



Laytown and Bettystown

Public Realm Plan

July 2021



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

BDP.

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1.0 Introduction

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1.1 Executive Summary

The Laytown and Bettystown Public Realm Plan sets out the future approach to the streets and spaces of both areas.

The aim of the vision statement for Laytown is to:

Improve the public realm through the reintroduction of a beach front park (subject to future environmental studies) and the relocation and control of commuter parking. Links to improved amenities and regeneration opportunities will help enhance the character of the town.

The aim of the vision statement for Bettystown is to:

Improve the public realm through a reorganisation of the centre of the town with better connections to the beach. Parking should be better organised along the main routes with enhanced gateways to the town and the identification of opportunities for regeneration.

Laytown and Bettystown are functional coastal towns with a large coastline that provides a scenic backdrop. This stretch of coastline attracts many visitors each year and is also home to variety of wildlife.

With a considerably high number of people living in the area, there is a large number of commuters. This has led to parking issues around the station in Laytown and in the centre of Bettystown. Over time, the streets and open public spaces of both Laytown and Bettystown have become vehicular dominated and do not match the requirements of those who use the towns daily.

Over a number of chapters, this plan includes an understanding of the existing, influencing factors; a series of objectives; feedback received through engagement with stakeholders; and proposed interventions to achieve the vision for Laytown and Bettystown.

The guiding principles for Laytown are to:

1. Reintroduce a beach front town park (in conjunction with future environmental studies).
2. Improve access to the beach.
3. Relocate commuter parking to the west of the railway line.
4. Introduce a timed restriction for parking next to the shops and for the use of the play / park areas.
5. Bring derelict sites and buildings back into use - opportunity for regeneration of the site overlooking the beach to the east.
6. Introduce traffic calming measures for vehicles.
7. Consider access to the recreation area south of the town centre.

The guiding principles for Bettystown are to:

1. Re-organise the centre of the town.
2. Create more regular safe crossing points, especially in the main square.
3. Create a pedestrian space / square as a focus of the town centre.
4. Introduce traffic calming measures but do not create traffic jams.
5. Introduce time restrictions for parking in the town centre.
6. Bring derelict sites and buildings back in to use.
7. Improve links to the beach.
8. Consider safer cycling with the introduction of a Spine Road.
9. Rationalise street furniture.
10. Remove perpendicular parking and replace with parallel.
11. Explore new town park associated with Spine Road.
12. Improve street lighting throughout the town centre.

1.1 Executive Summary

Design

Site specific design considerations have informed interventions proposed for Laytown and Bettystown in Chapters 4 and 5. These include the proposed rejuvenation of Bettystown Square and for a beach front park in Laytown. Both interventions have been developed to allow for the enhancement of pedestrian movement and accessibility in a bid to bring both areas in line with current building regulations and best practice. The plan objectives also seek to be sustainable and promote measures to combat climate change.

Bettystown Square has the potential to become a more attractive town centre with re-organised parking and enhanced open public space. Laytown Park would be a welcome addition of open public space with commuter parking moved closer to Laytown train station. If this project is to progress through the stages, there will be an inherent need to consider all proposed changes in the context of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive - Appropriate Assessment.

An Appropriate Assessment of the proposals has been undertaken by Meath County Council. All proposals outlined in this public realm plan will be subject to any mitigation measures recommended in the Appropriate Assessment report.

Consultation

A public consultation event with invited stakeholders was held on the 20th of March 2019 at Coláiste na hInse. A summary of the event and points raised can be found in the Appendix in Chapter 7.

Meath County Council placed the Draft Laytown and Bettystown Public Realm Plan on public display online at consult.meath.ie. The draft plan was on display between the 11th of March 2020 and 29th of May 2020. Five submissions were received and reviewed by the council before completing the plan in May 2021.

Project Ireland, launched on the 16th February 2018, is a high-level document which provides the framework for future development and investment in Ireland. It includes a detailed capital investment plan for the next ten years, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027, and the National Planning Framework (NPF) which outlines the broader policy principles and priorities in planning for future population and economic growth to 2040. Public Realm Improvements, placemaking and brownfield development are central tenants of the NPF. The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) which forms part of Project Ireland supports ambitious and strategic projects which contribute to sustainable rural regeneration and development. The proposals put forward in this Plan adhere to and strive to implement the principles of the National Planning Framework.

Resilience

The recent global health crisis has influenced how we think about outdoor public space. The Resilience and Recovery 2020-21: Plan for Living with COVID-19 highlights that outdoor spaces are safer than indoor spaces, in terms of being less susceptible to high transmission rates of Covid-19. The vision and objectives of this plan remain applicable in how the public realm of Laytown and Bettystown should be treated and where enhancement should be pursued. The interventions of these plans include enhancements to outdoor public spaces and amenities. They will better accommodate the recent changes to our behaviour in how we use our streets and towns and enjoy open space.

1.2 Context and the Need for a Public Realm Plan

Laytown and Bettystown are seaside towns that have seen a large increase in residents in recent years. They are largely commuter towns while their beaches still remain popular with ‘day-trippers’. Both have large potential for future enhancement to better accommodate residents, traders and tourists alike.

Location

Laytown and Bettystown are located on the east coast of Meath within close proximity to Dublin, the Dublin-Belfast railway line, the M1 Dublin-Belfast Economic corridor and Drogheda. The population including Mornington / Donacorney increased in the last inter-census period from 10,889 persons in 2011 to 11,872 persons in 2016.

Laytown and Bettystown have experienced unprecedented expansion, with primarily residential development, over the past 20 years. The area is popular with commuters who work in Dublin. The area has a unique coastal backdrop and identity with both towns linked via the coastal road. There are other mixed-use developments throughout the town. Streets in the core of the town tend to be dominated by the provision of vehicle parking. In the centre of the town, there are numerous blank façades that face onto public open space. Large parts of the new town centre remain unfinished or vacant.

Locals and visitors to the area benefit from significant natural environmental features and open space given the proximity to the East coast and expansive beach front. The protection, conservation and enhancement of such areas is sought by Meath County Council. Options identified by the Planning Authority include protecting existing access points to the beach and providing additional connection points and walkways where possible, subject to appropriate environmental assessments.

Many people are now settling or have settled in the newer residential developments in Bettystown, and commute to Belfast and Dublin from Laytown Station. This has created issues with commuter parking with residents of Laytown and Bettystown parking in central areas for large parts of the day.

New Aspirations

Laytown and Bettystown hope to build on the wealth of events that already take place in the area, such as the annual Laytown Races, Sand Yachting in February and March, the Cricket Ireland Competition and Volleyball tournaments.

How people use Laytown and Bettystown year-round is also under review. There will be a large focus on daily users who live and work in Laytown and Bettystown as well as residents who commute to Dublin and Belfast.

What is the ‘Public Realm’?

Public Realm is commonly defined as all areas between buildings, including streets, laneways and open squares that are accessible to the public. From the earliest times, public spaces have played an important role in cultural, political, commercial, social and recreational development of communities. Extensively studied and written about, public spaces are simply places where people can meet, mix, engage and exchange. Well designed and planned public spaces enhance the physical environment and improve the ‘liveability’ and sustainability of urban or town centres. They provide a geographical focal point for the community and a place where residents and visitors alike can congregate for a variety of purposes.

The public realm in Laytown and Bettystown varies from long narrow roads that meet in the central square to more open public spaces found in developments such as Croí Nua.

The Need for a Public Realm Plan

Meath County Council has committed to producing a town centre public realm plan which outlines the benefits of public realm improvements. There are a number of funding avenues available including Town and Village Funding, Rural Regeneration Development Funding, Heritage funding and tourism related funding such as Fáilte Ireland.

It is hoped that this document will demonstrate a clear vision for the future of Laytown and Bettystown and the various ways in which such funding can be used to benefit the area.



‘Voyager’ Sculpture, Laytown



Bettystown Junction

1.3 The Value of Public Realm in Laytown and Bettystown

The public realm of Laytown and Bettystown must tender to the needs of locals, visitors and commuters alike, to provide a usable place for all. There is ample opportunity to make enhancements to restore pride of place in both areas.

Socio-Economic

While Laytown and Bettystown will always be thought of as coastal towns or seaside destinations for beach-goers, development in the past twenty years - particularly in Bettystown - has meant that there are more people living, commuting and working in the area than ever. As a result, the public realm must work harder to accommodate daily users and encourage growth of trade and other services.

Environmental

With great improvement comes an even greater responsibility to protect, conserve and enhance areas of environmental significance in Laytown and Bettystown. Dynamic ecosystems such as the sand dunes support an array of plant, bird and animal life and should be managed and preserved for future generations to enjoy. Biodiversity can also be enhanced within both towns with a stronger presence of vegetation and greenery. Any proposed works to coastal sites of environmental conservation significance must be considered in the context of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive- Appropriate Assessment.

Functional

Public realm must be functional in order to achieve the above. This means to encourage walking and cycling through better links and provision, improving orientation through wayfinding and signage and making Laytown and Bettystown inclusive places for all users. It is also important to also rationalise movement and transport, as doing so can lead to more outdoor space associated with amenity, retail and leisure within the towns.



Bettystown



Laytown Beach

1.4 The National Context for Seaside Towns

With seaside towns around Ireland becoming ever more popular with domestic and international tourists, is the public realm of Laytown and Bettystown working as hard as it can to attract and accommodate tourists?

The Setting

The most popular beaches around Ireland afford visitors an escape from towns and cities with access to the coast and seaside air. The more successful seaside towns boast blue flag status for their beaches.

Attractions

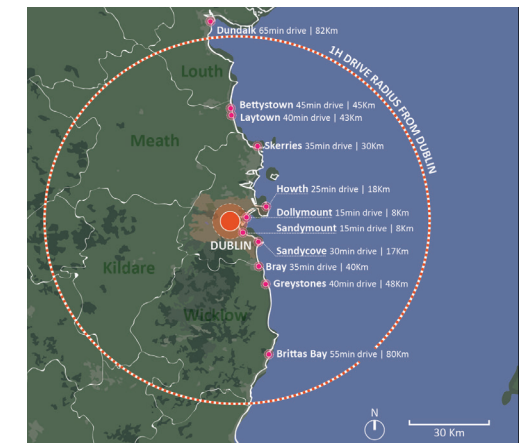
Seaside towns such as Inchydoney, Lahinch and Bundoran offer a variety of shops, bars, restaurants and hotels. Good public realm achieved through well-considered design can encourage investment from business owners and start-ups.

The Image of a Seaside Town

As local governments strive towards meeting housing demands, it is important that a balance is struck between achieving these needs and protecting a seaside town or village feel for towns such as Laytown and Bettystown. This can play a vital role in how the area is marketed as well as how people perceive Laytown and Bettystown.

Identity

Feedback noted at the stakeholder consultation event for Laytown and Bettystown has suggested that both towns should have their own identity. This can be achieved through enhancing the public realm in a way that is unique to both. This could mean that different types of interventions are sought for each.



Top to bottom:
- Bundoran, Co. Donegal
- Inchydoney, Co. Cork
- Lahinch, Co. Clare
- Tramore, Co. Waterford

1.5 The Existing Situation in Laytown

As a result of commuter parking, Laytown is dominated by vehicles during the day. Clear pedestrian links to the coastline are lacking as is a consistent material palette.

