



DROMCOLLOGHER PUBLIC REALM & TOURISM PLAN

December 2022



Figure 1. Aerial view of Dromcollogher Town

DROMCOLLOGHER PUBLIC REALM & TOURISM PLAN

This plan has been prepared by Limerick City and County Council

December 2022

Officially launched on the xxxxxxxx by xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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Figure 2. Figure Ground Plan of Dromcollogher

1. INTRODUCTION

The name Dromcollogher comes from the Irish Drom Collachair meaning hazel ridge or long hill. The town of Dromcollogher has long been an historically important and vibrant place. Many aspects of the town's heritage, annual events and community pride have succeeded in putting this relatively small, rural town on the map. Dromcollogher enjoys a strategic location in close proximity to Newcastle West and Charleville.

It is a prosperous and industrious town, self-sustaining in many ways with local businesses and enterprises, employing over 300 people locally and from the surrounding hinterlands. Dromcollogher is a town that certainly punches above it's weight. With regard to the built form the main feature of the town is the central square with its historic buildings.

This plan was prepared by Limerick City and County Council in collaboration with the Dromcollogher Community Council, recognising the built heritage of the town and that improvements are required to enhance it's aesthetics and function. This plan follows on from the Dromcollogher Design Statement prepared by Limerick City and County Council in 2013.

Great work has taken place over the years in Dromcollogher town by the community, business groups and the Community Council. A plan is now needed to coordinate improvements to the public realm through a series of projects, delivered by different stakeholders over a period of 5-15 years. Not only will these projects improve

the way Dromcollogher looks, but also the way in which it provides for its people economically, socially, culturally and assists to capitalise on its tourist potential.

Through this document, we analyse the town today, enabling the opportunities to improve its public realm. A total of 4 main themes are considered, accompanied by a detailed Action Plan that outlines how each will be delivered.



2. VISION, AIM & OBJECTIVE

Vision

The vision for Dromcollogher is distinctively rooted in its sense of place – its history and heritage, its people and its culture. Dromcollogher is a heritage town, which has always preserved and celebrated its past, people and culture.

There is an opportunity for the town to build on its potential to become an increasingly strong economic and social hub within its immediate hinterland, and to be a good place to live, work and visit.

Aim & Objectives

To fulfil this vision, a series of aims and objectives as shown in Table 1 demonstrate the benefits of the various parts of the town working more strongly together.

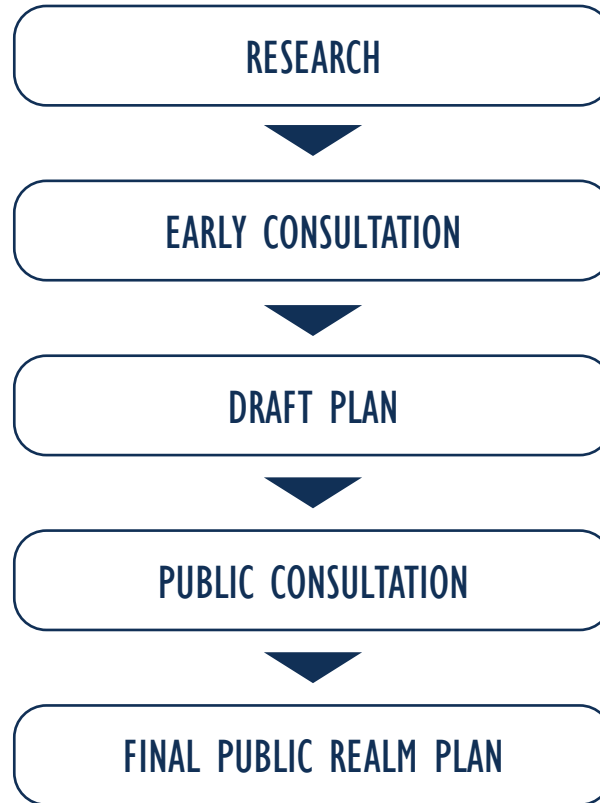
AIM	OBJECTIVE
Improve public realm and town square	Upgrading and regenerating the town square, placing people and a sense of place at the heart of the town, respecting and improving the built form.
Improve arrival and welcome	Improving the gateways to the town, creating a sense of place and distinctiveness and safety.
Traffic management and calming	Providing a safer, more pedestrian friendly environment, and reducing traffic speeds through the town.
Embrace, restore and celebrate unique heritage	Consider the historical and heritage assets of Dromcollogher; and provide opportunities for highlighting these.
Dereliction and vacancy	Focus on existing town centre vacancy and dereliction, working closely with property owners to make units available.
Consider green infrastructure and connectivity to nature	Developing the proposed Town Park and investigating opportunities for a series of short and long loop walks around the town. Opportunities for improving the overall biodiversity of the town.
Improve connections	Strengthen public transport connections within the hinterland and improve connections between local community groups and their work

3. METHODOLOGY & ROLE

The plan has been prepared in-house by LCCC, with on-going consultation with a number of community groups to shape the plan in the period 2018-2019.

While this plan is not a statutory document, it was compiled in the context of the National Planning Framework 2040, the draft Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 2019-2031 (RSES), the Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 (as extended), Dromcollogher Village Design Statement, 2013 as well as the Limerick Tourism Development Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023.

In addition to providing a shared vision for the public realm of Dromcollogher, the plan will also play an important role in ensuring the sustainable development of the town, improving its overall attractiveness, improving connectivity and strengthening its existing tourism function, building on its rich and diverse history and heritage.



Dromcollogher - The Square.



Aerial view of the Square.



Figure 3. Context plan highlighting Dromcolloghers position relative to other major towns

4. CONTEXT

Geography

Dromcollogher is located approximately 16 km south east of Limerick's county town Newcastle West, the town is in the west of County Limerick and approximately 2 km from the border with County Cork. Dromcollogher has a number of regional roads traversing the town. The R522 serves Newcastle West to the north east of the town, and traverses the town to Lis Carroll, and onwards to Mallow. The R519 to the north of the town serves Kilmeedy and onwards towards Ballingarry. The R515 to the south of the Square serves Broadford to the west and Milford to the east.

Dromcollogher lies on the border between a central lowland region and the hill region to the west of the county. The topography within the hill region is 'rolling to moderately steep, with slopes ranging from 5 to 15°' and that of the lowland region is 'gently undulating to easy rolling with most slopes less than 8°; elevation never exceeds 500ft'.

The River Ahavarragh runs through the western part of the town and enters the River Deel 5 km downstream. A small river (the Carroward Stream) runs through the eastern part of the town joining up with the Ahavarragh River downstream.

Planning Context

The Limerick County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 sets out the Council's policy to steer future development in the County based on a settlement hierarchy reflecting settlement function. It outlines population targets for all settlements in Limerick.

The settlement structure for County Limerick, which is set out in the County Development Plan designates Dromcollogher as a Tier 4 settlement. Tier 4 settlements generally have a population of over 400 people that cater for the daily and weekly needs of their inhabitants and the needs of the surrounding wider catchment area and provide a range of services appropriate to their size and function, such as secondary and primary schools, childcare facilities, sports grounds/complexes, library, Garda stations, medical centres and a good range of local services including shops, pubs, post office and banks/credit unions.

Policy SSP9 of the County Development Plan states that it is the policy of the Council to support the sustainable development of Tier 4 towns.

Any development that requires planning permission will be assessed in terms of compliance with the policies and objectives as set out in the County Development Plan. Potential applicants are advised to avail of pre-planning discussions with the Planning & Environmental Services section of the Council prior to submitting their application and refer to the policies, objectives and development management guidelines of the County Development Plan.

Settlement & Hinterland

Function - Civic, Economic & Social

The town has an important civic and service function for the resident population and its surrounding hinterland and possesses many of the amenities of larger urban centres and it is desirable to maintain this standard. The diverse range of services and businesses include; a credit union, a large convenience retailer, pharmacies, pubs, two funeral homes, a service station, hairdressers, beauty salon, two bakeries, a fresh vegetable and gardening shop, a hardware store, a drapery store, a laundry, a café, restaurants, a post office, a veterinary practice and a car repair service, to name a few.

Educational, health and community facilities include a medical centre, dentist, local library, a primary school, a second level community college, a third level horticultural college, and a Garda station. The town also has a privately run enterprise centre close to the town Square, with a number of units occupied. There are a number of tourism assets, including an old creamery building with interpretation, called the National Dairy Co-op Museum and a heritage centre, which is in use as a café.

The town has a number of tourist accommodation options including a Bed and Breakfast on the Square, some Airbnb listed properties as well as Springfield Castle, which is available for private rental to groups. The Green Room at Springfield Castle is open to the public every Saturday for breakfast and lunch.

The voluntary sector in Dromcollogher is to be commended for undertaking substantial developments in the town since the 1980's. These initiatives include the respite and day care centre, voluntary housing with approximately 56 units for single persons, families, and the elderly, a community hall and a community pre-school crèche. The voluntary sector also provides a number of small business units located by the Museum in the core of the town. There is a rural bus service route from Newcastle West to Charleville (Route 521) that stops in Dromcollogher 6 times a day (excluding Sundays).

Active sports clubs locally are the Dromcollogher-Broadford GAA club, Springfield basketball club and Dromcollogher ladies football club.

Population

Dromcollogher town is part of a wider Electoral District (ED) consisting of 19 townlands. The town is located on part of four of these townlands within this electoral district. These townlands are Woodfield, Coolaboy, Carroward East and Carroward West.

