

# CREATING PLACES FOR PEOPLE: THE RIAI TOWN AND VILLAGE TOOLKIT



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

SUPPORTED UNDER THE  
GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ARCHITECTURE





Ballydehob, Co. Cork, drawing by Architect Maura Shaffrey.  
Courtesy of Shaffrey Architects and the Irish Architectural Archive.



# Table of Contents & Contributors

	<b>PREFACE</b>	Philip Jackson, MRIAI	<b>5</b>
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	Simon Wall, MRIAI	<b>11</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>HEALTH, WELL-BEING &amp; HAPPINESS</b>		<b>16</b>
	DESIGN TOOLS		23
	CASE STUDY: Westport, Co. Mayo		26
<b>2</b>	<b>CONNECTIVITY, ACCESSIBILITY &amp; MOVEMENT</b>		<b>31</b>
	DESIGN TOOLS		42
	CASE STUDY: Clonakilty, Co. Cork		44
<b>3</b>	<b>VARIETY &amp; VIABILITY</b>		<b>50</b>
	DESIGN TOOLS		58
	CASE STUDY: Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo		61

# Table of Contents & Contributors

<b>4</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY</b>	<b>67</b>
	DESIGN TOOLS	72
	CASE STUDY: Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary	74
<b>5</b>	<b>A SENSE OF PLACE: URBAN FORM &amp; CHARACTER</b>	<b>80</b>
	DESIGN TOOLS	86
	CASE STUDY: Viking Triangle, Co. Waterford	88
<b>6</b>	<b>VISION, GOVERNANCE &amp; MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION</b>	<b>95</b>
	DESIGN TOOLS	102
	CASE STUDY: Co. Mayo	105
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	110



# Preface

## Making Places for People



Street Carnival in Clonakilty, West Cork.  
Photo courtesy of Cork County Council.

## **Making Places for People – RIAI Town and Village Toolkit**

Philip Jackson – Chair RIAI Urban  
Design Committee

**The RIAI Town and Village Toolkit has been developed by the RIAI and the RIAI Urban Design Committee in response to requests to provide expert advice for people to assess the quality of the towns and villages where they live, work or have responsibility.**

The RIAI Urban Design Committee advises that using a ‘toolkit’ does not provide an easy quick-fix solution that can be simply applied by anyone. Quite the opposite, providing expert advice on urbanism is a specialist skill that many architects develop over many years of practice and experience in this area, including several years additional postgraduate training. Substantial international research and work over the past 50 years has created an extensive evidence-based body of knowledge on how we understand, analyse and monitor the effect of the built environment on people’s behaviour, health and well-being.

This ‘toolkit’ provides a starting point. It draws upon ways that the RIAI consider are the most effective in helping to improve the quality of our towns and villages as attractive places to live. The featured case studies,

delivered by architect-led teams, show how these tools are being successfully applied in Irish towns and villages.

The toolkit also draws upon the findings from a series of colloquia on Shaping the Future of our Town, organised by the RIAI Urban Design Committee and held in Mallow and Drogheda. These colloquia were led by architects with urban design expertise working with a broad range of local people interested in their town, including local community and business interests, local authority representatives, elected public representatives and members of the public. Also contributing were planners, engineers, landscape architects and other fellow built environment professionals. These colloquia explored ways to overcome existing constraints and to help people identify ways to improve their town. The findings and strategic recommendations were collated and presented to the Local Authority in a report.

With growing interest from other local authorities to hold similar events, the RIAI Urban Design Committee decided to develop a ‘toolkit’ methodology to support towns in identifying and making the strategic decisions needed to become attractive and thriving places.



## The Development Process

The process began with a series of discussions within the Urban Design Committee from which six key themes emerged:

1. Urban Structure, Form and Character (A Sense of Place)
2. Connectivity and Interaction
3. Variety and Viability
4. Health and Well-being
5. Living Sustainably / Sustainable Living
6. Governance, Management and Stewardship.

The Committee held a workshop involving other architects with urban design expertise in towns and villages, other built environment professionals and stakeholders. Members of the committee then prepared draft principles and tools for each of the six themes. These were collated and reviewed by an editorial team.

It became evident that ‘Health, Well-being and Happiness’ should be the starting point for thinking about how we can improve the quality of our towns and villages as attractive places to live. Key to this is improving walkability and social interaction. Inclusiveness, diversity and vitality are essential factors. It is also essential that we live and work using local resources sustainably rather than relying on global supplies such as imported energy or food. Creating walkable, sustainable towns and villages can greatly help reduce our carbon footprint, develop the local economy and improve our quality of life.

Local Government has a key role in achieving this by enabling, helping and supporting people to manage and care for their communities. This is essential, not only to improving our towns and villages today, but also for our children’s future.

With the main text, principles and tools drafted, the next step was to consider case studies and interview the key players. This has drawn on the direct experience of RIAI Members working in towns and communities. The toolkit has been ‘peer reviewed’ by four architects specialising in urban design, all working in towns and villages around Ireland. Their feedback has been incorporated into this version.



The RIAI held a workshop in January 2017 with professionals from different backgrounds involved in urban design facilitated by Connect the Dots.



## How the Toolkit Works

Each chapter contains a set of principles and objectives under the six themes:

1. Health, Well-being & Happiness
2. Connectivity, Accessibility & Movement
3. Variety & Viability
4. Environmental Sustainability
5. A Sense of Place, Urban Form & Character
6. Vision, Governance & Management Co-ordination

These are followed by Design Tools and useful further reading.

Case studies of realised projects complete each chapter.

The Toolkit is based around working with and repairing our existing urban fabric, recognizing and responding to the unique qualities and value inherent in each of our towns. It is focused on how people live and use our towns, and how good quality design management and thinking can improve the quality of life for all. This can have major benefits to our physical health and well-being, our economic health and ability to attract business and generate income, and to living in a better managed and more sustainable relationship with our environment.

The toolkit draws upon the extensive body of research and work developed over the past 50 years in understanding, analysing and monitoring the effect of the built environment on people's behaviour, health and well-being. There is now a strong evidence base of best practice which the toolkit draws upon. Research and development of analysis tools using applied technology are also beginning to provide more ways to understand our towns and villages.

Development of the RIAI Town and Village Toolkit received funding from the Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht as part of the Government Policy on Architecture. The toolkit is intended to complement other similarly funded initiatives such as the Heritage Council's Village Design Statements and Town Centre Health-Check programme. The toolkit has greatly benefited from the valuable contributions from members of the RIAI Urban Design Committee, the RIAI editorial team and the Peer Reviewers, all of whom worked on a voluntary basis.

The RIAI Town and Village Toolkit is intended to be an easily accessible, visual guide to making places better, widely available for people to download. The intention is that it can be used as an educational tool, to inform and guide local community and business interests, and as a reference and guide for professionals and those responsible for our towns and villages. The aim is to help communities make informed decisions to improve their towns and villages as places for people.

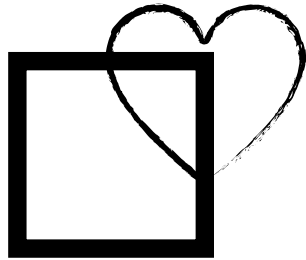


The RIAI Town and Village Toolkit can be downloaded from [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie). We welcome feedback from anyone who has downloaded and used this toolkit.

**Contact:** [info@riai.ie](mailto:info@riai.ie)

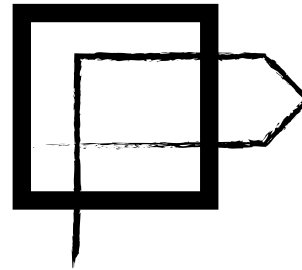


## Chapter Key



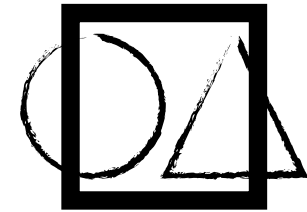
### Chapter 1

Designing Places for People:  
Health, Well-Being & Happiness



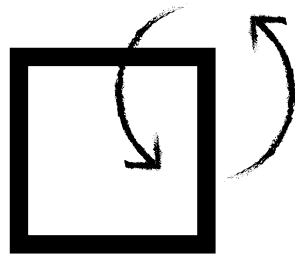
### Chapter 2

Connectivity,  
Accessibility & Movement



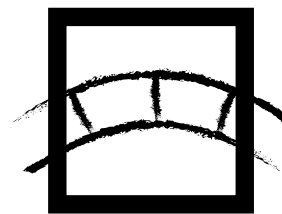
### Chapter 3

What Allows a Town to Thrive?  
— Variety & Viability



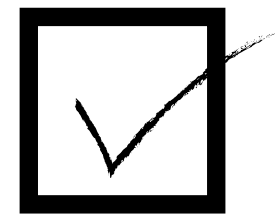
### Chapter 4

Environmental Sustainability



### Chapter 5

A Sense of Place:  
Urban Form & Character



### Chapter 6

Vision, Governance &  
Management Co-ordination



# Introduction

Getting Started – How  
Can a Town Pick Itself Up  
and Drive its Future?

Clonakilty 400 Urban Design.





## **Getting Started - How Can a Town Pick Itself up and Drive its Future?**

Simon Wall, MRIAI, Senior Executive Architect,  
West Mayo Municipal District

**Towns and Villages are the commercial and social ‘life blood’ of rural Ireland the length and breadth of the country. Yet many are in decline, some almost beyond rehabilitation. This document has been created to give strong practical guidance, or a ‘road map’ to how towns can go about helping themselves to survive and prosper.**

Local Authorities no longer have the funding to do everything. The responsibility for meeting the community’s needs and ‘getting it right’ has become the joint responsibility of both local communities and Local Government. Today, the key to achieving vibrant and successful towns is through cooperation and partnership with Local Government who can provide a vital role in enabling and supporting the local community in managing their own town or village.

### **Step 1: Create a Team**

At the outset, establish a Town Team, and meeting structure, consisting of the following three strands:

1. Volunteers.
2. The Business & Professional Community,
3. The Local Authority; Councillors & Executive.

It is important that the Local Authority Executive and Councillors are on this team as the Local Authority control development and can facilitate the all-important next step (Step 2). Try to include an RIAI Architect on this team, as they are trained and have the skill set to understand urbanism and the built environment. Many Local Authorities now have in-house Architects with this expertise.

### Step 2: Create a Vision

- Negotiate the commissioning of a Town or Village Design Statement through the Local Authority. If funding is not directly available from the Local Authority there are other sources like 'LEADER' companies, who will consider grant aiding towns and villages for these type of community plans.
- This creates and demonstrates a community-led vision and sets out a 'roadmap' list of tasks and projects that can be realised for the town. The document identifies opportunities for improvements from small things such as signage to larger public realm projects. It will also identify key sites and general improvements that could improve the town, and identify potential funding sources that are available to realise these projects.
- The importance of this step is that a community is investing in 'intellectual capital' and planning its future together in partnership with Local Government. Through the creation of its Town or Village Design Statement the community will have created a document that will be the basis and justification of plan-led grant-aid applications for future projects.

### Step 3: Start Delivering

- The projects identified in the Vision can be delivered in many ways:
  1. Through the Local Community.
  2. Through the Local Authority.
  3. Through a Community Investment Company.
  4. Through Voluntary Organisations.
- The key is to deliver one small successful 'trial project' as a demonstration within a community to build collective confidence, then gradually and incrementally expand from there – many small steps have less risk than one large project.
- Keep on delivering. Success builds on success, and gives a town confidence and, most importantly, a collective consciousness.
- When working with Local Government there are greater opportunities of 'leverage' by coordinating works. For example, proposed large-scale engineering projects such as street services or drainage provide opportunities to improve the street layout and finishes for the public realm spaces.



### Next Steps

- Educate yourselves as to the structure of your Local Government.
- Find out about the many sources of grant aid from Local and Central Governments, and the Irish Local Development Network CLG (ILDN).
- Remember, there are lots of funding streams available for the urban regeneration of our towns and villages. However, it tends to go to the communities that pull together as a strong team in partnership with their Local Authority. The creation of a 'Vision Document' as outlines is usually the basis of successful plan-led funding applications. This 'toolkit' will hopefully demonstrate through the steps above, and inspire through the associated case studies, how this can be achieved through partnership.
- Team up with professionals who have the expertise to help you construct and deliver the vision.

See **Funding Sources**, p104.

There are **15** towns  
with a population of  
**20,000–50,000.**

At individual town level Blacklion  
(**46.4%**) in Cavan had the highest  
vacancy rate, excluding holiday  
homes in 2016 followed by  
Keshcarrigan (**45.6%**) in Leitrim  
and Kilgarvan (**43.1%**) in Kerry.

There are **56** towns  
with a population of  
**under 10,000.**

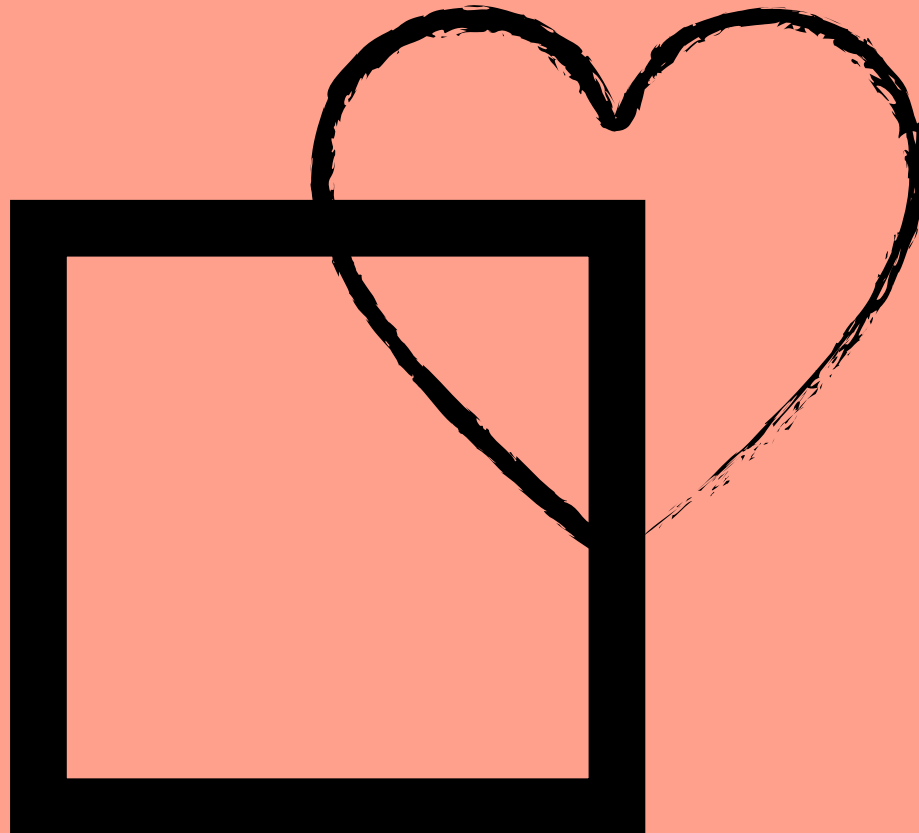
Of the **183,312** vacant houses and  
apartments **117,381** were located  
within the **873** settlements identified  
in Census 2016. There were **54** towns  
identified in 2016 (dropped from 112  
towns in 2011 Census) where there  
were **over 25%** of dwellings vacant.

