



PUBLIC REALM PLAN

for
the historic walled town of fethard
prepared for
south tipperary county council
the heritage council /
irish walled town network

by
the paul hogarth company
and erm ireland limited



3 JUNE 2008

Amended March 2009



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contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2	4	ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS	9	5	THE PUBLIC REALM PLAN CONCEPT AND DESIGN TEMPLATE	20
				4.1 Introduction	9		5.1 Vision	20
2	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4		4.2 Regional Context	9		5.2 Aims	20
				4.3 Land & Building Uses	11		5.3 Objectives	20
3	BACKGROUND TO THE WALLED TOWN	5		4.4 Open Space	12		5.4 Concept Plan and Design Template	22
	3.1 Introduction	5		4.5 Built Form & Fabric	13	6	ECONOMIC AND TOURISM STRATEGY	24
	3.2 Location	5		4.6 Significant Features	14		6.1 Economic & Tourism Strategy	24
	3.3 Geography	5		4.7 Access and Circulation	15		6.2 Redevelopment of Infill and Visually Poor Sites	25
	3.4 History of the Walled Town	6		4.8 Views & Landmarks	16		6.3 Frontage Programme	25
	3.5 Policy Context	6		4.9 Public Consultation	17		6.4 Promotion and Branding of the Town	25
	3.6 Ongoing Initiatives	8					6.5 Development of Equine Related Activities	26
							6.6 Provision of Accommodation	26

6.7	Accessibility & Traffic	26
6.8	Residential Development	27
6.9	Private Sector Investment	27
6.10	Retail Development	27
6.11	Residential Development	28

7.7	Chapel Lane Regeneration	49
7.8	Lighting Strategy	52
7.9	Neighbourhood Open Space Strategy	53
7.10	Frontage Programme	54
7.11	Historic Features	55
7.12	New Tourism Gateway	57
7.13	Tholsel	58
7.14	Interpretation & Orientation Strategy	59
7.15	Rural Strategic Linkages	61
7.16	Equestrian Visitor Centre	61

7 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES 32

7.1	Introduction	32
7.2	Town Wall Walk & Conservation	34
7.3	Walled Town Gateways	35
7.4	Approach Road Improvements	41
7.5	River Park Extension	42
7.6	Streetscapes	43

8 DELIVERING THE VISION 64

8.1	Delivery Framework	64
8.2	Funding	65
8.3	Delivery Plan	66
8.4	Action Plan	68

9 CONCLUSION 70

figures

Summary of Proposals	3	Public Realm Plan	30	Abbey Street - Typical Section	41	Identification of Neighbourhood Public Spaces	53
Regional Context Map	9	Axonometric Sketch of Proposals	31	River Park Plan	42	Sketch of Potential Tourism Gateway	57
Land and Building Use Plan	11	Indicative Wall Walk Route and Buffer Zone	34	Main Street Streetscape Sketch Plan 1/3	44	Town Hall Sketch	58
Open Space Plan	12	Northgate Gateway Sketch Plan	36	Main Street Streetscape Sketch Plan 2/3	45	Proposed Interpretative Walks	59
Built form plan	13	Madam's Bridge Gateway Sketch Plan	37	Main Street - Typical Section	45		
Significant Features Plan	14	Watergate Gateway Sketch Plan	38	Main Street Streetscape Sketch Plan 3/3	46		
Access and Circulation Plan	15	Barrack Street - Typical section	39	Burke Street - Streetscape Sketch Plan	47		
Views and Landmarks	16	Barrack Street - Detailed Plan	39	Main Street - Typical Section	48		
Concept Plan	21	Burke Street Gate - Detailed Plan	40	Chapel Lane Regeneration Proposals	49		
Sketch Plan of Potential Concept for Northern Expansion	28	Rocklow Road - Perspective elevation	41	Chapel Lane as a Tourist Destination	50		
Detailed public realm plan	29	Abbey Street - Typical Section	41	Lighting Strategy	51		

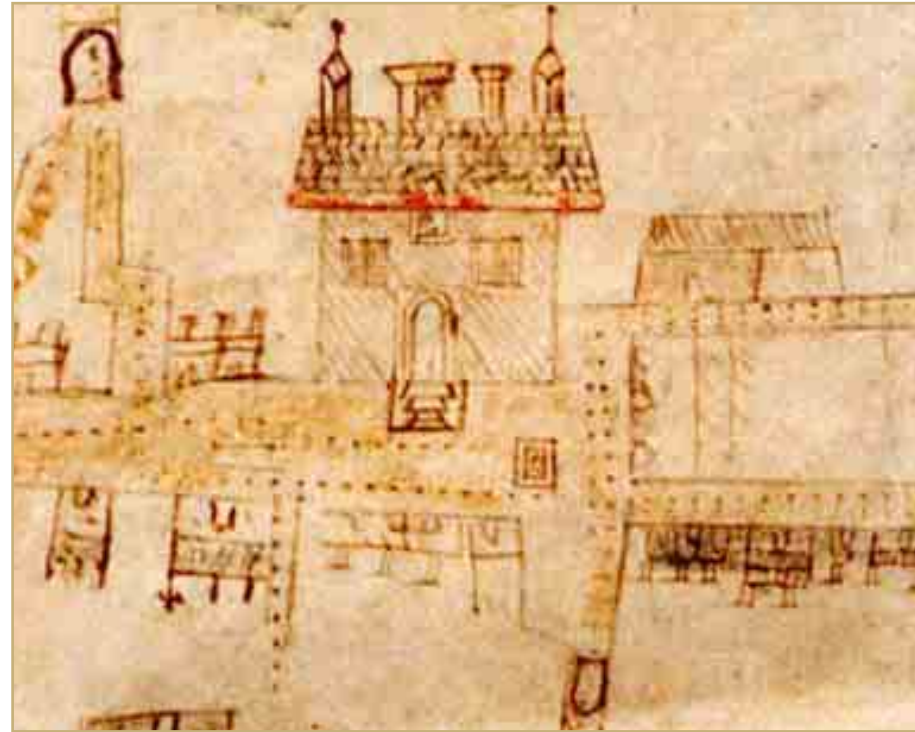
Town Walls	1	Compact Urban Form	13	Existing Interpretation	36	Acer campestre	43	Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church	55
Detail of 1730's Plan	1	Looser Suburban Character	13	Approach to Northgate	36	Public Art	43	Edmonds Castle	55
1845 Plan of Fethard	1	Existing Wall Walk	14	Proximity of New Housing	36	On-street Parking Bays/ Bollards	43	Court Castle	55
Town Walls	5	Abymill Theatre	14	Madam's Castle	37	Street Tree Planting	43	Round Turret	56
View from Market Hill	5	Ad Hoc Parking	15	View Towards Bridge	37	Sorbus aucuparia	43	Sheela-na-Gig	56
Slievenamon	5	Congestion Area	15	View From Bridge	37	Prunus avium	43	Augustinian Abbey	56
Historic creamery	6	Lack of Pavements	15	Court Castle 38		Visually obtrusive parking	45	Convent and Private Walled Garden	56
Town Walls	6	Classic View of the Wall and Church	16	Watergate from River	38	View East on Main Street	45	Abymill	56
Walled Town Day 2005	6	Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church	16	Approach Road	38	Main Street c.1900	46	Cattle Mart Site	57
Wall Carving	6	Presentation to Community	17	Barrack Street	39	Expansive Road Space	46	GAA Buildings against town wall	57
Local Area Plan	7	Discussion with Residents	17	Location of Former Gate on Burke Street	40	Weigh Bridge	46	Jimmy Ryan's House	59
Town Walls	8	Holy Trinity Church and Town Walls	18	View at Ballroom	41	Market Square	46	Jimmy Ryan's Geese	59
Site of Proposed Youth Facilities	8	Holy Trinity Church	19	Lack of Pavements	41	Burke Street c.1900s	48	Fair Day, c.1900s	59
New Housing	8	Abymill Theatre	23	Town Arrival	41	Burke Street	48	Orientation Board on Derry's Walls	60
Ormond Castle, Carrick-on-Suir	9	Tholsel	25	River Walkway	42	Chapel Lane Today	50	Interpretation Boards in Derry	60
Rock of Cashel	9	Main Street	25	Arrival	43	Detail of Chapel Lane	50	Children's Interpretation	60
Regional Connections	9	Northgate	25	High Quality Stone Paving	43	Surfacing	50	Existing Interpretation	60
Cahir Castle	9	New Housing	25	Street Furniture	43	Current Lighting Provision	52	Fox Hunting	61
Public House	11	Gateway Through Wall	27	Quercus rubra	43	Lighting of Historic Features	52	River Park with Hills Beyond	61
Convenience Store	11	Mill Stone at Abymill	27	Tilia cordata	43	Flexible space used for play	53	Main Street, c. 1900's	61
Castle Inn	11	Sheela-na-Gig	33	Orientation	43	Ornamental space	53	Local Horse Race	61
Small Open Space	12	Wall Walk	34	Limestone Slab/ Salvaged Cobble Paving	43	Through Route	53	River Park	63
Market Square	12	Round Turret	34	Street Furniture	43	Prominent Town Centre Frontage	54	Detail of Wall	67
River Park	12	Wall at GAA pitch	34	Fraxinus excelsior	43	Holy Trinity Church of Ireland	55	Town Walls in Winter	70
Narrow Streets	13	Impact of Heavy Vehicles on Northgate	35						

photos

Historic & Walled Town Day Photos © J. Kenny, with thanks



Town Walls © J. Kenny



Detail of 1703 Plan



1845 Plan of Fethard

1 INTRODUCTION

The historic Walled Town of Fethard is a special place. It has one of the finest medieval town walls in existence in Ireland, if not Europe. It is a treasure trove of historical features, with several castles and churches, all located within a short walking distance of one another. It provides the commercial hub for an established rural economy, which is recognised as the best in the world for the breeding and rearing of race horses.

Remarkably, for a town of such abundant qualities, the Walled Town of Fethard remains to many a hidden gem. Visitor numbers are lower than would otherwise be expected, while tourism infrastructure is limited. The town is also often difficult to find on the tourist map of Ireland.

Like many modern Irish towns and villages today, Fethard is also a place of transformation. New areas of land have been identified for new housing and neighbourhood development, in what will represent the most substantial physical change the town will have seen since its planned creation by the Normans in the 13th Century.

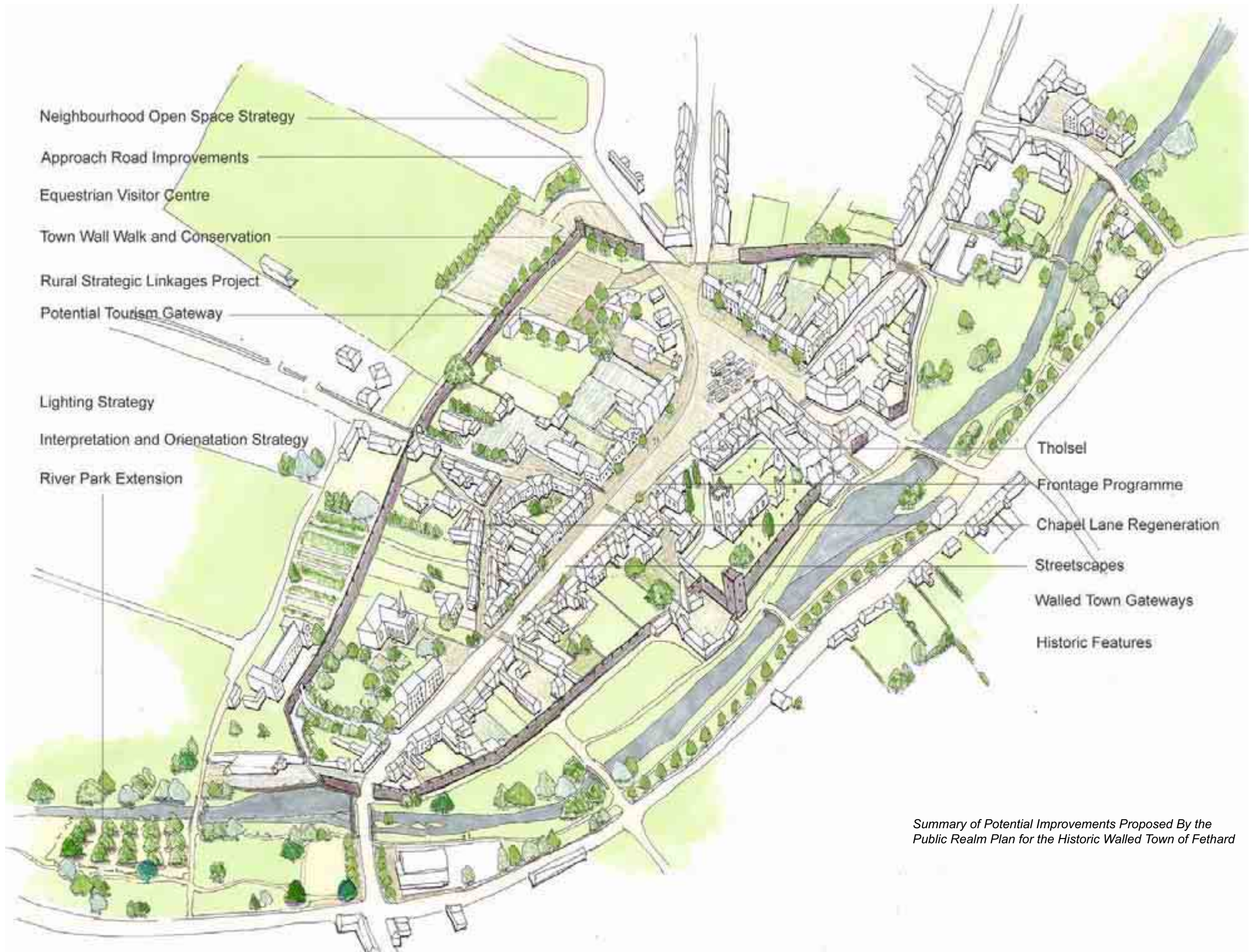
Whilst prosperity and growth are to be welcomed and encouraged, real dangers exist that the physical qualities of the Walled Town of Fethard will be compromised, thus reducing its potential to be a leading visitor destination.

This Public Realm Plan for the Walled Town of Fethard seeks to provide a strategic framework by which the town can maximise the benefits of its many assets, without losing those special qualities that give it character and charm. The Public Realm (the publicly accessible network of streets and spaces) links together and provides the setting for all the town's attractions. It therefore plays a critical role in defining the character of the town and its coordinated improvement could have considerable impact.

Such improvements will not only be of value to visitors, but also to local people, who stand to benefit from improved public spaces and amenity, as well as the economic opportunities associated with an enhanced tourism based economy.

The Public Realm Plan was commissioned in the summer of 2007 by South Tipperary County Council and the Heritage Council, through its Irish Walled Town Network initiative. It was prepared over a 6 month period by Landscape Architects and Urban Designers, The Paul Hogarth Company and Environmental Consultants, ERM Ireland Ltd.

This non-statutory plan is designed to act as guidance for all those involved with development of Fethard, including central government officials, local council planners, private developers and other interested parties. It maps out the strategic direction of public realm improvements needed in the town, setting the context for further consultation, detailed design and formal approvals as necessary. The varied nature of each project means that some have potential to be delivered over the short term, whilst others that are more complex and even aspirational in nature, will take longer to come to fruition. However, as demonstrated by the plan, Fethard has immense potential to be greatly enhanced through investment in its public realm.



Neighbourhood Open Space Strategy

Approach Road Improvements

Equestrian Visitor Centre

Town Wall Walk and Conservation

Rural Strategic Linkages Project

Potential Tourism Gateway

Lighting Strategy

Interpretation and Orientation Strategy

River Park Extension

Tholsel

Frontage Programme

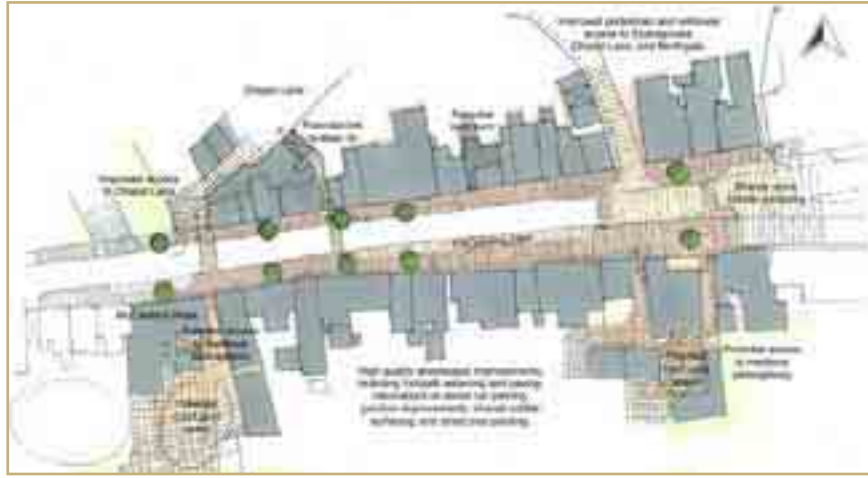
Chapel Lane Regeneration

Streetscapes

Walled Town Gateways

Historic Features

Summary of Potential Improvements Proposed By the Public Realm Plan for the Historic Walled Town of Fethard



2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Realm Plan for the Walled Town of Fethard was commissioned in the summer of 2007 by South Tipperary County Council and The Heritage Council as part of the town's membership of Irish Walled Town Network (IWTN)

Through a process of research and consultation, the appointed consultants found that whilst Fethard has a considerable wealth of historic features, including the magnificent town walls, the potential to attract visitors to the town has yet to be fully realised. In addition, development pressure on the Town has led to an urgent requirement to safeguard the physical elements of the town that combine to give the Walled Town of Fethard its unique and fascinating character.

Accordingly, The Public Realm Plan for the Walled Town of Fethard proposes 15 specific initiatives of varied scale and remit. Individually each project can help to improve the quality of the town's publicly accessible environment. Combined, they can bring about a significant transformation with long term social and economic benefits for the town and its people.

The 15 specific initiatives proposed are identified on the adjoining drawing, and are as follows:

1 Wall Walk and Conservation-Designation of a walking route around the Town Walls, to be accompanied by conservation and interpretation of the structures themselves.

2 Walled Town Gateways - A series of environmental improvement projects to accentuate the location of the towns historic gateways and mark the transition into the walled town.

3 Approach Road Improvements - A series of environmental improvements to greatly improve the arrival experience into Fethard.

4 River Park Extension - Proposals to improve and enlarge the town's principal green open space as a riverside amenity for local people and visitors, as well as a setting for the Town Walls.

5 Streetscape Improvements - A series of streetscape projects to upgrade the quality of materials and design of the town streets and squares.

6 Chapel Lane Regeneration - Proposals for the transformation of this historic medieval laneway to play a central role in the tourism offer of the town.

7 Lighting Strategy - Proposals to improve the quality of Fethard's night-time environment, thus increasing safety and maximising the impact of its historic landmarks.

8 Neighbourhood Open Space Strategy - A strategic look at all the town's small open spaces to define their future role, design and management.

9 Frontage Programme - A coordinated initiative to improve shop and house fronts along the Main Street and Burke Street, collectively improving the visual quality of the area.

10 Historic Features - Site specific proposals to help support and develop the town's main attractions.

11 New Tourism Gateway - Comprehensive proposals to provide centralised parking facilities for visitors to the town.

12 Tholsel - proposals to sensitively turn this historically important building into the hub of future tourist activity in the town.

13 Interpretation & Orientation Strategy - Measures to improve the visitor experience through orientation between its attractions and interpretation of their significance.

14 Rural Strategic Linkages Project - A series of measures to strengthen the physical relationship of the town with its environs for the benefit of locals and visitors alike.

15 Equestrian Visitor Centre - A visitor attraction to tell the story of the area's rich equestrian heritage and economy.

3 BACKGROUND TO THE HISTORIC WALLED TOWN OF FETHARD

3.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to “set the scene” against which the Public Realm Plan for the Walled Town of Fethard has been developed. An understanding of the town’s geographic and historical context, along with prevalent policies and ongoing initiatives provides a base from which the subsequent analysis findings and proposals are made.

3.2 Location

The historic Walled Town of Fethard is located in the centre of County South Tipperary in the province of Munster, Ireland.

It sits within a cluster of historic local centres including: Clonmel (14km), Cashel (17km), Cahir (21km), Thurles (29km) and Carrick-on-Suir (29km), and between the four major regional centres of Waterford (54km), Kilkenny (57km), Limerick (76km) and Cork (110km).

3.3 Geography

The town is situated on the banks of the Clashawley River, a tributary of the River Anner that in turn flows into the River Suir.

It is surrounded by extensive agricultural land forming part of the Golden Vale of Munster, famed for the fertility of its soil.

The town rests at the foot of the striking conical mountain of Slievenamon (721m) that offers dramatic views over Tipperary and the neighbouring counties.

Fethard derives its name from the Irish *Fiodh Ard* meaning High Wood. It is likely that this area was once ancient woodland as there are remnants of Grove Wood, a stand of native woodland south of the town.

The town itself is situated on a low hill, with an undulating Main Street acting as the spine of the town. Relatively gentle gradients make Fethard a good place to walk on foot.



Town Walls © J. Kenny



View from Market Hill © J. Kenny



Slievenamon



Historic creamery



Town Walls © J. Kenny



Walled Town Day 2005



Wall Carving

3.4 History of the Walled Town

The Walled Town of Fethard first came to prominence with the arrival of the Normans to Ireland in the late 12th Century. It is reported that the town was founded by William de Braose, who was installed by King John in 1201 as chief tenant of the Barony of Middlethird. Fethard was systematically laid out as a Norman Settlement with a market place, a conveniently located church and graveyard and a regular street pattern. Much of this early 13th Century urban fabric and Norman town planning is still visible in the town today.

Fethard was endowed with a Charter of Borough status and prospered as a market town in the 13th Century as its extensive building activity dated to this period indicates. There is evidence of goods such as honey, cereals, cloth, silk, sea-fish, coal, timber, nails and salt, to name a few, being sold in the town.

The first signs of town enclosure in Fethard occurred at the end of the 13th Century. The town walls were, as with all medieval settlements, paid for through a succession of 'Murage Taxes', a levy or tax on goods coming into the town. It is thought that the early form of enclosure was with ditches and/or fences. The stone walls evident today were built in the 14th and 15th Century, as were many of the walls, towers, castles and fortified houses.

Fethard received a Royal Charter from Edward VI in 1552-3 and another from King James in 1607. This allowed the town the freedom to pursue its own affairs without interference from the Crown. The town survived the armies of Lord Inchiquin and Oliver Cromwell relatively unscathed in the 17th Century.

However, Fethard suffered decline in the 18th Century, coinciding with the end of the Everard's involvement with the town. The family's mansion on the north east corner of market place (where the current Garda Station is now located) was sold in 1702. It was later demolished and a new mansion built in its place by Thomas Barton, the Bordeaux wine merchant. This building was then converted into a cavalry barracks in 1805 and later burnt down during the Civil War of 1922.

Fethard continued to be a moderately successful small market town throughout the 19th Century. This period saw the emergence of mills in the town and a connection to Clonmel in 1879, by the Great Southern and Western Railway. 19th Century industrialisation also brought about localised erosion of the town's medieval form with all but one of the town's Northgate demolished by the end of the Century.

A degree of geographic isolation perpetuated by the closure of the railway and a lack of road investment, saw limited growth of the town through much of the 20th Century. Consequently, at a time when many towns in Ireland lost much of their historic fabric through redevelopment, Fethard managed to retain nearly all of its medieval walls and many of its castles, churches and other important buildings.

The 20th Century also saw Fethard's reputation as a centre of excellence for horse breeding and training emerge, with the town now closely associated with the highly successful Coolmore Stud and Evarard's Grange Racing Stables.

Such prosperity, underpinned by a strong national economy, has helped to bring about significant development in the town from the 1990's to the present day. The renewed construction of housing and associated infrastructure is now steadily transforming the town.

3.5 Strategic Policy Context

Fethard, and the surrounding area, has considerable potential which, if fully taken advantage of, will provide the local community with economic and cultural opportunities into the foreseeable future. In light of this, South Tipperary County Council, the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland and local interest groups have determined the need for a Public Realm Plan. The Plan will act as a key document that will help guide planning for the town and will facilitate the development of its potential in a sustainable manner. The preparation of the Public Realm Plan reflects the commitment of the Heritage Council, South Tipperary County Council and its partners, in association with the local community, to ensuring that the historic town of Fethard is developed and promoted as a tourism icon and as an active living community.

There are already in place a number of important policy and planning proposals

of the government, the local authority and others. These are currently having, and will continue to have an impact on the town. It is essential that the current national, regional and local planning framework for the future development of the town is fully understood and implemented. The Public Realm Plan needs to complement these so that any national and local resources that are available can be used as much as possible to deliver real benefits to the community as quickly as possible.

Therefore, the relevant plans, guidance and policy documents have been considered during the development of the Fethard Public Realm Plan as follows.

The *National Spatial Strategy (NSS) 2002-2020* is a 20 year spatial strategy providing a framework to guide policies, programmes and investment across the State and includes guidance on rural settlements. It provides the principal planning framework for the National Development Plan 2007-2013. As such it underpins any State and Local Authority financing of, among others, development projects in transport, tourism and urban regeneration. It is critical therefore that the Public Realm Plan fully complements the National Spatial Strategy and any of its associated Plans and Programmes. Fethard can be described as a changing, culturally distinct area in the south-east. The NSS states that these '*culturally distinct*' areas require; enhanced accessibility, strengthening of existing settlements, and; conservation of their cultural identity.

The *Sustainable Development Strategy for Ireland 1997* provides the framework for the achievement of sustainable development

at a local level. The Strategy recognises the need to protect built heritage in Ireland. It emphasises that the Country's natural heritage is everyone's heritage, and its protection and conservation depend on action by, and the behaviour of, communities and individuals, as well as Government, public authorities, and economic actors.