The population of the town according to the 2016 Census is 518 persons. This highlights a decrease of 30 people from the 2011 Census when the population was 548 people. Thus, Dromcollogher town has experienced a population decline of -5.4% during the 2011 – 2016 inter-census period, while in the 2006 - 2011 period Dromcollogher town had experienced an overall increase of +4.5%.

Vacancy

A vacancy survey was undertaken for the purposes of this plan - see Figure 4.

It was recorded that there were 35 commercial units within the town centre and approx. 10 of these were vacant. It was also recorded that there were 72 residential units within the town centre and 13 of these were vacant.

The vacancy rate in Dromcollogher is low in comparison to other rural town centres and the vacant properties present an opportunity for growth and development within the town.

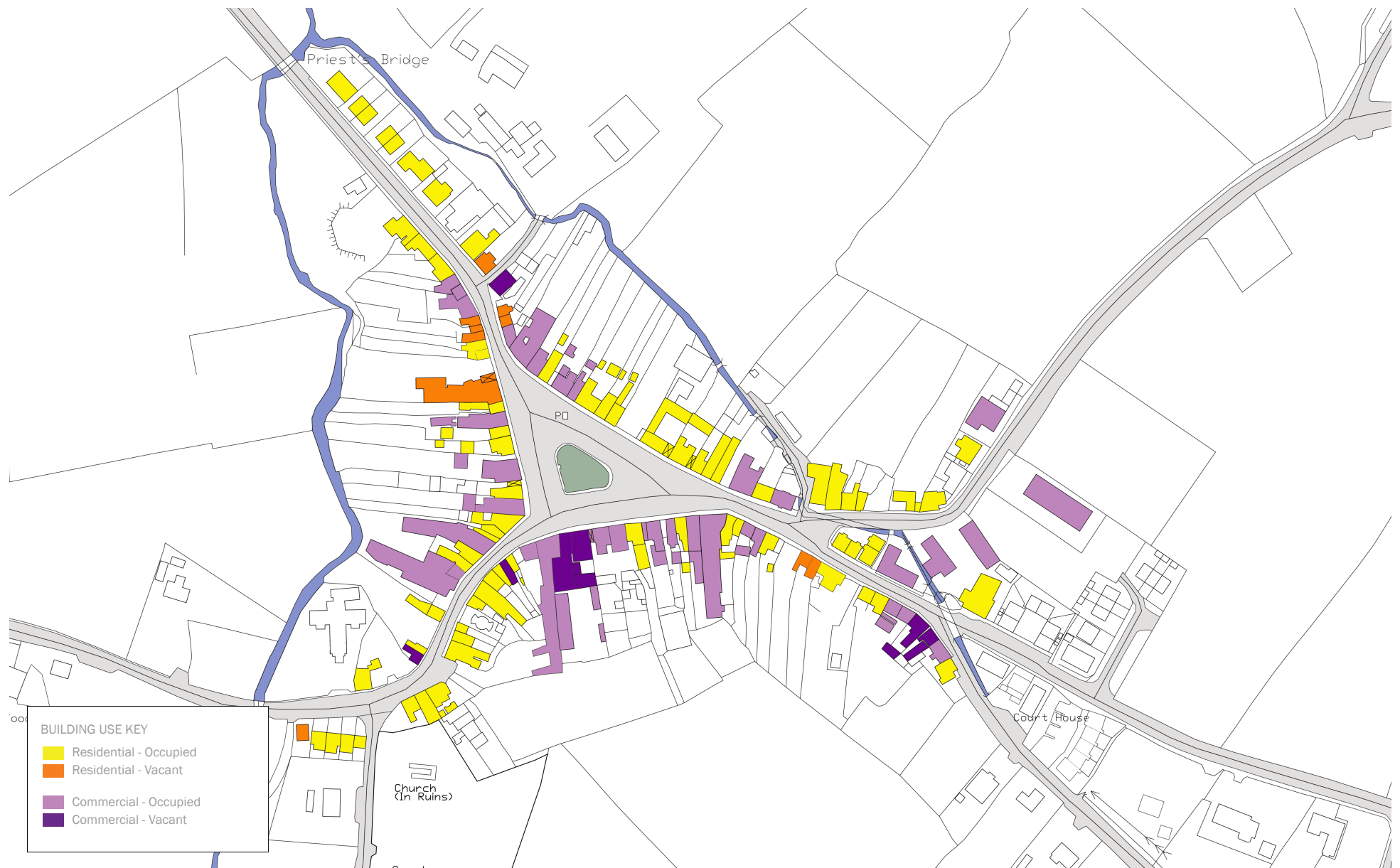


Figure 4. Vacancy Survey Map

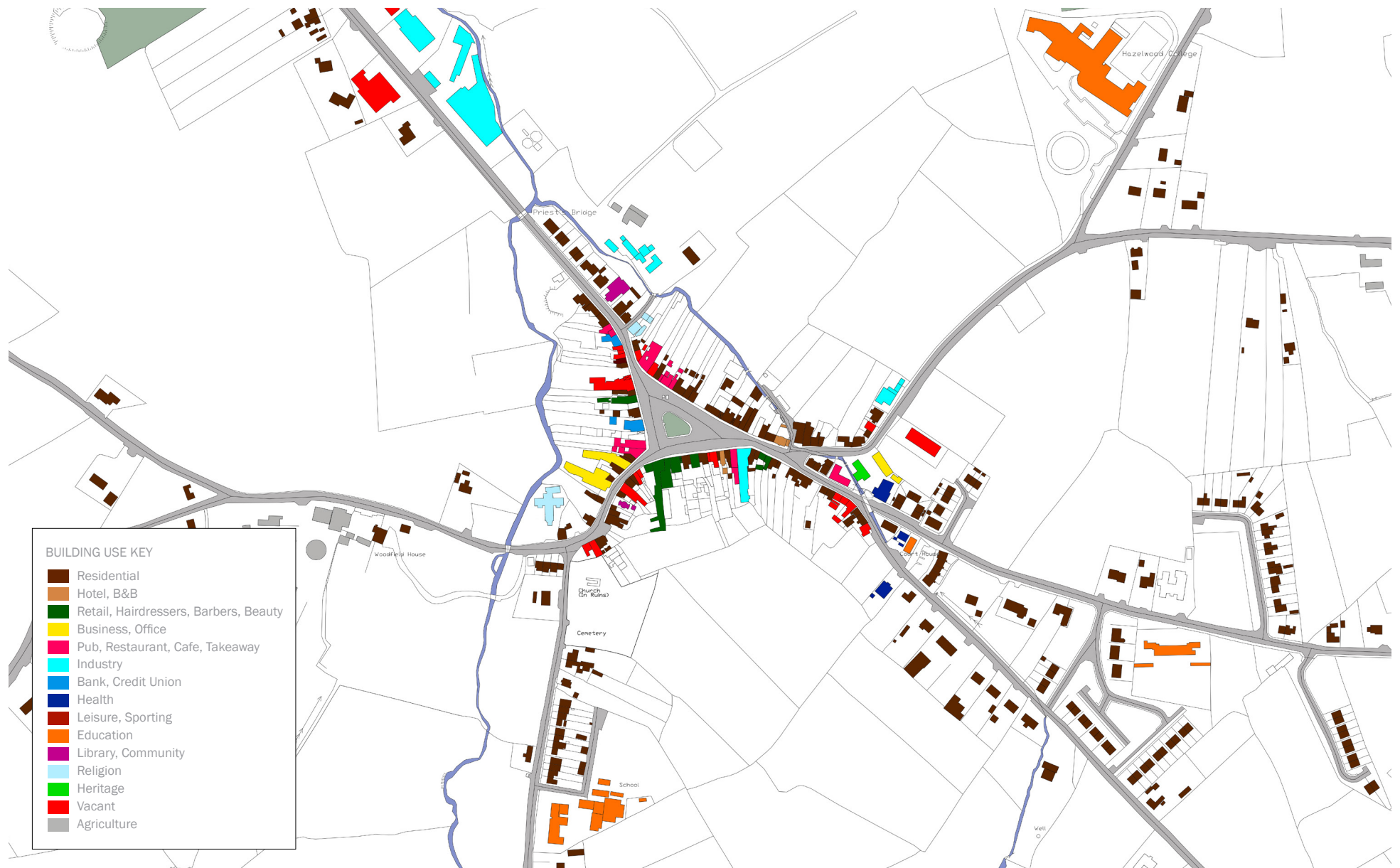


Figure 5. Building Use Plan

Land use

The building use plan opposite shows a mix of commercial and residential uses concentrated around the main square. The plan also shows a number of lower density residential estates and one off houses around the edge of the town. There are a number of large industrial businesses on the edge of the town.

The education establishments are located to the periphery of the town.

Open Space

The main area of public open space in the town is the raised green in the middle of the square, known locally as the Garden of Remembrance. As shown in the aerial shot below, the raised garden is surrounded by parking which serves as a barrier to pedestrian movement onto the green. The GAA pitch is located approx. 650m from the town centre. A town park is presently being developed to the west of the town.

Wastewater

The wastewater infrastructure in Dromcollogher is constrained by the existing sewerage treatment plant. The plant is currently overloaded both biologically and hydraulically. Irish Water are currently progressing a scheme to construct a new treatment plant in Dromcollogher however this is in the very preliminary stages.

Water

Dromcollogher is serviced from the South West Regional Water Supply Scheme and there are no issues with supply or storage with this scheme. Water supply should not be a constraint to development in Dromcollogher.

Broadband Connectivity

High-speed broadband is available in Dromcollogher with copper-based service in the town and environs and fibre-to-the-home connections available in the outlying townlands.

