

Granard Public Realm Strategy

Final Draft Report - Public Consultation

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By

Brady Shipman Martin

in association with

Shaffrey Associates Architects

for

Longford Local Authorities

The Heritage Council



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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Fig 1 Context; Granard is well located with good links and is readily accessible.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The town of Granard is located in the north of County Longford and has been a centre of population since Norman times, initially settled most likely due to its elevated position which affords views over nine counties from the highest point of the town. Granard developed into a busy market town, providing its population with a range of businesses, services and amenities and acting as a focal point for the surrounding rural population. Over the past number of years however the town has experienced a population decline as people living within the town have migrated outwards into the surrounding rural areas. This decline and increased car usage giving ready access to larger urban areas such as Longford town have lead to pressures on existing businesses and services in the town. The challenge for Granard as with all towns in a similar situation is to differentiate itself from other destinations and promote itself as an attractive place to live, work and visit.

The public realm of a place can be defined as any streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities that are publicly accessible. The achievement of a quality public realm is essential in the creation of attractive environments within which people live and work.

To this end Brady Shipman Martin along with Shaffrey Associates Architects have been commissioned by Longford Local Authorities and the Heritage Council to prepare a Public Realm Strategy for Granard Co Longford with the aim of improving the public spaces of the town.

The enhancement of the public realm of Granard has the potential to achieve benefits beyond the mere cosmetic improvement of the town. It is intended that this Strategy will improve the way in which the town functions and as a result bring real benefits to its tourism, retail, and commercial sectors as well as raising the quality of life of inhabitants in the town.

In preparing the Strategy the study team were briefed and guided by Mairead Ni Chonghaile, Heritage Officer for County Longford.

The Public Realm Strategy is an exercise in public participation and the project could not have proceeded without the wholehearted engagement of the people of Granard who have attended workshops and meetings. This Strategy is an embodiment of their hopes and aspirations and the team merely facilitated the expression of these ideas.

We also received assistance and information from the officers of Longford County Council and from the Granard Town Councillors.

This strategy sits alongside the statutory Local Area Plan (LAP) for Granard. It is intended to compliment and support it. The LAP remains the key expression of planning policy for the town.



1.1 Vision

The participation of local communities in the preparation of the public realm strategy and, critically, its implementation, is recognised as an essential element of the concept and process.

The public realm of an historic town encompasses the streets, squares, parks of the town, as well as civic and community buildings. It is affected by the uses and activities which take place within a town as much as by the physical fabric and infrastructure. The objective of this strategy is, in collaboration with the local community and local authority, to critically analyse the current condition and qualities of the town's public realm and to identify a range of credible strategies and projects which can improve and enhance the quality of the public realm for all those living in, working in or visiting Granard

1.2 Heritage Council And Public Realm Strategies

The Heritage Council introduced the concept of Public Realm Plans through their Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) programme in 2006/07. The concept is based on recognition of the importance and resulting benefits – economic, social, environmental, cultural, - of maintaining and designing quality public realm in Irish historic town centres. It also recognises that every Irish town has its own distinct identity which, by and large, is made by the town's cultural and natural heritage qualities. Culture and identity are acknowledged as key principles of a sustainable community and so investment in protecting and enhancing these qualities is supported by the Heritage Council, at a local level, through the Public Realm Plan programme.

1.3 The Study Team

The team was lead by

David Bagnall

and

Grainne Shaffrey

Brady Shipman Martin Landscape Architect/Architect

Shaffrey Associates Architects Architectural Conservation Architect

The team was assisted by

Aimee Powderly

and

Tomas O'Connor

Brady Shipman Martin Planner

Shaffrey Associates ArchitectsArchitect.

Client Representative

Mairead Ni Chonghaile

Longford County Council Heritage Officer



Plate 1: The quality of the Main Street is exceptional and one of Granard's greatest assets.



Plates 2 and 3: At the commencement of the study extensive consultations were held with community groups and stakeholders in the town

2.0 THE PROCESS

The process for the study was built around public participation and can be summarised as follows:

2.1 Listen

At the earliest possible stage in the process a workshop was arranged through the Granard Area Action Group and towards the end of 2010 a successful meeting was held. Many issues arose reflecting the concerns and also the aspirations of the people of the town. PJ Reilly Deputy Mayor assisted in the consultative process with the background to many of the local issues. The views of the Granard Chamber of Commerce were also sought. Both Anne Glancy (Town Clerk) and Eamonn Bennett (Town Engineer) contributed with their understanding of the issues affecting the town. In March and April 2011 presentations were made to the Heritage Forum, the Town Council and the Longford Community Resources Limited. This round of presentations dealt with the 'emerging issues' and generated useful feedback. A presentation was also made to the Rathmhuire Group and again good local input was obtained from the older people in the town.

2.2 Look

Familiarisation is a critical element in any study of this type and in addition to desk studies of existing documentation this involved numerous surveys and visits to the town and the surrounding countryside. Documentation that the team reviewed included:

- Archive material provided by Martin Morris, Longford County Archivist
- Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015
- Granard Local Area Plan 2006-2012 prepared by Longford County Council
- Surveys of the Town organised by the Heritage Officer in the summer 2010

2.3 Assimilate

The information gathered from public participation, site visits and desk top studies was reviewed and analysed. Following this process it was incorporated into a rounded view of the existing environment. This in turn led to a definition of the current issues arising in relation to the public realm of Granard. This was discussed with, and presented to, the client and the Granard Town Council. .

2.4 Suggest

This report outlines the team's suggestions in relation to appropriate Public Realm Strategies for Granard. These are to be presented and tested at a workshop in the town.



3.0 TOWN ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction

This assessment has been based on the aforementioned public participation exercise, site visits, data gathering and desk top studies. The strengths and weaknesses of the town have been examined and the resulting opportunities and threats considered.

3.2 Context

Regional

In order to form a rounded view of the issues affecting Granard and enable the formation of appropriate improvement measures, it is essential to understand the wider context of the town and how it operates within the wider surrounding region.

Granard is located in the north east of County Longford close to the boundary with County Cavan. The N55 runs through the town and provides good linkages with Cavan and Athlone. (See Figure 1) The table below shows the travel times to relevant centres of population.

Destination Travel Time (by car) Hours	Travel Time
Longford	0.5
Cavan	0.5
Mullingar	0.6
Athlone	0.8
Tullamore	1.1
Dublin	1.5

Located on a national secondary route the town can be described as accessible with a number centres of population within an hours drive of the town. This is a significant asset to the town in presenting itself as a destination and an easy place to get too.



Plate 4: View of the Main Street from Church Street. The main streets of Granard possess a fine spatial and architectural quality. What is needed, apart from careful, informed, maintenance and sensitive repairs and interventions, is to keep the buildings in use. These buildings offer many opportunities for sustainable living, commerce and community/civic/cultural uses.



Plate 5: The lovely simple classicism of the street facades, each with their own distinctive personality, some more elaborate than others and all coming together to form a coherent ensemble. The incremental changes to windows, shopfronts, etc., can erode these qualities and therefore should be avoided.

Local

The countryside around Granard is generally flat with gentle undulations but the town itself sits on a prominent hill. At an elevation of 160 to 170 metres Over Datum (OD) the town commands fine views over the flatter plain. The Motte located at the southern edge of the town (at 179 OD) is a notable landmark and is visible from a wide area of the surrounding countryside. Granard's elevation on a hill gives the town a special aspect and prominence over the surrounding countryside that, while not unique, is unusual in Irish towns.

In the town the N55 route is busy and carries significant level of commercial and HGV traffic travelling between the towns of Cavan and Athlone. There are a number of industrial premises in the town (Grain Mills and the Bakery in particular) and these also contribute to the commercial traffic flows in the town.

3.2 Historic Development

Granard and its surrounding hinterland has a long history of settlement. This heritage is manifest in the rich archaeology of the area surrounding Granard dating back to the Neolithic period and including what more recent excavations have indicated as an early Christian settlement at Granardkill, situated south-west of the present town. The substantial collection of ancient earthworks which surround the town contribute to a distinctive cultural landscape which has also been formed by traditional farming practices and a network of country roads lined by mature hedgerows.

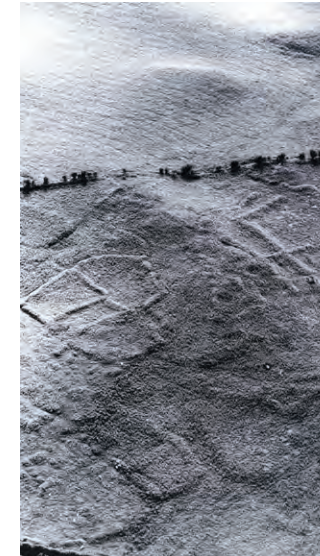
The town of Granard owes its origins to the early medieval Norman period, founded by Richard de Tuite, whose motte remains today, along with St. Mary's Church, the prominent feature of the town, dominating town and surrounding countryside. The town layout also retains much of this medieval foundation, which can be seen in the linear main street, the narrow lanes off this and the long narrow 'burgher' plots which survive on the south side of the main street. The town grew in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a market town and today retains very much the physical character of this period, as well as many of the two and three storey buildings which line the main street and Market Street. In fact this market tradition can be dated back to the late fifteenth century when an Irish market was held in Granard and subsequently in the early seventeenth century when a number of Royal charters for the holding of fairs and markets were granted to individuals in Granard. The importance of Granard can be also be seen through its political status, Granard returned two members of Parliament from 1678 to the Act of Union.

The historic maps and photographs of Granard provide a visual description of the form and shape of the town, how it developed since the late eighteenth century survey (the map of c. 1793 which is held in the County Longford Archives is a remarkable resource and an important historic artefact itself), and how much survives today (See plates 6-11 and Figures 4, 7 and 10). In particular the historic photographs from the Lawrence collection (National Library of Ireland) show how relatively little physical change has occurred within the historic centre of Granard, despite the unprecedented development of the recent years. While this has been a typical feature of many historic Irish towns, Granard was also one of the few towns which escaped the development excesses of the Celtic tiger, with one or two notable exceptions.



The cultural history of Granard includes the long running harp festival, which dates back to 1781, the first of its type in Ireland and which continues today. The frequent visits to Granard of Michael Collins, between 1917 and 1922, to meet with his fiancée Kitty Kiernan in her family's hotel, the Greville Arms, provides a personal and romantic connection with a figure and a period more notable for public heroism and troubled times.

The history of Granard had provided a significant cultural heritage of buildings, public spaces, traditions and uses. The ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter), defines cultural significance as “the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects”, where “associations mean the special connections that exist between people and a place” and, “meanings denote what a place signifies, indicates, evokes or expresses”. Applying these definitions, Granard can be considered a place of cultural significance and, as such, this cultural significance should be managed in such a way as to retain, enhance and make accessible the special qualities which make it significant.



*Plate 6: Granardkill Aerial Photo
Ref Kieran O'Connor*



*Plate 7: Aerial Photo of ringforts in Granard hingerland.
Ref Kieran O'Connor*

Plates 8-11: Lawrence Collection Photographs of Granard



Plate 12



Plate 13

Plate 12: Detail of the limestone steps and ironworks at the entrance to the Greville Arms. The worn steps speak of a history of use and these small details contribute greatly to the distinctive identities of places.

