

Laois County Council & Offaly County Council

Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025~2031

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
1.1 Background and Overview	4
1.2 Purpose	5
1.3 Methodology	6
2. POLICY CONTEXT	7
2.1 International Policies.....	7
2.2 National Policies.....	7
2.3 Regional Policies.....	9
2.4 Local Policies.....	9
3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT	14
3.1 Policy Context	14
3.2 Settlement Description and Characteristics.....	14
3.3 Flooding History	17
3.4 Population Statistics (Source: Central Statistics Office)	18
3.5 Employment Distribution.....	18
3.6 Car Ownership	19
3.7 Modal Share of Travel.....	19
3.8 Land Use and Trip Generators.....	20
3.9 Existing Travel Patterns	22
3.10 Existing Infrastructure and Services.....	24
3.11 Swot Analysis.....	27
4. ESTABLISH CONTEXT OF TRANSPORT PLAN	30
4.1 Transport Strategy	33
4.2 Transport Gaps Identified in Portarlinton.....	35
4.3 Modal Share Targets.....	37
5. OPTIONS ASSESSMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND TIMELINES	40
5.1 Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA)	41
6. PLAN PREPARATION AND FINALISATION	51
Appendix A – Map 5 (Transport Elements - Schematic Layouts).....	52
Appendix B – Description of the Preferred Flood Relief Scheme for Portarlinton.....	53

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Overview

This Local Transport Plan for Portarlington identifies measures required to successfully implement the strategy for the future transport and mobility of Portarlington. It is one of several complementary assessment processes used to inform the drafting of the Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan 2025~2031.

It identifies measures which will improve connectivity within and through the town and which will encourage the replacement of trips by private vehicle with more sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Portarlington is situated on the county boundary between Laois and Offaly and is located equidistant from the county towns of Portlaoise and Tullamore.

By virtue of its railway station, which has had substantial investment in recent years and through which the Dublin-Cork and Dublin-Galway train lines run, regular daily rail services are provided to major urban areas including Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. There are also several bus services connecting Portarlington to Kildare, Monasterevin, Portlaoise, Tullamore and Dublin. Portarlington is therefore one of the most accessible towns within the Midlands Region.

In terms of Local Government, Portarlington has dual administration under both Laois and Offaly County Councils. Most of the urban area (approximately 75%) is located within the County of Laois (Portarlington South for CSO data purposes) with the remaining portion (Portarlington North) in County Offaly. The River Barrow flows through the town in a west-east direction.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) includes a National Policy Objective to prepare a Joint Local Area Plan where a town and its environs, such as Portarlington, lie within the combined functional area of more than one Local Authority.

Responsibility for the preparation of Portarlington Joint Local Area Plan (Joint LAP) is therefore shared between Laois County Council and Offaly County Council.

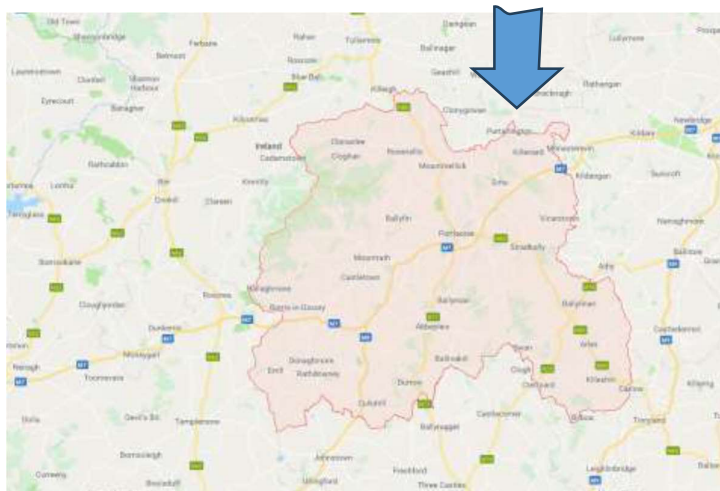


Figure 1-1: Portarlington in Context

To meet the requirement for an evidence-based approach to planning, as set out in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), Laois County Council and Offaly County Council require the assessment methodology relating to the Local Transport Plan to be an Area Based Transport Assessment (ABTA).

In large part due to its proximity to the Greater Dublin Area and its location on the Dublin-Cork / Dublin-Galway train line, Portarlinton has experienced significant population growth since the beginning of the millennium. Its population increased from 4,001 persons in 2002 to 8,368 persons in 2016 and the latest 2022 census data shows a further population increase to 9,288. Portarlinton is ranked second in population size in both County Laois and County Offaly, lying behind the county towns of Portlaoise (23,494) and Tullamore (15,598) respectively. While such population growth has created the critical mass to support the town's own services and industry, this growth has in turn placed an even greater demand on the town's infrastructure.

Section 2.10.2 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021~2027 states that Laois County Council has identified Portarlinton as a *Self-Sustaining Growth Town*.

Table 7.1 (Retail Hierarchy) of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021~2027 identifies Portarlinton as a *Self-Sustaining Town*.

1.2 Purpose

Portarlinton Local Transport Plan 2025~2031 (LTP) is founded in the core purpose of what an ABTA should achieve, namely effective integration of land use and transport planning while providing for more sustainable and equitable forms of development. An important aspect of this is to capture more sustainable travel mode share by discouraging car use. These aims are in line with overarching National, Regional and Local Planning Policies (as outlined in Part 2 of this LTP).

The overall purpose of this LTP is to underpin the future development of Portarlinton by ensuring that the assessment of transport demand and its associated impact plays a central role in informing the future development of the town. In so doing, it will also establish a framework for future investment in transport infrastructure within Portarlinton.

The key steps in developing Portarlinton Local Transport Plan 2025~2031 are summarised as follows:

- (i) Provide an understanding of travel demand associated with the combined functional area of both Laois County Council and Offaly County Council (the 'study area') and determine how this can be best served while prioritising sustainable modes (walking, cycling and public transport) in accordance with National and Regional transport policy;
- (ii) Identify deficiencies in the current transport infrastructure in Portarlinton relating to all forms of transport including public transport, vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist travel;
- (iii) Determine impacts and opportunities associated with the proposed Relief Roads referred to as Objectives of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027;
- (iv) Determine impacts and opportunities associated with Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme;
- (v) Identify an appropriate set of measures relating to transport infrastructure in Portarlinton to form a Local Transport Plan and the next Joint Local Area Plan;
- (vi) Linked to a transport strategy, identify and rank a set of measures which may be delivered during the period of the Portarlinton Joint Local Area Plan 2025~2031 which will achieve the aims and objectives of the LTP.

The strategic aim of the Local Transport Plan is to:

- a. examine the current lack of alternatives to the car and land use patterns which can better affect a modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling. These alternatives, while affecting a modal shift to more sustainable means of travel, will enable a reduction in transport emissions and assist public

realm improvements that will increase biodiversity and promote safe, enjoyable, and environmentally friendly modes of transport.

- b. address current issues and anticipate future problems in the transport network of the town and its strategic routes, and in doing so present an analysis of the current transport situation together with potential interventions and recommendations for roads objectives, active travel options, and solutions to encourage provision and greater use of public transport.

1.3 Methodology

The key steps in building an evidence-based approach to this LTP were drawn from the NTA's Area Based Transport Assessment methodology. These steps are summarised in Figure 1-2 which is an extract from the NTA's guidance document "ABTA 'How To' Guide – Pilot Methodology".

This LTP captures Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the process of carrying out a transport assessment and preparing a Local Transport Plan.

