Chapter 12
Urban Design and Placemaking

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Aim: To ensure the use of good urban design and placemaking in Carlow's towns and villages, which protects and enhances their unique character and heritage, contributes to the achievement of compact growth, improved health and wellbeing, and to attractive, vibrant and inclusive environments in which to live and work.

12.0   Introduction

The Council has a key role through the planning process in shaping the built environment of the County's towns and villages. Achieving a good quality-built environment and public realm is essential to support sustainable mobility, healthy communities, successful urban living and the achievement of compact growth. The success of settlements is dependent upon the provision of accessible, safe, and distinctive built environments, which builds upon their respective character and heritage. This chapter outlines principles to achieve quality placemaking and good urban design which supports a key element of the core strategy in relation to compact growth.

12.1   Policy Context and Guidance

The key guidance and policy context that informed this chapter of the Plan includes (inter alia):

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP).
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 (RSES) for the Southern Region.

- Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities Cities, Towns and Villages), DEHLG (2009).
- Urban Design Manual, A Best Practice Guide, DEHLG (2009).
- Retail Design Manual, A Companion Document to the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DAHG (2012).
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS), DTTS and DECLG (2013 & 2019).
- Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHLGH, (2018).
- Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DHPLG (2018).
- Project Carlow 2040, A Vision for Regeneration, Carlow County Council.

12.2   Urban Design and the Importance of Placemaking and the Public Realm

Urban design deals with the arrangement, appearance, and function of the built environment in our towns and villages. It is both a process and an outcome of creating high quality places that all people can fully engage with, and which are attractive and liveable.

Good urban design underpins what has been more recently termed as placemaking. Placemaking reinforces a people-centred approach to the creation of the built environment, which goes beyond just the physical fabric of a place. A focus on placemaking acknowledges that compact growth in our towns and villages must be provided in tandem with social, recreation

and cultural development, at the same time as enhancing and protecting the unique heritage, character, and identity of these settlements.

Figure 12.1 details the key urban design considerations that contribute to good quality places. A quality public realm is characterised by safe, secure, and enjoyable public areas with well-defined and distinctive places and recognisable landmarks. A quality public realm includes an appropriate selection of facilities; a good balance between pedestrians and vehicles defined with quality materials and street furniture and will incorporate trees and other natural elements. Clear definition between private, semi-private and public space is required using well designed boundaries and materials.
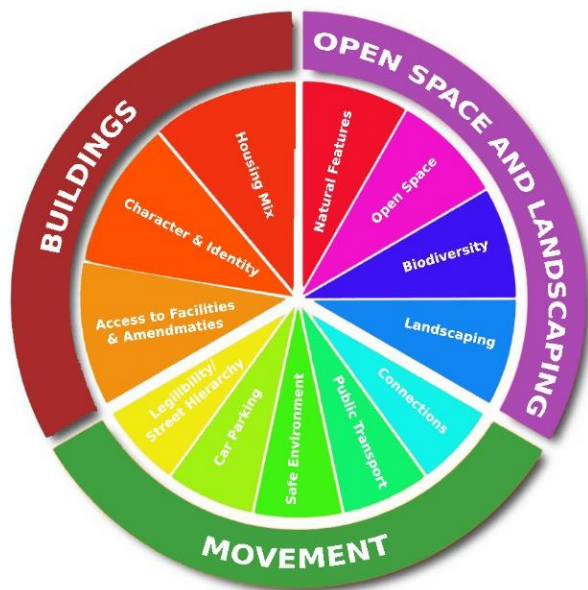

Figure 12.1: Key Urban Design Principles for Quality Placemaking

National and regional policy in the NPF and RSES recognises that in supporting the role of urban design and placemaking, new residential development in towns and villages must:

- **Be appropriately located** to support sustainable development and be of a scale of provision relative to location.

- Support **lifetime adaptable homes** by building resilience in housing.
- **Incorporate sustainable residential densities** through measures such as reduced vacancy, re-use of existing buildings, infill development, regeneration, and increased building heights at suitable locations.

12.2.1 Achieving Good Quality Urban Design and Placemaking

Good urban design and placemaking can contribute to the achievement of compact urban growth, a higher quality of life, greater economic vitality, and a more efficient use of resources. To be successful, the public realm must be multi-functional and multi-dimensional, meeting the needs of people of all abilities, young and old, thereby improving quality of life for the communities they serve.

Urban Design and Placemaking – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

UD P1: Provide high-quality public realm and urban spaces through support for and the promotion of good urban design and placemaking, to reinforce a people centred approach to the creation of the built environment.

UD P2: Apply the following key attributes when considering public realm enhancements:

- Attractive and visually pleasing urban spaces with high-quality design, materials, and installations (street lighting, furniture and signage).
- Distinctive urban spaces with reference to local context and existing built heritage, character, and identity.
- Accessible, connected and linked permeable urban spaces that facilitate ease of movement.

