

Longford 2040: A Town Centre First Plan



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

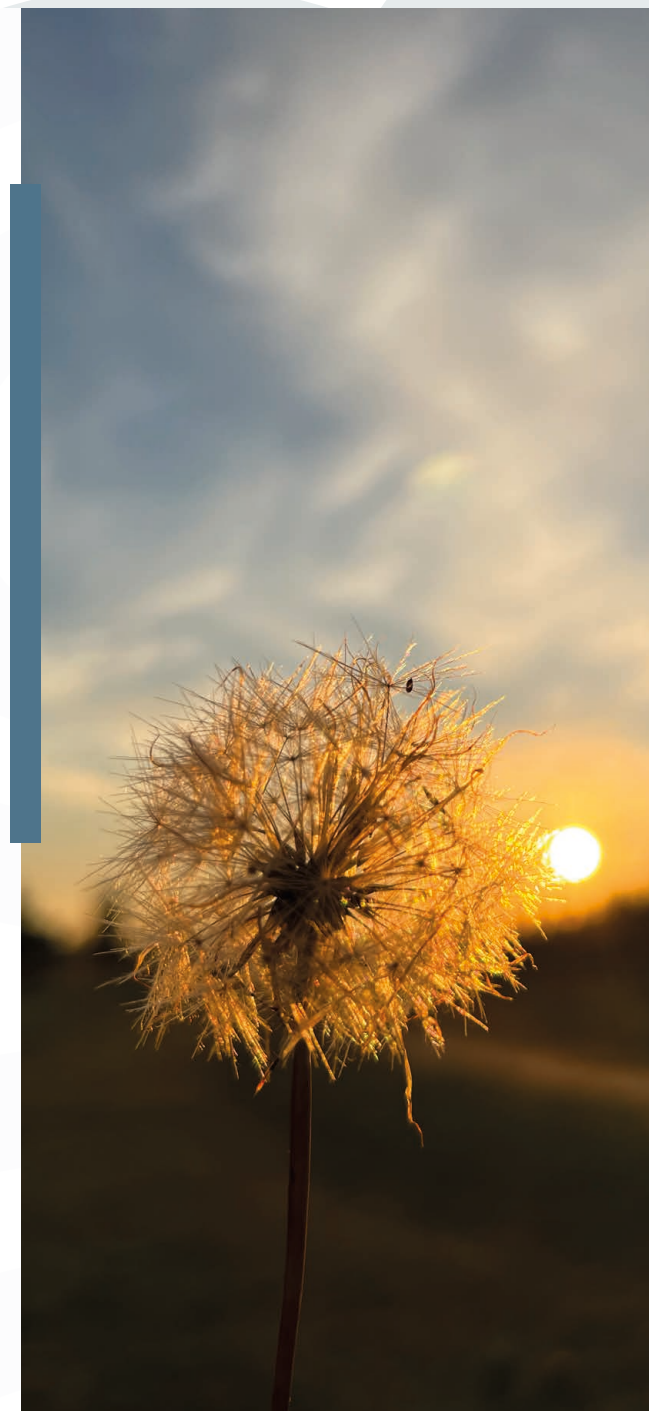
Ár dTodhchaí
Tuaithe
Our Rural
Future



Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First

Contents

| | | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| 1.0 | Setting the Scene | 3 |
| 2.0 | Setting the Plan in Context: A Town Centre First Policy | 5 |
| 3.0 | Developing the Plan | 6 |
| 4.0 | The Story of Longford | 7 |
| 5.0 | The Response | 16 |
| | Transformational Proposal 1: An Improved and Connected Public Realm | 18 |
| | Transformational proposal 2 – An Integrated Sean Connolly Barracks and Plaza | 26 |
| | Transformational proposal 3 – Tackling Vacant Buildings and Dereliction | 31 |
| | Transformational proposal 4 – Walkways and River Access | 36 |
| | Transformational proposal 5 – Longford Town Identity and Marketing | 43 |
| | Transformational proposal 6 – A Social Community and Wellbeing Hub | 51 |
| | Transformational proposal 7 – Transport Links | 56 |
| | Transformational proposal 8 – Unlocking the Backlands | 60 |
| | Transformational proposal 9 – Housing and Town Centre Living | 64 |
| 6.0 | Implementing the Plan | 68 |





Setting the Scene

The Longford Town Centre First (TCF) Plan is an ambitious strategy that sets out a pathway for the revival and revitalisation of the county town of Longford. This strategy sets out the following 17 year vision for the town, outlining ambitions to be realised by Longford by 2040.

Our vision for Longford is to rejuvenate the town as a unique cultural, tourism and heritage destination through the further development of its physical, economic and social infrastructure.

This vision means that Longford will be:

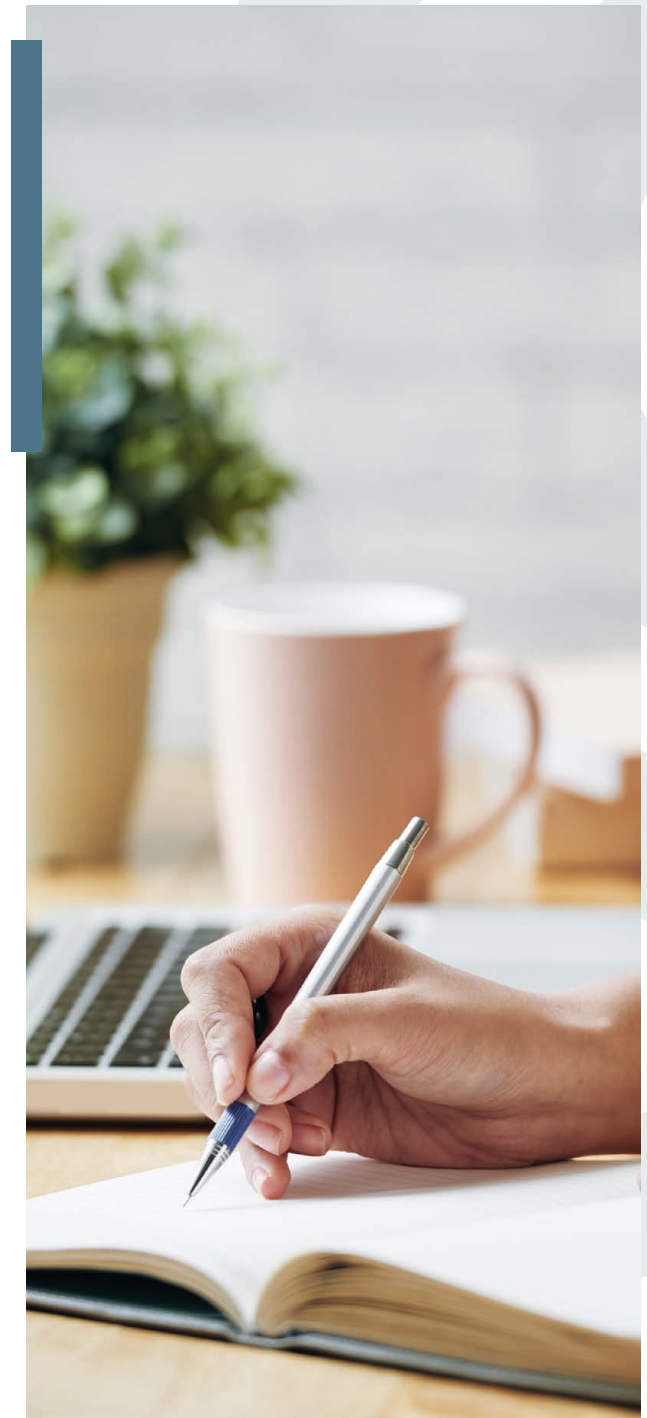
- ➔ **A town of cultural and heritage significance optimising its unique architectural attributes and urban characteristics.**
- ➔ **A vibrant economic town that capitalises on its retail, tourism and hospitality offer, and embraces digital transformation and innovation.**
- ➔ **A sustainable town that prioritises climate change adaptation and the regeneration of public spaces and town centre living.**
- ➔ **A socially connected town that supports communities through inclusive places and spaces.**
- ➔ **A safe, welcoming and accessible town that values sustainable mobility, age friendly initiatives and universal design principles.**

Transformational Proposals

This Town Centre First Plan brings our 2040 vision to life by identifying nine transformational proposals and a seven year roadmap to achieve them.

Our Transformational Proposals include:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  <p>An Improved and Connected Public Realm</p> |  <p>An Integrated Sean Connolly Barracks and Plaza</p> |  <p>Tackling Vacant Buildings and Dereliction</p> |
|  <p>Walkways and River Access</p> |  <p>A Social Community and Wellbeing Hub</p> |  <p>Transport Links</p> |
|  <p>Unlocking the Backlands</p> |  <p>Housing and Town Centre Living</p> |  <p>Longford Town Identity and Marketing</p> |



Setting the Plan in Context:

A Town Centre First Policy

The National Planning Framework and Our Rural Future set out a vision to develop thriving Irish Towns which are integral to national economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing and development. This vision is built on the interdependence of urban and rural areas, and recognises the diversity of individual towns, the centrality of people, the importance of vibrant and lived-in places and the potential to create quality jobs and sustain our shared environment.

The Town Centre First policy seeks to support the delivery of this vision and complement a wide range of Government policies impacting on towns in Ireland. It provides a cross-cutting and collaborative framework for central government, Local Authorities, public and private sector stakeholders, and especially communities, to build sustainable vibrant town centres.

“The Town Centre First policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.”

Towns impact on quality of life and should be attractive places for people of all ages, abilities and social backgrounds to live in. There remains a focus on enhancing work and enterprise, with new opportunities now presented by remote working. Towns also service the needs of visitors and tourists, as well as being an important source of community character and identity.

The Town Centre First (TCF) plan policy will facilitate that response by ensuring that town centres can function as the sustainable and vibrant heart of the communities they serve, in ways that are adaptable and appropriate to 21st Century needs.

In December 2021, Phase 1 funding was announced as part of the Government’s ‘Town Centre First’ policy. Each county was required to select a town to engage in the initial phase of the programme and thus Longford County Council subsequently received a budget allocation to support the development of a Town Centre First Plan for Longford.

The Town Centre First Policy proposes that participating towns across Ireland should develop Town Centre First Plans in partnership with the local community and businesses, collaborating as part of the Town Team, together with all other relevant stakeholders in the town.

Developing the Plan

The process of creating a Town Centre First Plan requires collaboration and consultation to capture the needs and desires of the local community and stakeholders.



Key principles of the consultation process has been to afford an opportunity for all interested parties to participate in the process and thereby promote social inclusion, to include those from across society, including those marginalised and disconnected from the Local Authority, in particular the traveller and 'new communities', to capture a wide range of community, business, visitor, and stakeholder feedback to inform the plan and to seek opinion from the Council and the Town Team to explore draft proposals, ideas, views, and areas of conflict which exist so they could be assessed for incorporation in the plan as appropriate.

The Process:

375 Individuals



were involved in shaping the Longford TCF Plan and a range of other inter-related plans and strategies that have influenced the development of the TCF plan such as the Camlin Quarter Urban Design & Economic Framework and the Longford Town Local Area Plan 2023-2029

65 Residents, businesses and stakeholders



attended a public consultation event seeking opinion on the Longford TCF Plan transformational proposals

19 Written submissions



received as part of consultation on the Longford Town Local Area Plan 2023 – 2029

61 Resident responses



to an online survey seeking opinion on the Longford TCF Plan transformational proposals

6 Engagements



with the Longford Town Team representatives.

20 Stakeholder interviews



carried out to inform the Camlin Quarter Urban Design & Economic Framework including key community, business and statutory organisations.

6 Site visits and town walkabouts



carried out by the consultant team.

The contributions of stakeholders are weaved throughout this TCF plan, reinforcing its sense of ownership within Longford and its residents.

The Story of Longford

Population

Longford town had the highest population in the county, with a population of **10,952** (Census 2022).

- There was **9.43%** population growth rate between census periods from 10,008 to 10,952 in Longford town which is higher than the state (8%) but lower than the county (14%) (Census 2022).
- 34.78%** of the population in Longford town are under 25, higher than the state (33.2%) and the county (38.03%) (2022).
- 36.46%** of the population in Longford town are over 45, lower than the state (37.2%) and the county (48.82%) (2022).
- 657 people** from the Traveller community are resident in Longford town, 6% of the population (Census 2022).
- 5%** of families in Longford town are lone-parent families.
- 38.8 years** is the average age of residents in Longford town, increased from 37.4 years since the last census.
- The old age dependency ratio in Longford town has increased to **22%** (from 15%) in 2022 (Census 2022). The young age dependency ratio in Longford town (**35%**) still remained above the State ratio (30.1%) (Census 2022)

Ethnicity

~48% of Longford town's population identifies as **White Irish** (47.68%) which is significantly lower than the state (82%) and the county (80.4%) (Census 2022).

~10% of Longford town's residents identify as **Black/Black Irish or Asian/Asian Irish** (9.59%) which is higher than the state (3.5%) and the county (3.9%).

6% of Longford town's population identify as **White Irish Traveller** which is higher than the county (1.7%) and the state (0.7%).

Deprivation

~17% of Longford town's population are classified as **unemployed or unable to work** (17.4%) (Census 2022).

~36% of Longford town's population is classified as **unskilled/unknown** (5.5%) (Census 2022)

Longford town had a relative HP Deprivation Index Score of -5.33 in 2016 which is categorised as marginally disadvantaged on the Pobal Index. (Pobal HP).

Health



24.1% of Longford town are **disabled**. **11.2%** are **male** and **12.9%** are **female**.

Longford town has a higher disabled population than State level (21.5%).

(Census 2022)



73.1% of Longford town's population identified their health as **very good/good**.

Lower than the county (76%) and the state (83%).



3% of Longford town's population stated that their health was **very bad/bad**.

Higher than the county (2.1%) and the state (1.75%)





Education



3.3% of the Longford town population have **primary level** as their highest education level achieved, compared to the state (7.4%).

(Census 2022)



6.7% of the town's population had achieved a **bachelor's degree or higher**, which is lower than the state (33.7%).



19.5% of the town's population aged 18 or under **have ceased their education**, compared to the state (22.5%).



10.51% of the town's population aged 15 and over **have not ceased their education**.



Connectivity

Longford town is centrally located in the heart of Ireland, and dissected by important transport corridors. Longford Town has been identified as a strategic portal to the northwest and south in recognition of its location at the junction of the N55; M4/N4 Dublin/Sligo and N5, and due to its proximity to the regional growth centre of Athlone, which supports its role as a strategic employment centre.

County Longford has a wealth of lakes, rivers and canals, making it an ideal destination for fishing and water-based recreation. Bus services are operated by Bus Eireann and a range of private operators. Rail services are available from Longford and Edgeworthstown which both operate on the Dublin-Sligo rail line.



Heritage & Culture

County Longford boasts a stunning natural environment that greatly enhances the well-being of its community, enriches the quality of life, and enhances the county as a destination of choice to live work and invest. There are 18 sites in Longford protected by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) with more potential sites in consideration. 18 NPWS protected sites including: (NPWS.ie)

- » 6 Natural Heritage Areas
- » 8 Special Areas of Conservation
- » 4 Special Protection Areas

County Longford has 12 Natura 2000 sites and six Natural Heritage Areas. Other areas also support vital habitats for flora, fauna, and vulnerable species. These form a connected network of spaces contributing to the County's Natural Heritage.