There are **22** towns  
with a population of  
**less than 20,000.**

Among the urban towns (towns with  
a population of **1,500 or more**) the  
highest vacancy rates were recorded in  
Ballaghaderreen (**33.1%**) and Castlerea  
(**27.7%**) in Roscommon along with  
Bundoran (**29.9%**) in Donegal.

# Chapter 1

## Health, Well-being & Happiness





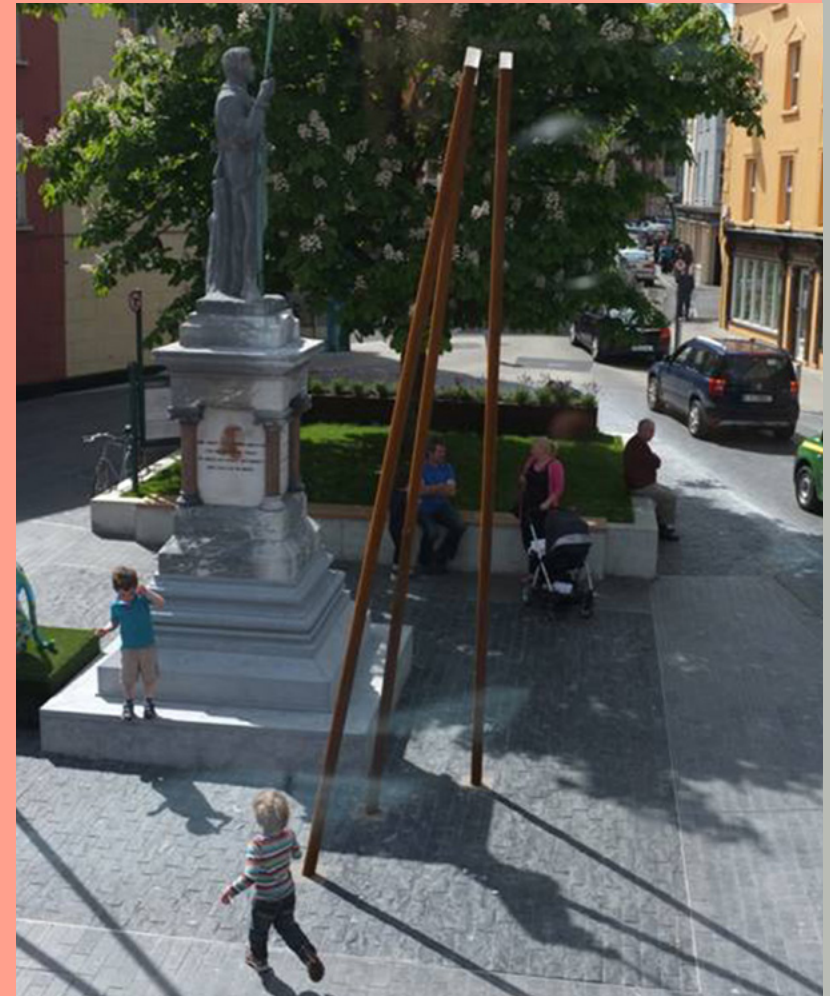
## Introduction

Towns are at the centre of Irish life. For generations, they have been the focal point for our communities as places of commerce, governance and social interaction, serving both local dwellers and the surrounding rural hinterland. In an age of urbanisation, increased mobility and technological change, towns remain unique in their potential to offer great places to live, to have a positive work-life balance, and to be part of a community. Living in well-managed and attractive towns allows many people an opportunity to lead stimulating, fulfilling and healthy lives.

Great towns are inclusive, supportive, friendly and open. They provide people with services, opportunities for everyday social contact, and independence in their own lives. These towns offer something for everyone. How they are planned and designed determines how we live. The quality of the built environment **directly impacts on the health and well-being** of all people. Extensive evidence-based research has established the positive impact that good urban design and town planning can have on people's health, well-being and happiness. An approach to design which focuses on inclusion, active movement and social interaction, is therefore essential in ensuring our towns can respond to our everyday needs.

## Designing Places for People

People need focal points in their towns and communities: places to stop and meet, places for conversation and exchange, or just to sit and watch the world go by; places that are safe and welcoming for everyone of all generations, abilities, cultures and backgrounds. Universal principles exist with regard to how people's senses directly affect and influence the way in which they relate to and behave in the built environment. Spaces that work well are designed to these principles. Places that are noisy, busy, threatening, dirty, and visually discordant can overload people's senses, cause stress, and adversely affect their well-being.



Asna Square, Clonakilty. A former car park has been transformed into a shared space with opportunities to stop and meet people. Winner RIAI Public Choice Award 2014 (Phase 1 Clonakilty 400 Urban Design).

Vehicular traffic can significantly undermine the quality of life in our towns and have adverse health implications. In contrast, streets designed for people are calmer, less stressful and better for our overall health and well-being. Removing or slowing through-traffic and providing more attractive modal options (walking, cycling, public transport) can allow public spaces, streets and squares to be improved as social spaces with a range of activities that can be **enjoyed by everyone**, increasing both local community participation and appealing to visitors. Places that have natural sounds, pleasant smells, good quality air and light, and planting are all attractive to people because they help reduce stress and improve well-being. People are attracted to and tend to stay longer in places where they can observe and interact with others. Such places are also more pleasant for residents.

By analysing how people use public streets and places, it is possible to understand why some spaces are inviting and well-used while others are not. From this understanding, recommendations can be made on effective modifications and changes to improve people's use and enjoyment of these spaces. There are many examples from around the world where this approach has been applied successfully to transform and create attractive, friendly places which engage people of all ages and abilities.



Example of poor pedestrian realm.  
Courtesy of Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets.



Example of well-designed pedestrian realm in Ballymun. Courtesy of Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets.



## Designing to Include Everyone

Policies and actions intended to achieve intentional inclusivity are key to creating a healthy, happy town that belongs to everyone. Maintaining independence and mobility, having everyday social contact and interaction with other people, and knowing that there is someone to help when needed, are key factors to everybody's quality of life. These factors are fundamental to how we plan and manage our towns. Each person has individual traits and characteristics that contribute to the diversity, variety, and interest of a place. Designing our towns to universally accessible standards provides for the needs of all people (young and old regardless of ability), improves the quality of life for everyone, helps build communities and leads to a more **inclusive society**.

This requires an interactive creative process that involves and engages with everyone and is usually led by an architect with urban design expertise. For the elderly or infirm, being able to walk to local facilities helps provide independence, maintain mobility, and offers opportunities for social contact and stimulation. Identifying and managing the provision of affordable housing is essential in order to meet the needs of all in the community. For young people, a town must provide an



Streets in Clonakilty were designed to include everyone. Photo courtesy of Cork County Council.



Greenways, like Westport Greenway, enable young families to cycle safely together. Image taken from [greenway.ie](http://greenway.ie).



engaging environment that encourages children to explore, learn, understand and enjoy the world in which they find themselves. Our streets and public spaces should **offer opportunities** for children to develop independence and social responsibility. This requires an ability to involve children as individuals and citizens in their own right from an early age. As part of this, parents can be helped in overcoming their fears regarding play, freedom, and safety so that their children can develop fully and freely as part of the community. This requires communication and reassurance about any proposals designed to change habits and improve health outcomes: for example, a project that makes it easier and safer for children and their parents to walk and cycle, rather than be driven to school, is beneficial for everyone.

Adults can also enjoy ‘playful’ places with interesting features that may be engaged with. Developing inclusive cultural programmes that use the public realm can bring major benefits in terms of stimulating interest and participation, inclusion and cohesion, and in attracting people and investment.



The water feature in Emmet Square, Clonakilty is a popular gathering point for all generations. Courtesy of Cork County Council.

## Designing for Active Movement

In the mid-twentieth century the planning of our towns deviated towards a dispersed form of development, where large areas of land were restricted to a single use and reliance on private cars as the principle means of movement was promoted. It is now widely recognised that this has adversely affected the quality of our environment, impacted on our health, and increased social isolation. As a result, there is a growing shift towards compact, walkable towns with a mix of uses, planned around people rather than cars. Our towns originally developed before the advent of motorised transport and are ideally sized for active movement, such as walking and cycling, as part of everyday life.

Many remain largely compact with local facilities at the centre that are most easily accessible

on foot rather than by vehicle. Compactness is the key ingredient, with facilities that are convenient to walk to as part of our everyday routine. Such simple yet regular activity benefits people's physical health, mental well-being, and quality of life. Not only is this personally healthier, it costs relatively little and reduces demand on our healthcare services. Individuals also directly benefit financially when reducing their car use, in terms of expenditure on car maintenance, motor insurance, and fuel bills. Providing attractive, walkable places requires less physical infrastructure and is more **environmentally friendly** than building roads and parking. This allows public funding to be redirected to services that benefit people's quality of life.



### Design Tools

Work with an Architect/Urban Designer to implement these tools. You can find an Architect on [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie).

**Plan** compact towns with local facilities clustered at the centre. Shops, schools, workplaces, public transport and leisure amenities all within short walking distances of where people live.

**Identify** the most convenient routes and streets for people to walk, run and cycle along — particularly for children to get to school — and make these more attractive with wide pavements, good quality paving materials, seating, trees, planting, and lighting. Encouraging people to interact with such everyday spaces ensures our towns are more social, safer, and well maintained.

**Bring** people together by using main public places and streets for a variety of activities that attract more people into the town centre. In addition to regular daily activities, this could include organising special events or encouraging more casual spontaneity.

**Improve** the quality of public places and streets so that people feel comfortable rather than crowded. Provide plenty of space for people to walk together, pass others by, and talk normally rather than shout over traffic noise. Provide for people with disabilities and mobility issues.

**Design** places where people feel connected to nature: consider trees in squares and along streets, places to sit close to the sound of water, to enjoy clean air and sunshine, and provide views, glimpses and access to natural landscape features.

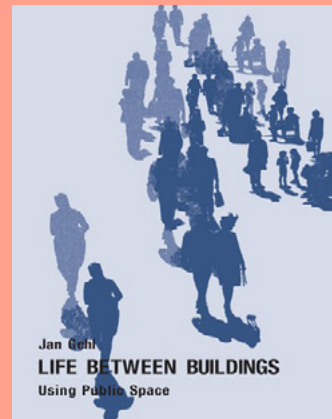
**Analyse** and evaluate how people use places before and after any changes are made and experiment by making small improvements.

## References



The **Happy Homes** toolkit is an initiative set up by the Happy City organisation. Its aim is to help identify principles, strategies and actions to boost social well-being in multi-family housing.  
<https://thehappycity.com/resources/happy-homes>

**Place Standard Tool** is part of a framework developed by the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and Architecture and Design Scotland to assess the quality of a place. It can be a useful starting point for a community or individual to identify their issues concerning their town and to establish a database to work from.  
<http://www.placestandard.scot>



**Jan Gehl**, HonMRIAI is a visionary urbanist who was an early proponent of a people-centred approach to urban planning. His work and research is a useful resource for analytical tools, unique insights and good design principles. His 1971 book '*Life between Buildings*' is a classic text that describes essential elements that consistently contribute to people's enjoyment of public space. Later publications provide good practice examples. In 2013, *How to Study Public Life*, written with Birgitte Svarre, includes many methods and tools drawing on over 50 years of experience.  
<https://gehlpeople.com/shopfront>



The Gehl Institute founded in 2017 works with other organisations and foundations on research of public life. Their research includes '*Inclusive Healthy Places — A Guide to Inclusion & Health in Public Space*'.  
<https://gehl institute.org/work/inclusive-healthy-places>

**Age Friendly Ireland** have produced a series of guidelines in relation to age-friendly design and the built environment. Use their analysis checklist to assess whether your town is really accessible to the elderly or those with restrictions to their mobility.  
<http://agefriendlyireland.ie/resources-and-practices>



**'Space to Grow: ten principles that support happy, healthy families in a playful, friendly city'**  
[https://gehl institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GehlInstitute\\_SpaceToGrow\\_single\\_pages.pdf](https://gehl institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GehlInstitute_SpaceToGrow_single_pages.pdf)





**Healthy Ireland** is a government-led initiative which aims to create an Irish society where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health, and where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society. This includes the 'Healthy Cities and Counties programme' and the 'Healthy Ireland Network'. A strategy for the Healthy Cities and Counties Programme is currently being developed.

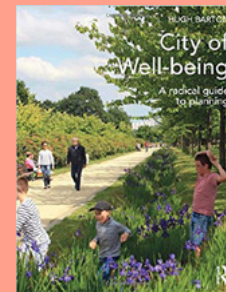
**'Designing Cities with Children and Young People'** edited by Kate Bishop and Linda Corkery provides international case studies to designing with children and engaging children and young people for participation in planning and design. This book is published by Routledge and can be ordered through the RIAI bookshop.



Arup's **'Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods'** released December 2017. <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/cities-alive-urban-childhood>



**'A Playful City'** is a Dublin based initiative encouraging communities to come together interact and use their streets to create a more playful, engaging and inclusive city'. <https://www.aplayfulcity.com>



Professor Hugh Barton is a town planner and author of various publications on the planning of healthy, sustainable settlements, including **'City of Well-being: A Radical Guide to Planning'** published in 2016. He is recognised as an international expert and special advisor the World Health Organisation 'Healthy City' movement. The book which highlights the crucial role of planners, communities and developers in the design of healthy planning principles to shape the development of our built environment is published by Routledge.



**'The Design of Childhood'** by Alexandra Lange, published June 2018, explores how children's playthings and physical urban environment affects their development. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/the-design-of-childhood-9781632866370>

Specialist books on Urban Design can be ordered from the RIAI Bookshop, visit [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie) or email [info@riai.ie](mailto:info@riai.ie).

# Case Study

## Westport, Co. Mayo

### **Mayo County Council, Architects Department**

Peter Hynes MRIAI, Chief Executive

Geeta Keena MRIAI, Senior Architect

Simon Wall MRIAI , Senior Executive Architect

The Westport Case Study has been the result of a collaborative multi-disciplinary approach to Urban Regeneration over a period of two decades.

### **What problem/challenge did Westport experience?**

The main challenge Westport faced coming up to the millennium, was that, like most West of Ireland towns, we were in decline. We had reasonably strong summer tourism seasons, but these were short, and could not sustain us year-round. The town was also on the cusp of being approved for Section 23 tax designation by central government, which we hoped would attract tourism-related infrastructural development.

