



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



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## Durrow Development Forum

### Durrow Community Plan 2019-2023



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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to Community and Participatory Planning**

According to the Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape (1997), each village is distinctive and unique. They create a significant sense of regional and local character based on the natural, built and cultural heritage. This unique character is created by the interplay of architecture, streetscape, boundaries, views, landscape features and cultural elements (Dargan, 2013). The individual elements of these villages make up a set of historic clues that can explain the past provided we know what to look for. These clues include tales of religion, culture, economics, vernacular style and climate over long periods of time.

### ***1.2 Durrow Development Forum***

For the past 20 years, Durrow Development Forum, the lead group in developing this Community Plan, have a strong track record of delivering key projects and programmes for the benefit of all individual's groups and communities in the area. The group are the lead representative group for the village. In 2017, the group successfully applied for assistance under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 for support to develop a five year Sustainable Communities Plan.

The key objective of this initiative was to secure a "shared vision" for the future of Durrow Village. This was to be achieved by:

1. Working intensively with the community to strengthen and enhance community structures.
2. Producing a comprehensive Sustainable Community Plan which will inform actions for future community development of Durrow village.

3. Identifying project proposals and preparing specifications for future funding applications.



***Figure 1: Some members of Durrow Development Forum, June 2018***

A successful plan for Durrow cannot deal with spatial aspects in isolation from the social, economic and environmental context. Of particular importance is the process by which decisions are made and who makes them. The more people involved in decision making, the more accurate and broad ranging the information base and the higher the chances of reaching genuine agreement on key issues become. Therefore, participation by local people in the process of developing the plan becomes as important as the plan itself (Tipperary Institute). Since the mid-2000s, a significant shift in the need to secure meaningful public participation has taken place at an international, European and national level.

The guiding principles used to assist with this community planning process included:

1. The plan was developed using an action planning model
2. A commitment to working in an inclusive way
3. Adopting an integrated approach to sustainable planning
4. The Plan needed to be clear and accessible
5. The Plan should devise structures to support its implementation

This Community Plan will provide significant assistance for decision makers and a context for future planning, enabling an accurate and informed assessment of the potential impacts of new development proposals.

### ***1.3 Consultation Process***

Extensive preplanning took place to ensure appropriate representative views were captured and collated at a public consultation meeting which was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018. The key aim was to recruit broad representation from community groups, businesses and elected representatives. The workshop covered the preparation of a local resource audit, a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) and an indicative priority Programme Action Plan.

Recruitment for the event was undertaken with the assistance of local social media, local newspapers and extensive one to one telephone contact with many of the above stakeholders. A follow up workshop with members of the Development Forum was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018. A number of follow up telephone interviews were held with individuals who expressed an interest in elaborating in more details their views on the future of the area. A number of written submissions further aided the collation of key information and views for the plan.

#### 1.4 Summary findings of Resource Audit

Theme	Resource
Economic	<p>Employment Opportunities</p> <p>Quality of Local Businesses</p> <p>Bespoke Auction House</p> <p>Range of local hospitalities, eateries &amp; accommodation</p> <p>5* Hotel</p> <p>Central Location</p> <p>Good connectivity (<i>buses, taxis</i>)</p> <p>Residential homes are affordable</p> <p>Numerous points of interest</p> <p>Limited dereliction &amp; No ghost estates</p> <p>Good Broadband Service</p> <p>Financial institutions have been retained</p>
Social Capital	<p>People</p> <p>Community Ethos &amp; high level of Volunteerism</p> <p>Strong Local Social Media Platform</p> <p>High Quality Festivals (Scarecrow &amp; St Patricks Day Festival)</p> <p>Range &amp; Quality of Sporting Clubs</p> <p>Range &amp; Quality of Community Groups</p>
Community	<p>Community Playground</p> <p>Cycling Routes</p> <p>Community Employment Programme</p> <p>Extensive range of events</p> <p>Central Green is the heart of the village</p> <p>Community Services (<i>meals on wheels</i>)</p> <p>Umbrella Community Structure</p> <p>Good quality primary schools, playschools &amp; childcare service</p> <p>High Quality Walks (<i>e.g. Leafy Loops</i>)</p> <p>Post Office</p> <p>Library</p> <p>Fire Station</p>
Natural & Built Heritage	<p>Natural Landscape (<i>e.g. Rivers, Walks, Woods</i>)</p> <p>High Quality Built Heritage</p> <p>Heritage (<i>Tangible &amp; Intangible</i>)</p> <p>Durrow Castle</p> <p>Fishing</p>

### **1.5 Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, Opportunities**

The summary views of attendees at the public meeting, telephone interviewees, written submissions is show below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
High Rates of Volunteerism & Community Spirit Natural Resources Location Local Services (banks, post office) Employment Opportunities Range of festival & events High Quality Broadband Strong Local Social Media Platform	Lack of befriending service Signage cluttering on approach roads Carpooling taking up valuable central car spaces Lack of facilities for older teenagers & old People Limited Police Presence in village No public toilet Loss of Civil Defence Service Lack of designated business/industrial park Limited Public Lighting Limited Public Transport Limited land banks to develop new recreation projects No local housing for the elderly Lack of Hostel
Opportunities	Threats
One way traffic system Retirement Village / Supported Housing for the Elderly New Community CCTV Initiative Develop signage strategy for all approach roads Seek news uses for old Civil Defence & Old Methodist Church Maximise usage of existing community centre Completion of the Square Project Develop Community based car parking solutions Dredging of River & Repair of Old Bridge	Rural Crime Flooding / Climate Change Business Rates Drugs & Anti-Social Behaviour Security of CES Speeding Volume of Traffic Future of vital services ( <i>post office, banks, hospital, library</i> )

### **1.6 Location**

Durrow is a beautiful, small town in the south of Co. Laois close to the border with Co. Kilkenny with a rich built heritage and natural environment.



**Durrow Area: Co. Laois**

***Figure 1.1 Location Map of Durrow and its hinterland***

The earliest recorded mention of the area was in the fifth century, as the reputed birthplace of St. Benedict (Durrow Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) Study, 2010).

Durrow is located in the fertile lowlands of Co. Laois, between the higher lands of the Slieve Blooms and the Castlecomer Plateau. The town is surrounded by Countryside that is hill in character (Figure 1.2).









central part of the town has been designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) to preserve the special character of the historic core.



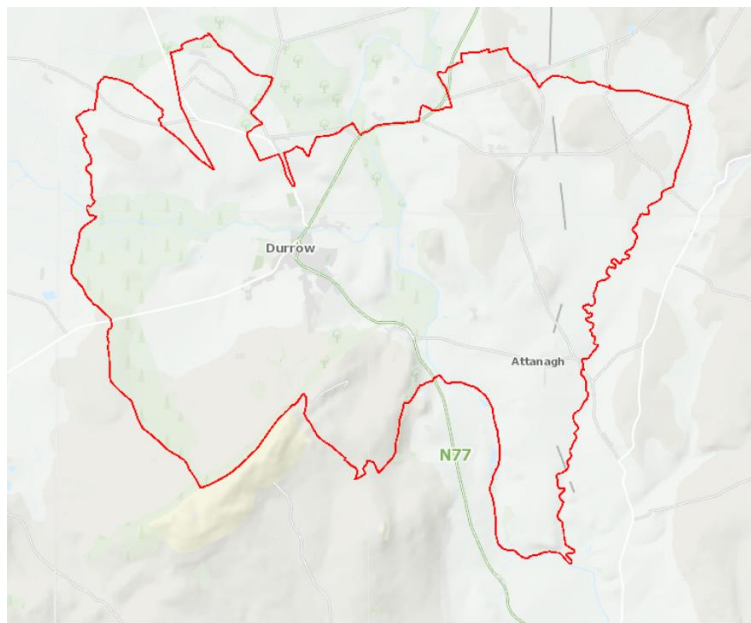
***Figure 1.4 Aerial view of the centre of Durrow***

Castle Durrow is an important landmark building, set in its own demesne, but with its entrance on to The Square. It is actively used as a Country House Hotel, is regularly used as a wedding venue and is an important source of employment for the town.

The town has a strong business and enterprise focus, with a number of transport and logistics companies benefitting from Durrow's central location. There is a thriving tourism industry with three hotels; a number of B&B's and guesthouses; and a strong wedding sector. There is a tradition of high quality dining in Durrow dating back to when the town was a key stop-off point on the road between Dublin and Cork, before the town was bypassed by the M8 in 2010.

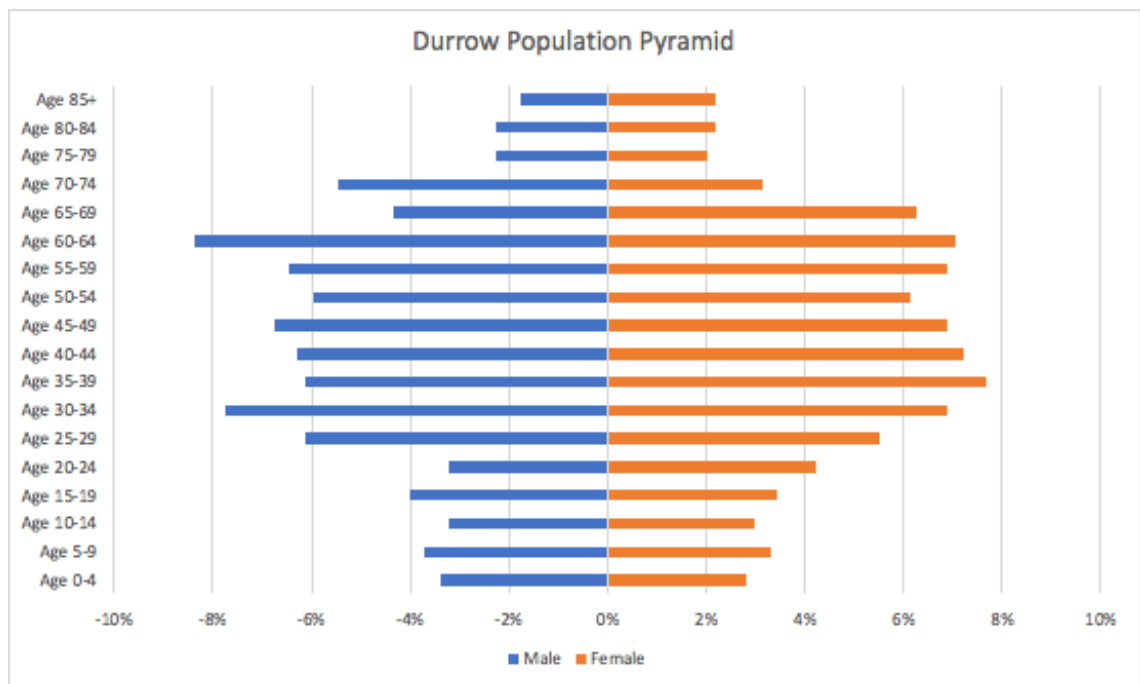
### **1.7 Population Profile**

Today the Durrow Electoral District (ED) has a population of 1,258, according to census 2016. The Durrow ED includes the town of Durrow and its immediate hinterland (Figure 1.5). The population has been remarkably consistent over the last 10 years, with a fall in the population of just four people between 2006 and 2016. In contrast Co. Laois as a whole was one of the fastest growing counties in Ireland, with a population increase of 26% from 67,059 to 84,697. This population increase for the county was as a result of large parts of Co. Laois becoming a commuter suburb of Dublin. This commuter effect, however, has had less impact on Durrow.