Heritage & Culture

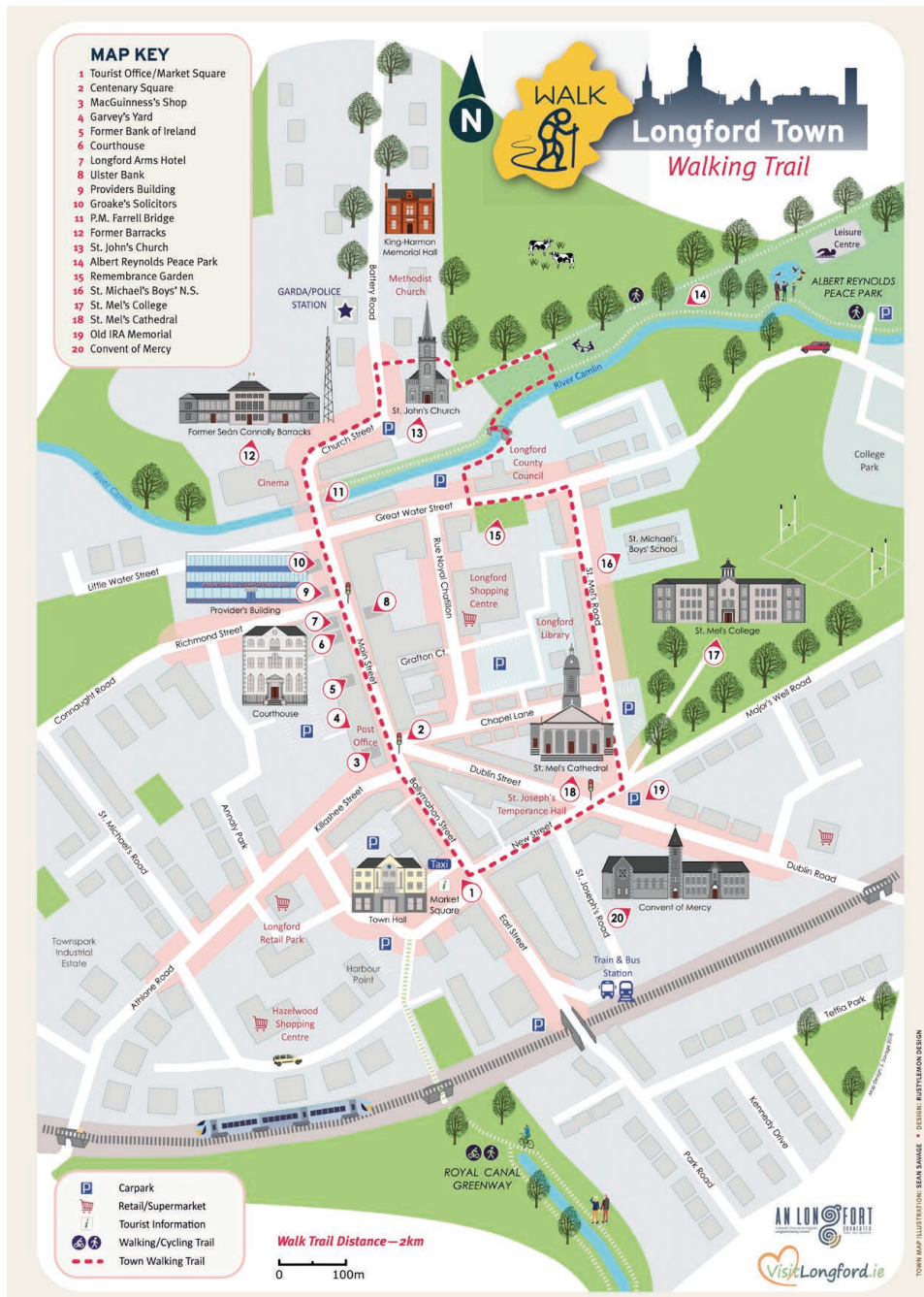
County Longford has a notable presence of environmental, local food, cultural, and artistic elements.

Various amenities like the County libraries and theatres such as the Backstage in Longford and the Bog Lane in Ballymahon showcase the work of local artists, food producers, and craft workers for visitors to enjoy. There are also smaller shared spaces with galleries and craft shops throughout the County.

There is a keen enthusiasm for sports within the County, with numerous facilities and venues available in every parish. The County also takes pride in its musical, drama, and dance talents, often showcased in local venues. The rich tradition of Irish, country, and contemporary music and dance is celebrated across the county in various venues, halls, and pubs. Various activities and festivals provide opportunities for local communities to celebrate their cultural heritage and showcase local talents and distinctive attributes.

There are many heritage and culture features specific to Longford Town as well. St. Mel's Cathedral is a protected structure built in neo classical style which was severely damaged by a fire on Christmas Eve, December 2009 and was rebuilt and mass celebrated for again for the first time on Christmas Eve 2014. The restoration project brought the Cathedral back to its former glory whilst developing a liturgical setting fitting of a Cathedral for the 21st century and won the award for 'Building Project of the Year' and 'Internal Architectural Project of the Year' at the Irish Building & Design Awards 2015.





Heritage & Culture

Battery Road Architectural Conservation Area is located in the northern portion of the town and derives its name from the military installations that once stretched from the existing barracks on Church Street to the Battery, which is now occupied by Pearse Park GAA grounds and Pearse View housing estate.

The area is characterised by a wide, tree lined carriageway, bounded by a wide range of structures that display a myriad of uses, sizes, scales and architectural styles. The interaction of these buildings, many of which are protected structures, with their setting, including their boundaries, planting and entrance and surface treatments have a significant impact on how the area is experienced and is important in forming the first visual impression for many people entering Longford.

In 2021, Longford Tourism in partnership with the Council developed a Longford Town Walking Trail consisting of a brochure and audio informed looped walk around Longford town highlighting 20 areas of historical significance. The walk takes in landmark buildings and places of interest to include the Garden of Remembrance, the Sean Connolly Army Barracks, and the Albert Reynolds Peace Park

Economy

County Longford's primary employment sectors include commerce, trade, manufacturing, and a substantial agricultural industry. Over the period from 2013 to 2022, employment in IDA companies in Longford increased by 79.3%, surpassing the state average and ranking second only to Leitrim (100.1%).

In 2022, the proportion of individuals engaged in farming or agricultural work in County Longford (7.0%) exceeded both the Eastern and Midlands Region (1.9%) and the State (5.2%). The census of 2016 revealed that Longford had higher employment proportions than the state average in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Building and Construction, Manufacturing, and Public Administration industries.

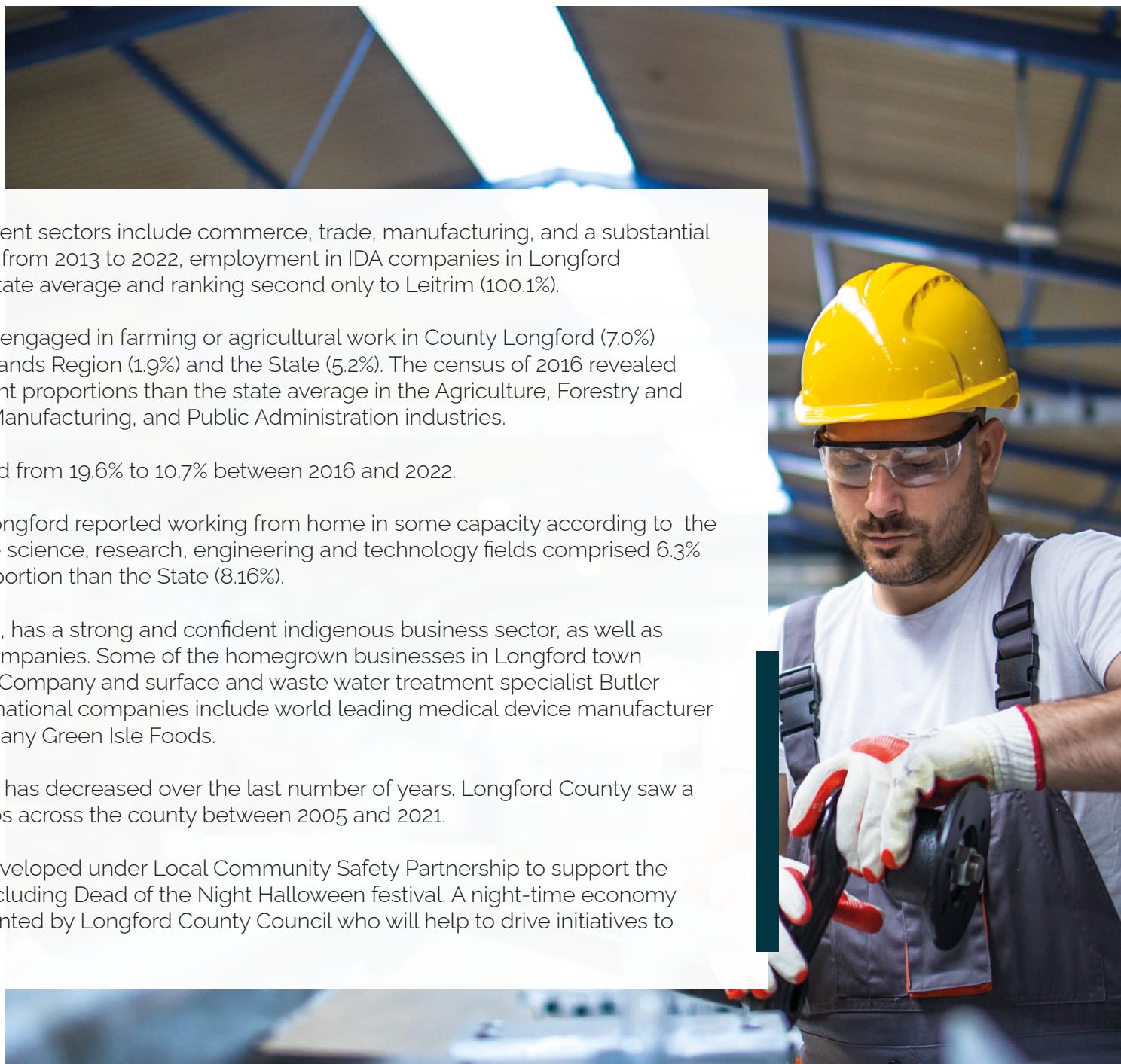
The unemployment rate has dropped from 19.6% to 10.7% between 2016 and 2022.

Approximately a fifth of workers in Longford reported working from home in some capacity according to the 2022 Census. Those employed in the science, research, engineering and technology fields comprised 6.3% of Longford's workforce, a lower proportion than the State (8.16%).

Longford Town, despite its small size, has a strong and confident indigenous business sector, as well as being home to many international companies. Some of the homegrown businesses in Longford town are micro-brewery St. Mel's Brewing Company and surface and waste water treatment specialist Butler Manufacturing Services while multi-national companies include world leading medical device manufacturer Abbotts and international food company Green Isle Foods.

The night time economy in Longford has decreased over the last number of years. Longford County saw a 25.7% decrease in the number of pubs across the county between 2005 and 2021.

A programme of events has been developed under Local Community Safety Partnership to support the creative and night-time economy, including Dead of the Night Halloween festival. A night-time economy adviser has also recently been appointed by Longford County Council who will help to drive initiatives to improve the night time offering.





Housing

Between 2016 and 2022, the housing vacancy rate dropped in County Longford but remained above the state average. In addition, the number of households qualifying for social housing support in 2022 was less than half the number that qualified in 2017, with the number of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme properties being highest in the Longford Municipal District.

As of the 2022 census night, the housing stock in County Longford totalled 19,195 (CSO, Census 2022). Between 2016 and 2022, the total housing stock increased at a slower rate in Longford (3.2%) than the State (5.4%) (CSO, Census 2022). In 2022, the number of properties on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme was highest in Longford LEA (182), followed by Ballymahon LEA (111) and Granard LEA (32). (CSO, Social Housing in Ireland).

Longford County Council is responsible for the provision of social housing in Longford town. Work has been ongoing in the review of vacant and derelict houses, refurbishing or redeveloping sites as appropriate, including the purchase of 37 turnkey properties on former derelict sites on Richmond Street and St. Michael's Road/Connaught Road.

The Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) Activation Programme is underway involving the identification and inspection of properties for inclusion in the programme. To date 24 properties have been identified under the CPO Activation programme in Longford Town.

Vacancy

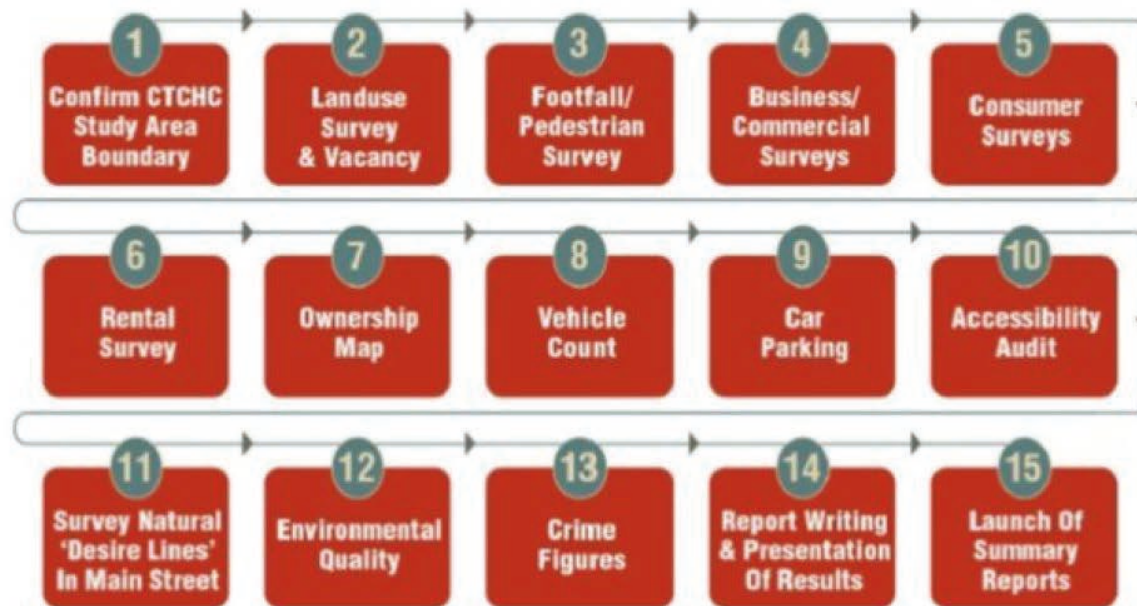
Longford Town centre has suffered decline in recent years, with particularly high levels of vacancy rates on Lower Main Street with vacancy rate on the ground floor of approximately 38%. The vacancy rate is lower in other parts of the town. However a number of high profile buildings remain vacant, which impacts on the overall impression of vacancy and dereliction within the town centre, including the never opened shopping centre, the former Post Office building, Providers building and the Mac Guinness building.



The Response

This plan has taken cognigence of the 15 step town centre assessment process informed by the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme, created by the Heritage Council and its Partners in Autumn 2016 and has taken into consideration in particular the recommended approaches outlined below that have already been undertaken via previous studies in Longford and work currently undertaken by agencies influencing town planning in Longford:

Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme The 15-Step CTCHC Process



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Transformational Proposals

The following section sets out the nine transformational projects to be delivered over the first seven years of the Longford Town 2040 Vision. In the subsequent sections we describe each proposal, why the proposal is important, current state of play, the key actions required to deliver the proposal and the key 'action holders' (the lead accountable organisation and partners).