### **How did you bring about change?**

The then Town Council made two significant decisions just prior to the millennium:

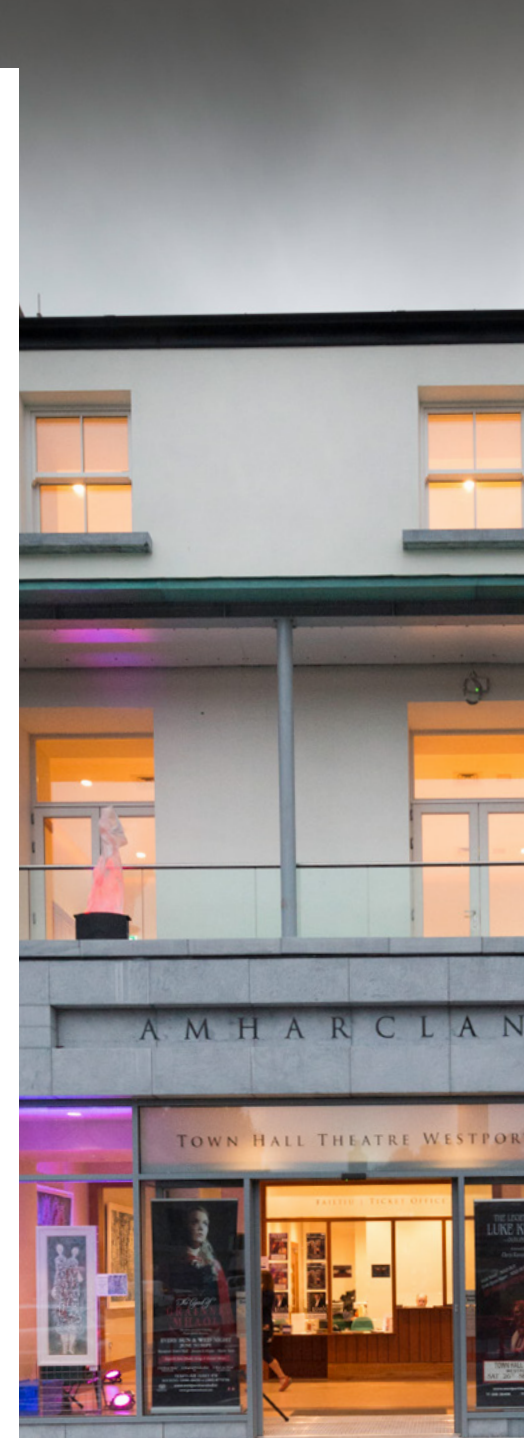
- To commission a Town Design Statement called '*Westport 2000*'. This was, in essence, an intellectual gift to the town that structured and annotated how and where future development should happen. The Town Design Statement provided design guidelines on everything from large interventions, such as where and how new streets should be designed, to the small interventions such as signage and planting guidelines.

- To employ a Town Architect based full-time within the town's community, to manage planning and the built environment utilising the Town Design Statement, as part of the town management team.

Another key driver was the fact that we entered national competitions. This is a very quick way of galvanising a community into putting the best foot forward and coming together to present our best to the outside. This quickly creates strong town teams for future, greater projects and events. As the old adage goes... success breeds success.

### **How is Westport now? And what would you do differently?**

The strategy implemented by the then Town Council, and the associated community buy-in, paid dividends. Today we are perceived to be one of Ireland's most successful small rural towns; this was not the case 25 years ago. Having a full-time Local Authority Town Architect, liaising with the professions within local government, such as the planners and engineers, while empowering the local community, has driven positive urban regeneration and galvanised the town's





## ⇒ CASE STUDY WESTPORT, CO. MAYO

stakeholders in supporting their Local Authority. It also allowed Section 23 tax incentive development and the 'Celtic Tiger' to be harnessed in a positive way, to work for the town and its future, leaving a very positive legacy.

### **What contribution did architects/urban designers make?**

One of the key contributions to the successful urban regeneration of Westport was the Town Council having its own Architect as part of the town management team, to drive and structure the town's rejuvenation. This strategy was inspired by the example of Cork County Council where in the 1980s and 1990s Architect Billy Houlihan pioneered the template of the Local Authority 'Town Architect', as a champion of community-led urban regeneration in the towns of Clonakilty and Kinsale. The legacy is still paying dividend – Clonakilty and Kinsale are some of Ireland's most successful small towns today.

### **What are you doing next?**

Since the abolition of Town Councils and the advent of Municipal Districts, Mayo County Council have now adapted and expanded their architectural template by designating a full-time Municipal Architect and Architectural Technologist to be based within each of its four Municipal Districts.



## Before



The Town Hall before.



The square was nothing more than a car park.

## After



The Town Hall after refurbishment. Car parking spaces were removed to make the public realm more attractive and pedestrian-friendly.



Car spaces were removed and the Sentinel sculpture inserted to create a square.



The Town Design Statement provided **design guidelines** on everything from large interventions, such as where and how **new streets** should be designed, to the small interventions such as **signage** and planting guidelines.

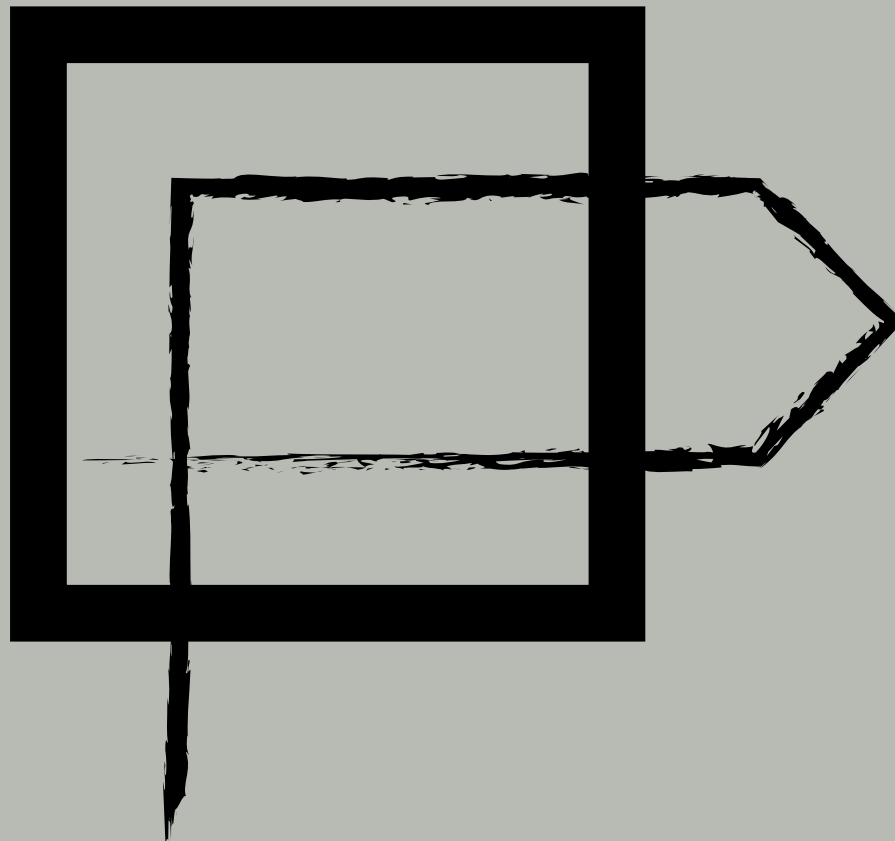


The Sentinel', Westport by sculptor Ronan Halpin.



# Chapter 2

## Connectivity, Accessibility & Movement



## **Introduction**

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges that high quality, accessible, well-connected places, designed to include people of all abilities **promote social activity** and cohesion in public spaces while empowering and enabling communities. The public realm can be enjoyed by all and become a hive of activity and social wellbeing. Towns have evolved to enable human interaction, to facilitate social wellbeing, and to provide the exchange of ideas and goods. **Connectivity** to accommodate human activity is fundamental to the social and economic success of a town. Connectivity comes in many forms — interaction within the community, physical access and movement within and between settlements, and using technology to overcome physical distance for essential services. The design and quality of physical infrastructure has major impact on how we live, use and feel about our towns, which in turn has economic consequences. The urban structure of a town is **shaped by patterns** of mobility and community behaviour over time which result in a hierarchy of routes and spaces.



Before: Thomas Davis Square was choked by cars and was not a place for people to gather.



After: Traffic was reduced to one lane on Thomas Davis Square, Mallow to make the public realm more welcoming to pedestrians.

Based on extensive architectural research of urban structure and analysis of movement patterns, evidence-based design tools and methodologies have been developed that can accurately predict the impact of development on how we use our towns, which areas will be busy or quiet, and preferred movement routes. These tools, which reflect and support architectural and urban design practice, are increasingly being used to assess major investment decisions – for example, the impact of a new bridge, street, or shopping centre on movement patterns.

## Establishing Movement Principles

As stated in Chapter 1, incorporating active movement – walking, jogging, cycling, etc. – into everyday activity is beneficial to people’s health, wellbeing and quality of life. The health advice is a minimum of 30 minutes five days per week. Irish Towns are **ideally suited** to encouraging active movement as part of everyday life because of their compact size and intact urban layout with homes, schools, shops and places of work located in close proximity.

- Active movement can be encouraged by designing our streets and public space so that people find it preferable to walk and cycle rather than use other transport modes.
- For longer journeys, a good quality integrated public transport system is required, which is convenient for everyone to use.
- Community bus services for our smaller towns which feed into ‘transport hubs’ in main towns can connect seamlessly with regular trains or inter-city coach services.

The general preception that has prevailed is that private cars provide individual flexibility and convenience, but in practice there is a desire to shift away from this mode of transport for everyday journeys, due to its impact on our quality of life – of congestion, long commutes, overheads (buying, running and parking costs) and environmental pollution.

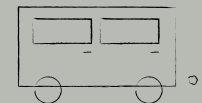
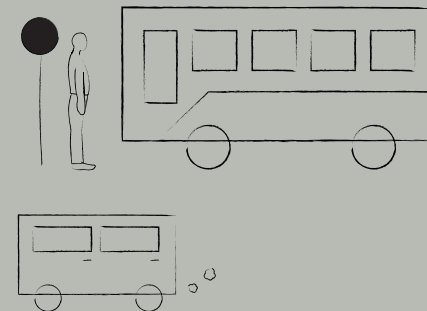
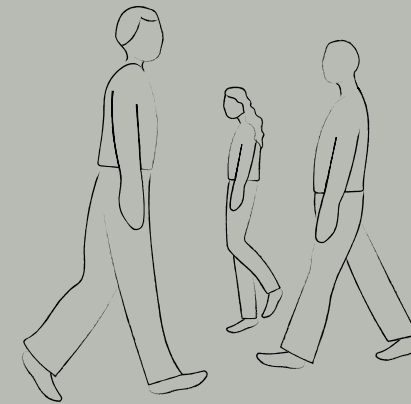


Thomas Davis Square, Mallow, Co. Cork.



## Sustainable Modes of Transport

The technological development of driverless vehicles will exacerbate these problems. There is a growing body of knowledge that people prefer to be ‘multi-modal’ — walking, using public transport, with occasional car usage for specific tasks rather than everyday use. This is evidenced in part by the growth of car and bike sharing schemes. For towns with a large hinterland, a combination of visitor short-stay car parks within walking distance of the town centre and more peripheral ‘park and ride/park and bike’ long-stay car parks can reduce private vehicle use within the town and encourage active movement. Any associated development should be limited to supporting these parking facilities and not replicate town centre business activities.



This diagram shows a hierarchy of sustainable modes of transport from top walking and cycling to public transport, with individual car usage last.



Crowds enjoying a performance in the Pavilion of Light, Mardyke Gardens, Fitzgerald Park, Cork by Darmody Architecture. Photo by Enda Cavanagh.

The movement strategy for a town needs to be combined with a public realm strategy and activity programme developed with full community support. The activity programme should include using streets and spaces creatively for impromptu and formal events, festivals, markets, art, play and other activities that attract and engage everyone. Community engagement, involvement and **sense of ownership** is vital. The business community needs to be confident that the measures will attract people into the town and improve their businesses. Public space art programmes can be very effective. A ‘town management team’ is essential to coordinating and implementing this process (See Chapter 6). The overall appearance of a town can be greatly improved by quality designed walkable surfaces, attractive materials and finishes that reflect the town’s overall character, good quality planting, removing visual clutter and overhead wires, integrating utilities, managing signage, introducing softer directional lighting and reducing noise levels. These all help create an attractive public realm for people to enjoy.



## Improving Walkability

The streets and spaces in a town form its public face. These streets and spaces are defined by the adjacent buildings which give a sense of enclosure, height and scale. Streets and spaces need to be permeable, legible, and allow for passive surveillance. Investment in the public realm forms part of a programme of urban renewal which includes reviving active use of existing buildings. In busy streets this may be commercial at ground floor with a mix of commercial and residential above. In quieter streets and squares, residential can also work well at ground floor with a defined public/private interface. This provides people with **a sense of safety**, encourages pedestrian movement, encounter and exchange, enables social and economic interaction and **enhances community life**.

Pedestrianised public spaces encourage encounters and enable social and economic interaction enhancing community life.  
(Asna Square, Clonakilty.)



Wide footpaths with planting encourage people to stop and spend time there.

## Working with the Existing Urban Structure

The urban structure of a town provides ‘visual signs’ that subconsciously inform and direct people walking about. Main streets with commercial uses are perceived differently from narrow laneways which act as short-cuts. Street patterns create junctions and nodes. These help way-finding and orientation as part of a **hierarchy of routes** that connect different places. Gateway points are significant in terms of first impressions, while central spaces provide a sense of arrival, where people feel they should stop and look around. Streets in towns tend to converge either on a central large space, or series of streets and spaces, which form the town centre. This area is often the focus of social and



retail activity where people congregate. It tends to be the oldest and most sensitive part of the town and are often under most pressure to change (See Chapter 5).

Most towns have a **highly permeable walkable street structure** with small urban blocks and fine urban grain, particularly at their centres where streets converge. Invariably, there are locations where connectivity is restricted, for example large sites with no through access. To improve walkability, defined routes along pedestrian desire lines that connect into the surrounding street pattern and hierarchy should be introduced. The development of large single use sites with single vehicle access onto main roads should be avoided. These concentrate traffic in one location leading to an environment that is hostile and unpleasant for other users. This generates greater dependence on private vehicles.





Seating offers pedestrians the opportunity to stop and linger in a public space.  
Image: Clonakilty Main Street, Co. Cork.

Instead a network of streets can disperse traffic by providing alternative routes, reducing junction design and improving safety for other users. This requires a 'softer' qualitative design approach that considers the quality of the public realm rather than just the functional requirements of users such as vehicles and cyclists. Existing suburban 'cul-de-sac' type residential areas can be connected together to improve permeability and accessibility. This can be achieved by connecting new streets or by creating a 'green' network of pedestrian and cycle routes. Providing focal points and uses along these routes helps attract people and provide passive surveillance.

### Designing Out the Car

Converging streets enable pedestrian movement from the periphery to the town centre. Many have become busy vehicular 'arteries' carrying through traffic to other places. The negative impact of traffic on people's safety and the quality of urban space can be considerable. This can result in residents preferring to use vehicles rather than cycling or walking, which exacerbates the problem.

Vehicular traffic, which conflicts with pedestrian movement and activity, therefore needs to be carefully managed. This is gradually happening with the construction of bypasses around many towns which takes away through traffic. However, commercial development along these routes and at junctions must be restricted so as to minimise impact on the commercial viability of the town centre.

Within towns, **measures to slow traffic** by designing primarily for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing road signage, etc. and limiting on-street parking in urban streets improves the quality of the public realm for everyone. Measures to reduce the need for car usage include planning policies that restrict single use, low density and dispersed development that conflicts with town centre uses. Planning applications need to be accompanied by mobility management plans based on active movement and public transport strategies. Designing out the need to use a car **improves safety** for everyone. Designing to create mutual respect between different road users — pedestrians, cyclists and drivers — is essential for both safety and inclusiveness.





## Design Tools

Work with an Architect/Urban Designer to implement these tools. You can find an Architect on [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie).

**Develop** a multi-modal movement strategy to reinforce connectivity to and within the town or village, prioritize people to move actively and minimize the need to use vehicles.

**Evaluate** proposed improvements by carrying out an urban design quality audit, prior to implementation, to help ensure that the proposed works will enhance the quality of place. Evaluate and record people's behaviour both before and after any works to assess the impact and, on an ongoing basis, identify further 'fine-tuning' improvements.