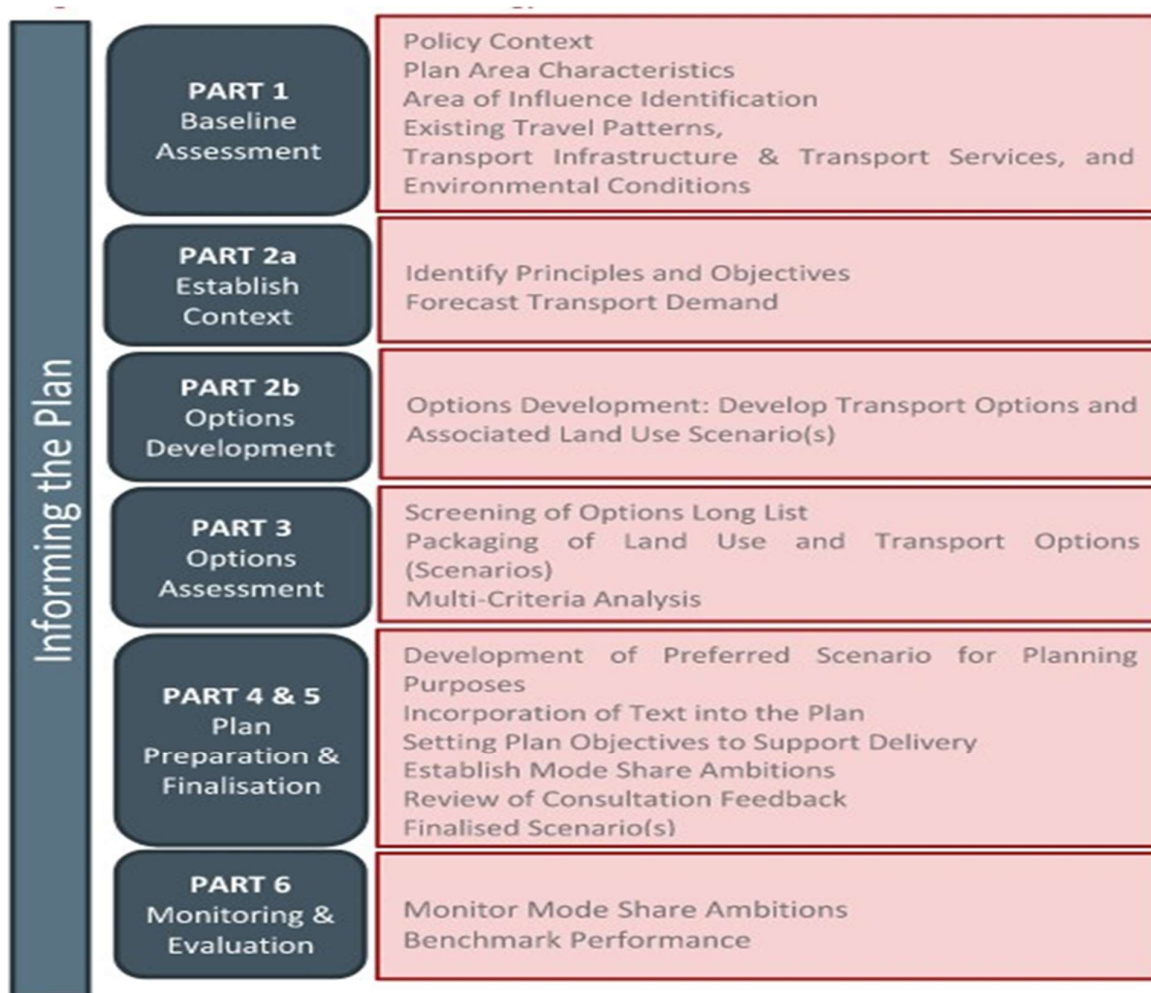


Figure 1-2: NTA ABTA Methodology

2. POLICY CONTEXT

The policies and plans that have an impact on Portarlington are as follows.

2.1 International Policies

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015

In 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity and applies to both developed and developing countries. The focus of the 2030 Agenda is the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their respective one hundred and sixty-nine sub targets. The goals are all interconnected and address environmental, economic and social challenges.

Paris Agreement, 2015

The Paris Agreement was adopted in December 2015 and sets out a global framework to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and trying to limit it to 1.5°C. Ireland signed up to the Paris Agreement in 2016. Achieving the goals of the agreement will require an intensive program of decarbonisation across nations, including within the transport sector, which is one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions. This Policy supports its goals through measures to decarbonise the public transport fleet and encourage modal shift to sustainable modes of travel.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Ireland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in March 2018 and is committed to promoting and protecting the full enjoyment of all human rights by people with disabilities.

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, Article 9 of the Convention (Accessibility) undertakes to take appropriate measures to provide equal access for everyone to the physical environment and to transportation both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:

- Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces.

2.2 National Policies

National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (2021)

The purpose of the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) is to support the delivery of the National Planning Framework, which sets out the vision for the sustainable development of Irish society over the coming decades, a vision encapsulated by ten National Strategic Outcomes.

NIFTI ensures that transport investment is aligned with the National Strategic Outcomes and supports, enables and facilitates the NPF, delivering positive social, environmental and economic outcomes throughout Ireland. Transport investment will follow a modal hierarchy of:

1. Active Travel,
2. Public Transport, and
3. Private Vehicles.

It is of note that NIFTI (2021) places active travel at the top of its modal hierarchy.

National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022

This purpose of this policy is to set out a strategic framework for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade. The primary focus is to cater for daily travel needs in a more sustainable manner.

Climate Action Plan, 2024

Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon Climate Action Plan 2023 by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. It provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

While the 'full roadmap of actions to support the delivery of our climate targets' is within the 2024 Plan itself, new high-impact actions are contained in the Climate Action Plan 2024 'Annex of Actions'.

Under the heading of 'Transport', one of the actions listed in the Annex of Actions that is relevant to Portarlington LAP is to focus on alternative fuels, enhance rail to port connectivity and speed up implementation of smart and sustainable mobility projects.

Elsewhere, in addressing the subject of *Road Space Reallocation*, Climate Action Plan 2024 states that Public Authorities should work towards a reduction of on-street car parking spaces where it complements measures to prioritise active travel and public transport and to improve the public realm.

Project Ireland: National Planning Framework and National Development Plan 2021 -2030

The National Planning Framework is a planning framework to guide development and investment over the coming years. It does not provide every detail for every part of the country; rather it empowers each region to lead in the planning and development of their communities, containing a set of national objectives and key principles from which more detailed and refined plans will follow.

The companion to the NPF document is the National Development Plan, a ten-year strategy for public capital investment. Their joint publication as Project Ireland 2040 sets out the Government's overarching investment strategy and budget for the period 2021-2030.

The following objectives relate directly to the Local Transport Plan in Portarlington:

Active Travel in Towns and Villages:

The Government has committed to funding the development of walking and cycling infrastructure all over Ireland, including in towns and villages in more rural areas. Active modes are recognised as the most sustainable modes of transport. Enabling people to walk or cycle for their daily journeys is a key element in meeting Ireland's decarbonisation targets, and for this to happen, safe and reliable alternatives to using the private car need to be provided.

The *National Cycle Network Plan (NCN) Report (2023)*, prepared by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) on behalf of the Department of Transport, sets out a phased programme that will see the delivery of approximately 3,500km of cycle facilities by 2040. The NCN Plan will provide an inter-urban cycle network (incorporating the regional and national greenways network, as appropriate), with a view to enabling greater levels of cycling and walking amongst leisure users, tourists, and commuters. The objectives of the *NCN Plan* support and align with European, National, Regional and Local objectives.

The overall investment in active travel has transformative potential to: -

- substantially increase the numbers choosing to make active travel part of their daily life.
- improve personal health and mental well-being, making town centres in places such as Portarlington, more vibrant and people focused spaces, and
- significantly address our climate action challenge.

Connecting Ireland:

The NTA's 'Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan' is a national public transport initiative that will increase connectivity, particularly for people living outside the major cities and towns. The Plan aims to provide better connections between villages and towns through enhanced and new local routes. These local routes will be integrated with an enhanced regional network connecting cities and regional centres nationwide. The key principle will be to provide access to opportunities (employment, education, healthcare, retail, etc) at the closest point available, or connections to higher level centres further away that offer those opportunities. As these will be mainstream public transport services, they will be open to all, and all vehicles will be wheelchair accessible.

Regional and Local Roads:

In addition to regional and local road maintenance, it is a priority to carry out targeted improvements to sections of the network.

The first category of targeted works are Safety/ Minor works projects which are designed to address sections of road with poor safety characteristics and poor safety records.

The second category are Strategic projects which would have a significant and quantifiable economic impact, particularly regarding employment and on industry, tourism, agriculture, rural development, and urban regeneration.

Our Journey towards Vision Zero: Ireland's Government Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030

The Road Safety Strategy is underpinned by Ireland's goal of achieving Vision Zero (zero road deaths or serious injuries) by 2050.