The nine proposals include:

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
|  <p>An Improved and Connected Public Realm</p> |  <p>An Integrated Sean Connolly Barracks and Plaza</p> |  <p>Tackling Vacant Buildings and Dereliction</p> |  <p>Walkways and River Access</p> |
|  <p>Longford Town Identity and Marketing</p> |  <p>A Social Community and Wellbeing Hub</p> |  <p>Transport Links</p> |  <p>Unlocking the Backlands</p> |
|  <p>Housing and Town Centre Living</p> | | | |

It is envisaged that some of the proposals will be delivered in full during the first five years of the plan, whereas other proposals focus on developing pathways for further progress. The proposals will also be underpinned by a commitment to a consistent set of principles which align closely with the TCF plan policy. These include a commitment to positively contribute to climate action and net zero objectives, accessibility to all, sustainability, collaboration and ensuring the voice of people living in Longford is retained and embedded throughout the practical implementation of the plan.

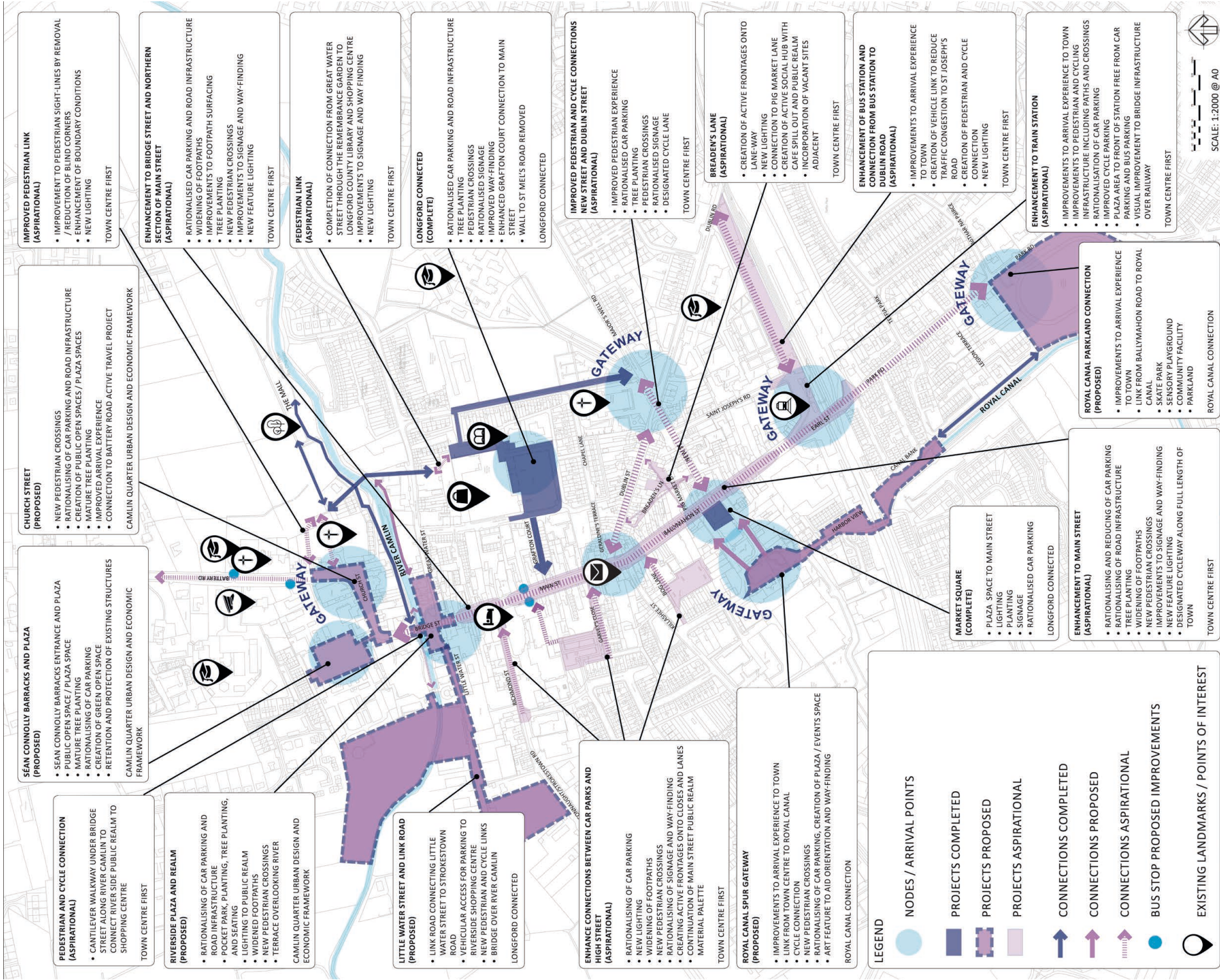


Transformational Proposal 1: An improved and Connected Public Realm

Public realm is a term used to describe areas where all members of the public have routine access to. It includes streets, public buildings, riverbanks, squares, as well as parks and green spaces. It can consist of many elements such as overall layout, shopfronts, architecture, street furniture, planting, signage, paving, footpath maintenance, colour schemes, traffic management, cycling and pedestrian facilities.

'The vision for Longford town is to develop a high-quality and connected public realm throughout the town which will facilitate all generations to congregate, relax and enjoy the urban environment.'

Figure 1
Transformational Proposal 1



Proposal 1:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

The consultation process undertaken as part of the development of this plan has identified the following challenges that can be addressed by this proposal:

- A receding retail and hospitality provision in the town particularly at Lower Main Street due to parking issues and lack of public realm investment to date
- A recognition that historically previous town planning and infrastructural interventions has led the built architecture to 'turn its back' on the river Camlin and with that the potential that the river could bring to improving the public realm appeal of the town
- A requirement for safe pedestrian and cycle routes throughout the town centre
- A requirement for increased provision of streetlighting for pedestrian use at night
- A lack of structured and coordinated car parking infrastructure leading to traffic congestion in the main street and underutilisation of the car park provision in the backland areas of the main street
- A requirement for more pedestrian crossings to encourage more town centre engagement and footfall
- A requirement for more street furniture in the town centre (park benches) and greater use of interpretive and information signage to encourage dwell time
- Residents have complained that street signage is too small and too high for pedestrian-level sight
- A lack of public bins leading to increased littering on the main street
- A requirement for more bus stop options leading out of the town centre



- A lack of adequate space in the centre of town to use as an events space
- The historical architecture of the town could be enhanced via further restoration and increased visibility via increased lighting of frontages
- Improvements to remedial works undertaken to existing infrastructure after new public realm schemes have been completed
- Incidences of anti-social behaviour at the Post Office site and at the underpass leading to Royal Canal walkway
- Opportunities for further digitise street furniture e.g. introduction of more card friendly parking meters
- There is a strong aspiration for a greener more environmentally friendly town centre
- There has only been a modest uptake on shopfront enhancement schemes

Delivering the Proposal: State of Play

The following proposals have been identified to address the above issues and have emerged as part of the Camlin Quarter Urban Design Framework (September 2019):

1. Church Street and Barracks Plaza Improvements

Proposals for Church Street/Barracks Plaza include the redevelopment of public realm to promote pedestrian movement and permeability and encourage use of existing amenities such as the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (ARPP). The works will enhance the northern 'gateway' into Longford town (an architectural conservation area) and aim to support inward investment in the Barracks compound and the adjacent vacant Riverside Shopping Centre. The proposals also encourage permeability between Church Street and the Camlin river and enhancement of access to the ARPP on the Battery Road.

2. Little Water Street & Link Road

Proposals include the development of a link road that will provide a vital connection to Little Water Street from the Strokestown road and allow vehicular access to the Riverside Shopping Centre car park (currently vacant) with a capacity of circa 400 spaces. It is also proposed that pedestrian paths and cycleways will be installed along this link to provide access to the river and improved upon for the length of Little Water Street, complementing improvements proposed to the Bridge Street Junction.

It is further proposed that a waterpark is developed to the rear of the Barracks property on the northern side of the river, incorporating a footbridge from Little Water Street over the River Camlin on the - the Southern Bank that will also link to the Barracks. The park will showcase town centre biodiversity and act as an extension to the ARPP amenity. This will also incorporate flood risk management and climate change adaption mechanisms.

3. Bridge Street & Great Water Street

Proposals include works to the junction at Bridge Street to address accessibility issues and provide visibility and access to the riverside parkland, eradication of longstanding vacancy and dereliction and creating a coherent connection between the main street and local administrative functions. The project has been developed in cognisance of the refurbishment of the Civic offices at Great Water Street which anticipates the consolidation of local government facilities with other administrative functions.

It is further proposed that the Council landbank at Great Water Street (South) will be developed into sheltered housing units, benefitting from the existing remembrance Garden and the proximity of the shopping centre and other community services within the town core. Proposals also includes the acquisition and refurbishment of the derelict corner building at the eastern end of Great Water Street/Northern end of St.Mel's Road.

4. Abbeycartron & Albert Reynolds Peace Park

Proposals include the extension of the Albert Reynolds Peace Park (ARPP), provision of bus parking facilities to serve the sporting facilities in the Mall complex and the Longford Athletics Club, and also existing schools in the area where bus parking is currently on Blind Man's walk.

It is also proposed that a new pedestrian connection will be made between Abbeycartron lane, a large housing area to the north of the ARPP, through the park, facilitating pedestrian and cyclist access to the core area and employment areas and business parks to the eastern side of the town. This will include the provision of a carriageway over the Camlin river to facilitate access off the Ballinalee Road for Affordable housing sites/units to be established on the northern end of the Council owned landbank adjacent to the existing, well established Abbeycartron housing area.

5. Royal Canal Spur

Proposals include enhanced public realm design and wayfinding focused on improving the link between the Royal Canal Greenway and the Market Square where the original Royal Canal Harbour was located. This will include the representation of elements of the original Longford Spur canal channel into the town and harbour, reinforcing the existing disjointed connection between the Longford Canal Spur and the Town Centre.

The proposal also includes the installation of a strong art feature that will create a focal and reference point for the town, whilst also assisting in the orientation and way-finding between the Longford Spur and the heart of Longford town.

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|---|-------------|---|
| Church Street & Barracks Plaza improvements to commence subject to URDF business case sign off and to complete by the end of 2026. Estimated Cost – €1,834,883 – Funding of 75% sought from Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) | Short Term | Longford County Council Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) |
| Little Water Street & Link Road improvements to commence subject to URDF business case sign off and to complete by the end of 2025. Estimated Cost – €2,724,777 – Funding of 75% sought from URDF | Short Term | Longford County Council, Omniplex Cinema, Longford, URDF |
| Bridge Street & Great Water Street improvements to commence subject to URDF business case sign off and to complete by the end of 2025. Estimated Cost – €6,814,591 - Funding of 75% sought from URDF. These works will significantly address issues of dereliction, vacancy and declining economic return experienced in the Lower Main Street area | Short Term | Longford County Council Private Sector Partners URDF |
| Abbeycartron & Albert Reynolds Peace Park (ARPP) improvements to commence subject to URDF business case sign off and to complete by the end of 2025. Estimated Cost – €6,256,016 – Funding of 75% sought from URDF | Medium Term | Longford County Council Longford Athletics Club URDF |
| The Royal Canal Spur proposal will act as an interface between ongoing projects within Longford town to include the Royal Canal Enhancement Works supported by the Outdoor Recreational Improvement Scheme (ORIS) and the Longford Connected Public Realm Enhancement Project supported by URDF. Estimated Cost – €2,000,000. | Medium Term | Longford County Council URDF ORIS |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|-------------------|---|
| <p>To implement three new bus stop pairs and adjust one existing bus stop pair to route 975 in Longford town as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Adjust – Longford Main Street/Town Centre » New – Battery Road » New – Pearse Park & » New – Clonbalt Wood | <p>Short Term</p> | <p>Longford County Council NTA</p> |
| <p>To undertake preliminary assessments to consider additional proposals informed via the recent TCF consultation process and outlined in Figure 1 to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Proposed further enhancements to the main street (footpath widening, new pedestrian crossings, signage and wayfaring) » Further pedestrian linkages and enhancements to the pedestrian route off Church Street leading to the River Camlin, » Proposed enhancements to Bridge Street and the Northern Section of Main Street and the creation of a connection from Great Water Street through the remembrance garden to Longford County Library & Shopping Centre » Proposal to develop a cantilevered footpath over the Camlin at the Bridge at Lower Main Street to facilitate further pedestrian access at a level alongside the riverside and integrating into the vacant shopping centre. » Public realm improvements to Breaden's Lane » Enhancements to the Bus Station and connection from the Bus Station to the Dublin Road » Enhancements to the Train Station to include improved arrival experiences, and reconfiguration of car parking to provide better pedestrian access to the station and improve visual impact for the visitor » Enhancements to connections between existing car parks and the High Street (Garveys Yard, Court Lane & Weavers Court) and the use of electronic signage to direct drivers specifically to these car parks. | <p>Short Term</p> | <p>Longford County Council</p> |

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|------------|--|
| <p>To set up a Town Centre First Interagency Forum that will be tasked providing oversight of TCF plan delivery with a specific emphasis on public realm improvements.</p> <p>The Forum should comprise of members of the Council's Regeneration team, nominated members from the Town Team and invited public and private external agencies.</p> <p>Short term actions to be taken forward by the Interagency Forum should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » To undertake a review of street furniture provision within the town and provide recommendations based on identified need and an ambition to increase dwell time in the town centre » To undertake a review of street service infrastructure within the town and provide recommendations to address the following issues highlighted via the TCF public consultation process in particular i.e <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bin locations and accessibility issues • Rectifying street signage height levels so that they are within better sight for pedestrians • Increased optimisation of interpretative signage within the town centre and identified public buildings e.g. Library • Improving street lighting at identified sites • Installation of sustainable 'smart' technologies such as EV charging points • Installation of public water stations (subject to public health issues being resolved) • Initiatives to reduce overhead cabling within the town centre • Initiatives to further improve tree planting and other 'greening' opportunities within the town centre | Short Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>Longford Town Team</p> |

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|-------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » To undertake a review of and lead out on climate action community schemes building out on the Tidy Towns initiative, encouraging the development of schools initiatives such as 'Neat Streets', encouraging further engagement in the annual 'National Spring Clean' initiative and creating more localised 'Green Communities' aiming to support groups via training and guidance to improve green sustainable approaches in day to day living and enhance local biodiversity | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| To develop a specific funding strategy framework that the TCF Interagency Forum can use to inform how the actions identified above and other emerging actions can be funded by the Council or by other third party funding sources | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| <p>Further development of a Council led environmental improvement investment scheme that will allow both private owners to apply as sole applicants or in collaboration with identified third party agencies to deliver larger scale collaborative shop front improvement schemes and well resourced programmes of work to encourage the maintenance and upkeep of new and existing green areas and public rights of way</p> <p>To further animate and provide support to local business owners to secure grant opportunities</p> | ~Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team Longford Tidy Towns Team |
| To consider expanding the Council Parks & Amenities function to include resourcing a full time Horticulture Officer(s) that will have specific expertise in landscape management and maintenance of Council led and third party contracting environmental improvement schemes | Short Term | Longford County Council |
| Incorporation of flood risk considerations in proposed uses along the Camlin River Spine? taking into consideration of natural inundation patterns in conjunction with development proposals | Medium Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |



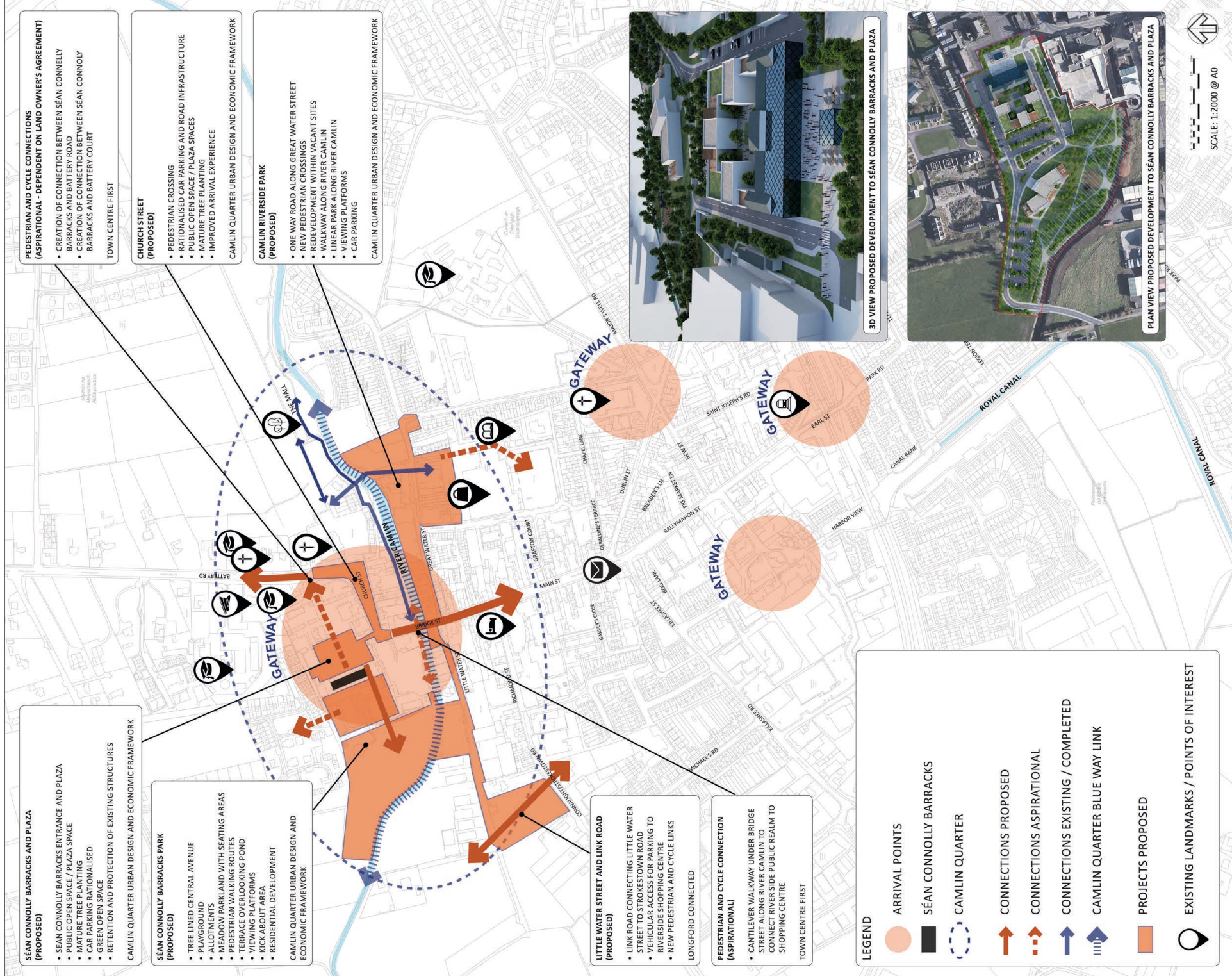
Transformational Proposal 2: An Integrated Sean Connolly Barracks and Plaza

Sean Connolly Barracks is a major asset for the town in terms of economic regeneration and tourism. The Barracks is a council-owned site of approximately 4 hectares. Its current vacant state negatively impacts the vitality of the town centre, but it has huge potential to attract inward investment, whilst there are also possibilities to develop the plaza in front of the Barracks and a greenfield river site to the southwest of the site.

'The vision for Longford town is to create a Sean Connolly Barracks and Plaza site that can be used to secure inward investment for economic development and tourism led initiatives and ensure benefits accrued are maximised at all levels.'



Figure 2
Transformational Proposal 2





Proposal 2: Why is the transformational proposal important?

The consultation process undertaken as part of the development of this plan recognises the following:

- The Sean Connolly Barracks and Parade ground is a site of rich cultural heritage with unique architectural attributes
- The Barracks represents a unique urban characteristic focal point for the town representing a visual and physical link to the town centre right up to the Market Square
- The grounds offer significant opportunity for increased amenity and recreation space and activity tourism space along the Camlin River
- The forecourt represents the prime site within the town for significant events space
- The Barracks site has potential for a varied range of accommodation provision to include the potential for hotel development

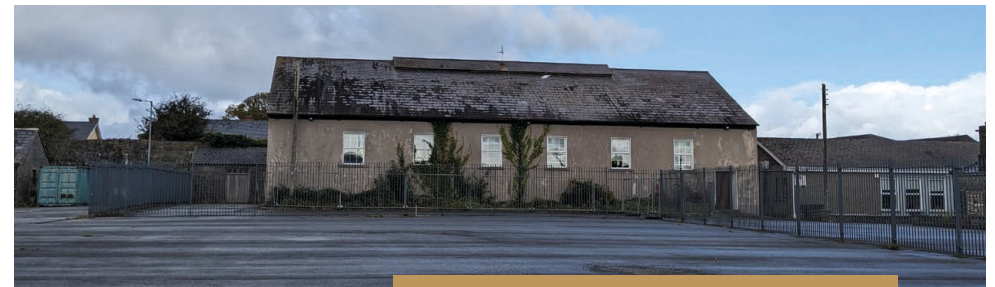
Delivering the Proposal: State of Play

Connolly Barracks is identified as one of five 'strategic sites' in the current Draft Longford Town Local Area Plan and considered to be a 'regenerative catalyst within the town'.

The eastern side of the site, some c1.25 hectares and encompassing the majority of other buildings has already been acquired, adapted and utilised by the Longford Westmeath Education Training Board (LWETB) for office and teaching space.

As previously outlined under Transformational Proposal 1, it is proposed that a waterpark is developed to the rear of the Barracks property on the northern side of the river, incorporating a footbridge from Little Water Street on the Southern Bank as part of an estimated €2.7 million scheme. The park will showcase town centre biodiversity and act as an extension to the ARPP amenity. This will also incorporate flood risk management and climate change adaption mechanisms.

Further proposals for the Sean Connolly Plaza and site are detailed in Figure 2. These have emerged from the Camlin Quarter Urban Design and Economic Framework and include proposals specifically for the Barracks entrance and plaza, Church Street, and Camlin Riverside Park. These also include proposals for a link road connecting Little Water Street to the Strokestown Road to include pedestrian and cycle link proposals emerging from the Longford Connected plan.



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|--|-------------------|--|
| <p>A priority action is to identify an 'anchor use' for the site – The following 'opportunity projects' should continue to be explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Undertake a market viability analysis on the potential viability of future potential hotel, tourism, cultural uses to include accommodation on site, with a preference for hotel tourism » Ensure that any future design proposals provide for a dedicated, high quality civic space on the former Parade Square and enable flexible civic use and events space and is prioritised to pedestrian movement and access » Consider an additional use of the site to host an indoor civic space that could accommodate a Arts/Theatre space and some atypical Council Services | Short/Medium Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>URDF</p> <p>Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB)</p> <p>Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF)</p> <p>Longford Tourism Office</p> |
| <p>To be investment-ready as and when required, it is proposed to undertake a detailed survey of the former Barracks site and buildings to determine their structural condition and build on a visual survey that was previously completed.</p> | Short Term | Longford County Council, |
| <p>Ensure that any new build or new use proposals are sympathetic to the heritage setting and values of existing protected structures/buildings within the Barracks site and the wider Battery Road Architectural Conservation Area. This will require regular engagement with the Heritage Office with Longford Council Council</p> | Short Term | Longford County Council (Heritage Office) |
| <p>Engage with the Education Training Board (ETB) regarding the potential removal of the existing high fence and replace with a permeable landscape edge treatment</p> | Short Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>LWETB</p> |

Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|---|-------------|--|
| Engage with residents at Battery Court on access and permeability between the Barracks site and Battery Court | Short Term | Longford County Council Battery Court Residents |
| Ensure that any future design proposals include high quality distinctive paving, lighting and seating, trees in planters and soften hard landscape areas where appropriate. | Short Term | Longford County Council, |
| To monitor and consider any influencing factors borne out of the site being potentially used as an Accommodation Facility for Ukrainian Refugees over the next five years | Medium Term | Longford County Council |
| To develop a business case in conjunction with an appointed Integrated Design Team to take forward one or all three of the 'opportunity projects' identified and develop a funding proposal for significant investment. | Medium Term | Longford County Council |



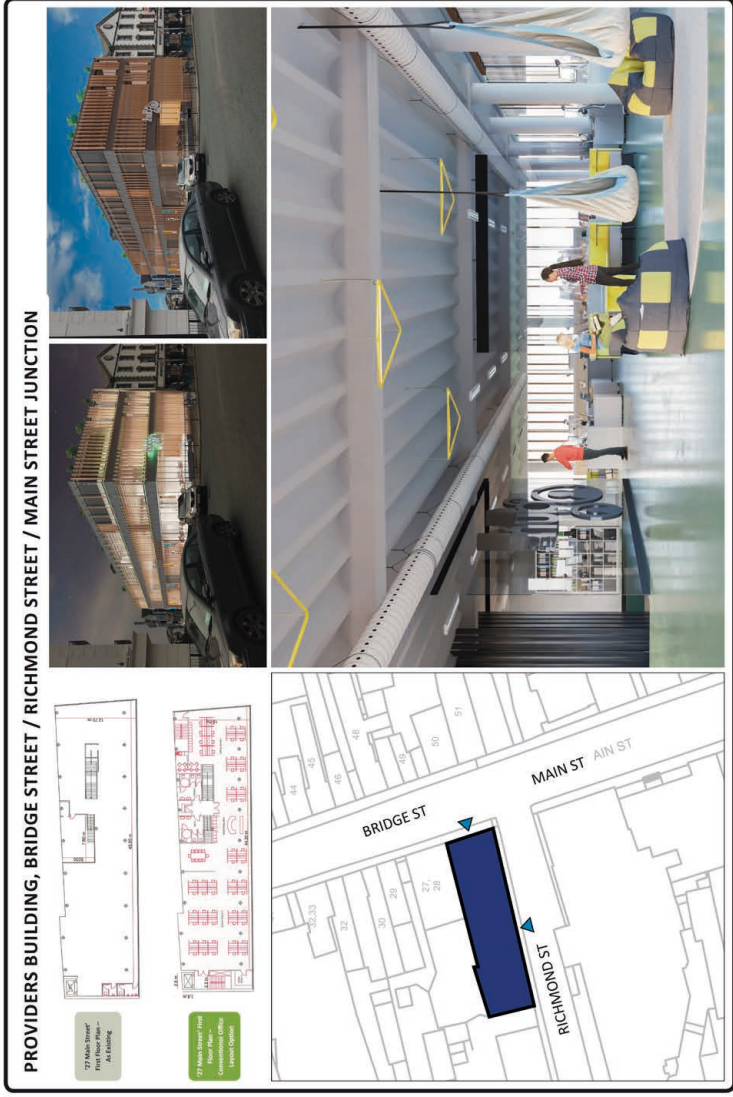
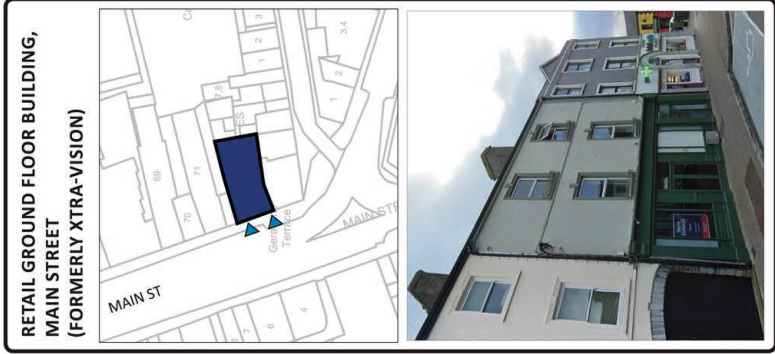
Transformational Proposal 3: Tackling Vacant Buildings and Dereliction

This proposal seeks to develop a targeted and focused approach to address dereliction and vacancy within the town centre. The proposal will rely on engagement between key partners and stakeholders to explore and encourage imagination and creativity in bringing vacant properties back into use for business and enterprise.

'The vision for Longford is to undertake a targeted and focused approach to address dereliction and vacancy within the town centre, with the aim to significantly reduce vacancy rates by 2040'.



Figure 3
Transformational Proposal 3





Proposal 3:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

- The Draft Longford Town Local Area Plan has identified 30 derelict sites, 2 vacant sites and 1 dangerous structure in Longford town.
- Building vacancy rates/high level dereliction was ranked 1st biggest challenge in the town centre in the online community survey.
- The online community survey highlighted that dereliction and vacancy rates in Longford are considered by residents to have serious negative social impacts on the town and the surrounding hinterland
- The online community survey highlighted the high level of vacant buildings in the Lower Main Street leading to the Richmond Street junction
- Previous investment proposals for Longford have highlighted the requirement for a greater hospitality offering, hotel accommodation, in particular a boutique hotel offering, a creative arts space and exhibition hub, a community resource and education space, and an economic innovation hub.
- Addressing vacancy and maximising the use of existing housing stock is a primary objective of Government. The reuse and regeneration of vacant properties in the town can also unlock greater potential for the private sector to invest in much needed housing and have a transformative impact

Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

Longford County Council is leading a process to document a list of all vacant and derelict properties in Longford Town on a regular basis. Of those properties identified, Figure 3 outlines five potential areas for vacant property revitalisation but these can be subject to change due to further consultation on feasibility of use:

1. **Providers Building,**
2. **The Vacant Shopping Centre – Bridge Street/Little Water Street**
3. **Old Post Office Building, Main Street**
4. **Mac Guinness Building, Main Street**
5. **The former Xtra Vision Building, Main Street**

- The Providers Building is currently in Council ownership and the existing first floor space available (570sqm) currently benefits from an open plan arrangement which has versatility in its layout and construction, with high ceilings, lift access and floor to ceiling external glazing running the entire street frontage.
- The vacant Shopping Centre at Bridge Street/Little Water street was constructed in 2008 but has been vacant since 2010. The Omniplex group acquired the property in 2018. The centre has about 73,000 square foot of retail space over two floors and has the capacity for up to several dozen retail outlets. The Omniplex group currently operates a four screen cinema adjacent to the Shopping Centre.
- The Old Post Office building is privately owned and has been vacant since 1990.
- The Mac Guinness Building is privately owned and has been vacant since 2006.
- The former Xtra Vision site is privately owned and vacant since 2016.

