

KELLS Public Realm & Regeneration Plan

The preparation and implementation of the Plan will address many of the issues which are viewed as blockages to the redevelopment and regeneration of the town centre in Kells. The plan will seek to be the catalyst for the revitalisation of the town centre and surrounding areas. It will also support a continued pattern of development that respects the character of the town. The Council hopes that its implementation will really improve the social, economic and environmental assets of Kells for all who live, work and visit the town.

Public Consultation

The consultation for the project took place in a variety of forms, both in person and using web based surveys, each with their own added benefits. Public engagement took place in October and November 2022 to seek the views of the community before progressing into developing strategies and ideas. This helped bring awareness to the project and helped people to gain an understanding of its ambition, possibilities, intentions, and scope.



What You Told Us

Below is a summary of the consultation feedback received.

What you like about Kells

- The heritage
- The sense of community and people
- The architecture and character of the older buildings in the town
- The character of the existing streetscape
- The retail in the town
- Its walkability
- The facilities

What you dis-like about Kells

- The lack of pedestrian crossings, no logical way to get around and unsafe for pedestrians
- Traffic speed and flow, no traffic calming measures with chaotic traffic network and therefore feel in town, uninviting
- Dangerous junctions
- Lack of parking facilities and dislike of current parking charges
- Need for additional seating areas in the town
- Poor signage and poorly displayed navigation of heritage areas
- Derelict / vacant properties
- No cycle lanes
- Narrow and uneven footpaths
- Not enough small car parks to facilitate shoppers short term and workers long term
- No local park or facilities for dogs
- Under-utilised heritage sites



Strengths

- 01 The Heritage and History
- 02 The Community and The People
- 03 The Character and Sense of Place
- 04 Great Place to Live
- 05 The Facilities
- 06 Well Connected Infrastructure

Challenges

- 01 Heritage sites always closed
- 02 Derelict Houses
- 03 Need for wider/safer footpaths
- 04 Not enough parking, need for off street parking. Incentive long term parking outside of town centre
- 05 Connectivity of Spaces
- 06 Dangerous junctions
- 07 Better crossing points needed at the cross/tourist centre
- 08 Too much Traffic
- 09 One way system was disastrous for pedestrians. If this was to be looked at again input from pedestrians is very important

Opportunities

- 01 Tourist office needs coffee shop and gift shop and more toilets
- 02 Develop and open heritage sites for tourism
- 03 Dedicated community centre
- 04 New car park and extended long-term car park
- 05 Pedestrian crossings
- 06 Cycle lanes- make the town and surrounding roads cycle friendly
- 07 Walking Park/Dog Park
- 08 Youth centre/ Sport facilities
- 09 Interpretive Signage and Heritage plaques
- 10 Shop front strategy linked to town and its heritage
- 11 More Greenery (planting)
- 12 For local craft and culture
- 13 Connect the fronts with the backs
- 14 Multi-generation Housing

Threats

- 01 Heritage assets are closed i.e Round tower, Colmcille's House and Spire of Lloyds
- 02 The town centre retail is dying
- 03 Lots of trip hazards in the town
- 04 Speeding agricultural vehicles
- 05 New road signage to dominate the town centre and be placed in front of home/shop windows
- 06 The town should be left alone
- 07 Conserving the original character and streetscapes
- 08 Not preserving buildings and existing character, (restoring derelict buildings without keeping its existing character)

The next steps:

There are currently no funds in place, however, this plan and the actions within, will be used to apply for future funding to help regenerate the future of the town. The plan enables a considered holistic approach rather than a piecemeal reactive to response to change.

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Upon completing the engagement process we were able to derive the below conclusions and project objectives to take forward into creating a Public Realm and Regeneration Plan for Kells.

Objectives for the plan:

01

Celebrate the heritage through the design of the public realm

02

Introduce new pedestrian crossing points through the town to create a more inviting, usable and comfortable public space

03

Reconsider balance between pedestrian, cycling and vehicular space

04

Implement traffic calming measures within the town

05

Rationalise parking within Kells ensuring good quality short-term parking and locations for appropriate longer-term parking

06

Develop and implement a cohesive way-finding and signage strategy for the town

07

Identify opportunities to enhance local biodiversity and introduce green and blue infrastructure within the streets

08

Ensure existing and new community facilities are accessible and well connected in the town