Portarlington LTP will support the Government Road Safety Strategy by looking at the current infrastructure and pedestrian and cycle facilities in Portarlington with a view to improving access and permeability in a safe manner.

2.3 Regional Policies

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019- 2031

The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 sets out a framework to direct future growth of the region during the timeframe of the strategy.

The principal statutory purpose of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019- 2031 is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region.

Portarlington is identified as a Level 3 retail town in Table 6.1 of the RSES (*Retail Hierarchy for the Region*).

Under the heading of tourism, Regional Policy Objective RPO 6.19 supports the local strategies that are already in place to link the River Shannon Blueway, The Royal and Grand Canal Greenways and the proposed Barrow Blueway right across the Midlands, incorporating the towns of Longford, Athlone, Mullingar, Tullamore and Portarlington.

2.4 Local Policies

Laois County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

The main purpose of the Laois County Development Plan (Laois CDP) is to set out a framework for the sustainable spatial and physical development of County Laois while considering the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment over the period of the Plan and beyond. It aims to carefully consider all the needs of society.

As previously noted herein, Portarlinton is one of the most accessible towns within the Midlands Region by virtue of the train station. Due in large part to its proximity to the Greater Dublin Area and its location on the Dublin-Cork / Dublin-Galway train line, Portarlinton has experienced significant population growth since the beginning of the millennium. In this regard, the town's population increased from 4,001 persons in 2002 to 9,288 in 2022.

Laois County Council's objectives that directly apply to the Portarlinton Local Transport Plan are:

- CS 10: In conjunction with Offaly County Council, prepare a cross boundary Joint Local Area Plan (LAP) for Portarlinton together with an associated local transport plan, having regard to the projected population growth set out in the Core Strategy of the Laois CDP and to its location within the combined functional area of both Laois County Council and Offaly County Council.
- Emergency Services PO 02: Facilitate the accommodation of fire service facilities in locations that allow ease of access and safe functioning with respect to the road network;
- Transportation Policy Objective Number 14 (TRANS 14): It is an objective of Laois County Council to undertake a Local Transport Plan in conjunction with the NTA, TII, and relevant stakeholders which will identify a transport strategy to address modal shift traffic issues, parking and active travel deficiencies in the existing network and make recommendations on same in a number of towns including Portarlinton & Environs "*(Joint Study with Offaly County Council to be explored)*".
- TRANS 25: Facilitate the following priority road project during the lifetime of the Plan period 2021 - 2027 for the Self-Sustaining Growth Town of Portarlinton: - Portarlinton Inner Relief Road.
- TRANS 33: Support the growth of Electric Vehicles with support infrastructure, through a roll- out of additional electric charging points in collaboration with relevant agencies at appropriate locations, both on street and in new developments.
- TRANS 37: Support the installation of infrastructure measures (for example new/wider pavements, road crossings and cycle parking facilities), retrofitted, if necessary, which facilitates, and encourages safe walking and cycling.
- TRANS 44: Designate on-road cycling trails to link the Barrow Navigation with Portlaoise, Stradbally and Portarlinton and to link the Barrow Navigation with the Killeslin Plateau.
- TRANS 58: Support the maintenance and enhancement of rail infrastructure and associated facilities in County Laois, including supporting the maintenance and enhancement of rail infrastructure and associated facilities, particularly facilitating the development of additional car, coach and cycle parking at the train stations within the County – Portarlinton, Portlaoise and Ballybrophy.

In accordance with Section 10.1.2.4 of the Laois County Development Plan 2021~2027, policy objectives of the Laois County Development Plan are informed by the following National and Regional guidance and policies:

- The National Climate Mitigation Plan and Climate Adaptation Framework
- Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021
- National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP)
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018
- Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets
- Smarter Travel–A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020
- Smarter Travel - National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020
- Developing Resilience to Climate Change in the Irish Transport Sector
- Cycle Design Manual
- Spatial Planning and National Roads-Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DECLG, 2012)
- National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021
- Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads (March 2011).

Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

The Offaly County Development Plan (Offaly CDP) presents a land use plan and overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of County Offaly over the 6-year period 2021-2027.

Section 1.4 of the Offaly CDP states that its content aligns with international, European, national, regional and local policy and legislation, in addition to Ministerial Guidelines / Policy Directives. It recognises that sustainability is at the heart of planning and acknowledges Ireland as a signatory of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which frame national agendas and policies to 2030.

Offaly County Council's *Sustainable Transport Strategy Objectives* that directly apply to Portarlington Local Transport Plan are: -

Sustainable Mobility and Accessibility

SMAO-01 It is an objective of the Council to facilitate the provision of transport infrastructure in County Offaly in line with national policy as outlined in the National Development Plan, Government policy and also in line with the Councils own programme of works.

SMAO-02 It is an objective of the Council to prepare a Local Transport Plan in accordance with 'Area Based Transport Assessment Guidance' by TII and NTA, for the Key Town of Tullamore in conjunction with the National Transport Authority and in tandem with the Local Area Plan, and to prepare Transport Plans for other towns that are subject to Local Area Plans, namely Birr, Edenderry and Portarlington subject to the provision of funding and agreement with statutory agencies.

SMAO-03 It is an objective of the Council to specify baseline figures and targets for modal share in new / varied Local Area Plans in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.

SMAO-04 It is an objective of the Council to improve the baseline modal share figures for the county that are set out in this Development Plan, in particular a reduction in the percentage usage of the car which shall be informed by measures set out in Appendix 1 of this Development Plan including the improvement of rural accessibility through rural transport systems, improvements in inter-settlement and intra-settlement accessibility and improvements advocated by Local Transport Plans, all in conjunction with setting modal share targets within the county in cooperation with NTA, CARO, EMRA and other relevant stakeholders and in accordance with any relevant Guidelines that may come into effect.

SMAO-05 It is an objective of the Council to identify suitable areas in towns and villages for age-friendly parking bays, in accordance with the Age Friendly Strategy for Offaly 2018-2021, and any future editions.

Walking / Cycling

SMAO-06 It is an objective of the Council to implement Connecting People Connecting Places: A Strategy for Walking and Cycling in Offaly September 2015.

SMAO-07 It is an objective of the Council that cycle lanes are designed and maintained in accordance with the National Cycle Manual by the National Transport Authority 2011.

SMAO-08 It is an objective of the Council to collaborate with Bord na Móna and Coillte in the development of the 'Major Cycling Destination in the Midlands of Ireland – Feasibility Study 2016' and to pursue the development of greenway links to adjoining counties.

Public Transport

SMAO-09 It is an objective of the Council to safeguard all existing rail infrastructure, to encourage the re-opening of rail stations, and to preserve disused stations / halts and tracks, appropriate to future strategic county public transport needs.

Roads

SMAO-12 It is an objective of the Council to construct, upgrade and improve where necessary, the Regional Road R420 (*together with other roads not listed in this LTP*), taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process. Where lines are shown on the maps in Volume 2, they are indicative only. The Council will have regard to national and regional transport plans and the Council's programme of works. The undertaking of any works will be subject to examination of its feasibility including the availability of finance and resources and will be subject to environmental assessments where necessary:

- Scheme Description R420: Examine the feasibility of the construction of by-passes and relief roads for both Portarlinton and Clara
- R420: To co-operate with Laois County Council to examine the feasibility of providing the following:
 - 1. Relief Road from the Tullamore Road to Botley Lane, Portarlinton.
 - 2. Long-term bypass to the south of Portarlinton.

SMAO-16 It is an objective of the Council to examine the feasibility of providing future relief / distributor roads adjacent to / within the town of Portarlinton, taking into account environmental sensitivities as identified in the SEA Environmental Report and the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan relating to sustainable mobility. Where feasibility is established, the Council will seek to pursue and / or facilitate the relevant project, subject to other provisions in the Plan, including section 8.6.4 Corridor and Route Selection Process.

Portarlinton Joint Local Area Plan 2025~2031

The Portarlinton Joint Local Area Plan 2025~2031 (JLAP) published by Laois County Council and Offaly County Council in accordance with the requirements and provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, recognises that a well performing transport network underpins the economic, spatial, social, and environmental success of urban areas, and contributes to a more climate resilient urban environment. The prioritisation of integrated transport and land use together with investment in active travel networks is therefore essential to build on the strategic location of Portarlinton town and its existing assets. This in turn will improve people's travel choices and support safe, sustainable, and healthy lifestyles.

