KELLS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013 - 2019

Appendix B
Kells Retail Review

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Áineas Éireann

comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

Kells Retail Review

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 John Spain Associates were appointed by Meath County Council in August 2012 to carry out a Retail Review for Kells to help inform the new Kells Development Plan 2013-2019. This retail review will build on the work undertaken for the Meath County Retail Strategy 2012 which forms part of the review of the County Plan.

1.1.2 In particular, this retail review will provide guidance on the following:

- A projection of the retail floorspace needs of Kells town and its catchment area up to 2019 and 2022 based on the projected changes in local population and consumer spending;
- Comment on and analyse the suitability of the 'backlands' and 'frontlands' sites to cater for retail development;
- Identify, following establishment of the retail needs assessment, the preferred location and form for town centre expansion, based upon a review of the 2006 Kells Retail Evaluation and the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013.

1.1.3 The Retail Planning Guidelines (RPG's) for Planning Authorities (2012), issued by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, require Local Authorities to prepare retail strategies and policies for their areas and to incorporate these, where appropriate, into their development plan.

1.1.4 Meath County Council have prepared a Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 which is accompanied by a Retail Strategy for the County. The County Retail Strategy provides guidance and policies for retail development at a strategic county level and aims to ensure a co-ordinated, sustainable approach to the assessment and provision of retail floorspace in the County.

1.1.5 The Planning Authority considered that it was appropriate to carry out a more detailed retail review for Kells, which would build on the findings and recommendations of the County Retail Strategy, in order to inform the Kells Development Plan 2013 - 2019. It is envisaged that the retail review will help inform the policies of the plan in respect of retail development and ensure that such policies are based on the most up to date information.

1.1.6 The retail review provides advice regarding the quantum, scale and type of retail development required in Kells. The retail review builds on the detailed survey work undertaken for the County Retail Strategy and seeks to provide specific guidance to ensure an appropriate planning framework is provided for retail development in the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019. The Kells Retail Evaluation 2006 and the Retail Impact Statement prepared for the 'Backlands' application, Reg. Ref.: KT800014, have been reviewed during the preparation of this Retail Review.

1.1.7 The Retail Review provides a planning framework for the development of Kells as a Level 3 Sub-County Town Centre in accordance with its designation in the County Retail Strategy and the 2008 Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. The Retail Review is based on analysis of the current retailing environment in the town, and includes policies and proposals to improve the profile of Kells as a retail centre in line with its designation as a Level 3 Sub-County Town Centre in the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. The Retail Review uses research and analysis from a number of sources including existing retail and planning policy; a household survey of consumer preferences in the retail catchment area (this is based on the survey undertaken as part of the County Retail Strategy preparation); and quantitative and qualitative analysis of the current retail environment in the town. The Retail Review proposes a series of measures and responses which can be taken to ensure that Kells develops to its full potential as a Level 3- Sub County Town Centre in the overall retail hierarchy of the GDA.

1.1.8 In accordance with the requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012, the Retail Review provides the following information which will help inform the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019:

- Outline of the level and form of retailing activity appropriate to Kells;
- Definition of the boundaries of the core shopping area of Kells town centre;
- An assessment of the requirement for additional retail floorspace in Kells for the period 2013-2019;
- Strategic guidance on the location and scale of retail development to support the moderate sustainable growth town status of Kells, including where appropriate identifying opportunity sites which are suitable and available and which match the future retailing needs of the area;
- Identification of sites which can accommodate the needs of modern retail formats in a way that maintains the essential character of the shopping area;
- Inclusion of objectives to support action initiatives in Kells town centre, and;
- Design guidance for the identified town centre expansion sites.

1.2 Introduction to the Study Area

1.2.1 The town of Kells is a designated heritage town and is situated in the north west of County Meath at the junction of the recently completed M3 Motorway (Dublin – Cavan – Donegal) and the recently upgraded N52 National Secondary Route (Dundalk-Mullingar). The recent completion of the M3 motorway to Kells and the associated bypass of the town by the N52 have considerably eased the traffic congestion in the town. The town is located 64 kilometres north west of Dublin, 15 kilometres north west of Navan and 50 kilometres south east of Cavan.

1.2.2 Kells is a picturesque town owing to its heritage, which traces its origins as a 9th century Columban Monastic settlement, and its current layout to eighteenth century town planning, under the First Earl of Bective. Kells was developed around the early medieval core of the Columban Monastery, with Saint Columba's church and round tower at its centre. In the 18th century the street plan was crossed by a network of major roads linking Dublin to the north west,

including Headfort Place. A number of the most impressive and important buildings in Kells date from the late 18th and early 19th Century such as the Courthouse, the Town Hall, the former Masonic Hall which now accommodates St. Columba's Credit Union and the Tower of Lloyd (as referred to in the NIAH survey "An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of County Meath").

1.2.3 Headfort Demesne is located to the north east of the town centre and contains the impressive Headfort House and associated grounds and outbuildings in addition to two parkland golf courses.

1.2.4 The overall population of Kells has increased steadily since 1996 with a population increase of 19% between 1996 and 2011. The most recent census information from 2011 indicates that the current population of the town and environs is 5,888 persons which is an increase of 12.2% since the 2006 census results. The environs of the town has experienced the most significant population increase with an actual decrease in the population in the Kells Urban area as noted in the Core Strategy section of the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019.

1.2.5 Since the Development Plan was adopted in 2007 the Supervalu anchored shopping centre development on Carrick Street / Cavan Road and the Aldi store on the Cavan Road have been completed. No significant new retail development has been delivered in the town centre core. Permission was granted for a significant mixed use redevelopment of the 'backlands' site (Reg. Ref.: KT800014), however, this scheme has not proceeded to date and it is considered unlikely that it will proceed in the format and scale approved by the Council and upheld by An Bord Pleanála.

1.3 Structure of the Report

1.3.1 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

CHAPTER 2 **PLANNING POLICY ANALYSIS**

CHAPTER 3 **THE HEALTH CHECK ASSESSMENT**

CHAPTER 4 **QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT**

CHAPTER 5 **ESTABLISHING AND STRENGTHENING THE CORE RETAIL AREA**

CHAPTER 6 **RETAIL RECOMMENDATIONS AND DESIGN GUIDANCE**

CHAPTER 2: PLANNING POLICY ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 In preparing the Kells Retail Review, consideration must be given to the relevant national, regional and local planning policy in place. The planning policy hierarchy both informs and directs retail planning policies at a local level.

2.1.2 In this section, we identify the current and emerging plans, policies and proposals that are relevant to the review of the Retail Strategy in the following order:

- National;
- Regional; and
- County and Local.

2.2 National Level

2.2.1 A number of national level plans, strategies and guidelines are of particular relevance to the preparation of a retail strategy for the town. These are:

- National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020;
- Greater Dublin Area Draft Transport Strategy 2011 -2030
- Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012)
- Retail Design Manual (2012)

National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020

2.2.2 The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published on 28th November 2002. The NSS provides a broad planning framework for the location of development in Ireland over the next 20 years. The key objective of the National Spatial Strategy is the achievement of more balanced regional development.

2.2.3 Kells is located within the hinterland area of the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). The NSS requires that the 'success, competitiveness and national role' of the GDA is built upon and sustained into the future.

2.2.4 The NSS identifies Kells as having urban strengthening capacity and states that such *"towns, located on important economic and transport corridors or in important locations and with a capacity to grow, must become a focus for the settlement policies of local authorities as incorporated in county development plans".*

2.2.5 Kells is identified as a settlement having a population of between 1,500 and 5,000. With regard to these towns it is stated that:

"Towns of this scale in the GDA are also generally located on or near the transportation corridors radiating from Dublin and are relatively close to the larger urban areas. While the primary development centres will be the main

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focus for responding to future growth in the GDA hinterland, these smaller towns cater for local growth in residential, employment and service functions through enhancing the built environment, water services, public transport links and capacity for development in these centres. Accommodating such additional functions must however be balanced with protecting the character and quality of these towns".

2.2.6 The rural area to the north west of Kells has been designated 'Village Strengthening and Rural Area Opportunities', whilst the area to the south east of the town is identified as having 'Strategic Rural Assets within a Metropolitan Hinterland'. Thus, the Kells catchment area has the scope to be strengthened under the strategic objectives of the NSS.

2.2.7 Kells is located some 16km to the north of Navan and is located on the M3 transport corridor. Under the NSS, Navan has been designated as a 'Primary Development Centre'. Such centres are seen as 'strategically placed, strong and dynamic urban centres'. Thus, Kells should benefit from its proximity to this regional centre.

Greater Dublin Area Draft Transport Strategy 2011 – 2030

2.2.8 This document has been prepared by the National Transport Authority and was published in draft format in June 2011.

2.2.9 The Draft Strategy vision for the Greater Dublin Area in 2030 is for *"a competitive, sustainable city-region with a good quality of life for all."*

2.2.10 The Draft Strategy represents the overall strategic approach to developing transport within the GDA for the period up to 2030, and, by its nature, takes a high level approach in many of its recommendations.

2.2.11 The NTA's draft Transport Strategy sets out the requirement to include in the Development Plan an objective to undertake local transport plans for 'Designated Towns', as well as more detailed local transport plans for 'Designated Districts', as set out in Measure LU3 of the NTA's draft Transport Strategy). Kells is a 'Designated District' in the Draft Strategy. These local transport plans will address the implementation of the relevant measures contained in the NTA's draft Transport Strategy (when finalised) and will be integrated into the relevant Town Development Plan or Local Area Plan.

Retail Planning Guidelines (2012)

2.2.12 The Retail Planning Guidelines (2012) were adopted by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in April 2012 and replace the previous Retail Planning Guidelines (2005).

2.2.13 The aim of the Guidelines is to ensure that the planning system continues to play a key role in supporting competitiveness in the retail sector for the benefit of the consumer in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development.

2.2.14 The Guidelines emphasise that enhancing the vitality and viability of city and town centres in all their functions through the sequential approach to development is an overarching objective in retail planning.

2.2.15 The Guidelines have five key policy objectives, namely:

- Ensuring that retail development is plan-led;
- Promoting city/town centre vitality and viability through a sequential approach to development;
- Securing competitiveness in the retail sector by actively enabling good quality development proposals to come forward in suitable locations;
- Facilitating a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Smarter Travel Strategy; and
- Delivering quality urban design outcomes.

2.2.16 The Guidelines emphasise that in order to ensure proper planning and sustainable development, retail development and activity must follow the settlement hierarchy of the State, including the various Gateway and Hub town locations identified in the NSS 2002-2020, the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Core Strategies of Development Plans.

2.2.17 Some specific guidance set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines, of relevance to Kells, includes the following:

- 3,000 sq. m. net cap on convenience retail floorspace;
- The need for any additional retail warehousing should be carefully assessed in view of the significant levels of recent provision and potential impacts on vitality and viability of city and town centres.

Retail Design Manual (2012)

2.2.18 One of the key messages of the Retail Planning Guidelines is that a high level of design quality can make an important contribution to the future health of city and town centres. The Guidelines are therefore accompanied by a Retail Design Manual which sets out key principles of urban design which might form the framework for policies to promote quality design in development plans and local area plans. The Manual sets out the key principles of urban design under a number of headings (e.g. design, context and character, access and connectivity, density and mixed use, etc.) and uses case studies to demonstrate the application of these principles.

2.3 Regional Level

Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010 – 2022

2.3.1 The 'Strategic Vision' of the Regional Planning Guidelines is as follows:

"The GDA by 2022 is an economically vibrant, active and sustainable international Gateway Region, with strong connectivity across the GDA Region,

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nationally and worldwide; a region which fosters communities living in attractive, accessible places well supported by community infrastructure and enjoying high quality leisure facilities; and promotes and protects across the GDA green corridors, active agricultural lands and protected natural areas".

2.3.2 The relevant reference to Kells in the Regional Planning Guidelines is as follows:

- The RPG's designate the Navan Economic Growth Area, which includes Navan as the principal economic growth town, and which includes Kells and Trim as secondary economic growth towns.
- With regard to Kells, it is stated that potential exists to develop Kells as part of a tourism cluster along with Trim.

Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008 - 2016

2.3.3 The 2008-2016 Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area was adopted in July 2008. The Strategy updates and reviews the previous Retail Planning Strategy from 2001 to take into account the significant economic, demographic and policy changes in the Greater Dublin Area in the intervening period.

2.3.4 The stated purpose of the Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008 -2016 is *"to guide the activities and policies for retail planning across the seven Councils which make up the Greater Dublin Area- Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County, Fingal County, South Dublin County, Kildare County, Meath County and Wicklow County Councils".*

2.3.5 The Strategy identifies Kells as a Level 3 Sub County town centre. Table 6.2 of the Strategy indicates that middle order comparison, lower order comparison, superstores and supermarkets are suitable for such centres.

2.3.6 In relation to Kells, the Strategy recommends the following specific policy objectives which should form part of the issues addressed in individual retail strategies:

- *To facilitate and promote the continued improvement of Dunboyne, Ashbourne, Dunshaughlin,* ***Kells,*** *Laytown / Bettystown, Enfield and Trim in line with their position in the hierarchy so that they meet their role as Level 3 centres, incorporating a range of convenience and comparison retail facilities adequate to serve the everyday needs of the catchment population. To provide for the future development of Dunboyne from Level 3 to a Level 2 centre over a 15-20 year time frame alongside the development of the rail line and associated future population growth, with this growth guided by the Integrated Framework Plan for Land Use and Transportation Plan and the Local Area Plan for Dunboyne".* (Emphasis added)

2.3.7 The Strategy also re-affirms the guidance set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines in terms of the sequential approach to retail development and the importance of the protection and enhancement of the vitality and viability of town centres.

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2.4 Local Level

2.4.1 At the local level, the plans and strategies, which have an influence, or will have an influence on the Kells Retail Strategy, are the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019, the Meath County Retail Strategy, Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Kells Retail Evaluation March 2006.

Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019

2.4.2 The County Plan seeks to facilitate the growth of Kells as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town in line with its designation in the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022. The Core Strategy allocates 650 housing units to Kells for the period 2013-2019 in order to comply with the settlement strategy for the County and based on the population projections contained in the RPGGDA.

2.4.3 The County Plan seeks to expand the town's comparison and convenience retail offer in accordance with its designation as a Level 3 Sub-County Town Centre in the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008-2016. These towns perform an important sub county retail role / function and generally include a good range of convenience provision and a modest provision of comparison offer. In particular the Plan notes an under provision of convenience and comparison retail floorspace in Kells. The Plan notes the significant town centre scheme approved on the 'backlands' site but acknowledges that such schemes in the format and scale proposed are unlikely to come to fruition. However, it states that the Council remain committed to the redevelopment of strategic town centre sites.

2.4.4 Kells is also identified as a Secondary Economic Growth Town in the RPGGDA with important links to the Primary Economic Growth Town of Navan given the town's location on the M3 transport corridor and proximity to the county town. Accordingly the Plan seeks to strengthen the economy of Kells, attracting new investment in employment, services, administration, retail and tourism uses.

