

Chapter 4: Built Heritage

Strategic Aim:

To protect, conserve and manage Edenderry's buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, by promoting the understanding, enhancement and appropriate development of these assets in order to instigate regeneration of the town.

4.1 Introduction

Edenderry's built and natural heritage are key and distinctive assets that can be used positively to promote a positive image of the town and attract visitors. The built heritage is a unique resource and represents an irreplaceable expression of the richness and diversity of the town's past.

As stated in the Offaly County Development Plan, our *'built heritage assets are a non-renewable resource that contributes to our understanding of the past. It is important that our components of our built heritage such as our historic planned towns, heritage towns, protected structures, Geashill Architectural Conservation Area, sites and monuments, country houses and demesnes, industrial architecture, vernacular structures and monastic sites are valued and protected for future generations.'*

The architectural heritage of Edenderry is represented with very strong structures and streetscapes making a very distinctive contribution to the town and forms part of the initial identity of the town. From Blundell Castle, to the Town Hall on O'Connell Square, and the fine vista of JKL Street and the Grand Canal Harbour, Edenderry's architectural heritage offer is rich and punctuates a colourful history for the town, from Plantations to the Ireland's Industrial Revolution. It is crucially important that there is an understanding and an appreciation of the social and economic benefits that conserving the architectural heritage of the town can bring such as:

- Contributing to a sense of place and creating an identity through a link to the past,
- Forging community capacity engendering civic pride,
- Regeneration,
- Environmental quality including embedded carbon capture in existing buildings, and
- Distinctive and competitive edge in attracting business, visitors and new residents.

4.2 Architectural Heritage

4.2.1 Record of Protected Structures

The Council intends to protect all structures within the County Offaly Record of Protected Structures (RPS) that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest. The County Offaly RPS accompanies the Offaly County Development Plan. Within Edenderry, there is a strong concentration of protected structures located on JKL Street.



Figure 4.1 Sample of Protected Structures in Edenderry

4.2.2 Architectural Conservation

Edenderry displays a strong Georgian influence because of its unique and largely intact architectural character and setting. Edenderry town's built environment is characterised by a compact historic core and a defined square. It contains many fine buildings and terraces dating from the 18th and 19th Centuries.

The archways and doorways along JKL Street are an intrinsic feature of the buildings and streetscape. Many of the keystones over the doorways feature unique decorative designs and these contribute positively as a point of interest along the street. Many of the decorative fanlights are retained over the doorways also.

Carriageway arches are prominent features in the current streetscape. Their historical function is evident to provide access to the rear of properties, though it should be noted that most are not capable of accommodating an intensification of modern day vehicular traffic to and from the backland areas.

It is essential that any renewal or new development should respect and compliment Edenderry's architectural character. Archways, doorways and keystone decorations should be retained and should be incorporated sensitively into any re-designed shopfront. The overall aim of the Council will be based on conserving and maintaining the character and attractiveness of Edenderry by carefully managing development, in particular, in the town centre.

4.2.3 Vernacular Structures

There are some structures within this plan area that are of moderate scale and are important for a number of local reasons e.g. local history or building techniques etc. Individually, or as part of a group of buildings or street, such structures may contribute positively to the character of the area or townscape, which can be diminished by their loss. It is an aim of the Council to encourage the protection, appreciation and appropriate revitalisation / reuse rather than demolition of the vernacular heritage of Edenderry including their setting and features.

4.2.4 Recent Restoration Works

There are many types of structures within Edenderry town and encouraging their continued use is important for both the buildings and the town as a whole. Some restoration / enhancement works carried out in recent times include:

- Completion of a report on Blundell Castle in 2020 (funded from the Community Monuments Fund), which has resulted in the removal of vegetation from the castle and the securing of loose masonry, removal of palisade fencing and making the structure as safe as reasonably possible,
- Repairs to Castropetre Church of Ireland Church and statue, and
- Edenderry Town Hall works which makes provision for alternative usage e.g. the co-working hub E-hive and the adjoining O'Connell Square public realm improvements.