Vehicular Dominated

With poor public transport links to Laytown from Bettystown, many commuters drive and park in Laytown to take the train to work. As a result, during the day Laytown is dominated by vehicles with no parking available for walkers and families using the playground.

Poor Pedestrian Links and Public Open Space

There is currently one pedestrian crossing in Laytown. This is insufficient. Circular movement through the town and towards the coastline could be greatly enhanced.

Lack of Trees and Vegetation

There is a lack of vegetation and greenery. Although perhaps conditions are not favourable to a wider planting selection, biodiversity should not lose out as a result of limited palette.

Clutter and Uncoordinated Street Furniture

Existing components such as upstand walls and bollards detract from the seaside feel that Laytown should be striving for. The sporadic layout of street furniture and inconsistency in material selection contributes to a negative appearance in the town.

A Wider Carriageway Leads to Faster Traffic

The wide carriageway at the bend on Strand Road / R150 allows larger traffic to pass through at speed when heading towards Julianstown. This impacts negatively on the experience of the space for pedestrians.



Bird's-eye sketch of Laytown, Co. Meath



1.6 The Existing Situation in Bettystown

While Bettystown has seen an increase in new development over the past twenty years, the town centre has been left behind. Various issues outlined below contribute to a negative experience in the town.

Lack of Public Open Space

While there is ample opportunity to explore the coastline, there is very little open public space in the town centre. Swathes of car parking and scattered street furniture take up space that could potentially contribute to the provision of open space for pedestrian users.

Head-on Parking

Head-on parking not only takes up considerably more space than parallel parking, but can also be more dangerous for motorists as cars vacate these types of spaces when reversing into the main road.

Vacant Buildings and Blank Façades

Blank façades and vacant buildings impact negatively on how people experience the Square. The unfinished Croi Nua development also impacts negatively on its surrounding area.

Clutter

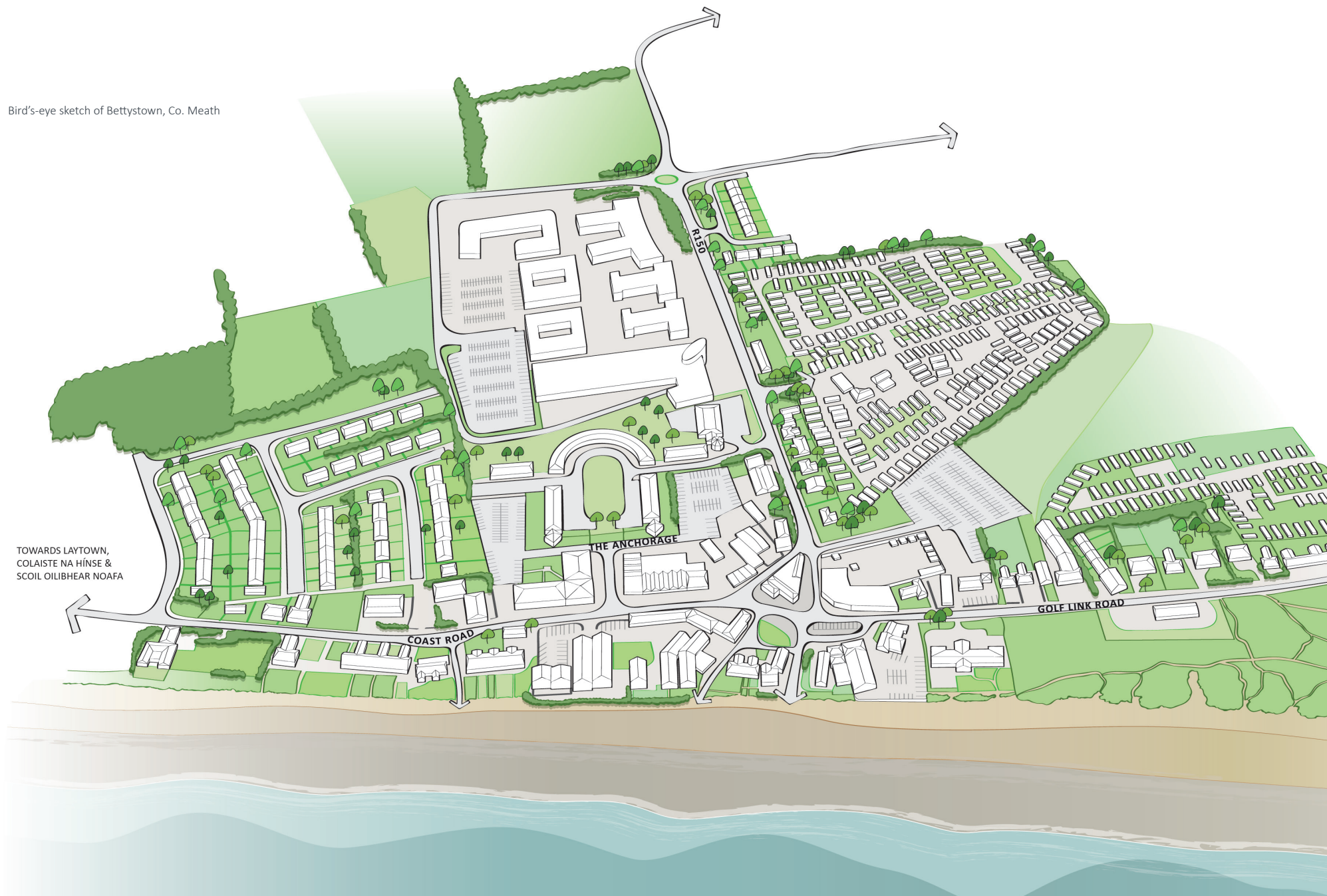
The sporadic layouts of bollards and signage are excessive and limits pedestrian movement in the town square.

Poor Pedestrian Links and Road Crossings

Some key pedestrian links within the town square lack crossing points. Access to the beach can also be improved.



Bird's-eye sketch of Bettystown, Co. Meath





2.0

Strategic Public Realm Plan to Achieve the Vision

2.1 A Shared Vision for Laytown

2.2 Street Hierarchy, Key Spaces and Gateways in Laytown

2.3 Movement, Access, Parking and Circulation in Laytown

2.4 A Shared Vision for Bettystown

2.5 Street Hierarchy, Key Spaces and Gateways in Bettystown

2.6 Movement, Access, Parking and Circulation in Bettystown

2.1 A Shared Vision for Laytown

The open space to the south offers potential for a new public open space if commuter parking can be accommodated in a more suitable location.

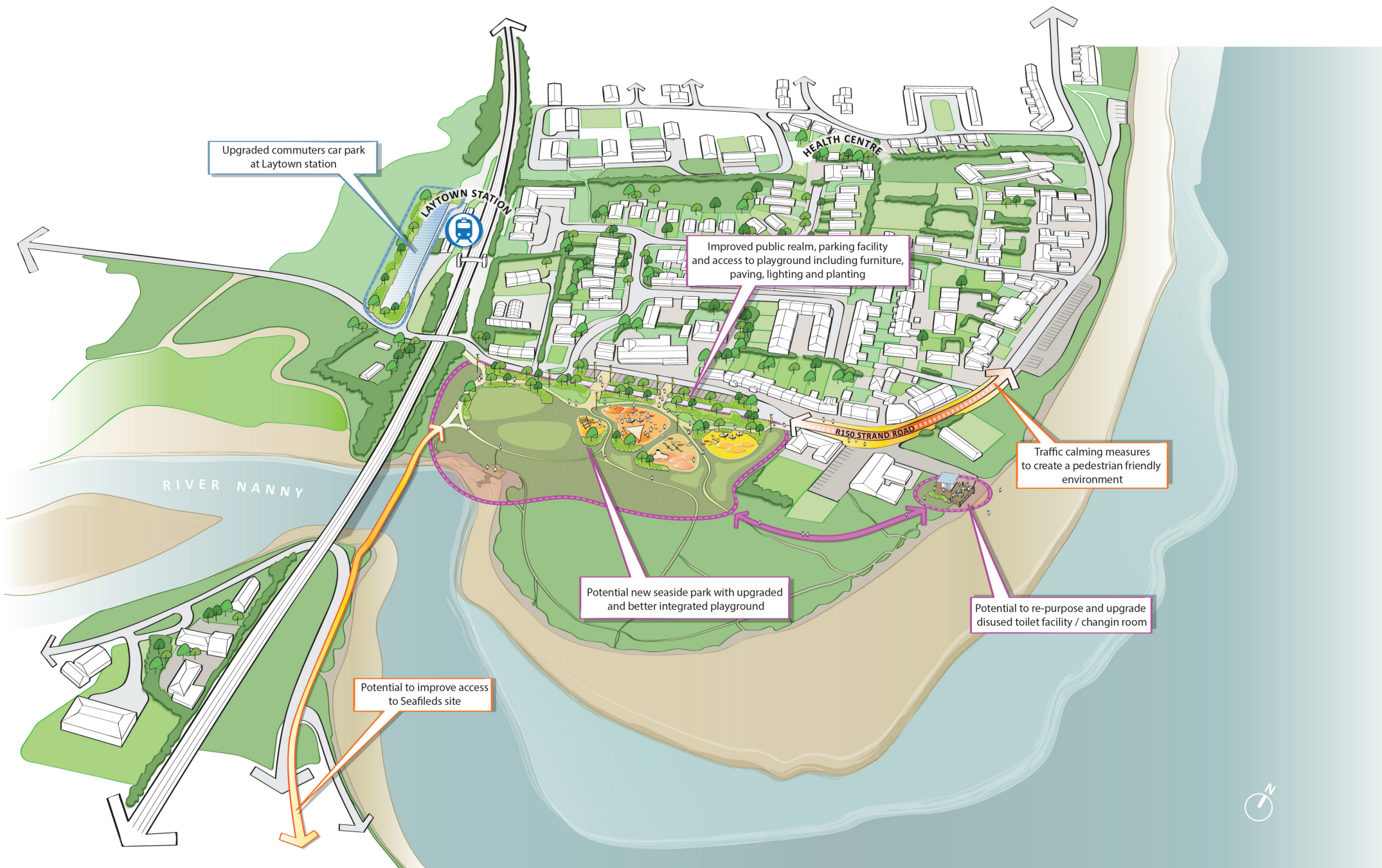
Objectives

The below points are the key objectives identified for the future of public realm in Laytown.

The Vision Statement

“To improve the public realm through the reintroduction of a beach front park and the relocation and control of commuter parking. Links to improved amenities and regeneration opportunities will help enhance the character of the town”.





2.2 Street Hierarchy, Key Spaces and Gateways in Laytown

Gateways

Laytown is defined by gateways both at the railway bridge and around to the shops on the Strand Road. A clearer sense of arrival in Laytown can be achieved through a change of materials, the calming of traffic speeds and more frequent pedestrian crossings.

Primary Roads

Reduced speeds, regular crossing points and better pedestrian connections will enhance the primary route through Laytown. On-street parking should be reviewed and time restrictions introduced at the shops. The carriage way should be reduced to a maximum of 7.3m to help calm traffic speeds and improve the area for pedestrians and cyclists. The relocation of commuter parking closer towards the station will also impact positively on how the town is experienced by all users.