**Prepare** a list of all potential improvements along each part of the route or space to make it more attractive for people to use actively. Form this into a 'vision' with actions and identify potential funding sources. Consider implementing works either as a series of actions on a coordinated phased area basis, or done as one project for a key area.

**Identify** routes connecting main uses and activities that would enable direct pedestrian movement within and around the town. Include main public streets and spaces as well as short-cuts between residential and other areas, such as schools, shops, etc. Are these routes regularly used on a daily basis? Are they attractive to pedestrians and cyclists? Identify where more short-cuts could be introduced to improve connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists – for example by removing a fence or wall to create a laneway.

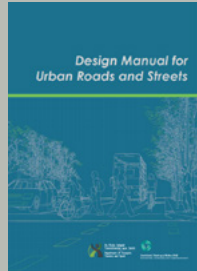
**Manage** traffic. Prevent land use planning that encourages vehicular traffic. Minimize vehicle circulation within the town by providing convenient visitor parking at main arrival points. These need to be attractively designed and landscaped, with good pedestrian connectivity to the main town centre core area. Consider also provision for limited short-term parking for residents and access for people with disabilities, as well as deliveries and services.

**Analyze** and assess the suitability and quality of the routes and spaces for people to use actively. This involves walking and studying each part of the route and recording all comments and observations. As part of this assessment, consider particularly:

- Places of interest where people may like to stop, such as an attractive café, or play area, or to enjoy a view, feature or natural amenity.
- Do people feel comfortable using the route? Is it pleasant on the senses – can people talk in normal tones or does it feel there is a constant presence of traffic?
- Is the route well maintained, with well-located, good quality comfortable seating, lighting, materials and finishes?
- Are the surface materials and finishes pleasant to walk, ride or run on, or are they too slippery, hard or bumpy?
- Do the materials and finishes add to the local character of the place?
- Ways to reduce visual clutter such as overhead wires, service boxes, signs, bollards or wheelie bins by integrating utilities, seating, planting and waste collection points into the design.



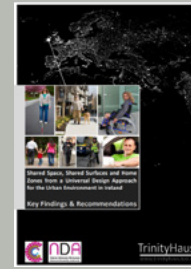
## References



DMURS; ***Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*** (DTTS/DECLG 2013) sets out requirements for street design in our cities, towns and suburbs aimed at encouraging more people to walk, cycle or use public transport. <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/publications/english/design-manual-urban-roads-and-streets>



Further information on 'shared spaces' is available in '***Creating better streets: Inclusive and accessible places: reviewing shared space***' published in January 2018 by the 'Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation' (CIHT). This evaluates the success of several 'shared space' case studies in the UK and makes 15 recommendations for further work including policy, research and improvements to standards in the UK.



'***Shared Space, Shared Surfaces and Home Zones from a Universal Design Approach for the Urban Environment in Ireland***' published in 2012 by the NDA Centre for Excellence in Universal Design sets out key evidence-based findings and recommendations in relation to implementation of Shared Spaces, Shared Surfaces and Home Zones in Ireland. <http://universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/Shared-Space>



'***National Cycle Manual***' sets out standards for planning and designing for cyclists, including cycle lanes on roads. <https://www.cyclemanual.ie>

'***Sustainable Transportation Planning: Tools for Creating Vibrant, Healthy and Resilient Communities***' by Jeffrey Tumlin (Wiley 2012) considers in a U.S. context how residents and stakeholders can evaluate their transportation investment decisions in the context of achieving long-term qualitative goals (economic development, social equity, ecological sustainability, etc.). His book considers how the needs of each transport mode needs to be balanced against each other in different contexts (eg. town centre, neighbourhood, etc.)

'***Space Syntax***' is a tool developed in the early 1980s by a research team at University College London headed by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hansen. This has successfully been used by planners and architects to simulate the likely movement patterns and social effects of their designs. The commercial value of the tool has been developed by 'Space Syntax Limited' to advise on major investment decisions such as new bridges and routes.

# Case Study

## Clonakilty, Co. Cork

### **Prepared by:**

Giulia Vallone B.Arch, MRIAI, AoU, Senior Architect Cork  
County Council, Capital Projects Implementation Unit.

Clonakilty 400 is a successful outcome of a multi-disciplinary cross-departmental approach and a proactive participatory community design process in response to the 'Putting People First' Local Authority Reform 2012.

The project was led by Cork County Council Architects Department under the direction by Cork County Council and former Clonakilty Town Council, with contributions by the CCC's Heritage, Planning and Traffic Departments and with the Road Design Office of Transport Infrastructure Ireland in Cork.

### **What problem did Clonakilty experience?**

The brief was to redevelop the small market town of Clonakilty's main squares, which had previously been dominated by car parking and empty buildings and blighted by antisocial behaviour. The objective of the Town Council was to make the local community aware of the heritage value of its townscape, including traditional shop front preservation, and to re-establish social activities on the street.

### **How did you bring about change?**

The project was initiated by the former Town Council to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Clonakilty Town Charter. A heritage-led urban design plan was formulated which focused on providing new 'living rooms' for civic and social events. A contemporary public realm design layer was proposed for Asna and Emmet Squares, connected by an urban streetscape. A concerted effort was made to involve the community throughout the design process and residents were consulted at each stage from the formulation of the brief to

addressing concerns with the final design. The initial challenge of car parking loss from the main street resulted in a positive opportunity — shared by the retailers — to address universal design, street furniture for the elderly, and trees. Safety, inclusiveness and place-making were crucial points to further establish pedestrian priority over the motor car and a sense of place.

### **What has been changed?**

At Asna Square a paved ellipse binds the environment with a strong geometric statement reminiscent of Neolithic ring forts and stone circles found in West Cork. This geometric pattern — omitting road marking and signage — establishes a shared surface to accommodate passing cars, café seating and informal gatherings around a new pocket park and ensures pedestrian priority. Further up the street, alterations to Emmet Square create a re-landscaped park, water feature, newly commissioned bronze sculpture and the new Michael Collins House Museum.





### How is Clonakilty now?

The outcomes of the civic stewardship are free maintenance of the public space and inspiring tolerance and pride in the community. The success of public engagement from the early design stage is evident in the celebration process after project-completion. This becomes fully part of the design brief, including events like the Street Carnival, Christmas lights, Old Costumes fair and more. Today the juxtaposition of the contemporary public realm layer and urban design with its surroundings is considered by all to be a successful intervention that is attracting new town patrons and private investment. The property market confirms higher value and the empty buildings are now occupied, delivering new urban vibrancy and sense of community.



### What contribution did architecture make?

The Municipal Architect as 'community problem solver' was uniquely positioned to engage, harness and promote civic input, as well as to act as the standard bearer of the town's built environment. Firstly we aimed to identify and empower the expert citizen by gathering local knowledge and working with the local community. Working together we built a brief from multiple sources to identify local priorities across various scales. We found out who were the community leaders and the expert citizens and got them to engage with each other through the project, thereby becoming project champions. Next we developed a design analysis that generated an agreed vision, and applied to that a new layer of quality contemporary design and spaces for public life, focusing on inclusive space. It was important to identify roles within the community for project ambassadors: the town manager, the politician, the Tidy Towns Committee, the Chambers of Commerce, heritage groups, with the town foreman becoming the town custodian.





Safety, inclusiveness and place-making were crucial points to further establish **pedestrian priority** over the motor car and create a **sense of place**.



Water feature at Emmet Square



## Before




Emmet and Asna Squares suffered from vacancy and tired shopfronts along with the dominance of the car.

## After



Removing car parking spaces allowed more pedestrian movement and re-established social activities in the street, which was welcomed by the retailers.





Further up the street, alterations to Emmet Square create a re-landscaped park, **water feature**, newly commissioned **bronze sculpture** and the new Michael Collins House Museum.



# Chapter 3

## What Allows a Town to Thrive? — Variety & Viability



## Introduction

Successful towns are attractive, varied, interesting places where people and businesses prosper. They have a **diverse economy** that nurtures people's talents, and are open to new ideas and fresh perspectives. A sustainable town is a flexible, adaptable place that is constantly evolving, assessing and planning for gradual renewal and change. It appreciates the value of protecting the unique qualities of the town and its surroundings. It provides for a mix of development including small-scale, local growth and larger-scale inward investment, in a way that enhances and supports local qualities. This is reflected in the overall layout, pattern of development and physical form of the town which is constantly evolving, layer upon layer, over time. Understanding how and why the town's urban structure has evolved and identifying interventions to continue to improve and adapt for the future are essential to planning the success of a town.



Building Block, Co-working space, Sligo Town  
by Noji Architects. Photos: Collin Gillen.



This requires a highly skilled ‘surgical’ approach that: identifies the qualities and attractors of a place, including its heritage, setting and natural assets; maintains the existing townscape, manages change, and supports growth. It also involves a constant ‘fine-tuning’ that gradually improves the town’s attractiveness as a place for everyone while responding to the ever-shifting nature of national and global economic change. This approach involves all the community **working collectively** to agree what they would like their town to be and to set out a plan to achieve this.



Culturstruction, ‘Breach’, Commonage Summer School (2012).



The co-working space Ludgate Hub, Skibbereen, Co. Cork has introduced a digital economy into the rural economic environment.

## Understanding Capacity/ Realising Potential

Local people are key to achieving a thriving town. The population catchment area determines the level of services that a locality can support. The skills and educational level of people informs the **potential** of the town for various types of economic and employment **opportunities**. However all the community have talents that can contribute to the town realising its potential. People need to be supported and nurtured in developing these. Tolerance of each other is a sign of a strong, confident community that is open and welcoming. The rapid evolution of major employment sectors from manual production to automated technology and online business has led to a shift from our town centres being primarily ‘service centres,’ which people need to use regularly for everyday needs, to ‘destinations’ which people choose to use based on what they have to offer. Towns need to identify whether they have the population, skills and physical assets to provide a diverse range of cultural, commercial and social opportunities for a **variety** of people, or whether they might be more successful to specialising in certain niche areas.



## Density of People

The density of people living and working in a town has a direct impact on its diversity and attractiveness. A compact town has a concentration of people and businesses using it on a daily basis. This attracts additional visitors which further increases vibrancy, activity and demand for services. People living in a town tend to walk and cycle rather than drive. This improves the quality of the public realm, increases activity and attracts more people. A concentration of people improves the viability of public transport

to serve and connect a town with other places. A dense population allows more effective public expenditure: ‘hard infrastructure’ (roads, utilities, etc.) costs less per person, allowing more public investment in ‘soft’ services that directly benefit more people (education, healthcare, leisure, etc.) Planning for people requires planning for **diversity** — all ages, incomes and social groups need to be considered, provided for and involved as part of a community.



## Economic Diversity

With modern technology major companies are less locationally dependent. They can choose to locate where their employees can expect to enjoy a long-term, stable, high quality of life. Irish towns can provide this, if properly planned and managed, by offering good services, minimal commuting, easy access to natural amenities, and a strong local **cultural identity**. The most successful towns build upon their established economies, identifying and attracting new business sectors, and supporting local people to develop their own business opportunities. Local communities can raise investment to develop as attractive technology hubs, becoming viable alternatives to major employment centres, providing a more attractive quality of life. Providing local people with the opportunities to develop their interests and ideas can help create local **distinctiveness** that attracts income and investment (eg. surfing workshops, fiddle playing, artisan food production, ecological management).



Cashel, Co. Tipperary, drawing by Architect Maura Shaffrey.  
Courtesy of Shaffrey Architects and the Irish  
Architectural Archive.



The historic fabric can be retained to sit next to new developments. Medieval Museum, Viking Triangle, Waterford city. Commended – RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2014. Image taken by Alice Clancy.

## The Built Fabric

Irish Towns offer many advantages; they are traditionally compact, walkable, and friendly, with a good range of local services. Most towns have a varied mix of existing buildings that can be adapted and reused while retaining their existing unique qualities in terms of design and materials. Such opportunities could include retaining old shopfronts with new ‘creative’ businesses inside, converting upper floors back to urban living, adapting streets and spaces for interesting public activities and events, or reusing churches and historic structures for cultural purposes and regular place-specific seasonal events. The historical fabric of most Irish towns is also largely intact, with traditional street patterns, plot sizes, a mix of building types, distinctive paving, and street furniture. Maintenance and care of the existing built fabric is essential to ensure that a town’s character and quality remains attractive and conveys a strong sense of the local community working together. Retaining older features shows that local people care about and have pride in their heritage and history. Shopfront competitions, awards and school projects all contribute to greater appreciation by people of their living heritage.

## The Evolving Urban Structure

The evolving urban structure towns are constantly changing, with new uses replacing old. This process of constant urban renewal needs to be carefully managed to ensure that the attractive qualities of our towns are retained intact. Most of our towns consist of a dense network of streets with small building plots which allows for gradual incremental renewal. This pattern of development can also provide **variety and character** with minimal impact.

Some businesses may seek a plot larger than the established norm for a specific purpose, for example an industry, office, hotel or retail development. This is often achieved by combining smaller plots in the town centre or by locating on a greenfield site. However all possible locations in the town centre should be assessed, both as a location and in terms of impact on the town's built fabric, before an out-of-town greenfield location is proposed in any plan. This is to ensure

that development takes place in the most appropriate situation to enhance the town.

A range of plot sizes provides variety and diversity. However, permeability across large urban blocks is important to facilitate the fine urban grain and walkable circulation network within the urban centre.

It is essential to manage the overall balance to ensure that new uses can be integrated into the town in a way that retains the qualities of the existing built fabric while bringing new ideas and improvements to the urban realm. All proposals need to be thoroughly interrogated and reviewed to ensure that they will be of lasting benefit to the locality. Successfully integrating new uses into the urban fabric is a complex challenge that requires highly skilled architectural thinking to deliver robust proposals that will add to the quality of a town.



## Design Tools

Work with an Architect/Urban Designer to implement these tools. You can find an Architect on [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie).

**Undertake** Capacity Studies and surveys to identify requirements and whether there are deficiencies or over supply in the range of services required to meet people's existing and future needs. The scale of these services depends on the population catchment to support them.

**Assess** density: survey how many people live within five minutes walk or 500m of a town centre and assess how this can be increased to support existing local businesses and services, either by improving linkages or increasing density.

**Survey** existing physical assets that reflect the town's character and heritage and identify how their condition, use and accessibility could be improved and used as part of the town's 'offer'. Consider whether poor quality buildings and 'eye-sores' could be refurbished or replaced.

**Analyse** the pattern of development of the town. Identify larger plots within a few minutes walk of the town centre and carry out urban design studies to assess how they could be reused and better integrated into the town. Examples may be old factories, barracks, institutional or railway lands. Consider the implication of the proposed reuse of these lands on the rest of the town.

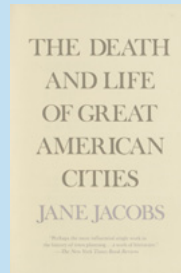
**Monitor** the use of existing buildings and sites, identify those that are unused, underused or in poor condition and consider how they can be sensitively reused to meet modern requirements.

**Plan** for gradual constant renewal and change, to provide a mix of small-scale, local growth and larger-scale inward investment, in a way that enhances and supports the qualities of the town.

**Focus** on creating a compact town by reusing existing buildings, intensification and densification within the town boundaries, prioritising active movement and avoiding car dependency, with a good quality public realm.

**Work** with the community to encourage active management and care, including competitions, education, events celebrating the town, and promoting the town for awards and recognition.