- Functional urban spaces that foster activity and are safe and adaptable.

UD P3: Require through the development management process that both public and private developments make a positive contribution to the public realm of towns and villages through adherence to best practice principles for urban design and placemaking as outlined in this chapter of the Development Plan, and relevant statutory guidelines and design manuals.

12.3 Health and Wellbeing in the Built Environment

A healthy built environment can:

- Promote being active, eating healthy and other healthy habits;
- Encourage social connectedness;
- Prevent injuries and promote safety;
- Improve air, water, and soil quality;
- Provide access to natural and green spaces; and,
- Ensure all members of the community have good opportunities to be healthy regardless of their age, income level, gender, ethnic background, or any other social or economic reasons.

The connection between the built environment and public health has become increasingly apparent with the Covid 19 pandemic. This has demonstrated a key relationship between place and space and potential impact on human health and wellbeing. Individual actions to improve lifestyle or health status are likely to be influenced by both our environment and socioeconomic context. Broader health concerns in relation to physical activity, mental health and the impact on social activity and community participation have also been highlighted as a result of the on-

going pandemic. Health and wellbeing in urban environments are now recognised as of vital importance to future sustainable urban development which will bring connections between people and places to the fore. Planning for the built fabric of our towns and villages must be informed by how people interact and move within it. In this context, active transport options such as walking and cycling within accessible and attractive public areas are required. The goal is to help more people spend more time outdoors, together. Improving the quality and enhancing accessibility within settlements to high quality public open spaces will provide multiple benefits including health and wellbeing, as well as sustainable transport, biodiversity and recreation.

Figure 12.2: Healthy Placemaking

Health and Wellbeing – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

HW P1: Promote a healthy County by improving physical and social environments to create vibrant, accessible, healthy and sustainable places to live, work and relax.

HW P2: Promote compact urban form, which is appropriate to context, in the

interests of efficient use of resources and optimising the opportunities to walk and cycle, and the feasibility of public transport.

HW P3: Support and promote the development of healthy and attractive places by ensuring:

- Adherence to high quality urban design and placemaking principles which are integrated into the layout and design of new developments.
- Development proposals prioritise the need for people to be physically active and promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces.
- New schools and workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks.
- The provision of open space considers different types of recreation and amenity uses that are connected through safe and secure walking and cycling routes.
- Developments are planned for on a multi-functional basis to include ecosystem services, climate change adaptation measures, green infrastructure, and key landscape features in their design.

12.4   Designing for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience

The requirement to adapt built environments to overcome the consequences that are associated with climate change is becoming more and more prevalent. Many of the County's towns and villages were founded on rivers for economic and transport reasons and as a result are more vulnerable to climate change. The long-term impacts of built-up urban environments, including the use of impermeable surfaces for roads and footpaths, carbon intensive modes of heating

and transport, and poor air quality, have further implications in this regard.   Adapting to these challenges is critical and will require a concerted effort to adapt the built environment to climate change.

Adapting to climate change can be achieved through good urban design, and through the promotion and support of compact growth and urban regeneration. Adapting to climate change can be facilitated through:

- **Development Change**
  - Spatial: Focusing and consolidating growth in the core areas of towns and villages.
  - Movement and Air Quality: Being aware of our impact on the climate and making a positive change for the future.
  - Health and Wellbeing: Placing an emphasis on healthy living through urban design practices.

- **Environmental Assets**
  - Green and Blue Infrastructure: Increasing the use of rivers and river corridors in towns and villages for leisure and amenity and also as sustainable industries.

Designing for Climate Change – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

CC P1:   Require the incorporation of adaptable, multi-functional, and sensitive design solutions which support the transition to low carbon, climate resilient, sustainable and attractive towns and villages.

CC P2:   To support Sustainable Energy Communities initiatives subject to compliance with planning and environmental considerations.

12.5   Town and Village Centres

Town and village centres provide vitally important functions comprising centres of economic and tourist activity, transport hubs, focal points for local communities, places to live, and places for recreation and amenity. Retaining vibrancy and vitality has proved challenging with declining residential populations, a growth in suburban areas, and reduced retail activity. These trends have contributed to loss of attractiveness, vitality and liveability with knock-on effects for the character and appearance of urban centres. There is now a need for a major focus on regenerating original town centre and village centre areas, with a view to creating more attractive, desirable places that people want to live and spend time in, for work, shopping or recreational purposes. A new emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements will be required, rather than continual expansion and sprawl of towns and villages.

In this regard, urban design, placemaking and public realm will play a vital role in helping to define the town and village centres so that they present as attractive locations for people to live, work and visit.

Town and Village Centres – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

TVC P1: Regenerate and revitalise our town and village centres, diversify and seek new roles and uses to stimulate economic and cultural development and provide necessary physical and social infrastructure.

