Rathkeale

Town Centre First Plan
November 2025

Rathkeale Town Team

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ATTRIBUTES   **VISION**   **CHALLENGES**   **PATHWAY**   **ACTION**   **PROGRESS**

The Rathkeale Town Team is pleased to introduce the Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan. This Plan has been crafted through various public engagements with the local community, businesses and stakeholders. Our local community is our most valuable asset, and by collaborating with everyone to implement this plan, we will achieve delivery of transformational projects for the future sustainable growth of Rathkeale. The Plan leverages tangible possibilities for our town to obtain funding based on these proposals and represents a crucial initial step in the long-term development of Rathkeale. This Plan harnesses the significant potential of our town and provides a clear strategy that seeks to revitalise the heart of our town centre, enhancing it as a place to live, work and visit, both now and for future generations. We, the Town Team, look forward to collaborating with our community, Limerick City and County Council, and other stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of the proposals detailed in this Plan.

Rathkeale
Town Centre First Plan

"The TCF Plan itself will build upon the positive attributes of the town, address the challenges it faces, and offer a comprehensive path forward to revitalise the town and secure a desirable place to live and work. The TCF Plan will outline a shared vision for the development of the town centre and immediate surrounds, will be action orientated, and will identify specific interventions required to meet the objectives of the plan."

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Photography by Clara Planelles, Ray Hogan and LCCC

Glossary

AA	Appropriate Assessment		LCETB	Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board
AGS	An Garda Síochána		LDC	Local Development Company
BCP	Broadband Connection Point		LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028
BER	Building Energy Rating		LEO	Local Enterprise Office
BHIS	Built Heritage Investment Scheme		LSP	Limerick Sports Partnership
CAP	Climate Action Plan		MD	Municipal District
LDP	Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028		MP	Mayoral Programme
CLÁR	Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais		NDP	National Development Plan Review 2025
CSO	Central Statistics Office		NPF	National Planning Framework
CTCH	Collaborative Town Centre Health Check		NPO	National Policy Objectives
DCDE	Department of Children, Disability and Equality		NSO	National Strategic Outcomes
DEY	Department of Education and Youth		NTA	National Transport Authority
DCCS	Department of Culture, Communications and Sport		OPW	Office of Public Works
DCEE	Department of Climate, Energy and Environment		ORIS	Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
DHLGH	Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage		OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
DJHM	Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migratio		PPN	Public Participation Network
DRCDG	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht		RT	Rathkeale Together
DoT	Department of Transport		RLS	Repair and Leasing Scheme
DTB	Digital Town Blueprint		RPO	Regional Policy Objectives
EC	European Commission		RRDF	Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
ED	Electoral Division		RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
EGD	European Green Deal		SAC	Special Area of Conservation
EI	Enterprise Ireland		SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment		SHIP	Social Housing Investment Programme
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency		SPA	Special Protection Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund		SCOT	Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats
EU	European Union		SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment		TCF	Town Centre First
HEI	Higher Education Institution		TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
HSF	Historic Structures Fund		TUS	Technological University of the Shannon – Midlands Mid-West
IDA	Industrial Development Agency		TRO	Town Regeneration Officer
LCCC	Limerick City and County Council		TVRS	Town and Village Renewal Scheme
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee		UL	University of Limerick
			UN	United Nations

RATHKEALE TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN

Vision

This Town Centre First Plan will promote Rathkeale as a town in transition, providing a new direction for future community, residential and economic investment, encouraging and supporting a renewed focus for local community life.

Introduction

1.0 **Introduction**

The Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan provides a unique opportunity to guide the development of the town into the future and to deliver real change for the local community, local business and visitors to the town.

Rathkeale is part of the second phase of the Town Centre First Programme under the National Town Centre First initiative and has been awarded government funding to prepare a Town Centre First (TCF) Plan. The plan is being led by Rathkeale's Town Team in conjunction with Limerick City and County Council. The plan has been informed by local community and stakeholder engagement.

In accordance with Town Centre First Policy, this Plan will focus on key projects and sustainable proposals that focus on town centre regeneration.

The plan is structured according to national TCF policy under the following sections:

- **Collaboration and Communication -** A collaborative process involving the formation of the Town Team and clear communication with all relevant local stakeholders in respect of issues raised and the agreed direction.

- **Understanding the Place -** A collection of relevant spatial information and survey data.

- **Defining the Place -** Identification of key projects.

- **Enabling the Place -** Identifying a clear path for delivery of the key projects, which will require actions of varying scale to be delivered through different funding schemes and relevant partners.

Map 1: Rathkeale Town Centre First boundary

LEGEND
Collaboration and Communication — Defining the Place
Understanding the Place — Enabling the Place

The 14 Month Town Centre First Plan Process

'Town Centre First – A policy Approach for Irish Towns' represents a new approach to the development of our towns where local communities and local business can be central to reimagining their own towns and planning their own futures.

The format of the Rathkeale TCF plan has been aligned with the core elements of the Town Centre First Policy as outlined below.

1.1 Rathkeale TCF Context

Rathkeale is strategically located off of the N21 (National Primary Road) Limerick to Tralee road 31km south-west of Limerick City between Adare and Newcastle West. It has an approximate population of 1,231 as per Census 2022. The town itself is nestled alongside the River Deel which flows through the town until it reaches the Shannon Estuary at Askeaton. It has a thriving industrial base on the periphery of the town and a mix of retail, hospitality and community services in the town centre. The Limerick Greenway is located to the north of the town and has great tourism potential as well as active travel and amenity uses, including walking and cycling.

Rathkeale is located in the Adare-Rathkeale Municipal District and is strategically located for growth and investment. It is the purpose of this Town Centre First plan to have regard to existing objectives contained within the Rathkeale Local Area Plan (LAP) 2023-2029 to help achieve the vision for Rathkeale in a strategic and phased approach. The plan seeks to rejuvenate the town centre by addressing the social, economic, historic and environmental opportunities and challenges within Rathkeale and seek funding which seeks to deliver key projects.

1.2 Town Centre First Policy

Town Centre First policy recognises that every town is unique. It lays the foundation for each town to develop their own plan-led strategy at a local level. This will be expressed through a tailored TCF Plan which is underpinned by a clear analysis of local strengths and challenges. This TCF Plan will be driven by the local community and businesses as part of a Town Team who will be supported by Town Regeneration Officer and technical expertise within Limerick City and County Council.

The Town Centre First policy recognises that successful places:

- ➔ Are characterised by an attractive public realm (streets, spaces and parks) that is designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell;

- ➔ Contain a variety of services/shops that provide employment opportunities, enable people to shop locally and meet the needs of the local community;

- ➔ Provide a range of cultural, recreational and community spaces (that includes scope for periodic events and festivals) that bring together community members and attract visitors/tourists;

- ➔ Contain a well maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces;

- ➔ Conserve, adapt and highlight historical buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity;

- ➔ Are attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop;

- ➔ Are well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport, enabling a high proportion of journeys to be made by foot and/or bicycle from the immediate hinterland (e.g. the '10 minute town' concept).

- ➔ Manage traffic within central areas so that streets prioritise vulnerable users (pedestrians and cyclists), enabling them to move about safely and in comfort;

- ➔ Provide a mix of housing typologies and tenures to cater for diverse communities in terms of age, income and mobility;

- ➔ Utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle;

- ➔ Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.

Key Elements of Town Centre First Approach

Town Centre First Policy is supported by a targeted investment programme. This includes Key Funding Streams such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS), and the Croí Cónaithe (Vacant Homes) Fund. However, many other schemes support the revitalisation of town centres.

Key Town Centre First Funding Options

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

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

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) supports the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. The fund is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development,

with a commitment of €1 billion in funding up to 2027. The RRDF supports ambitious investments of scale to deliver town centre regeneration, including projects which aim to repurpose derelict, disused or heritage buildings, deliver remote working and enterprise spaces, build or transform libraries, deliver tourism infrastructure and generally support greater activity, footfall, business and residency. The funding is awarded through a competitive bid process, proposals are invited from Local Authorities and other locally/regionally based organisations such as Local Development Companies.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme is a funding scheme first introduced in 2016 as a measure to rejuvenate rural towns and villages throughout Ireland. This scheme is part of "Our Rural Future - Ireland's Rural Development Policy 2021 - 2025" as is funded under Project Ireland 2040. Since the launch of the scheme in 2016 over €177 million has been allocated to more than 1,800 projects. This scheme is supported by the Town Centre First Policy and the priorities under the scheme are reviewed each year with the scheme revised as appropriate.

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) is designed to support the revitalisation of rural towns and villages through a renewed focus on town centre economic and social recovery. This scheme is supported by the Town Centre First Policy and the priorities under the scheme are reviewed each year with the scheme revised as appropriate. It is a competitive process where Local Authorities submit applications to the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Housing for All - Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund

There are two schemes under the Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund which are delivered by local authorities. The **Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant** provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties, while under the **Ready to Build Scheme**, local authorities make serviced sites available in towns and villages at a discounted rate to individuals who want to build their own home.

The grants underpin the policy objectives set out in Pathway Four 'Addressing Vacancy and the Efficient Use of our Existing Stock' of 'Housing for All'. The grants are aimed at addressing the blight of vacant and derelict properties across cities, towns and villages by bringing them back into use, adding vibrancy and providing new accommodation on these areas.

Croí Cónaithe has two streams with different supports:

➲ **Stream 1,** which is the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, provides people with a grant of up to a maximum of €50,000 to support the

refurbishment of vacant properties, and up to €70,000 for derelict properties.

- **Stream 2,** which is the Ready to Build Scheme, provides local authorities with the ability to make serviced sites available, at a discount on the market value (up to a maximum of €30,000) within towns and villages to potential individual purchasers (building must be occupied as the principal private residence of the purchaser).

Other Funding Opportunities

There are also other grant schemes available which would support the regeneration of Rathkeale. The following is a non-exhaustive list:

- Housing for All initiative – such as Repair and Lease, Buy and Renew, etc.
- Creative Ireland Grant Scheme;
- Heritage Council - Community Heritage Fund;
- Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage - Community Monuments Fund;
- SEAI Community and Business Grants;
- Local Authority Community Grants;
- Fáilte Ireland Small Grants Scheme;
- Local Enterprise Office Financial Supports;
- NTA Active Travel Grants Programme.

1.3 Overriding Status of the Plan

Implementing this Plan will involve Limerick City and County Council helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans setting out public policy for sustainable development, including that relating to land use developments, land use activities, tourism and environmental protection and environmental management.

This Plan is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents which are subject to environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment, as appropriate, and which informs the decision-making and consent-granting framework. The Plan does not provide consent or establish a framework for granting consent and will not itself be binding on any decisions relating to the granting of consent.

This Plan fully aligns with the provisions of documents including the existing National Planning Framework, Ireland 2040, Climate Action Plan 2025, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 2020-2032, Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 and Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029, all of which have been subject to legislative requirements relating to public consultation and environmental assessment/screening for environmental assessment.

In order to be realised, the types of projects referred to in the Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with various legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework. This includes provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management that have been integrated into these documents. It is a specific provision of this Plan to ensure that all of the provisions from the Development Plan and Local Area Plan (including those identified in the accompanying Screening for SEA report) shall be complied with throughout the implementation of the Plan.

Policy Context

2.0 **Policy Context**

Policy Context

The Rathkeale TCF Plan has been developed to align with European, National, Regional and Local policies and therefore aligns with these planning policy documents.
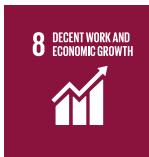
The TCF plan is an evidence based, non-statutory document which has been developed in conjunction with the Rathkeale Local Community, the Rathkeale Town Team and other stakeholders. The purpose of the plan is to identify key projects in the town which will enable the Rathkeale Town Team to leverage funding for the delivery of the projects in the short to medium-term.

United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030

The U.N. 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity which seeks to better incorporate sustainability into planning and policy.

This plan is aligned with Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2022-2024. Below is a brief assessment of the plan against each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

2.1 European, National and Local Policy

SDG 1 - No Poverty

The Town Centre First plan will assist in delivering new employment, enterprise and housing opportunities within the Town Centre to help provide a more prosperous future for all residents.

SDG 2 - Zero Hunger

The plan proposes a diversity of planting in the town centre. There could also be an opportunity for the provision of community allotments/gardens where local people are encouraged to grow their own food.

SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being

The plan proposes transforming Rathkeale into a safer, more pedestrian friendly town which could improve and encourage physical activity and active travel.

SDG 4 - Quality Education

A number of the key projects will have educational elements will involve collaboration with local schools.

SDG 5 - Gender Equality

Employment opportunities arising from key projects should adhere with gender equality policies.

SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

Surface water should be managed locally utilising SUDS and blue/green infrastructure and evolving technologies.

SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy

Potential for Green Tech investment capitalising on future Shannon Estuary proposals in Foynes.

SDG 8 - Decent work and Economic Growth

The activation of enterprise and employment zoned lands should bring opportunities increased vibrancy and footfall throughout the town, which would enhance the existing economy.

SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

A number of projects provide opportunities for expansion and innovation within the town centre and in existing enterprise and employment zoned lands.

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

Projects identified should have consideration for all members of the community, including teenagers, older people and ethnic minorities.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

The Town Centre First Plan is based on the core principles of sustainable urban design.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

Where possible, materials should be re-used.

SDG 13 - Climate Action

The proposals in this plan incorporate the sustainable adaptive re-use of existing buildings, upgrade of existing amenities and incorporate blue/green infrastructure to lessen the impact of climate change.

SDG 14 - Life Below Water

Incorporating blue/green infrastructure into Public Realm schemes can help to minimise the impact of development on the environment.

SDG 15 - Life on Land

The Town Centre First Plan includes projects that support biodiversity and encourage the development of blue/green infrastructure.

SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The Town Team will consider the needs and views of the local community who were surveyed and consulted during the development of this plan. Revitalised towns thrive when residents feel included and feel they can contribute to the decision-making process.

SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals

The Town Team and LCCC continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to seek to deliver better outcomes for Rathkeale and facilitate applications for key projects in line with the SDGs.

Hierarchy of plans in Ireland

E.U. Legislation and Policy

National Planning Framework
(Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
(Southern Regional Assembly)

City and County Development Plan
(Planning Authorities)

Local Area Plans
(Planning Authorities)

European Policy

European Green Deal

The European Green Deal is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use. It is about improving the well-being of people, making Europe climate neutral and protecting the natural habitat which will be good for people, the planet, and the economy. The aims of the Green Deal are for Europe to become climate-neutral by 2050; to protect human life, animals, and plants by cutting pollution; to help companies become world leaders in clean products and technologies; and to help ensure a just and inclusive transition.

National Policy

Project 2040: National Planning Framework and National Development Plan Review 2025
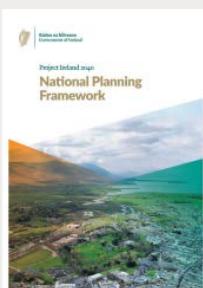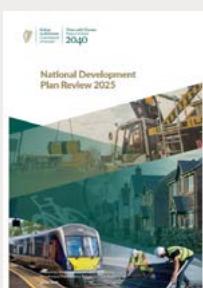
The National Planning Framework (NPF) – Ireland 2040 is the government's strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to 2040. The NPF is partnered with the National Development Plan (NDP), which outlines a programme of investment. It also sets out the key principles that will guide future development across the country, addressing issues such as compact growth, making stronger urban places, creating strong and vibrant communities, and ensuring a healthy, liveable environment. This will be achieved through 10 National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and regional and local plans must align with the NSOs.

The National Development Plan Review 2025 sets out the government's overarching investment strategy and budget from 2026-2030, enabling delivery of the NSOs and priorities set out in the NPF. This significant funding source will support both urban regeneration and rural rejuvenation through a €3 billion Regeneration and Development Fund.

Our Rural Future – Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

The policy represents the Irish Government's blueprint for the development of rural Ireland from 2021-2025. It provides the framework to achieve the vision of transforming the quality of life and opportunity for people living in rural areas.

Our Rural Future contains a number of key commitments that deliver on the aim to support the regeneration, repopulation and development of rural towns and villages to contribute to local and national economic recovery, and to enable people to live and work in a high quality environment.
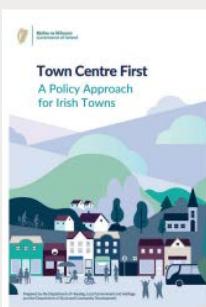
Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022

The Town Centre First Policy seeks to support and complement existing policy documents and the key objective of this policy is to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

The policy lays the foundation for towns to develop their own plan, which paves the way to rejuvenate their town centre and sets the foundations for funding streams to deliver projects, which are crucial to this revival.
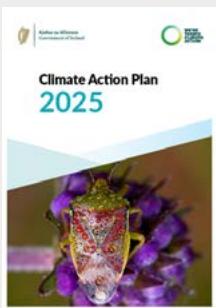
Climate Action Plan 2025

The purpose of the Climate Action Plan is to lay out a roadmap of actions which will ultimately lead us to meeting our national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

Regional Policy
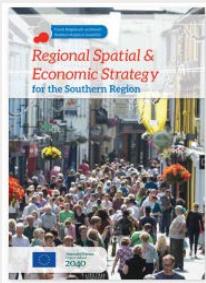
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework at a regional level. It identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives. The development of Limerick will be shaped by the Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) which provide a framework for the spatial and economic development of the Southern Region. At this strategic level it provides a framework for investment to better manage spatial planning and economic development to sustainably grow the region to 2031 and beyond.

Local Policy

Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

The Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028 sets out the blueprint for the physical, socio-economic, and environmental development of Limerick over a six-year period up to 2028 and beyond and sets out the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Limerick over the plan period. The Plan has been formulated to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Framework and the Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. The Plan aligns with the principles of compact growth, developing sustainable transport and capitalising on natural assets, to enhance connectivity and quality of life for the residents of Limerick.
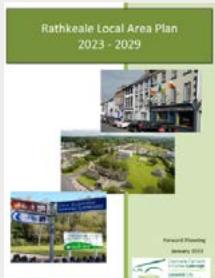
Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029

The Rathkeale LAP sets out a land use strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of Rathkeale to 2029, whilst complying with the provisions of higher-level spatial plans.   The LAP is consistent with the objectives of the higher level spatial plans, including the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (RSES) and the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.   The Town Centre First Plan and the Local Area Plan align to support the development of Rathkeale.

Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The Climate Action Plan for 2024 to 2029 builds on the work achieved by the previous Climate Adaption Plan and Development Plans and demonstrates the increased ambition of Limerick City and County Council to play a significant role in delivering adaptation and mitigation measures at local and community levels.
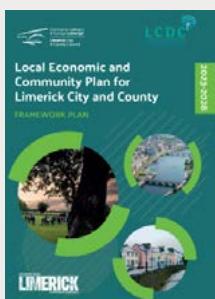
Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2028

The Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) is a 6-year plan for local economic development and local community development across Limerick. It is about working together to achieve the sustainable development of communities in Limerick.

Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2030

The Limerick Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) provides a framework to guide the work of everyone involved in the conservation of the natural environmental in Limerick.

Policy Compliance

Mayoral Programme – More for Limerick 2024-2029

The Mayoral Programme – More for Limerick 2024-2029 outlines how Limerick can become more liveable, more prosperous and more healthy.

The Adare-Rathkeale Municipal District is about to enter a transformative era, ready to capitalise on its strategic location and its cultural assets. **The Shannon Estuary Growth Triangle** runs from Adare to Kilmallock and to Limerick's only Level 2 Key Town, Newcastle West, this triangle facilitates further hub and spoke ecosystems centred in their three towns and involving nearby towns and villages such as **Rathkeale**, Athea and Croom, for services, population growth and enterprise.

The Shannon Estuary, and particularly Foynes, represents a significant opportunity for Foreign Direct Investment heavy engineering, manufacturing and new green industry and job creation. The proposed offshore renewable energy development opportunities for this region are well documented. This initiative will position the Adare-Rathkeale Municipal District as a key player in Ireland's transition to sustainable energy. By working with government bodies, particularly the Department of the Taoiseach, we will address local challenges and drive key regeneration projects. These efforts include reactivating the former Bank of Ireland building, implementing a public realm scheme, and delivering alternative housing options to increase the population and vibrancy of **Rathkeale**.

Key Strategic Priorities for Rathkeale

AR04

Revitalisation of Derelict and Vacant Properties - Implement strategies to address dereliction and activate vacant properties, both social and privately owned, to expand affordable housing options and revitalise communities. Explore a pilot housing project in Rathkeale to introduce a new ownership model for affordable rental housing.

MH05

Establish a Task Force, integrated into the Limerick PI 2040 Delivery Board, or More Healthy Limerick subcommittee of the Mayoral Implementation and Advisory Committee, to include HSE representatives to remove blockages which have delayed primary health care centres for years on the Ennis Road, in Raheen and in Rathkeale or find alternative locations and establish a time-based delivery programme to be monitored by the Task Force.

2.2 Digital Town Blueprint
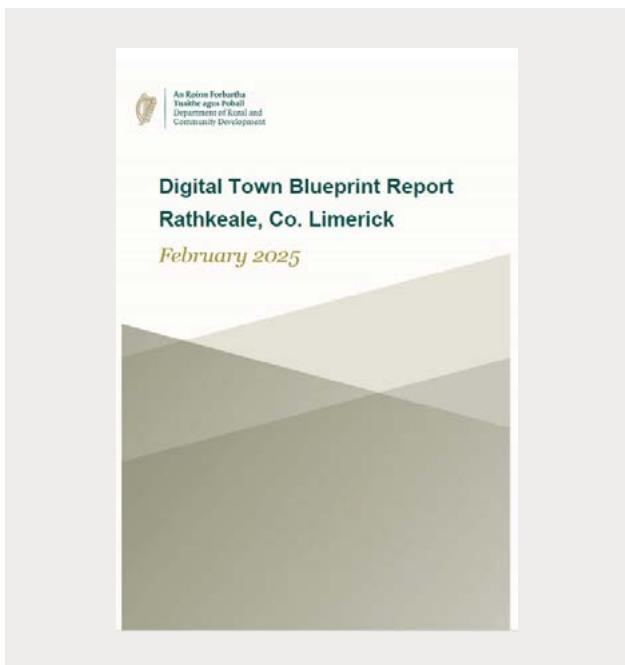
The availability of digital technologies has transformed many areas of how people interact and how businesses operate and that has brought many opportunities and challenges. Currently there is no co-working hub/space available in Rathkeale town centre.   The National Remote Working Strategy (2020) and the National Hub Network (ConnectedHubs.ie) aims to build on the progress made in the adoption of remote work and to ensure that remote working is a permanent feature in the Irish workplace in a way that maximises economic, social and environmental benefits. These benefits include increasing participation in the labour market, attracting and retaining talent, enabling balanced regional development, alleviating accommodation pressures, improving work/life balance, improving child and family wellbeing, reducing the amount of time spent commuting, and reducing transport-related carbon emissions and air pollution (Remote Working Strategy, 2020). The benefits of digital and remote working will need to be promoted and supported by appropriate services and networks.

Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) Report Rathkeale, Co. Limerick. February 2025.

The Digital Town Blueprint (DTB) report was prepared and funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCDG) by the Irish Institute of Digital Business at Dublin City University (DCU) and funded by DRCDG. The Digital Town Blueprint is designed to be used by policymakers and town teams to help create a targeted local digital action plan and to measure a town's digital readiness.
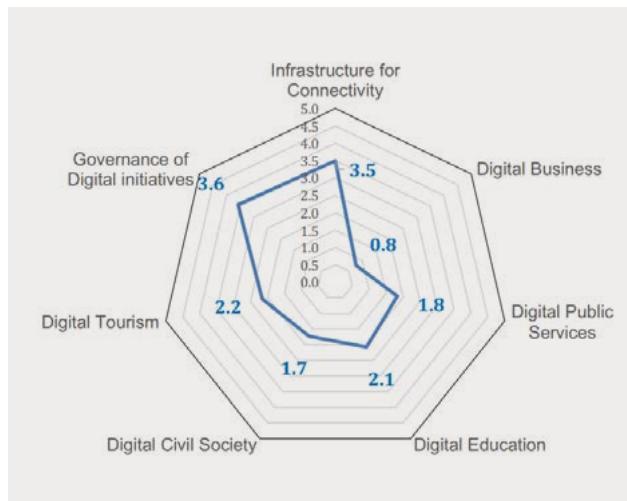
Digital Town Score

Based on the analysis undertaken as part of the process Rathkeale received an overall Digital Town Score of **50.2**. This aligns with readiness score between 40-59 and dimension level 3 in the report which categorises Rathkeale as **Defined Competitive**. This states that 'there is clear evidence of digital readiness. Use and sophistication of digital technologies and capabilities are documented and planned'.

A key objective of this analysis is to provide an insight into key indicators for improvement at a town-level. The numbers individually have very little meaning without comparators. However, as presented they do show gaps between performance today and potential in the future. The report notes that 'KPIs are competitive relative to peer towns and regional, national and EU averages'.

The diagram gives a summary of the dimensions. Rathkeale scored highest in Governance of Digital Town Initiatives. This shows that there is good horizontal and vertical coordination across policy making among a wide range of stakeholders. It scored badly on Digital Business and Digital Civil Society, which weights Website Technology Intensity Score, Digital Technology take-up and E-commerce take-up.

The town scored second highest on Infrastructure for Connectivity - demonstrating it has good connectivity including fixed and mobile broadband and competition among Irish telecom providers.

The town scored relatively poorly on Digital Tourism, particularly on Smart tourism and Digital Infrastructure. Rathkeale does have its own designated website www.rathkeale.com which includes news and information about upcoming events and has a directory on businesses, clubs and societies. However, further development is required in this area. The Council will engage with the Town Team to develop this area further.

Collaboration and Communication

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future

Town Centre First

Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City
& County Council

ATLANTIC EDGE
LIMERICK
EUROPEAN EMBRACE

3

Big and small squares are unattractive and unwelcoming

Age friendly parking spaces should be provided

Abbey Park is unattractive and uninviting, Band Stand and seating in park could be more attractive and usable

**Cars on footpaths at several locations**

3.0 Collaboration and Communication

3.1 Process and Engagement

Collaboration and communication are key components in the formation of the Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan. Community and stakeholder engagement was essential in guiding the Plan and in the identification of key projects that will make positive long-term changes in Rathkeale.

Rathkeale Town Centre First (TCF) Plan Programme Timeline

October 2023	➔ Identification of all relevant stakeholders and contact details collected. ➔ Elected members notified.	**September/ October 2024**	➔ Meetings with all sectors of the community. ➔ Preparation of Business, Community and Employee/Volunteer Surveys. ➔ Completion of Business, Community and Employee/Volunteer Surveys.
November 2023	➔ Adverts/Social Media/Church Notes regarding the formation of the Town Team were published. ➔ Initial meeting with identified stakeholders and formation of town team (Open Invite Issued).	**November 2024**	➔ Review of survey responses. ➔ Preparation of Draft Plan for non-statutory public consultation.
December 2023/January 2024	➔ Analysis of Town issues and key data. ➔ Strengths, Challenges. Opportunities, Threats (SCOT) analysis.	**December 2024**	➔ Draft Plan published including suggested key projects. ➔ Non-Statutory Public Consultation process. Thursday 12th December to Friday 31st January.
May/June 2024	➔ Schools consultation - 2 National Schools (St. Anne's and St. Joseph's).	**January 2025**	➔ Review of submissions arising from the public consultation process.
July/August 2024	➔ A walkability audit was conducted in conjunction with Age Friendly Ireland and the Brothers of Charity. ➔ Mapping exercises. ➔ Desktop Research.	**February/July 2025**	➔ Review of Plan by Town Team and Key Stakeholders. ➔ Final list of projects agreed with the Town Team.
		September 2025	➔ Publication of Final Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan.
		October 2025	➔ Adoption of plan by Town Team. Official launch of Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan.
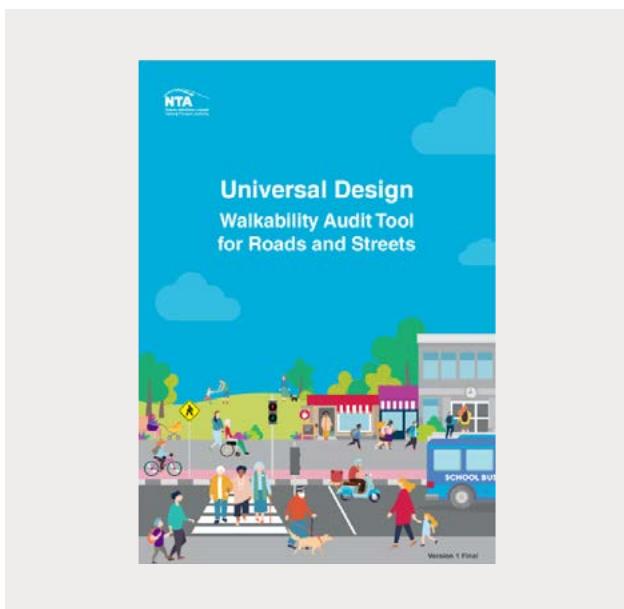
Walkability Audit with Age Friendly Team LCCC and the Brothers of Charity

A walkability audit of Rathkeale town centre took place on the 10th of July 2024, organised by Limerick City and County Council in conjunction with Age Friendly Team and the Brothers of Charity. The purpose of the audit was to capture the needs of people with a wide range of abilities to share their experience of using local roads and streets.

A number of improvements and actions were identified. A summary of the findings and observations are outlined below:

➔ Pedestrian Crossings – Need to be repainted, lights to be provided,

➔ Footpaths and Dropped Kerbs – Reduce the height of drop kerbs, reduce the use of cobblelock as a material for footpaths.

➔ Public Seating – Street furniture should be provided and general 'greening' of the town centre should be undertaken.

➔ Parking and Traffic – Age friendly parking spaces should be provided, cars parking on footpaths, 2 way traffic on very narrow streets/lanes, illegal U-turns at Bank Place

➔ Bollards – Too close to disabled parking spaces

➔ Signage and Temporary Works – Signage is too small and unnoticeable

➔ Town – There is a need for disabled entrances to public buildings and businesses, big and small squares are unattractive and unwelcoming, all weather pitch next to the Abbey needs to be replaced, Abbey Park is unattractive and uninviting, Band Stand and seating in park could be more attractive and usable

➔ Public Toilets – In poor condition

3.2 Formation of the Town Team

The process of forming the Town Team was initiated by the Town Regeneration Officer and a public meeting was advertised in November 2023 for people who were interested in becoming part of the Town Team. The formal Town Team was formed in December 2023. The Plan is driven by the Town Team and has the support of the Town Regeneration Officer and a multidisciplinary team in Limerick City and County Council. Town Team meetings were held, consultations with local schools and surveys were conducted throughout 2024 and 15 key projects were identified based on the information gathered during this process.

3.3 Walkability Audit, Schools Consultation and Survey Results

As part of the data gathering process a consultation with local schools and surveys were undertaken in Rathkeale.

Schools Consultation

A consultation with local schools took place in June 2024. Of the 3 local primary schools, St. Anne's and St. Joseph's were consulted. The workshop focused on the children's perspective of likes and dislikes about Rathkeale and also about services and facilities that are needed in the town.

The key findings of the schools consultations are outlined below:

What do the Children like about Rathkeale?

- Very quiet – you can hear the birds
- Greenway
- Parades
- Fishing on the River
- People

Issues/don't like about Rathkeale

- Playground – dirty/smelly/ equipment broken/needs a separate area for older kids
- Too Much Traffic
- Bus can't get through the Town
- Not safe to cycle
- No pedestrian crossings at busy locations
- Trees overhanging at the Graveyard road
- Litter/ rubbish on streets

Surveys

Public surveys were carried out during October/November 2024. Three separate surveys were conducted to find out the opinion of the local community (80 responses), businesses owners (20 responses) and employees/volunteers (38 responses) in relation to Rathkeale's strengths, weaknesses, availability of services and connection with the town. Below is a summary of comments and recommendations based on the 138 surveys gathered.

A selection of survey comments

"Traffic and parking during the seasonal months of Dec/Jan is mad around town"

"More Garda presence needs to be made available"

"It's a great town but needs help to rejuvenate it and bring more businesses in and tackle dereliction".

Where do the Children like to go after School?

- Sports – GAA, Soccer, Boxing, Playground
- Music
- Play at home – estates are safe
- Green area at the Abbey

What does Rathkeale need?

- More activity in the Community Centre for children;
- Greening of the town – planting/trees/flowers
- More benches
- Cinema
- Restaurants that open on a Sunday
- More bins
- More events – festivals and parades
- More streetlights
- Ball wall
- More shops
- Nowhere for young people to go – youth club/café
- Signage for the Council car – park – so people will stop and know where to park
- More parking at the Playground

"Great little town but needs a lot of work all round"

"Some fabulous architectural buildings that are not being shown off/utilised (Cafés, Restaurants, public buildings)"

"Reduce street parking, increase space on the street"

"If we had more housing it would encourage more young families to live in the town which would increase footfall and therefore attract more businesses and shops. The people of Rathkeale are the best but we need help and funding to improve the town"

Survey Responses – Key Findings

The findings from the Walkability Audit, Schools Consultation and Public Surveys collated were essential in informing what key projects were to be included in the Rathkeale TCF Plan.

The majority of employees who responded travel to work by **car**.

32.5% of Community Survey respondents feel that over the last two years Rathkeale is getting a little worse.

We asked "what would you recommend as the top three priorities to help drive economic development in Rathkeale?" 1. Providing enterprise support to SME's and micro companies. 2. Providing training and upskilling opportunities. 3.Providing turnkey commercial/industrial spaces

Improve the appearance of the town centre buildings. Have them painted or develop an aesthetics plan for refreshing them....

Location, 30 mins from Limerick is good for industry. Develop the offering for industrial facilities for other manufacturing companies and it could become a manufacturing/engineering hub...

Streetscape, dereliction, illegal dumping of rubbish, speeding, antisocial behavior and adequate policing...

The majority of employees who responded are employed in **Manufacturing**.

You ranked these top two favourite things about Rathkeale town

1. **The Limerick Greenway**
2. **Community Spirit**

The main reasons for visiting Rathkeale are for **work** and **shopping** purposes

We asked, "In your opinion, what is the most important project for Rathkeale Town Centre?" The majority of people agreed that the Re-use of the former Bank of Ireland on Main Street was **the most important**.

Rathkeale has a rich cultural heritage which could be marketed more to attract visitors

Rathkeale's Key **strengths** are
1. The Limerick Greenway
2. Community Spirit
3. Location

When we asked how would you like to see vacant buildings in Rathkeale Town Centre reused/redeveloped, for example, the former Bank of Ireland, Old Convent, derelict houses on Lower Main Street?

Most Community Survey respondents said business, housing, family resource centre or for education purposes.

The community spirit in Rathkeale is brilliant, we just need help and funding to invest in the town to bring it back to its former glory....

LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL

PREPARATION OF A DRAFT TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN FOR RATHKEALE

Limerick City and County Council have prepared a Draft Town Centre First Plan for Rathkeale. The Plan has been prepared in line with the National Policy 'Town Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns' and is a regeneration and renewal focused plan, with a view to strengthening the role, image, vibrancy, vitality and resilience of Rathkeale town centre. The Plan is informed by consultation that has taken place to date and from the valuable input from the Town Team, and the local community, which now translates into an ambitious action plan for the future development of Rathkeale.

Share

Submissions

5 submissions have raised observations relating to this consultation.

Themes

Town Centre   Active Travel

Economic Development

Public Realm and Open Space

Materials

Draft – Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan – D...
36.82 MB

Data Protection Privacy Statement - Draft R...
737.55 KB

Advert - Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan D...
57 KB

Dashboard

View graphs and filter submission data for this consultation

3.4 Public Consultation Observations

The Rathkeale Town Centre First Plan (Draft) public consultation was carried out between 12th December 2024 and 31st January 2025. The Draft Plan was available online on Limerick City and County Council's MyPoint page and it was on display at Limerick City and County Council's public offices.

Key issues highlighted in the submissions included:

- Active Travel link
- Bus Connectivity and accessibility
- Improve town centre services
- Wayfinding signage
- Address building vacancy and dereliction
- Develop and promote Rathkeale's Heritage assets

Understanding the Place

RATHKEALE TOWN CENTRE FIRST PLAN

RATHKEALE Co. LIMERICK. 9642. W.L.

4.0 Understanding the Place

4.1 Overview and History of Rathkeale

Rathkeale is a historic rural town surrounded by low lying landscape. The River Deel flows North through the town and the town has untapped potential for tourism and recreational uses.

The town has a high level of vacancy and under-use in contrast to other Irish towns of similar size. Many properties, such as the former Bank of Ireland building and Saint Anne's Convent have remained empty for a number of years. The town centre has lost many of its commercial premises to residential use. The town's main functions include manufacturing [Anglo Beef Processors (ABP) and businesses in the Rathkeale Industrial Estate], retail, small scale enterprises, educational, community and religious buildings.

The town has significant space dedicated to cars. Off-street parking is underused as vehicle owners prefer to use on-street space for parking. The town centre has limited greening and planting. However, there are opportunities for Rathkeale to capitalise on its high quality transport connectivity, for further economic development and future residential development, to improve public realm spaces and increase active travel connections with the Limerick Greenway.

In order for Rathkeale to fulfil its potential, the town requires consolidation of land use, investment in services, infrastructure, sustainable transport, amenities and local employment balanced with high quality housing delivery.

Key historical dates

902
The name Rathkeale comes from the Irish 'Ráth Caola', believed to be derived from Ráth gCaeli, which means "the fort of the Caeli" or "the Rath of Caola".

1289
The importance of Rathkeale as a centre can be traced back to the foundation of an Augustinian priory in the town.

1410
The Earls of Desmond used Rathkeale as a base and Castle Matrix, built as a fortress in or around 1410 by the Thomas Fitzgerald, 7th Earl of Desmond, was the principal stronghold of the Desmonds in the area.

1709
Palatine settlements were founded around Rathkeale area. By 1720 up to twenty-five German families were settled along a laneway in the centre of Killeheen townland.

1840
Rathkeale Catholic Church was built at Thomas Street. It replaced a thatched Catholic Chapel, mass house situated on Chapel Lane. It was used until 1873 when the present St. Mary's Catholic Church was opened and its tower and spire were completed in 1881.

1831
The Protestant Church was built on the site of a medieval parish church.

1850
The Sisters of Mercy opened a convent in Rathkeale. It closed in 2013.

History

The importance of Rathkeale as a centre can be traced back to the foundation of an Augustinian priory in the town in 1289. Its location on the River Deel added to its influence in the area. The arrival of the Palatines also contributed to the development of Rathkeale. The Palatines were Lutheran refugees who fled from the Rhenish Palatinate of Germany due to an invasion by the French. They came to the area in 1708-09 under the patronage of Lord Southwell. Approximately twelve hundred Palatines came to settle in the area and brought with them new ideas in farming and were a large contributing factor to the development of the town. Rathkeale was also a major market town for the area and held seven fairs throughout the year.

The name Rathkeale comes from the Irish 'Ráth Caola', believed to be derived from Ráth gCaeli, which means "the fort of the Caeli" or "the Rath of Caola".

Rathkeale witnessed a surge in industrialisation throughout the eighteenth century. In 1717 a factory for hempen sailcloth and a linen market were established. By 1820 the town had as many as 31 occupational categories, three tan yards, a brewery, a distillery, a bleachyard, and was manufacturing soap candles, shoes and salt. In 1836 Rathkeale was the largest town in the county. It had a large constabulary barracks, a courthouse, a gaol, a flour mill and a fever hospital. However the 1820 - 1830's saw the end of this economic boom due to the lack of an active landlord, competition with foreign products, and the effects of the famine.

1916
The death takes place of William Hayes local organiser for the Irish Parliamentary.

1921
The local workhouse was burnt to the ground by the IRA during the truce between the end of the War of Independence and the signing of the Treaty.

1953
A meat processing plant called Shannon Meats opened on the site of the old workhouse.

1975
The local railway line which ran from Limerick to Foynes had operated since the 1860's was closed. Passenger services had been closed some years previously.

1992
The Rathkeale by-pass on the N21 opened.

2021
Limerick Greenway is opened to the public.

2025
Public Realm and Outdoor Facilities completed at Limerick Greenway Hub, Rathkeale.

*Acknowledgment of historical facts written by John Shanahan and Ciss Breen of the Rathkeale Historical Society at www.rathkeale.com

MAIN St. RATHKEALE. Co. LIMERICK: 9088. W.L.

ST. MARY'S R.C. CHURCH RATHKEALE Co. LIMERICK. 9083. W.L.
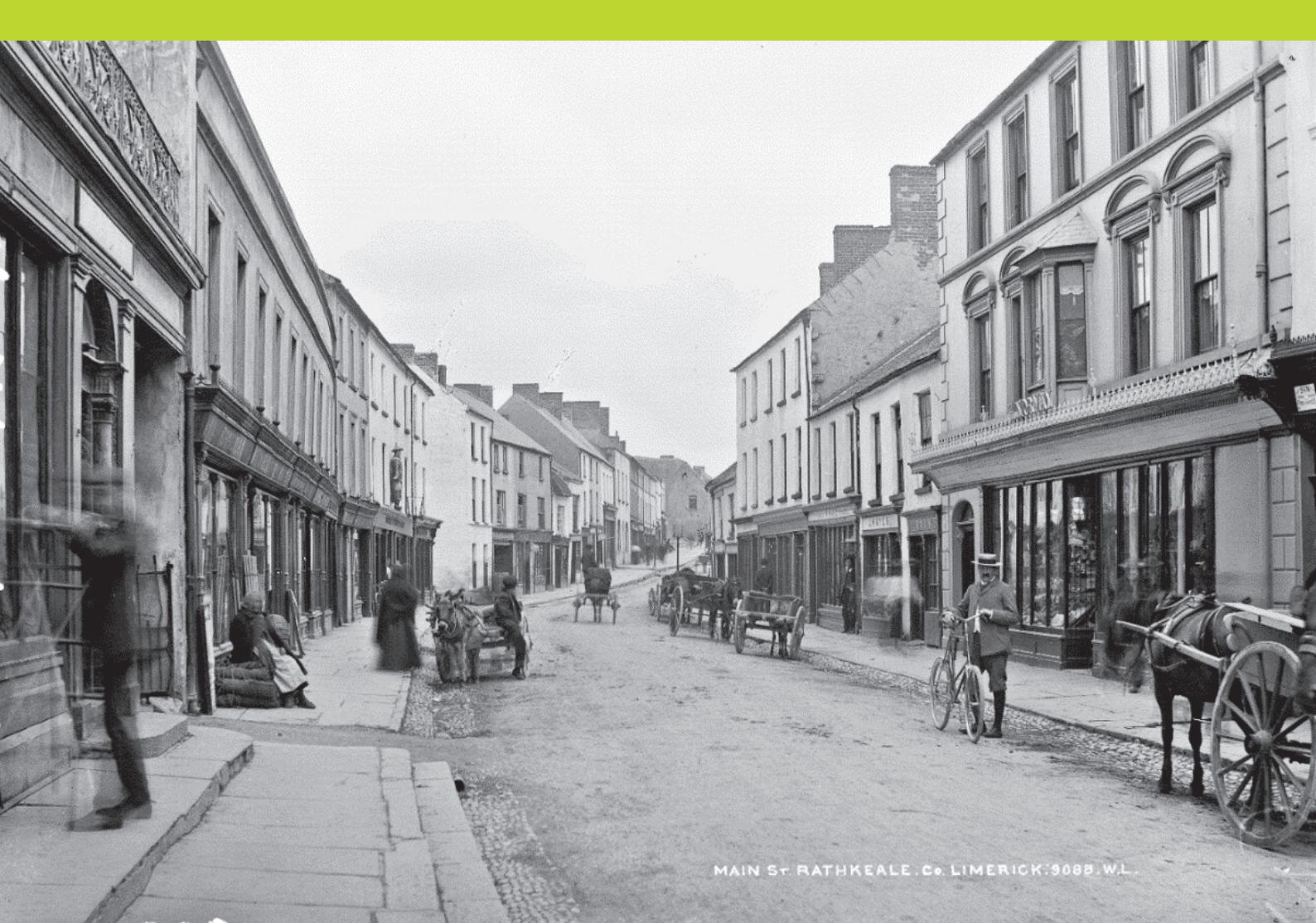

Lawrence Collection Photographs

The Lawrence Collection in the National Library of Ireland is a collection of photographs from 19th Century Ireland that captures the character of Irish Towns and Villages between the years of 1870 and 1910.

Main Street, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick – Lawrence Collection – 1870 -1910

MAIN ST. RATHKEALE Co. LIMERICK. 9639. W.L.