2.4.5 The Plan recognises the potential of Kells as a tourist attraction based on its archaeological and historical heritage and as an important part of the strategy to develop cultural tourism in the County. Section 3.4.4 of the Plan states that *'the designation and marketing of Meath as the Heritage Capital of Ireland has been successful and is dependent on maintaining the intrinsic character of important built settlements such as Kells and Trim. It is imperative that the market town character of Kells and Trim is respected and maintained and that development should be consistent with the character of the towns'.*

2.4.6 The following objectives are included in Section 4.1.1 of the Plan:

- *'Kells and Trim to develop as a tourism cluster with improvement in the connectivity between both centres identified for investment. Each town to develop a strategy for niche tourism as an integral part of their overall development strategy e.g. culinary tourism, regional food hub, creative industries, etc.;*

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- *Protection of the intrinsic built and natural heritage of Kells and Trim and their promotion as a basis of tourism must be dominant in the development strategies adopted for both "Heritage Towns";*
- *Kells, identified as a Secondary Economic Growth Town, benefitting from N3 and N52 bypasses, to further develop its retail and manufacturing bases.'*

2.4.7 The County Plan acknowledges that there are significant lands identified for town centre expansion and mixed use development in the current Kells Development Plan. The Plan supports the redevelopment of these strategic town centre sites.

Meath County Retail Strategy

2.4.8 This Strategy is included as Appendix 5 of the County Plan. A number of the key findings and recommendations of the County Retail Strategy are incorporated into the relevant sections of the Plan and have been discussed above.

2.4.9 The key objectives in respect of Kells include:

- Promote the development of further convenience and comparison retailing in the town centre;
- The potential of a comprehensive upgrade to the public realm of Farrell Street should be investigated, to include the provision of public spaces, high quality landscaping and street furniture, and other measures which would attract shoppers and visitors. Improvements to the public realm in the town centre should assist where possible in the interpretation and promotion of Kells unique heritage and importance as a tourist destination;
- Identify measures to attract more retail floorspace to the town generally, in order to maintain and increase competitiveness;
- The utilisation of existing vacant premises in the town centre core area and opportunity sites in the town centre and edge of centre locations should be encouraged. The development of key backland sites will also be promoted;
- New development should be integrated with the traditional retail areas of the town and should be sympathetic to the heritage and character of Kells. The key objective is to create a vibrant and commercially successful retail sector to the town and its hinterland;
- Encourage additional café, restaurant and gift / tourist shops in the town centre in order to attract tourists to the town centre and provide a link with the retail provision in the town;
- Promote linkages between the retail developments (Kells Shopping Centre, anchored by Supervalu, and Aldi) at an edge of centre location to the north of the town and the town centre.

2.4.10 This Retail Review will elaborate on the research and recommendations undertaken for Kells in the County Retail Strategy and provide a detailed retail strategy for the town including advice on the quantum of retail development required over the period of the next development plan. A number of

opportunity sites are identified in the County Retail Strategy and the key town centre expansion sites will be considered in more detail in this Retail Review.

Kells Development Plan 2007 – 2013

2.4.11 The Kells Development Plan 2007 – 2013 was adopted on the 1st October 2007. This six year plan sets out a template for the proper planning and sustainable development of the town and its environs. The Development Plan is currently under review. The Kells Retail Review is being prepared to assist with the preparation of the Kells Development Plan 2013 – 2019.

2.4.12 Section 4.4 of Chapter 4 relates to Retail and Commercial Development. This section states that:

"The town centre area of Kells has retained a compact form. The core retail area of Kells comprises of Farrell Street, Cross Street, John Street, Castle Street, Market Street and includes the site of the existing Kells Shopping Centre. The medieval street pattern has resulted in a difficulty in accommodating the requirements of modern retailing in the town. The retail mix in the town centre is quite limited when examined in comparison with similar sized towns".

2.4.13 The Development Plan acknowledges that Kells is designated as a Level 3 sub-county town centre in the Greater Dublin Area retail hierarchy and this is confirmed in the Meath County Retail Hierarchy.

2.4.14 With regard to existing and future retail offer, the Kells Development Plan further states that:

- There is no representation of national or international multiples;
- There has been limited retail investment over the pre-ceding 2001 plan period;
- Addressing deficiencies in the retail offer of Kells must be addressed in conjunction with promotion of the heritage of the town and with urban improvements to the town centre area.

2.4.15 The Development Plan includes a series of policies and objectives which seek to protect and enhance the town centre and expand the retail offer of Kells in accordance with the sequential approach. In accordance with the recommendations of the 2006 Kells Retail Evaluation the Development Plan identified a number of opportunity sites to accommodate retail development in the town. The Plan identifies the 'backlands' site to the east of Farrell Street and Bective Street as the most suitable location for expansion of the retail core. The 'frontlands' site to the west of Suffolk Street and south of Cannon Street is also identified as a suitable location for town centre expansion.

2.4.16 Policy KS4 relates to the LAP for the Backlands which was adopted in 2006. It states that Phase Two of the Backlands LAP can only commence within 2½ years of the taking effect of the Development Plan. It is noted that planning permission was granted by Kells Town Council, Reg. Ref.: KT800014, for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Kells Backlands in June 2009, this was

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upheld on appeal by An Bord Pleanála, Ref. PL49 .234285, on the 16th of March 2010. This provides a 10 year planning permission for a mixed use town centre development comprising of retail, residential, commercial, crèche, civic space and ancillary and associated uses on a site of c7.86 hectares (c19.42 acres).

2.4.17 The lands adjoining the N52, on the Cavan Road, which now contain the Aldi store, are identified as a suitable location for retail warehouse uses.

2.4.18 The historic core of Kells and Headfort Place are designated as ACA's in the Development Plan.

Kells Retail Evaluation March 2006

2.4.19 To inform the preparation of the Backlands Local Area Plan and the 2001 Development Plan review, DTZ Pieda Consulting were commissioned in March 2006 to carry out a Retail Strategy Review and Capacity Assessment for Kells. This comprised of a review of the parts of the Meath County Retail Strategy 2003 specific to Kells and determined whether or not a variation to the strategy was required. The review also included an indicative assessment of the requirement for additional retail floor space in Kells. As part of this capacity assessment a health check of the existing town centre was carried out.

2.4.20 The study included a series of recommendations in relation to retail planning objectives and policies which informed Chapter 4, Section 4.4 Retail and Commercial Development, of the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013.

2.4.21 This included an updated Core Retail Area and guidance on the location and scale of new retail development, including an analysis of four potential town centre expansion areas.

2.4.22 Area 1 was located to the south of the Cavan Road. These lands were designated KS6 in the 2007 Kells Development Plan with an objective to accommodate retail warehousing and other employment generating uses. The western section of this site has been developed for an Aldi discount foodstore. This store has enhanced the convenience retail provision of Kells, however, it is located in an out of centre location with poor connectivity to the town centre.

2.4.23 Area 2 is adjacent to the town centre and located south of Cannon Street and west of Suffolk Street. These lands are known as the "frontlands" and remain undeveloped.

2.4.24 Area 3 is located south east of Farrell Street adjacent to the Core Retail Area and within the town centre expansion area and is identified for town centre uses in the Backlands LAP.

2.4.25 Area 4 is located south of the town centre, east of Bective Street and represents an extension of the town centre expansion area, i.e. area 3, and is identified for town centre uses in the Backlands LAP.

2.4.26 The Retail Evaluation identified Area 3 as being the most appropriate location for development in the short to medium term and notes that the phasing arrangement of the LAP releases Area 3 first in accordance with the retail evaluation. As referred to above, under Register Reference KT800014 a significant mixed use development was granted permission on the Area 3 and Area 4 Backlands.

2.5 Summary and Conclusions

2.5.1 The NSS identifies that Kells has urban strengthening capacity and states that such *"towns, located on important economic and transport corridors or in important locations and with a capacity to grow, must become a focus for the settlement policies of local authorities as incorporated in county development plans".*

2.5.2 Based upon the guidance set out in the Retail Planning Guidelines (2012), retail development should be directed towards town centres in the first instance, and where there are no suitable, viable and available town centre sites, development should be directed to edge of centre locations, followed by out of centre locations. The main thrust of the Retail Planning Guidelines is that the vitality and viability of existing town centres should be protected and enhanced.

2.5.3 The County Development Plan has recognised Kells' potential for growth based on its status as a Moderate Sustainable Growth Town and a Secondary Economic Growth Town.

2.5.4 In terms of retail development the County Plan identifies a need for expansion of the comparison and, in particular, the convenience floorspace within the town. In addition, the tourism potential of the town is recognised and this could attract niche retail uses to the town centre.

2.5.5 It will be important that any future retail development in Kells develops in a manner which respects its heritage and its intrinsic market town character and has regard to its origins as a monastic settlement and later as an 18^{th} century planned town. The town has significant potential for tourism based on its heritage and this could have implications for the town centre and its retail offering. The opportunities for retail tourism should be facilitated and promoted in the town centre.

2.5.6 It will be necessary to reinforce the town centre as the core of commercial, social and community activity in Kells through the re-use of existing underutilised or vacant buildings, promoting appropriate infill and backland development and providing a vision for the town centre's expansion which will address the leakage of retail expenditure from the town.

CHAPTER 3 - THE HEALTH CHECK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section of the retail review provides a health check assessment of Kells and builds on the work undertaken for the County Retail Strategy. It provides an overview of the town's key attractions, its existing retail profile, key changes since the Kells Retail Evaluation was carried out in 2006 and provides a basis for recommendations for improving the retail profile and town centre environment.

3.2 Assessing Vitality and Viability

3.2.1 A health check assessment is an integral part of a retail strategy: analysing the strengths and weaknesses of a town centre. Annex 2 of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 sets out the matters that should be taken into account when determining the vitality and viability of town centres. It is based on a qualitative analysis of factors such as the range and quality of activities in a centre, the mix of uses, the accessibility of the centre to people living in the area, and the general amenity, appearance and safety of the area. Indicators of a healthy town centre include a low level of vacancy, a high pedestrian footfall and a pleasant and inviting public realm which is well maintained.

3.2.2 The Retail Planning Guidelines provide a comprehensive checklist of information to be included in a health check assessment. It is stated in the guidelines that a healthy town centre is one which is both vital and viable and that balances a number of qualities including:

Attractions these underpin a town and comprise the range and diversity of shopping and other activities which draw in customers and visitors.

Accessibility successful centres need both to be accessible to the surrounding catchment area via a good road network and public transport facilities, and to encompass good local linkages between car parks, public transport stops and the various attractions within the centre.

Amenity a healthy town centre should be a pleasant place to be in. It should be attractive in terms of environmental quality and urban design, it should be safe, and it should have a distinct identity or image.

Action to function effectively as a viable commercial centre, actions need to follow: Development and improvement projects should be implemented efficiently; there should be regular and effective cleaning and maintenance and there should be co-ordinated town centre management initiatives to promote the continued improvement of the centre.

3.2.3 The Guidelines advise that *'although no single indicator on its own can measure the performance of a town in relation to these four elements of all round*

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"health", it is possible to gain a good appreciation by undertaking a vitality and viability health check assessment using a variety of indicators'.

3.2.4 In carrying out the health check assessment for Kells the following indicators were used to assess the vitality and viability of the town centre:

1. Attractions
2. Accessibility
3. Environmental Quality/Amenity
4. Levels of Vacancy
5. Diversity of Uses
6. Multiple Representation
7. Suitability of Existing Floorspace
8. Significant Changes to the Retail Environment since 2003
9. Action

3.2.5 This assessment for Kells was carried out within the Core Retail Area, which is confined within the areas surrounding Farrell Street, New Market Street, Market Street, John Street, Castle Street, Cross Street and Suffolk Street. Consideration was also given to streets adjoining the Core Retail Area such as Cannon Street, Bective Street, Kenlis Place, Headfort Place and Church Street.

3.2.6 This chapter will provide an up to date and concise assessment of the vitality and viability of Kells town centre based on the qualities set out above. It is considered appropriate to outline the positive qualities Kells has at present and areas which could be improved which would have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre in the longer term. These recommendations will form the basis for the recommendations, policies and objectives included in this Retail Review.

3.3 Attractions

3.3.1 Kells is a designated 'Heritage Town' owing to its origins as a 9th century monastic settlement and subsequent development as an 18th century planned town. The town has expanded in stages to its present day profile as an important urban centre serving a wide rural hinterland. The town centre is compact and the medieval street pattern of the town is still evident.

3.3.2 Kells town is steeped in history and heritage owing to its 9th century origins which define its designation as a heritage town. The town is renowned for the Book of Kells, an illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels written in circa 800AD. There are a number of heritage attractions in the town centre and on

the outskirts of the town. Such attractions in the town centre include St. Columba's Church and grounds, including the Round Tower and High Crosses, the 10th century St. Columcille's House, whilst the 18th century Spire of Lloyd is located to the west of the town.

Photo 3.1 St. Columba's Credit Union, Headfort Place

Photo 3.2 Kells Town Hall, Headfort Place

3.3.3 The town has significant potential as a tourist destination. Kells has been included on a tentative list of ancient monastic sites in Ireland for UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The town includes a number of notable heritage features and attractions such as the Monastic enclosure with the High Crosses, Round Tower, St. Columcilles House and the Scriptural Market Cross at the

entrance to the Heritage Centre, the former Courthouse. A 'Kells Historic Trail' was established in 2010 and the trail features panels and plaques at 14 historic points around the town. The trail commences outside the Kells Civic Offices, the former Town Hall, on Headfort Place, whereby residents and visitors to the town can pick up a map and follow the walking trail through the town.

3.3.4 Headfort House and Demesne is located to the east of the town. This demesne is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area and the house is considered particularly important in terms of 18th century architecture. Headfort Golf Course, which contains the new and old course, is located on the demesne lands.

3.3.5 The town is designated as a Level 3 Sub County Town Centre in the GDA and County retail hierarchies and provides an important service function to a large rural hinterland.

3.4 Accessibility

3.4.1 Kells has excellent accessibility by private car, being served by the N3 / M3 route, which connects with Dublin to the south-east and Cavan to the north west. This national road network also serves the towns of Navan, Dunshaughlin, Virginia and Cavan. The N52 upgrade which provides a bypass of the town to the north provides a regional road link to Mullingar and Dundalk. The recent completion of the M3 extension north of Kells and the N52 bypass have significantly reduced congestion in the town and ensures that a more pleasant town centre environment now exists, than when the previous Retail Evaluation was undertaken in 2006.

3.4.2 Kells is also accessible by bus, with Bus Eireann operating a number of inter town services which serve Kells, most notably the service between Dublin and Cavan, with services operating every half hour, with a travel time to Dublin of approximately one hour twenty minutes. This service also serves Navan and Dunshaughlin. Due to the size of Kells there is no local bus network within the town.

3.4.3 Kells has a relatively good pedestrian network in the town centre, assisted by the compact layout and attractive street pattern which is based on its origins as a monastic settlement and subsequently as an 18th century planned town. Footpaths are of a relatively good standard. However, there is a lack of pedestrian crossing facilities in the town centre.