Secondary Routes

Secondary routes should continue to accommodate pedestrian movement with improved pedestrian crossings. A consistent palette of materials should be used along with way finding and information of the local points of interest.

Key Spaces

Laytown Park will be the new key space for Laytown. This will create a new focal point for the town and create usable public open space for locals and visitors. In moving the current commuter car parking to the west of the station, this allow for a more pedestrian friendly environment.



2.3 Movement, Access, Parking and Circulation in Laytown

Priority and Give Way Vehicle Flows

The priority and give way vehicle flows remain unchanged through the town.

Secondary Routes

Secondary routes remain unchanged. However, improvements can be made to make their appearance more consistent.

Commuter Parking

The relocation of the commuter parking area in Laytown is a long-term aspiration that will ease pressures on the town. It will also limit the number of cars parked in the town throughout the day. The existing car park will remain with unrestricted parking to allow for commuter parking until a long term solution is achieved. Short-term works to improve the current situation will include resurfacing and the organisation of spaces through lining.

Time Restricted Parking to the Shops

With many cars parked in this area for long periods of time, time restricted parking would open the town up to more users per day, help local businesses and potentially increase trading in Laytown.

Unrestricted Parking

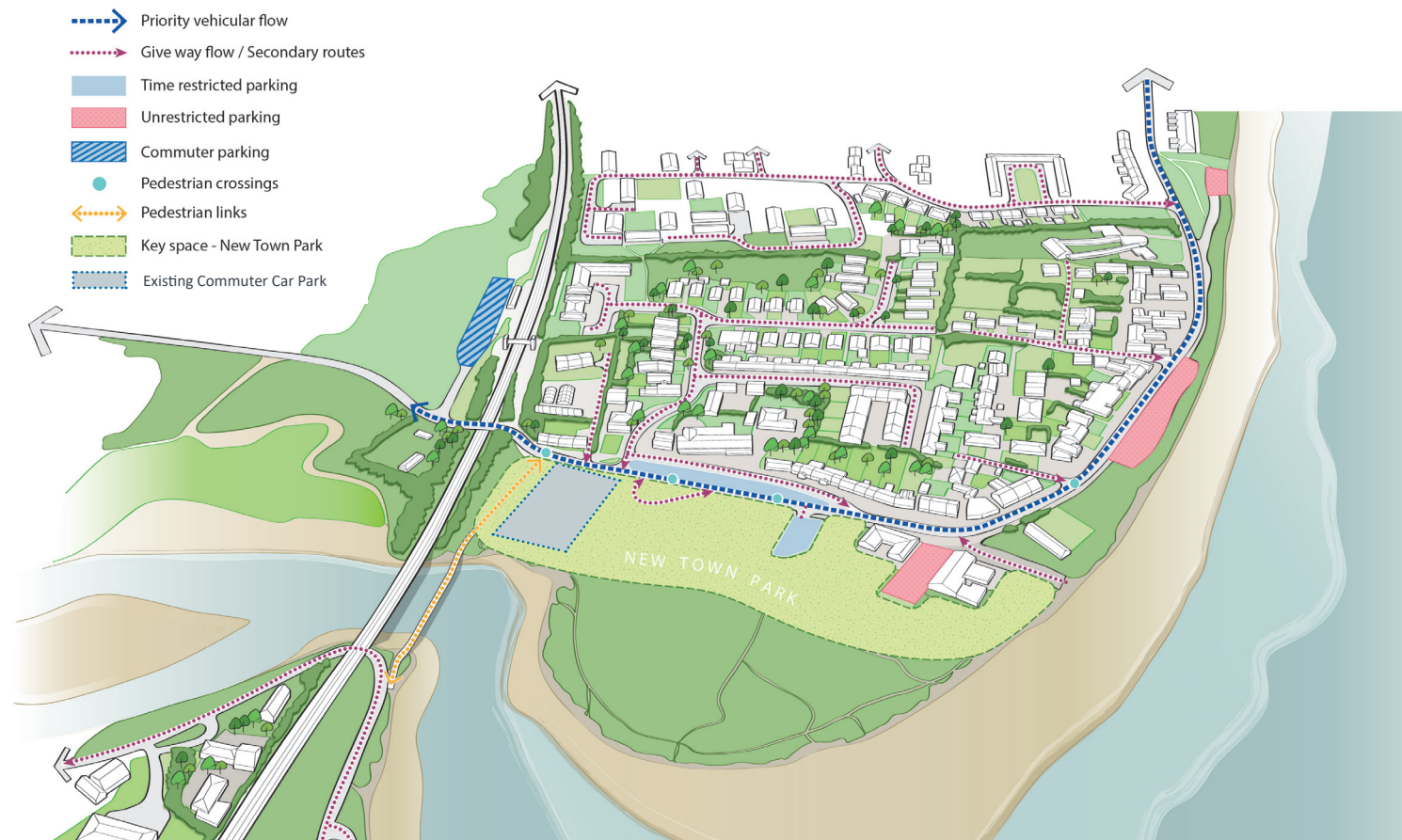
Unrestricted timed parking will still be provided where physically appropriate for those who need longer durations of parking. These should be clearly marked to promote their use.

Cycling

It is recognised that the roads entering Laytown are not ideal for recreational cycling. The reduction of speeds should help make a more comfortable cycling environment. Visible, well positioned cycle parking will be a welcome addition and encourage a sustainable option for transport in Laytown.

Regular Pedestrian Crossings

Pedestrian connectivity is to be improved with new pedestrian crossings positioned at least every 150m on both main axes. Consideration is needed for a mix of controlled, zebra and uncontrolled crossing types.



2.4 A Shared Vision for Bettystown

The layout of the streets and central square in Bettystown offers great potential for enhancement through a coordinated approach to the public realm.

Objectives

The below points are the key objectives identified for the future of public realm in Bettystown.

The Vision Statement

“To improve the public realm through a reorganisation of the centre of the town with better connections to the beach. Parking should be better organised along the main routes with enhanced gateways to the town and the identification of opportunities for regeneration”.

1

Re-organise the centre of the town.

2

Create more regular safe crossing points, especially in the main square.

3

Create a pedestrian space / square as a focus to the town centre.

4

Introduce traffic calming measures but do not create traffic jams.

5

Introduce times restrictions for parking in town centre.

6

Bring derelict sites and buildings back in use.

7

Improve links to the beach.

8

Consider safer cycling with the introduction of Spine Road.

9

Rationalise street furniture.

10

Remove perpendicular parking and replace with parallel.

11

Explore new town park associated with Spine Road.

12

Improve street lighting throughout the town centre.



2.5 Street Hierarchy, Key Spaces and Gateways in Bettystown

Gateways

Bettystown is defined by three gateways to the north, east and south of the town. Although routes into the town give a good view of the centre on approach, the sense of arrival can be enhanced through a consistent approach to material specification.

Primary Roads

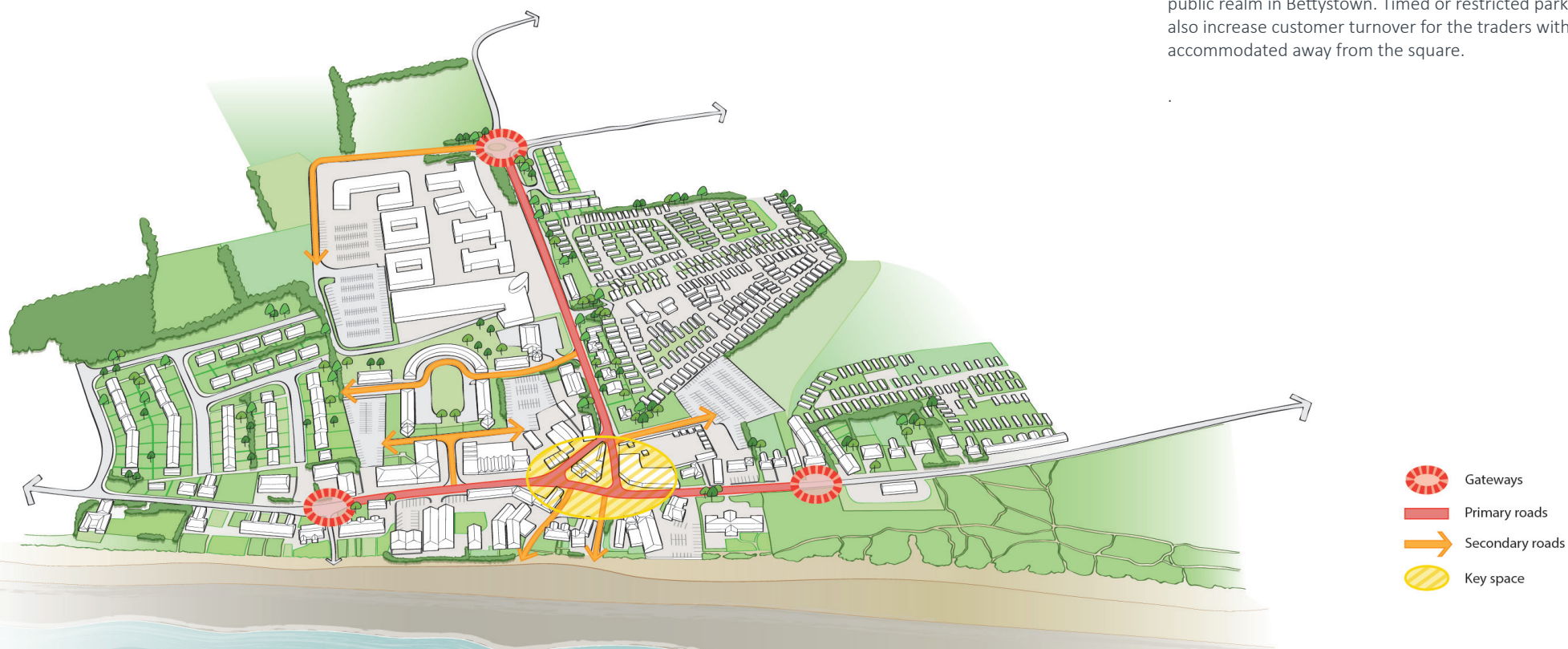
Reduced speeds, regular crossing points and better pedestrian connections will enhance the primary routes of Bettystown. On-street parking should be reviewed and time restrictions introduced in the central areas. The carriage way should be reduced to a maximum of 7.3m to help calm traffic speeds and improve the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists. Head on parking should be replaced with parallel parking to address safety concerns and increase public open space.

Secondary Routes

Secondary routes should continue to accommodate pedestrian movement with improved pedestrian crossings. A consistent palette of materials should be used along with way finding and information of the local points of interest.

Key Spaces

Following its rejuvenation the Square will be the key space for Bettystown. An increase in public open space, vegetation and improved surface finishes will lead the enhancement of the public realm in Bettystown. Timed or restricted parking would also increase customer turnover for the traders with staff parking accommodated away from the square.



2.6 Movement, Access, Parking and Circulation in Bettystown

Priority Vehicle Flow

The north south and east routes should be retained as the priority flows for vehicular traffic. The reviewed road layout and junction will provide definition of vehicle movements in the Square. The slip road to the south east of the Square will become access only and the R150 approach from the east will become two-way flow. The purpose here is to address a current imbalance in pedestrian / vehicular priority.

Give Way Flow and Secondary Routes

Give Way Flow and Secondary routes will remain unchanged yet improvements, which can be made, will make their appearance consistent.