The *South East Regional Planning Guidelines 2004* reflect the objectives of the NSS as they relate to the South-East. In the Guidelines Fethard is identified as an urban centre supporting Clonmel, the County Town, and Cashel as a district town. Fethard, as well as other towns and villages across the country, is experiencing an era of falling agricultural and industrial employment and therefore faces challenges to its on-going development.

The current *South Tipperary County Development Plan 2003* (under review) and the *Fethard Local Area Plan (LAP) 2005*, further embed national and regional policy into the County Council's plans for the area. Fethard is recognised as a town with an historic fabric of national significance and the Council '*will have regard to such factors when considering all planning related matters*' (LAP 2005). There is a need to strike a balance between conservation and development with sustainability at the forefront. Fethard has a rich and varied history and what remains within its relatively intact Town Walls is proof of this. However, the urban centre of Fethard is witnessing a continuous decline in population. The most recent 2006 census figures show a population decline, in the Electoral Division (ED) of Fethard, of 6.5% from 2002 to

2006 with a total of just 788 persons now living in the historic town itself. In contrast, figures for Peppardstown, an ED located immediately north of the historic town, has seen an increase in population of 7.5% during the same period. While this growth is welcomed, the overall pattern of growth and decline is unsustainable in the long-term. Growth in the core areas of the town is required so as to create a balanced physical and social environment, and an economically viable town. The LAP supports the redevelopment of infill and derelict sites in the town and developing an employment base within Fethard.

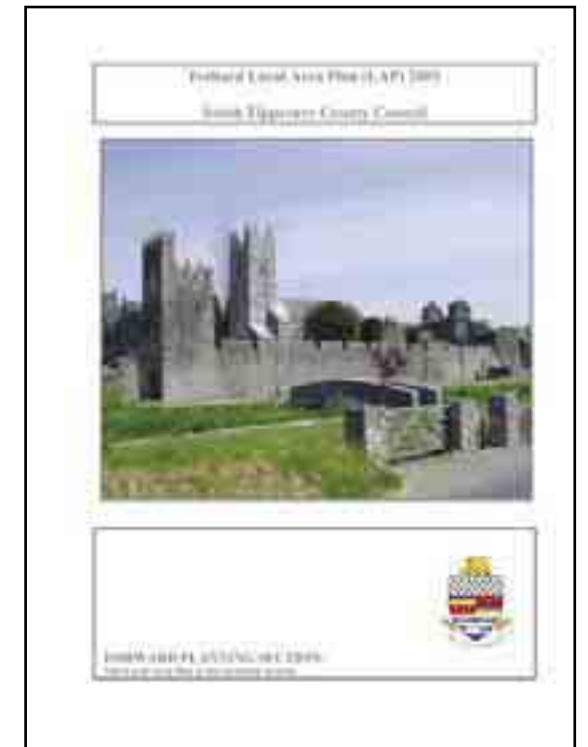
The settlement strategy as outlined in the County Development Plan reflects the challenges Fethard faces in maintaining and attracting people to live and invest in the town. The County Development Plan states that '*Fethard will remain a rural settlement with strong links with the equine industry, and will be further developed as both a residential centre and a historic town*'. The overall policies and objectives of the Fethard LAP are supported in the Public Realm Plan and are dealt with in greater detail in the concept analysis and recommendations.

South Tipperary County Development Board (CDB) aims to achieve greater public and community service co-ordination and integration at county level and, by extension, into the towns of the County. Under the Economic investment priorities of the Board (2005-2008) Fethard is earmarked for investment in the development of a business park site between Killenaule Road and Moy Class Road. The Public Realm Plan endorses these investment proposals as they will

have long-term direct positive impact on the vitality of the town. The relevant agencies and organisations on the Board have set an overall shared vision for the economic, social and cultural development of the County and have agreed to implement a series of actions to do so. This process is seen as one of the key areas where public realm initiatives can be achieved.

The *South Tipperary Corporate Plan* sets out the core values and corporate objectives of South Tipperary County Council. The Plan highlights and reinforces the delivery of national and local policy, including the National Development Plan. It has a customer and citizen focus and addresses issues of social inclusion and sustainable development and how the Council will address these through its service planning and delivery.

The Corporate Plan is relevant to the Fethard Public Realm Plan as it includes delivery of County Council services to include: housing; road transport and safety; water supply and sewage; development incentives and controls; environmental protection; agricultural; education; health and welfare; recreation and amenity; and community enterprise, to name but a few. All of these services directly influence the public realm and are critical to the creation and implementation of the Public Realm Plan and subsequent maintenance of a quality public realm for Fethard. Having in place an on-going programme that supports the provision of infrastructure in the town and its environs will be significant for the town. It will help the town to have the necessary capacity for growth, including the continued redevelopment of key parts of the town. The corporate commitment



Local Area Plan

of the County Council is paramount to delivering the Public Realm Plan.

The Irish Walled Towns Network Draft Action Plan 2006-2008 ratified the International Walled Towns Friendship Circle's Piran Declaration 2003. It states that '*Walled Towns are unique inheritances from times long past and should be treasured, maintained and safeguarded from neglect, damage and destruction and passed on into perpetuity as irreplaceable 'Timestones of History'*'. The heritage aspect of the Public Realm Plan will be implemented in accordance with this Declaration, as well as with the ICOMOS's *Bruges Resolutions*. The Bruges Resolution has specific relevance '*to historic towns where distinctive qualities and value are deemed as being worthy of retention and enhancement*' and provides guidance to be addressed.



Town Walls



Site of Proposed Youth Facilities

3.6 Ongoing Initiatives

A number of development and regeneration initiatives are ongoing within the town and are therefore required to be taken into consideration by this Plan.

A separate Conservation and Management Plan for the Town Walls, undertaken by Oxford Archaeology, was also commissioned alongside the Public Realm Plan. It was also funded by The Heritage Council with South Tipperary County Council through the Irish Walled Town Network. The programme for the Conservation and Management Plan was designed to undertake a detailed evaluation of the physical structure of the walls and to identify policies by which they can be conserved and managed into the future. It is therefore essential that the public realm proposals contained within this Public Realm Plan are read in conjunction with those put forward within the Conservation and Management Plan.

At the time of preparation of this Public Realm Plan phased environmental street improvements were being implemented by the County Council on Main Street. These improvements included improved parking, provision of new light columns and concrete paving. This work is bringing about welcome and positive change to the quality of pedestrian environment in this area.

Also at the time of writing, new housing developments were in progress at:

- Congress Terrace, Kerry Street
- Abbeyview Housing Development, Abbey Street
- Strylea, Upper Green Street
- New housing on the Killenaule Road
- New Housing on Cashel Road

Substantial new housing and neighbourhood is also envisaged between Killenaule and Rocklow Roads to the north of the town, as part of a masterplan for the area.

Residential development is also planned at Chapel Lane (County Council) and new youth facilities at Church Hall by Madam's Bridge.

These developments must be informed by the Public Realm Plan and the principles of sustainable development.



New Housing



Ormond Castle, Carrick on Suir



Rock of Cashel



Regional Connections



Cahir Castle

4 ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

A threefold process of desktop research, site appraisal and consultation was used by the consultant team to gather data necessary to inform the Public Realm Plan. In addition information and advice was supplied to the team by the project steering group through regular meetings and correspondence during the course of their appointment. For the Plan to meaningfully propose how the Public Realm of Fethard can be improved, it was essential that an accurate picture of the town's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities be formed. This chapter summarises the findings of this process. It is ordered thematically and illustrated using survey plans made of the town.

4.2 Regional Context

The regional positioning of Fethard is a critical aspect of its economic sustainability, as well as its future growth as a tourism destination.

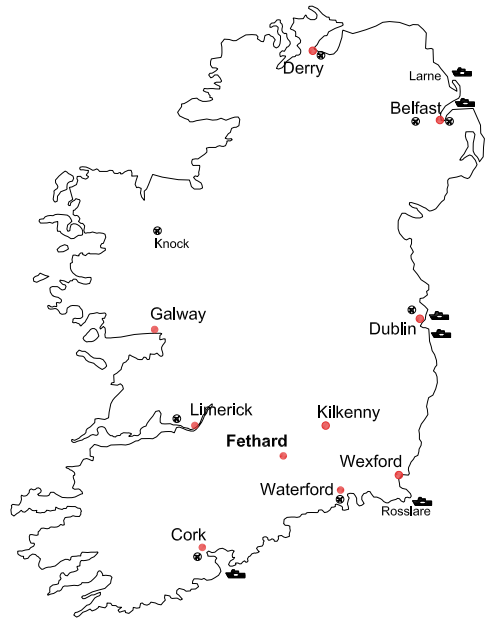
As noted in the introduction, Fethard is located close to the three regional centres of Limerick, Waterford and Cork, meaning that significant populations and associated opportunities are within an hour and a half drive of the town.

In addition, the town sits within a cluster of large historic towns including Cashel, Clonmel, Cahir, Thurles Carrick-on-Suir and Kilkenny, providing important social and economic links to the town of Fethard and its people.

It is therefore vitally important that Fethard maximises the benefit of having such a central location for both its economy and for tourism.

The quality of transport links, particularly to the newly upgraded N8 Dublin Cork corridor, must be improved where possible to facilitate movement between the town and its neighbours. The quality of signage identifying Fethard on this corridor is also of particular importance.

For the visitor, many if not all of the nearby clustering towns also have interesting historical features. To attract visitors, therefore, The Walled Town of Fethard needs to carve out its distinctive niche within these centres, with the walls being its most unique asset. The community of Fethard must therefore work together with its neighbours to establish a strong hub of historic towns that can attract tourists.



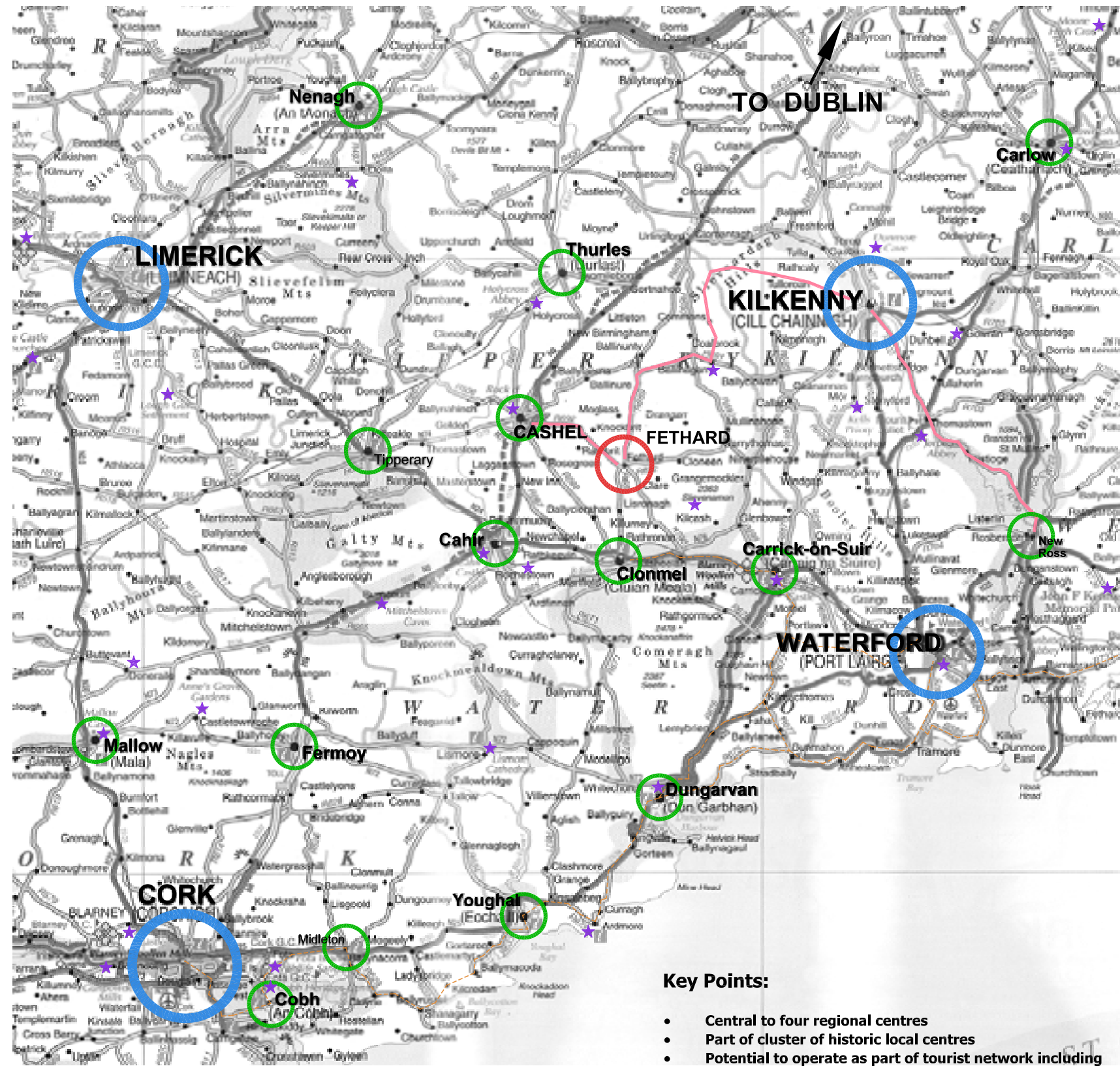
Maddams' Bridge at junction of roads to Cashel and Clonmel



Approach to Fethard along Rocklow Road



Approach to Fethard along Killenaule Road



- KEY**
- Fethard
 - Regional Centre
 - Local Centre
 - ★ Attractions
 - Scenic Route
 - - - Proposed Irish Cycle Network
 - ✈ Airport
 - ⚓ Ferry Port

Routes to Fethard

- From Dublin:**
160km via N8 and R689. Arrival into town via Killenaule Road (R689) and Upper Green Street.
- From Kilkenny:**
57km via N76 and R706, arrival into town via Kilsheelan and Grove Road (R706); or 70km via Scenic Route along R691, R689, and other roads, arrival into town via Killenaule Road (R689) and Upper Green Street.
- From Waterford:**
54km via N24 and R706. Arrival into town via Kilsheelan and Grove Road (R706).
- From Cork:**
110km via N8, N24, and R689. Arrival into town via Kerry Street (R689).
- From Limerick:**
76km via N74, N24, and R692. Arrival into town via Cashel Road (R692).
- From Tipperary: (36km via N74)/Cashel (17km via Scenic Route, R692)/ Thurles (37km via N8). Arrival into town via Cashel Road, a designated Scenic Route (R692).
- From: Cahir (30km)/ Clonmel (14km) via N24 and R689/Dungarven (55km) via R671 and R689. Arrival into town via Kerry Street (R689).
- From Carrick-on-Suir: 29km via N24 and R706. Arrival into town via Grove Road (R706).
- From New Ross: 74km via Waterford and Carrick-on-Suir (N25, N24, R706) or approx. 100km via Scenic Route (via Kilkenny) along R700, R691, and R689.

Key Points:

- Central to four regional centres
- Part of cluster of historic local centres
- Potential to operate as part of tourist network including access to scenic route
- Scope for improved links to newly upgraded N8 corridor

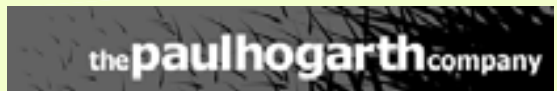
Designated Scenic Routes link Fethard with Cashel (via R692), Kilkenny (R689 and R691), and New Ross (R700).

The proposed **Irish Cycle Network** reaches Clonmel (14km from Fethard) and Carrick-on-Suir (29km from Fethard) linking them with the main long distance route along the coast servicing centres such as Cork, Cobh, Youghal, Dungarven, Waterford, and Wexford. Refer to Strategy for the development of cycle tourism, South East Regional Report, August 2006.

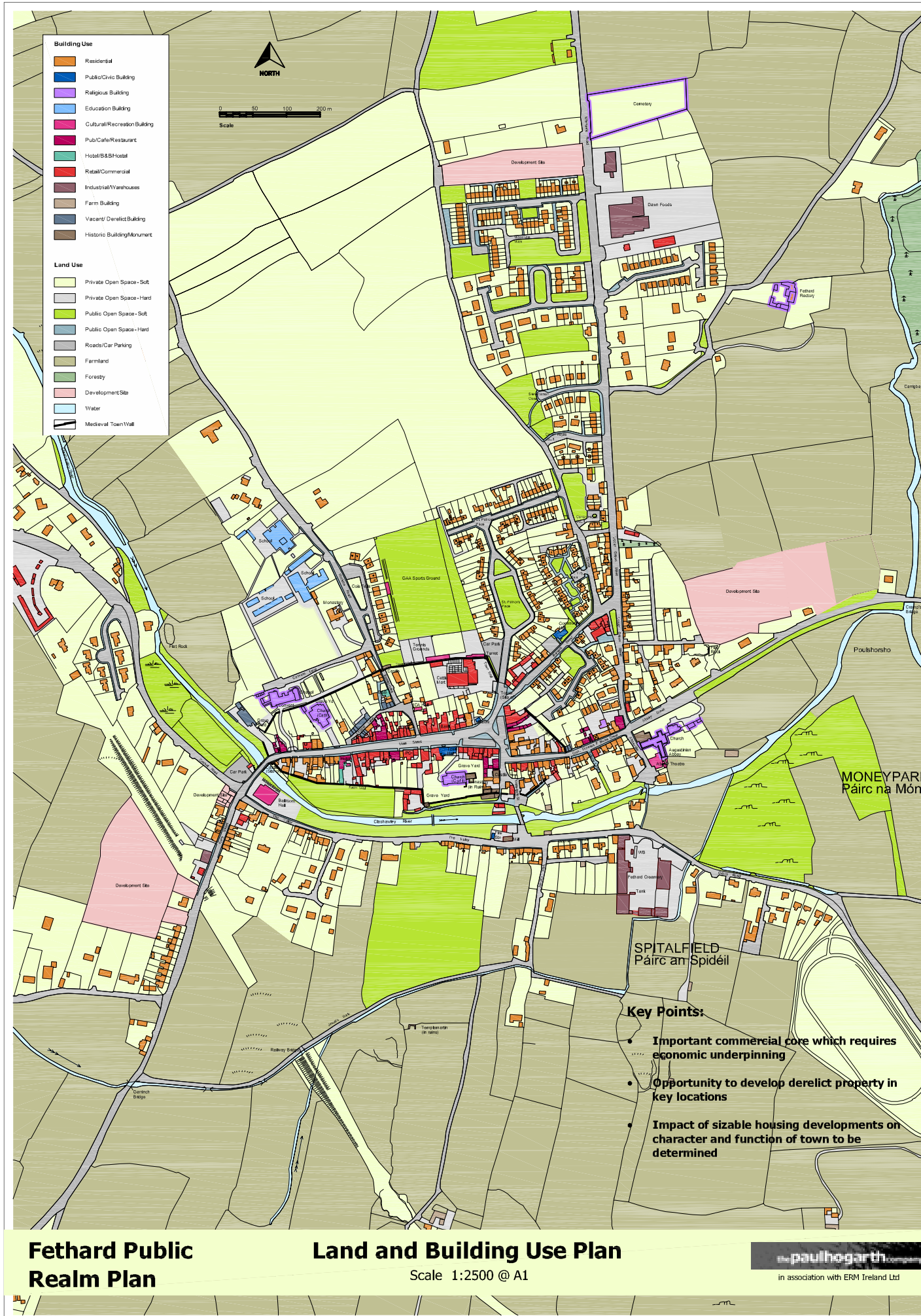
Fethard Public Realm Plan

Regional Context Map

Not to Scale



in association with ERM Ireland Ltd



4.3 Land & Building Uses

The mapping of Fethard's ground floor building and land uses highlights the important commercial core in the centre of the town. A mix of predominantly retail and residential properties is interspersed with licensed premises. This helps to sustain a lively main street throughout the day.

However, several vacant and derelict properties provide visible evidence of commercial decline in the centre of Fethard, emphasising that the Public Realm must underpin the economic vitality of the town centre.

For a town rich in historical attractions, there is a lack of hospitality provision for visitors. It is notable that only one bed and breakfast facility offers accommodation, while only a handful of establishments regularly serve food. This issue must be addressed with urgency should the Walled Town of Fethard fulfill its potential as a tourism destination.

Mapping of land uses also reveals the extent of residential property outside of the town core, particularly to the North. This and the prospect of increased house building, points to the need for good pedestrian and cycle linkages between these areas and the rest of the town.



Public House



Convenience Store



Castle Inn



Small Open Space



Market Square



River Park © J. Kenny

4.4 Open Space

As a compact medieval town, open space in Fethard is relatively limited within the confines of the Town Wall. Since the 13th Century, the market square has been the primary open space which to this day performs a market role, as well as the more modern day requirement of car parking. Central to the success of the Market Square is the completeness of its original form, with the only weak point being at its North East, where the barrack building was replaced with houses and the Garda station. These were designed with little regard for the urban form of the Square. The square itself has been recently upgraded to significantly improve the organisation of parking and the quality of walking areas. Whilst this is to be commended, a long term objective for this space should be to further improve the quality of the materials used, and to increase the ability of the area to accommodate a greater range of events.

The river park that follows the Clashawley River through the town is located beyond the walls to the south. It consists of grass areas and trees, seating and bridges across the river. The park is a fantastic asset for Fethard for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides a notably attractive setting to the southern stretch of the Town Walls, providing what is arguably the finest view of a walled town in the country. Secondly, the park is a valuable open space for residents and visitors, which can accommodate passive recreation and events, particularly in the summer. Thirdly, the park provides a good natural habitat for wildlife and is often found to be alive with abundant birdlife in and around the water.

This plays an important role in sustaining biodiversity in the area, whilst also adding interest to those who use the park.

Successful parks must be and feel as safe as possible. Increasingly, antisocial behaviour and access by vehicles has become a problem for the river park and must be addressed through the delivery of the Public Realm Plan. It is likely that a combination of physical measures, such as improved lighting and the introduction of bollards, will need to be accompanied by positive management of the park, with the Council working closely with the people of the town and relevant landowners.

Elsewhere in the town, a number of open spaces exist in association with residential areas to the north. Some of these provide good amenity for local residents, whilst others have a less clearly defined function and quality. Potential exists to greater improve these spaces by defining their roles and design and improving connection between them.





4.5 Built Form & Fabric

The town has a compact historic urban form in its central area, with the medieval layout of market space and narrow streets clearly visible. This delightful medieval form, most notable on Main Street, Burke Street and Chapel Lane is a critical component of the towns overall character and charm. Their protection, afforded in part by the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) as set out in the County Development Plan, must be strictly enforced to ensure that redevelopment in the central area does not compromise this quality. Any new buildings set within the historic built fabric must be very carefully designed and planned to ensure appropriate scale, form, architectural detailing and use of materials.

Beyond the Town Walls the urban form of Fethard adopts a looser character typical of 20th century development, quite different to that of the central core. This is particularly evident in housing areas to the north and along the main approach roads to the town. Lower density housing tends to leave more open spaces, which unless well designed and maintained, can reduce the overall environmental quality of the area.

Importantly, lessons should be learned from the urban form of the existing town when planning and designing new urban extensions. By emulating the scale and massing of some of Fethard's most attractive streets, new development can make a positive contribution to the overall character of the town. The development of areas that future generations may wish to conserve should not be an unrealistic aspiration.



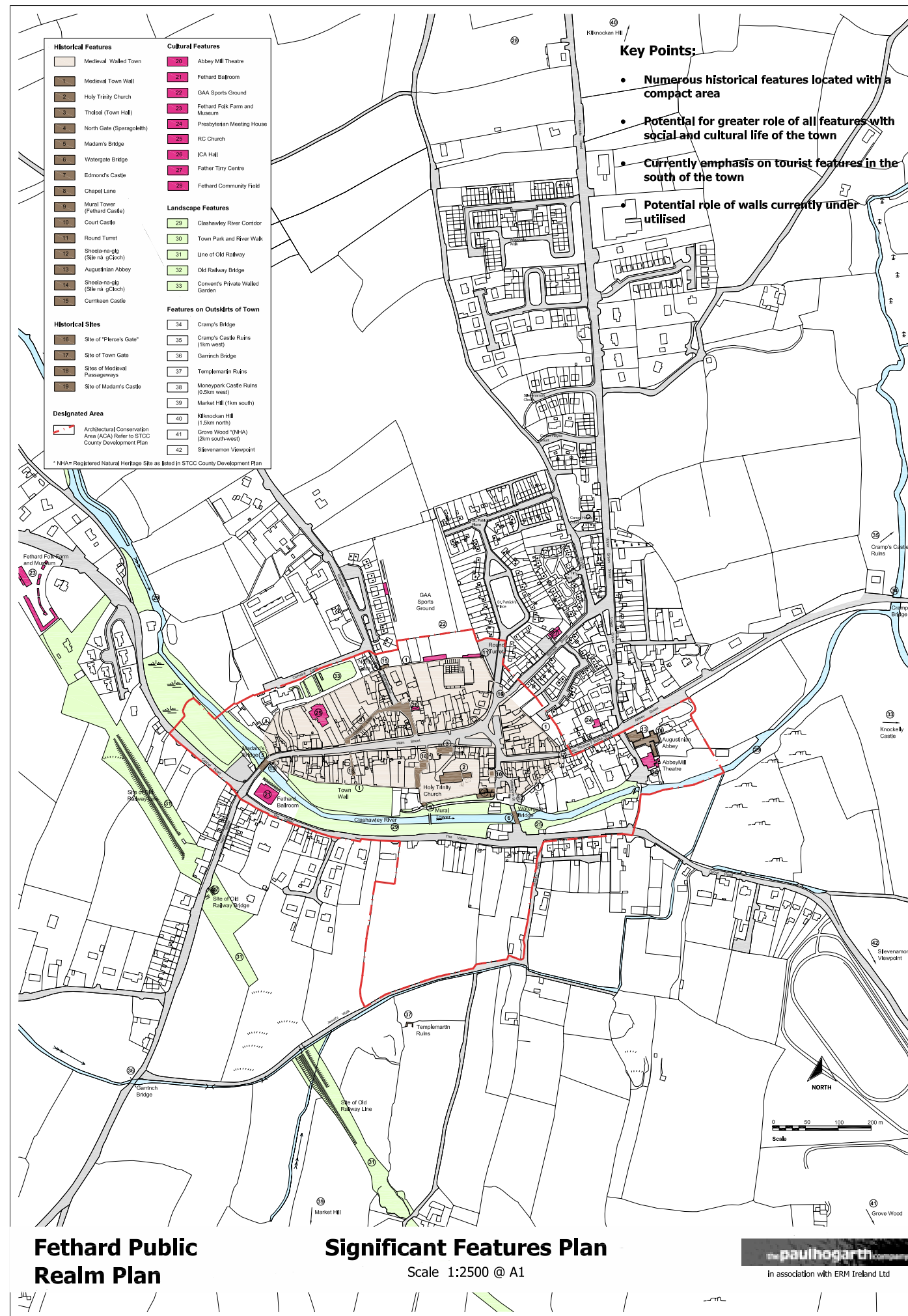
Narrow Streets



Compact Urban Form



Looser Suburban Character



4.6 Significant Features

Fethard has a wealth of social, cultural, and most importantly, historic features. The main historic features, which are also the town's main attractions to draw visitors, include the Town Walls, Town Hall, Holy Trinity Church, Sheela-na-gig carvings, and the Augustinian Abbey. The main cultural features are Abymill Theatre, Fethard Ballroom, ICA Hall, Fr Terry Centre, the GAA sports ground, and the Fethard Folk Farm and Transport Museum. These cultural assets are important to the town's population for the cultural and leisure activities that they provide, and they are also important in that they draw visitors from far and wide. A prime example is the Fethard Ballroom, which hosts the Tipperiana Book Fair, one of the largest book fairs in Ireland. The town also has many natural features that make an important contribution to the town's character and the quality of life for its population as well as enhancing the visitor experience. A key natural feature is the Clashawley River which provides such an important setting for the town and its walls.