Plate 13: This fine building on the north side of Main Street is typical of the restrained classicism found in many Irish towns. Of particular note is the lined stucco work, the decorative window surrounds, the archway to the rear gardens and yards and most of the historic windows survive. Replacement of the single upvc window at ground level with a timber window matching the historic would greatly improve this building

Plate 14: Exterior view of the Market House. With its short elevation onto Main Street, punctuated by the distinctive arched gate to the Market House itself, and its long 6 bay elevation onto Market Street, this is a particularly fine civic building. Architecturally and functionally this building makes an important contribution to Granard – the full length, high volume, first floor room is one of the great interior civic spaces in the county, right in the heart of the town.

Plate 15: The historic arch and gate to the Market House, the worn limestone threshold and the simple interior space, which still hosts a weekly market. The gate is an important symbol of the historic and continuing functions within. The requirements to carry out improvements to this gate to make it 'small animal proof' need to be carried out to a high standard – although details should be simple, restrained and follow the conservation principle of reversibility.



Plate 14



Plate 15



3.3 Population

Table 1 below indicates the population trends over the past two census periods in Granard and the surrounding areas within a 5 kilometre radius of the town. The table shows that over almost the past decade the population living within the town has declined while the population of the surrounding rural areas has increased. This reflects an ongoing national trend, outside the major urban centres, whereby towns are depopulating in favour of one-off housing in the surrounding areas. This has implications for :

- The social mix within the town (those with the resources moving out and the more disadvantaged remaining in the town).
- The difficulty of providing services and commercial operations to a dispersed population and the consequential difficulties for businesses and civic/community facilities within the town to survive with less support from a more dispersed local community.
- The sustainability of this type of residential spread which necessitates the use of car based transportation for almost all activities.

In terms of the wider population catchment there is a significant number of people residing within an hour's drive from/ to Granard. If we take a travel time of around an hour to be a distance of approx 60 Km the population living within this catchment was approx 378, 000 people in 2006 which reflected a growth of over 40,000 since the 2002 census.

This could realistically be taken as a population that is within an easy day trip of Granard and to which the town could present and market itself as an attractive destination with something to offer.



Plate 16: John O'Hara: This is a significant building due to the extent of surviving historic fabric of quality – the fine timber shopfront, the upper floor wet dash and whitewashed plaster; the historic windows. Note also the elegant shopfront of Walsh's to the right.



Plate 17: This single bay building is of interest and charm due very much to the change in street rhythm it creates and the extent of historic fabric surviving. This variation in scale of building widths is part of the innate character of Granard and should be carefully considered in any proposals for interventions or alterations.

EDs within a 5k radius of Granard	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Change in population 2002-2006	% change in population 2002-2006
Abbeylara	245	314	69	28.2
Bunlahy	167	167	0	0
Coolamber	263	321	58	22.1
Creevy	289	344	55	19
Dalystown	170	175	5	2.9
Firry	172	178	6	3.5
Granard Rural	256	300	44	17.2
Granard Urban	1013	933	-80	-7.9
Milltown	323	351	28	8.7
Mullanlaghta	292	295	3	1
Newgrove	37	43	6	16.2
Sonnagh	281	286	5	1.8
Kilcogy (Cavan)	371	365	-6	-1.6
Kilgolagh (Cavan)	314	319	5	1.6
Total	4193	4391	198	112.7

Table 1: Population Change in Granard and areas within a 5 Km radius of the town.



3.4 Policy Context

This Public Realm Strategy is formed within a hierarchy of spatial plans which set out the development aims of the national/regional/local government. A full examination of the planning context of Granard is set out in Appendix 2 with the main aims and objectives of the various policy documents highlighted below.

National Spatial Strategy:

There is considerable future potential to complement the agricultural sector in the Midlands with additional tourism and recreational activity.

Regional Planning Guidelines:

- Granard is seen as a key service town as closely linked to the prospects to their closest principle or gateway towns, ie that the future development of Granard is closely linked to the prospects of Longford.
- Urban development within the smaller town and village network should be consolidated with the provision of physical, social and community infrastructure a priority.
- Build upon existing strong businesses in the food, engineering and medical device sectors
- Focused promotion and marketing of the natural heritage and cultural resources of the area and its associated high quality of life, which is vital for its development and a valuable contribution towards the identity of the region as a whole
- It is an aim of the Intra Regional Road Investment priorities to develop a bypass of the N55 at Granard.

Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015

- Granard is a key service town whose aim is to drive the own local economies within its area.
- Strong emphasis will be placed on the growth of the local economy in Granard and the development of its vital administrative and social functions to support and complement growth in the region, developing and enhancing synergistic links with the adjacent Border Region
- The growth and development of retail floorspace and other town centre services/functions will be encouraged in Granard, in order to support its transition into a more self-sustaining centre within the county's settlement and retail hierarchies.
- The Council shall promote and encourage the development of "Honeypot" tourism developments at Granard.
- It is the policy of the Council to investigate and promote the provision of improved access to important archaeological sites such as those National Monuments in State ownership or guardianship including Granard Motte which is under the guardianship of the State.



Plate 18: Another charming single bay house with unusually long window sills, suggesting possibly wider openings previously – although this may not be certain – and a distinctive entrance arrangement with solid door and sidelight/shop window. The colour scheme articulates the distinctive features well.

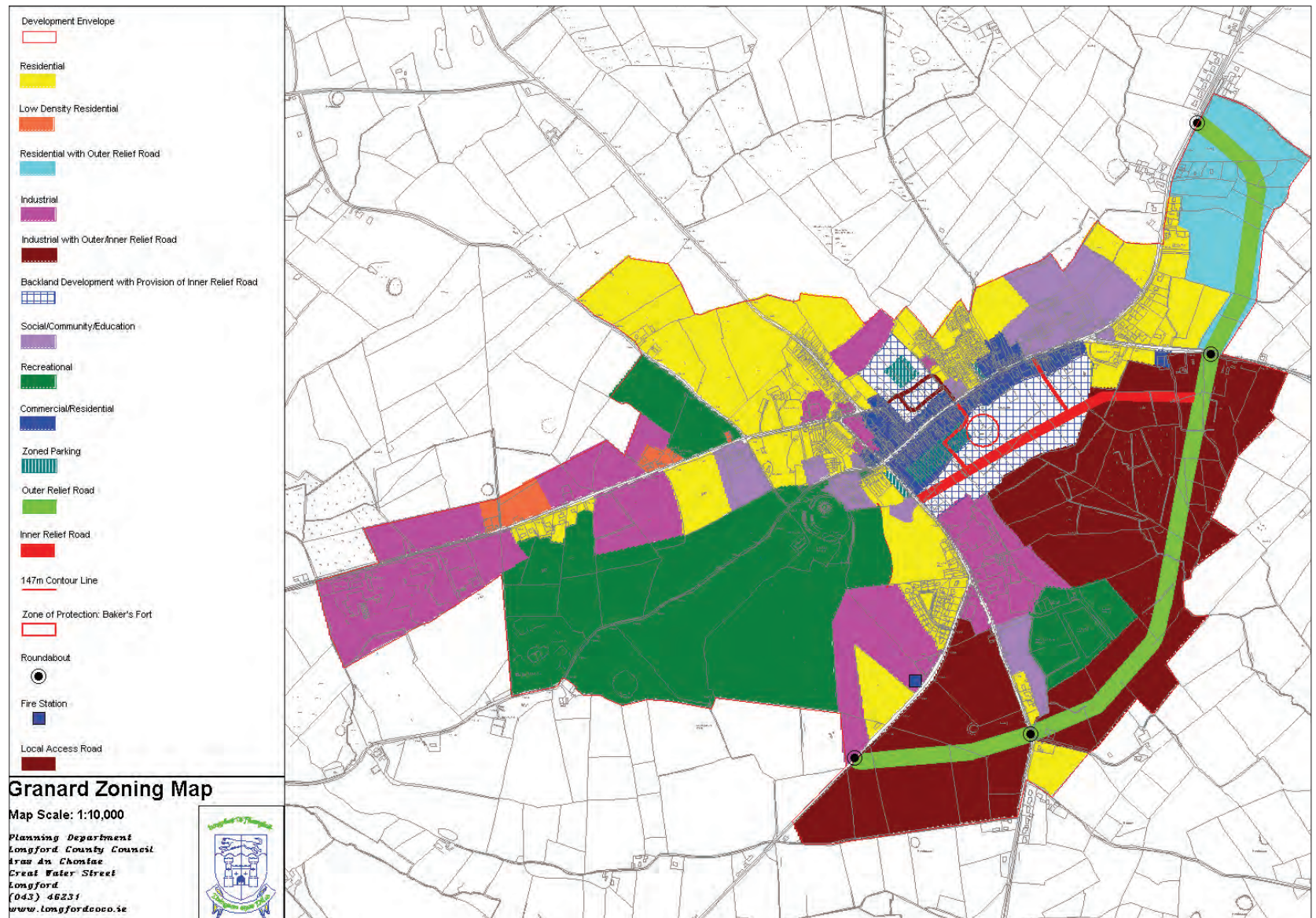


Figure 2: Granard Local Area Plan 2006-2012



Granard Local Area Plan 2006-2012 (Figure 2)

Objectives of the LAP for the Town include:

- To ensure that the necessary infrastructure including roads, public utilities and services, recreational and community facilities are available to satisfy the development needs of the town.
- To facilitate the provision of improved environmental amenities within the town, and to secure the redevelopment and renewal of obsolete areas.
- To secure safe and convenient movement corridors within the area, including pedestrian and cycle paths.
- To enhance the environment and heritage of the town including the renewal of obsolete areas and the protection of structures of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific or technical interest.
- Policies and Objectives of the Local Area Plan specific to the public realm of the town include:
 - High quality designs and finishes will be required in connection with new development and shall include the provision of decorative street furniture, pavement treatment and lighting.
 - New retail premises or refurbishment of existing premises shall be sympathetic to the character and built fabric of the streetscape and compatible with existing uses in the vicinity. Modern designs are acceptable, provided that they respect the character of the streetscape and neighbouring developments and are compliant with the provisions outlined for shopfront design within Longford County Development Plan.
 - To identify a line for an inner link road in order to open up the land to the south of Main Street.
 - The Council recognises the importance of good pedestrian and cycle linkages within and out of new residential development sites into the town centre and community facilities, including open space, to reduce the need to travel by car and to encourage the safe and efficient movement of the local population to other facilities and services.
 - To ensure the provision of off-street parking and pedestrian links to the north of Main Street, as is currently proposed by Longford County Council. Side-on car parking shall be provided for on Main Street.
 - To promote the development of an inner link road and the opening up of land to the south of Main Street.

The Council recognises the importance of good pedestrian and cycle linkages within and out of new residential development sites into the town centre and community facilities, including open space, to reduce the need to travel by car and to encourage the safe and efficient movement of the local population to other facilities and services.



Plate 19: Views from the motte and church give good views over the town and surrounding countryside.



Plate 20: The church spire is a dominant landmark in both the town and the surrounding countryside.

