



RATHVILLY



## RATHVILLY VISION 2040

---

### PUBLIC REALM PLAN



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040

Ár dTodhchaí  
Tuaithe  
Our Rural  
Future



COMHAIRLE CONTAE  
CHEATHARLACH

CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

MAY 2023



Urban Design  
Masterplanning  
Planning  
Architecture  
Conservation Architecture  
Project Services  
Visualisation  
Interiors  
Research  
PSDP

# CONTENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND VISION

Introduction

A Vision for Rathvilly 2040

Public Realm: What is it and Why it matters

## 2. APPRECIATING THE CONTEXT

Location Overview

Planning Overview

Origins and Evolution of Rathvilly

Understanding Rathvilly Today

Existing Site Constraints

Identified Site Opportunities

Rathvilly Spatial Conditions, Qualities, Challenges  
and Opportunities

Public Consultation and Engagement

## 3. PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

Objectives for a successful Public Realm

Public Realm Strategy and Recommendations

Public Realm Opportunity Areas

Indicative Signage and Wayfinding Strategy

Indicative Materials, Finishes and Street Furniture

Potential Implementation Process

## 4. APPENDIX

1.

**INTRODUCTION  
AND VISION**

# INTRODUCTION



**KEY**  
— Rathvilly 2040      = Existing roads

## Purpose of the Document

VHA Architects have been appointed by Carlow County Council to prepare the Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan.

The Public Realm Plan has been prepared to act as a tool kit to assist and guide Carlow County Council in enhancing Rathvilly Village as a people oriented, safe and legible place via identified public realm improvements. Appreciating the existing setting and assets of the village, a comprehensive baseline assessment has been carried out and provides a foundation towards understanding what the village and its people need.

VHA led a hands on engagement and consultation process with elected members, stakeholders and local community members. The presented public realm opportunities within this document, have been established from engagement and consultation feedback throughout the course of the project.

## Introduction

The Rathvilly 2040 Plan provides an integrated and coordinated approach towards enhancement and rationalisation of the existing public realm and movement network within Rathvilly Village.

The Rathvilly 2040 proposal is supported by a bespoke suite of urban design principles that, informed by an overall Vision, will guide emerging and future development opportunities.

A suite of potential urban design projects which seamlessly fit into, support and consequently enhance the existing fabric of the village, whilst bringing added value, are set out in this document. These projects, collectively and independently, will enable the village to become a more distinctive and memorable destination for residents and visitors alike.

# A VISION FOR RATHVILLY 2040

In creating a vision for an enhanced and successful public realm in Rathvilly, the following aspirations were considered by the project team:

## A People's Village

- Create a better and safer movement environment with improved facilities, particularly for pedestrians and the less-abled;
- Reduce traffic speed and provide traffic management measures for safer movement between vehicles and pedestrians;
- Rationalise road signage and locations of signage; and
- Rationalise car parking and improve ease of access to/from parking areas.

## Sense of Place and Character

- Enhance and compliment the historic, heritage and natural features of the village core;
- Respond to and enhance the setting of historic buildings, monuments and features of local significance, including the triangle; and
- Re-create a sense of village core and re-imagine a sense of place, whereby people and place, and safe pedestrian movements are prioritised.

## Attractive and Welcoming

- Enhance and celebrate the village entry and exit points; and
- Ensure that all experience aspects of the village presents and retain the unique village identity for locals and visitors alike.

## Vibrant and Animated

- Create an enhanced public realm that encourages year-round community use and activity;
- Improve accessibility and sense of place of the existing open spaces areas, particularly at The Green; and
- Maximise the quality and appeal of community, social and tourism assets within the village core.

## A Safe and Connected Space For All

- Improve connectivity between streets, public spaces and green spaces within the village core;
- Enhance and re-imagine the pedestrian realm, encouraging people out of the car more; and
- Provide enhanced and safer pedestrian oriented connections between destinations.

**The Rathvilly 2040 Vision is to develop a high quality, attractive, coherent and safer village core; where streets and spaces are distinctive and contribute to stronger sense of place; and where a clear and legible pedestrian-oriented public realm is self-evident.**

**A strong people focused public realm that connects the streets, spaces and facilities of the village core, will underpin the long term social and economic vitality of Rathvilly.**



# A VISION FOR RATHVILLY 2040



## KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- Rationalised vehicular movement
- Public realm improvement area
- Public open space
- Key local destinations
- Primary gateways
- Secondary gateways
- Potential for improved pedestrian connectivity
- Potential for dedicated pedestrian links
- Vehicular movement
- ★ Relocated village triangle

# PUBLIC REALM: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IT MATTERS

Places are about people. People engage with the public face of the village on a daily basis; with its river, local destinations, roads, streets and open spaces. These features, along with the accessible spaces in between buildings, including car parks, courtyards, footpaths and spatial voids are what make the public realm.

How public spaces are designed and built, maintained and managed, and how safe they feel influence the spatial quality and the experience for users. Whether it's one space or a series of spaces within a village, it influences how we feel about it as the place which in turn bears influence of how people use, interact, enjoy and remember a place. How effectively and efficiently the public realm works is vital for the life of any place: how people move around the village and feel safe whilst doing so; how people access services, and how businesses operate. The public realm accommodates the essential services such as lighting, signage and drainage, all of which a village cannot function without. Public Realm is also the space within and around which transport of all forms can move and operate. It is for this reason, safety, orientation, integration and accessibility are important issues to consider when looking at and designing for a robust and memorable public realm.

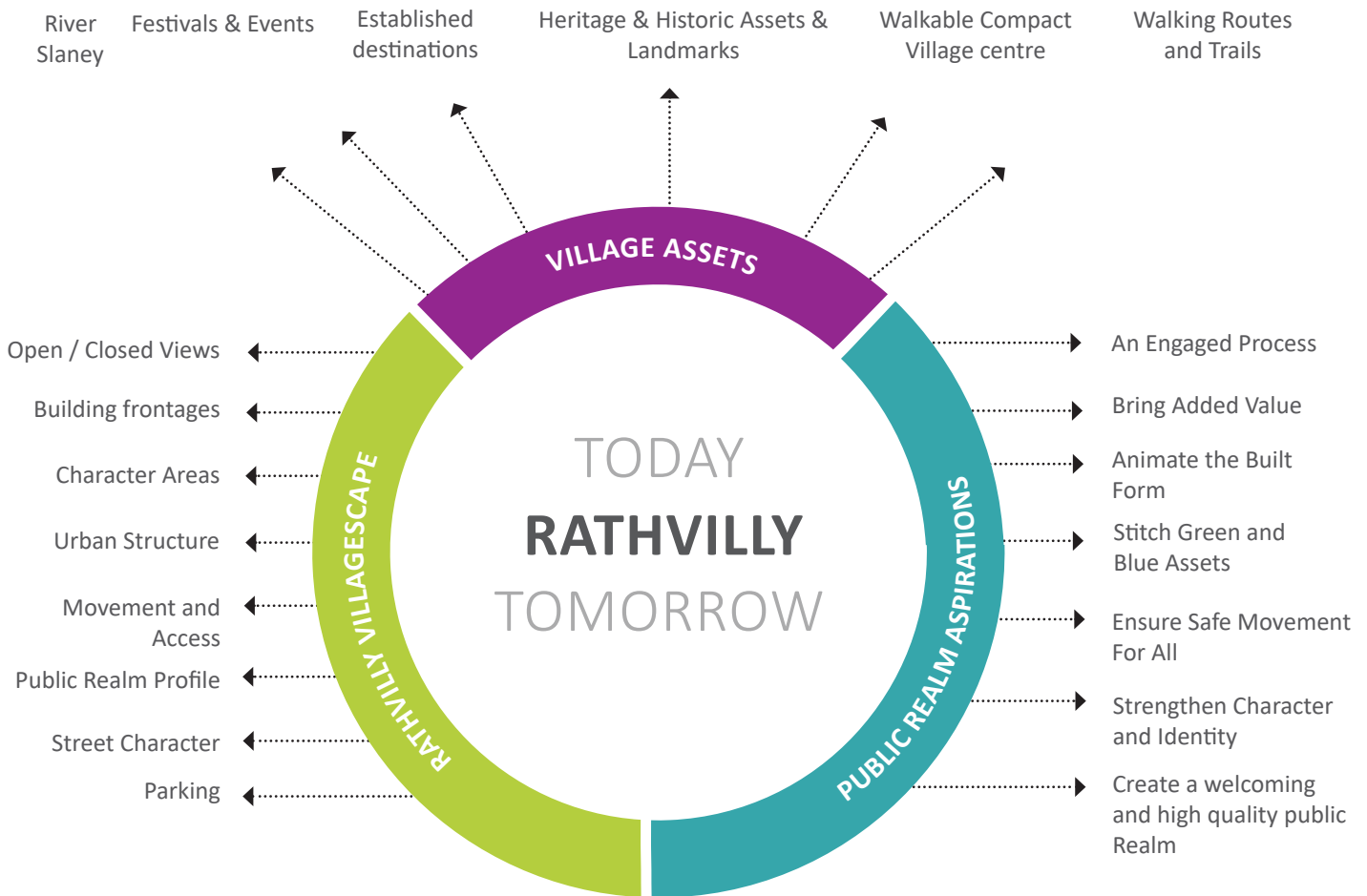
In the context of Rathvilly, it is important to have careful consideration, understanding and appreciation for role and function of the existing village. With this in mind, it is equally important to understand how Rathvilly can become a more pleasant and more competitive destination whilst building on its existing assets. The village's public realm and identity is inseparable from the user experience of the village. The influence of the public realm extends beyond its daily users and has an important role of being memorable and enjoyable to visitors of the village. Such experiences bear influence on the economic sustainability of Rathvilly and its overall well-being. Whether to visit, work and / or live in, people enjoy going to and staying in places that are pleasant, easy to use and well-functioning.

An attractive, high quality public realm can have a positive and memorable impact on the village's competitiveness with other destinations. It is an arena for business, for gathering, for recreation and for celebration. It is where people can come together to participate in public activities of all shapes and sizes: from the weekend markets to one-off events; and from families meeting in parks to tourists on walking and cycling tours.





# PUBLIC REALM: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IT MATTERS



**Building on assets of Rathvilly Village and bringing added value.**

**Bringing streets, spaces and green assets to life, and together.**

2.

**APPRECIATING THE  
CONTEXT**

# LOCATION OVERVIEW

## Regional Scale

Rathvilly, positioned in north County Carlow, is in close proximity to County Kildare and County Dublin. Rathvilly Village is approximately a 1.5 hour drive from Dublin via the N81 and a 0.5hour from Carlow town.

The village, positioned on the N81, linking directly to Dublin, is strongly influenced by outward commuting to the greater Dublin Area.



## County Scale

Rathvilly village, via the N81 is connected to Tullow 11km to the south, and to Baltinglass 8km to the north. The county town of Carlow is located 22km southwest of Rathvilly.

Rathvilly is designated as a Small Town under the Core Strategy of the County Development Plan 2022-2028.



## Local Scale

The core of Rathvilly village is defined by the alignment of the N81 and Phelan Street, which pass through and serve the village. Within the village core itself, is the “The Green” adjacent to the Church grounds and west of the N81. “The Square”, is located opposite The Green, and to the east of the N81.