There is potential for the significant features in Fethard to be enhanced so that they can play a greater role in the town's social and cultural life as well as its tourism aspirations, particularly in the summer months.

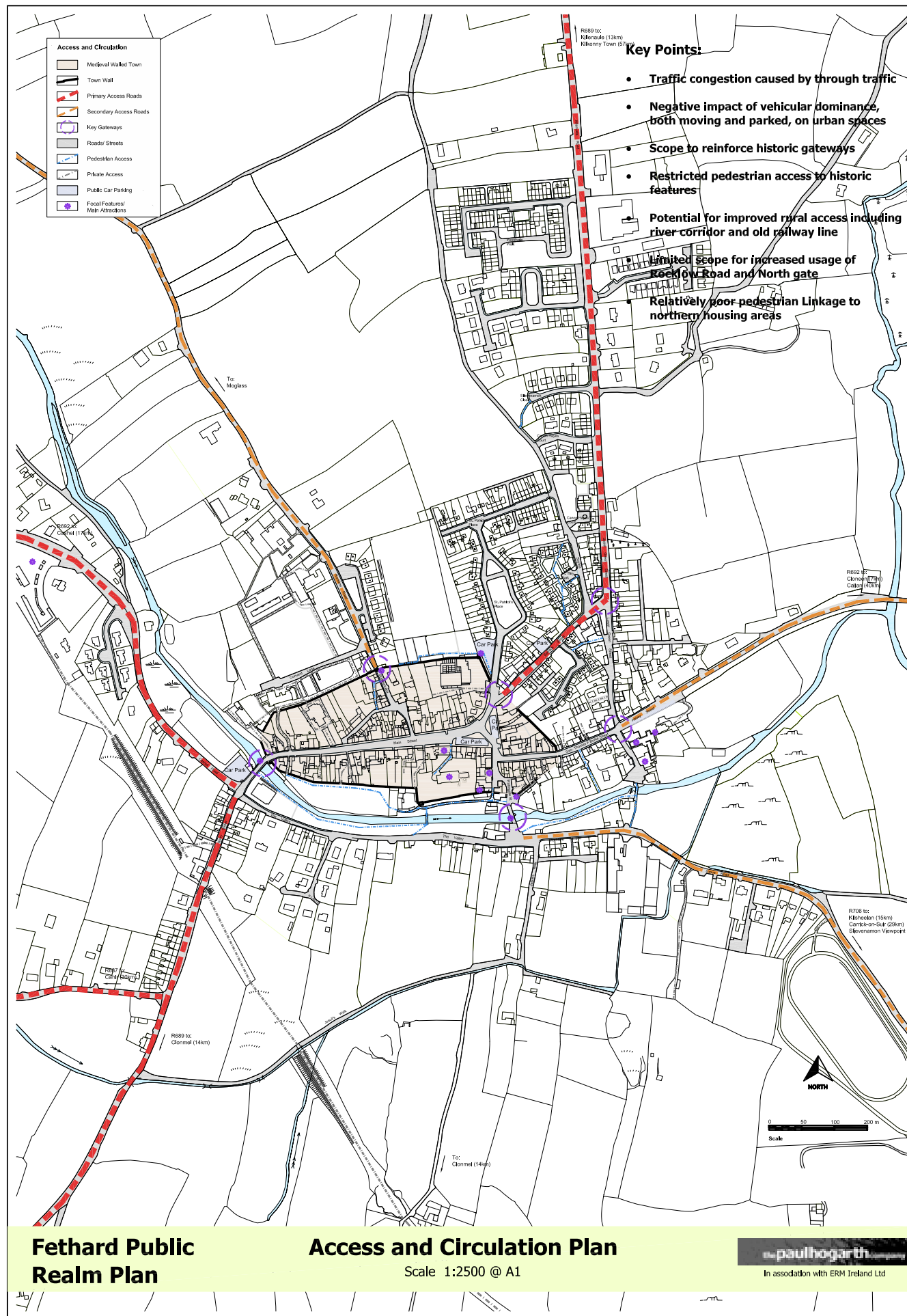
Strengthening the role played by the many assets existing within the town will be fundamental to the future of the Walled Town of Fethard. To this extent, the magnificent Town Walls and the Tholsel building are vitally important to the town, with few, if any comparable examples within the country. This therefore highlights the need for the public realm to play a role in improving the setting and physical access to these features.



Existing Wall Walk © J. Kenny



Abymill Theatre © J. Kenny



4.7 Access and Circulation

Vehicular circulation with Fethard is an important consideration due to its central location in the surrounding road network, its role as a commercial centre with a wide rural catchment area and the level of commuter traffic to nearby towns such as Clonmel. As with many rural towns, Fethard can be a busy place, which is partly reflective of commercial activity in the town. However, congestion can be a problem on key areas, particularly on the lower sections of Main Street and at the corner of Barrack Street and Green Street which can be partly attributed to on-street car parking.



Ad Hoc Parking

In general parking is well provided for on the Main Street and it is recognised as being important for local retailers. However, in places the impact of parking on the quality of the pedestrian environment and the setting of historic buildings is an issue that requires addressing.

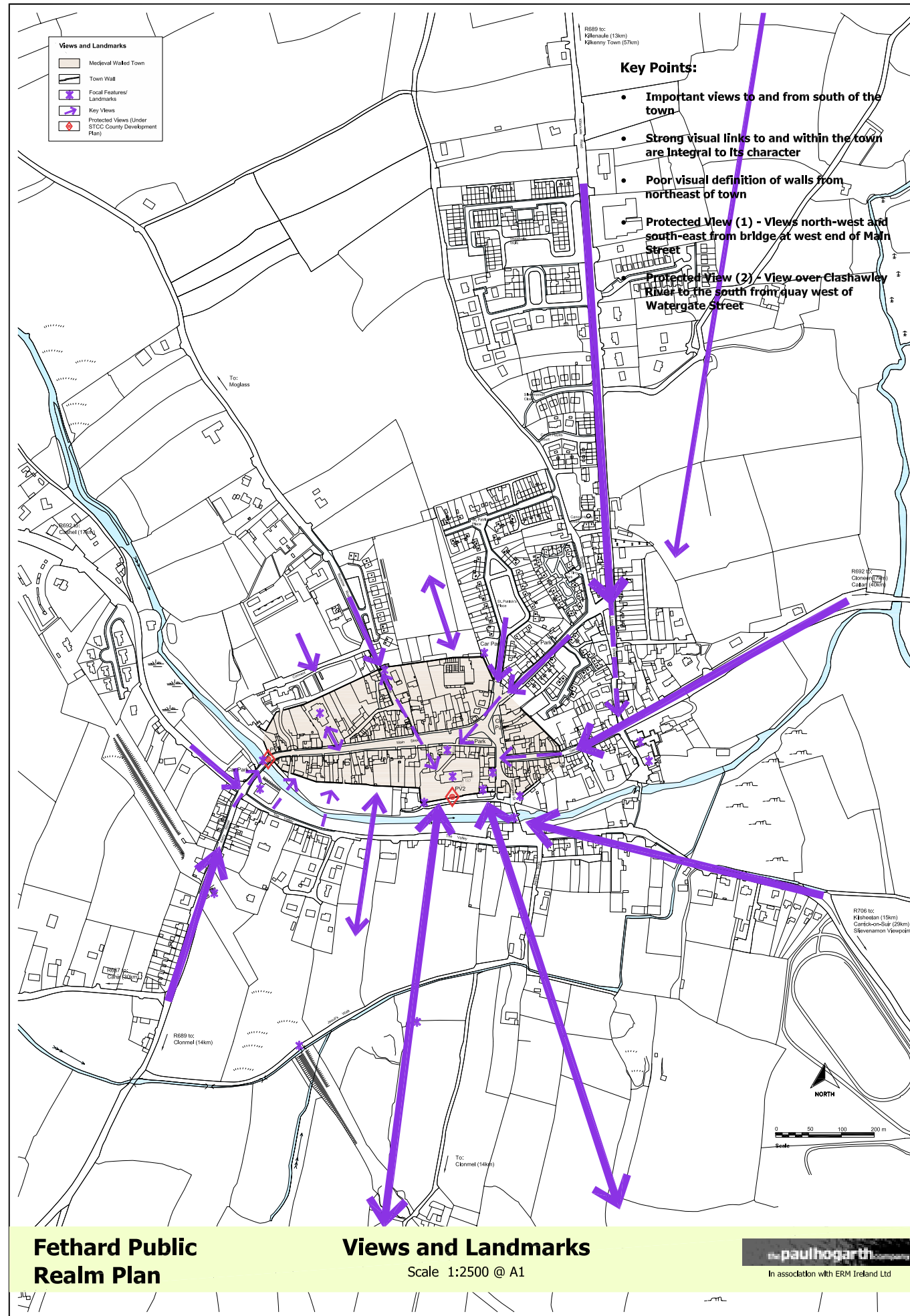


Congestion Area

Pedestrian circulation is crucially important in a compact town such as Fethard. The quality of the walking environment is generally good, with recent streetscape work greatly improving conditions. However, in some outlying areas, footpaths are either of a low quality or are missing altogether. The result is an unsafe walking environment in some parts of the town and an increased likelihood of car usage for short trips within the town.



Lack of Pavements

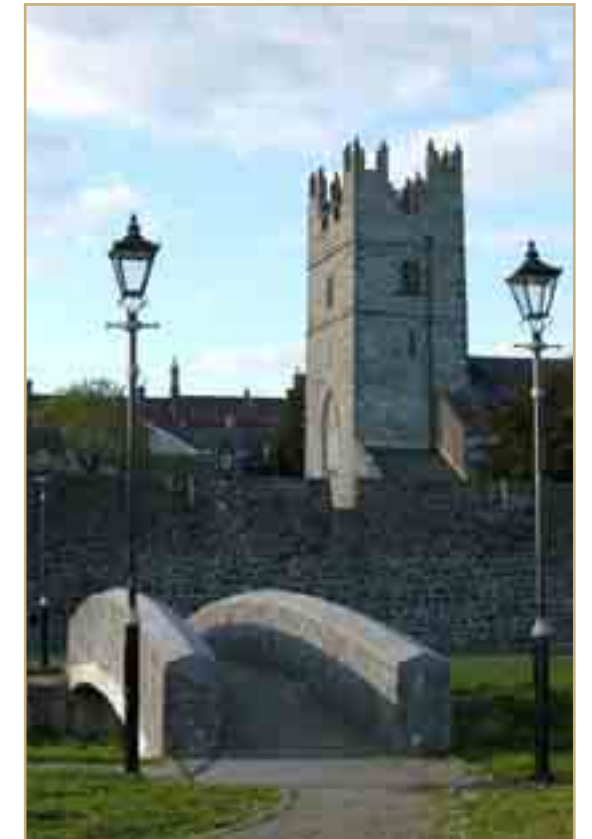


4.8 Views & Landmarks

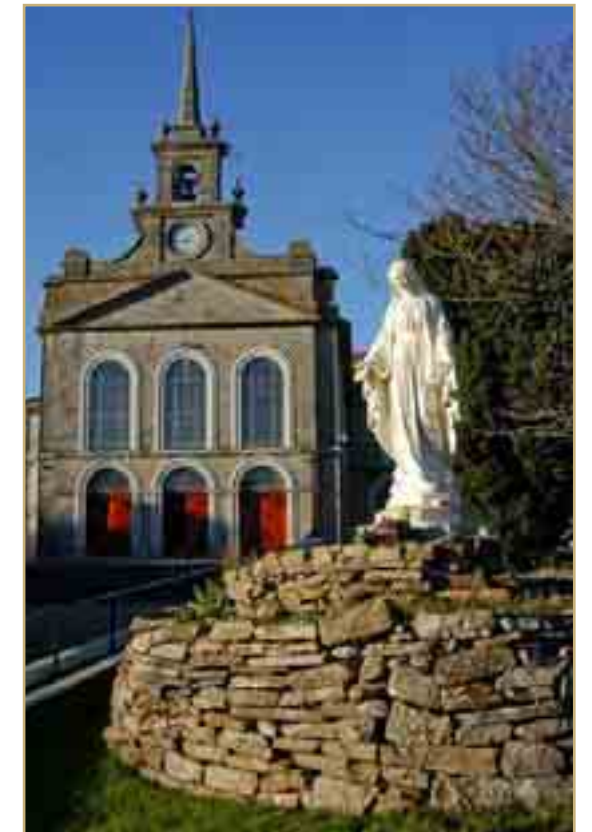
There are many important views and landmarks in, around, and towards the town. The most important views are those to and from the southern section of the town walls along the banks of the Clashawley River and neighbouring agricultural land south of the valley. There are important views of the walls from the main approach to the town at Madam's Bridge and North Gate on the Rocklow Road, while the northern approach to the town, at Barrack Street lacks this visual definition of the walls. Fethard's farmland plays a crucial role in maintaining unspoilt views from Kilknockan Hill in the northeast to Market Hill in the southwest and as far as Slievenamon in the distance. The conical dome of Slievenamon provides an important backdrop to the town. There are important landmarks within the town that play a key role in its character. These include the Town Walls, Town Hall, both churches, Northgate, Mural Tower, Edmond Castle, Court Castle, Madam's Castle, Augustinian Abbey, and Abymill Theatre. The iconic tower at Holy Trinity Church of Ireland is visible from many parts of the town and beyond.

Further details of protected views are available in the South Tipperary County Development Plan.

It is vital to the conservation and enhancement of Fethard's unique character that its views and landmarks are maintained, and where possible, enhanced.



Classic View of the Wall and Church
© J. Kenny



Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church
© J. Kenny

4.9 Public Consultation



Presentation to Community

A community consultation event was held in Fethard on the 30th October 2007 to enable residents of the town to participate in the development of the Public Realm Plan. A presentation of the initial analysis findings was followed by an open discussion of those issues that residents and other stakeholders felt should be addressed by the plan. Additional consultation meetings were also held by the consultant team with residents of the town, as well as with members of the project steering group.

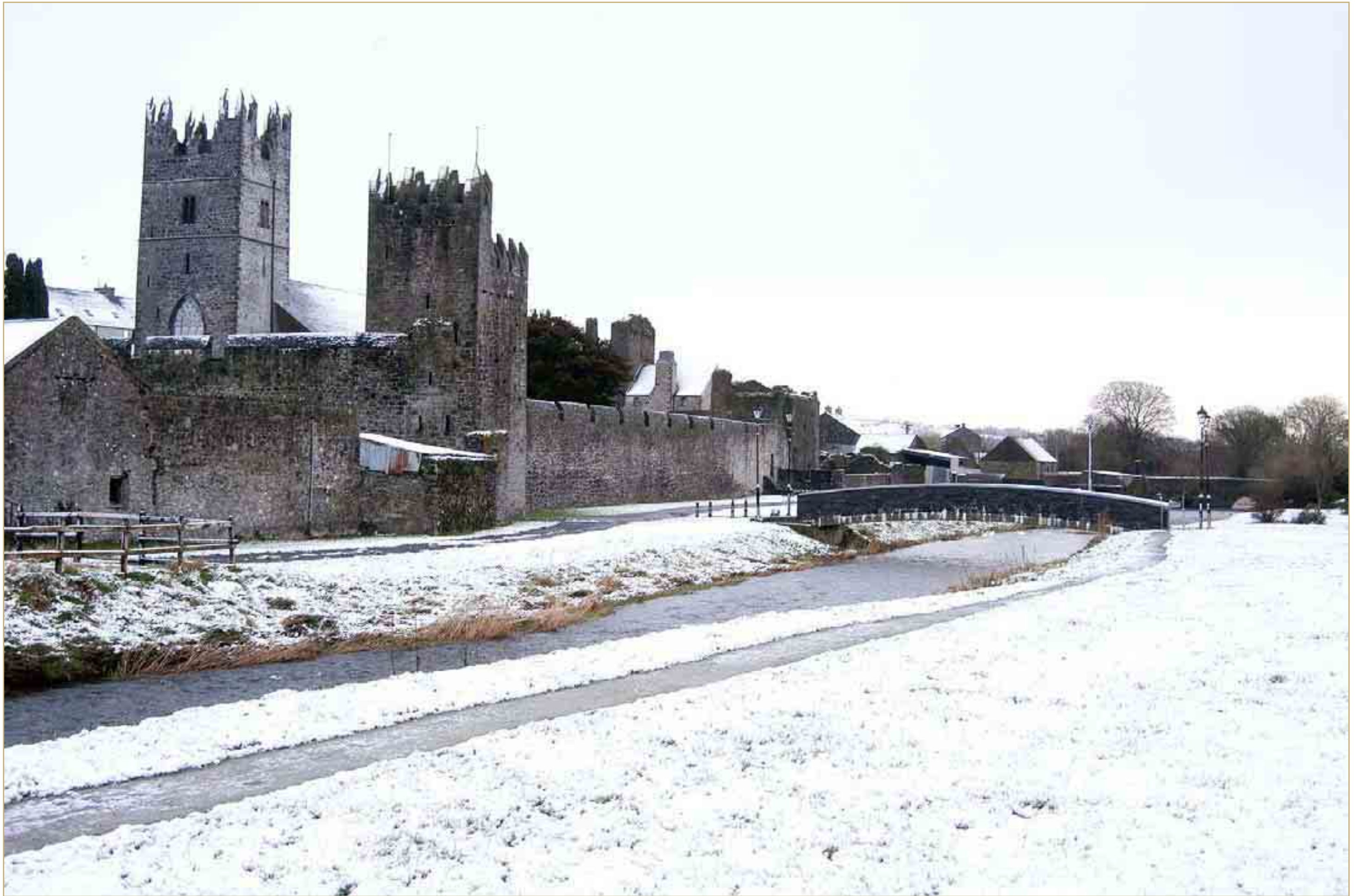
Key issues identified were as follows:

- Acknowledgement of the potential of the towns visitor attractions
- A need for increased visitor facilities including places to stay
- Concern over antisocial behaviour in the park and Holy Trinity Church
- Concern about localised traffic congestion on Main Street and Barrack Street
- Discussion of the potential impact of new development, including traffic circulation and pressure on services and amenities.



Discussion with Residents

A full account of the Community Consultation process can be found in the Appendix of this document.



Holy Trinity Church and Town Walls in Winter © J. Kenny



Holy Trinity Church

5.0 THE PUBLIC REALM PLAN CONCEPT AND DESIGN TEMPLATE

Vision:

The Walled Town of Fethard will be elevated to a tourist attraction of national significance, capitalising fully on its considerable heritage assets as well as its central position within a regional network of historic towns. This will be achieved in a manner that protects the historic value of the town, whilst also sensitively accommodating new development necessary for the sustainability of the town.

5.1 Vision

Having undertaken a process of research, consultation and analysis, this Plan proposes the following shared vision for Fethard:

Fethard will be elevated to a tourist attraction of national significance, capitalising fully on its considerable existing assets as well as its central position within a regional network of historic towns. This will be achieved in a manner that protects the historic value of the town, whilst also sensitively accommodating new development necessary for the sustainability of the town.

5.2 Aims

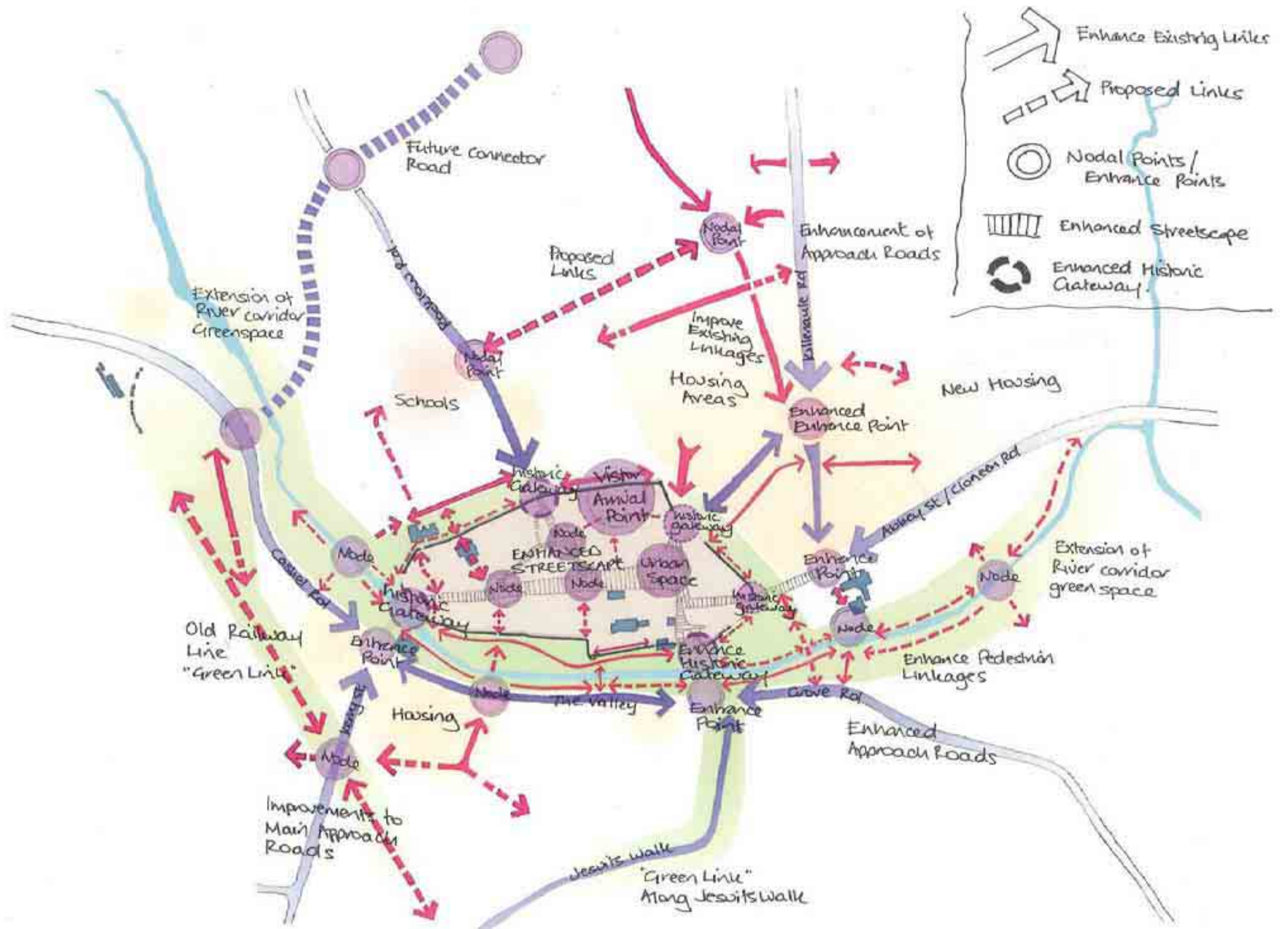
To achieve this shared vision, it is important that a clear set of aims for the Public Realm Plan are set out. These are proposed as including:

- Enhance the Environmental Quality of Fethard to the benefit of local residents, businesses and visitors
- Significantly Improve Fethard as a Tourism Destination (A Tourism Icon)
- Create a Positive Framework for Future Development
- Managing future development in a way which protects and enhances heritage assets in line with the Conservation and Management Plan.

5.3 Objectives

The following public realm objectives have also been identified, forming the basis for proposals contained within the Plan.