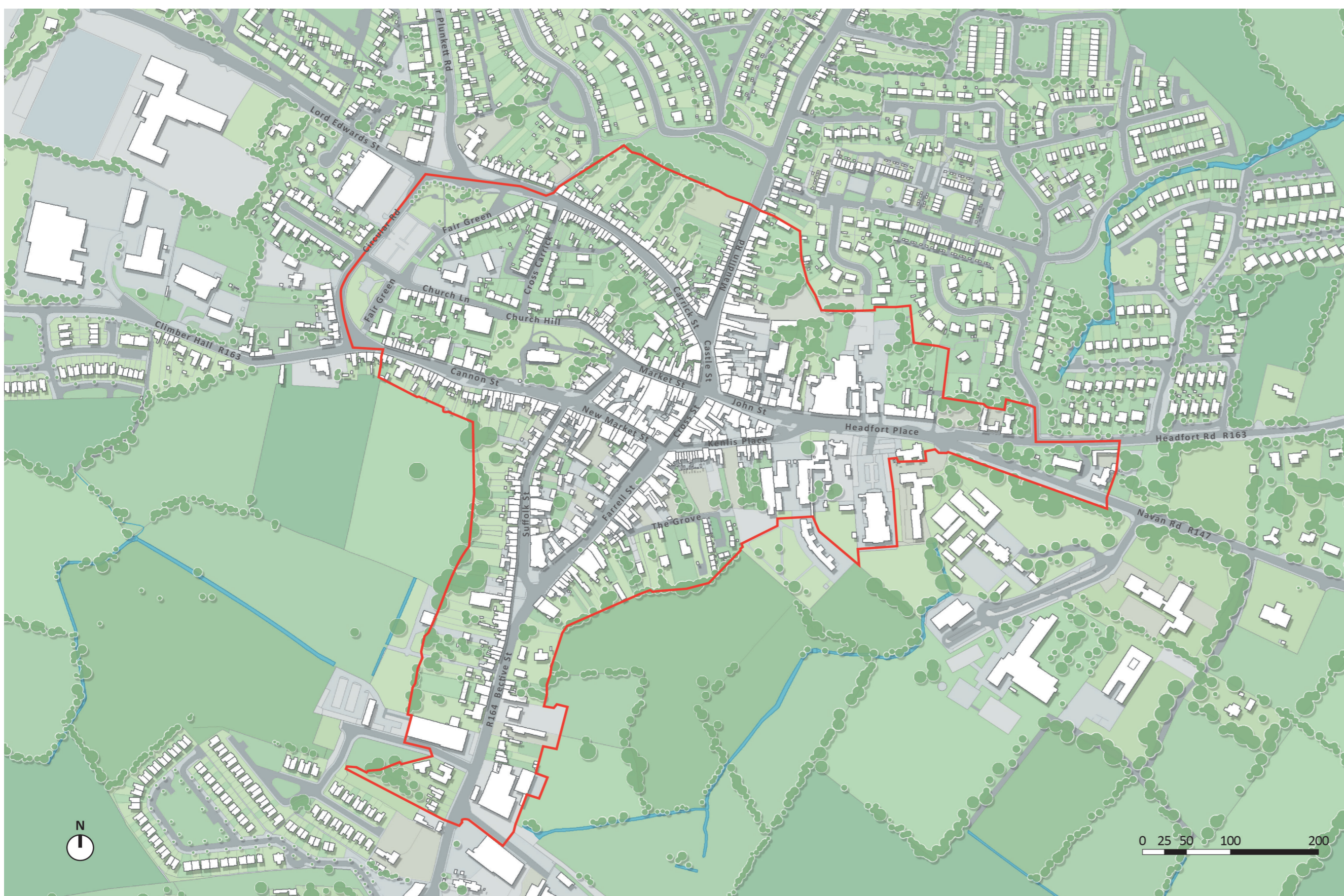
09

Encourage the reuse of derelict buildings by activating and improving the adjacent public realm

10

Promote a well-connected and sustainable development for the front-lands and back-lands, which contributes to the overall town centre

Kells Regeneration Proposal:



The plan will seek to be the catalyst for the revitalisation of the town centre and surrounding areas whilst pursuing a continued pattern of development that respects the inherent characteristics of the natural and built environment. This includes the following measures:

- Create recognisable gateways on arrival into town.
- Determine different street typologies throughout the town which respond to their function and locations.
- Define a strategy for off-street car parking to ensure a balance for the different user types in the town centre.
- Create new multi purpose and flexible public spaces in the town centre which promote a range of event and activities.
- Identify opportunities for redevelopment or future new developments which complements the exiting town centre
- Ensure any future back-land development sites are well connected to the town centre
- Create new pedestrian and cycling links through the back-lands to link residential areas to local schools and amenities.

In addition to an overall town strategy the following specific actions and initiatives have been identified:

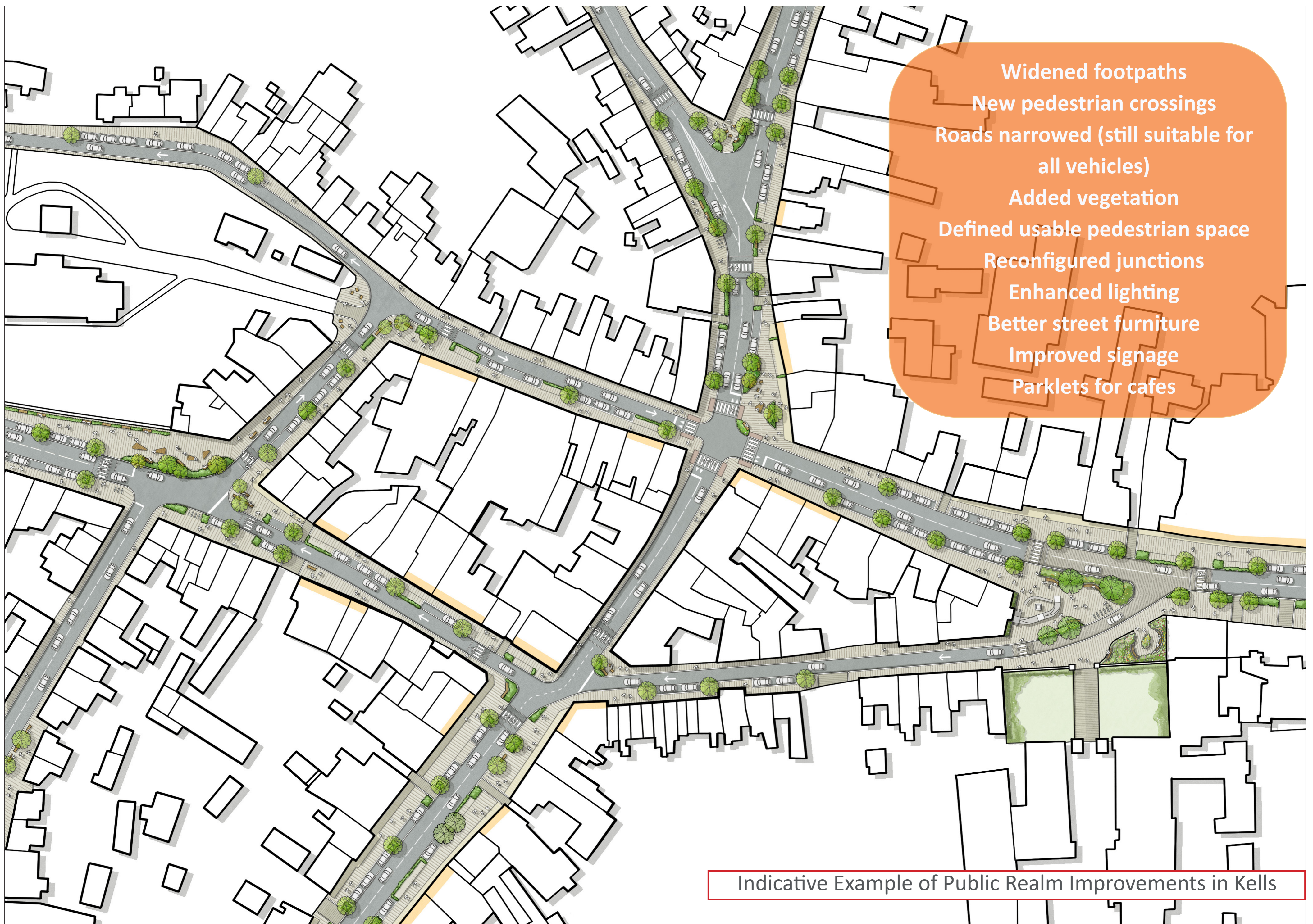
1. Inclusive streets for all
2. Improving parking
3. Celebrating Arts and Culture