TVC P2: Target financial incentives to re-establish the role of town and village centres and encourage a greater take up of development opportunities for retail, residential, commercial, and leisure uses.

TVC P3: Seek funding to support the preparation of public realm strategies to enhance the unique characteristics and assets of Carlow's towns and villages.

TVC P4: Promote the consolidation of town and village centres with a focus on the regeneration of underused / vacant buildings and strategic sites and the establishment of a mix of uses to encourage greater vibrancy outside of business hours.

TVC P5: Promote the utilisation of available funding to support the plan led development and regeneration of publicly owned land banks.

TVC P6: Require all development proposals for strategic brownfield / infill sites in towns and villages to be accompanied by a site brief and/or masterplan that sets out a phased programme for the regeneration of the site and demonstrates how the development proposal complies with statutory guidelines that seek to integrate principles of high-quality urban design and placemaking.

12.6   Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration

The NPF acknowledges that the physical format of urban development is one of Ireland's greatest development challenges. The pattern of development over the last number of decades represented a departure from the traditional compact urban form of the 20th century, with the fastest growing areas predominantly being at the edges of and outside towns and villages in the Country. This has had implications in terms of the provision of infrastructure, urban sprawl, run-down urban centres, a dependency on private transport, and a higher carbon footprint.

To tackle these challenges policy objectives in NPF and RSES are focused on securing compact and sustainable growth in urban settlements through the development and regeneration of existing built-up areas. Strong urban design and place making principles are at the core of this compact growth and regeneration initiative.

The preferred approaches are to utilise previously developed brownfield sites and infill sites, as well as the redevelopment of existing sites and buildings. By utilising these approaches to increase the proportion of future urban development within the footprint of existing built-up areas in towns and villages there is potential to:

- Bring new life and footfall;
- Increase the viability of services, shops, and public transport;
- Bring people closer to their place of work and to recreational opportunities; and,
- Increase opportunities for walking and cycling as alternatives to private car-based travel.

12.6.1 Project Carlow 2040: A Vision for Regeneration and Development

Project Carlow 2040 is a Regeneration Strategy which seeks to achieve a high quality connected urban environment with increased employment opportunities and a better quality of life for all. The Strategy focuses development on the Town Centre and identifies opportunities in the built environment and the public realm which can be developed to the benefit of the community and the local economy. In this regard it includes a number of interventions which will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Town. In addition to the Intervention Areas, the Strategy incorporates a number of Character Areas which together, help identify

the key characteristics across the Town Centre area. These include a Retail Quarter in the Town Centre with a key aim to promote 'retail prosperity' at a time when the sector faces challenges. It seeks to consolidate and link the modern shopping centre to the east with the retail core thereby leveraging competitive advantages for the Town.

Figure 12.3: Potato Market Intervention Area

Figure 12.4: Potato Market & Barrack Street Link

Improving the connections between principal retail, educational and civic spaces in Carlow Town will entice people to spend more time in a vibrant and modern Town Centre, while providing more sustainable forms of movement around the Town. Additionally, this Strategy seeks to re-establish a residential population within the Town Centre through the promotion of and provision for Town Centre living, as well as improved public realm spaces and better access and promotion of civic uses.

Figure 12.5: **Barrow Track/Civic Spine - Carlow's Riverfront provides the opportunity to shape the Town's future and deliver an exemplary model for sustainable compact growth in an urban environment.**

Figure 12.6: **Improved Carlow Town Centre circulation through Barrack Street and Market Square Link**

In line with national and regional policy, the Strategy is innovative and offers a sustainable approach to urban regeneration. The implementation of the interventions in this Strategy will not only regenerate large areas of the town centre but will improve health and wellbeing, create better town centre spaces, enhance competitiveness and commercial activity, promote town centre living and encourage building enhancements

in order to improve the long-term viability of Carlow Town.

Guiding Principles outlined in the strategy seek to address the existing challenges facing Carlow Town by building on the many assets and attractors of the Town. These principles address (inter alia):

- Reduced Vacancy;
- Promote a high quality of life and wellbeing;
- A Town perceived as an exciting place to live, work and visit;
- A Distinctive Town;
- Increased Town Centre Footfall; and,
- Diversity of Uses in the Town Centre.

Compact Growth and Urban Regeneration Policies – Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

CGR P1: Promote and support the regeneration of underused town centre, village centre and brownfield/infill lands, in conjunction with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands.

CGR P2: Facilitate the delivery of compact and sequential growth and urban regeneration in towns and villages by consolidating the built footprint through a focus on regeneration and development of key infill /brownfield /backland sites.

CGR P3: Support increased building heights at appropriate locations subject to the criteria outlined in Policy DN P6, including intervention sites along the River Barrow in Carlow Town (as contained in Carlow 2040) and in accordance with the County's settlement hierarchy, and subject to compliance with best practice urban

design, and proper planning and environmental considerations.