MAIN ST. RATHKEALE. Co. LIMERICK. 9084. W.L.

Historical OSI Maps

6" first edition Black and White

6" first edition Colour

6" Last Edition

Aerial Images

1995

1996

2001

2006

2013

4.2 Socio-Economic Profile

Limerick City and County Council local authority area is divided into four Municipal Distracts (MDs). Rathkeale is part of the Adare-Rathkeale rural MD. The socio-economic data available on Rathkeale has been central to developing an understanding of the existing situation, identifying areas that require change, understanding the reasons for these changes, and determining how to implement them. Like many rural Irish towns there has been a reduction in retail which has contributed to low footfall and increased vacancy and dereliction. However, what has become evident throughout this process is Rathkeale's truly unique and valuable heritage, its untapped economic potential, and the presence of a committed community.

The socio-economic information for Rathkeale has been primarily informed by data obtained from the most recent Census undertaken in 2022, Central Statistics Office (CSO). The analysis of the baseline conditions includes: population, education, employment and unemployment, social characteristics such as family structure, health and disability and housing. A comprehensive socio-economic analysis of conditions in Limerick City and County is contained in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), Framework Plan 2023-2028. This provides a backdrop for comparison of conditions in Rathkeale with Limerick City and County as a whole.

Population

The settlement of Rathkeale has a population of 1,231 persons. This represents a significant decline (-14.6%) since 2016 and over the last two Census periods (decline by -21% since 2011). The pattern and scale of decline go against the trend of positive population growth in Limerick (+5.4% for the City and County between 2016 and 2022). Over the last three decades, there was a large decline in the population of the town between 1996 and 2002 (during the Celtic Tiger boom years). While the population of Rathkeale recovered the losses to reach a population threshold of over 1,500 in 2011, there has been a consistent decline over the last ten years and more. However, the town has a unique population base characterised by large population movements over a yearly cycle. There is a large fluctuation in the town's population due to the nomadic lifestyle of Trader-Travellers with residential properties in Rathkeale or returning to temporary sites in the town. At certain times of the year (in the months around Christmas) the population of Rathkeale is significantly greater than that recorded in Census (undertaken in April).

The settlement of Rathkeale has a population of 1,231 persons.

This is a significant decline of -14.6% since 2016 and -21% since 2011.

-21%

Age Structure and Age Dependency

The average age of the population of Rathkeale settlement is 40.7 years (Census 2022). This is above the Limerick average (39.3 years) but Rathkeale is not amongst the oldest of Limerick's rural towns. Overall, 18.4% of the population of Rathkeale is in the age group 0-14 years, compared with 18.8% for Limerick. The same proportion (18.4%) is in the age group 65 years and over in Rathkeale, above the Limerick average (16%). The Dependency Ratios for Rathkeale and Limerick City and County as a whole as presented below.

Settlement	Youth Dep (0-14 years)	Old Age Dep (65 years +)	Total Dep – Youth & Old Age
Rathkeale	29.2	29.2	58.4
LCCC Av.	28.9	24.6	53.5

Table 1: Dependency Ratios - Rathkeale and Limerick City and County

The Youth Dependency Ratio for Rathkeale is slightly above the Limerick average. The Old Age Dependency Ratio is also higher compared with Limerick City & County average (24.6). This results in an overall Dependency Ratio for Rathkeale (58.4) above the average for the local authority area (53.5).

Ethnicity

Census 2022, White Irish Travellers make up less than 1% of the population

Limerick is the same as national average at 1%. Highest numbers in **Rathkeale**, Askeaton, Abbeyfeale and Kilmallock.

The ethnic background of the population in terms of the proportion identifying as White Irish Traveller is a distinctive characteristic of Rathkeale, where 30% of the population self-reported as White Irish Traveller in Census 2022. Other rural towns in Limerick had a relatively large proportion of Irish Travellers – Abbeyfeale (10.1%), Askeaton (9.3%) and Kilmallock (4.4%), however, the highest concentration is in Rathkeale. The size of the Irish Traveller population in these towns compares with less than 1% Irish Travellers for Limerick City and County as a whole. The trend towards an increase in the Traveller population in Rathkeale is at odds with the

situation in Limerick as a whole (the proportion of just under 1% White Irish Traveller has been more or less the same over the last Census periods for Limerick). The number of Travellers who self-report as Travellers in the Census is well below the actual figure. This applies in general but also to the towns with the large Traveller populations, including Rathkeale. As highlighted above under Population – the Traveller population recorded in the 2022 Census (undertaken in April) doesn't take into account the periodic influx of a transient Traveller population to Rathkeale from October to February (the months around the Christmas period). During the latter period, the population of Rathkeale is estimated at over two thirds Traveller.

In terms of other ethnicity in Rathkeale, 56% report as White Irish, 3.6% Other White, 1.4% Other, 1.2% Asian/Asian Irish and 0.9% Black/Black Irish.

Education

Rathkeale has the profile of a very disadvantaged town and this is reflected particularly in its profile of educational attainment of the adult population. In 2022 (Census), 36% of the adult population in Rathkeale whose education has ceased has at most Primary Education/No Formal Education compared with an average of 10% for Limerick City and County: 19% have Lower Secondary as their highest level of qualification bringing the percentage with Lower Secondary Education or Below to 55% in Rathkeale compared with an average of 25% in Limerick City and County. Just under 8% in Rathkeale have third

level education at Ordinary Bachelor's Level or above compared with an average of 30% for Limerick, while 11% have a technical or vocational/apprenticeship qualification in Rathkeale compared with an average of 18% for Limerick.

Area-based Deprivation and Social Inequalities

The 2022 Pobal HP Relative Deprivation Index shows that the upturn in the economy since 2016 brought improvements in the deprivation measures across the state as a whole, but the gap between the most disadvantaged areas and the average has widened. This pattern is reflected in Limerick. In the rural Limerick context, it can be observed in the expansion of pockets of deprivation in some Limerick towns. In Rathkeale, there has been further deterioration in the long-standing pattern of deprivation. Affluence has moved out beyond town boundaries into the periphery and rural hinterland – a pattern observed in many of Limerick's rural towns and across the state. This can be seen in the hinterland areas of Rathkeale. Linked to characteristics of the Settled Traveller population, the core of Rathkeale is Very/Extremely Disadvantaged. Of the four Small Areas (SAs) with a combined population of 1,231 (corresponding to the settlement), two are classified as Extremely Disadvantaged, one Very Disadvantaged and a further one Disadvantaged. Between 2016 and 2022, Rathkeale deteriorated with one Small Area shifting from categorisation as Very Disadvantaged to Extremely Disadvantaged.
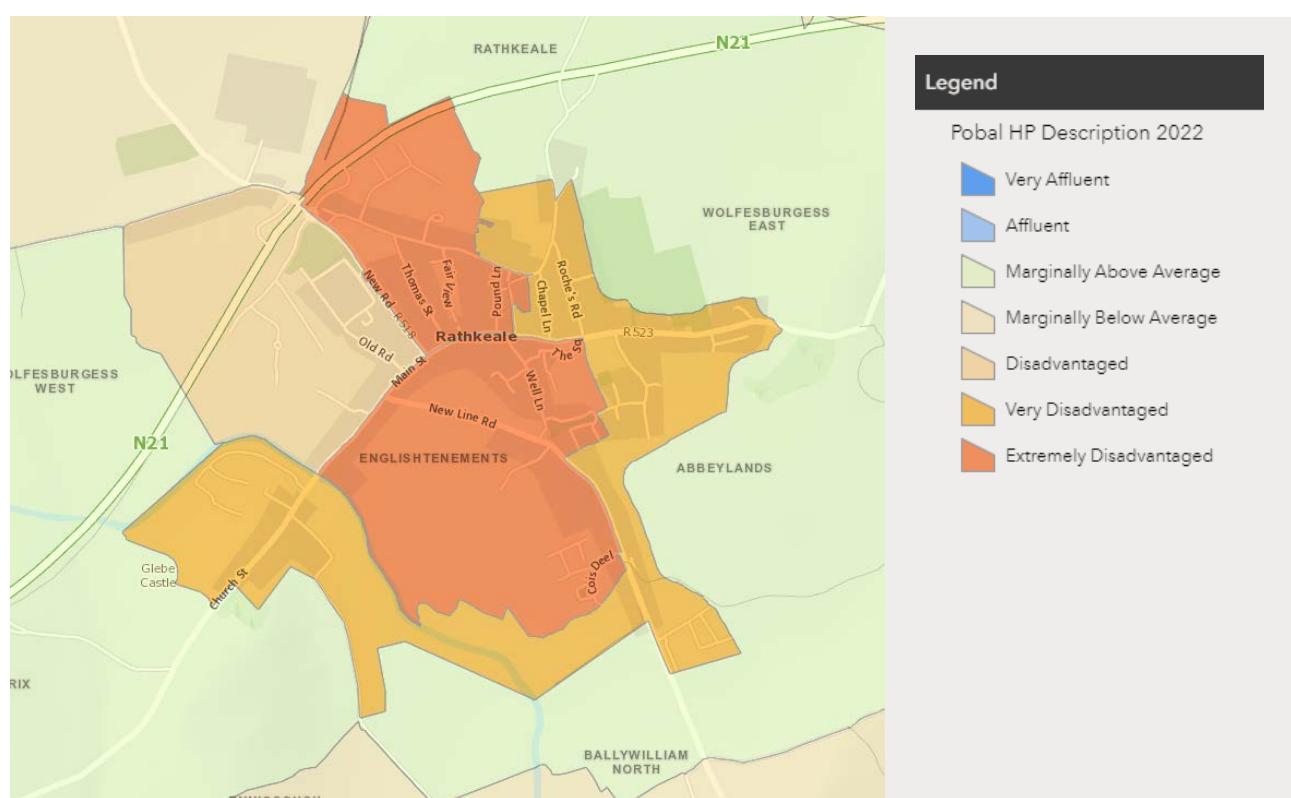
Map 2: HP Pobal Deprivation Index Small Areas – Rathkeale, 2022

Housing Tenure

Analysis of type of tenure by housing occupancy for Rathkeale shows that 49% is in private ownership, below the Limerick average (65%). Just under 30% of households are rented from the local authority or a voluntary housing body, more than three times the Limerick City and County average (9%).

Health and Disability

Health inequalities, reflected in larger proportions of the population having poorer health, are generally observed in socially disadvantaged areas. This is in evidence in Rathkeale where 24% of the population of the town report they are in fair/bad/very bad health, compared with 11% for Limerick City and County as a whole. Some 67% of the population in Rathkeale report they are in good/very good health, lower than the average for Limerick (80%). Furthermore, some 32% in Rathkeale report they are living with a disability or long-term illness, significantly higher than the average rate of disability in the Limerick population (23%).

Families and Social Disadvantage

Census 2022 reported 189 families with children in Rathkeale. Of those, 79 (42%) are One-Parent Families, which is well above the rate for Limerick as a whole (26%). Focusing only on those families with any children under 15 years (101 in Rathkeale), 36% are One-Parent Families compared with a rate of 20% for Limerick as a whole.

Services for Children and Families: Childcare and Family Services

In Limerick, there are four Family Resource Centres (FRCs), core-funded by Tusla – the Child and Family Agency, located in disadvantaged communities, and providing a range of universal and targeted services for families. There is no Family Resource Centre in West Limerick, despite significant levels of deprivation in some West Limerick towns, including Rathkeale. However, services in the town include Mother/Baby and Youthreach programmes.

Employment

> **Rathkeale is an important economic centre with more daytime jobs compared with the number of residents of the town at work.**

While the commercial base of Rathkeale (Urban ED) has declined and the town now has a profile of extreme social disadvantage, the town is important as a centre of employment, with significant numbers of jobs, particularly in the former Anderson factory (now known as the N21 Business Park) and ABP meat plant. In 2022, Rathkeale has a daytime working population of 570 jobs[1], an increase since 2016 where there were 527 daytime jobs in Rathkeale (based on Rathkeale Urban ED). With 367 residents of Rathkeale with a fixed place of work, the town has a net gain (+203 jobs) in the working population (i.e., it has more jobs in the town than residents of the town at work).

However, some 80% of the jobs in the town are for persons commuting into Rathkeale for work (583). Some 32% (117 persons) of all residents of Rathkeale with a fixed place of work (367) live and work in the town, while some 68% (250) of Rathkeale residents commute out of the town to other locations for work.

The data show the strong reliance on a commuter workforce into Rathkeale. Combined with high unemployment rates in the town – see below – it shows poor capacity of residents to take advantage of town-based economic / work opportunities. The large number of residents of Rathkeale commuting out of the town for work is indicative of mis-matches between skills and economic opportunities or poor attractiveness of available employment in the town to the resident workforce of Rathkeale.

Labour Market Participation and Unemployment

The Labour Force Participation rate, which indicates the proportion of the population at work and those available for work (currently unemployed), was recorded at 46% in Rathkeale (2022), well below the Limerick average (58%). The female Labour Force Participation Rate (34%) is particularly low and significantly lower than the Limerick average (52%). This reflects the concentration of Traveller populations in Rathkeale (and more women).

Rathkeale has a very high unemployment rate (20%), more than twice the Limerick average. It was identified as an unemployment "blackspot" in Census 2016 and remains in the same position in 2022. Structural unemployment is a serious problem in the town. The female unemployment rate (25%) is well above that of males (17%). Concentrations of Travellers in the town, very low education and poor orientation to the labour market are the main explanatory factors here.

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1 From analysis of POWSCAR data the daytime working population of Rathkeale Urban ED was 570 in 2022; of these 117 are resident in Rathkeale Urban ED and 453 came from outside the ED. This is not to be confused with the Rathkeale urban area as newly defined in the 2022 census, which is slightly smaller than the Urban ED. The previous definition of the settlement in 2016 was the same as the Rathkeale Urban ED. For the record the daytime working population of the Rathkeale urban area in 2022 was 527.

Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland | Tionscadal Éireann Project Ireland 2040

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Means of Transport, Commuting and Working from Home (WFH)

Data on the main means of everyday travel for residents of Rathkeale to work, school, college or childcare are reported in Census 2022.

The dominant mode of travel is the 'Private Car' (both car driver and car passenger) at 46% of journeys. Combined with Travel by van or lorry, this brings reliance on motor vehicles for travel to some 51%. This is followed by 'On Foot' (25% of journeys). Active travel (i.e. Walking Cycling) together account for 26%. Travel by public transport (bus) is extremely low at 3%. This data shows the scale of the challenge in terms of the shift to more sustainable means of transport and travel.

For commuting journeys undertaken, 39% of total journeys (552) in Rathkeale are under 15 minutes, while 87 (16%) of commuting trips had a duration of between 15 to 30 minutes. A small number of people (37, 5%) had a journey of one hour and more.

In terms of car ownership, 217 households in Rathkeale had ownership of a car, an additional 80 households had 2 cars or more while 120 households reported having no car.

In Limerick, 24,866 people (aged 15 and over) worked from home (WFH) at least one day a week in 2022, representing 27% of the workforce. This is lower than the national average (32%). In Rathkeale, 10% of working persons WFH at least one day a week while 61% never work from home.

Rathkeale	Number	
On foot - Total	146	24.7
Bicycle - Total	10	1.7
Bus, minibus or coach - Total	16	2.7
Train, DART or LUAS - Total	0	0.0
Motorcycle or scooter - Total	0	0.0
Car driver - Total	167	28.3
Car passenger - Total	102	17.3
Van - Total	26	4.4
Other (incl. lorry) - Total	5	0.8
Work mainly at or from home - Total	14	2.4
Not stated - Total	105	17.8
Total	**591**	**100.0**

Table 2: Usually resident by means of travel to work, school, college or childcare, Rathkeale, Census 2022, CSO

Internet Access

Availability of high-speed and reliable broadband underpins economic development and contributes to good quality of life for Limerick's communities. Based on Census 2022, just under three quarters (74%) of private households have broadband and a further 4% have other internet connection. Just over one-tenth have no internet access (10.6%). Rathkeale Urban has the highest percentage of households with no internet (39%). However, there is free Wi-Fi available in Rathkeale town through the WiFi4EU initiative and there is also a Broadband Connection Point (BCP) installed in Rathkeale.

Perspective of Social Groups on Quality of Community Life
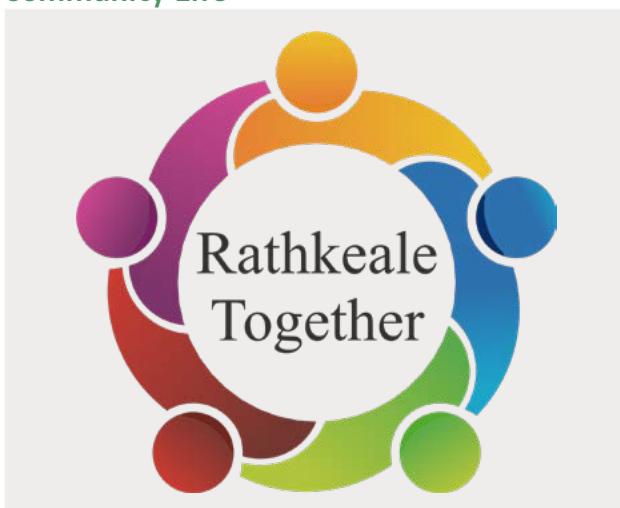
Focusing on perspectives of Travellers, young people, migrants and people with disabilities on the quality of community life and civic/community participation, there are some common themes particularly focused on the need to pay more attention to diversity and inclusion.

In relation to Travellers, Traveller Health projects, funded by HSE have been established for many years in city and county areas. Representation is a key issue for Travellers in Limerick. Local representative organisations are relatively more developed in rural Limerick including Rathkeale - i.e. Rathkeale Together.[2]

4.3 Collaborative Town Centre Health Check

A Collaborative Town Centre Health Check is a tool used to assess the vitality and viability of town centres. The main aim is to gather data and insight that help inform better planning, regeneration and investment decisions.

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2 Rathkeale Together is a community-based project that promotes cohesion and leadership among the people of Rathkeale. The project is a joint ecumenical initiative of the Church of Ireland, Methodist and Catholic Churches, coordinated by West Limerick Resources (WLR).

SCOT - Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, Threats

Strenghts	Challenges	Opportunities	Threats
⊙ Excellent Schools located in the town ⊙ Financial services in the Town – including Credit Union and Post Office, AIB Bank ⊙ Significant community assets – Parish Hall, Boxing Club, Community Centre etc. ⊙ Significant natural amenities in the town and adjoining hinterland ⊙ Business park and zoning for additional businesses/industry, available to attract additional employment ⊙ Capacity in existing facilities – water and wastewater ⊙ Central location and close to both Newcastle West and Limerick City, which will improve with the development of the Foynes to Limerick (including Adare bypass) Road Scheme ⊙ Proximity of the Greenway to the Town Centre and potential to increase visitors to town ⊙ Hotel located in the Town Centre and capacity to attract tourists into the town ⊙ Strong sense of community spirit in the town ⊙ Rich historical built heritage and streetscapes in the town centre ⊙ High quality sporting facilities including Mick Neville Park, The Bog Garden ⊙ Strong success in the staging of community events in the town, delivered by voluntary groups such as: St. Patrick's Day Festival, International Women's Day event, Christmas Lights, Christmas Concert and Family Fun Days	⊙ Occupancy rates of residential property ⊙ Economic loss due to vacancy rate and change of use of commerical units to residential use on Main Street. ⊙ Encourage the establishment of new business in Rathkeale ⊙ Litter and cleanliness of the town ⊙ School capacity and attendance – investment in schools and availability of school places ⊙ Lack of services – particularly family support and associated wrap around services ⊙ Unclear ownership of property – registration of property regularly incomplete ⊙ Vacancy and dereliction within the town ⊙ Poor educational attainment levels in Rathkeale, as identified by the CSO ⊙ Unemployment blackspot, as identified by the CSO ⊙ Availability of housing for young people; ⊙ Traffic congestion and management – pinch points in the town centre ⊙ Poor public realm and lack of connectivity for pedestrian and cyclists ⊙ Lack of activities for young people	⊙ Ability to attract new industry/employment opportunities to Rathkeale, availability of zoned lands and services ⊙ Ability to attract additional population, with the availability of zoned lands in the town ⊙ Potential of Dohyle Lough redevelopment ⊙ Swimming Pool ⊙ Activation of River Deel for amenity and recreational purposes ⊙ Potential of former Bank of Ireland building – need to attract business to Rathkeale and occupy vacant buildings ⊙ Potential for Green Tech investment capitalising on Shannon Estuary Proposals in Foynes ⊙ Potential Public Realm improvements and environmental enhancements that could be made to the Main Street in particular and the many lanes in Rathkeale ⊙ Potential for additional Family Support Services in the Town Centre ⊙ Multi Agency approach required to tackle the issues that exist in the Town ⊙ New employees in Rathkeale have had very positive experiences and wish to reside in the town	⊙ Loss of commercial activity on Main Street and the impact the lack of services has on the Town Centre, coupled with dealing with online retail and changing consumer behaviour ⊙ High unemployment rates and low third level education attainment rate ⊙ Proximity to large commercial centres – such as Newcastle West and Limerick City and Environs – which are competitors

Surveys and Audits

Primary data collection was carried out across several domains to assess the performance of the town centre:

⊙ **Land Use Survey**: Each ground-floor unit within the core town centre was surveyed and classified (e.g. retail, services, vacant, other).

⊙ **Footfall Count**: Manual pedestrian counts were undertaken at key town centre locations (e.g. The Square, Garda Station and Junction of Main Street

and New Line Road)

- ➲ **Accessibility and Public Realm Audit**: An assessment of pedestrian infrastructure, signage, lighting, street furniture and overall user experience.