The Square, The Green, are identifiable placemaking areas within the village core. Other key features and destinations include the vacant School House Community and Enterprise Centre, the village triangle, the River Slaney, amongst other features.



**KEY**  
— Rathvilly 2040

# PLANNING OVERVIEW

## NATIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

### Project Ireland

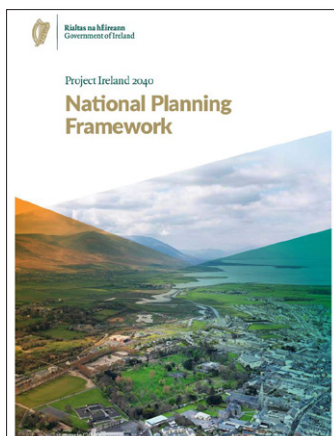
In February 2018, Project Ireland 2040 was launched to ‘re-imagine’ and prepare Ireland for the future. The national plan contains two key plans: the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan Framework which, in tandem, set out infrastructural and regional development priorities for the country. Across the two plans, it is sought to achieve ten strategic outcomes, building around the overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity.



### National Planning Framework (NPF)

The NPF sets out the Government’s strategic vision for shaping future growth and development of Ireland up to the year 2040. The companion document, the National Development Plan (NDP), provides the accompanying investment strategy that aligns with the strategic objectives of the NPF.

The NPF identifies a set of goals built around the themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity. These are expressed as National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which underpin the overarching vision for the Country



### National Development Plan (NDP) 2018—2027

The NDP establishes four new funds to help deliver the NPF, and have a combined allocation of €4bn. “These funds will be allocated in support of project proposals which demonstrate a strategic vision aimed at delivering on the NPF objectives in the areas of .....urban regeneration, the achievement of climate action objectives .....”.

A key intent of the Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan is to prepare a suite of improvement projects focused on public realm enhancement within the village core, and with these priority projects, ultimately apply for RRDF funding.

### The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

The RRDF is a flagship element of the National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040 which seeks to support more compact and sustainable development, through the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland’s rural areas.

A commitment of €1 billion euros by the government to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027 is the foundation of the RRDF. The purpose of the fund is to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in our towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000 and outlying areas.

The Department of Rural and Community Development has also funded schemes for Town and Village Renewal which is a part of a package of national and local support measures to rejuvenate rural towns and villages throughout Ireland. Since 2016 Carlow County Council has benefited from over €1.76m of funding under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

## REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

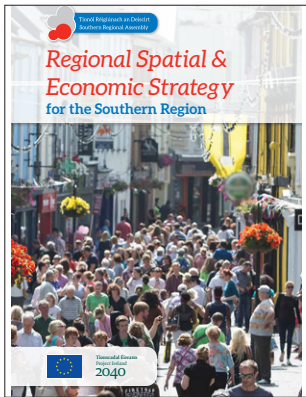
### Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The RSES sets out a 12-year strategic framework for development, and the way in which society, the environment, economy and use of land should evolve, while identifying key priorities for investment. Within the Southern Region there are three Strategic Planning Areas (SPA). Carlow is located in the South East SPA.

The RSES for the Southern Region aims to build upon the strengths and potential of the region to become a more stable, productive, climate-resilient and desirable place for the benefit of the population.

RSES. P1: *Ensure consistency with and support the achievement of the Regional Spatial Objectives (RSOs) and Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.*

# PLANNING OVERVIEW



## Climate Action Plans

National Government policy has increasingly recognised the key strategic challenge of climate change. The Government has published the 'Climate Action Plan 2019 and 2021', and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, all of which combine to comprise a strong legislative and policy framework for climate action.

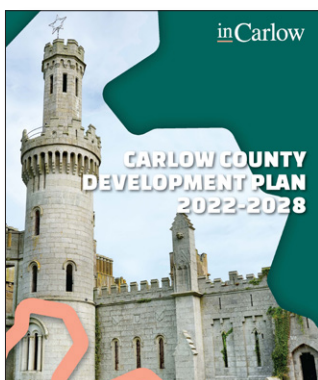
At a local level, the Council has adopted the 'Carlow Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019' and is a signatory of the Climate Action Charter that commits Local Government to driving forward meaningful climate action in their communities.

## LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

### Carlow County Development Plan (CDP, 2022 - 2028)

The CDP for the period of 2022-2028 provides a cohesive suite of guidelines and policies for the County.

A key driver and vision of the CDP, in line with national planning policy, is to encourage and achieve compact urban growth, provide for a higher quality of life and ensure more efficient use of resources.



From the CDP, a suite of policies and objectives, of relevance to the Rathvilly 2040 Plan have been considered throughout the design evolution of the Rathvilly 2040 plan, are summarised as follows:

- **Urban Design 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.
- **Urban Design 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.
- **Urban Design 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.
- **Town and Village Centre 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.
- **Town and Village Centre P3:** Seek funding to support the preparation of public realm strategies to enhance the unique characteristics and assets of Carlow's towns and villages.
- **Movement and Transport P10:** Maintain and improve where appropriate the local road network /streets and to improve the pedestrian environment including the quality, aesthetics and width, where appropriate, of footpaths in the town, to promote active travel measures and to improve access for mobility impaired.
- **Movement and Transport P11:** Promote and facilitate the development of walkways and cycleways at appropriate locations throughout the town to encourage sustainable transport.
- **Social Infrastructure P15:** Seek to enhance and provide recreational and community amenity facilities in Rathvilly and to enhance connectivity and accessibility to the River Slaney for passive recreational uses subject to environmental assessments.
- **Social Infrastructure P17:** Support the development of zoned open space and amenity lands for the provision of appropriate amenity facilities for the local community.

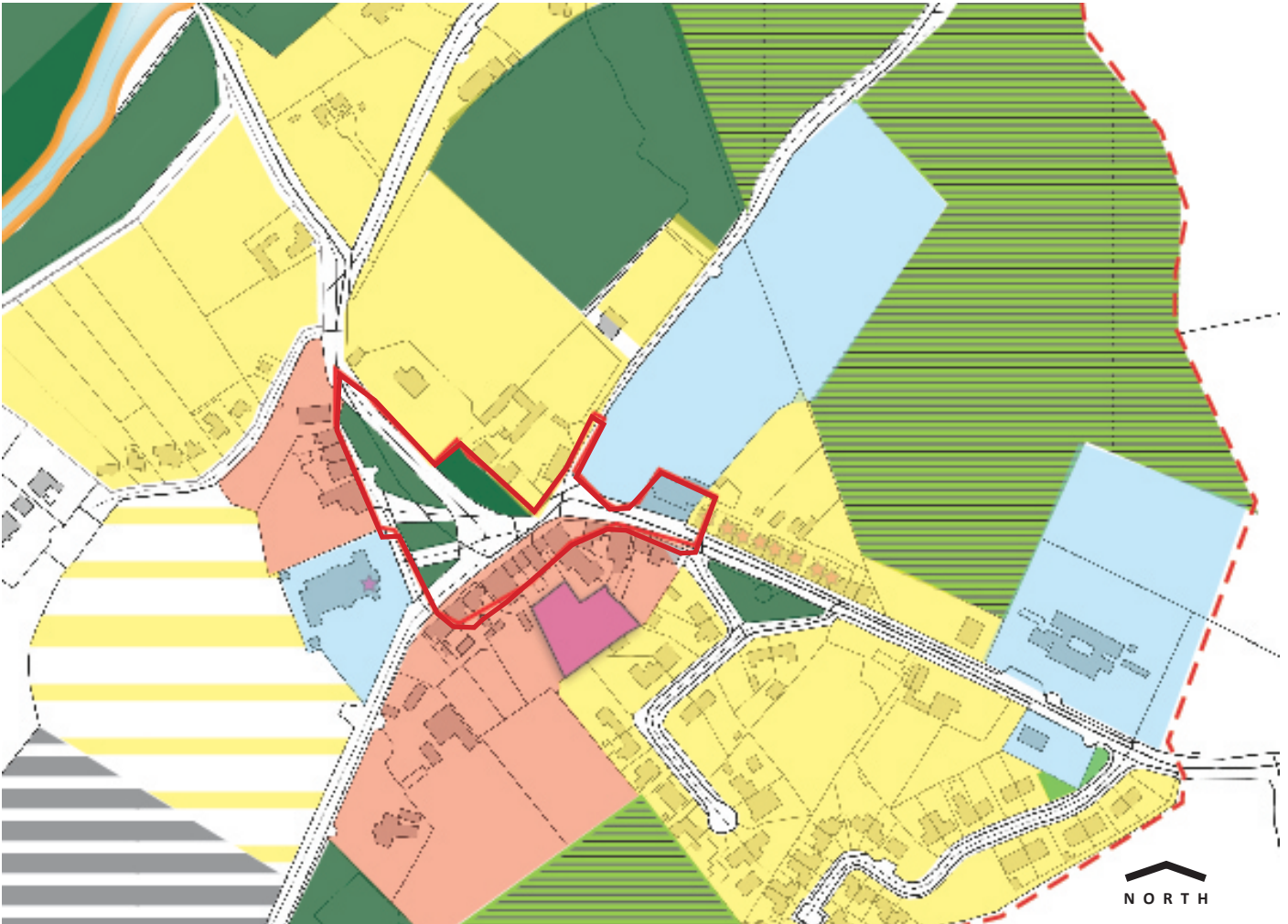
# PLANNING OVERVIEW

- **Public Realm P19:** Encourage public realm enhancements to the centre of the town and to facilitate mixed town centre uses to ensure the continued vitality and vibrancy of the town centre.
- **Public Realm P20:** Continue to support public realm improvements in the town, including where appropriate, the provision of appropriate signage, public seating, open space, hard and soft landscaping, retention of old stone walls and improvements to the public road and footpath network.
- **Public Realm P21:** Promote and support the utilisation of available funding and the implementation of any projects or schemes for which funding has been received that would contribute towards the maintenance and improvement of the public realm of the town.
- **Built and Natural Heritage P22:** Support the retention of buildings with architectural merit, significant architectural features, historic /heritage structures and archaeological sites that contribute to the town's character and setting
- **Built and Natural Heritage P23:** Protect individual trees, groups of trees, hedgerows and stone walls in so far as possible within the settlement and on all approach roads which contribute significantly to the character and visual amenity of the town.

# PLANNING OVERVIEW

## Carlow County Development Plan (CDP, 2022 - 2028)

The land use zoning context, per the CDP 2022-2028 is presented below. The relevant land zonings have been considered as part of the Rathvilly 2040 plan making process.