3.4.4 Previous traffic management issues which saw Kells used as a through-route to reach surrounding settlements such as Oldcastle, Athboy, Slane and Mullingar have been largely alleviated by the completion of the M3 motorway.

3.4.5 Car parking provision in the town generally appears to be sufficient to meet demand. Pay and display car parking is in operation in the town centre, with a maximum stay of two hours.

3.5 Environmental Quality/Amenity

3.5.1 Kells is an attractive historic and heritage town enriched by buildings and structures from the Monastic, Anglo-Norman and Georgian periods. Kells town centre is compact and has built up around the former monastery. The town centre can broadly be defined within the areas surrounding Farrell Street, New Market Street, Market Street, Suffolk Street, Cross Street, Castle Street and John Street. Much of the medieval street pattern is retained.

3.5.2 The town centre generally has a traditional appearance with two storey buildings and a number of well preserved shopfronts. The general urban environment of the town centre, while greatly benefitting from its architectural heritage, is in need of improvement. The quality of the built environment and the streetscape is not helped by some inappropriate shopfronts and a number of vacant and derelict properties scattered throughout the town centre.

3.5.3 Parts of the town, and particularly Headfort Place, are notable for urban enhancement works which increase the attractiveness of the town. The public realm along Headfort Place has been significantly enhanced through recent hard landscaping improvements which acknowledge the importance of this street in terms of the civic functions of the town. The extension of public realm improvements to the Core Retail Area, potentially concentrating on Farrell Street first, would significantly enhance the retail environment of the town.

Photo 3.3 High Quality Shopfront on Market Street- Currently Vacant

Photo 3.4 Poor Quality Shopfronts on Farrell Street

THE HEALTH CHECK ASSESSMENT

3.5.4 In terms of its heritage function, the town is well provided for in terms of directional sign-posting, tourist information boards and the Kells Heritage Trail plaques. However, the potential exists to improve the legibility of the heritage trail route.

3.6 Rates of Vacancy

3.6.1 A key indicator of the health of a town centre is the level of retail vacancies that prevail. The vacancy rate in the Core Retail Area of Kells is estimated at 11.5%[1] comprising approximately 15 units. Vacancy is generally concentrated around the western end of Farrell Street and also on Castle Street and Market Street. The vacancies, which are indicated in Figure 3.1 below, detract from the attraction and ambiance of the town centre.

Photo 3.5 Vacant Unit on Castle Street

[1] Ground floor units within defined town centre core retail area only

THE HEALTH CHECK ASSESSMENT

Figure 3.1: Location of Vacant Units in Kells

3.6.2 Positive measures such as the promotion of a cultural quarter in the secondary retail area may assist in reducing the vacancy rate in Kells town centre and in turn enhance its vitality and viability.

3.7 Diversity of Uses

3.7.1 Kells has a relatively wide range of uses in accordance with its role as an important urban centre for its wide rural hinterland. However, the quality of the town's retail offer is considered to be low to mid order, which fails to compete with the offer of other higher order centres. In addition to retailing the town accommodates a number of public houses and some restaurants including the Headfort Arms hotel and restaurant. There is scope for improvement in the range of café, restaurants and social /entertainment facilities within the town in accordance with its tourism role.

3.7.2 There are a good range of sporting facilities and clubs within the town including Parc Columcille and Kells Swimming Pool. Other facilities include a tennis club, equestrian centre and two 18 hole golf courses. The town is well catered for in terms of financial and banking services and other retail services such as hairdressing and beauty salons. We are aware that the HSE plan to relocate from Kells Business Park, which is located to the north of the town to the former car showroom on Bective Street. This will increase the workforce within the town centre and help support existing services.

3.8 Multiple Representations

3.8.1 In comparison to retail centres of a similar size, role and function, Kells has a relatively limited mix of retail types. The comparison retail sector of the town is dominated by independent retailers. Farrell Street and Cross Street in particular comprises a range of ladies, children and men's fashion retail units.

3.8.2 There is no national or international comparison multiples in the town, which may be influenced by the lack of appropriate floorplates. The comparison retail profile of the town indicates that local people will have to travel to higher order centres to meet the majority of their comparison shopping needs. This is clearly reflected in the results of the household survey which was undertaken by Demographics Ireland in November 2011 to inform the County Retail Strategy which indicates an outflow of 85.8% of comparison expenditure from the Kells zone. Higher order centres such as Navan and Blanchardstown act as significant attractions for the residents of the Kells zone with 54.3% of respondents within the Kells zone travelling to Navan and 12.9% of respondents travelling to Blanchardstown.

3.8.3 The absence of comparison multiples in the town is furthermore reflected within the shopper's survey undertaken in Kells in November 2011 to inform the County Retail Strategy. 46% of respondents within Kells identified the need for "more shops", and a further 6% of respondents referred to the need for "more shopping malls/centres".

3.8.4 The town centre has a limited range of convenience shopping facilities. There are a number of newsagents, butchers and grocers in the town centre, together with a number of small convenience stores, for example an independent convenience store on Headfort Place, a Centra to the west end of Farrell Street, and an independent convenience store on the corner of Cross Street and New Market Street. With the exception of Super Valu and Aldi located to the north west of the town centre, there is limited provision of convenience shopping facilities in the town. The Supervalu store is circa. 1,400 sq. m. net floorspace and anchors a small Shopping Centre which also includes 4 no. additional retail units, including a pharmacy, a hair studio and a butchers shop. The Aldi store has circa 1,125 sq.m. net sales floorspace.

3.9 Suitability of Existing Retail Floorspace

3.9.1 Overall there exists a need to improve the range and quality of the retail offer provided within Kells. The retail profile of the town is defined by a number of independent retail outlets. Existing convenience multiples include Aldi, SuperValu and Centra but there is an absence of comparison multiples within the town. Whilst there are a number of independent comparison outlets, the town generally lacks an appropriate range of such facilities. Enhancement of this offer would increase the attractiveness of the town and reduce leakage to surrounding centres.

3.9.2 One of the key challenges for the town centre relates to the integration of larger national and international multiples into the town core. In general these units require a large surface area to accommodate larger retailing floorplates and this can place pressure on the fine urban grain of traditional town centres. This could be addressed by the development of larger retail units adjoining the traditional town centre leaving the town centre to accommodate future specialised retail uses complemented by extensive environmental improvement works.

3.10 Significant Changes to the Retail Environment Since 2003

3.10.1 The only significant changes identified in the retail environment in Kells since 2003 has been the redevelopment of Kells Shopping Centre, anchored by Supervalu, and the Aldi development situated on the Cavan Road. The redevelopment of Kells Shopping Centre comprised of 2,731.75 sq.m GFA, containing a supermarket with a net retail sales area of 1,388 sq.m and 4 no. retail units with a net retail sales area of 451 sq.m. The Aldi store has a net floor area of 1,125 sq. m..

3.10.2 There has been very little development in the town centre. The only notable development in or close to the town centre since 2003 has been the development on the corner of Suffolk Street and Farrell Street (Kells Town Reg. Ref: KT/30022) comprising the construction of a three storey building to include 2 no. ground floor retail units with residential above. These retail units are occupied by Centra and a Carpet and Flooring Shop. These provide for circa. 200 sq. m. of retail floorspace each.

3.10.3 The health check has not identified any other significant developments in the retail environment in Kells since 2003.

Photo 3.6 Kells Shopping Centre, Circular Road

3.10.4 The Retail Planning Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2008) indicates that 1,811 sq. m. of net convenience floorspace and 3,450 sq. m. of net comparison floorspace was present in Kells. These figures do not account for the recent Aldi and Suffolk Street / Farrell Street developments.

3.10.5 A significant pipeline development is the permission granted by An Bord Pleanála under reference PL49.234285 in March 2010 (MCC Reg. Ref.: KT/800014) for development of the ‘backlands’ site bounded to the north by established development fronting Kenlis Place and Headfort Place, to the west by established development fronting Bective Street and Farrell Street, to the east by playing fields associated with the Secondary School, and to the south by undeveloped zoned lands. The approved development comprises of 199 no. residential units, 4,402 sq. m. gross convenience and 5,658 sq. m. of gross comparison floorspace, commercial uses, a civic square of 4,100 sq. m. and a total of 951 no. car parking spaces. The permission has a life of ten years and construction has not commenced.

3.10.6 Planning permission was also granted for the construction of 3 no. retail warehouse units and 6 no. light industrial units at Townparks, Cavan Road, Kells by An Bord Pleanála, ABP Ref.: PL17.220439, on the 2nd of July 2008 following a refusal by Meath County Council. This development contains 2,300 sq.m net bulky goods floorspace. The site is located to the immediate west of the Aldi store.

3.11 Actions

3.11.1 The health check assessment has identified a number of issues which should be addressed within the town centre in order to enhance the role and function of

the town in line with its designation as a Level 3 Sub County Town. A number of actions to address these issues are considered below and in more detail in Chapter 6 of the Retail Review.

- While the town centre has a number of historical attractions for visitors, as a retail destination its retail offer is weak. The limitations of the historic street network and retail footprints means that it has been difficult to accommodate modern day retail formats within the traditional town centre. This may be a deterrent to large convenience and comparison retailers locating in the town centre. There are a number of opportunities in and adjoining the town centre for retail development, particularly on sites which are currently vacant, which should be investigated as a priority.
- The Core Strategy includes an objective to create a cultural quarter, focusing on creative and cultural industries with galleries, craft shops, potteries, goldsmiths and jewellery designers, artisan foods, restaurants, cafes, etc., in the Market Street, Church Hill, Church Street, New Market Street and Cannon Street area. Proactive mechanisms to deliver this cultural quarter will need to be considered by the Planning Authority if such an objective is to be realised.
- It is also apparent that the town lacks a full range of supporting facilities, such as cafes, restaurants and gift shops.
- There are a number of vacant / derelict town centre properties which could be utilised for new retail development.
- Farrell Street has the potential to be a particularly attractive shopping street. The width of the street offers the potential for additional public spaces to be provided. The street is currently utilised on both sides for on-street car parking. The rationalisation of some of this parking, and the introduction of soft landscaping, high-quality street furniture, traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossing facilities would significantly improve the appearance of the street.
- The completion of the M3 has reduced the level of through traffic in the town, thus creating the potential for a higher quality retail location and pedestrian environment.
- There are two designated Architectural Conservation Areas in Kells (the historic Core ACA and the Headfort Place ACA). Consideration should be given to the introduction of a Special Planning Control Scheme on key streets which would provide greater control over signage and land uses. This could help enhance the retail experience within the town centre.

3.12 Conclusions

3.12.1 Kells is under-performing in terms of its role as a Level 3 Sub-County town. A review of the quantum and quality of the retail offer of the town indicates that local people are relatively poorly served in terms of both comparison and convenience floorspace and as such have to travel to higher order centres such as Navan and Blanchardstown. Kells is not recognised as a significant shopping destination and will not attract many visitors from outside its immediate catchment area for this purpose. The retail offer of the town centre is mostly limited to a number of independent traders with a relatively limited choice of

convenience and comparison shopping. Therefore, while the town centre has a number of historical attractions for visitors, as a retail destination its retail offer is weak.

3.12.2 These trends are clearly reflected in the results of the household survey undertaken to inform the Meath County Retail Strategy. Due to the absence of an appropriate range and level of retail offer, Kells does not retain expenditure and experiences leakage to competing centres such as Navan, Oldcastle, Ardee, and Blanchardstown. This is a threat to the retailing sector in Kells. In order for Kells to function in accordance with its role, there will need to be a considerable strengthening of the town's retail offer, both in convenience and comparison terms.

3.12.3 There are a number of smaller infill opportunities in the town centre for retail development, particularly on sites which are currently vacant, which should be investigated as a priority. Due to the constraints associated with the historical layout of the town, opportunities for further retail development at edge of centre locations adjoining the retail core should be considered.

3.12.4 There is a good opportunity to seek to attract tourist visitors to the town centre, and to retain these visitors in the town centre. In order for this to be successful, the retail offer of the town needs to be expanded and upgraded and additional tourist related facilities such as restaurants, cafes, gift shops and potentially additional town centre accommodation, needs to be provided. Public realm improvements should also be investigated, particularly on Farrell Street.

CHAPTER 4: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section provides an assessment of the likely capacity in quantitative terms for additional retail floorspace in Kells. In accordance with the 2013-2019 County Retail Strategy, this strategy covers the period from 2013 to 2019 and beyond to 2022. This enables a longer term assessment of retail planning and potential in the catchment area which is consistent with the Regional Planning Guidelines. This assessment reviews and provides a more detailed floorspace capacity assessment, in the context of the 2013 County Retail Strategy as it relates to Kells.

4.1.2 It should be noted that a quantitative assessment of this nature can only act as a broad brush indicator of the likely quantum of floorspace that may be required in an area over a given period. It involves making forecasts for future population expenditure, turnover and other factors and as such the study is based on a number of assumptions and therefore can only provide a broad indication of anticipated capacity. Nonetheless, the quantitative section can give a useful overview of the position.

4.1.3 Furthermore, it should be noted that the figures set out in this section are not intended to be prescriptive thresholds. Rather they are the minimum floorspace targets that need to be achieved in order to ensure that the retail function of Kells is reinforced and strengthened.

4.1.4 All figures within this assessment are rounded off to the nearest point of decimal. The base year and price year throughout is 2011.

The Approach

4.1.5 The approach taken is a step by step capacity assessment including the following steps:

- Definition of the catchment area.
- Estimate the population at base and design year.
- Estimate of expenditure per capita on convenience, comparison and bulky household goods at the base year and the design year.
- Incorporate projections on inflows and outflows of expenditure to the catchment area based on the results of the shopper's and household surveys undertaken by Demographics Ireland to inform the 2013 County Retail Strategy.
- Estimate of total available expenditure in the base year and design year for residents within the Kells catchment area.
- Estimate the likely increase in expenditure available for provision of additional floorspace.
- Estimate the likely average turnover of new floorspace in convenience and comparison goods.
- Estimate the capacity for additional floorspace within Kells and its

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catchment area.