The Main Street, from Barrack Lane in the East up to and including St. Joseph's Terrace and the Roman Catholic Church in the West, shall be designated an Architectural Conservation Area (See Townscape Appraisal Map). It is the policy of the Council to ensure the preservation of the character of the Architectural Area, including:

- Controlling development which could alter the character of structures which contribute to the character of the area.
- Issuing notice to require restoration of character of structures in the Architectural Conservation Area.
- Preventing the demolition of these structures.
- Promote the development of areas and features unique to Granard, such as the town's architectural heritage defined by the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), as a tourist facility in conjunction with existing established attractions such as the Motte.
- Other measures relating to the public realm that are mentioned in the LAP but are not included in policies or objectives include:
- Undergrounding of overhead cables
- Physical and environmental upgrading, landscaping and screening of buildings along the approach to the town along the Edgeworthstown Road
- Provision of a statement building at the corner of the Edgeworthstown road and Main Street
- Provision of an inner link road to open up the lands to the south of Main Street removing the traffic away from this area and reducing the traffic pressure on Main Street.
- Environmental improvements including removal of palisade fencing along the approach to the town via the Ballinalea Road.
- Provision of a Council car park adjacent to Ulster Bank
- Significant environmental improvements along entrance to the town from Cavan

3.5 Land And Building Uses

Figure 3 provides a snapshot analysis of the range of uses accommodated within the buildings of the town centre. It is based on a survey carried out by Longford County Heritage Office in 2010 and therefore may already be somewhat out of date, as the changes in building occupation which are presently occurring, primarily as a result of the economic downturn, are quite rapid.





Figure 3: Landuse Granard 2010

The historic Market house is an architecturally important building and also is of cultural and social importance to the town. Located in a prominent urban location, it houses the branch library, the weekly Country Market, and the Town Council chamber, as well as accommodating other social, civic and cultural events.

This is particularly so with regard to vacancy of ground floor shop units. While the gradual transformation of the upper floors from shopkeeper's home to storage, or no use, has been steadily growing over many years, this trend had been slower to grip the ground floor commercial/retail space, until more recently.

Notwithstanding this, the land use map shows a broad range of uses within the town and this mix is the lifeblood of any successful town. The functions and activities which happen within the town are what draw people to the place and thus what make the town a social and civic hub for its residential and working community and its visitors. And it is this which contributes so importantly to the quality of the public realm. It is critical, therefore, that Granard maintain a broad range of uses within the town centre, including most importantly, residential. Buildings in use are also more likely to be maintained, so in aiming to protect the architectural heritage, the ongoing use and maintenance of the building stock is vitally important.

In addition to accommodating the typical uses present in most Irish towns, the following lists some of the more notable aspects of land and building use in Granard which may not appear so readily when viewing the land use map:

- The presence of a large food industry within the heart of the town, which is an important employer and also part of the town's contemporary cultural profile. It is notable that, while the bakery makes a social and sensory impact on the town (the pleasant smell of fresh baking pervades the town at times), it has no retail outlet which might serve locals and visitors.
- The weekly mart continues an historic tradition and is also an important part of the culture of Granard, as well as being of some economic note. This latter aspect, however, is much less strong today than in the last century when market day brought considerable business and social life to the town. Today, the mart operates at a remove from the town.
- The historic Market house is an architecturally important building and also is of cultural and social importance to the town. Located in a prominent urban location, it houses the branch library, the weekly Country Market, and the Town Council chamber, as well as accommodating other social, civic and cultural events. The proposed expansion of the library is to be welcomed, although the knock-on implications of relocating the Country Markets deserves further consideration and review. The Country Market has operated here for over 30 years and its presence and potential at this location is an untapped asset for the town.
- Several buildings along the main street are occupied and used by community groups. The large number and broad range of community groups is positive, and it is to be hoped that these groups will continue and increase support of local services, outside of the activities which take place within the community buildings themselves,



- Granard is an important centre for primary and secondary education, serving a wide hinterland. There is the potential for the schools to become more active and present in the cultural life of Granard to the benefit of both school children and town. There are two banks within the town, both architecturally important buildings. However, the continued presence of these financial institutions, within these particular buildings, if not in Granard itself, is not guaranteed, especially if the population continues to decline.
- There are other possible future casualties of a declining population and these might include the 24hour Garda station; Granard Town Commissioners and a long term delay in completing the partially developed lands to the north of Main Street. These would all have direct impacts on the urban fabric and use mix.
- While the land and building use map shows the presence of two hotels in the town, Granard is really not very well served in terms of overnight visitor/tourist accommodation and facilities. There are few places for a 'special night out' or to hold a family or business function.

The physical legacy of Granard's long and rich history, is a town centre of strong urban qualities with a number of particularly fine buildings which include banks, churches, market house, convent, hotel, – all building types which speak of the historic social, civic and economic importance of the town. However, today too many of the town's historic buildings are underused or vacant, reflecting the economic downturn and the falling local population. This situation, however, also reflects the implications of the modern flight from living and shopping in the smaller Irish towns, particularly by the more affluent members of the community.



Figure 5: Granard as it is today

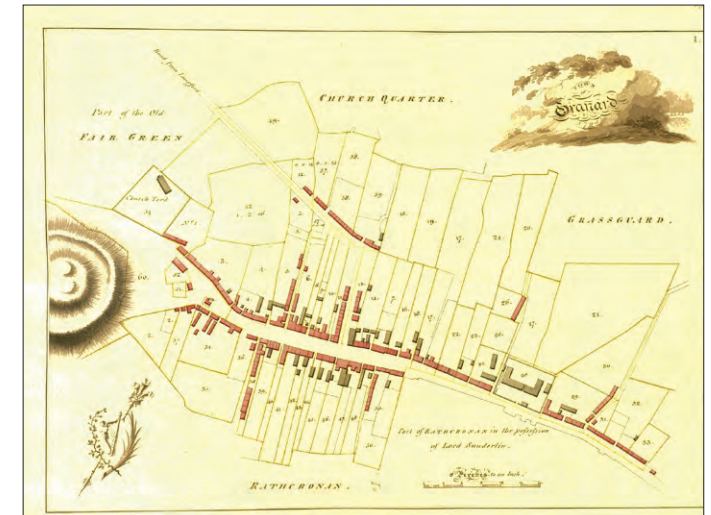


Figure 4: 1793 Rent Map Granard showing the main street largely as it is today. The Edgworthstown Road has not yet been constructed nor has the Catholic Church, but the Motte is clearly represented.



Plates 21 and 22: Higgenstown Sports facility with playing fields, pitch and putt and a playground is a valued addition to the town and is well used. The playground is further from the residential areas of the town than is desirable



3.6 Open Space And Hinterland

Existing Amenities and Opportunities

The town is located within driving distance of a number of attractive amenities. In particular, Lough Gowna and Derrycassan Wood, located to the northwest (6+km) and Loughs Kinale and Sheelin, to the east (5+km) are attractive and popular local destinations. However the distance of the town to these natural destinations is such that they are primarily accessed by car.

The local community with the assistance of the local authority has been proactive in providing for organised sports in the town. There is a 'sports ground' at Higgenstown that has a small playground and provides for pitch and putt, tennis and includes a GAA pitch and clubhouse. It also contains a further pitch that is used for a variety of events and activities including soccer, local agricultural shows etc. (See plates 21 and 22)

Apart from these facilities, access to open space, parks or footpaths for informal recreation and exercise is very limited and this represents a significant shortcoming in the existing public realm provision in Granard. There is minimal provision of public seating/benches in the town. This pattern is common to many midland towns.

Studies undertaken by Longford County Council Heritage Officer in 2010 indicate that the town is deficient in quality open space within the core of the town and that the extent of constructed footpaths is limited to the built up area.

However, the town does sit at the centre of a web of radiating roads and laneways with significant potential for development as pedestrian and cycle loops. The area around the town is also rich in archaeology, heritage sites and field monuments. Again there is the potential to integrate presentation of these monuments with looped walks and provide low key but well designed interpretative panels along the way.

In the wider area Granard is situated in what is known generically as the Lakelands and links to both the nearest lakes are important. The line of the Black Pig's Dyke a series of defensive earthworks built along the southern boundary of Ulster and dating from 390BC links the Lough Gowna and Sheelin Lake complexes. There is little evidence of this alignment on the ground but it provides a good basis for the development of an off-road medium-distance route. This in turn intersects the old rail alignment running to the west of Lough Kinale. This also offers a potential route for long-distance footpaths. Taken together these two historic cross-country routes are a significant asset to Granard, linking the town to a wider attractive hinterland.

Granard does have a number of particular assets and amenities in terms of Open space:

Higgenstown Sports Field (mentioned above)

This has been the subject of much community effort and is object of pride for the town.

This important feature is not in public hands but is a scheduled national monument. There has been a pattern of informal public access on and around the Motte over the years and a statue of St Patrick has been placed on the top (we understand that this may be replaced/upgraded in the near future)

3.7 Access, Traffic And Parking

The ability of residents and visitors to access and move around the town in safety and comfort is an important factor in making the town an attractive place to spend time and shop. The heavy traffic associated with the N55 militates against both comfort and safety. There is a perception that there is a shortage of parking in the Main Street. However on the team's many visits to the town this did not appear to be borne out in reality and there was always options available. The existing unstructured arrangement of a combination of parallel and herringbone parking is however confused and unsafe, particularly where drivers are reversing out into a busy main road. It is also problematic for cyclists.

There are a number of schools located at the northern end of the town. This is a busy 'pick up' and 'drop of' location and the associated footpaths along side the road are both narrow and in poor condition. Furthermore there is an unacceptable number of vehicles parking on these footpaths. It was also noted that a significant proportion of the traffic entering the town from the north appeared to be travelling around a gentle bend at some speed. The combination of heavy traffic moving at speed, a narrow footpath and busy school drop-off activity is less than satisfactory and gives rise to significant risk. There are already 3 sets of banner speed limit signs on the northern approach however it appears that more must be done to slow traffic at this location, and mitigate the risks to pedestrians and school children.

The provision of footpaths within the town is varied. Wider footpaths make for an environment that encourages pedestrians to relax and slow down and spend more time shopping and there are opportunities for extending and improving footpaths at a number of locations in the Main Street. The foot path on the Longford road alongside the Market Hall is particularly unsatisfactory and requires attention. Wider footpaths also facilitate a range of other activities including casual and organised markets, busking and street performances, etc. This would reinforce the core of the town as a vibrant and exciting place to visit and do business.

It has been established that shoppers respond well to loops particularly where they are enlivened with shops and service outlets. There is the potential for a loop within the town, should the partly completed development on Barrack Lane be advanced, as it provided for a link between Barrack Lane and the Longford Road adjacent to the Buttermarket. See figure 6 Barrack Lane Loop

The combination of heavy traffic moving at speed, a narrow footpath and busy school drop-off activity is less than satisfactory and gives rise to significant risk.



Plate 23: Narrow footpaths and heavy traffic, travelling at speed, combine to generate an unsatisfactory adjacent to the schools.