Time Restricted Parking to Square

With many cars parked in the Square for long periods of time, time restricted parking would open the town up to more users per day, help local businesses and potentially increase trading in the town centre.

Unrestricted Parking

Unrestricted timed parking, for those who need longer durations of parking, will still be provided in adjoining streets where physically appropriate. These should be clearly marked out to promote their use.

Private Parking

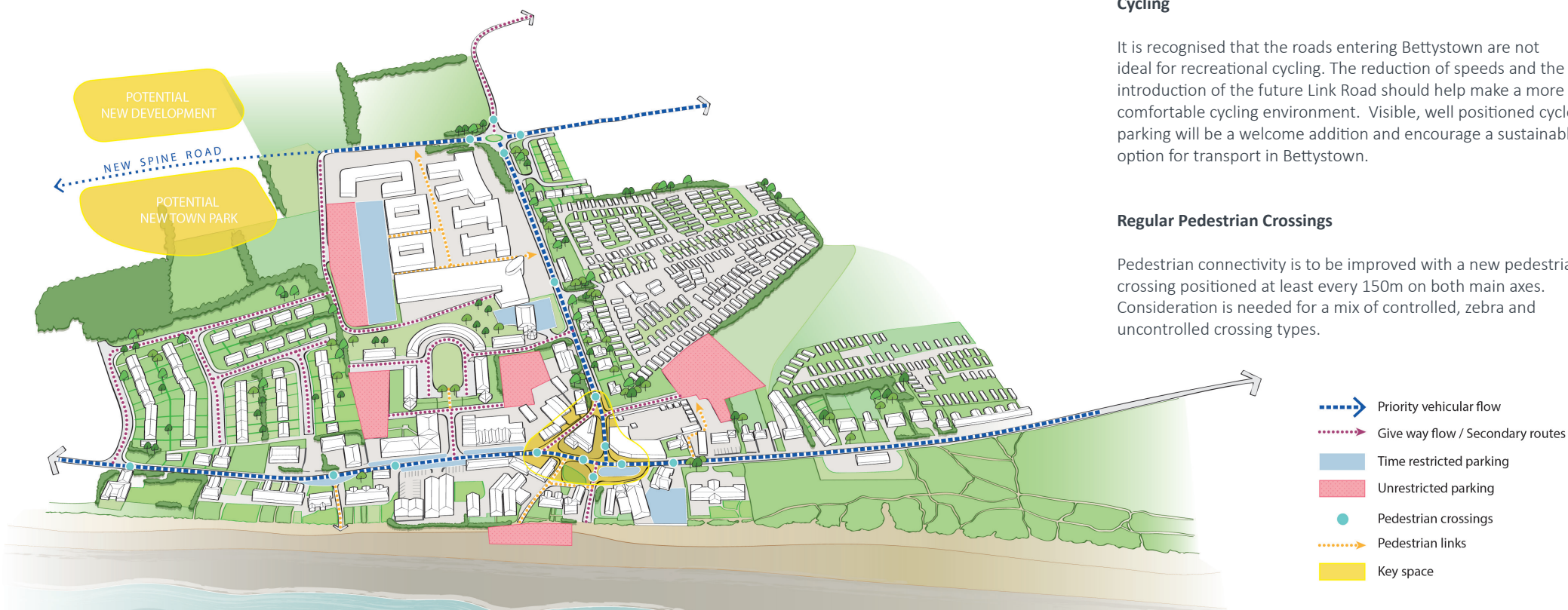
Private parking areas are as per the existing and should continue to be used as they currently are.

Cycling

It is recognised that the roads entering Bettystown are not ideal for recreational cycling. The reduction of speeds and the introduction of the future Link Road should help make a more comfortable cycling environment. Visible, well positioned cycle parking will be a welcome addition and encourage a sustainable option for transport in Bettystown.

Regular Pedestrian Crossings

Pedestrian connectivity is to be improved with a new pedestrian crossing positioned at least every 150m on both main axes. Consideration is needed for a mix of controlled, zebra and uncontrolled crossing types.



3.0 Approach to Components

3.1 Paving

3.2 Street Furniture

3.3 Wayfinding and Signage

3.4 Lighting

3.5 Vegetation

3.1 Paving

All paving should be of high quality and suitable to withstand the function of the area. Durability, lifespan and visual appreciation should all be considered when specifications are being determined.

The pedestrian areas of the square should be resin bound with natural stone strips to the carriageway edge. Natural stone is also proposed for larger public open spaces. Natural stone paving, such as granite should be laid on a rigid concrete base with mortar bedding and joints. Small unit slabs are suggested for ease of use, weight and cost for such areas, nominally 60mm thick. Where natural stone is being used in vehicle areas, thicker setts should be used.

The choice of natural stone is made for the following reasons:

- Appropriate for a town centre.
- Durability- when laid on a concrete base, it will achieve a long lifespan with minimal maintenance.
- Stone products appreciate in value with natural weathering.
- Depending on colour and source, the material cost difference to concrete products is minimal.

The vehicular carriageway should be a high quality asphalt laid between granite kerbs. Kerbs should be a maximum 100mm high, lowering to a minimum 50mm where a shared environment is more appropriate. It is essential to use radius sections, quadrants and dropper kerbs within the design.



The small unit slabs / setts allow ease of laying and achieve levels tying in to both thresholds and crossing points without the need for triangular cuts, which should be avoided. All paving falls are to be compliant with Building Regulations and universal design standards.

Drainage units, manhole covers and other components in the paving should be flush with surrounding areas. They should be integrated within the design to avoid trip hazards.

Paving infill covers are not required. However there should be a maximum 10mm gap between the frame and outer paving.



3.2 Street Furniture

All elements of street furniture in Laytown and Bettystown should be designed into the public realm and not as an afterthought. Coordination and combination between elements should be considered, to avoid visual clutter. Contemporary materials such as stainless steel should be avoided with timber and neutral colours preferred. The materials selected should also be durable considering the exposed conditions.

Generally all items of street furniture should be from a standard palette and neutral in design – the exception being when singular items of street furniture are considered as art and are site-specific.

Seating: A variety of seating options should be incorporated, including benches with armrests and backs, benches as seating platforms, ledges and steps. Seating must not impede natural movement, while seating arrangements should encourage social interaction.

Bins: Should be located at key junctions and spaced at regular intervals along the streets. They should be neutral in design and part of a coordinated street furniture palette.

Bollards: The use of bollards should be avoided wherever possible. Where necessary, they should be 1.1m high, slender and coordinated with other pieces of street furniture.

Cycle racks: These should be located in small clusters, in places where cyclists enter the pedestrian zones, in visible locations, not impeding circulation.



3.3 Lighting

The proposed lighting for Laytown and Bettystown will enhance spaces, increase their duration of use and provide a feeling of safety. A consistent palette should be specified that is relatively simple and neat in design.

The experience users will have when moving through Laytown and Bettystown can change for the better by using several types of light treatment with a consistent palette of materials. Consideration should be given to the following:

A standard palette should be agreed to provide ambient light to prescribed lighting levels. This being a column or wall mounted fitting where appropriate which is neutral in design.

Subtle character changes along streets and within spaces should be incorporated within an overall masterplan. This can emphasise focal points in the main square, pedestrian open spaces, gateways and provide interest while moving through the town.

Lighting the streets

High-level building mounted luminaires where appropriate; these provide ambient light levels and should be discreetly positioned on buildings while having regard for the character of the buildings on which they are installed.

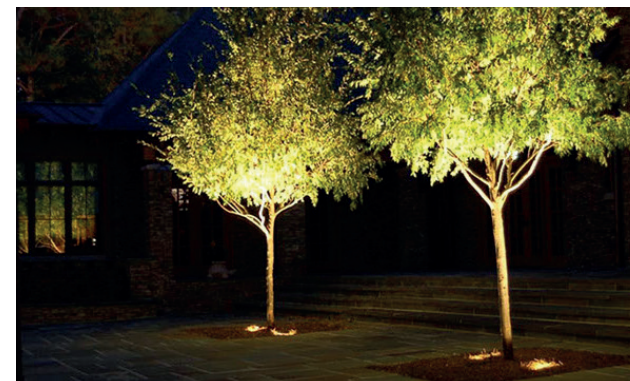
Columns- these will need to be carefully positioned and blend into the street scene. They will add interest and scale in appropriate locations ensuring they must not impede pedestrian movement or block key views. A neutral style of column and luminaire is proposed appropriate to the setting and context.

Multi-head columns- these can be carefully positioned in public open space to act as focal points. The multi-directional heads can be used to light art features.



Feature lighting

Feature lighting can help define the public realm at night. The value of this needs to be considered on a case by case basis in line with the Council's Energy Action Plan. Provision for festive lights should also be made throughout the town centre.



3.4 Wayfinding and Signage

Legibility and wayfinding can be enhanced in Laytown and Bettystown by specifying a consistent palette of signage and interpretation points.

Directional Signage

To maintain a minimal theme that is in-keeping with the wider strategy for the town, directional signage should be minimal with a careful choice of materials. It is important to identify starting points from which pedestrian visitors are most likely to begin walking through the towns and then where the main routes for pedestrians will be. Directional signage can then be placed at points that meet or where there is a change in direction. Starting points or destinations might include:

- Laytown Train Station.
- Tourist information points.
- Public car parks / commuter parking.
- Town Squares.
- Probable pedestrian walkways or pedestrianised areas.
- Interpretation Points.
- Tourist attractions- i.e. Laytown Park, Bettystown Park.

Unauthorised signs should not be allowed on any directional sign posts. Directional signage in general should be kept to a minimum to avoid clutter.

Interpretation Signage

Signage used for interpretation should be from one coherent family. Like directional signage, it should be minimal in appearance and consistent throughout the town. A variety of installation types include installing interpretation signage in-ground, on buildings or on posts where necessary.

All interpretation signs should be kept simple and clear. Clutter and over-use of interpretation signage should be avoided.



Meath County Council Policy on Shop Fronts

When considering shop fronts, traders should be encouraged to reference policies outlined in the 'Shopfront and Signage Guidelines' document produced by Meath County Council. This document encourages shop-owners and traders to use hand-painted fascia lettering and logos in a style and colour that harmonises with the shop. Such signage should also help to portray its use. The installation of roller shutters located behind the line of glazing in shopfronts is also suggested by the guidelines.



3.5 Vegetation

While the beaches and dunes of Laytown and Bettystown are environmentally significant themselves, there remains a lack of vegetation inland. This is perhaps due to the difficult conditions found in an exposed coastal environment. With a potential increase in public open space, there is an opportunity to provide greater biodiversity via coastal tolerant planting.

The proposed vegetation for the Public Realm of Laytown and Bettystown could include the following, with the correct coastal planting specification being a priority:

- **Street Trees**- these are to be introduced in order to 'green' the town centre and provide vitality to spaces that is currently lacking. An appraisal of existing trees should be undertaken to determine feasibility for retention or the possible need for removal and replacement.
- **Rain Gardens**- by planting an attractive, low maintenance, wildlife friendly selection of plants, rain gardens give an opportunity to manage rainwater runoff from hard surfaces after downpours while also injecting some much needed greenery to the centre of Bettystown.
- **Planted ledges / boxes** - these must be integrated with building façades and only used where they will further enhance both the building and street scene.
- **Shrubs and flowers** in appropriate contained areas can provide seasonal interest and variety throughout the year. Shrubs must be tolerant of coastal conditions.