Events

Dromcollogher holds a number of events throughout the year such as:

- Annual Road Race
- Annual sports in GAA grounds
- Tractor Run
- Carnival
- Harvest Fair
- Corpus Christi Procession.



The role of the Garden of Remembrance has become a traffic island in the middle of the town

Built Heritage

In terms of public realm, Dromcollogher has many positive attributes including the Square, which has a rich traditional built fabric with a number of protected structures. The Square is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), in the Limerick County Development Plan . There are also a number of buildings in the town which are on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) Please refer to the table below and section 5 for imagery.

PROTECTED STRUCTURE - LIMERICK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010 - 2016

- ref:1156 Allied Irish Bank
- ref:1157 Tasty Chinese Take-away
- ref:1161 Library
- ref:1162 Woodfiled house
- ref:1163 Garda Station
- ref:1164 The Organic College
- ref:1165 Creamery building (National Dairy Co-op Museum)
- ref:1167 Medieval site - Church
- ref:1168 Courthouse

NATIONAL INVENTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

- Allied Irish Bank, The Square
- The Corner House, The Square
- St. Bartholomew's Church
- Springfield Castle
- Dromcollogher Garda Station
- Tasty Chinese Take-away
- DS Refridgeration Sales
- O'Kelly's
- National Dairy Co-op Museum
- Teddy's Pre-school – former Courthouse
- Scoil Naomh Iosaf
- Gate Lodge

The Dromcollogher Architectural Conservation Area is centred on the Square and radiates along the approach streets. Refer to figure 6. New development (renovation/restoration or new build) proposed within the ACA should respect the existing building lines and the historic form of those buildings. Proposals for new buildings should not seek to dominate the historic core and should respect the historic fabric of the buildings and the morphology of

their plots. The County Development Plan sets out specific objectives in respect of development within the ACA. The Planning Authority are supportive of proposals to develop sites, refurbish and restore buildings within the ACA.

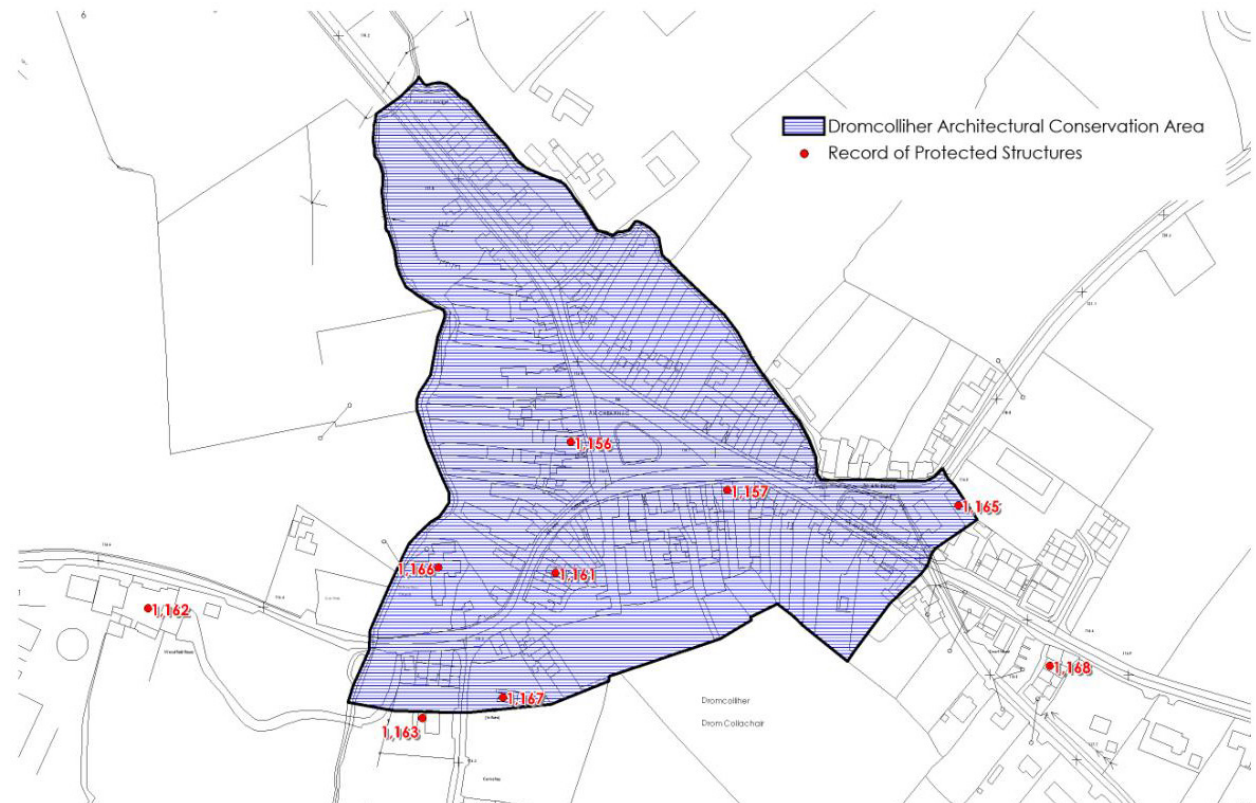


Figure 6. Dromcollogher Architectural Conservation Area

5. UNDERSTANDING DROMCOLLOGHER'S HISTORY & HERITAGE

Historical Context

The name Dromcollogher comes from the Irish Drom Collachair meaning the hazel ridge or long hill. There is a possible reference to Dromcollogher as early as 1160 from the Book of Leinster. Westropp however, gives the earliest dated reference as 1201, in the form Drumcollechaellor. In 1199 King John granted Hamo de Valoignes, an Anglo-Norman Knight of Suffolk, 'the land from the Shannon north of Askeaton to where Dromcollogher now stands'. A medieval church, classified as a recorded monument (Li054:040:02) is located in the local burial ground in the southwest of the village. It was dedicated to St. Bartholomew.

After the defeat of the Munster Geraldines by the English in 1583, the Dromcollogher area was confiscated and granted to the English planter family of Courtenay. In circa 1640, George Courtenay was granted a patent to hold a weekly market and an annual fair in Dromcollogher. It is reasonable to assume that a village, founded by Courtenay, was in existence by this date.

A survey of the Courtney lands in 1709 described Dromcollogher as comprising of 'about 12 mud walled thatch houses and about 18 cabins'. By this time, the town had developed its existing street pattern. Dromcollogher was 'small, schematic and compact, with winding streets focusing on a triangular green ... reminiscent of the plantation town of Donegal'.

Dromcollogher was destined to remain small and its growth prospects were probably impaired when it was surrendered from the Courtenay estate as a result of extensive land sales early in the nineteenth century'. Lewis gave the population as 658 in 1831. The population in 1841, was 714 and had fallen to 587 in 1891.

During the 1800's the streetscape we see today on the Square emerged with traditional two storey terraced dwellings and businesses addressing the footpath directly with each building having its own distinctive plot to the rear. The opening of a branch of the Munster and Leinster Bank in the Square and the post office on the Square in the 1830s highlights the commercial importance of the town. St. Bartholomew's Roman Catholic church was built in 1824. The increasing civic importance of the town in the 1800's was reflected by locating a dispensary in the town and the construction of fine buildings such as the courthouse and the creamery.

By the 20th century, the town began to develop outwards from the core of the Square along North Road, Church Street, Pike Street and Pound Street. The sewage treatment plant was built in the 1940s and is located to the north west of town, which has contributed to the town's expansion. The Garda station was built circa 1940 and the new larger national school (Scoil Naomh Iosef) was built in 1959. The Dromcollogher - Broadford GAA club grounds were also established on the north road in the 1950s. Housing was developed at St. Joseph's Park to the east of the town and Buckley's Terrace to the south. The expansion of the town in the late 1900s included the development of manufacturing and light industrial developments, with the community taking a proactive approach to securing foreign direct investment into the town.



In 1962, the Saar family, who had fled East Germany after the second World War set up a small factory on North Road, producing delicate and elaborate ceramic made figurines called Irish Dresden, from moulds which had originated in Germany. The moulded figurines were internationally famous for their delicate lace frills and designs, which were hand painted and given a glazed finish. The factory remained open until 2009, and at this time saw the loss of 15 jobs, when full scale production ceased due to the economic recession and the changing perception of luxury goods and ceramics.

The Shannon Development Enterprise Park to the east of the town was also the result of extensive lobbying of government by the community organisations in Dromcollogher. This saw the opening of Form Grinders in 1979. This business, now called Weener Plastics, has been providing valuable local employment for over forty years.



Irish Dresden Factory

In 1991, the Organic College was founded by Jim McNamara. The College currently has over 60 students enrolled in a number of nationally certified, full-time and part-time third level courses in organic horticulture and sustainability. In 2002, Hazelwood College secondary school was constructed on the outskirts of the town to the east facilitating the amalgamation of the former Vocational School and St Mary's Secondary School, in the town. Hazelwood College completed its third phase of expansion in 2018 and has 38 teachers with facilities for 600 students.

The Dromcollogher Day Care Centre was officially opened by President Mary Robinson in October, 1996. The Dromcollogher and District Respite Care Centre was developed by the local community on North Road and received its first patient in April 2012. A number of housing schemes have been developed over the past two decades, providing sheltered and family housing for the community.



Dromcollogher Organic College opened in 1991



Weener Plastics



Hazelwood College



Dromcollogher Respite Centre

The Garden of Remembrance / The Square

Awaiting text in relation to the Square and Garden of Remembrance.