4. An improved town centre core
5. Finding a new future for vacant buildings

6. Revitalising building facades
7. Connecting heritage through way-finding

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1.0 Inclusive Streets for All



Artist's Impression of the Design:



Existing View: Farrell Street



Existing View: Arrival at John Street



Existing View: Market Street



Artists impression: Farrell Street



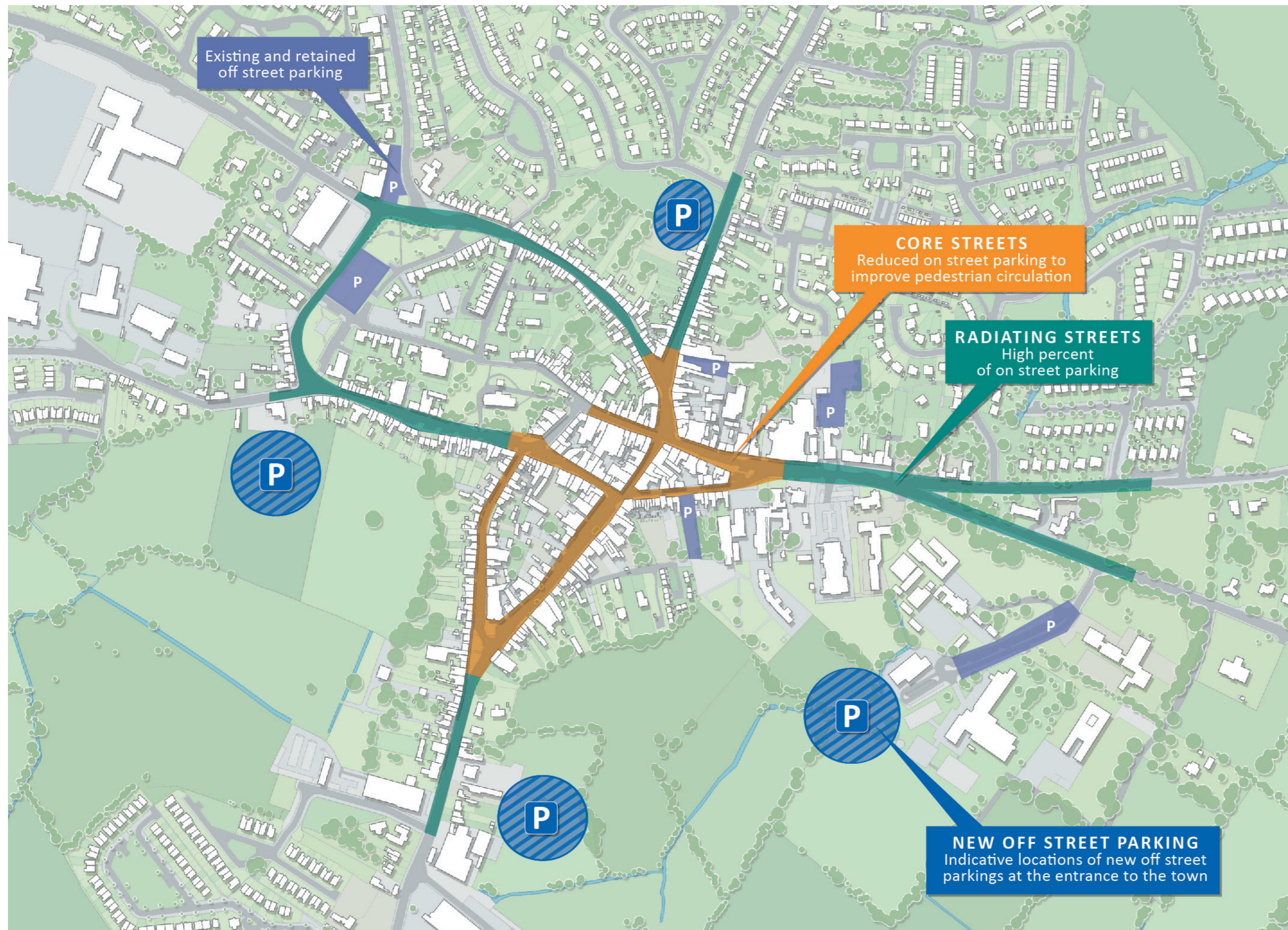
Artists impression: Arrival at John Street