CGR P4: Promote regeneration and revitalisation of the County's small towns and villages and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for their surrounding rural hinterlands.

12.7 Best Practice Principles for Urban Design and Placemaking

To create a distinctive and an enduring built environment and to guide and secure compact and sustainable urban growth, the following principles should inform development proposals:

- **Character:** Aim to create identity and character that reinforces locally distinctive patterns of development and landscape.
- **Maintain and Consolidate:** Maintain the cores of urban settlements while avoiding developments that cause sprawl or decentralising core functions.
- **Expansion:** Only to be considered where it does not have a negative impact on the existing urban centre or overall settlement fabric.
- **Regeneration:** This involves constant change and evolution of existing urban development. Reuse, refurbishment, and redevelopment of existing buildings and sites is preferable.
- **Continuity and Enclosure:** Public and private spaces that are clearly distinguished, and continuity of street frontages and enclosure of space by the built form, is achieved.
- **Public Realm:** Quality of public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including older people and people with disabilities.

- **Liveable Environments:** Encouraging walkable environments which facilitate access to public transport in order to reduce reliance on the private car, as well as the provision of a well-connected open space network.
- **Accessibility and Connectivity:** Providing opportunities for permeability to form new or to strengthen existing connections.
- **Mobility**: Prioritising pedestrian and cyclist movement in towns and villages, facilitating connectivity and permeability.
- **Variety and Viability:** Promote choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to ensure places respond to local needs, as well as providing for a diverse society of different incomes at different stages of their lives.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Enhancing local ecology by promoting biodiversity, by allowing new wildlife habitats to establish and protecting existing ones.

New developments can only succeed in creating 'place' if the principles required are incorporated into their planning and design. Many of these principles are further explained and expanded upon in the DEHLG Urban Design Manual, A Best Practice Guide (2009). The guide highlights 12 key criteria for successful urban design and placemaking, as shown by Figure 12.6. The criteria are sub-divided into three groups: Neighbourhood/Site/Home, reflecting the sequence of spatial scales and order of priorities that is followed in a good design process. These 12 criteria can also be applied across a wide variety of locations and development proposals.

Figure 12.6: Criteria for Successful Urban Design and Placemaking

In addition to the foregoing, the DAHG Retail Design Manual (2012) also sets out key urban design principles for retail development. The design manual aims to ensure that future planning for the retail sector is focused on the creation of vibrant, quality places. The manual acknowledges that the principles put forward in the document are equally relevant to all aspects of urban design.

12.7.1 Town and Village Centre Consolidation

Intensifying development within the built footprints of our existing town and village centres can occur by utilising existing underdeveloped sites. These underdeveloped sites can comprise brownfield, infill and backland sites.

Brownfield Sites comprise previously developed land that has the potential to be redeveloped. It is often land that has been used for industrial and commercial purposes and is generally occupied by redundant buildings. They are frequently located in or immediately adjacent to town and village centres. The intensive use of these lands through new developments presents opportunities to create sustainable urban quarters with a mix of uses, creating compact

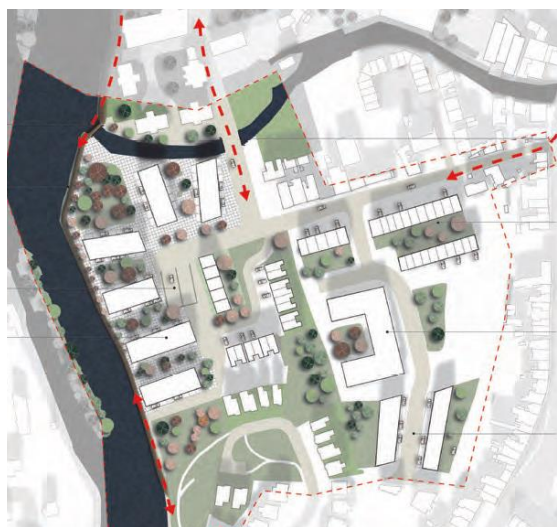neighbourhoods with pedestrian orientated streets.

Figure 12.7: Brownfield Sites at Pembroke in Carlow Town as identified in Project Carlow 2040

Infill Sites offer excellent development opportunities in key locations within the established built fabric of towns and villages and can be suitable for either commercial or residential development, or a mixture of uses. The development of infill sites in town and village centres has the potential to significantly contribute to the overall appearance of the surrounding area whilst also ensuring vitality and the beneficial reuse of town centre lands.

Figure 12.8: Infill Sites in the Cultural Quarter of Carlow Town as identified in Project Carlow 2040

Backland development is generally defined as development of land that lies to the rear of an existing property or building line. Significant backland areas exist within many towns and villages throughout the County. They generally relate to undeveloped lands behind town centre buildings immediately to the rear of buildings with street frontage. A plan-led masterplan approach to backland development can facilitate provision for phasing, infrastructure provision, community facilities, density, layout, open spaces, landscaping and development design briefs and statements. The piecemeal development of individual backland plots is generally not appropriate, unless it can demonstrate that a development proposal will not jeopardise the comprehensive redevelopment of surrounding lands.