- ➲ **Environmental Quality Survey**: Visual inspections recorded levels of cleanliness, maintenance, green spaces and presence of dereliction.
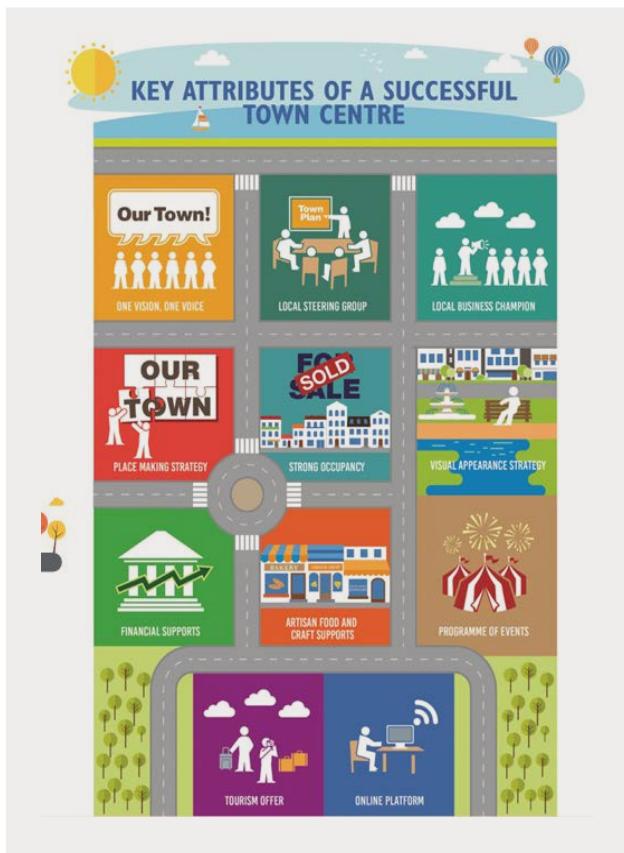
A Framework for Town Centre Renewal, Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Retail Consultation Forum, 2017.

Vacancy

Vacancy levels were mapped identifying the number of vacant units. The mix and diversity of retail and services were evaluated to understand economic resilience and consumer choice.

Data Analysis and Mapping

Survey results were compiled using GIS mapping and statistical analysis to visualise key trends, identify priority areas for intervention, and benchmark Rathkeale against towns of similar size and function. Each building use was selected in accordance with the GOAD Classification of Land Use to ensure consistency with other CTCHC surveys.

Rathkeale like many small rural towns has suffered the loss of many of its town centre businesses due to the changing nature of retail and the volume of former commercial premises' being converted to residential use. Residential vacancy is exacerbated in Rathkeale due to the seasonality of town centre residences and absences for much of the year.

Land Use Survey and Vacancy

A **Collaborative Town Centre Health Check** for Rathkeale was undertaken by Limerick City and County Council in 2021 which examined land use distribution, vacancy and dereliction rates, transport mobility, heritage, economy and tourism. The surveyed vacancy rate, for retail and residential was high with many vacant buildings appearing derelict. This is an ongoing challenge in terms of revitalising these buildings, and retaining the heritage within the town centre. The residential vacancy in Rathkeale was recorded as 9.48% in the Health Check Survey (October 2021). Commercial vacancy was significantly higher at 27%.

This covered two areas; the Town Centre area and the Town, based on the boundary of the Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029. The surveyed vacancy rate, for retail and residential was high with many vacant buildings appearing derelict.

An updated land use and vacancy survey was subsequently undertaken in October 2025. This covered two areas: the Town Centre and the Town, based on the boundary of the Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029. The large majority of buildings in the Town are for residential use.

Focusing on vacancy, of the total number of buildings in the town (969), 102 (10.5%) are vacant buildings or vacant/derelict sites. Twenty (20, 2%) are vacant residential buildings, 19 (2%) are vacant commercial buildings and 63 (6.5%) are vacant / derelict sites.

Taking only those buildings classified for residential use (791), the analysis (ground floor) shows a residential vacancy rate of 2.5%. This figure is considered to understate the residential vacancy rate in Rathkeale as it doesn't capture temporarily unoccupied housing in the town[3]. The latter is linked to the transitory population of trader Traveller that own residential properties in Rathkeale and return for only part of the year around Christmas time.

Taking all non-residential buildings (134 buildings for commercial or Other Uses), the non-residential vacancy rate is 14.2%. Focusing only on commercial buildings (98 buildings), the commercial vacancy rate is 19.6%.

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3 The Town Health Check Methodology is based on surveys undertaken "on foot" where the status of "vacancy" is established based on the look of the property and not deeper investigation. Temporarily unoccupied houses in Rathkeale are typically well-kept from a visual perspective and, as such, would not appear "vacant". A deeper investigation of residential occupation undertaken by the Council in October 2024 estimated some 300 residences as vacant or unoccupied.

Town Centre Health Check – Land Use – October 2025
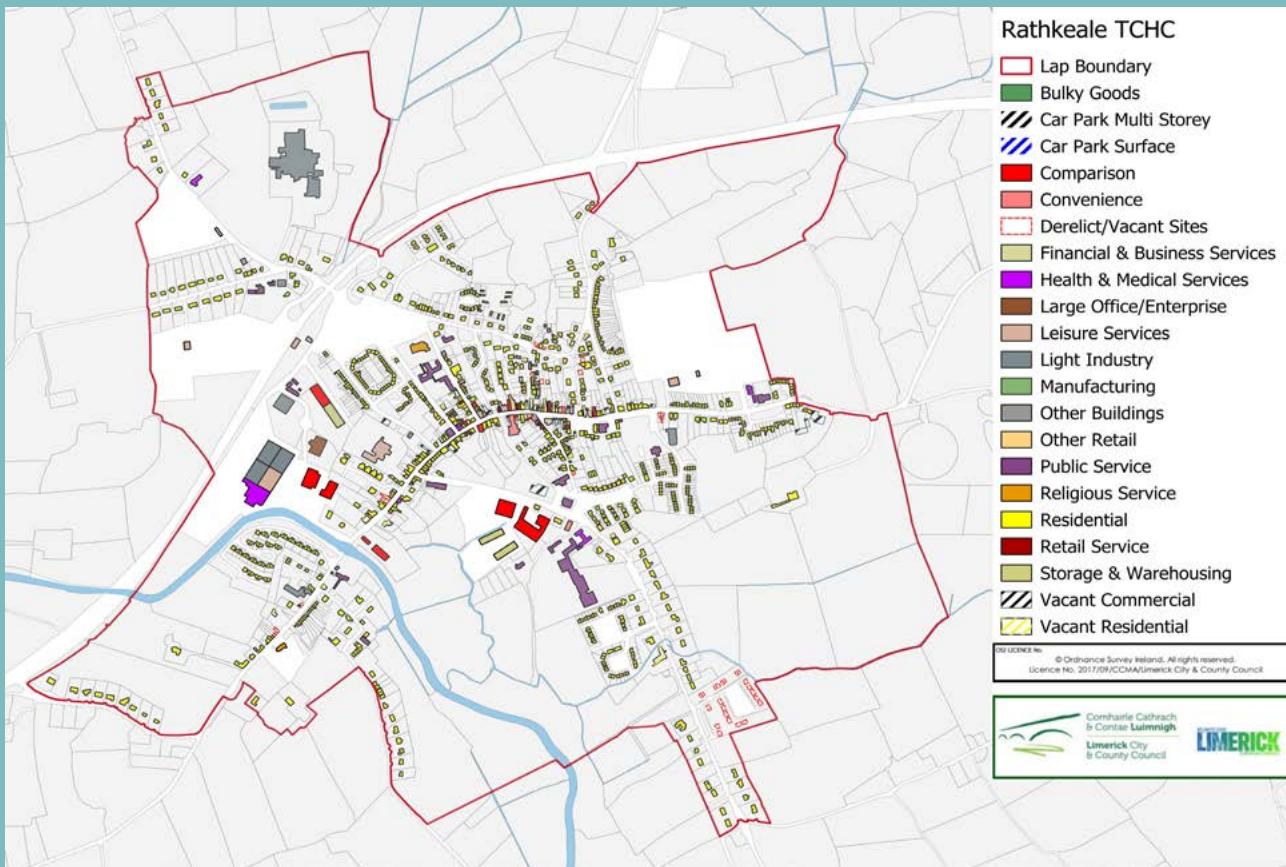
Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2023-2029 - Zoning Map
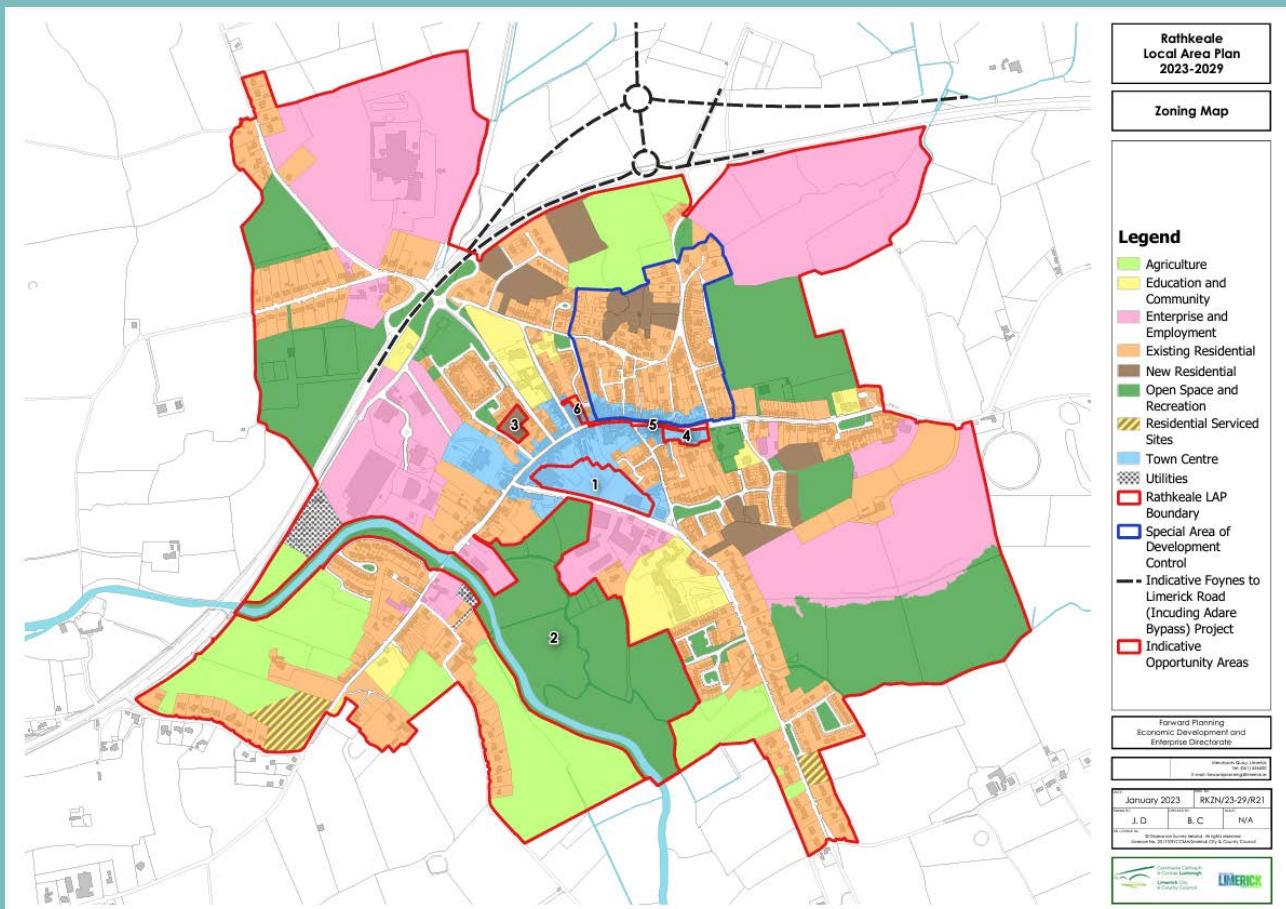
Footfall and Vehicle Counts

➲ A CTCHC footfall survey was undertaken by Limerick City and County Council at different locations in Rathkeale Town Centre on Wednesday 2nd July and Wednesday the 9th of July 2025. Three time slots were recorded for each location. The town centre locations included the Square, the Garda Station (junction of New Road and Main Street) and the junction of Main Street and New Line Road.

Pedestrians were recorded at both sides of the road at each survey point. Vehicles passing on both sides of the road were also recorded. Each location is shown on the map below. Overall the Garda Station (Junction of New Road and Main Street) was the busiest location, with the highest pedestrian count of 40 people recorded between 9:30am and 9:45am on Wednesday the 9th and also the highest vehicle count of 134 vehicles recorded between 1.45pm and 2.00pm on Wednesday the 2nd. 10 cyclists were observed in total during all counts.

The busiest time observed in the town centre is from 1.45pm to 2.00pm and the quietest time is 9.30am to 9.45am. The results show how cars are dominating the town centre.

Footfall and Vehicle Count in Rathkeale Town Centre, July 2025

Day	Times	The Square		The Garda Station (Junction of New Road and Main Street)		The junction of Main Street and New Line Road		Totals		Overall Combined Totals
		Pedestrians	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Vehicles	Pedestrians	Vehicles	
Wed 2nd July 2025	1.45pm – 2.00pm	21	74	23	134	24	112	68	320	388
	3.30pm – 3.45pm	17	63	21	109	19	121	57	293	350
Wed 9th of July 2025	9.30am – 9.45am	23	43	40	110	14	97	77	250	327
Totals		61	180	84	353	57	330	202	863	1,065

Footfall and Vehicle Count Map

Traffic Count by Location (Pedestrians vs Vehicles)
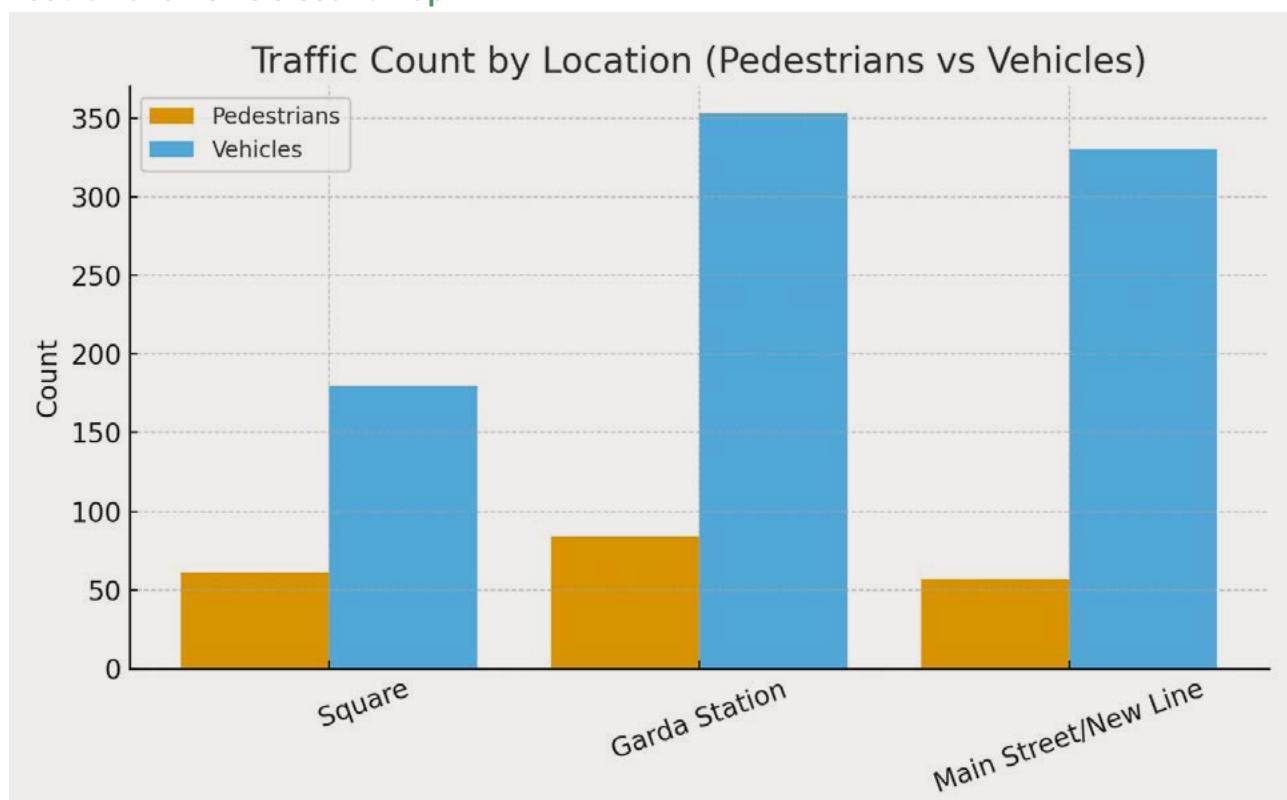
Desire Lines

Town centre desire lines refer to the natural or most direct paths that people prefer to take when moving through a town centre especially between key destinations like shops, public transport, car parks, schools, offices, parks and tourist attractions.

These lines show actual human movement patterns which are not necessarily the ones defined by roads, pedestrian crossings or footpaths. They are important to observe as they reveal how people use spaces. They help improve walkability and connectivity and inform future pedestrian friendly design and infrastructure.

4.4 Culture and Community

The Institute of Sustainable Communities defines a sustainable community as one "that is economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient". Common elements of a sustainable community include healthy and safe surroundings in which the needs of everyone are met, a strong economy with employment opportunities and an environment that is appreciated. Rathkeale has a strong history of community development driven by voluntary participation through a number of local organisations and groups. Rathkeale provides an important economic, educational and service function for its town centre residents and wider catchment area. Retail and commercial uses are dispersed around the town and provide a mix of convenience and comparison shopping, hospitality and professional services. The town centre is served by professional services, retail, hospitality, a public library, Adare Rathkeale MD office, health services, primary, secondary and early year's education and community partnerships.

Rathkeale's culture is enhanced by the vibrant mix of ethnic groups in the town. This is showcased through the cohesive festivals and celebrations that take place annually, including the St. Patrick's Day Parade, International Women's Day March, Christmas Lights, Christmas Concert and Family Fun Days.

Organisations include Rathkeale Together, Rathkeale Community Council, Rathkeale Men's Shed, Rathkeale Sheltered Housing Association, Rathkeale Sports and Recreation Organisations, youth spaces, The Butterfly Club along with many other community groups.

The Rathkeale TCF Plan through its key projects aims to promote the development of sustainable communities by supporting the provision of community facilities and associated infrastructure and public realm improvements at appropriate locations.

The Butterfly Club

The Butterfly Club is a voluntary organisation operating in Rathkeale since September 2004. It is a social club for children and teenagers with special needs and caters for those aged 3 years and up from all areas of Limerick. Its aim is to provide leisure activities in a safe, fun filled environment for children and young adults with special needs, while also providing respite for parents/guardians. The Saturday club enables children to attend once a month from 1pm – 5pm. 4 of the groups which includes a Youth Club are based in Croí na nÓg, Rathkeale and one other club is based in Abbeyfeale.

Limerick Youth Service

Rathkeale Youth Space is fun space where young people can spend their free time & take part in youth work, educational and training programmes. It also promotes and facilitates social, educational and creative development for young people and provides a wide range of activities that respond to the needs of young people from the community. The youth space is home to Limerick Youth Service's Rathkeale-Askeaton Youth Project.

Foróige

In Rathkeale, Foróige operates a Youth Diversion Project. Foróige is a youth-led organisation which focuses on empowering young people to develop character building skills, take responsibility for their choices and make a positive contribution to society.

Desire Lines Rathkeale

▬▬ Desire Line 1
- Bloomers/Boyle sports - O'Sulliivan's Pharmacy

▬▬ Desire Line 2
- Rathkeale House Hotel across to Lower Main Street
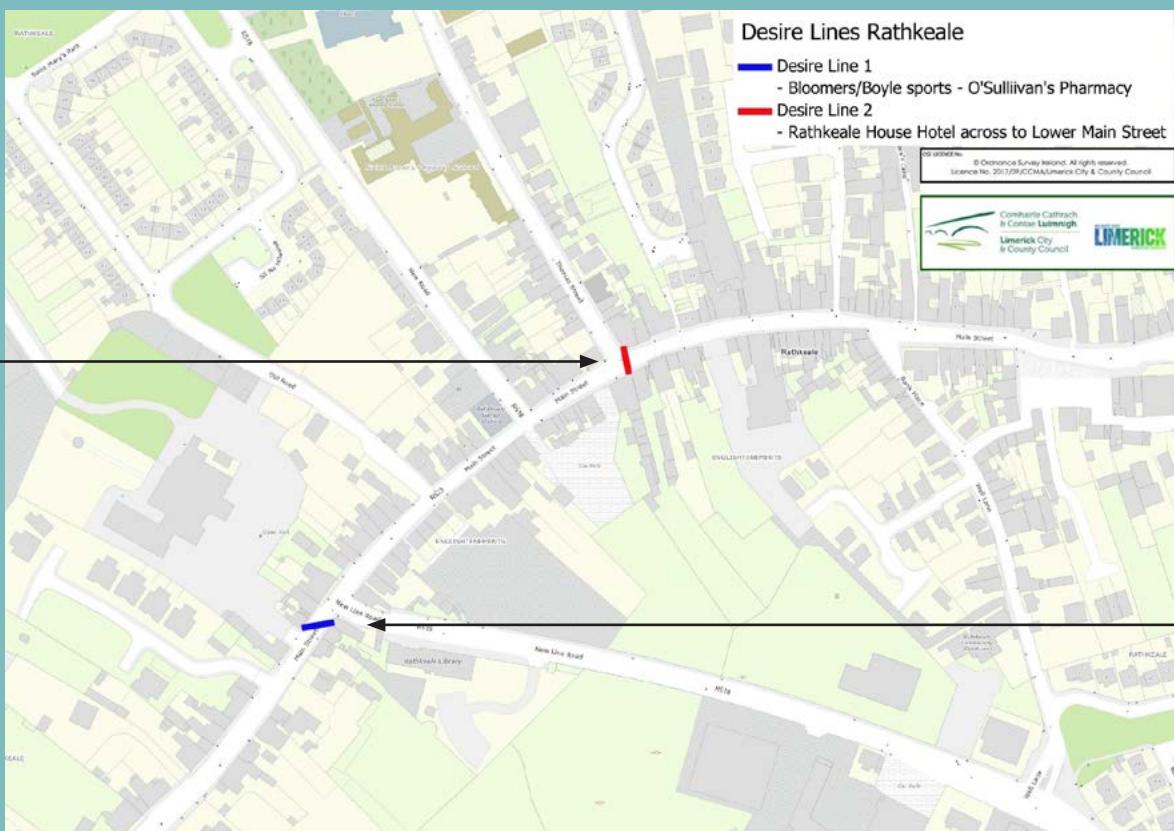
4.5 Heritage

Rathkeale has a number of key historic architectural assets, including religious and ecclesiastical buildings and structures, a historic town core and streetscape. The town centre still has some Georgian townhouses and original shop-fronts. Main Street retains its narrow winding character and back lanes which are in need of conservation-led regeneration and investment.

Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann Project Ireland 2040

Ár dTodhchaí Tuaithe Our Rural Future

Town Centre First

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh Limerick City & County Council

ATLANTIC EDGE LIMERICK EUROPEAN EMBRACE

Rathkeale Heritage Trail Map

Legend

- ☐ ACA Boundary
- ◆ RPS
- ◆ NIAH
- ☐ Heritage Buildings
- ▨ Heritage Urban Areas
- ▨ Abbey
- ▪▪▪ Heritage Trail

Rathkeale has an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) in the town centre. An architectural conservation area is a place, area, group of structures or townscape which is either of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest in its own rights, or which contributes to the appreciation of protected structures. Within the Rathkeale ACA there are 16 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) structures deemed regionally important in terms of artistic and architectural merit and there are 35 Protected Structures in the ACA.

Rathkeale's rich architectural heritage is evident on Thomas Street with ornate door cases and on the more elaborate embellishment of carvings around the former Bank of Ireland building on Main Street, on traditional shopfronts and former administrative buildings. Buildings are generally two to three storeys, reflecting traditional building lines found in many Irish towns. In the centre of Rathkeale's historic core, the buildings tend to address the footpath directly. The NIAH structures include the former Art Deco Style cinema built in the early 20th Century, designed on the principles of being functional, simple and generally a smooth form of design.
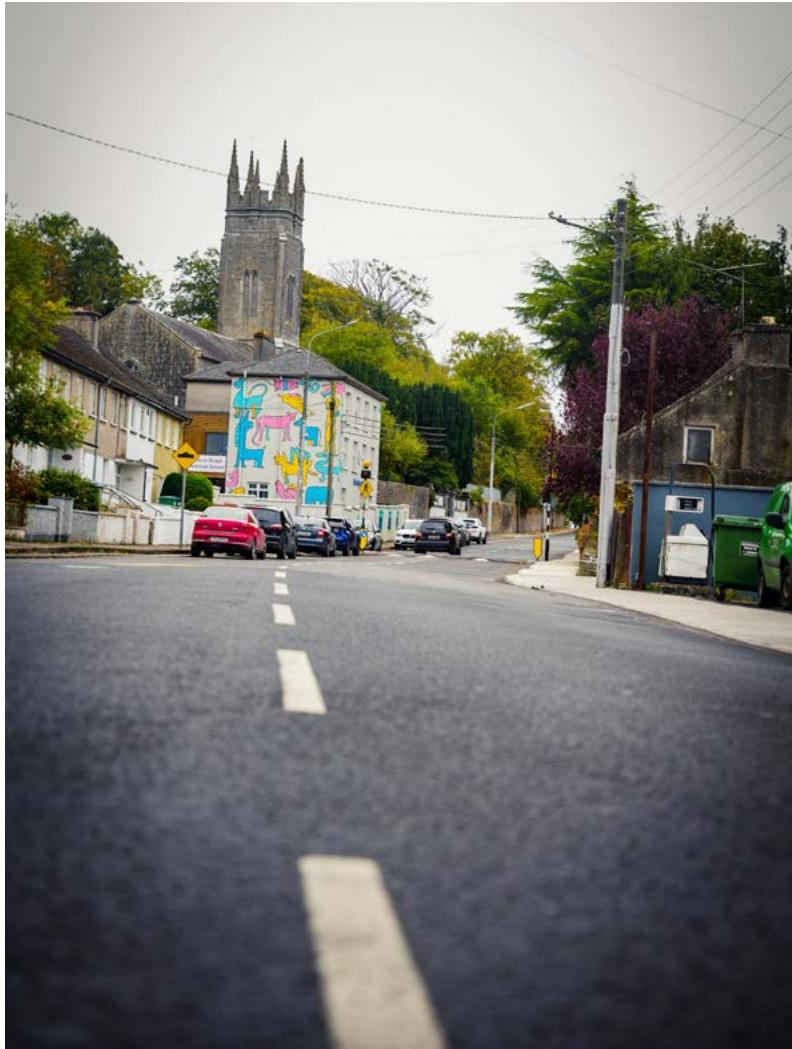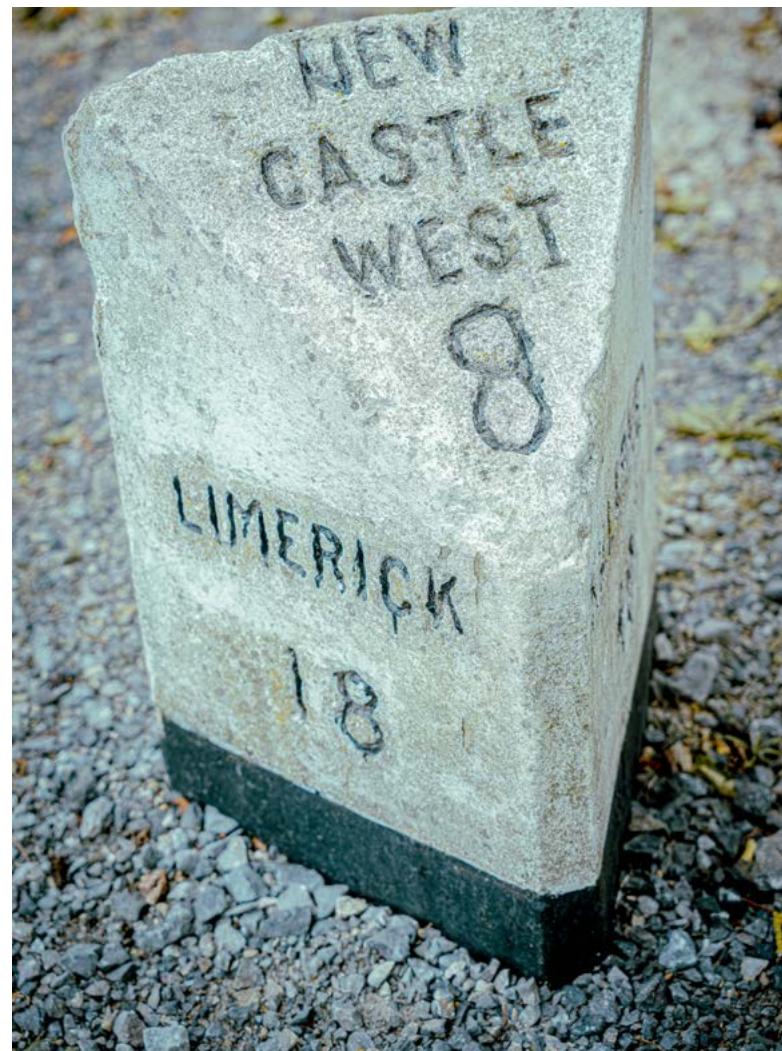
Limerick Greenway Map
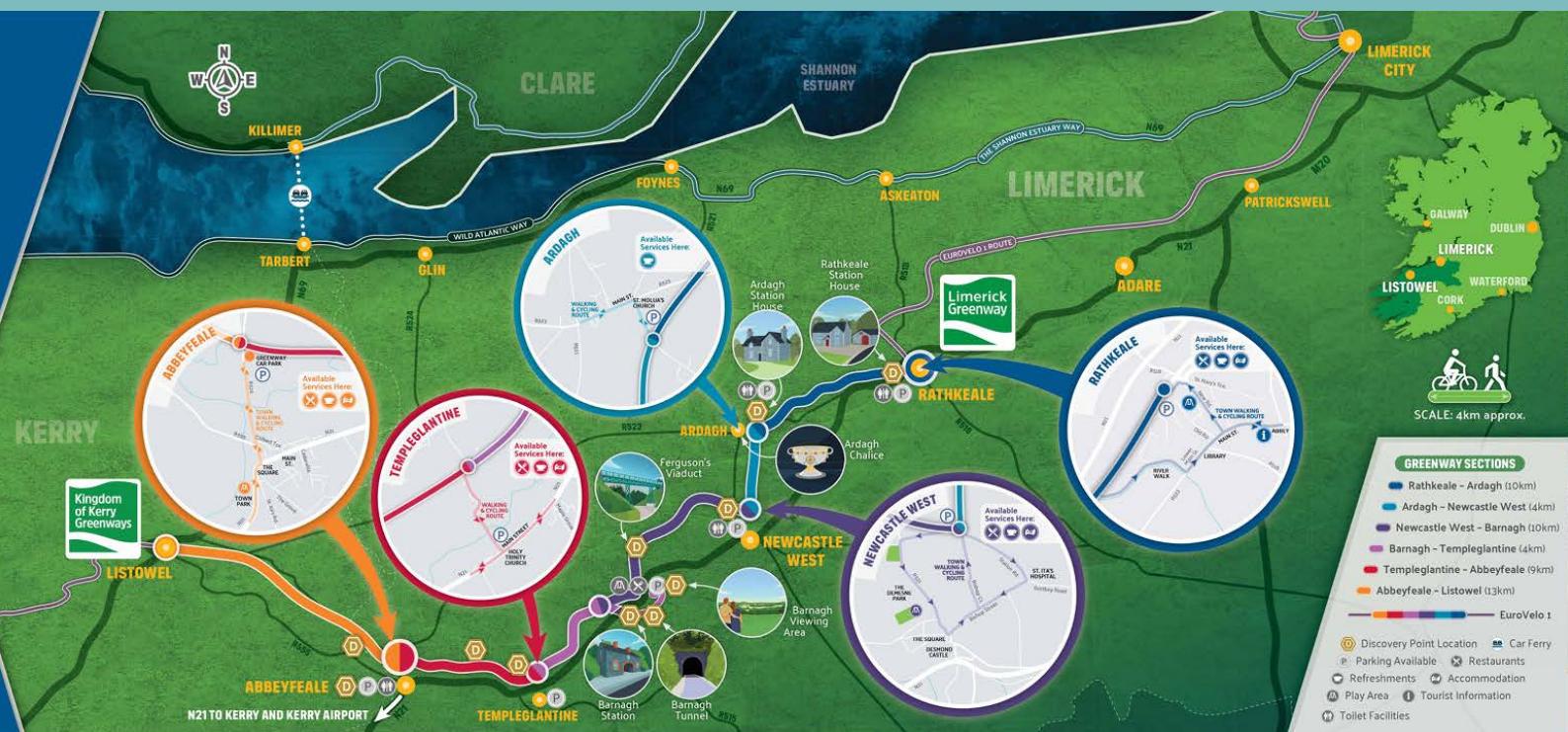
Transport, Connectivity and Off-Street Car Parking Map

4.6 Tourism

Rathkeale is served by many key heritage and cultural facilities and tourist attractions both in the town centre and on the outskirts of the town. These facilities are hugely important assets that add character and a sense of place to Rathkeale.

The Community Centre in the Square is located next to the historic Abbey Park. Activities and attractions in or within close proximity to Rathkeale include: the Irish Palatine Museum, Abbey Park and the Limerick Greenway, the latter located to the north of the town. The redeveloped Limerick Greenway Hub at Rathkeale incorporates a new Hub building (restored Railway Goods Shed), incorporating bike hire facilities, car park, public realm and services area including toilets; electric vehicle charging points; a bicycle repair stand; a water station; a bus stop and picnic benches. It is designed in harmony with the rich heritage of the town and compliments the Irish Palatine Museum, housed in the adjoining former Railway Station House.

The Limerick Greenway takes the visitor off-road via the three market towns of Rathkeale, Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale and is linked with the Kingdom of Kerry Greenways where users can continue their journey to Abbeyfeale, across the Limerick-Kerry border and on to Listowel. There is also future potential from the expansion of the Limerick Greenway at Rathkeale and joining it to Foynes and into Limerick City and onto Montpelier via the University of Limerick (U.L.) and Castleconnell. The Limerick Tourism Development Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023 identifies Rathkeale with the 'Medieval strongholds of Abbeyfeale, Newcastlewest and Adare' and packages them as 'Limerick's Connected Heartland'.

The River Deel also offers blue-way opportunities by upgrading access, seating and biodiversity along the river and improving connectivity with the town, the Limerick Greenway and the Matrix Riverside Walk. Also capitalise on the delivery of the Ryder Cup in Adare in 2027 having regard to Rathkeale's proximity to Adare.

Improvements to the current tourism offering should include diversifying the selection of activities, particularly for arts and cultural activity in town during the evening and at night.

4.7 Transport, Connectivity and Car Parking

Rathkeale is well connected and centrally located to access Shannon Airport (54km away) and is served by a daily bus service (Bus Éireann) between Rathkeale and Limerick City and a local commuter bus services operated by TFI Local Link Limerick Clare.

Due to its strategic location between Limerick City and Newcastlewest and the development of the new dual carriageway from Foynes to Rathkeale and Limerick City, the town is in a strong position to develop as an economic centre offering alternative solutions to businesses and residents outside of Limerick City.

There have been a number of enhancements to the local road network serving Rathkeale, however, there are still heavy traffic flows and congestion through the town at peak periods. There is a need to redistribute heavy goods vehicles away from the town centre and for a new road from Main Street linking directly onto New Line Road. The town centre has significant space dedicated to cars. The main off-street car parks are underused as vehicle owners prefer to use on-street space for parking. Measures to address this could include improved pedestrian linkages and signage of off-street car parks.

Rathkeale remains a car-dominated town, with a lack of priority given to walking, cycling and public transport. This should be reversed, to encourage active, sustainable lifestyles and to help reach low-carbon commitments. Therefore, the following proposals aim to provide a high-quality people-focused town centre, improving the pedestrian, cyclist and public transport accessibility, with consideration to all users including those with reduced mobility.
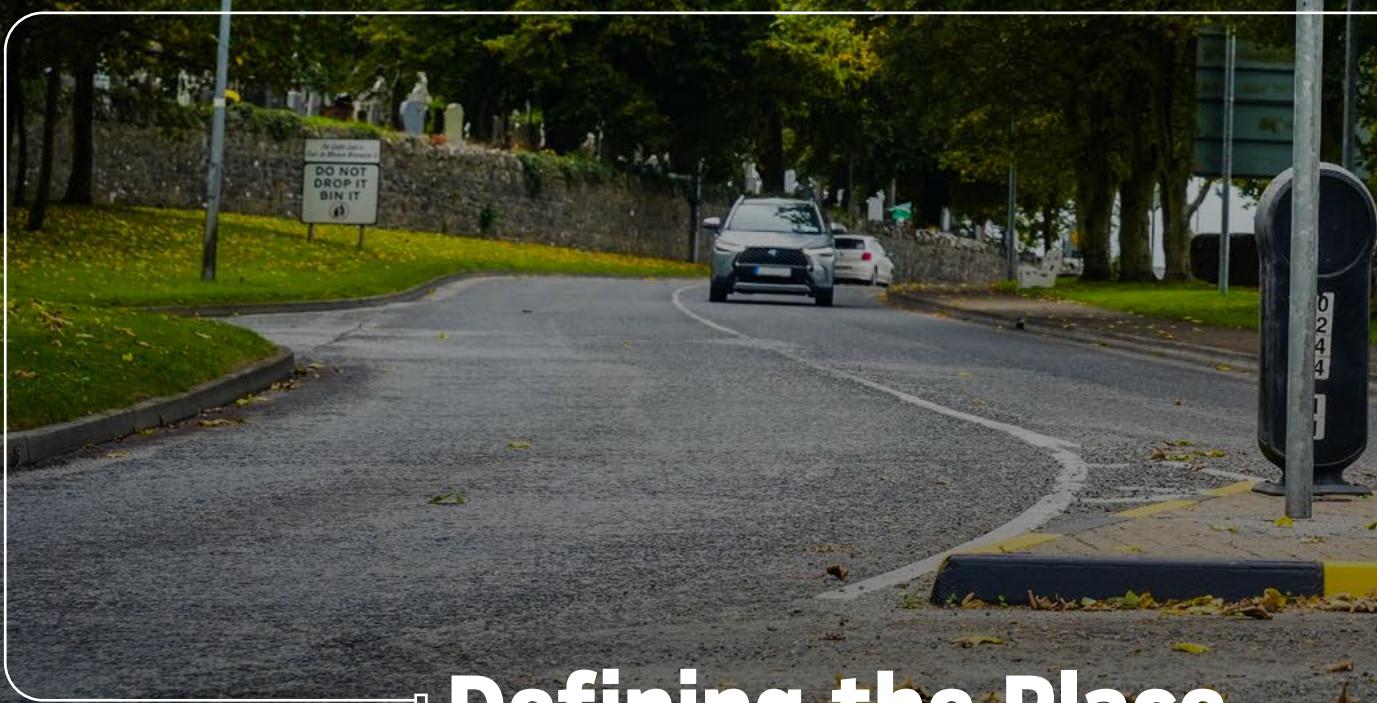
Defining the Place

5.0 **Defining the Place**

5.1 TCF Plan Themes

Placemaking is an all rounded approach to the planning, design, implementation and management of public spaces.
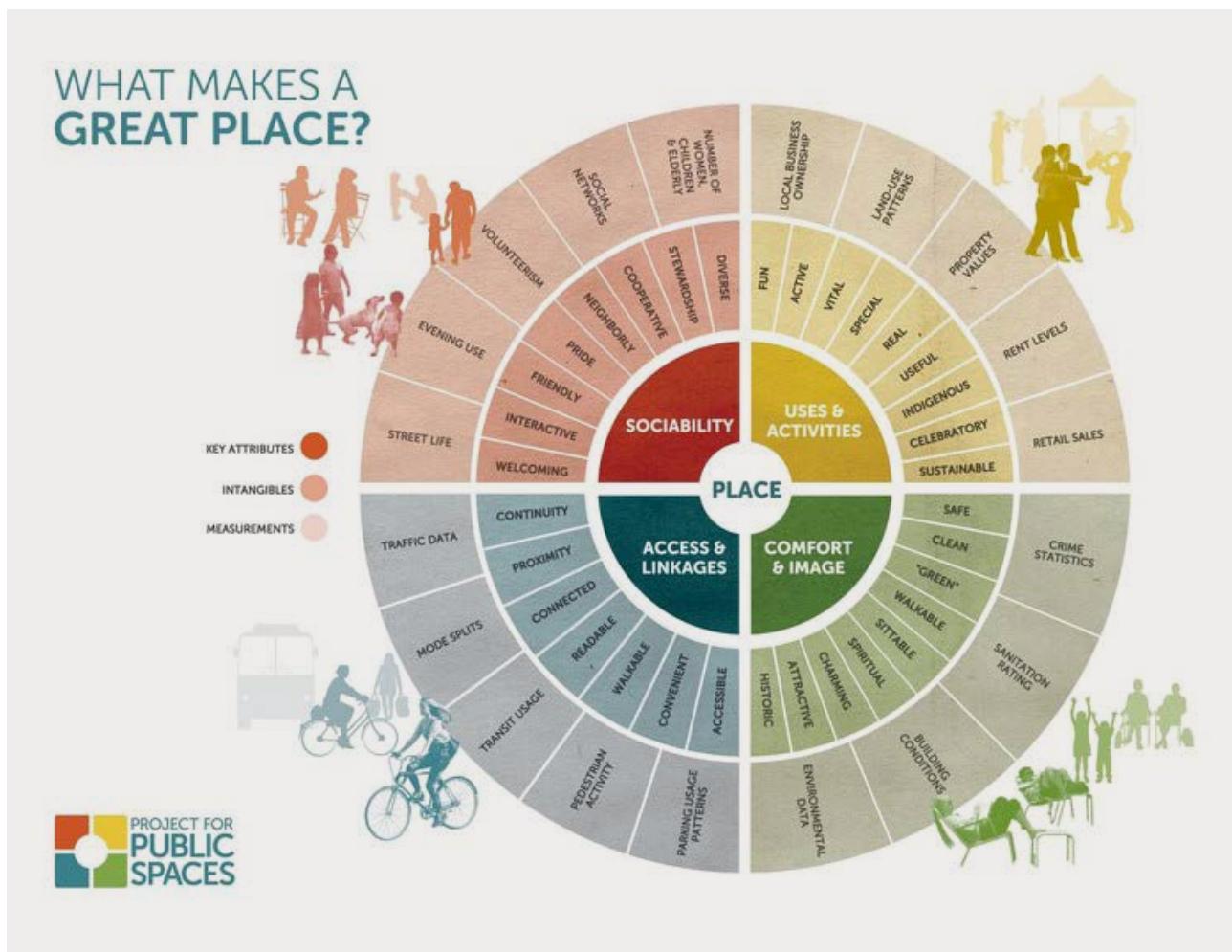
Healthy Placemaking - Improve both physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work, visit and invest in.

Public Realm - Promote good urban design to create vibrant urban centres and attractive, safe and accessible public spaces.

Sustainable Travel - Prioritise walking, cycling and sustainable travel in the planning, layout and design of places.

Recreation and Open Space - Provide access to nature and green spaces, and play and active recreation opportunities.

Sense of Place - Promote arts, culture and heritage led regeneration as key to our identity and the character of places.

Strong Inclusive Communities - Ensure good access to health, education and services for all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

Physical Infrastructure - Provide good connectivity and infrastructure to attract investment and diversify local economies.

Physical (Built, Construction Projects) - Public realm enhancement

Activation (Stimulation, Vibrancy) - Events coordination and business development

Activate the town - Pop up community spaces

Sustainable Mobility and Transport	Public Realm	Culture, Heritage and Digital Connectivity	Housing
Sustainable Economic Development	Sustainable Community, Growth and Investment	Climate Action, Green and Blue Infrastructure	Identity and Visitor Experience

Town Centre First (TCF) Plan Themes

Climate Action, Green and Blue Infrastructure

- Climate Action, Green and Blue infrastructure has multiple benefits including, social, environmental and economic.
- Sustainability - Promotes planting and greening within the town centre and the reactivation of existing building stock. Encourages an expansion of the sustainable modes of transport through better active travel routes.
- Social – Contributes to character and identity of place, improves health and wellbeing, encourages outdoor activity, and provides non-material benefits such as mindfulness and education.
- Environmental – Climate adaptation and mitigation, flood alleviation and management, Land and biodiversity, enhances ecology and biodiversity, improves air quality, reduces noise, reduces cooling demands of buildings, cutting energy use.
- Economic – Improves productivity, lengthens the lifespan of grey infrastructure, increases land and property values, economic growth and investment, tourism, food produce, recreation and leisure revenue.