Artists impression: Market Street

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2.0 Improving Parking



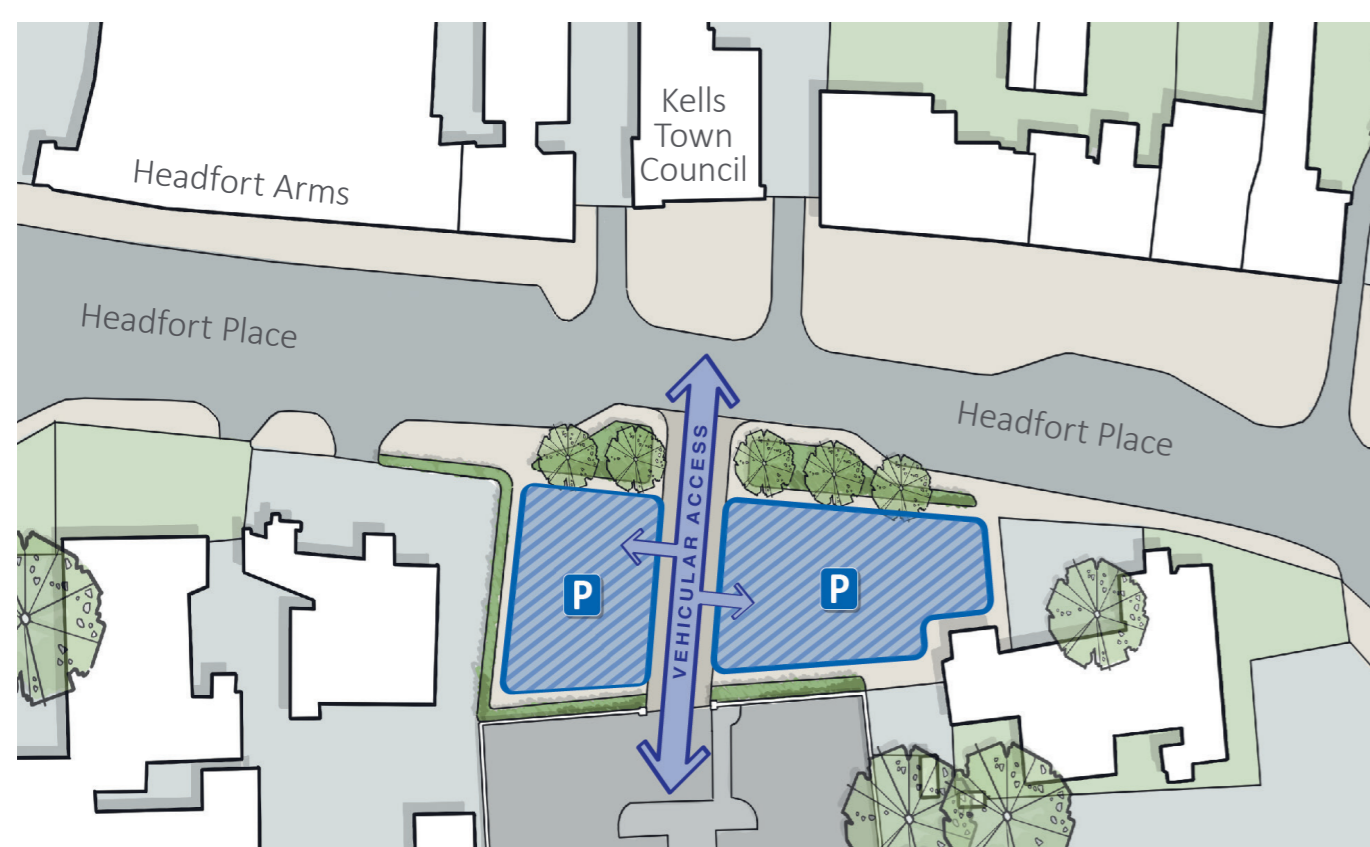
Kells town centre is dominated by vehicles, both in terms of roads and parking.

In line with the aspirations of the public engagement process the balance between vehicles and pedestrians needs to be addressed. New off street car parks are needed along with encouraging use of the existing ones. This in turn will allow the reduction of some on street spaces in order to introduce more comfortable footpaths, new crossing points and generally reduce vehicle dominance.

This initiative outlines several opportunity sites for potential off street car parks, all located at entrances to the town. This is to encourage those who wish to stay for longer durations to park at these location, thus freeing up necessary on street spaces within the core of the town.

It is important that long stay parking is within the off-street car parks and is encouraged through the right enforcement measures. Long stay car parking along the streets should be prohibited.

