its adoption a major government policy was introduced in February 2022 to help revitalise town centres. The Government's Town Centre First Policy aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction, and breathe new life into town centres. The policy lays the foundation for towns to develop a tailored plan by a Local Authority in collaboration with a Town Team. The policy is underpinned by a multi-billion-euro investment programme spread across Government schemes.

The Ballyragget Masterplan will subsequently provide a basis for the town to seek support from funding streams such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and Village Renewal Scheme, Active Travel Fund and Historic Towns Initiative.

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

1.3 Multi-disciplinary Team

The Masterplan is visionary, ambitious, and creative in the design of new propositions for Ballyragget. A multi-disciplinary integrated approach bringing together the development of places and destinations, transport planning, urban design, mixed use architecture and landscape design were used to develop the Masterplan strategy. The Masterplan is holistic and addresses a range of short and long term challenges facing the town. The multi-specialist team consists of the following practices:

- Turley – planning, urban design, landscape architecture, economics and strategic communications consultancy services; and
- RSK – Environmental and ecology.

Design Team



Turley
4 Pembroke Street Upper
Dublin 2
D02 VN24



RSK
Bluebell Business Centre
Old Naas Road
Bluebell
Dublin 12

Figure 1.1: Settlement Boundary for Ballyragget as per Figure 4.5 of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.



1.4 Project Objectives

The aim of this Masterplan is to ensure that Ballyragget has the right objectives and projects in place to tackle issues of dereliction, vacant properties, and above all, to become a better place to live, work and run a business, ensuring the vitality and vibrancy of the town into the future.

To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

- Positively address key issues and challenges in Ballyragget.
- Embrace the power of urban design and architecture in reimagining the town so that it can ultimately realise its full potential.
- The vision for Ballyragget will build upon its existing character and heritage assets to increase green areas, facilities, and connectivity within the town to provide a holistic design approach from the outset.
- Set a new benchmark for public realm and town centre design, transforming Ballyragget into a prosperous settlement and enabling it to realise its full potential.
- Longer-term adaptability and robustness to survive everchanging economic conditions.

1.5 Methodology

The methodology for the project is informed by the established double-diamond design methodology (see Figure 1.2) as developed by the UK Design Council in 2005. The Double-Diamond methodology is a four-stage innovation process which captures the divergent and convergent nature of design, and offers flexibility as a foundation to designers, allowing shifts to the model to fit the specific needs of a project. Typically, the four phases are:

- Discover phase (divergent): exploration of brief and hypothesis, contextual research and definition of project participants or communities.
- Define phase (convergent): designing and conducting engagement / feasibility studies.
- Develop phase (divergent): development of a several ideas through co-creation and design ideation processes.
- Deliver phase (convergent): selection of ideas to take forward and delivery of outputs in the form of prototypes, services ideas, or guidance.

Importantly, this is not a linear process as the arrows on the diagram show. The two diamonds indicate that a divergent and convergent creation process happens twice; once to define the problem (in this case provide preliminary options, i.e., Stage 1) and once to create the solution (i.e., provide for design development and the preparation of a Masterplan – i.e., Stage 2).

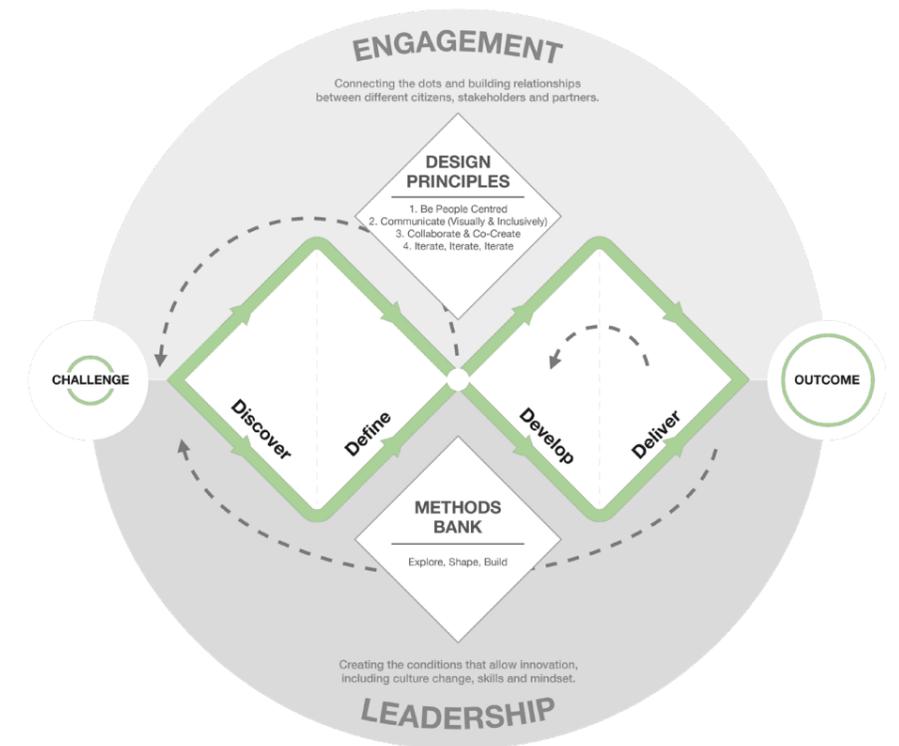


Figure 1.2: Design Council’s Double Diamond Approach (Source: Design Council)

1.6 Producing the Plan

Working closely with the local community is a vital component of the plan process. The programme comprised of six key stages. Taking account of feedback received from the local community, it identifies opportunities for improvements by proposing strategies and projects in the short, medium, and long term.

KCC, in collaboration with the local community, will use the plan to implement improvements and seek funding to deliver positive change.

1. Inception

Kilkenny County Council appoint a design team led by Turley and including environmental consultants RSK

2. Research & Analysis

Site visits:

- Photo surveys
- Desktop research
- Baseline analysis
- Policy context analysis

3. Engagement

Initial information and ideas gathering stage with local community and stakeholders, including:

- A local community and stakeholder workshop event
- Draft Plan concept ideas and proposals were presented to the local community to seek approval

4. Draft Plan

Ideas development

- Analysis of public survey results
- Objectives identified
- Draft vision developed
- Draft Plan concept ideas and proposals were presented to KCC to seek approval.
- SEA/AA screening

5. Consultation

Public presentation of the submission of the draft Town Masterplan.

6. Masterplan published

Plan report is updated in response to feedback.

- Production of Final Masterplan following consultation feedback
- Client review
- Final revisions, if required
- Publication of Final Masterplan

2.0 The Town

2.1 Town Context

Ballyragget is located to the north of Co. Kilkenny and is situated in close proximity to the southern border of Co. Laois.

Ballyragget is in a strategic location in that it is situated c.17km from Kilkenny City (c.20 minutes' drive via N77); c.74km from Waterford City (c.55 minutes' drive via the N77 and M9 Motorway). Ballyragget is also strategically placed half way between Cork and Dublin, just off the M8 Motorway. The town of Ballyragget is an important local service centre in the north of the County. The town is well connected to nearby towns and villages such as Freshford and Castlecome via public transport including to Dublin Airport (service 891) and Dublin City (service 890)



Figure 2.1: ACA boundary, as per Figure 9.4 within the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.

The character of the town is rural. The River Nore is Ballyragget's main natural heritage asset, and is c.140km long, and one of the constituent rivers of the group known as the 'Three Sisters' (River Barrow, River Nore and River Suir). The Nore flows to the west of the town and meanders south towards and through Kilkenny City, and is a proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA) and is a Special Area of Conservation (Designation 002162). The River Nore is home to the only known extant population of the critically endangered Nore freshwater pearl mussel.

Ballyragget is located around Market Square. Market Square and the wider town town contains an Architectural Conservation Area and several protected buildings (see Figure 3.23). This reflects the town's rich history, a history that contributes to its local identity and that the residents are proud of. There is an opportunity to capitalise on Ballyragget's built and natural heritage assets. Combined with its strategic and accessible location, Ballyragget has the potential to develop into a prosperous place to live, work, visit and do business, making it a destination town in its own right.

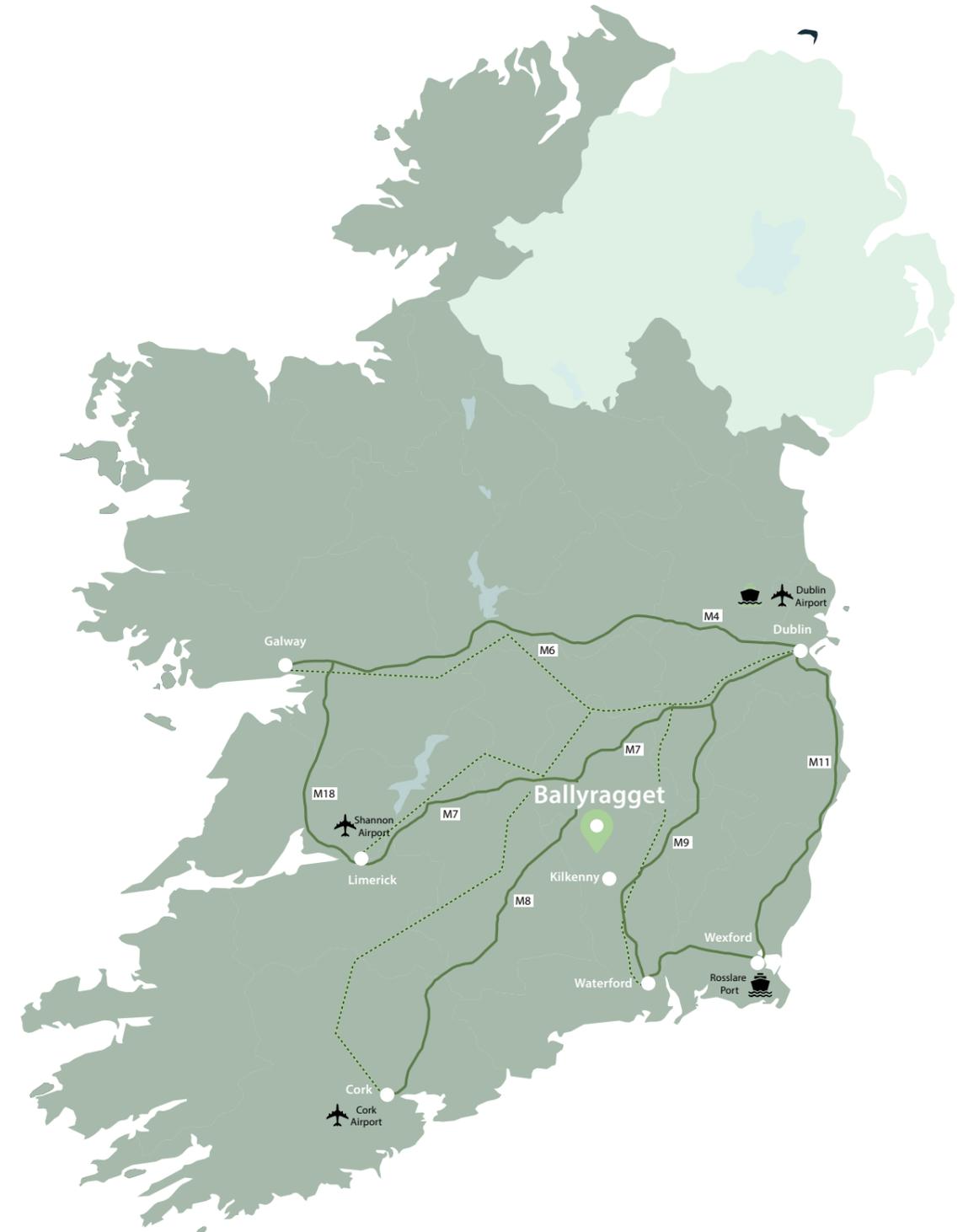
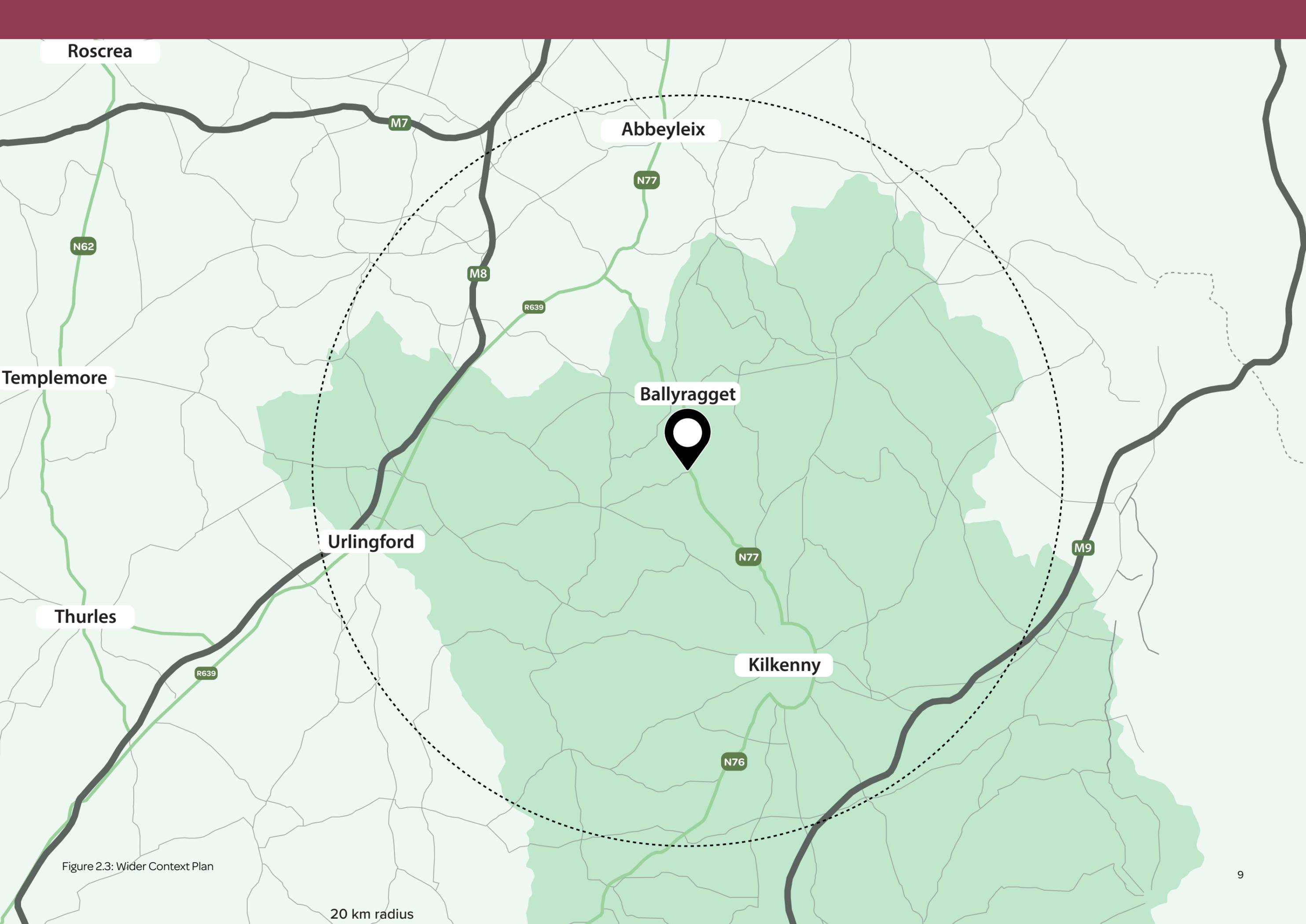


Figure 2.2: Map of Ireland (Source: Turley)



Roscrea

Abbeyleix

N77

N62

M8

R639

Templemore

Ballyragget

Urlingford

N77

M9

Thurles

R639

Kilkenny

N76

Figure 2.3: Wider Context Plan

20 km radius

2.2 Historical Development

Ballyragget contains an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) given its rich historical context, with a number of Recorded Monuments and Protected Structures listed within the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The town dates back to the 13th century. The name Ballyragget is the anglicised version of 'Béal Átha Ragadh' meaning mouth of the Ragget's ford and takes its name from Richard le Raggat, who held the lands of Ballyragget in the early part of the 13th century.