The Portarlinton Local Transport Plan 2025~2031 is one of a number of complementary assessment processes used to inform the drafting of the Portarlinton JLAP . Portarlinton LTP also serves to support the policies and objectives for transport planning as set out in the Portarlinton JLAP, to support integration of land use and transport planning, a transition to sustainable transport and to set out a framework for investment in active travel and public transport.

In the development of scenarios for assessment of Transport Options / Land Use Scenarios, an iterative approach was taken to achieve integration across transport and land use options, while promoting and supporting the development of connected communities and the '10-minute settlement' concept, with an emphasis on:

- active travel
- shorter walking and cycling timeframes to social and community facilities
- improving permeability in the built environment, and
- encouraging a reduction in car dependency.

CycleConnects - Laois Cycle Network, 2023 (Draft)

The National Transport Authority (NTA) developed comprehensive cycle plans for counties outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including County Laois.

The Laois Cycle Network plan describes the existing conditions of County Laois and the existing policies and plans that affect the county. The NTA applied the Cycle Network Development Methodology for County Laois to produce the following maps:

- Laois County Cycle Network
- Portlaoise Urban Cycle Network
- Portarlington Urban Cycle Network.

Local Authority Climate Action Plans

Local authorities are key drivers in advancing climate policy at the local level. Ireland's Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act (2021) requires each local authority to prepare a Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) to meet national climate targets and develop resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Laois Climate Action Plan 2024~2029

Laois Climate Action Plan 2024~2029 lists seven strategic goals (Goals A to D) that provide context for both mitigation and adaptation actions. Strategic Goal D aims to enhance opportunities for individuals to choose the better, climate friendly, options through Active Travel, Environmental Awareness, and other programmes. The objectives of Strategic Goal D are:

D1: To make it more attractive or easier for individuals and groups to choose the more climate friendly options.

D2: To upgrade public infrastructure to allow for more climate friendly options.

D3: To continue, through a combination of persuasion and active measures, to enforce environmental legislation in the interests of the community as whole.

D4: To incorporate climate related criteria within our internal assessment procedures.

D5: To work with communities to develop locally based and community driven behavioural change.

Offaly County Council Climate Action Plan 2024~2029

The actions contained in the Framework of Actions described in the Offaly Climate Action 2024~2029 are aligned with the Delivering Effective Climate Action (DECA) 2030 document and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Transport Actions are:

- T3.1: To migrate the Council fleet towards low carbon fuels and electric vehicles.
- T3.2: To provide infrastructure and support modal shifts to low carbon methods of transport. This Action includes the following:
 - a. Continued Delivery of the Offaly County Councils Active Travel Programs to facilitate modal shift, having due regard to environmental sensitivities such as traffic and transport constraints and aspects, the receiving water environment, local air quality, biodiversity, and European sites,
 - b. Provide safe, equitable and accessible infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists.
- T3.3: To work in partnership with public transport providers to expand networks and connections. This Action includes investigating inter-modal transit hubs e.g., accessible interchange stations where passengers can switch modes to continue journeys.
- T3.4: To increase the resilience of roads and transport infrastructure.

3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

3.1 Policy Context

The policies and plans that have an impact on Portarlinton are described in Chapter 2 herein and form an integral part of this baseline assessment.

3.2 Settlement Description and Characteristics

Portarlinton was founded in 1666 on lands on the south bank of the River Barrow in a pocket created by a bend on that river. The Market Square lies at the centre of the town and development extends radially from this centre, primarily southwards to fill the pocket created by the bend in the river, with the railway station at the extremity of this extension. The town has also experienced significant development on the northern side of the Barrow.

Two existing inner relief roads from Market Square to Main Street and from Foxcroft Street to French Church Street served to remove through-traffic from the centre of the town.

Spa Street was previously upgraded to accommodate pedestrians and two-way traffic.

Travel time for vehicles to Dublin was reduced to less than an hour with the opening of the Heath Mayfield section of motorway in 2004. In this regard, Junction 14 Monasterevin is located approximately 10 kilometres from the town.

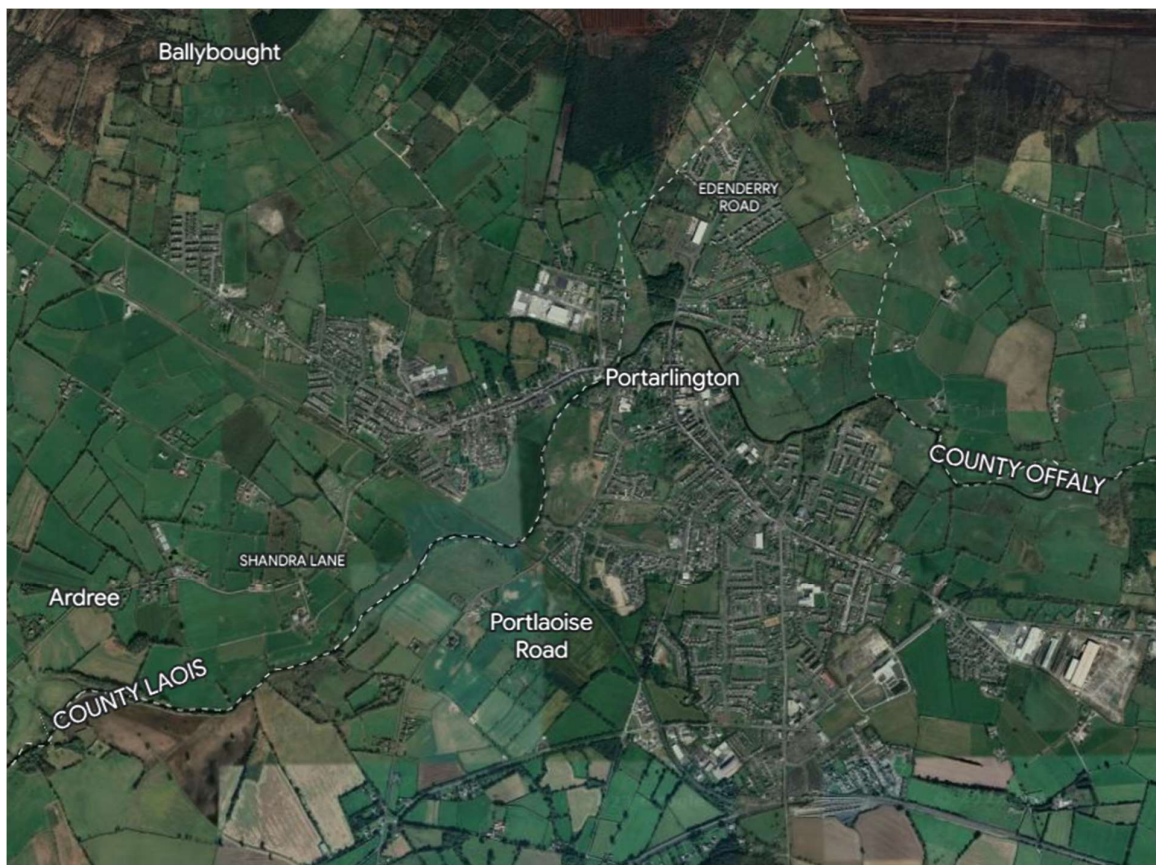


Figure 3-1: Google Earth Image of Portarlinton (2016)

The improvement of transport infrastructure in the town is a key element of sustainable development and the achievement of a low carbon economy. At present, traffic congestion is an issue that needs to be addressed, particularly on Patrick Street, where the problem is exacerbated by the existing pattern of on-street parking. There are two bridge crossings of the River Barrow in Portarlinton. The R419 between Portlaoise in County Laois and Rathangan in County Kildare crosses the River Barrow in a North South direction at Spa Street Bridge and the R420 between Monasterevin in County Kildare and Tullamore in County Offaly crosses the river in an East-West direction at Barrow Bridge on French Church Street. These bridges provide the only means of movement between the parts of the town lying north and south of the Barrow.