3.0 Celebrating Arts and Culture

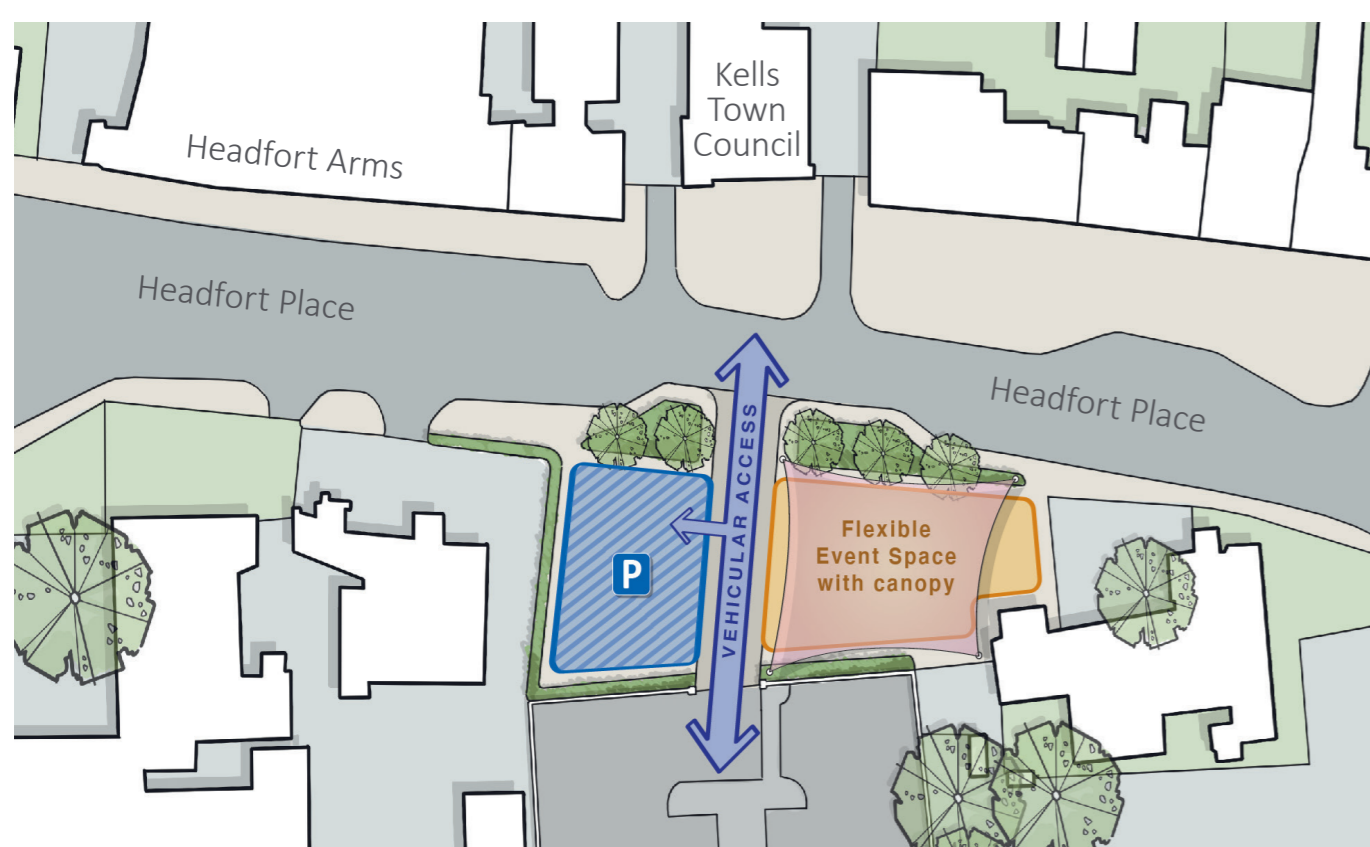


Kells is a town of historic importance with significant heritage which makes it a unique town in the County. This history and heritage make it an important tourist destination in 'Ireland's Ancient East' and the Boyne Valley. Kells has a strong community base with a number of community, social, sporting, business, historic, cultural and education orientated groups.

This Proposal aims to support the growth of facilitating Arts and Cultural events in Kells Town Centre.

The focus of the project is to create an outdoor flexible space that can be used for events,

activities and markets. This is then linked to a number of key buildings that have been identified that are currently in use. Wayfinding, signage, interpretation, ease of access, movement between the venues are all considered important aspects to allow the town's art and culture to continue to grow and further enhance the experience.



The Kells Creative Placemaking Plan have identified significant dormant buildings to re-purpose and develop into new cultural facilities throughout the town of Kells.

These include:

1. The Sawmills, which has become Kells Print Works Centre for typography
2. The Courthouse, which has become a cultural hub for festivals, film viewings and exhibition space.
3. The Convent, will become the Kells Convent Studios for Artists residential and working space.
4. The Chapel, will become the Chapel Cinema and Cafe Bar for performances, culture cinema and art house venue.

The arts and cultural events hub proposal will help to compliment the works of this project and create a network of various cultural facilities available in the town.

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4.0 An Improved Town Centre Core

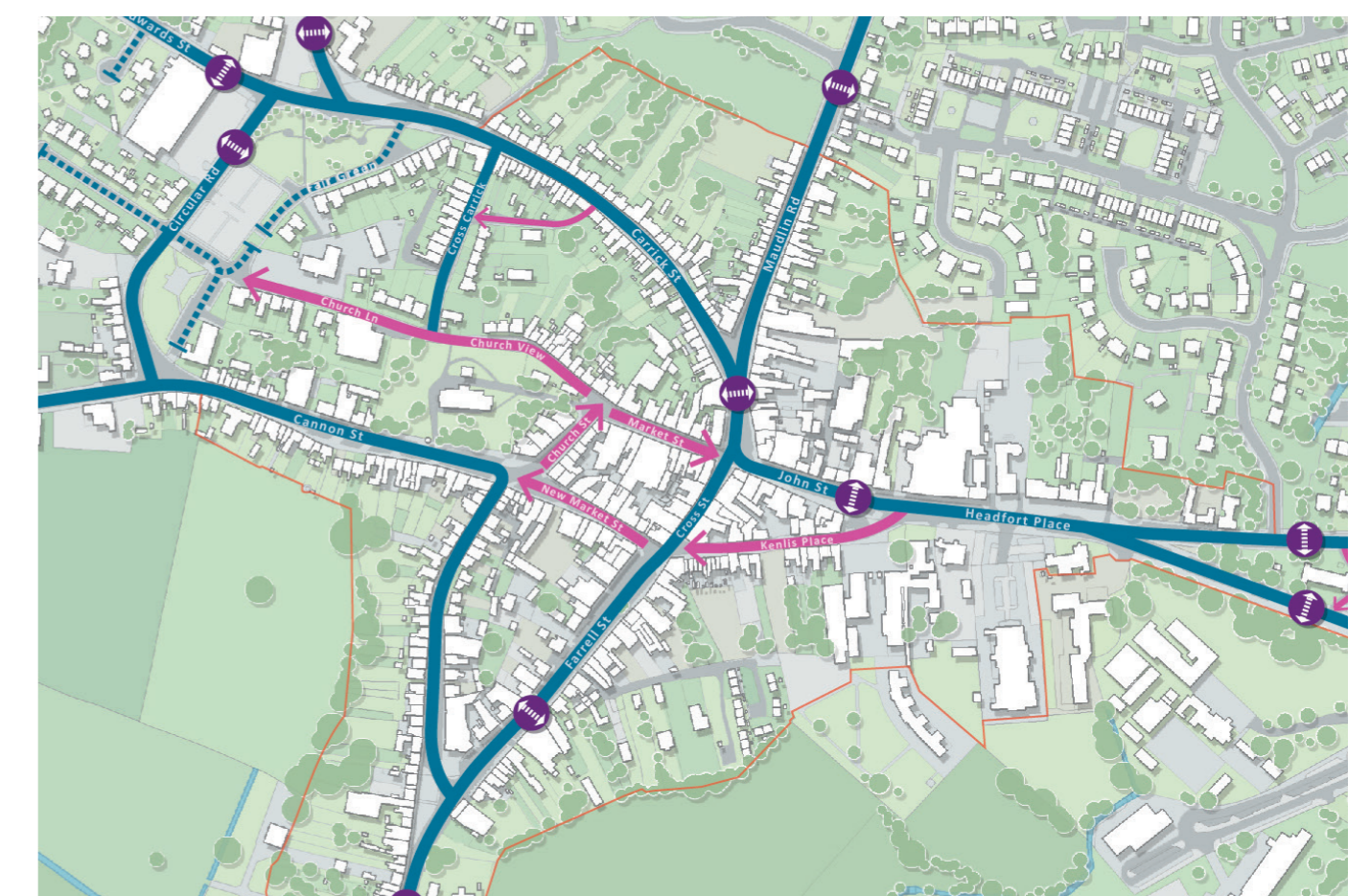
Putting People First

Dominating traffic flows were identified as a key issue in Kells town centre. Current traffic management gives priority to vehicles to move through the town as quick as possible, without stopping. This makes an uncomfortable experience for pedestrians and cyclists who wish to move safely through the streets and spaces. The lack of crossing points also encourages more people to drive as the perception of distance is greater. More footfall helps shops, businesses and the overall appreciation of the town, its heritage and all that it has to offer.