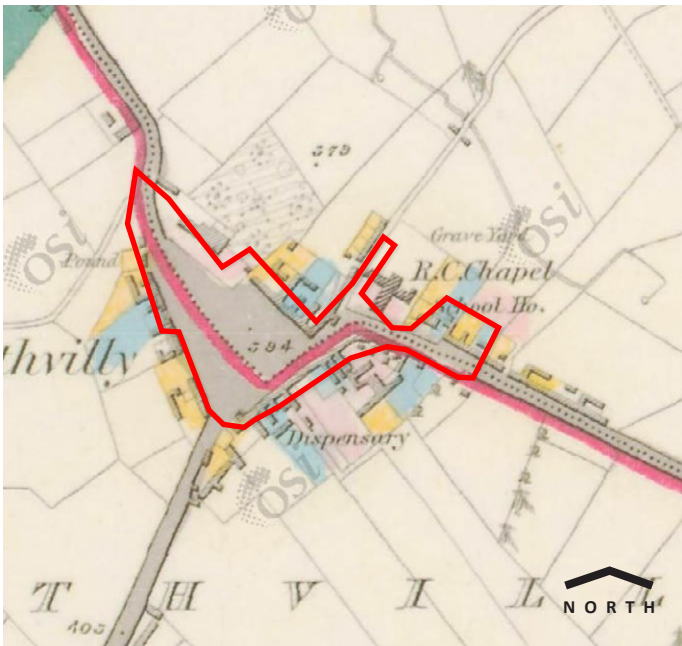


Rathvilly Zoning Plan, as per the Carlow County Development Plan (CDP, 2022 - 2028)

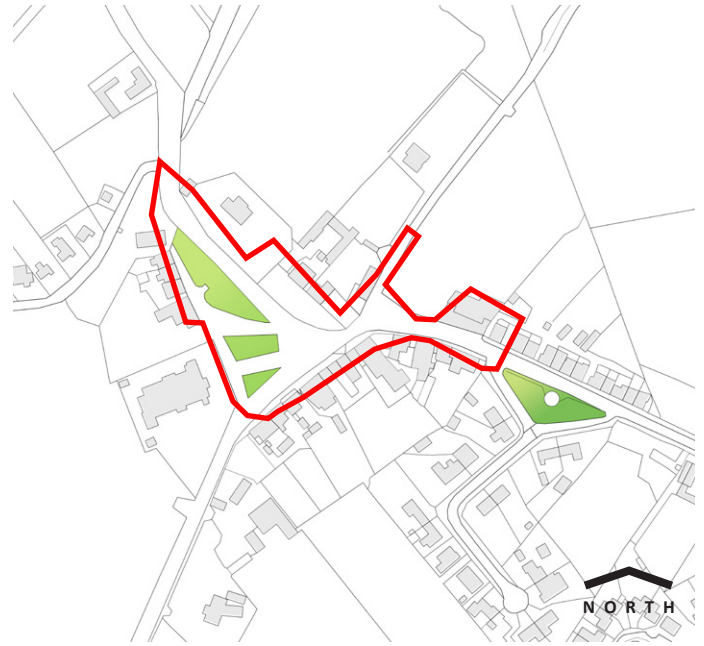
### KEY (as per the (CDP, 2022 - 2028)

- Rathvilly 2040
- - - Rathvilly boundary
- Town centre
- Existing/infill residential
- ▨ New residential
- Community/education
- ▨ Enterprise and employment
- Open space and amenity
- ▨ Agriculture
- Opportunity site

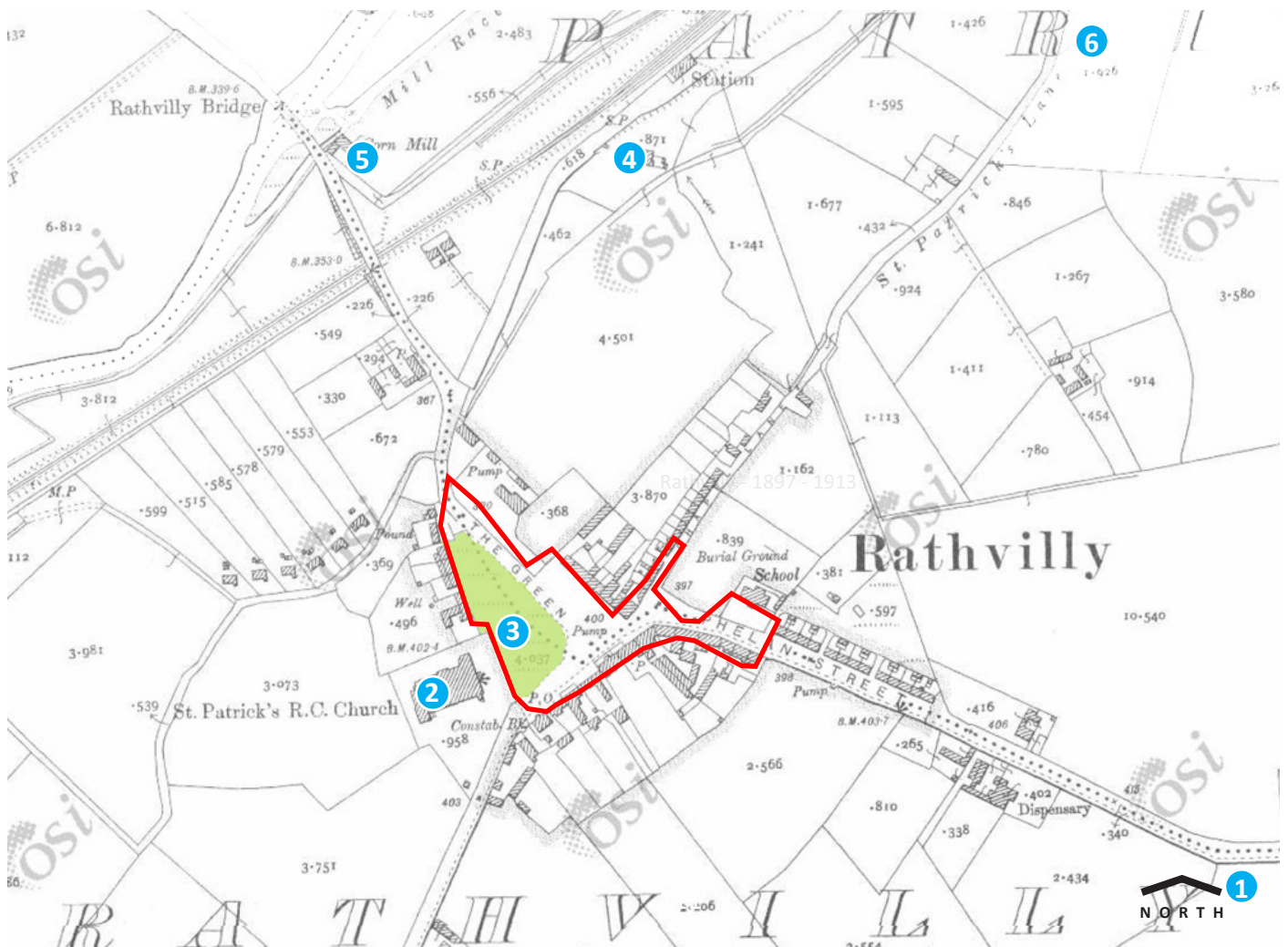
# ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF RATHVILLY



Rathvilly - 1829 - 1841



Rathvilly Today



Rathvilly 1897 - 1913



# ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF RATHVILLY

## 1. THE MOTTE

Rathvilly derives its name from Ráth Bhile in Irish which translates to “The fort of the old tree”, from the nearby “Motte”.

“The Motte” was the residence of King Crimhthann 443-483 AD and it was built by the Normans. It is located a mile outside Rathvilly on Hacketstown Road and is a remnant of the Ancient East’s medieval heritage.

## 2. ST. PATRICK’S CHURCH

St. Patrick’s Church was designed by the architect William Hague. It was built in 1886 using local granite.

## 3. KEVIN BARRY

Kevin Barry, Ireland’s hero for his struggle for independence, spent his childhood in Rathvilly and attended Rathvilly National School. He is remembered through a memorial monument located in front of St. Patrick’s Church.

## 4. TRAIN STATION

The Rathvilly train station opened in 1886, however closed down in 1959 due to the popularity of the car.

## 5. CORN-MILL

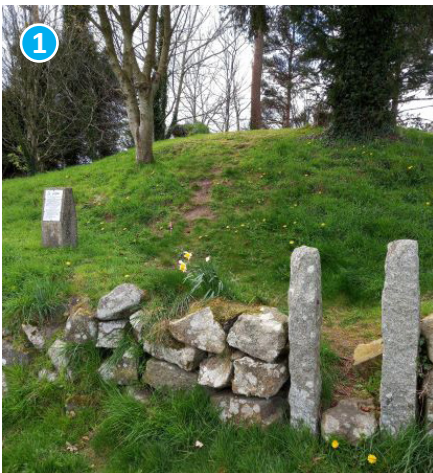
The Corn-Mill is located next to the Rathvilly Bridge. It was built in the 16th Century. The waterwheel located outside today represents the significance of it’s economy in the past when it was used to grind oats and corn.

## 6. ST. PATRICK’S WELL

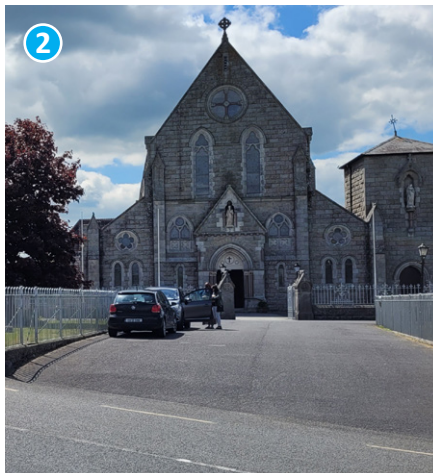
St. Patrick’s well is located at the end of Chapel Lane, on an ancient mass path. St. Patrick in 450 AD baptised King Crimhthann on this site. The well was formed by a natural spring capped by a large slab.