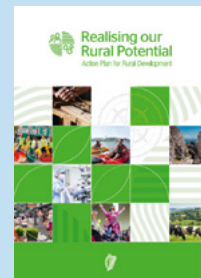
## References



**'The Death and Life of Great American Cities'** written by Jane Jacobs in 1961 set out fundamental principles of how urban design affects how we live and work. This includes sections on the use of public realm, the conditions for diversity, the forces of decline and regeneration, and developing different tactics and approaches. This can be ordered through the RIAI bookshop, visit [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie) or email [info@riai.ie](mailto:info@riai.ie).

While many of the physical urban design principles have become enshrined by design and planning organisations, she also considered the economic value of urbanism in subsequent books including **'The Economy of Cities'** (1969) and **'Cities and the Wealth of Nations'** in 1984.

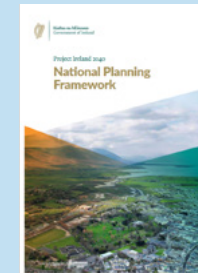
Recent Government Policies recognise the value and economic potential of built heritage and town management through 'place-making' to attract people, businesses and sustainable growth. Further reading of these resources can provide more detailed information on the strategies and tactics available to local communities and organisations. These include:



**'Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Ireland'** published in 2017 by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. <http://www.ruralireland.ie/policies/action-plan-for-rural-development>



**The Retail Planning Guidelines to Planning Authorities** accompanied by the **Retail Design Manual** were published in April 2012 by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government'. These set out principles for retail location and integration in towns, including sequential testing of retail capacity, site planning and urban design.



**'Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework'** published in February 2018 by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. <http://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>



**'A Framework for Town Centre Renewal'** published in April 2017 by Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.  
<https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/A-Framework-for-Town-Centre-Renewal.html>



**Free Market** was the Irish pavilion for the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2018 curated by Jo Anne Butler, Miriam Delaney, Tara Kennedy, Laurence Lord, Orla Murphy and Jeffrey Bolhuis. The exhibition will be travelling around Ireland throughout 2019 to highlight the generosity and possibility in the common spaces of Ireland's market towns. See [www.free-market.ie](http://www.free-market.ie).



The Heritage Council has developed various initiatives and programmes including '**Policy Proposals for Ireland's Towns**', the '**Town Centre Health-check programme**' and the '**Community-led Village Design Statement**' programme and toolkit.

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme>

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/community-led-village-design-statements>

[https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/policy\\_proposals\\_irelands\\_towns\\_2015\\_5mb.pdf](https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/policy_proposals_irelands_towns_2015_5mb.pdf)



# **Case Study**

## **‘Tobar Place’, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo**

### **Architects**

NOJI Architects – John Monahan MRIAI and Elizabeth Clyne MRIAI

Architects Section Sligo County Council

### **What problem/challenge did Tubbercurry experience?**

Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo (population 2000) is the centre for commerce for South Sligo, a predominantly rural and farming area. This function has been diminishing over recent years. The larger of the existing town centre public spaces is surrounded by parked cars, is landscaped defensively and is rarely used. The smaller of the spaces was a sloping site, unused and poorly landscaped, surrounding an existing well called 'Tobar Place'. The town centre has become car dominated and does not allow gathering spaces or spaces of interest for any tourist or local alike. The pedestrian route ways through the town have no focal points to give a balance to the wide streets and through traffic.

### **How did you bring about change?**

We designed a series of public spaces and adapted a derelict building as a community space. The design followed briefing by Sligo County Council and meetings with the local tidy towns and development association. Analysis of the local calendar of events, pedestrian route ways and traffic flow was a key part of the

design process. 'Tobar Place' is the gathering space designed on the smaller existing town centre site. It was sloped and so an accurate site survey by a Site Surveyor, together with Council drawings showing existing services crossing the site, were essential. Discussing the site with local engineers provided information about hidden historic issues.

### **How is your Tubbercurry now? What would you do differently?**

The town has responded really well to the completed phase one of the design. 'Tobar Place' is now a stepped gathering space/ amphitheatre off the main street that links to an existing pedestrian route way into the town centre. The other phases will be completed on receipt of funding over coming years. We would have used different materials in some areas if budget had allowed. This project was designed to a very small budget and material decisions had to be made to fit the budget. The town is benefitting already by seeing it evolve its own image, from an old world rural town to a cultural and tourist hub.





Tubbercurry is benefitting already by seeing it **evolve its own image**, from an old world rural town to a cultural and tourist hub.





### **What contribution did architects/urban designers make?**

The contribution from us as architects has been the re-imagining of the centre of this town into a place of importance for events, tourists and daily life alike. The design links a series of new public spaces in the town and reuses an existing building as a community hub to give purpose and a variety of gathering places to the centre of town. The new spaces counter-balance the car dominated streets and parking and give moments of relief; they encourage activities, allow interaction and give an optimistic outlook for the town. Towns of this scale can transform themselves by reimagining unused or poorly conceived spaces and break the cycle of engineer dominated decisions where cars fill every gap. By attracting people and activities you attract business, with increased business you allow a town to function as a centre of commerce again.

### **What are you doing next?**

The next phase will include the demolition and rebuilding of an existing town centre building as a community hub. This building is pivotal in the town and while small in size it is a key position on the main pedestrian link into the town and across the road from 'Tobar Place'. The strategy of the design is to link several spaces and give reason for pedestrians to journey through the town, to create the journey and know there is a destination. The other existing public spaces on the plan will get funding in time and have the purpose and meaning of 'Tobar Place'. Each town needs to tell a story that is solely its own, the experience of the town needs to leave a memory that is positive and unique. We will continue to work with Sligo County Council to achieve these goals within Tubbercurry.

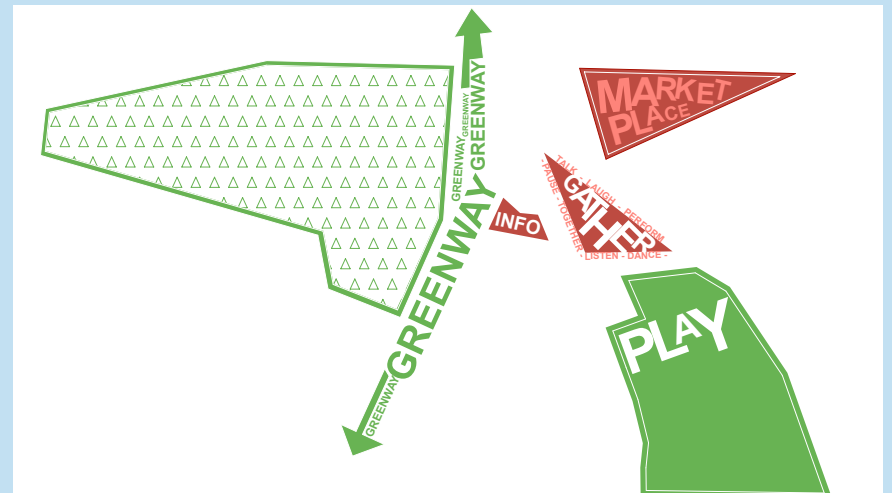


## Before




The square was more or less a car park.

## After



Tobar Place is now a gathering space for the community and a venue for markets and other outdoor events.





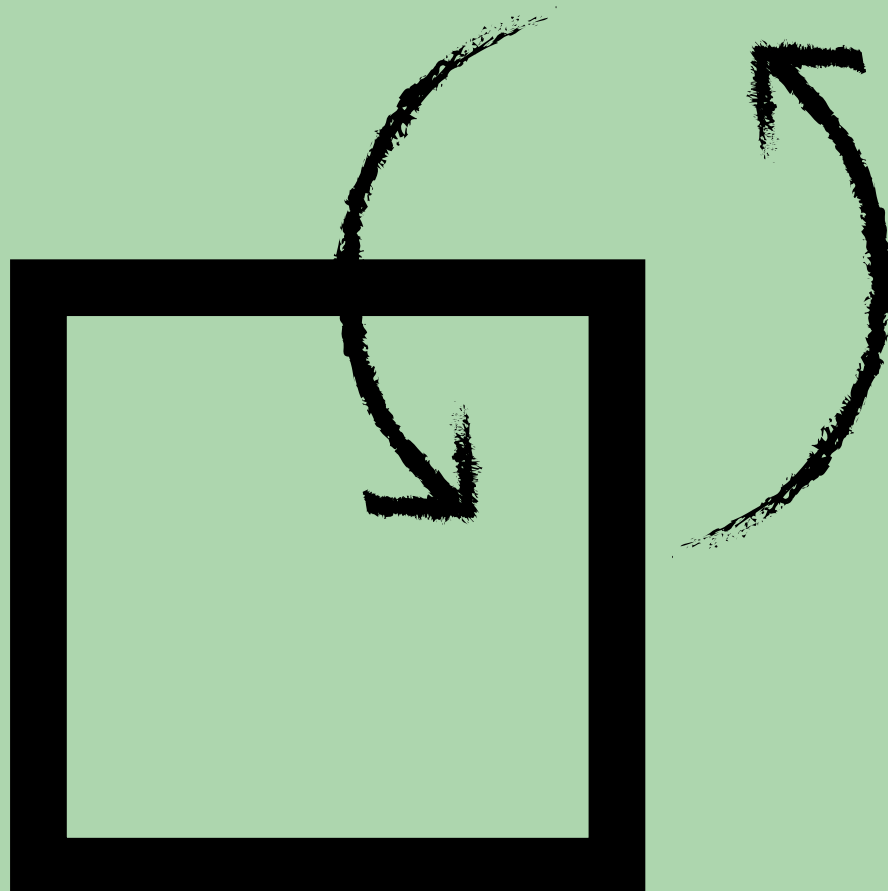
The strategy of the design is to link several spaces and give reason for pedestrians to journey through the town, to **create the journey** and know there is a destination.

'Tobar Place' Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo



# Chapter 4

## Environmental Sustainability





The Olive Branch zero waste store in Clonakilty, Co. Cork showing that small steps towards lowering our ecological foot print can start in our villages and towns.

## Introduction

“By 2012, the biocapacity equivalent of 1.6 Earths was needed to provide the natural resources and services humanity consumed in that year” (Global Footprint Network, 2016), as cited in [http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr\\_living\\_planet\\_report\\_2016.pdf](http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_living_planet_report_2016.pdf). In the context of an exponential growth in global population, putting further demand on our renewable resources, it is critical that we **think globally and act locally**. Local actions and the creation of self-sufficient settlements can have a positive impact on climate change by limiting CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gas emissions. Land is a finite resource needed to sustain a viable food chain and ecological continuity. Consolidation of the existing built environment should therefore be implemented before further expansion of the town or village is considered. New development or regeneration should respect **biodiversity**, harness natural resources/assets, reduce unnecessary infrastructure and the overuse of resources, and enable healthy lifestyle choices in one’s daily activities.

## Context

Living within our ecological limits is critical to enabling healthy human habitation. Towns can be places where it is easy for people to adopt sustainable and healthy lifestyles. As part of our health and wellbeing, and that of the environment, we can act by reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gas emissions, creating closed loop environmental systems and enabling a local circular economy by consuming local produce and supporting local environmental initiatives. Services management should aim to minimise the



Community spirit in the Cloughjordan ecovillage, Co. Tipperary.  
Image by Sally Starbuck

impact on existing infrastructure and promote the use of onsite solutions. Waste minimisation strategies and targets should be implemented. An awareness of energy use can help in ensuring we enjoy a healthy environment through the implementation of sustainable building practices that both reduce embodied energy and harness local renewable energy opportunities. **Sustainability** is about more than resource efficiency. Well-designed walkable places will foster social and economic sustainability.





Pupils of Scoil Oilibhéir in Cork with their project. They were part of an architecture in school programme with architect Seán Antóin Ó Muirí MRIAI.

Good urban form and healthy lifestyles are interrelated. The ability to walk and cycle to access one's daily needs can have a positive impact on human health and the environment. Engagement with local people of all abilities and ages is a critical factor in incubating sustainable communities. Schools, community groups and other local organisations should be involved in raising awareness of environmental issues at a local level. Young people not only have the ability to one day **shape the future** but may also help influence the present by introducing new ideas to older generations. To ensure the success of towns, the development and delivery of designs should be closely monitored to achieve the desired outcome.

The design team should be allowed the means to provide an analysis-led approach. This should, for example, include passive design principles, an existing building stock appraisal and an assessment of the environmental impact. An architect with urban design experience should be retained throughout the design process to maintain a continuity of vision and co-ordination. Local authorities would benefit from conducting ongoing GIS mapping to understand and monitor how the settlement is functioning. This can in turn help shape improvements/alterations as appropriate. Best practice urban design requires an **integrated approach** where buildings, the spaces between them, streetscapes and the surrounding hinterland are considered as a whole. A multi-disciplinary co-ordinated approach to land-use, movement and urban design needs to be managed to protect the town's urban fabric and the natural environment. An architect with expertise in urban design is best equipped to co-ordinate this approach in identifying potential improvements.

## Design Tools

Work with an Architect/Urban Designer to implement these tools. You can find an Architect on [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie).

**Exploit** opportunities for renewable energy sources by encouraging the use of photovoltaics in development and refurbishment schemes, investigating the feasibility of geothermal heating, and harnessing localised opportunities for wind power. Consider community energy schemes, as opposed to autonomous building solutions, to improve energy efficiency and use.

**Undertake** sustainable building practices and create durable, adaptable buildings that could potentially fill many uses over a long time span. This can be achieved through the use of materials with a lower embodied energy, encouraging locally sourced labour, considering the possibility of deconstruction and the reuse of materials, and reducing the energy requirements of buildings by design.

**Establish** the existence of local flood plains and similar territory unsuitable for building. Designate these areas as potential biodiversity zones as part of a wider green network that connects the town to its surrounding hinterland. The enhancement of current habitats and natural water bodies can further expand this plan.

**Practising** sustainable farming methods can be supported through local food and retail initiatives. Year-round farmers' markets, cooperative grocery stores, and community kitchens and gardens can all contribute to a self-sustaining cycle that benefits growers, producers and consumers equally.

**Prioritise** the natural benefits of each site. Design a building's orientation to maximise the quality of daylight, assess building form and street layouts to avoid uncomfortable microclimates, and implement grey water and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

**Reduce** waste by realising a sustainable action plan. This could involve minimising demand and improving the efficient use of existing resources, localised recycling schemes, and assessing the potential to transform certain wastes into potential resources, such as composting.

**Manage** the natural and built environment in a holistic way so that they complement each other. Business incubators can support local enterprise. Farmers' markets and local restaurants and shops can support sustainable retailing strategies.

**Reuse** and re-appropriate existing buildings and intensify underutilised urban land within walking distance of the centre. This will enhance biodiversity, reduce the environmental impact of development by retaining valuable farmland as a food source and raise social value and cohesion by evoking the memories a place holds.