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|--|------------|--|
| To work with the Vacant Homes Officer(s) within the Council to carry out a detailed assessment of vacant properties in Longford and establish a baseline status in terms of condition, ownership and vacancy. To ensure the Vacant Site Levys are in place promptly so that the development of vacant sites can be encouraged and the occurrence of land hoarding mitigated. | Short Term | Longford County Council (Vacant Homes Office) Longford Town Team |
| Organise and facilitate a series of workshops and information sessions on available funding opportunities to include the Croi Conaithe (Towns) Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant fund and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) programme. | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| To prioritise vacant and derelict properties within the extents of Lower Main Street and Little Water Street for intervention | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| Undertake a condition survey of the following identified five priority sites to identify key areas for redress prior to potential reinvestment | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| Undertake a feasibility study (individually or as a composite) to include a market analysis and RIBA stage 2 design concepts exploring the potential use of the priority sites identified above for the following uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hospitality offering (particularly restaurants providing evening dining) » Accommodation offering (e.g Boutique Hotel) » Creative Arts Space & Exhibition Hub, » Community Resource and Education space, and » An Economic Innovation Hub » Family Resource Centre | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|---|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Develop a business case in conjunction with an appointed Integrated Design Team for use as a funding application bid for investment in one or more of the investment areas highlighted above under URDF or other identified funding streams | Medium Term | Longford County Council URDF |
| Encourage, promote and market the use of the Providers Building for 'temporary' community or economic use e.g. pop up businesses/shops, arts spaces, community based classes/services. Local events etc | Short Term | Longford County Council |



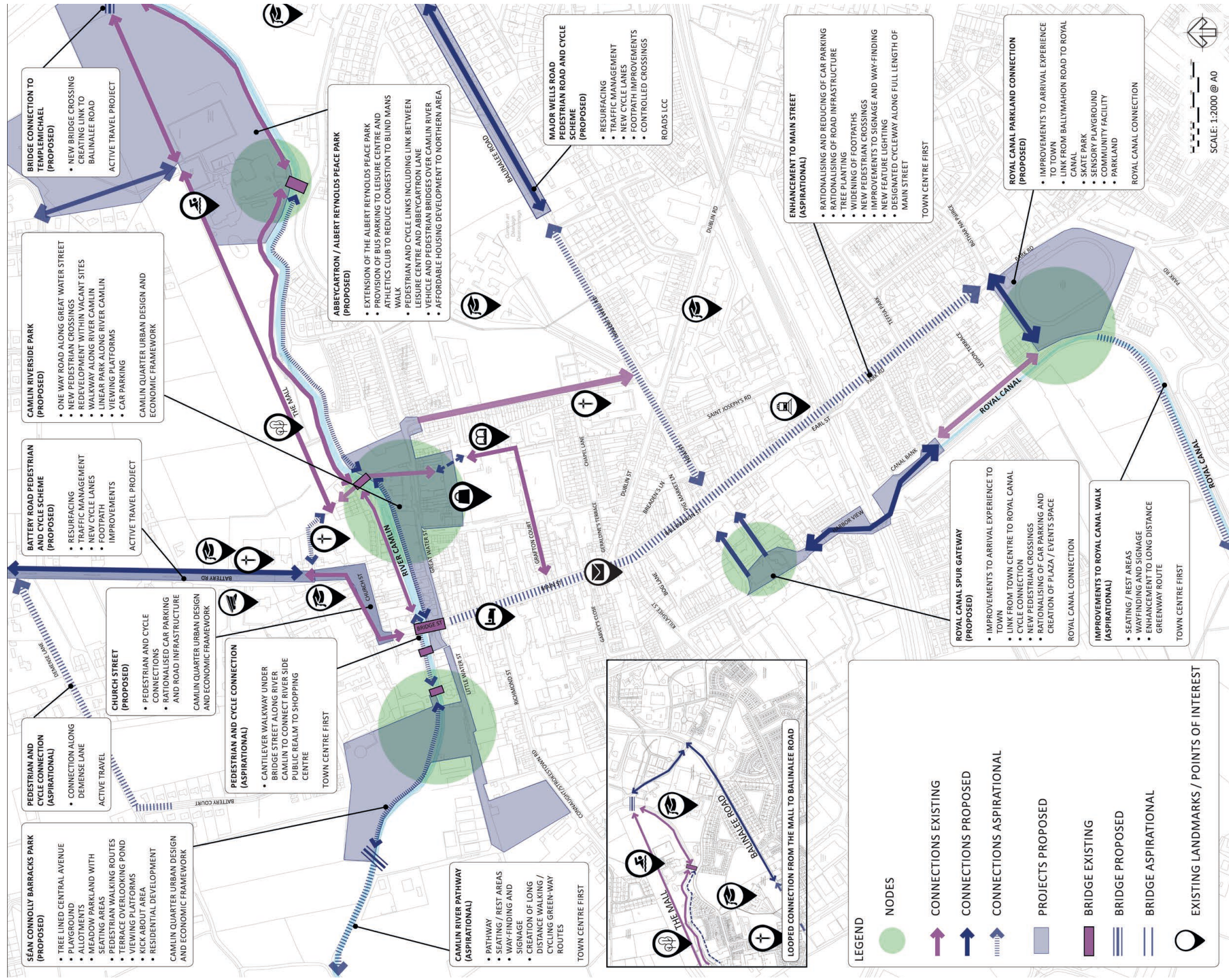
Transformational Proposal 4: Walkways and River Access

This proposal aims to improve the pedestrianisation and permeability of Longford to create attractive, vibrant and safe places that are accessible by walking and cycling, as well as connecting Longford to its hinterlands and the wider region through active travel.

'The vision for Longford town is to create attractive, vibrant and safe places that are accessible by walking and cycling as well as connecting Longford to its hinterlands through active travel initiatives.'



Figure 4
Transformational Proposal 4



Proposal 4:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

The priority within Longford has been favoured towards the car and to moving traffic and goods through and around the town. Further consideration is required as to how people can be more active in and around the town centre, encouraging active travel, where limited infrastructure currently exists.

Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

A number of Active Travel projects have been delivered within the last two years at an estimated cost of approximately €2,250,400 via NTA Active Travel. These include:

- Setting back of boundary wall and new 60m footpath installed to link the pathway coming from the front of Aldi to Harbour row where none previously existed
- Shared path and priority crossing link from the footbridge to the rear of Aras an Chomtae across Camlin to link directly to Mall loop walk and Battery Road
- Installation of a raised coloured priority crossing with signage and tactiles across the entrance to Longford Mall
- Formalised short cut link on to the Royal Canal Greenway from Farranyoogan Estate across a green space that provides a key link for school students to the primary and secondary schools in the town and also to the bus and rail station
- Installation of a cycle scheme on Lower Battery Road from the entrance to St.Albans to the entrance of the ETB via the installation of bollards and line marking and the removal of car parking
- Narrowing of the carriageway and installation of new dedicated cycle tracks on either side of the N63 from the entrance to Oak Vale to the Ardmichael Junction (circa €2 million investment)

The following Active Travel projects are currently underway as follows and represent an investment of approximately €7.85 million via NTA travel:

- R198 Battery Road Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme (Pathfinder Sub Project) – The works zone for this project stretches from the Retail Park Roundabout ending between St.Albans and Longford Garda Station. The project will also include the rehabilitation of the Battery Road surface, the installation of traffic lights at Lisbrack Road Junction, the construction of right turning lanes at the entrance to Abbeycartron Lane and Demense, the realignment of Battery Road to include cycle tracks and continuous footpaths on both sides of the road, the construction of pedestrian crossing points, undergrounding of overhead power lines and installation of new public lighting



Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

- N63 Ballinalee Road Pedestrian Road & Cycle Scheme (Pathfinder Sub Project) – The works zone for this project stretches from the Templemichael Terrace junction with the N63 out to the roundabout on the N4. The scheme includes new cycle tracks on either side of the road from the Ard Michael Estate as far as the entrance to The Laurels Estate, while a new footpath will be installed on the northern side of the road. Junctions along the road will also be made safer and more pedestrian and cyclist friendly, with a signal controlled pedestrian crossing being included in the N4 end
- N63 Farranyoogan Pedestrian & Cycle Safety Scheme (Pathfinder Sub Project) – This €3 million investment will see the construction of a cycletrack on both sides of the N63 from the Royal Canal Greenway to the Railway Bridge crossing on the N63. Expected to complete by the end of 2025
- Aghafad Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme – This investment will see the construction of a 3m wide shared path facility to link from the industrial units at Aghafad back into Longford town linking onto the Canal Greenway through Slashers GAA grounds and is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.





Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|---|-------------|---|
| <p>Royal Canal Spur Link to Market Square As previously outlined in Transformational Proposal 1 it is planned to enhance public realm design and wayfinding focused on improving the link between the Royal Canal Greenway and the Market Square where the original Royal Canal Harbour was located..</p> <p>The proposal also includes the installation of a strong art feature that will create a focal and reference point for the town, whilst also assisting in the orientation and way-finding between the Longford Spur and the heart of Longford town.</p> <p>The proposal is estimated to cost €1.8 million and it is proposed that funding is sought from Failte Ireland, the NTA and URDF</p> | Short Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>Failte Ireland</p> <p>NTA – Active Travel</p> <p>URDF</p> |
| <p>Pedestrian and cycle link bridge over Camlin to Templemichael and N63 It is proposed to provide a link from Templemichael along the existing cul de sac road off the N63 to include a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the Camlin in the vicinity of the Old Bridge abutments. This will link directly to the existing Mall loop walk which links to Battery Road and complements the future development of the Northern environs and Abbeycartron Road area.</p> <p>The proposal is estimated to cost €2.5 million and it is proposed that funding is sought from NTA – Active Travel</p> | Medium Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>NTA – Active Travel</p> |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|-------------|---|
| <p>Lower Battery Road & Church Street Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme It is proposed that the next sequential link of the current Pathfinder Sub Project progresses closer to the town centre with the provision of dedicated cycle tracks on both sides of the R198 and include pedestrian and cycle provision on Church Street.</p> <p>The proposal is estimated to cost €3 million and it is proposed that funding is sought from NTA – Active Travel and URDF.</p> | Medium Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>NTA – Active Travel</p> <p>URDF</p> |
| <p>Town Cycleway from Church Street to Earls Street This concept proposal is to develop a town cycleway link from Church Street to Earls Street and it is envisaged to comprise of a number of sub projects to be delivered sequentially over a number of years. The proposal is also dependant on future decisions regarding the dilution of on street parking.</p> <p>The proposal is estimated to cost €7 million and it is envisioned that funding is sought from the NTA – Active Travel and URDF.</p> | Long Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>NTA – Active Travel</p> <p>URDF</p> |
| <p>Demense Lane Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme This concept proposal is to develop a pedestrian and cycle scheme that will form an active travel link/shared path from Battery Court Estate to the R198 Battery Road. This proposal will require boundary adjustments and land acquisition requirements.</p> <p>The proposal is estimated to cost €300,000 and it is envisaged that funding is sought from NTA – Active Travel.</p> | Long Term | <p>NTA – Active Travel</p> |



| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|---|------------|--|
| <p>Rugby Club/Lisbrack Road Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme This concept proposal is to realign Lisbrack Road from Lisbrack Downs towards the town centre with the setting back of the Rugby club boundary and the inclusion of an Active Travel link back towards Battery Road.</p> <p>The proposal is estimated to cost €400,000 and it is envisaged that funding is sought from the NTA – Active Travel.</p> | Long Term | NTA – Active Travel |
| <p>As outlined in Transformational Proposal 1, it is further proposed to develop a waterpark to the rear of the Barracks property on the northern side of the river, incorporating a footbridge from Little Water Street over the River Camlin on the Southern Bank that will also link to the Barracks. The park will showcase town centre biodiversity and act as an extension to the ARPP amenity. This will also incorporate flood risk management and climate change adaption mechanisms.</p> <p>This proposal forms part of the expected works to Little Water Street costed at €2,724,777 – Funding of 75% sought from URDF</p> | Short Term | Longford County Council Omniplex Cinema URDF |
| <p>It is proposed that the Town Centre First Interagency Forum further review opportunities to open up river access and recreational opportunities along Little Water Street and Great Water Street, particularly along areas of the river bank that have been neglected for some years. Two suggested short term project proposals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » To scope out and seek funding for refurbishment of the adjacent Mill Wheel and, » To scope out and seek funding for a cantilever walkway under Bridge Street along the River Camlin to connect the Riverside public realm to the shopping centre » To scope out and seek funding for improved pathways, seating/rest areas, increased streetlighting along river walkways, and the creation of further long distance walking/cycling green way routes along the Camlin River and the Royal Canal walkway | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |



Transformational Proposal 5: Longford Town Identity and Marketing

A consistent theme emanating from the consultation and public participation processes underpinning the development of the Longford Town Centre First Plan is the lack of a distinct identity for Longford Town, its perceived image and how the town is marketed and promoted. A combination of factors leads to the town presenting a poor image and the perceptions of the town being on balance more negative than positive. These include the presentation of the town (public realm, vacancy, dereliction, quality and positioning of signage, lack of quality design and a lack of colour) combined with anti-social behaviour and the often negative news stories associated with the town.

Transformational Proposal 5 will seek to deliver on the following vision within the Town Centre first Plan:
'The vision for Longford town is to develop a more strategic, integrated and focused approach to the identity and marketing of the town as well as the marketing of specific events and activities in the town across the year.'