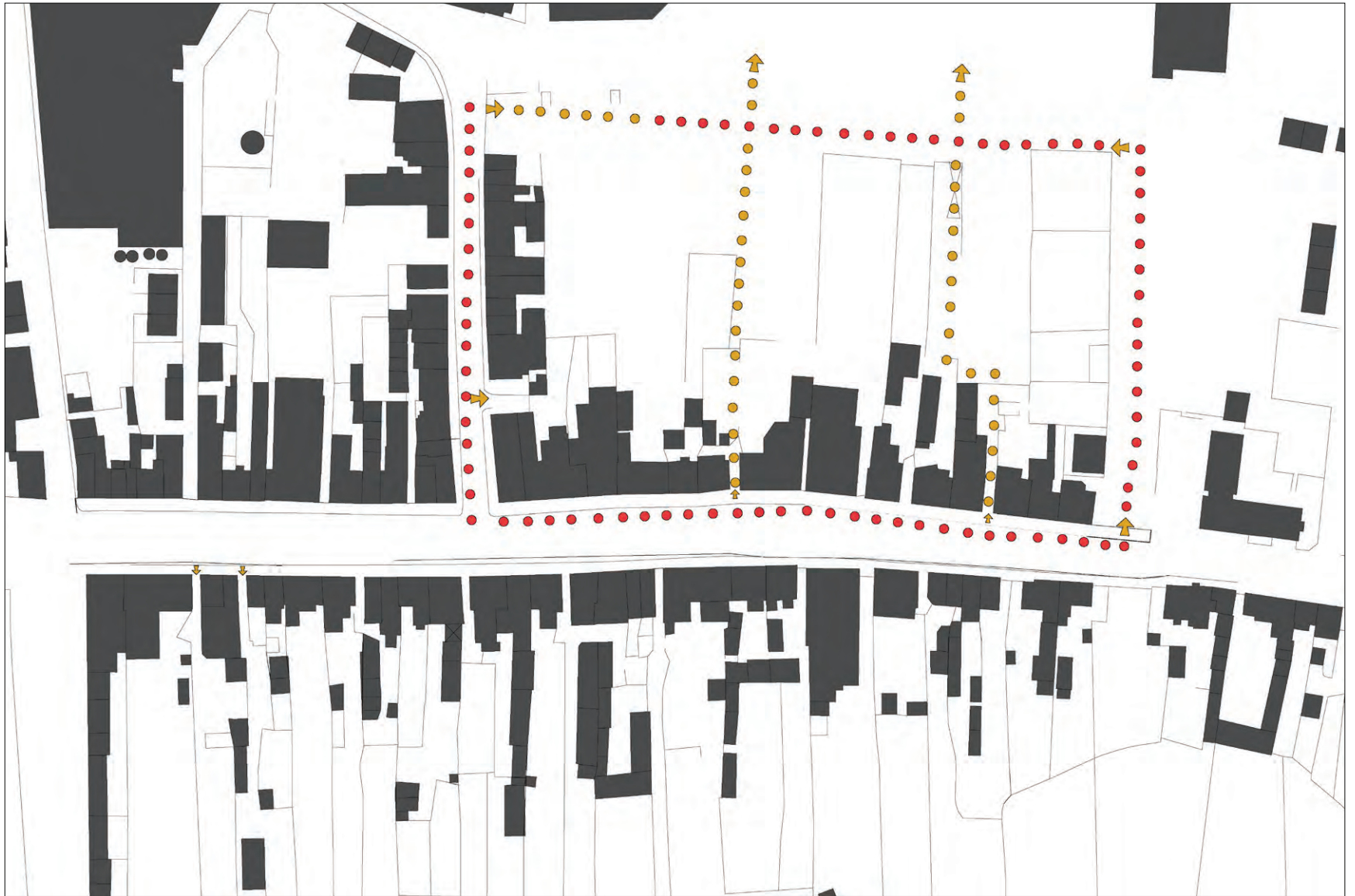


Figure 6: Barrack Lane Loop

3.8 Significant Features Buildings, Places, Uses

There are 33 structures in Granard which are listed in the Record of Protected Structures for County Longford (listed in Appendix 3). These include a variety of structures ranging from the visually prominent St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, designed by John Bourke and completed in 1867, to the more subtle post boxes on Barrack Street and Market Street. They also include houses, shops, hotel, Market House, banks and monuments, amongst others illustrating a wealth of cultural heritage within the town (See Plates 4, 5 and 12-18).

The Granard LAP identifies a proposed Architectural Conservation Area for the town centre (See Figure 8) Area of Architectural and Urban Significance). It is noted that this area is quite limited in scope and could be said to exclude some important elements to the town's urban and architectural character. In particular, the boundary excludes public streets and spaces, surely an essential part of the ACA's particular character. It also limits its coverage to the main, street, buildings along the historic main street, thus truncating the plots to exclude the long rear 'burgher' back areas, which are an important reminder of the early medieval origins of Granard. Map 02 (Area of Architectural and Urban Significance) acknowledges these wider aspects of urban significance and, while the specific planning objectives of the ACA are limited to those structures which lie within this designated area, it is suggested that guidelines be provided for development within the wider area of urban and architectural significance outlined on this map, which encourage development which enhances the particular characteristics of these lands. Thus, for example, development of the south backlands areas for off street parking (an objective of the Granard LAP) might integrate features such as mature trees, historic walls and piers and, through the use of paving, express the plot boundaries which are of historic and architectural interest.

The Granard ACA confirms the importance of Main Street and Church Street, especially the buildings which line these streets and their protection, in full use and in good condition is an important factor in achieving a quality public realm.

Granard town also possesses a rich archaeological heritage, not least of which is the motte which is a National Monument in state guardianship (Mon. No. 263, described in more detail in the following section). It is a policy of the Longford Development Plan to investigate and promote the provision of improved access to the Motte, which is in private ownership. The Motte is also included on the list of Monuments of Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Interest Orders, as is Granardkill (both Grade A monuments). There are also numerous other recorded monuments within the Granard hinterland, of which Baker's Fort and St. Patrick's Church of Ireland and graveyard lie within the town area.



Figure 7: Ordnance Survey Map 1837-42 Showing Granard very similar to day's town.



Figure 8: Area of Architectural and Urban Significance

3.9 Views And Landmarks

Even a casual visitor to the town will quickly become aware of the Motte situated to the top of the hill to the south west of Main Street. Along with the adjacent spire on the Catholic Church is a dramatic feature and landmark. As it is located at the top of the hill it is visible from much of the town and from the wider countryside. While mottes in the Irish countryside are not unusual few are as prominently located as the Motte at Granard. It is a dramatic structure and is presently surmounted by a statue of St Patrick. The property is in private ownership but there appears to be a tradition of informal public access to top of the Motte. The climb is steep but the views from the top are worth it and are spectacular on a fine day and local lore maintains that it is possible to see 7 counties from the top. The extent of the views from the relatively low elevation of 179 metres OD reflects the flat nature of the surrounding lands. In addition to the Motte proper there are substantial earthworks around it's base. The entire area is presently used for livestock grazing and there is evidence on the site that this activity is giving rise to some erosion of the mound. As an important element of heritage the motte is not under any effective management at present and there are concerns should the existing situation continue, the integrity of this important landmark and element of heritage is at risk.

The Motte is not alone as a heritage resource as the town is set in a landscape rich in field monuments (see section above). These are landmarks in the very basic sense of the word being marks on the landscape. As such they combine with an attractive agricultural landscape to provide a hinterland to the town that is both beautiful and interesting.

The Spire on the Catholic Church is a very fine architectural element and is located on the axis of the main street. It makes a significant contribution to character of the town and plays an important role in the identity and iconography of Granard. It is notable that the views towards the Motte and spire from the Moatfield, Granardkill, Ballybrien, Ballymacrolly road direction is protected in the Longford Development Plan (Ref. F.S-14).

3.10 Events And Activities

As described in the Historic Development section above, Granard has a long tradition of events and activities which are a key component in the cultural character of the town. Some events, such as the Granard Harp Festival, which started out in 1781 and was revived 200 years later, and the Granard Show, are annual festivals, taking place over the course of a single day or a long weekend. Other events occur more regularly, such as the weekly Country Market and the regular meetings of a range of community groups.

The value of such events and activities to a town is measured by the intensity of activity which they can generate, bringing one-off or regular visitors into town. A diversity of events can ensure a broad range of people and ages visit and use the town and, where these are programmed imaginatively, they can allow one event to build on another. Alternatively, if spread out, they can allow for a year round calendar of activities. Some towns focus on single themes (eg Listowel Writer's Festival and, indeed, Granard's Harp Festival), others have taken an alternative and quirky approach (e.g. the Flat Lake Festival in Co. Monaghan). Very often the most successful and enduring festivals are a result of a strong association between a place and a leading figure.



Plate 24: The motte and church steeple combine to form a powerful landmark, visible over a wide area.

Running temporary events and festivals can be demanding on resources – people and financial - and often their success will depend on the commitment and energies of a small cohort. In small communities it is often the same people who get involved in all the activities. In today's recessionary times it can also be hard to access funding and so it is not surprising that the Granard Harp Festival is not being held in 2011.

The more regular activities, for example, the weekly mart, the age action meetings, the country market, happen independently of each other possibly serving different communities. Thus the opportunities to benefit from linking activities appear to be missed. The team noted, for example, that the weekly rural transport bus arrives too late for commuters to visit the Country Market.

4.0 ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis Of Issues Arising From Public Participation, Workshops, And Consultations

Arising from the public participation sessions a number of negative issues affecting the public realm of Granard were highlighted:

Most serious problems affecting Granard

- Traffic Congestion – Parking
- Housing estates
- Approach roads
- 15-20 club
- Night time socializing very limited ie hotels, restaurants etc
- Evening night time activities very poor
- Lack of toilet facilities – especially for sporting organizations at Higgenstown

In response to the query 'How you would enhance the positives of Granard town?' the following suggestions arose:

- Night life – cant have a meal at night in Granard
- Cinema
- Paint
- Trail walks – Sli na Slainte





Figure 9: Character Areas

- Tourism
- Michael Collins Society
- Agricultural Show
- Marketing
- Better preservation of historical sites
- Bypass the town – reduces traffic congestion
- Walking track

Traffic and Parking

The issue of traffic congestion and a perceived lack of parking along the main street in Granard arose as one of the most pressing issues affecting the stakeholders of the town. The LAP for Granard has zoned lands to the rear of the main street on both the northern and southern sides to be opened up to provide car parking which would go a long way to alleviating this issue. In addition a bypass to the town of the N55 road has been proposed in both the Longford County Development Plan and Granard LAP but it is unlikely that funding will be available to develop this bypass over the next number of years.

As mentioned above traffic in the vicinity of the schools at the north-western end of the town is particularly bad and exacerbated at school drop off and pick up times. Due to the road alignment traffic coming into the town from the North arrives at speed and consequently this causes a hazard to school children who often cross the road opposite the schools.