Urban Expansion may be necessary in certain circumstances however, it is critical that this does not undermine the town and village centres functions, services and activities. Urban expansion generally refers to the development of previously undeveloped (greenfield) land within or adjacent to their existing built-up areas. The primary objective is to ensure that any expansion is strategic and does not detract from the primacy of the established urban centres, including their main streets, but rather reinforces their function, service provision, and activities.

12.8   Detailed Urban Design Considerations

This section outlines urban design considerations that should be taken into account when formulating development proposals.

12.8.1 Scale/Mass/Composition

Scale is one of the key elements in the design consideration for new buildings and is a primary starting point for all urban design proposals. Together with mass and composition scale essentially refers to the size

of the plot, average storey height and also the manner in which the façade(s) are articulated. If a building is excessively large when compared to adjoining buildings along a street, then its scale is likely to be out of place on the streetscape. Exceptions in this regard may be where a building is of major public significance and if the nature of a proposed use demands a large building and the location for same is suitable. The degree to which a building can contribute to the vitality of a town or village centre is also an important consideration.

12.8.2 Gateway/Key Buildings

Gateway and landmark buildings can emphasise the urban identity of a place. Their purpose is to provide a signal of a significant place either in terms of movement or use. These buildings have the potential to act as important landmarks and should therefore address the significance of the site. Suitable locations for these buildings include important street corners or junctions, corner sites, the end of vistas and gateways, local centres and the edges of public squares. They ensure visual interest and develop a stimulating streetscape.

It may be appropriate to increase building heights for gateway buildings so as to provide greater emphasis on the building, but there will also be a greater expectation of design quality and architectural treatment. The significance of these buildings does not always need to be expressed in terms of height. Differentiation in building materials and form can also convey their importance.

12.8.3 Corner Sites

Corners shall be reinforced by buildings which address both street frontages. These buildings shall be designed with windows and, where appropriate, entrance ways onto both streets.

Various options can be explored, e.g. an increase or stepping up in building height, a round corner, a stepped back corner (for example, to create a civic space), or a simple splayed corner. Such buildings shall be designed to an exceptional standard on all elevations.

12.8.4 Building Line

Building lines are created by the position of the building frontage along the street edge. This is important as the position of the building line determines the width of the street, therefore influencing the sense of enclosure created.

In towns and villages throughout Carlow, building lines generally are continuous but not rigidly straight. They tend to be more organic in nature, staggering at certain intervals, adding significantly to the character of the street and sense of enclosure.

Generally, existing and established building lines should be maintained. Building lines may be relaxed to accentuate an important building or place or where important areas of public or civic space are required. Existing building lines may also be relaxed where innovative design solutions can demonstrate that the design will positively enhance the streetscape.

12.8.5 Roofline

The scale of buildings and their rooflines have a direct influence on the skyline. Rooftops of traditional buildings are generally constructed of slate and contain features such as chimneys which add visual interest and variety to the skyline. In many contemporary buildings, roofs tend to be flat; where this type of roof occurs on a building with a long façade it can result in monotony. In such cases the monotony can be relieved by variations in building height at appropriate locations (i.e. stepping up heights at the

corners or at the centre of a symmetrical building).

Figure 12.9: Traditional variations in roof line and height in Tullow.

12.8.6 Perimeter Block

Residential layouts should generally utilise the perimeter block principle, as a departure from typical cul-de-sac type layouts. This will increase pedestrian permeability and legibility of a new development area and will help to define streets and public spaces.

12.8.7 Building Type

In order to support the vitality of urban cores, a mix of uses and a healthy balance of economic, residential, cultural and recreational activity should be maintained. By increasing the amount of services and amenities within urban centres, the provision of a wide range of local jobs will be encouraged. It is therefore imperative that urban centres provide a diverse range of activities and uses. Development should be designed for a diverse community which encourages sustainable living and reinforces neighbourhood values.

Residential development should provide a variety of house types to accommodate a good mix of household types, including first time buyers, single people, families, empty nesters and the elderly, in order to ensure a social mix and balance is achieved.

12.8.8 Building Heights

The Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) acknowledge that increasing prevailing building height has a crucial role to play in addressing the delivery of more compact growth in urban areas, particularly large towns. The Guidelines require that the scope to consider general building heights of at least three to four stories, coupled with appropriate density, in locations outside what would normally be defined as the city or town centre and which would include suburban areas, must be supported in principle at development plan and development management levels.

In general, heights should respect the local streetscape. In towns and villages varied building heights will be considered across residential, mixed use and town centre areas to support compact growth and to create a sense of place, urban legibility, and visual diversity.