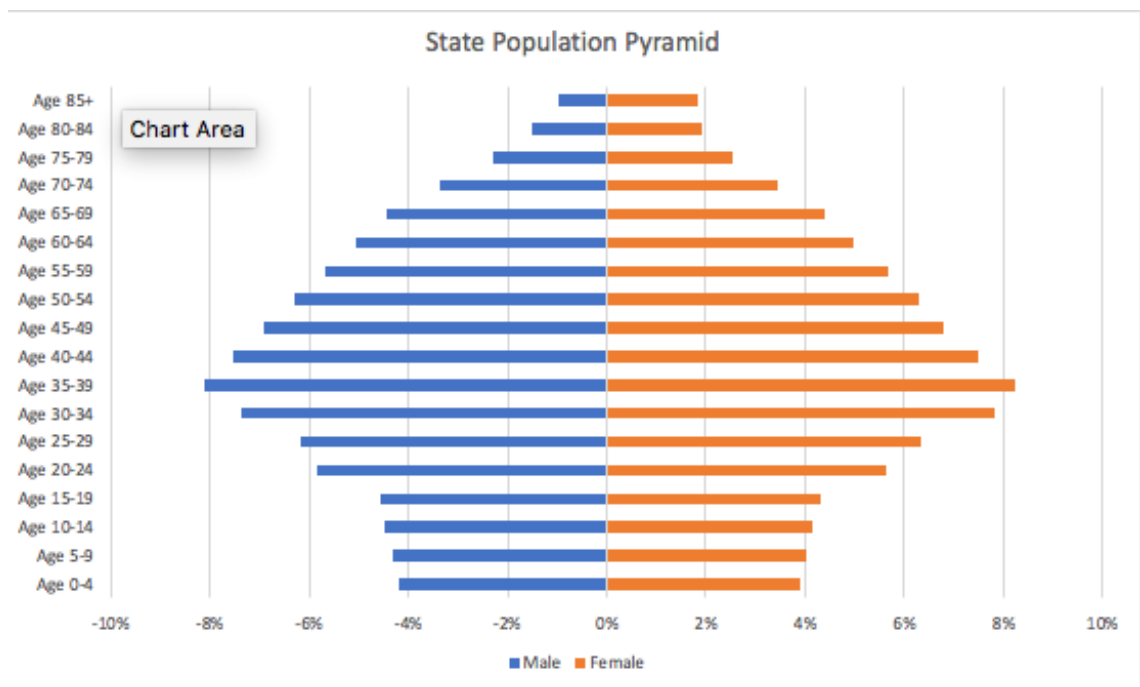


**Figure 1.5 Durrow Electoral District**

A review of the population pyramid for Durrow shows the percentage of people in different age ranges of both males and females living in the Durrow Electoral Division (Figure 1.5). Comparing Durrow's population pyramid with the State's pyramid (Figure 1.6), shows a similar age pattern for most age groups, but there are fewer men and women aged 20-24 in Durrow than the national figures, and more people in the 60-64 age range. Housing provision for this older population will need to be planned.



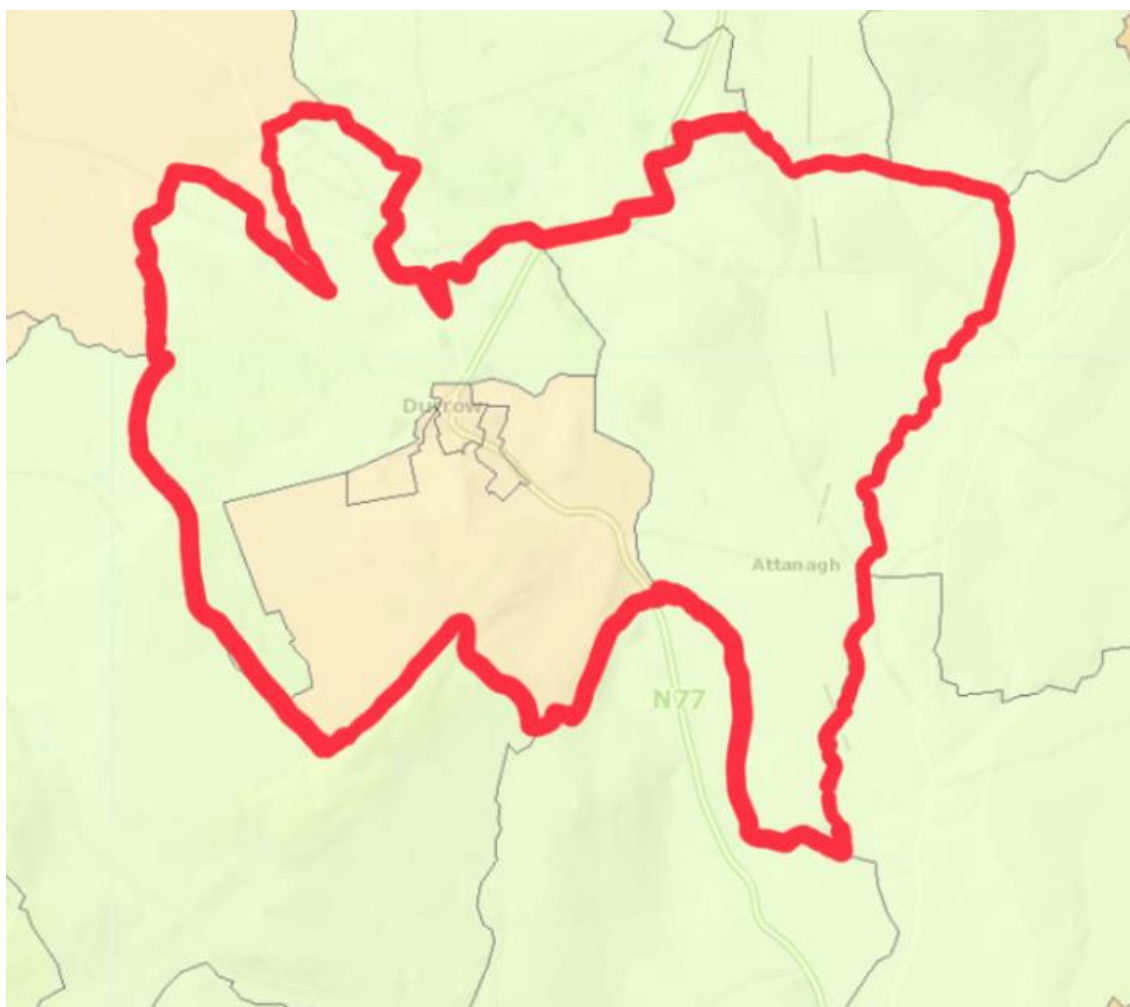
**Figure 1.6 Durrow Population Pyramid Census 2016**



**Figure 1.7 State Population Pyramid Census 2016**

Pobal is a Government and EU funded body set up to tackle disadvantage and support social inclusion. Their Deprivation Index maps allows us to assess deprivation levels within a

community based on census data (Figure 1.8). The map shows that the population living in Durrow town are marginally more deprived than the average in Ireland, while the population in the hinterland outside the town are marginally less deprived.



**Figure 1.8 Pobal's Deprivation Indices for Durrow**

### **1.8 Plan Context**

This plan is a community driven plan that has been led by the people of Durrow in its preparation and implementation. A community led approach contributes not only to ownership of the plan but also to the subsequent implementation and to monitoring the outcomes. The process offered everyone in the community the opportunity to shape the future of their town.



Participation by the local community in the process of developing the plan is as important as the plan itself. Active participation of local people in the planning and development of the area where they live is itself a positive outcome. When people are empowered to participate in planning, the result is not just a better final product but an improved relationship between local people and the agencies tasked with implementing the plan. This leads to improved decision making and ultimately, better planning and better delivery of local services.

This community plan is consistent with the objectives of the Laois County Development Plan and through extensive consultation with the public, the plan reflects the aims and aspirations of the community of Durrow.

The plan was prepared in response to an invitation from the Durrow Development Forum to develop a Sustainable Communities Plan for the town, using public consultation to develop policies and projects for the ongoing development of the community. The plan builds from a series of previous plans and studies for Durrow carried out over the last 20 years. Many of the recommendations of previous plans have been implemented. The plan will highlight the main issues facing Durrow today.

Previous plans include:

- The Durrow Village Design Statement 2002
- Durrow Town Plan 2007
- Durrow Architectural Conservation Area Study 2010
- Durrow Laois Heritage Action Plan 2012-2015
- River Erkina Blueway report by Andy Dunne of EAEC Ltd. (2016)

This plan must be consistent with local, regional and national plans and guidelines:

- Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework
- Midland Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022
- Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021
- The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2013)

## Chapter 2 Social, Community and Economic Development

### ***2.1 Community and Social Infrastructure***

#### ***2.1.1 Redevelopment of Methodist Church and Civil Defence property on Patrick Street***

The Laois County Development Plan (CDP) 2017-2023 (p. 53) highlights the importance of providing local facilities for community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups to meet and progress their work. The plan contains a specific objective for Durrow (DU24) to develop additional community and sporting facilities which are flexible and capable of being managed for a number of different uses.

The community consultation carried out for this plan identified the Methodist Church and the adjacent Civil Defence property as a potential new community space (Figures 2.1 & 2.2). The Methodist church is on the record of protected structure in the Laois CDP.



***Figure 2.1 Community Centre Site boundary outlined in red (Includes adjoining local authority car park)***

Re-using these buildings would be in line with objective DU3 of the CDP to encourage redevelopment or restoration of derelict, vacant or underused buildings within Durrow town centre.



***Figure 2.2 The Methodist church and adjacent Civil Defence property could be a potential new community space***

In order for this community facility to be successful it should aim to have as many uses as possible. A good model is the Axis theatre in Ballymun (Figure 2.3). A survey of residents by Ballymun Regeneration Ltd showed that 70% of local residents attended the Axis theatre regularly. The basis of success of the Axis theatre is the multi-use nature of the building. It combines a café that serves breakfast and lunches, with a theatre space, rehearsal studios, dance spaces, crèche, community rooms and office space.



**Figure 2.3 Axis Theatre, Ballymun, Dublin**

### **2.1.2 Rationale for Investment in Community Facilities**

Community facilities represent the physical space where community members:

- Deepen their civic relationship with and commitment to their community
- Meet other community members socially, both formally and as part of a defined group
- Participate in sports, drama or other interests, actively or as a spectator
- Conduct voluntary activities that are of benefit to the whole community
- Accept the services offered by the community

In many ways, the well being of a community is mirrored in the appearance of and usage of its physical structures. Over the years many community facilities have fallen into disrepair while some communities have lacked this essential amenity. With many smaller communities facing decline in population and services, the strengthening of such communities is vital to their sustainability. Investment in community facilities is more about people as much as is about bricks and mortar. A facility designed by the community leads to increased activity in sports, community arts and community education.

### ***2.1.3 Policy Context***

The need for such high quality community facilities is referenced in a number of documents. The 2007 Durrow Village Plan restates the local authorities policy of encouraging the provision and further development of community facilities which are flexible and capable of being managed for a number of different uses and to encourage the further use of existing facilities.