Vehicles dominate many of Portarlinton's streets and largely unrestricted vehicle movement is detrimental to a vibrant and liveable environment. This impacts negatively on the quality and type of activities that can be accommodated in the town centre, the attractiveness for pedestrians and cyclists, and their safety.



Patrick Street



R420 Road

Portarlinton is served by three Regional Roads, the R419, R420 and R423. These in turn facilitate access to the N80 National Secondary Road and other key national road links such as the M7, M8 and M9 motorways via Portlaoise to the south, and the M6 via Tullamore to the north-west. These links provide access to the east, south and west of Ireland, including Rosslare, the Greater Dublin Area, Dublin Port and Dublin Airport.

Trip generators within the Study are shown in Figure 3-2.

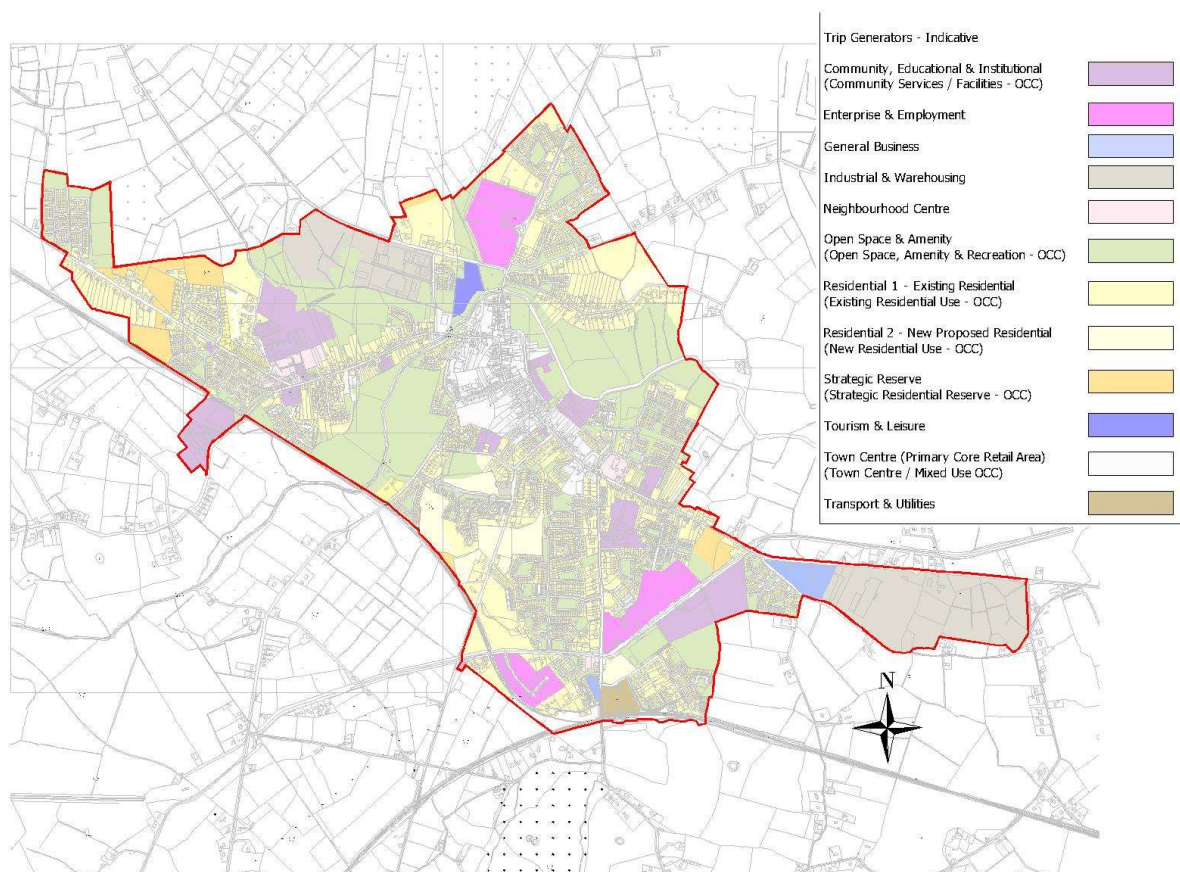


Figure 3-2: Study Area (Outlined in Red) & Trip Generators

3.3 Flooding History

Portarlinton has a history of serious flooding to numerous properties and businesses caused by fluvial flooding from the River Barrow and its tributaries.

Flooding in the urban area of Portarlinton and surrounding lands is predominantly caused by exceedance of the river channel due to increased rainfall, flow restrictions through the bridges and the confluence of the River Barrow and the Blackstick Drain, a small tributary flowing in from the north. Affected properties include those adjoining the river to the east of the town centre, within the town centre and southwest of the town centre.

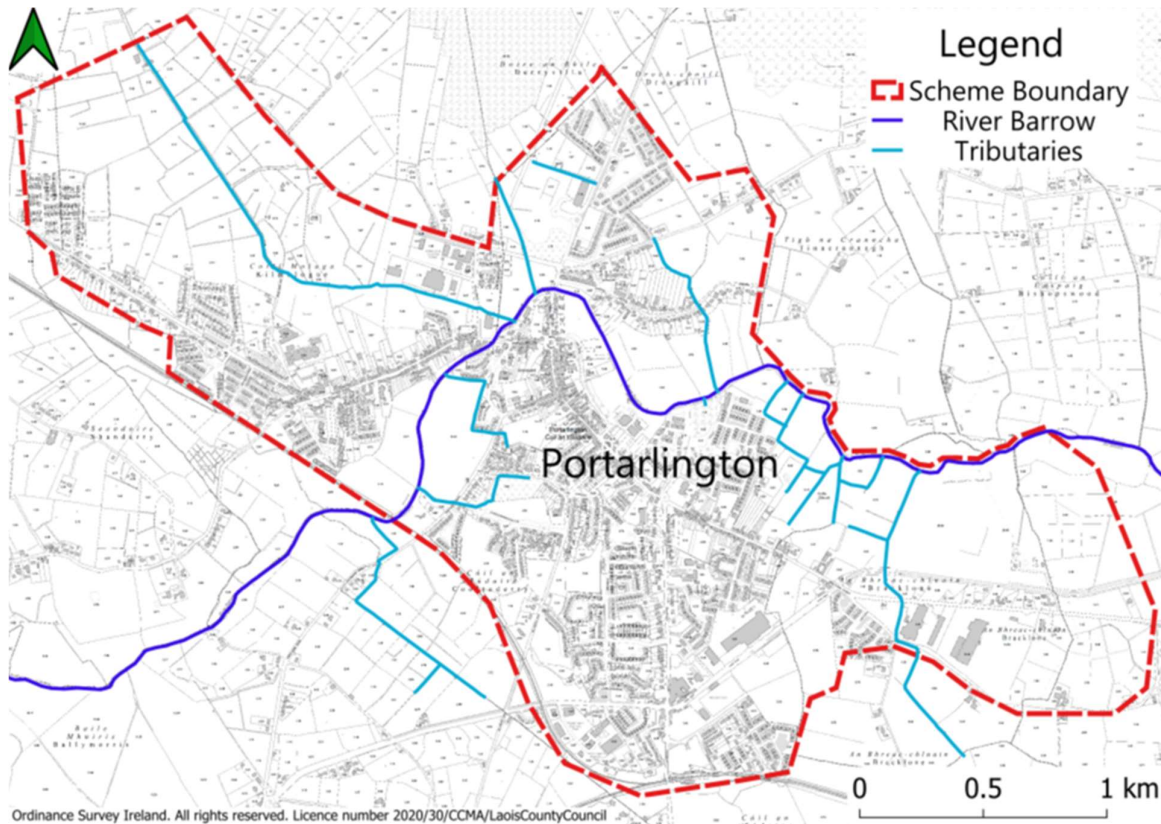


Figure 3-3: River Barrow and Tributaries

Previous major flood events have been recorded as far back as 1954 and have continued at intervals up to the present time. The town currently has no protective flood defence assets or structures.

To address flooding issues nationally, the Office of Public Works commissioned and completed Catchment and Flood Risk Management (CFRAM) studies covering the entire country.

