

Chapter 3: Town Centre and Regeneration

Strategic Aim:

To sensitively and sustainably enhance the historic town centre through the provision of healthy place-making. To facilitate a competitive and healthy retail environment and to support the future vitality, diversity and viability of Birr town centre and Crinkill village. Reinforce Birr town centre as the heart of the town, by avoiding undesirable and inefficient sprawl, achieving critical mass and consolidating new development within the built-up footprint of the town, through targeting a significant proportion of future development on infill/brownfield/under-utilised sites, and extending out sequentially subject to available infrastructure. These aims will improve the attractiveness and functionality of Birr Town as a place in which to live, work and visit while also functioning as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.

3.1 Context

The town's influential Georgian heritage has given Birr a strong urban form within its central core. The urban core has clearly defined urban spaces such as Emmet Square and John's Place as well as the tight urban grain prevalent along the two main axes Main Street/Emmet Street and John's Mall. All the major routes converge at Emmet Square making it the central focal point of the town. Beyond the compact central core, however, the urban form of Birr 'dissipates' into lower density development typically associated with the 20th century. The result is less clearly defined open spaces and in certain areas, a lack of distinctive character or identity, with a lack of pedestrian circulation.

The protection and enhancement of the historical core of Birr town is a priority of the Council. This will be facilitated by all available means including environmental improvements, the promotion and facilitation of the appropriate reuse/renewal of derelict, vacant and underutilised buildings in the town centre. The Council will also endeavour to achieve permeability and connectivity in the town centre for cyclists and pedestrians. The architectural character of the existing built fabric in the commercial area will be protected and enhanced where possible.



Figure 3.1 View of O'Connell Street from Emmet Square, Birr

3.1.1 SCOT Analysis of Birr Town Centre

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Self-Sustaining Growth Town - Healthy niche retail along Main Street - A tourism destination town - Diverse recreation opportunities and facilities - Compact and walkable scale - Excellent architecture both historic and contemporary - Hospitality - Central national location - Fishing - Strong character and sense of place, attractive streetscape - Festivals and entertainment - Arts and Cultural experiences including Library and Birr Theatre and Arts Centre - Birr Castle, Gardens and Science Centre - Farmers Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connection from Castle Street to Main Street - St. Brendan’s ruins - River access - Role of Birr as a base for tourism - Restoration of significant buildings – old workhouse, distillery, Birr Courthouse, mill, etc. - Cattlemart and Rectory lands redevelopment - Bypass - Co-ordinated wayfinding system (directional signage) - Support healthy ecosystems and local biodiversity - Plant more trees - Improve walking and cycling permeability and public transport provision - Source sustainable materials for use and re-use in the public realm - Public realm works in accordance with Birr Public Realm Plan (2009 and addendum of 2021) - Get people back living in the town centre
Challenges	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large amount of cars and traffic along Main Street - Shortage of public transportation - Wayfinding system not clear, difficult to navigate - Derelict and vacant buildings - Pedestrian and cyclist facilities - Continued management of street clutter including advertising signage - Inappropriate shop signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traffic congestion

3.2 Regeneration

3.2.1 Healthy Place-Making

The Healthy Place-Making Strategy outlined under the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) aims to improve both physical and social infrastructure to create places that are healthy and attractive to live, work, visit and invest. Healthy Place-making is one of three principles outlined in the Offaly County Development Plan that will support the County Strategic Outcomes. Healthy Place-making encompasses compact growth, liveable settlements, regeneration, attractive places, sustainable settlement patterns, permeability, appropriate redevelopment of Opportunity Sites and universal and lifetime adaptable design etc. The Council will support and encourage the principle of healthy place-making in Birr Town.