The Town has older settlement names, the most prominent one being Donoughmore (Irish: Domhnach Mór). There is some debate as to the origins of the name, but the first issue of the Journal of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society (1948), stated a belief that the Irish meaning meant "big Sunday", signifying the thousands of people who congregated at the now ruined Church on a Sunday.

The town's foundations emerged from the erection of Ballyragget Castle which is said to have been constructed c1485 by Lady Margaret FitzGerald, who married the 8th Earl of Ormond, Pierce 'Ruadh' Butler (1467-1539). A number of Castles built later in the 16th Century are modelled on Ballyragget Castle, including Tybroughney Castle, Piltown.

Their son, Richard Butler, became the 1st Viscount Mountgarret in 1550, and he inherited the Castle, which was the principal residence of the Mountgarret branch of the Butler family for two centuries. The Tower was renovated in the late 15th Century, and incorporates an inscribed stone to commemorate Edmund Butler, who was the 2nd Viscount Mountgarret.

The Castle which stands 100m from the banks of the River Nore, was central to the defence of Kilkenny in the 16th Century and 17th Century. The Battle of Ballyragget took place in 1775 and is said to have involved the largest assembly of Whiteboys in Kilkenny, including 300 horsemen and 200 on foot, who were defeated.

In the late 18th Century, Robert Butler built a number of buildings which still stand today and are Protected Monuments. The Butler House, which was a key component in the Battle of Ballyragget, was constructed c1750-1755, and was used as a hotel post 1900 and decommissioned in the late 20th Century. Ballyragget Lodge is said to have been constructed c1785-1790, originally used as a house but converted to a convent in 1946.

Ballyragget Bridge, constructed c1810-1815, is a ten arch rubble stone bridge, which crosses the River Nore.

Historically, Ballyragget Railway Line which opened in 1865, linked the North to the South of Kilkenny. In the early 1900s, a new line was made linking Ballyragget to Castlecomer however, the railway line closed, and the track was lifted in the early 1960s.

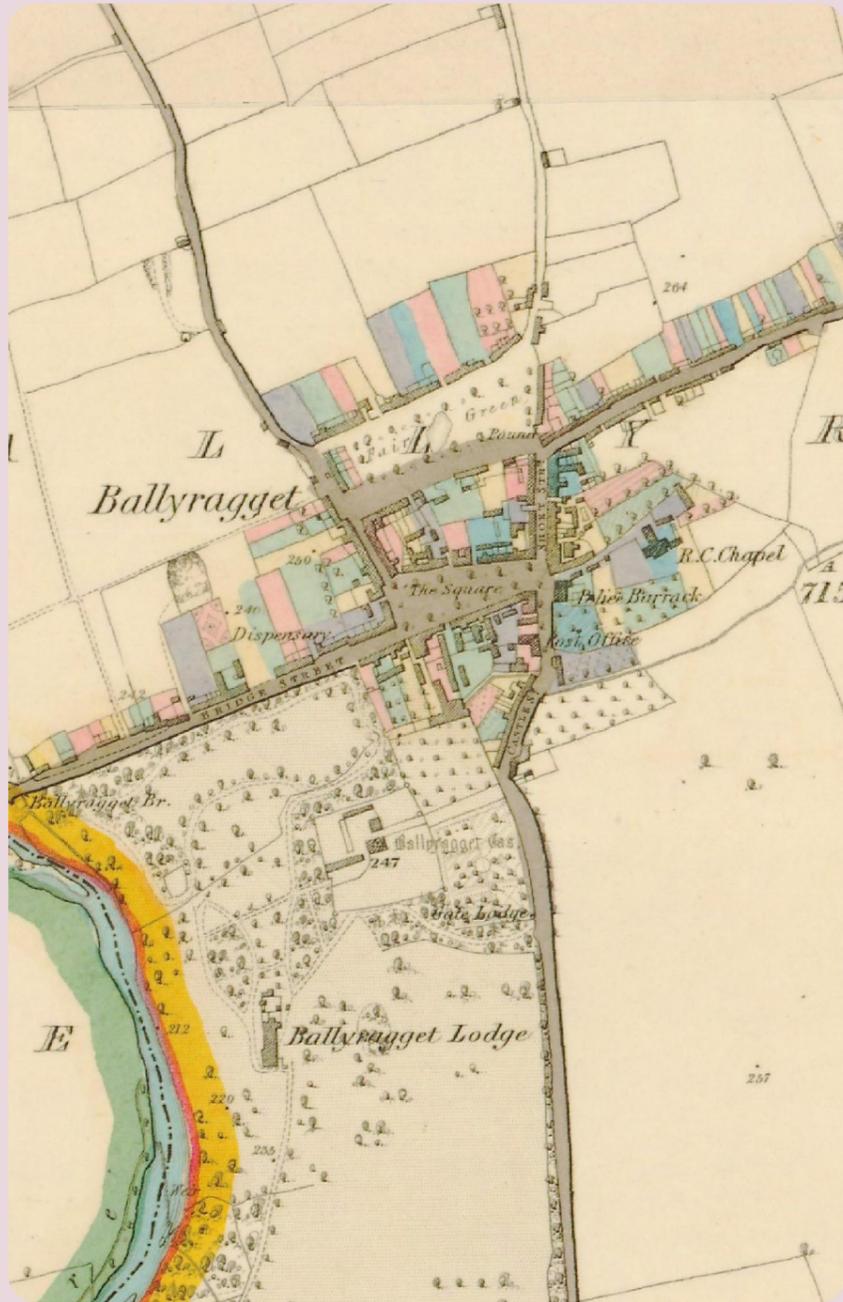
The Market Square, one of the Town's unique features, was historically laid out as a wide main street to allow for markets and the famous 'Fair Day', which took place up until the 1960s.



Butler House



Red Barn



Historical First Edition OSI Map (1829-1841)



Historical Second Edition OSI Map (1897-1913)



Ballyragget Bridge



Ballyragget Lodge



Butler's House from the rear



Map of old railway Route from the 1906 Viceregal Commission rail map of Ireland



Ballyragget Lodge



Old Railway Bridge



Ballyragget Castle and Castle Walls



Railway Station in 1960s before track lifted
Source: National Library of Ireland.



Ballyragget Castle Tower



Ballyragget Castle Tower



The Market Square, Ballyragget
(Source: Town Ecologies – Community Presentation)

Summary of The Town Chapter

Ballyragget’s rich and multilayered history is reflected in its built environment. The imposing Castle remains and the elegant market square pay testament to the town’s strategic importance as a social and economic hub for north Kilkenny. The town contains several buildings and public spaces of architectural and historical merit and benefits from its tangible historical links. The River Nore, flowing to the west of the town, provides a home to the only known extant population of the critically endangered Nore freshwater pearl mussel, and is a great asset to the town.

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Policy Context

3.1.1 Overview of Policy

The Ballyragget Masterplan has been developed with regard to national, regional and local policy context documents as set out below. The plan has been developed in collaboration with the Ballyragget community and other relevant stakeholders. The plan therefore aligns with, and supports all relevant planning policies pertaining to the town.

It is intended that the strategy for development, and the key proposals as set out in the Masterplan, will enable Kilkenny County Council, in collaboration with the local community, to leverage funding in order to implement the key actions for delivery as set out in Section 5 of the Masterplan.

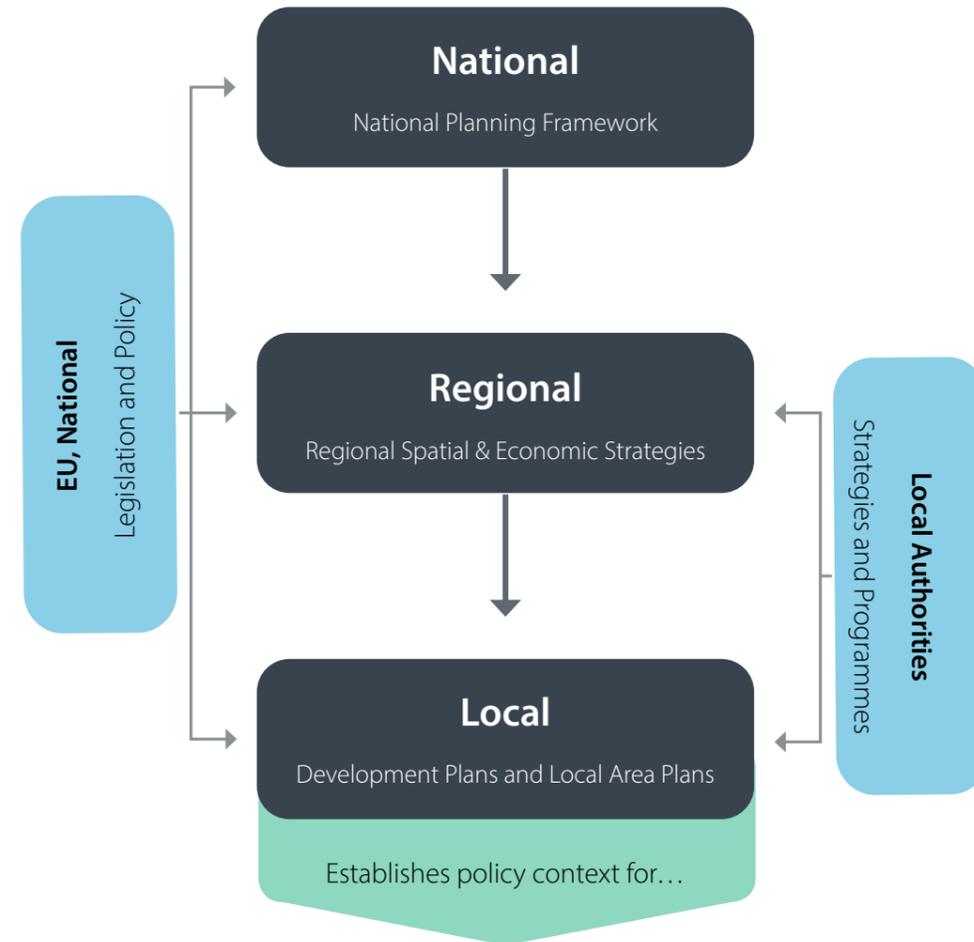


Figure 3.1: Planning Policy Hierarchy in Ireland
(Source: Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework).

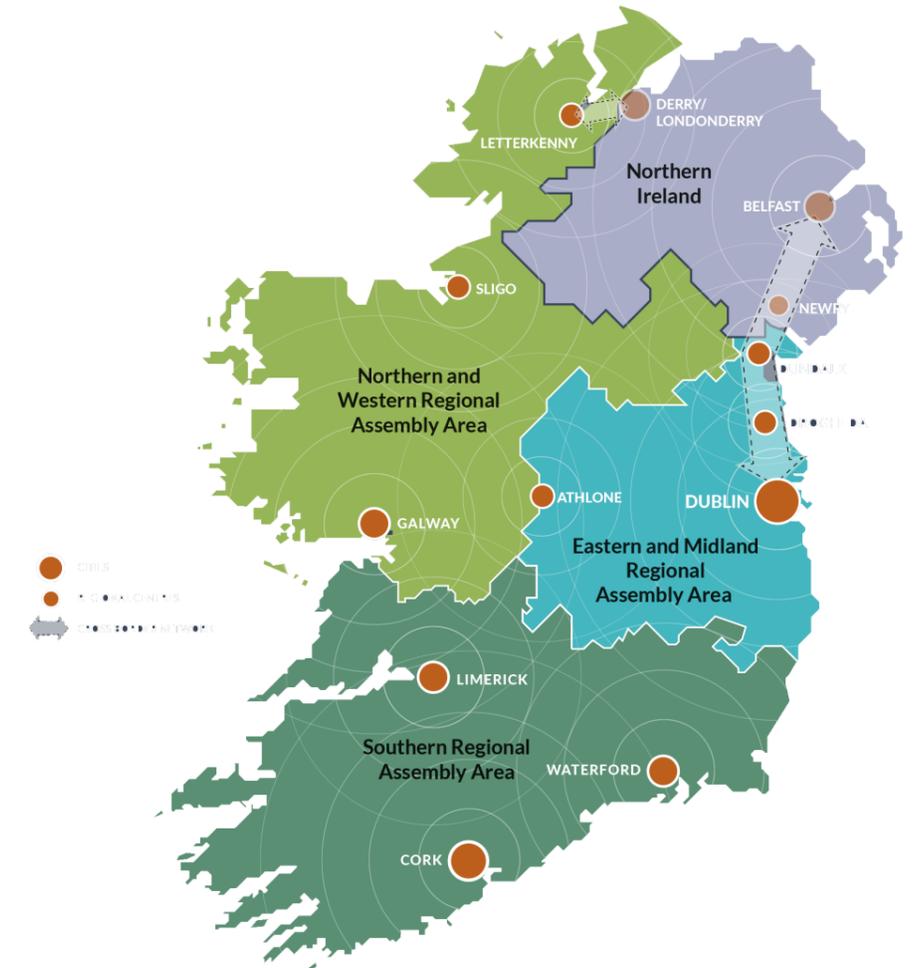
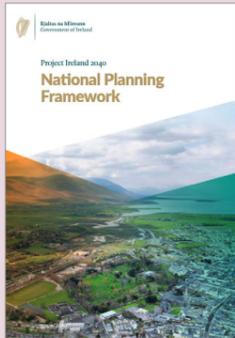
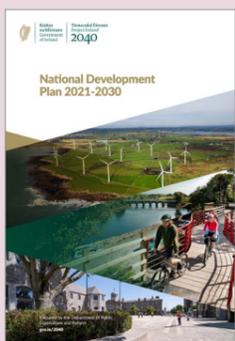


Figure 3.2: Map of the Regional Assemblies of Ireland
(Source National Planning Framework).



3.1.2 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

The Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework (NPF) is a strategic framework to guide public and private investment, and to protect and enhance the environment. It sets out a spatial hierarchy of urban centres that are in line for significant population and economic growth over the period of the plan. It also sets out the key principles that will guide future development across the country, addressing issues such as compact growth, making stronger urban places, creating strong and vibrant communities, and ensuring a healthy, liveable environment. This will be achieved through 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and priorities for every community in the country.



3.1.3 National Development Plan 2021–2030

Aligned with the NPF, the National Development Plan 2021–2030 sets out the government’s overarching investment strategy and budget for that period, enabling delivery of the NSOs and priorities set out in the NPF. This significant funding source will support both urban regeneration and rural rejuvenation through a €3 billion Regeneration and Development Fund.



3.1.4 Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

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



3.1.5 Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns

The Town Centre First policy (2022) approach seeks to support and complement a wide range of government policies impacting on towns and is central to the vision of Our Rural Future. It is a core policy objective of Town Centre First to “create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community”. The policy lays the foundation for towns to develop their own planned path forward through a tailored Plan. The policy is closely aligned with many National Strategic Outcomes such as Compact Growth, Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities, Sustainable Mobility, Enhanced Amenities and the Transition to a Low Carbon Society.