The Planning Authority will be positively disposed toward higher buildings in appropriately located central areas of larger towns close to public transport or on strategic lands proximate to town centre where it is demonstrated that the development proposal will:

- Make a positive contribution to the locality and is of a high design quality, strengthening the sense of place while respecting and responding to the character of the area;
- Not unduly impact on any vistas or views towards significant natural, built and landscape features or amenities including designated views and prospects;
- Not result in any undue overshadowing of nearby properties, especially residential properties or areas of public open space; and,

- Not have a detrimental effect on any existing building which has special visual identity.

Figure 12.10: Proposal for 4-5 storey building heights on Barrow Track brownfield site in Carlow Town as identified in Project Carlow 2040.

12.8.9 Protection of Existing Built Fabric

All development proposals immediately adjoining existing development shall provide for the protection of existing residential amenities and shall have particular regard to minimising overlooking and visual intrusion.

The Council also places significance on the existing heritage fabric of the towns and villages within the County including the protection of vernacular buildings and historic / traditional streetscapes (See Chapter 10, Sections 10.11, 10.15 and 10.18). These represent key heritage and cultural assets for Carlow and include protected structures, NIAH listed buildings, and vernacular architecture.

12.8.10 Building Language and Finishes

Good modern architecture and design should prevail throughout developments. There should be consistency in materials, colour, proportions, roof pitches, building detail, street/route surfaces, planting and street furniture within a development. Certain principles will apply in relation to materials and finishes for a development, as follows:

- In general, finishes and materials should be of a high-quality nature and should be used in a consistent and restrained manner.
- Where possible natural materials should be used including wood, stone, slate etc. The use of native Irish material should be maximised.
- Materials and finishes should, as far as possible, reflect an Irish/ local vernacular.
- Use of non-natural materials such as clay pantiles will be permitted in limited circumstances where it is considered that such use contributes to the overall design quality of the scheme.
- In the interests of sustainable development environmentally friendly materials should be used.
- In cases where it can be demonstrated that the design of a building is of an exceptional nature and particularly in the case of gateway and landmark buildings, consideration will be given to the use of modern materials in the context of a modern design approach to such buildings.
- External wall finishes may include render, wet dash and brick. Timber cladding will be considered in exceptional circumstances, particularly in apartment and mixed-use development schemes, and shall be assessed at planning application stage on a case by case basis as follows:

  - In all cases, details of the type of timber proposed and the reason for using timber as part of the development scheme shall be demonstrated as part of the planning application. In the case of apartment and mixed-use development schemes and in addition to the above, a maintenance agreement shall be put in place which shall provide for regular maintenance and cleaning of

the timber finishes and replacement as appropriate.

- The use of colour should form part of any design proposal; however, this should have regard to the traditional use of colour in the Irish context.

- In general, the design of schemes should focus on having a commonality of approach in terms of particular housing areas, with a clearly different approach between housing areas.

- In addition, there should also be an overall and consistent design paradigm for the entire scheme.

- All walking and cycling routes should be overlooked where feasible by adjoining uses to ensure passive surveillance.

12.8.11 Car Parking

Parking standards are set out in Section 16.10.11 of Chapter 16. Regard shall be had to the following in relation to the location and layout of car parking areas:

- Car parking should generally be sited within established site boundaries in such a manner as to ensure minimal injury to the amenity of adjoining premises.

- In town centres parking spaces should be located behind buildings or underground wherever possible, to encourage the continuity of streetscapes.

- Landscaping and tree planting must be provided to counteract the appearance of parking areas.

- Where on-street parking is proposed properly marked car parking spaces shall be provided with regular tree planting and a high standard of kerbing and paving. Generally, not more than five perpendicular or two parallel car parking spaces shall be provided between trees.

- Where surface car parking is required, it should be designed to be overlooked and

therefore comply with the principles of passive surveillance and should not dominate the street frontage.

- Cycle parking facilities shall be conveniently located, secure, easy to use, adequately lit and well posted. Weather protected facilities should be considered where appropriate. In addition, parking should be placed within a populated, well-supervised area, and monitored by CCTV where possible.

12.8.12 Shopfronts

Towns and villages would benefit enormously from an improvement in the quality of shopfronts. Shopfronts and use of colour can have a significant impact on the quality of the public realm. The basic rules of good shopfront design are based on restraint in signage, sophisticated use of colour and complete harmony with the upper floor facades of their buildings.

The architectural merit of buildings and the collective townscape qualities of the street are being eroded by poor quality shopfronts. The Council therefore promotes and encourages high quality public realm through the design of shopfronts.

Figure 12.11: Traditional Shopfront in Borris

Shopfronts - Policies

It is the policy of the Council to:

SF P1: To encourage the preservation of authentic traditional shopfronts and particularly those deemed of townscape importance which contribute to visual amenity and character of the area.