## References



The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/sustainable-development-goals\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/sustainable-development-goals_en)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>



A simple definition of “ecological footprint” would be to call it the impact of human activities measured in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated. **The Living Planet Report** (WWF, Global Footprint Network, Zoological Society of London, 2006). [http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge\\_hub/all\\_publications/living\\_planet\\_report\\_timeline/lpr\\_2006](http://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/all_publications/living_planet_report_timeline/lpr_2006)



One Planet Living footprint calculator, <http://calculator.bioregional.com> produced by the **Stockholm Environment Institute** is an international non-profit research and policy organisation that tackles environment and development challenges. They connect science and decision-making to develop solutions to provide for a sustainable future for all. Their work spans climate, water, air, and land-use issues, and integrates evidence and perspectives on governance, the economy, gender and human health. Their approach is highly collaborative: stakeholder involvement is at the heart of our efforts to build capacity, strengthen institutions and equip partners for the long term. They publish open access material, and in leading academic journals. [www.sei.se](http://www.sei.se)



The **Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)** was established as Ireland's national energy authority under the Sustainable Energy Act 2002. SEAI's mission is to play a leading role in transforming Ireland into a society based on sustainable energy structures, technologies and practices. To fulfil this mission SEAI aims to provide well-timed and informed advice to Government, and deliver a range of programmes efficiently and effectively, while engaging and motivating a wide range of stakeholders and showing continuing flexibility and innovation in all activities. SEAI's actions will help advance Ireland to the vanguard of the global green technology movement, so that Ireland is recognised as a pioneer in the move to decarbonised energy systems. For further information, including SEAI's annual report visit SEAI website. <https://www.seai.ie>

# Case Study

## Cloughjordan ecoVillage, Co. Tipperary

### Architect

Sally Starbuck MRIAI, Gaia Ecotecture

### **What problem did Cloughjordan experience?**

The existing problem for many rural places, including Cloughjordan (despite the boom experienced generally in Ireland), was an ageing and decreasing population. This was threatening the viability of rail services and valuable village institutions such as the Bank and Post Office. The challenge was the careful integration of the ecoVillage with Cloughjordan which has come about significantly through the primary schools and local clubs and more recent initiatives like the amphitheatre and soccer pitch. The Cloughjordan ecoVillage is Ireland's first purpose-built sustainable community. Founded in 1999, the project came together around the principle of shared



Historic old town of Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary.

responsibilities. After a countrywide search, the land in Cloughjordan was purchased by the not-for-profit company, Sustainable Projects Ireland Ltd, who, in 2004, made Planning applications for the infrastructure, community and enterprise facilities, 130 homes and work units.

### **How did you bring about change?**

The ecoVillage has its internal processes, organisational system and strategy. It had quite a professional approach at the outset which made it legible to the wider community, designers and planning officers; more like a developer-led proposal except that, crucially, it was member-owned and has become an educational Charity. Initially, applicants to join the ecoVillage, went through an interview process so they were handpicked, bringing forward skills that would help the project at the early stages. Subsequently, in terms of the ecoVillage integration, some members have volunteered for the Cloughjordan Community Development Committee or its' several subcommittees. This, in turn, has spread the Ecovillage influence wider throughout Cloughjordan and beyond.



### **What has been changed?**

We have 55 houses built and occupied. Both primary schools are thriving and the secondary school nearby has had a new lease of life with improvements to the school. Cloughjordan is a relatively vibrant small village and people are attracted to live here due to the subculture. If any house goes on the market locally it goes very quickly. The Ecovillage's aims to be economically, environmentally and socially sustainable are supported through energy efficiency and community supported agriculture. Biodynamic organic farms provide vegetables to most of the village residents and others. Fruit and nut trees have been planted around the estate (what is called, 'edible landscape' in Permaculture terms). An award-winning baker and apiarist are among The Ecovillage residents. Local farmers provide organic meat, milk, eggs and homemade produce through local shops.

### **How is Cloughjordan now?**

#### **And what would you do differently?**

The problem that we face is that it is less of a challenge for the people who now have their home. They are sitting back but not necessarily driving onto the next phase of the project. We welcome new participants, who bring new ideas in and keep that momentum going. However, we do have the commitment and buy-in that a developer wouldn't have.



## ⇒ CASE STUDY CLOUGHJORDAN ECOVILLAGE, CO. TIPPERARY

We didn't look for public funding as it was supposed to be self-funding and replicable. External funding was sought for certain aspects, like the biomass district heating system. The capital budget was diminished by additional running costs over the time it took the project to get outline planning permission and compliance with 36 conditions of permission. It stalled after the recession.

### **What contribution did architecture/urban design make?**

The original masterplan was by Solearth and that, with design guidelines, was appended to the zoning on the land. We designed the ecoVillage in collaboration with Solearth involving the Members in participatory planning exercises. Thanks to a bursary by Create, the collaborative arts agency, I acted as Architect in the Community and devised a series of 'Art & Chi-tecture' workshops to examine 3D design of shared spaces between buildings. Apart from small groups of cooperative building, most homes were self-builds. It is evident that people who join a pioneering ecovillage community, characteristically, dislike rules! This helped the project get 'out of the ground', which would now benefit from the coherent design

approach to the remaining unbuilt folios. Trisha Purcell was commissioned to undertake the Village Enhancement Plan with Leader-led funded signage and wayfinding. This was a follow-on from the earlier integrated Cloughjordan ecoVillage plan.

### **What are you doing next?**

To tackle affordability, the community is considering more collaborative, modular building and co-housing, perhaps, where residents share amenities in common areas but also maintain private space. Other options are affordable or social housing. Independent living units for older people seem to be appropriate, rather than holding out for the Midlands economy to recover enough for the remaining serviced sites to be sold freehold. The ecoVillage has added to the local economy through difficult years, for example, the co-op café in the main street. The North Tipperary green enterprise centre is home to small businesses, with several others in live-work or home-based enterprises, aided by broadband internet service provided in the ecoVillage. Site resolution works are planned for paving, street lighting, etc. to bring the infrastructure works to a finished standard.





## ☰ CASE STUDY CLOUGHJORDAN ECOVILLAGE, CO. TIPPERARY



The historic village of Cloughjordan.



Cloughjordan experienced problems associated with an aging and decreasing population. The community worked together accumulating lots of small changes, the fruits of which gives the residents ownership and pride.



In the new Ecovillage, the emphasis is on sustainable architecture.





The existing problem for many rural places, including Cloughjordan was an **ageing** and **decreasing population**.

# Chapter 5

## A Sense of Place: Urban Form & Character





## Introduction

Local identity — a sense of place — is the expression of an interrelationship between social, economic, and physical factors that have a considerable impact on the **qualities** and **character** of a town. A town is like a carefully balanced, gradually evolving organism that requires constant care and management. Urban design is about the management of this continuity and change.







A small building had occupied the public space beside Waterford's historic monument, Reginald's Tower, which is of Viking origin.



Emphasising landmarks helps visitors navigate their way through streets in Waterford's Viking Triangle.

## Context

The legibility of a town is its ability to be understood as a whole. Behavioural patterns are impacted by legibility because we perceive place by creating “mental maps”. The pattern of streets, the character/ architecture of districts, the location of landmarks, the nature of enclosure, the treatment of edges and the topography of the town are contributors to a towns legibility and constitute its urban form and structure. A confluence of streets creates junctions and nodes which aid orientation in a hierarchy of routes that connect the town.



Before and after: a former car park in Waterford is now a public space for events and festivals

The space between buildings is informed by its edges. In Ireland, medieval and older areas of towns tend to have narrow, enclosed streets. Those laid out in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have wider streets and spaces to allow for pedestrians, planting and transport. They have larger blocks and plots, and uniformity in scale and architectural style. An urban block can be defined as a building or group of buildings that encloses and segregates private and public space. Places with smaller urban blocks and plots are described as ‘fine grain’, while those with larger blocks are ‘coarse grain’. Fine grain is generally more appealing and encourages a varied mix of uses. The height and scale of buildings and street widths tend to relate to a human-scale. This scale allows people to recognise each other across the street, enables passive surveillance and a sense of safety in the public realm. Traditionally plots tend to be small and narrow in town centres, and larger and wider on the periphery.



Plot patterns inform the scale, size and shape of buildings and the overall character, rhythm and proportion of urban edges. Smaller plots tend to contain older buildings and result in a variety in architecture and uses. They provide **visual interest** and allow for low impact incremental change. Generally, larger plots tend to contain single use functions and have a higher impact on the urban fabric. A well-managed fine-grained urban structure can provide flexibility for incremental change to meet short-term business growth. Irish architecture is distinctive for plain, simple and well-proportioned buildings with considered use of materials and details. This practical, 'fit for purpose' approach reflects the climate and is a feature of our cultural identity. Many towns have a common palette of indigenous materials. Late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings introduced new materials, the use of which can provide contrast. Well considered design in this context can contribute to the town's character.



Abbeyleix Library, Co. Laois. Winner of Best Conservation Award in RIAI Irish Architecture Awards 2009 by de Blacam & Meagher Architects.



Cashel, Co. Tipperary, drawing by Architect Maura Shaffrey. Courtesy of Shaffrey Architects and the Irish Architectural Archive.



Many historic towns have lost their aesthetic charm by the cumulative effect of visual clutter caused by modern day living. This includes street signs, overhead utilities, cars, etc. This makes them difficult to comprehend and navigate, particularly for people with infirmities. The negative impact of traffic on the built environment cannot be overstated. Density and mix contribute to the vibrancy of a settlement by providing a concentration of people to support a range of services and enable social interaction in public spaces throughout the day.

There should be a **mix of building types** and uses to encourage a diversity of actors. The density of housing is critical to informing the character of a town and enabling this condition. The treatment of street edges and the threshold between private and public space can contribute to a varied active frontage. A separation space between street and building can enable a sense of privacy within the building while permitting passive surveillance of the street and thus a sense of security in the public realm. Methods include raised ground floors, planting/window boxes, or recessed seating. A shallow strip fronting shops can provide a display area or place to window shop. These fine details are essential to the social character of a town and its resilience. Good architects with urban design expertise can help achieve appropriate sensitively-designed infill development.



### Design Tools

Work with an Architect/Urban Designer to implement these tools. You can find an Architect on [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie).

#### Undertake

historical research to understand why the town was established in its location and map how it has grown, evolved, and changed over time. This can lead to a better understanding of the existing town and will aid in the preparation of an urban design strategy.

#### Identify

the urban grain of the town. Record the scale and height of buildings, the width and shape of streets, and how both the architecture and public space relate to each other. Maintaining this character and layout is important, and new developments should seek to emulate similar principals in order to integrate with the existing townscape.

#### Provide

a comfortable, attractive public space that encourages street life and is accessible to all. Remove visual clutter such as overhead wires and utilities, road signage and advertising, and locate utilities underground where possible. Design buildings that activate the spaces in their vicinity and which are situated as part of a wider network of regenerating interventions. A well-designed public realm will encourage locals and visitors alike to engage in the town centre and stay for longer.

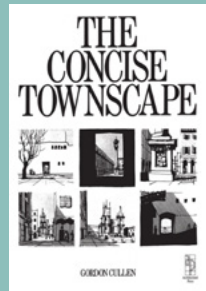
#### Respect

features in the urban fabric that reflect change and have meaning. Consider how these features contribute to the modern town. Enhance historic monuments that are valued as part of the town's collective memory. Promoting these elements can be a point of pride for a town and help affirm a unique identity.

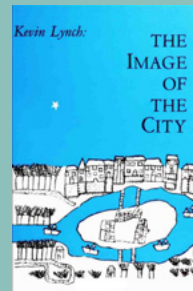
#### Consider

the impact of natural conditions such as light, air, and water on the enjoyment of a public space. Does a square or street have adequate levels of daylight? Does it require shelter from the rain? Are strong winds an issue? Design with these factors in mind to ensure that people can benefit from the public realm of the town.

## References



**'The Concise Townscape'** by Gordon Cullen in 1961 has been republished many times. This considers how a considered 'townscape' provides visual coherence to the mix of buildings, streets and spaces that form the urban environment and informs how people feel, relate to and use the space.



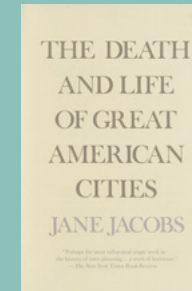
**'The Image of the City'** written by Kevin Lynch in 1960 is a seminal work on how people perceive and navigate urban environments, which defined terms such as paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks and wayfinding. He advocated 'mental mapping' to interpret how people understand and relate to their urban environment. The graphic notation and language used has been adopted by many urban designers to convey how spatial structure and form is understood by people. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental\\_mapping](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_mapping)



**'Town: Origins, Morphology & Future'** by Orla Murphy (2012) examines the Irish rural town: its origins, built form, cultural character and intrinsic value as an urban model in modern society.



**'Urban Code: 100 Lessons for Understanding the City'** by Anne Mikoleit and Moritz Purckhauer. Cities speak, and this little book helps us understand their language in words and pictures.



**The Death and Life of Great American Cities'** written by Jane Jacobs in 1961 is also a seminal work which set out fundamental principles of how urban form affects how we live and work. She advocated the need for mixed uses, small blocks, mix of building types, density and diversity (see also Chapter 3).

Specialist books on Urban Design can be ordered from the RIAI Bookshop, visit [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie) or email [info@riai.ie](mailto:info@riai.ie).



# Case Study

## Waterford Viking Triangle

### **Architects**

Rupert Maddock, MRIAI, Senior Architect, Waterford City & County Council

Morris Conway, MRIAI Executive Architect, Waterford City & County Council

Waterford Viking Triangle was a project led by Waterford City and County Architects with contributions by:

GKMP Architects, Mitchell and Associates, Bluett O'Donoghue, Duffy Henry Bent, John O'Connell, Wigham McGrath, John Kennedy, Falconers & Associates, and Gavin Duffy.



## CASE STUDY WATERFORD VIKING TRIANGLE

### **What problem did Waterford's historic centre experience?**

Waterford's historic city centre, known as the Viking Triangle, was the area first settled by the Vikings who founded the city in 914AD. With little investment over a long number of years the area had become very rundown, lacking vibrancy and bereft of any significant retail offering despite the fact that the compact network of streets boasted eleven national monuments. This underutilised area was targeted and totally transformed into a major asset for the city.

### **How did you bring about change?**

The driving force in the initial transformation was the transfer of the city museum from Merchants Quay to the Viking Triangle. This move coincided with the concept of creating a 'Museums Without Boundaries' philosophy that viewed the area as a 'palimpsest' whereby the layers of history were exposed and presented to the public, not just in the three new museums, but also in the public realm. The House of Waterford Crystal was established within the area bringing an internationally recognised high-end interactive craft visitor attraction and retail offer. A Viking Triangle committee was established within the Council, drawing from expertise of the various departments, in particular the Museum Service and Architects' Department, who project managed the transformation.



Waterford Medieval Museum by  
Waterford City Council Architects.  
Photo by Philip Lauterbach.

The Viking Triangle and other recent city centre public realm projects have been made possible by funding from a number of agencies including Fáilte Ireland, the European Regional Development Fund and Waterford City & County Council. The project had a number of complex layers which were addressed by the Council's team led by Michael Walsh, Chief Executive, Eamonn McEneaney, Director of Museums and Rupert Maddock, City Architect.

### **What has been changed?**

The primary change was the creation of new and improved public spaces, the creation of new and improved pedestrian links, and the acquisition and redevelopment of strategically important vacant and derelict buildings. These actions were guided by the overall vision or theme, "1000 Years in 1000 steps" and thus the new museums are aligned in chronological order so that as you walk from one museum

though the new public spaces to the next you walk through 1100 years of history. The new and redeveloped buildings also include retail and commercial premises, cafés and restaurants and a residential development, all carefully located to animate and bring vibrancy to the public realm.

### **How is the area now? And what would you do differently?**

The tourist office has relocated to the area, the three museums now attract 105,000 visitors per year, while the House of Waterford Crystal attracts over 200,000 visitors. Seventeen new retail premises have opened since 2011. Tapas bars, cafés, restaurants and an artisan glassworks were opened. A Viking Triangle Trust was established to promote commerce and animate the area. The Trust comprises of representatives of the business community and stakeholders in the area working closely with the Council's Viking Triangle committee.