4.2 Analysis Of Issues Arising From Town Assessment

While the town possesses a distinct overall identity, or personality, it can also be understood as a series of somewhat distinct character areas. . Figure 9 Character Area Map identifies six distinct characters areas within the town. These areas represent a general consistency of urban form, land use and age and can be a helpful way of understanding the varying characters of any town. For example, the primary entrances into Granard – Dublin Road, Longford Road and the Cavan Road – which are relatively typical of many Irish towns of this size, are characterised by residential ribbon development in the form of detached dwellings and outlying large industry/employment complexes which are generally low-scale large footprint warehouse type buildings surrounded by parking spaces and with poor edge/street enclosure. The Motte and the churches, along with their graveyards and grounds form an area of historic and landscape quality which is also a distinctive character area within the town. Another space of landscape quality is the greenspace at O'Callaghan's Terrace



In Granard the six character areas identified are as follows:

1. Church Lands and Motte This is the area described in the above paragraph and owes its distinctive qualities to its topography, the mature landscape setting, the sacred and spiritual associations with place and its historic importance to Granard.
2. Main Street and Commercial Centre: This is the 'heart' of Granard, the main street with its distinctive spatial identity and its mixed use character containing the principal retail, commercial and civic functions of the town. It can be subdivided into the Main Street/Market Street area and, historically of lesser commercial importance, Barrack Street, although a slight shift in this balance can be seen with the recent developments of Super Value and the Credit Union on Barrack Street.
3. Educational Precinct: The north-western end of the town is notable for the dominance of the secondary school and convent. This has a physical (spatial) influence on character as well as a temporal one (which varies with the comings and goings of pupils at different times of day and year).
4. Residential Suburbs: Primarily dating from the second half of the last century, these residential developments adjoin the historic core and typically line the minor roads leading into and out of the town (the dwellings along the primary entrance/exit roads are generally single, detached houses in large gardens). Several of these residential developments were developed by the local authority, although many houses are now private. They are in varying condition and occupation, with some requiring regeneration. However, their proximity to the historic and commercial centre, catering for an urban population, make them important in the long term future survival of Granard as a commercial centre.
5. Employment and Industry: Granard is fortunate for having a number of long established mid-size employment generating industries within, or close to, the town centre. In addition to their social and economic impact on the town, they exert a physical impact both in terms of built fabric and traffic generation, parking, etc. These impacts are of mixed benefit to the town and certainly an improvement in their physical presentation would be a positive contribution to uplifting the overall public realm of Granard.
6. Incomplete/unoccupied development areas: While Granard is fortunate in having comparatively little of this type of development, there are two sites which have a marked impact on the town's character and so can be considered a character area in themselves. Most notably there is the unfinished development off Barrack Street. It is somewhat fortunate, by being located behind the main street and not on any through route, that, despite its considerable size (it occupies an area almost as large as the historic core), it is somewhat hidden. Nonetheless, its completion, with variations to its current design, can contribute to the enhancement of the public realm (see Strategies section below). The second such area is the incomplete community enterprise development on the Dublin Road. These buildings are substantially complete, however in their current boarded up and empty presentation, they are somewhat of an eyesore on this principal entrance. More importantly, however, their availability for burgeoning local enterprise and employment, located within walking distance of the town centre, will hopefully contribute to the local economic recovery.

The historic building stock, typically two bay buildings of two and three storeys, is generally in sound condition, although like many towns the incremental alterations, most notably to windows and shopfronts, have eroded some of the architectural quality.

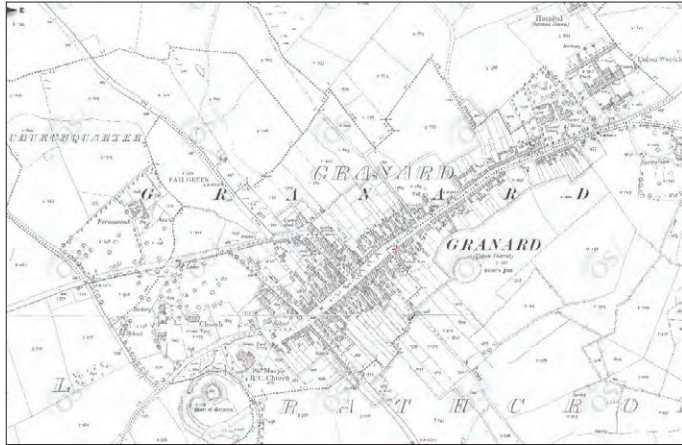


Figure 10: Ordnance Survey Sheet 1888-1913

Granard is a town of many fine townscape qualities [SEE MAP 04 TOWNSCAPE]. Its historic centre has a clear urban form, which creates public spaces of strong spatial quality. There is a coherent built edge forming the central streets which is augmented by a number of buildings of architectural and civic/community importance. The historic building stock, typically two bay buildings of two and three storeys, is generally in sound condition, although like many towns the incremental alterations, most notably to windows and shopfronts, have eroded some of the architectural quality.

While the town does not possess a distinct town square, there are a number of important nodes within the town – these are spaces of heightened spatial and/or active intensity, often found at street junctions. These can be found at the junction between Main Street and Market Street, where the architecturally, socially and culturally important Market Plan acts as an important focal point, physically and through its civic character and function and, to a somewhat lesser intensity, at the junction between Main Street, Church Street, Bloxham Street and Dublin Street.

The pavements along Main Street were resurfaced some years ago, however it is unfortunate that the undergrounding of services did not take place as part of these works. Also, the opportunity to increase the space for pedestrians by widening pavements was not exploited. Main Street is a typically wide street, belying its historic market function and rationalising car parking in such a way as to improve the quality of the public realm and civilise the impact of traffic on the historic centre could be achieved. It is also unfortunate that the nighttime character along the central spine is dominated by the tall, orange glowing, lights of the national primary route, another lost opportunity to create a distinctive evening/nighttime character through imaginative lighting.

Within the town there are important vistas towards the Motte and spire of St. Mary's church, which, located at one end (the head) - and at an elevated position - of the long, central spine of the town (the body), give the town its very distinctive physical form. The sloping Church Street widens out as it rises, to create a fan-shaped space which takes in the Church grounds and the space in front of O'Carroll's Avenue. Presently the car park and hard surfacing of the church grounds make it difficult to appreciate the spatial qualities here, however there is the potential to give the town a distinctive civic space, which has wonderful views over the town and surrounding landscape.

Probably a legacy of its medieval origins, Granard possesses some narrow lanes which are both of historic and landscape amenity value. Of particular note is Tuite's Lane (which may well owe its name to Granard's founder Richard de Tuite), running south-east from Main Street to somewhere in line with the Mart complex, just short of the playing fields and playground at Higginstown. Water Lane, which runs alongside the bakery, is an important short-cut/desire line within the town.





Figure 11: Townscape Qualities

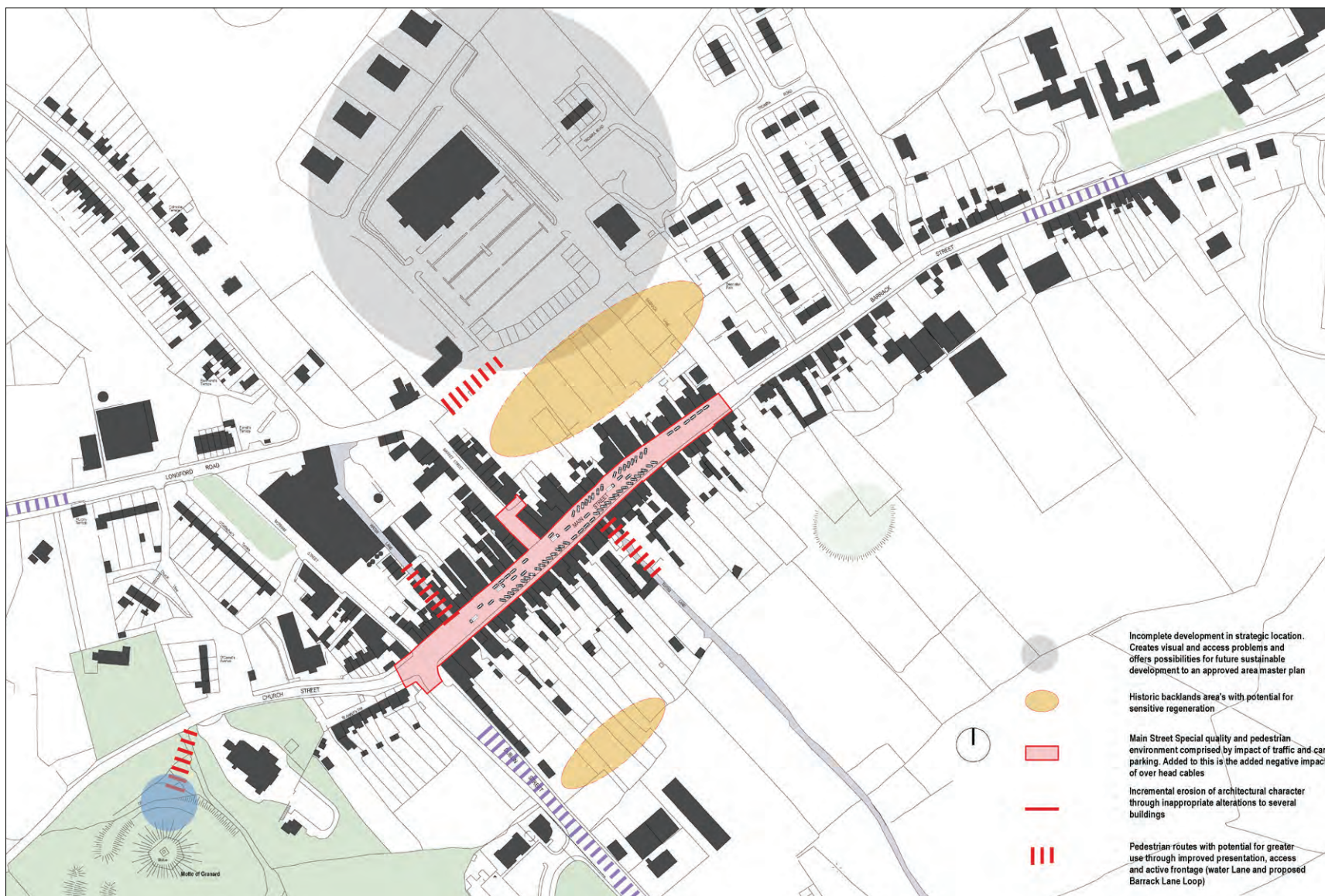


Figure 12: Public Realm Challenges and Opportunities



Figure 13: Public Realm Strategies

PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

Brady Shipman Martin - Shaffrey Associates Architects

5.0 KEY STRATEGIES

5.1 Granard As A Destination

It is clear from the consultations that the business and commercial activity in Granard has been declining for some time. This is a common phenomena in towns of this size that sit below the 'county' town in terms of administrative function and as a local/regional focal point. While the trend has been exacerbated by the recent economic decline there is evidence that this decline is part of a longer term pattern. The census records indicate a steady decline in population in recent years within the Granard DED. Anecdotal evidence is that there has been a drift from living in the town to residing elsewhere; probably to one-off housing in the locality. The population figures above support this proposition. Thus there are many people who will describe themselves as 'from' Granard whereas they are more properly described as 'of' Granard. This has a number of consequences not least is a reduced level of loyalty to the town as their shopping hub and secondly the consideration that a car journey is now required to shop or socialise.