The Town Centre First Approach notes that a Town Centre should function as the ‘business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community’. This LAP has had regard to the Town

Centre First – A Policy Approach for Irish Towns (TCF Policy), 2022. As per the TCF Policy, the Council recognises the importance of having vibrant, accessible and lived-in town centres that are home to both young and old. It is the Council’s aim to embed an age-friendly approach to the design of the public realm. The vision for Birr is that growth planned for the town over the life of the Plan occurs in a sustainable and sequential manner, characterised by a compact, consolidated and permeable pattern of development linked by sustainable modes of transport including a robust network of pedestrian and cycle routes. The grafting of a new ‘green twist’ upon plans for enhancing public spaces / realm in the town is encouraged.



Figure 3.2 Healthy Place-making Strategy (Source: Figure 9.2 of EMRA RSES)

3.2.2 Vacancy and Dereliction

In addition to promoting compact growth and sustainable transport modes, the Council will encourage the regeneration and the appropriate redevelopment of brownfield and infill sites for residential and mixed uses within the existing built-up footprint of the historic town of Birr. The Council will support making better use of under-utilised land and buildings in Birr including vacant, derelict and under-occupied buildings. Continued enhancement and improvement of Birr will not only improve how the

town functions on a day-to-day basis but will have longer term socio-economic, cultural and environmental benefits for residents, businesses and visitors.

The Council will aim to support the reduction of vacancy in properties identified below by 20% during the life of the Plan, subject to resources and funding.

3.2.3 Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS)

There are many amenity benefits that are intrinsic to SuDS – good SuDS design often provides amenity benefits while delivering water quantity, water quality and biodiversity benefits. In turn, it helps regenerate a town by contributing to healthy place-making and thereby improving quality of life. The table below demonstrates how SuDS can add such amenity value to a town.

Table 3.1 Amenity Benefit of SuDS

SuDS Amenity Benefit	Examples
Air quality Improvements	SuDS using blue and green areas, including grass and trees, provide significant air quality improvement, by for example, removing fine particulates from urban streets.
Air and building temperature regulation	Green and blue infrastructure buffer and moderates extreme temperatures caused by climate change.
Biodiversity and ecology	Green and blue SuDS help to support flora and fauna.
Carbon emission reduction	Plants and soils take in and store Co2 and other greenhouse gases, so where SuDS use plants this potential can be exploited.
Community cohesion	By increasing opportunities for human interaction and creating more enjoyable environments, people are more likely to feel they belong to the community and take a greater pride in their neighbourhood. This is especially the case if the community has been involved in the SuDS design and process and in some cases the maintenance process.
Increase inward investment	SuDS contributes to the creation of attractive places which in turn improve a town’s attraction as a place in which to invest, live, work and visit.
Health and wellbeing	Blue and green infrastructure can play a role in maintaining mental and physical health by providing places for recreation and relaxation.
Noise reduction	SuDS and associated trees and grassed areas can provide noise-absorbent barriers and surfaces. Green roofs provide sound insulation for buildings.
Security of water supply	Direct collection of rainwater to use for domestic and other purposes saves water, and potentially provides essential irrigation resources and long-term viability for amenity trees, vegetation and crops.
Recreation	SuDS can deliver a wide range of green and blue spaces that can be used for walking, cycling, informal play, organized sports and games etc.

Developments and public realm works require climate adaptive and resilient urban design and accordingly ‘Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas – Best Practice Interim Guidance Document, 2022’ (and any subsequent editions) should be considered at design / retrofitting stage in terms of SuDS. These Guidelines seek to mimic the

natural water balance of rural areas through water sensitive urban design which can be achieved through the replacement of impermeable surfacing with nature-based planted areas that are designed to absorb, retain, store and treat urban runoff prior to discharge back into the environment. This will reduce pollution and reduce flood risk as well as improving biodiversity and a greener more pleasant urban environment.

The natural slowing and filtration of runoff from our roofs, streets and public realm can be assisted by the creation of a variety of initiatives such as green building surfaces, green roofs, raingardens, swales, permeable surfaces, bioswales, natural water collection and storage ponds.