SF P2: To promote and encourage high quality public realm through the design of shopfronts including where appropriate the use of traditional Irish shopfronts (where such are vernacular to the immediate area) Shopfront designs including the provision of good quality contemporary designs where appropriate shall be in accordance with the design standards as contained in Section 16.9.7.

12.9 Urban Layout, Road and Street Design

Understanding the context and the potential of a site through a detailed site analysis will inform the design process for future development proposals. The urban structure shall consist of a framework of routes and spaces that provide connectivity within a development as well as to existing and planned routes in adjoining developments. Design considerations should include:

- Recognisable routes, intersections and key buildings should be provided to help people find their way around.
- Priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists by providing routes that are direct, safe and secure.
- Streets should be designed and well-lit to give control to pedestrians and therefore encourage pedestrian activity.
- Attractive and successful outdoor areas should provide a quality public realm which is essential to providing each area with its own individual identity.

- Passive supervision of the public realm, which is the most effective means of preventing anti-social behaviour
- Buildings should be orientated to maximise privacy, where appropriate, and elements such as planting, and boundary treatment used to maximum effect.
- Residential layouts should, where appropriate, utilise the perimeter block principle as a departure from more recent cul-de-sac type layouts.
- All dwelling houses should seek a minimum of dual aspect designed so that greatest advantage is taken of southwest orientation.
- Development should be designed for a diverse community which will encourage sustainable living and reinforce neighbourhood values.

12.9.1 Permeability and Connectivity

Central to the vitality of any town or village centre is its network of pedestrian paths and routes. A fine-grained network is critical to the creation of place and a human scale environment that is attractive and accessible for the pedestrian. All new development should provide a fully permeable and recognisable interconnecting network of streets. Permeability within town and village centres must be protected and where possible improved. Any new development should where possible open up new routes as part of the development. Permeability through existing housing estates shall be subject to local public consultation.

Figure 12.12: Key characteristics of the street that influence sense of place. A safe, attractive, and comfortable pedestrian environment requires all of these elements. (Source: DMURS 2013)

12.9.2 Legibility

All new development should provide:

- Recognisable routes which provide a coherent and easily read pattern of streets, lanes, squares, urban rooms and green spaces.

- Intersections and landmark buildings which are provided to help people find their way around and aid orientation.
- Main routes should be distinguished by exploiting vistas, key buildings, and landmarks.
- The activities and functions of the places should be made visible, thus bringing a sense of liveliness to places.

12.9.3 Public Space

To create vibrant bustling towns and villages the provision of a network of public spaces should be explored. These spaces should be designed to vary in size and use, providing for children's play and kick-about spaces, passive recreation and landscaped and planted areas to serve the entire community. Public spaces should be linked through high quality pedestrian and cycle routes combined with views and vistas and should be overlooked by adjoining accommodation to ensure passive surveillance.
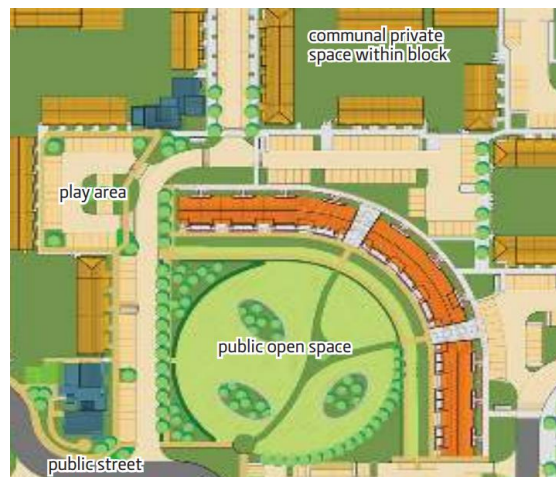

Figure 12.13: The plan above shows amenity spaces arranged in a hierarchy of public to private spaces. The main green in the centre is fully public, set off a public road; a communal courtyard provides shared private space to apartments while fully private gardens are provided to houses. (Source: DEHLG Urban Design Manual 2009)

12.9.4 Streetscape

The streetscape should be characterised by quality buildings and a high consistent standard of finishes and treatments such as

paving, landscaping and street furniture, thereby creating an environment with a definite sense of place. All streets/roads, walking/cycling routes and public spaces should be overlooked by adjoining accommodation to ensure passive surveillance to diminish the need for CCTV technology. The creation of observed public spaces and route ways should not reduce or detract from the private nature of other spaces and buildings.