### KEY

— Rathvilly 2040



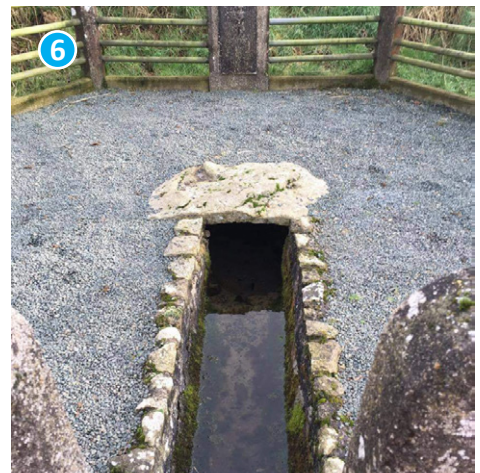
Source: The Standing Stone



Source: Historical Picture Archive

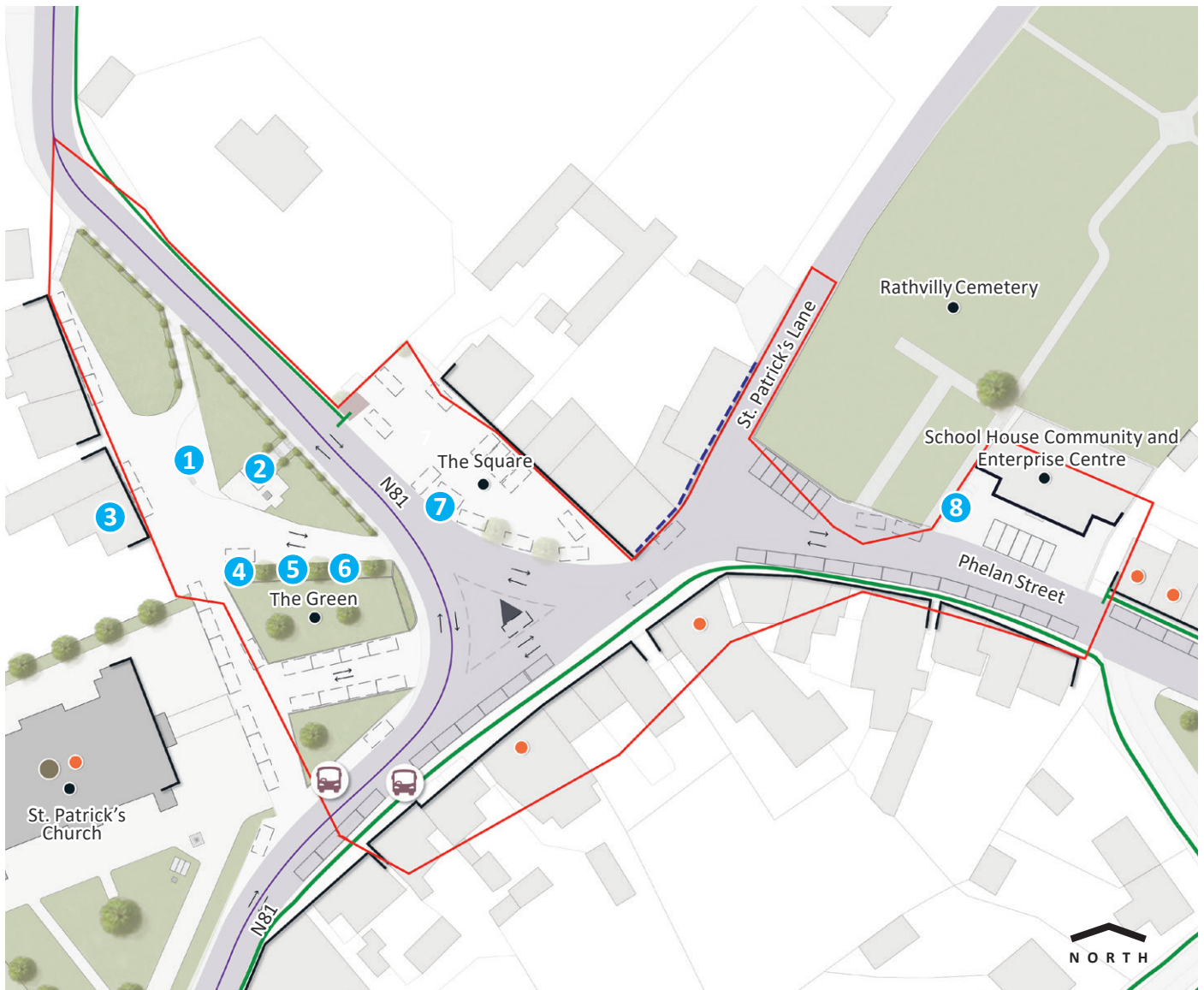


Source: Ireland Genealogical Projects



Source: Our Irish Heritage

# UNDERSTANDING RATHVILLY TODAY



## KEY

### Connectivity

- Rathvilly 2040
- Regional bus corridor
- Existing bus stop
- Dedicated footpaths

### Built-form

- Existing frontages
- Existing blank gable wall
- Record of protected structures
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
- Village triangle
- Existing designated parking
- Undesignated parking areas
- Existing buildings
- Existing trees
- Existing green spaces
- Existing Destinations

### Destinations

- 1 Outdoor seating
- 2 Kevin Barry Memorial
- 3 Green Lemon cafe and bakery
- 4 Rathvilly Rose
- 5 Rathvilly time capsule
- 6 Michael Fay memorial
- 7 Local information board
- 8 Bring bank



The Green Lemon cafe and bakery

Source: The Green Lemon

# UNDERSTANDING RATHVILLY TODAY



Outdoor activities



Outdoor seating



GAA Club



Tidy Towns Community



St. Patrick's Well



Phelan Street

## RATHVILLY TODAY

Rathvilly is a rural village with an engaging and active community. It enjoys good access to Dublin via the N81 and convenient access to the wider towns and the landscape of County Carlow.

According to the Carlow County Development Plan (2022-2028), the village has experienced a 5% increase in population between 2011-2016.

The heritage and archaeological assets of the village are rich in character, and defined for example for features including the row of protected Granite houses on Phelan Street.

The village core can be described as a village of two halves. Passing through the centre of the village, the N81 delineates between these two halves, where on one side is an area known locally as "The Green", and on the other side is "The Square".

Within the core of the village is a range of local services and facilities including but not limited to a Post Office, a Credit Union, a Crèche, a local convenience store, pubs, a Garda Station, and the Rathvilly Cemetery.

## RATHVILLY VILLAGE CENTRE ASSETS

Rathvilly Village has a wealth of established assets and attractors which include:

- A rich heritage and archaeological background
- Existing, central area of open spaces within the village core
- Activated public spaces
- A riverside amenity with potential to link seamlessly with the village centre
- A distinct vernacular of character, particularly along Phelan Street
- Strong sense of community and identity
- Community and retail destinations within short walking proximity.

These village centre assets, supported by the established amenities and facilities are the starting point for the establishment of the Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan. The Plan aims to take these assets into consideration and build on them in order to create an enhanced identity, economic social and communal vitality and the overall experience of the village for residents and visitors.

# EXISTING SITE CONSTRAINTS

## Issues

- Weak and unsafe pedestrian realm (narrow footpaths and in some areas, no footpaths, and no safe crossing points)
- Haphazard car-parking arrangements, with no formal delineation of spaces within the village core
- Over-dominance of roadscape with heavy traffic volumes, making for an unpleasant pedestrian realm
- A weak civic quality, with vehicular parking, movements and speed, distilling a legible sense of quality public realm
- Lack of fully accessible open space within the village core. The Green is defined by locked railings, limited public access or use.

## KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- ⋈ Unsafe access/egress
- Existing dedicated footpaths
- - - Disconnected pedestrian realm
- Compromised areas for safe pedestrian movement
- Over-dominance of vehicular movement
- Fragmented public realm/shared surface areas
- Existing railings
- ⊗ Limited access to open space areas
- - - Poor quality building frontages
- Existing designated parking
- Undesignated parking areas
- 🚌 Existing bus stop locations



# IDENTIFIED SITE OPPORTUNITIES

- Create an enhanced sense of 'place' within the village core through public realm interventions and pedestrian oriented streetscape improvements
- Rationalise the dominance of roadscape and reconfigure road alignments for traffic management, road safety and management of traffic speed
- Reduce carriageway widths where possible to ensure comfortable footpath space
- Create an enhanced and safer pedestrian realm with introduction of new pedestrian paths, enhancement of existing pedestrian facilities and introduction of dedicated pedestrian crossings
- Reposition the village triangle and integrate as a key public realm feature
- Rationalise car parking arrangements
- Create an enhanced sense of arrival at the village gateways
- Enhance overall presentation of the village core with introduction of high quality paving, lighting, street furniture and trees
- Incorporate directional signage and interpretive information.

## KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- Formalised car parking
- Proposed shared surface areas
- Proposed dedicated public realm
- Proposed rationalisation of road alignment
- Dedicated pedestrian paths
- Indicative village node
- Secondary gateways
- Proposed pedestrian crossings
- ↔ Rationalised vehicular movement
- ▶ Repositioned village triangle



# RATHVILLY SPATIAL CONDITIONS, QUALITIES AND CHALLENGES



Car dominated pedestrian realm



Car dominated streetscape



Illegible public realm with no delineation between vehicular and pedestrian areas



Over dominance and poorly organised parking



Undulating levels and challenging pedestrian access and movement arrangements for less able people

# RATHVILLY SPATIAL QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES



Clear sense of public realm and sense of pedestrian priority



Enhance streetscapes



Celebrate and enhance community assets, including the Village Triangle



Enhance dwell time opportunities



Create enhanced sense of place through street furniture



Create connected, people oriented spaces

# PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan was informed through analyses, and thus an understanding of for the village as it is today. Appreciation of existing assets, public realm challenges and, importantly, public realm opportunities were identified by the VHA team. To complement and further inform the emerging design proposals of VHA, a process of consultation and engagement was facilitated.

A series of meetings and discussions were held with local interest groups, private and commercial operators, and the local community of Rathvilly.

An open Public Consultation Event, held on 13th and 14th December 2022, presented the emerging public realm proposals for Rathvilly 2040. Please refer to the Appendix section of this document for the two options are presented at the Open Public Event. A series of exhibition boards (as illustrated the page opposite) were placed on display in Rathvilly following the event and feedback forms were shared for local distribution.

Over 100 responses were received, and a summary of feedback received is summarised on the following pages.



Public consultation event photos

**INVITATION TO  
HAVE YOUR SAY  
AND FIND OUT MORE**

Carlow County Council invite you to participate in an emerging Public Realm Plan for the village of Rathvilly. The purpose of the Plan is guide the creation of a people and place oriented enhancement of Rathvilly as a great place to live, work and visit.

The Rathvilly 2040 Project Team would like to hear your views on how the village could become a thriving destination for locals, visitors, for families and for businesses.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS.**

**RATHVILLY PUBLIC  
REALM STRATEGY  
CONSULTATION  
EVENT**

We would like to hear your thoughts, ideas and aspirations for Rathvilly and its future public realm at our public consultation events:

- Plan Viewing: 12th December 2022 10am-6pm
- Consultation Meeting with VHA Architects: 13th December 2022 3pm-8pm

The event will take place in the Consultation Bus in Rathvilly Village Centre

Public consultation flyer

**RATHVILLY 2040**  
Public Realm Strategy

**VHA**  
Village & Heritage Architects

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME**

**FEEDBACK FORM**

We welcome and thank you for attending the open Public Consultation Event at Rathvilly Village Centre, Co. Carlow.

We would like you hear your thoughts on the presented plans. Please complete this form and we will consider, as appropriate, for the next stage of design.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Public consultation feedback form



# PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

## WELCOME

Welcome to the Rathvilly Village 2040 Public Realm public consultation event. Carlow County Council is in the process of producing a Public Realm Plan for the village. The purpose of the Plan is to create a strategy that sets out the future enhancement of Rathvilly as a great place to live, work and visit.

This report of this strategy is to provide a coherent vision for the village and to focus on the public realm by engaging with its residents, business operators and visitors to the town and public spaces including:

- How can we improve the streets and spaces?
- How can we better integrate the wider village area with its context?
- How can we enhance and better connect walking facilities within and around the village?
- How can we create an enhanced village that is a better place for residents and business operators to visit and encourage visitors to stay longer?

## WHY ARE WE HERE TODAY?

The project team, VHA Architects, commissioned by Carlow County Council, would like to hear your views on what the public realm strategy should consider to enhance and improve Rathvilly village centre.

To date this project team has been undertaking an information gathering process to inform the strategy. To inform us further, we would like to hear your views and understand your expectations for its future as a great place to live, work and visit.

## PROJECT TEAM

Carlow County Council  
VHA Architects  
Kierulff Architects

## PUBLIC REALM STUDY AREA

The Public Realm Study Area is defined by the village's main thoroughfares, including Rathvilly Road, The Square, and the Phoenix Street. It encompasses the central village area where most public activities take place.

## WHAT IS PUBLIC REALM?

Public Realm is the "space between buildings" - the streets, lanes ways, the waterfront, civic and open spaces that are accessible to the public and make up our town and village, and also the buildings themselves that define these spaces.