It is clear that declining support has lead to businesses in the town closing and downsizing. There is a real risk that this will become self-perpetuating pattern with a declining spend leading to businesses closing and the town becoming less attractive as a destination for shopping, socialising, etc. New development in recent years has given Longford Town an improved retail offer and a wider/improved range of services and it is now presenting competition to Granard as a destination and shopping hub in the centre of the county.

To survive and thrive in this environment Granard must reinvent its self as a destination town. It must become attractive to visitors because it is distinctive and something special to offer. In making these improvements it will also become a better place to live and work. The audience that the town should address is the one hour drive horizon which generates a potential market of in excess of 370,000 people. Visitors will travel an hour provided there is a worthwhile reason for their trip. For day trips they will need:

- A real point of interest; a reason for travelling.
- An attractive, distinctive and intelligent, public realm.
- Basic facilities - toilets, parking etc
- Clear presentation and signage of amenities
- An appropriate level of Interpretation of natural and built heritage and archaeological sites

In addition they will use and spend money in

- Shops
- Petrol/Fuel stations.
- Coffee Shops; Restaurants



- To ensure that visitors return for repeat visits the destination should have 'depth' and a range of support attractions/activities will be of assistance including
- links to the adjacent lakes and other sites in the area,
- good walking and cycling routes
- play opportunities for children
- markets in the town.

The public realm has an important part to play in establishing this new role. However, there is no single 'magic bullet' that will deliver this result. Improvements to the public realm on their own will achieve little and will not, in themselves, drive a change in perception. An integrated approach is required with buy-in from both residents and the commercial interests in the town will be needed. The whole hearted support of the Local Authorities and other official agencies will be required to support the public realm strategies.

There are a number of examples of towns that have established themselves as focal points and are recognised as regional destinations. Enniskerry, Dungarvan, and Birr come to mind. All have distinctive characters and a heritage that is well articulated, combined with an attractive retail offer and a good access to adjoining countryside.

In terms of the public realm the assets that require conservation, improved presentation, and development include

The Main Street frontage between the Edgeworthstown Entrance and Barrack Lane is the commercial focal point of the town.

The market is an important asset and should be further developed. Recent surveys by Failte Ireland on Heritage Towns have highlighted the important role that local markets can play in the visitor's experience of a town.

The Motte and the surrounding area is an important element in defining the character of the town. The Motte area should be considered as the wider area including both Churches, the adjoining car parks and the roads and paths.

Walking and cycling routes around the town will contribute both to the health and well being of the residents and be an attractive amenity to visitors. The route strategy is set out in the section The Great Outdoors below. Visitor surveys undertaken on behalf of Failte Ireland clearly demonstrate the important role that walking has in the visitor experience. With the relatively affluent over 55s walking is regarded as an essential component of recreation or leisure time. The provision of organised walking and cycling routes around the town is a positive attractor to potential visitors to the town. Given the extensive array of archaeological and heritage sites around Granard walking routes can be structured around these sites and with appropriate signage and interpretation this will add significantly to the visitor's experience. See Fig 14 Links and new Pedestrian Paths within and around the Town and Fig 17 Environs Access Strategy.