More recently (2016) in the Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), the high level goal (G9) seeks to develop and promote ways of living and doing business that support a sustainable environment. Objective B4 seeks to ensure conservation, active use and enhanced presentation of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The Architectural Conservation Area objectives states that Laois Co. Co. should actively seek to support viable uses for derelict sites. The proposal by Durrow Development Forum is consistent with above policy objectives.

### ***2.1.4 Durrow Community Centre: Key Funding Challenges & Needs Analysis***

The key challenge in developing facilities is access to clean title or of a leasehold that is of sufficient length so as to comply with the regulatory requirements of key funding programmes. Durrow Development Forum have considered a number of potential options such a) as developing a new facility on a green field site or b) to select an existing facility for extension and modifications. The group quickly came to the conclusion that a green field option was not viable or sustainable as the existing limited resources would need to be fully expended on the site purchase. A decision was quickly arrived at to focus on the old Methodist church site as the key advantage was the availability of the adjoining disused civil defence building. The availability of clean title for the old Methodist church/ICA Hall and a leasehold of the adjoining building coupled with it's central location were the main reasons for its selection as the priority site for investment.



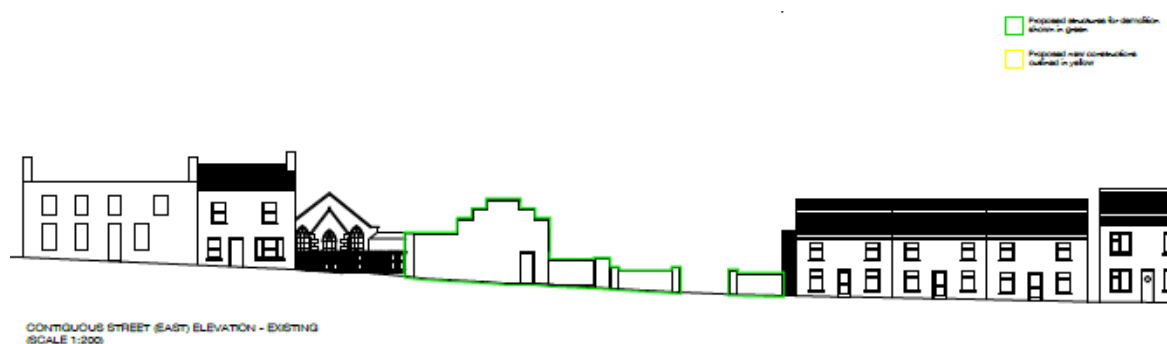
The consultation process has identified many groups requiring access to facilities and activities that cannot take place due to limited or no access to appropriate community facilities. This includes meeting and activity space for youth and community groups such as the local Folk Choir, Scarecrow Festival, Men's Shed Project, 'Hot Desking' Space amongst many others. Community Arts Activity has seen a significant increase in over the past number of years so the design of a fully functioning multi purpose space has well advanced by the group.

Needs identified through the community consultation and interviews which informed the design of the new facility includes:

- Rehearsal space
- Dance studio
- Community Meeting space
- Choir rehearsal
- Community Theatre and performance space
- Community kitchen
- Youth Café/space in the evening
- Men's shed
- Hot desking for daytime use

### ***2.1.5 The Proposal***

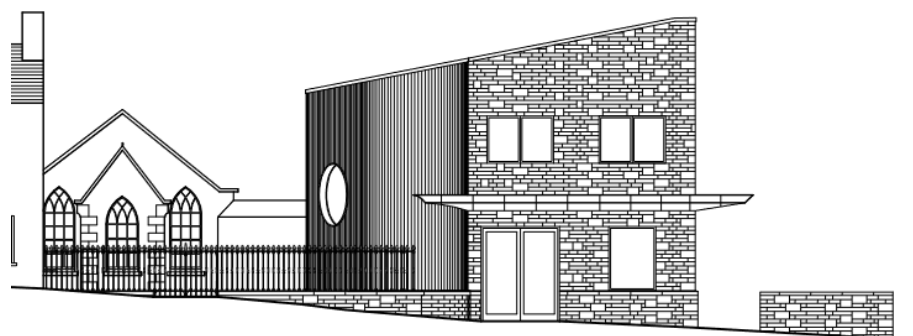
The aim of this project is to fully restore the existing old Methodist hall and adjoining old civil defence building into a multi purpose community activity facility.



***Figure 2.4 Contiguous Existing Street Elevation of the two facilities on Patrick Street, Regional Road R639***

The proposal is expected to be completed in two phases. The former building had undergone preservation works over the past number of year including major repairs to the roof and windows. The facility however lacks many of the additional functional services expected of a contemporary community facility such as kitchen, disability toilets, heating and meeting facilities such as projection equipment. The adjoining civil defence building is in need of a significant overhaul and requires demolition and rebuilding (See Figure 2.2).

The design of the community centre was by an accomplished conservation architect who had the capacity to design for the new emerging needs while preserving elements of the old Methodist Church. The proposed centre is shown in Figure 2.5.



***Figure 2.5 Elevation of Proposed Community Centre***

#### ***2.1.6 Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and pitch for Soccer Club***

The community consultation highlighted the need for a MUGA and the need for a pitch for the soccer club. These could be jointly developed as a single project if a suitable site is found.

The project is more likely to be successful and more likely to get funding if a range of uses for the facilities can be identified. The MUGA, as its name suggests, is suited to a wide variety of

sports. As many local sporting clubs as possible should be involved in this project including GAA, rugby and soccer clubs. The local primary school should also be involved with the bid, as they can use the facilities during weekdays when other use is likely to be limited. The facility should also cater for niche sports such as bowls, which might attract senior citizens to use the facilities at off-peak times.

A site close to the town centre would be preferable to allow access for pedestrians and cyclists. One possible site would be the land on the south bank of the river Erkina, to the East of the town (Figure 2.6). This land is close to the centre of Durrow and is zoned for recreational use. As it is adjacent to a Natura 2000 site (see section 4.3.1), any development would have to be carefully managed to protect adjacent habitats. The site is in Flood Zone A, which means it is prone to flooding at least once every 100 years, and the pitches may not be available when water levels rise. This would have to be taken into account and the clubs would have to decide whether the benefits outweigh occasional non-availability of the pitch. Access to the site is available from the lane adjacent to the graveyard.



**Figure 2.6 Potential site for MUGA and soccer pitch, outlined in red. This land is zoned for recreation (Source, Bing Maps)**

### ***2.1.7 Play Areas for Children***

There is an excellent playground next to the old primary school on the Kilkenny Road on the outskirts of the town (Figure 2.7). This play area is close to residential housing and is convenient for many families.



***Figure 2.7 Playground beside the old primary school***

There is a need, however, for more play spaces for children. The northern section of the Square, in the town centre, close to the buildings and away from the main road would be a good location for new play equipment (Figure 2.8). In addition, there could also be some adult gym equipment on the Square. To enhance the play facilities, commercial establishments on this side of the square should be encouraged to provide outdoor seating. This would allow adults to have a coffee while watching their children. This setup of children's play equipment adjacent to coffee shops is very common and successful on the continent.





***Figure 2.8 The Northern side of the square would be a good location for play equipment and to encourage seating outside commercial premises***

In order to facilitate play equipment on the square, traffic calming would be needed for the main road through the square. Traffic calming would be beneficial to the town for many reasons and should be pursued whether play equipment is installed or not (see section 2.3.4).

## **2.2 Economic Development and Employment**

### ***2.2.1 Tourism***

Durrow has an excellent tourism offer and should build on its strengths to attract more visitors. The community consultation highlighted the need to promote Durrow, and develop a logo for the town. One way to promote the town is to gather together all the tourism offerings into a brochure, in both printed and online formats. These brochures should be available at all hotels and guest houses, and there should be links to all available activities on all their

websites. This will be of benefit to accommodation providers as well as to the businesses that supply local services.

Visitors want to see a range of activities in the area such as walking, cycling, fishing, golf and play activities for children. Durrow provides many of these opportunities, but there is scope to improve the offer. The Laois Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) developed by the Laois Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) has an objective to grant aid new and existing tourism products particularly activity-based tourism businesses (p. 30), and this grant-aid should be pursued.

### ***2.2.2 Building on the Successful Wedding Business***

Durrow is a successful wedding destination with Castle Durrow (Figure 2.9), the Ashbrook Arms, and the Castle Arms Hotel all hosting weddings.



***Figure 2.9 Wedding at Castle Durrow (source [www.weddingsonline.ie](http://www.weddingsonline.ie))***

According to [weddingsonline.ie](http://weddingsonline.ie) 2018 survey, couples are spending an average of €26,000 on their weddings and typically they invite 159 guests. While most couples honeymoon abroad, half of couple's "mini-moon" in Ireland. If Durrow can capture more weddings, and encourage more couples and their guests to extend their stay, it could boost the spend in Durrow.



Weddings provide business to more than just the hotels. Couples are spending on ancillary services such as:

- Hairdressers
- Make-up
- Florists
- Car hire
- Horse and carriage hire
- Wedding Cakes
- Child minding
- Music for the ceremony
- DJs and bands for the reception
- Photographers and videographers
- BBQ service for the day after the wedding

Potential wedding parties when choosing their wedding location are keen to source these services locally, but often find it difficult to research their options. A coordinated effort by suppliers to provide an up-to-date listing of services to wedding venues would encourage more weddings to come to Durrow. There should be links to the services on the wedding venue's websites as well as a printed brochure that should be updated annually.

Spillover accommodation is often required for guests, and this is an opportunity for small guest houses, traditional B&B's and for Airbnb style accommodation. Bed and breakfast or Airbnb options on local farms might be attractive for some guests. One suggestion in the community consultation was the idea of developing a "Community Hostel". Such a hostel would also help provide spillover accommodation for weddings.

Durrow would also benefit from a listing of all local activities and attractions (see section 2.2.1) that would encourage the wedding couple and their guests to stay before and, or after the wedding.

### ***2.2.3 Buildings for Businesses***

There is a shortage of empty units for new businesses to locate in Durrow. There are sites zoned for enterprise and employment on the outskirts of Durrow, but there is no sign of this opportunity being taken up.

One way to provide extra space would be to ensure that all existing commercial buildings are being used to their full extent. There has been a lot of attention given to the idea of using upper floors of commercial buildings for residential accommodation. But often upper floors are more suited to commercial use. Good examples of upper floor use include:

- Accountants
- Solicitors
- IT start-ups
- Medical services

A survey of all commercial buildings should be carried out to identify underused or vacant floors that would be suitable for small business.

The community consultation highlighted the idea of setting up an industrial/community kitchen. This could be in the proposed new community centre in the Methodist church and Civil Defence buildings, or the survey of commercial buildings could be used to identify other options. A community kitchen could be an opportunity for local producers to supply food.