An attractive, high quality public realm in Rathvilly can have a positive impact on the village's competitiveness with other destinations, both for living, visiting and investment. It is an arena for business, for gathering, for recreation and for celebration. It is where people can come together to participate in public activities.

We see the purpose of the Rathvilly 2040 Plan as one where people and place are at the forefront - where the heritage, social, economic, cultural, physical and natural assets and fabric of the village are fully appreciated so to ensure their long term vitality and vibrancy and reinforce their appeal as a place to live, visit and where applicable, a place to do business.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

We would like to hear your thoughts. The project team are handing out feedback questionnaires. You are welcome to complete the form today or alternatively, you can:

- Complete the written feedback form as provided by the VHA design team and leave it in the box provided at the event.

## CREATING A VISION FOR RATHVILLY

In creating a vision for a successful public realm in Rathvilly, the following aspirations are being considered by the project team, including:

### PEOPLE'S VILLAGE

- Create a better and safer movement environment for all with improved facilities
- Reduce traffic, speed and
- Reduce unnecessary street clutter
- Rationalise on street parking and improve ease of access to parking areas

### ATTRACTIVE & WELCOMING

- Define and celebrate entrance points of the village
- Enhance the public realm through distinctive materials, planting, street furniture and street signage
- Ensure that all aspects of the visitor experience and unique identity of Rathvilly are considered

### WITH UNIQUE CHARACTER

- Protect and enhance the village's historic and natural features
- Conserve the fabric and enhance the setting of historic buildings and monuments
- Enhance the visual relationship between St. Patrick's Church and The Phoenix Centre

### VIBRANT & ANIMATED

- Maintain and enhance a public realm that encourages year-round community use and activity
- Maximise the size and quality of community, social and leisure areas in the village
- Improve and create flexible public spaces

### CONNECTED

- Improve connectivity between streets, spaces, the waterfront and green spaces
- Enhance and extend the pedestrian realm so as to encourage people to use the street network for future potential opportunities for new businesses
- Provide enhanced connectivity
- Reconnect via pedestrian routes, key village destinations

**Rathvilly Village, its friendly people, unique character, history and culture and activity will be enhanced through an improved high quality public realm.**

This will optimise and improve the village centre for people living in Rathvilly, while also reinforcing its appeal, variety of offerings and the village as a destination for tourism and new businesses.

## INDICATIVE PUBLIC REALM PROPOSALS

### OPTION TWO

Public Realm Improvement Potential

#### Existing Characteristics

- Street:** Strong sense of community; Strong heritage and sense of identity; Large open space area within the village core; Good scope with potential for enhancement; Community and retail destinations within short walking possibility.
- Issue:** Weak sense of pedestrian realm; Presence of car parking and traffic; Poor sense of safe pedestrian realm; Absence of low quality to distinguish pedestrian realm; Over-contraction of street signage; Lack of util, open accessibility to existing open spaces.
- Opportunities:** Create sense of arrival and a strong civic focal point at the town centre; Visually reduce the prominence of road surface and manage the quality of util; Optimise pedestrian space by reconfiguring existing road space; Enhance presentation using high quality signage, lighting, street furniture and trees; Incorporate distinctive signage and interpretive information.

#### Recommendations

- Establish a civic space at the "The Square" as a focal point, and connecting to a high quality, adaptable public realm destination space;
- Integrated welcoming, directional and way finding signage;
- Reduce canopy within where possible to ensure comfortable footpath space;
- Provide differentiated arrangement where Phoenix Street meets the NEI, with canopy; differentiated from surrounding;
- Provide a redefined pocket park with seating and a potential small playground/children's garden or similar at "The Green";
- Provide strong definition of the street space and pedestrian environment;
- Reconfigure selected on street parking spaces to optimise footpath width and pedestrian space as key locations where appropriate; and
- Soften the overall hard landscape and dimensions of terrain and roadway areas.

**Key:** Study area; Existing canopy; Existing heritage; Proposed reconfigurable street signage; Designated public realm; Bus stop location; Pedestrian crossings; Existing vacant building; Proposed School House Community and Enterprise Centre.

## EXISTING ASSETS

Rich heritage, Connected community, Existing central open spaces, Activated public spaces, Riverside amenity, Information and orientation, Rathvilly Tidy Towns.

## EXISTING STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM

Phoenix Street, Phoenix Street/NEI Intersection, Pedestrian links, The Square, NEI Courtyards, NEI Courtyards.

## CHALLENGES

Connected and unconnected pedestrian realm and footpaths, Car dominated environment and public realm, Reduce car dominance, Heavy buildings.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Connect open spaces and destinations, Create connected, people centred destination spaces, Pedestrian movement, Reduce car dominance, Enhance street scenes, Activate vacant buildings, Enhance street scenes.

### DESIGN

- Establish highly legible and orientable
- Name of streets and spaces
- Character and information reflecting heritage and culture
- Walk and feet - widened pavements and street furniture

### CONNECTIVITY

- Strengthen pedestrian connections between The Square, The Green and other local village centre destinations
- Increase retail and residential uses
- Establish active frontages/tourism along key routes
- Streets and junctions
- Provide focused street and civic spaces
- Reduce street clutter
- Enhance pedestrian and pedestrian priority
- Street lighting, trees and planting
- Increase retail and residential uses
- Rationalise car parking
- Active and open up public spaces
- Enhance pedestrian and pedestrian priority
- Street lighting, trees and planting
- Reduce car dominance
- Enhance street scenes

### UTIL FINDING AND INFORMATION

- Utilise, quality signage - directional, wayfinding

## INDICATIVE PUBLIC REALM PROPOSALS

### OPTION ONE

Public Realm Improvement Potential

#### Existing Characteristics

- Street:** Strong sense of community; Strong heritage and sense of identity; Large open space area within the village core; Road space with potential for enhancement; Community and retail destinations within short walking possibility.
- Issue:** Weak sense of pedestrian realm; Presence of car parking and traffic; Poor sense of safe pedestrian realm; Absence of low quality to distinguish pedestrian realm; Over-contraction of street signage; Lack of util, open accessibility to existing open spaces.
- Opportunities:** Create sense of arrival and a strong civic focal point at the town centre; Visually reduce the prominence of road surface and manage the quality of util; Optimise pedestrian space by reconfiguring existing road space; Enhance presentation using high quality signage, lighting, street furniture and trees; Incorporate distinctive signage and interpretive information.

#### Recommendations

- Establish a defined pedestrian oriented civic space as a welcoming and focal point within the village core at "The Square";
- Provide enhanced and redefined town and public realm areas at the School House Community and Enterprise Centre;
- Reduce traffic speed and improve with a rationalised roundabout junction arrangement;
- Reduce canopy within where possible to ensure comfortable footpath spaces;
- Rationalise the existing interconnect arrangement where the NEI meets Phoenix Street via a modified junction arrangement;
- Utilise and unlock the broader potential of "The Green", by providing a larger expense of fully accessible open space with activated areas;
- Rationalise the existing car parking as a formal, clear arrangement;
- Introduce and enhance the soft landscaping, quality signage, seating and lighting; and
- Soften the overall hard landscape, on-street street signage.

### Key: Study area; Existing canopy; Shared surface area; Designated public realm; Pedestrian signage; Bus stop location; Pedestrian crossings; Existing vacant building; Proposed School House Community and Enterprise Centre.

## INDICATIVE MATERIAL PALETTE

### Typical surface materials and finishes

Feature dark grey setts to create civic areas; Feature paving with interpretative and heritage signage; Light grey setts to pedestrian crossing; Kerb detail; Feature dark/light grey setts for parking bays; Road surface treatment.

### Typical street furniture and planting

Urban Street planting/wayfinding examples

### Indicative Signage and Wayfinding

Clear text; Quality bicycle racks; Urban Street planting/wayfinding examples

## THE NEXT STEPS

WE ARE HERE: 1 Hear your thoughts and views on the emerging public realm proposals for Rathvilly Village; 2 Project Team, in close liaison with Carlow County Council, will prepare preliminary Public Realm Plan; 3 PRODUCTION OF FINAL RATHVILLY 2040 PUBLIC REALM PLAN.

NEXT STEPS: 1 Design development of public realm design proposals; 2

**THANK YOU FOR COMING.**

Extract of public consultation exhibition boards

# PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

## WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TOLD US

The following is a summary overview of key observations and feedback received from the process of consultation and engagement held throughout by VHA Architects and Carlow County Council during 2022.

A list of bodies and groups engaged with include:

- Carlow County Council;
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII);
- Private landowners;
- Local business operators; and
- Local community members.

A series of stakeholder engagement meetings were held during 2022, including:

- 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022: Carlow County Council (Heritage Department, County Librarian, Finance Department)
- 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022: Carlow County Council (Engineering Department, Climate Action Department, Environmental Department, Special Projects Delivery)
- 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022: Transport Infrastructure Ireland (Health and Safety)
- 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022: Carlow County Council (Director of Services, Housing Department, Community Services Department, Recreation and Amenity)
- 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022: Carlow County Council (Heritage Department,
- 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022: TII (Engineering Inspector and Landscape Architect)

### Summary of key aspirations, themes and desired objectives:

The following points summarise the feedback received from stakeholder engagement held to date.

#### Green Environment, Open Space and Amenity

- It's essential to have a playground in the village. There's an option to locate one in the Church Green.
- The existing green space in front of the Church is well maintained but could be better used through easier access and providing seating, etc.
- Use of planted areas, street furniture etc. is a useful tool to aid traffic calming and prevent the subsequent installation of bollards. Planted areas should also be considered as a Sustainable Urban Drainage device especially to cater for run off from pedestrian areas.

#### Parking and Safety

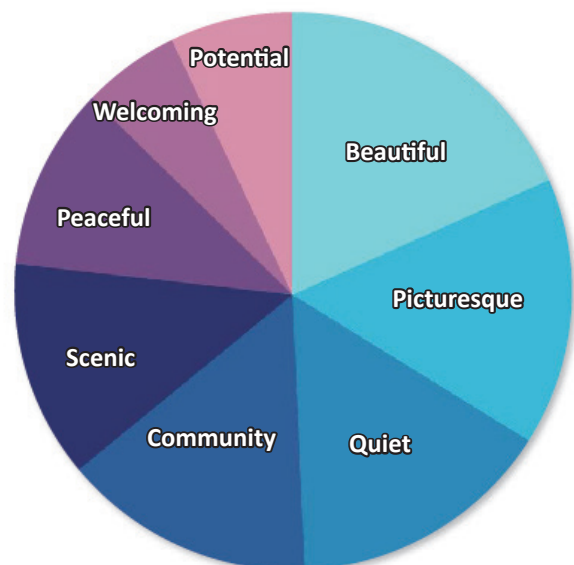
- Provision of inset bus stops is welcomed; it will remove queuing and overtaking of the parked bus.
- The lack of segregation between the carriageway and adjoining footpaths will encourage double parking, therefore need to consider measures to discourage this behaviour otherwise bollards will most likely need to be installed (post construction).