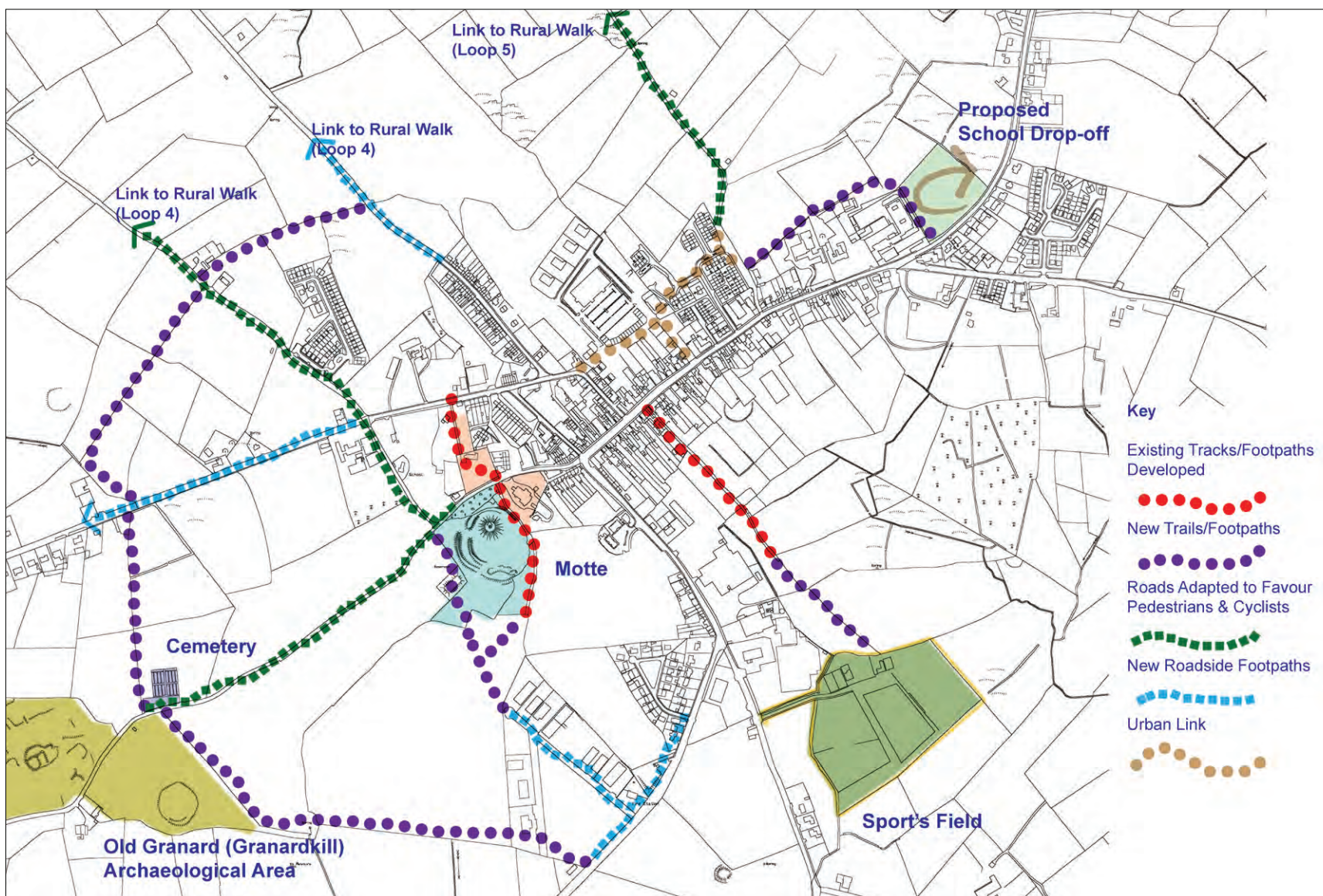


Figure 14: Links and new Pedestrian Paths within and around the Town



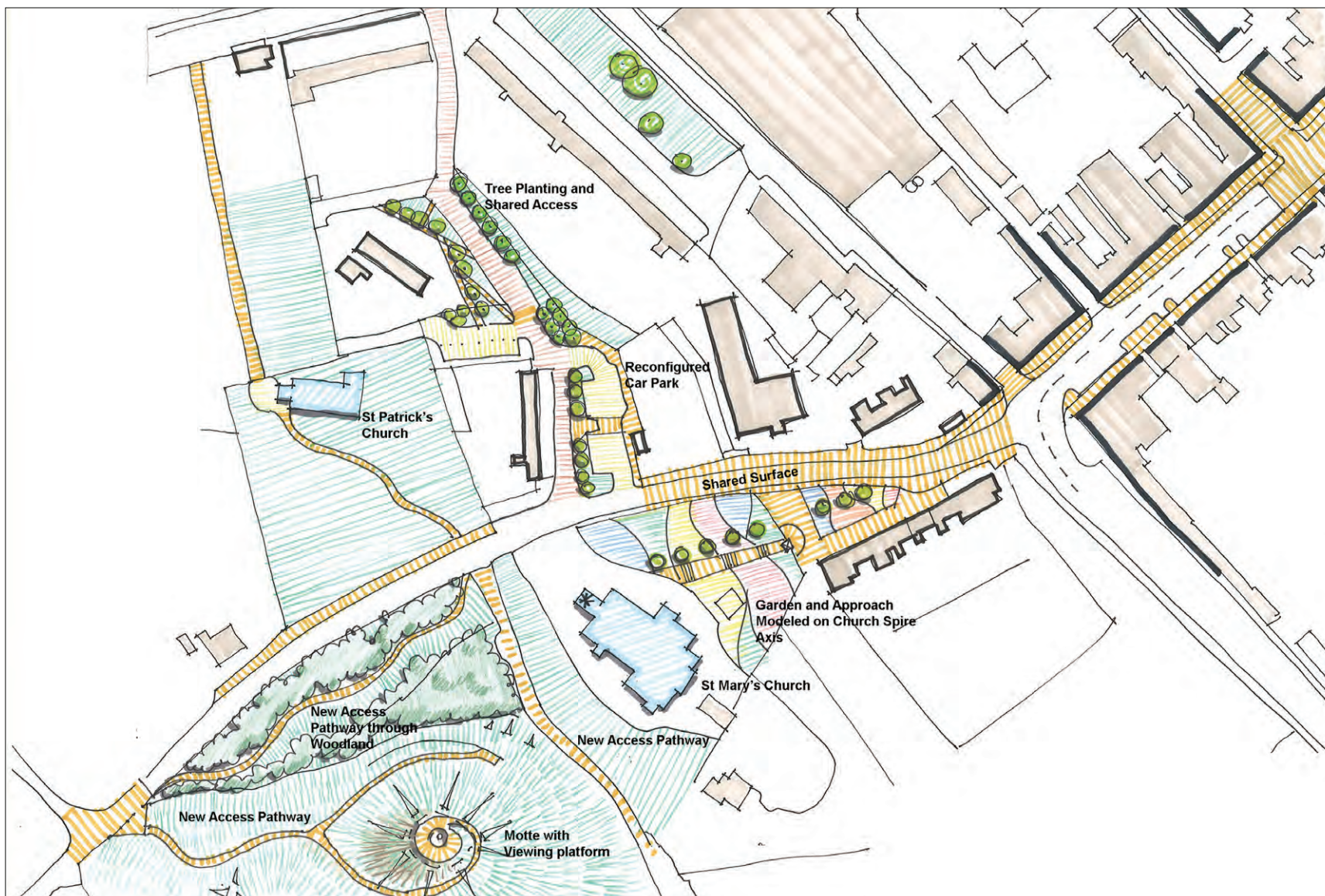


Figure 15: Schematic Proposal for Link from Main Street to Motte and Church



Figure 16: Sketch of Possible Access Arrangements to the Motte

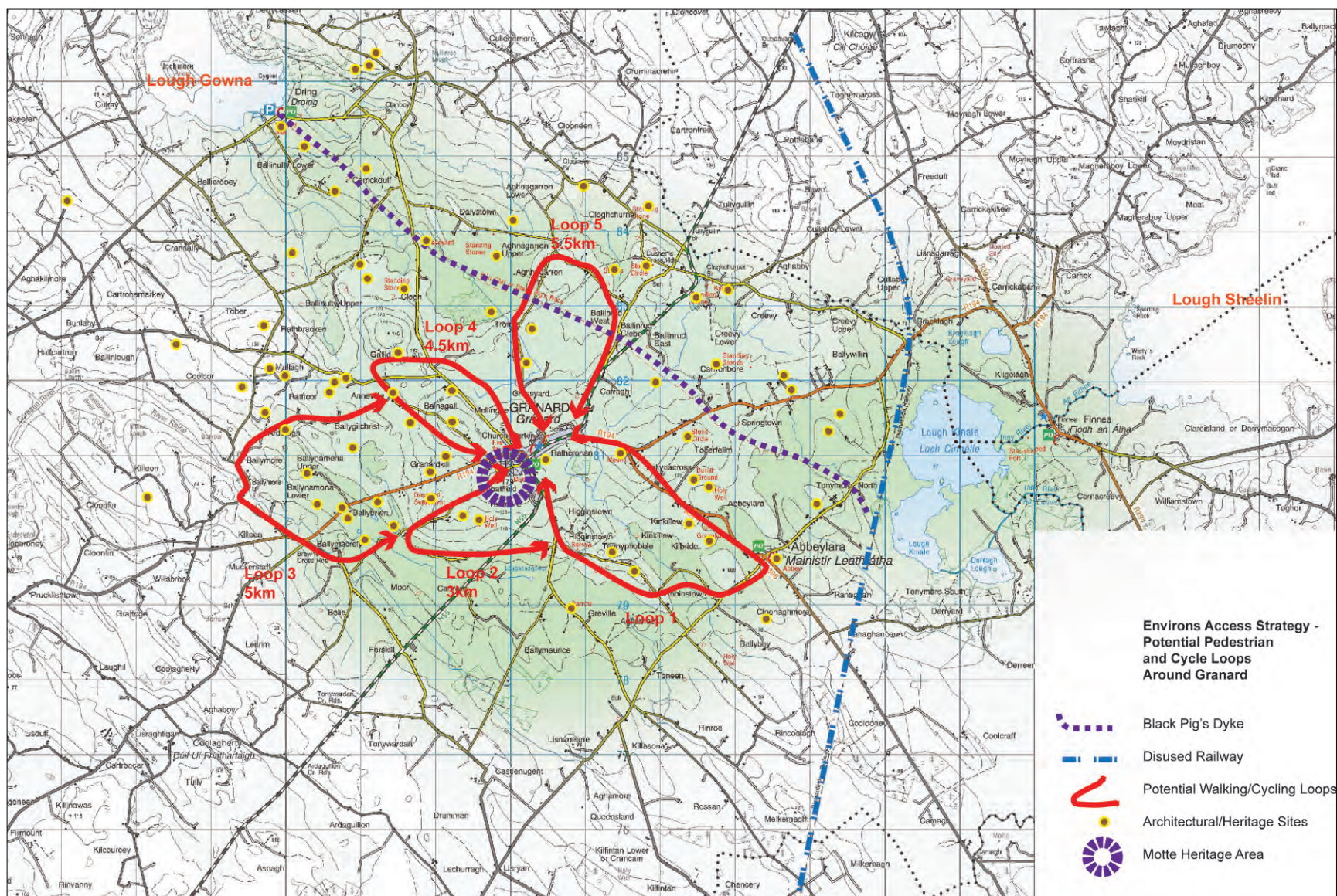


Figure 17: Potential Walking and Cycling Routes around Granard.

5.2 Public Realm Improvement Strategies Within The Town Centre

Figure 12 Public Realm Challenges and Opportunities identifies some of the challenges and opportunities which currently prevail with regard to the general public realm character of the town centre. To address these, a diverse range of public realm strategies has been developed. Figure 13 Public Realm Strategies, identifies and locates these 11 strategies for the improvement of the public realm within the town centre. While these comprise primarily physical works (hard infrastructure), they should be seen as complimentary to other 'soft' infrastructure initiatives which are described further on in this plan. They will also support general building repairs and improvements, in particular along the main commercial streets, which this plan encourages individual property owners to implement.

While the strategies are described separately, in some instances they will be implemented sequentially or can be carried out as a series of linked initiatives which cumulatively can lead to an improved public realm. To assist in planning implementation a number of the strategies are identified as being core strategies, i.e., strategies considered as of greater priority due to the impact they can have and their key role in protecting the existing qualities of the town. However, circumstances may warrant implementation of other strategies in advance of the core strategies and so implementation must retain flexibility.

The strategies complement the proposals for the wider hinterland around Granard.

- Core Strategies
- Main Street Public Realm Works Phase 1: – This includes pavement widening, public lighting and guidelines for improving/protecting street frontages
- Market House
- Motte
- Church Lands public space
- North Backlands Carpark and Proposed Links
- North Backlands Development Completion
- Historic routes and laneways within the town





Figure 18: Public Realm Strategy North Backlands

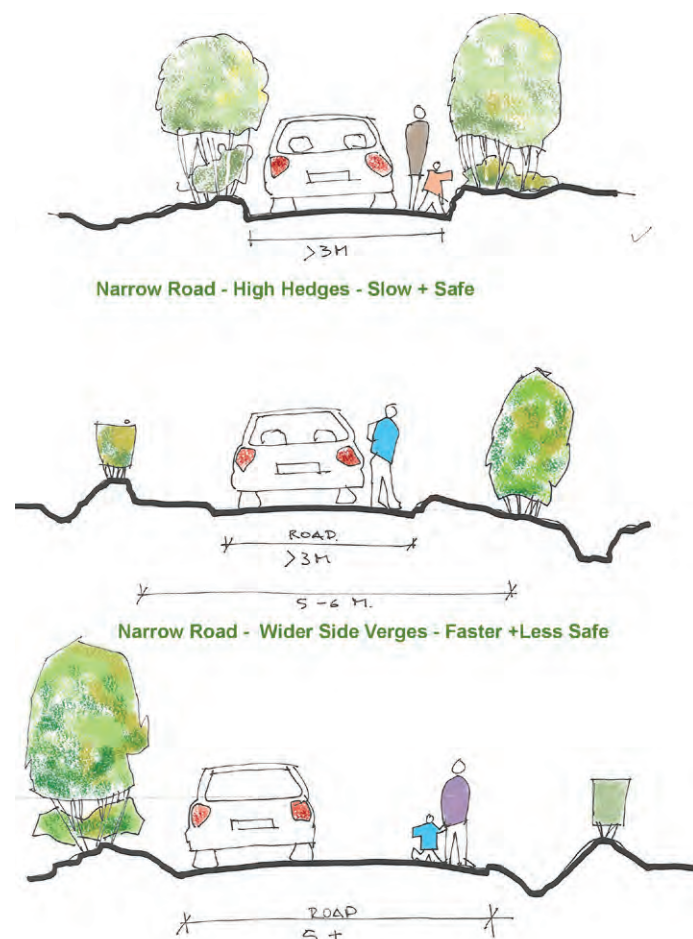


Figure 19: The width of roads and the character of the edge conditions (hedges margins etc) has a significant effect on drivers behaviour and the usefulness of the road for pedestrians and cyclists.



Other Strategies

- Semi-public improvement areas
- Principal Entrances
- Main Street public realm improvements Phase 2 (however, this might be implemented with Phase 1, depending on resources and sufficient off-street parking – ref north backlands carpark.
- South Backlands

Maps Nos x and y illustrate the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Main Street public realm improvements. The separation of these important public realm improvements is address likely availability of resources and the need to phase the implementation in conjunction with provision of off-street parking. Map z describes how a number of the strategies might be developed. The completion of the North Backlands area to an improved plan, which considers scale, grain, streetscape, uses, permeability and general public realm objectives, can enhance and support the main street and provide a sustainable model of development within the town centre. This plan is also capable of being implemented incrementally which may better suit available resources.

5.3 Generating Excitement – (Events And Activities)

- Create better linkages between current regular activities. So, concentrate on Wednesdays (Mart day) and Friday's (Country Markets and rural bus service) and arrange other events around these. Reschedule Country Market or bus times – or add buses – to ensure one can serve the other. Organise other activities on Fridays, for example a film club, dancing or art classes. Make Fridays (and possibly Wednesdays) GRANARD DAY, and market this widely.
- Encourage use of shops along main street, if even for temporary events. For example, support the pop-up system of short, low rent leases to encourage new uses, with a view to some long term successes. Perhaps some uses may only function on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Explore possibility of a temporary use for the large, empty, retail unit to the rear (north) of Main Street/Barrack Street (part of larger incomplete development). Could this be used for large community gatherings
- The proposed network of walking and cycle loops– all leading from and to the town centre – is aimed at bringing more people, local and visitor, into the town. More people in the town will support existing and new businesses.
- Encourage the provision of a hotel with function and evening dining facilities
- Encourage greater cafe and eating opportunities within the town centre. These should work with and serve the walkers/cyclists.
- Explore possibility of an artisan bakery outlet – building on the prominence of Granard as a bakery town of long tradition.



Plate 24: Smaller roads (generally 3 metres or less) with high hedges are safer for pedestrians as traffic tends to drive more slowly



Plate 25: Fast roads like the N55 are uncomfortable and unsafe environments for pedestrians and cyclists alike, particularly when they have no hard shoulder or grass margin.



Plate 26: As road widths decrease traffic tends to slow, however even on smaller roads with low hedges and grass margins traffic will travel fast with consequent danger for pedestrians and cyclists. Some interventions can make these roads safer for walkers/cyclists etc (see below)

Plates 24-27: Access to Rural Roads Around Granard



Plate 27: The use of paint and road markings can make roads safer for pedestrians and emphasise priority for walkers and cyclists.

- Develop projects with the local schools which make increase their physical presence within the town and engender greater understanding, appreciation and interest in their town. These projects should be fun and aimed at capturing imaginations.
- Encourage continued residential uses within the historic centre. Imaginative refurbishments and adaptations of the fine street buildings which can also exploit the long back gardens, can ensure distinctive and comfortable homes. What is required at the outset, however, is a collective community belief and commitment to the town as a place in which people can live, work, shop and recreate.

5.4 Heritage A Resource For All (Historic Fabric And Significant Features)

Behind the public realm strategies for the town centre, described above, is the aim to consolidate and integrate the rich cultural heritage of Granard as part of the civic, social and cultural life of its community. The heritage of Granard belongs to all its citizens and is a key part of the distinctive identity of the town. It is an inheritance of the endeavours and lives of previous generations and should be handed on, in good condition and well respected, to future generations. Possibly the best way to achieve this, is if our heritage is seen as an essential component of everyday life. Within this approach, however, is the need to understand the particular qualities of the different parts of this heritage and to protect and maintain these special qualities in a careful and informed manner. If this can be managed well, the heritage of Granard will be part of the town's long term sustainable survival.

5.5 Getting Around (Movement Access And Car Parking)

The presence of heavy through traffic, with a high proportion of HGV's in the town undoubtedly has a negative impact on the ambience of Granard. It makes the pedestrian experience less pleasant than it should be and gives rise to concerns for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in the town. It is apparent that this has had an impact on how people perceive and move through the town and in during the study we did not see any significant use of cycles.