- Conservation and restoration of historic built fabric, including the walls
- Increased pedestrian linkage into and around the historic walled town
- Positive guidance to future development in relation to the character of the town
- High quality Public Realm to support economic viability of the town and its businesses
- Interpretation and presentation of Fethard's history
- Improved visitor orientation around the town
- Identification, protection, and enhancement of important views
- Improved amenities and hospitality for visitors
- Reduction of impact of traffic and parking on important urban spaces
- Enhanced settings for historic buildings and spaces
- Enhancement of the arrival experience into Fethard
- Improvement of the night time environment of the town
- Expansion and diversification of visitor attractions and activities
- Improved provision of well designed green open space and linkages



5.4 Concept Plan and Design Template

To meet the identified aims and objectives, a conceptual plan for the public realm of Fethard has been developed. This provides the basis for the public realm plan, the key concepts of which are as follows:

Let the Historic Walls take Centre Stage

The Walls of Fethard are an exceptionally strong asset upon which the town has already begun to capitalise. It is proposed that through their conservation and increased access to them, the walls form the centrepiece of the town's tourism and public realm strategy. The Walled Town of Fethard should be promoted as such, and efforts made through the physical regeneration of the town, to increase their physical contribution as a whole. This is particularly relevant to gateway locations where an enhanced sense of transition in and out of the walled town would be most effective. It also centres attention once again to the northern part of the town, where the wall is at present largely concealed from view.

Strengthen Fethard's "Place on the Map"

It is important that Fethard seeks to build its regional, national and international reputation to attract increased interest from visitors and investors, thus bringing economic benefits to the town. Such a proactive approach is necessitated by its location; whilst Fethard is centrally located, it lies some distance from major transportation routes that would increase its profile more easily. The job of promoting Fethard to a wider audience, however, should be a relatively easy one, given the extent of its attributes and historic significance covered earlier in this report. However, to be successful, this will be reliant on the coordinated endeavours of many organisations working at local, regional and national level. It is also recommended that Fethard seeks to work in partnership with other historic towns in the in area, establishing a network of complimentary visitor destinations. Its prominent role within the Irish Walled Town Network will be critical to this success.

Foster an Improved Arrival Experience

The value of first impressions of Fethard must not be overlooked, particularly in an economy where tourism is likely to play an increasingly central role. A number of different factors effect such impressions, some of which lie outside the scope of this Plan (such as quality of hospitality etc). However, several physical conditions have a significant role to play and should therefore be coordinated in a strategic manner. These include the positioning and character of new development in outlying areas, the appearance and quality of existing properties in prominent locations and the design and maintenance of public spaces at arrival points. Visitors must also be made to feel welcome to Fethard and be actively encouraged to explore and spend time in the town. This will be achieved through good quality orientation and interpretation, the details of which are proposed in the specific initiatives section of this Plan.

Spread Tourism Activity through the Town

At present, tourist activity in Fethard centres predominantly south of Main Street, in the vicinity of the River and Holy Trinity Church. Whilst this in itself is not problematic, it is proposed that through the public realm plan, efforts are made to spread visitor activity across a wider part of the town, thus increasing the potential impact of visitors on local businesses. Influencing such dynamics brings into focus areas of the town such as the Cattle Mart, the GAA pitch, Northgate and Chapel Lane, all of which have the potential to play a greater role in the attraction of visitors.

Increase the list of "Things to Do"

It is important that the visitor to Fethard is provided with choice of attractions and activities. Diversity of attractions helps to increase visitor numbers and the extent of attractions will help to maximise the amount of time visitors chose to stay in the town.

Underpin Character through Appropriate and Sustainable Development

Inappropriate development poses a considerable threat to Fethard's future as a tourist destination of national significance. It is advocated that any new developments in the town must not detract from overall quality and character of Fethard at present. In sensitive historic locations for example, the right urban form and choice of materials is a key consideration. In other parts of the town, an appropriate urban layout that creates good connections and safe environments is essential.

Sustainable development - often defined as 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' - must be at the heart of Fethard's approach to its public realm and regeneration as a whole.

This will be achieved through good urban and architectural design practice, managed by an effectively implemented planning system. Contrary to some beliefs good design is not necessarily expensive, nor does appropriate development limit creative opportunity.

Reinforced Hierarchy of Spaces and Nodes

As noted in the analysis section, the centre of Fethard retains a strong urban structure characteristic of such planned medieval settlements. It is recommended that this form be enhanced during the course of all future redevelopment and regeneration works in the town. As part of this process, public realm design should seek to reinforce the existing hierarchy of Fethard's spaces, with the Market Square as the principal civic space and the river park the principal recreational space within the town.



6.0 ECONOMIC AND TOURISM STRATEGY

6.1 Tourism and Economic Development Strategy

Fethard has potential to grow as a tourism destination and this will, in turn, support the economic development of the town. The public realm proposals recommended as part of the Public Realm Plan have the potential to create a quality tourism product. It is essential that South Tipperary County Council facilitate the management of the various aspects of the Public Realm Plan and link the core elements of Fethard's tourism development to the implementation of the County Tourism Strategy. Equally the development of the tourism product in the county needs to complement the development of the town itself. Critical to this process will be the establishment of a clear linkage between the town and the wider county, as well as the principal towns in the area, most notably Cashel, Cahir and Clonmel.

The following elements must therefore be

addressed as priority elements of the public realm plan and its product development programme:

- Redevelopment of backland and visually poor sites;
- Promotion and branding of the Town;
- Development of equine related activities;
- Provision of accommodation and related facilities;
- Addressing accessibility traffic and parking;
- Providing for residential development and its benefits;
- Facilitating private sector investment;
- Facilitating retail development



Tholsel



Main Street



Northgate



New Housing
25

6.2 Redevelopment of backland and visually poor sites

The redevelopment of backland and visually poor sites is encouraged and this will help to improve the social, economic and aesthetic value of the town. The Public Realm Plan supports the South Tipperary County policy relating to controlling the provision of housing in the open countryside 'Policy HSG 8' and redirecting people to live within existing towns and villages in the county. The implementation of this policy is vital to the physical, social and economic sustainability of Fethard.

It is recommended that support be provided to those landowners who wish to redevelop historic, protected structures or visually poor and derelict sites throughout the town (detailed in Appendix 3 and 4 of the Local Area Plan) in accordance with specific **conservation objectives** detailed in the LAP. Landowners should be encouraged, in partnership with the County Council, and through initiatives such as the Rural Development Programme, to provide for the redevelopment of such sites within the town.

The County Council should investigate acquiring opportunity sites or derelict sites/ structures in accordance with the powers conferred on them under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Derelict Sites Act 1990. The LAP policies ENV.8 and ENV.9 are supported in the Public Realm Plan. These should be consulted regarding the **appropriate use of sites** currently not developed or which may become the focus for development in the future.

6.3 Frontage programme

Improvement and maintenance of the Main Street and Burke Street streetscapes is seen as a priority area for action in order to attract tourists and investors into the town. The LAP policy ENV.10, regarding painting schemes, is endorsed in the Public Realm Plan. In order to facilitate such an approach there is a need for a co-ordinated management, information and support process for individual landowners. This should cover the provision of advice on painting, materials, and the design and management of architectural features as detailed within the Architectural Conservation Area and the town as a whole. The development of a **unique historic town image** is considered to be key in the promotion of the attractiveness of the town as a place to live and/or visit. It should also encourage the development of contemporary new buildings sympathetic to the existing built form. The implementation body should involve a partnership approach with knowledge of historic landscape and built environment aspects as well as economic.

6.4 Promotion and branding of the Town

In conjunction with the implementation of the various Public Realm initiatives, the effective promotion of Fethard and, in particular, **South County Tipperary's Walled Town product** should be explored in greater detail. South Tipperary County Council and the County Tourism Committee, supported by the Irish Walled Town Network, The Heritage Council, and Failte Ireland, should investigate the development of a Walled Town Circuit linking the various towns of the county/ country through national and international promotion, branding and development of accessible tourist trails across the Country. This could incorporate existing attractions and resources such as the provision of looped walks or other outdoor pursuits or attractions, with the focus on specifically linking the historic towns.

The Cashel, Clonmel and Fethard, **'Walled Town Triangle'** not only offers the visitor a wealth of historic and cultural heritage resources to include the Walls of each town but includes a dramatic natural setting with an abundance of outdoor activities available to the visitor to include: walking, fishing and horse riding coupled with the individual community atmospheres of each town. The creation of such a network would bring immediate positive impacts to towns which currently do not derive as much economic benefit as could be possible, given the tendency for visitors to move out to other centres in other counties, thus limiting spend.

Targets, such as those set out in the *South Tipperary Heritage Plan* in supporting the Fethard Transport Museum by 'providing ongoing professional support and funding' need to be broadened to include other attractions in the town.

6.5 Development of equine related activities

Coolmore Stud, the world's largest breeding operation of thoroughbred racehorses, has undeniably brought economic benefits to the town. However greater potential exists for the local equine industry to play a more central role in tourism in the area. The development of other equine related activities or support services should be investigated in conjunction with the Stud farm in order to maximise the local economic potential that the Stud clearly brings to the Town.

The Town's historic and cultural heritage, along with the links to natural environment including; its equine and fishing industries, the rural transport museum, the Jesuits Walk, Market Hill and the impressive Slievenamon (722m) (located just six kilometres from Fethard), need to be marketed within a **county wide strategy** so that the visitor is encouraged to increase their length of stay in Fethard or alternatively to base themselves in one of the neighbouring towns. South Tipperary County Council already supports, in principle, the expansion of the equine related activities and the **development of facilities in the town** (*Policy EMP.2*). There is however, the need for additional market research that would focus on creating a successful package of support products.

6.6 Provision of accommodation and related facilities

Fethard's historic town has no shortage of tourist attractions. However, there appears to be a shortage in the provision of **tourist accommodation** and other facilities. The provision of these basic services as well the promotion of, and **further development** of, the **evening economy** is required in Fethard. The provision of accommodation and facilities within the town could be investigated as part of the redevelopment of some of the opportunity sites (detailed in Appendix 4 of the LAP). The provision of high-end, quality accommodation facilities/mixed uses would not only attract tourists but could also serve as a location where locals can socialise.

6.7 Accessibility, traffic and parking

While Fethard is not immediately accessible from any national routes, the road network linking Fethard to the rest of the county is extensive with six different access routes into and out of the town. The town has a significant volume of heavy traffic passing through it. These high volumes of traffic can create negative impacts on the public realm. The development of the proposed link/connector road to service the proposed Master Plan lands (LAP) from the Killenaule Road is supported by the Public Realm Plan. It is seen as a priority in implementing the Public Realm Plan and this is supported by the Council through *Policy TRANS.4* and specific transport objective *T7* of the LAP. However, the effective removal of unnecessary through traffic entering the town and parking provision within the town needs to be further explored.

In addition, it is considered that the historic North Gate is in need of an extensive conservation and management regime. Measures should be taken in order to protect the Gate against any further deterioration to preserve this unique feature of the town. These measures are addressed further in Section 7.3. **Traffic calming measures** through the public realm and restrictions on vehicular access passing through the Gate should also be considered and implemented. This would increase the aesthetic value of the Gate and improve and/or mitigate any safety issues linked to it. The management of transport accessibility in the town, and in particular HGV movements, is required in order to preserve the historic character of the town and to improve the overall quality of the towns' heritage experience. Accessibility to, and within the town is key to creating an **enjoyable environment** for both local people and visitors to spend their time.

6.8 Residential development and its benefits

An active and safe town is a confident town. The availability of a growing population base gives confidence to investors and serves to attract businesses to set up in the area and vice-versa. The 2005 LAP has zoned some 17.80 hectares for new residential development and a 20 hectare site, subject to a Master Plan, to include a provision for housing developments. The benefits of a **permanent** and growing **population** base are immeasurable in terms of the contribution to the local social, cultural, and economic environment and the perceived vitality of the town. The current population statistics of the Town illustrate a declining population base over the years. However, the Pepparstown (part of the electoral division) area has seen an increase in population by 7.5% from 545 to 586 persons in 2006. While this increase in Pepparstown is important, a continuing decline in the urban core would undermine the long-term vitality of the community and local businesses. The importance of having people living in the town centre is that it provides a welcoming and safe environment for people living in and visiting the area.

A **revitalised town centre** is therefore critical to attracting investors, as well as tourists. Evidence, from other Irish and international communities, suggests that this is a critical aspect to creating a sustainable community with the necessary critical mass to confront the challenges of an increasingly unstable global environment. The decline in the urban area needs to be addressed having

regard to national policy guidance within the National Spatial Strategy and the South East Regional Planning Guidelines. These detailed policies documents seek to counteract trends in settlement patterns in rural areas and support proposals that strengthen the town centre services. The tourism and economic industry play an important role in addressing these key issues and diversification of rural based economy should be supported. It is essential that there is integration between the existing and new built environment and that ongoing management of the Town's historic assets and realm is supported and improved upon in any new developments.



Gateway Through Wall

6.9 Private sector investment

The private sector impact on Public Realm cannot be underestimated. The creation of a sustainable high quality product is shown to have direct economic as well as social benefits to an area. Equally the businesses of the area have already made a substantial investment in the area and will continue to do so. The Council has a role to play in providing the necessary **leadership** to the private sector but equally there is a responsibility on the Council to make sure that local business is embedded in the development planning of the town.

The South Tipperary County Enterprise Board plays a key role in helping to create jobs by facilitating the establishment, development and expansion of small enterprises in the County. The Board is a source of over 10 year's experience of working in the County with many hundreds of people benefiting from practical information, advice and counselling. It is recommended that the Enterprise Board is consulted in order to obtain up-to-date information regarding setting up businesses in South Tipperary. It is noteworthy that in similar towns such as Kilmallock in County Limerick, that the Board has played a key role in the development of local business facilities and may also provide training and funding source for individuals which underpin the Walled Town Concept. The diversification of farm based activities is supported and the benefits of agri-tourism should be investigated by landowners in the area.

6.10 Retail development

The South Tipperary County Retail Strategy 2003 states that, to improve the Town's retail functions and services, the **population** will have to increase so as to bring demand for other local services, both public and private, to the town centre. However, it points out that there is a challenge in identifying land or buildings within the town centre that would have the size to attract/interest convenience operators. The Public Realm Plan does not support large-scale out of town retail development as this would result in a continuing decline of the core retail area and detract from **the character of the historic town and its rural setting**. However, the Masterplan area could provide a solution to meeting the need for retailing facilities that cannot be located in the town centre. The sequential approach should be applied by the County Council when considering planning applications for commercial development.

Summary

It is clear that the town can attain a higher status in the tourism and economic sectors; however management of the various public realm projects is essential. There is little point in investing in the public realm if it is not to be a part of a wider socio-economic development process which itself becomes the platform for further improvement to the public realm. This will require an on-going programme of delivery to include actions identified in this Plan in Section 8.0.



Mill Stone at Abymill

Policy TC6 is directly relevant to the economic development of the town centre and relates to the Local Authority liaising with *'relevant interest and statutory groups retailers, relevant interest and statutory groups to improve the range of retail services available in Fethard town centre and facilitate the co-ordinated development and promotion of Fethard as a niche retail destination within the county'* and is supported within the Public Realm Plan. Existing vacancy rates along Main Street and within the core town centre areas need to be addressed. Rejuvenation of these sites, by attracting a mixture of retail and commercial, day and night time services, should promote activity in the town centre while conserving and respecting the historic urban fabric of Fethard.

6.11 Strategic Development Masterplan

It is important that the considerable growth of Fethard is managed carefully so that new development is not detrimental to the character or functioning of the walled town. Substantial areas for new housing are presently zoned within the Local Area Plan, on lands north of the walled town, accompanied by a 'feeder road' connecting the two. Should this go ahead, it is critical that development of this scale is thought through carefully in relation to the rest of the town, including distribution and quality of its public realm. Failure to do so could have serious consequences for the vision of Fethard as a tourism icon.

It is advocated that a comprehensive masterplanning process be completed for this area to ensure the best possible outcome in relation to the existing town and its assets. The area should be planned and designed with good urban and landscape design principles in mind so that it forms an appropriate extension of Fethard's urban form as opposed to a series of isolated housing estates. Key elements to be incorporated should be:

- Centred on a network of well proportioned streets that connect to existing parts of the town, rather than access roads and cul de sacs. All vehicular access to masterplan lands shall be from the Killenaule Road until such time as the link connection road is completed between Rocklow Road and Cashel Road.
- Buildings should front onto public spaces at all times to ensure a safe environment
- Housing should be predominantly 2 storey in height with pitched roofs.
- Densities should be suited to a compact village settlement, with the use of terraced housing as well as other forms.
- Existing landscape features and topography should be harnessed positively to provide an established context for development and public open spaces.
- Views to and from the town walls and historic town must be controlled in a manner that is unobtrusive yet beneficial for Fethard as a whole.

Opportunities to relieve the narrow Northgate of heavy traffic must be considered if housing is to be proposed in this area. Solutions may include a new north south / access route by the GAA pitch. A review on the pitches future location would also be necessary as part of this process.



Indicative Sketch Plan of a Potential Concept for Northern Expansion



NORTH

GAA

North Gate

Curkeogh Castle

Round Turret

Potential Visitor Arrival Point

Chapel Lane

Courtyard

Mary's Gate

Medan Bridge

Holy Trinity Church

Court Castle

Erin's Castle

Shee a-na-oid

Watergate Bridge

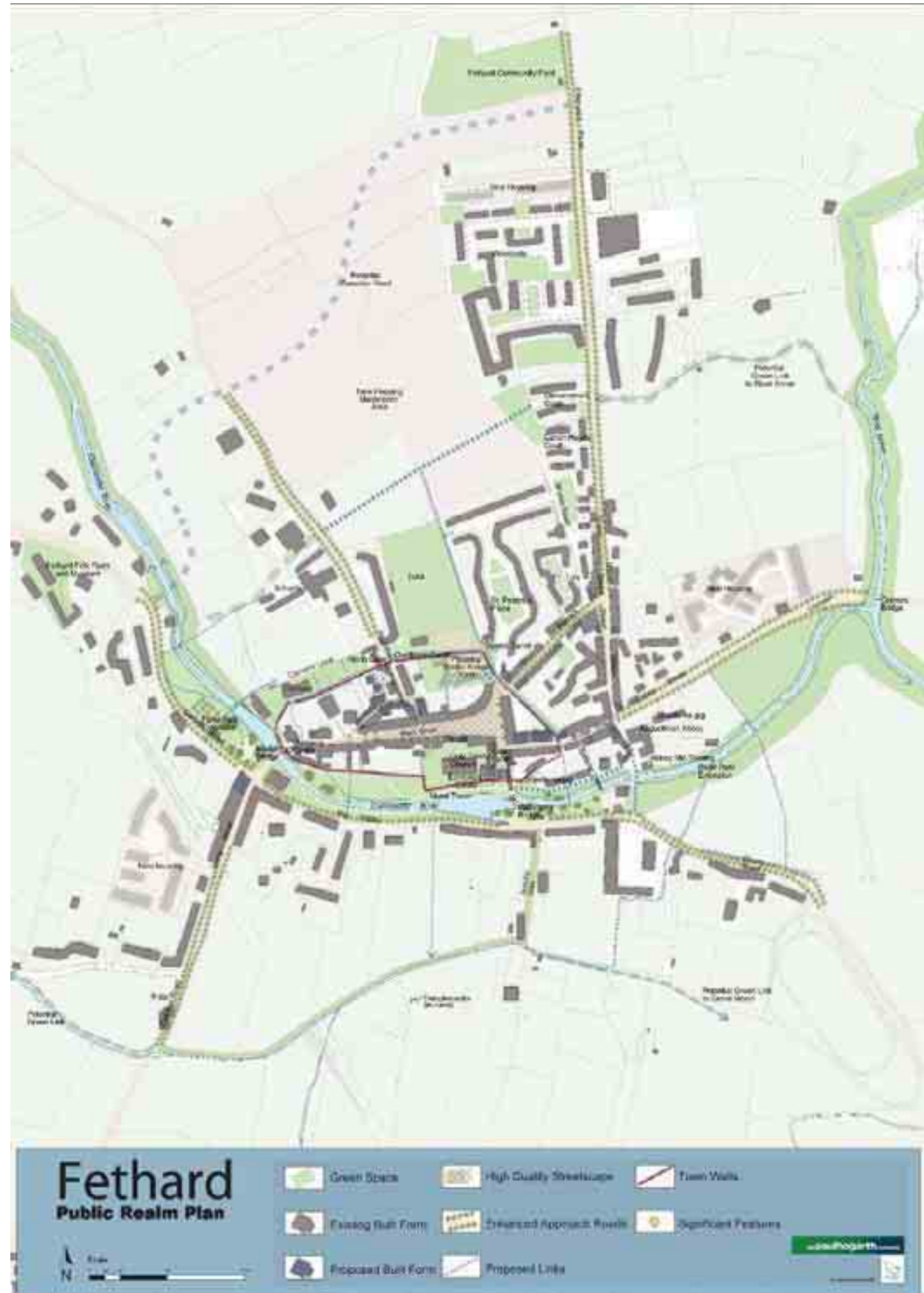
Clashawley River

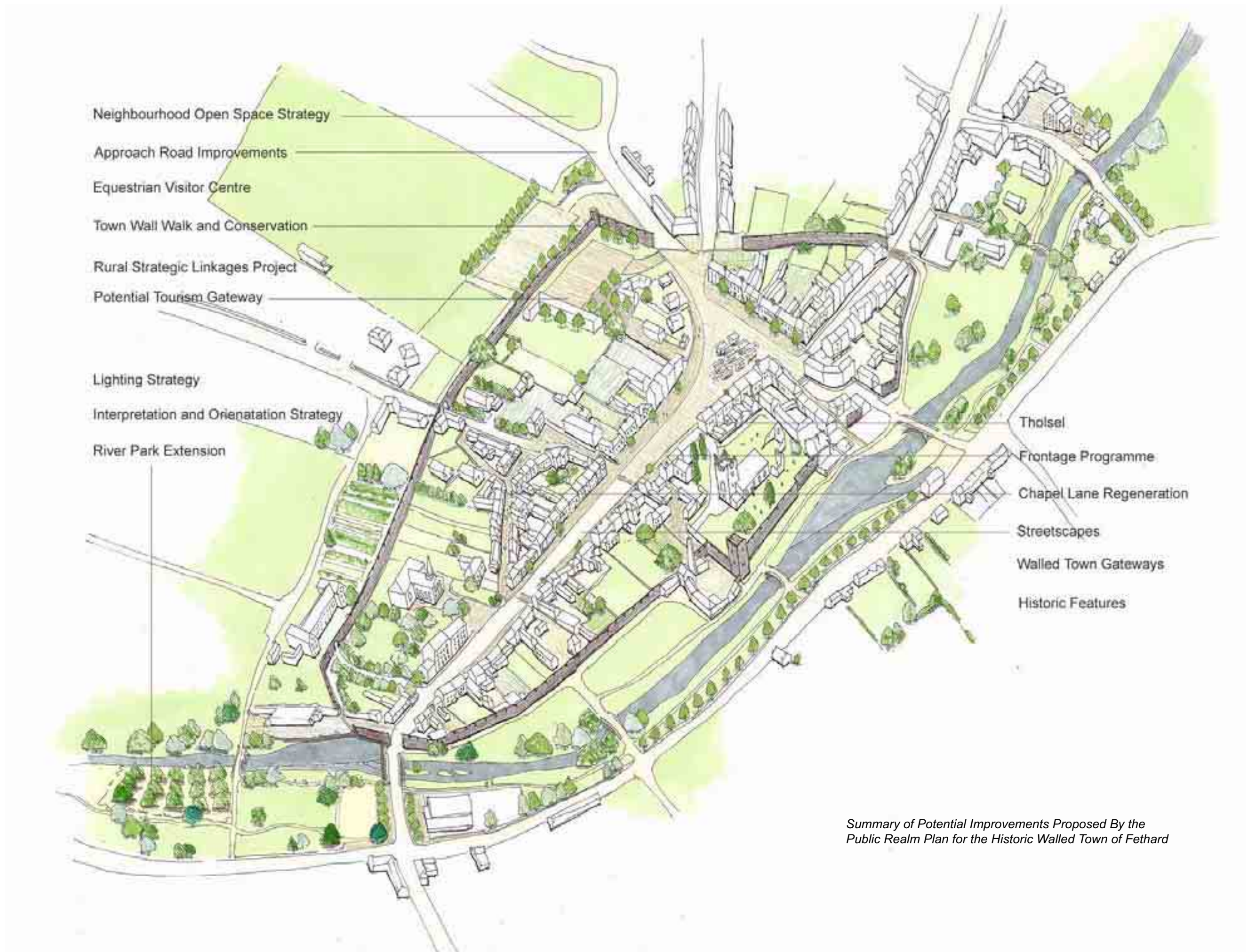
Mural Tower

The Valley

M1

Scale
0 10 20m





Neighbourhood Open Space Strategy

Approach Road Improvements

Equestrian Visitor Centre

Town Wall Walk and Conservation

Rural Strategic Linkages Project

Potential Tourism Gateway

Lighting Strategy

Interpretation and Orientation Strategy

River Park Extension

Tholsel

Frontage Programme

Chapel Lane Regeneration

Streetscapes

Walled Town Gateways

Historic Features

Summary of Potential Improvements Proposed By the Public Realm Plan for the Historic Walled Town of Fethard

7.0 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

7.1 Introduction to Specific Initiatives

To realise the vision outlined by the Public Realm Plan it is necessary to organise proposed works into a series of projects or specific initiatives. These initiatives vary in size and content, but have a shared goal of improving the quality and experience of the Fethard's Public Realm. Collectively, the initiatives can have a significant impact on the town as a whole.

A total of 16 Specific Initiatives are proposed as follows. This Chapter outlines the content of these, so to provide guidance to inform their delivery. In most cases, however, further more detailed work will be required to bring them to realisation.