3.1.6 Climate Action Plan 2024

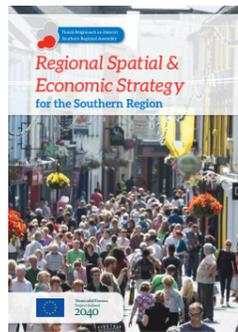
The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) is the third annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan 2024 sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland’s emissions by net by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. It further sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis. The compact growth agenda outlined in the National Planning Framework is reinforced which promotes extensive retrofitting of existing premises and housing stock and the prioritisation of brownfield and compact development. Actions in CAP24 strongly align and support the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland’s towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment, and amenities by sustainable transport modes.



3.1.7 Heritage Ireland 2030

Heritage Ireland 2030 is built around a vision of our heritage being at very centre of discourse, valued by all and cared for and protected for future generations. At the heart of this framework are three themes: communities, leadership and partnerships, reflecting the importance of ongoing collaboration between government and communities, heritage organisations, individuals and local authorities in caring and planning for our shared heritage.

3.1.8 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region



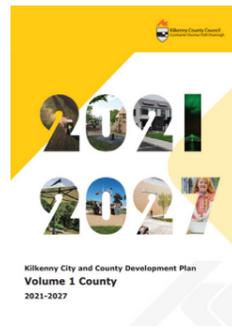
The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) provides a long-term, strategic framework for future physical, economic and social development and seeks to determine at a regional scale how best to achieve National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF and NDP. To this end, the RSES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

Although the RSES does not specifically reference Ballyragget, it acknowledges that:

“There is evidence of significant decline in some smaller towns and villages in the Region. Investment and policy support is urgently needed to bolster and consolidate these vital settlements to arrest the decline and the consequent depletion of the physical fabric and provision of services in these areas”.

Table 3.2 of the RSES, entitled ‘Settlement Typology’, identifies Kilkenny City as a ‘Key Town’. Kilkenny City is described as being the fourth largest settlement in the Region and it is identified as being centrally located within the Region with good road and rail links to Dublin and elsewhere.

3.1.9 Kilkenny City and County Development Plan



The Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Kilkenny for six years whilst aligning with longer term national and regional objectives. As part of the Development Plan Core Strategy, Ballyragget is identified as a Rural Town within the Settlement Hierarchy (Table 4.3).

The Development Plan includes Objective 4La, which forms the basis for the preparation of this Masterplan. It states:

“To develop a set of criteria and a programme to carry out an analysis of the Smaller Towns and Villages (Tier 4) to consider:

- (a) The provision of zoning maps where appropriate (particularly for Ballyragget, Mooncoin, Paulstown, Piltown, Kilmacow and Urlingford)*
- (b) Developing specific objectives for core areas, focal spaces, amenities and opportunity sites etc.,*
- (c) Identify land with development constraints.*

This programme to be commenced within 12 months of the coming into effect of the Plan.”

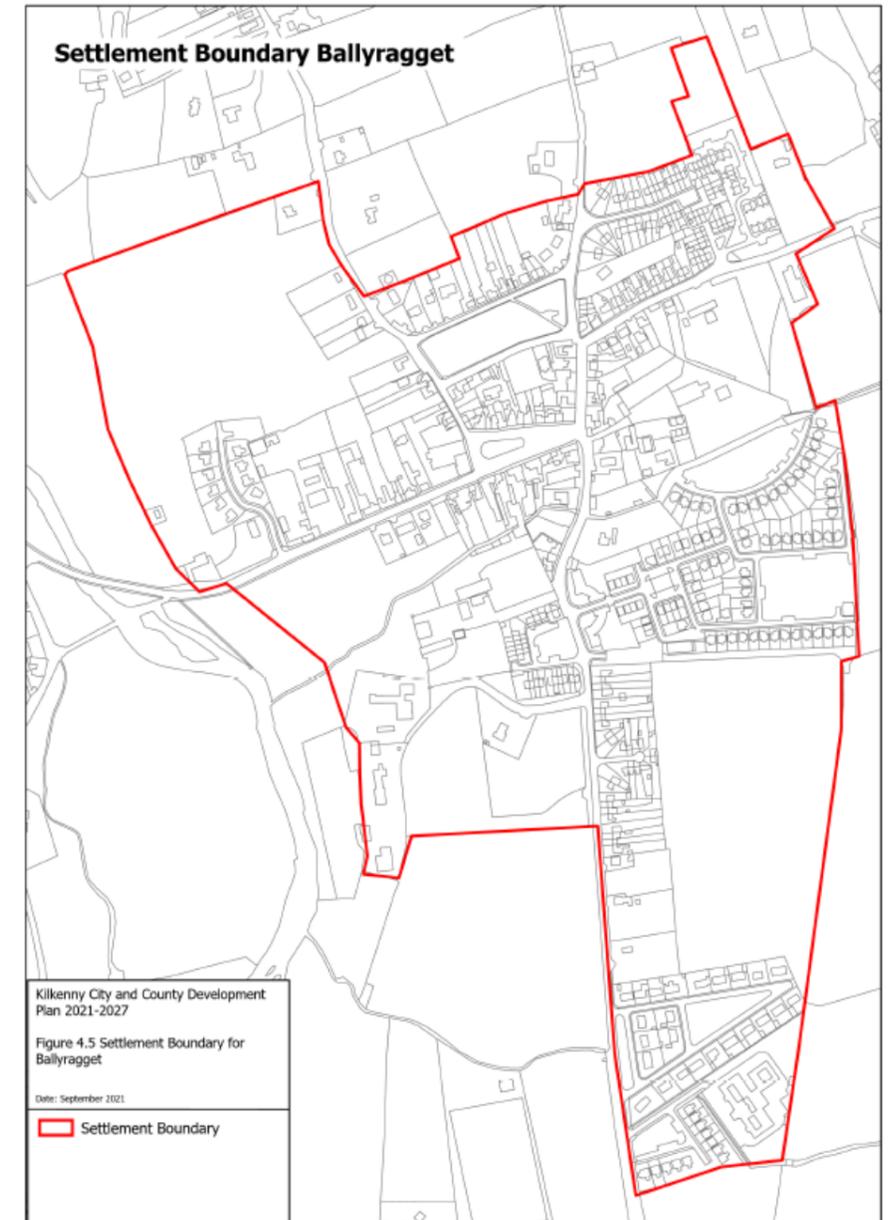


Figure 3.3: Settlement Boundary for Ballyragget (Source: Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027).

3.2 Socio-Economic Analysis

3.2.1 Population

The total population of Ballyragget in 2022 stood at 1,116 no. residents. This follows a period of minimal growth, rising from 1082 no. residents in 2016 (+34; +3.14%). Based on the growth between 2016 and 2022, the population projection for Ballyragget in 2028 will be 1,320 no. residents (18%), representing 3% growth.

The age profile of the town is slightly older compared with demographics at county and national level. In Ballyragget, of the population of 1,116 people, 20% of the population (221 people) are between the ages of 0-14 and 22% of the population (241 people) are aged 65 and over. In Kilkenny County and nationally, 20% of the population are aged between 0-14 years of age. In Kilkenny County, 16% of the population is aged 65 or above and nationally the percentage is 15%

At the time of the 2022 Census, the majority of the population were Irish (92.3%), with a small proportion identifying as being from the United Kingdom (1.4%), or another EU member state (ex. Ire and Poland) (2.2%), the rest of the world (0.5%) or not stated (3.7%).

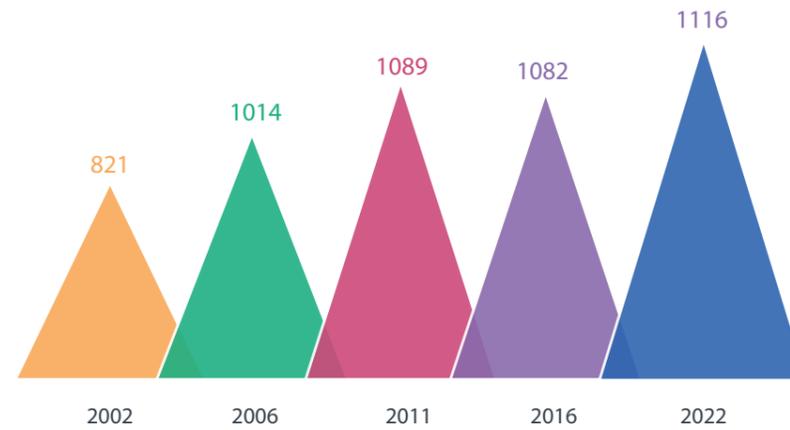


Figure 3.4: Population of Ballyragget 2002-2022 (Source: CSO 2022 Census Data)

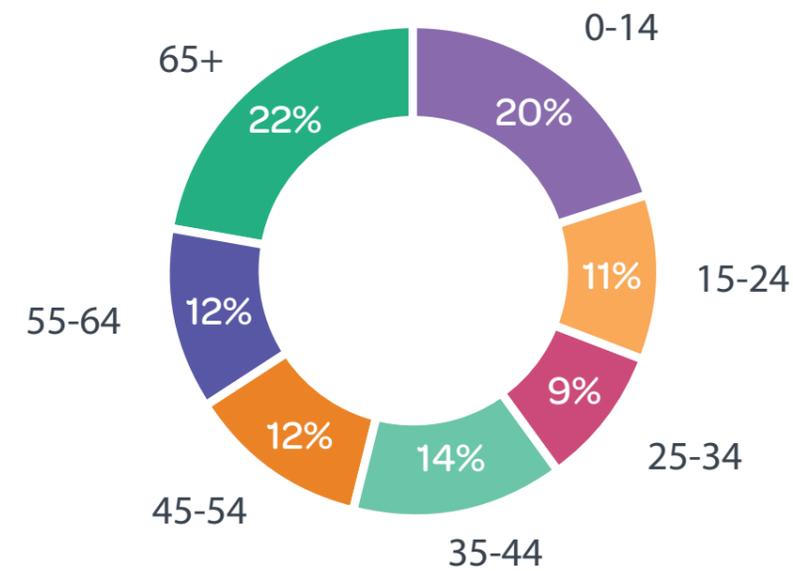


Figure 3.5: Age Groups of Ballyragget in 2022 (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

Nationality

Usually resident population by citizenship	Number of residents in Ballyragget (2022)	Percentage of the Ballyragget population
Ireland	1026	92%
United Kingdom	15	1%
Poland	1	0.1%
India	4	0.4%
Other EU272020 (Exec Ireland & Poland)	19	2%
Rest of World	5	0.5%
Not stated	41	4%

Table 3.1: Nationality by Citizenship in 2022 (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

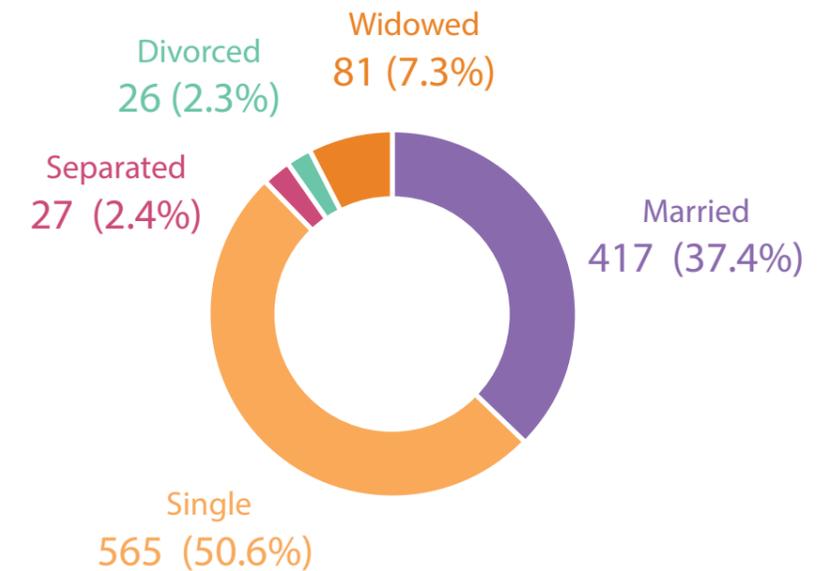


Figure 3.6: Marital Status of Ballyragget in 2022 (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

Housing

The largest proportion of households in Ballyragget are 2 person households (23%), closely followed by 4-person household (22%), and then 3 person households (21%). This is on par with average household size at a national scale with 22% of household sizes being made up of 2-person households, 20% being made up of 3-person households, and 25% being made up of 4-person households.

The main type of occupied housing in Ballyragget is a low density residential development, with 93.3% of residents living house or bungalow. Only 6.7% of residents live in apartments

The level of owner-occupiers either with a mortgage, loan or owned outright (66%) is higher than the national average of 59%, largely in part to the fact that there are higher rates of owning properties outright in Ballyragget (32%) compared to the national average (25%).

In turn, there are lower rates of renters in Ballyragget (29%) either renting from private landlords, local authorities or from voluntary co-operative housing bodies, compared to the national average (36%). While there is a stark difference in the levels of rent from private landlords (8% in Ballyragget and 22% across Ireland), there are higher levels of renting from local authority in Ballyragget (22%) than the national average (11%).

On the night Census 2022 was conducted, 93% of dwellings were permanently occupied with 7% of units vacant, excluding holiday homes.

Significantly, the Census 2022 data reveals that 33% of Ballyragget’s housing stock was developed between 2001 and 2010. This demonstrates that the volume of new home building which occurred in the Settlement during this period in a comparatively short amount of time and is higher (33%) than at national level (27%). Housebuilding in the town from 2011 to now has been relatively limited (8%), in line with the national average (9%).

Persons per Household



Figure 3.7: Person per Household in Ballyragget in 2022. Figures may not add due to rounding. (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

Age of Housing Stock



Figure 3.9: Age of Housing Stock in Ballyragget in 2022 (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

Type of Housing Occupied

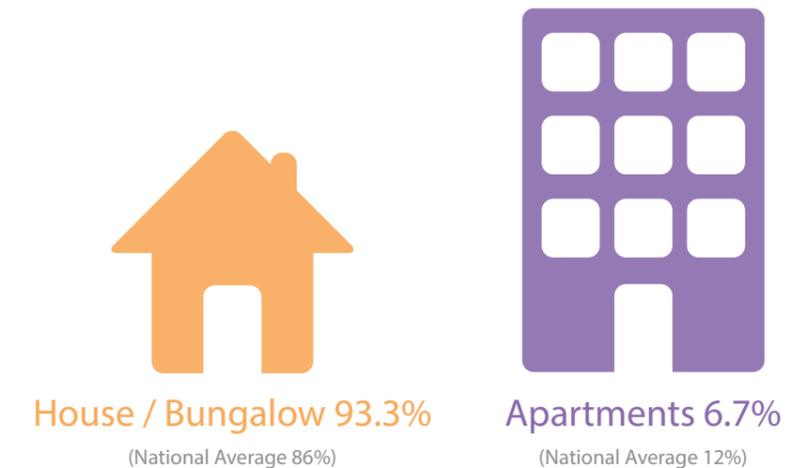


Figure 3.8: Type of Household Occupied in Ballyragget in 2022 (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

Type of Occupancy	Ballyragget	Nationally
Owned with Mortgage	34%	34%
Owned with nNo Mortgage	32%	25%
Renting (private landlord, local authority, voluntary/co-operative housing body)	29%	36%
Occupied Free of Rent / Not Stated	5%	5%

Table 3.2: Types of Occupancy in Ballyragget and Ireland (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)



Figure 3.10: Housing stock in Ballyragget (address: Green View)



Figure 3.11: Housing Stock in Ballyragget (address: Bridge Street).



Figure 3.12: Housing Stock in Ballyragget (address: Castle Gardens)



Figure 3.13: Vacant Buildings with residential potential.