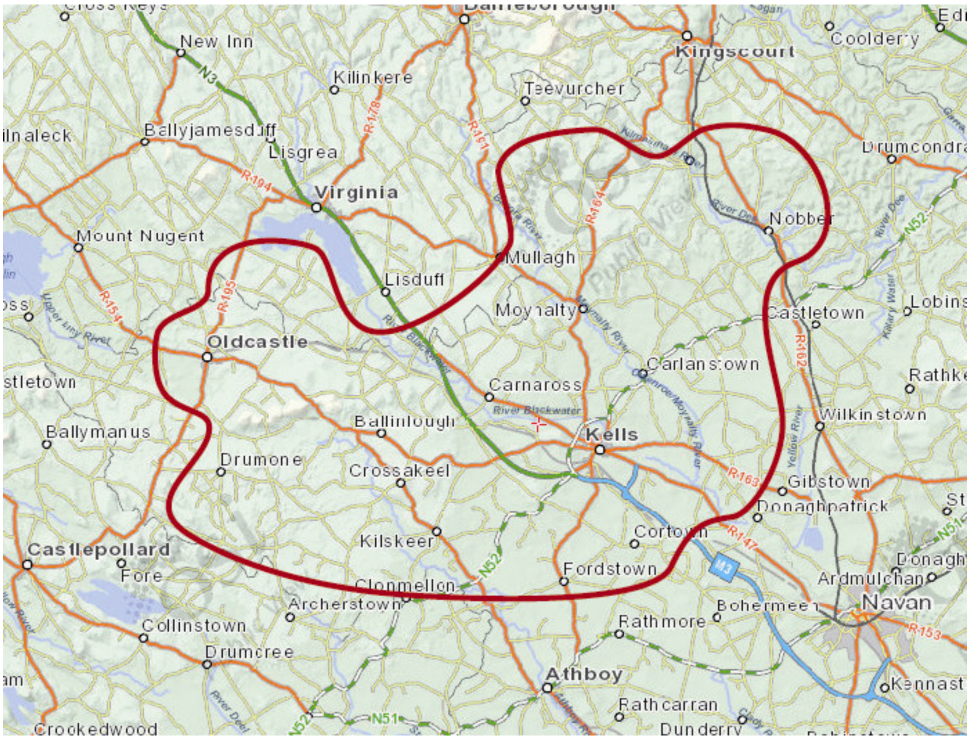
4.2 Identification of Catchment Area

4.2.1 A key aspect of any quantitative assessment is to identify the expenditure available to support additional retail floorspace within a defined catchment area. It is necessary to define a catchment area of the town for this purpose.

4.2.2 The catchment area for the purposes of this study is based on the consideration of drive times from Kells and the proximity of competing centres to the town.

4.2.3 The results of the household survey undertaken by Demographics Ireland in November 2011 to inform the Meath County Retail Strategy illustrate how higher order centres of Navan and Ardee exert a significant influence on shopping patterns and the proximity of these centres limit the extent of the Kells catchment area to the south east and north east respectively. The catchment area for Kells extends further to the west and north-west given the lack of higher order centres within this area. Based on these considerations the catchment area for Kells is identified in Figure 4.1 below:

Figure 4.1: Map of Catchment Area



4.3 Population of the Study Area

4.3.1 The 2011 census carried out by the Central Statistics Office identifies a population of 22,351 for the identified catchment area. This represents an increase in population within the catchment area of approximately 12.9% since 2006.

Population Trends

4.3.2 The population trends for Kells Town and Kells Environs between 1991 and 2011 are set out in Table 4.1 below. The overall population of Kells Town and Environs has increased from 3,539 in 1991 to 5,888 in 2011, a population increase of 2,349 persons or 66% in the 20 year period. The population has increased 12.2% since the 2006 census results. The environs of the town has experienced significant population increase with an actual decrease in the population in the Kells Urban area as noted in the Core Strategy section of the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 and illustrated in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Population Trends in Kells Town and Environs 1991-2011

Year	Kells	Kells Environs	Total Kells and Environs
1991	2,183	1,356	3,539
1996	2,152	1,390	3,542
2002	2,252	1,899	4,151
2006	2,257	2,991	5,248
2011	2,208	3,680	5,888

Population Projections

4.3.3 As part of the quantitative assessment, population projections are estimated for Kells Town and Environs and the catchment area. These are influenced by recent trends set out above and have particular regard to the population projections set out within the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 Core Strategy.

4.3.4 Population projections for Kells and Environs are set out within the Chapter 2 of the Kells Town Development Plan 2013-2019. The plan anticipates that the population of the town and Environs will grow from 5,888 persons in 2011 to 6,848 persons in 2019. This represents a growth rate of approximately 2% per annum for the town and environs.

4.3.5 Having regard to the trends observed within the catchment area and the population projections set out for Kells within the Core Strategy document, a growth rate of 2% per annum is assumed within the catchment area from 2011 to 2022.

Table 4.2: Population Projections

Year	Population
2011	23,351
2019	26,188
2022	27,791

Assumption: Population growth rate of 2% per annum assumed between 2011 and 2022

4.4 Expenditure per Capita

4.4.1 Expenditure per capita is calculated based on the information contained within the Annual Services Inquiry published by the Central Statistics Office. The most recent Annual Service Inquiry with data in an appropriate format for this purpose is the 2006 Annual Services Inquiry which was published in 2008. This source is used within the 2013 County Retail Strategy and is therefore used for the purposes of this capacity assessment.

4.4.2 The 2006 Annual Services Inquiry sets out expenditure per capita figures of €3,402 for 2006 on comparison goods and €3,759 for convenience goods. These figures are updated to a 2011 price year using the CPI (Consumer Price Index). Convenience expenditure per capita is estimated at €3,898 in 2011 and comparison expenditure is estimated at €3,528. In accordance with the CSO publication "County Incomes and Regional GDP", the expenditure figures for County Meath are assumed to be in line with the national average.

4.4.3 It was considered necessary to make a further adjustment to the expenditure figure having regard to the trends observed from the Retail Sales Index. An adjustment is made to provide for a reduction in comparison goods expenditure per capita from 2006 to 2011. While the Retail Sales Index shows that "high street" comparison goods, such as clothing and footwear remain at or above 2006 levels, there has been a slight reduction on the overall comparison figure between 2006 and 2011. The population increase as set out in the 2011 preliminary census also means that there has been a greater reduction in per capita comparison expenditure. Having reviewed the figures for comparison goods expenditure as set out in 2006 and 2011 Retail Sales Index, it is considered that a reduction of 5.1% in expenditure per capita from 2006-2011 is appropriate.

4.4.4 An increase in convenience expenditure of 2.2% in the Retail Sales Index was observed between December 2006 and December 2011 and in this regard it was not considered necessary to make an adjustment to the assumption set out within the Annual Services Inquiry. This shows that convenience expenditure changes less in response to changes in incomes than comparison expenditure.

4.4.5 For convenience goods we have assumed a 1% growth rate between 2011 and 2022. This is based on the assessment of long terms trends.

4.4.6 Expenditure growth on comparison goods has been substantially higher than expenditure growth on convenience goods over time. This is because most households' requirements in respect of convenience products have been largely satisfied and most additional expenditure has gone into products such as clothing, footwear, household goods, electrical goods, carpets, furniture and so on. Exceptionally high levels of growth in comparison goods sales were experienced in the late 1990's up to 2007.

4.4.7 However as a result of the recent economic downturn, expenditure per capita has declined in the period 2008 to 2010 and is likely to grow slowly in the next few years in accordance with economic forecasts. We have therefore used a

more conservative long term average for projecting forward and we have assumed a growth rate of 2% per annum between 2011 and 2013 and 3% per annum between 2013 and 2022. This is illustrated in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Expenditure per Capita

Year	Convenience	Comparison
2006	€3,898	€3,528
2011	€3,898	€3,348
2019	€4,221	€4,159
2022	€4,349	€4,545

Price Year: 2011, Source 2008 Annual Service Inquiry and CPI

Assumptions: 6.5% reduction in comparison expenditure between 2006-2011, 2.2% reduction in convenience expenditure between 2006-2011, 1% growth in convenience expenditure per annum from 2011 to 2022, 2% growth in comparison expenditure 2011-2013, 3% pa from 2013-2022.

4.5 Total Available Expenditure

4.5.1 The total available expenditure for convenience and comparison goods is set out in Table 4.4 below. This is calculated by multiplying the population by the expenditure per capita for each category for each year.

Table 4.4: Total Available Expenditure

Year	Convenience	Comparison
2011	€87,124,198	€74,831,148
2019	€110,537,887	€108,919,960
2022	€120,858,109	€126,304,744

Price Year: 2011, Source Tables 4.2 and 4.3

4.5.2 In considering the above expenditure levels, it is important to note that significantly different levels of turnover will apply to town centre comparison goods such as clothing and footwear and smaller household durables than would apply to bulky household goods sold in retail warehouses. Retail warehouses have a distinct function and are generally located outside of the town centres. It is necessary to establish the expenditure potentially available to town centre comparison floorspace. In this regard, it is considered important to split between expenditure available for bulky household goods and comparison goods within the study area. Having regard to the Household Budget Survey and experience elsewhere in this respect, it is estimated that approximately 20% of comparison expenditure will be accounted for by bulky household goods in retail warehouse type premises.

4.5.3 Estimates for expenditure on convenience goods, pure comparison goods and bulky household goods are set out in Table 4.5 overleaf.

Table 4.5: Total Available Expenditure – Split between pure Comparison and Bulky Household Goods			
Year	**Convenience**	**Comparison**	**Bulky Household Goods**
2011	€87,124,198	€59,864,918	€14,966,230
2019	€110,537,887	€87,135,968	€21,783,992
2022	€120,858,109	€101,043,795	€25,260,949

4.6 Existing Retail Trends within Kells

4.6.1 A household and telephone survey was undertaken by Demographics Ireland to inform the Meath County Retail Strategy. These surveys provide useful information on market share and trade draw of the County. County Meath was split into 3 separate survey zones in the County Retail Strategy in accordance with those defined within the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

4.6.2 The catchment area identified for the purposes of this assessment is broadly consistent with the Kells zone identified within the County Retail Strategy and in this regard the information obtained from the surveys are therefore relevant to the identified catchment area for Kells. The following key results are obtained from the survey:

Market Share Levels

4.6.3 The household survey undertaken by Demographics Ireland identifies the following trends within the Kells zone:

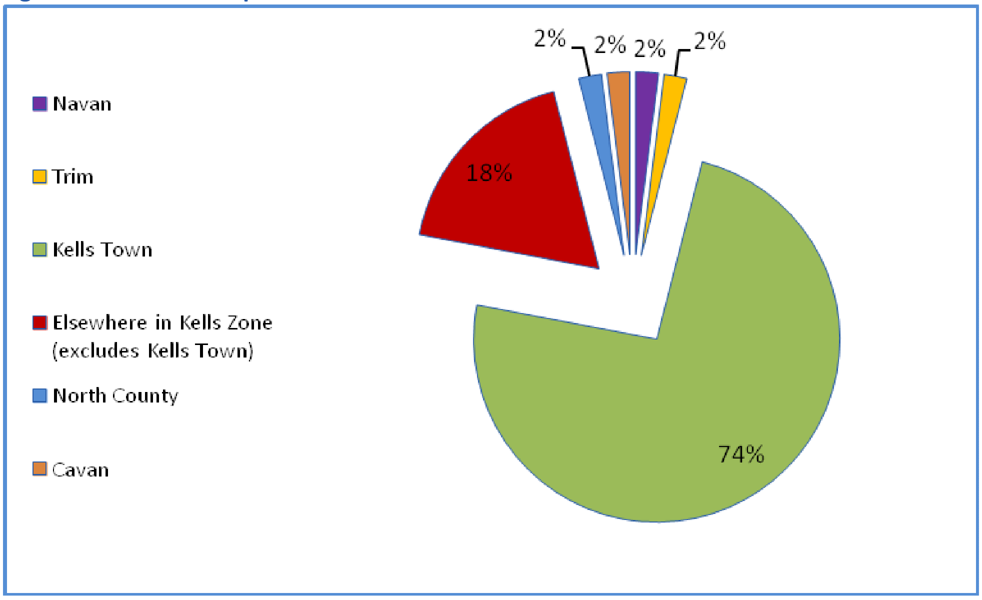
- **Convenience**: 70% of respondents surveyed undertook their main food and grocery shopping within the Kells zone, resulting in an outflow of 30%.
- Navan and Ardee act as significant attractions for convenience shopping for residents within this zone with 14.29% of respondents within the Kells zone travelling to Navan and 8.6% of respondents travelling to Ardee.
- **Comparison:** Only 14.2% of the total respondents surveyed undertook their main clothing and footwear shopping within the Kells zone, resulting in high outflows of 85.8%.
- Navan and Blanchardstown act as significant attractions for clothing and footwear shopping for residents within this zone with 54.3% of respondents within the survey zone travelling to Navan and 12.9% of respondents travelling to Blanchardstown.
- **Bulky Goods:** 25.05% of respondents undertook their main bulky goods shopping within the catchment area, resulting in an outflow of 74.95%. The majority of respondents within the catchment who shop within the Kells zone undertake their bulky goods shopping within Oldcastle (i.e. 18.6% for electrical and 12.5% for furniture).
- 51% of respondents within the Kells zone carry out their bulky furniture shopping within Navan, 45.7% of respondents within the Kells zone travel to Navan for their main electrical goods purchases.

Trade Draw

4.6.4 Estimates on trade draw are obtained by from the shopper's survey undertaken by Demographics Ireland in November 2011 to inform the Meath County Retail Strategy. A total of 500 surveys were undertaken within the County, 150 of which were allocated to Navan and 50 were undertaken in the settlements of Kells, Trim, Dunshaughlin, Ashbourne, Bettystown, Dunboyne and Enfield.

4.6.5 Table 4.19 of the County Retail Strategy sets out information regarding trade draw to Kells. Figure 4.2 below summaries the responses to the survey question "where do you come from?" at it relates to the Kells zone.

Figure 4.2: Where Respondents come from



4.6.6 The following trends are observed from this table.

- 74% of respondents within Kells were from the town and a further 18% were from elsewhere within the Kells survey zone.
- The shopper's survey identifies an inflow of 8% to the Kells survey zone. 2% of the respondents interviewed within Kells were from the Navan survey zone, 2% were from the Trim survey zone, 2% were from North County Meath and 2% were from County Cavan.

Nature of Trade Draw

4.6.7 The nature of trade draw is determined based on the responses to "what is the nature of your visit to Kells?" as set out within Table 4.22 of the County Retail Strategy. Only 2% of the 8% of respondents who came from outside of the Kells zone noted that they were in Kells for shopping purposes. These respondents were specifically in the town for their main food/grocery shopping. The other 6% of respondents were in Kells for work, financial services or eating out.

4.6.8 It is noted that the assumptions on trade draw are lower than those assumed within the 2006 Kells Retail Evaluation which assumed an inflow of 10% for convenience and 5% for comparison floorspace. These assumptions were primarily attributed to the location of Kells on the N3 and N52 National Roads. However, the completion of the M3 may have altered shopping patterns and the household survey undertaken in November 2011 to inform the County Retail Strategy illustrate low levels of inflow to the town.

Assumptions on Market Share and Trade Draw

4.6.9 For the purposes of this assessment and in accordance with the results obtained from the shoppers' survey, a 2% inflow for main food and grocery shopping is assumed.

4.6.10 Having regard to the trends identified within the household and shoppers surveys, the following adjustments are made to the total available expenditure within the identified catchment area.

Convenience Expenditure

4.6.11 70% of respondents surveyed within the household survey undertake their main food and grocery shopping within the Kells zone. It is estimated that this level of retention will grow to 80% by 2019 and continue at this level until 2022 as enhanced retail offer and floorspace is provided in Kells. The inflow of 2% is anticipated to continue over the lifetime of the strategy.