#### Movement and Access

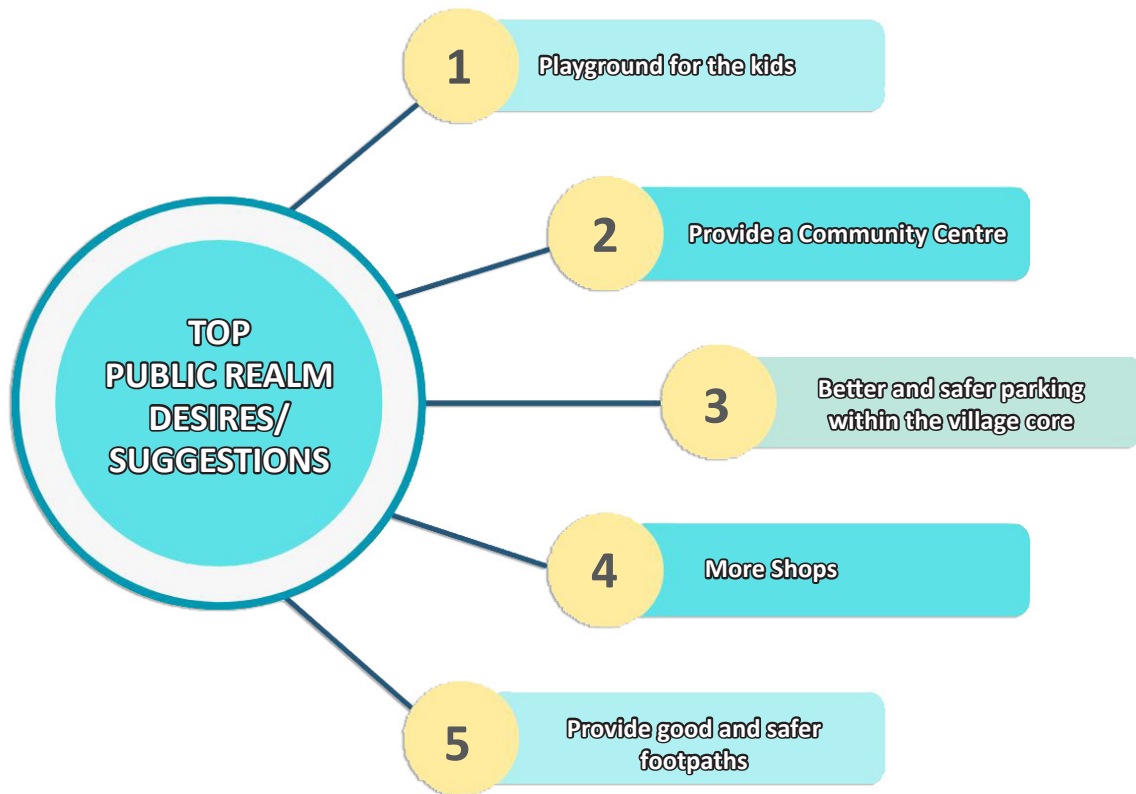
- Consideration to be given to slow down the traffic through the N81 and the junction area needs to be rationalized.
- Additional points to be considered: electric vehicle (EV) parking, SUDS, accessible parking spaces.
- Plants can be used as buffers – a combination of soft and hard landscape ratio to soften the interface between the public realm and the N81.
- Pedestrian crossings on the N81 could work very well and would have little impact on the capacity or operation of the road and don't cause delays
- Exit through the shared surface area in between the green might be dangerous for providing sight lines. The shared surface could be used as a one way system instead.

The following charts summarise the feedback received from the public consultation event:

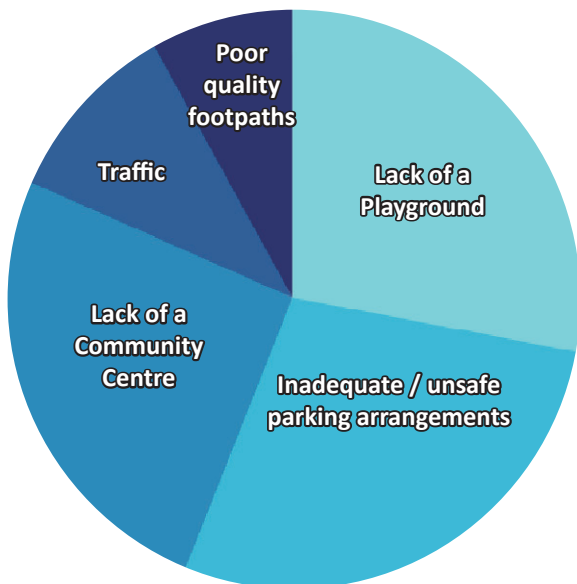
#### Top words used to describe Rathvilly Today:



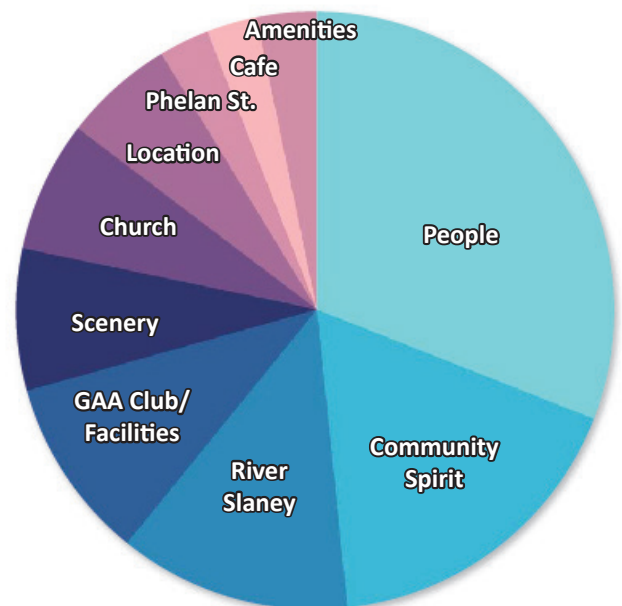
# PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT



What people dislike most Rathvilly Village:



What people like most about Rathvilly Village:



3.

**PUBLIC REALM  
STRATEGY**

# OBJECTIVES FOR A SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC REALM

An objective of the Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan is to guide the creation of an enhanced and robust public realm - one that is people and experience focussed, whilst further enlivening and animating the village core. The Plan are focusses creating a welcoming, engaging and distinctive public realm; one that is characterful and reflects the culture of the village; and is an arena for the day-to-day life of the village and its community and visitors.

Accessible For All



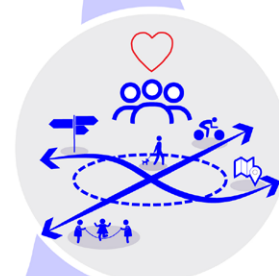
Interactive and Animated



Connected



Comfortable For All



## RATHVILLY 2040

A Clear Sense of Identity



A Successful Economy



Characterful



# PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rathvilly 2040 public realm strategy builds upon existing assets of the village, its unique characteristics, its heritage and its people. Building on these to create an enhanced public realm, the following key themes are the drivers for a future Rathvilly:

## PUBLIC REALM THEMES

### Identity

- Reflect the identity of Rathvilly in its public realm (streets and spaces) to create a meaningful and distinctive sense of place for locals and visitors alike;
- Work with existing village assets and features of strength and compliment and further enhance them with public realm features such as street planting, furniture and signage;
- Facilitate and incorporate new and repositioned signage with 'Carlow brand' street signage to tell the story of Rathvilly.

### Bringing Streets to Life

- Create a distinctive, vibrant and appealing village core by establishing a people focussed public realm, with dedicated pedestrian paths and facilities, high quality paving, seating, street furniture and lighting;
- Create an environment within the village core that is conducive to a pedestrian oriented realm which is safer, attractive, memorable.

### Connections and Movement

- Establish a safer pedestrian realm within the village core with dedicated pedestrian links and routes, particularly between The Square, The Green and the School House Community and Enterprise Centre;
- Encourage safer and integrated movement for all and social interaction within the village core;
- Adjust the pedestrian to vehicular balance of streets where appropriate so as to provide a stronger and safer pedestrian environment around the village core.

### Welcome and Legibility

- Enhance arrival points to the village centre, reflecting the brand and create a sense of arrival and welcome;
- Provide clear directional signage from the gateways through to village core destinations and facilities, including parking and public transport, as well as retail, civic and amenity destinations.

#### KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- - - Existing road alignment
- Shared surface area
- Dedicated public realm
- Dedicated open space
- 🚌 Proposed bus stops
- Proposed reconfigured roadscape
- Proposed car parking
- Proposed disabled parking
- Proposed EV parking
- ||| Proposed pedestrian crossings
- School House Community and Enterprise Centre Part 8 application boundary
- ▲ Relocated village triangle

# PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



# PUBLIC REALM OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## N81 / Phelan Street Intersection



### IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To improve, enhance and provide a safer pedestrian realm
- To rationalise the existing N81 road alignment, creating opportunities for a more cohesive and connected public realm
- To rationalise vehicular movement as appropriate, and reduce to one way in areas best feasible
- To retain and reposition the village triangle, and enable it to act as a key nodal feature within the enhanced public realm
- To rationalise and formalise car parking and the existing bus lay-by areas.

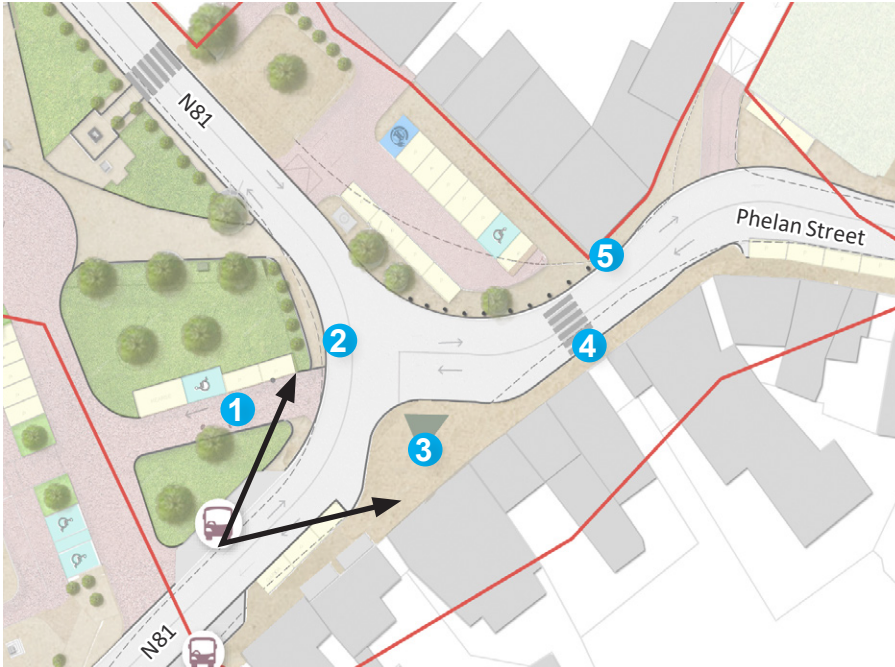
### EXISTING





## DESIGN RATIONALE:

Rationalise the traffic junction of the N81 and Phelan Street and create an enhanced and defined public realm that celebrates the existing assets of Rathvilly.