Consideration is needed for locating trees

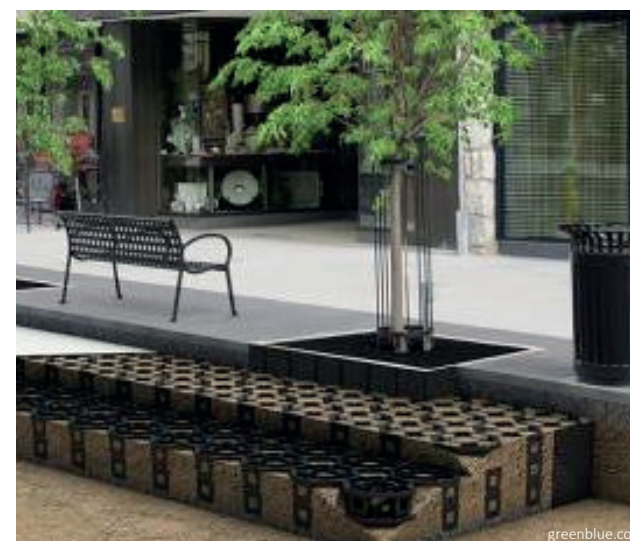
- Where possible, plant trees, of an appropriate species, in suitable created tree pits and conditions.
- Utilise trees to aid in wayfinding and creating identity to spaces, by selecting different species for each type of space; pedestrian street, vehicular street, nodes and green spaces.



- Tree locations should be carefully considered in order to complement adjacent buildings and spaces, and so as not to block or hinder views, or obstruct CCTV.
- Trees should have a clear stem of 2.2m and reach a mature height of 10-15m with a uniform canopy.
- Trees should be planted in tree pits specifically detailed to accommodate street trees and to better tolerate town centre conditions with root barriers to protect underground utilities.
- Trees should be in groups of the same species.

Suitable Suggested Coastal Tree Species

- *Alnus glutinosa* - Common Alder.
- *Cotoneaster frigidus* - Cornubia.
- *Crataegus monogyna* - Hawthorn.
- *Gleditsia triacanthos* Broad-leaved Cockspur Thorn.
- *Ilex aquifolium* - Holly.
- *Quercus ilex* - Holm Oak.
- *Sorbus aria majestica* - Whitebeam.
- *Acer pseudoplatanus* - Sycamore.
- *Arbutus unedo* - Strawberry Tree.
- *Prunus spinosa* - Blackthorn.
- *Pinus sylvestris* - Scots Pine.



3.5 Vegetation - Rain Gardens

In most urban areas, impervious surfaces such as asphalt and concrete walkways are dominant and prevent water from percolating through the ground. This severely impacts waterways and wildlife, causes pollutants to spread, endangers ecosystems and increases the pressure on water networks.

What are rain gardens?

A rain garden is a planted depression that allows rainwater and runoff from impervious areas such as roads, parking and walkways to be filtered, stored on site, and then percolate through the natural ground.

Rain gardens act as living sponges, and are a key element of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) which can play a large part in shaping new sustainable urban landscapes. Rain gardens are an effective, attractive and economically accessible way to fight back the negative effects of over development of hardscapes in urban areas.

The key benefits of rain gardens include:



Water storage

Providing long & short term storage of water during storm event



Infiltration

Allowing water to soak into the ground



Pollutant treatment

Effective treatment of polluted water



Biodiversity

Increasing the variety of plants & wildlife



Enhanced management

Reduction of pressure on 'classic' water networks



Visual amenity

Providing attractive, useable and pleasing features



Education

Learning opportunities with wildlife and water management



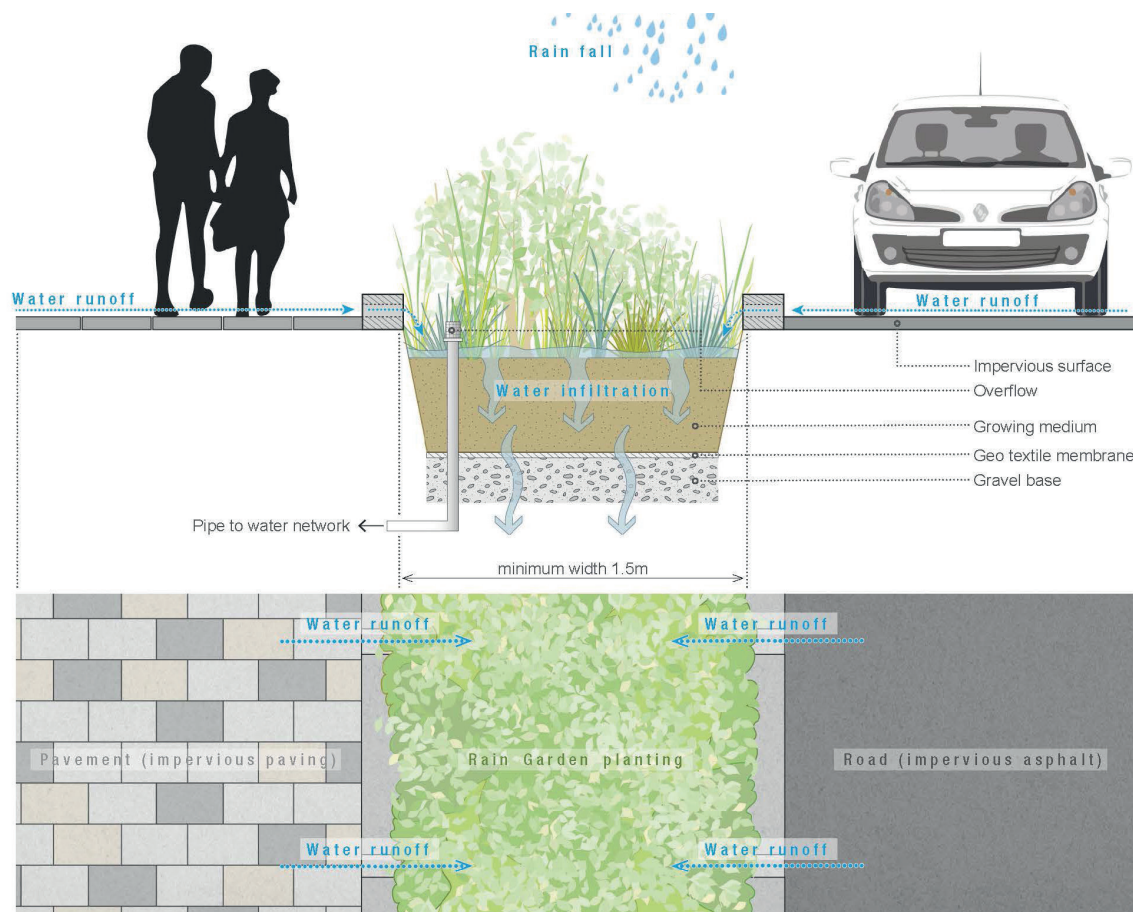
Adaptability

Easily changed for additional future capacity



Resilience

Mitigation of current & future negative impacts of climate change



Typical Raingarden Layout



There are many ways in which rain gardens can be implemented in the urban environment: on narrow street, in commercial and residential environments, on sloppy terrain, etc. Additionally, rain gardens can display playful features, colourful planting and become positive features in any urban regeneration scheme.





4.0

Laytown Intervention

4.1 The Issues in Laytown

4.2 What Makes a Good Town Park?

4.3 Laytown Park Design Rationale

4.4 Laytown Park- Layout Option 1

4.5 Laytown Park- Layout Option 2

4.6 Trees and Planting

4.7 Public Spaces

4.8 Surfaces Finishes

4.1 The Issues in Laytown

Although Laytown itself is a small town, it benefits from having a large peninsula of open space that is of scenic and ecological interest. However, a large portion of the area is currently used as commuter parking.

Below are listed some of the issues and factors that contribute towards a negative impression of Laytown and where there is potential for enhancement.

Picture 1:

- A picturesque setting with potential for a seaside park.
- Poor pedestrian links towards the coast.
- Lack of usable space opposite the shops (except for the playground).
- Lack of trees.

Picture 2:

- Vehicular dominated space with poor pedestrian circulation.
- With a lack of commuter parking in the town, this space is occupied by cars for large parts of the day during the week meaning other daily users find it difficult to find spaces.
- Poor quality surface materials.
- Accessibility for all users not accommodated.
- Lack of visibility into and out of the space.
- Lack of greenery.

Picture 3:

- Tall floodlights spoil views out.
- Lack of usable space for locals and visitors.
- Potential for new town park.
- Lack of trees.