Education and Employment

With regard to education, the Census 2022 results reveal that for 40% of Ballyragget’s population aged 15 and over, the highest level of formal education attained is between Levels 3-5 of the National Framework of Qualifications (junior/leaving certificate at secondary school). This is above the national average of 30%. Ballyragget has slightly higher level of people attaining Level 6 Advanced, compared to the national average (5%). Ballyragget had fewer people attaining Levels 7-10 qualifications (ordinary/honours bachelor degree, Postgraduate diploma or degree, Doctorate(Ph.D) or higher). The census shows that 18% of the population of Ballyragget had a Level 7-10 qualification, compared to 35% of the national population.

The 2022 Census results reveal that 52% of the population in Ballyragget aged 15 years old or over were working compared to 56% of the population at State level. The data shows that unemployment was relatively low at 4% compared with the national average of 6%. 22% of Ballyragget’s residents were retired, and 6% of residents were described as unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability, higher than the national average (5%).

The most populous socio-economic group in both Ballyragget and Ireland is ‘D Non-Manual accounting for 33% of persons in Ballyragget and 36% in Ireland. The next biggest socio-economic group in Ballyragget is ‘E Manual Skilled’ holding 15% whereas the second biggest socio-economic group across Ireland is ‘A Employers and Managers’, representing 14% of the population. Given Ballyragget’s rural location, surprisingly only a small percentage of residents work as farmers (1%) or agricultural workers (0%).

Based on the National Deprivation Index, Ballyragget is considered ‘marginally below average’, with a national average of 0 and Ballyragget scoring -4.80. Kilkenny as a County is classed as marginally below average, with a score of -0.41.

Employment Type	Ballyragget	National
A - Employers and Managers	11%	14.41%
B- Higher Professionals	1%	1.57%
C- Lower Professional	4%	7.24%
D- Non-Manual	33%	36.39%
E- Manual Skilled	15%	8.33%
F- Semi-skilled	9%	8.10%
G- Unskilled	7%	3.20%
H - Own Account Workers	5%	3.66%
I - Farmers	1%	0.36%
J - Agricultural Workers	0%	0.48%
Z - Others	14%	16.26%

Table 3.3: Employment in Ballyragget in 2016 (Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

Employment Occupation sector	Ballyragget %	National %
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	8%	8%
Professional Occupations	12%	21%
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	8%	12%
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	10%	9%
Skilled Trades Occupations	14%	9%
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	12%	7%
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	6%	7%
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	9%	7%
Elementary Occupations	13%	9%
Not stated	8%	11%

Table 3.4: Employment Sector in Ballyragget in 2016 (Source: CSO Census 2022)

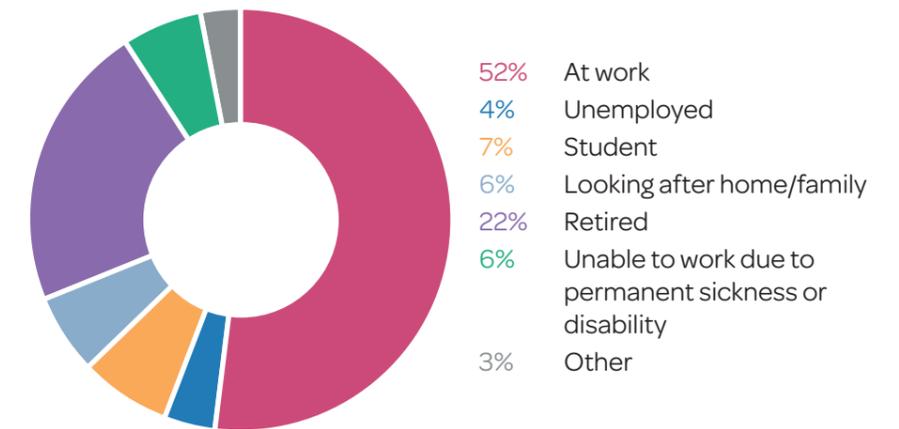


Figure 3.14: Principal Economic status of Ballyragget 2022(Source: CSO Census Data 2022)

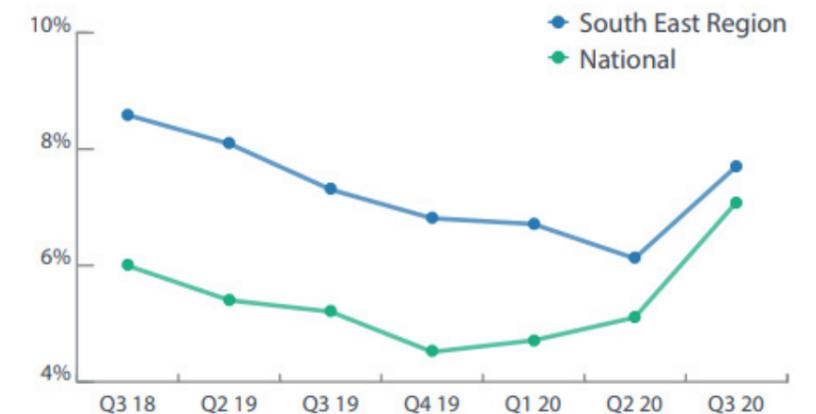


Figure 3.15: Levels of Unemployment across the Southeast Region and Nationally. (Source: CSO Census 2022 Data)

Summary of Socio-Economic Trends

The total population of Ballyragget in 2022 stood at 1,116 no. residents. As the Census data shows, the age profile of the town is slightly older compared with demographics at county and national level. In Ballyragget, 22% of the population (241 people) are aged 65 and over., compared 16% of the population across Kilkenny County Council and 15% of the population across Ireland. Given that the population in Ballyragget but also across Ireland is ageing rapidly, the older demographic of the town must be a key consideration moving forward.

3.3 Urban Analysis

3.3.1 Appreciating Ballyragget

Ballyragget is a historic town with an attractive urban form and patterns. The streetscape of the Square is made up of both 18th and 19th Century structures and vantage points radiating from this point to provide oblique views of the settlement and its townscape feel.

The town is set within a rural context within the north of Co. Kilkenny and enjoys easy access to Kilkenny City and Waterford City, through the strategic road network comprising N77, R694 which link to the M7 and M9 motorways.

Combined with its advantageous location and rich built and natural history, this makes Ballyragget an attractive place to live and work.

3.4 Built Environment: Character Areas

Three separate character areas have been arrived at for Ballyragget - Market Square, Fair Green and River Nore which are described as follows:

- Market Square forms the main town centre and contains a number of amenities such as pubs, cafes, restaurants, and a pharmacy. The N77 roadway runs through the Square, which connects to nearby towns, villages as well as the M7 motorway. The streets radiating from Market Square connect the town to its rural hinterland. The Square also sees the focus for the town's historic features, including the most significant concentration of Protected Structures.
- Fair Green is an area of public open space, which is located to the north of Market Square. This large open space area houses a children's playground, and is surrounded by wooden fencing and mature trees, with select street furniture.
- The River Nore flows to the west of Market Square and is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which includes a variety of habitats supporting a large ecosystem.



Figure 3.16: Market Square

3.4.1 Architectural Heritage

Ballyragget has a strong history and unique identity and character defined in part by several Protected Structures provided around Market Square and recorded in the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027. These Protected Structures are summarised in Table 3.5 and illustrated the figures that follows.

A large number of landmark buildings are located within or surrounding Market Square. The historic fabric of the Square helps to form the identity of the town, for local residents and visitors. The key buildings within the Square include several residential properties, Tower house, the Catholic Church, Ballyragget Lodge, the bridge, the Old National School, Eden Hall and houses spread around the town.

The historic fabric of the town has also been designated as an 'Architectural Conservation Area' in the county, as illustrated in Figure 3.24.



Figure 3.17: Fair Green



Figure 3.18: River Nore



Figure 3.19: St. Patrick's Catholic Church



Figure 3.20: Ballyragget Castle Tower House.



Figure 3.21: Ballyragget Lodge (Formerly Ballyragget Convent of Mercy).



Figure 3.22: Fitzpatrick Public House.

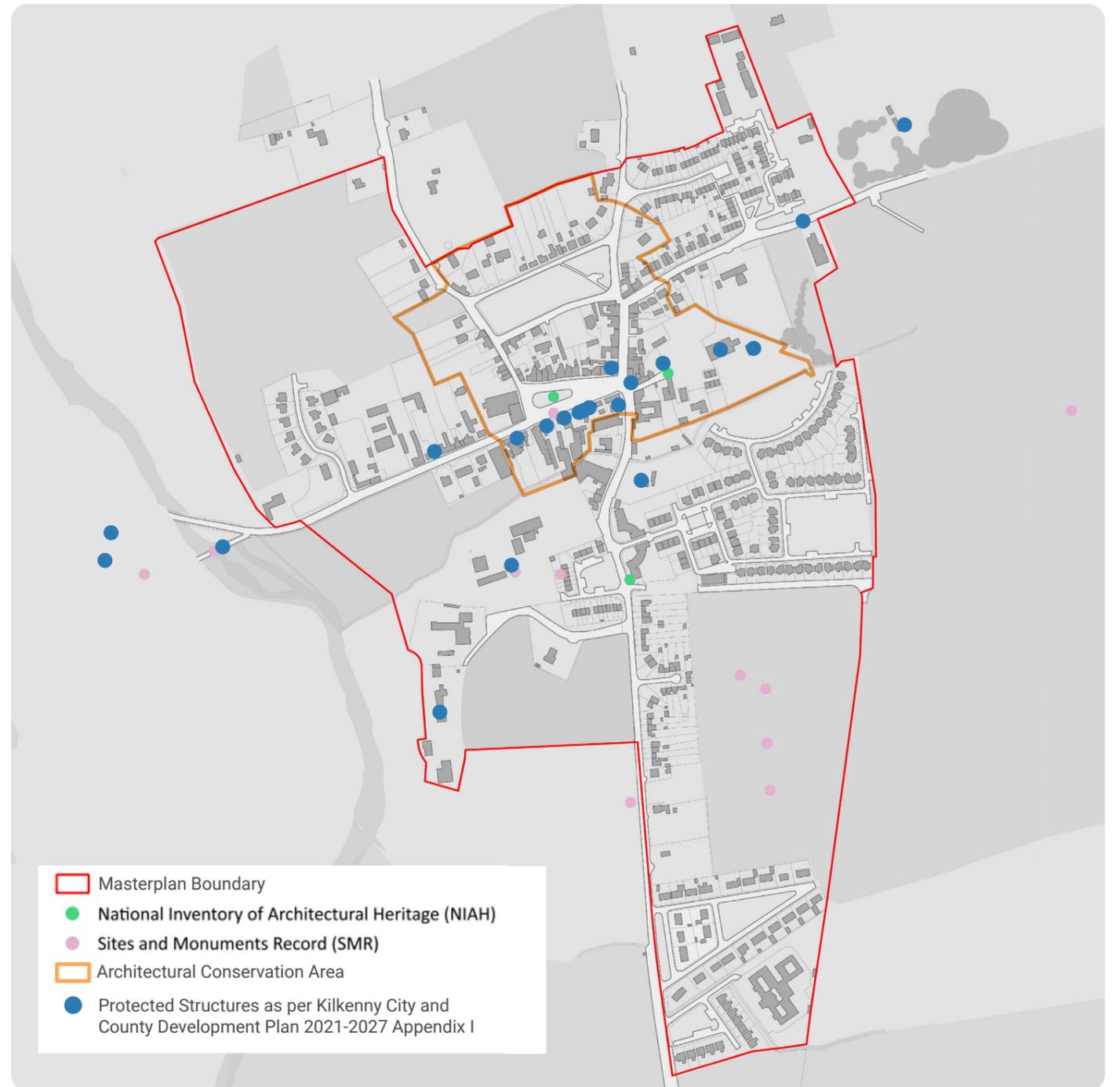


Figure 3.23: Protected Structures, Conservation Area, Recorded Sites and Monuments, National Inventory of Architectural Heritage properties.

Protected Structure	Description	Location
Catholic Church	St. Patrick's Church. Detached seven-bay single- and two-storey Gothic Revival Catholic church, dated 1842, on site of earlier Catholic chapel, pre-1840.	Chapel Avenue
Ballyragget Convent of Mercy	(Balyragget Lodge), built 1788. Detached 5-bay, 2-storey over basement house by Robert Butler.	Beside the Castle
Public House	Corner L plan two storey public house (Fitzpatricks).	North side of the Square
Eden Hall Country House	Detached, five-bay, two-storey house, c.1825.	
Tower House	Castle.	
Ballyragget Bridge	Formerly carrying the main road over the Nore to the west of Ballyragget, the bridge comprises 6 semi-circular arches, with angled cutwaters; 2 floodwater channels and a millrace are also accommodated, Now superseded on the upstream side.	Over the Nore.
School	Detached, three-bay, two-storey, Tudor Revival National School, c.1825.	West end of bridge
Barney Church	Near Grange, Ballyragget Butler-Mountgarret tomb in the form of a sarcophagus on legs.	
The Medical Hall	Commercial property with symmetrical shopfront, gilt lettering.	The Square
Bridge	Long narrow bridge of 11 arches.	
Square	North square is roughly a rectangular green with good simple cottages.	The North Square
House	Mid18th century 6 bay, 2 storey gable ended rendered house with segmental windows and a steep pitched roof.	Street towards the bridge
Houses	2 three storey houses, 1 with inset doric doorcase	Street South to the Square.
House, row of four	Four bay, two storey house with a square headed doorcase and leaded light, chamfered corner and door facing Catholic Church.	Corner facing Square
House	Attached five-bay two-storey over basement house with dormer attic, c.1825.	West end
House	Solid mid-18th century house with Ionic pilasters – 3 bays, 3 storeys plus another 2 bays. "Cantwell's"	East end of Square
House	Four-bay, three-storey structure with round-headed doorway with limestone columns and railings to the street.	Castle Street
House	Work House and Overseer's dwelling	Green Street
House	Four-bay, two-storey over basement structure with round-headed doorway and railings to street.	Bridge Street
House	End-of-terrace three-bay two storey house, c.1990. One of a pair.	The Square
House	Terraced four-bay two storey house, dated 1913, possibly incorporating fabric of earlier house, pre-1840, with square-headed carriageway to the left ground floor.	The Square

Table 3.5: Protected Structures (from the CDP)



Figure 3.24: Ballyragget Bridge.



Figure 3.25: House – Opposite St. Patrick's Catholic Church (NIAH Ref. 12303012).



Figure 3.26: House on the Square (house to the right) (NIAH Ref 12303008).



Figure 3.27: The Square



Figure 3.28: House on Bridge Street (NIAH Ref. 12303004).



Figure 3.29: House on the Square (NIAH Ref. 12303005)

3.4.2 Land Use

Ballyragget provides a mix of uses including retail, commercial, industrial, community uses, residential, and restaurants / public houses / cafés. Residential properties are spread throughout the town and are characterised by semi-detached / detached bungalows and 2-storey houses with private gardens and public open space within a cul-de-sac street.

Regarding healthcare, the town includes a HSE Medical Centre (GP) close to St. Patrick’s Church and a Dentist clinic on the square. The town is also home to Aiséirí Aislínn Adolescent Addiction Treatment Centre for addiction issues with alcohol, drugs and/ or gambling and Brookhaven Nursing Home for long-term residential care, respite care and dementia care, both south of the town centre.

The public services and facilities in Ballyragget are well spread within the town, including a Supervalu supermarket, an XL Carrolls Service Station, McGrath’s newsagents, St. Canice’s Credit Union, Bradley’s Butchers, Mullany’s Pharmacy, Harrington Bookmakers, as well as several café’s, pubs and hairdressers.

In addition, Ballyragget benefits from a community hall, known either as the CYMS Hall Ballyragget or the Ballyragget Community Hall, which is located along the N77, west of the Square.