SuD is also addressed in Chapter 6 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure, Chapter 8 Climate Action and Chapter 9 Critical Infrastructure.

3.2.4 Birr Public Realm Plan

The Council launched the Birr Public Realm Plan in April 2009. The purpose of the study was to identify areas where improvements can be made in all elements of the public realm and to ensure a coordinated approach to any improvements.

Some key points arising from the analysis and of the study include:

- Key character areas are well defined.
- Mill Street and Wilmer Road have weaker defined character.
- The river is detached from the town.
- Birr Castle, Gardens and Science Centre is a permanent fixture to the west.
- Key views are the townscape and castle.
- Landmarks are evenly spread through the town.
- Scattered neighbourhood spaces.

Some key points arising from the concept of the study include:

- Elevate and enhance Emmet Square as the heart of Birr.
- Sustain mixed-uses on Emmet and Connaught Streets to ensure the town centre remains lively through different times of the day and week.
- Create strong connections with Birr town and castle via Church road using St. Brendan's Old Churchyard as a node in between.
- Establish key gateways.
- Integrate the town with the Camcor River.
- Extend the river pathway network to the Old Distillery and beyond.
- Improve the quality of small neighbourhood spaces.

Significant progress has been made on enhancing the town of Birr since production of its public realm plan in 2009. Emmet Square now features an attractive pedestrian space for people and events, with defined parking and traffic routes. Visitor numbers to Birr Castle, Gardens and Science Centre have risen dramatically through much investment there. Many of the town's fine buildings have undergone improvements and restoration, enabling them to contribute far more positively to the public realm of Birr. Other successful projects delivered have included the William Street car park, frontage improvements and the addition of high quality street name signage around the town delivered by the Chamber of Commerce.

The addendum to the Public Realm Plan for Birr was written in 2021 to reflect changes in the town since the original plan was launched in 2009. The addendum, which has been informed through consultation with local stakeholder groups, will be used alongside the original plan to further inform planning policy and investment decisions for Birr.

As a planned heritage town with abundant existing assets, the Council and its partners have demonstrated their ability to use public realm enhancements to improve Birr as a place to live, work and visit. A total of 26 projects were proposed in the Public Realm Plan for Birr, a number are substantially complete, while several more have been very well advanced.

Four new projects (relating to Moorfield, Rectory Lands, Regional Greenways and a Castle Entrance) have also been introduced, reflective of opportunities and priorities that have emerged since 2009. It is the intention of the Council that each project be delivered individually based on their importance, complexity and availability of funding.¹



Figure 3.3 Proposal to make Market Square a far more pedestrian friendly space, with potential for outdoor seating (Source: Birr Public Realm Addendum 2021)

3.2.5 Town Enhancement Projects

The council will encourage and assist in the enhancement and regeneration of areas and structures in Birr in order to improve the quality of place and urban resilience of the town. In planning for the creation of healthy and attractive places, there is a need to prioritise and promote walking and cycling in town centres in the design of streets and public spaces. In recognition of this, a new pedestrian bridge was built over the Camcor River, in Birr between November 2016 and April 2017. The bridge was built to eliminate the hazardous situation whereby pedestrians were required to walk alongside traffic at the intersection of Main Street and Moorpark Street.

¹ Refer to the Birr Public Realm Plan 2009 and associated addendum.



Figure 3.4 Birr Pedestrian Footbridge, River Camcor, Birr

The Council recognises the importance of improving the appearance of streetscapes in order to provide communities with attractive, coherent, and legible spaces. A number of improvement works have been carried out in Birr and Crinkill such as the public realm works in Crinkill Village in 2019 (Town and Village Renewal Scheme funded), and most recently, improvement works carried out to Green Street in Birr - 'The Green' (Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2019, Fáilte Ireland Destination Town Funding and Birr Municipal District). The works carried out at The Green have enhanced the area linking Emmet Square to Birr Castle, Gardens and Science Centre thus improving the overall tourism product in Birr and people's experience of visiting the town. An additional pedestrian entrance to the Birr Castle, Gardens and Science Centre at the head of Green Street has approval. Historic plans from 1808 show that a gate once existed in this location prior to the construction of the present walls. Any such proposal would require the utmost care and attention to the historic integrity of the castle and its walls.