Laytown

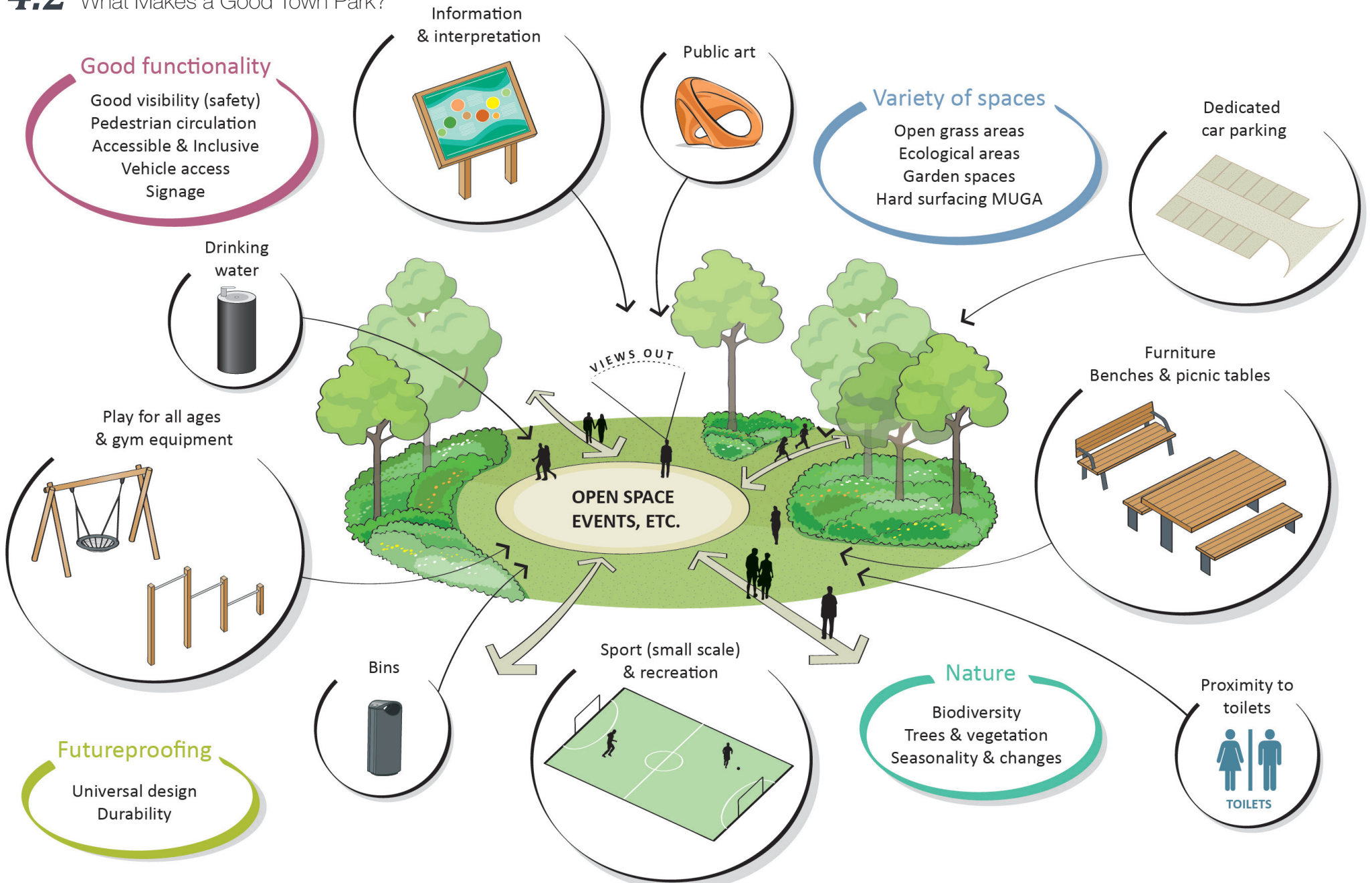


Laytown Car Park



Laytown Car Park

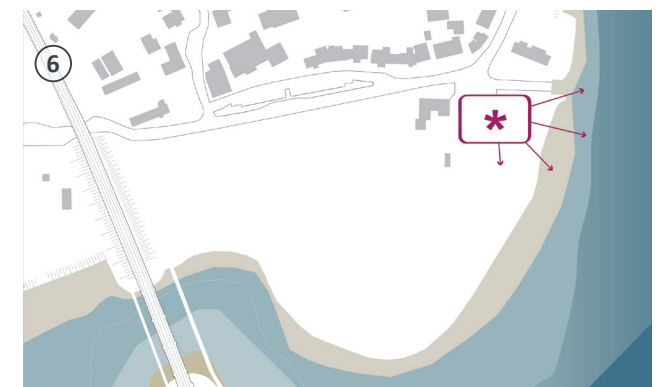
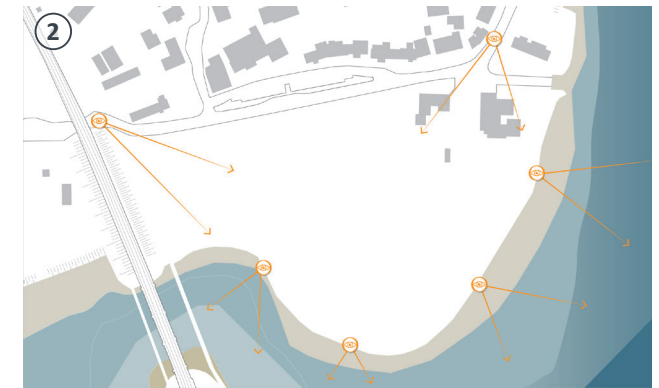
4.2 What Makes a Good Town Park?



4.3 Laytown Park - Design Rationale

A number of key principles can be developed for Laytown Park to ensure its good functionality, efficient distribution of activities and future success. The design principles presented here can then be applied to future optional layouts in conjunction with future environmental studies - i.e Article 6(3) - Appropriate Assessment

- ① **Clear links and access routes from the main road into the park, along well defined paths and leading to key destination points.** This will help to establish improved legibility and access for all users across the park; different types of paths (surfacing, width) along with a clear hierarchy can also contribute to the creation of varied character zones.
- ② **Views into the park and from the beach to the river and sea.** A good visibility of the park and its equipment will attract locals and visitors and assist with the legibility of the space. From the southern edge of the park, opportunities should be given to the public to enjoy long views towards the river and sea, the seaside location of the park being one of its strong assets.
- ③ **'Active park': a sequence of dedicated play areas** This could include play spaces that cater for all ages, outdoor gym equipment, small scale sport pitches (MUGA), but also and spaces for temporary events.
- ④ **Places to dwell in the park.** These spaces support the active areas of the park by giving people quiet spaces in which they can sit, gather and stay in the park. This can include sitting areas with benches, open lawns, picnic areas or small pocket garden spaces.
- ⑤ **'Natural park': a preserved natural space along the beach.** This part of the park, suited for promenades and walks, would make the most of the natural seaside habitat zone along the beach. Paths following the existing trails and including boardwalks would take the public through a preserved natural area whilst providing points through interpretation boards.
- ⑥ **Destination landmark building with views of the sea.** The existing building in this location would be sensitively extended to create a destination café, or restaurant that would act as a landmark and sit proudly by the beach. This building could also offer a terrace space overlooking the sea, and toilets for the park users.





4.4 Laytown Park - Layout Option 1

This optional layout proposes the creation of a strong path hierarchy linking the key park components and leading to a central hard flexible open space, suitable for events and gatherings. The layout includes the creation of an active strip dedicated to outdoor activities (play, gym, etc) at the north of the park, whilst the southern part of the park is retained as a protected habitat zone, suitable for walks and nature interpretation.

- ① Open hard-space with seating.
- ② Trail of pockets of play spaces, outdoor gyms and small scale sport facility.
- ③ Informal flowing garden spaces with seaside planting and seating.
- ④ Pockets of parking integrated into the park.
- ⑤ Paved arrival space to the new bar, café/hotel and tourism building.
- ⑥ Improved access to the beach.
- ⑦ Outdoor terrace facing the sea.
- ⑧ Green buffer.
- ⑨ New bar, café/hotel tourism building.
- ⑩ New sequence of pedestrian crossings.
- ⑪ Boardwalks through the natural area.
- ⑫ Viewing platforms connected to the network of paths through the natural area.
- ⑬ Natural area: preserved habitat zones for promenades.
- ⑭ Short-term car park to be retained until commuter parking solution is achieved.



4.5 Laytown Park - Layout Option 2

This optional layout proposes the creation of a series of pocket hard open spaces acting as 'nodes' connected by a main path. The northern 'active' strip is larger than in Option 1, allowing the creation of an extensive garden space. This layout also includes a wider central pedestrian avenue running from the main road to one of those nodes.

- ① Open pocket spaces with seating.
- ② Trail of pockets of play spaces, outdoor gyms and small scale sport facility.
- ③ Informal flowing garden spaces with seaside planting and seating.
- ④ Pockets of parking integrated into the park.
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- ⑬ Natural area: preserved habitat zones for promenades.
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Play Area and Carpark



Play Area



Coastal Walks



New bar, café/hotel tourism building





5.0

Bettystown Intervention

5.1 The Issues in Bettystown

5.2 The Existing Situation

5.3 Proposed Bettystown Square

5.4 Pedestrian Movements

5.5 Parking and Vehicular Movements

5.6 Trees and Planting

5.7 Public Spaces

5.8 Surfaces Finishes

5.1 The Issues in Bettystown

There are a number of factors that can be addressed to enhance the public realm of Bettystown. Below are listed some of the issues encountered here and that the redesign proposes to resolve.

Picture 1:

- Poorly lit central space.
- Lack of greenery.
- Extensive area of asphalt.

Picture 2:

- Street furniture presents obstacles for pedestrians.
- Head-on parking is a danger for motorists and dominates what should be pedestrian space.

Picture 3:

- Blank façades dominate the architecture.
- Lack of crossing points.

Picture 4:

- Uncoordinated signage and clutter.
- Blank façades facing onto street.

Picture 5:

- Derelict buildings that face onto the square.

Picture 6:

- Confusing road layout for all users.
- Wide roads with no crossing points.
- Lack of greenery.
- Head-on parking presents a danger to merging motorists and dominates the space.



5.2 The Existing Situation

Although the main square in Bettystown should define the centre and point of arrival for the town, pedestrian movement is restricted by the large junction and provision of car parking. Footpath widths are inconsistent and crossing opportunities limited.

- ① Carriageway.
- ② Main junction.
- ③ Vacant building.
- ④ Pedestrian space.
- ⑤ Public Art.
- ⑥ Existing trees.
- ⑦ Pedestrian crossing.
- ⑧ Car parking space.
- ⑨ Loading bay.
- ⑩ Disabled parking bay.
- ⑪ Bus lay-bye.
- ⑫ Bettystown Beach.



5.3 Proposed Bettystown Square

The rejuvenation of Bettystown Square aims to create a pedestrian friendly environment that also accommodates existing vehicular flow and parking. An increase in greenery can be achieved through street tree planting and rain gardens.

The key principles of the proposal are the following:

- **A pedestrian friendly environment:** widen pavements, safe crossing points and creation of defined pedestrian spaces;
- **Rationalisation of vehicular movement:** tightening of junctions where possible, introduction of a mini-roundabout, reorganisation and rationalisation of car parking, raised tables to the central portion of the carriageway;
- **A green and sustainable square:** introduction of rain gardens and coastal tolerant tree planting.

- ① New mini-roundabout.
- ② New pedestrian crossings.
- ③ Proposed new building.
- ④ Resurfaced access roads to reorganised parking areas.
- ⑤ New & resurfaced pedestrian spaces.
- ⑥ Widened pavements for pedestrian movement.
- ⑦ Rain gardens.
- ⑧ New tree planting.
- ⑨ Potential Northbound bus stop.
- ⑩ Potential Southbound bus stop.

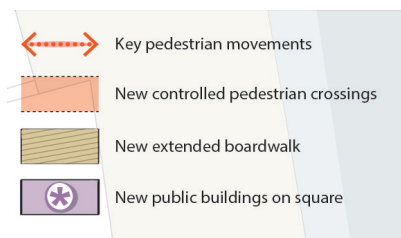


5.4 Pedestrian Movements

The existing situation in Bettystown can be much improved in terms of pedestrian circulation.

The adjacent diagram exhibits how the new layout in the centre responds to the circulation patterns around the core of the town:

- The carriageway has been narrowed to 7.3m to redefine the balance between vehicles and pedestrians.
- Regular crossing points are introduced to enhance circulation and calm traffic.
- Parallel parking is preferred to head-on parking to allow for more usable pedestrian space.
- Enhancements to pedestrian links to the beach.
- New public spaces have been defined to enhance the identity of the town square and to allow for more social interaction.
- There is also potential for new public buildings on the square. These should face on to the street with a publicly accessible ground floor - i.e. shop, service, bar, restaurant, and community use.

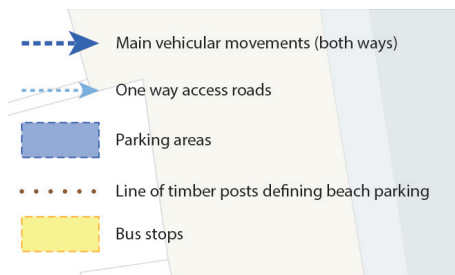


5.5 Parking and Vehicular Movements

Enhancements to the pedestrian experience in Bettystown can be made by making amendments to the current vehicular movements through the town.