Comparison Expenditure

4.6.12 14.2% of the total respondents surveyed undertook their main clothing and footwear shopping within the Kells zone.

4.6.13 Two scenarios are assumed in estimating the future amount of comparison goods expenditure available within the survey area. Scenario 1, the low growth scenario, assumes that the existing level of retention and inflows of expenditure to the catchment will remain at the 14.2% level over the lifetime of the retail strategy. This scenario assumes that there would be no improvement in the comparison retail offer of the town up to 2022.

4.6.14 Scenario 2 estimates that the level of retention of comparison expenditure within the catchment area will increase within the timeframe of the retail strategy in line with improvements to the retail offer and trade draw of the town. For the purposes of this assessment it is assumed expenditure retention will grow to 30% by 2019 and remain at this level to 2022. It should be noted that this scenario will only materialise if there is significant additional comparison floorspace provision over this period. An inflow of 5% is estimated from 2019 to 2022 under this Scenario as a result of the planned enhancement in comparison retail offer and improvements to the tourism role of the town.

Bulky Goods Household Expenditure

4.6.15 The household survey established that approximately 25.05% of respondents undertake their main bulky goods shopping within the Kells zone. It is noted that this retention level is primarily attributed to the existing bulky goods provision within Oldcastle. This retention level is assumed for the lifetime of the retail strategy.

4.6.16 Having regard to the above assumptions, the total available expenditure available for convenience, comparison and bulky goods is summarised in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6: Total Available Expenditure adjusted to account for Inflows and Outflows of Expenditure

Period	Convenience		Comparison Scenario 1		Comparison Scenario 2		Bulky Warehouse Goods	
2011								
Resident Expenditure		€87,124,198		€59,864,918		€59,864,918		**€14,966,230**
Less Outflows	**30%**	€26,137,259	**85.8%**	€51,364,100	**85.8%**	€51,364,100	**74.95%**	**€11,217,189**
Spend by resident on Outlets in County		€60,986,939		€8,500,818		€8,500,818		**€3,749,041**
Add Imported Expenditure	**2%**	€1,219,739	**N/A**		**N/A**		**N/A**	
Spend in retail outlets in catchment		€62,206,677		€8,500,818		€8,500,818		**€3,749,041**
2019								
Resident Expenditure		€110,537,887		€87,135,968		€87,135,968		**€21,783,992**
Less Outflows	**20%**	€22,107,577	**85.8%**	€74,762,661	**70%**	€60,995,178	**74.95%**	**€16,327,102**
Spend by resident on Outlets in County		€88,430,309		€12,373,307		€26,140,790		**€5,456,890**
Add Imported Expenditure	**2%**	€1,768,606	**N/A**		**N/A**		**N/A**	
Spend in retail outlets in catchment		€90,198,916		€12,373,307		€26,140,790		**€5,456,890**
2022								
Resident Expenditure		€120,858,109		€101,043,795		€101,043,795		**€25,260,949**
Less Outflows	**20%**	€24,171,622	**85.8%**	€86,695,576	**70%**	€70,730,657	**74.95%**	**€18,933,081**
Spend by resident on Outlets in County		€96,620,217		€14,348,219		€30,313,139		**€6,327,868**
Add Imported Expenditure	**2%**	€1,933,730	**N/A**		**5%**	€1,515,657	**N/A**	
Spend in retail outlets in catchment		€98,620,217		**€14,348,219**		**€31,828,796**		**€6,327,868**

Source: Table 4.4 & assumptions set out above

4.7 Existing Retail Floorspace within Catchment Area

4.7.1 A survey of existing and constructed floorspace with County Meath has been carried out by Meath County Council to inform the 2013 Meath County Retail Strategy. The floorspace figures set out within the 2008 GDA Retail Strategy were updated with floorspace which has been permitted and constructed since that period. The extent of existing convenience, comparison and bulky goods floorspace within the catchment area is illustrated in Table 4.7 overleaf.

Table 4.7: Existing Net Retail Floorspace within Catchment Area 2011	
Kells Convenience	2,300 sq.m.
Oldcastle Convenience	1,727 sq.m.
Catchment Convenience Total	**6,232 sq. m.**
Kells Comparison	3,450 sq.m
Oldcastle Comparison	2,238 sq.m.
Catchment Comparison Total	**5,688 sq. m**
Kells Bulky Goods	-
Oldcastle Bulky Goods	1,100 sq.m
Catchment Bulky Goods Total	**1,100 sq. m.**

4.7.2 Table 4.7 above does not take into consideration retail floorspace which has been permitted but not yet constructed. Due to the current economic and retail conditions on a national basis, and the considerable uncertainty as to which developments will be implemented and further uncertainty on timing, it is considered that the situation should be reviewed and assessed in considering future applications having regard to the situation at that time. Any implementation of such permissions is likely to be on a reduced scale from that originally approved, and / or on a phased basis. The location and scale of the proposed retail floorspace will be key in this considering future applications. The appropriate redevelopment and revitalisation of sites within the designated core retail areas and identified opportunity sites will be promoted as a priority.

4.8 Turnover of Existing Floorspace

Turnover Ratios

4.8.1 It is possible to derive the turnover of existing floorspace within the catchment by multiplying the floorspace in each category by average turnover. A turnover of €10,000 per sq. m. is assumed for existing convenience floorspace within the catchment in 2011 and €3,500 per sq. m. for comparison floorspace. An average turnover of €2,500 per sq. m. is assumed for bulky goods in 2011 prices. The turnover figure assumed for comparison floorspace is lower than that assumed within the County Retail Strategy having regard to the existing format of comparison floorspace within Kells. Data available for the turnover of retailers in Ireland is limited and it is necessary to use estimate average figures. The figures are based on published retail industry data and have regard to the average turnover per sq.m. calculations established in Annual Reports and Retail Rankings. They reflect the average turnover levels retailers will require to sustain a healthy level of activity.

Table 4.8: Turnover Ratios Assumed for Existing Floorspace

	Convenience	Comparison	Bulky Goods
2011	€10,000	€3,500	€2,500

Price Year: 2011

4.8.2 These figures show the average assumed turnover per sq. metre of existing floor space overall in the catchment area. They disguise significant differences in turnover for different shops. In general, multiple branches of national and

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international multiple shops are located within purpose built shopping centres or other prime locations. Prime town centre shop units will have substantially higher turnover per square metre than shops which are less well located or situated in older inefficient premises and are operated as independents. In particular, it is likely that smaller units have substantially lower turnover per sq. metre than these averages whilst the largest supermarket operators have substantially higher turnover rates per sq. metre.

4.8.3 The turnover of existing retail floorspace within the catchment area is obtained by multiplying the existing floorspace estimates set out in Table 4.7 by the turnover per sq. m. estimates set out in Table 4.8. This is illustrated in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Turnover of Existing Floorspace	
Convenience	€62,320,000
Comparison	€19,908,000
Bulky Goods	€2,750,000

Source: Tables 4.7 and 4.8

4.8.4 The residual surplus for additional retail floorspace within the catchment area is obtained by subtracting the turnover of existing convenience, comparison and bulky goods expenditure as set out in Table 4.9 from the total available expenditure set out in Table 4.6.

Table 4.10: Available Expenditure for Additional Retail Floorspace in Co. Meath

Year	Available Expenditure	Turnover of existing Floorspace	Residual Surplus
Convenience			
2011	€62,206,677	€62,320,000	-€113,323
2019	€90,198,916	€62,320,000	€27,878,916
2022	€98,620,217	€62,320,000	€36,300,217
Comparison Scenario 1			
2011	€8,500,818	€19,908,000	-€11,407,182
2019	€12,373,307	€19,908,000	-€7,534,693
2022	€14,348,219	€19,908,000	-€5,559,781
Comparison Scenario 2			
2011	€8,500,818	€19,908,000	-€11,407,182
2019	€26,140,790	€19,908,000	€6,232,790
2022	€31,828,796	€19,908,000	€11,920,796
Bulky Household Goods			
2011	€3,749,041	€2,750,000	€999,041
2019	€5,456,890	€2,750,000	€2,706,890
2022	€6,327,868	€2,750,000	€3,577,868

Source: Table 4.6 and 4.9

4.9 Future Floorspace Potential for Kells Town

4.9.1 In order to calculate the potential for additional retail floorspace within the catchment area, we apply estimate turnover ratios for future retail floorspace to the estimated gross spare expenditure capacity presented in Table 4.9. A turnover per sq. m. of €11,000 is assumed for future convenience floorspace,

€5,000 for comparison retail floorspace and €2,500 for bulky goods floorspace in 2011 prices. The broad assessment of the potential for additional retail floorspace in Kells and its catchment area is set out in Table 4.11 below.

4.9.2 It is clear from Table 4.10 above that there is no capacity for additional comparison floorspace under Scenario 1. This is attributed to the high levels of comparison expenditure outflow from the catchment area. The minus figures under this scenario imply that there is no capacity for even the existing level of comparison floorspace within the town. However it is noted that the household survey undertaken by Demographics Ireland sets out the response to the question “where do you undertake your main clothing and footwear shopping?”. While the existing comparison retail units within Kells would not be classified as units where customers would carry out their main comparison shopping people would still shop in these units on occasion. It is therefore reasonable to assume that there is sufficient expenditure available within the catchment area for existing retail provision. We have assumed equilibrium between existing floorspace and expenditure in the town on the basis that existing floorspace is being supported at present. Table 4.11 therefore sets out a requirement for additional comparison floorspace under both Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 in 2019 and 2022 based on an increase in comparison expenditure projected between 2011 and 2019 and 2022, based on projected population and expenditure increase.

Table 4.11: Kells Floorspace Potential

	Net Convenience sq.m.	Net Comparison sq.m. Scenario 1	Net Comparison sq.m. Scenario 2	Net Bulky Goods sq.m.
2011	0	0	0	400
2019	2,534	774	3,528	1,083
2022	3,300	1,169	4,666	1,431

Source: Table 4.10

4.9.3 In considering the potential for additional retail floorspace within the catchment area it should be noted that the floorspace potential figures outlined in Table 4.11 above should not be considered as upper limits, merely as indicative of the scale of new floorspace required to meet the needs of existing and future population and expenditure in the catchment area. Additional new floorspace may be proposed and this could replace some existing outdated or poorly located retail floorspace. These figures should be seen as minimum rather than maximums. The key consideration is the location of new floorspace. This point is addressed in further detail in Chapter 5 of the Retail Review.

4.9.4 The lower set of figures for comparison floorspace, Scenario 1 in the capacity assessment, is based on a continuation of high leakage of expenditure from the catchment area to competing centres. The level of retention of this expenditure has potential to increase over the lifetime of the strategy in line with an enhanced provision of comparison floorspace within the catchment area as set out within Scenario 2 of the capacity assessment.

Pipeline Permissions

4.9.5 It is noteworthy that the figures set out in Table 4.11 above do not include for "pipeline" floorspace i.e. floorspace which has already been permitted in Kells but not constructed at the time of the preparation of the retail strategy. Details of extant permissions are provided in Chapter 3 of the retail strategy and are summarised in Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12 Summary of Pipeline Floorspace

Towns	Net Convenience sq.m.	Net Comparison sq.m	Net Bulky sq.m
Kells	3,025	3,747	2,300

4.9.6 A number of these permitted schemes are significant and there is uncertainty regarding their delivery. Due to the current economic and retail conditions on a national basis, and the considerable uncertainty as to which developments will be implemented and further uncertainty on timing, it is considered that the situation should be reviewed and assessed in considering future applications having regard to the situation at that time.

4.9.7 A pragmatic approach must be taken to such extant permissions and it should be recognised that any implementation of such permissions is likely to be on a much reduced scale from that originally approved, and / or on a phased basis. A case by case consideration of the relevant pipeline floorspace will be necessary in considering any significant retail development. The key consideration in assessing future planning applications is the location of the proposed retail floorspace. The appropriate redevelopment and revitalisation of town centres lands will continue to be promoted as a priority. The prioritisation of town centre expansion lands is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 5: ESTABLISHING AND STRENGTHENING THE CORE RETAIL AREA

5.1 Defining the Core Retail

5.1.1 Kells has a historical background and its street pattern and layout has been primarily influenced by its origins as a monastic settlement and more recently as an 18th century planned town. The town centre is fairly compact and can be broadly defined by the area focused on Farrell Street, Cross Street, Market Street, New Market Street, Castle Street, John Street and Bective Square.

5.1.2 The Core Retail Area of Kells is identified in Figure 5.1 overleaf. In determining the Core Retail Area regard was had to the Kells Retail Evaluation 2006, the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013, the Meath County Retail Strategy 2012 and the following considerations:

- The objective to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre
- The existing character and retail profile of the town centre of Kells
- The location of town centre development opportunity sites

5.1.3 The core retail area of Kells extends across a number of streets, and although the town centre can be considered to be compact, the core retail area is quite dispersed. For a centre of Kells' size this dispersion could create difficulties in attracting new retailers and creating a more vibrant retail core. In this context it is considered appropriate to differentiate between primary and secondary retail streets as follows:

- Primary Retail Area- Farrell Street and Cross Street
- Secondary Retail Area- Bective Square, New Market Street, Market Street, Castle Street and John Street

5.1.4 The differentiation between primary and secondary streets is beneficial in terms of distinguishing between town centre and edge of centre sites. It will also allow the Planning Authority to concentrate investment in public realm improvements in the primary retail area in the short term.