Figure 3.30: Land Use

There is one Primary school in the town, Ballyragget National School, which was formed through an amalgamation of the old boy’s national school, Scoil Chiaráin Naofa, and the girls’ Scoil Naomh Bhríde in 2018. The school caters from Junior Infants (4-5 years of age) to Sixth Class (11- 12 years of age). Both original school building campuses remain in use but are now designated the ‘Junior’ building and the ‘Senior’ building.

There are three no. childcare facilities in Ballyragget, the Ballyragget Community Childcare Centre and Playgroup, The Wishing Well Creche & Montessori, and Croía Early Childcare Education & Afterschool Care.



Figure 3.31: Supervalu Supermarket in Ballyragget



Figure 3.32: XL Campus Petrol Station.



Figure 3.33: St. Canice's Credit Union, Ballyragget.



Figure 3.34: CYMS Hall Ballyragget or the Ballyragget Community Hall.



Figure 3.35: Ballyragget NS Senior Campus .



Figure 3.36: Glen Vale with Butchers and Pharmacy.



Figure 3.37: Ballyragget N.S Junior Campus



Figure 3.38: Ballyragget Community Childcare Centre and Playgroup

3.4.3 Vehicular Network and Parking

The main road running through Ballyragget is the N77, which is the National Secondary Route linking Kilkenny and Durrow. Two regional roads also converge on the centre of Ballyragget, the R694, the Castlecomer to Freshford road, the R432, and the Abbeyleix to Ballyragget road.

The primary and secondary roads within the town provide two-way traffic, with no designated cycle lanes provided in the town. The N77 is the primary road which runs on a north-south axis through the town connecting Durrow and Kilkenny. There are also several residential roads that intersect the primary and secondary roads that end in cul-de-sacs.

Designated on-street parking is provided along the N77, from the north-entrance to the town to the town centre, and in the southern part of the town. Off-street parking is provided at several points, including to the rear of the dental clinic, within the Square area, and to the rear of the grocery shop 'SuperValu'. Parking provisions provide easy access to the existing amenities / facilities within the town. Consequently, this has led to an issue of congestion within the town, particularly during the school run periods.



Figure 3.39: Pedestrian Crossing on the Square



Figure 3.40: Sign for the National Road N77



Figure 3.41: Grove terrace – an example of a cul-de-sac.



Figure 3.42: On Street Parking along Bridge Street (N77).



Figure 3.43: SuperValu Carpark.

Traffic management measures, including central islands and traffic lights, are in place at both sides of the Square to control the speed of vehicles. However, we note that most of the intersections within the town do not offer pedestrian crossings.

Traffic movements within the town are primarily focused along the N77 with the majority of trips within the town taken by private car. Parking movements act as a means of reducing traffic speeds.

3.4.4 Residential Areas

The town remains mostly residential, with several developments spread across all parts of Ballyragget's settlement boundary. Each residential development has a direct link to the main axis, the N77.

The residential units along the N77 include a mix of terraced houses and apartment units over retail / commercial units. To the south of the N77, from west to east, are the residential development of: Haven Court, Castlecomer Road and Grove Terrace.



Figure 3.44: Mix of Houses, Apartments and retail use along the Square



Figure 3.45: Residential Cul-de-sac Brookfield



Figure 3.46: Residential cul-de-sac Station Avenue

3.4.5 Recreational / Leisure

Ballyragget benefits from a selection of recreational amenities and facilities. There are a number of sporting activities that are available in the town, including GAA, camogie, soccer, martial arts, angling, squash, and badminton.

The St. Patrick GAA Ballyragget Club is located in the south of the town, along the N77. The GAA Club has two sports pitches. Apart from those outdoor activities, most of them occur in the Ballyragget community hall.

There are no designated walking trails within the town.

The two most notable public spaces in the town are the Square and the Fair Green. Today, their primary function is that of a passive amenity (such as visual amenity, strolling, dog walking, etc.). The Fair Green's surrounding planting allows for informal physical recreation (such as playing ball) as well as goal posts which allow for Soccer to be played. The Fair Green also includes a children's specific play area. The small open space in the Square is formally landscaped, well planted, and includes benches.



Figure 3.47: Community and Sports Facilities



Figure 3.48: St. Pat's GAA Pitch.



Figure 3.49: Ballyragget's Fair Green



Figure 3.50 Children's Play area in the Fair Green



Figure 3.51: Public benches in the Square.

3.4.6 Public transport, pedestrian, and cycle links

Ballyragget is served by 1 no. Local Link bus service Route 897 from Athy train station to Kilkenny which runs 4 times each day from Monday to Saturday and three times on a Sunday. Route 897 stops at both Market Square bus stop, within the development boundary and Seven Cross Roads in Ballyragget, outside the development boundary. Slieve Boom Coaches run the Route 838 service from Kilkenny to Mountmellick which runs twice a day Monday to Saturdays, stopping at the Market Square bus stop.

Ballyragget is a small town, easily accessible by walking and cycling. However, we note that there are significant physical barriers within the town which reduce pedestrian / cyclist permeability and comfort, including the lack of connectivity between residential developments and local amenities / facilities, and the high-level of on-street car parking along the N77.



Figure 3.52: Local Link Bus Route 897 at Ballyragget bus stop.

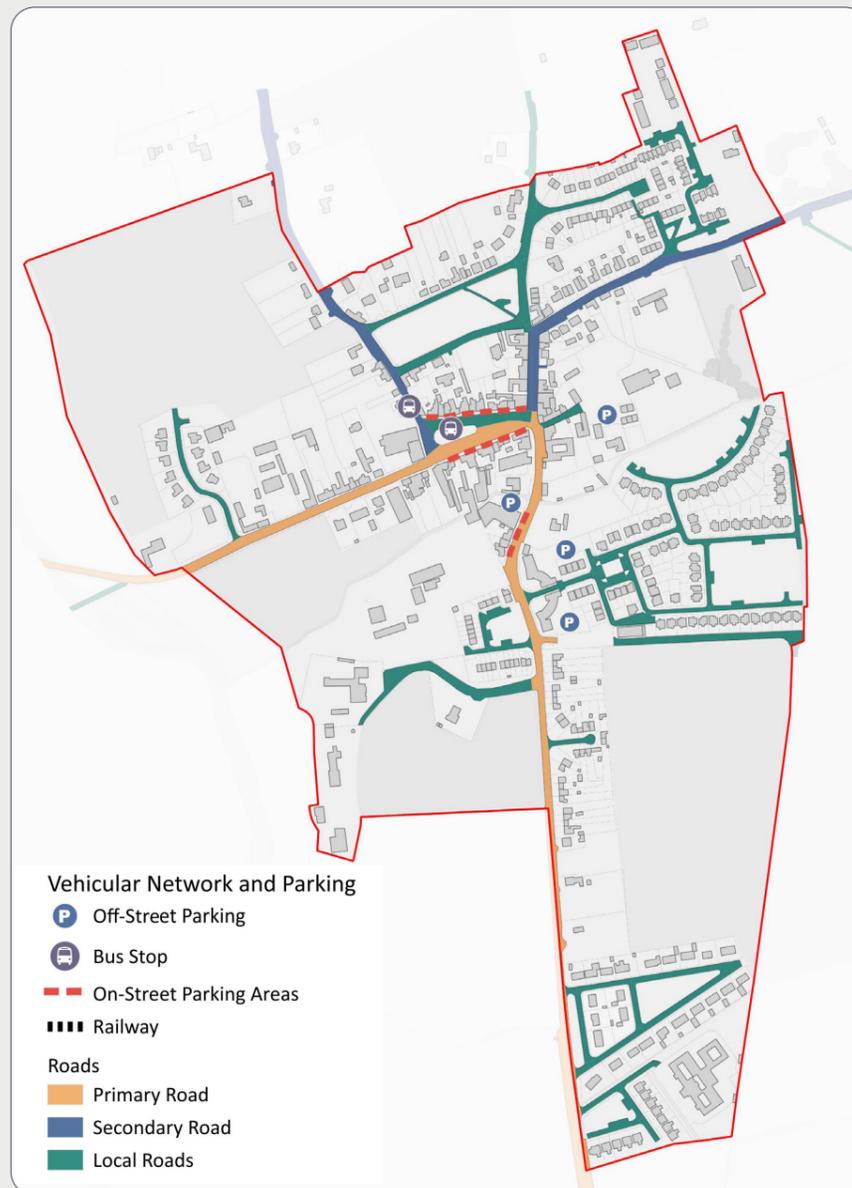


Figure 3.53: Vehicular Network and Parking

While there are footpaths on either side of the N77, they are narrow at points reducing the potential for street furniture or people friendly meeting spaces. Notwithstanding, footpaths remain broadly in good condition around the Square however the quality of the footpaths vary along routes outside the main square.

Most of the intersections within the town do not offer a pedestrian crossing; with only a signalled crossing in the middle of the square, with traffic lights. This makes it difficult to cross at the eastern edge of the square, from Patrick St. (R694)/Chapel Avenue/ Castle St. to the Main Square. Similarly there is no formal crossing points to the western part of the square making it difficult to cross from Moate Rd. (R432) and the western part of Bridge St to the Main square. The lack of pedestrian crossings along the National Road prevent pedestrian permeability across the town, and therefore limits the potential for active transport in the area.

With regards to cycling, there are no designated cycle routes within the town.

It is evident that Ballyragget requires the provision of additional traffic measures, enhanced public realm and landscape improvements, the provision of priority signalised junctions and upgraded public lighting. It is noted that the pedestrianisation of the old bridge was mentioned in the expired LAP. A participant at the public consultation also suggested the pedestrianisation of the old bridge. The pedestrianisation of the old bridge would lead to the creation of a pleasant walking route and amenity area around the River Nore Proposed SAC.



Figure 3.54: Road south of Fair Green without Pavements.



Figure 3.55: Ballyragget southern entrance Speed Limit 60mph

3.4.7 Recreational and Leisure

While there are no cycle or walkways to traverse within Ballyragget, the town forms part of the North Kilkenny Cycle Route which is an 82km route that extends from Castlecomer to Freshford Loop. The route mainly comprises quiet roads joining National roads in sections and there are no segregated cycle lanes on the section throughout Ballyragget. There are no walking trail routes within the town or to other towns nearby.



Figure 3.56: Signs for the North Kilkenny Cycle Route in Ballyragget

Ballyragget benefits from a selection of recreational amenities and facilities. There are a number of sporting groups in the town, including GAA, camogie, soccer, martial arts, angling, squash, and badminton. The two most notable public spaces in the town are the Square and the Fair Green, as outlined above.

With regard to community facilities, there is a community hall, the CYMS Hall Ballyragget, which is located to the west of the central square and caters for a wide range of community including Zumba classes. The St. Patrick's GAA Clubhouse located alongside the GAA pitch is also used as a community hub.

3.4.8 Employment Areas

Industrial areas within Ballyragget are spread within the town.

Two main industrial centres are provided within the town, namely:

- Glanbia Agribusiness Ballyragget located after the north main entrance of the town, and M Dowling Motor Repair located at the end of Moate Road, in the northern part of the town.
- Glanbia Ireland Ballyragget' is a significant industrial site located to the north-east of the town. Glanbia is the largest employer in Ballyragget. Glanbia's main activity is the production of food ingredients, such as milk and other dairy products, but there is also an administration and information technology section located in Ballyragget.

Another large employer is 'Brookhaven Nursing Home' located at the south of the town, within the new residential development 'Haven Court'.

The distance between those areas and the town centre can lead to a sense of disconnection between the town and its employment offer.

3.4.9 Environmental

A Strategic Level Flood Risk Assessment was carried out as part of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027, which identified a small area within the settlement limit, which is designated Flood Zone B, however, the majority of the town is not subjected to flooding. Open lands within the western part of the settlement boundary fall within Flood Zone A and a parcel of land within the centre of Ballyragget falls within Flood Zone B

Lands along the River Nore within Flood Zone A would be appropriate for open space development. However, any area within or adjoining Flood Zone A or B shall be subject of a site specific Flood Risk Assessment appropriate to the type and scale of the development being proposed.



Figure 3.57: Lands along River Nore.



Figure 3.58: Ballyragget Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Map. (Source: Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027).

Summary of Urban Environment

Ballyragget is a historic town with an attractive urban form and patterns. The streetscape of the Square is made up of both 18th and 19th Century structures, many of which have been finely preserved, however some have been neglected or their historical architecture has been altered over the years.

The town is set within a rural context within the north of Co. Kilkenny and enjoys easy access to Kilkenny City and the M7 Dublin-Cork Motorway, particularly through the N77 which runs through the heart of the settlement. While the N77 is a positive for transport and access to other areas, the lack of infrastructure within the town centre to promote active travel within Ballyragget, such as pedestrian crossings and cycle lanes, is noteworthy.

As is typical of rural Irish towns, there are a number of vacant buildings within the town centre, most notably the Butler House along the eastern section of the Square and the former Heather Court Hotel along the eastern part of the square. Despite this, many of the building uses along the main square promote active use and represent positive uses of the built environment.

4.0 Engagement

4.1 Overview

A stakeholder workshop took place on Wednesday 19th January 2023 from 7:30pm – 9:30pm, in Ballyragget Community Hall. The 2023 workshop was intended to be an opportunity, in conjunction with local people to explore and develop ideas by the design team.

The following sections provide an overview of the workshop structure, a summary of the key points raised, followed by a more details record of the feedback received during the workshop exercises.

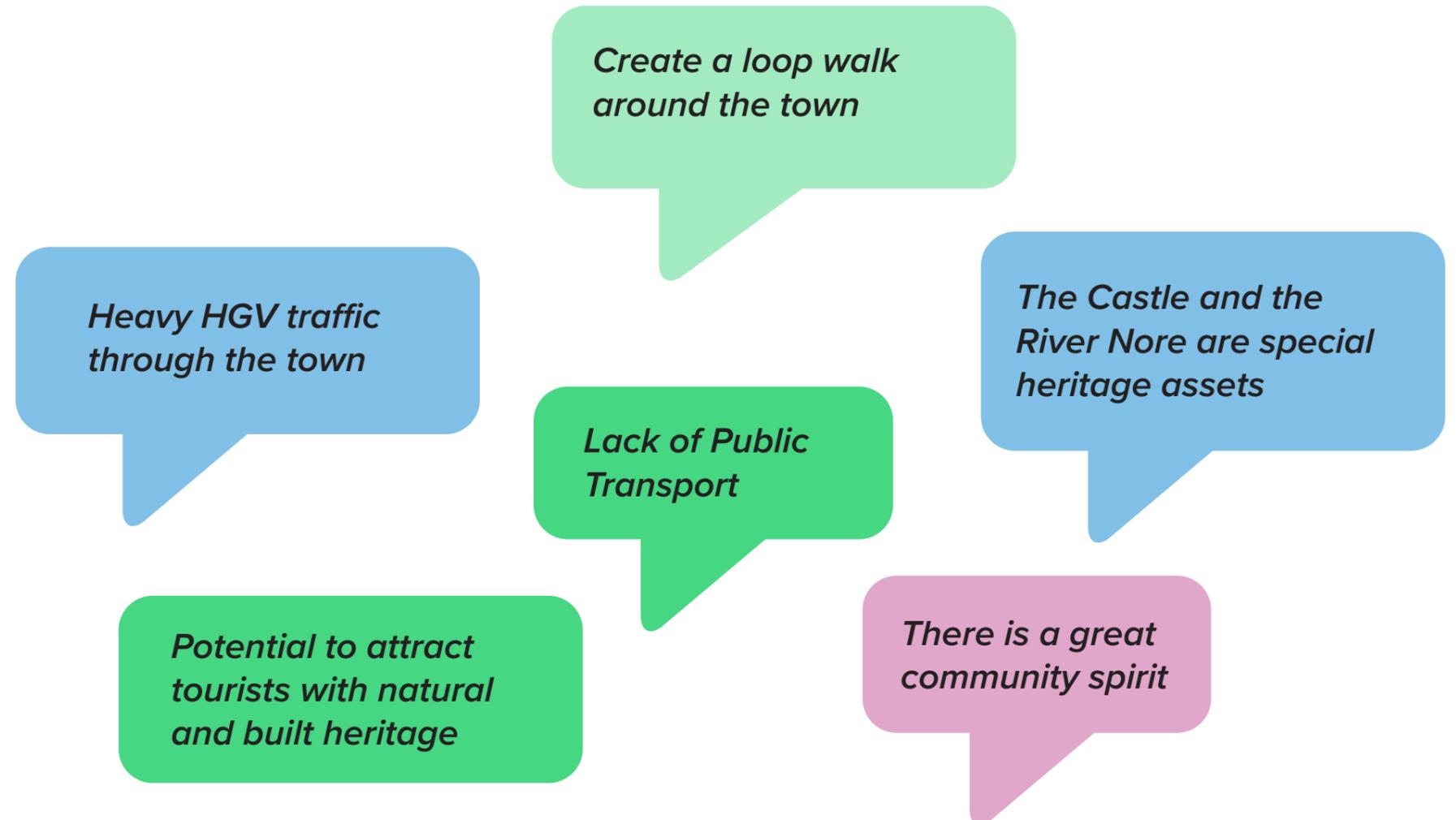
The workshop was open to the entire community to attend and was advertised widely to encourage attendance. A total of 31 local people participated in workshop discussions.