Proposal 5:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

The community engagement and public participation process undertaken as part of the development of the Town Centre First Plan has identified a range of challenges which could/should be addressed by this proposal:

- Longford Town lacks a distinct identity and a supporting range of experiences, activities events and festivals which increase its profile and improve its perception. There is a need for a collaborative process which engages Longford Town Stakeholders to agree a vision and identity and actions which can deliver it
- Public art should be used to tell the story of Longford. Murals to highlight our Irish legends, i.e. the story of Mider & Etain and Longford legends. Engage with schools and local professional artists for ideas on how this could be progressed
- Explore Longford's music and literary heritage and make it more accessible through public art, festivals, a calendar of events and exhibitions; there is a need for higher level of coordination and collaboration
- Create a heritage trail in the town that brings people to see all Longford has to offer; engage with local historians, heritage groups and other relevant organisations to help to develop and communicate our history and heritage
- 'Clan Farrell' brings tourists to the area and host events – requirement to engage with the Clan to help build the Longford Town offer
- Make more of our waterways; identify sports and activities that could be provided on the river and examine the potential for blueways to complement the adjacent greenways
- Could Longford become an urban destination for fun water sports, boat excursions and other activities?
- Recognise and promote Longford as a multi-cultural and increasingly diverse County and Town; including what our new residents bring/do to enhance Longford and how we can support and facilitate to achieve this
- More outdoor space to hold community events
- Longford is too well known as a place to be passed through on the way to the West; turn this around into a tagline that might stick. Think of Mayo or other towns and how they are branded; create a brand
- Longford should have a designated museum and exhibition space. This could be created in the Town Centre e.g. the old Ulster Bank Building would lend itself to a 'Community Hub'; there should be a Tourist Office in this space; look at other towns that have central public space in old buildings e.g. Carrick-on-Shannon, a space for tourists and visitors to meet and explore local history and attractions, and to discover all that Longford has to offer. A space where local craftworkers/designers can display and sell their work maybe within a restaurant and public toilets. A space that is multi-purpose for local groups and organisations to use for meet-ings, events, and exhibitions



Proposal 5:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

- Accommodation is lacking for visitors to the town; look at town vacancies and locate rental space i.e., Air BnB in town houses
- There is a perception by a significant number of people engaging in the public participation process that the town can be unsafe and this deters them from visiting at night to become involved in its nighttime offer
- There is consistent feedback that many of the young people around Longford travel out of the town to access what they perceive to be both a safer and a more varied nighttime economy offer in other towns; this has a negative economic impact on the town
- There are 'no go' areas in the town after dark; this must be acknowledged and initiatives taken to reverse this position in these areas
- Whether it is a perception or a reality there is a clear feeling that Longford Town has a poor perception by people outside Longford and nationally
- There is a lack of bright colours, interesting spaces or interesting architecture to help to lift the quality and image of the town
- Significant stretches of vacant and derelict commercial buildings are a particular problem and reflect poorly on the image of the town; these could and should be repurposed for housing or community/cultural uses; this in turn would bring life and footfall to the town
- Groups of people loitering around certain areas of the town make people feel unsafe and this is perceived as being intimidating; the areas outside Tesco and the Post Office were identified as being particularly challenging for many people and yet both of these services are important in terms of their weekly activities
- The overall presentation of the public realm is dated and this does little to improve the image of the town
- The signage in and around the town is of both poor design and quality and therefore reflects poorly on the image of the town; many signs are poorly located
- There is feedback that the overall approach to signage is not planned or strategic; there is a clear feeling that it must be confusing for the external visitor
- There is a lack of any overall cultural, artistic or creative spaces in the town. These are important both in terms of the image of the town but also in terms of its offer to local citizens who would like to meet, socialise and become involved in creative activities but do not want to visit bars. Safe cultural space can be a keyway to help newcomers/asylum seekers to integrate thus encouraging better community cohesion



Proposal 5:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

- Much of the poor image (reality or perception) of the town is not related to one single issue but a range of factors. Reversal of poor (perceived or real) images will require a 'joined up', collaborative and coordinated approach. This will include improvement of the town's public realm, reduction in vacancy/dereliction and introduction of safe walking and cycling routes into and out of the town. It will also require the provision of safe shared spaces which increase the range of activities and experiences for citizens and visitors to the town. It will require the development of a strong unique night-time economy. Design around lighting and making safe public access routes to the town is also part of the overall solution. The marketing, communication and messaging associated with the town needs to be positive, resourced and sustained
- There are some positives in terms of image and promotion of the town; this includes opportunities to improve the promotion of positive events such as the Longford Dead of Night Festival, the Ukulele Festival and the Longford Dream Space for children
- There is a clear perception that if the anti-social behaviour challenges of the town are not acknowledged and addressed the image of Longford Town cannot be reversed. Moreover, if there is a genuine aspiration to attract visitors to the town and attract its citizens into the town to experience a more varied nighttime offer this will only be possible if anti-social behaviour is addressed
- There needs to be a more visible Garda presence in and around the town centre especially at night. This must be augmented with visible security cameras and better lighting
- People have expressed an aspiration that they would like to be proud of the town but currently find that that is difficult given the poor news stories and social media stories feed to the town
- For many, Longford is a fantastic town to live in; it has a particularly strong offer in relation to sports, recreation, leisure and parks across the town. However, its overall identity is intangible and needs to be reworked
- Art and creativity should be used as a way to engage people in civic life and supporting the Council to develop a positive image for Longford Town. Specifically it has the potential to engage young people and particularly those young people with limited interest in sports, recreation, leisure and team sports



Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

Longford Town identity and marketing is one part of an overall comprehensive approach to addressing the issues. This proposal recognises that much of what needs to be addressed of what has been raised by the consultation of public participation feedback will also be addressed by a number of other proposals including:

- Transformational Proposal 1: An Improved and Connected Public Realm
- Transformational Proposal 2: An Integrated Sean Connolly Bars and Plaza
- Transformational Proposal 3: Tackling Vacant Buildings and Dereliction

Other initiatives led by Council and others can also impact positively. These include:

- Nighttime Economy Officer and pilot programme
- Development of events and festivals (developing the current offer and introducing new events and festivals)
- The We Are Longford series of eight personal stories of people (reflects the diversity of the town) and their reflections and commitment to Longford Town

This proposal focuses on three of the other key elements to the improvement of the image, identity and perception of Longford Town. These are:

- Defining an identity and brand for Longford Town
- Addressing the reality and perceptions of anti-social behaviour
- Implementing a pro-active, positive and sustained communication plan
- Developing a strong events offer (linked to the night time economy)



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|---|-------------|--|
| <p>Facilitate a visioning exercise to determine a shared vision/image for Longford Town (and perhaps County). This will bring together a range of stakeholders including Failte Ireland, those involved in the tourism, cultural, arts, nighttime economy sectors to review the current baseline offer and establish a 5-10-15 year vision for the image and offer to be developed within Longford Town. This action will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Bringing together and facilitating cross-sectoral stakeholders » Developing a Branding and Identity Options Paper » Agreeing a preferred Branding and Identity offer/option » Developing a Branding and Communications Strategy » This action will seek to jointly explore and develop opportunities locally and regionally through ongoing engagement with Failte Ireland | Short Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>Engage with Failte Ireland re: opportunities</p> |
| <p>Examine the possibility of introducing a community warden/community safety/anti-social behaviour warden scheme. Liaising with An Garda Siochana, the Longford Community Partnership and community leaders identifying areas that the public have identified as particularly challenging (in reality if backed up by figures or from a perception perspective). Actions will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Examining the impact of community wardens' schemes in other towns » Identifying a governance and line management approach for community wardens » Developing a budget to employ community wardens | Medium Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>Longford Local Community Safety Partnership</p> |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|---------------------------------|---|
| <p>Review and implement a Community Cohesion Model. Acknowledging that there are intra community tensions/conflicts/flashpoints. An action would involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Reviewing approaches taken in other communities with a significantly high level of diversity (particularly an accelerated level of diversity) » Compare and contrast approaches » Agree a model which could be piloted in Longford Town » Agree a budget and make presentations/applications to secure revenue funding for a three year pilot programme | Medium Term | Community Safety Partnership |
| <p>Develop a coordinated events strategy (development and delivery for Longford Town). This will seek to build on the success of a range of festivals and events including the Dead of Night Festival, the Ukulele Festival, the Longford Dream Space event and the recent Hallowe'en Festival. The strategy will examine how the success and impact of these events can be enhanced and identify gap in the annual calendar of events/festivals where new opportunities might be piloted. The strategy will be developed around the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Co-ordination and Programming » Developing Existing Events and Festivals » Piloting New Event and Festivals » Communication and Promotion » Funding and Resources <p>This action will provide an overall co-ordinated Schedule of Events including those already promoted by the LCC Tourism Office and Longford Community Safety Partnership.</p> <p>A monthly update will be issued to each of the stakeholders aligned to the events strategy and reflecting any amendments or additions across the year e.g Tourism Office and Local Community Safety Partnership</p> | Short/Medium Term (and ongoing) | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>Failte Ireland</p> <p>Existing events organisers</p> <p>Longford Local Community Safety Partnership</p> |



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|-------------------|--|
| Agree a 'Positive Longford' Communication Plan. This action will seek to build on existing communication activities including the Council's on/offline activities and initiatives such as 'We Are Longford' to sustain positive new feed/communication relating to Longford town. This could include attempting to secure Purple Flag Status for Longford Town | Short/Medium Term | Longford County Council Communication Team |



Transformational Proposal 6: A Social Community and Wellbeing Hub

The analysis and public participation processes underpinning the development of the Longford Town Centre First Plan have identified that many of its citizens live a life where they are exposed to social challenges in relation to health and wellbeing, education and training. These challenges are often exasperated by poor earnings and living in poverty. Longford Town is one of the most diverse towns in Ire-land with new entrants from a number of foreign countries. This brings with it additional challenges (often language related) in terms of accessing services. Whilst there are Two Family Resource Centres in Longford County (Granard and Ballymahon) there is no such facility in Longford Town. Equally it is recognised that there needs to be some accessible focal point for people to access services, cultural activities, informal and lifelong learning and which is considered a safe and shared space.

Transformational Proposal 6 will seek to deliver on the following vision within the Town Centre First Plan:

'The vision for Longford town is to develop a Social Community & Wellbeing hub at an identified site where community organisations and the wider community can come together to access a range of social activities, health and wellbeing programmes, arts and creativity programmes as well as opportunities for social enterprise.'





Proposal 6:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

The community engagement of public participation processes underpinning the development of the Longford Town Centre First Plan have identified the following challenges and opportunities which could/should be addressed by this proposal:

- Old Providers Building - potential to have a social enterprise alongside a private enterprise (anchor tenant) with both generating foot-fall for Longford Town Centre
- Longford must have a Family Resource Centre to support the entire community, including the traveller community, asylum seekers and refugees that are resident in the area, people are coming to the country with little or no support and are finding it difficult to settle into the community and other minority groups. A Family Resource Centre could help these people and help Longford discover what skill sets they have that would be of benefit to the town, their social and emotional well being is important as they are residents in the community. It could provide practical help, e.g. Doctors, Teachers, Journalists, Engineers and other professionals without European recognised certification or qualification to gain these and enter the labour market
- Need for a 'drop in' youth café providing safe social space and information to support young people who need 'their own space'
- Provision of a youth safe social space near Garvey's Lane would help alleviate loitering on streets (due to shops and food outlets) and make for a safer environment for everyone.
- Need for a Community hub/house to support and inform 'marginalised' communities located alongside Little/Great Water Street. There aren't any Direct Support Provision Centres near that area of the town. The 'Roma community' need 'on the ground' support close to where most of their community reside
- Need for a Hub or support facility for homeless people, there should be at least somewhere to shower and receive food.
- Great Water Street could be a location for a community house in the town to support families, 'meet them where they are at'
- A designated area /space for Men's Shed to help alleviate isolation that provides social Inclusion/integration and connectivity for men and provision of intergenerational, health & wellbeing projects and programmes.
- A 'Hens Shed' (the same concept as Men's Shed) for ladies located in a hub or as a 'stand-alone' project (perhaps in a repurposed vacant/derelect building)
- Create a Social Supermarket. There are some excellent models to copy best practice from. These provide practical support through cheaper food products and practical advice on how to manage debt advice services without judgement

It is clear that there is strong support for the concept of a shared community hub/space/Family Resource Centre/drop in centre. There appears to be a number of different visions/models and potential locations for this transformational proposal. Equally there is a recognition that it must complement and not duplicate provision in existing community centres/spaces (e.g. Backstage Theatre) and with the existing Family Resource Centre in Granard and the Bridgeways Family Resource Centre in Ballymahon



Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

At present there is no Family Resource Centre or equivalent community hub in Longford Town. It is recognised that the Family Resource Centre in Granard and Ballymahon provide well-respected and effective services. However, for many of the people requiring access to such services in Longford Town they are not accessible (a combination of the availability and affordability of public transport, language barriers or a lack of awareness). There has been a number of discussions (with TUSLA) around the potential to develop such a facility in Longford Town. The proposal is to carry out a comprehensive needs analysis and feasibility process which can determine the following:

- Quantify or establish the strategic rationale for such a facility and investment; how does it fit with national, regional and local strategy and policy (particularly that of TUSLA)
- Quantify the need; engage in detail with the range of people (by gender, by age, families, asylum seekers/foreign nationals, people with specific support requirements around disability, addiction) to assess demand
- Confirm a suitable site(s) with an emphasis on repurposing vacant or derelict properties (key site options likely to include the Pro-viders building, former Post Office and the McGuinness building)
- Examine a model; Family Resource Centre or hybrid which meets the identified need
- Engage an architect led multi-disciplinary team to carry out a site/building options appraisal and feasibility process
- Develop a Feasibility Study and Public Spending Code Appraisal



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|--|-------------|---|
| <p>Establish a Project Steering Group to guide the needs analysis and feasibility study processes required to confirm the need for a Family Resource Centre for Longford Town. Typically, this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Council » Statutory representation including HSE and TUSLA » Representatives of organisations providing access to services and supporting inclusion | Short Term | <p>Longford County Council</p> <p>TUSLA</p> <p>HSE</p> <p>Longford Local Community Safety Partnership</p> |
| <p>Agree a Project Development Pathway which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Needs analysis and feasibility (The Providers building or others) » Site/building assessment and appraisal » Development of a Public Spending Code Appraisal Report | Short Term | Project Steering Group |
| <p>Undertake a technical feasibility and project development process. Typically this should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Having agreed a preferred site/building option (or options) considering the Providers Building, former Post Office and McGuinness Building » Commence a design process leading towards a Part Eight Planning Application and begin the process of capital funding acquisition. | Medium Term | Project Steering Group |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------|
| <p>Examine the need for a shared multi-use/multi-functional hub space in Longford Town. This would provide an inclusive space which could/should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Social/drop in youth space» Arts and cultural space/exhibition space» Possible museum provision» Informal/life long learning spaces and provision <p>The process will also examine the potential actions emanating from Transformational Proposal 3 - Tackling Vacant Buildings and Dereliction.</p> <p>Key project delivery steps should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Consulting with potential users (organisations and the wider public) to establish what services and activities are needed, which organisations might provide them and the nature of/specification for the multi-functional space required to meet these needs» Undertake a site/building appraisal process considering existing and available vacant and derelict sites» Engage an architect led multi-disciplinary team to develop and cost design options, to support the Project Steering Group to agree a preferred option and to secure Part Eight Planning consent» Identify and apply to appropriate capital funders | | <p>Project Steering Group</p> |



Transformational Proposal 7: Transport Links

Transport links are central to how Longford Town functions for its citizens; that is for people who live in and around Longford Town and use town as their focal point to access education, employment, services, social connections and their retail requirements. Strategically, transport connections from Longford Town externally to other settlements are also important. This supports people in those hinterland settlements to access Longford Town for many of the same reasons as those living in and around the town. It is also recognised that connections with the strategic regional and national transport networks are also important for people accessing employment and third level education opportunities and also to connect potential inward visitors to the town. There is a growing awareness of the importance of an active travel infrastructure in and around the town and connecting the town externally as part of the Council's wider approach to meeting climate change and climate adaptation targets.

Transformational Proposal 7 will seek to deliver on the following vision within the Town Centre First Action Plan:

'The vision for Longford town is to ensure that the town is an attractive place to live, work and visit through the appropriate integration of transport and land use, with a primary focus on ease of access for all by sustainable transport!'