12.9.5 Transport Network, Pedestrians and Cyclists

Development must emphasise permeability for all modes of transport and should be designed on the basis of the following considerations:

- Pedestrians and cyclists
- Public Transport
- Access for emergency vehicles
- Efficient circulation of local traffic Externalising non-local traffic

Pedestrian and cycling linkages are necessary to promote integration and sustainable development patterns. New development should seek to achieve:

- Convenient and prominent pedestrian access points in terms of signage, lighting and gradients;
- A pattern of footpaths/pavements, which allows easy permeability and a choice of routes filtering through the area;
- Routes from houses to local facilities, including shops, schools and bus stops, shall be direct and pleasant avoiding steep slopes or steps/kerbs where possible;
- Utilising green open space networks for longer distance walks; and,
- Providing dedicated pedestrian routes along green corridors. For a cycle network to be successful it should be continuous
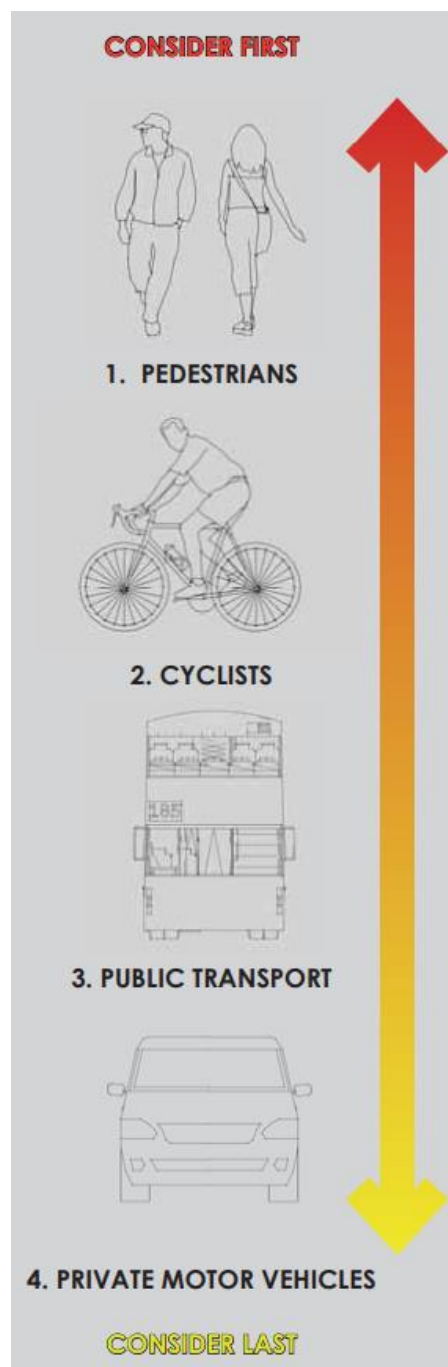
and convenient with appropriate trip-end provision.

Figure 12.14: Prioritising sustainable forms of transport (Source: DMURS 2013)

12.9.6 Street Hierarchy

A network of high quality, attractive streets, comprising of a high standard of quality finishes and treatments such as paving and landscaping, to create an environment with a definite sense of place, should be achieved.

All development should include a hierarchy of streets designed to recognise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and therefore encourage healthy activity. This can be achieved by paying close attention to the design of street surfaces and planting, which should be integrated with passive traffic calming measures such as changes in road colour, planting, narrowing of streets or other forms of traffic calming. The purpose of any proposed network is to adequately serve the maximum extent of development whilst discouraging unnecessary through-traffic. Guidance relating to street design is contained in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, DECLG (2013).

12.10   Design Statements

All medium-to-large scale and complex development proposals should be accompanied by a design statement, or other development proposals as deemed appropriate by the Planning Authority. The Design Statement should address urban design placemaking, landscape and building design issues, and clearly explain the development process, the design options considered, and the rationale behind the adopted development proposal approach.

The Design Statement should take the form of a concise illustration or series of illustrations and a written statement. This material should form the basis of meaningful pre-application discussions with the Planning Authority.

A Design Statement should outline:

- The policy background, identifying all relevant policies, development briefs, design guides, standards, and regulations and, in the case of developments in areas with Local Area Plans and/or adopted development guidance, shall demonstrate how the relevant urban design principles and guidance have been complied with.

- The urban design and architectural context including a site and area appraisal (illustrated with diagrams), summaries of relevant studies and records of any relevant consultations.
- The development strategy for the site, including design principles which have been formulated in response to the policy background, the site and its settings and the purpose of the development, and how these will be reflected in the development.
- An explanation of the urban structure, including approach to movement and accessibility, landscape development blocks, land uses, density, urban grain, visual context and built form.

Policy – Design Statements

It is the policy of the Council:

DS P1:   That all medium-to-large scale and complex planning applications (30+ residential units, commercial development over 1,000sq.m., or other development proposals as required by the Planning Authority) shall be accompanied by a 'Design Statement'. The Design Statement shall demonstrate how the development addresses or responds to the design criteria set out in this chapter and the 'Urban Design Manual' (2009), the Retail Design Manual (2012), and the Design Manual for Roads and Streets (2013 and 2019), as appropriate.