Figure 7. The Garden of Remembrance

The Garden of Remembrance / The Square

Awaiting text in relation to the Square and Garden of Remembrance.



Nighttime aerial view - The Square



Memorial Plaque dedicated to the Volunteers of the Dromcollogher Battalion



The carnival on the square



Existing pathway and seating within the Garden of Remembrance

6. BUILT FORM



Fitzgeralds Bakery (presently Twomeys Bakery)



Springfield Castle



Co-operative Creamery



St Bartholomew's Church



Post Office (Old AIB Building)



National School



Respite Centre



Organic College



Dromcollogher Library



Community Centre



Hazelwood College Secondary School



The Old Courthouse - Teddy's Playschool

Street Elevations

Buildings on the Square are all two storey with differing ridge heights which adds character to the area. The design of the buildings reflects that of a traditional Irish townscape from the 19th century. The buildings are generally terraced, with natural slate roofs, doors and windows having vertical proportions, smooth rendered, painted or stone facades, and timber doors and timber windows.

The collective arrangement of buildings around the Square is considered to be significant to the built heritage of the

town and contributes to the character and established street and townscape.

It is the objective of the Council to preserve the character of this area and therefore it is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)¹³. There are 4 buildings on the Square that are considered by the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht as of significant importance in terms of architectural heritage to be included in the inventory for County Limerick. These are the Allied Irish Bank, the Corner House, the Tasty Chinese take-away and DS Refrigeration Sales.

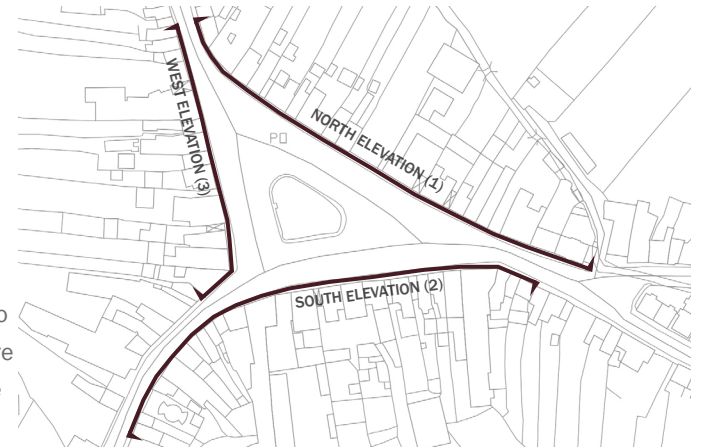


Figure 8. Street Elevation Key

Green Bar Public House



NORTH ELEVATION (1)



NORTH ELEVATION (1)

Oriel House Bed & Breakfast



WEST ELEVATION (3)

Opportunity for rear parking area / link to Town Park



SOUTH ELEVATION (2)

Walls Hardware Store



SOUTH ELEVATION (2)

7. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The proposals within this plan have been informed by a number of consultation events that have taken place during the past 3 years.

Members of Limerick City and County Council together with Minister Patrick O'Donovan met with Dromcollogher Community Council in March 2018 to set out the vision for the plan, review the previous design statements and discuss how the plan would be developed.

Following on from this an open public consultation event was held in May 2018 in the community hall in conjunction with a workshop with the TY students at Hazelewood College. The open consultation event that took place in Dromcollogher Community Hall was very positive with over 100 people attending. Questionnaires were available at the event (see figure. 8) and we received 85 responses from the public consultation and 23 responses from the TY students.

The feedback and responses over the course of the engagement period was extremely positive, with in depth discussions throughout each event. The engagement process particularly highlighted peoples interest in the square and the desire of the local community to make the most of this important asset. It also highlighted the communities interest and passion in their town, future business, being part of a community and how the town and its wider setting could be supported to thrive.

The questionnaires were evaluated and following on from this and together with further discussion with the key stakeholders a series of key themes started to emerge.

design with communities - dromcollogher

list the main strengths of Dromcollogher
 Good community, Fasworkers keep Dromcollogher nice and tidy.

list the main weaknesses of Dromcollogher
 parking on church street.
 parking outside on Tionad Gab (brow of hill) will be an accident.
 Square (could do with a more modern look)
 Entering drom from milford rd. Eyesore

do you have any suggestions for what you would like to see/do in Dromcollogher

short term
 Childrens park, really needed.

long term
 Recycling bins.
 Some garden benches (colourful)
 Some area diff parts of drom
 pedestrian crossing at hurling field
 if shop opens (maybe speed ramps?)
 Children will be crossing.
 A lot more litter bins needed.
 Flowers on entering town.

name (optional)
 contact details (optional)

Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Lúimnigh
Limerick City
& County Council

Figure 9. Example questionnaire from consultation event

Some of the responses that came from the public via the questionnaires are noted below:

“The square itself is visually weak, with the low wall and green area in need of refurbishment”

“Junction layouts too generous and encourage speed”

“Square not serving the needs of people today”

“Rejuvenate the Square”

“Have a sheltered area to sit down in the square”

“The potential to promote and develop the Plunkett Museum is enormous”

“Dromcollogher has so much to offer. Every kind of shop is in the town. It is a great business town with a great community.”

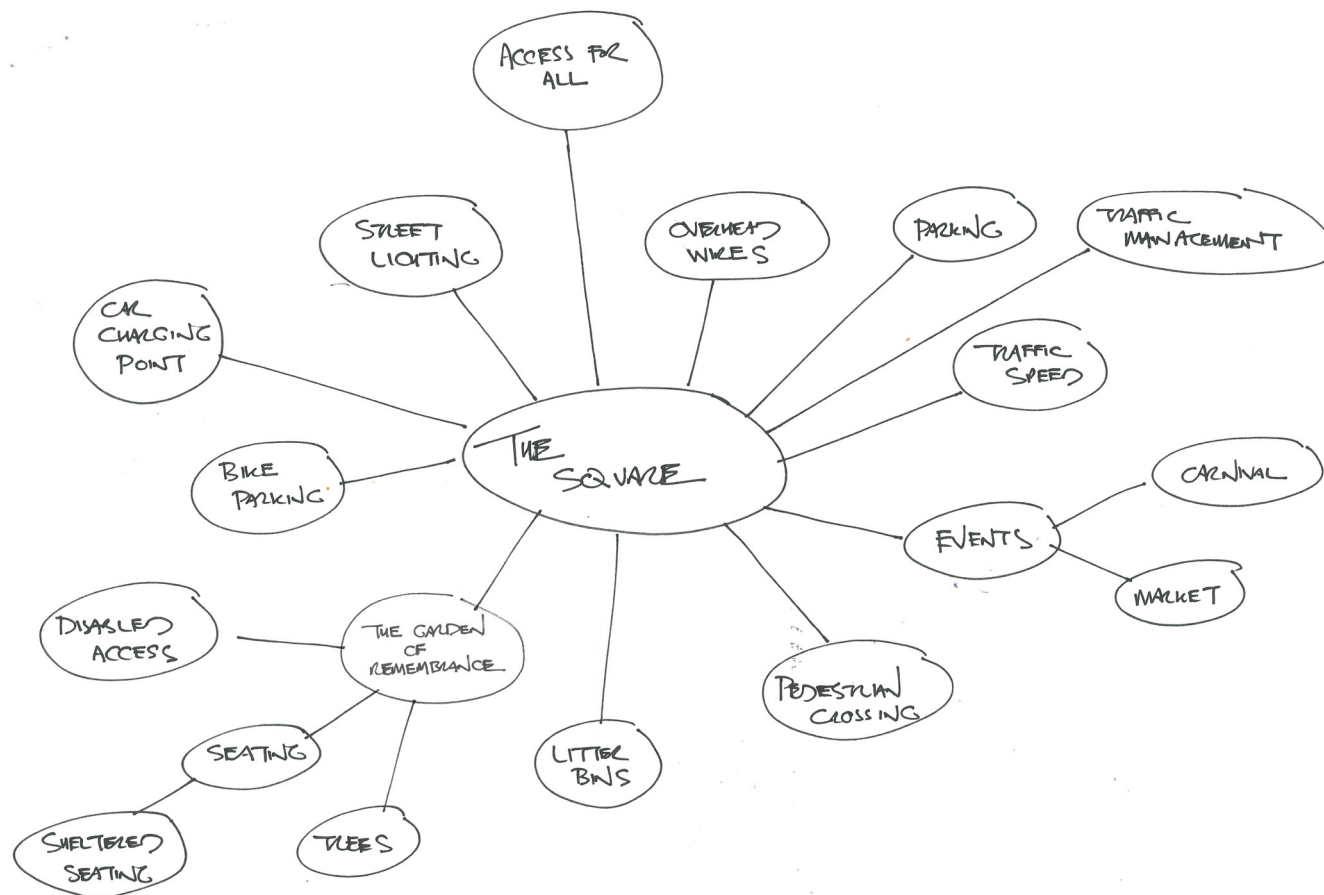


Figure 10. Web diagram summarising key issues around The Square



Open public consultation - May 2018



Open public consultation - May 2018



Public consultation - March 2022

Following the initial round of consultations a draft public realm plan was prepared during 2018 and 2019. As a result of Covid 19 in early 2020 it was not possible to hold a public consultation event until early 2022.

Two public consultation events were held in Dromcollogher Community Hall in March and April 2022 where draft copies of the plan were presented and members of LCCC were in attendance to respond to any queries in relation to the plan. The draft plan was also put up on Limerick.ie website for a period of 4 weeks and people were invited to submit comments via email and post. Over 40 people attended the public consultation and 19 submissions were received via email.