The Flood Risk Management Plan for the River Barrow Basin was published in 2018. The purpose of the Plan was to set out the strategy, including a set of proposed measures for the cost-effective, sustainable and long-term management of flood risk in the River Basin, including the areas where the flood risk had been determined as being potentially significant.

Portarlinton is one of a number of communities within the River Barrow Basin that the Plan identified as needing a flood relief scheme and it concluded that a scheme for Portarlinton should be progressed to develop

and assess project proposals including environmental assessment and public consultation, and to prepare designs and documentation for planning approval and subsequent implementation.

In order to develop the Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme and following the launch of the CFRAM Study findings, a design team was commissioned in August 2020, working on behalf of Laois County Council and in partnership with Offaly County Council and the Office of Public Works.

Since the 2020 appointment, the preferred option has been identified for a Scheme that will alleviate the risk of flooding in the Portarlinton for the 1% AEP (1 in 100-year return period) fluvial flood event and that will be socially, environmentally and economically acceptable. Details of the current preferred scheme as presented by the design team (Binnies/ Nicholas O'Dwyer) are contained in Appendix B.

When complete, the flood relief scheme will guide the future development of Portarlinton.

3.4 Population Statistics (Source: Central Statistics Office)

2022 Census data states the overall population of Portarlinton to be 9,288, an increase of 11% from the 2016 Census figure of 8,368. The Laois-Offaly population distribution for Portarlinton is shown in Table 3-1.

Persons within 7 Built-Up Areas in County Offaly	Persons within 23 Built-Up Areas in County Laois	Total Persons in Portarlinton
2,106	7,182	9,288

Table 3-1: Population Distribution for Portarlinton

3.5 Employment Distribution

The employment distribution for the settlement of Portarlinton is shown in Table 3-2.

Principal Status			
Principle Economic Status	Males	Females	Total
At Work	2,093	1,728	3,821
Looking for first regular job	39	28	67
Short term unemployed	78	57	135
Long term unemployed	133	107	240
Student	365	398	763
Looking after home/family	63	518	581
Retired	409	400	809
Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	244	308	552
Other	24	31	55
Total	3,448	3,575	7,023

Table 3-2: Portarlinton Employment Distribution

3.6 Car Ownership

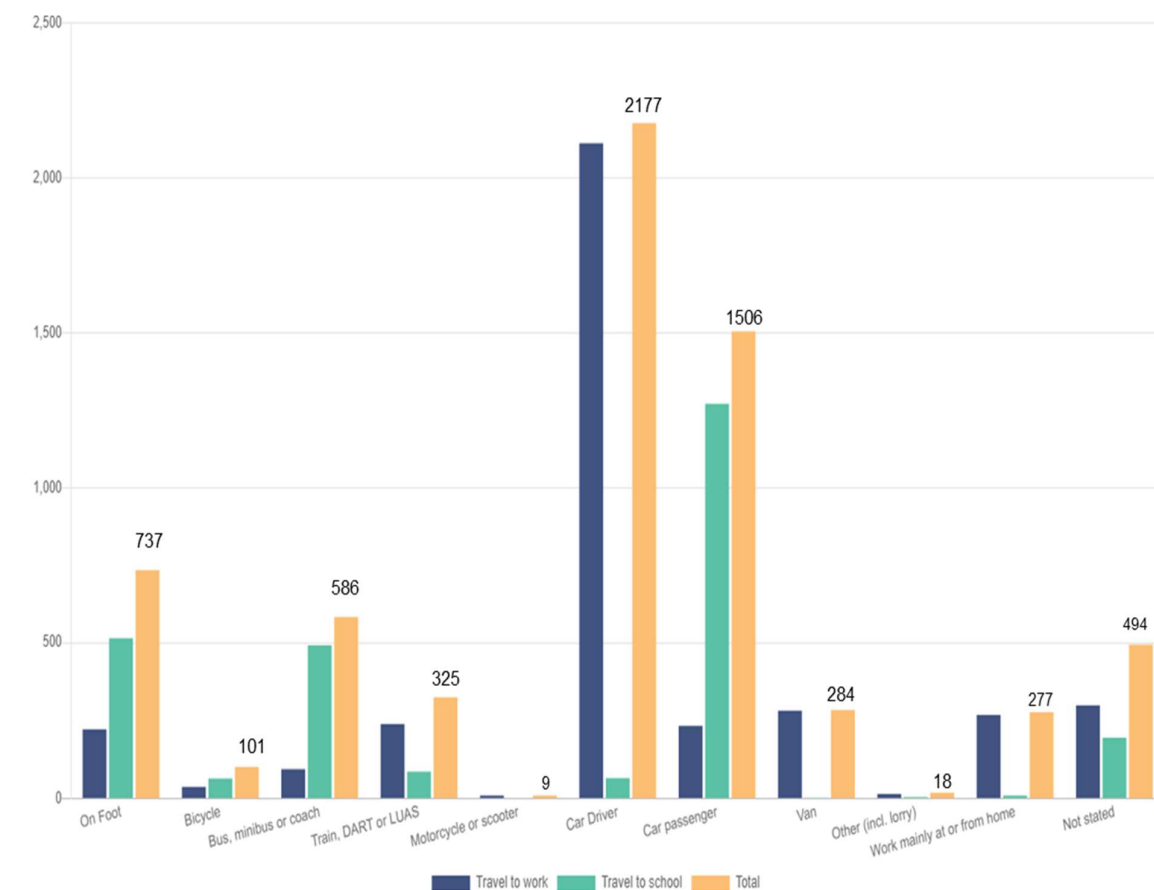
Levels of car ownership in Portarlinton is shown in Table 3-3.

No. of Cars	No. of Households	%
No motor car	464	15.2%
1 motor car	1,496	48.9%
2 motor cars	918	29.9%
3 motor cars	149	4.9%
4 or more motor cars	35	1.1%
Total	3,062	100.00%

Table 3-3: Level of Car Ownership in Portarlinton

3.7 Modal Share of Travel

Figure 3-4 below from Census 2022 demonstrates that 3,994 Portarlinton commuters (61.2%) use private transport (Motorcycle, Scooter, Car, Van, Lorry) as the mode of travel to work or school every day. This compares to 911 persons (14%) using public transport and 838 persons (12.9%) using green modes.



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Figure 3-4: Portarlinton Commuters – Means of Transport (2022 Census)

Table 3.3 demonstrates that 15.2% of households in Portarlinton do not own a car. Although similar to the Leinster average of 15%, this is above both the Laois average of 9% and the Offaly average of 10%. Car ownership is high, with almost 85% of households owning at least one car and almost 36% owning two or more.

These figures suggest a need for alternative modes of transport such as active transport infrastructure and reliable and safe public transport.

3.8 Land Use and Trip Generators

The following main land-uses are indicated on Figure 3-2 of this LTP:

- Community, Educational and Institutional Services and Facilities
- Enterprise and Employment
- General Business
- Industrial and Warehousing
- Neighbourhood Centres
- Open Space, Amenity & Recreation
- Residential and Strategic Residential Reserve
- Tourism & Leisure
- Town Centre
- Transport & Utilities

Portarlinton currently provides limited facilities for cyclists, and with many key locations situated at different areas throughout the town, there is great potential to provide a high-quality network of pedestrian and cycling routes.

Along with the upgrade and implementation of pedestrian and cycling facilities across the primary routes in Portarlinton, opportunities also exist to provide efficient permeability routes (Pathfinder Routes) through existing housing estates linking key locations in the town.

In conjunction with upgraded facilities on the broader street network, the permeability that these Pathfinder Routes would provide has the potential to improve safety, continuity and efficiency for pedestrians and cyclists, leading to an equivalent increase in the number of persons switching to sustainable modes of transport with a corresponding decrease in the number of vehicular journeys.

Schools

There are three Primary Schools in Portarlinton, all situated in the southeast of the town in County Laois. They are located in Canal Road (569 pupils), Station Road (548 pupils) and Sandy Lane (88 pupils). This is a total of 1,205 pupils locally.

Scoil Naomh Eoin National School is located in Killenard, 5.7km southeast of Portarlinton, and caters for 380 primary school students. Scoil Naomh Mhuire National School, which caters for approximately 142 pupils, is located in Cloneygowan approximately 7 km northwest of Portarlinton on the R420 Regional Road to Tullamore. Cloneyhurke NS, located 7.5km west of Portarlinton, caters for 38 primary school students.