- 7.2. Town Wall Walk and Conservation
- 7.3. Walled Town Gateways
- 7.4. Approach Road Improvements
- 7.5 River Park Extension
- 7.6 Streetscapes
- 7.7 Chapel Lane Regeneration
- 7.8 Lighting Strategy
- 7.9 Neighbourhood Open Space Strategy
- 7.10 Frontage Programme
- 7.11 Historic Features
- 7.12 New Tourism Gateway
- 7.13 Tholsel
- 7.14 Interpretation and Orientation Strategy
- 7.15 Rural Strategic Linkages Project
- 7.16 Equestrian Visitor Centre



7.2 Town Wall Walk and Conservation

The Town Walls of Fethard are among the finest examples of their kind in Ireland and indeed Europe. It is rare to find such urban fortifications so intact, having withstood the pressures of town growth and redevelopment for some 800+ years. The draft Conservation and Management Plan, notes that the town is of 'outstanding significance'. It is therefore critical that these structures are first of all maintained for future generations and secondly, used to play a greater role in the town as an attraction to visitors.



The draft Conservation and Management Plan concurrent with this Plan, details the works necessary to safeguard the structure from further decay and depreciation. These measures should be viewed as urgent in a town where the walls are of such significance and potential to its future.

Open space should be increased around the walls, where appropriate. Increased open space will enhance the walls' setting, improve visibility of the walls, and act as a buffer to reduce impact of future development adjacent to the walls.

Public realm proposals can also make a major contribution to the enjoyment of the walls for visitors and locals alike. A key objective for Fethard should be the securing of a circular walking route around the walls town walls, either on the outside, inside or where possible upon the structures themselves. It is recognised, however, that specific areas of private ownership may result in the completion of such a route being a long term objective.

An important aspect of highlighting and celebrating the walls further will be the implementation of feature lighting to the walls, as discussed in the lighting strategy. Feature lighting will help increase the night time use and enjoyment of the walls and the town as a whole.

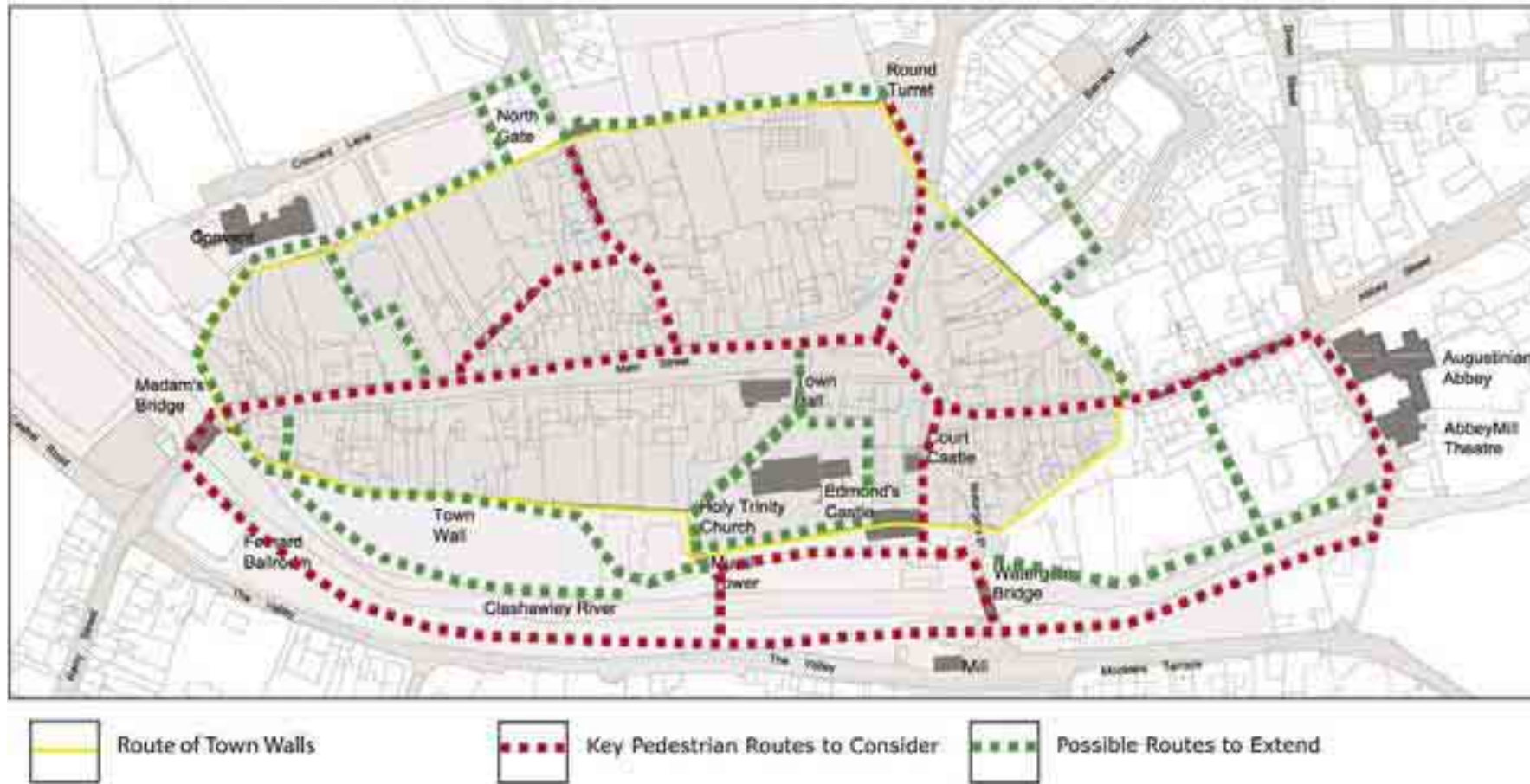
There is potential for elevated sections of walkway at Madam's Gate, the graveyard at the Convent, and the cattle mart/ GAA wall. These sections of elevated walkway could draw inspiration from the example shown in the Holy Trinity Church graveyard and potentially could provide similar excellent panoramic views across the town and out into the surrounding countryside. There is also potential for visitor access to the Mural Tower, Currikeen Castle at North Gate, and the round turret at the northeast corner of the walls. Such access would provide further view points as well as increasing the interactive attraction of the walls.

There is scope for enhancement of the walls interpretation and navigation, building on good examples of the existing annotative signage already present. The Interpretation Strategy will set out how the visitor's knowledge and enjoyment of the walls and their association with the town's history can be improved.

The enhancement and improvement of the Town Walls supports the local authority policies and objectives set out in the Local Area Plan. Specifically;

A3b: Improve access along the eastern and northern sides of the town wall;

A3f: Improve access and enhance walkway to the rear of Barrack Street and along the Town Wall.



Indicative Wall Walk Route



Wall Walk



Round Turret



Wall at GAA pitch



7.3 Walled Town Gateways

A key characteristic of any medieval town were its gates, designed to control movement of people and goods both in and out of the town. The original Walled Town of Fethard had five known gates, with one on each of the North, West and South facing walls and two on the East. Today, despite the intactness of the walls, only one gate remains - Northgate. The other four have long since been removed to make way for development and road widening.

As the principal points of access into the Walled Town of Fethard, these locations are of critical importance to the town. Northgate is in urgent need of work to safeguard its existence against the impact of heavy vehicles that pass through it. And the remaining four gate locations would benefit greatly from physical measures to mark their former role, thus informing visitors, reminding locals and accentuating the transition of passing to and from the Walled Town of Fethard.

This section proposes individual public realm masterplans for each of the towns gateway locations. They propose a series of measures that if collectively implemented overtime, would serve to greatly improve the quality of these important places.

- a. Madam's Bridge
- b. Watergate
- c. Northgate
- d. Site of Pierce's Gate (Barrack Street)
- e. Site of Gate (Burke Street)



Critical Impact of Heavy Vehicles on Northgate



Existing Interpretation



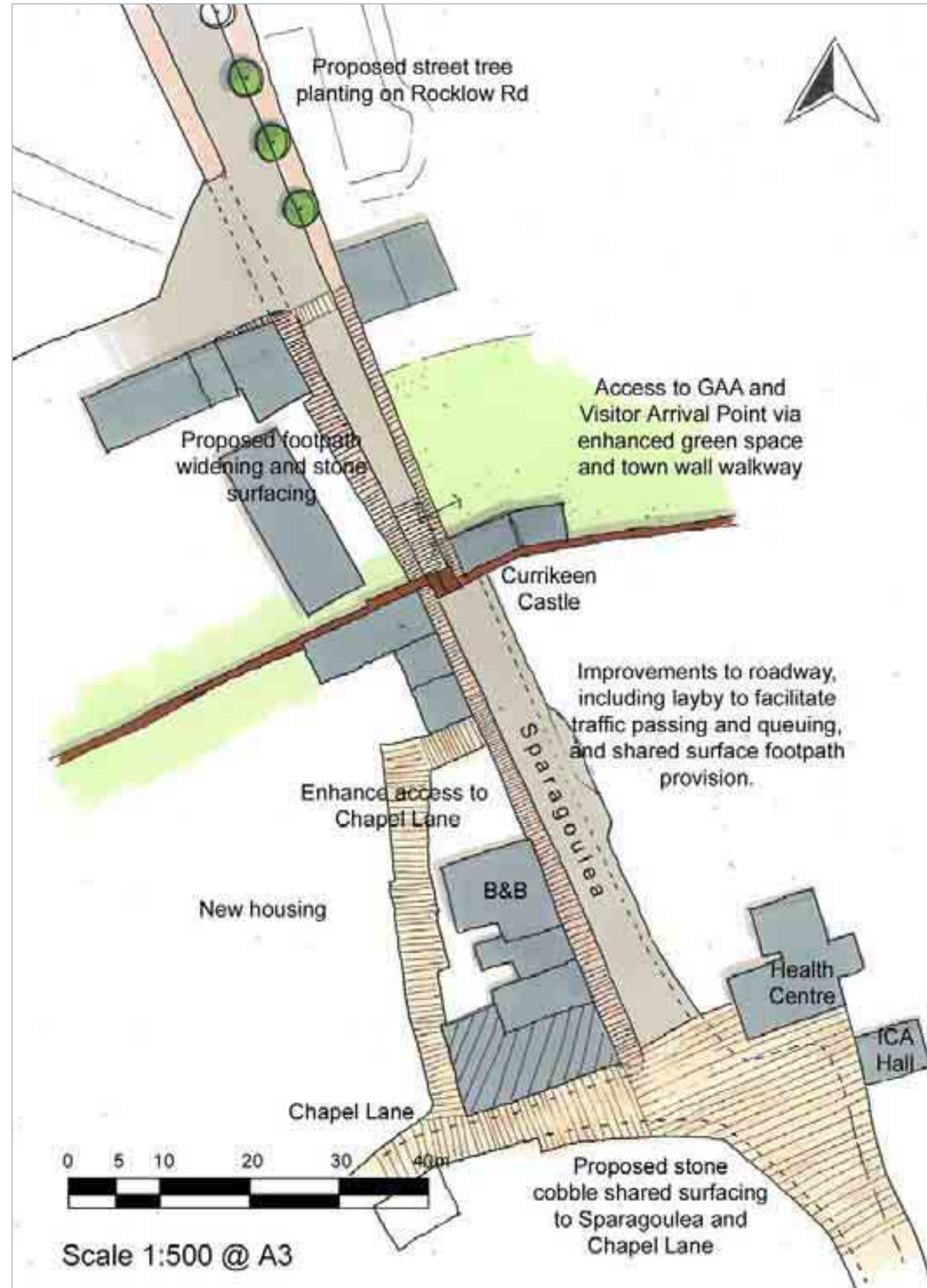
Approach to Northgate



Proximity of New Housing

Northgate

Northgate is a vitally important section of Fethard's Town Walls and is currently under immediate threat of damage by heavy vehicles that pass beneath its arch. A number of proposals to address this issue must be given a high priority to safeguard the gate for future generations in the town.



Northgate Gateway Sketch Plan



Northgate

- Urgent conservation of the Northgate arch. Refer to Town Walls Conservation and Management Plan.
- Increased measures to safeguard this structure need to be sought immediately. Vehicular height/width restrictions on this stretch of Rocklow Road is one of many traffic management measures that could be utilised.
- It is important that existing views and vistas to and from Northgate are maintained. Future development in the vicinity of the arch will need to be sensitive to the setting of Northgate so as not to impact on these.
- Improvements to the Rocklow Road by way of enhanced surfacing, footpath provision, street tree planting to enhance the Northgate setting.
- Improvements to welcome/orientation/interpretive signage.
- Conservation/ restoration of Currikeen Castle and walls adjacent to Northgate to enhance awareness of this site and to help reinforce visual and historic value of the Northgate gateway. Refer to Town Walls Conservation and Management Plan.
- Streetscape improvements to Chapel Lane and Sparagoulea will also enhance the Northgate setting from within the walled town, whilst improving pedestrian access and movement to Chapel Lane and Main Street.
- Feature lighting to Northgate arch, walls, and Currikeen Castle.



Madam's Bridge

- Conservation/restoration to Madam's Castle to reinforce historic gateway to the town. (Refer to Town Walls Conservation and Management Plan)
- Traffic management to reduce impact of traffic on Madam's Bridge and conflict with pedestrian movement
- Feature lighting to Walls, Madam's Bridge, and Madam's Castle
- Rationalisation of car parking and recycling point within the river corridor green space/town park. Enhanced street frontage/ boundary treatment including improved pedestrian access to the river.
- Sensitive reinstatement of missing wall section
- Renovation or potential relocation of existing cycle shop
- Enhanced green space in front of town walls, as part of the wider river park. This will create an appropriate setting for this key historic gateway
- Enhanced street frontage at the Fethard Ballroom, including tree planting, lighting and potential public art
- Junction improvements at Kerry St/ Cashel Rd/ The Valley, including pedestrian crossing points



Madam's Bridge Gateway Sketch Plan



Madam's Castle



View Towards Bridge



View From Bridge



Watergate Gateway Sketch Plan



Watergate

- Conservation/restoration to Town Walls at Watergates to reinforce historic gateway to the town. Refer to Town Walls Conservation and Management Plan
- Traffic management to reduce impact of traffic on Watergate Bridge. Improve pedestrian movement
- Increased open green space along river corridor and increased access to and along the river
- Streetscape improvements to Watergate and medieval passageway beside Edmond's Castle, including high quality surfacing
- Feature lighting to Walls, Watergate Bridge, and Sheela-na-gig at Watergate
- Interpretive and orientation signage to inform visitors of the significance of the Watergate site and its features, and to direct visitors to other locations around town
- Junction improvements at the valley/ Jesuits' Walk/ Grove Road, including adequate footpath provision and pedestrian crossing points
- Potential public acquisition of prominent shed buildings in the area, with a view to their relocation to more suitable, less visually prominent locations
- Potential restoration of Flour Mill building, including relocation of current depot uses and possible out door seating areas relating to the river park



Court Castle © J. Kenny



Watergate from River



Approach Road

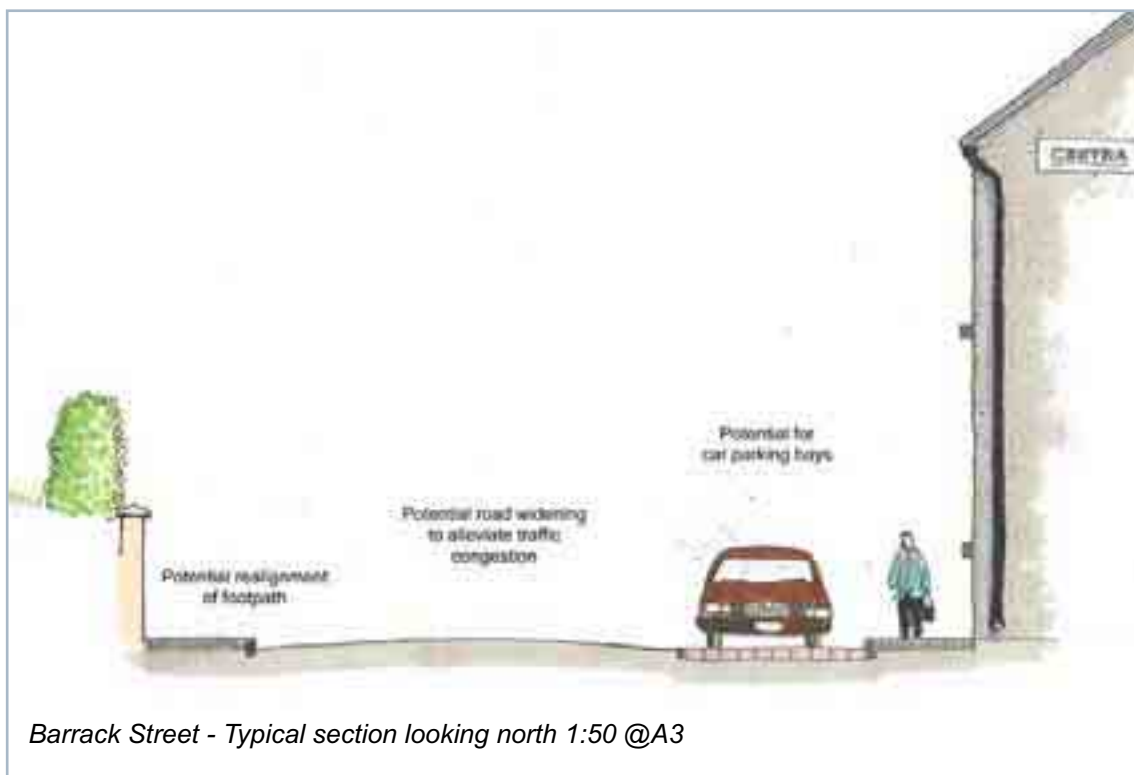


Site of Pierce's Gate, Barrack Street

- Appropriate demarcation/ delineation of historic gateway and town walls via paving textures, public art and potential reconstruction of wall sections as appropriate. Refer to Town Walls Conservation and Management Plan
- Improved setting to existing wall sections at the Cattle Mart / GAA ground. This should include removal of dense planting and lighting of the corner turret
- Street improvements to Barrack Street and Main Street to help define the transition into the historic walled town and create a setting for the remaining section of wall. Street tree planting along the Barrack Street approach to the town will help frame this gateway and create a vista into the historic core



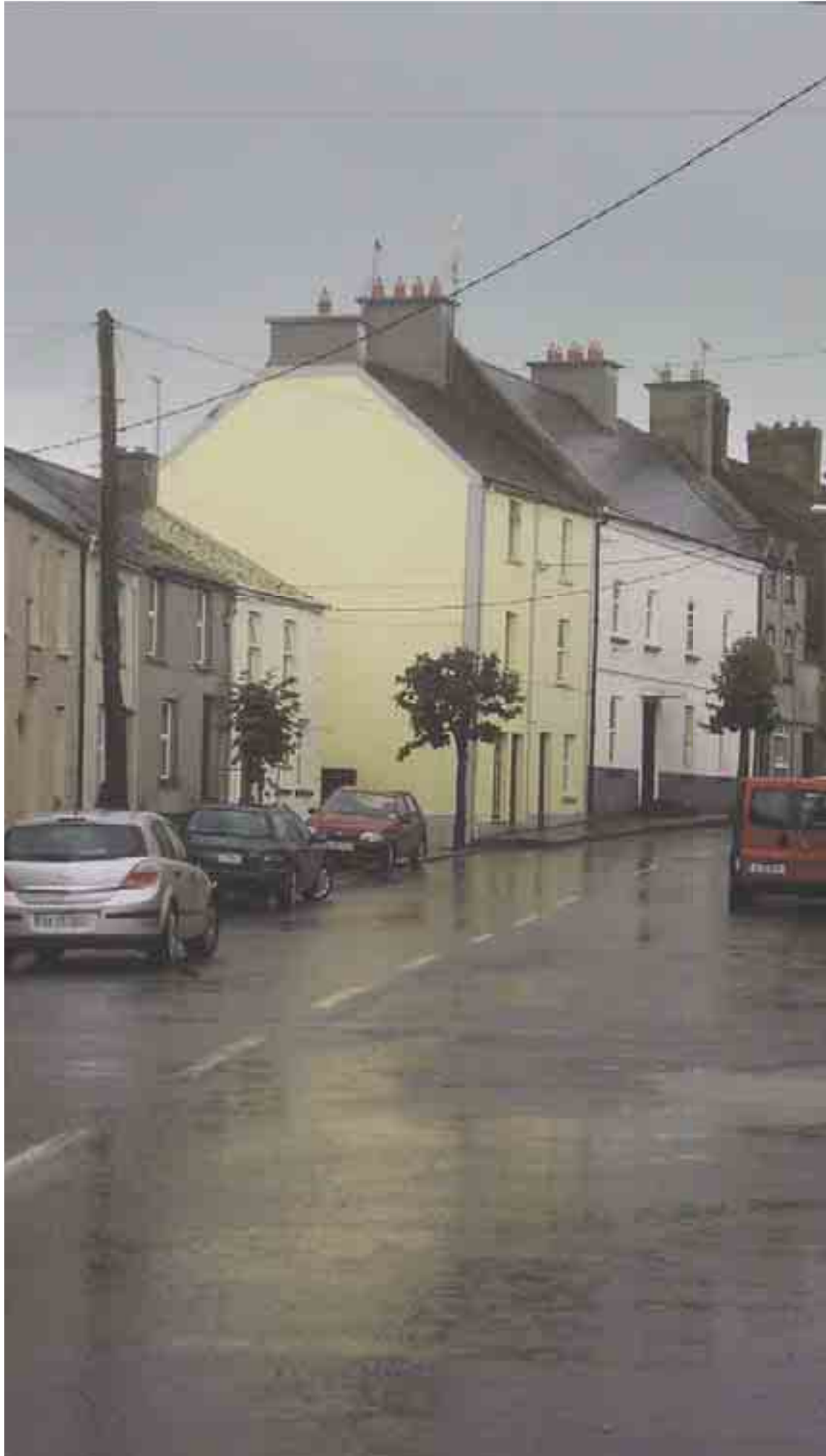
Barrack Street - Detailed Plan



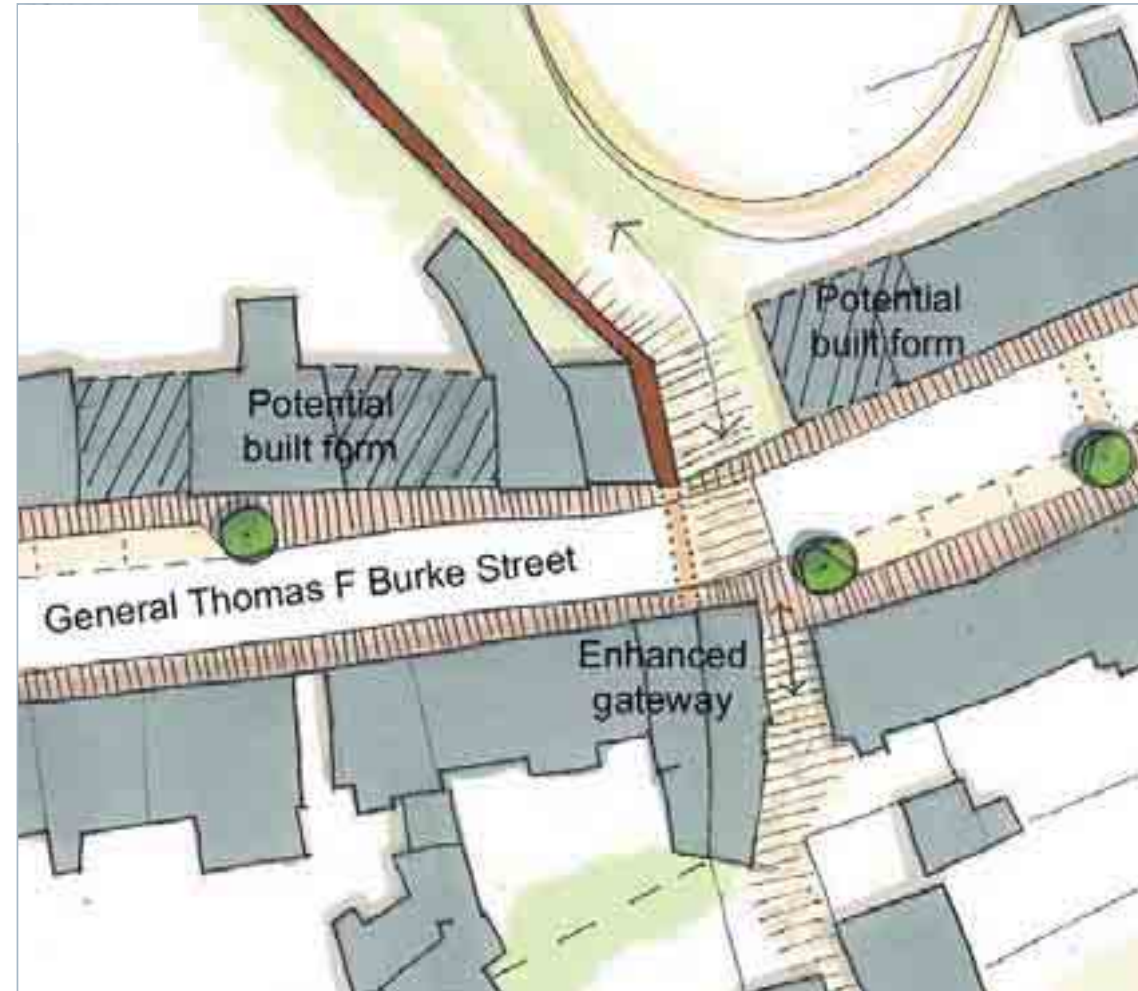
Barrack Street - Typical section looking north 1:50 @A3



Barrack Street



Location of Former Gate on Burke Street



Burke Street Gate - Detailed Plan



Site of Gate, Burke Street

- Appropriate demarcation/ delineation of historic gateway and town wall through surfacing, lighting and public art as appropriate.. Refer to Town Walls Conservation and Management Plan
- Streetscape improvements to Burke Street in the form of improved footpaths, high quality surfacing, parking rationalisation, appropriate street tree planting will help define the transition into the historic walled town
- Interpretive and orientation signage to inform visitors of the significance of the gate site on Burke Street, and to direct visitors to other locations around town
- Potential for improved access to town walls from Burke Street via green space along walls from Burke Street to Barrack Street. This could provide pedestrian access to and from the potential visitor arrival point



7.4 Approach Road Improvements

The importance of first impressions of Fethard should not be underestimated, not only in positively welcoming tourists, but also influencing the perceptions of people from the local area and business community. Key approaches identified are:

- Killenaule Road
- Cashel Road
- Kerry Street (Clonmel Road)
- The Valley
- Grove Road
- Abbey Street (Cloneen Road)
- Jesuit's Walk

Public realm improvements to these stretches should seek to increase definition of where town starts and finishes through improved roadway and verge definition, welcoming signage and where appropriate, entrance features such as public art. In some areas, where spatial definition of the street is poor, grass verges and street tree planting would be of particular benefit.