The main area of concern with regard to the draft plan was the proposals around the Square and the Garden of Remembrance. The updated web diagram opposite captures the main concerns and comments we received from the local community and stakeholder groups.

The illustrative proposals as presented in the plan have been updated in response to the comments received during the last round of public consultations.



Figure 11. Updated Web diagram summarising key issues and concerns around initial proposals for the Square.

PAGE TO BE UPDATED FOLLOWING LAST
ROUND OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION TO
TAKE PLACE MONDAY 12th DECEMBER

8. PROJECTS

Following on from the consultation and research undertaken by LCCC, a number of key themes emerged as noted below.

PROJECTS	
A	PUBLIC REALM AND TOWN CENTRE
B	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
C	TOWN THRESHOLDS - ARRIVAL & WELCOME
D	TOURISM

Some of the strategic considerations that shaped the plan include:

- Significance and uniqueness of Dromcollogher’s history and heritage, with existing tourism assets;
- Public realm enhancements to the town square
- Traffic, parking and connectivity;
- Natural heritage and linkages to the environment; and
- Threats to public realm including vacancy and dereliction.

This plan sets out specific projects, ranging in size and scope, which together will enhance the quality and experience of the town and its environs for the community, be as an attractor for inward investment and increased visitor numbers.

A series of projects, each comprising a number of actions, has been proposed with the intention that each can be delivered individually based on their importance, priority, complexity and availability of funding. All projects will require further public consultation, detailed design and funding availability prior to delivery.

A. PUBLIC REALM & TOWN CENTRE

It is evident through consultation with the local community and through visiting the town that the square is very much the ‘jewel in the crown’ for Dromcollogher Town. The square located at the centre of the town is where most of the businesses are located.

It is also evident through the work on this plan that the Square is currently underutilised and that the community would like to see this space redesigned, reinvented and its uses maximised. Some of the key issues around the current square are noted below:

- Wide roads with no speed control measures encourage speeding;
- Little differentiation between surface materials - reads as sea of tarmac;
- Lack of road crossing points leads to unsafe accessibility issue for the elderly and the young;
- The Garden of Remembrance is underused due to its layout and current parking arrangement cuts the garden off from the public;
- Narrow footpaths;
- Lack of people living on the square - either in residential units or ‘over the shop’; and
- Some key buildings on the square vacant or derelict.



Figure 12. Existing Plan of Dromcollogher Square / Town Centre



Wide roads lead to high traffic speeds through the square. Current parking arrangement blocks pedestrian access to the Garden of Remembrance.



The approach streets onto the Square have a slight curve and rise slightly which gives interesting entrance points to the Square. Overhead cables are unsightly and dominate the streetscape.



Current parking arrangement within the Square



Inappropriate landscaping within the central garden. There are too many trees for the size of the green area and some of the species are not suitable for this location.



Figure 13. Illustrative Masterplan for Dromcollogher Square / Town Centre

The illustrative masterplan overleaf has been prepared in consultation with the local community, local businesses and other key stakeholders.

An initial masterplan for the square was presented at the public consultation events in March and April 2022. All feedback received at the events and online were reviewed and considered.

Following on from this a number of meetings were held with different stakeholder groups within the town to discuss the proposals around the square. One of the main concerns was the proposals for the existing Garden of Remembrance - the central Garden is culturally and historically significant within the town as it was built to honour the Volunteers of the Dromcollogher Battalion (1909 - 1921).

Following on from the consultation a further option was developed as shown opposite where the stone walls from the Garden of Remembrance are retained in situ to create stone benches. The 3d illustration opposite shows how seating, planting, the relocated memorial plaque and pathways could be integrated with the stone seating.

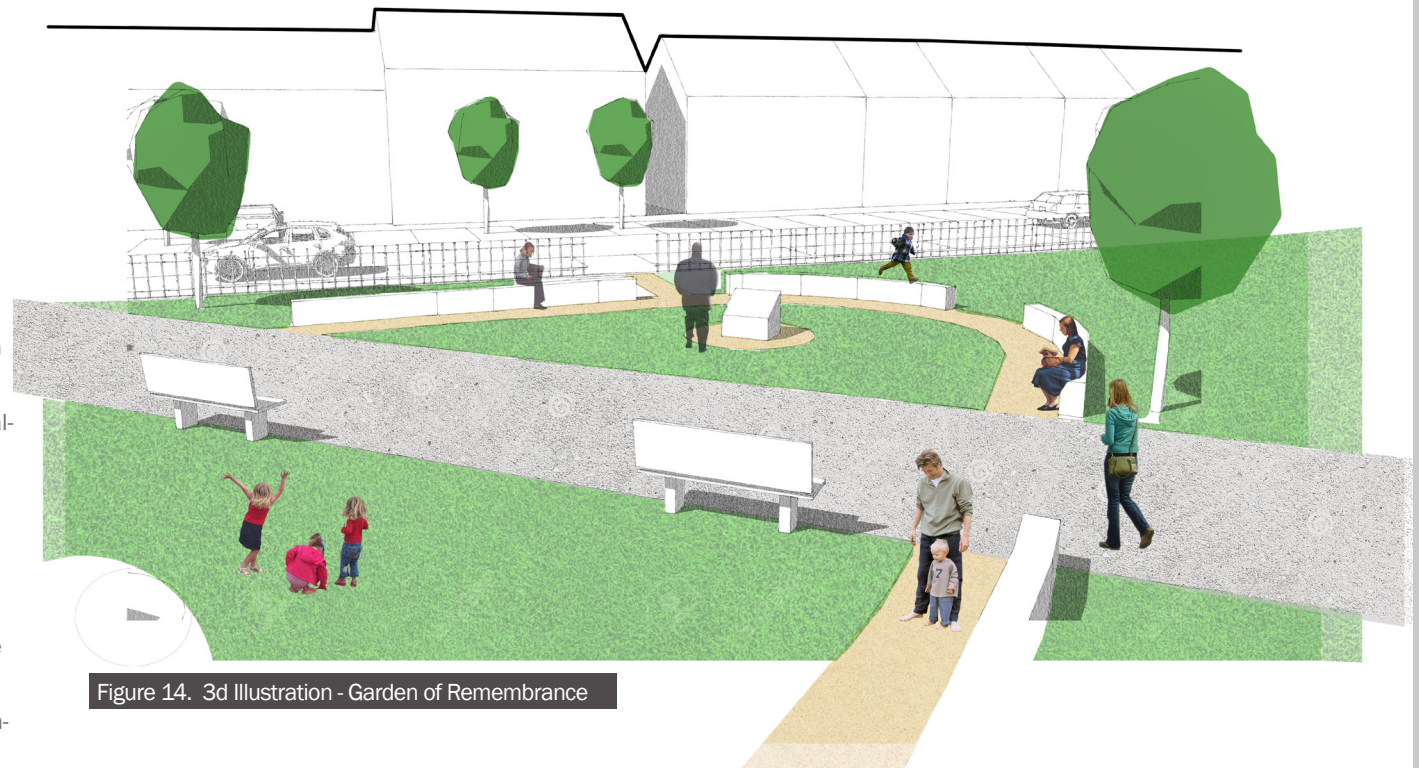


Figure 14. 3d Illustration - Garden of Remembrance



Figure 15. 3D View of the square looking North East - Option 01

The 3d illustration opposite provides a wider birds-eye view of how the re-imagined and redesigned square could look. A further 3d illustration is shown on page 34 which shows another option of how the square could be redesigned.

All the plans and illustrations from p.30 - p.34 are illustrative only and are presented in this plan to highlight some of the opportunities that exist within the square. It should be noted that the number and location of parking spaces, the design of the Garden of Remembrance, the design of the road junctions, the exact location of crossing points and the width of the roads and footpaths is not fixed.

The next stage of this project would be the development and submission of a Part 8 Application and a full design team (including Engineers, Architects, Landscape Architects and QS) would be appointed for this. During this process the local community would have the opportunity to input and comment on any design proposals.

It is proposed, as part of this plan that the following objectives are agreed for the Dromcollogher Town Square:

- Pedestrian crossings located at entrance to the Square to slow traffic and provide safe crossing points;
- Road width narrowed to standard widths and excess space prioritised for pedestrian / amenity use;
- Overhead wires undergrounded local to the Square;
- Garden of Remembrance redesigned to improve accessibility and amenity value; and
- Overall parking layout, capacity and requirements to be reviewed.

The Dromcollogher Public Realm & Tourism Plan sets out a series of actions under each theme. They vary in scale and complexity with some actions suited to short term delivery, while others are likely to take place in the longer term due to funding constraints.

Oversight and co-ordination of the plan and its delivery will require a continued process of partnership between Limerick City and County Council, Newcastle West Municipal District, local groups, members of the public and Dromcollogher Community Council.

Responsibility for the delivery of the actions should be shared between different organisations and groups, including Limerick City and County Council as well as other public bodies, community groups and the private sector. All projects will depend on the availability of funding and will be subject to further design development, local engagement and where necessary, planning approvals.



Improved accessibility to green space within the Square

ACTION PLAN	
A1	Undertake age freindly audit of the town centre to highlight accessibility issues and test suitable locations for road crossings.
A2	Undertake community led parking audit of the square to better understand the current parking requirements.
A3	Working with LCCC, continue to look for opportunities to upgrade and provide new residential accomodation within the town centre.
A4	Engage with LCCC to prioritise short term improvements within the town centre with particular regard to road crossings, landscape design and accessibility of the existing Garden of Remembrance.
A5	Submit a Part 8 application for the public realm improvements to the square - alongside this undertake traffic analysis work to accompany Part 8 application.