### KEY

- ① One-way entry to Church Grounds and parking
- ② Realigned junction arrangement
- ③ Re-located village triangle
- ④ New pedestrian crossing
- ⑤ Enhanced pedestrian realm
- > Direction of vignette view
- - - Existing road alignment
- Reconfigured road alignment
- Proposed enhanced public realm

## PROPOSED



For illustrative purposes

# PUBLIC REALM OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## Phelan Street (West)



### IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

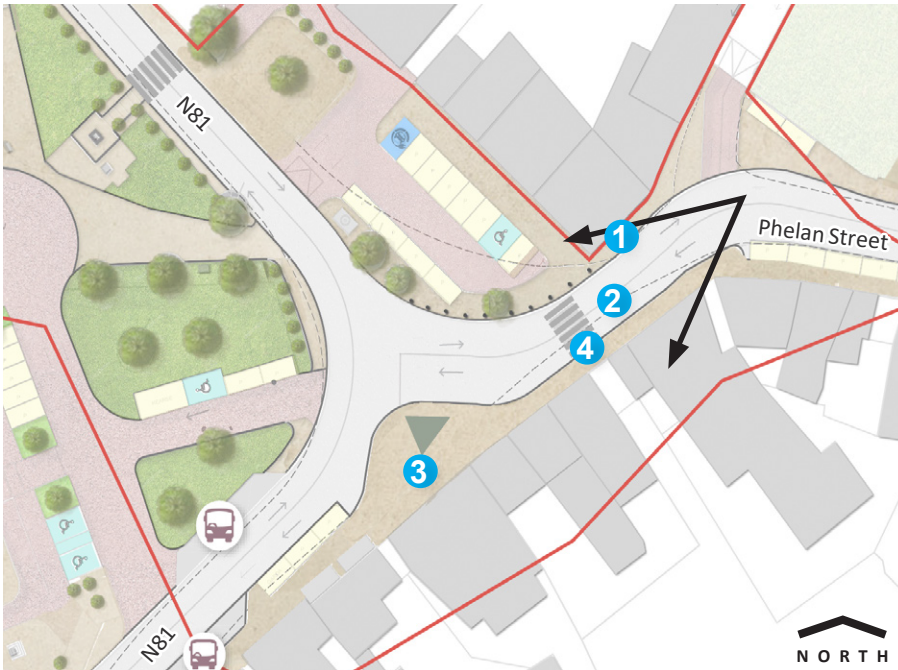
- To improve, enhance and provide a safer pedestrian realm and pedestrian movement, particularly between The Square and the School House Community and Enterprise Centre
- To rationalise the existing Phelan Street road alignment, creating opportunities for a more cohesive and connected public realm between the School House Community and Enterprise Centre and the overall village core
- To retain and reposition the village triangle, and enable it to act as a key nodal feature within the enhanced public realm
- To rationalise and formalise car parking spaces
- To provide pedestrian crossings, facilitating safer movement, where appropriate
- To rationalise the existing intersection and number of road lanes, where the N81 and Phelan Street meet, thus creating a safer, more legible sense of place, and to reduce the dominance of vehicular movement
- Provide high quality street furniture and materials to create an identifiable village core.

### EXISTING



## DESIGN RATIONALE:

To create a safe crossing intersection and pedestrian realm along the junction of the N81 and Phelan Street and create an enhanced public realm



### KEY

- ① Enhanced pedestrian realm
- ② Reconfigured road alignment
- ③ Re-located village triangle
- ④ New pedestrian crossing
- ⑤ Proposed street furniture and planting
- ↘ Direction of vignette view
- - - Existing road alignment
- Proposed road alignment
- Proposed enhanced public realm

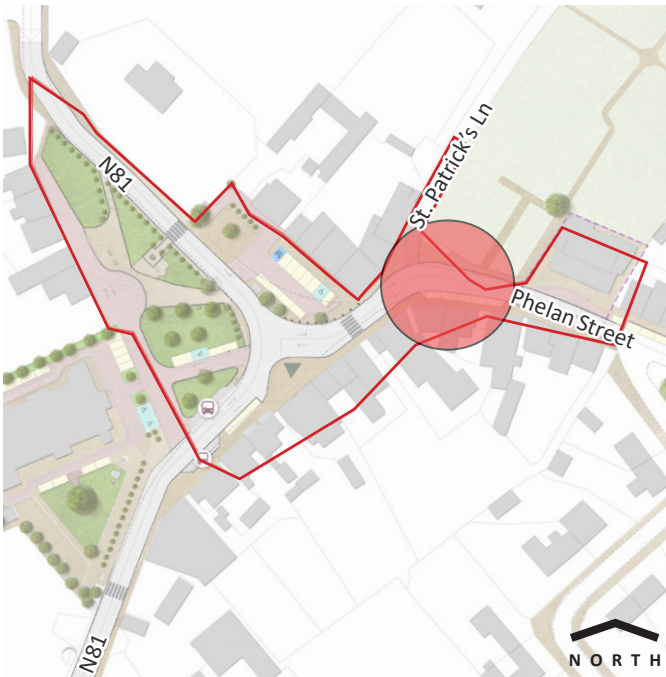
## PROPOSED



For illustrative purposes

# PUBLIC REALM OPPORTUNITY AREAS

## Phelan Street (East)



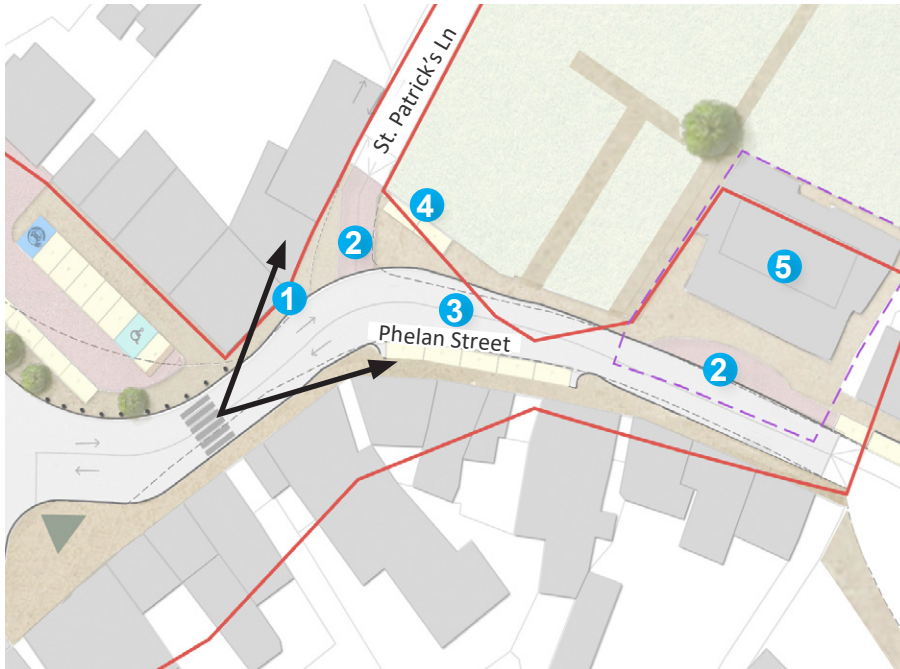
### IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To improve, enhance and provide a safer pedestrian realm and pedestrian movement, particularly between The Square, the Cemetery and the School House Community and Enterprise Centre
- To rationalise the existing Phelan Street road alignment, particularly in front of the Cemetery, creating opportunities for a more cohesive and connected public realm to the School House Community and Enterprise Centre.
- To create a safer pedestrian realm through the widening of narrow footpaths and to provide footpaths in areas currently non-existent
- To rationalise and formalise car parking spaces
- Provide high quality street furniture and materials to create an identifiable village core.



## DESIGN RATIONALE:

Enhancing pedestrian realm on Phelan Street and reduce dominance of car parking.



### KEY

- 1 Extended pedestrian realm
- 2 Shared-surface area
- 3 Reconfigured alignment of Phelan Street
- 4 Rationalised parking
- 5 School House Community and Enterprise Centre
- > Direction of vignette view
- - - Existing road alignment
- Proposed road alignment
- Proposed enhanced public realm

## PROPOSED



For illustrative purposes

# INDICATIVE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING STRATEGY

To facilitate easy navigation and legibility around and within the Rathvilly 2040 area, the plan below sets out potential locations and markers for wayfinding and signage opportunities.

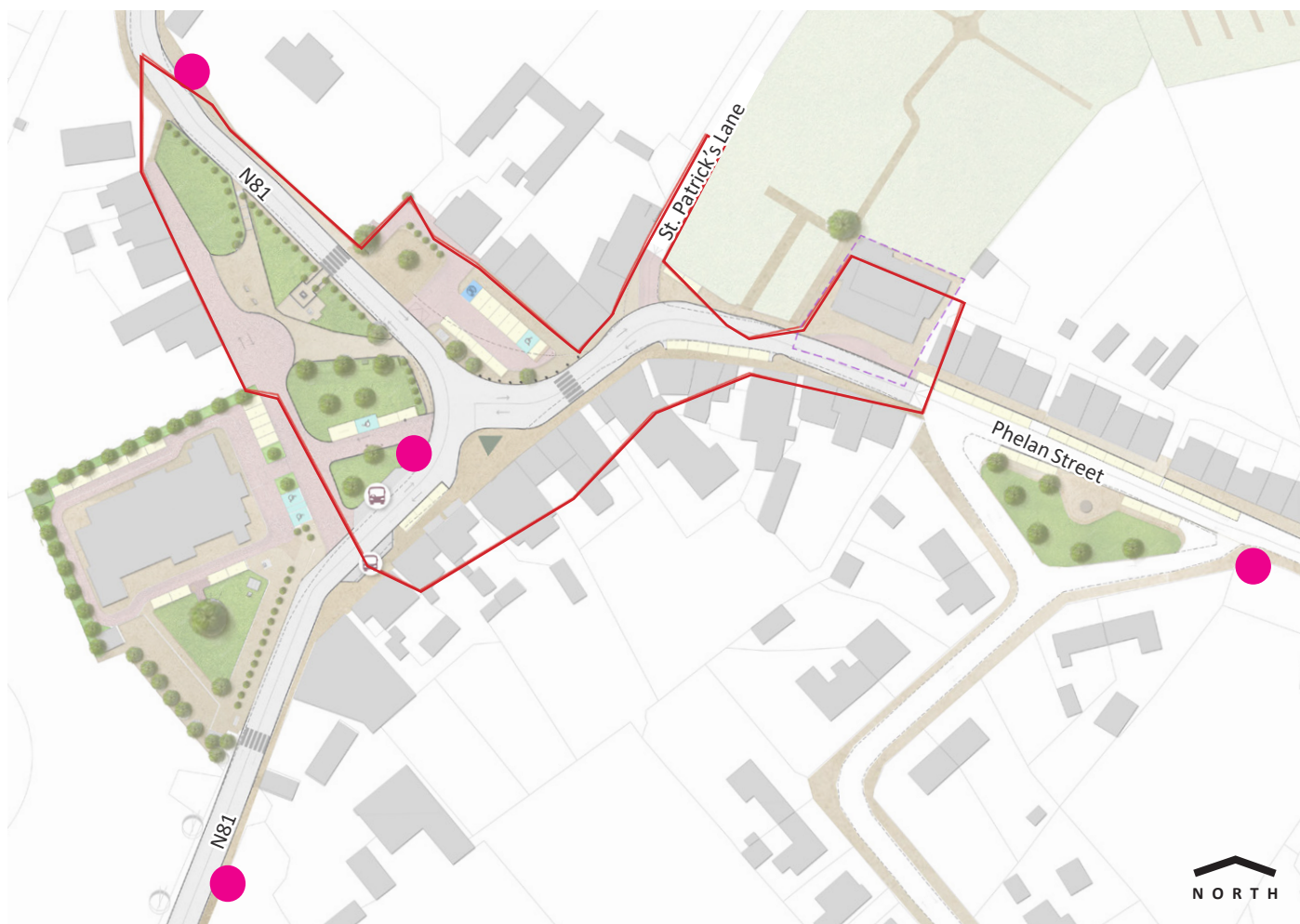
This will enhance the user experience for both locals and visitors to Rathvilly.