Culture, Heritage and Digital Connectivity

- Market Rathkeale as a historic and cultural town with a history of trade and commerce.
- E-commerce - Support increased uptake of eCommerce supports by encouraging local businesses to engage with the Local Enterprise Office Limerick to strengthen their eCommerce offering and drive online sales.

Housing

Support the delivery of new housing options within the town centre.

Identity and Visitor Experience

Encouraging tourism initiatives and promote Rathkeale as a safe place to live and visit.

Public Realm

Public realm considers the design and materials used in all areas that the public has access to, including public buildings, public spaces, streets, parks, open spaces, and civic spaces such as the Square. The concepts above are interrelated and when successfully applied can create responsive, functional, inclusive, living urban environments instilling a sense of community pride - a place that people want to visit, use, and interact socially informally, or more formally at civic events in safe, aesthetic open spaces.

Sustainable Community, Growth and Investment

Strengthening and developing social structures and accessible community spaces within Rathkeale.

Sustainable Economic Development

Increasing opportunities for economy, employment, enterprise and connectivity.

Sustainable Mobility and Transport

Sustainable Mobility and Transport is a key issues when considering the future of Rathkeale. The town needs to become better connected, easy to walk and cycle around, fluid movement for public transport and less reliance on private cars.

5.2 Key Projects for Rathkeale

Town Centre First – Key Projects Map

Legend
- 1 - Former BOI
- 2 - Active Travel Link
- 3 - Matrix Walk
- 4 - Shopfront Enhancement
- 7a - Public Realm
- 7b - Public Realm
- 7c - Public Realm
- 8a - Square
- 8b - Abbey
- 12 - Link Road & Site Activation
- 14 - Convent
- 15 - Dohyle Lough
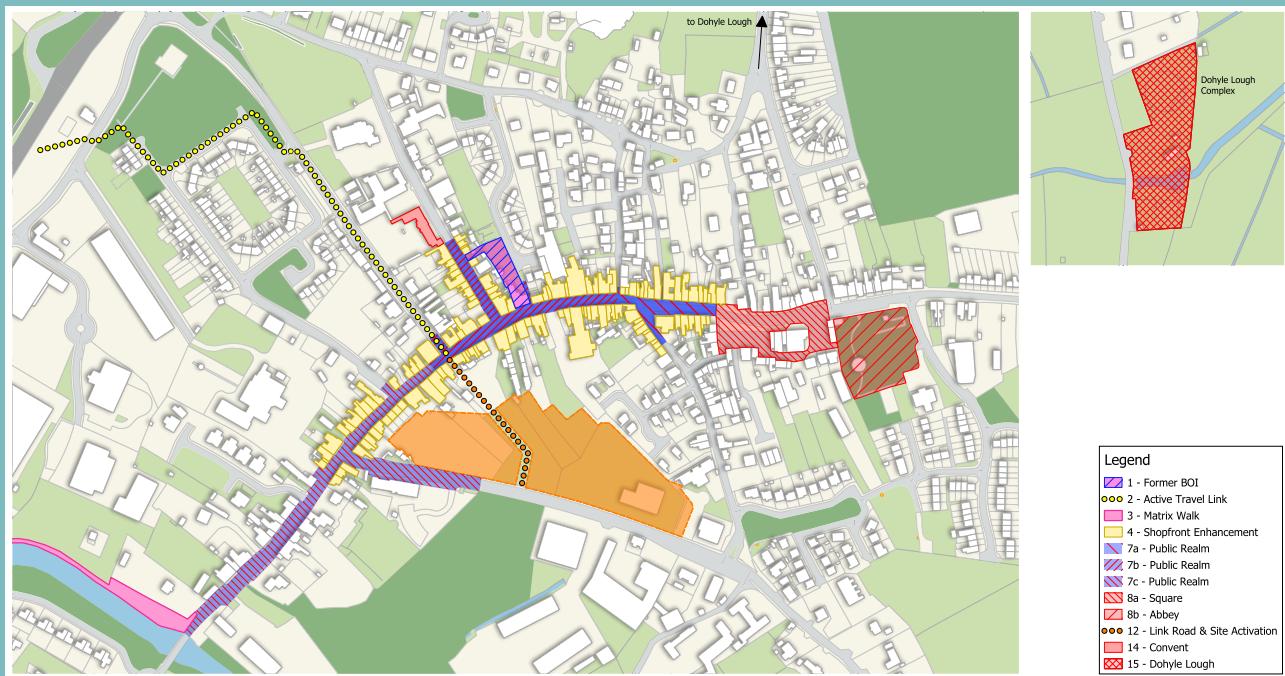
1. Repurpose the former Bank of Ireland (BOI) Building on Main St

Project Description

Situated on Main Street, the former Bank of Ireland (BOI) building (Record of Protected Structures (RPS) ref. 1568 and NIAH ref. 21831024) is a 3 no. storey building (476 sq.m. approx.) centrally located with a number of public amenities within a 5 minute walk. It is situated in a prominent location on Main Street and is ideal for co-location of enterprise and community facilities (including education and training) which would drive greater town centre footfall. A category 2 RRDF funding application was approved in October 2025. This funding will bring the former BOI building to shovel-ready stage, enabling detailed design, planning and preparatory work ahead of a future application for capital investment.

Accommodation comprises main banking hall, office accommodation and vault etc. on the ground floor and residential space on the first and second floors. There is potential for refurbishment and establishment of office units mixed with co-working space and common areas (meeting room, training /education space, kitchen space), community space and podcast studio. Enterprise workspace builds on the successful re-development of the Andersen building in Rathkeale – a former factory re-developed by Innovate Limerick and now occupied by small businesses and social enterprise (11) in production and services sectors.

Public consultations and surveys suggest that there is a strong desire to repurpose the building in an economically viable way and to ensure an active use

from day to night. There is a lack of office, meeting and community spaces available in the town centre. If there were facilities in the town centre that allowed for flexibility in terms of enterprise and office space it would attract people to come into the town centre and increase footfall on the Main Street. The building is in a good condition, however it would require a complete renovation internally. There is also development potential to the rear of the building due to a large private green space with an access gate off Thomas Street.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➔ Maximise economic development opportunities including a mix of office/community uses

➔ Protect the heritage and historic fabric of the town

➔ Improve the exterior by using best-practice conservation approaches

➔ Address building vacancy, dereliction and potential reuse

➔ Reactivate the building and increase footfall on Main Street

➔ Incentivise enterprise businesses to locate in the town centre

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – Former Bank of Ireland (Area 6) has been identified as an opportunity area (Chapter 7. Opportunities for Placemaking - Section 7.4).

Examples

Co-Working, Training and Meeting Spaces –
Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford www.coworx.ie

Co-Working and Office Spaces – Urlingford,
Co. Kilkenny www.exit4urlingford.ie

Amenity and Sustainable Transport Map – Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029

2A. Provide Active Travel Links to the town centre and upgrade playground

Project Description

Rathkeale is a well connected by road due it location between Limerick City and Newcastle West. There are opportunities to develop the town for businesses and people to relocate outside of other urban centres.

Measures are required to enhance pedestrian and cycling links with local amenities and services.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- ➜ Increase connectivity across the River Deel, the Limerick greenway and Rathkeale N21 Business Park

- ➜ New active travel routes within the town

- ➜ Better mental health and quality of life

- ➜ Encourage active lifestyles for all age groups

- ➜ Improve the sustainability of the town

- ➜ Reduce car dependency

- ➜ Improve the safety and accessibility of pedestrians and cyclists

- ➜ Improve wayfinding and signage

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 –Sustainable Mobility and Transport Strategic Policy Objective

To promote and facilitate a sustainable development of a modern sustainable mobility and transport network in Rathkeale in accordance with the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028

TR 02: Improve and seek investment for safe and direct pedestrian and cycleway link throughout the town, including connecting to the Limerick Greenway and a pedestrian and cycle connection across the River Deel to improve connectivity to the town centre and existing services, including schools and other community facilities.

Examples

Bus Shelter – Lower Main Street, Rathkeale

Footpath upgrades

2B. Upgrade Playground

Project Description

To upgrade the existing playground as an inclusive and revitalised area for fun and activities for children to enjoy.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- ➔ Upgrade existing play facilities in the town and to expand the current range of equipment to make it accessible to all
- ➔ Encourage incidental play
- ➔ New outdoor exercise equipment for adults
- ➔ Encourage families who use the greenway to come into the town
- ➔ Improve the arrival point to the town
- ➔ Wayfinding signage

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – Community Infrastructure, Recreation and Open Space Strategic Policy Objective

To support the provision of a broad range of high quality social/community, educational, healthcare and recreational facilities and infrastructure, in accordance with the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:

CI 04: (a) Protect existing open space by not permitting development which encroaches on open space, and protect semi-natural open space from inappropriate development and facilitate/support the provision of allotments or community gardens at appropriate locations. (b) Ensure new residential development provides high quality public open space and play-lots proportional to the number of residential units, having cognisance to accessibility, safety, permeability, place-making and the requirements set out in the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028. (c) Support enhancement of the Rathkeale Community Playground and the park associated with the Augustinian Abbey without compromising the historical and archaeological integrity of National Monuments.

Examples

People's Park, Limerick City

Mount Congreve Gardens, Co. Wexford

Concrete Pipe Playground, Hong Kong

Vallmora Park in Masnou, Barcelona

Abha Bhán Parish Park, Loughill

Wells House and Gardens, Wexford

3. Upgrade of the Matrix Riverside Walk and improve connectivity with the town centre

Project Description

To improve the Matrix River walk with proposals, including new fencing and seating and a new community garden, orchards and allotments. Improve access to the river through enhanced connections which would ensure that the river becomes a focal point connected to other key areas of the town.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- Improve and support biodiversity and educational value of open space
- Encourage primary and secondary schools to contribute to the proposals
- Enhance connectivity and links to the N21 Business Park to encourage use of the walk
- Potential for a community garden/allotments/ orchard adjacent to the walkway

- The community can learn to grow their own food
- Support physical and mental wellbeing
- Create additional amenity space within the town centre
- Encourage community and social interaction
- Support biodiversity
- Create a wildlife habitat
- Enhanced tourist offering for the town centre

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – The Matrix Riverside Walk (Area 2) has been identified as an opportunity area (Chapter 7. Opportunities for Placemaking - Section 7.4).

Examples

Example of a Biodiversity Walking Trail

Garryowen Community Garden – Limerick City

Community Garden and Growing Project – Limerick City

Biodiversity Walking Trail – www.pollinators.ie
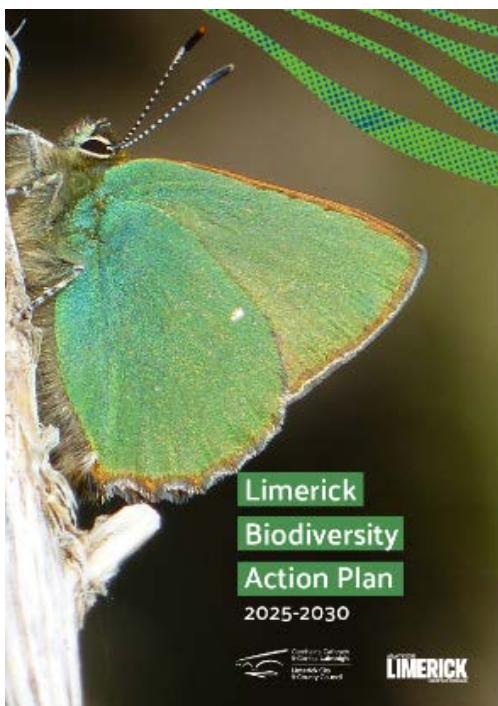
Biodiversity Garden – Cappampore, Co. Limerick

Biodiversity Walking Trail – www.pollinators.ie

4. Coordinate and support a Shopfront Enhancement Scheme along Main Street

Project Description

A shopfront enhancement scheme would involve the revitalisation and enhancement of the visual character of the street. Works undertaken aim to make improvements to the appearance, functionality and safety of the building and streetscape. Physical interventions could include conservation advice and a paint scheme.

Limerick City and County Council have Shopfront Design Guidelines which will help establish a minimum standard for shopfronts and best practice for upgrading and improving signage across Limerick whilst seeking to preserve Limerick's architectural heritage.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- ➲ Protect the architectural heritage of the town
- ➲ Improve and enhance the streetscape and appearance of Main Street
- ➲ Enhance the attractiveness and vibrancy of Rathkeale
- ➲ Assist the Tidy Towns committee with improving their overall annual score in the Tidy Towns Competition
- ➲ Encourage community and social interaction
- ➲ Make the town centre more attractive to tourists and the local community

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – North Main Street Streetscape (Area 5) has been identified as an opportunity area (Chapter 7. Opportunities for Placemaking - Section 7.4).

Examples

*Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities*

Limerick City & Council – Shopfront Design Guidelines

Creative Ireland Programme - The Our Type project is an ongoing photographic project documenting the disappearing shopfronts, signage and typography of Ireland's towns and villages.

Our Type Photographic Project – Clancy, Ennis, Co. Clare

5. Develop a Digital Heritage Trail

Project Description

The project would highlight and raise awareness of the rich heritage and architectural details and stories in Rathkeale. Within the Rathkeale Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) there are 16 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) structures deemed regionally important in terms of artistic and architectural merit and there are 35 Protected Structures in the ACA.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- ➔ Develop a route identifying key heritage/historical buildings
- ➔ Education resource for local people, schools and visitors
- ➔ Strengthen local identity
- ➔ Additional tourism offering encouraging visitors into the town centre

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 - Archaeological and Architectural Heritage Strategic Policy Objective

To protect, conserve and manage the archaeological, architectural and built heritage of Rathkeale, and promote sensitive, appropriate and sustainable development and re-use of older historic built fabric in accordance with Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:

Architectural Heritage:

HE 02: (a) Positively consider proposals to improve, alter, extend or change the use of Protected Structures and attendant grounds so as to render them viable for modern use, subject to demonstration by a suitably qualified Conservation Architect or other relevant expert that the structure, character, appearance and setting will not be adversely affected and, suitable design, materials and construction methods will be utilised in accordance with best conservation practice and relevant heritage legislation. (b) Promote awareness of the appropriate adaption of built heritage to climate change as per Government Draft Heritage Ireland 2030, the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the Built and Archaeological Heritage, 2019, the Built Vernacular Strategy, 2021, the pending National Policy on Architecture, the Limerick Climate Adaption Strategy 2019 – 2024 and higher-level spatial plans.

HE 03: Support the re-introduction of traditional features on Protected Structures where there is evidence that such features (e.g. window styles, finishes etc.) previously existed.

HE 04: Strongly resist the demolition of Protected Structures, in whole or in part, the removal or modification of features of architectural importance, and design element that would adversely affect the character or setting of a Protected Structure, unless exceptional circumstances can be clearly demonstrated by a suitably qualified professional.

HE 05: Ensure the design of any development in the Architectural Conservation Area, including any changes of use of an existing building, should preserve and/or enhance the character and appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area as a whole.

Examples

www.buildingsofireland.ie/wonder-wander-walking-trails/
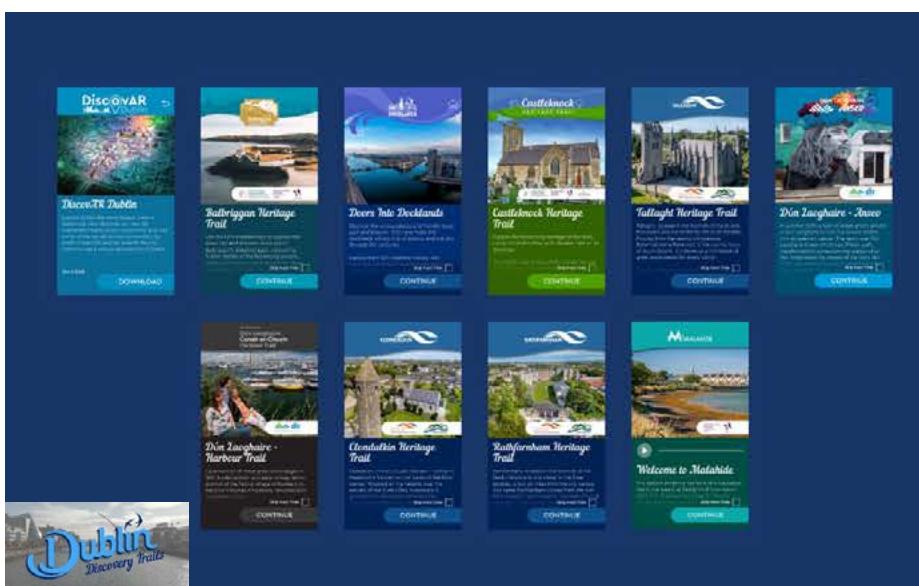
www.dublindiscoverytrails.ie
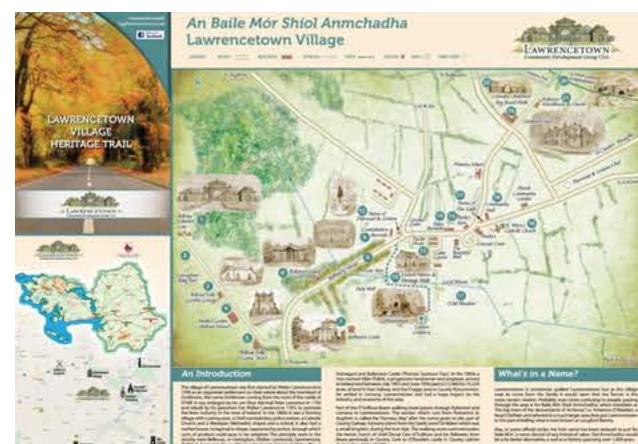
6. Establish a new Rathkeale Town Brand (including marketing of events and festivals)

Project Description

A strong town brand translates a town's identity.

The ultimate aim is to create, develop, manage and communicate Rathkeale's identity in a uniform way, so as to enhance attractiveness and competitiveness. The new brand would work along the existing Limerick Brands.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- Improved public realm spaces will help strengthen the brand values and public message

- Develop and promote a new identity for Rathkeale that showcases the passion of the Rathkeale people, community cohesion and strong business ethos in the town

- Develop a new brand that recognises the uniqueness of the town

- Increase footfall in the town centre

- Build and develop festival offering in the town

Examples of existing signage and branding in the town

7. Deliver a comprehensive Public Realm Scheme for Rathkeale – including Greening the Town Centre

Project Description

The public realm generally refers to all areas to which the public has access to including, roads, streets, lanes, footpaths, cycle lanes, signage, street furniture, parks, squares, open spaces, public buildings. Potential Public Realm improvements and environmental enhancements could be made along Main Street in particular and the many lanes in Rathkeale. Greening and Planting (including Urban Trees) could be a powerful tool to help Rathkeale go from 'Grey to Green' and to help mitigate against climate change and improve public health. There are also several parades and events that take place in Rathkeale throughout the year that could benefit from enhanced public spaces.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➲ Improve and enhance the appearance of the town centre

➲ Support Rathkeale to go from 'Grey to Green' and help mitigate against climate change and improve public health

➲ Work with the Tidy Towns committee to improve their overall annual score in the Tidy Towns Competition

➲ Improve outdoor spaces for the community and visitors to the town

➲ Improve wayfinding and signage in the town centre

➲ Improve accessibility to existing facilities in the town centre

➲ Enhance footpaths, lighting, planting, road surfaces and provide new street furniture

➲ Support the development of an annual programme of coordinated parades and festivals

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – North Main Street Streetscape (Area 5) has been identified as an opportunity area (Chapter 7. Opportunities for Placemaking - Section 7.4).

Options

Aerial view of proposed public realm scheme at Bank Place (junction of Main Street and Bank Place)


Aerial view looking West of proposed public realm scheme at Bank Place (junction of Main Street and Bank Place)

Aerial view looking East of proposed public realm scheme at Bank Place (junction of Main Street and Bank Place)

Street view of proposed public realm scheme at Bank Place (junction of Main Street and Bank Place)

Public Realm - Limerick City Centre
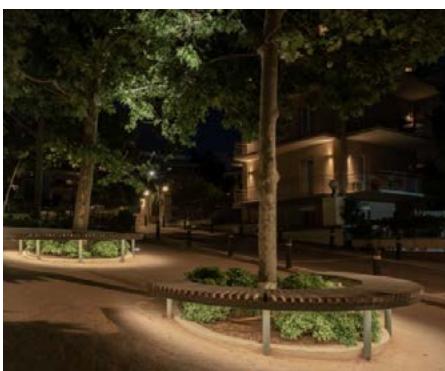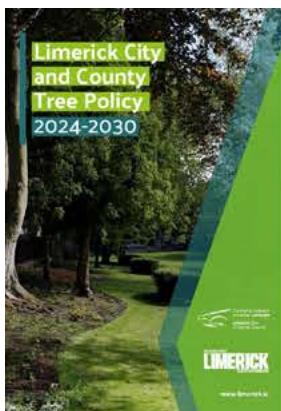
Filing Station – Town Square Rathkeale. Limerick County Council - Integrated Area Plan for Rathkeale – 1998

8. Upgrade of Town Squares

Project Description

The proposed upgrade of the Town Squares would transform the spaces thorough defined pedestrian areas, delineated parking, and activation of the squares for social uses.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- Improve and enhance the streetscape and quality of life for residents and visitors to the town
- Use high quality material finishes which will improve the aesthetic of the town
- Encourage a new sense of place and integration of new communities
- New multi-use civic meeting space for outdoor events, farmers markets, concerts, community spaces etc.

- Restore identity and historic character of the space
- Positive economic impact on the town centre
- Encourage greenway users to come into the town centre and provide bicycle stands
- Improve safety and parking
- Provide planting and seating
- New landmark sculpture

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – Market Square (Area 4) has been identified as an opportunity area (Chapter 7. Opportunities for Placemaking - Section 7.4).