Stone walls to Garden of Remembrance could become attractive stone benches

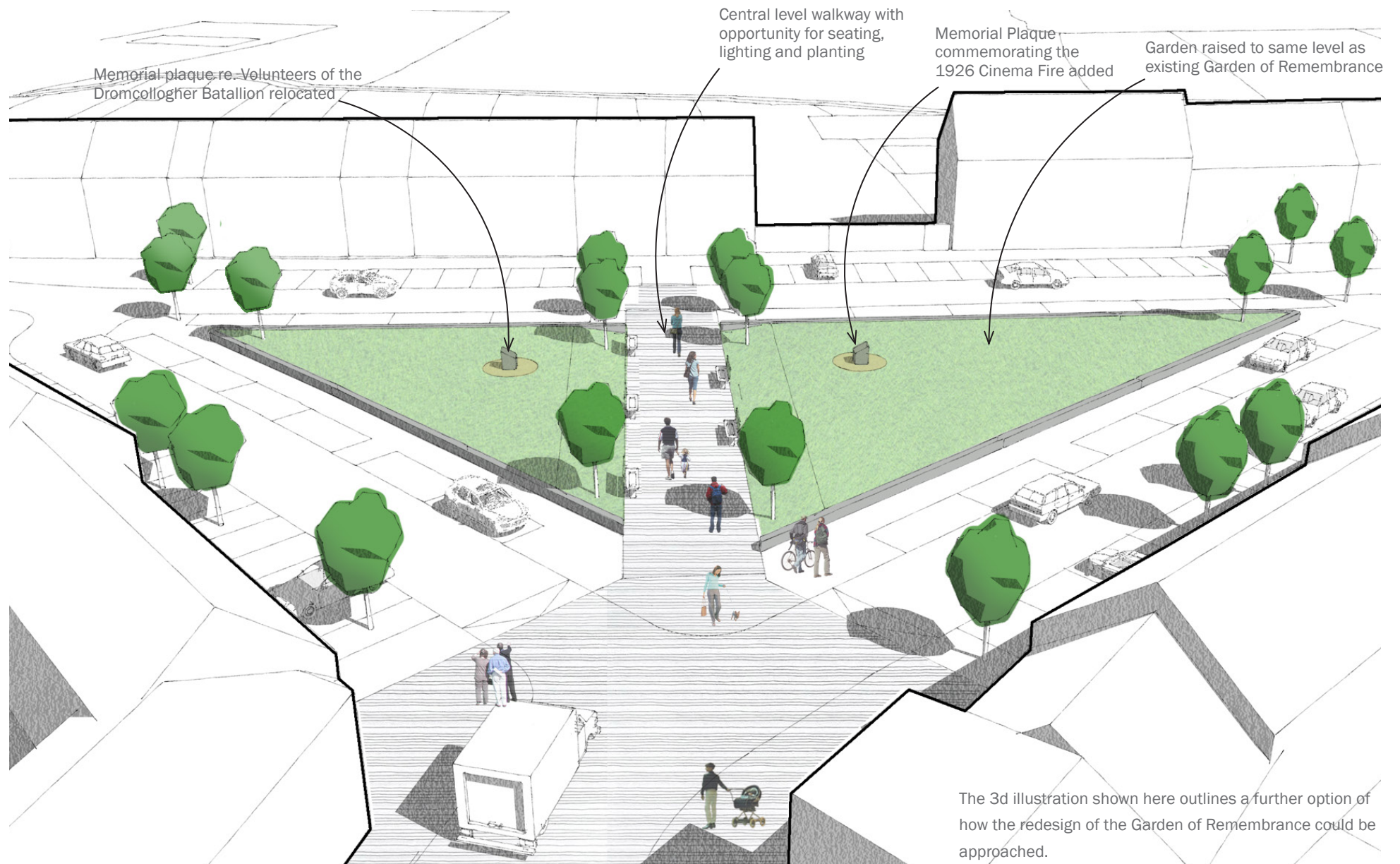


Figure 16. 3D View of the square looking North East - Option 02

B. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Another strong message that emerged from the public consultation was the desire for a greater amount of public open space and safe walking trails / loops.

Whilst Dromcollogher is a rural town surrounded by open countryside it has a limited amount of publicly accessible open space. The new town park will address this issue and as part of this plan we have noted some important elements of the park that should be explored as the park plan evolves.

The following pages give an overview of some of the projects that have been highlighted and evolved through consultation with the community.

“Green Infrastructure is a network of green spaces that help conserve natural ecosystems and provide benefits through water purification, carbon capture, food production and recreation. Such spaces include woodlands, flood plains, hedgerows, town parks and street trees.”



Sensory Garden proposed within planned Town Park.



Opportunity for riverside loop walks along the River Ahavarragh



Figure 17. Plan showing Public Open Space areas around Dromcollogher Town

Town Park

Dromcollogher Town Park was granted planning permission in June 2018 and work has currently started on site and the plan is shown opposite.

The park will provide an invaluable amenity to the town and will also help to attract people to visit Dromcollogher to use the park.

Dromcollogher Community Council, are driving the project and a number of objectives are listed on the opposite page.



Recently installed Lower Bridge



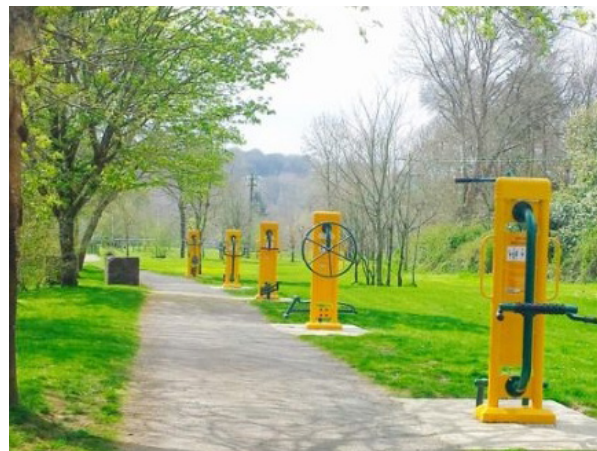
Figure 18. Masterplan for Town Park



New entrance to Town Park from Newcastle West Road (R522)



Labyrinth installed 2022



Outdoor gym equipment adjacent to park walkway



Natural Play Areas

ACTION PLAN	
B1	Deliver the riverside walk from R515 to Broadford Road as early as possible.
B2	Deliver a high quality entrance to the park off North Road that celebrates the park and improves the entrance to the town. COMPLETE
B3	Undertake local feasibility study to test opportunities for further recreation uses within the Town Park.
B4	Develop natural playscapes within the Town Park to cater for younger children.
B5	Develop and market event calendar incorporating Town Park i.e. weekly park run, summer BBQ's, Park yoga etc.

Loop Walks

There are currently no official loop walks around Dromcollogher. The local community undertake a lot of walking in the evenings and on weekends and at present use the existing road and footpath network in and around the town.

Town Park Loop

The town park offers an opportunity for a short loop walk along the River Ahavarragh. This will be a pleasant and safe walk with views of the river and open countryside.