The key principles of the proposal are the following:

- **New mini-roundabout:** all traffic at this intersection will now have equal priority. This will improve traffic calming and allow the road to the south-west to become access only .
- **Town centre parking:** parking to the front of Centra and Macari's has been rationalised to allow for enhanced, safer pedestrian movement. All on-street parking is to be parallel parking with head-on parking avoided. Parking restrictions should be enforced to discourage all-day parking in the town centre and to increase turnover for traders.
- **Beach parking:** parking on the beach is proposed to the south of the main gateway and enclosed within timber bollards to allow for safer pedestrian access to the beach. For larger events, visitors should be directed to other unrestricted parking sites within the town.



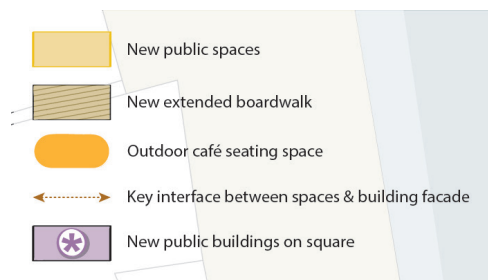
5.6 Trees and Planting

The introduction of appropriate street trees and planting, which provide seasonal variation and greenery, can enhance the user experience of Bettystown and create a sense of place in the town centre.



5.7 Public Spaces

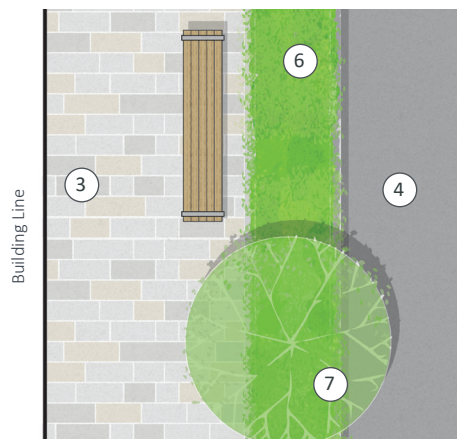
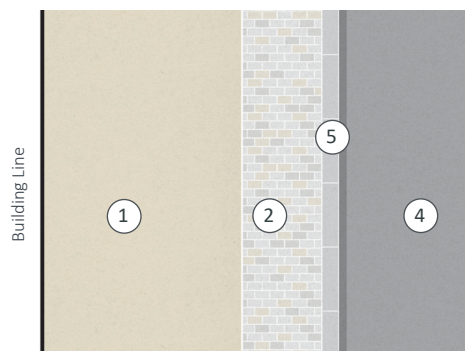
A series of new public open spaces are proposed within the core town centre. These can be further enhanced in the long term by new public buildings and improved pedestrian access to the beach.



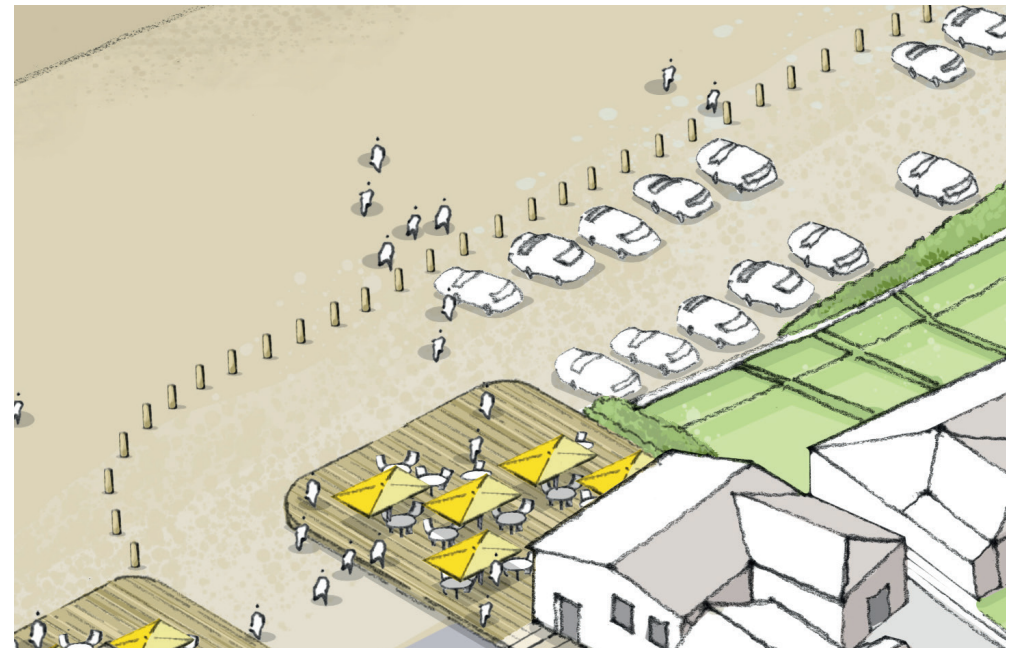
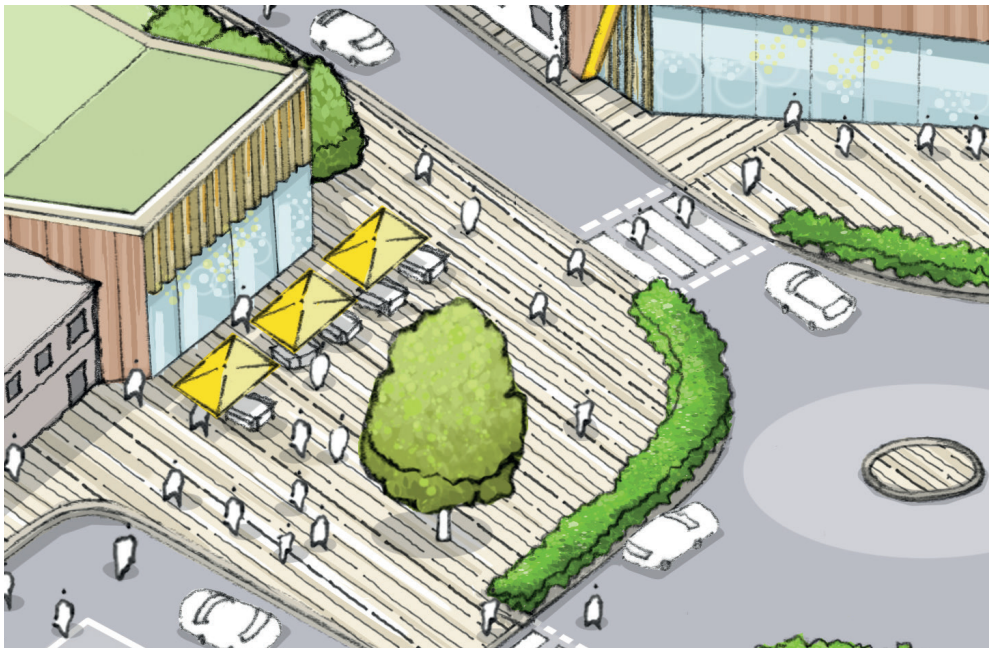
5.8 Surface Finishes

All paving should be of high quality and suitable to withstand the function of the area. Durability, lifespan and visual appreciation should all be considered when specifications are being determined.

In order to **create an identity**, the application of a clear, consistent paving palette will greatly enhance the sense of arrival and identity in Bettystown.



- ① Resin bond surface.
- ② Natural stone paving trim.
- ③ Feature natural stone paving.
- ④ Asphalt carriageway.
- ⑤ Silver granite kerb.
- ⑥ Raingarden.
- ⑦ Street Tree.





6.0 Appropriate Assessment

6.0 Appropriate Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment of the proposals has been undertaken by Meath County Council. All proposals outlined in this public realm plan will be subject to any mitigation measures recommended in the Appropriate Assessment report.

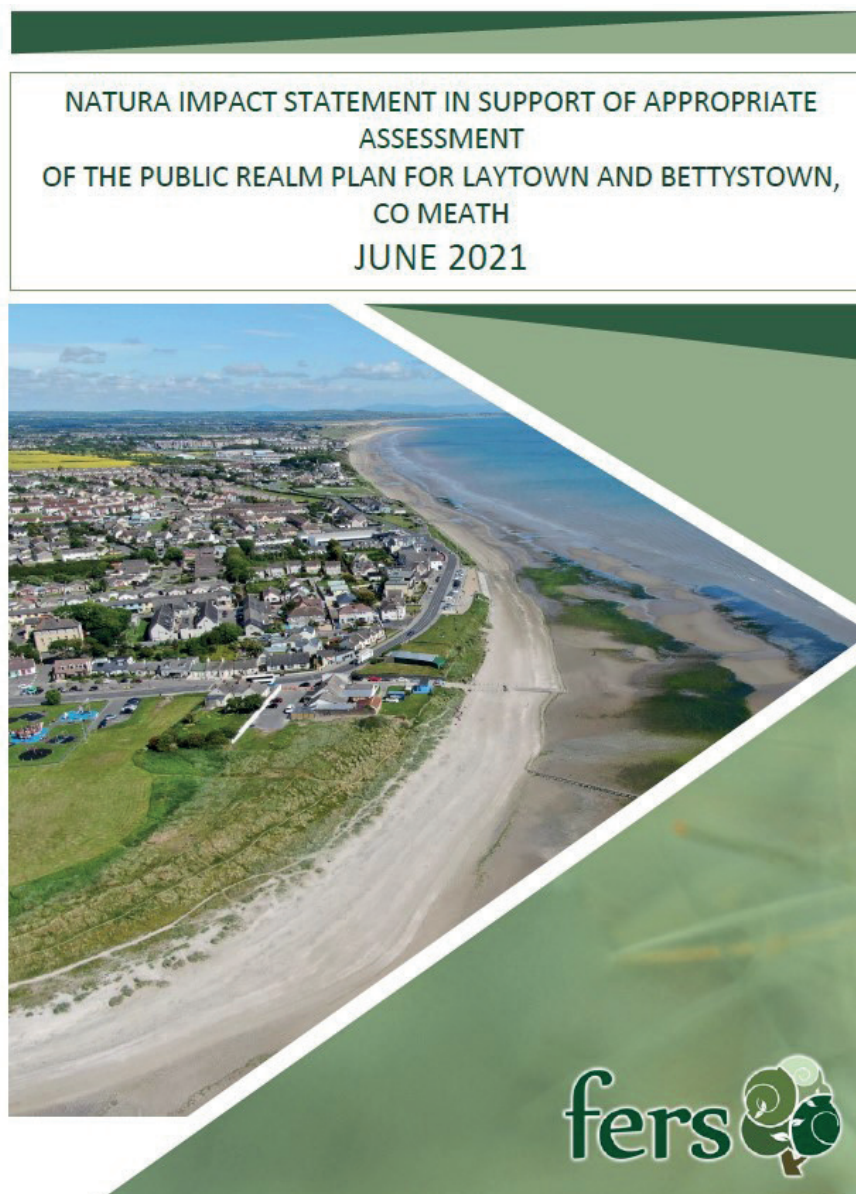
The Fers reports identifies the primary sources of potential impacts associated with (limited components of) the Laytown and Bettystown Public Realm Plan in Sections 3.5. The report also describes the necessary mitigation measures in section 3.6.

The report concludes:

'In order for AA to comply with the criteria set out in the Habitats Directive and the Planning and Development Act 2000, an AA undertaken by the Competent Authority must include an examination, analysis, evaluation, findings, conclusions, and a final determination.