4.2 Workshop Structure

Following a presentation of the proposed interventions, delivered by Turley, participants were asked to undertake a ‘dream and draw’ exercise in small groups. This involved:

- Identifying spaces within the town that should be considered by the Masterplan proposals
- Drawing on ideas for interventions
- Highlighting priority areas for development

The second exercise involved two parts. In the first, we asked participants to identify opportunities and challenges presented by the Ballyragget Masterplan. These were to be written on post-it notes and stuck to the desk in front of them. For the second part of the exercise, participants were asked to pick one for the challenges they had identified and come up with a proposed solution to this.



Challenges and Opportunities

A summary of key challenges and opportunities identified by stakeholders is provided below:

Challenges	
Public Transport	Several groups highlighted the paucity of public transport links between Ballyragget and other towns.
Vacant Buildings	Dereliction within the town was felt to be a challenge.
Protected Building Status	One group raised questions about the status of protected buildings within the town, saying it was unclear why some buildings were being preserved.
Traffic	100 trucks per hour on average, travel through the town which participants felt was a challenge in terms of safety and the environment.
Agreement with Local Landowners	One group identified a need to develop land to attract tourism but warned that this would require coming to an agreement with local landowners.
Public Amenities	Several groups highlighted a need for more public amenities and community hubs, with ideas including: Mens' Shed, Social Clubs, Gym, Public Toilets, Litter / Dog Fouling Bins.
Parking	Parking within Ballyragget was felt to be a challenge, particularly around SuperValu.
Leisure / Recreation	Several groups called for the introduction of an all-weather sports pitch.
Funding	Some respondents felt that securing funding could be a challenge.
Timescales	The lead-in time to deliver improvements within the town was felt to be a challenge.

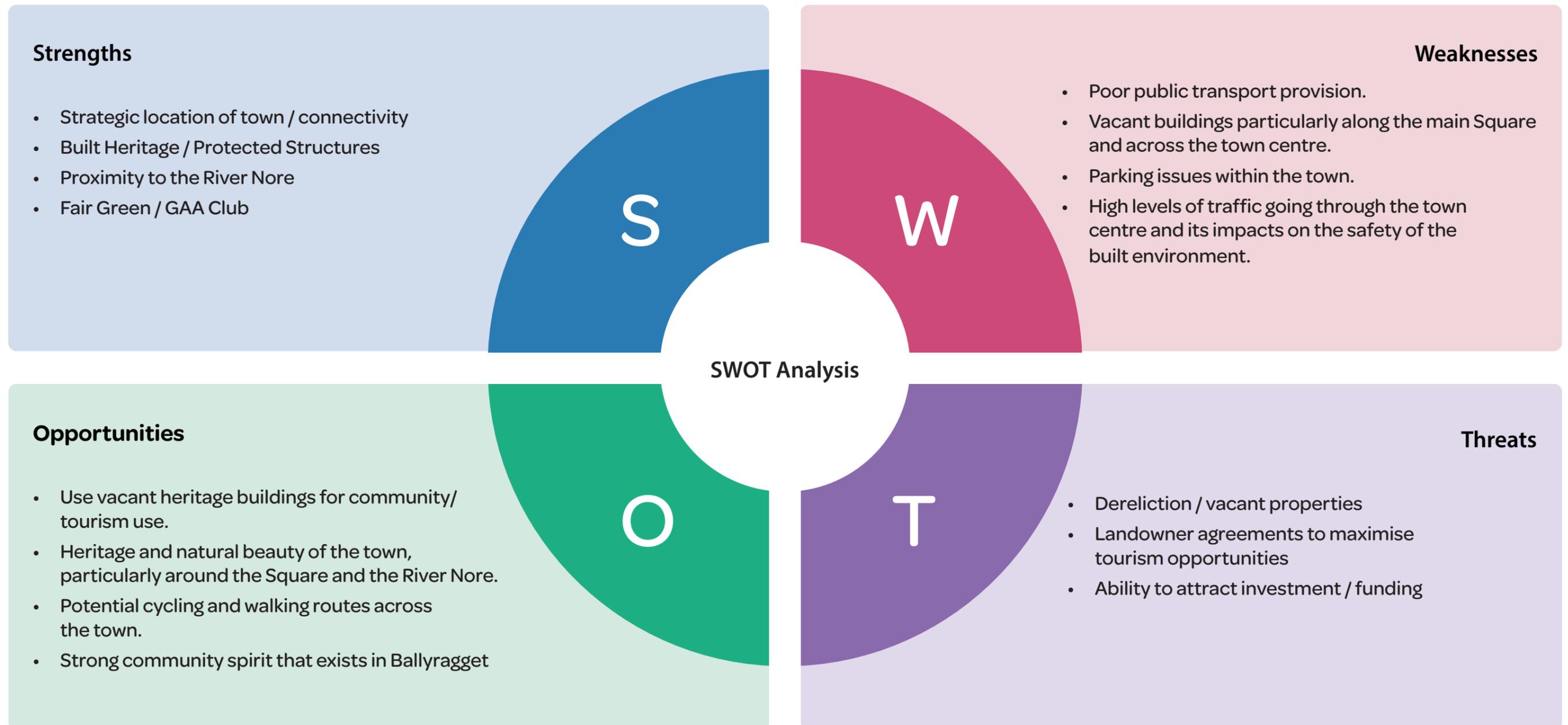
Opportunities	
Cycle and Walking Routes	Participants highlighted a number of opportunities to create new walking or cycling routes within the town, as well as connecting to nearby amenities and towns.
Loop Walk	The idea of a loop walk around the town was very popular.
Heritage	Several groups highlighted the potential of the old bridge, with some suggesting it should be pedestrianised.
Traffic	Some participants felt that the HGV traffic through the town could represent an opportunity. By providing better opportunities for drivers to stop and rest, businesses in town could be supported.
Growing Population	The town's growing population was pointed to as an opportunity for the town to continue to develop.
Heritage	Participants felt that the heritage, both built and natural, of the area was a key strength that should be exploited. Both the Castle and the River Nore were pointed to as evidence.
Fishing	Participants felt that more could be done to make Ballyragget a destination for fishing.
Old School	Participants felt that the old school buildings could be used as a museum or community hub.
Business / Remote Working Hubs	Participants felt that introducing a business or remote working hub could be a benefit to the town.
Community Spirit / Volunteers	Participants felt that the strong community spirit in Ballyragget would help ensure any initiatives to improve the town were a success.

A Question and Answer section took place to give participants an opportunity to comment on ideas, which are summarised below:

Theme	Comments
Community Hub	'The community hub needs to be refurbished and updated to ensure it continues to be sustainable.'
Heritage	'The river is home to unique species of freshwater mussels, found nowhere else in the world. We should be doing more with that.'
'A boardwalk along the river would be a great addition.'	Several groups highlighted the potential of the old bridge, with some suggesting it should be pedestrianised.
'The area north of the bridge is a proposed Natural Heritage Area and the nearby wetlands are protected. We should exploit our natural heritage as an attraction.'	Some participants felt that the HGV traffic through the town could represent an opportunity. By providing better opportunities for drivers to stop and rest, businesses in town could be supported.
'There's a standing wave at Glanbia that could be an attraction for surfers if better promoted.'	The town's growing population was pointed to as an opportunity for the town to continue to develop.
River and Natural Surroundings	Several groups highlighted the potential of the old bridge, with some suggesting it should be pedestrianised.
Walking Paths`	'We need to better connect the GAA grounds to the town'
'A loop walk around the town, visiting the GAA grounds, the river, the bridge and the green would work well'	Participants felt that the old school buildings could be used as a museum or community hub.
Capturing HGV Business	'We could capture a lot of business from the 100 HGVs per hour passing through the town. Create somewhere for them to stop and offer them somewhere to eat – HGV drivers don't want to just eat fast food, but for those passing through the town that's their only option in most of the towns on their route.'
Public Transport	'A park and ride in Ballyragget for people travelling to Kilkenny would be well-used'



Fitzpatrick's Bar



5.0 Masterplan

5.1 Vision for Ballyragget

The vision for Ballyragget is to embrace its unique urban form and utilise the built and natural heritage assets to build on the town's established historic context and character to enhance the town as an attractive place to live, work and do business.

The vision for Ballyragget is also to extend the principles of its unique urban form and to define a fabric for the future development of the Town. Formed by 'two squares', the existing built form will be supported by a connectivity between key nodes, a new river park and a new natural walkway enhancing the town's connections with the River Nore.

The vision is supported by enhanced connectivity throughout the Town, including new pedestrian and cycle connections, creating a safe and accessible environment for all residents and visitors. The strategy also seeks to support new transport links and repurpose existing land and buildings to the benefit of the community.

A comprehensive public realm scheme will help to create an attractive environment within the town and surrounding area by enhancing the key spaces such as the Fair Green, with new areas of public open space providing the opportunity for new recreational activities, supporting the health and well-being of residents and visitors alike.

Ballyragget will be revitalised and rejuvenated through improved connectivity, urban form and amenity, and will become a destination town known for its rich historical and natural assets.

It will identify as a town by the river, enhanced by revitalisation and rejuvenation, in tandem with improved connectivity, urban form and amenity.



“A TOWN BY THE RIVER, ENHANCED BY REVITALISATION AND REJUVINATION, IN TANDEM WITH IMPROVED CONNECTIVITY, URBAN FORM AND AMENITY”

“BALLYRAGGET WILL BECOME A DESTINATION TOWN, KNOWN FOR ITS RICH HISTORIAL AND NATURAL ASSETS”



5.2 Key Spatial Elements

The spatial framework informing the masterplan comprises three key elements set out below.



Key Arterial Routes

Ballyragget will remain structured around the character of the historical town centre, The Square. It has a distinctive, deliberate, and somewhat formalised layout centred on The Square and the Fair Green, with approach roads linking to Bridge Street, regional roads R432 and R694, and national road N77. The streetscape of the Square is made up for the most part of 18th and 19th Century structures, of consistent architectural scale, proportion, and finish. The historic building formation is created in a frame of single row, deep plots, fronting onto main approach roads.



Town Loop Walk

The Town Loop Walk would act as a secondary spatial element, informed by walking routes linking to the town centre and wider area. The infrastructure will provide enhanced connectivity within Ballyragget and serve as a tourism asset promoting active tourism and enabling visitors to explore the town's rich built and natural heritage.



Key Nodes

The Fair Green, The Square and its key heritage assets, the GAA Club and the River Park are the key nodes within the Town. They are the strategic foci into which the observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which one is travelling. They may be primary junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths.

5.3 Guiding Principles

This plan is about ensuring Ballyragget has the right objectives and projects in place to become a better place to live, work and run a business, ensuring the vitality and vibrancy of the town into the future.

The aim is to increase the resilience of the local community and economy and provide an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, child-friendly and healthy urban environment. Towns are continually evolving and need to be resilient, and Ballyragget, with its rich history and natural environment assets, can be reimagined to provide a more connected, vibrant, and dynamic place to live, work and visit.

Taking into account the Town Centre First policy objectives, our baseline analysis of the town and the feedback received from the local community, we have developed a set of principles to help guide the ideas, actions and strategies for the masterplan.

These are:

Streets and Public Spaces – rebalancing the streets of Ballyragget with upgraded public realm to coincide with the works already carried out to The Square, creating an attractive environment.

Movement – Improved connectivity between the town and its surrounds, as connectivity is fundamental to the social and economic success of a town.

Heritage and identity – celebrate the culture and heritage of Ballyragget, defining its image and making it a destination town for visitors.

Built Form and Use – Reuse of existing vacant / derelict buildings to provide new community facilities and /or tourism offerings.

Vitality and Vibrancy – ensure the town of Ballyragget is an economically viable community with the capacity to generate income and employment necessary to maintain or improve the town.

Sustainability and Climate Resilience – Resilient towns promote sustainable development, well-being and inclusive growth.

Streets and Public Spaces

Ballyragget will be characterised by an attractive public realm (streets, spaces and parks) that is designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell. The public realm will be carefully designed to serve the whole community, performing multiple roles as places to rest, meet, play, exercise, or host community events.

Investigate the potential for a River Park along the banks of the River Nore along a Town loop walk, which will provide a dedicated cycle and pedestrian greenway for residents and visitors alike. The Looped walk and a possible River Park will enhance the relationship with the River Nore and serve as a tourism asset, promoting active tourism and enabling visitors to explore the town’s rich heritage and biodiverse hinterlands.

Enhance connectivity of streets and places to encourage active travel for short journeys, reducing car dominance.

Ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to street furniture and materiality, including street lighting, within the public realm.

Provide a network of public and green spaces at varying scales to help strengthen community ties across all ages, offer space for activities and events, and improve the health and well-being of the community and visitors.

Movement

Address the balance within the town to create a safer, accessible pedestrian experience, improving the attractiveness and perception of the town.

Manage traffic through the town by the introduction of traffic calming measures such as speed ramps, and new pedestrian crossing points at intersections of the town to ensure pedestrian safety.

Provide an integrated pedestrian and cycle network to promote sustainable travel to, from and around the town centre. The new network will allow for public realm enhancement and permeability along the new Towns loop walk.

Develop a new car park to service the Town looped walk, to provide a “park and walk / cycle” facility which will also service and support the active tourism initiative.

Create an accessible and inclusive streetscape, supporting ease of movement for children travelling to the nearby school, through minimising uneven pavements and reducing clutter.

Heritage and Identity

Tackle dereliction and improve the appearance of buildings, particularly façade improvements to buildings within the town centre to improve the overall attractiveness.

Identify, adapt, restore and/or reuse historic buildings for the benefit of the local community, creating a more inclusive, attractive environment, building on the strong community spirit.

Celebrate the town's heritage and history through signage, wayfinding, trails, events and festivals, highlighting the historic assets with possible interventions including lighting, greening, access and potential museum / Castle shop.

Define Ballyragget's image as an alluring historical town which embraces its enduring character and treasures its rich built and natural heritage, whilst adapting to meet current needs as a destination in which to live, work and do business.

Built Form and Use

Make effective use of existing derelict / vacant building stock within the Town to provide new spaces for new uses.

Enhance existing community hall and provide a range of public and community spaces, to provide activities for the young and old, contributing to a more inclusive community and adding to the health and well-being of residents' and visitors.