Carlow County Council have formulated a bespoke design standard palette for county wide signage and wayfinding (as illustrated opposite).

For Rathvilly 2040, signage is positioned in locations where minimal visual clutter is facilitated, and for ease of accessibility for all users, by car, foot or public transport. Proposed locations also aim to make the experience of navigating through the village safe and more legible.

## KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- Indicative signage locations



Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan

# INDICATIVE SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING STRATEGY



Carlow County Council Signage and Wayfinding palette and standards



Indicative public realm improvement proposal with incorporation of Carlow branded street signage

For illustrative purposes

# INDICATIVE MATERIALS, FINISHES AND STREET FURNITURE



Light grey setts



Feature dark/light grey setts



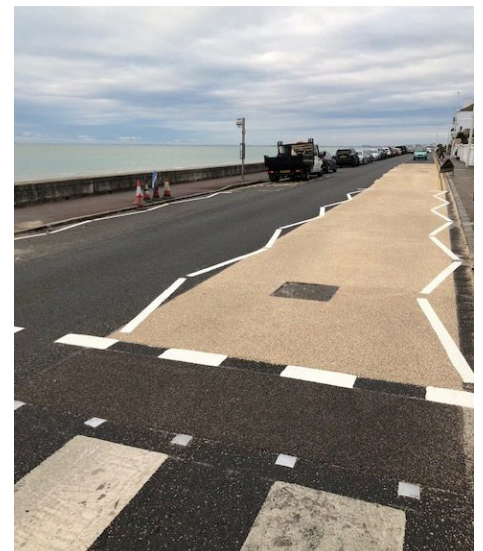
Feature dark/light grey setts



Shared surface treatment



Indicative kerb detail, paving detail and material differentiation



Road surface treatment



# INDICATIVE MATERIALS, FINISHES AND STREET FURNITURE



Flexible outdoor seating



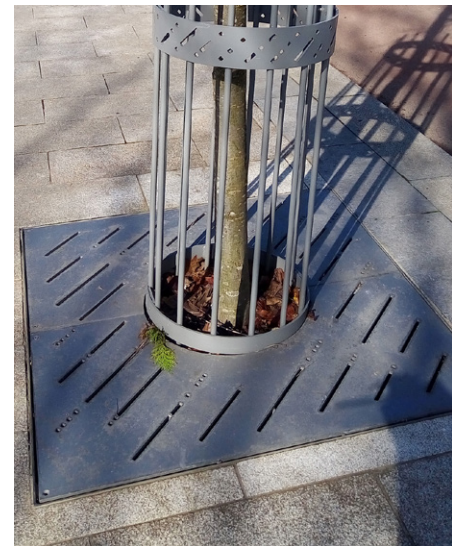
Indicative street bollard types



Quality Bicycle racks



Litter bin



Tree grille



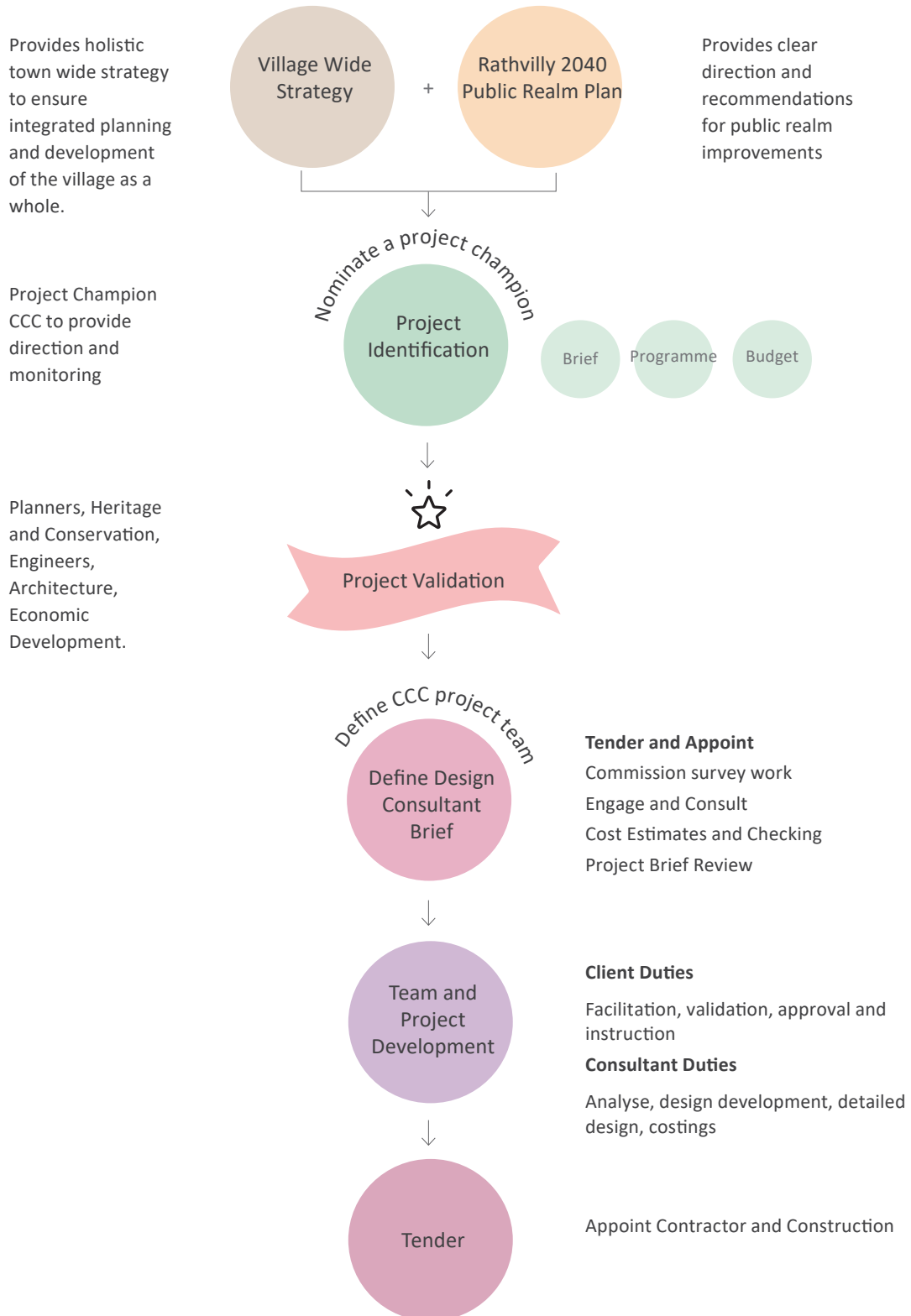
Multi-functional street planters and seating examples



# POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The process for each individual public realm project area is complex and unique to each location. It is dependent on identified site constraints and opportunities, engagement and consultation feedback, approvals and ease of change.

The process diagram below sets out the various stages which should be considered and need to be managed as part of the process towards creating the proposed Rathvilly 2040 Public Realm Plan.



4.

**APPENDIX**

# APPENDIX

## Rathvilly 2040 Draft Option 1 (presented during Open Public Event)

- Establish a defined pedestrian oriented civic-space as a welcoming and focal point within the village core at “The Square”.
- Provide enhanced and redefined forecourt public realm area at the School House Community and Enterprise Centre
- Remove village triangle, currently functioning as a traffic island, and replace with a rationalised roundabout junction arrangement.
- Rationalise the existing intersection arrangement where the N81 meets Phelan Street via a reconfigured junction arrangement.
- Unify and unlock the broader potential of “The Green”, by providing a larger expanse of fully accessible open space with activated uses within;

### KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- - Existing streetscape
- Shared surface area
- Dedicated public realm
- Indicative signage locations
- Bus stop locations
- Proposed reconfigured streetscape and parking
- Pedestrian crossings
- Existing vacant building
- Proposed School House Community and Enterprise Centre



# APPENDIX

1 BEFORE



1 AFTER



For illustrative purposes

2 BEFORE



2 AFTER



For illustrative purposes

3 BEFORE



3 AFTER



For illustrative purposes

# APPENDIX

## Rathvilly 2040 Draft Option 2 (presented during Open Public Event)

- Establish a civic space at “The Square” as a focal point, and connecting to a high quality, adaptable public realm destination space
- Reduce carriageway widths where possible to ensure comfortable footpath space
- Relocate the village triangle to form an integral part of the enhanced public realm, and within the pedestrian areas, rather than as currently positioned, within the road scope
- Introduce wider footpath widths to ensure comfortable pedestrian space and encourage passive amenity
- Provide differentiated arrangement where Phelan Street meets the N81 with crossings, differentiated from carriageway.
- Re-configure selected on street parking spaces to optimise footpath widths and pedestrian space as key locations where appropriate.

### KEY

- Rathvilly 2040
- Existing streetscape
- Existing footpaths
- Proposed reconfigured streetscape
- Proposed parking
- Dedicated public realm
- 🚌 Bus stop locations
- Indicative signage locations
- ⚡ Pedestrian crossings
- 🏠 Existing vacant building
- 🏢 Proposed School House Community and Enterprise Centre



# APPENDIX

1 BEFORE



1 AFTER



For illustrative purposes

2 BEFORE



2 AFTER



For illustrative purposes

3 BEFORE



3 AFTER



For illustrative purposes

## APPENDIX: NEXT STEPS

This Public Realm Plan has been created, with the support of the community and consultancy company Vincent Hannon Architects (VHA) with the support of the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund (RRDF) and aligns to Town Centre First. We thank the community of Rathvilly for their vibrant views and engagement on this project to date and we look forward to continuing to work with the community to develop the concepts on this plan further.

The Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant, and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural, and recreational hub for the local community. It is acknowledged that Irish towns are facing significant challenges and opportunities that require a coordinated and comprehensive response. The public realm plan is a framework to develop future proposals for funding.

The delivery of any vision for a Town requires funding and the delivery of Vision Rathvilly 2040 will require the attraction of central government funding in order to realise its vision.

The approval of this plan will be preceded by a procurement process for a design team to carry out detailed design on elements on the plan. The detailed design process will involve further consultation with the community and key stakeholders. As at May 2023, Carlow County Council has funding in place for the technical design process of elements of the plan but the long-term delivery will be dependent on the continued consultation with community to agree detailed design on elements and central government funding.

If you have any queries in respect of the vision or next steps please contact , Carlow County Council – Local Enterprise Office on 059-9129783 or e-mail [enterprise@carlowcoco.ie](mailto:enterprise@carlowcoco.ie)





**SLIGO**

Second Floor  
Hanson Building  
Doorly Park Road  
Sligo, F91 P7N2

**GALWAY**

Suite 4, Cloch Mhile,  
Dublin Road, Galway  
H91 V97E

**DUBLIN**

81 Amiens Street,  
Dublin 1,  
D01 N2F5