Proposal 7:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

The community engagement and public participation processes underpinning the development of the Longford Town Centre First Plan has identified the following challenges and opportunities which could/should be addressed by this proposal:

- More public transport routes to nearby towns such as Drumlish to accommodate workers in the area. Various people from different communities work in factories outside the town and cannot access regular reliable transport to their place of work. Not only is this an inconvenience but it is incurring unnecessary costs to travel and therefore there is a lack of incentive to seek employment.
- Need to engage with employers and public transport providers to help arrange suitable and sustainable timetable/service
- More accessible cycle paths/routes to make for safer cycling throughout town
- Parking meters that use both coins, cards and apps
- A link road around Longford to help ease congestion in the town centre and especially in the west of town
- Need for a link road from Little Water Street to Connaught Road
- Lighting at the entrance to the car park behind Ballymahon Street is poor. There is also a problem here with bird droppings which are proving to be a slip hazard from Market Square. Maybe some sort of bird deterrent is needed in this area (the presentation of this and many of the backland carparks deters people using them to access the Town Centre)
- Address double parking on Main Street outside fast-food outlets and the laneway from Tesco car park to side of the TEAGASC building
- Community Transport scheme needed for pensioners and disabled residents.
- Provide local link transport services to estates around the town
- Connect all cycle routes and walkways around town to form 'loops' which support both active travel and increased participation in recreation and leisure
- Examine the potential for a subsidy scheme to help pensioners with taxi costs
- Improve frequency of public transport links servicing Longford from smaller towns; this is central to helping support improved accessibility to and economic performance of Longford Town/Town Centre
- Provision of more transport out the Athlone Road for access to the EDI Centre and Megabowl; this would increase the frequency of use of these facilities



Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

It is recognised that a number of the transport opportunities identified to address the challenges raised through the public participation process are already contained within Transformational Proposal 1: An Improved and Connected Public Realm. These include:

- > Little Water Street and Link Road.
- > Bridge Street and Great Water Street
- > Royal Canal Spur

There are also existing Active Travel Schemes being proposed as outlined in Transformational Proposal 4: Walkways and River Access.

There is an identified need to map and examine further active travel linkages between existing and planned housing and leisure developments (e.g. Greyhound scheme) and the town.



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|--|-------------|-------------------------|
| Delivery of Planned Schemes: Longford County Council will continue with the planned delivery of schemes as identified in transformational proposals 1 (public realm) and 4 (walkways & river access). | Short Term | Longford County Council |
| <p>Further examine enhancement opportunities in current walk and cycleways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Lighting » Surfacing » Cleaning and Maintenance » Signage <p>This might also be combined with a periodic Community Safety Warden Scheme to help address potential/current 'hot spots' for anti-social behaviour</p> | Short Term | Longford County Council |
| Revisit some public realm and active travel proposals and map against current and planned housing and leisure developments and identify new active travel routes in response. (can this be refined to specific actions that can be delivered) | Medium Term | Longford County Council |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years

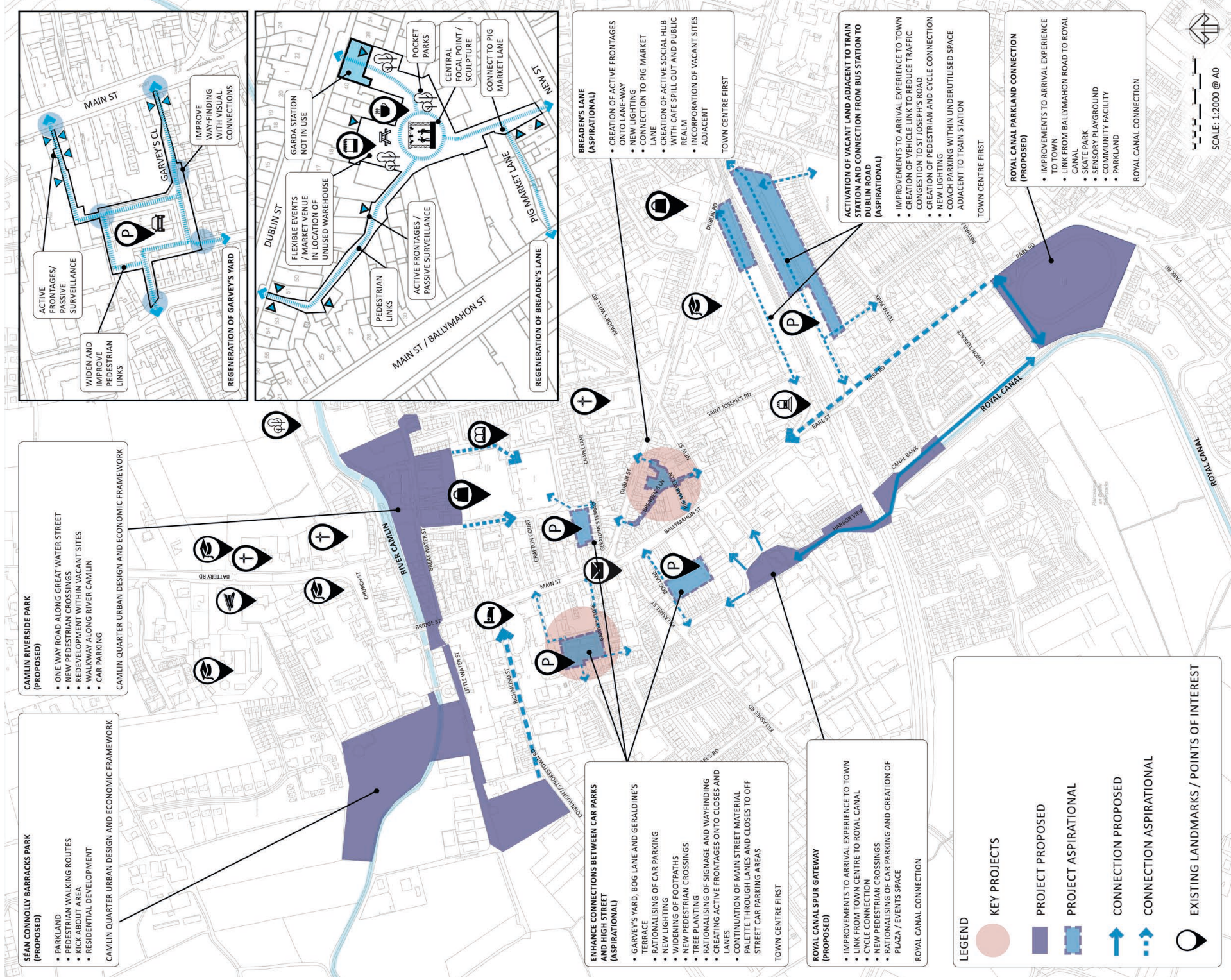


Transformational Proposal 8: Unlocking the Backlands

Longford has the potential for a range of mixed development proposals, including a combination of residential, commercial and community initiatives in compact growth sites, in and around the town core, known as the Backlands. The potential for urban expansion through land assembly and amalgamation across key Backlands opportunity sites is therefore a key priority for the town and the inclusion of specific proposals focused on 'Unlocking the Backlands' is a recognition of this opportunity.

'The vision for Longford town is to unlock the potential of the backland streets via a range of mixed development proposals, including a combination of residential, commercial and community initiatives'

Figure 5
Transformational Proposal 8





Proposal 8:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

There are a limited number of backland lanes and streets in Longford town centre due to the scale of the primary street network in the town. Linkages do exist with a number of laneways in particular Garvey's Yard and Breadan's Lane.

A lack of structured and co ordinated car parking infrastructure leading to traffic congestion in the main street and underutilisation of the car park provision in the backland areas of the main street. Opportunities exist to improve the the attractiveness and permeability of pedestrian routes carparks within the backlands and in tandem encourage better utilisation of the car park provision available within the backlands.

The impact of any new commercial developments in the backlands also needs to be considered in the context of ensuring viability and vitality of the established town centre commercial core is not unduly compromised.

Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

Figure 5 outlines the two key laneways identified for backland development consideration, namely Garvey's Lane and Breadan's Lane.

'Aspirational' proposals emerging from TCF consultations for Breadans lane include the creation of active frontages on to the laneway, new lighting, further connections to Pig Market lane and the creation a potential social hub with café spill out and public realm.

Figure 5 also identifies further 'aspirational' proposals to:

- Enhance connections between car parks and the main street at Richmond Street, Garveys Yard, Bog lane , Weavers Hall, Court Lane
- Enhance the aesthetics of the bus station by creating a plaza area to the front of the station free from car parking and bus parking and make visual improvements to the Bridge infrastructure over the railway
- Reconfigure bus parking to an identified vacant greenfield site adjacent to the train station



Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|---|-------------|---|
| Establishment of an 'Unlocking the Backlands' working group to explore innovative, best practice projects that could be implemented to repurpose backland spaces to include proposals identified in Figure 5. This includes carrying out best practice visits to other towns as part of a capacity building programme for the Town Team | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| Carry out an initial review of existing Backlands space within Longford town centre and including the exploration of potential land assembly and amalgamation options or opportunities | Short Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| Facilitate engagement with residents and landowners (private and public) to determine potential future land amalgamation and land assembly options | Medium Term | Longford County Council Longford Town Team |
| Liaise with landowners, National Land Development Agency and the community, in relation to the County Development Plan/ LECP (2029) to develop plans and future use for the backlands | Medium Term | Longford County Council National Land Development Agency Longford Town Team |
| In the short term to engage with Irish Rail to explore the option of reconfiguring car parking at the front of the Railway Station and to further explore opportunities to activate the identified vacant land adjacent to the train station for further walkway and green development and coach parking | Short Term | Longford County Council Irish Rail |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years



Transformational Proposal 9: Housing and Town Centre Living

Town Centre First Policy focuses on making town centres more attractive for people to live in. This includes re-purposing much of the commercial cores of towns to provide housing options which suit the changing lifestyle of citizens or directly meet the housing crisis demand. This transformational proposal seeks to examine how additional housing can be provided in Longford Town which is aligned to the needs of existing citizens or people considering Longford Town as a re-location option.

Transformational Proposal 9 will seek to deliver on the following vision within the Town Centre First Plan:

'The vision for Longford town is to create an inclusive and liveable town centre that incorporates design actions to accommodate residents who shop, socialise and interact with the town centre and adhere to the needs of older residents in particular'.



Proposal 9:

Why is the transformational proposal important?

The consultation process undertaken as part of the development of this plan has identified the following areas for consideration:

- Provision of incentives/schemes to business owners to regenerate space above businesses to provide living accommodation and apartments
- Create green space for small parks and pedestrian zones within the Town Centre to make it more attractive for people to live in
- Looking at vacant and derelict buildings within the town centre; Is it feasible for the Council to purchase and renovate some of these to create affordable modern energy efficient town homes for working families?
- Provision of energy efficient social housing options throughout the town
- Provision of safe supported and independent living homes for seniors and those with disabilities near the town centre which are close to services, amenities and spaces/opportunities for social connection
- More modern social housing provision in Great Water Street and the Camlin quarter; also improve the presentation of the existing social housing provision in these areas of the town
- Develop a playground/safe space for young children to prevent street play which is unsafe. Overcrowding at home means that there is a need for youth and young people to have safe social/play space other than at home
- Address overcrowding in housing; particularly for Roma Community

Delivering the Proposal:

State of Play

The Council is currently developing an up to date list of derelict and vacant properties in the town centre. The Council is also in the process of delivering a number social housing schemes within the town.

There is potential to examine additional housing needs led schemes within the town to include:

- Retro-fitting of existing social housing stock
- Potential retrofitting of private housing stock and private rental stock
- Examination of age friendly/independent living accommodation schemes (mixed use) in vacant/derelict town centre commercial properties
- Progress on the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Programme in the Town Centre

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe* | Action Owner |
|---|------------|-------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Delivery of existing housing schemes planned for Longford: » St. Michael's Road Void Programme » Great Water Street Further sites to be confirmed | Short Term | Longford County Council |
| Develop a draft strategy for housing, identifying certain areas of town/streets that are most suitable for affordable housing and mixed tenure and identify an area for an initial pilot scheme. | Short Term | Longford County Council |
| Develop a case study on adaptive reuse of a building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identify a building » Set out steps for reuse » Engage with landowners to inform of potential funding streams » Utilise Residential Zoned Land Tax to encourage landowners to progress upgrades to buildings | Short Term | Longford County Council |
| Actively encourage private sector investment through enhance public realm, pocket parks, other identified initiatives etc. | Short Term | Longford County Council |

*Timeframe: Short Term = 1 - 2 Years / Medium Term = 3 - 4 Years / Long Term = 5 - 7 Years

Delivering the Proposal:

What needs to happen next?

| Headline Action | Timeframe | Action Owner |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>In line with assessment of productive uses of the backlands in Longford town, also examine how these might be used to address housing need. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mapping the backlands and identifying areas which have the potential to be developed as housing options (acceptable from a planning perspective and have sufficient space and access) » Liaising with landowners to establish their willingness to develop or release for housing schemes » Undertaking design and costing of options | <p>Medium Term</p> | <p>Longford County Council</p> |
| <p>Examine the potential to develop age friendly/independent housing options in particular. Actions will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Carrying out a needs assessment to confirm the volume of need and typical requirements (e.g. one bed/two bed, location, services) » Reviewing existing age friendly/independent living housing models to capture learning which can be used to influence options for Longford Town » Assessing site/building availability and carry out an options appraisal to confirm one/two site/building options » Designing and costing schemes and seeking planning consent and capital delivery funding | <p>Medium Term</p> | <p>Longford County Council</p> |

Implementing the Plan

Town Centre First Plan should be supported by a targeted investment programme. The grid below examines potential financial sources to help carry out and support the plan's recommendations and delivery.

There are also various government schemes which are administered at a local level which can be key in supporting and investing in the Town Centre First approach. The schemes are advertised as they become available for applications.