The only second level school in Portarlinton is located off Patrick Street in Co. Offaly and caters for 1,092 students.

Portarlinton Further Education and Training Centre provides third level education courses as well as adult education courses.

Recreation and Sports

Portarlinton Leisure Centre is located centrally in the town off the Link Road and comprises a state-of-the-art gymnasium, aerobic rooms, meeting rooms, sports hall, changing facilities, communal area, coffee shop and swimming pool.

The People's Park is a three-hectare open space situated in the town centre between the Link Road and the River Barrow. It is linked to the adjoining Leisure Centre with all-weather soccer pitches and a mini basketball court, making this an active recreation facility catering for diverse activities, age groups and abilities. The frontage along the Link Road includes a car park, which has a dual purpose in providing for park users as well as shoppers. The park is designed predominantly for passive recreation with pathways, trees and grass. Seating is provided throughout. Additional features include a 9-Hole Disc Golf course, tree trail and orienteering course.

Portarlinton GAA Club, which is located on Canal Road in County Laois, includes a large hall and changing rooms along with a 1000-seat stand.

Gracefield GAA Club is located in Kilmalogue in County Offaly on the R420 Road to Tullamore, approximately 2km from Market Square. It is linked by footpath to the town centre.

Portarlinton Rugby Club is located in County Laois on Lea Road on the R420 to Monasterevin. It is located outside the Development Boundary approximately 4km east of the town and in an 80km/hr speed zone. Footpath connectivity coming from the town ceases at the end of the 60km/hr speed limit zone and past this location, no footpath exists over the remaining distance of 1.4km through an 80km/hr speed limit zone.

Commercial and Business

Areas of centralised commercial interest and thus trip destinations outside the core town centre include the following:

- Portarlinton Enterprise Centre on Canal Road, Co. Laois provides office space and industrial units together with an Innovation Hub that provides state-of-the art training rooms and hot-desk facilities.
- Dublin Road Business Park located on Lea Road, Co. Laois
- Riverside Commercial Park located on the Edenderry Road at Droughill, Co. Offaly.
- Botley Lane Industrial Park, Kilmalogue, Co. Offaly.

Residential Areas

The main residential areas are dispersed throughout Portarlinton, north and south of the River Barrow and represent areas where trips for work or education are almost entirely outgoing.

3.9 Existing Travel Patterns

Transportation options in Portarlinton include the following modes:

- Private Vehicles (including car drivers and passengers, motorcycles and vans)
- Commercial / Public Bus
- Walking
- Cycling
- Other (i.e., Lorries, e-scooters, etc.)

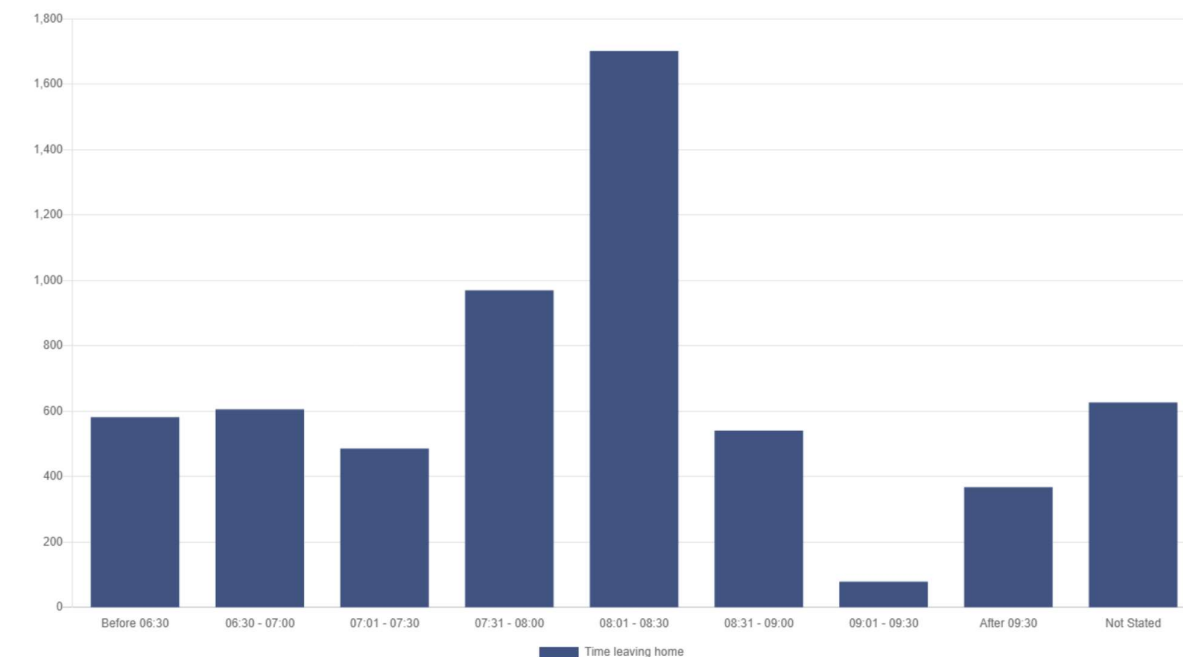
As shown in Table 3-4, 2022 census data indicates that 61.32% of the population of Portarlinton use private vehicles when travelling to work, school or college while 26.85% use more sustainable means of transport.

Persons at Work, School or College		Portarlinton		
		Persons	%	
Sustainable Transport	<i>On foot</i>	737	11.31	12.86%
	<i>Bicycle</i>	101	1.55	
	<i>Bus, minibus or coach</i>	586	9.00	13.99%
	<i>Train</i>	325	4.99	
Private Vehicle Based Transport	<i>Motorcycle or scooter</i>	9	0.14	61.32%
	<i>Motor car: Driver</i>	2177	33.42	
	<i>Motor car: Passenger</i>	1506	23.12	
	<i>Other (incl. Lorry or van)</i>	302	4.64	
Work mainly at or from home		277	4.25	11.83%
Not stated		494	7.58	
Total		6514	100%	100.00%

Table 3-4: Persons Aged 5 and Over – Means of Travel to Work, School or College

Reference to Figures 3-5 and 3-6, (Census 2022 Data) shows that the morning peak of travel time in Portarlinton is from 08:00 to 08:30 with a modal commuting time of 15 minutes or less.

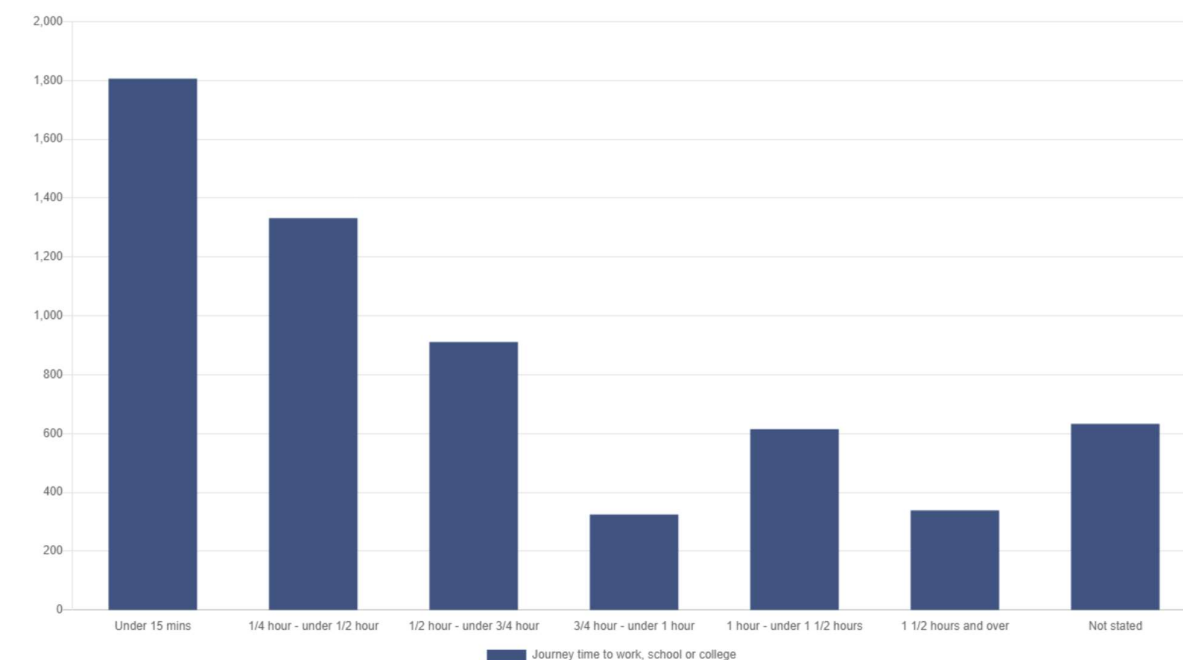
Population Aged 5 and Over – Time Leaving Home to Travel to Work, School or College