Fethard's approach roads are also an important recreational amenity for local residents, who use them for walking, jogging, cycling and horse riding. A review of provision for non car users on these roads is required, so that adequate footways can be implemented. This process must also take into account the character and setting of the road. For example, Jesuits Walk has a charming rural character that should be maintained. Therefore footpaths may be inappropriate on certain stretches of this relatively low trafficked road.



View at Ballroom



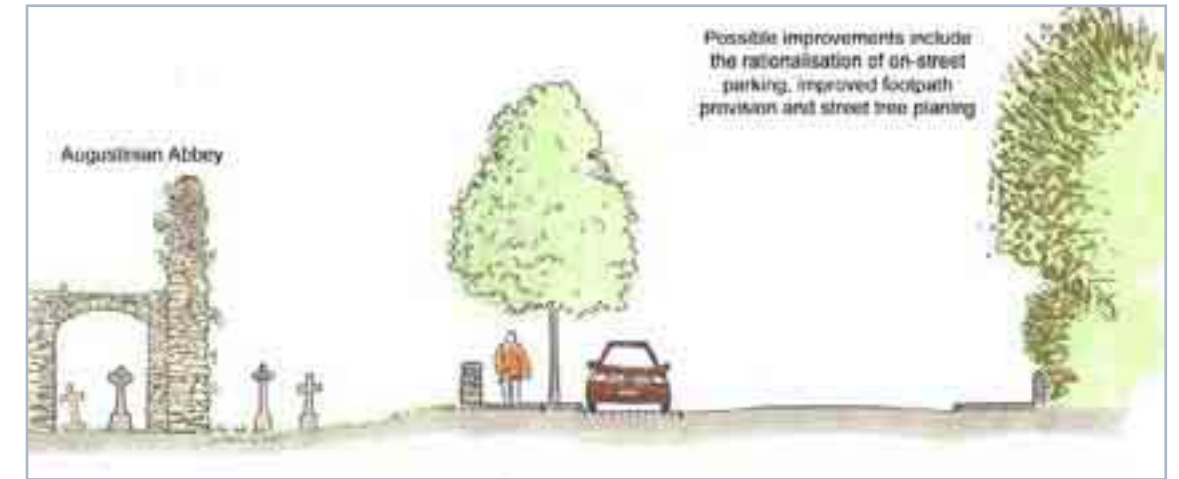
Lack of Pavements



Town Arrival

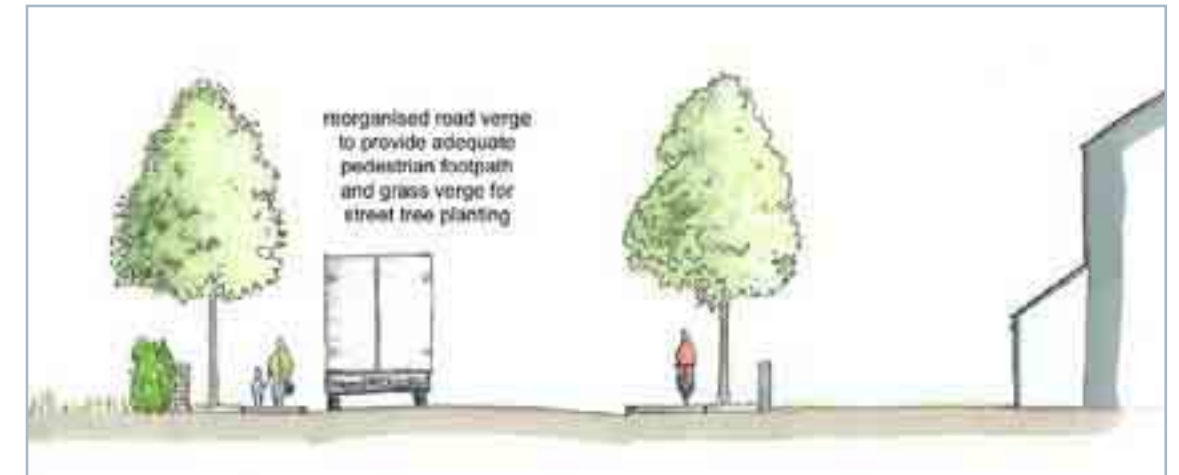


Rocklow Road - Perspective elevation - looking south



Abbey Street (Cloneen Road) - Typical Section - looking west 1:100 @A3

The Public Realm Plan supports the policies of the Council regarding the improvement of these sites and supports in particular policy C5. *'Improve the visual quality of the approach roads to the town, through planting, designing entrance features, traffic calming and streetscape enclosure. These include: Killenaule Road, Clonmel Road, Cashel Road and Mullinahone Road.'*



Abbey Street (Cloneen Road) - Typical Section - looking west 1:100 @A3



River Park Plan



7.5 River Park Extension

The River Park along the banks of the Clashawley River is an important feature of Fethard's public realm. Opportunities for its enhancement should therefore be explored to maximise the positive contribution it makes to the town.

Over the short term, relatively simple management measures should be introduced to mitigate against antisocial behaviour in the park. These should include restricted vehicular access with the use of small number of bollards, as well as lighting and bin provision and key intervals. Increased positive usage of the park in the evenings should also be encouraged with activities such as play and performance a possibility. Increase usage and therefore safety of the park would also be achieved by establishing new linkages to it and from other parts of the town.

The park plays an important role in providing a visual setting for the town walls. Scope to improve this should be explored with the thinning of selected trees to open up more views and the design of a potential belvedere from which to view the walls.

There is potential for the restoration/ reinstatement of the mill pools and weirs that were once located at Madam's Bridge and Watergate. This could be related to restoration of the Flour Mill at Watergate and perhaps the reinstatement of a working water wheel. The addition of these initiatives as part of a town park would greatly add to the attractions and activities at the river as well as enhancing the setting of the town walls and monuments in this area.

Significant opportunity also exists for the River Park to be extended both up and down stream. This would require a process of land assembly, as well as the implementation of pathways and lighting. An extended river park could serve outlying areas of the town as a recreational amenity and adopt the role of a link between the town and outlying rural areas. To be successful, a park of increased area would need to be accompanied by adequate management and maintenance provision.

As part of this process, opportunities to re-establish old walkways such as Belbow Lane should be actively pursued. Sensitive enhancement to these routes would make them safe and accessible once more.

The majority of the proposal for the river park extension is generally supported in the LAP through the zoning objective to provide for 'amenity' uses along the river. Specifically under policy AMT 7 supports passive recreation facilities that *'retain and incorporate key landscape features such as trees, stone walls, streams, etc. into open space and landscape plans'*

Opportunity site 4 is particularly relevant to the river park extension and it is a proposal of the Public Realm Plan that the entire site be given over to recreational and amenity uses.

Other relevant recreation and amenity objectives which support the proposal include:

- *'Objective A.5 Investigate the possibility of reinstating the sluice gates at Abbeyville to improve the visual amenity of the river.'*
- *'Objective A.6 Preserve the amenity value and habitats of the Natural Heritage Area and ensure adequate buffer space is provided between the NHA and any new developments in the vicinity.'*



River Walkway



An appropriate range of materials needs to be used to help reflect the town's locality and built form. It is proposed that locally quarried stone such as the Limestone used in Fethard's town walls, is used as kerbing, paving slabs, setts and cobbles. There is also scope to introduce cobbled stone surfacing to shored surfaces and laneways where traffic will be reduced. Appropriate finishes and materials should be selected to reflect the function and hierarchy of the streets, for example, the principal vehicular routes should continue to be surfaced with asphalt.

7.6 Streetscapes

Key objectives for Fethard are to enhance settings for its historic buildings and spaces, reduce the impact of traffic and parking on important areas of the town and enhancement of the arrival experience into the town. Fethard's streetscapes will therefore play a key role in achieving these objectives. The town's streets already make an important contribution to the town's character and it is important that this is conserved and enhanced.

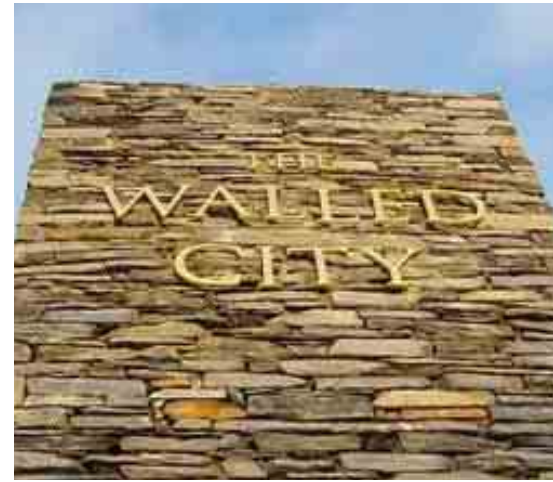
Key streetscapes identified in this study are that of Main Street, Burke Street, Chapel Lane, and medieval laneways and passages such as Belbow Lane. Other streets such as Barrack Street and Lower Green Street play an important secondary role in linking the main housing areas with the town and Watergate.

It is proposed that Fethard's streets are enhanced in a way that will re-shift the balance from vehicular dominated spaces to more pedestrian orientated spaces. This will be achieved through carriageway realignment and narrowing, footpath widening, shared surfacing in narrow streets and lanes, junction and crossing improvements, rationalisation of on-street parking, provision of off street parking, appropriate street tree planting schemes where space permits and high quality surfacing and kerbing.

High quality natural stone surfacing to the main streetscapes of the historic core of the walled town (from gate to gate) are essential in conserving and enhancing its historic setting and character.

Replacement of street surfacing is an excellent opportunity to address the service lines and cables that currently dominate the skyline of Fethard's key streets. A medium term goal of transferring all overhead cables to below ground service ducts should be pursued.

The benefits that trees bring to our towns and cities are well documented. Street tree planting is a key component of the public realm. Street tree planting will provide a colourful aesthetic addition to Fethard's streetscape, introducing biodiversity, seasonal interest and scale. It is important that appropriate measures are taken in site selection for tree planting so that the tree can benefit the location and have space to grow to maturity with minimum management. In this respect it is essential that tree selection is based on important factors such as tree size and form, species/cultivars and their urban tolerance, space availability, environmental and site conditions. Planting locations and pit detailing should also be carefully considered within the context of vehicular movements, service deliveries, underground services and archaeological sensitivities. Many streets in Fethard would gain great benefit from tree planting, although historical appropriateness should be considered in certain areas.



Arrival



Orientation



Public Art



High Quality Stone Paving



Limestone Slab/ Salvaged Cobble Paving



On-street Parking Bays/ Bollards



Street Furniture



Street Furniture



Street Tree Planting



Quercus rubra

Tilia cordata



Fraxinus excelsior

Acer campestre



Sorbus aucuparia

Prunus avium



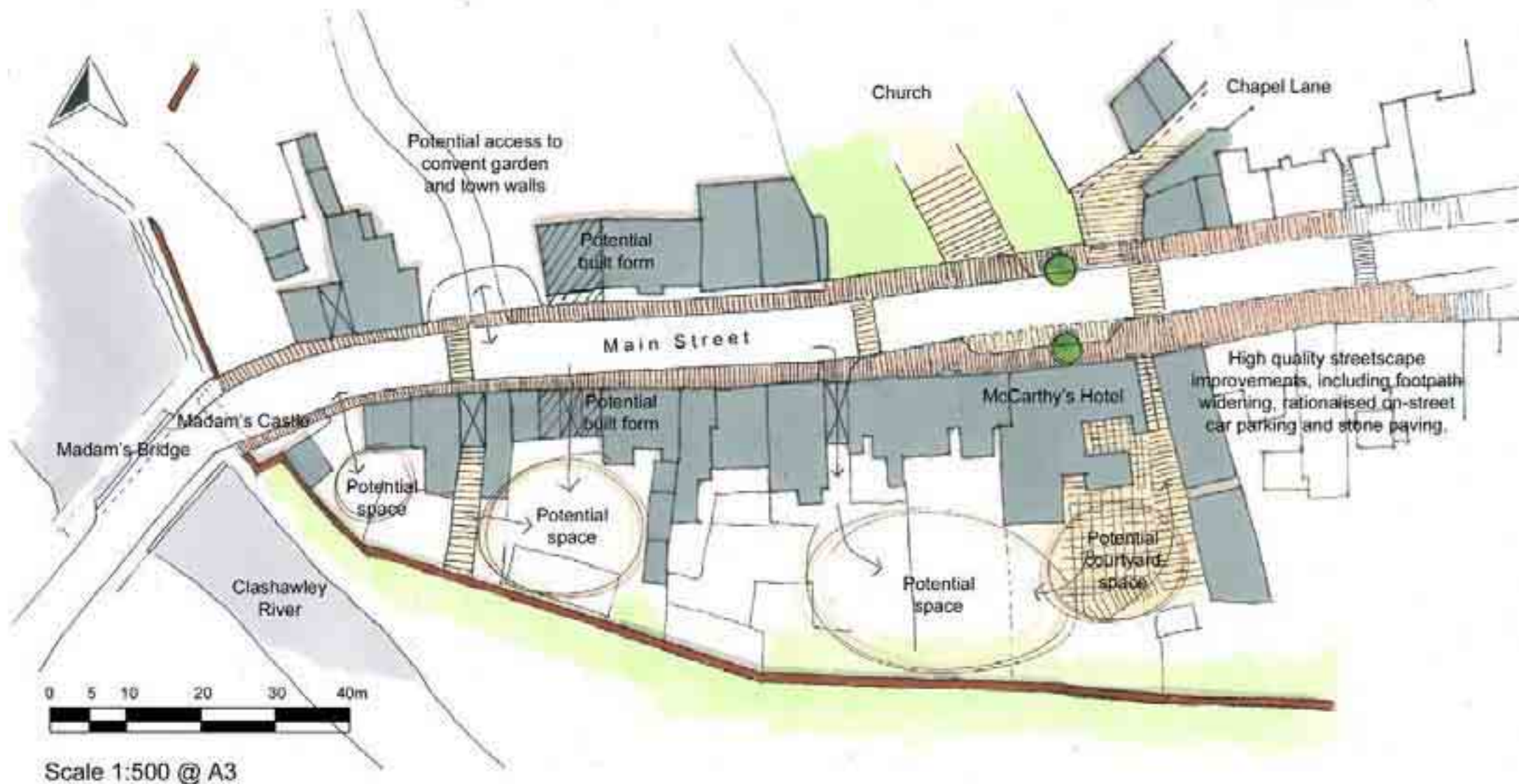
Main Street

Main Street is relatively unchanged since it was laid out as a planned Norman street in the 13th Century. The street has been the town's thoroughfare and hub since and still is today.

Main Street has become a vehicular dominated space which undermines the town experience and retail and leisure opportunities. Parked cars along the length of the street hide shop fronts and reduce visibility, whilst cars parked at the top of the town have transformed the historic "market place" into a car park. High volumes of traffic, including lorries, flow through the town throughout the day. These factors have reduced the visible public space in the heart of the town and have a negative impact on its historic fabric.

It is the intention of the Public Realm Plan to reduce the vehicular dominance on Main Street and create an optimum balance between vehicular and pedestrians, where there is increased opportunities for locals and visitors to enjoy activities such as shopping, eating out, street markets and events. The following proposals will contribute to achieving this, should traffic levels be successfully reduced through the delivery of alternative routes to the north.

It is proposed to install high quality stone surfacing to Main Street and potentially its medieval passageways to reflect and enhance its historic character. A major component of Main Street's enhancement will be the recreation of the historic "market place" at the top of the town, through high quality surfacing and traffic management. This will provide a substantial urban space



Main Street Streetscape Sketch Plan 1/3



for events etc. It is proposed to reduce vehicular dominance in Main Street through reduced on-street parking and organisation into car parking bays. This will also benefit the flow of traffic through the town.

The Tholsel or Town Hall building is a key part of Main Street and it is proposed that the footpath be widened to facilitate improved access and “spill-out” space on to the street and into the “market place”. Appropriate street tree planting will further enhance the street by framing it, giving it scale, providing shelter, seasonal colour and a green setting for its historic buildings. Frontage improvement, as discussed in the Frontage Programme section will play an important role in enhancing the Main Street. Likewise, street lighting and interpretation, as discussed later, will also contribute to an improved Main Street.

There is potential for improved access to the medieval passages and laneways in the town. These lanes and passages are important remnants of the medieval urban fabric and provide a visual link to the town’s history. There is potential to develop these assets as part of the public realm in order to enhance the present day town experience. These laneways have the potential to increasing pedestrian access around the town and creating further links between the town and the river.



Main Street Streetscape Sketch Plan 2/3



Main Street Typical Section



Visually obtrusive parking



View East on Main Street



Where possible, it is proposed that Fethard's laneways and passages should be opened up for pedestrian access. These routes will be primarily for pedestrian access only, however in the case of Chapel Lane and Belbow Lane, limited vehicular access will be facilitated. It is proposed that the passages and laneways are surfaced with appropriate high quality stone cobbles and setts as flush wall-to-wall profiles to maximise space.

There is potential for creation of small courtyard spaces along some of the passageways leading to Main Street, such spaces could be utilised by private businesses such as cafes, restaurants, pubs, and workshops.

Main Street Streetscape Sketch Plan 3/3



Main Street c.1900



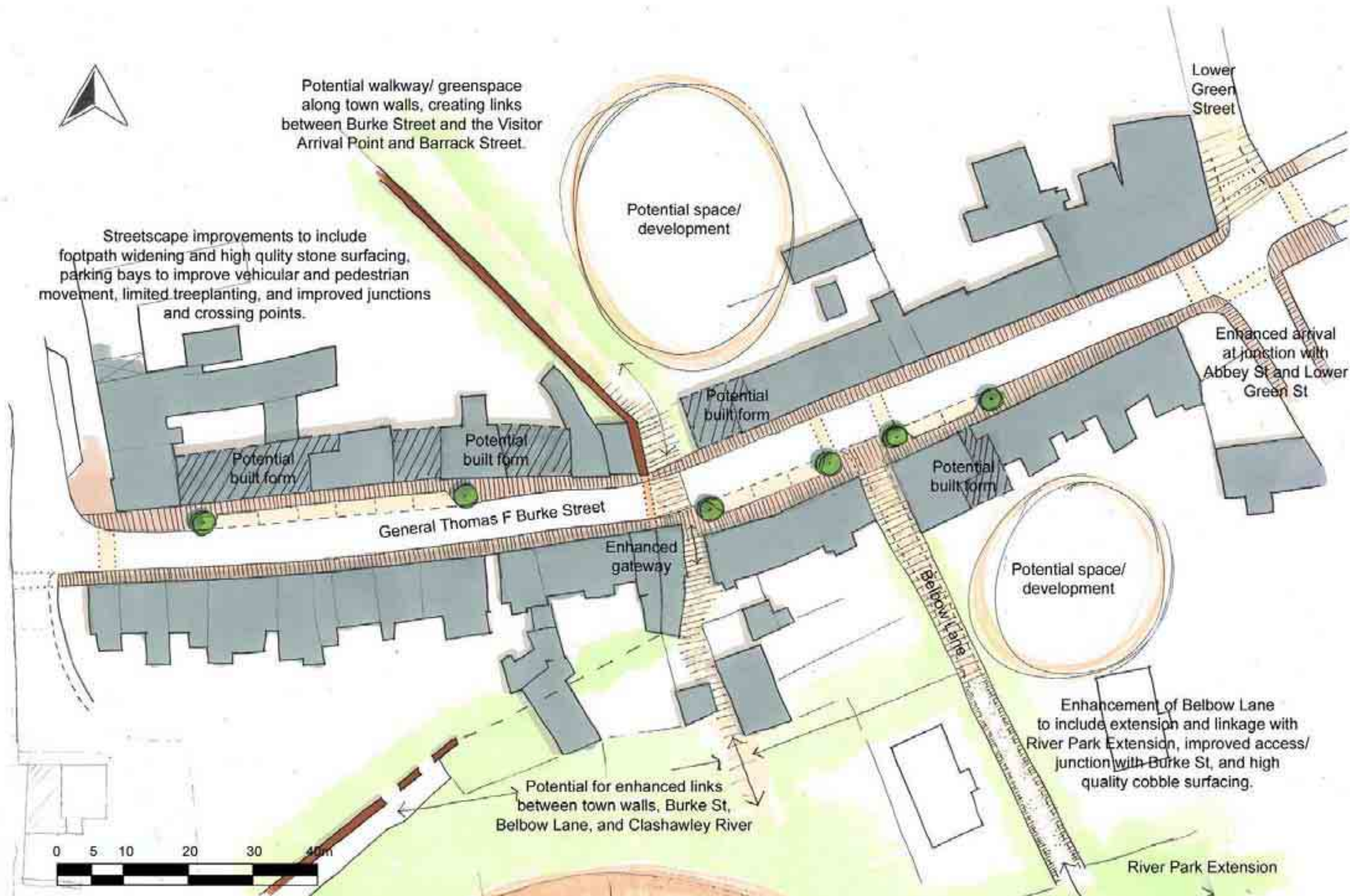
Expansive Road Space



Weigh Bridge



Market Square



Potential walkway/ greenspace along town walls, creating links between Burke Street and the Visitor Arrival Point and Barrack Street.

Streetscape improvements to include footpath widening and high quality stone surfacing, parking bays to improve vehicular and pedestrian movement, limited treeplanting, and improved junctions and crossing points.

Potential space/ development

Lower Green Street

Enhanced arrival at junction with Abbey St and Lower Green St

Potential built form

Potential built form

Potential built form

Potential built form

General Thomas F Burke Street

Enhanced gateway

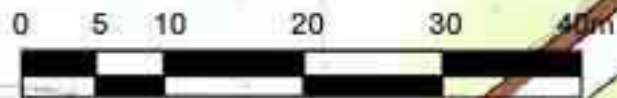
Potential space/ development

Belbow Lane

Enhancement of Belbow Lane to include extension and linkage with River Park Extension, improved access/ junction with Burke St, and high quality cobble surfacing.

Potential for enhanced links between town walls, Burke St, Belbow Lane, and Clashawley River

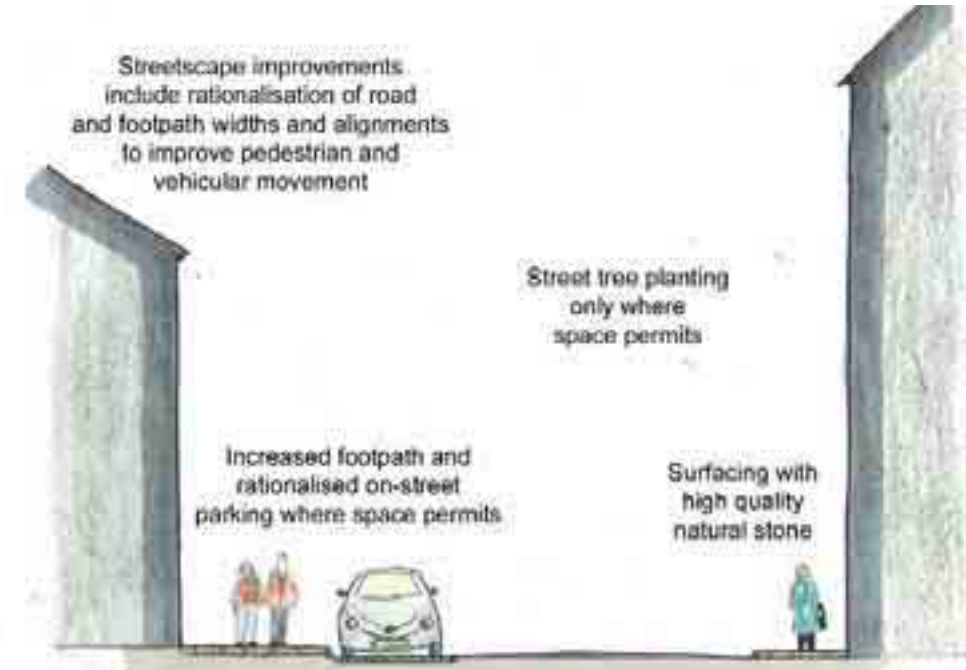
River Park Extension



Burke Street Streetscape Sketch Plan



Burke Street c.1900s



Main Street - Typical Section - looking west 1:100@A3



Burke Street

General Thomas F Burke Street

As well as being particularly attractive, Burke Street plays an important role as a commercial area outside of main street as well as doubling up as an approach to the historic town. Burke Street is the site where one of the town's historic gates was located.

Burke Street needs to be enhanced for the street to cope with modern traffic movements and maintain its commercial / retail role for the town. There is also a need for the derelict and vacant buildings and land to be filled with development along Burke Street.

It is proposed that where possible footpath widths are widened to improve pedestrian movement along the street. This will improve the public space of Burke Street and enhance opportunities for retail and leisure activities. Traffic management in the form of allocated on-street parking bays and rationalised road widths should

improve traffic flow whilst creating a more pedestrian orientated environment. It is proposed that Burke Street's footpaths are surfaced with high quality stone, given its importance within the historic core of the town. Parking bays, junctions, and crossing points will be surfaced using stone cobbles and setts. There are limited opportunities for street tree planting on Burke Street, given its narrow width.