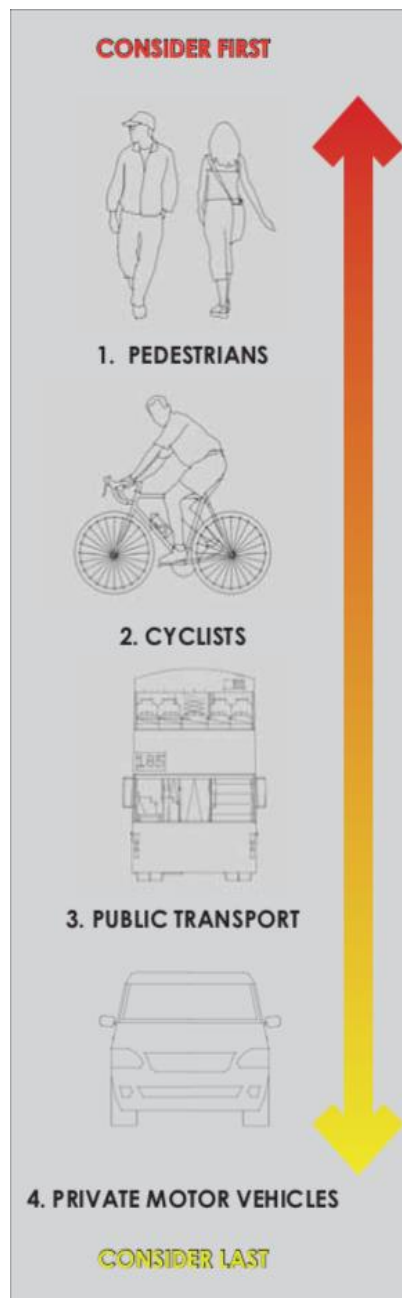
Hot desking is a way of providing office space for start-ups and small businesses. This facility would allow them to share office space and encourage networking and innovation. The proposed new community centre could be a location for hot desking. This would help ensure that the building is well used during the day. Other possible locations for hot desking could be identified through the suggested survey of commercial buildings.

A therapy room is a room suitable for a variety of therapists and medical practitioners to rent-out on a part time basis. For example a physiotherapist might rent out the room one afternoon a week, while a psychotherapist could rent the room one morning a week. This allows a range of services to be offered in Durrow, that wouldn't otherwise be possible. The website [www.therapyrooms.ie](http://www.therapyrooms.ie) can be used as a booking service for the room. Again a suitable room could be provided in the proposed new community centre, or an alternative location could be found in the survey of commercial buildings. For many medical practitioners the room would have to be accessible for patients with disabilities.

## **2.3 Movement and Transport**

### ***2.3.1 Improvements for Pedestrians***

The pedestrian is often treated as an afterthought when transport is considered. Yet all visitors, shoppers, residents and workers have to walk (or use a wheelchair) for some part of the journey. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, however, states that pedestrians must be placed at the top of the user hierarchy in the design of streets (Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, p.28) (Figure 2.10).



**Figure 2.10 Priority for street design (Source, *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets*)**

We should also design our streets to be accessible to all, so footpaths need to be wide enough for wheelchairs and buggies, and should not be blocked by street clutter or parked cars (Figures 2.11 and 2.12). Objective DU22 of the Laois CDP sets out the need to facilitate mobility and movement of people with special needs in Durrow by providing:

- dished kerbs at crossing points
- level footpath surfaces
- tactile pavings
- audible traffic light signals for pedestrians
- disabled parking spaces in strategic locations
- ensure that slopes that form part of the pedestrian network do not exceed 1 in 5.



***Figure 2.11 The footpath on both sides of Chapel Street are obstructed by parked cars***



***Figure 2.12 The footpath on Mary Street is not particularly wide, but are not obstructed by street clutter or inappropriate carparking***

### ***2.3.2 Facilitating Cycling in Durrow***

Cycling is not a significant mode of transport in Durrow. Just two people reported cycling to work in Census 2016, and not a single pupil reported cycling to school or college. But if Durrow is to encourage more local residents to cycle, or to attract cycling-based tourism, more will have to be done to facilitate cyclists. In particular there needs to be places for people to securely lock their bikes. This means Sheffield stands are needed (Figure 2.10), so that cyclists can easily lock the frame of the bike, and not just the wheels. One car parking space is enough room for five Sheffield stands which would allow 10 bikes to park. The Laois CDP contains objectives to provide cycle parking at buildings in community use, especially schools (DU20) and to provide cycle parking in association with the existing bus stopping area (DU23).





***Figure 2.13 Bikes locked to Sheffield stands in Drumcondra, Dublin***

In order to boost cycling by local residents around the town, a series of traffic calming measures will be needed, and these will be discussed in section 2.3.4.

Cycle training in school can be very effective at encouraging children to cycle. For example, Dublin City Council provided cycle training to St. Fiachra's primary school in Beaumont (Figure 2.14). Before the cycle training 10 pupils were cycling to school. Six weeks after the training 110 were cycling to school. There is more likely to be buy-in from parents for cycle training if successful traffic calming measures are introduced into the town (see section 2.3.4).



***Figure 2.14 Cycle training for the pupils of St. Fiachra's School in Dublin was very successful at encouraging children to cycle to school***

### **2.3.3 Parking in Durrow**

The thorny issue of parking in the town centre came up in the public consultation. A particular problem was identified with car-pooling commuters parking their vehicles in the centre of town all day.

Before drastic steps are taken to address the parking situation it is important to assess the severity of the problem. A survey should be carried out a number of times at peak car parking. If fewer than one in eight spaces are free on a regular basis, then action will be required. And the best way to deal with commuters hogging vital car parking spaces is to introduce paid parking in Durrow.

A car parking location for the car poolers should be identified. Car parking could be provided in the backlands behind Mary Street (Figure 2.15). Access could be through one of the existing archways. The archways are only 3-4m in width, which is not wide enough for two-way traffic,



but a simple yield system would allow one vehicle in or one vehicle out. If parking could be provided in such a central location, it would allow for a reduction of parking elsewhere, especially on the square.



***Figure 2.15 The backlands behind Mary Street would be an excellent location for car parking, if access can be acquired***

Another possibility for car parking for car poolers is the car park of the local GAA club, which is usually not busy during the working day. Another alternative is the site zoned Enterprise and Employment (Figure 2.16). It is close to the town centre and a pedestrian linkage across the old bridge could be provided. This would require a rezoning of some of the Enterprise and Employment lands.



***Figure 2.16 Suitable Site for Re-development***

New high quality parking bays have been installed on one section of the square (Figure 2.14). There are also plans to upgrade the parking outside the Castle Arms Hotel on the Square through the Phase 2 works of the Square Upgrade (Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)). Any upgrade should provide charging terminals for electric cars. This will encourage local residents to switch to electric cars, but could also encourage travellers on long-distance journeys to take a break in Durrow to charge their car. It is an objective of the Laois CDP (DU22) to facilitate mobility and movement of people with special needs by providing disabled parking spaces in strategic locations in particular at buildings in community use.





***Figure 2.17 New car parking bays on the completed Phase 1 Square Upgrade (centre). Note Phase 2 of the Square Upgrade will incorporate improved car parking layouts and improved street furniture***

### **2.3.4 Traffic Calming**

A striking feature of Durrow is the large number of HGVs rattling through the narrow streets (Figure 2.18). This is a particular problem on residential streets such as Patrick Street and Carrigan Street, where there are no front gardens to act as a buffer against passing traffic. Not only are the HGVs noisy and dangerous, they also generate heavy vibrations, which must impact on the quality of life of the residents of these streets. The problems caused by the traffic may be why so many homes are vacant in the town centre (see section 4.1) and it will become increasingly difficult to attract families to live on these streets, unless something is done to alleviate the traffic impacts.



***Figure 2.18 HGVs are having a serious impact on the quality of life for residents in Durrow***

Every effort should be made to advocate for a bypass or ring-road around the town. In the meantime steps should be taken to calm traffic moving through Durrow, to mitigate the effects of HGVs and to make the town more pedestrian and cycle friendly.

Narrow carriageways are one of the most effective design measures to calm traffic (Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, p. 101). This technique should be applied to Castle Street/Patrick Street, and to Chapel Street/Carrigan Street, where the carriageway could be reduced to 5-5.5m (i.e. lane widths of 2.5-2.75m). Roads through the Square should be raised to create a shared surface and narrowed to 4.8m or less. This would help make the square feel like a single community space rather than separate sections of open space and more in keeping with the original design of the town. It would also significantly slow down traffic and make the use of the square safer for children, and reduce traffic noise (Figure 2.19).





**Figure 2.19 Shared surface in Dundalk (Source, Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets)**

Narrowing roads will not only calm traffic, but will also provide opportunities to provide wider footpaths, tree planting (Figure 2.20) and extra car parking spaces – all of which would further contribute to traffic calming, and all would be particularly beneficial for the residents of Patrick Street and Carrigan Street.



**Figure 2.20 Mock-up of Carrigan Street with trees**

Traffic calming should also start at the entrance to the town, where there are opportunities to provide some extra greenery (Figure 2.21).



***Figure 2.21 Grass and tree planting would encourage traffic calming and improve the public realm at the entrance to Durrow on the R639/Cork Road***

For traffic coming from Mary Street on to Carrigan Street, there is a gentle bend which allows vehicles to pick up speed as they turn this corner (Figure 2.22). A sharper bend would help slow down the traffic, in particular for larger vehicles (Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, p. 93).





***Figure 2.22 The gentle corner coming from Mary Street to Carrigan Street allows trucks to pick up speed***

A new one-way street system was suggested during the consultation. If done properly this could help calm traffic in the town centre and could bring many benefits. It should, however, only be implemented if the number of lanes on each street is reduced to one – to allow for wider footpaths, tree planting, and car parking (Figure 2.21). If two lanes of traffic are kept on one-way streets, speeds would increase from their current levels, and it would make the town centre a less attractive place to live in or to visit.



***Figure 2.23 Francis Road in London before and after being reduced from two-way to one-way traffic with one lane***

If traffic calming is introduced in Durrow, the next step would be to reduce the speed limit to 30kph. Introducing a lower speed limit before any traffic calming is less likely to be effective. A successful 30kph zone would improve safety, reduce traffic noise, make Durrow more attractive to visit, and improve quality of life for residents on Patrick Street and Carrigan Street.

## Chapter 3 Culture and Heritage

### 3.1 Arts and Culture

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

The Arts can bring delight, joy and the full range of human emotions and they are an important way for people to get a deeper understanding of themselves, their community and their circumstances in life. The arts are a vital part of the life of any strong community and should be at the heart of any plan for Durrow (Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1 A thriving Community Arts Community. E.g. Durrow Scarecrow Festival 2018**

The proposed renovation of the Methodist Church and Civil Defence building for community use should be an important venue for the Arts in Durrow. It should provide a performance space for theatre, dance, music and an exhibition space for the visual arts.

Sculpture has been used in a tasteful way to improve the public realm in Durrow (Figure 3.2) and there is scope for more.





*Figure 3.2 Sculpture on the Square brings delight to visitors*

### ***3.1.2 The Scarecrow Festival***

The Scarecrow Festival has been a great success for Durrow (Figure 3.3), enticing up to 27,000 visitors, while increasing spend in local businesses, and raising funds for the Durrow Development Forum and key initiatives within the community.



***Figure 3.3 The Scarecrow Festival has attracted many visitors to Durrow***

But there is a need, as identified by the community consultation, to develop spin-offs or to plan for alternative festivals for Durrow if and when the Scarecrow Festival starts to fade in popularity.

### ***3.1.3 The Development of Interpretative Centres & Museums***

There are a number of quirky and offbeat museums in the area including the bicycle museum in Bob's Bar Durrow and The Fly Fishing and Game Shooting Museum in Attannagh. The recently setup Aylward Country Life Museum just Outside Durrow is a new offering to the area

and consolidates the number of visitor attractions. These promoters should be encouraged to collaborate and “package and cluster” their offerings with the other museums.