The Viking Triangle encompasses the work of a **number of Architects** each exhibiting their own **individual vision** for the greater project.

## ⇒ CASE STUDY WATERFORD VIKING TRIANGLE

The requirements and actions are continually evolving and changing. The city is a living thing; people, our needs and movements are continuous. Design, construction and operation is therefore a continuous cycle.

### **What contribution did architecture/urban design make?**

The policy of using the public realm as a means of exploring and engaging the public with the history of the city has been hugely successful. The City Architects adopted a strong set of design principles informing all works in the public realm. These guiding principles are to create uncluttered spaces which encourage and prioritise pedestrian movement and the use of a limited palette of high quality materials which ensures consistency across a number of schemes. The high level narrative, the preparation of the design brief and the



composition of the marking criteria are all hugely important in ensuring the procurement of the very best suited Architect-led design team for each particular phase of the greater project. The Viking Triangle encompasses the work of a number of Architects each exhibiting their own individual vision for the greater project.

### **What are you doing next?**

Thanks to the success of the project with the public and as part of the continuing Viking Triangle project, the Council is developing a number of new museums including refurbishing three former Alms houses dating from 1467 in which it plans to develop a museum that explores the traditions, customs and superstitions associated with death in Ireland. The current phase of public realm works within the City is connecting the Viking Triangle to the City's main retail shopping streets to the west. The team are also working on a number of projects including the redevelopment of the City's North Quays, a new Cultural Quarter, town and village renewal projects and public and community buildings.





## Before



The area had vacant buildings and too much space given to car parking.

## After



A new public space was created, prioritising pedestrian movement through interconnecting streets and the addition of sculptures and museums to attract visitors.



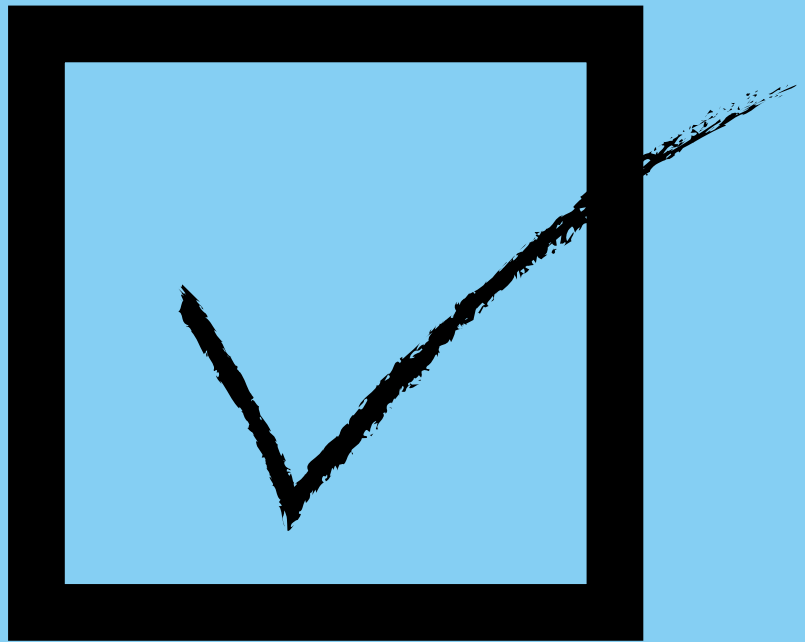


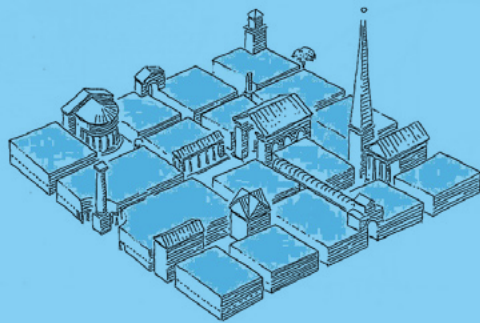
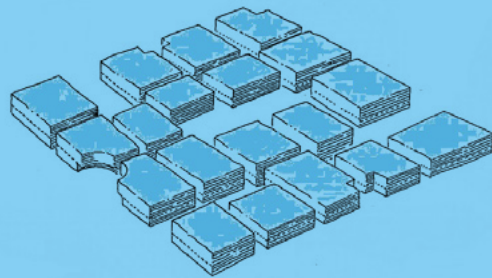
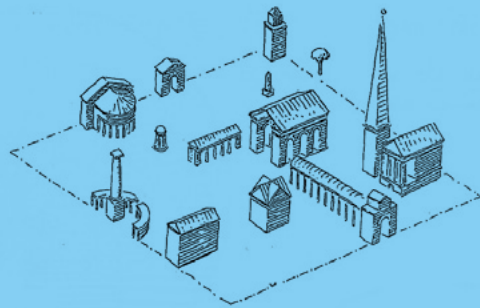
The tourist office has relocated to the area, the three museums now attract **105,000** visitors per year, while the House of Waterford Crystal attracts **over 200,000** visitors.

The Waterford Medieval Museum by Waterford Council Architects has acted as a beacon for renewal and regeneration.

# Chapter 6

## Vision, Governance & Management Co-ordination





## Introduction

Civic pride, sense of ownership and local **stewardship** are all essential ingredients of a successful town. A community working together to improve the quality of a town is most effective when a coordinated approach is established towards common goals and a collective vision. The active role of local authorities is key to coordinating, enabling and managing this work. This vision needs to identify an urban design strategy that supports the town's spatial contribution to sustainable place-making: by controlling out-of-town developments; by prioritising the consolidation of existing urban fabric; by ensuring public services are located within towns; by supporting an urban design framework for towns; and by enabling the imaginative re-use of the existing building stock.

Local authorities can provide expertise, guidance and support. They have a responsibility to ensure that basic services are provided, which has resulted in Town and County Councils having considerable knowledge of how their local area functions. It is often individuals in the community who are first to spot the 'signals' where intervention and action is needed – for example, local GPs may identify health and social consequences of poorly design environments.



Meaningful involvement of the community is necessary to ensure success in defining an implementable vision. Local decision-making and **community engagement** from the outset can harness people's creativity, create a sense of ownership, responsibility and civic stewardship. This can lead to the best outcomes, with the local authority seen as guiding, enabling and supporting the community. A combination of 'bottom-up/top-down' approaches, involving all stakeholders, can achieve the best results in creating a vibrant sustainable place and ensure a sense of ownership and pride in the inhabitants.



Street carnival, Clonakilty, Co. Cork

## **Context**

Local authorities are most effective when pro-active, working directly with the local community to understand their needs, identify actions, provide expertise, source financing, coordinate investment and formulate delivery mechanisms. This is best provided by a small dedicated professional ‘town management’ team with the skills to work with local stakeholders and community on an ongoing basis to develop and implement a vision. The team coordinate resources and engage appropriate specialists where needed. They should work with the community on a long-term basis, recommending small actions and interventions, as well as advising on larger issues. The initiative for a town project may come from the local authority, an investor/developer or the local community. Effective and sustained leadership by the initiator is essential in setting standards, maintaining the momentum of the project, and ensuring the implementation of agreed actions and support mechanisms.

It is critical to prioritise the appropriate re-use of buildings in town centres, and to provide coherent/joined up advice to organisations in the form of a ‘one-stop shop’ that brings together the relevant departments in a local authority. This can bring considerable benefits and savings to applicants for small infill and refurbishment projects, improving their viability.

The future health of a town is determined by the vision developed at the outset. In doing this it is vital to identify and involve key stakeholders, that is, both governmental and executive arms of the local authority, those representing local commercial interests, community groups, and interested sectors in the town. It is important that the vision can be **implemented incrementally**, and that any masterplan can accommodate change. This approach ensures ideas can be thoroughly challenged, tested and robustly worked out. This is a long-term process involving commitment, dedication and resolve. The vision needs to be implemented, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. It involves working collectively, with the local authority enabling, guiding and building ‘social capital’



### Tivoli - A New Perspective

RIAI Design Review + Development Strategy  
for Port of Cork Company



2017

The RIAI provides a Design Review process similar to an open design competition. For more information see [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie)



A strategy for the future viability and regeneration of Irish towns will require action on a number of fronts but should be heritage-led to ensure that the unique identity of each town is retained and utilised. There needs to be a long-term commitment to funding the regeneration of towns to give confidence and certainty to private investors. This will also enable sourcing additional funding from other programmes. Funding can be by:

- direct capital investment in flagship projects such as the regeneration of a prominent historic building in the town or public realm enhancement works;
- leveraging rents and appropriate fiscal incentives to private owners to enhance, and repair historic properties;
- area-based projects such as architectural area enhancement schemes or main street consolidation.

Often there is an expectation of transformative change. However, implementation takes time and resources. Best results are often achieved by many continuous small-scale initiatives that can gradually build up support and confidence. Often opportunities exist to coordinate improvements with utility works and infrastructural projects at little extra cost. Creating the strategy involves working collectively, with the local authority enabling, guiding and building ‘social capital’ with the community.

**Local participation** is vital to support and delivery of the strategy and should involve people of all age groups and abilities. This can be realised by involving Community Development Organisations, Chambers of Commerce, Tidy Towns committees, Housing Associations, educational bodies, cultural bodies, clubs etc.

Some towns have set up their own voluntary councils. Community engagement should be encouraged through road shows, workshops, school-based projects in the community and disseminated through digital media to greater participation by design. The quality of architecture and urban design has the greatest impact on the attractiveness of a place and on how it is used. Good design is critical to the success of regeneration projects. Well-designed schemes using local materials and craft skills will succeed by enhancing the quality of the urban environment, increasing civic pride, providing a durable, long-lasting urban fabric, and developing a local pool of skilled experts and craft workers.

Expertise is essential for the management team to be effective. It is essential that County Councils appoint officers and professionals from their main departments to the Municipal Districts. Dedicated personnel are required with the skills and expertise to provide coordination, management, spatial and economic vision, land-use planning, movement and accessibility, design and upkeep of the public realm, property legislation, financing and training measures.

Municipal architects working long-term in communities are providing these skills as part of dedicated ‘town teams’ and producing the most successful results nationally. Intrinsic to an architect’s role is to **listen, synthesise and establish creative strategies.**

## Design Tools

Work with an Architect/Urban Designer to implement these tools. You can find an Architect on [www.riai.ie](http://www.riai.ie).

**Appoint** a strong local champion to follow up and initiate ideas. This could be an architect or urban designer. The person in this role could coordinate design advisory panels, ensure quality control in new projects, and act as a liaison between the local authority, designers, developers, and community groups. A clear position and set of responsibilities is crucial and can have a significant impact on the future of a town.

**Enter** local awards and competitions to highlight the positive work taking place in the town. Consider also the potential of establishing design and ideas competitions within the town itself. These can be a great source of inspiration and creativity, and should be conceived with a feasible implementation strategy in mind.

**Bring** together sectors to work together towards a common aim. Include sectors dealing with community/rural development and social inclusion, job creation (Local Enterprise Boards/ Local Authorities/IDA), and educational institutions (schools/colleges of further education/institutes of technology) as well as business people. Each has a particular set of resources and expertise that can strengthen a town-led initiative.

**Communicate** with people on the ground, create local partnerships, and establish common ground in order to identify issues for further consideration. Dissemination and collaboration can not only encourage support for an idea or project, but can motivate local communities by working together towards a shared goal.

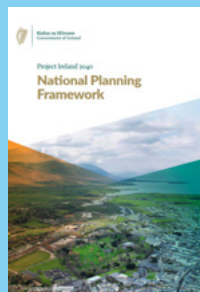
**Monitor** the quality of life within the town, and ensure an ongoing review of urban design and policy by assessing impact on health, sustainability outcomes, and the effectiveness of the process. Governance should allow for a degree of flexibility and be responsive to changing micro and macro conditions.

**Consider** new links and opportunities for the town. Possibilities to improve heritage facilities and cultural output may be secured through local and national arts infrastructure, while collaboration with towns of a similar size, facing similar issues, could produce a network of knowledge which would be of benefit to all involved.



## References

Recent **Government Policies** recognise the value and economic potential of built heritage and town management through ‘place-making’ to attract people, businesses and sustainable growth. Further reading of these resources can provide more detailed information on the strategies and tactics available to local communities and organisations.

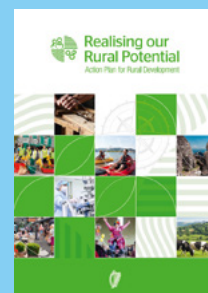


The Government’s **‘National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040’** (DHPCLG 2018) includes the goal of managing sustainable compact growth in our cities, towns and villages to add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work. This emphasises that

all our urban settlements need a streamlined managed approach to realise their potential.  
<http://npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/Project-Ireland-2040-NPF.pdf>



This objective is reflected in the Government’s **‘National Development Plan 2018–2027’** (National Strategic Outcome 1) which announced new regeneration and development funds, including the Town and Village renewal scheme.  
[https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/831/130718120306-5569359-NDP%20strategy%202018-2027\\_WEB.pdf#page=35](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/831/130718120306-5569359-NDP%20strategy%202018-2027_WEB.pdf#page=35)



**‘Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Ireland’** published in 2017 by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. This includes Town and Village Renewal Scheme and LEADER programme.  
<https://actionplan.ruralireland.ie/Rural-Ireland-Action-Plan.pdf>



The Government’s **‘Town and Village Renewal Scheme’** aims to support the revitalisation of towns and villages across Ireland, to increase their attractiveness as places in which to live and work. The central aim of the scheme is to support the revitalisation of towns and villages, to improve the living and working environment of their communities and increase their potential to support increased economic activity into the future. A second element of the initiative is set to examine ways in which to encourage increased residential occupancy in town and village centres.  
<https://drcd.gov.ie/about/rural/town-village-renewal-scheme>



The Government document **'A Framework for Town Centre Renewal'** (DBEI 2016) provides a series of useful steps to understanding the town including stakeholder engagement and 'health-check indicators' for town centres, establishing a 'town team', preparing a town centre plan, and supports for town centre renewal including project Ireland 2040 and Local Authority supports. <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/A-Framework-for-Town-Centre-Renewal.html>



**'The Retail Planning Guidelines to Planning Authorities'** accompanied by the **'Retail Design Manual'** were published in April 2012 by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government'. These set out principles for retail location and integration in towns, including sequential testing of retail capacity, site planning and urban design. <https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload,30026,en.pdf>

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload%2C30028%2Cen.pdf>

## Other References



**Project for Public Spaces** (PPS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. It is a central hub of the global placemaking movement, connecting people to ideas, resources, expertise, and partners who see place as the key to addressing our greatest challenges.

Publications such as **'Making Massive Small Change'** by Kelvin Campbell (<http://www.smarturbanism.org.uk/>) advocate a citizen's based, grass-roots approach to urbanism.

## Funding Sources

RRDF & URDF: There is a new suite of funding available to communities the length and breadth of the nation. These are:

RRDF (Rural Regeneration & Development Fund) URDF (Urban Regeneration Development Fund). These significant funding sources are accepting joint applications from Communities and Local Authorities over the next five years.

Rebuilding Ireland: Identify to your Local Authority derelict buildings, that could be potentially be acquired to facilitate new housing accommodation. There is significant funding available to Local Authorities, through the Rebuilding Ireland fund, to address the national housing deficit. This is contributing to the urban regeneration of small towns and villages throughout Ireland.