Ballyragget will become a tourist destination town. Explore opportunities for hotel / hostel accommodation to support active tourism initiatives, which will support local businesses and contribute to the town's economic viability.

Vitality and Vibrancy

Ballyragget will provide attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop. It will provide opportunities for jobs and enterprise, including working hubs.

Tourism – explore opportunities and prepare a 'Tourism Strategy' for the town. There is a huge potential for tourism including: active tourism (the proximity to the River Nore and NHA, with suggested new looped walk and potential River Park, angling etc.) and the historic assets (Tower Castle with the 'wishing chair').

Create an attractive and welcoming environment for the local community and visitors, through the provision of well-designed and considered planting, street furniture, lighting, signage and wayfinding.

Create a programme of events for the town to include activities to celebrate aspects of the town's cultural identity (for example, a monthly market in the Square, which in turn supports local businesses), and create new activities linked to the natural heritage assets, such as angling events and/or water-based activities, appealing to the local community as well as visitors.

Sustainability and Climate Resilience

Ballyragget will provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.

Introduce additional planting and greening, with sustainable drainage, particularly along the new Town Loop Walk, to create an attractive environment, enhance biodiversity and to mitigate against flooding and climate change.

Ensure Ballyragget has an urban framework and infrastructure that will support the anticipated population growth, in the most sustainable way.

5.4 Plan Framework

This overall plan brings together opportunities for investment, improvement, and development across a wide range of potential locations. The plan is not a blueprint, rather a flexible framework which seeks to set out how opportunity sites might come forward in a manner which responds positively to context and creates good quality, connected and integrated places. Some particular ideas and opportunities are highlighted across the following pages before the individual plan project ideas are outlined for the town.

5.5 Intervention Toolkit

The interventions toolkit has been arranged to align with the six placemaking themes (guiding principles), under which there are a broad range of intervention opportunities.

Within the following section are a series of ideas to reinforce these placemaking pillars, with a focus on physical enhancements to the public realm alongside opportunities for events, activation, and branding.

5.5.1 'Physical Enhancement' vs 'Activation Interventions'

All the projects are identified as either a 'physical enhancement' project or an 'activation intervention' project.

- Physical Enhancement will typically be interventions comprising physical development in the built or natural environments (e.g., public realm enhancement, a public park, or a new building).
- Activation Interventions will typically be interventions that do not result in changes to the physical environment per se but play an important role in supporting effective land use and activities in the village (e.g., events coordination, business development or feasibility studies).

Masterplan Key Interventions

Streets and Public Spaces

- 1 Public Realm Enhancement
- 2 Town Loop Walk
- 3 Fair Green

Movement

- 4 New Town Car Park
- 5 Reduce level of on-street car parking
- 6 Pedestrian and Cycle Network
- 7 Wayfinding
- 8 Traffic Calming

Heritage and Identity

- 9 Façade Improvements
- 10 Town Gateways

Built Form and Use

- 11 Butler House
- 12 Community Centre/ Hall
- 13 Heather Court Hotel

Vitality and Vibrancy

- 14 Programme to tackle vacancy and dereliction
- 15 Cycling and Walking Activities
- 16 Heritage
- 17 Events

Sustainability and Climate Resilience

- 18 Groups and Organisations
- 19 Landscaping
- 20 EV Charging

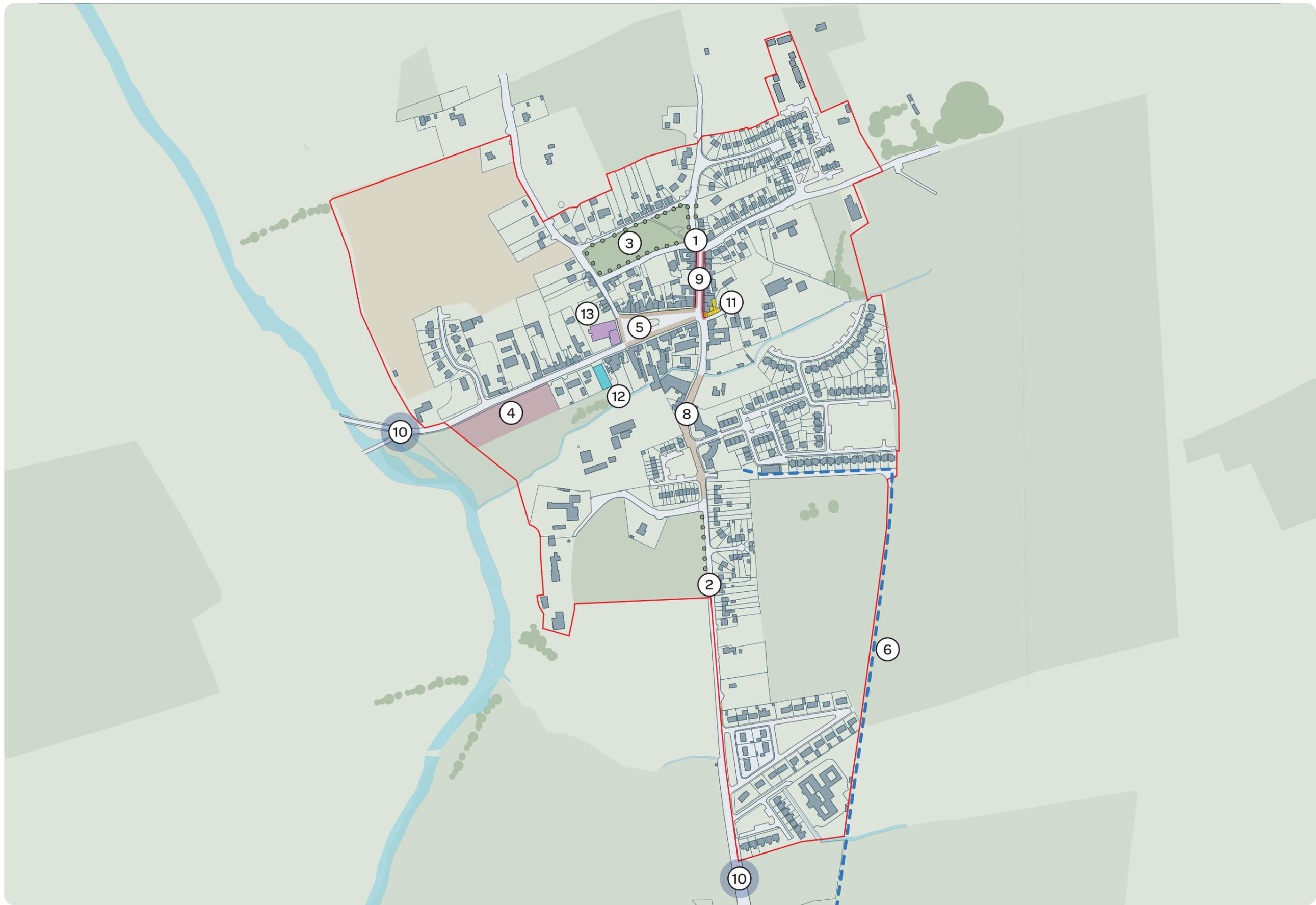


Figure 5.1: Ballyragget Masterplan – Key Interventions (Source: Placeholder)

Masterplan Interventions

Streets and Public Spaces

01 Public Realm Enhancement

Preparation of a comprehensive public realm enhancement scheme in order to provide an attractive Town Centre, and compliment existing public realm.

The scheme will include new, level pavements which will support active travel choices and will serve the community as a whole.

Key Features:

- Improve the balance of quality of public spaces through enhanced public realm
- Reduced on-street car parking. New car parking will be facilitated along the Town Loop Walk, with bicycle storage to be located centrally.
- High quality materials (local materials e.g. limestone paving and sets) and high quality detailing.
- Widening of footpaths where applicable to ensure accessibility for all residents' and visitors.
- Improved street lighting to public places (e.g. Fair Green) using the heritage lighting columns found in the Square, to support safe and active travel.
- Consistent approach to public realm to ensure continuity throughout the town, in terms of seating, bins, lighting columns etc.
- Reduction of street clutter – removal of overhead lines where possible and relocated underground.

Short Term Interventions

- Additional landscape features throughout the town – tree planting in selected locations, raised planters, and raised planters with benches.

A good example...



Abbeyleix

Abbeyleix demonstrates the value of strategic infrastructure investment, including public realm enhancement, acting as a catalyst for regeneration. In 2009, Laois County Council began initiatives to address challenges to the vitality and viability, of Abbeyleix, including depopulation of the urban core, traffic congestion and limited car parking provision.

Laois County Council commissioned the adaptation of the market house into a new Library. Subsequently, a strategic plan was prepared for the town. The Plan highlights the importance of a sense of place, respect for the environment and a high quality public realm in the creation of sustainable communities. It also recognises the value of heritage – both in terms of historic buildings and public spaces – as a resource to be conserved, both for its own sake and to revitalise the town centre and its economy.

02 Town Loop Walk

A new Town Loop Walk potentially providing dedicated public space connecting key assets, including the Community Hall. It could include a pavilion (potentially toilets, showers, bike hire, fishing equipment hire and other water-based sporting equipment to support active tourism) and natural play equipment and skate park. Key features could include:

Key Features:

- A new river park with supporting facilities.
- A new car park providing parking to the town centre and a place of rest for passing HGV traffic, supporting local businesses.
- A Town Loop Walk with dedicated cycle and pedestrian lanes, with crossing points throughout the loop and town centre.
- Heritage trails, highlighting the history of the town through designs for the public realm and ensuring good wayfinding throughout.
- Enhanced connectivity within the town and active travel routes to key locations.
- Support for the health and well-being of residents and visitors.



Potential Study Area for Town Loop Walk



Potential views of Loop Walk

03 Fair Green

An existing rectangular area of public open space to the north of the Square, with a children's playground. There is potential to make this public space a focal point, by making it more attractive to residents' and visitors.

Key Features:

- c. 1ha of open space located within the town centre.
- Existing children's playground.

Key Actions:

- Improve street lighting within the vicinity to ensure pedestrian safety for residents and visitors.
- Explore potential to erect public artwork / sculpture to create a focal point.
- Meandering pathways through the space that do not prohibit the use of the area as an informal playing pitch.
- Careful landscaping interventions could be introduced such as formalised planting, raised planters and / or planters with benches
- Addition of a bandstand or similar feature to provide sheltered seating area, making this area an attractive space to meet, mingle and play.



Views of Fair Green



Example planters

Source: ABC Borough Council – Scarva Bandstand in Bloom

Masterplan Interventions

Movement

04 New Town Car Park

Provision of a new town car park located c.0.5Km from the Square that will support active travel choices to and around the town centre. This car park will also provide access to the new River Park.

Key Features:

- Provides a destination point on arrival to the town at the western gateway.
- Provides access to the River Park / Heritage Trails.
- To include EV charging points.
- To include a rest area, drawing HGV traffic away from the town centre.
- To include bicycle parking.
- To include a high quality attractive public realm scheme with select landscaped areas.

05 Reducing the Level of On-Street Carparking

There is a high level of on-street parking throughout the town. It is proposed that some of these spaces are removed to facilitate new 'greened' areas, which would comprise raised planters with benches / seated areas, to create more space for residents and visitors to meet or provide areas for existing businesses to spill out onto the street.

Short term interventions could include:

- Potential to line parking bays at SuperValu (N77) to indicate available number of spaces.
- Potential to introduce double yellow lines on opposite side of the road to avoid hazardous double sided parking on a busy road.



Market Square.



N77 outside SuperValu.

06 Pedestrian and Cycle Network

The town presently has no cycle or pedestrian network. The potential new Town Loop Walk and potential River Park will provide connectivity to and within the town, providing active travel options.

Key Actions:

- Provision to be coordinated with the new loop walk and River Park.
- Explore opportunity to provide footpath to cemetery.
- Enhanced footpath and junction improvement at Moate Street / High Street – short term interventions could include ‘Yield’ signage or pedestrian / children playing signage.
- Cycle storage and parking to be located centrally.
- Improve signage which supports sustainable movement e.g., links off the Loop Walk.

07 Traffic Calming

There is a lack of pedestrian crossing points at congested areas including along the N77 at SuperValu. The town also has high levels of HGV traffic.



Traffic calming

Therefore, resident and visitor safety is paramount.

- Introduce new signage tying into branded wayfinding signage.
- Explore interventions such as speed bumps, rumble strips, raised tables, introduction of zebra crossing points with raised tables in particular areas of the town, and / or the inclusion of traffic islands.

08 Wayfinding

Introduce new branded signage for the town, including entrance signs to the western and southern approaches to create a sense of arrival. Introduce interpretative signage at potential new River Park for the historic trails.

Explore introduction of heritage plaques to help identify Protected Structures within the Town.



Ballyragget Castle Signage.

Masterplan Interventions

Heritage and Identity

09 Façade Improvement

Vacancy, dereliction and the consequential appearance of buildings has been highlighted as an issue within the town centre and secondary streets.

The town is characterised by the two 'formal squares'. Therefore, the quality and appearance of buildings is important to ensure they contribute positively to the historic streetscapes.

Key Features:

- Work with local businesses and property owners to explore options for improvement.
- Ensure any proposed works comply with heritage policies and objectives set out in the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027, especially within the Architectural Conservation Area.
- Support business owners in securing grant funding.

How this could be done...



Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative Project

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



Glove Factory, Tipperary Town

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



Vacant and derelict Red Barn Building facing onto the Square.



Shopfront Clutter in Architectural Conservation Area

10 Town Gateways

The western and southern approaches to the town should be prioritised as a short-term intervention in order to create an attractive, welcoming gateway to the town, through a combination of signage, landscaping and artwork capturing the town's history (e.g., the Tower Castle). Through these mechanisms existing arrangements could be significantly improved.



Welcome to Ballyragget sign along the N77.



Images of signs across Ballyragget

Masterplan Interventions

Built Form and Use

11 Butler House

Butler House dates to c.1750 and is one of Ballyragget's heritage assets. The building is vacant / derelict, and its central location on the Square would make it an ideal building for a community hub / remote working hub with the potential to include gym facilities and / or café. There is a courtyard to the rear of the property which would be suitable for car and bicycle parking.

Actions:

- Work with Kilkenny County Council and / or the Heritage Council to seek means of funding with a view to securing funding to carry out restoration works.
- Repurpose the space within the building for a number of activities (e.g., community events, gym space, café, youth club, remote working hub).
- Opportunity to have CPD events / local courses / further education events whilst not detracting from the nearby Community Hall.



Butler House

12 Community Centre / Hall

The community hall is located on the N77 beside the Square. Apart from outdoor activities held at the GAA Club, most of them occur in the hall.

Based on the existing use of the hall combined with the desire to expand activities for younger people, there is a need to refurbish the existing building.

Key Actions:

- Liaise with the local community to ascertain what activities could be facilitated within the space.
- Assess the opportunity to enhance the building.
- Explore how the community hall's relationship will benefit and compliment the potential new River Park, including dual access and parking.



Community Hall

13 Heather Court Hotel

Despite its central location on the Square, this property and site is unoccupied. Therefore, it is a key opportunity site within the town. A feasibility study should be carried out to explore the potential for a hotel or hostel accommodation, which would support the active tourism initiatives proposed for the town and would contribute to the existing active street frontages.

Actions include:

- Engage with stakeholders to understand what level of accommodation could support the local tourism initiatives.
- Undertake a feasibility study to assess local provision and future demand.
- Short-term interventions could include landscaping initiatives such as hedge and tree planting to screen the vacant building and carpark from the N77, which would positively contribute to the town's attractive streetscape.



Heather Court Hotel

Masterplan Interventions

Vitality and Vibrancy

14 Programme to Tackle Vacancy and Dereliction

Vacancy and dereliction are a key priority within the National Town Centre First Policy Framework. Feedback from the local community revealed that this is an issue for those who live and work in the town.