Potential Funding Options

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|--|--|--|
| Rural Regeneration and Development Fund | Mainly Capital (min €500k) with minor revenue (max 3yrs) | The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with a commitment of €1 billion in funding up to 2027. The fund supports the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000. Funding is awarded by a competitive bid process. The RRDF encourages large-scale, ambitious investments aimed at regenerating town centres. These include projects that seek to revive abandoned, derelict or historically significant buildings; create remote workspaces and enterprise areas; construct or renovate libraries; create infrastructure for tourism; and generally, encourage increased activity, foot traffic, business, and residency. |
| Housing for All Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund | Capital | Housing for All aims to improve Ireland's housing system and deliver more homes of all types for people with different housing needs. There are two schemes under the Housing for all Crói Cónaithe (Towns) Fund to support housing delivery which are managed and administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant awards people with a grant to help with the renovation of abandoned buildings. Local Authorities provide serviced lands at a reduced cost to anyone who wish to construct their own homes under the Ready to Build Scheme. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| European Regional Development Fund | Capital | The European Regional Development Fund 2021–2027 programmes set out an investment strategy for €853 million, of which €396 million is financed by the EU. To guarantee compliance with regional spatial and economic strategies and to assist local authorities in implementing the sustainable revitalization of towns and urban centers, funding is overseen by regional assemblies. The fund seeks to establish low-carbon and climate-resilient communities, alleviate regional imbalances, and promote sustainable economic and environmental growth. Tackling vacancy and dereliction in towns, in support of the TCF approach is a particular emphasis of this fund. |
| Active Travel Grants Programme | Capital | The Active Travel Grants Programme administered by the National Transport Authority supports strategic pedestrian and cyclist routes, access to schools, permeability links, urban greenways, minor public transport improvement projects, dedicated infrastructure schemes such as the Safe Routes to School Programme and behavioural change programmes such as Green Schools. In 2022 the programme allocated €289 million funds to Local Authorities for over 1200 walking and cycling infrastructure projects nationally. |
| Town and Village Renewal Scheme | Capital | The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides grant funding to support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000. The program, which is administered by Local Authorities, allows applications to be made to the Department of Rural and Community Development. It is designed to support projects that improve town centre revitalization and place making. Funded projects have included the creation of public plazas, town parks, playgrounds, community gardens, and dog parks, as well as the renovation of banks, courthouses, theatres, and halls for community use. Additionally, the program provides funding for pre-development work and the purchase of suitable abandoned or deserted properties that could be turned over to the government and used for community purposes. It has also provided specific funding to enhance streetscapes and shopfronts under the streetscape enhancement initiative. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|---|-----------------|--|
| Climate Adaptation/Retrofitting Initiatives | Capital | The government's commitment to climate action is supported by funding to meet 2030 and 2050 climate targets. For example Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provide sustainable energy grants to help homeowners, business owners, communities and industry reduce energy costs and greenhouse emissions. Local Authorities are funded in undertaking a programme of insulation retrofitting of the least energy efficient social homes. The Regional and Local Road Grant Programme support the maintenance of public roads in towns. The Active Travel Grants programme also provide supports for more sustainable travel modes to local schools, residential areas and places of employment. |
| Historic Towns Initiative | Capital | The Historic Towns Initiative is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council, its goal is to encourage historic town centre redevelopment driven by heritage. The initiative comprises two funding streams: funding for heritage-led regeneration plans to identify conservation-focused interventions for a town; capital works to repair and enhance the town's heritage through heritage-led regeneration projects that address residential vacancy and dereliction, the conservation of landmark buildings, and streetscape and public realm conservation led projects. |
| Rural Development Programme (LEADER) | Capital | The Rural Development Programme, widely known as LEADER, provides capital funding for rural development and job creation, with a focus on climate change and sustainability of the rural environment. The programme applies to designated LEADER areas. |
| National Development Programme | Mainly Capital | Climate Action Fund will support up to 50% of project costs that meet Ireland's climate and energy objectives. Open to non-departmental public bodies, private organisations, academia and NGOs. Other funds such as Build Digital Grant and the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Funds are aimed at multi-partner consortia and large projects. Smaller grants related to climate change may be provided either directly or indirectly (e.g., for energy-efficient house retrofits, electric charging stations, and smaller-scale environmental projects). |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Community Enhancement Programme | Capital | The Community Enhancement Programme (CEP) provides capital funding to community groups in disadvantaged areas across Ireland. Projects covered by the CEP include minor improvements to buildings, minor renovation of community centres, developing community amenities and improvements to town parks, common areas and energy-saving projects. |
| Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme | Capital | The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure. It provides funding for the development, extension and repair of trails, walkways, cycleways and blueways; improved access to outdoor leisure or recreational facilities; and development of outdoor recreational infrastructure. |
| CLÁR Programme | Capital | The CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas. The Department of Rural and Community Development provides funds for the programme, which is implemented in tandem with local funding and based on priorities that are determined locally. Under the CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) program, about €8 million in new financing has been awarded to community and sports facilities located throughout the country. Under Measure 1 of the initiative, grants from €5,000 to €50,000 are being provided to support the development of community and sports facilities, youth clubs, playgrounds, sensory gardens, walking tracks and much more. |
| Housing | Mainly Capital | A variety of housing assistance programmes are available (e.g. for renovations, adaptations, energy efficiency, older people etc) excluding incentive schemes (e.g. help to buy). These may change over time. Funding sources includes the Housing for All (Town) Crói Cónaithe Fund. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|--|---|--|
| IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the Western Development Commission | Capital and Revenue | IDA can support FDI on a case by case basis. Enterprise Ireland can provide a spectrum of grants and support (e.g. Business Financial Planning Grant; Sustainable Enterprise Fund (small €25k-50k; and large up to €800k), Brexit Ready for Customers, Capital Investment Schemes, Online Retail and Lean Business Continuity Voucher). The WDC can assist projects (e.g. developing hubs) as part of its Atlantic Economic Corridor initiative; and via equity finance and loans. |
| North West Regional Assembly | Capital and Revenue (at least indirectly) | Being located in the border area enables access to a wider range of EU funds than counties in the Greater Dublin Area. |
| ERDF Programme for Towns | Capital | The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme for Towns - 2021-2027 programme, puts an emphasis on tackling vacancy and dereliction in towns in support of the Town Centre First approach. The ERDF is managed by the Regional Assemblies and is co-financed by the European Union and Government of Ireland. |
| Destination Towns Initiative | Capital | Fáilte Ireland's Destination Towns scheme is funded under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy and seeks to develop the tourism potential of towns and create a sense of place in towns to support growth in the tourism sector. |
| Active Travel Fund & Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme | Capital | These potential funding sources support the rapid roll out of new and improved active travel infrastructure in towns. |
| Repair and Leasing Scheme | Capital | The Repair and Leasing Scheme provides upfront funding of up to €60,000 per unit (including VAT) the scheme supports work which is necessary to pull privately owned properties up to standard, the property owner in return leases the property to the dwelling to the Local Authority or Housing Body. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Buy and Renew Scheme | Capital | The Buy and Renew Scheme supports Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in purchasing and renewing housing in need of repair and makes them available for social housing use. It is a complementary initiative to the Repair and Leasing Scheme. |
| Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund | Capital | The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund provides public off-site infrastructure to relieve critical infrastructure blockages. This will make it possible to deliver dwellings on important development sites and in cities where there is a significant housing demand. Funding for the infrastructure is supplied on a matched funding basis, with the Local Authority contributing 25% and the Exchequer giving 75% of the total expenditure. |
| Serviced Sites Fund | Capital | The Serviced Sites Fund provides key facilitating infrastructure on public lands to support the delivery of affordable homes to purchase or rent. |
| Community Enhancement Programme | Capital | The Community Enhancement Programme provides small grants to community groups to enhance facilities in disadvantaged areas. It is managed by the Local Community Development Committee. |
| Destination Towns | Capital | The Destination Towns initiative seeks to develop the tourism potential of towns and to create and improve the sense of place in towns, improving towns in attracting visitors to the area and helping to provide and improve the necessary infrastructure to support regional growth in the tourism industry. Fáilte Ireland's Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns provides a practical aid to guide the development of a destination town. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Community Centre Investment Fund | Capital | This fund supports community groups to upgrade and develop their community centre facilities. The scheme is administered directly by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Grants were available under 3 categories in 2022: Small scale projects/ improvements to facilities €10,000 to €25,000; Larger scale projects €25,001 to €100,000; Major projects €100,001 to €300,000. A minimum contribution of 5% of the total project costs was required from applicants own funds for category 2 and 3. |
| Sports Partnership | Capital | Funding provided through Sports Partnership includes for the provision of sports equipment such as kits for school children. In 2023, €10,365,000 was allocated to Local Sport Partnerships nationally. |
| Creative Ireland Projects | Capital | Creative Ireland Projects promote social cohesion, economic growth, and the well-being of individuals and communities, creativity in community projects allows local community engagement. Placemaking is the initiative's main focus. Grants under the 2023 plan vary from €500 to €2,000. |
| Built Heritage Investment Scheme | Capital | Through match-funded subsidies, the Built Heritage Investment Scheme helps owners of heritage buildings—including those listed on the Register of Protected Structures and in Architectural Conservation Areas—maintain and repair historic buildings. The 2023 scheme awarded up to €15,000 for a standard project and up to €20,000 for a thatched structure project. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|---|-----------------|--|
| Historic Structures Fund | Capital | For the benefit of communities and the general public, the Historic Structures Fund seeks to preserve and improve historic buildings and historical structures that are owned by both the public and private sectors. Grants in 2023 were offered under three streams. Stream 1 offered grants from €15,000 up to €50,000, with a maximum of 80% awarded relative to eligible costs; Stream 2 offered grants from €50,000 up to €200,000 for larger enhancement, refurbishment or reuse projects, with a maximum of 50% awarded relative to eligible costs. Stream 3 offered grants of between €5,000 to €10,000 to support conservation repairs and small capital works to vernacular structures. |
| Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme | Capital | Local Authorities support and facilitate community groups in their applications to the Heritage Council Community Grant Scheme. The program's objective is to provide funding for large-scale initiatives that enhance accessibility and inclusivity to historical sites and that incorporate best practices for managing historical sites, collections, or artifacts (including buildings). The programme also helps with the procurement of necessary equipment. The purpose of this programme is to support communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to cultural heritage in carrying out their current activity or launching new ones. The Heritage Council allocated in the region of €1.5 million to the 2023 scheme. |
| Community Monuments Fund | Capital | The Community Monuments Fund aims to protect and promote archaeological heritage, supporting community development, traditional skills, jobs, tourism, regional and rural development. €6m was made available for the 2023 fund nationally. |
| Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme | Capital | The Sustainable Mobility Investment Programme includes support for the rapid roll out of new and improved active travel infrastructure in towns and villages. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Heart of the Community Fund | Capital | The Heart of the Community Fund is for not-for-profit organisations delivering vital services/support that promote and support peace, culture, education and community development. Grants between €5,000 and €25,000 were available in 2023. The fund also provides organisational investment grants. |
| Community Water Development Fund | Capital | The Heart of the Community Fund is for not-for-profit organisations delivering vital services/support that promote and support peace, culture, education and community development. Grants between €5,000 and €25,000 were available in 2023. The fund also provides organisational investment grants. |
| Play and Recreation Funding Scheme | Capital | The Community Water Development Fund is open to community and voluntary groups to assist in the protection and management of water quality. Examples of projects funded include feasibility studies, surveys and plans, biodiversity signage, water conservation measures, invasive species control, riparian management and planting, training workshops and citizen science initiatives. The fund is administered by LAWPRO on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. €500,000 was available under the 2023 fund. |
| The Dormont Accounts Fund | Capital | The Dormant Accounts Fund can support the development of services to support the personal and social development of persons who are economically or socially disadvantaged; the educational development of persons who are educationally disadvantaged; persons with a disability. |

| Potential Funding Source | Type of Support | Notes |
|--|-----------------|---|
| Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways | Capital | Funding under this strategy to Local Authorities and state agencies aims to integrate Greenways into town centres by ensuring funded projects bring access from a Greenway to places of education, employment and entertainment in town centres. |
| Work with Fáilte Ireland | Capital | As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to assist the long-term sustainable growth of tourism and to help develop destinations. It also provides consumer and buyer insights, mentoring, business initiatives and training programmes and buyer platforms to help tourism businesses innovate and grow. |

Implementing the Plan:

Longford's Town Team

A key element to the success of the plan will be the contribution from the local community and stakeholders, who came together to contribute to the development and implementation of the plan. The plan is driven by a Town Team which is supported by members with various roles and experiences. The Town Team continues to act as a steering group, providing ongoing feedback on emerging ideas and projects, as well as developing a clear action plan implementation.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Elected Representatives | Peggy Nolan Gerry Warnock Martin Monaghan Seamus Butler John Browne Uruemu Adejinmi Gerry Hagan |
| Tidy Towns | Michael Keenan |
| Longford Community Resources Ltd | Adrian Greene |
| Education | Orla Egan – Principal of St. Joseph's Primary School |
| Business/sport | Brendan Doyle |
| Chamber of Commerce | Fiona Fenelon |
| Longford Vintners Federation | Eddie Valentine |
| New Communities/Minority | PPN – To be confirmed |
| An Garda Siochana | Darran Conlon (Community Policing) |
| Comhairle na nOg/Youth | PPN – To be confirmed |
| Arts Sector | Rosie O'Hara |
| Historical Society | Hugh Farrell |
| Longford County Council | John Brannigan (Director of Service) Lorraine O'Connor (Town Regeneration Officer) Tourism Officer Heritage Officer Vacant Homes Officer |

Implementing the Plan:

Longford's Town Team

Central to the effective implementation of any of the Town Centre First Plans across Ireland will be the capacity of the Town Team and other community organisations to lead on elements included in the Town Centre First Plan. Their leadership will involve a number of strands including:

Engaging with the County Council around engagement, design and communication relating to core public realm proposals and the transformation of public space in line with the Town Centre First Plan vision

Specifically leading on proposal development processes e.g. the development of community space or the development and delivery of community led events/festivals

Developing effective funding applications for revenue and capital funding



Implementing the Plan: Capacity Building Programme

This section sets out a specification for the Longford Town Centre First Community Capacity Building Programme. It is proposed that the Community Capacity Building Programme supports community organisations (Longford Town Team and other stakeholder groups) to get ready to play their role in the effective implementation of the agreed Town Centre First plan. The capacity building and support programme will provide four elements as follows:

- Understanding the principles of effective community leadership.
- Understanding effective proposal development and assessment processes.
- Understanding how to develop effective funding applications.
- Implementing a practical/learning proposal.

The following table sets out the content and learning outcomes for each of these four elements of the Longford Town Centre First Community Capacity.

| Longford TCF Plan Capacity Building Programme: Elements | Specification | Learning Outcomes |
|---|--|--|
| Understanding Community Leadership | Four workshops focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Understanding and implementing Community Leadership » Practical means for engaging the local community » Working with County Councils and public bodies (co-design) » Developing consensus around community visions and plans » Effective communication and local engagement | The Heart of the Community Fund is for not-for-profit organisations delivering vital services/support that promote and support peace, culture, education and community development. Grants between €5,000 and €25,000 were available in 2023. The fund also provides organisational investment grants. |

Implementing the Plan: Capacity Building Programme

| Longford TCF Plan Capacity Building Programme: Elements | Specification | Learning Outcomes |
|---|--|--|
| Proposal Development and Assessment | <p>Two workshops on proposal development and assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Understanding the feasibility process » Developing and appraising proposal options <p>Site visits to successful community led capital proposals(x2)</p> <p>Development of a Feasibility Study and Public Spending Code Appraisal for an identified TCF plan Transformational Proposal (as a learning by doing process)</p> | <p>Longford Town Team and associated community leaders will understand the key steps in capital proposal development and how to lead such processes for transformational proposals in the TCF Plan</p> |
| Developing Effective Funding Applications | <p>Two workshops on developing effective funding applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Identifying capital and revenue funding opportunities » Screening opportunities which align with Longford TCF Plan actions | <p>Longford Town Team and associated community leaders will have improved awareness of funding opportunities and enhanced application development skills</p> |
| Practical/Learning Proposal | <p>Agree a small/medium scale proposal aligned to one of the Longford TCF Plan Transformational Proposals to test the learning and build the capacity of the Town Team and other community leaders in proposal design, planning and delivery</p> | <p>Longford Town Team and community leaders from Longford have better developed proposal development and management skills and capacity</p> |

Resourcing the Longford Town Centre First Community Leadership Programme

The budget to develop and deliver a Longford Town Centre First Plan includes resourcing to support the community to procure appropriately experienced organisations to deliver on all of the four elements set out above. These may be individuals or organisations to deliver each individual element or collectively deliver the full programme. The delivery model for the input will be:

- Formal training sessions.
- Facilitation, mentoring and coaching.
- Learning by doing (developing feasibility studies and funding applications).

It is anticipated that the support will be provided over the initial year (from the production and launch of the Longford Town Centre Plus Plan). The budget will be required to fund the following:

- Appointment of suitably experienced and skilled community leadership, trainers, facilitators and mentors.
- Input from experienced community leaders from other communities to visit Longford town and share their experience.
- Supporting community leaders in Longford town to visit other communities implementing proposals similar to the transformational proposals in the Longford Town Centre First Plan to capture learning which can be applied in Longford town.
- Technical support around feasibility processes or the delivery of a practical/learning by doing proposals.

Longford 2040:

A Town Centre First Plan



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Lár Bailte ar dTús
Town Centre First