ILDN is the representative body for the country's 49 Local Development Companies who deliver the following: RDP LEADER, Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme, Rural Social Scheme, Tús, Local Employment Service, Jobs Clubs, Rural Recreation Programme, The Walks Scheme, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance, and Social Enterprise Programmes across rural and urban Ireland.

# Case Study

## Local Governance

### Co. Mayo

#### Architect

Peter Hynes MRIAI, Chief Executive, Mayo County Council

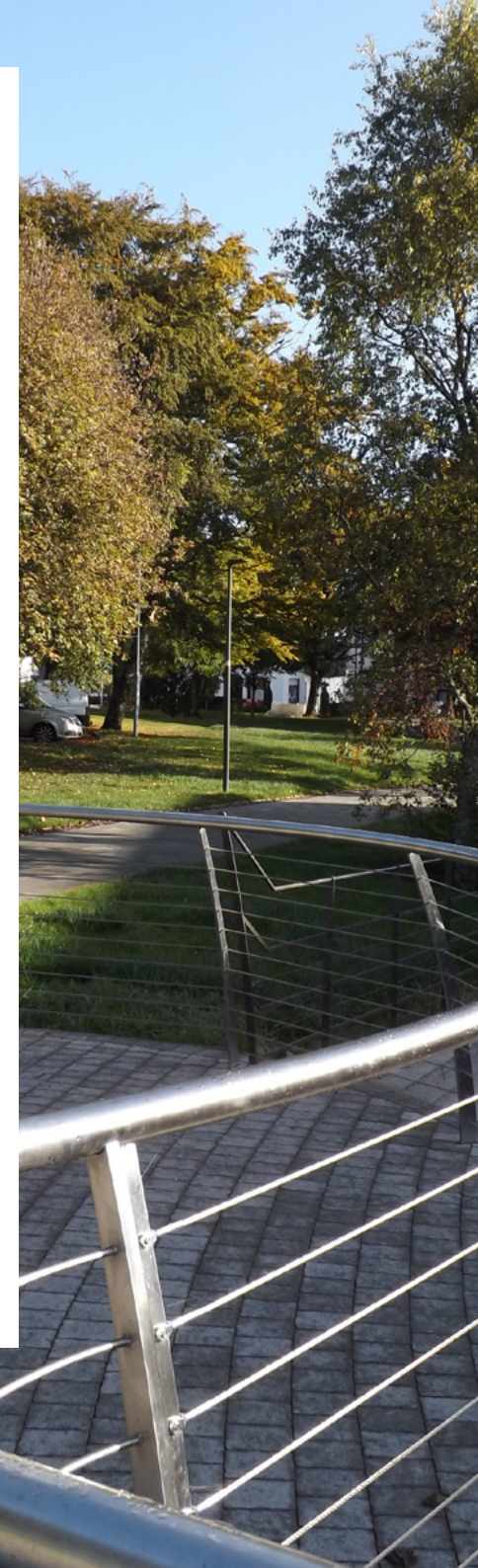




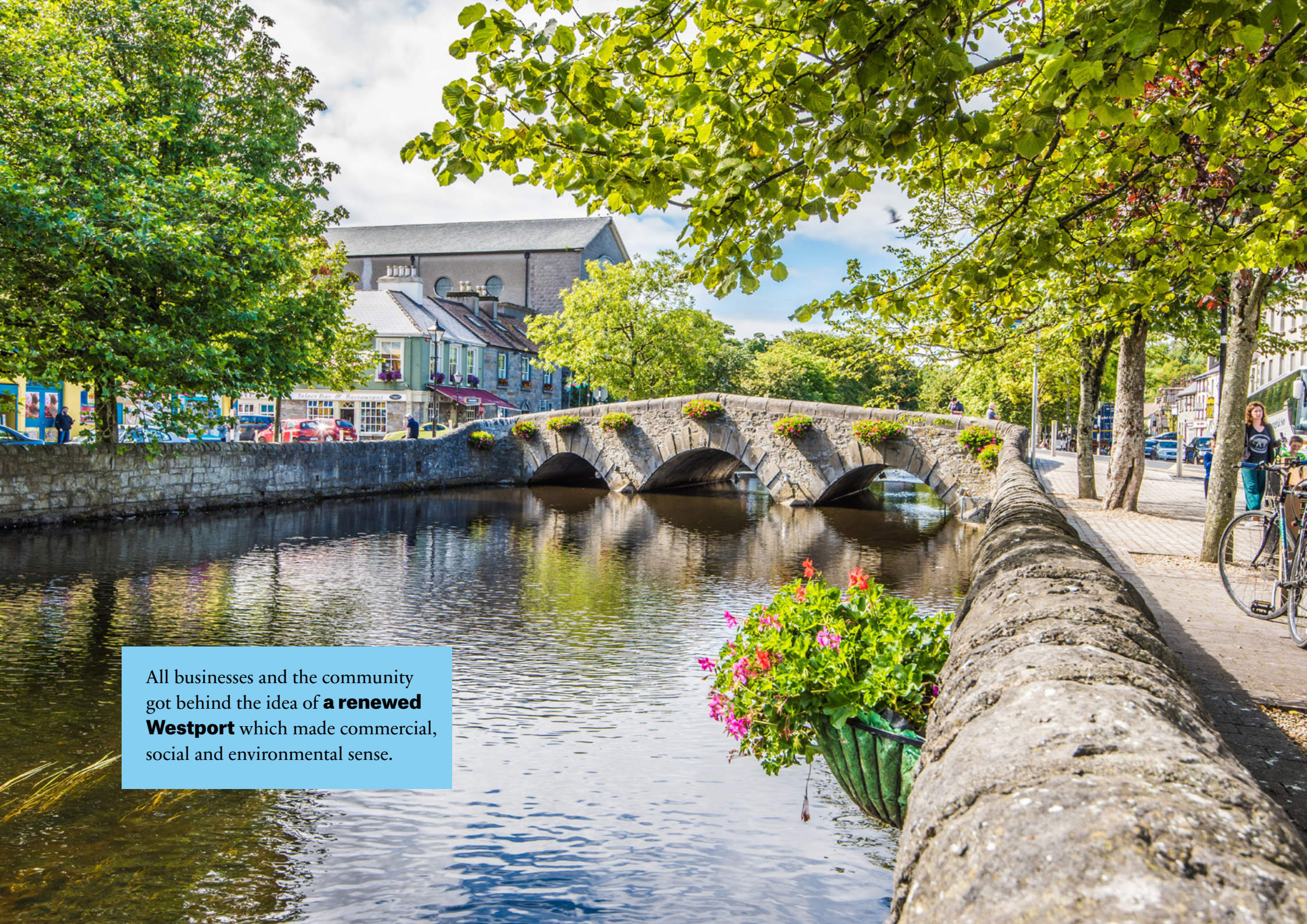
**Westport is hailed as a real success story for reinventing a town. How did it come about?**

There were a number of factors which came together to transform Westport over a twenty year period; it was not something that happened overnight. There has been a long established awareness of the value of towns and villages in Mayo, and organised work in this area kicked off with our first Town Renewal Scheme which was initiated by my predecessor, County Manager Des Mahon, in 1991. That scheme gave structure and focus to the work that we had been doing with communities and Tidy Towns groups for some time. In the case of Westport, there was also an awareness of the unique character and layout of the town, championed by people like Kitty O'Malley and Iain Douglas in our Planning Department and by the Urban District Council and many business and voluntary groups in the town itself. In the mid-nineties we put together a plan — “Westport 2000”. This was a vision-led plan, initiated by then Town Manager Padraig Hughes, which involved widespread consultation

with all town stakeholders. Architects Gerry Mitchell and Jim Coady would have been two of the guiding lights in that exercise. While it was not statutorily adopted, it provided a valuable guiding framework for the boom times from the mid-nineties through to 2007/2008. Another critical ingredient was intense stakeholder participation. All businesses and the community got behind the idea of a renewed Westport which made commercial, social and environmental sense. The establishment of a Town Architect position was a further key success factor — a full-time person working principally in the areas of planning, urban design, public realm improvements and community activation. Finally and crucially, we had an enormous investment in the town core from both public and private sectors. The Seaside Resort Tax Scheme was responsible for some €150/200 million private sector investment in Westport over a ten year period, combined with significant public sector investment in sewerage, roads and public realm upgrades.







All businesses and the community got behind the idea of **a renewed Westport** which made commercial, social and environmental sense.



In short, we had a vision for the town and a plan to guide delivery of that vision; we had a person on the ground actively involved in guiding; we had the resources required and we had active community and business engagement. It was these elements which combined over a twenty year period to transform the town.

**With the current restructuring you are ensuring that every town in Mayo has a Municipal Architect. Why is this so important?**

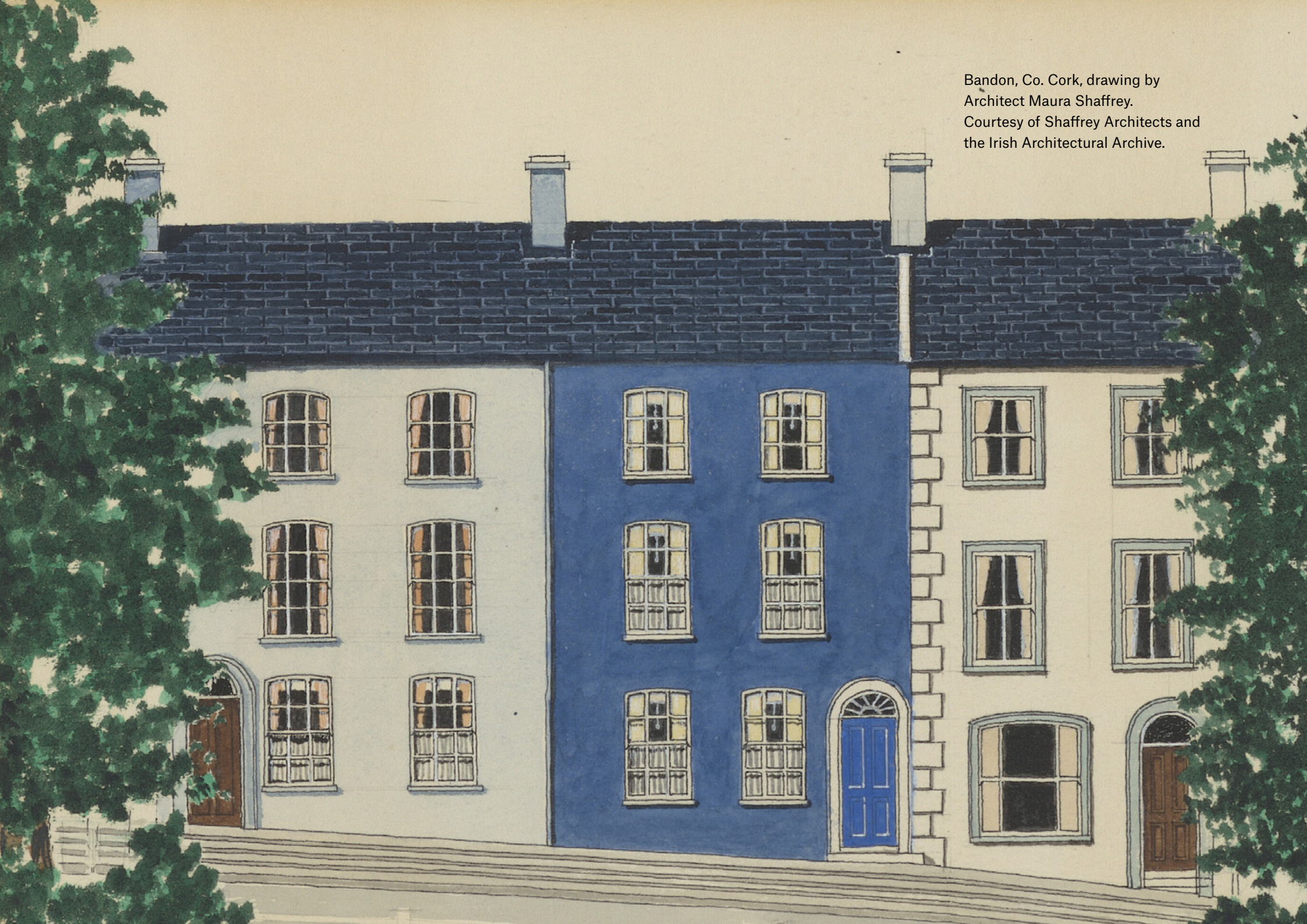
We started with a Municipal Architect in Westport where Simon Wall made an enormous contribution to the transformation of the town. We then extended the role to our other two major towns with Pdraig Kelly in Castlebar and Kevin Keegan in Ballina. Their work can be seen in the quality of the public realm in the core areas of both towns and the contribution which they have made as part of multi-disciplinary teams has been very significant. Since we have restructured along municipal district lines, we have moved to establish a Municipal Architect position in each Municipal District within a strengthened Architects Department for the County overall.

Quality housing in towns contributes to improving town streetscapes.





Bandon, Co. Cork, drawing by  
Architect Maura Shaffrey.  
Courtesy of Shaffrey Architects and  
the Irish Architectural Archive.





## ⇒ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The RIAI Town and Village Toolkit was produced by the RIAI Urban Design Taskforce with funding from the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht under the Government Policy on Architecture.

### **RIAI Urban Design Committee Members 2016–2018**

Philip Jackson, MRIAI (Chair); David Dwyer, MRIAI (Vice Chair); Jonny McKenna, MRIAI, (Hon.Sec.); Paul Altman, FRIAI; Noel J. Brady, FRIAI; Martin Colreavy, MRIAI; Brian Hogan, FRIAI; Anne Kiernan, FRIAI; Derbhile McDonagh, MRIAI; John McLaughlin, MRIAI; James Pike, FRIAI; Tony Reddy, FRIAI; Grainne Shaffrey, MRIAI; Peter Twamley, FRIAI (Retired); Giulia Vallone, MRIAI; Sharon O'Gara, MRIAI.

### **RIAI Town & Village Workshop Attendees**

Paul Altman, FRIAI; Noel Brady, FRIAI; Martin Colreavy, MRIAI; Eddie Conroy, FRIAI; Joanne Coughlan, MRIAI; David Dwyer, MRIAI; Emer Fox; Emma Geoghegan, MRIAI; Brian Hogan, FRIAI; Emmet Humphries, MRIAI; Philip Jackson, MRIAI; Anne Kiernan, FRIAI; Diarmuid Lawlor; Derbhile McDonagh, MRIAI; Seamus MacGearailt; Nicholas O'Kane; James Pike, FRIAI; Tony Reddy, FRIAI; Gráinne Shaffrey, MRIAI; Jason Taylor; Peter Twamley, FRIAI (Retired); Giulia Vallone, MRIAI; Simon Wall, MRIAI; and Tony Williams.

Workshop Organisers: RIAI

Workshop Facilitators: Connect the Dots

### **Peer Reviewers**

Simon Wall, MRIAI; Giulia Vallone, MRIAI;  
Emmet Humphreys, MRIAI and Sharon O'Gara, MRIAI.

### **RIAI Editorial Team**

Philip Jackson, MRIAI and David Dwyer, MRIAI.

Dr Sandra O'Connell and Emma Gilleece.

Copy editor: Michael Hayes, MRIAI.

We welcome your feedback.

Please email [communications@riai.ie](mailto:communications@riai.ie).

Design: WorkGroup

RIAI



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