4.3 Archaeological Conservation

It is the Council's aim to protect Edenderry's archaeological heritage from damage. It is also an aim of the Council to secure the preservation of all archaeological monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places, together with any other sites and their settings discovered since the publication of the Record.

4.3.1 Zones of Archaeological Potential in Edenderry

The Zones of Archaeological Potential within Edenderry town are identified in Figure 4.2. However, it is accepted that many other sites may remain beneath the surface and possibly may become uncovered following development/excavation work (refer to www.archaeology.ie).



Figure 4.2 Zones of Archaeological Potential

4.3.2 Edenderry's Burial Grounds

A total of five burial grounds can be found within a short distance of Edenderry town. These burial grounds include St. Mary's cemetery and Castropetre graveyard within the town, Drumcooley graveyard and Shean graveyard both south of the town, and Monasteroris graveyard north-west of the town at the Franciscan Friary. The Council aims to protect these historical burial grounds and encourage their maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.

4.3.3 Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change

Predicted changes to the Irish climate will have implications for built and archaeological heritage. Wetter winters and drier summers along with increasingly powerful storms have potential to give rise to structural damage of Edenderry's built and archaeological heritage. The Council will consider the

Built & Archaeological Heritage, Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan (2019) prepared under the National Adaptation Framework in this regard. The Council recognises the importance of climate proofing structures and work is currently ongoing to conserve Monasteroris church under the Laois – Offaly Just Transition Programme 2021-2023.

4.3.4 Consultation with Relevant Bodies

In the interest of conserving Edenderry’s buildings, structures and sites of special interest, the Council will ensure that all planning applications for development, refurbishment, and restoration works etc. are referred on receipt to the relevant statutory bodies. The Council will take cognisance of the advice and recommendations of the statutory bodies, both in respect of whether or not to grant planning permission, and in respect of the conditions to which permission, if granted, should be subject. Wherever practicable, the Council will encourage the provision of public access to sites identified in the Record of Monuments and Places.

4.4 Built Heritage Policies

It is Council Policy to:

BHP-01 Encourage the rehabilitation, renovation, climate-proofing and re-use of existing protected structures, where appropriate, over the demolition of same and new-build on-site.

BHP-02 Encourage the rehabilitation, renovation, climate-proofing and re-use of existing vernacular structures that are not listed on the Record of Protected Structures, over the demolition of same and new-build on-site.

BHP-03 Protect and enhance the urban form of Edenderry including the character of the streetscape of JKL Street, O'Connell Square, and vistas.

BHP-04 Protect all structures in Edenderry that are listed in the County Offaly Record of Protected Structures that are of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest in Edenderry.

BHP-05 Ensure that all applications pertaining to the re-development of buildings that include features such as vernacular doorways and archways include a detailed methodology, prepared by a suitably qualified person, for the repair and maintenance of these features.

BHP-06 Encourage contemporary development within Edenderry where the applicant can successfully demonstrate that any proposal will not negatively detract from the special character of the existing built environment.

BHP-07 Ensure that full consideration is given to the protection of archaeological heritage when undertaking, approving or authorising development in order to avoid unnecessary conflict between development and the protection of archaeological heritage.

BHP-08 Have regard to the Zones of Archaeological Potential as shaded on Figure 4.2 to ensure that planning applications are referred to the appropriate prescribed bodies.

BHP-09 Protect the historical burial grounds within Edenderry town and encourage their maintenance in accordance with conservation principles.

4.5 Built Heritage Objectives

It is an objective of the Council to:

BHO-01 Secure, where feasible and appropriate, the protection of the character of the existing original carriage archways/access-ways to the rear of existing properties.

BHO-02 Secure, where feasible, the protection of the character of structures of interest, which are part of the town's milling and distilling heritage.