Proposed Traffic Flow

The proposal is to retain two way traffic through the town, however introduce a one way system from Kenlis Place, up New Market Street, along Church Street and back along Market Street. This will be accompanied by a series of new junction layouts.



- Existing Controlled Pedestrian Crossings
- Two way traffic
- One way traffic

The plan shows a proposed solution to address vehicular dominance and speed through the town.

The One-way System

By introducing a one way system within the core streets in the town centre, this allows for more space to be given to pedestrians and create more controlled junctions within the town centre.

Pedestrian Crossings

Regular pedestrian crossings along the streets will allow for safer pedestrian movement throughout the town. By introducing crossing at regular intervals will also help to slow down vehicle speeds.

Narrow Roads and Wider Footpaths

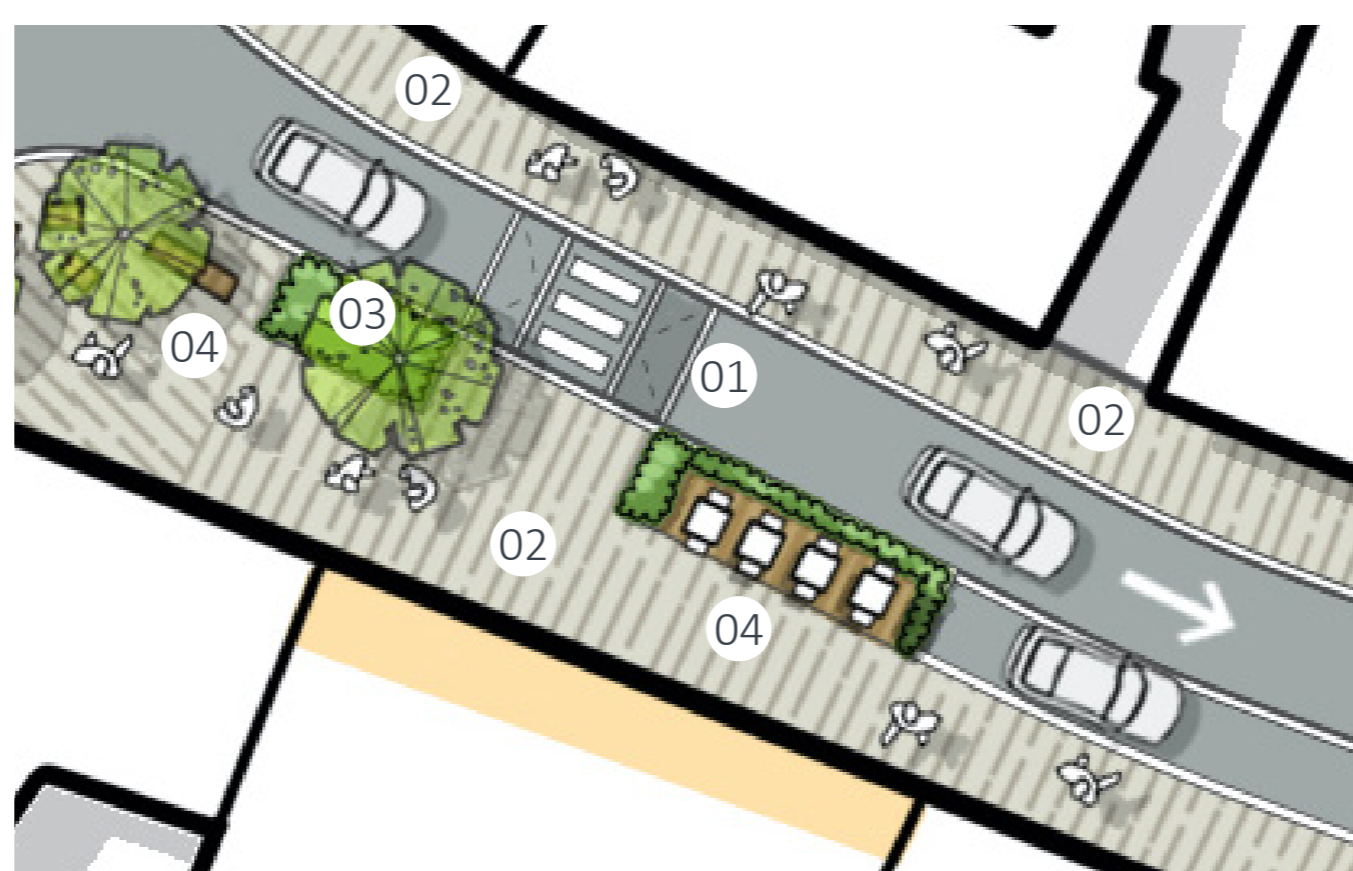
Creating streets which have wider footpaths and therefore narrower carriageways, where feasible, can allow for more space to be given to pedestrians in the town.

Better Cycling Provision

Introducing the proposed traffic management will create streets which are safer for cyclist to use. With the proposed additional public space, more cycle parking with adequate passive surveillance can be incorporated into the town.