### **3.2 Built Heritage**

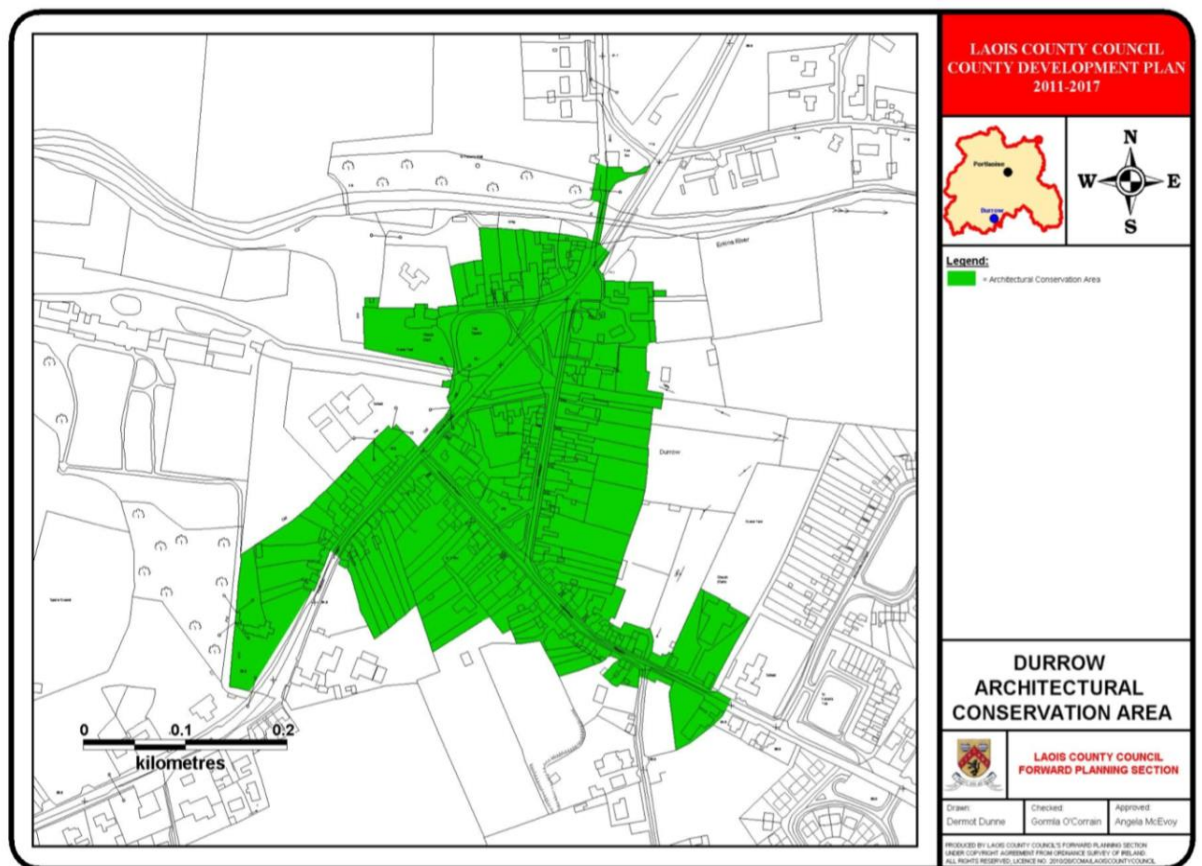
#### ***3.2.1 Built Heritage Introduction***

Durrow has an outstanding built heritage and the local community deserves credit for curating their heritage and for restoring vacant and dereliction buildings. Studies carried out on behalf of the town include:

- Durrow Architectural Conservation Area Study, 2010
- Durrow, Co. Laois, Heritage Action Plan 2012-2015

The village that we see today dates back to the 18th century and was developed under the ownership of the Flower family. Sir William Flower became the owner of the Castle Durrow estate in 1708 and it remained in his family’s possession until the early 20th century. The family built the castle, which was completed in the 1730s and they developed a planned village of 218 houses by the end of the 18th century (Durrow Architectural Conservation Area Study, 2010 p.7). The street layout that exists today can be seen on the first edition Ordnance Survey map from 1841.

Durrow town centre was designated as an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) with the adoption of the 2011-2017 Laois CDP (Figure 3.4). In addition, more than 30 buildings and structures in the town are on the record of protected structures in the current Laois CDP.



**Figure 3.4 Boundary of Architectural Conservation Area**

The designation as an ACA has implications for future development in Durrow. Development that could normally be carried out without planning permission – so called “exempted development” – may require planning permission. Within an ACA, exempted development is limited to works that do not affect the appearance of a building from the public domain. For example the addition of a porch to a house would normally be considered as exempted development, but such development would require planning permission in Durrow.

### **3.2.2 Future Enhancements to Built Heritage**

- Vacant and derelict buildings (Figure 3.5) should be brought back into use as quickly as possible. This may require the council to use their compulsory purchase powers, and is in line with objective DU3 of the Laois CDP.

- Upper floors should also be used to their full potential, and as stated in section 2.2.3, upper floors are often very suitable for businesses such as accountants, solicitors and medical practitioners.
- A start has been made on the renovation of the historic square in the centre of town, and this renovation needs to be completed.
- Where possible, overhead wiring within the ACA should be moved underground (Objective DU25 Laois CDP)
- The temporary weir on River Erkina at the Old Stone Bridge should be repaired or replaced (Objective DU9 Laois CDP)
- Shopfronts should be encouraged to have timber frames and hand painted lettering. The Laois Local Economic and Community Plan has an objective to run a shopfront grant scheme (Objective A10 under Goal 10). This could be an opportunity to employ local craftsmen.
- Lamp standards should be consistent and suitable for a heritage town
- The Old Stone Bridge needs significant attention (Figure 3.5). A report commissioned by the Durrow Development Forum in 1999 by Pat McAfee highlighted the danger to the future stability of the bridge caused by the presence of the weed/wild flower Valerian.
- The Scout Hall on the Kilkenny Road is a very attractive building and is on the record of protected structures. The building at the back of the hall appears to be of poor quality and detracts somewhat from the Scout Hall (Figure 3.6). A future project may be to demolish the building at the back and replace it with something more appropriate. It might be a good location for an indoor sports hall, if funding can be identified.





***Figure 3.5 Derelict building on Patrick Street***



***Figure 3.6 The Old Stone Bridge is heavily infiltrated by Valerian which could damage the future stability of the bridge***



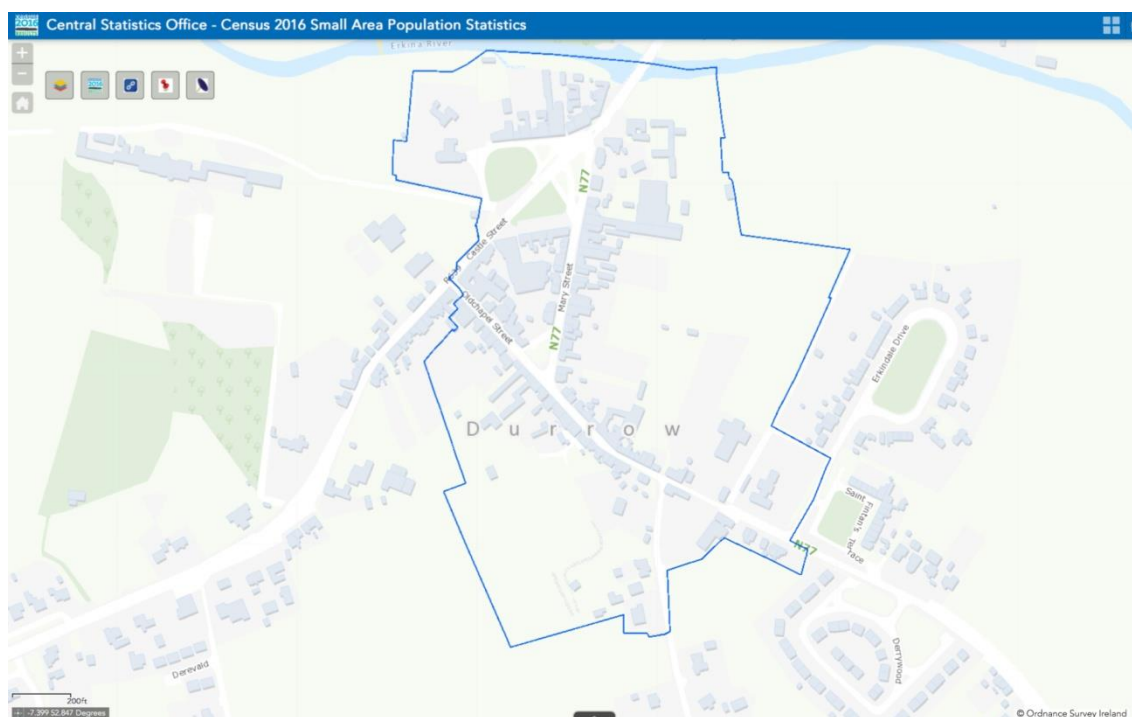
***Figure 3.7 The building at the back of the Scout Hall detracts from the Scout Hall and could be replaced with something more attractive and more beneficial to the community***





“Residential 1” is land that has already been developed for housing, but additional housing can be built as well as uses that enhance the amenity of those living there such as schools, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields, etc. (Laois CDP 2017-2023, p. 181).

An important way of providing housing is to bring vacant properties back into use. Twenty-nine of the 100 housing units within the town centre were vacant in 2016 – a worrying vacancy rate of 29% (Figure 4.2). The 29 vacant units do not include holiday homes. The remainder of the Durrow Electoral District, has 39 vacant units out of 464 – a vacancy rate of 8.4% (Census 2016).



**Figure 4.2 The centre of Durrow has a vacancy rate of 29% according to Census 2016**

If buildings remain vacant for extended periods of time, they will fall into disrepair and dereliction. This would have serious implications for the attractiveness of Durrow, and would cause significant damage to the built heritage within the town. A loss of population within the town centre will also reduce the spending power within the town, and damage the viability of many of the businesses and services in Durrow.

Every effort should be made to reduce the vacancy rate within the town. A survey should be carried out to identify all vacant units and to try and establish the causes of vacancy. One way to bring these units back into use is through Approved Housing Bodies that have finance to purchase, renovate and bring vacant properties back into use. The council may need to use its compulsory purchase powers in some cases in order to bring homes back into use. Smaller properties might be suitable for single people, such as senior citizens. This would be supported by Housing Policy 9 of the Laois CDP to meet the needs of the elderly by providing accommodation in central, convenient and easily accessible locations and to facilitate independent living where possible;

“Residential 2” is land that is zoned for new housing development, as well as uses that can enhance the amenity for new residents such as schools, small shops, doctor’s surgeries, playing fields, etc. Most new housing is likely to be developed in this land. It may be possible to attract buyers who might otherwise prefer a rural home, by offering plots of land for sale, so that people can design their own home. This is the development process that appears to be happening on the Mill Road (Figure 4.3).