Options

Aerial view of proposed upgrades to the Town Squares

Aerial view looking South West of proposed Town Square upgrade

Aerial view looking East of proposed Town Square upgrade

Examples

Kildare Town Market Square, Co. Kildare

Skibbereen Town Hall, Skibbereen, Co. Cork

The 'Sentinel' sculpture, Westport, Co. Mayo

9. Upgrade Abbey Park Project Description

The proposed upgrade of Abbey Park would transform the amenity spaces thorough the introduction of new seating, cycle stands, pathway and the activation of the bandstand for community events and social uses.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➔ Restoration of archway gates to make the park more inviting to visitors

➔ Upgrade the bandstand which could be used to host music and pop-up events all year round

➔ Upgrade of sports facilities, including the Astroturf pitch and tennis court

➔ Provide integration opportunities for the community by working together on events

➔ Upgrade of public toilets

➔ Improve and support biodiversity

➔ Support climate adaptation/mitigation measures

➔ Provide space for community orchards and allotments

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – Community Infrastructure, Recreation and Open Space Strategic Policy Objective

To support the provision of a broad range of high quality social/community, educational, healthcare and recreational facilities and infrastructure in accordance with the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:

CI 04: (a) Protect existing open space by not permitting development which encroaches on open space, and protect semi-natural open space from inappropriate development and facilitate/support the provision of allotments or community gardens at appropriate locations. (b) Ensure new residential development provides high quality public open space and play-lots proportional to the number of residential units, having cognisance to accessibility, safety, permeability, place-making and the requirements set out in the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028. (c) Support enhancement of the Rathkeale Community Playground and the park associated with the Augustinian Abbey without compromising the historical and archaeological integrity of National Monuments.

Options

Aerial view looking South West of proposed Abbey Park upgrade

Aerial view looking North East of proposed Abbey Park upgrade

Examples

1. Contemporary Seating by Artist Rhona Byrne Seat, Dublin City
2. Contemporary Seating and material palette
3. Hangout Spaces
4. Social benches
5. Upgraded Bandstand – St. Stephen's Green, Dublin
6. Planting
7. Social benches
8. Social benches
9. Bicycle Stand
10. Social benches
11. Social benches
12. Planting
13. Social benches
14. Summer Event at Melton's New Park, Melton Mowbray, England
15. Mount Congreve Gardens, Co. Waterford

Examples
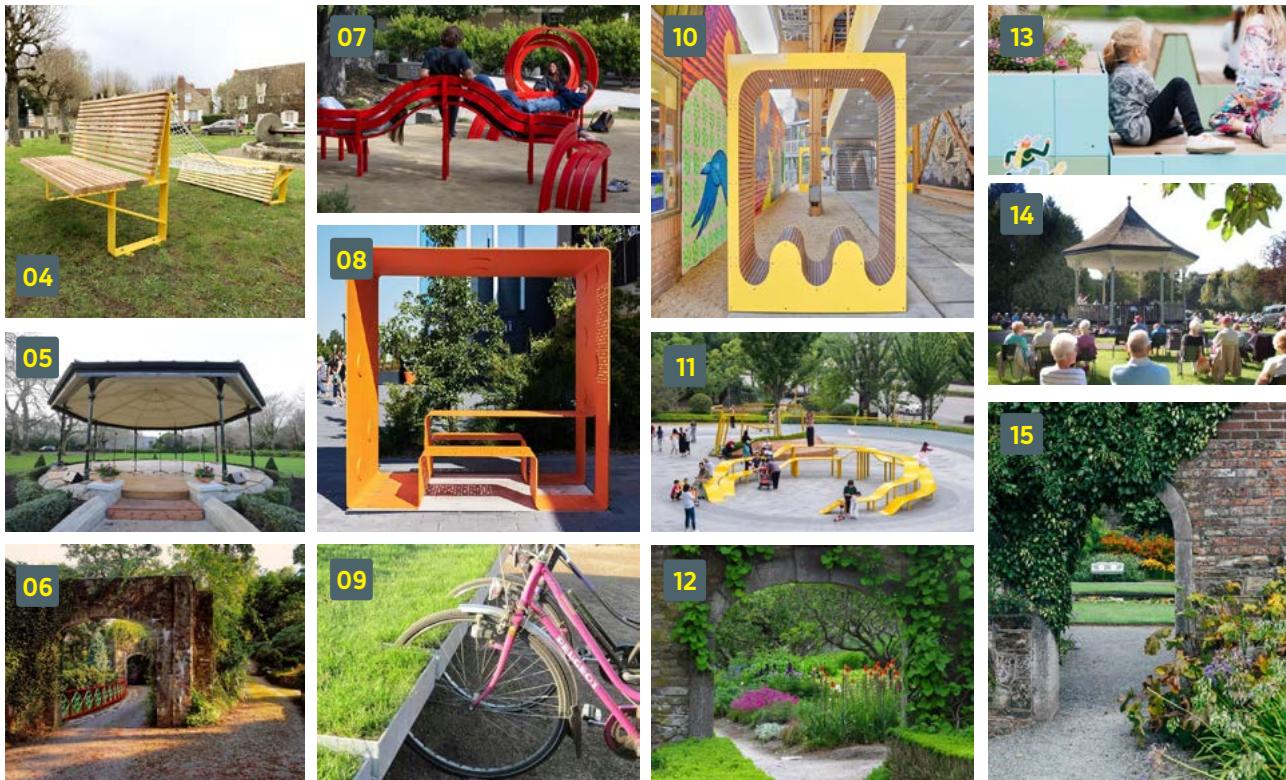
Calisthenics Outdoor Exercise Equipment, Tymon Park, Co. Dublin

10. Support the development of a Community Gym

Project Description

Engagement with the community has identified that the provision of a community gym should be a key project for the town centre. The gym would benefit all member of the community, both young and old.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➲ Encourage active lifestyles for all age groups

➲ Provide a fitness hub promoting community integration and social connections

➲ Positive impact on mental and emotional well-being for all members of the community

Base Community Gym, Listowel Community Centre, Listowel, Co. Kerry
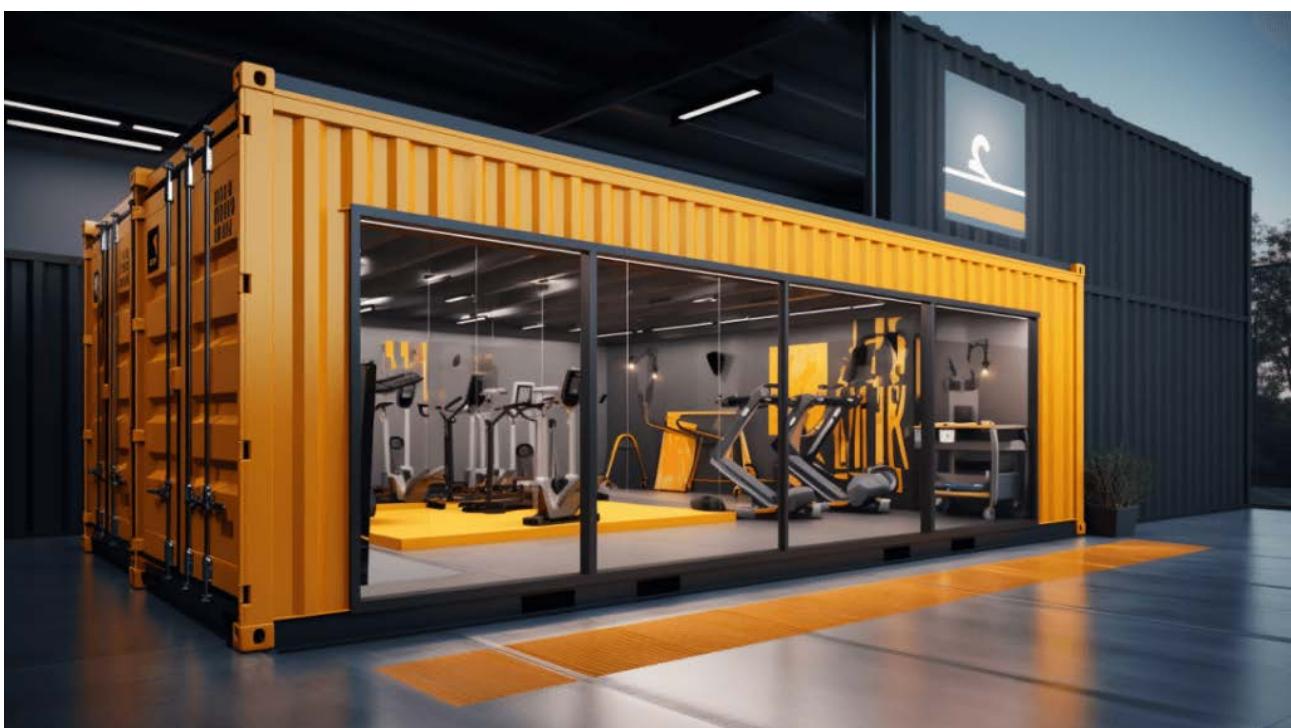
Container Gym

Cost Rental Scheme at An Cnocan, Milleencoola, Bantry, Co. Cork. Delivered by Cork County Council.

11. Seek to deliver alternative housing options such as Affordable Rental Housing within the Town Centre

Project Description

Affordable Rental housing is targeted at people with higher incomes who do not not meet the criteria for social housing eligibility. This new type of rental accommodation is supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Housing Finance Agency and Limerick City and County Council.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➔ Provision of housing options and availability in the town centre

➔ Examine potential sites

➔ Collaborate with the housing department, LCCC and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to deliver housing in Rathkeale town centre

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 - Housing Strategic Policy Objective

To deliver new residential development in accordance with the Settlement and Housing Strategy of the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028, supporting a choice of quality housing, mixed tenure and unit size/type universally designed for ease of adaption to the lifecycle and mixed mobility needs.

Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:

H O3: Require the creation of sustainable communities and high quality universally designed residential area, with a mix of unit types, sizes, tenures, heights, amenities and facilities to create and maintain a sense of place and local distinctiveness.

Examples

Cost Rental Scheme, Citywest, West Dublin. Delivered by the Land Development Agency.

Cost Rental Scheme, Taylor Hill, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Delivered by Clúid.

Advanced Manufacturing Centre – IDA National Technology Park, Limerick
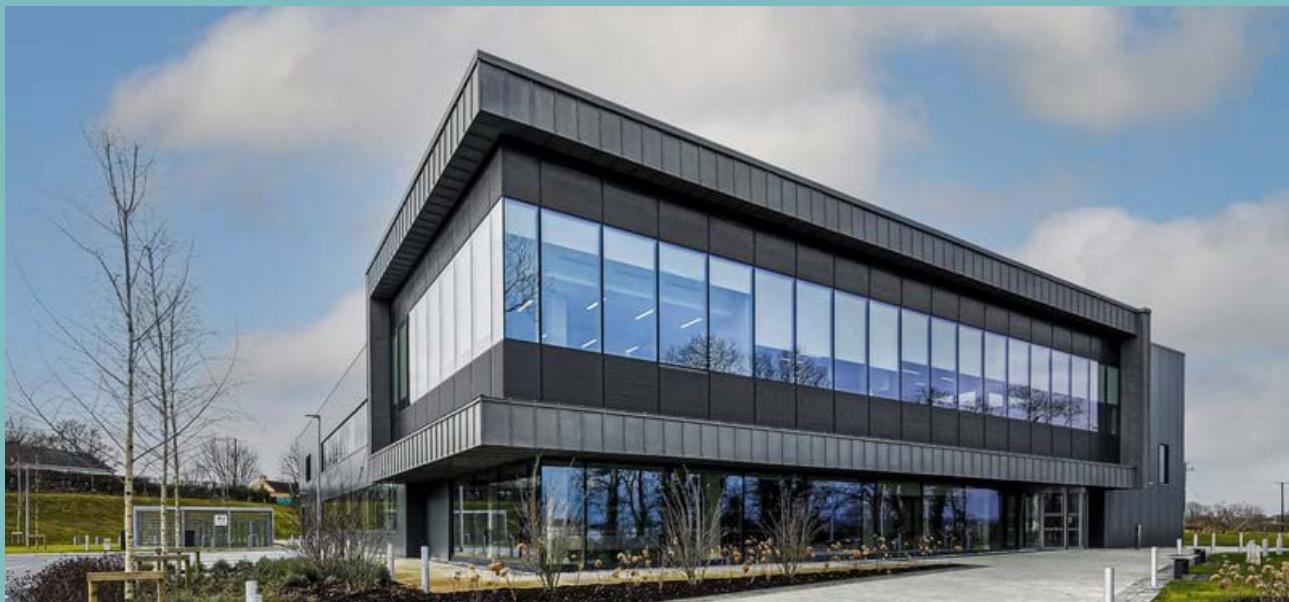
12. Support the activation of Enterprise and Employment zoned lands

Project Description

Capitalise on Rathkeale's central location close to both Newcastle West and Limerick City, which will improve with the development of the Foynes to Limerick (including Adare bypass) Road Scheme. Work with owners of lands zoned to identify opportunities and demand for facilities.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➔ Work with owners of lands zoned to identify barriers to advancing development of zoned lands

➔ Work with relevant stakeholders such as the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Innovate Limerick and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to identify potential occupants

➔ Attract medium to large scale organisations to relocate to Rathkeale

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – Economic Development Strategic Policy Objective

To promote, facilitate and enable economic development and employment generating activities in Rathkeale in a sustainable manner in accordance with higher-level spatial plans, including the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028, the National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.

Objectives: It is an objective of the Council to:

ED 01: Promote a diverse range of employment opportunities by facilitating appropriate development, enhancement of the Rathkeale Enterprise Centre, and promote enterprise development on appropriately zoned Enterprise and Employment lands, subject to compliance with all relevant Development Management Standards of the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028.

ED 02: Encourage the redevelopment of vacant commercial units, brownfield, derelict, and infill sites for enterprise subject to the normal planning criteria, such as access/egress, associated transport movement, appropriate scale to the respective area, impact on amenity of adjoining occupants, servicing, connectivity (including pedestrian and cycling) with the town centre etc.

ED 03: Require that all Enterprise and Employment development incorporate active travel and sustainable travel measures into the design of proposals.

ED 04: Require the preparation of masterplans for the lands zoned Enterprise and Employment, at Wolfburgess East and Abbeylands. The masterplans shall include conceptual layout, access arrangements, infrastructure works and phasing details. Early engagement with all utility providers, including Irish Water is strongly advised.

ED 05:   Any future development proposals for the lands zoned Enterprise and Employment will require a Traffic and Transport Assessment to assess the impact of the proposal on the road network. The costs of the mitigation measures shall be borne by the developer. In the case of development of lands at Abbeylands for Enterprise and Employment any proposals will have due regard to the protective stated status of Protected Structure RPS 1535 Abbeylands House and its curtilage.

Examples


Production Facility and Office Space Design Exemplar

St. Joseph's Convent – Clifden, Co. Galway

Legend
- LAP Boundary
- Enterprise & Employment (Active)
- Enterprise & Employment (Inactive)
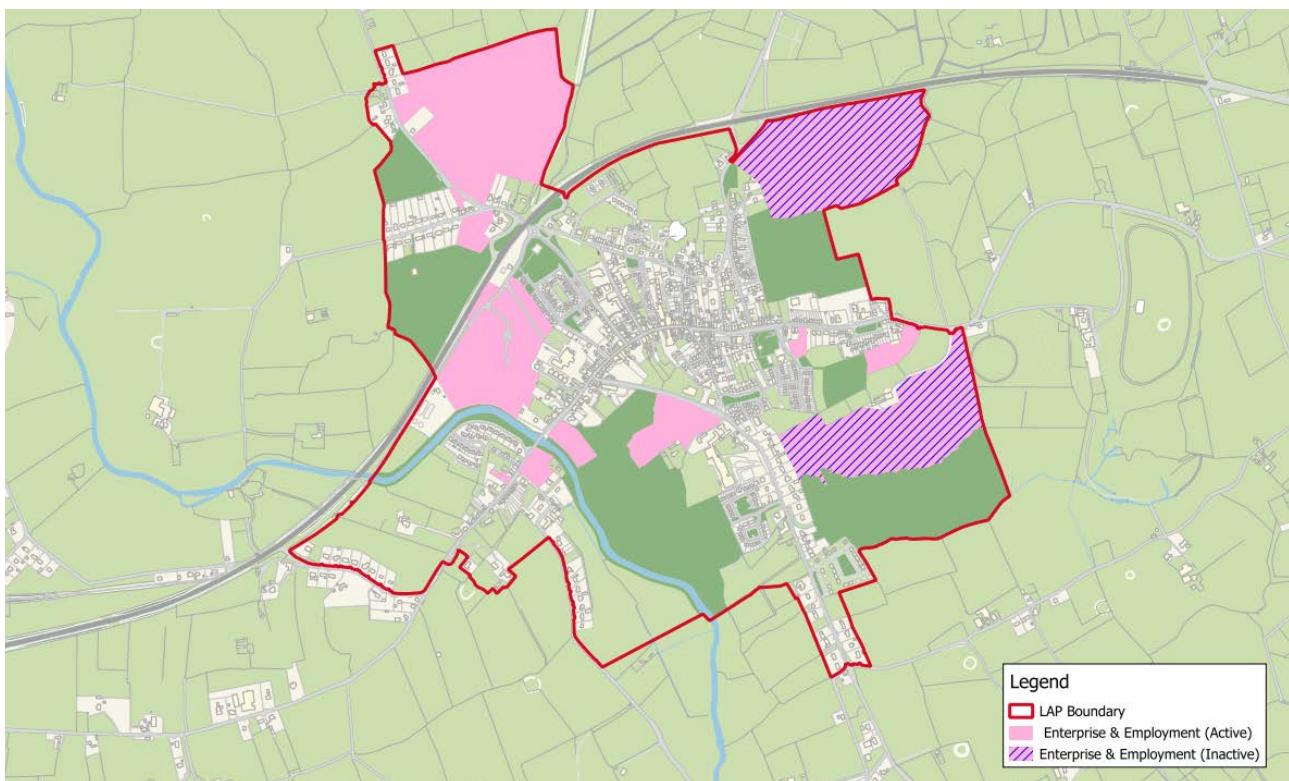
Enterprise and Employment zoned lands

13. Provide a New Link Road from Main Street to New Line Rd

Project Description

There have been a number of enhancements to the local road network, however, there are still heavy traffic flows and congestion through the town at peak periods. There is a need to redistribute heavy goods vehicles away from the town centre and for a new road from Main Street linking directly onto New Line Road.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- ➔ Alleviate traffic congestion caused by vehicles turning onto Main Street from Thomas Street

- ➔ Activation of lands for future development

- ➔ Improve wayfinding and signage

- ➔ Improve the connectivity of Rathkeale town centre to New Line Road

Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029 – Former Mart, New Line (Area 1) has been identified as an opportunity area (Chapter 7. Opportunities for Placemaking - Section 7.4).

The red line boundary outlines Opportunity Area no. 1 contained in the Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029. N.B. This is an indicative master plan for illustrative purposes only. A minimum density of 22 units per hectare is required as set out in Objective H 02 as contained in the Rathkeale LAP 2023-2029.

14. Support the redevelopment of Saint Anne's Convent on Thomas Street

Project Description

Saint Anne's Convent is a prominent historic building (RPS ref. 1538, NIAH reg. no. 21831018) located on Thomas Street in Rathkeale which has remained vacant for several years. Its redevelopment represents a unique opportunity to revitalise a significant heritage structure while addressing local needs and contributing to the town's social, economic, and cultural regeneration. The aim is to repurpose and support the restoration of the building to meet the needs of the community, attract investment, and enhance the town's overall attractiveness.

Key Actions and Opportunities

- Engage with the owners of the building to help ensure the building is repurposed for a combination of community, housing and educational uses
- Redevelop St. Anne's Convent and uphold best practice in the preservation and conservation of this prominent historic building in the town centre

- Promote economic development opportunities in the town centre
- Protect the heritage and historic fabric of the town
- Improve the exterior by using conservation practices
- Address building vacancy, dereliction and potential reuse

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future

Town Centre First

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

ATLANTIC EDGE
LIMERICK
EUROPEAN EMBRACE

St. Joseph's Convent – Clifden, Co. Galway

Manor Hill Age Friendly Housing – Waterford City and County Council

McAuley Place – Naas, Co. Kildare

15. Support the redevelopment of Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool with connection to the Limerick Greenway and Rathkeale Town centre

Project Description

Connect the Limerick Greenway to Dohyle Lough, an existing, pool and amphitheatre. The facility, 500m from the Rathkeale to Adare stretch of the Greenway, has existing buildings, toilets and two car parks. As an attraction with enhanced services, Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool would bring visitors to West Limerick and help rejuvenate the town of Rathkeale.

Key Actions and Opportunities

➲ Engage with the owners of Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool to support the redevelopment of Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool as a regional visitor destination.

➲ Connect Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool with the Limerick Greenway and the Rathkeale Goods Shed and Bike Hire facility at the Hub.

➲ Promote educational and specialist interest tours.

➲ Stimulate tourism development in the Rathkeale area.

➲ Develop space for community events and cultural activities.

➲ Encourage active lifestyles for all age groups

Examples

Dohyle Lough

Rathkeale

Limerick Greenway
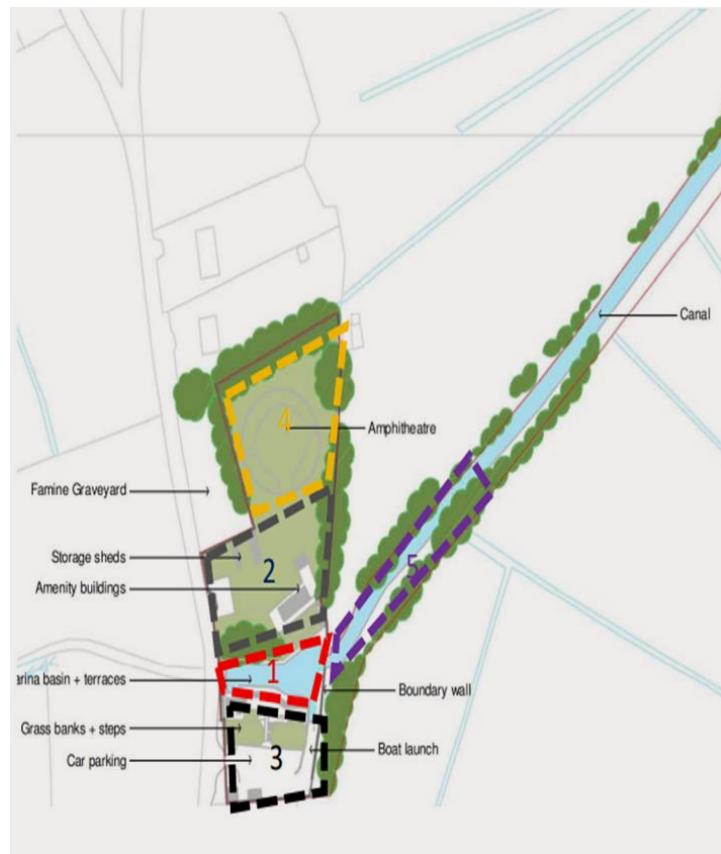
Charlestown Aqua Centre, Lowpark, Charlestown, Co. Mayo

Clontarf Outdoor Pool, Clontarf Road, Dublin 3

Erris – Tidal Swimming Pool, Belmullet, Co. Mayo

Enabling the Place

6.0 Enabling the Place

Key projects outlined under section 5.0 – Defining the Place, need to maximise funding opportunities so that the projects can be successfully delivered. Relevant funding streams are outlined in the table below.