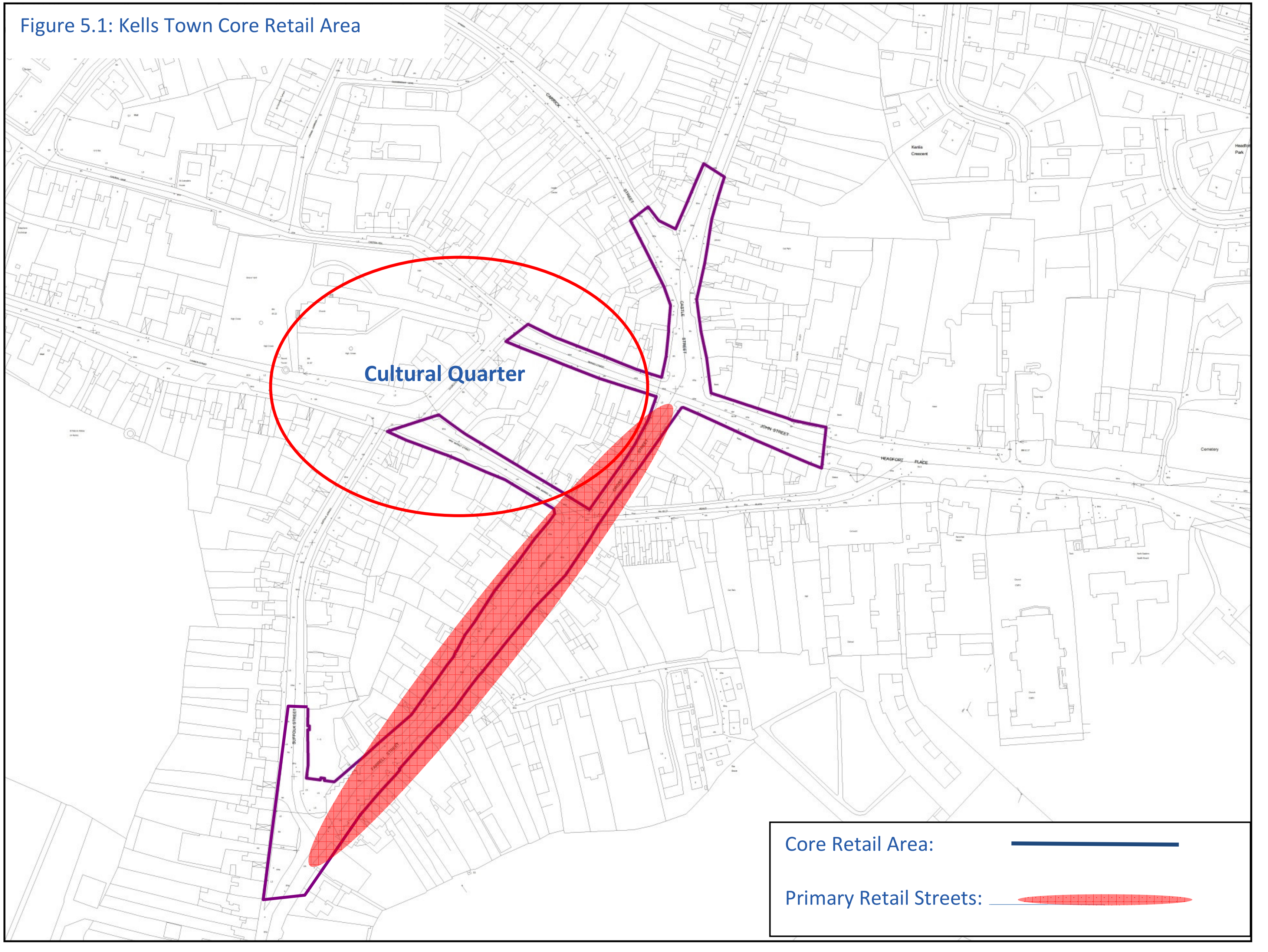
5.1.5 The designation of Farrell Street and Cross Street as the primary retail area has regard to the existing retail profile of these streets, which currently contain a greater concentration of comparison and convenience retail uses. It also takes into consideration the likely future development of the 'backlands' site, which is located to the immediate east of Farrell Street, as a town centre expansion area which is discussed in more detail in Section 5.3 below. The future development of the 'backlands' site will require the provision of appropriate vehicular and pedestrian links to Farrell Street and this will increase the footfall in this area of the town centre. Traffic calming and public realm improvements on Farrell Street and Cross Street would further enhance the retail environment of the town centre.

5.1.6 The Planning Authority should promote higher order convenience and comparison uses in the primary retail area. However, due to the floorspace

requirement of modern retailers it is likely that these retail formats will be more easily accommodated on the town centre expansion lands. The secondary retail area is considered more suitable for middle and lower order uses and non-retail service uses, in particular those which would complement the tourism potential of the town. The Core Strategy proposed in the Kells Development Plan 2013 – 2019 includes an objective to provide a cultural quarter in the Market Street, Church Hill, Church Street, New Market Street and Cannon Street area (see Figure 5.1). This could be a significant attraction for the town centre and would be complementary to the primary retail area.

5.1.7 The extension of the Core Retail Area along Bective Street / Bective Square has regard to the potential of the 'frontlands' site, which is located to the west of Bective Street, Bective Square and Suffolk Street, to provide for town centre expansion. It will be necessary to provide linkages from this area to Bective Street and Suffolk Street to ensure any new development enhances the vitality and viability of the Core Retail Area.

Figure 5.1: Kells Town Core Retail Area



5.1.8 Having regard to the above a key focus of the Kells Retail Review will be to encourage and facilitate the diversification of the retail profile of the town centre. This can be achieved by identifying areas, as suggested above, for targeted investment in order to provide for a greater range of retail and service uses in the town centre. Retail development should be directed into the Core Retail Area and the town centre expansion sites in order to:

- Ensure a vital and viable town centre;
- Encourage regeneration of areas with scope for improvement;
- Increase the environmental attractiveness of the centre;
- Achieve the quantum and quality of retail formats necessary to minimise convenience and comparison outflow of expenditure and expand the retail offer of the town.

5.1.9 It is envisaged that as Kells develops over the life time of the retail strategy, that the retail offer of the primary retail area will improve, that cultural and tourism related uses will develop in the secondary streets in the area identified as a cultural quarter and that the core retail area will expand into the 'backlands' and / or the 'frontlands' site.

5.1.10 In this context it is considered appropriate to identify opportunity sites within the town centre which will act as the focus for the future growth and expansion of the core retail area over the lifetime of the strategy and beyond. The key opportunity sites are discussed below.

5.1.11 Considering its proximity to the primary retail area, it is considered that the 'backlands' site offers the most suitable location for town centre expansion in the short term. However, it is acknowledged that significant constraints exist in bringing the preferred town centre expansion area forward for development. It is also important to allow for choice in order to cater for all potential retailers and therefore the identification of the 'frontlands' site for town centre expansion should be retained in the new Kells Development Plan. Encouragement should also be given to smaller scale retail development on infill sites where it can be established that such development will add to the vitality and viability of the retail core.

5.2 Development Opportunity Sites

5.2.1 A number of opportunity sites are identified within the Meath County Retail Strategy and these are considered in further detail below. It should be noted that the identified sites are considered to represent potential retail development sites on the basis of the application of the sequential approach to retail planning. The identification of a site as an opportunity site should not be taken as an assumption that the site is acceptable in principle for retail development as any development proposal would also have to satisfy a range of other relevant development management criteria such as zoning, access, design, quantitative justification of floorspace proposed, car parking, public transport, etc.. Section 5.3 below provides further advice on the most suitable location for town centre expansion in Kells.

Infill Opportunity Sites

5.2.2 As illustrated in the vacancy survey included in Chapter 3 there are number of opportunities for retailers to locate in the primary and secondary streets of the Core Retail Area of Kells.

5.2.3 There are a number of key town centre opportunity sites which are considered suitable for the provision of new retail / commercial development. The location of these sites is identified in Figure 5.2 and they are described below. Opportunities for new development in the primary and secondary retail streets are limited due to the historic nature and layout of the town. Therefore, opportunities to locate new retail development in existing vacant buildings in the town centre should be pursued.

Opportunity Site 1

5.2.4 This is the former 'Miller's' Building on Market Street. This building is a protected structure and is located on a secondary street in the town centre core. This two storey building, which extends a significant distance to the rear, is in a good location for either convenience or comparison retail development or other complementary uses such as a restaurant / café or bar. It is understood that the building was last in use as a supermarket. The site is located within the area where it is an objective to develop a cultural quarter.

Photo 5.1 Opportunity Site 1 – Market Street

Opportunity Site 2

5.2.5 Located on the corner of John Street and Castle Street, these adjoining vacant properties offer an excellent opportunity for appropriate re-use for retail development. The property on John Street is designated as a protected structure and contains the former Fitzsimons Bakery. The building is listed as a good example of a 1930's Art Deco industrial building in the NIAH survey. The location of this site in the secondary retail area results in this site being suitable for comparison or convenience retail use. Other suitable uses would include a

restaurant, which may be appropriate considering the location of the site to the south of the proposed cultural quarter. Any such proposals for the re-use of these structures will need to be sympathetic to their architectural character which contributes to the streetscape of Castle Street and John Street.

Photo 5.2: Opportunity Site 2 – Corner of John Street and Castle Street

Photo 5.3: Opportunity Site 2 – Fitzsimons Bakery John Street

Opportunity Site 3

5.2.6 Located on Suffolk Street just outside the core retail area, this building was originally a cinema and most recently was in use as a carpet warehouse. The

reuse of this site for retail use would improve the retail profile and offer of Suffolk Street and be a positive addition to the streetscape.

Photo 5.3: Opportunity Site 3 – Suffolk Street

Greenfield Opportunity Sites

5.2.7 There are two significant green-field backland sites situated in proximity to the Core Retail Area which were identified as potential locations for town centre expansion in the Kells Retail Evaluation 2006, the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019. These sites are as follows:

Opportunity Site 4- Frontlands Site

5.2.8 This site is located to the rear of Suffolk Street and Cannon Street, and is known as the 'frontlands' site. This site is zoned for town centre expansion in the current Development Plan. This area was identified as a potential town centre expansion area in the Kells Retail Evaluation Study 2006 that conformed to the Sequential Approach.

5.2.9 The key to the future development of this site will be the ability to integrate the new retail development with the Core Retail Area, by providing vehicular and pedestrian linkages to Bective Square, Suffolk Street and potentially Cannon Street. In addition any new retail development would need to have special regard to the character and heritage of Kells. A design statement will be required to ensure that the relationship of the proposals to the historical context of Kells and its origins as a monastic settlement and later as an 18th century planned town are fully considered.

5.2.10 A Strategic Flood Risk assessment undertaken to inform the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 identifies a portion of this site as being located within Flood Zone A. This has implications for the extent of development achievable on the

site. The resultant configuration of the land use zoning objectives will present further design challenges. A strong urban edge from the Bective Street approach will be required including the redevelopment of the existing car park to the rear of the former car show room to the town centre expansion area.

Opportunity Site 5- Backlands Site

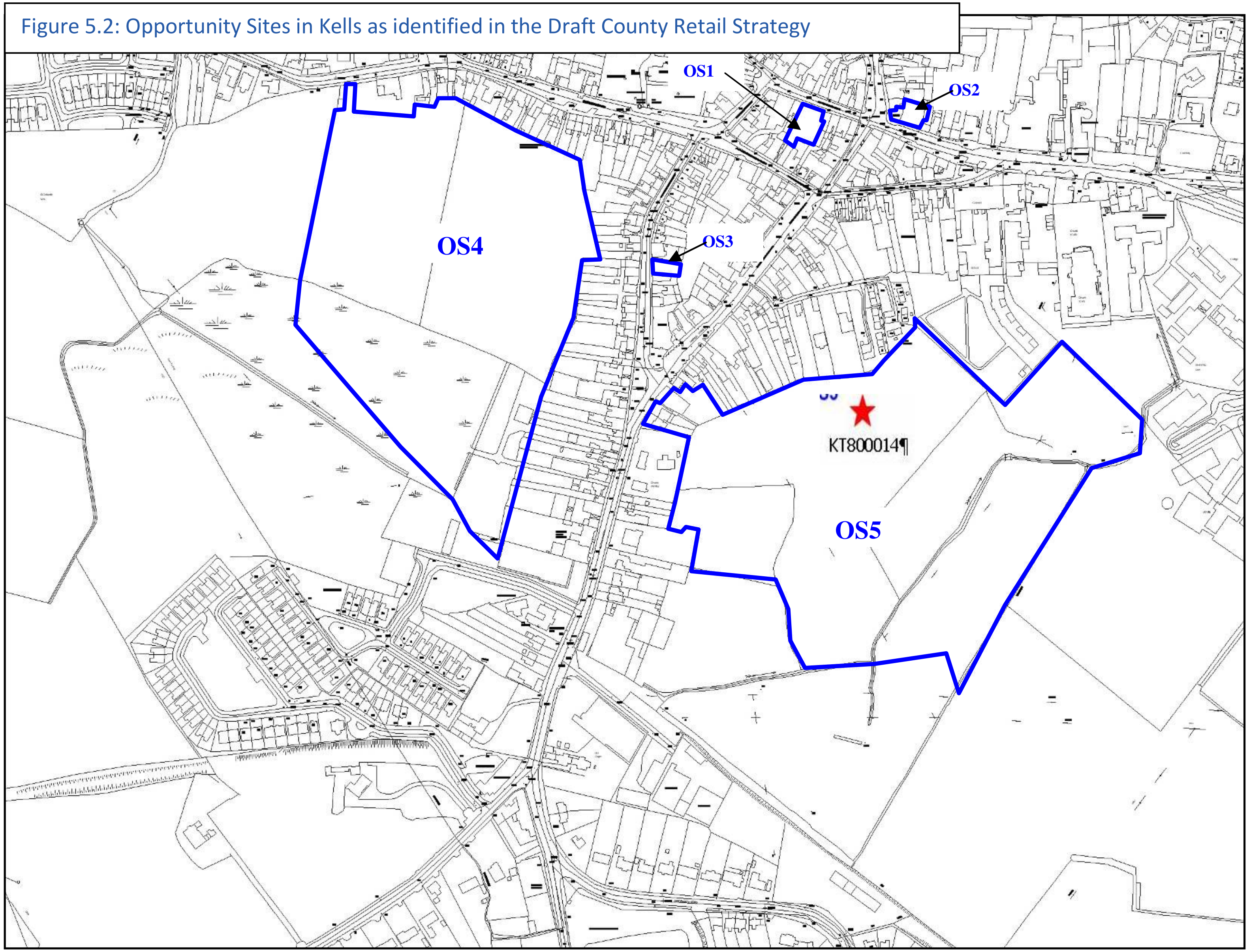
5.2.11 The Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Kells Retail Evaluation 2006 identifies the site to the east of Bective Street and Farrell Street, known as the 'backlands' site, as the most appropriate area in the short term to accommodate expansion of the retail core. This site is zoned for new town centre activities in the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013.

5.2.12 There is an extant permission on these lands under Reg. Ref: KT/800014 for a mixed use town centre development comprising of retail, residential, commercial, crèche, civic space and ancillary and associated uses. This provides for in the order of 4,402 sq.m GFA of convenience, 5,658 sq.m GFA of comparison and 2,064 sq.m GFA of non-retail services. This exceeds the estimated retail floorspace required for Kells up to 2022 as set out in Chapter 4 of this Retail Review. Having regard to the nature of this scheme and the changed economic circumstances, it is considered unlikely that this extant permission will be implemented.

5.2.13 A Strategic Flood Risk assessment undertaken to inform the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 identifies a significant portion of this site as being located within Flood Zone A. This has significant implications for the extent of development achievable on the site.

5.2.14 The key to the future development of this site will be the ability to integrate the new retail development with the existing town centre, particularly the primary retail area of Farrell Street, through vehicle and pedestrian linkages. In addition any new retail development would need to have special regard to the character and heritage of Kells. A design statement will be required to ensure that the relationship of the proposals to the historical context of Kells and its origins as a monastic settlement and later as an 18^{th} century planned town are fully considered.

Figure 5.2: Opportunity Sites in Kells as identified in the Draft County Retail Strategy



5.3 Location, Type & Scale of New Retail Development

5.3.1 In accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 the preferred location for new retail development is within the town centre and in assessing locations for expansion of the town centre the sequential approach should be followed.