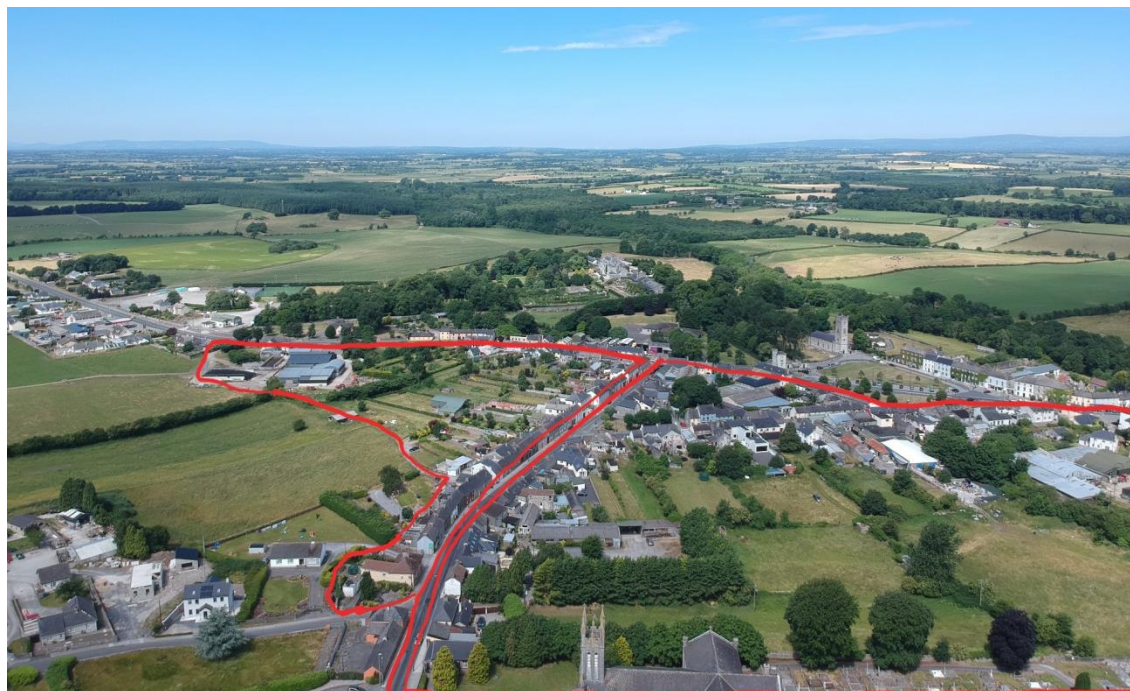


***Figure 4.3 Each house on Mill Road is built to its own design or ‘bespoke’ design***



There is a large amount of undeveloped land behind the existing streets in Durrow (Figure 4.4). These backlands are largely zoned “Town Centre” which allows for a mix of uses, including residential and commercial. While this land has important potential, because of its proximity to the town centre, getting access to this land is a significant challenge. It’s not appropriate to demolish historic buildings to allow access to the backlands – the purchase and demolition of a modern infill house would be more appropriate (Durrow Architectural Conservation Area Study, p. 48). An alternative approach to gain access to the backlands is through one of the existing historic archways. These archways tend to be 3-4m in width, so they wouldn’t allow standard two-way access, but a simple yield system, would allow one vehicle in or one vehicle out at a time. A second point of access from the rear of the backlands would also be needed.

Any development in the backlands would have to be in sympathy with the size and scale of the existing streetscapes.



**Figure 4.4** An approximate outline of the land zoned as “Town Centre”. Note the significant areas of backlands available for development

## **4.2 Public Realm**

### **4.2.1 Seating**

On street seating outside cafés and bars should be encouraged to help animate the town.

Wider footpaths would help to facilitate this – particularly on Mary Street. Seating in locations that catch the evening sun are particularly attractive to people.

There is plenty of public seating on the Square, but there was just one seat under the shade of a tree during this warm summer (Figure 4.5). More shaded seating would be welcome.



***Figure 4.5 Seating in the shade is very welcome on warm summer days***

The oasis of greenery and flowers at Tae Lane is very attractive (Figure 4.6). Seating at this location would encourage people to linger.





***Figure 4.6 The oasis of green on Tae Lane***

### **4.3 Environmental Projects**

#### ***4.3.1 Natura 2000 sites***

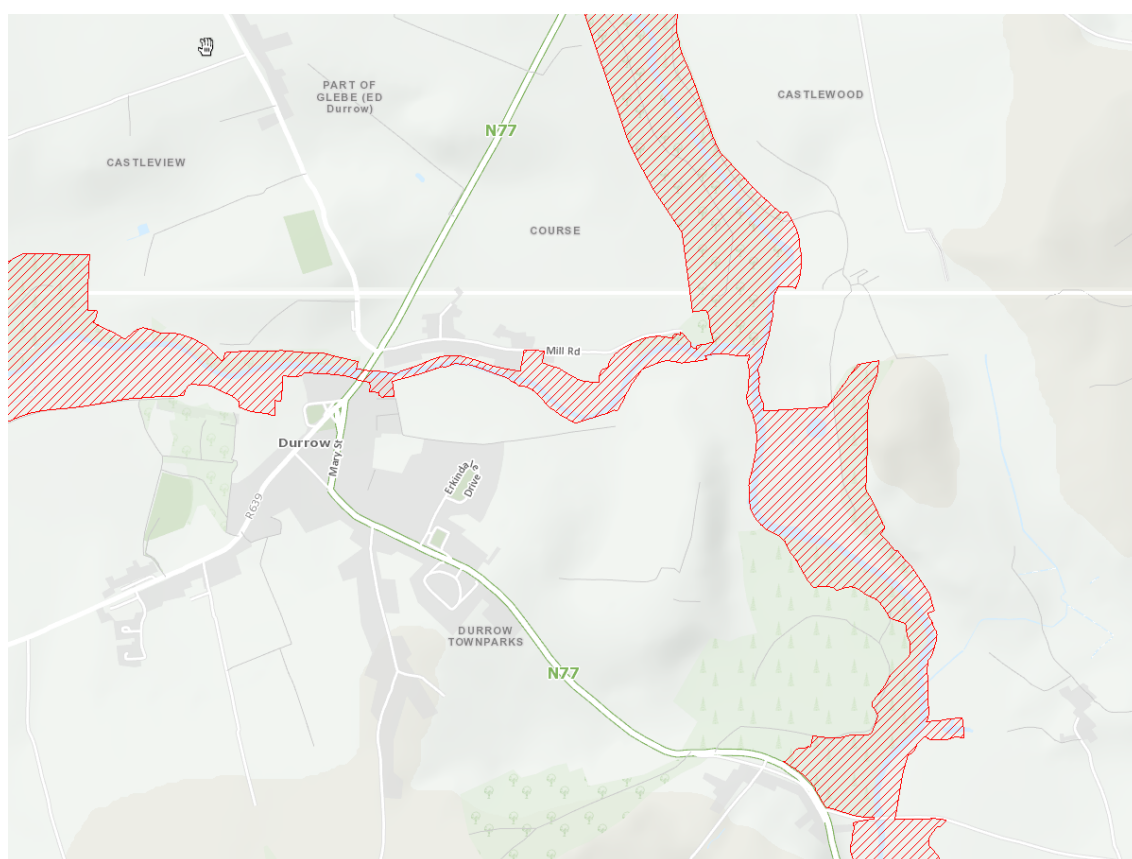
Natura 2000 sites are habitats that are protected by law to help preserve certain species of birds, animals and plants. Development on or near a Natura 2000 site is severely restricted. There are a number of Natura 2000 sites in or near Durrow that must be taken into account when any new development is planned.

The EU Habitats Directive was agreed in 1992 to protect a wide variety of animals, plants and habitat types throughout Europe. Protected areas under the Habitats Directive are called Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

The 2009 Birds Directive aims to protect the 500 wild bird species in Europe. Habitat loss is one of the biggest threats to the conservation of wild birds, so the directive established a network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to help preserve species under threat.

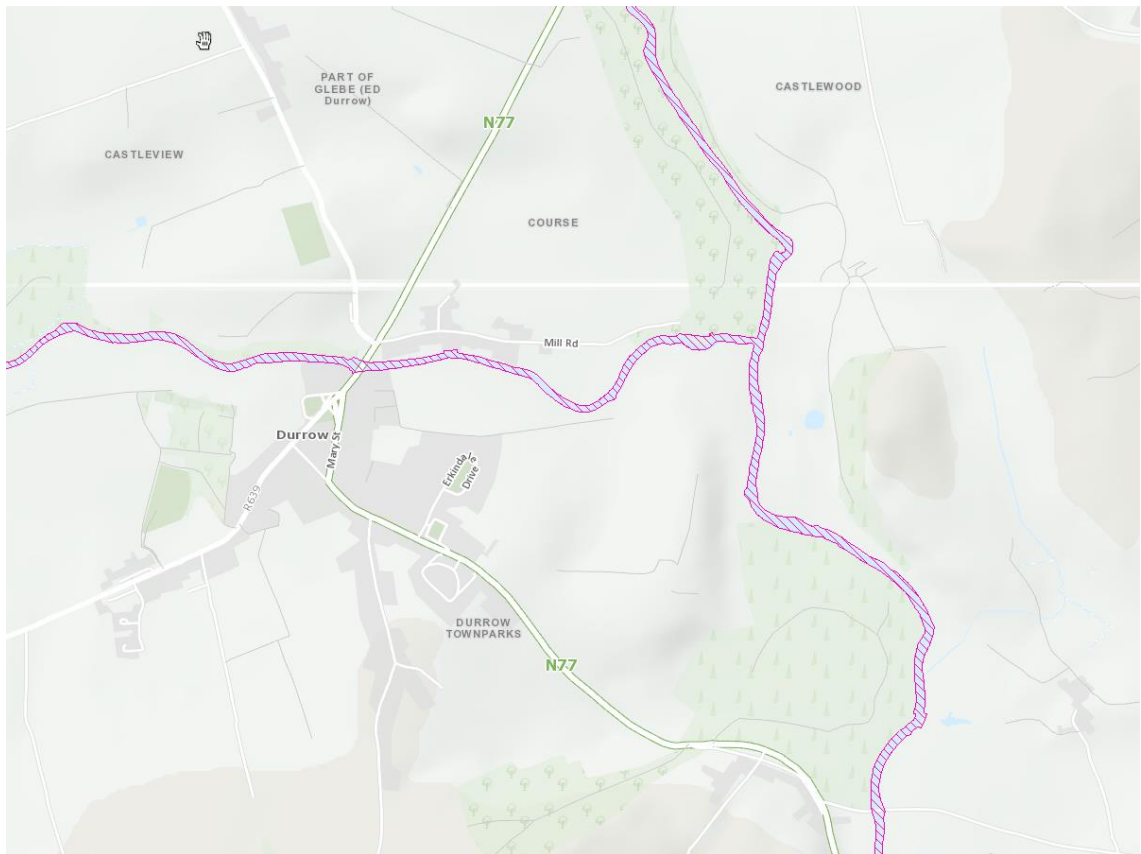
Together the SACs and the SPAs form the Natura 2000 ecological network, and any development that could “adversely affect the integrity” of a Natura 2000 site will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances. The exact definition of the integrity of a site is open to interpretation by the courts, but essentially a site should still be functioning and recognisable as an SAC or an SPA after a project is completed. Even outside the boundaries of a Natura 2000 site, any proposed works that would have an adverse impact on a site would be refused planning permission.