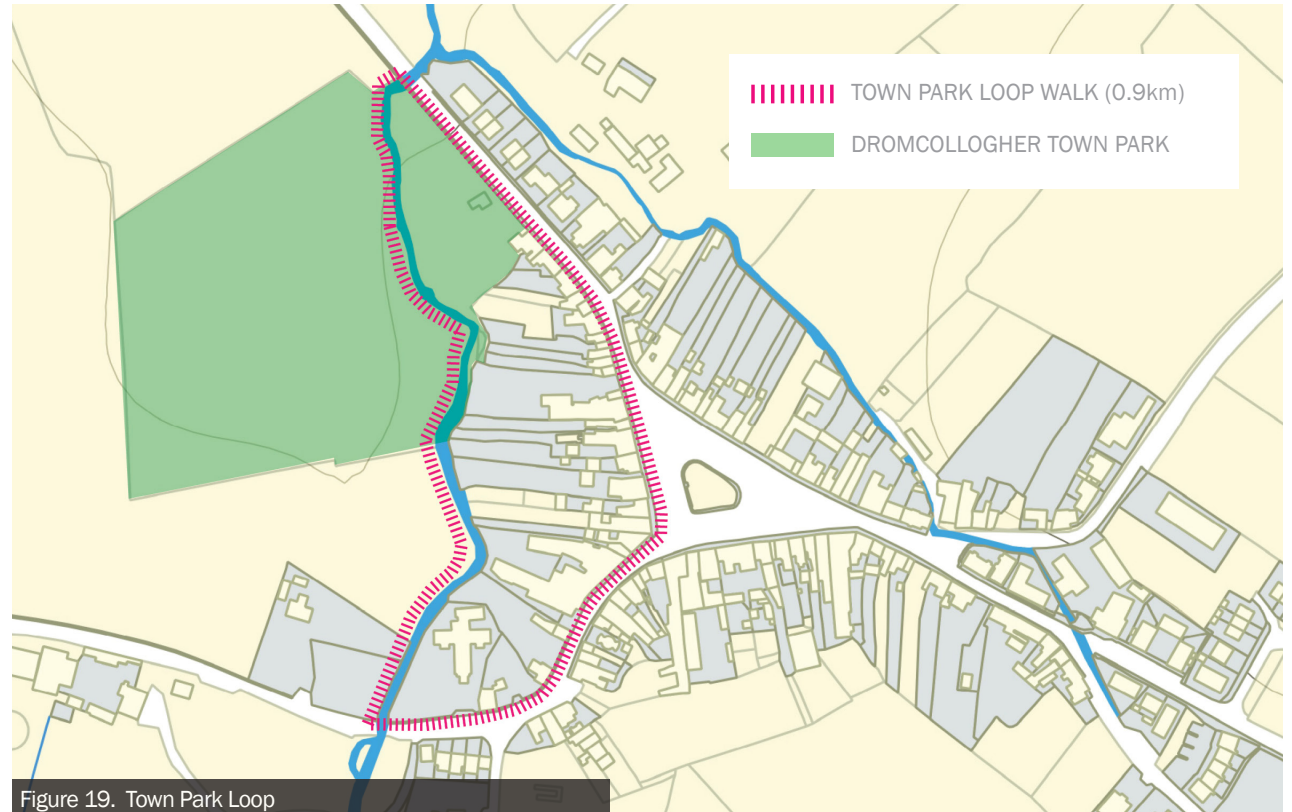


Figure 19. Town Park Loop



The Square



River Walk



Dromcollogher Labyrinth

Town Loops

There is an opportunity to extend the Town Park Loop walk to the south along Buckley Terrace. This stretch of Buckley Terrace has a footpath along its length therefore providing a safe route for walkers. There may be future opportunities (subject to land ownership agreements) to extend the town park loop walk further south along the River Ahavarragh.

There is an opportunity to the east of the town to create a loop walk along Glenn Coill and the R522. There may be future opportunities (subject to land ownership agreements) to provide an informal pedestrian route between the two roads thereby creating the loop walk. This loop walk offers good views back towards the town as the land rises to the east.



Buckley Terrace (towards Dromcollogher Town Centre)



Opportunity to integrate Southern Loop Extension with Woodfield Wier

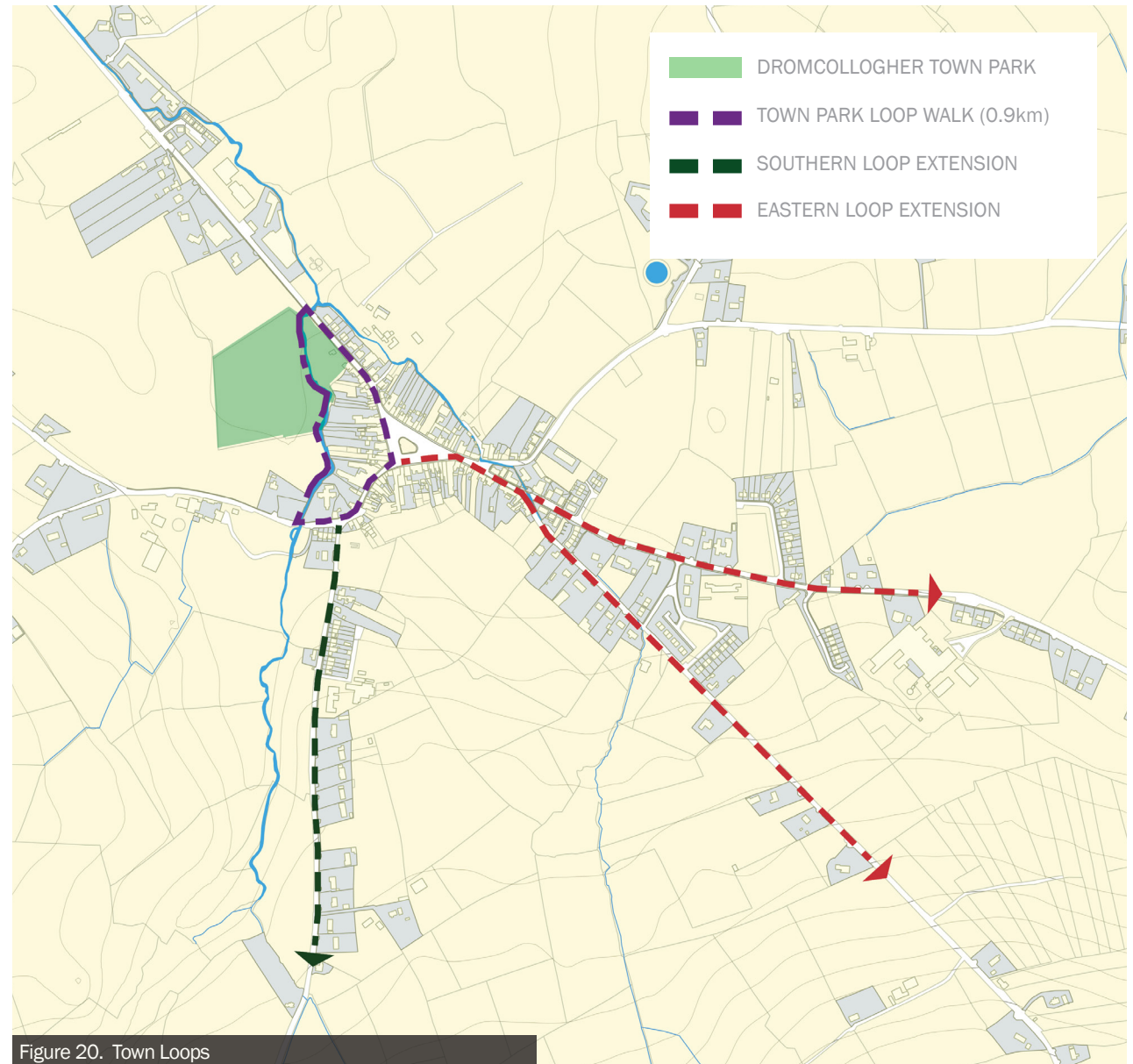


Figure 20. Town Loops

Wider Loops

In addition to the short town loops there is an opportunity to create / formalise a series of longer walking loops around Dromcollogher.

The neighbouring villages of Broadford and Ashford have successfully created a series of loop walks ranging from 13km up to 20km. The Gleann na gCapill loop is located to the south of Broadford and covers a distance of 10km. As shown on the map opposite there is an opportunity to join up with this loop to form an enjoyable walking route between Dromcollogher and Broadford.

Many of the routes as shown on the plan opposite are currently used by the community but there is an opportunity to formalise these routes via maps, signage and website making them accessible to the public.

ACTION PLAN	
B6	Create pedestrian walkway along River Ahavarragh between town park and church car park to create loop walk.
B7	Undertake feasibility study for eastern and southern town loops.
B8	Engagement with Broadford / Ashford Walking Trails to consider opportunities for linking into parts of the trail network. Opportunity for sharing experience of how the Broadford / Ashford walking trails were developed.
B9	Undertake feasibility study for Wider Loops as noted. Is there opportunities to take some of the routes off the existing road network.
B10	Develop signage / branding for town loops and continue use of signage as more loop walks become live.



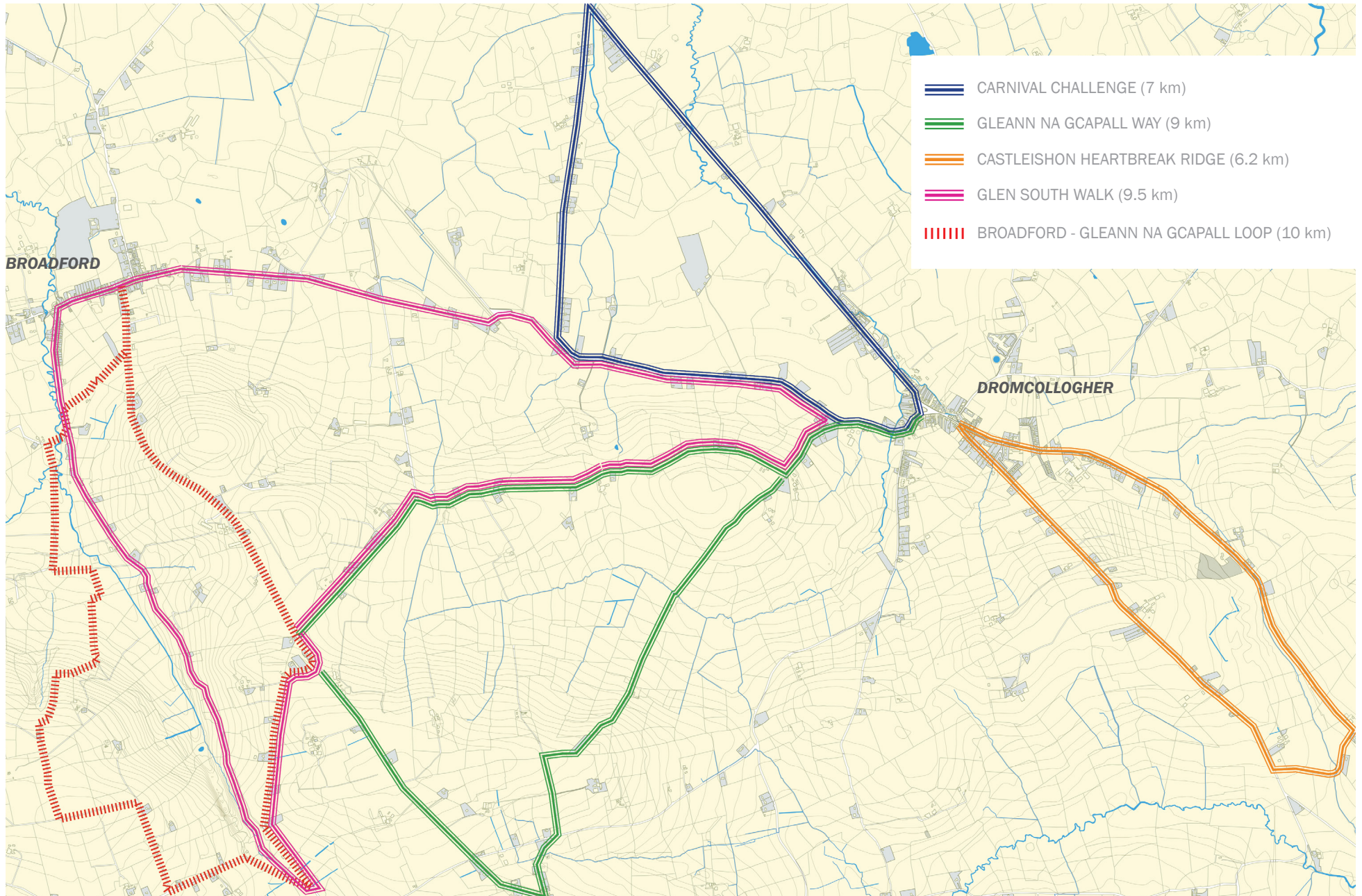


Figure 21. Wider Loops



Figure 22. Town Thresholds

C. TOWN THRESHOLDS - ARRIVAL & WELCOME

As shown on the map opposite, Dromcollogher has six roads all leading towards the town square.