5.3.2 The Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2008 provides guidance in Table 6.2 on the retail formats expected in each level of the retail hierarchy. In relation to Sub-County Town Centres, such as Kells, it advises that middle order comparison, lower order comparison, superstore and supermarkets can expect to be present. It is accepted that the above retail formats are appropriate for Kells. Due to Kells potential as a tourism town the possibility exists to attract niche high order comparison retailers to the town centre.

5.3.3 This section of the Retail Review will provide further guidance on the scale and in turn the most suitable location for retail development in Kells.

5.3.4 Chapter 4 sets out the indicative floorspace potential of Kells up to 2022 as follows.

Table 5.1: Kells Floorspace Potential

	Net Convenience sq.m.	Net Comparison sq.m. Scenario 1	Net Comparison sq.m. Scenario 2	Net Bulky Goods sq.m.
2011	0	0	0	400
2019	2,534	774	3,528	1,083
2022	3,300	1,169	4,666	1,431

Source: See Table 4.11 in Chapter 4

5.3.5 Based on the above it is recommended that the new Development Plan should provide sufficient town centre zoned lands to provide for in the order of 3,300 sq.m net convenience retail floorspace and provide for up to 4,666 sq.m of net comparison floorspace. This approach accords with the recommendations of the Development Plan Guidelines which advise that *'development plans will provide for sufficient zoned land to meet not just the expected demand arising within the development plan period of six years, but will also provide for the equivalent of 3 years demand beyond the date on which the current plan ceases to have effect'* (Section 4.14, Pg. 34 Development Plan Guidelines). Whilst this approach is generally applied to residential zoning it is also considered relevant in this instance. It is considered that the bulky goods floorspace can be accommodated on a portion of the KS6 lands which are identified for retail warehouse use in the current Development Plan and which benefit from an extant permission for 2,300 sq.m net of retail warehouse floorspace.

5.3.6 It is apparent that the quantum of convenience and comparison retail floorspace projected for Kells up to 2022 could not be accommodated in the Core Retail Area of Kells town centre. Thus, the sequential approach to retail development must be followed in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012.

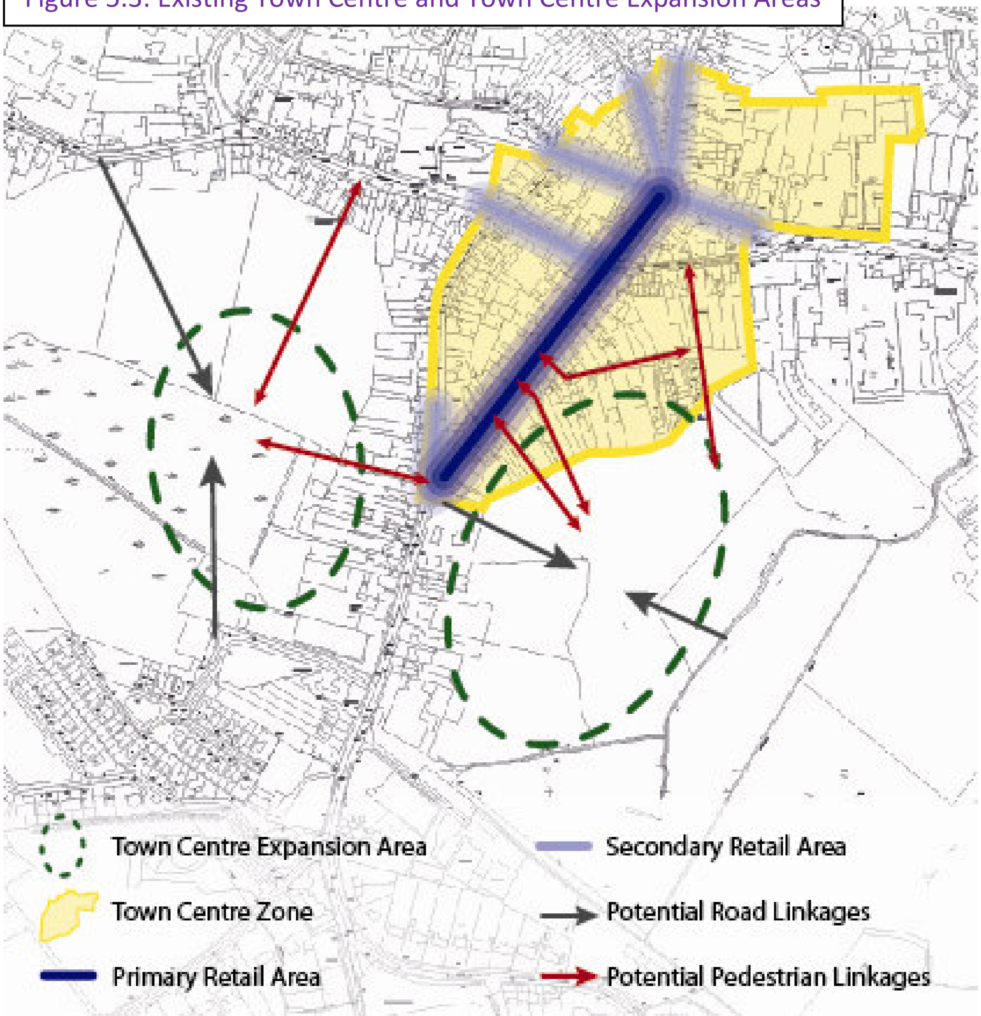
5.3.7 In considering the most suitable locations for town centre expansion regard must be had to the existing planning policy framework. The Kells Retail Evaluation 2006 assessed locations for town centre expansion. Based on the recommendations of the Retail Evaluation, the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 identified the 'backlands' and the 'frontlands' as suitable areas for town centre expansion.

5.3.8 The Kells Retail Evaluation concluded that *'in the short and medium term, consistent with adopted policy Area 3 is the one which provides the greatest potential for the regeneration of the town centre and best meets the tests of the Sequential Approach'* and that *'we recommend that expansion of the town centre be undertaken on a phased basis with the preferred location for retail development being Area 3 in accordance with the RPG and principles of the Sequential Approach'.*

5.3.9 The Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 zoned lands largely co-incidental with both Area 3 and Area 4, i.e. the 'Backlands', and Area 2, i.e. the 'Frontlands', for town centre expansion. However, the Development Plan acknowledges that in the short to medium term the development of area 3, i.e. the northern part of the 'Backlands' site, offers the greatest potential, followed by area 4. In addition the Development Plan required a framework plan to be prepared for Area 2 prior to development commencing in this location.

5.3.10 Figure 5.3 below indicates the existing town centre and potential town centre expansion areas and potential linkages to and from the town centre expansion areas.

Figure 5.3: Existing Town Centre and Town Centre Expansion Areas



5.3.11 The Planning Authority have requested that this Retail Review establish the quantum of new retail floorspace required in Kells up to 2022, which is demonstrated in Chapter 4 and Table 5.1 above, and also the most appropriate location to accommodate this floorspace and other town centre uses.

5.3.12 We include an assessment below, against eight different criteria, of the suitability of the 'backlands' and 'frontlands' sites for town centre expansion. The conclusion of this assessment is that while both sites are suitable, in the short to medium term the 'backlands' site is considered the more suitable location for town centre expansion.

5.3.13 The following is a list of the criteria against which each site was assessed.

Summary of Assessment Criteria

Location - How proximate is the site to the Core Retail Area?

Size[2] - Is the site of sufficient size to accommodate the quantum of retail development projected for Kells up to 2022?

Availability - Is the site available for development in the short term?

Heritage - Would the sites development as a town centre expansion area have a positive impact on the heritage of the town?

Environment - Would the development of the site have a positive impact on the environment and amenity of the town centre?

Policy Context - Is the planning framework in place to provide for the development of these lands for retail uses?

Accessibility - Is the site accessible from the Core Retail Area and how does it rate in terms of potential accessibility if developed?

Services - Are services available to provide for town centre expansion in this location?

5.3.14 The following provides an assessment of the 'backlands' and 'frontlands' site against each of the criteria. The order of the criteria is considered to be reflective of their relevance in assessing the suitability of an area for town centre expansion.

Backlands Site

Location - The backlands site is located to the immediate east of Farrell Street, as illustrated in Figure 5.3 above, which is a primary retail street and immediately adjoins the lands zoned as existing town centre.

Size - There remains a significant area of land zoned for 'town centre expansion' which could accommodate significant retail floorspace,.

Availability– We understand from the Planning Authority that these lands are available for development

Heritage - The lands are located adjacent to the historic town core. The lands are partially located in the Kells Zone of Archaeological Potential. Any development of these lands would need to be thoroughly assessed in terms of impact on heritage.

Environment- We understand that the eastern portion of the 'backlands' site is subject to flooding due to its location adjacent to the Newrath

[2] *It is noted that the size of the sites assessed against this criterion is the area proposed in the draft Kells Development Plan 2013 – 2019 land use zoning objectives map. The extent of lands included within Flood Zones A & B have been discounted in this regard. The extent of both the 'backlands' and 'frontlands' sites have therefore both reduced in their respective extent from that contained in the 2007 – 2013 Kells Development Plan.*

Stream. There is potential to incorporate an open space area which could become an important natural asset for the town centre by protecting the ecological value of the site. There is a need to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of these lands for 'town centre expansion'.

Policy Context- The lands are zoned for town centre expansion in the current Development Plan. The Kells Backlands LAP 2006 also provides a more detailed planning framework for the development of these lands. This area is the preferred site for town centre expansion in the Kells Retail Evaluation and the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013. There is an extant planning permission for retail mixed use development on the northern part of these lands.

Accessibility- At present there is no access to the subject lands from Farrell Street. The extant permission proposed an access from the junction of Bective Street and Farrell Street. The success of the development of these lands for town centre expansion will be dependent on providing appropriate pedestrian and vehicular access including direct pedestrian linkages to the primary retail area on Farrell Street.

Services - We understand from the Planning Authority that the services issues associated with the development of this area were resolved by the extant grant of permission for this site, including the reservation of water services capacity.

Frontlands Site

Location - This area is located to the west of Bective Street, Bective Square and Suffolk Street, an area currently zoned for mixed use and residential uses, and therefore is more removed from the Core Retail Area than the 'backlands' site.

Size - There is a significant area of land zoned for 'town centre expansion' in this area which could also accommodate significant retail floorspace.

Availability– We understand from the Planning Authority that these lands are available for development.

Heritage - The lands are located adjacent to the historic town core. The majority of these lands are located in the Kells Zone of Archaeological Potential. Any development of these lands would need to be thoroughly assessed in terms of impact on heritage including the preservation of a newly identified view and prospect (no. 4) in the Kells Development Plan 2013 - 2019.

Environment- We understand that a portion of the southern part of these lands is subject to flood risk. These lands rise steeply from south to north and any development in this location would require sensitive design

to ensure the historic character of the town is not adversely impacted on. There is a need to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of these lands for 'town centre expansion'.

Policy Context- The lands are zoned for town centre expansion in the current Development Plan. The Development Plan requires the preparation of a framework plan for agreement with the Planning Authority prior to development proceeding. This has not been finalised to date.

Accessibility- There is a potential access to the southern part of these lands from Bective Street, adjacent to the former McKeown's Garage. Additional pedestrian access points to these lands from Bective Street, Bective Square, Suffolk Street and possibly also Cannon Street needs to be provided if these lands are to be developed for town centre expansion.

Services - We understand from the Planning Authority that there would be issues relating to the availability of water services capacity to serve this development. It is noted that retail development in itself does not present a significant loading on water services. Other services issues may also need to be resolved.

5.3.15 The above assessment provides an analysis of the suitability of the 'backlands' and the 'frontlands' site for town centre expansion. It is considered that the 'backlands' site is the most suitable location for town centre expansion based on its proximity to the Core Retail Area and the potential benefits the development of these lands will bring in terms of revitalising the town centre of Kells.

5.3.16 However, the evaluation also demonstrates that both sites have constraints. Furthermore, it is important to provide choice for potential retailers and in this respect it is considered appropriate to retain the 'frontlands' as a suitable location for town centre expansion. Such an approach would acknowledge the constraints that exist on both sites and the fact that it is not clear which site will come forward for development first. Therefore it is recommended that both sites are identified for town centre expansion subject to overcoming the identified constraints and providing appropriate access and pedestrian links to the retail core.

5.3.17 Thus, the recommendation of this Retail Review is consistent with that of the Kells Retail Evaluation 2006 and the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 which identified the 'backlands' site as the more suitable location for town centre expansion in the short to medium term but also identified the 'frontlands' site as a suitable location for town centre expansion.

CHAPTER 6: RETAIL RECOMMENDATIONS AND DESIGN GUIDANCE

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This section of the retail review sets out key recommendations to enhance the retail offer, profile and vitality and viability of Kells in line with its designation as a Level 3 Sub County Town Centre.

6.2 Key Principles

6.2.1 The location and scale of new retail development must have regard to the planning context for the County and in particular the Retail Planning Guidelines, the Meath County Development Plan and the Town Development Plan.

6.2.2 A key principle in the provision of future retail floorspace is the need to reinforce the existing retail structure of the town and ensure that the town centre develops its retail function to meet the shopping needs of its residents and the surrounding catchment area which it serves and to ensure a healthy and competitive retail environment.

6.2.3 The principal location for future retail development will be concentrated in and adjoining the Core Retail Area. The 'backlands' site is identified as the most suitable location to accommodate the projected retail floorspace requirements of the town and its catchment area up to 2022, i.e. the lifetime of the next Development Plan and an additional three years. However, considering the site constraints it is also considered appropriate to retain the 'frontlands' site as a suitable location for town centre expansion to provide choice of location and greater certainty for potential retailers. Consideration of the potential impact of large scale retail development outside of the Core Retail Area and its impact on the traditional town centre should be taken cognisance of when assessing any significant planning applications for retail development.

6.2.4 The confined and historic nature of the traditional town core, while forming the basis of an attractive and distinctive retailing environment, presents difficulties in accommodating modern retail formats, particularly those of the larger multiples. The central aim of this retail review is to protect and enhance the traditional town core of Kells town centre while also encouraging the future growth and expansion of the retail offer of the town in a sustainable manner. The key issues for Kells over the period of this strategy include:

- Addressing leakage of retail expenditure from the town by providing the means to strengthen the range and quality of its retail offer in line with its status as a Level 3 centre serving a large rural hinterland;
- Encouraging and facilitating the diversification in the town's retail profile and offer to address the overall lack of national and international comparison and convenience units within the town centre;
- Protect the vitality and viability of the traditional town centre and enhance its status as a Level 3 centre in the County Retail Hierarchy;

- Further enhance linkages between the retail core and the identified town centre expansion sites;
- Ensure the continued primacy of the town centre in the face of increased competition from out of centre development.

6.2.5 This section of the retail strategy sets out key policies and actions which aim to address these key issues.

6.2.6 It is considered that the 'backlands' site, which is located adjacent to the Core Retail Area, is highly suitable for retail expansion of the town, provided appropriate pedestrian linkages to the retail core are established. However, in recognition of the constraints of the site and in order to provide greater choice for retailers it is also considered that the 'frontlands' should be retained as a town centre expansion area. Design guidance for the future development of the 'backlands' and 'frontlands' sites, i.e. the town centre expansion areas, is provided in Section 6.5 below.