The map in figure 4.7 shows the SACs while figure 4.8 shows the SPAs near Durrow. Figure 4.9 shows the Natura 2000 sites, which is a combination of the SACs and SPAs.

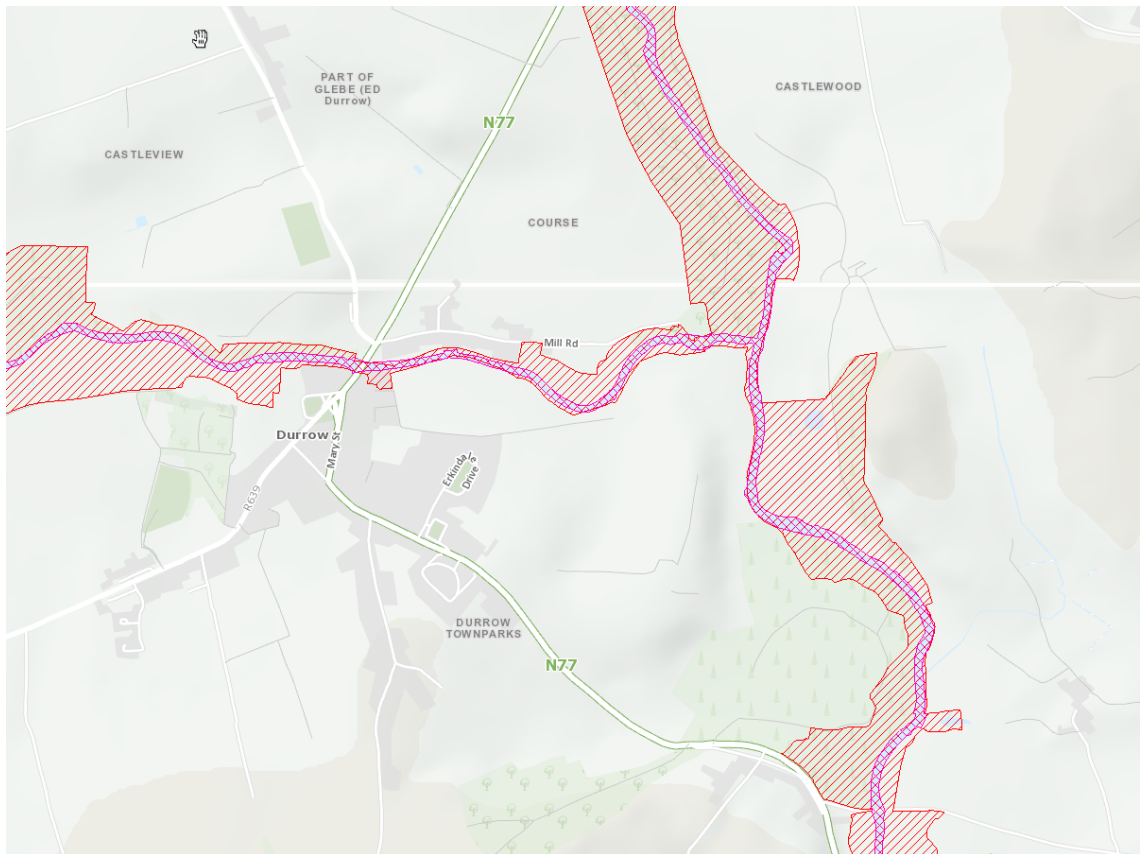


**Figure 4.7 SAC sites near Durrow**





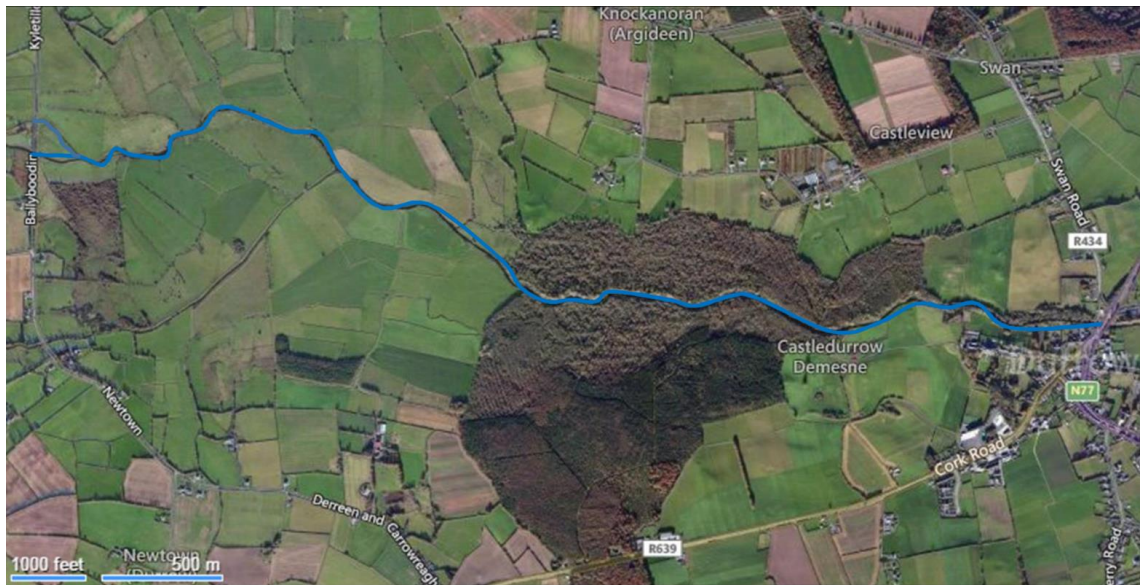
**Figure 4.8 SPA sites near Durrow**



**Figure 4.9 Natura 2000 sites near Durrow**

#### **4.3.2 Waterways**

The River Erkinia Blueway report by Andy Dunne of EAEC Ltd sets out how to develop a 5km recreational water trail for non-motorised activity between Durrow and Ballyboodin in Co. Laois (Figure 4.10). The blueway will require trail heads; put in and take out points; and accessible trail information. Impediments to navigation such as depositions of silt and overhanging trees will need to be removed.



**Figure 4.10 River Erkina Blueway (Source *The River Erkina Blueway report by EAEA Ltd*)**

This stretch of the Erkina river, however, is within both a Special Area of Conservation and a Special Protection Area (see section 4.3.1). Any plans to dredge the river, or carry out works on the banks will require consent from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The provision of storage facilities and lockers for canoeists in Durrow would encourage more visitors to take a break in the town, knowing their equipment is safe.

In addition to the Erkina, the river Nore runs alongside Durrow. Both of these rivers contain stocks of wild brown trout and pike, and fishing should be promoted as an activity for visitors to Durrow.

### **4.3.3 Walkways**

Durrow has some magnificent walking routes through woods, open farmland and along rivers (Figure 4.11). There are a variety of routes and loops for people with different abilities ranging from the Dunmore Wood Quick Loop, which is about 2km, to the Leafy Loop which is 22km.





**Figure 4.11 Capponellan Wood, Durrow (source [www.walkingdurrow.noalphabet.com](http://www.walkingdurrow.noalphabet.com))**

The Walking Durrow website ([www.walkingdurrow.noalphabet.com](http://www.walkingdurrow.noalphabet.com)) gives excellent information on walks that are available through the area.

It would be helpful to signpost short loops within the Leafy Loop walk for families and walkers with different abilities. It might also be attractive to theme certain loops for children. For example, some short loops could be themed with fairy tales, with various characters found along the route.

#### **4.3.4 Cycle Trails**

There are four cycle trails that pass through Durrow, that were developed by South Laois Tourism, Laois Partnership, Laois County Council and Fáilte Ireland. These trails are signposted in Durrow (Figure 4.12).





**Figure 4.12 Cycle Trail signs**

These trails have potential to bring visitors to Durrow, but would benefit from more promotion. While there is some information about the routes on the South Laois Tourism website (Figure 4.13), it can be difficult to find. The tourism website gives directions and information about the length of each trail, but they could also provide information about the difficulty of the trail, and show photos.



**Figure 4.13 Maps of the cycle trails are available on South Laois Tourism's website**

There is potential to run a bike hire business in Durrow, and there should be facilities such as bike parking and lockers for storing luggage for cycling tourists. The cycle trails should be promoted as part of a package of activities that can be carried out from Durrow.

Durrow would be ideally placed to develop a scaled down bike version of the Clonakilty Bike Scheme. This would be based around providing bike hire and also guided cycle tours of the area which could help to “join up” the various local attractions. This would enhance the range of outdoor activities pushed in general and look to set up Durrow as a hub for outdoor pursuits and where walking, cycling, kayaking and fishing could be packaged. These key resources should be ‘exploited’ in new small sports festival and events.

It is further recommended to continue the protected cycle corridor down to Cullahill at least (currently in place between on the N77 between Durrow and Abbeylisk).

#### ***4.3.5 Biodiversity***

It is essential for our environment that we conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the plants and animals. How the environment is managed in Durrow can have a significant impact on the range of plants and animals thriving in the area.

Although Durrow is located in the countryside, the countryside does not always have good biodiversity. Agricultural land, for example, usually has low levels of biodiversity, due to the use of herbicides and pesticides to promote improved yields.

The protection of insects, especially pollinators is an important aspect of biodiversity. The development of wild meadows is a good way to protect our insects (Figure 4.14). Wild flowers should be encouraged in all grassed areas. For example the grass verges on the approach roads into town should be less tightly mown. Even the Square in the centre of Durrow could have corners or islands of longer grass and wild flowers. These areas of wild flowers can be signposted with a range of signs available from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan



([www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie)), or local artists/craftsmen or perhaps school children could produce bespoke signs (Figure 4.15).



**Figure 4.14 Irish Wildflower Meadow (source [www.wildflowers.ie](http://www.wildflowers.ie))**



**Figure 4.15 Signposts can be used to indicate that longer islands of grass are being grown to support bees**

Tree planting should be promoted, especially on some of the residential approach roads as discussed in section 2.3.4. Where there is enough space, trees should be planted in clusters (The Durrow Village Design Statement, p. 25). Every effort should be made to provide “Nature Corridors” to encourage the movement of wildlife from one area to another out of sight of predators.

A number of towns in Laois have developed Local Biodiversity Action Plans, and It is an objective of the LECP to work with local communities to implement actions of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and develop Local Biodiversity Action Plans (Laois LECP 2016-2021, p. 79). Durrow should work with the LCDC to produce its own action plan.

In 2017 Durrow was awarded 33 marks out of 50 in the Tidy Towns competition for Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities. Durrow should aim to improve its score in this category, and perhaps aim for a prize in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan award.

#### **4.4 Sustainability Strategy**

##### ***4.4.1 Energy Efficient Grants***

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) offer grants to communities that work together to reduce energy consumption across the community. Sustainable Energy Communities typically reduce energy consumption by 20% and offer other benefits such as lower energy bills, more comfortable local buildings, and increased local employment.

It is an objective of the Laois LECP to identify willing early adopter communities (Laois LECP 2016-2021, p. 78) and to facilitate grant applications.

##### ***4.4.2 Waste Management***

Durrow’s lowest score, by quite a margin, in the 2017 Tidy Town competition was in the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management category, with a total of 17 marks out of 50.