Belbow Lane is a medieval laneway just off Burke Street. This lane should be fully utilised as an important link to the river park extension. This lane should be surfaced as a flush shared surface with natural stone cobbles to facilitate both vehicular and pedestrian movement.

A key component of Burke Street is its link with the town walls and the site of its historic gateway. This aspect of Burke Street needs to be further developed. There is potential to further celebrate this

historic gateway site through appropriate interpretative signage, feature lighting and surfacing materials, as discussed in the Gateway Masterplans Initiative. There is an opportunity to create access along the town walls north of Burke Street as far as Barrack Street. This would provide an important link of the proposed walkway circuit around the entire walled town.

It is also proposed that the junction of Burke Street, Abbey Street and lower Green Street is improved to act as a secondary gateway and welcome point as well as improving pedestrian and vehicular movement.



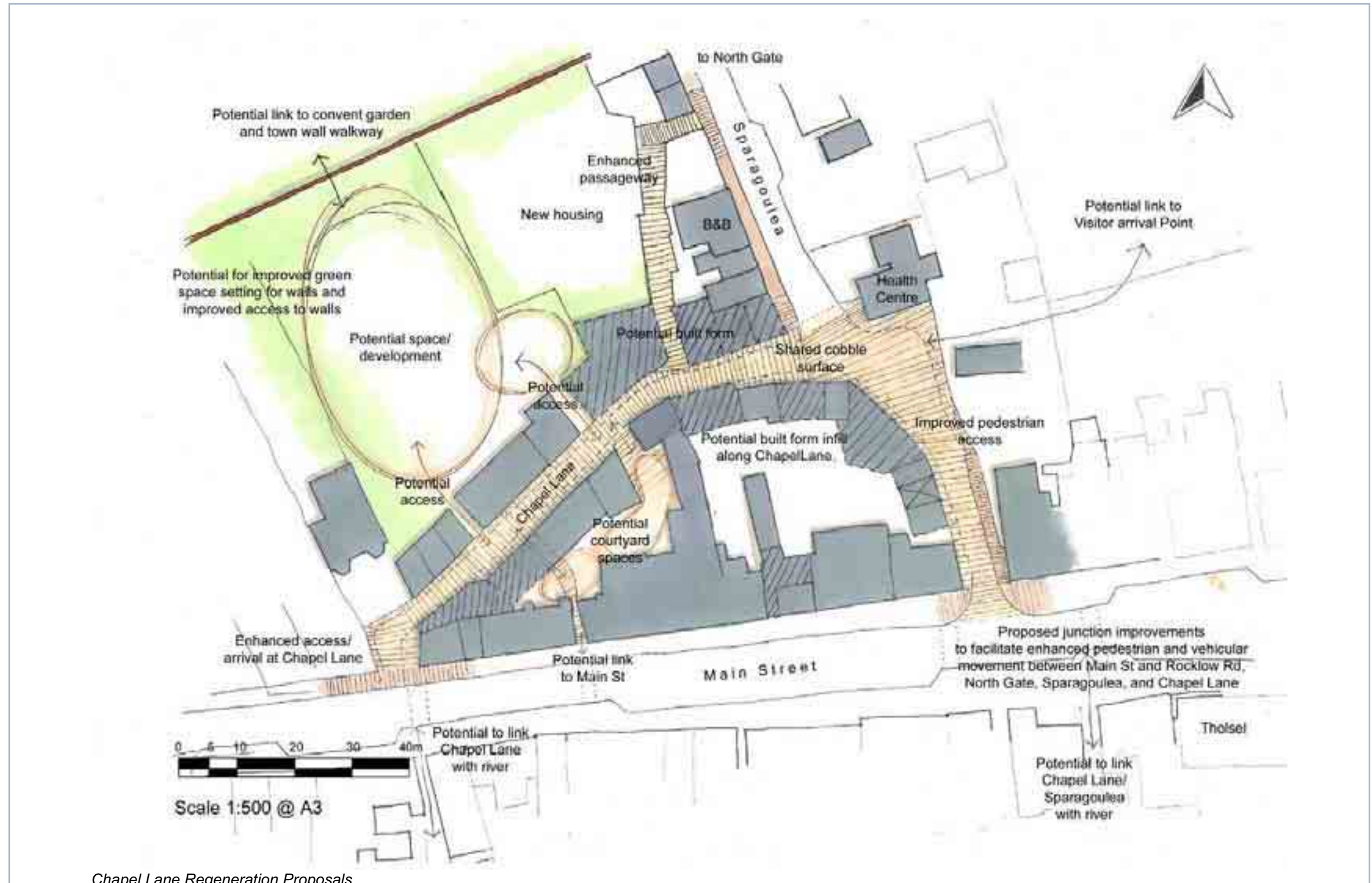
7.7 Chapel Lane Regeneration

Chapel Lane is a significant historic asset in Fethard as it is a rare example of a medieval back street and is also thought to mark the 13th century boundary of the town.

There is great potential to develop and market Chapel Lane as a unique quarter within Fethard's historic walled town. This area would be an ideal location for craft workshops, niche retail units, and café/ restaurants. There is also potential for business owners on Main Street, to utilise this prime asset on their back door step by establishing a secondary frontage at the rear of their properties.

Whilst infill development would be beneficial in reinforcing the historic build form and framing the streetscape it is crucial to the areas success that the scale and style of such development is sensitive to its historic context and character. There is scope for development of the land behind Chapel Lane provided that it provides a suitable buffer to maintain the walls setting, and where possible provides potential access to the walls.

To facilitate the development of Chapel Lane it is proposed to upgrade the streetscape of the lane, Sparagoulea, and the connecting passageway. Streetscape improvements will include the upgrading of the paving in the area to a high quality natural stone cobble finish to reflect and enhance its historic setting. It is proposed that Chapel lane and the adjoining passageway will be pedestrian orientated with restricted



Chapel Lane Regeneration Proposals

access for vehicles. Sparagoulea will be a mix of shared surfacing, where space is limited, and footpath access. This street is a key setting for the Northgate gateway and provides access and linkage to the walls and a potential visitor arrival point proposed for the GAA/ Cattle Mart area.

There is potential for the creation of private and semi-private courtyard schemes as part of the Chapel Lane area. These could provide "people spaces" and entice visitors to stay longer in the area. The prime example of how these spaces could be used is by businesses such as pubs, cafes, and restaurants. Improvements to building frontages should be encouraged, as this would improve the character of the existing built fabric as well as the area as a whole.



View of Chapel Lane as a Tourist Destination



Improved access within and to the Chapel lane area is an important in achieving its potential. The junction of Chapel Lane and Main Street and the junction of Sparagoulea and Main Street are key nodal points and their enhancement is important in improving access to Chapel lane for pedestrians as well as raising awareness of the area as a destination and a throughway. These nodal points on Main Street will also provide potentially important links to passageways off Main Street that would provide access to the River Park and southern section of the walls.

Interpretation and orientation, as set out in the Interpretation Strategy, will be equally important in establishing Chapel Lane as a destination for businesses, shoppers, and visitors. It is important that visitors are made aware of Chapel Lane at the key arrival points, know how to get there, and are adequately entertained and informed about the history of the area in order to get the best experience from a visit there.

Streetscape improvements to the area will also include amenity and feature lighting, as discussed in the Lighting Strategy, to create an enjoyable and safe night time environment. Appropriate lighting has the potential of promoting Chapel lane as a night time destination for visitors and local people.



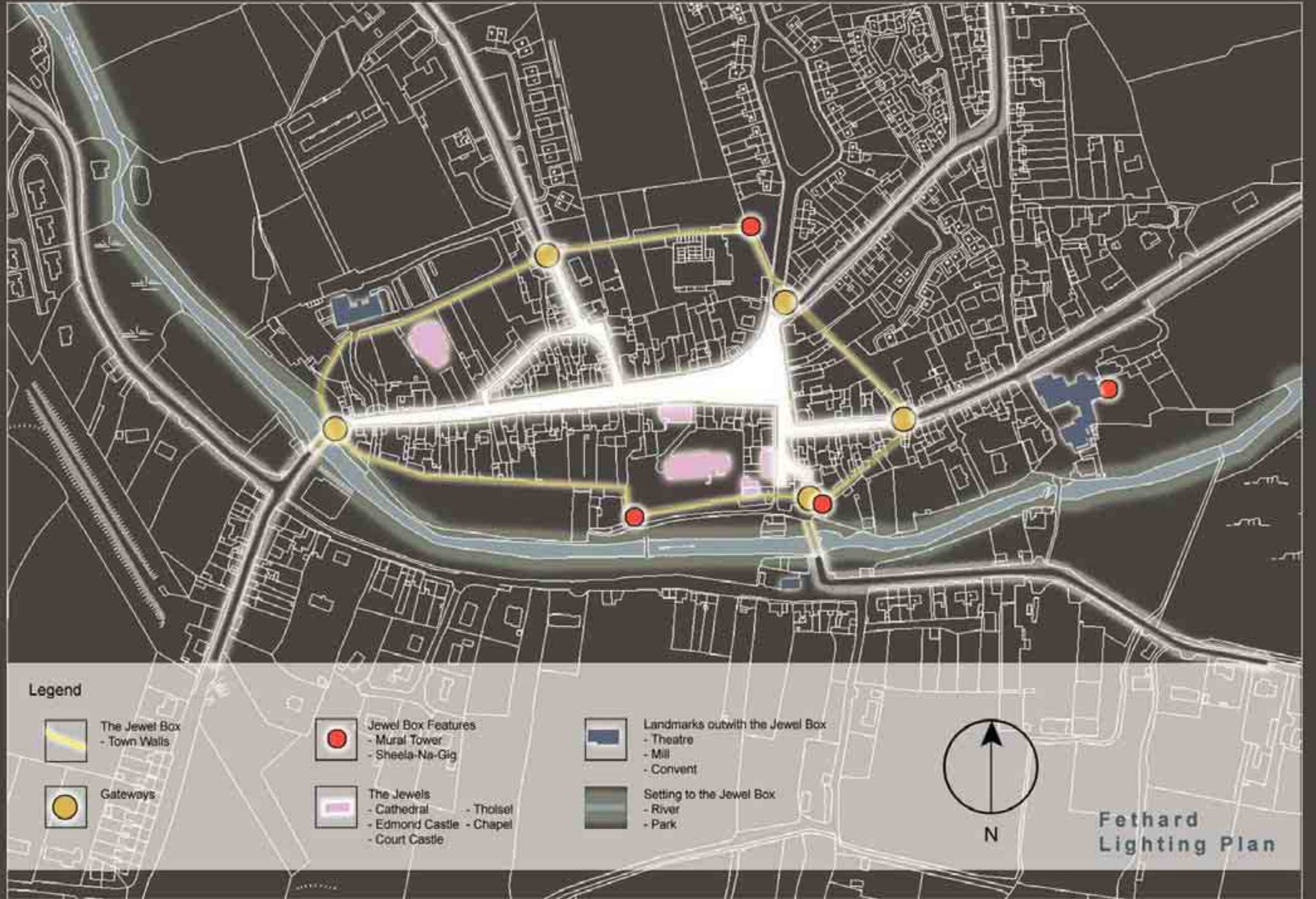
Chapel Lane Today



Detail of Chapel Lane



Surfacing





Current Lighting Provision



7.8 Lighting Strategy for Fethard

The quality of Fethard's night time environment is an essential element of the public realm. Good lighting contributes directly to the safety and the perceived safety of public spaces. It can also be used to great effect in enhancing the role of landmark buildings and monuments. Improving Fethard's lighting can enable commercial and tourism activity to be extended beyond its core times of the day and year. For example, well lit shopping areas can help to encourage retail activity later on in the evening and on dark winter afternoons. Likewise, well lit historic features can encourage tourists to explore the town at night and increase its appeal during the less traditional tourism months of winter. The use of light has been put to spectacular effect in many of France's historic towns, with *Son et Lumière* shows that draw large crowds to watch the towns come alive at night.

It is proposed that a Lighting Strategy be commissioned for Fethard as part of delivering wider public realm improvements. Amenity lighting of the town should be reviewed to ensure that all areas are sufficiently lit and safe places in which to walk at night. The use of 'white light' should be considered in key locations, as enables clearer definition of features and colours than the yellow sodium lights commonly used.

Feature lighting should be of a high quality, with substantial scope to make Fethard a dramatic and atmospheric place at night. The adjacent plan demonstrates a Jewel Box concept for the lighting of Fethard. This reinforces the role of the walls containing within many landmarks of cultural and historical importance. The walls would be sensitively lit to extenuate textures and features along their length. Key landmarks within the town, such as the Tholsel and Holy Trinity Church would be lit in white light to create a strong visual presence, again extenuating their features and architectural detailing. Outside of the walls, feature lighting of the Abbey, the River and potentially the Convent, would be subdued and atmospheric to deliberately contrast with those contained within the walls.



Lighting of Historic Features

The protection and improvement of overall streetscape and street frontages of the town is required and is supported in the LAP through painting initiatives, retention of historic features of properties (i.e. sash windows), street furniture, lighting, etc. Relevant policies include (policy Env.10) and conservation objective C6 where it is *Councils policy to devise a colour scheme in conjunction with local development and business groups in order to improve the visual appearance of buildings within the ACA.*

The Council also states that advertising signage, support structures and ancillary equipment which are not authorised by licence, and detract from the visual character of the town, will be required to be removed (Policy TOWN. 2). The Council states that it will take enforcement action where necessary to achieve compliance (*policy TC2*) as well as meeting *objective A1*, which will enable the Council to 'seek the removal of unsightly elements at historically sensitive locations within the town, such as inappropriate advertising, poles and wirescapes'.



Prominent Town Centre Frontage



7.10 Frontage Programme

Whilst improvements to Fethard's streetscapes are an important component of the public realm plan so too are improvements to the town's existing built form. As the public realm encompasses both buildings and spaces in between them, in Fethard's case, streets, laneways and passages, it is important that these elements are considered collectively.

Fethard's buildings play a key role in the town's character and atmosphere. As such it is essential that Fethard's building frontages are preserved and enhanced to a high quality in order to maintain the town's character and improve visitor and shopping experience.

It is proposed that a programme of building frontage improvements be developed for the two primary streets of the walled town: Main Street and Burke Street. This would involve the establishment of a palette of appropriate building finishes, fittings and colours relevant to the character and history of the town. In addition to residential properties, shop fronts should also be considered in relation to their quality and appropriateness of material, signage and lighting.

This palette would be led by architects only through a collaborative exercise with local businesses and community members. Its application should be responsive to the town and ensure that unique features and characteristics are not lost in the process. Financial mechanisms should also be put in place to assist owners with retrospective works to their properties.

7.11 Historic Features

Fethard's wealth, or "treasure trove" of historic buildings and structures is key to its prospect as a tourism destination. As such, conserving and enhancing them where possible will be a central component of achieving the vision for Fethard.

Conservation of individual historic properties is fundamentally important process. In some cases this has or in the process of being carried out. However, other properties identified, particularly in relation to the wall, need conservation works to be carried out a matter of urgency. This process may require the assistance of the public sector in expertise and financial support.

Whilst most significant features are visually prominent, few of them are currently open to the public. In many cases this is not possible, due to private ownership. However, a detailed analysis is required to ascertain opportunities for key building interiors in the town being made accessible to tourists in one form or another. In some cases full access may be achievable; whilst in other restricted public access through uses such as accommodation or catering may be more appropriate.

It is proposed that more detailed work is required to ascertain the issues relating to specific properties in relation to their condition, use and management. However the following section gives an initial overview on some key points.

Holy Trinity Church of Ireland



Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church



Edmonds Castle



Court Castle



Abymill
Madam's Bridge and
Watergate Bridges
Edmond's Castle
Fethard Folk Farm and
Transport Museum
Holy Trinity Churches
Convent
Tholsel / Town Hall
Round Turret
Court Castle
Augustinian Abbey
Currikeen Castle
Walled Garden

Holy Trinity Church of Ireland - This is one of the largest medieval parish churches in Ireland with a 13th Century nave and a unique 15th century crenellated tower that is a key landmark in the Fethard skyline. This is an iconic asset to the town and will be a great aid in selling the town as a tourist destination. However, there is a need to improve access to the church and church grounds so as to fully utilise this as a tourist attraction. There is potential to incorporate tours of the church's fine medieval interior as part of guided tours etc. Opportunities for a relationship with the functioning of the Tholsel / Town Hall should also be explored.

Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church - Built in 1818, the towns Catholic church in an important part of Fethard's architectural heritage, as well as its religious and community life. The formal setting of this building should be accentuated with the use of symmetrical planting of appropriate species.

Edmond's Castle - This 15th century castle at Watergate is under private ownership, however its conservation and restoration are important and all measures available should be taken to facilitate that. There is potential for a range of different uses for this castle, namely that of a bed and breakfast or restaurant.

Court Castle, also under private ownership, is in need of substantial repair work. Priority for this structure should be its conservation and restoration. It has potential to be utilised as a bed and breakfast or hotel possibly related to the Court Inn.



Round Turret

Round turret at the northeast corner of the wall is the only tower of its kind in the town walls, and forms an important landmark in the town. The setting for this turret should be improved by increasing the visibility of this structure. Proposed access to the tower would provide a great attraction for the visitors who would benefit from its viewpoint over the town. Feature lighting and interpretation would help further celebrate this structure. Refer to Conservation and Management Plan.

Sheela-na-gig carvings at Watergate and the Abbey are examples of a quasi-erotic figures found in Ireland mainly in the 15th and 16th centuries. Although it is unlikely that these carvings are in their original locations, they are a great asset to the town as they are of national importance. These historic artefacts are important visitor attractions and as such priority should be given to their preservation. The Sheela's, as they are known locally, would benefit from appropriate feature lighting, orientation and signage to indicate their location, and improved access to them. These measures would help further celebrate the figures and improve visitor awareness of them.



Sheela-na-gig

Augustinian Abbey was founded in 1306 and is still used as an Augustinian church today. It is an important historic building and site, and is a key attraction in the town. Further implementation for example in the form of guided tours would help tell some of the long history and give visitors a deeper insight into the Abbey.

Currikeen Castle at Northgate provides an opportunity for increased access to the walls and a chance of using this structure as a viewpoint over the town. The conservation and management plan for the walls will document the condition of this structure and the work required for its conservation and potential for restoration. In the interim the castle would benefit from improved interpretation and feature lighting.



Augustinian Abbey

Convent and Private Walled Garden to the north of the town walls may be one of the younger historic features in the Fethard, however this building and its garden have a potential to be made more accessible to visitors.

Madam's Bridge and Watergate Bridges are discussed as part of the Gateway masterplans.



Convent and Private Walled Garden

Abymill, next to the Abbey, was built in 1791 as a corn mill and restored in the 1980's. The mill today is home to the Abymill Theatre and a performing arts and community space. This historic feature is a prime example and success story of how many of Fethard's other historic features can be utilised in the future. The mill would benefit from improved accessibility for the mobility impaired, as well as improved interpretation of its 'story'.



Abymill

Fethard Folk Farm and Transport Museum located on the outskirts of the town on the Cashel Road. There is potential to further develop this into an improved visitor facility, celebrating the transport history of the region, integrated with the wider towns visitor attractions. The retained railway station and associated buildings have scope to play a more central role in the tourist offer of the town.



7.12 New Tourism Gateway

Should Fethard be in a position to welcome increased numbers of visitors, it will be required to accommodate their arrival in a convenient and unobtrusive manner. The vast majority of visitors currently arrive in Fethard by private car or coach; a trend that is likely to continue in the absence of plans to grow public transport provision in the area.

It is therefore proposed that a new 'tourism' gateway to Fethard is developed to accommodate the arrival of visitors effectively. A suitable site for such a facility is required to be found. It must be of sufficient size to accommodate car and coach parking and be within easy walking distance of the towns attractions, including the Tholsel / Town Hall as the likely venue of central interpretation facilities.

At the time of writing, the area of central Fethard most suitable for such development is that of the Cattle Mart and / or southern sections of the GAA grounds. Advantages of this area are its central location, with scope for new pedestrian connections to the market square, as well as an opportunity to improve the setting and access to substantial lengths of the town wall.

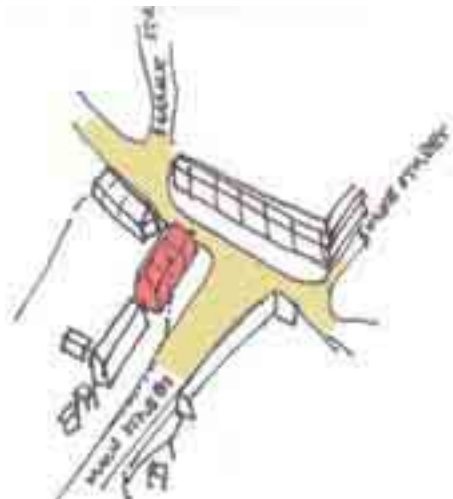
Through further consultation, a new tourism gateway in this location could be brought forward as part of an overall development proposal containing other uses, such as potential residential property and new sports facilities. An existing blocked archway through the wall could possibly be re-opened to enable pedestrian movement through the wall and flexibility in the use of the two parking areas. In addition to accommodating visitor parking, scope exists for these spaces to provide surplus parking for the GAA, for both churches and an occasional venue for special outdoor events.

Alternative but less advantageous locations could possibly exist on greenfield sites to the south or east, or further out of town linked to a 'park and ride' system.

Potential exists as a long term objective to restore the built form of the Market Square in this area. At present the Garda Station and adjacent housing poorly define the North East corner of the square. Consideration should be given to emulating the form of the barrack building that once stood in this location. Potential exists for this to a good location for a new hotel.



Sketch of Potential Tourism Gateway



Cattle Mart Site



GAA Buildings against town wall



Town Hall



7.13 Tholsel / Town Hall

The Tholsel or Town Hall is a key cultural and historic landmark in the town, was built in 1608 and is reported to be one of the oldest public buildings still in use in Ireland. The building was erected shortly after the 1607 Royal Charter bestowed on the town by King James. Its construction was largely funded by the Everard family, and the family coat of arms is set in the façade.

A feasibility study is underway for this important building. It is clear that the Tholsel still has an important role to play in the town as the purpose it was constructed for all those years ago. There is significant potential to utilise this building as a focal point for tourism and the community. Its potential as a first class visitor facility should be explored in detailed, with a view to it being the “first port of call” for visitors to the town.

7.14 Interpretation & Orientation Strategy

Strategic Aims

To enhance the visitor experience by encouraging tourists to stay longer and spend more

To build on, give coherence to and promote the town's many natural and human assets

To orientate and guide visitors and give them an appreciation of Fethard, past and present

To evoke a unique sense of pride among the local community.

Links to the public realm

Interpretation is integral to the public realm. It allows visitors to understand, appreciate and enjoy the town – its layout, history, people, buildings, natural assets and culture.

In conjunction with orientation signing and maps, interpretation helps visitors to experience the town's special places whether the view of Holy Trinity and the walls from the riverside or the Convent garden. It is these special places that people remember as if they had discovered them for themselves. They photograph them and tell their friends.

Interpretation helps to people the long-gone past and to make individual buildings come alive. Who patrolled the walls and why? Who were the Everards and what mark did they make on the town? It also gives visitors a sense of sharing the life of a community today, whether through the stories of the town geese, the stud farms or Cashel cheese.

Telling the town's story is much more than interpretation panels which should be used sparingly to avoid increasing street clutter. Elements of the story can be incorporated within overall public realm initiatives – the use of heraldry in gateway signs, public art, the reinstatement of the names of old lanes and passages, the opening up

of views and gardens, the restoration of Chapel Lane to give visitors a glimpse of a living past and the marking out of the site of vanished gates or stretches of wall through landscaping.

Interpretation is also delivered through 'software' ranging from the promotional literature and increasingly websites that influence the decision to visit, through guided and self-guided walks delivered by a range of media from 'heritage trail' leaflets to podcasts, events and festivals that feature aspects of town life.

Interpretation also feeds into wider tourism development and promotion. What product is Fethard presenting and how is this achieved, how does it complement the product being offered elsewhere in the region and how does it match visitor aspirations in terms of shopping, accommodation, eating and leisure facilities? The development of detailed storylines for interpretation in Fethard should be undertaken in consultation with local tourism providers from TIC staff to members of the Historical Society.

The adjacent plan outlines the routes of potential interpretative walks through Fethard. These are planned to pass by the main features of interest within the town. Further consultation and agreement with landowners would be necessary before these routes can be finalised.



Jimmy Ryan's House



Jimmy Ryan's Geese





Fair Day, c.1900s



Proposed Interpretative Walks

FETHARD

INTERPRETATIVE STRATEGY

-  Key Pedestrian Routes to Consider
-  Possible Routes to Extend



Orientation Board on Derry's Walls



Interpretation Boards in Derry



Children's Interpretation



Existing Interpretation

What makes for effective interpretation?

Interpretation is the end point in a visitor journey that starts with the decision to visit. Visitors need the reassurance of directional signing to and at designated car parks and of maps and orientation signs to guide them to the high points of their visit – the walls, the church and the medieval core of the town.

Thematic storylines underpin interpretation whether delivered within attractions, on the streets or in support 'software' so that visitors start to put together for themselves the complex jigsaw of the past and make the connections that present the town as a coherent whole.

Effective interpretation starts with what the visitor sees on the ground and draws on their own experience, curiosity and knowledge rather than on detailed history which is best conveyed through town histories and websites. It answers the basic question – how has this town come to look like it does today, suggesting, for example, that the story of the railway is as relevant as medieval charters.

Interpretation even within a town embraces a much wider canvas than history – views, landscape settings, wildlife, curiosities such as the town geese and the Sheelana-gigs, local folklore, reminiscences and town characters like Jimmy Ryan. Fethard is a living, working town not a museum.