The LAP envisages a bypass running to the southeast of the town however delivery of this piece of infrastructure is dependent on the development of adjoining lands. In the current economic climate it is difficult to envisage the construction of this by pass in the foreseeable future. Realistic proposals should be prepared to improve the current situation on the Main Street these should include some or all of the following:-

- Reorganise all parking to 'parallel' along the street. The current arrangement (a mix of parallel and herringbone parking is untidy and unsafe)
- Rebuild the footpaths at the northern end of the town. This area provides access to a number of schools and the current arrangement does not meet the required standards.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience by providing additional controlled crossing points and wider footpaths (this will cost some parking)





Figure 20: Strategy North Backlands



Figure 21: Sketch of potential development north of Main Street

- Consider the provision of controlled parking in the Main Street (Pay and Display) with charges balanced to favour short rather than long stay parking.
- A cooperative approach between property owners and commercial operators is required to provide off street car parking on adjacent back lands as envisaged in the Local Area Plan. This could significantly improve the perception of parking within the town.
- The feasibility of providing of cycling lanes should be reviewed in the light of the forthcoming National Cycle Manual (to be published by the National Transport Authority). While it will be difficult to provide space for cycles on the busier roads without significant expense there are many other options in and around Granard where cycle lanes and routes could be provided.
- The unfinished development off Barrack Lane is not only a detracting element on the urban character of the town it also has a negative impact on the ability of pedestrians to move around the town (its permeability). The scheme, as proposed included both an off street car park and a pedestrian link through to the Longford road. See Fig ? This link would significantly assist in helping and encouraging pedestrians to move around the town. In the section below 'The Great Outdoors' the possibility of providing pedestrian and cycling options around the town are explored further.
- The steep hill on which the Motte and the Catholic Church are located are a natural attraction. However the steep grades are a challenge to those who find walking difficult, who have to manage push chairs or wheel chairs. An alternative route should be developed via Water Lane to provide access in line with the 'Access for All' policy document

5.6 The Great Outdoors (Open Space And Links To The Hinterland)

Objectives

The objectives are to ensure that the open space and hinterland of the town are managed and developed to:

- Improve the presentation and understanding of the heritage of the town and its surroundings.
- Provide for the well-being of residents and visitors to the town.
- Enhance Granard as an attractive and distinctive destination.



Well being and exercise

Regular exercise is now seen as an essential prerequisite for healthy lifestyles for all sections of the population from pre-school to senior citizens. Furthermore, research has established that access to rural and natural environments is beneficial in term of mental wellbeing. The Public Realm has an important role to play in meeting this requirement by providing opportunities for exercise and engagement with nature that can be easily incorporated into everyone's daily routine. The demand for quality walking and cycling routes is evident in both urban and rural areas. The sight of people of all ages out walking and cycling for pleasure and exercise is common in the longer summer evenings and at weekends throughout the year. However, despite appearances to the contrary, the opportunity to undertake these activities in an appropriate setting is frequently lacking in and around rural towns. Despite being set in an attractive agricultural environment access to viable 'off-road' routes is constrained by access and property considerations. Many of the roads around the town carry speed limits and/or geometry that are incompatible with the provision of safe walking or cycling routes. However there are opportunities both on and off road to provide a significant resource. The Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs through organisations such as the Longford Community Resources Limited has the capacity to fund routes under the Walks Scheme. See figures 14, 17 and 19 and plates 24 - 27)

The strategy makes provision for a wide range of walking routes and links by:

- Using existing roads and paths around and through the town
- Identifying pedestrian/cycling loops on adjoining roads linking to the hinterlands
- Linking to the potential long distance walking routes of the Black Pig's Dyke and the Disused Railway
- Providing appropriate works to calm traffic and provide safe pedestrian routes along rural roads.
- Indicating an alternative access arrangement for the schools with a new safer drop off point.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are seen as an important facility in encouraging activity and cooperative play amongst youngsters. Current best practice indicates that playgrounds should be located close to residential areas (i.e. within a few minutes walk of home). The existing playground while constructed to a high standard is some distance from residential areas. The strategy recommends that a number of smaller play facilities are located around the town at locations close to the existing residential areas.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consultations And Workshops

The involvement of the public is central to the successful preparation of a scheme such as the Granard Public Realm Strategy. To achieve the best possible results it is essential that stakeholders and the public's concerns, views and values are incorporated into decision making and planning for the area. Public participation is central to achieving 'buy-in' from stakeholders and the local community.

Stakeholders include:

- Local groups
- Local representatives
- Local businesses

A stakeholder participation meeting took place in Granard on December 16th 2010 to inform the preparation of the Granard Public Realm Strategy. Representatives from the various stakeholders groups in the town were invited to attend the session. David Bagnall and Aimee Powderly from Brady Shipman Martin Planners and Landscape Architects, Grainne Shaffrey from Shaffrey Associates Architects and Mairaid Ni Conghaile, Heritage Officer with Longford local authorities facilitated the session on behalf of the project team. Ten members of local stakeholder groups attended. They were:

Roy Burke:	Granard Pitch and Putt
Matthew Connell:	Granard Show
G. O'Rourke:	Comhaltas Ceoiltoiri Eireann and Harp Competition
Patrick Maguire:	Granard Pitch and Putt and Granard Minor Club
Patty Fitzgerald:	Granard I.C.A
Bridie McMahon:	Granard I.C.A
Tracy Shanly:	Granard Garda Station
Nancy Carr:	Buttermarket, Chamber
P. Reilly:	M.C.C
S. Gettings:	Granard Playground



Presentation

Following introductions by Mairead Ni Conghaile the meeting commenced with a brief power point presentation made by David Bagnall of Brady Shipman Martin and Grainne Shaffrey of Shaffrey Associates Architects.

Definition of Public Realm

A definition of the 'public realm' of Granard was explained as encompassing all of the outdoor space in Granard that belong to everyone. This includes streets, civic spaces, public sports facilities, play facilities, and where people 'hang out'. It also includes places where people travel to to exercise and recreate, parks and forests for example. The public realm also includes places that people use subject to permission, schools, churches, clubs and privately run sports facilities for example. Indoor spaces that are regularly used by the public can also be classified as being in the public realm – libraries, market halls, pubs, restaurants etc.

Context

Facts about Granard were then outlined to the group to give context to the task at hand.

- The population of Granard is falling – it now stands at below 1000 people.
- There is a good employment base within the town.
- The town is strategically located on a National Route.
- The Local Authority has significant land bank in and around the town
- Granard avoided the excesses of the Celtic Tiger.
- The town enjoys strong architectural character
- The Motte and church are iconic features within the town.
- The town enjoys a role as an angling base
- It is well served by educational facilities
- The town has limited evening/night-time facilities
- There is currently limited prospect for further commercial development
- Political and administrative structures of the town may change

Historic Form of Granard

Grainne Shaffrey presented historical maps of Granard from 1793 and 1888. The maps show that the urban form and grain of the town have largely been retained since those times, with the motte acting as a focal point for the main street. Historical photos of Granard town show buildings of the same scale as the present day. The importance of the wealth of archaeological features surrounding Granard was also highlighted.

Workshop

Following the presentation the attendees were split into two groups. Each group was given a worksheet to facilitate discussion about Granard. The groups were asked to discuss the following:

- Best things about Granard
- Most serious problems affecting Granard
- How you would enhance the positives of Granard town?
- How you would eradicate the negatives of Granard town?



Appendix 2: Planning Context

National

This Public Realm Strategy is formed within a hierarchy of spatial plans which set out the development aims of the national/regional/local government. On a national scale the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a strategic plan for the development of Ireland over a 20 year period. Its chief aims are to achieve balanced and sustainable social, economic and physical development throughout the country. The plan aims to make the most of the cities, towns and rural places throughout the country in order to maximise opportunities, encourage higher a quality of life and make better places to live in.

The NSS highlights Granard as an Urban Centre (population circa 1,000) within the Midlands area of the country in a location classified as a Rural Area with Strong Potential for Diversification. The Strategy recognises that there is considerable future potential to complement the agricultural sector in the Midlands with additional tourism and recreational activity.

Regional

The Midland Regional Authority Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 set the long-term strategic planning framework which aims to direct the future growth of the Midland Region over the medium to long term and works to implement national policy as set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). Granard is classified within the RPGs as a Key Service Town within the Northern Development Area of the Midland region. Other Key Service Towns in the region include Birr, Edenderry, Portarlinton and Castlepollard. These Key Service Towns act as important drivers for local economies in areas that are comparatively more remote from the main population centres of the region. The RPGs see the development of Key Service Towns as closely linked to the prospects to their closest principle or gateway towns, ie that the future development of Granard is closely linked to the prospects of Longford.

The Northern Development Area of the Midland region has strong links between the Border and West regions and is further removed from the influence of the Greater Dublin Area than the rest of the region. This is evident in Granard by the way in which it managed to avoid the development excesses of the Celtic Tiger era.

NDA P6 The NDA should plan for a future population growth by 2022 in the order of 7,150. Urban development within the smaller town and village network should be consolidated with the provision of physical, social and community infrastructure a priority.

NDA P3 Build upon existing strong businesses in the food, engineering and medical device sectors

NDA P10 Focused promotion and marketing of the natural heritage and cultural resources of the area and its associated high quality of life, which is vital for its development and a valuable contribution towards the identity of the region as a whole.

It is an aim of the Intra Regional Road Investment priorities to develop a bypass of the N55 at Granard.

Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015

Granard is described as a 'Key Service Town' in the Longford County Development Plan 2009-2015. The purpose of key service towns is to drive the own local economies within their areas.

2. Granard - Key Service Town. County growth centre with a regional element. Strong emphasis will be placed on the growth of the local economy in Granard and the development of its vital administrative and social functions to support and complement growth in the region, developing and enhancing synergistic links with the adjacent Border Region (Dev Plan pg23)

County Retail Policy Strategic Policy 2

Key Service Towns (Granard, Edgeworthstown, Ballymahon)

It is Council policy to encourage the growth and development of retail floorspace and other town centre services/ functions in Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon in order to support their transition into more self-sustaining centres within the county's settlement and retail hierarchies. The Council will encourage the consolidation and increase of the retail functions of these centres to enable them to fulfil their important retail/services function within the county settlement/retail hierarchy; to realise their role as 'key service towns' under the provisions of the Midlands Regional Planning Guidelines; and help them to maintain their position within the hierarchy outlined in the Retail Planning Guidelines. (Dev Plan pg 65)

General Retail Policy 1 of the County Development Plan to promote and facilitate improvements in the public realm.

TOU 9 a) The Council shall promote and encourage the development of "Honeypot" tourism developments at the locations indicated below Granard - Granardkille, Lough Kinale, Derragh Lough, Lough Gowna, Black Pigs Dyke, Ballywillin Rail Station. (Dev plan pg 75)

Specific Road Policy 10 of the Development Plan includes the development of a by-pass to Granard by the N55

ARC 8: It is the policy of the Council to investigate and promote the provision of improved access to important archaeological sites such as those National Monuments in State ownership or guardianship including Granard Motte which is under the guardianship of the State.