In 2021, the Office of Public Works transferred ownership of Birr Courthouse to Offaly County Council. The Courthouse had last held a court in 2013 and was not used in the intervening years. In 2021, circa €200,000 was allocated towards works for the conservation of Birr's nineteenth century Courthouse to prevent rain ingress continuing and to improve windows and doors to the front. This was in addition to a contribution from the Historic Structures Fund and Offaly County Council. The Plans proposed by Birr 20:20 Vision CLG (referred to as Birr 20:20 hereon) are to re-use it as a multi-purpose community space, a digital/connected hub, as well as for arts and culture purposes. Offaly County Council commissioned a conservation master plan for the Courthouse. This was supported under the Offaly Heritage Plan 2017-2021 Heritage Council funding with a contribution from Creative Ireland funding. Offaly County Council are examining all options for funding support to continue the works at Birr Courthouse and are working with Birr 20:20 group in the process. It is estimated that close to €2,000,000 is needed to bring the Courthouse to a usable condition.



Figure 3.5 Birr Courthouse, Townsend Street, Birr

The Council also supports the conservation of Birr’s streetscape furniture. In recent years, conservation projects have included the Crimea Canon Gun at John’s Hall, the weighbridge at The Green and the water fountain on Castle Street.

Continued enhancement and improvement of Birr will not only improve how the town functions on a day-to-day basis but will have longer-term socio-economic, cultural and environmental benefits for residents, businesses and visitors.

3.2.6 Streetscape

Offaly Streetscape Project 2022 is currently under completion by consultants and is part-funded by the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan funding stream. It concerns a number of streetscapes in Birr and Tullamore. In terms of Birr, the streets include Market Square and Castle Street. The survey will determine occupancy / use with consideration of possible uses of vacant floors, provide guidance on appropriate repair of elements of the façade and provide graphic illustrations of existing and possible future uses / facades.

3.3 Opportunity Sites

Two key opportunity sites located on the periphery of the town centre are ‘The Mart’ and ‘Rectory Lands’ (refer to Figure 3.6). These sites have been identified as opportunity sites because of their prominence and underutilisation. In addition to promoting local economic growth, it is considered that their redevelopment would contribute greatly to the renewal, enhancement, regeneration and compact growth of Birr Town. These sites also provide the greatest potential for development and consolidation.

Opportunity Site	Land Use Zoning	Site Area (Ha)
Site 1 - Mart Site	Town Centre / Mixed-Use	1.23
Site 2 - Rectory Lands	Town Centre / Mixed-Use	5.72