6.3 Distribution and Floorspace Requirements

6.3.1 A capacity assessment has been undertaken in Chapter 4 of this study. This is based on a number of forecasts and assumptions which may be subject to change. However, it indicates that approximately 3,300 sq.m of net convenience retail floorspace, up to 4,650 sq.m of net comparison floorspace and approximately 1,500 sq.m of bulky goods floorspace is required in Kells up to 2022.

6.3.2 It is assumed that additional convenience and comparison retail floorspace should be provided where possible within and adjoining the identified Core Retail Area. Chapter 5 identifies the 'backlands' site as the preferred location for town centre expansion, whilst also acknowledging that the 'frontlands' site would be a suitable location for expansion of the retail offer of the town. It is considered necessary to identify both areas for town centre expansion due to the constraints that exist on both sites and the associated uncertainty in relation to the delivery of retail development on these sites, in the context of the significant shortfall of the current retail offer of the town.

6.4 Specific Objectives for Town Centre Improvements

6.4.1 This section will summarise the general appropriate policies and actions to encourage the improvement of Kells town centre.

General Measures to Promote Town Centre Improvements

6.4.2 Detailed below are a number of general policies and objectives that should be implemented to encourage and foster retail development in Kells. A number of objectives were identified in the Meath County Retail Strategy and those relevant to Kells are considered further and expanded upon below. Whilst it is acknowledged that the development of retail facilities is largely dependent on market demand and retailer requirements, it is envisaged that the following

general policies will help promote the town centre as a vibrant and attractive area thus encouraging its sustainable growth and development for retail, retail service, tourism, cultural, professional service and other complementary land uses.

Diversification of the retail offer

6.4.3 Independent or individual retail units can create a strong sense of character and place, attracting customers from a wider catchment and help serve and develop the tourism sector. Kells is uniquely suited in many ways to develop a speciality or niche profile to complement the more mainstream offer provided by international and national multiples. Whereas multiple operators require larger store formats and a prominent street presence, speciality operators are often ideally suited to the smaller, traditionally scaled units which characterise town centres such as Kells.

6.4.4 Diversity in the retail offer of Kells will be encouraged. Practical measures are needed to achieve this. The planning framework needs to be flexible enough to allow for the expansion or creation of larger floorplate retail units to accommodate the demands of retailers. An emphasis on creating high quality units and public realm improvements to enhance the visual appearance of Kells are also important.

6.4.5 The retail function of Kells should in turn support and be supported by other town centre uses, such as restaurants, bars, cultural uses, and community services.

Development of Identified Opportunity Sites

6.4.6 The fine urban grain and traditional narrow plot sizes of Kells town centre provide limited opportunities for large retail formats to enter the traditional retail core of the town. The 'Backlands' and 'Frontlands' sites are identified in Chapter 5 of this retail review as suitable locations for town centre expansion.

6.4.7 New development should be well integrated with the traditional retail areas of the town and should be sympathetic to the heritage and character of Kells. The key objective should be to create a vibrant and commercially successful retail sector for the town and its hinterland;

Establishment of a Cultural Quarter for Kells

6.4.8 The Core Strategy includes an objective to create a cultural quarter, focusing on creative and cultural industries with galleries, craft shops, potteries, goldsmiths and jewellery designers, artisan foods, restaurants and cafes, in the Market Street, Church Hill, Church Street, New Market Street and Cannon Street area. Proactive mechanisms to deliver this cultural quarter will need to be considered by the Planning Authority if such an objective is to be realised.

Enhancement of Tourist Facilities

6.4.9 Promote additional café, restaurant and gift / tourist shops in the town centre in order to attract tourists to the town centre and provide a link with the retail provision in the town;

Shop Front Design Guidelines

6.4.10 Design guidelines for shop frontages and upper floors of buildings should be prepared and advice given to property owners and retailers on urban design. This should include the promotion of a range of high quality styles, materials and finishes which contribute to an aesthetically pleasing streetscape. Careful consideration of signage is required to protect signature buildings along the street and to reduce visual clutter. The retention and upgrade of existing traditional shop fronts and timber sash windows in upper floors should be encouraged.

Business Improvements District Schemes

6.4.11 A feasibility study regarding the development of a town centre management initiative for Kells involving local business owners should be considered. This may include the setting up of a town centre management committee or a local 'BID' or Business Improvement District.

Public Realm Improvement Works

6.4.12 Further investment in the public realm is required to provide an improved pedestrian environment and encourage permeability through the whole area, and encourage further expansion of the Core Retail Area towards the town centre expansion sites.

6.4.13 The potential of a comprehensive upgrade of Farrell Street and Cross Street, i.e. the primary retail streets, should be investigated to include enhancement of the public realm, high quality landscaping and street furniture, and other measures which would attract visitors. Improvements to the public realm should assist, where possible, in promoting the unique heritage and importance of Kells.

Living Over the Shop Initiative

6.4.14 Limited use is made of the upper floors of retail units and this imposes a negative impact on the streetscape. "Living over the shop" should be encouraged in the town centre to enhance its overall vibrancy.

Pedestrian Facilities

6.4.15 Pedestrian facilities and connections should be enhanced to encourage greater pedestrian movement within the town's retail core.

Vacancy Study

6.4.16 The occurrence of vacancies within the town centre should be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. The reuse of existing vacant premises in the Core Retail Area should be actively promoted.

6.5 Design Guidance for Town Centre Expansion Sites

6.5.1 It is considered appropriate to provide design guidance for the town centre expansion sites, i.e. the 'backlands' and the 'frontlands' site, in this Retail Review. Significant urban design guidance is already provided for the 'backlands' site in the Kells Backlands LAP 2006 and any future development of this area for town centre expansion should have regard to this document. The current Development Plan also includes an objective to provide a Framework Plan for the 'frontlands' site prior to a planning application proceeding.

6.5.2 Given the current economic climate, Kells' position in the retail hierarchy and based on discussions with the Planning Authority it is likely that the only significant retail floorspace to be delivered in Kells in the short term will be supermarkets, potentially together with smaller shop units.

6.5.3 It would be appropriate to locate this new convenience floor space in the town centre expansion sites in order to comply with the sequential approach to retail development and to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre. It is generally acknowledged that supermarket operators require large floor plates with associated surface car parking. Due to the economic downturn, it is no longer realistic to assume that a supermarket development will be delivered as part of a multi-level mixed use scheme; however, ancillary café, retail and retail service units can be expected and will help provide the necessary integration into the existing streetscape and retail core. In any case a high quality urban development will be required.

6.5.4 In preparing this design guidance, particular regard was had to the 'Retail Design Manual - A Good Practice Guide' published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in May 2012. Any future applications on the 'Backlands' site should be required to show compliance with the 'Retail Design Manual', which was prepared in conjunction with the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012, to provide a planning framework for future development of the retail sector in a way which meets the needs of modern shopping formats while contributing to protecting, supporting and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of city and town centres as places to live, work, shop and visit.

6.5.5 Any future development of the 'backlands' site should also have regard to the 'Kells Backlands LAP 2006', however, this LAP will be superseded by the Kells Development Plan 2013-2019 when adopted. The future development of the 'frontlands' site will be subject to the preparation of a Design Statement which will indicate how the scale, type and layout of development is appropriate for this location.

6.5.6 It is recommended that the following design guidance should be followed for any future development of the town centre expansion sites.

Access & Connectivity

6.5.7 Access and connectivity will be key to the delivery of retail floorspace on the town centre expansion lands to ensure that such development enhances the vitality and viability of the town centre. The development of these lands should facilitate and encourage the delivery of appropriate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access routes and connectivity onto the surrounding road network in the interests of permeability and strong connections between the town centre expansion area and the established town centre.

6.5.8 The importance of access and connectivity for the 'backlands' site is recognised in the Kells Development Plan 2007-2013 as it indicates a number of vehicular and pedestrian accesses from the town centre and adjoining undeveloped lands into the subject site. Similar objectives are appropriate for the 'frontlands' site.

6.5.9 The Planning Authority and the applicant should proactively seek to deliver new pedestrian access points from Farrell Street, Kenlis Place and Bective Street to the 'backlands' area and from Bective Street, and possibly Suffolk Street and Cannon Street to the 'frontlands' area. This will require a proactive approach from the Planning Authority and may require the compulsory purchase of lands. Providing good pedestrian connectivity between the 'backlands' and Farrell Street, which is a primary retail street, and also Bective Street and Kenlis Place, will be key to ensuring that the development of the 'backlands' for retail uses enhances the vitality and viability of the town centre. This should be a requirement of any proposal for the 'backlands' site and connectivity is equally important for the 'frontlands' site.

6.5.10 As acknowledged in the Kells Backlands LAP 2006 the Planning Authority should also have regard to the need to preserve and enhance the alignment of the medieval town wall when facilitating pedestrian access between the town centre and the 'backlands'. Similar principles should underlie the preparation of proposals for the 'frontlands' site prior to planning applications being progressed.

Urban Form

6.5.11 The built form, scale and mass of development proposed on the town centre expansion sites should contribute to a high standard of urban design and quality in the built environment. The applicant shall demonstrate, in an urban design statement, how the urban form of the proposed development has regard to the character and context of Kells and enhances the built environment.

6.5.12 The built form should have regard to the historic streetscape, narrow building plots and Georgian character of Kells. Streets with active ground floor uses should be provided on the new pedestrian and vehicular links to the historic town centre.

6.5.13 The Retail Design Manual provides guidance for supermarket developments and states that *'in 'big box' situations, negative streetscape impacts can be avoided by wrapping the large floorplates with complementary streetfront units such as hairdressers, cafes, bookshops, and suchlike. This also has commercial advantages; the smaller traders feed off their adjacency to the anchor stores that, in turn, benefit from the streetscape activity that the specialist shops generate.'* Thus, even if it is no longer viable to provide a broad mix of uses on the subject site the possibility for providing varied streetscape with active ground floor uses should be encouraged.

6.5.14 Surface parking, and servicing, should ideally be located to the rear of supermarkets so as not to impact on the quality of the streetscape, and attractively landscaped with planting and lighting adding to the quality and character of the development. The Retail Design Manual includes the example of the Tesco supermarket in Ludlow, UK as Case Study 8 which it states *'is a classic example of best practice in bringing vital supermarket retailing into the town in a manner that is sensitive to its social and physical context, and unique sense of place of the historic town centre'*. Reference is also made to the Tesco store in Kildare town and the Aldi store in Brews Hill, Navan. Boundary treatment is important and palisade security fencing or other crude materials should be avoided.

6.5.15 The Retail Design Manual acknowledges that ultimately the development or reutilisation of backland sites can have significant positive knock-on benefits for adjoining properties and the town centre as a whole. Thus, the Planning Authority should encourage the appropriate redevelopment of underutilised sites to the rear of Farrell Street and Kenlis Place which adjoin the 'Backlands' site.

6.5.16 The following policies included in the Kells Backlands LAP 2006 should also be adhered to in delivering development on the 'backlands' site:

- To respect skyline views of Kells Town Centre and in particular the Columban Monastery within new development layouts.
- To incorporate existing ecological and natural features such as the existing stream in new development layouts
- To utilise potential linkages between the existing town and the backlands area.

Similar site specific recommendations should be considered in a design statement for any future development of the 'frontlands' site.

6.5.17 The applicant should also demonstrate an awareness of the town's historical features as the development of the identified town centre expansion sites provides an opportunity to highlight the archaeological and architectural heritage of Kells. Such awareness will promote a sense of unique place, unique identity and connectivity between the town's historic past and future progression.

Design Quality

6.5.18 A high level of design quality can make an important contribution to the future health of city and town centres and therefore should be promoted in the future development of the town centre expansion sites. The Retail Design Manual acknowledges that *'achieving a high quality of architecture and urban design in new retail development can be a key ingredient in delivering sustainable development in urban places'.*

6.5.19 High standards of design which are cognisant of and complementary to the heritage status of the town should be promoted. Well-designed elevations, shopfronts, signage and active ground floor uses will be required to ensure that the development contributes to the vitality and viability of Kells town centre. An urban design statement should be prepared at an early stage to indicate how the design of the proposed scheme has regard to the character and evolution of Kells and its status as a Heritage Town.

Public Realm

6.5.20 The development of the town centre expansion sites for retail and other mixed uses will present the opportunity to provide well-designed and well-used open spaces which contribute to the quality of the public realm in Kells town centre. A high quality appropriately sized civic space should be incorporated in the development of these sites. The design of the new access points will be of particular importance in terms of ensuring safe and attractive linkages from the town centre to the town centre expansion areas are provided.

6.5.21 It may be appropriate to provide temporary public spaces on underutilised areas of the site, in the short term, which can be developed for retail or other uses in the longer term when the market becomes more favourable.

6.5.22 The Retail Design Manual advises that successful urban spaces have regard for adjacent building lines and heights and contribute to the continuity and enclosure of the streetscape in their locations.

6.5.23 Surface and boundary treatments should be of a high quality, avoiding left over spaces and the exposure of the unsightly backs of adjacent development.

6.5.24 We understand that the eastern portion of the 'backlands' site is subject to flood risk. There may be scope to incorporate this area of the site as an important natural asset and deliver a landscaped open space, thereby protecting its ecological value and delivering a new open space for the town centre. Similarly part of the 'frontlands' site is subject to flood risk and this should be addressed in an appropriate manner.

Phasing

6.5.25 A phasing plan should be submitted by the applicant in large scale schemes for the town centre expansion sites which ensures that the delivery of retail development in this location accords with the sequential approach and provides

the necessary infrastructure, including vehicular and pedestrian access, to ensure the vitality and viability of Kells town centre is enhanced. This should provide details of phasing for different parcels of land in this location, the proposed uses and the infrastructure required to deliver each phase of development on the subject lands.

Environmental Responsibility

6.5.26 The proposed development should also reflect good practice in environmental responsibility. This should include the use of passive design principles to reduce the energy load from non-renewable resources. The development should utilise renewable energy technologies to reduce carbon emissions and lower fuel consumption. The proposed development should incorporate measures to enhance the biodiversity of the receiving environment. Any future development on the subject lands should incorporate the principles and practice of sustainable construction in its materials and technologies.

Conclusion

6.5.27 The Planning Authority will need to ensure that the applicants are fully aware of the sensitive nature of the town centre expansion areas in bringing forward development in these locations. In addition the Planning Authority will need to be proactive in terms of facilitating appropriate access and connectivity between the town centre expansion area(s) and the existing Core Retail Area. The above guidance should be considered in conjunction with the design guidance set down in the Kells Backland LAP 2006 and the Kells Development Plan.

6.6 Criteria for Assessing Future Retail Development

6.6.1 The criteria for assessing future retail development are provided in Chapter 9 of the County Retail Strategy 2012. All applicants for retail development in Kells should be referred to this chapter when preparing planning applications.