Following the identification of a potential impact(s) upon one or more Natura 2000 sites through an Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the proposed Laytown and Bettystown Public Realm Plan has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The information to enable the Competent Authority to perform its statutory function in this regard is presented within this NIS.

Following an examination, analysis, and evaluation of the relevant information, and applying the precautionary principle, it is the professional opinion of the author of this report that there will be no adverse impact on the integrity of any of relevant Natura 2000 sites, assuming the implementation of all mitigation/preventative measures as outlined. Consequently, there will be no risk of adverse effects on Qualifying Interest habitats or species, nor the attainment of specific conservation objectives, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, for the relevant Natura 2000 sites. The ecological integrity of the Natura 2000 sites concerned (connected with qualifying interests for which the sites have been designated) will not be significantly impacted.'



7.0 Conclusion and next steps

7.0 Conclusion and next steps

The process for every individual public realm project is complex and unique to each location. It is dependent on the site constraints, engagement, approvals, environmental considerations and ease of change. These all need to be carefully considered with each and every proposed intervention.

This guide is a first step towards improving the public realm in Laytown and Bettystown. It needs to be embraced and followed to encourage positive change in the town centre.

The key steps are as follows:

- **Programme:** It is suggested that a five-year programme is put in place to ensure momentum and achieve the overall goal of making improvements to the public realm in the town centre. This should identify the process and identify tasks against target dates.
- **Identify sources of funding:** Project Ireland is a clear source of funding which supports ambitious and strategic projects which contribute to sustainable rural regeneration and development. Other sources will include Failte Ireland and The Heritage Council.
- **Ongoing review of change in line with the Public Realm Plan:** The public realm plan provides a guide to all interventions within the public realm for both the Council and 3rd parties. All changes should be reviewed to ensure they are in line with the aspirations.
- **Design:** It is fundamental that all public realm schemes are design-led with integrated engineering, not the reverse. Design quality must be paramount and suitable consultants must be procured from inception.
- **Delivery:** The process of delivering public realm is complex and involves many stakeholders. Schemes need to be budgeted properly, resourced by an experienced team and delivered to specification.



8.0

Appendix

8.1 What People Have Told Us

8.1 What People Have Told Us - Stakeholder Consultation - 20th March 2019

Attendees

Local Traders
Local Community Representatives
Local Councillors
Local Residents

Introduction and initial thoughts

Bettystown

- Roundabout needed in town centre
- Bus stop location creates traffic
- Traffic backs up in all directions
- Buses needed – locations of stops should be better thought out
- Circulation is an issue
- Commuter parking could move location
- Delays can be caused by school traffic
- Summertime parking in town and on beaches is a big issue

Laytown

- Parking happens on both sides of the road towards the train station
- Playground parking is usually full with commuter parking during the day which means parents bringing their kids to the playground have nowhere to park.
- There should be restrictions on parking with solutions needed for commuter parking issues.
- More bus-stops are needed. Perhaps if there are more stops throughout the town, less people would drive and park at the station
- Cyclists would use a route if they were accommodated
- A greenway is needed.
- It may not be in ours or the council's remit to move parking for commuters
- A shuttle service to surrounding houses should be explored

Who uses the beach / town?

- People do both
- Tourists do both but don't use the town enough
- People use the beach a lot
- Connections should be improved between beach and town

- Families not geared towards play area
 - No facilities on Laytown Beach
 - This is an SPA area
- Inchydoney is a Blue Flag beach. Laytown and Bettystown should be aiming for same
 - No rubbish or dumping on beach
 - Clean water a must
- Events on the beach such as volleyball and walking
- Greenways – Boyne to Newry. The Gap between Donaghmede and Mornington should be a greenway running by Laytown and Bettystown
- Housing developments are causing problems with traffic. They also result in a lack of other facilities as well as transport problems
- There is nothing in the town for young adults to do. Most head to Drogheda

Gap Analysis

Quality of Footpaths

- Footpaths are not wide enough in some areas

Links

- Parking is an issue both sides of the beach entrance in Laytown – this should be a clearway
- Pedestrian accessibility to the beaches in parts is limited
- Cyclists are not well accommodated

Links to Tesco

- Cycleway goes to nowhere
- People drive to Tesco more often than they walk
- People do not use Tesco and the Town at the same time
- People drive between both
- Too dangerous at crossings
 - Difficult for families
 - 2 min. drive
 - Feels less comfortable walking
- When the hotel was open, more people walked between the town and the new development
- People should be made walk!

Greenery and Ecology

- Plenty on the coast but nothing in either town
- No larger vegetation to protect trees

Play

- Nothing for teens
- No toilet facilities on beaches
- Laytown has no parking (during the day when commuters have gone to Dublin)

Parking

- A huge issue in both towns
- Skerries has both free and pay and display parking at beach
- Engagement is needed with Irish Rail
- Charging points for electric cars should be looked at

Cycling

- Max Mason was killed a year ago to this day cycling outside the school.
- Cycling is not safe in either of the towns
- There are 2000 kids who would be delighted to cycle to school if cycling routes were available
- Accommodating cyclists would add to tourism

Public Transport

- Stops need improvement
- Housing estates are not linked by bus routes or served well by stops

Disabled bays

- Enforcement needed
- More disabled bays are not needed / there isn't enough (disagreement)

Tourism

◦ Bettystown

- Recent Guests at Reddins loved the beach, loved their accommodation but said that the town was "depressing"
- The town needs a change
- There is a building left in the centre with broken windows and water leaking out.
- Sand yachting and volleyball events attract tourism
- A walkable area
- The beach is fantastic

◦ Laytown,

- Birds and beach are the main attractions

Identity of town centre

- Both should be a village
- A strong centre for three town towns needed (Bettystown, Laytown, Mornington)

- Too many derelict buildings
- Doesn't feel like a village currently
- Housing developments outside the towns create problems.
- St Artha Ecology centre should be utilised better
- Clear walkway from Laytown to Bettystown is needed.

Marketing

- Meath Coast should be promoted.
- There is a canvas there but now people need a reason to visit.

Shopfronts

- The current state of shopfronts is bad, derelict
- The Meath Shopfront Strategy should be enforced
- Callaghans and Reddins look well and make an effort but others do not.
- Forecourt usage doesn't happen.

Identity

- They should be treated as independent towns.

Other Items

- Older kids need something to do.
- GAA and Soccer clubs are present but for other entertainment, kids need to travel to Drogheda
- The scouts have no scout hall currently.
- There should be other areas of open space other than the beach for each town. There should be a park in Bettystown, a park / playground in Laytown, an "inter-generational" area
- Cars should be parked west of the railway line
- The path along the estuary of the river Nanny should be reopened.
- Better road needed to access the M1
- Litter on beach needs to be addressed with bins being provided in places every so often.

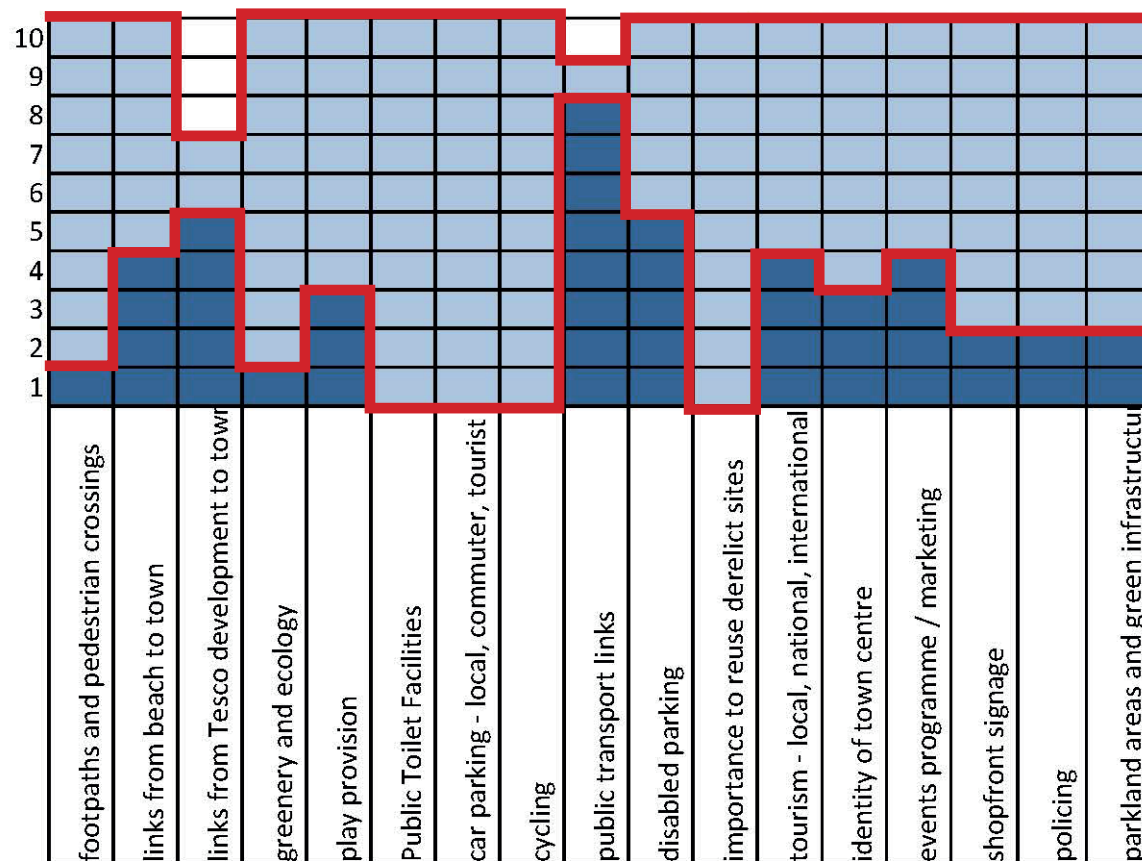
Vision Statement

Bettystown

- Regeneration, traffic calming, pedestrianisation of main square needs to be added

Laytown

- Both Laytown and Bettystown need parklands
- Traffic calming
 - o Rumble strips are too noisy
 - o Speed limits are not enforced



- o Speed bumps increase carbon footprint
- o Flashing signs may be a good idea.
- o Speed cameras may also be an option

Objectives

Bettystown

- Centre needs change
- Links to beach
- Boardwalks
- Civic centre at end of beach
- Head-on parking on the main road is dangerous and can

lead to accidents when reversing out.

- Outdoor gym equipment could be beneficial.
- Regeneration should be encourages rather than future development.
- Parts of original buildings should be kept.
 - o Reddins is the only old part of Bettystown
 - o Pat's Shop and Dune's not being looked after.

Laytown

- Village feel is needed.
- Fire station, bank and cinema have all gone
- "There were more facilities 40 years ago compared to what's there now.

8.1 What People Have Told Us - Draft Display of Plan - 11th March to 29th of May 2020

Meath County Council placed the Draft Laytown and Bettystown Public Realm Plan on public display online at consult.meath.ie. The draft plan was on display between the 11th of March 2020 and 29th of May 2020. Five submissions were received and reviewed by the council before completing the plan in May 2021.

For more about this event and to view the submissions received, visit:
<https://consult.meath.ie/ga/consultation/draft-laytown-and-bettystown-public-realm-plan-2020>

BDP.

Blackhall Green,
Stoneybatter,
Dublin,
D07 V0RF,
Ireland