Actions include:

- Identifying owners of vacant and derelict properties.
- Engaging positively with building owners, landowners to discuss issues in restoring life to vacant / derelict properties and develop a plan to reactivate properties with the potential for commercial, heritage and/or community use.
- Explore potential of various uses for vacant and derelict buildings.
- Liaise with Kilkenny County Council and other relevant bodies to identify any financial support for restoration works.



Dereliction along Patrick St.



Vacancy along Patrick St.

15 Cycling and Walking Activities

The town presently has no cycle or walking routes, with this issue being seen as the second priority area for improvement within the town by the local community. A new Town walking / cycle loop linked with a potential River Walk would fulfil the community aspirations and contribute to their well-being.

A wider greenway route could also be explored along the Old Railway Line, linking the town further afield, bolstering its active tourism offer.

Key actions:

- Engage with Kilkenny County Council and stakeholders to outline and agree Loop Walk / cycle route within Ballyragget.
- Explore opportunities to enhance relationship with the River Nore through wider greenway aspirations.
- Explore linear park linkages to new town cycle and pedestrian network.



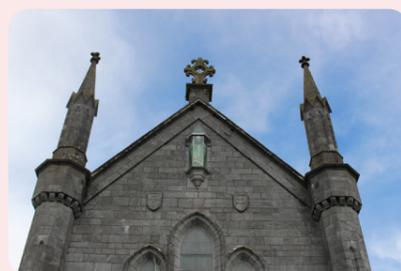
Pedestrian Crossing on the Square

16 Heritage

There is an opportunity to capitalise on the town's rich history through implementation of heritage trails in conjunction with the cycle / pedestrian routes and linear parks.

Key actions:

- Identify riverside landowners to secure land for linear park and heritage trails.
- Liaise with heritage property owners on the possibility of introducing heritage plaques, and potential to open up heritage assets to the public (e.g., the Tower is within private ownership and is closed to public access).
- Installation of interactive wayfinding with the potential to introduce digital technology (QR Codes) to provide more detail on the history of the heritage assets.
- Explore potential to develop Heritage Strategy to protect and preserve built heritage.



Historical building

17 Events

Historically, the Square was used for markets and 'The Fair'. Therefore, there is potential to recreate these events along with a wider event programme for the town. The Covid-19 Pandemic illustrated the value and importance of events to bring local communities together, and Ballyragget has a strong community spirit.

Actions include:

- Production of an events programme in conjunction with the wider public realm improvements.
- Events could include farmers market, craft fairs or seasonal fairs.



Market Square

18 Groups and Organisations

Several groups who participated in the masterplan workshops identified the need for more community hubs and amenities. Through this masterplan, Kilkenny County Council seeks to support and facilitate groups and organisations that already exist within the local area and aim to add to these by creating a more inclusive community, contributing to residents' health and well-being.

Actions:

- Engage with the local community to understand what groups are lacking.
- Continue to promote the town through the Ballyragget Town Development Association / Tidy Towns initiative.
- Investigate the possibility of establishing a Town Team in Ballyragget.



Community events

19 Landscaping

Additional landscape measures throughout the town will not only contribute to the biodiversity of the town, but will enhance the overall appearance, making it an attractive destination town.

- Short-term interventions to include planting of hedges, or railings with planters along N77 to screen existing commercial properties



Landscaping

20 EV Charging

EV charging should be provided within the town and in any new development. EV charging points should be located centrally within the Square, with additional charging points proposed within the new Town Car Park to service the wider community and visitors and at other locations if demand presents itself.



EV Charging

Placemaking Theme	ID	Project	Description	Priority
Streets and Public Spaces	1	Public Realm Enhancements	Preparation of a comprehensive public realm enhancement scheme to provide an attractive Town centre. The scheme will include new level pavements, widened pavements where applicable, street lighting upgrades and landscaping interventions	●●●
	2	Town Loop Walk	Creation of a Loop Walk and Linear Park, creating dedicated pedestrian and cycle paths along with a new area of public open space, enhancing the Town's relationship with River Nore. It will include natural play areas, skate park and a pavilion (potentially for water sports hire, angling, biking) supporting active tourism.	●●○
	3	Fair Green	Enhance this existing area of public space through the addition of new lighting, new landscaping (e.g., benches with planters), to create an attractive space for people to meet, mingle and play.	●●●
Movement	4	New Town Car Park	Develop a new car park at the New Town Park to provide appropriate car parking for the town centre. The new car park will connect with the town park, linear park and loop walk.	●●●
	5	Reduce level of on-street parking	Rebalancing the Square to reduce the level of on-street car parking by providing spaces at the new car park and replacing spaces with landscaping interventions, to enhance the streetscape.	●○○
	6	Pedestrian and Cycle Network	Creation of a new pedestrian and cycle network to improve connectivity to the town centre through active travel, and to support the health and well-being of residents and visitors.	●○○
	7	Wayfinding	Introduce new branded signage for the town, including entrance signs to the western and southern approaches to create a sense of arrival, introduce interpretative signage at new Linear Park and install heritage plaques on the protected structures.	●○○
	8	Traffic Calming	Traffic calming measures to reduce speed of vehicles approaching the town. A number of interventions such as signage, speed bumps or rumble strips could be employed.	●●●
Heritage and Identity	9	Façade Improvements	Carry out façade improvements utilising government supports and funding.	●●●
	10	Town Gateways	The Western and Southern approaches to the town should be reviewed to include signage and / or art to create a sense of arrival.	●●●
Built Form and Activity	11	Butler House	Butler House is centrally located on the Square, making it an ideal location for a remote working hub with other facilities such as gym / café etc. The courtyard to the rear could provide parking and bicycle storage, avoiding increase to any on-street parking.	●●●
	12	Community Centre / Hall	The Community Hall is in need of refurbishment to ensure it is continued to be used to service the residents of Ballyragget.	●●●
	13	Heather Court Hotel	A feasibility should be undertaken to explore the potential for a new hotel / hostel accommodation that would support the proposed tourism initiatives and support local businesses within the town.	●○○
Vitality and Vibrancy	14	Programme to tackle dereliction and vacancy	A key priority under the Town Centre First Policy. Feedback from community engagement revealed this is a priority for residents who live and work in the town.	●●●
	15	Cycling and Walking Activities	Design and implement the Loop Walk to create a dedicated cycle and pedestrian network. Active Tourism initiatives should include heritage trails. Explore potential to link to future greenway along the Old Railway Line.	●●○
	16	Heritage	Use / installation of heritage trails throughout the town, including wayfinding signage and interactive signage, to tell the story of Ballyragget.	●●○
	17	Events	Create a dedicated programme of events to celebrate the town's cultural identity, to appeal those in the community and visitors alike.	●●○
Sustainability and Climate Resilience	18	Groups and Organisations	Support existing and new organisations and groups, and promote the Tidy Towns initiative, to promote Ballyragget as an attractive destination.	●○○
	19	Landscaping	Review additional landscape measures throughout the town to improve biodiversity and overall appearance, to include landscaping interventions to screen the vacant carpark to Heather Court Hotel fronting the N77.	●●●
	20	EV Charging	EV charging infrastructure should be considered in any public realm enhancements. Charging points should be installed in the new car park and at select locations in the Square.	●○○

Priority
●○○ Lower priority desirable but not critical
●●○ Medium priority - an important local project
●●● High priority - a project of strategic importance to the town

Funding

Introduction

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

1. Key Town Centre First Funding Options

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

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

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

Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund

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

European Regional Development Fund

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



Active Travel Grants Programme

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

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

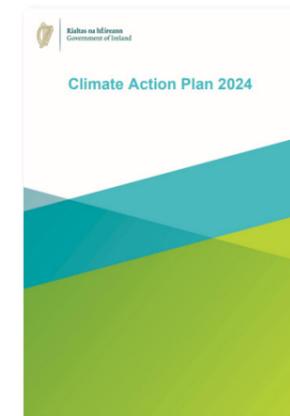
The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides grant funding to support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000. Applications are submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development through Local Authorities and the scheme focuses on projects that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

Climate Adaptation / Retrofitting Initiatives

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

Historic Towns Initiative

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



Fund	Lead	Area of Focus	Funding Level	Operation
Rural Regeneration & Development Fund	Department of Rural Community Development	Vacancy, dereliction, town centre residency, enterprise development	€500,000 minimum for projects. Up to 80% of the total project value. Contributions by applicants	Grant
Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Vacancy, dereliction, housing delivery	€30,000- €50,000 under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant Up to €30,000 under the Ready to Build Scheme	Grant Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate.
European Regional Development Fund	Regional Assemblies	Regional imbalance, sustainable regeneration, environmental sustainability, low carbon and climate resilient communities	Determined on a case by case basis	EU funding matched by a set percentage of national funding.
Active Travel Grant Programme	National Transport Authority	Active Travel	Determined under various programmes	Grant
Town and Village Renewal Scheme	Department of Rural and Community Development	Place making, town centre regeneration	€20,000 - €500,000 under main scheme Up to €400,000 under building acquisition measure €100,000 to each town selected under streetscape enhancement initiative	Grant, 90% of the total cost of a project, the remaining 10% by Local Authority and/or community and/or Philanthropic contributions Grant, 100% of purchase cost Grant
Climate Adaptation / Retrofitting Initiatives	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Local Authority, National Transport Authority	Climate adaptation	Determined under various programmes. Up to 100% of project value.	Grant
Historic Towns Initiative	Heritage Council, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Heritage-led regeneration	€150,000 - €250,000 for stream 1 heritage led regeneration projects Up to €40,000 for heritage-led regeneration plans	Grant, match funding of 20% by Local Authority or owners Grant, match funding of 20% from Local Authority

Table 1 – Overview of Key Town Centre First Funding Options

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

2. Other Funding Supports

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

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

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

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

Table 2 - Overview of Funding Schemes.

Fund	Details	Lead
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme	The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. It is co-funded by the government and European Social Fund Plus and managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Outdoor Seating and Accessories for Tourism and Hospitality Business Scheme	This scheme provided a level of financial support to tourism and hospitality businesses to purchase or upgrade equipment to provide additional outdoor seating.	Fáilte Ireland
Regional Festival and Event Fund	The Regional Festival and Event Fund supports festivals and participative events in County Kilkenny. The events must help to drive domestic and international tourism arrivals to Kilkenny, win bed nights, stimulate local economic activity, and help to improve the visitor experience. The fund has qualifying conditions and is evaluated on a competitive basis.	Fáilte Ireland
Destination Towns	The Destination Towns initiative seeks to develop the tourism potential of towns and to create a sense of place in towns, attracting visitors to the area and helping to provide the necessary infrastructure to support regional growth in the tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland's Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns provides a practical aid to guide the development of a destination town.	Fáilte Ireland
Community Centre Investment Fund	This fund supports community groups to upgrade and develop their community centre facilities. The scheme is administered directly by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Grants were available under 3 categories in 2022: Small scale projects/ improvements to facilities €10,000 to €25,000; Larger scale projects €25,001 to €100,000; Major projects €100,001 to €300,000. A minimum contribution of 5% of the total project costs was required from applicants own funds for category 2 and 3.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Sports Partnership	Funding provided through Sports Partnership includes for the provision of sports equipment such as kits for school children. In 2023, €10,365,000 was allocated to Local Sport Partnerships nationally.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Arts Programme	The Arts Office sets out a programme for funding, developing, and promoting the arts in County Kilkenny. Opportunities for funding arise throughout the year, as government departments offer funding schemes.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Arts Council

Fund	Details	Lead
Creative Ireland Projects	Creativity in the Community projects enable local community engagement with creativity to support individual and community well-being, social cohesion, and economic development. Placemaking is central to the initiative. Grants range between €500 to €2,000 under the 2023 scheme.	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media Creative Ireland
Built Heritage Investment Scheme	The Built Heritage Investment Scheme assists owners of heritage structures, including those on the Record of Protected Structures and in Architectural Conservation Areas, to conserve and repair historic structures by providing match-funded grants. The 2023 scheme awarded up to €15,000 for a standard project and up to €20,000 for a thatched structure project	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Historic Structures Fund	The Historic Structures Fund aims to conserve and enhance heritage structures and historic buildings, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public. Grants in 2023 were offered under three streams. Stream 1 offered grants from €15,000 up to €50,000, with a maximum of 80% awarded relative to eligible costs; Stream 2 offered grants from €50,000 up to €200,000 for larger enhancement, refurbishment, or reuse projects, with a maximum of 50% awarded relative to eligible costs. Stream 3 offered grants of between €5,000 to €10,000 to support conservation repairs and small capital works to vernacular structures.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme	Local Authorities support and facilitate community groups in their applications to the Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to support capital projects that improve access and inclusion to heritage sites; that apply good heritage practice to the management of places, collections, or objects (including buildings). The scheme also supports the purchase of essential equipment. This scheme is intended to enable communities and heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to continue their work or to start new initiatives. The Heritage Council allocated in the region of €1.5 million to the 2023 scheme.	Heritage Council
Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives	Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives includes the target to upgrade 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2 / cost optimal equivalent or carbon equivalent by 2030. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide grants to help upgrade homes and Local Authorities are undertaking programmes to retrofit least energy efficient social homes.	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Local Authority
Biodiversity Action Plan Grant Scheme	This scheme to Local Authorities supports biodiversity projects and the implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans that align with actions under the National Biodiversity Action Plan. €3m was made available to the 2023 scheme nationally.	National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Fund	Details	Lead
Community Monuments Fund	The Community Monuments Fund aims to protect and promote archaeological heritage, supporting community development, traditional skills, jobs, tourism, regional and rural development. €6m was made available for the 2023 fund nationally.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme	The Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme includes support for the rapid roll out of new and improved active travel infrastructure in towns and villages.	Department of Transport
Development Contribution Scheme	The Local Authority Development Contribution Scheme enables contributions to be levied on new development and provides funding towards capital work programmes on a range of services, including roads, amenity, community, recreation and parking.	Local Authority
Local Enterprise Office	The Local Enterprise Office provides training, mentoring programmes and a range of financial supports designed to assist with the establishment and/or growth of businesses including the LEO Client Stimulus Fund, LEAN Micro, feasibility grants and business expansion grants.	Development of Rural and Community Development Enterprise Ireland
Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme	The Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme benefits smaller or start-up social enterprises which do not necessarily have the capacity to compete for larger grants, but which nonetheless have a need for upgraded/additional equipment to help them to deliver their services. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development
Local Area Grant Scheme	<p>The Local Area Grant Scheme, previously known as the Community Support Scheme, provides funding for local communities to assist them with various projects that fall within the relevant categories of the scheme. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee. For 2023, applications were invited under nine grant support categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Realm Initiatives and Amenity Projects (Max Grant €2,000) • Maintenance of Open Spaces in Private Housing Developments • Community Playgrounds (Max Grant €3,000) • Burial Ground Maintenance and Provision (Max Grant €600 for maintenance and €8,000 for provision of extension) • Best Kept Local Authority Estate (Max Grant €500) • Arts (4 categories of grants, €1,000 for 3 categories) • Irish Language (Max Grant €800) • Tourism Marketing and Promotion • Sustainable Tourism 	Development of Rural and Community Development

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

3. Other Funding Programmes and Initiatives that can Support Plan Delivery

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

Environmental Assessments

Appropriate Assessment

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

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

It was considered that the Ballyragget Masterplan will not give rise to any potential for significant effects on European Sites, primarily due to its consistency with the policy objectives and environmental protective objectives contained with the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027, and associated assessments, including a full Appropriate Assessment. Therefore, a full Appropriate Assessment for the Plan is not required.

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

Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Applicability Report for the Masterplan was prepared. The Report had due regard to the criteria contained within Schedule 2A Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

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

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