Interpretation should be seen only if you want to see it. At key arrival points visitors are given pointers as to what to look for. Interpretation panels should be accessible, engaging and light on words, using images and illustrations to reinforce content and stimulate the imagination.

Fethard's assets for interpretation

- One of the best town walls in Ireland
- A real sense of a medieval town - gates, walls, churches, layout with lanes and alleys to discover
- Compactness which makes Fethard easy to explore on foot
- A green town of hidden gardens with strong visual links between town and countryside that invite visitors to explore further – riverside and woodland walks
- A significant number of unexpected corners, special places and interesting buildings

Suggested thematic approach

To present Fethard as a living medieval town with a strong sense, not only of past, but of the people the place and its future.

Possible storyline themes include:

- Walled town
- Medieval new town
- Market town over many centuries
- Garrison town
- Green town

Suggested interpretative initiatives

These are separate to physical enhancements to the public realm covered in separate sections of this report

- Develop the walls as the key attraction, one of the top three walled towns in Ireland, along with Athenry and Derry. The walls provide a coherent way of linking together smaller sights and a backdrop for medieval fairs, son et lumières, cultural events and pageants. The line of the walls has the potential to create a new way of exploring the town
- Present the town as a tourist destination and experience in itself. This has wider implication for tourism product development and marketing
- Create stronger links between the town and its countryside by opening up vistas of gardens within the walls and developing and promoting walking and cycle routes such as the riverside and the former railway line. It is the interplay of townscape and landscape that makes Fethard a special place
- Develop orientation and introduction boards at key visitor car parks and in the main street, replacing the existing concrete interpretation plinth with a 'welcome' board that is more contemporary in style and content
- Enhance the existing town trail to take in new features such as the Convent garden
- Adopt Fethard's existing Medieval Town Trail interpretation plaques as the model both in terms of design and content for any additional plaques
- Use discreet physical markers, at key decision points to guide people round the trail avoiding reliance on printed material
- Update the excellent town guide produced by the Historical Society to introduce more people orientated stories and make use of the photographic collection of Fethard in the 1900s
- Develop a self-guided audio tour round the town centre to add the missing element of people to the past
- Create a children's natural history trail along the riverside with walking and cycling links to the surrounding woodlands and Slievenamon
- Investigate the feasibility of opening a local visitor centre and café at the Tholsel



River Park with hills beyond

7.15 Rural Strategic Linkages Project

Fethard is located within an attractive rural setting and opportunities exist for the town to increase and improve recreational access to these areas for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. A detailed study should be commenced, with the identification of existing rights of way forming the foundation on which an integrated network of routes is established. Key features of the surrounding countryside, such as the Clashawley River, Slievenamon, mature woodland and archaeological sites should be prioritised as places of interest, subject to access agreements with landowners. Pathways should be well designed to allow for a combination of users, including pedestrians, cyclists and where suitable, horse riding.

Opportunities for connections at regional level should also actively explored in partnership with other towns and the county council. Scope exists for Fethard to be placed on a regional and even national network of routes, thus bringing added visitor potential.

The Public Realm Plan supports the Council policies "Policy H8. Taking cognisance of the protected views southward from the town wall, ref. No. V087, Appendix 6 of the County Development Plan 2003, any proposed development on lands at Jesuit's Walk (east end)No negative impact on the protected views from the town wall will be permitted." and 'policy H3. Resist pressure for new housing on amenity and agricultural land to the south of the town designated as important to the views from the Town Wall'.



Main Street, c. 1900s

7.16 Equestrian Visitor Centre

Fethard and its environs are renowned for the tradition of horse rearing and riding, with world famous stud farms such as Coolmore in close proximity. However, visitors to the historic town currently have little opportunity to learn about this important part of the life in Fethard. It is therefore proposed that a suitable location be identified for an equestrian visitor centre. Crucially, this must be within easy walking distance of the towns other attractions, possibly related to the extended river walkway. This facility need not be substantial in size, but of sufficient quality to attract and maintain visitor numbers, as well as establish a reputation of quality fitting to that of the area. Visitors could view an interactive exhibition of the equine history of the area, take part in workshops and demonstrations, as well go for short rides within the local area. Any associated provision of café or shop facilities should be kept to a limited scale so to avoid competition with premises located centrally within the town.



Fox Hunting
61



Local Horse Race



River Park

8 DELIVERING THE VISION

8.1 Delivery Framework

This section identifies some of the main players and their various roles in delivering and managing the existing and future public realm of Fethard. It sets out the existing functions of the various parties involved in the delivery and management of the public realm. It also acts as a starting point in taking the various specific initiatives forward for delivery, outlining some of the various existing funding mechanisms available to the town and individuals in protecting, preserving and developing the historic town of Fethard and its public realm.

It is important that the Public Realm Plan is deliverable and the main players and stakeholders responsible for its delivery are identified and agree to the Actions and specific initiatives set in the Plan. A number of stakeholders have and will continue to have a role in the delivery, management and maintenance of the public realm. These include; *South Tipperary County Council, The Heritage Council and The Irish Walled Town Network, South Tipperary County Development Board, South Tipperary County Enterprise Board, The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Fáilte Ireland, the incoming South Tipperary Local Development Agency* which is being established with the support of the *Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Church of Ireland, Community Council, Historic Society, sports groups in the town including the GAA, private landowners, and the wider community and interest groups.* A firm commitment from the variety of stakeholders towards the implementation of the Public Realm Plan aims, objectives and recommendations will be vital to the success of the Plan.

It is proposed that the various parties identified above exchange, as appropriate, memorandums of understanding with regard to their respective roles, ensuring that each has the capacity to fulfil the objectives of the Plan and work in a collaborative process in leveraging funding from the various sources available and therefore not competing against each other. The Agencies should seek, through their business plans, to align where possible and having regard for national accountability, their budgets in regard to underpinning the development of the Town generally. The County Development Board could provide the necessary external monitoring necessary to ensure the Plans successful implementation in the context of re-aligned budgets.

South Tipperary County Council is the primary everyday decision-maker regarding the future development of the town. The *Fethard Local Area Plan 2005* is the existing development management tool to guide development in the Town. It is recommended that the objectives and actions of the Public Realm Plan are included as a variation to the LAP. These aims and objectives are generally in line with the existing Development Plan, but require the LAP to go further. Ensuring and enforcing high quality design and maintenance of existing and future elements of Fethard and its public realm should be a central feature to the implementation of the LAP. The appropriate development of the 'opportunity sites' in the LAP is further supported and the Council should ensure that all development, no matter how insignificant, can contribute, and is seen to contribute, to the overall historical nature of the town's public realm. While the policies in the LAP are succinct it is the application of those policies which are

key to achieving a built environment that provides balance between the heritage of the town and its central role in the local area to the economic and social well-being of the community.

The use of pre-planning meetings with the County Council is one method of ensuring cognisance is taken of existing and recommended policies and standards relating to the various aspects of developing and designing specific sites in the town. The creation of a sustainable, high quality and integrated public realm should be a consideration at all times when reviewing planning applications. In that regard therefore, it is important that the Council actively engage with potential developers to ensure they understand the expectations of the Council as set out in the LAP and the Public Realm Plan.

The Council has a number of enforcement powers which should be used when required to maintain and control developments. The public also has rights in this regard and can highlight to the Council where they believe enforcement is required.

It is recommended that the Council actively engages in property portfolio management in regard to opportunity sites that exist within the town that can improve the current public realm in line with the recommendations of this Plan.

It is essential that management standards and guidelines are adhered to in the development and delivery of the specific initiatives. It may be necessary for the Council to consider existing maintenance regimes being delivered in the town and may need to adjust such services if the Public Realm Plan is to sustain a long term impact on the Town. There is

little point in investing significant sums in the physical characteristics of the Town if "softer" issues such as anti-social behaviour, litter and graffiti are not subjected to on-going management and, re-assessment in order to meet the expected standards of a Town seeking to build on its central role in Irish tourism and heritage. Equally the rigorous application of development controls in line with the national planning guidelines may be necessary if the historic core of the Town is to attract investors and permanent populations into the core area.

It is essential that existing public realm maintenance arrangements in the Town are continued and improved, where necessary, to support the development of the historic town. South Tipperary County Council should continue to take responsibility for the existing maintenance regime i.e. street sweeping, park maintenance and litter control etc and support the implementing a sufficient long-term financial support to provide for future maintenance costs associated.

Finally, it is essential that key individuals are 'brought on board' to achieve the vision set out in the Public Realm Plan. The elected members of South Tipperary County Council should be encouraged to fully endorse the Public Realm Plan. Consideration should be given to the appointment of an individual officer to oversee delivery and project management of the works. Efforts should also be made to appoint a high profile, project champion who can promote the Plan at a local, regional and national level as required.

8.2 Funding

National Development Plan 2007-2013

The National Development Plan – *Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All* (NDP) is the government's new seven year investment plan. The strategic direction for the Plan was set in the National Spatial Strategy. The NDP proposes to invest some €184 billion in Ireland's economic and social infrastructure, the enterprise, science and agriculture sectors, education, training and skills base, and environmental services. The new plan will be almost completely funded by domestic sources, the vast bulk of it by the Central Exchequer. A total of €800m is to be made available to tourism development in Ireland under the National Development Plan.

Investment in the public realm is recognised in the NDP as 'a key element of the overall urban fabric, and an important contributor to visual amenity, safety and a sense of place.' (p.228 NDP). Investment in urban renewal under the new NDP will have a strategic and highly visible impact, reinforcing the sense of place, identity and attractiveness of each location concerned. This is a feature of the recommendations set out in the Public Realm Plan for Fethard.

Irish Walled Town Network

The Irish Walled Town Network (IWTN) was established by The Heritage Council in April 2005. The network serves to unite and co-ordinate the strategic efforts of local authorities involved in the management and conservation of historic walled towns in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The IWTN, through the Heritage Council, provides a direct funding mechanism to its members. The IWTN and the official committee in Fethard has the capacity to support the

implementation of the strategic (including capital works) and specific initiatives, outlined in the public realm plan. The Fethard Conservation and Management Plan of the Walls is also supported for future funding and these two documents have the augmented capacity to preserve and promote Fethard's historic town Walls and their setting, in accordance with the *IWTN's 3 Year Action Plan*.

The IWTN is formally linked to the International Walled Towns Friendship Circle (WTFC), the international association for the sustainable development of walled towns, walled cities and fortified historic towns. It is recognised that ongoing communication with the IWTN will allow a flow of knowledge and information sharing between the town and other walled towns, and the various funding resources available to walled towns in any given year. It is also an important resource in establishing any lessons learned during the implementation of similar projects, from both at home and abroad.

Fáilte Ireland Product Development Strategy 2007 – 2013

Fáilte Ireland is working towards the implementation of its Product Development Strategy and has received €137million under the NDP tourism product development sub-programme to do so. Funding will be provided for a number of key elements of the tourism product over the Plan period. 'At the outset a major emphasis will be placed on supporting local authorities and other key infrastructure providers to develop a set of facilities for tourists. While the Infrastructure sub-programme will continue over the lifetime of the Plan, in 2008 and later years the focus will move

to reinvestment in Visitor Attractions and the expansion of various commercial Visitor Activities' which will have a direct benefit for the Town. This is dependant on meeting the objectives/ requirements of Fáilte Ireland in order to leverage funding from this and other sources.

Development Contributions

The South Tipperary County Council Development Contributions Scheme 2004-2009, provided under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, is funded by financial contributions from private developers. The funds generated by the Scheme are put towards the capital expenditure required to facilitate the development and management of works including community related facilities in the County. This fund is a primary source of funding that could be called upon in order to implement various aspects of the Public Realm Plan. These works include; traffic management, footpaths, parking facilities, drainage, water services and open space provisions. The Council should consider the objectives of the Public Realm Plan when allocating funds under the existing Contributions Scheme. In addition, when the Scheme is put forward for review, the Council should ensure that provision is made for all the objectives of the Public Realm Plan with a view to releasing funds for all aspects of the Plan.

Community Fund

In addition the Council may consider it appropriate to consider the use of Section 109 of the Local Government Act, 2001, to put in place a Community Fund to underpin the development of facilities in the area.

Government Grants

Information regarding grants available from the South Tipperary County Council and the Heritage Council for built heritage improvements through the exchequer and the NDP should be made available to local landowners, in particular for those sites that are falling into disrepair. The Rural Development Programme is also another source of funding that should be researched by specific landowners.

Summary and Conclusion

It may be necessary to change the current policy context to ensure the implementation of the Public Realm Plan. Equally the Public Realm Plan needs to be realistic to ensure that its recommendations can be applied within the financial and other resources of the community and Council. In that regard the Plan is seeking to build on the current context with the objective of enabling the resourcing of actions recommended in the Plan being delivered within an appropriate time frame.

It is critical that that Heritage Council, IWTN, and South Tipperary County Council and its partners, plan for local investments logically. It is recognised that progress has been made in Fethard. There is need to build on this progress to date by targeting funding for the necessary research, management and physical upgrades relevant to the iconic attractions of the Town as set out in the Public Realm Plan. It is recommended that funding mechanisms such as those listed above are monitored over the long-term by the various stakeholders in order to achieve the maximum aid in developing the various projects and initiatives.

8.3 Delivery Plan

Specific Initiative	Key Stakeholders	Priority and Suggested Timeframe	Approximated Budget (€) (for guidance only)
1 Town Wall Walk implementation of circular wall route (beside and on walls), strengthening of existing linkages, definition of potential new linkages, (with conservation, lighting, interpretation)	Heritage Council of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, South Tipperary County Council, Irish Walled Town Network, Fethard Historical Society	Immediate 6 Months	1.6M
2 Walled Town Gateway Masterplans - pedestrian upgrade, gateway enhancement, potential new development, lighting, interpretation, rationalisation of infrastructure	South Tipperary County Council, Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government, Town Traders, Fethard Historical Society	Short 1 - 2 Years	Madams 600,000 Water 1M North 150,00 Pierce 500,000 Burke 80,000
3 Approach Roads and Pedestrian / Cycle Linkage - planting, lighting, gateway markers (art), orientation, upgrade of existing footways, establish new linkages, potential cycle paths	South Tipperary County Council, Fethard & Killusty Community Council, Tidy Towns Committee	Medium 2+ Years	Killenaule 1M Cashel 600,000 Kerry 1M Valley 1.3M Grove 800,000 Abbey 1.8M Jesuits 1M Rocklow 900,000
4 River Park Extension – extended provision of public park, good quality public realm, associated new development, river hydrology and maintenance	Teagasc, private investors, Heritage Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service (specifically regarding Moneypark NHA), Fishing interests, An Garda Síochana	Short 1 - 2 Years	5M
5 Streetscapes (Main Street, Burke Street, Chapel Lane, Passageways) – upgrade paving, street furniture, lighting, tree planting, artworks, events / use programming, management and maintenance	South Tipperary County Council, Fethard & Killusty Community Council, Tidy Towns Committee, Fáilte Ireland	Short 1 - 2 Years	Main 3.3M Burke 1M Chapel 560,000 Elbow Lane 140,000
6 Chapel Lane Regeneration – restoration of buildings for mixed use and visitor attraction	South Tipperary County Council	Immediate 6 Months	2.7M
7 Lighting Strategy - Amenity and Feature lighting	South Tipperary County Council	Short 1 - 2 Years	1M

8 Neighborhood Open Space Strategy – Identification of role of spaces, definition of style and character	South Tipperary County Council (planning, roads and parks department), Tidy Towns, Fethard & Killusty Community Council	Medium 2+ Years	1.4M
9 Frontage Programme – upgrade of shop fronts, signage and prominent architectural detailing	South Tipperary County Council, South Tipperary Integrated Development Organisation, Fethard Tidy Towns, South Tipperary Chamber of Commerce, Fethard & Killusty Community Council	Immediate 6 Months	300,000
10 Historic Features – conservation, identification of appropriate role / uses	South Tipperary County Council, ITWN, Heritage Council	Short 1 - 2 Years	n/a
11 New Tourism Gateway – coach and car park, orientation point, rationalisation of development land, associated development, potential pedestrian linkages, access to walls	South Tipperary County Council	Medium 2+ Years	2.7M (+associated private development)
12 Tholsel - conservation, development of 1st class visitor facility	South Tipperary County Council, Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland	Medium 2+ Years	4M
13 Interpretation and Orientation Strategy – enhanced signage, tours, events	South Tipperary County Council, Fethard & Killusty Community Council	Short 1 - 2 Years	470,000
14 Rural Strategic Linkages Project – River Corridor, Railway, Regional Networks	South Tipperary County Council, Iarnróid Eireann, Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government, Slí na Slainte, Teagasc, Irish Sports Council	Medium 2+ Years	n/a
15 Equestrian Visitor Centre – centre with exhibition facilities, café and stables	South Tipperary County Council	Medium 2+ Years	8M

Note: All budgets exclusive of fees and VAT



Detail of Wall

8.4 Action Plan

<i>Aim 1: Enhance the Fethard product and increase the spend per visitor head and average length of stay</i>	
Action 1	Agree an industry target of a percentage income growth per annum and monitor numbers growth.
Action 2	Co-ordinate all marketing activities in the county/region creating a walled Town Heritage activity package For example: a South Tipperary Walled Town Triangle through Cashel, Clonmel and Fethard.
Action 3	Establish merchandising strategy, targeting markets.
Action 4	Improve tourism information and communication between the towns.
Action 5	Co-ordinate better presentation and branding of Fethard.
Action 6	Measure standards in the industry and report annually.
Action 7	Target the accommodation sector and evening activity providers.
Action 8	Develop partnerships and Marketing Plans to achieve longer stays in Fethard.
footnote: These actions relate to: 'Promotion and Branding', 'Provision of accommodation and facilities' outlined in Chapter 6 of the Plan.	

<i>Aim 2: Target employment growth and improve the quality of employment</i>	
Action 9	Research the needs, market supply, entry points and identifying standards and conditions for employees which will attract Irish workers into the industry.
Action 10	Additional training resources are needed from Failte Ireland Training certification section. County Development Board to underpin local skills development in tourism.
Action 11	Training Authorities to adopt best environmental practice in their Training Programmes.
footnote: These actions relate to: 'Residential development and its benefits', 'private sector investment', 'equine related activities', and 'Retail development', outlined in Chapter 6 of the Plan	

<i>Aim 3: Improvement of the quality of the public realm and tourism product needs to be monitored in the long term</i>	
Action 12	Develop a set of indicators to monitor the direct tourism and economic benefits as a result of implementing the various aspects of the Public Realm. This should include Value for money considerations.
Action 13	Employ a public realm co-ordinator that has project management experience in architectural, archaeology and landscape architecture projects. This person can serve as a direct point of contact for stakeholders and individuals during the implementation of the various specific initiatives.
footnote: These actions relate to: 'Accessibility and traffic', 'Development of visually poor sites' and 'Frontage programme' outlined in Section Chapter 6 of the Plan.	

9 CONCLUSION

Fethard is one of 101 towns in Ireland earmarked by Failte Ireland for tourism development as part of the National Tourism Development Plan. Failte Ireland will play a role in marketing Fethard as a tourist destination, however the town must first create a “Product” for them to sell. This will include improvements to infrastructure and capital works.

Through the course developing a public realm for Fethard, it has become clearly apparent that the town has significant potential to capitalise upon its abundant historical features. An ambition to achieve greater status as a tourism destination would appear to be well placed and it is hoped that the Public Realm Plan can play a pivotal role within that process. However, successful delivery is dependant on a number of factors.

The urgent conservation of historic features must be accompanied by a positive process of development management that ensures further growth of the town continues in a sustainable manner complimentary to the historic walled town.

The combined and coordinated efforts of many stakeholders will be required to make this happen, requiring a partnership approach between private and public sector organisations.

And the special character and charm of Fethard must not be lost in a process of delivering new development projects. An eye must always be kept on what makes Fethard special, so that these factors can remain positively incorporated into a truly unique place to live, work and visit.



Town Walls in Winter © J. Kenny

A APPENDIX

Project Steering Group

Alison Harvey, The Heritage Council
Barry O'Reilly, NIAH
Peter Grant, Tidy Towns Committee
Tim Robinson, Fethard Historical Society
Terry Cunningham, Fethard Historical Society
Dorin Saurus, Fethard Historical Society
Joe Kenny, Fethard and Killusty Community Council
Damian O'Brien, Fáilte Ireland
Hugh O'Brien, South Tipperary County Council
Labhaoise McKenna, South Tipperary County Council
Jonathon Flood, South Tipperary County Council
Eoin Powell, South Tipperary County Council
Sonja Reidy, South Tipperary County Council

Consultees

The Project Steering Group and Consultant Team wish to thank all those from the town who participated in the consultation process.

B APPENDIX

Key Points from Community Consultation Event, held on the 30th October 2007:

- **Access to historical/cultural sites:** Access to Holy Trinity Church is currently restricted for security reasons. Vandalism is a problem. Repair of damage is a substantial cost to the Church. The Church would like to be in a position to allow greater access.
- **Heritage is about people, not just buildings!**
- **Traffic Congestion:** There is traffic congestion at various spots around town i.e. outside Kenny's Supermarket on Barrack Street and outside McCarthy's Hotel on Main Street. A one-way system was put forward as a possible solution. Traffic is having a negative impact on Northgate!
- **Bypass:** There are fears that a "By-pass" may by-pass Fethard! This may have negative impact on economic and social prosperity of the town.
- **What is the town lacking?**
- **Accommodation:** "you can't visit properly if you cannot stay!" Currently visitors are just driving through
- **Food:** There is currently a limited offering of places to eat in the town.
- **Public Play Area** with modern facilities for all ages, i.e. synthetic pitches for young adults, and other recreational facilities.
- **Public toilets**
- **Businesses-** need for further investment. There is a fear that archaeological factors may be adding to set up costs i.e. costs associated with developing historic buildings or land. Are there grants etc available to encourage investment in the town?
- **Arrival Experience:** Important for both visitors and investors alike. Improvement needed to the towns approach Roads. The Clonmel Road for example is a good approach until it nears the town and the approach is weakened. Need to improve the link (Visual and Physical) between Fethard and Slievenamon. Improvement needed to Jesuits Walk.
- **Housing:** Fethard is currently designated with unlimited housing zoning. There are fears that this could lead to many poor quality housing developments having a negative impact on the character of the town. St. Patrick's Place is seen as a good example of housing development in the town- overlooking green space where children can play.
- **Examples:** Can we provide examples of how development can be achieved through good design that will provide both social and economic development whilst enhancing the character of the town? New buildings do not necessarily need to be of historical/vernacular style in order to compliment the local character of the town- this can still be achieved with well designed modern buildings.
- **Future Development:** There is great scope for development that does not impinge on the character of the town. There is a need for balance between developers' aspirations and public need for access, green space, and amenities and the desire to maintain the town's character. How can it be made easier for people to develop in Fethard?
- **Green Space:** Need for increased usable space. Much of the town's green space is left over space.
- **GAA ground** is well used, however there is demand for more organised activities for young people in the area. There is a shortage of staff for such activities- need for full time liaison officer. There is an issue with long term funding for such initiatives. There is a need for further Council commitment.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour** such as under age drinking, vandalism, late night car use of grass area to south of walls etc are all issues in Fethard.
- **Fire service:** There are concerns that the town does not have a fire service, especially now as more housing developments are being built!
- **Garda:** There is a need for an improved/ permanent Garda service in the town, especially as the town gets bigger and anti-social behaviour is at the level it is at!
- **Schools:** Problems with regards the miss-match of social and private housing is causing problems in the schools. People are sending their children elsewhere! There will also be issues in the future of capacity in the schools as the town's population grows.
- **Access:** Concern over increasing pathways and linkages. These could become more spaces for anti-social behaviour. The Garda do not currently access the pedestrian pathways and lanes.
- **Safety and Security:** needs to be a factor in future plans for the town. Improving lighting and increase the nighttime economy are ways of increasing safety at night. People police spaces!
- **Building facades:** preservation of facades and traditional shop fronts is an important part of preserving of town Character. There is scope for adding colour and brightening up the Main Street! Are there grants available?
- **Dereliction:** There are several buildings and land that have been vacant/derelict for several years and have a negative impact on the appearance of the town. Jimmy Ryan's backyard is a prime example.
- **Clashawley River green space-** there is a need to tidy up this area south of the wall- namely contractors compound and Jimmy Ryan's back yard. Conflict with car access and enjoyment by pedestrians.

C APPENDIX

Suitable Tree Species for Fethard

Below is a list of appropriate tree species, both native and non-native, suitable for planting in Fethard's Streets, green spaces and hedgerows.

NAME	SUITABILITY:
Acer campestre (Field Maple)	Parks, street tree planting, structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. Non-native
Alnus glutinosa (Alder)	Structure/boundary planting, especially tolerant of damp sites. Native
Betula species (Birch)	Parks and structure/boundary planting. Native
Corylus avellana (Hazel)	Structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. Native
Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)	Structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. Native
Fagus sylvatica (Beech)	Parks. Non-native
Fraxinus excelsior (Ash)	Parks, structure/boundary planting, and 'Westhof's Glorie' cultivar would make an appropriate street tree. Native
Ilex aquifolium (Holly)	Structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. Native
Pinus species (Pine)	Parks and structure/boundary planting. Non-native
Prunus avium (Wild Cherry)	Parks, structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. 'Plena' cultivar suitable for street tree planting especially in confined spaces. Native
Prunus spinosa	Structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. Native
Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer' (Chanticleer Pear)	Street tree planting in confined spaces. Non-native
Quercus species (Oak)	Street tree planting and parks. Native and non-native
Salix species (Willow)	Parks and structure/boundary planting. Potential for waterside planting. Native and non-native
Sorbus aucuparia	Street tree planting, parks and structure/boundary planting. 'Sheerwater Seedling' cultivar best for more confined spaces. Native
Taxus baccata (Yew)	Parks, structure/boundary planting and hedgerows. Native
Tilia species (Lime)	Street tree planting and parks. Non-native

