

Pobal le Cheile Project, Ballymahon : Landscape Report

Design Standards - DMURS

DMURS provides guidance relating to the design of urban roads and streets. The Ballymahon public realm enhancements have closely considered the principles, approaches and standards that are necessary to achieve balanced, best practice design outcomes with regards to the Town Centre.

As outlined in the guidance '*This Manual does not purport to account for every scenario that a designer will encounter, particularly when retrofitting existing streets. Nor can this Manual cover every technical detail. Many matters are left to the professional expertise and judgement of users*'.

Improving footpath widths

As part of the design, it is proposed to increase footpath widths to those minimum standards as set out in DMURS with new footpath widths of between 3.0 and 2.0m within the majority of the scheme. As set out in DMURS "*In a retrofit situation increasing footpath widths should be a priority for designers and where appropriate, accommodated by narrowing vehicular carriageways*". Furthermore, it is proposed to increase the existing footpath widths throughout the project area to improve the pedestrian environment and overall quality of the street.

Carriageway widths

It is proposed to maintain a minimum carriageway width of 6.0m throughout the project area on all two-way roads.

Improving the parking environment

In order to improve pedestrian permeability and to address the current bus parking issue, it is proposed to introduce a bus layby area that can serve school buses as well as for on-street car parking.

At present, there are no designated disabled parking bays within the project area. It is proposed to include on street disabled parking spaces within the project area.

Introducing tactile paving

Currently there is a lack of tactile pavements within the town. It is proposed to include tactile pavers at uncontrolled crossing locations as part of 2 crossing points on the R392.

Resilience to Climate Change

One of the aims of RRDF is to revitalise rural towns and villages, supporting projects that will deliver planned, sustainable regeneration and bridge the transition to a climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

It is important that this project exhibits nature based solutions to manage rainwater, where possible and to protect water quality and the environment.

The proposals for this project seek to make the town more resilient to climate change by:

- Introducing urban street tree planting
- Introducing planting beds that can act as rain gardens and accept surface water run-off from the adjacent carriageway and footpaths/cycleways
- Selecting a number of native species, which will aid biodiversity
- Introducing pedestrianised zones across a network of green spaces that encourage active travel and
- Introducing a new 2 way off road cycleway along the southern side of the R392.

Materiality

The primary approach to the surface materials is to provide a coherent, robust and visually appealing uplift throughout the town centre that compliments and unifies the adjacent architecture. Materials are appropriate to the type and use of space along the R392 corridor. Primarily the use of high quality natural stone paving will be used to revitalise this part of the town centre and provide an attractive, durable and long lasting public realm.

Materials will be appropriate to define key user groups and spaces, for example:

- Larger natural stone paving units to be introduced on footways.
- Stone sett paving to be introduced in areas which will be trafficked by both pedestrians and vehicles. This includes vehicle crossovers and vehicle access to private properties.
- Stone setts to be introduced to the raised R392 carriageway between the Mercy Secondary School entrance and the Circle K garage.
- Stone sett paving to car parking bays.

The design also focusses on removing street clutter and creating a public realm that is easily accessible to all. The raised table and shared surfaces have been introduced to slow vehicles down, and give priority back to pedestrian movement. There is a consideration for the use of texture and contrasting colour to aid visually impaired users.

Planting Strategy

A key aim of the planting strategy is to introduce street tree and planting to soften the existing hard streetscape, enhance the pedestrian experience and aid the town's resilience to future climate change. Alongside the ecological and social value it is also envisaged that tree planting within the town centre will make this a more attractive setting for new businesses, encouraging inward investment and boosting the local economy.

Planting will also be used to create an enhanced sense of arrival by strengthening key gateways and crossing points and also providing some separation between vehicle and non-vehicle users. It is intended that tree species will be tolerant to the urban environment and drought resilient.

Tree planting will be specified with a clear stem to ensure foliage does not impede visibility or access. A clear stem will also allow seating to be incorporated adjacent to trees providing people with contact with nature. Tree planting will also soften the hard landscape and provide a distinctive colour and texture throughout the streets and spaces. We will also seek to retain the existing street trees where these are in good condition.

The tree and plant species will be subject to further design development as well as investigation into service depths and existing ground conditions for establishing appropriate sizes and species.

Street Furniture

The street furniture as part of the public realm enhancements will create a consistent and coherent look and feel. A key aim is to declutter the footways and streetscape generally and the placement of seating, bins etc will be well considered to minimise the impact on pedestrian movement.

Street furniture will also be used to deter ad-hoc parking and prevent the need for excessive bollards / clutter. Furniture will use sustainable materials wherever possible and be specified to be robust and long lasting. Final specifications are subject to further detailed design

Lighting Strategy

The current lighting provision along the R392 includes a standard highway lighting columns. The proposal is to replace the standard highway lighting with high quality lighting columns and lamp heads.. Existing light column positions will be used where feasible, or retained close-by.

The proposed lighting strategy seeks to create a coherent look and feel to the public realm. The number of columns will be kept to a minimum to limit streetscape clutter and these will be well integrated into the streetscape to feel part of the new public realm.

Feature lighting will also be incorporated within the public realm to help animate this new pedestrian space and create a safe, attractive environment throughout the evenings. Final lighting specifications are subject to further detailed design.