Artist Impression for Market Street

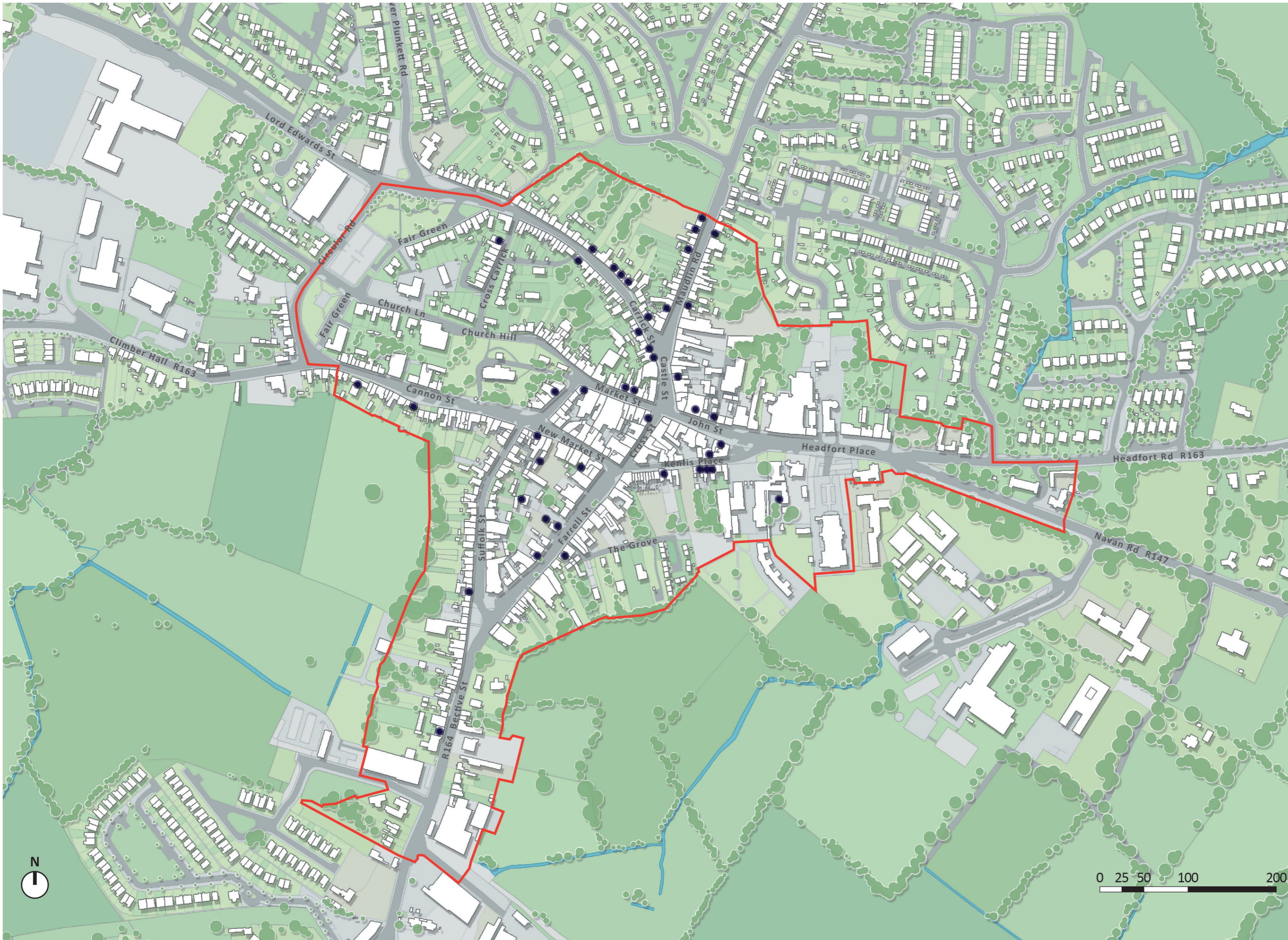


What a core street could look like

- 01. Pedestrian crossings with raised table
- 02. New paving to wide pedestrian footpaths
- 03. New trees
- 04. Seating

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5.0 Finding a Future Use for Vacant Buildings



The adjacent plan shows the vacant properties identified in Kells in April 2023.

This initiative looks to address these vacant properties in the town centre and encourage their redevelopment. There are several funds including the Croí Cónaithe (Towns) Fund which help property owners to refurbish vacant and derelict buildings.

The overall Public Realm enhancement in Kells will also help support the success of the town centre as a catalyst for regeneration to help to sustain redevelopment of properties in the town centre.

6.0 Revitalising Building Facades



The building frontage rejuvenation scheme will aim to support the improvement of the overall appearance of commercial and residential properties that front onto public streets within Kells town centre.

The appearance of shop fronts and the buildings in which they reside have a considerable impact and influence on the character of a place. They are an essential element not only of the buildings in which they are set, but also of the wider streetscape. A shop front that has been designed with respect given to the architecture heritage of the building and character of the surrounding area can add charm and vitality, making it attractive to shoppers and visitors alike.

This initiative will support owners of small independent businesses who contribute to the local environment and raise the image of town centres which in turn leads to increased local and visitor footfall.



This shows an example of a scheme to rejuvenate buildings by painting each property in a selected palette of colours.

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7.0 Connecting Heritage through Wayfinding

The heritage in Kells provides an opportunity to explore, wayfinding is the tool we use to successfully interpret and navigate through an area or space. Connecting the heritage through way-finding improve connectivity and helps draw attention to a towns existing assets. This can be made up not just of signs, but also built forms, routes, the natural environment and of course human behaviour.