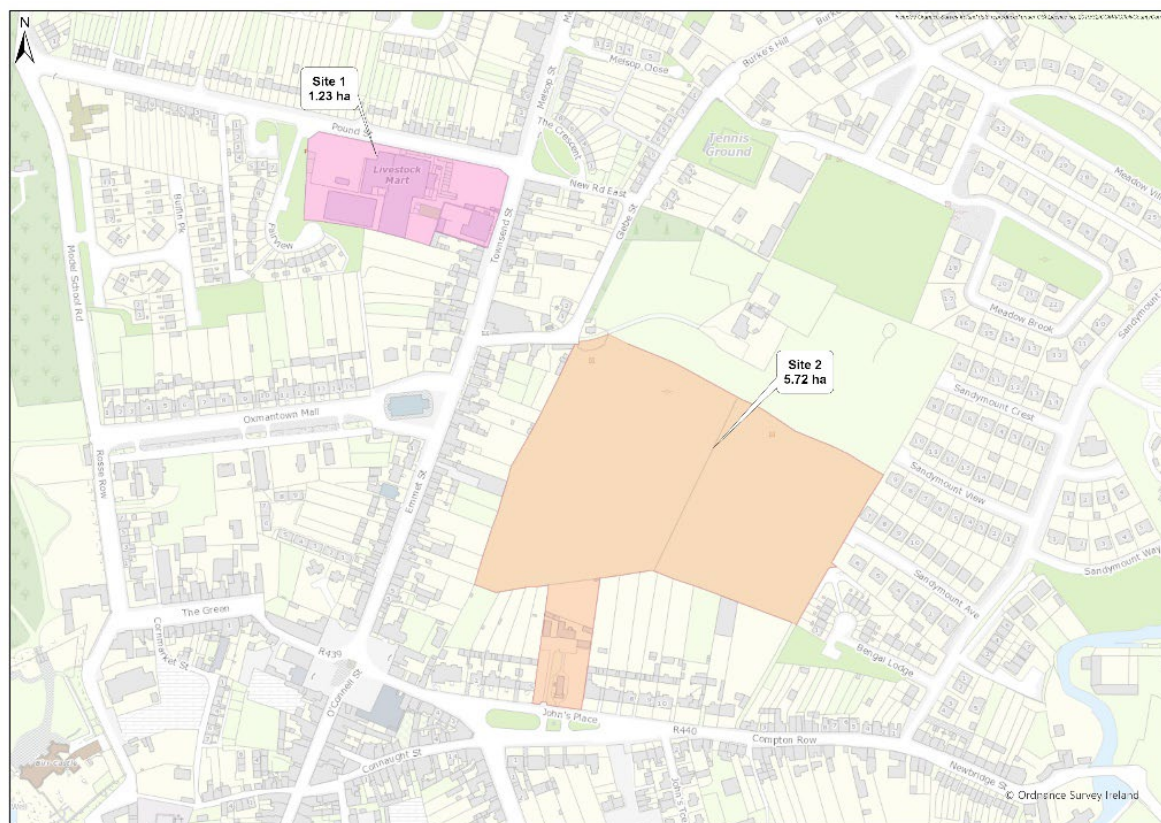


Figure 3.6 Birr Opportunity Sites

These two sites are potentially connected to the built form of the town centre through Emmet/Townsend Street. Both of these sites offer the potential for high quality designed developments that will knit into the urban grain of the town centre. Emmet/Townsend Street already have established streetscapes catering for a range of compatible town centre land uses and is naturally a continuation of urban grain of the town centre.

The inclusion of Emmet/Townsend Street in the ‘town centre’ makes Emmet Square a more central focal point, allows for the objectives of the Birr Public Realm Plan 2009 and associated addendum to be implemented i.e. pedestrian friendly town centre, reduces the need to travel within the town centre and allows for the two identified key opportunity sites to develop in tandem into the town centre, in accordance with the sequential approach.

To help realise the full potential for the development of Birr’s opportunity sites, any application put forward should consider the Development Plan policies, objectives and standards and shall include an Urban Design Statement and Masterplan taking cognisance of the development principles outlined in the Offaly County Development Plan.

3.3.1 Opportunity Site 1 – ‘Mart Site’



Figure 3.7 Mart Site, Pound Street, Birr

Development of the 1.23 ha ‘Mart Site’ will act as a landmark building on entry to the town centre. Located at a vehicular junction, it will become a natural cut off point/end to the town centre in a northern direction. The impact on the town centre must be carefully assessed. The residential amenities and the protection of the heritage character of the town must be respected.

Potential of the Site

- The ‘Mart Site’ offers opportunities to accommodate a mixed-use development incorporating an appropriate mix of commercial, recreational, cultural, amenity and residential uses.
- The site includes the handball alley and Birr Courthouse. Additional access and permeability to this site should be considered.
- Development proposals should be of a use, scale, form and design that accords with the role, function and size of Birr town.
- A diversity of uses for both day and evening is encouraged.
- The site will require high levels of accessibility.