6.1 Project Delivery

The Rathkeale Town Centre Plan relies on the strengths of the town team, local community groups and businesses to work together, supported by national and local government and other agencies to improve the town centre and quality of life for people of the town.

Timeframes: Short-term = < 2 yrs | Medium-term = 2 to 6 yrs

Potential Costs: € < €0.5m | €€ €0.5m-€3m | €€€ > €3m

No.	Project & TCF Plan Theme	Opportunities arising from the delivery of project	Timeframe	Potential Cost & Funding Source	Potential Risks
1	**Repurpose the former Bank of Ireland (BOI) Building on Main Street** Sustainable Economic Development	Maximise economic development opportunities including a mix of office/community uses Protect the heritage and historic fabric of the town Improve the exterior by using best-practice conservation approaches Address building vacancy, dereliction & potential reuse Reactivate the building and increase footfall on Main Street Incentivise enterprise businesses to locate in the town centre.	Short-term	€€ Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS), RRDF, SEAI, LEADER Themes 1 and 2. *RRDF Category 2 funding secured - October 2025	Sustainability of the proposed use, return on investment and increase in renovation costs during the project.
2	**Provide Active Travel Links to the town centre and upgrade existing playground** Sustainable Community, Growth and Investment	Active Travel Links Increase connectivity across the across the River Deel, the Limerick Greenway and Rathkeale N21 Business Park New active travel routes within the town Better mental health and quality of life Encourage active lifestyles for all age groups Improve the sustainability of the town Reduce car dependency Improve the safety and accessibility of pedestrians and cyclists Improve wayfinding and signage Upgrade Playground Upgrade existing play facilities in the town and to expand the current range of equipment to make it accessible to all Encourage incidental play Encourage incidental play New outdoor exercise equipment for adults Encourage families who use the greenway to come into the town Improve the arrival point to the town Wayfinding signage	Short-term	€, €€ Active Travel Investment Grants (NTA) The Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation *Leader funding secured - November 2025	Active Travel Links Reluctance to reduce car based travel Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport. Getting buy in from local residents. Upgrade Playground Ongoing maintenance due to general wear and tear and vandalism and insurance. Antisocial behaviour

No.	Project & TCF Plan Theme	Opportunities arising from the delivery of project	Timeframe	Potential Cost & Funding Source	Potential Risks
3	**Upgrade of the Matrix Riverside Walk and improve connectivity with the town centre** Climate Action, Green and Blue infrastructure	Improve and support biodiversity and educational value of open space Encourage primary and secondary schools to contribute to the proposals Enhance connectivity and links to the N21 Business Park to encourage use of the walk Potential for a community garden/allotments/orchard adjacent to the walkway The community can learn to grow their own food Support physical and mental wellbeing Create additional amenity space within the town centre Encourage community and social interaction Support biodiversity Create a wildlife habitat Enhanced tourist offering for the town centre	Short-term	€, €€ Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) LEADER ORIS (Outdoor Recreation and Infrastructure Scheme)	Maintenance of the community garden/ allotments/ orchard and associated buildings Antisocial behaviour
4	**Coordinate and support a Shopfront Enhancement Scheme Along Main Street** Public Realm	Protect the architectural heritage of the town Improve and enhance the streetscape and appearance of Main Street Enhance the attractiveness and vibrancy of Rathkeale Assist the Tidy Towns committee with improving their overall annual score in the Tidy Towns Competition Encourage community and social interaction Make the town centre more attractive to tourists and the local community	Short-term	€, €€ Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)	Getting buy in from local businesses and residents Overall coordination of the scheme
5	**Develop a Digital Heritage Trail** Culture, Heritage and Digital Connectivity	Develop a route identifying key heritage/historical buildings Education resource for local people, schools and visitors Strengthen local identity Additional tourism offering encouraging visitors into the town centre	Short-term	€ Heritage Council	Loss of the historic built fabric within the Rathkeale Architectural Conservation Area
6	**Establish a new Rathkeale Town Brand (including marketing of events and festivals).** Identity and Visitor Experience	Improved public realm spaces will help strengthen the brand values and public message Develop and promote a new identity for Rathkeale that showcases the passion of the Rathkeale people, community cohesion and strong businesses ethos in the town Develop a brand that recognises the uniqueness of the town Increase footfall in the town centre Build and develop festival offering in the town	Short to Medium-term	€ LCCC departments including Tourism, Communications and Marketing and Arts Office.	No cohesive town brand Failure to capture the positivity of the town and its people Agreement on what events should become part of the yearly events schedule

No.	Project & TCF Plan Theme	Opportunities arising from the delivery of project	Timeframe	Potential Cost & Funding Source	Potential Risks
7	**Deliver a comprehensive Public Realm Scheme for Rathkeale – including Greening the Main Areas within the Town Centre** Public Realm	Improve and enhance the appearance of the town centre Support Rathkeale to go from 'Grey to Green' and help mitigate against climate change and improve public health Work with the Tidy Towns committee to improve their overall annual score in the Tidy Towns Competition Improve outdoor spaces for the community and visitors to the town Improve wayfinding and signage in the town centre Improve accessibility to existing facilities in the town centre Enhance footpaths, lighting, planting, road surfaces and provide new street furniture Support the development of an annual programme of coordinated parades and festivals	Short to Medium-term	€€, €€€ Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF)	Coordination of the project with other planned infrastructure works i.e. road upgrades etc. Ongoing funding and maintenance of flowers and baskets/planters etc. Agreement on the scope of works to be proposed
8	**Upgrade of Town Squares** Public Realm	Improve and enhance the streetscape and quality of life for residents and visitors to the town Use high quality material finishes which will improve the aesthetic of the town Encourage a new sense of place and integration of new communities New multi-use civic meeting space for outdoor events, farmers markets, concerts, community spaces etc. Restore identity and historic character of the space Positive economic impact on the town centre Encourage greenway users to come into the town centre and provide bicycle stands Improve safety and parking Provide planting and seating New landmark sculpture	Medium-term	€, €€ Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS), Limerick City & Council	Agreement on the scope of works to be proposed
9	**Upgrade Abbey Park** Public Realm	Restoration of archway gates to make the park more inviting to visitors Upgrade the bandstand which could be used to host music and pop-up events all year round Upgrade of sports facilities , including the Astroturf pitch and tennis court Provide integration opportunities for the community by working together on events Upgrade of public toilets Improve and support biodiversity Support climate adaptation/mitigation measures Provide space for community orchards and allotments	Medium-term	€, €€ Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)	Agreement on the scope of works to be proposed

No.	Project & TCF Plan Theme	Opportunities arising from the delivery of project	Timeframe	Potential Cost & Funding Source	Potential Risks
10	**Support the development of a Community Gym** Sustainable Community, Growth and Investment	Encourage active lifestyles for all age groups Provide a fitness hub promoting community integration and social connections Positive impact on mental and emotional well-being for all members of the community	Medium-term	€, €€ CCommunity Sport Facilities Fund/Sports Capital and Equipment Fund Allocations	Economic viability Availability of a suitable site/ vacant structure, operational, management and maintenance
11	**Seek to deliver alternative housing options such as Affordable Rental Housing within the Town Centre** Housing	Provision of housing options and availability in the town centre Examine potential sites Collaborate with the housing department, LCCC and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to deliver housing in Rathkeale town centre	Medium-term	€€ Housing Department LCCC Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Agreement on the feasibility, location, density and scope of building works.
12	**Support the activation of Enterprise & Employment zoned lands.** Sustainable Economic Development	Work with owners of lands zoned to identify barriers to advancing development of zoned lands Work with relevant stakeholders such as the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Innovate Limerick and the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to identify potential occupants Attract medium to large scale organisations to relocate to Rathkeale	Medium-term	€, €€ IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Innovate Limerick, LCCC	That the activation of the enterprise and employment lands will not bring significant benefits to the town centre.
13	**Provide a New Link Road from Main Street to New Line Road.** Sustainable Mobility and Transport	Alleviate traffic congestion caused by vehicles turning onto Main Street from Thomas Street Activation of lands for future development Improve wayfinding and signage Improve the connectivity of Rathkeale town centre to New Line Road	Medium-term	€, €€ LCCC	Securing funding to purchase the required lands and deliver road.

No.	Project & TCF Plan Theme	Opportunities arising from the delivery of project	Timeframe	Potential Cost & Funding Source	Potential Risks
14	**Support the redevelopment of Saint Anne's Convent on Thomas Street** Sustainable Economic Development	Engage with the owners of the building to help ensure the building is repurposed for a combination of community, housing and educational uses Redevelop St. Anne's Convent and uphold best practice in the preservation and conservation of this prominent historic building in the town centre Promote economic development opportunities in the town centre Protect the heritage and historic fabric of the town Improve the exterior by using conservation practices Address building vacancy, dereliction and potential reuse	Long-term	€€€ RRDF, LCCC, Other,	Securing funding to purchase Saint Anne's Convent.
15	**Support the redevelopment of Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool with connection to the Limerick Greenway and Rathkeale Town Centre** Sustainable Community, Growth and Investment	Engage with the owners of Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool to support the redevelopment of Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool as a regional visitor destination. Connect Dohyle Lough Swimming Pool with the Limerick Greenway and the Rathkeale Goods Shed and Bike Hire facility at the Hub Promote educational and specialist interest tours Stimulate tourism development in the Rathkeale area Develop space for community events and cultural activities Encourage active lifestyles for all age groups	Long-term	€€€ LCCC, Other	Securing funding to purchase the required lands.

6.2 Funding

A targeted investment programme supports towns in delivering the interventions identified in their bespoke Town Centre First Plans. Schemes include the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund; Town and Village Renewal Scheme; Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund; and the European Regional Development (Thrive) Fund which will prioritise the delivery of Town Centre First. Other cross Government funding schemes also contribute to these projects and the National Office keeps a database of available schemes.

Government Funding Schemes

There are a wide range of government grants and funding schemes available that can support investment in the Town Centre First approach and identified key projects in this plan. Schemes and grants available are outlined in the table below.

Local Authority resource allocations from the LCCC annual budget can support the TCF plan along with the Limerick City and County Council Development Contribution Scheme 2022. Specific state grants to Local Authorities by various government departments for particular services such as for roads or recreation facilities can, subject to availability, support the plan.

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

Fund	Details on the focus of the funding	Supporting Body
Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)	Vacancy, dereliction, town centre residency, enterprise development. Grant of €500,000 minimum for projects. The Fund will provide up to 80% of the total project value, with at least 20% to be provided in matching contributions by the applicants. The fund supports coordinated and integrated projects between government departments, State agencies, local authorities, other public bodies, communities and, where appropriate, philanthropic funders and/or the private sector, which will have an impact on sustainable economic and social development in rural areas. Funding is awarded through a competitive bid process. Since the launch of the RRDF funding of €584 million has been allocated to 243 projects across the state.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS)	The Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) is designed to support the revitalisation of rural towns and villages through a renewed focus on town centre economic and social recovery. This scheme is supported by the Town Centre First Policy and the priorities under the scheme are reviewed each year with the scheme revised as appropriate. It is a competitive process where Local Authorities submit application forms to the Department of Rural and Community Development. Projects funded have included the regeneration of banks, courthouses, cinemas and halls for community use, the development of public plazas, town parks, playgrounds, community gardens and dog parks. The scheme also funds projects at pre-development stage and the acquisition of suitable vacant or derelict properties that could be taken into public ownership and converted for community use. It has also provided specific funding to enhance streetscapes and shopfronts under the streetscape enhancement initiative.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
Housing for All Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant: Croí Cónaithe Towns Fund	Provides people with a grant to support the refurbishment of vacant properties. Grant €50,000 - €70,000 under the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant and up to €30,000 under the Ready to Build Scheme (Local Authorities make serviced sites available at a discounted rate).	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Active Travel Programme	The Active Travel Programme administered by the National Transport Authority (NTA) supports cycling and walking infrastructure including the development of segregated cycle lanes, widening footpaths, new walking and cycling bridges, permeability links and new pedestrian crossings. It also funds dedicated infrastructure schemes such as the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme and behavioural change programmes such as Green Schools. In 2023, €290 million was allocated to Local Authorities to enhance the delivery of hundreds of projects nationally. By 2025, the NTA aims to have delivered in excess of 1,200 projects equating to 1,000km of combined cycling and walking routes nationwide.	Department of Transport (DoT)

Fund	Details on the focus of the funding	Supporting Body
Community Services Programme (CSP)	CSP 2023-2027 supports community-based organisations to provide local social, economic and environmental services through a social enterprise model. CSP aims to tackle disadvantage by providing a co-funding contribution towards the direct salary cost(s) of employing a manager (if approved), and full-time equivalent (FTE) positions. A minimum of 70% of CSP supported employees (excluding Managers) must be from the CSP Employment Target Groups. The current programme runs until 31 December 2027.	Pobal
Climate Action and Retrofitting Initiatives	The government's commitment to climate action is supported by funding to meet 2030 and 2050 climate targets. For example Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide sustainable energy grants to help homeowners, business owners, communities and industry reduce energy costs and greenhouse emissions. Local Authorities are funded in undertaking a programme of insulation retrofitting of the least energy efficient social homes.	Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
Historic Towns Initiative (HTI)	Historic buildings and streetscape enhancement and conservation support. The Historic Towns Initiative is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council to promote heritage-led regeneration and to improve the quality of our historic towns and villages for residents and tourists. The initiative has two streams of funding: Capital works to repair and enhance the heritage of town through heritage-led regeneration projects that address dereliction and residential vacancy, the conservation of landmark buildings, streetscape and public realm conservation led projects; Funding for heritage-led regeneration plans to determine conservation focused interventions for a town.	The Heritage Council (HC)
LEADER Community Led Local Development (CLLD)	The LEADER Programme is funded by both the EU and Irish Government and provides grants, advice and training to support business start-up, expand or develop new products; communities projects to be planned and carried out and assist projects that help the rural environment. The LEADER programme is administered at a local level by local action groups. The Limerick Local Community Development Committee are responsible for selecting and awarding LEADER funding to projects within their geographical area. The Programme funds proposals local and community projects in the local area. Supports under LEADER 2023 – 2027 will be provided under three main Funding Themes: ❯ Economic Development and Job Creation: Projects that promote rural tourism, enterprise development, agricultural diversification, and the green economy. ❯ Rural Infrastructure & Social Inclusion: Initiatives that improve rural infrastructure, accessible services, digital connectivity, and support for rural youth. ❯ Sustainable Development & Climate Change: Efforts focused on environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation and adaptation.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS)	The Repair and Leasing Scheme provides upfront funding of up to €60,000 per unit (including VAT) for any works necessary to bring privately owned property up to standard and in return the property owner agrees to lease the dwelling to the Local Authority or an Approved Housing Body.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Buy and Renew Scheme (BRS)	The Buy and Renew Scheme supports Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in purchasing and renewing housing in need of repair and makes them available for social housing use. It is a complementary initiative to the Repair and Leasing Scheme.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)	The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund provides public off-site infrastructure to relieve critical infrastructure blockages. This is to enable the delivery of housing on key development sites and in urban areas of high demand for housing. Funding is provided on a matched funding basis, with the exchequer providing 75% of the cost of the infrastructure and the Local Authority providing the other 25%.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Community Enhancement Programme (CEP)	The Community Enhancement Programme provides small grants to community groups to enhance facilities in disadvantaged areas. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)

Fund	Details on the focus of the funding	Supporting Body
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)	The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. It is co-funded by the government and European Social Fund Plus and managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
Regional Festivals and Participative Events Fund	The Regional Festivals and Participative Events Fund supports festivals and participative events in County Limerick. The supported events must help to drive domestic and international tourism, stimulate local economic activity, and help to improve the visitor experience in the city and county.	Fáilte Ireland
Community Centres Investment Fund	This fund supports community groups to upgrade and refurbish their existing community centre. Funding in 2024 is available under 2 categories – Category 1: Small scale projects/improvements to facilities - €10,000 to €25,000. Category 2: Larger scale projects - €25,001 to €100,000. Match funding is required for both Categories: a minimum of 5% for Category 1 and a minimum of 10% for Category 2.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
Sports Partnership	Funding provided through Sports Partnership includes for the provision of sports equipment such as kits for school children.	Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS)
Community Sport Facilities Fund	The Community Sport Facilities Fund is the primary vehicle for government support for the development of sports and recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country. The Programme for Government commits to continuing the programme and to prioritising investment in disadvantaged areas and groups that are currently underrepresented in terms of participation. The fund is divided into 3 categories: ➲ Equipment Allocations ➲ Local Projects ➲ Regional Projects	Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS)
Arts Programme	Limerick City and County Council - Arts Office - sets out a programme for funding, development and promoting the arts in Limerick. Opportunities for funding are advertised throughout the year.	Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS) The Arts Council
Creative Ireland Programme	The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-government initiative committed to enhancing access to, engagement with, and enjoyment of Ireland's culture and creativity.	Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (DCCS) Creative Ireland
Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS)	The BHIS is a Government grant scheme using funding from the National Built Heritage Service (NBHS) to help the owners and custodians of historical buildings to maintain and conserve these important structures. Applicants can apply to Limerick City and County Council for funding to help them undertake works to their properties. Funding is available of up to 80% of the cost of doing approved work. Applications open each summer for the following year, and successful applicants will be notified in January each year. Owners/Applicants must pay for the works and will receive the grant funding at the end of the year, after completion. The funding awarded for successful projects will be between €2,500 and a maximum of €50,000.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)

Fund	Details on the focus of the funding	Supporting Body
Historic Structures Fund (HSF)	The Historic Structures Fund aims to conserve and enhance heritage structures and historic buildings, in both private and public ownership, for the benefit of communities and the public. The core aims of this fund are to: ➤ enable larger scale conservation works to be carried out on heritage structures which are deemed to be significant and in need of urgent support; ➤ encourage the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and to help to secure the preservation of protected structures and/or culturally significant assets; ➤ support the investment of private capital in labour-intensive projects to conserve historic structures in public and private ownership for community use. ➤ support employment in the conservation and construction industries. ➤ build resilience in our heritage properties to enable them to withstand the effects of climate change. For 2025, The Historic Structures Fund will offer grants from €50,000 up to €200,000 only, and focus on larger enhancement, refurbishment or reuse projects involving heritage structures, where: A clear community or public benefit has been demonstrated, or A clear residential benefit has been demonstrated (such projects must be advanced through the planning process as necessary) Owners of protected structures seeking funding for smaller scale works, or where there is no community or public benefit, are advised to apply to the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS).	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Community Heritage Grant Scheme	Local Authorities support and facilitate voluntary and community groups in their applications to the Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme. This scheme is intended to enable communities and heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to continue their work on existing projects or to start new initiatives. A broad range of project types are eligible for funding under the scheme including: Workshops and training events that promote good heritage practice, in particular, we are interested in traditional building skills, craft skills, graveyard recording and biodiversity training. Development of Digital Heritage Resources including digitisation, online exhibitions, oral history recordings, podcasts, and films. You need to make sure that the digital outputs you create with grant funding are available, open, and accessible. Conservation surveys, reports, plans, and audits that will inform the future management of buildings and monuments, habitats, collections, or objects. Conservation works to buildings, monuments, habitats, collections, or objects.	The Heritage Council (HC)
Local Biodiversity Action Fund	This fund is available to Local Authorities and supports biodiversity projects and the implementation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans that align with actions under the National Biodiversity Action Plan.	National Parks and Wildlife Service(NPWS) Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)

Fund	Details on the focus of the funding	Supporting Body
Community Monuments Fund	The main aims of the Community Monuments Fund are the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of local monuments and historic sites. It has a number of funding streams aimed at enabling conservation works to be carried out on monuments which are deemed to be significant and in need of urgent support, encouraging access to monuments, improve their presentation and also to build resilience in monuments to enable them to withstand the effects of climate change.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme	The Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme includes support for the rapid roll out of new and improved active travel (walking and cycling) infrastructure in towns and villages.	Department of Transport (DT)
Limerick Development Contribution Scheme 2022	The Limerick Development Contribution Scheme 2022 enables contributions to be levied on new development and provides funding towards capital work programmes on a range of services, including roads, amenity, community and recreation.	Limerick City and County Council (LCCC)
Local Enterprise Office (LEO)	The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) provides training, mentoring programmes and a range of financial supports designed to assist with the establishment and/or growth of businesses including the LEO Client Stimulus Fund, LEAN Micro, feasibility grants and business expansion grants.	Enterprise Ireland (EI)\n\nDepartment of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme	The Social Enterprise Capital Grants Scheme benefits smaller or start-up social enterprises which do not necessarily have the capacity to compete for larger grants, but which nonetheless have a need for upgraded/additional equipment to help them to deliver their services. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee.	Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht (DRCDG)
The Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation	The Capital Grant Scheme for Play and Recreation supports the work of Local Authorities in improving access to quality play and recreation facilities within their communities. This can be through the refurbishment and upgrade of existing facilities or through the development of new ones.\n\nSome of these funded projects include the installation of:\n\n➲ an accessible mini-basketball court\n\n➲ wheelchair-accessible see-saws\n\n➲ inclusive sensory playground equipment\n\n➲ autism-friendly play features\n\n➲ upgraded accessibility features and biodiversity planting	Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)
Heart of the Community Fund 2024	The Heart of the Community Fund is an open grant round designed to meet the needs of not-for-profit organisations delivering vital services and supports to people across the island of Ireland. The Ireland Funds recognises the challenges organisations face in securing funding to build their capacity or meet their core costs.\n\nThe Ireland Funds is a global philanthropic network established in 1976.	The Ireland Funds
Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP)	The Housing Investment Programme, provides for 100% Exchequer funded new build construction on Council land. Undergoes a 4 stage process with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, which means it has to pass 4 gateways for funding approval. The four stages include 1:Feasibility, 2: Pre-Planning, 3: Pre-Tender and 4: Tender Approval for the Builder. This 4 stage process in total can take 59 weeks. Managed and Delivered by Limerick City and County Council under LA Construction and Maintenance unit.	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)