The road from Newcastle West (R522) is a straight road and the GAA pitch and Respite Centre signify that you are entering the town (A).

The road from Broadford bends through a tree lined avenue, passing St Bartholemews church before rising towards the square (B).

Dromcollogher Town stretches along the R522 with some smaller estates and one off houses. The Enterprise Centre marks the entrance to the town (C).

The road from Carraward drops down towards Dromcollogher and provides open views of the town and surrounding countryside (D).



Figure 23. Existing view of entrance to town from Hazelwood College

ACTION PLAN	
C1	In collaboration with LCCC, installation of traffic calming local to GAA club to reduce traffic speed on entrance to town.
C2	Provide high quality 'statement' entrance to the town park from Newcastle West road (R522). COMPLETE
C3	Improve entrance to town from Hazelwood College. (see Fig. 19)
C4	Orientation and wayfinding signage - signage declutter. Commission of bespoke suite of entrance / welcome and wayfinding signage.



Figure 24. New entrance to Town Park from Newcastle West Road (R522)

D. TOURISM

Heritage Trail

Whilst Dromcollogher prides itself on being a working town it also has a number of high quality heritage buildings. At present a visitor to the town would not be aware of these buildings and their history due to a lack of signage and marketing.

A town heritage trail has been explored in the past and funding has been applied for under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2019 to deliver this. The heritage trail would consist of information panels at particular sites of interest around the town as noted on the plan opposite.

The central information point would be located within The Square. These panels would combine graphic and textual information about each location and would be visually attractive within the streetscape, whilst providing adequate information to allow visitors gain insight to the particular building or locations.

The information on each Panel will be in summary format, augmented with layers of background data available as a multimedia presentation on mobile devices. Using a URL or QR code on each board, more detailed text on each site can be accessed. More photographs and images relevant to the site of interest will also be hosted at this online heritage repository.

As well as the pointers and directions from the central montage, each panel will provide a link to other panels in the form of a map, indicating the position of the current panel in the context of the overall Heritage Trail. Further information in relation to the key locations on the heritage trail are outlined in the following pages.



Dromcollogher Library

On a Sunday evening, the 5th of September 1926, William 'Baby' Forde hired an upstairs room from Patrick Brennan in the centre of Dromcollogher. He had intended to show two films in this makeshift cinema. However, disaster struck when, during the showing, a roll of film was set on fire from the flame of a candle. The fire spread resulting in the deaths of 48 people. The majority of the unfortunate victims were buried in the churchyard in a communal grave. A large Celtic cross was erected as a memorial to the victims of this tragedy.

The site of the fire lay boarded up and derelict for over 20 years. The local community came forward with the idea of a Memorial Library on the site and in 1953, a structure, unique for its time, circular with flat roof and tall narrow windows was opened as the Dromcollogher Memorial Library.

The memorial library is still in use today and is currently open for approx. 14 hours a week.



Dromcollogher Library

Courthouse

The destruction of Dromcollogher courthouse on the 20th of June 1920 was one of the most tragic chapters in the history of the West Limerick Brigade IRA operations during the War of Independence. The courthouse was a solid cut-stone structure on Pike Street, located approx. 150 yards from the local R.I.C. Barracks, which housed a garrison of R.I.C. and Black and Tans.

Up to eight volunteers of the West Limerick Brigade set out to destroy the building but while preparing for a fire within the building, a premature explosion set it alight, and the only means of escape via the front door was blocked. One man Paddy Buckley perished inside the building, while three volunteers were saved. However, David Brennan and Liam Danaher died in the days after the fire. The one survivor of the fire; Jack Farrell, lived with his injuries until the age of 62 and died in 1957. A plaque was erected on the wall of the reconstructed courthouse in 1956 to commemorate the lives of the three volunteers. The courthouse building has been extensively restructured internally and is now used as a facility for the pre-school children of the locality.



The Courthouse

Springfield Castle

This elegant Irish castle located to the North West of the town is steeped in history, and forms the ancestral home of Lord and Lady Muskerry.

The residence at Springfield was the beginning of a long association of the Fitzgeralds with this area.

In 1691 a younger son of the 20th Lord of Kerry, William Fitzmaurice, (cousins of the Fitzgeralds) bought Springfield castle and his son, John, built a very large three storey early Georgian mansion attached to the existing buildings. The Fitzmaurices occupied Springfield Castle until Sir Robert Deane married Ann Fitzmaurice, the sole heiress, in 1780. He was awarded the title Baron Muskerry in 1781 and the title Lord Muskerry has stayed at Springfield Castle to this day. The castle was burnt in 1921 during the war of Independence and rebuilt by Bob Deane, the 5th Baron in 1929.

The 9th Baron, Robert Fitzmaurice Deane, lives in South Africa, and is funding a restoration project for the renovation of the East Tower, and the Tower house. The castle is available to rent to private groups, while a café opened in Spring 2019.



Springfield Castle

Co-op Creamery

One of the key tourist destinations within the town is the Co-operative Creamery. Dromcollogher was one of the starting points of the Irish Co-Operative Movement, with the first Co-Operative creamery being set up in the town in 1889 on the initiative of Horace Plunkett.

The listed building was restored in 2005 with the aim that it would open as the National Dairy Cooperative Museum. The building no longer operates as a museum due to funding and lack of tourist numbers. All the equipment within the museum is in place and if a tourist wishes to visit the museum they need to contact a member of the community group to organise a visit. The museum is sometimes used for school groups and visiting groups. Some of the avenues that could be explored are noted below.



The co-operative Creamery building was restored in 2005

- Interactive audio-visual portal to be placed on external wall to front of building for use by visitors as part of Heritage Trail, or who visit the town and have not organised a site visit to the building - in consultation with Conservation Officer;
- Interpretation inside building to be duplicated and placed on the four external walls of building to tell the story of the Creamery, when it is not open to the public - in consultation with Conservation Officer;
- Specific marketing of the Museum in the months of June, July and August for tours to visit the building – limiting volunteers required to staff the building to this summer period (schools/ Men’s Sheds groups/ Macra, etc.);
- Create specific package tours with guests staying at Springfield Castle and the Longcourt House Hotel – exploring the agricultural assets of Dromcollogher; and
- Package tours to niche markets – such as European clubs with interest in old industrial processes/ agriculture, etc.



The travelling creamery

Dromcollogher - The Song

Percy French, the renowned Irish Composer, once stayed in Dromcollogher and composed the song “There’s Only One Street In Dromcollogher.

*“I suppose you’ve not been to Dromcollogher?
Ye haven’t? Well now I declare,
You must wait till you’ve been to Dromcollogher,
And seen the fine place we have there.”*

ACTION PLAN	
D1	Appoint an interpretive consultant to undertake review of Dromcollogher and the creamery and advise on how the building could be advertised to a wider audience.
D2	Deliver signage for Dromcollogher Heritage Trail and use as a key marketing tool for tourism in the area. COMPLETE
D3	Undertake feasibility study to develop Dromcollogher Library into Information Centre and shared space with extended opening hours.
D4	Undertake feasibility for town website - possibility that this could be hosted through Limerick.ie.
D5	Opportunities for cross promotion of town with neighbouring towns of Newcastle West, Charleville, Broadford and the wider West Limerick area.



9. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

This plan has evolved through extensive consultation with the local community. The range of projects have been identified and developed as a result of this extensive consultation process.

The project themes and associated projects should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals as projects are delivered and contextual circumstances change.

As indicated under each theme there have been a number of actions identified to enable the delivery of the projects.

The scale and complexity of certain projects means that delivery cannot take place over the short term. Therefore while some of the large scale projects (i.e public realm improvements to Town Square) are being prepared, short term deliverables (i.e town threshold improvements) are taken forward.

For each of the projects, the importance of quality must be underlined. Not only in the materials used, but the standard of design, construction techniques and maintenance once complete. It is also important that the branding, physical and digital, unifies the brand of the town.

The process undertaken has highlighted some of the key issues that the community would like to see addressed within the town. This plan should be used as a tool to deliver these key projects within Dromcollogher.

This plan is the next step in consolidating Dromcollogher's rich history and securing its future potential for the benefit of all.