The Town Heritage Trail

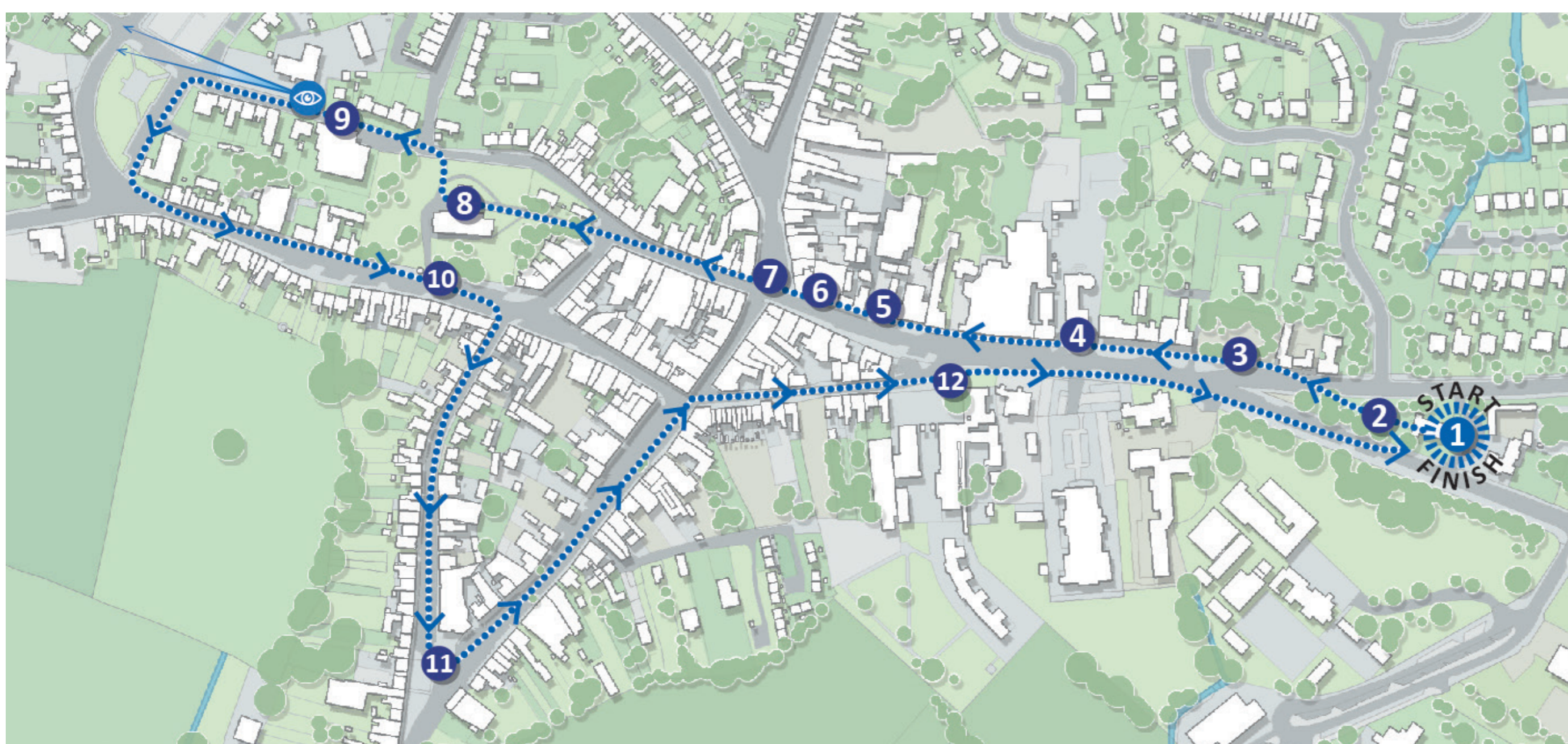
This scheme will develop upon the existing heritage audio trail to create more awareness and attraction to create a visually evident heritage trail in Kells Town centre. This can be developed through designs in the streetscape, interpretation and signage which will allow the heritage to become a more active aspect in the town. The proposed public realm improvements with wider footpaths and regular benches, will create the right environment to promote the heritage, along with the Arts, Culture and other amenities. Overall the promotion of a comfortable and legible pedestrian friendly town centre for all users.



Key attraction within Kells

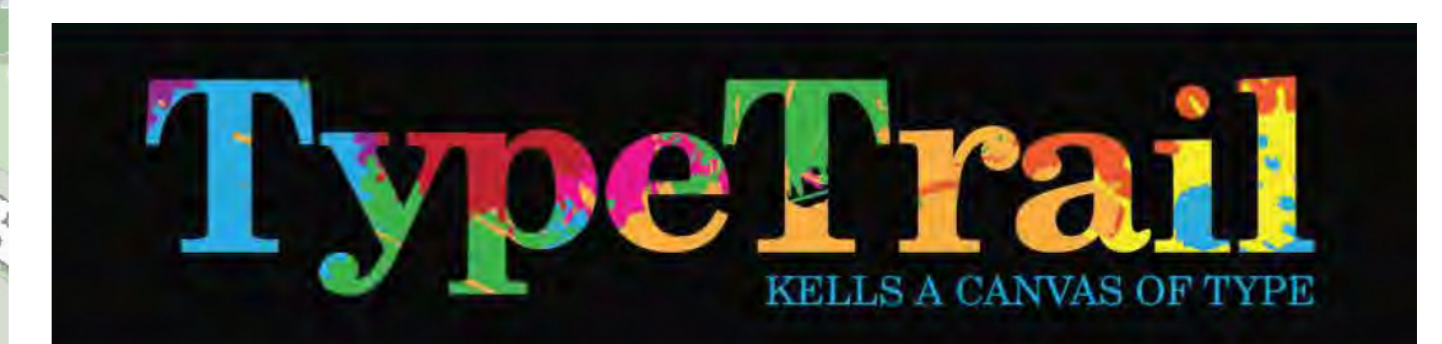
The adjacent plan shows buildings and landmarks of great heritage and architectural significance. We are keen to enhance the setting of these assets and locations.

-  Architectural Conservation Areas
-  Protected views (MDP 2021-27)
-  Key landmarks



Linking to Kells town to its heritage.

One of Kells annual festivals is "Type Trail" We propose that this is used in the design of the streets through paving design, the signs and the interpretation.



Proposed celebrated heritage walking tour:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 Old Courthouse- Tourism and Cultural Hub | 5 Oliver Usher Auction Rooms | 9 St Colmcille's House & View of Spire of Lloyds |
| 2 The Cross | 6 Fitzsimmons Bakery | 10 Monastic Site Round Tower |
| 3 St John's Cemetery | 7 Cross Roads, Previous location of Market Cross and general location of Kells Castle (1178-1800) | 11 Bective Square |
| 4 Kells Town Hall | 8 Kells Monastic Site | 12 Parnell Garden |