Development proposed on this site must have a strong ‘mixed-use’ emphasis and be of sufficiently high stature, quality, design and overall benefit to the town to justify the once-off opportunity presented by the site. The surrounding residential amenities and the protection of the heritage character of the town must be respected.

3.3.2 Opportunity Site no. 2 – ‘Rectory Lands’



Figure 3.8 Rectory Lands, Birr

The 5.72ha ‘Rectory Lands’ are of key importance to future development of the town centre. The lands are located to the rear of Emmet/Townsend Street, in close proximity to Emmet Square and adjoining residential housing developments to the east and north.

The key to any development on this site is that it knits into and further extends the built form/urban grain of Emmet/Townsend Street and hence the town centre. It is also seen as an opportunity to integrate housing developments to the north of the town centre into the urban fabric of the area. Movement and access through the site from Emmet/Townsend Street and adjoining housing estates is of key importance to its future development. Public spaces, access points and routes must be fronted and overlooked by development. Potential exists for mixed-use development in the backlands of Emmet/Townsend Street overlooking any new development on the Rectory Lands and incorporating improved public access from Emmet/Townsend Street onto the site. Potential also exists for the development of the backlands of existing residential developments at John’s Mall, but this may prove more difficult due to the need to protect the character of buildings of significant importance on these site plots.

The Rectory Lands are considered to constitute a strategic site within the town. The Concept Masterplan will illustrate an overarching design concept for the lands which will be based on an appraisal of the area and its surrounding contextual environment. It is intended to set out the broad parameters for the development of the site and is designed to assist all parties involved in the planning process including the Council, design teams and residents.

Potential of the Site

The 'Rectory Lands' offers opportunities to accommodate uses, design, form and layout in accordance with the Concept Masterplan which is currently under preparation by consultants and which is due to be finalised in 2023. The Concept Masterplan and future development of the site needs to address the following principles:

- Understanding natural and heritage assets of the site and its context to guide their protection and integration with the scheme as appropriate;
- Ensuring appropriate permeability within, to and from the site, with an emphasis on town centre foot and cycle links;
- Demonstrating a compact urban form, good urban design and healthy place-making;
- Be of high quality in terms of building form, layout, materials and public realm;
- Be consistent with Ministerial Guidelines for example Sustainable Development in Urban Area Guidelines, Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments and Urban Development and Building Heights;
- Providing for low carbon output;
- Planning the development capacity, urban and landscape form of the site in reference to the above two;
- Examining the potential mix of uses appropriate to the site;
- Establishing design guidance / coding to help ensure the development complements the unique character of Birr;
- Guiding phased implementation of the scheme; and
- Informing future policy.

3.4 Residential Areas and the Town Centre

The Council will seek to maintain a strong residential base in the town centre area, and to prohibit undue encroachment of commercial uses into established residential areas and streets such as Oxmantown Mall and John's Mall. This is in order to protect the residential amenities of existing properties, to retain residential character and to foster and protect architectural integrity of the streets and individual buildings.

The Council will encourage the appropriate re-use of rear gardens where adjoining landowners can co-operate to create new streets and/or cohesive developments.

The Council will encourage the use of upper floors of existing retail/office units within the Town Centre as residential accommodation in order to contribute to the daytime and night time activity of the Town Centre, and improve the liveability factor of the town.

3.5 Retailing

Birr is designated a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' in the Offaly County Development Plan. Appropriate levels of convenience and comparison floor space will be encouraged and supported in Birr, where it is required to serve the existing and projected population catchment, subject to consideration of the impact on the core retail area and existing retail developments. There will generally be a presumption against the development of retail parks accommodating retail warehousing in Birr. Where retail

warehousing is proposed, careful consideration shall be given to the level of existing provision, the levels of vacancy, pressure to entertain or accommodate inappropriate uses at existing sites and the justification for additional retail warehouses. Any retail application received by the Council will be assessed under the remits of the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 or subsequent editions.