The National Tidy Towns website provides a helpful guide to make improvements in sustainable waste and resource management. It aims to encourage a more efficient use of all resources, including water, energy, transport, etc. and not just waste management.

One project that might be suitable for a new community centre or the library would be a book exchange, where people can bring along their old books and pick something new to read at no cost. A toy exchange could also be considered. Another project might be tackling food waste in the town.

#### ***4.4.3 Water Management***

A key constraint for development in many towns in Ireland is the supply of drinking water and the management of waste water. Durrow is well served for both of these services. Water supply is from the Convent and Fermoy Wells (Laois CDP, p. 29), while the waste water treatment plant was upgraded in 2012 (Laois CDP, p. 38).

It's also important to manage surface water "runoff" from the public realm and from private property to help prevent flooding and to improve waste water management. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are a more holistic system for dealing with runoff, rather than the traditional method of relying on pipes to deal with water overflow.

In a natural environment rainwater normally soaks into the ground where some of it evaporates, some of it is absorbed by plants, and some ends up in waterways. In a built environment the surfaces are less permeable and there are fewer plants, so there is less opportunity for soaking into the ground or absorption by plants. This can result in excessive runoff leading to flooding, pollution and erosion. Climate change is leading to heavier rainfall events, so these problems are likely to be exacerbated in the future. SuDS can help reduce the quantity of runoff, reduce pollution in runoff, and maintain a better environment for people and nature (The SuDS Manual, pp 5-6).

Examples of SuDS include:

- Rainwater Harvesting
- Pervious paving
- Tree planting
- Swales, ponds and wetlands that slow the flow of water, store and treat runoff and improve biodiversity

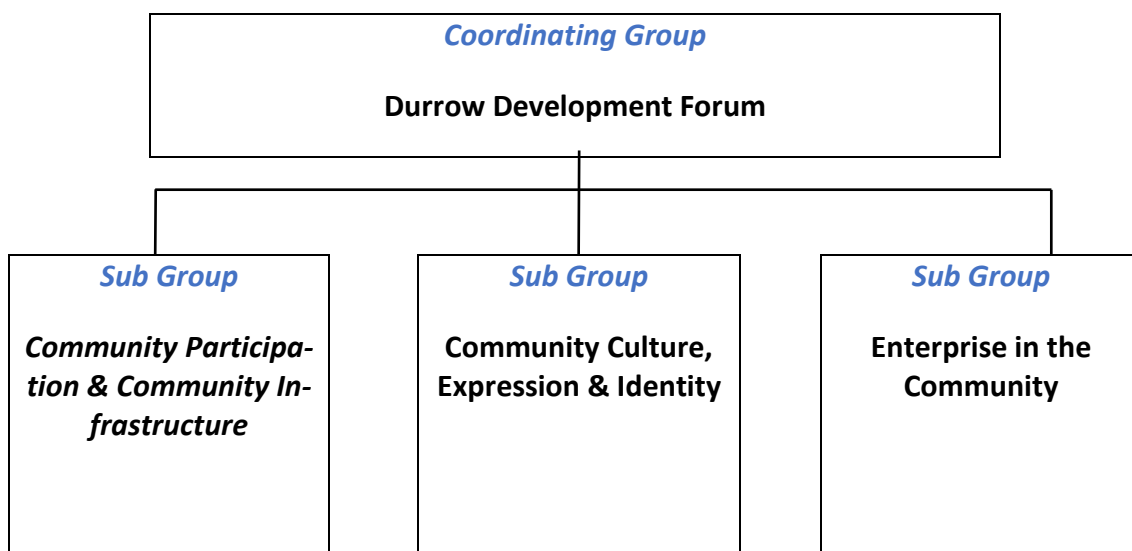
Durrow should make use of SuDS where possible. A community rainwater harvesting programme would be very beneficial, as would tree planting on residential streets, and any new paving should be pervious.

## Chapter 5: Project Action Implementation Plan

This chapter sets out the recommended implementation structures and Programme Action Plans across three focus areas, namely Community Projects, Cultural Heritage Projects and Community Enterprise Projects.

### 5.1 Subcommittee Structure

The following structure (Figure 5.1) and working group arrangement have been recommended as the way forward. New volunteers need to be given leadership opportunities initially at subgroup level so as to support future succession planning.



*Figure 5.1 Recommended Umbrella Committee & Sub-Committee Structure*

The rationale and objectives for each focus area is set out below:

### 5.2 Focus Areas & Objectives:

#### 5.2.1 Community Participation & Community Infrastructure [Community Projects]

#### *Rationale*

- a. Invest in community based actions which promote the meaningful participation of individuals and groups in economic and social activity
- b. Invest in community based initiatives, both physical and social that enhances the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to participate actively or as spectators in sports, drama or special interest programmes

### **5.2.2 Community Culture, Expression & Identity [Cultural Heritage Projects]**

#### *Rationale*

- a. Invest in community initiatives that will engage individuals and groups in actions that will celebrate their personal and cultural identity
- b. Build the capacity of individuals and groups to advocate and represent the cultural needs of their community

### **5.2.3 Enterprise in the Community [Community Enterprise Projects]**

#### *Rationale*

- a. Create a positive contribution to the economic wellbeing of Durrow by investing in enterprise in the community to create networking and income opportunities for individuals, community groups and private businesses

Each focus area has a list of planned initiatives in response to the community consultation and several follow up committee meetings. It must be recognised that a number of the actions can be delivered by the local group, however extensive collaboration with partner entities will be required to make progress on others. There are other planned activities that will be the responsibility of third parties to implement. However, the members of the new umbrella group have a vital role to play by participating in county decision making structure and advocating for resources and supports so as to effect local change.



In advance of preparing a Programme Action Plan, follow up consultation was carried out with other key stakeholders including officials from Laois Partnership and The Planning, Heritage, Roads, and Community and Enterprise Departments of Laois Co. Co.

#### **5.2.4 Primary Focus Area 1: Community Participation & Community Infrastructure**

<b>Rationale for Focus</b>	
a.	Invest in community based actions which promote the meaningful participation of individuals and groups in economic and social activity
b.	Invest in community based initiatives, both physical and social that enhances the capacity of individuals, groups and communities to participate actively or as spectators in sports, drama or special interest programmes
<b>Partners</b>	
Laois Co. Co., Laois LCDC, Laois Partnership	
<b>Planned Initiatives</b>	
1.	Establish a specific subgroup under the auspices of Durrow Development Forum to coordinate and drive this Primary Focus Area
2.	Assist Local Clubs to strengthen governance and to complete medium & long term development plans
3.	Complete Phase 2 Square Project & undergrounding of cables
4.	Assess the technical feasibility of Dredging of River & Carrying out Repair of Old Bridge
5.	Research the need and build a business case for an Older Persons Supported Housing Development within the village. Disseminate results & select an Approved Housing Body to implement
6.	Assist Durrow Tidy Towns Group to identify a minor award within the National Tidy Towns Award Programme & aim to attain by 2020
7.	Support the Community Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project 1: Development of a feasibility &amp; technical plan for the refurbishment of a community facility combining the Old Methodist Chapel and Civil Defence property (to incorporate Youth Space/Youth Café &amp; Men's Shed)</li> <li>- Project 2: Facilitate the formation of a collaborative of Clubs within the village to design and develop a multi games area (MUGA)</li> <li>- Project 3: Old Boys School CYMS</li> <li>- Project 4: Graveyard clean up</li> <li>- Project 5: Upgrade the existing playground (resurfacing &amp; creation of a multi-purpose sport area &amp; fencing to enclose area)</li> </ul>

### 5.2.5 Primary Focus Area 2: Community Culture, Expression & Identity

Rationale for Focus	
a.	Invest in community initiatives that will engage individuals and groups in actions that will celebrate their personal and cultural identity
	b. Build the capacity of individuals and groups to advocate and represent the cultural needs of their community
Partners	
Arts & Heritage Offices, Laois Co. Co., Failte Ireland, Durrow Scarecrow Festival, CRAOL, Laois Partnership	
Planned Initiatives	
1.	Establish a specific subgroup under the auspices of Durrow Development Forum to coordinate and drive this Primary Focus Area
2.	Examine the feasibility of establishing community radio
3.	Plan for the consolidation of existing and successor festival and events and visitor attractions by developing clustering and or special packaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consolidate the development of the Scarecrow Festival, carry out research to capture the impact of the festival as a tool to leverage additional grant aid</li> <li>- Grow the number &amp; range of festival/events for Durrow across the calendar year</li> <li>- The consolidation of existing Interpretative Centres &amp; Museums such as Bob's Bar Bicycle Museum, The Fly Fishing and Game Shooting Museum in Attannagh</li> <li>- Support the development of the Aylward Country Life Museum</li> </ul>
4.	Become a better known village / Continue to grow the identity of Durrow / Marketing of Durrow / consider a transnational-inter territorial to areas of best practice / Durrow Logo ( <i>devise an email signature tagline plan for key events in the village</i> )
5.	Enhance & consolidate the 24 km Leafy Loop National Looped Walk & Board walk with a sustained programme of investment and development of themed spurs ( <i>board walks</i> )
6.	Design & Implement a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family Cycle Trail</li> <li>- Bike Scheme (<i>modelled on the Clonakilty Bike Scheme</i>)</li> <li>- Continue the protected cycle corridor down to Cullahill (<i>at least</i>)</li> </ul>
7.	Examine & implement programmes/ to facilitate maximum use of the river resource

### 5.2.6 Primary Focus Area 3: Enterprise in the Community

<b>Rationale for Focus</b>
Create a positive contribution to the economic wellbeing of Durrow by investing in enterprise in the community to create networking and income opportunities for individuals, community and private businesses
<b>Partners</b>
SEAI, Local Energy Agency, Laois Partnership, Private and Community Based Businesses, Local Enterprise Office, Tourism Office, Laois Co. Co., Failte Ireland, Rural Recreation Office, Laois Partnership
<b>Planned Initiatives</b>
1. Establish a specific subgroup under the auspices of Durrow Development Forum to coordinate and drive this Primary Focus Area
2. Examine Community Based solutions to identified Parking Issues in the village
3. Develop a Community Energy Team at a local/sub-regional level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research existing community models through networking</li> <li>- Establish energy consumption to inform development of a home retrofitting plan</li> </ul>
4. Establish the feasibility of developing a community hostel to cater for walking/cyclists/fishing
5. Establish the feasibility of developing an Industrial or Community Kitchen
6. Develop 'hot desking' opportunities as part of planned community facility developments within the village

### 5.3 Funding Sources

There are six key funding programmes that can support the realisation of the named initiatives. These include:

<b>Funding Programme</b>	<b>Fund Manager</b>
The Rural Development Programme	Laois LCDC & Laois Partnership
Community Enhancement Programme	Department of Rural and Community Development
Town & Village Renewal Programme	Department of Rural and Community Development
Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	Department of Rural and Community Development
Rural Regeneration & Development Fund	Department of Rural and Community Development
Laois Local Enterprise Office (LEO)	Laois County Council

## Conclusion

The Community Planning Process does not finish at the adoption of this plan. The emphasis now switches to developing the recommended thematic sub committee structure. This plan is not presented as a shopping list. It should be viewed as a useful tool to prioritise the projects that the community requires and aid the leverage of resources, both public and private.

## Acknowledgements

Durrow Community Plan 2019-2023

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