3.5.1 Sequential Approach

The Council recognises that new retail development is best located within the existing core retail areas of Birr and Crinkill respectively.

It is necessary to retain the vitality and viability of Birr town centre and Crinkill village, therefore, a sequential approach (from the centre–outwards) will be applied in the location of retail developments. The Council consider that the size and scale of retailing provision should follow the established size of Birr town and Crinkill village and be located within the settlement i.e. concentration of retailing within the town centre, where possible.

3.5.2 Core Retail Area

The Core Retail Area of Birr Town is defined in the Offaly County Development Plan. The Core Retail Areas of Birr Town and Crinkill Village contain the primary retail streets where the main concentration of retail activity takes place (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10 below). These areas are the preferred areas for retail development. This Plan anticipates that new retail provision will be achieved through a combination of appropriate regeneration and renewal of sites within Birr Town and Crinkill Village.

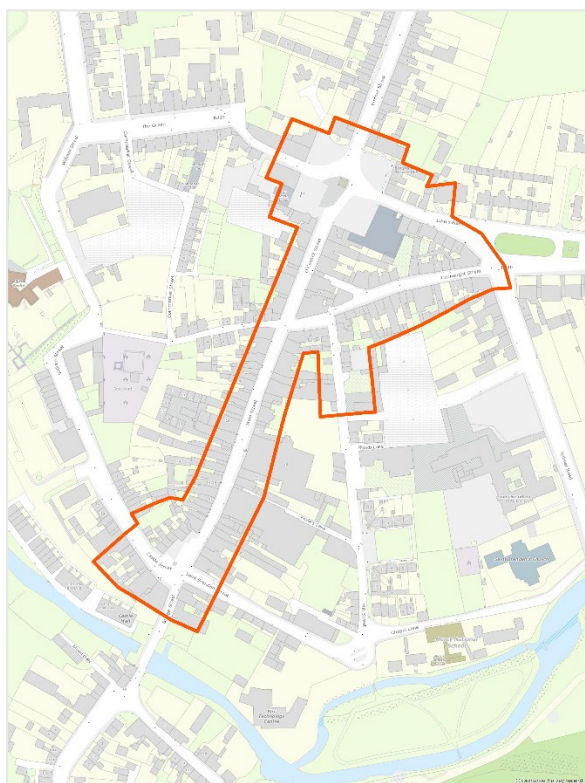


Figure 3.9 Birr Core Retail Area



Figure 3.10 Crinkill Core Retail Area

3.5.3 Shopfronts

Birr has many examples of well-designed shopfronts contributing positively to enhance the streetscape. Shopfronts provide colour and add variation to main streets, older shopfronts can contain clues of the history of commerce and the development of the town. New shopfronts may reflect a more traditional design or be more contemporary in approach but they should have regard to the features of the building that they front, particularly when they occur in protected structures. The design and material used for shopfronts should be of high quality materials and the colour scheme should integrate successfully with that of existing buildings in the vicinity.

The Council encourages the design of shopfront and signs in accordance with the Advice Leaflet 'Guide to Shopfronts and Signs' by Offaly County Council. The leaflet addresses, fascias, signs, lighting, windows, entrances, elements of traditional shopfronts, and principles of good design.



Figure 3.11 Cover of A Guide to Shopfronts and Signs by Offaly County Council

3.6 Purple Flag Accreditation

There is an opportunity for Birr town to obtain ‘Purple Flag’ accreditation by raising the standard and broadening the appeal of the town centre between the hours of 5pm and 5am. Areas that are awarded the ‘Purple Flag’ are recognised for providing a vibrant and diverse mix of dining, entertainment and culture while promoting the safety and wellbeing of visitors and local residents. The Council recognises the importance of achieving ‘Purple Flag’ accreditation for Birr Town. Obtaining a ‘Purple Flag’ for Birr town will play a valuable role in raising the standard and broadening the appeal of Birr town’s night-time economy.

3.7 Town Centre & Regeneration Policies

It is Council Policy to:

TCP-01 Protect and promote the vitality and viability of Birr and Crinkill's Core Retail Area, and to ensure that it remains the primary location for retail development, through the application of a sequential approach to development.

TCP-02 Support and promote the function of Birr town centre as the business, service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community and ensuring that it is vibrant, accessible and lived-in in accordance with the Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns 2022.

TCP-03 Facilitate the redevelopment of Opportunity Sites for a mixture of uses that will contribute to the vibrancy, diversity, vitality, attractiveness, safety, liveability and compact growth of Birr Town Centre. In conjunction with this, proposed developments must demonstrate how they will interact within its context and the wider urban area and shall be in accordance with section 3.3 of this Local Area Plan and section 7.2.4 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027.

TCP-04 Encourage and facilitate the reuse and regeneration of derelict, vacant, backland and underutilised lands and buildings in the town centre for retail, residential and other mixed uses through legislative measures and / or by supporting the progression and delivery of projects funded by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and other appropriate funds.

TCP-05 Support and encourage the principle of healthy place-making in Birr Town.

TCP-06 Ensure that growth planned for Birr town over the life of the Plan occurs in a sustainable and sequential manner, characterised by a compact, consolidated and permeable pattern of development linked by sustainable modes of transport including a robust network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

TCP-07 Embed an age-friendly approach to the design of the public realm.

TCP-08 Further improve the streetscape and public realm in Birr town centre by undergrounding existing cables and improving pavements and street furniture in particular.

TCP-09 Support and promote the implementation of measures proposed in the Offaly Streetscape Project 2023 as it relates to Market Square and Castle Street in Birr.

TCP-10 Ensure that traditional shop fronts are retained and restored, and that new shopfront design contributes positively to and enhances the streetscape and that the design of shopfront and signs are in accordance with the Advice Leaflet 'Guide to Shopfronts and Signs' by Offaly County Council.

TCP-11 Provide loading bays of adequate capacity where they are needed most in order to ensure that traffic flows are not restricted.

TCP-12 Support and promote the development of the Rectory Lands, which are the subject of an emerging Rectory Lands Concept Masterplan.

TCP-13 Support the implementation of the key projects of the Birr Public Realm Plan 2009 (and associated addendum 2021).

TCP-14 Secure the relocation of the cattle mart, and facilitate the redevelopment of the existing mart site.

TCP-15 Support the development of sustainable low-carbon climate resilient communities and encourage a climate adaptation and mitigation approach to developments which will enable regeneration.

TCP-16 Incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other nature-based solutions in accordance with the 'Nature-based Solutions to the Management of Rainwater and Surface Water Runoff in Urban Areas – Best Practice Interim Guidance Document, 2022' and any subsequent editions.

TCP-17 Prohibit the proliferation of any individual use within the town centre which would by way of increased presence and use, detract from the amenities of the area and work against the policy of encouraging appropriate development to contribute positively to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

TCP-18 Seek a survey of existing numbers of bats, swifts and swift/nests for planning applications for renovations, redevelopment or demolition of old buildings in Birr Town and Crinkill Village centres. Where bats and/or swifts are shown to be present, specific mitigation measures during and after construction shall be proposed.

3.8 Town Centre & Regeneration Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

TCO-01 Assess retail development outside the Core Retail Areas of Birr and Crinkill in accordance with town centre first principles, the Offaly County Development Plan and Chapter 4 'Retailing and Development Management' of the Retail Planning Guidelines (DECLG, 2012).

TCO-02 Reduce the extent of vacant properties in Birr by 20% during the Plan period, subject to resources and funding.