September 15, 2023 11:00:00 UTC

Figure 3-5: CSO Extracts (Census 2022)

Population Aged 5 and Over – Journey Time to Work, School or College



September 15, 2023 11:00:00 UTC

Figure 3-6: CSO Extracts (Census 2022)

3.10 Existing Infrastructure and Services

Portarlinton is reasonably well served by footpath facilities along the road network, with most of the town having footpaths on both sides of the road. However, many junctions do not have dropped kerbs and tactile paving to facilitate crossings by pedestrians, wheelchair users, etc. There is a distinct lack of provision for cyclists, with very few dedicated cycle ways / paths and almost no dedicated parking / storage facilities. Connectivity between cycle facilities is equally limited.

As a result, opportunities for internal cycle trips within the town and its surrounds are correspondingly limited so that, for example, cycling to and from school is impractical for many students. This is particularly relevant in respect of Coláiste Íosagáin, the only second level school in Portarlinton, catering for 1,092 students and located on the Offaly side of the River Barrow.

Primary and secondary schools in Portarlinton cater for a total population of 2,297 students. However, CSO trip data indicates that only 1.55% of all trips (including both to work and to school) are taken by bicycle. It can be reasonably assumed that this extremely low percentage is in part due to the deficit in cycle facilities described above.

In a 2021 survey of parents of two primary schools in Portarlinton, the Portarlinton Business Association Sustainability Energy Community ('PBA SEC') presented the following data on attitudes towards their children walking and cycling to school.

- 79.3% of the school - going children live within walking distance of their primary school.
- 93.1% of the children have access to a bicycle.
- 70.85% of the children travel to school by car or bus daily, while 21.63% walk and 7.21% cycle to school.
- 99.68% of the parents said they were aware of the health benefits for their children of walking or cycling to school.
- 94.04% of the parents felt, however, that the routes were not safe enough for their children to cycle to school.
- 99.06% of the parents said they would like to see safer and more segregated cycleways around Portarlinton.
- 89.66% of the parents said they would consider allowing their children to cycle to school if there were safer routes to do so and if lock - up facilities were available in the schools.

This survey confirms the significant benefits that would arise from the provision of appropriate cycling infrastructure in Portarlinton.

Cycle Routes Scheme

In 2022, Laois County Council commissioned the preparation of an Active Travel Plan for Portarlinton and further to this commission, a concept scheme for Active Travel infrastructure in Portarlinton was produced in November 2022. The scheme includes both cycle and permeability links.

The proposed Active Travel Plan addresses the following routes:

- French Church Street to Market Square
- Market Square to Main Street: this section includes the R420 Link Road and its junction with Main Street
- Main Street to Kilnacourt Wood and Station Road Roundabout
- Canal Road East to Station Road: this section includes Canal Road junction with Lea Road, Canal Road/Station Road Junction.

-
- Station Road: this section includes Railway Mews
 - Canal Road West
 - Ballymorris Road to Crowe Lane to Main Street
 - R419 Portlaoise Road to French Church Street.

The objectives of the primary Permeability Links considered as part of the proposed Active Travel Plan are based on:

- Enhancing the accessibility and convenience of local travel for residents and visitors alike by opening new links that connect key destinations such as schools, shops, parks and public transport hubs.
- Providing more direct, safe and comfortable routes for pedestrians and cyclists,
- Reducing reliance on cars and improving health and well-being.

Greenway Proposal

In July 2023, Portarlinton Business Association Sustainability Energy Community ('PBA SEC') submitted *Portarlinton Greenway Proposal* to both Laois and Offaly County Councils. This unsolicited proposal does not form part of the statutory consultation related to the making of the Portarlinton Joint Local Area Plan 2025~2031.

The proposal relates to the construction of a 'Greenway' walking and cycling route (including an active travel bridge) across the Barrow to connect the Laois and Offaly sides of the town via an active travel route.

The proposal states that Portarlinton is one of Ireland's fastest growing towns and that a strong argument exists for urgent improvements to its cycling and active travel infrastructure, particularly since there is a low rate of commuting to school by active travel modes in the town.

The proposal goes on to state that:

- Coláiste Íosagáin, the sole secondary school in the town, is located on the Offaly side of the town and caters for 1,100 pupils, the vast majority of whom live on the Laois side of the town, across the River Barrow. Laois pupils who choose to cycle to the school can only travel to the school across the Barrow Bridge and up Patrick Street, which has no cycle paths, and the danger associated with cycling that route acts as a great disincentive for children cycling to the school;
- Similarly, primary school students from the Offaly side of the town cannot safely cycle to the three primary schools in the town, all located on the Laois side of the Barrow. There are no current plans and extremely limited available space to introduce safe segregated cycling facilities on a street as narrow as Patrick Street;
- For residents on both sides of the Barrow who do not have access to a car, the lack of safe cycling infrastructure and heavy traffic volumes on Patrick Street can lead to a social and economic disconnect between the Laois and Offaly sides of the town.

The main elements to the Greenway Proposal are:

- Construction of a cycling and pedestrian path and bridge crossing the Barrow and connecting the Laois and Offaly sides of the town. This route would traverse approximately 500metres across a green-field site;
- Upgrades of Riverside estate on the Offaly side for safe cycling/walking (c. 300m);
- Upgrades to roads/crossings on the Offaly side from Riverside estate to Coláiste Íosagáin Secondary School (c. 325m).

Preliminary approaches to the affected landowners are reported to have met with positive responses to the proposal.

The following image is an extract from the proposal document and shows the approximate proposed route.



However, it is of note that the preferred option for Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme as described herein in Section 3.3, show that a considerable section of the proposed greenway east of the River Barrow would be located within the floodplain.

Public Transport

Portarlington is a focal point of the Irish railway network, being situated on the junction for train services to the west (Galway, Mayo), the south (Cork, Limerick, Tralee) and the east (Dublin, Kildare). Portarlington Train Station provides regular daily services to major urban areas in Ireland including Cork, Killarney, Limerick and Dublin. Portarlington also benefits from high frequency commuter trains to and from Dublin, during morning and evening peak times.

Dublin Coach operates a service through Route 816 that connects Portarlington to Kildare Village and Monasterevin from 06.35 AM to 10.05 PM. The Portarlington bus stop locations for this service are at Market Square, French Church Street, and on the Link Road.

At a more local level, the National Transport Authority funds the Rural Transport Programme to provide a Local Link for Laois/ Offaly – Route Identification Numbers 2328, 2330, 548, 549 and 560. These services are aimed at addressing rural social exclusion and the integration of rural transport services with other public transport services. An increase in the number of bus stops along the access roads and within the town limits would encourage more people to use public transport. Local Link Laois/Offaly has advised that they will be monitoring the transport needs of Portarlington to look at possible new routes or amendments to existing routes.

Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030

Resulting from a commission by Laois County Council, Downey Planning & Architecture in collaboration with MESH Architects, Wilson Architecture, TOBIN Consulting Engineers, and Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. issued their report to Laois County Council entitled "*Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030*" in September 2021.

As stated in that report, the main objective of the project is to create a more viable and visually attractive Town Centre in Portarlington for residents, visitors and workers through the appropriate rehabilitation of the Market House and other buildings, together with improvements to connectivity, public realm and amenities.

The key requirements of the project that directly relate to the Local Transport Plan for Portarlinton involved an evaluation of the potential to:

- Develop a vision for Portarlinton town centre and public realm, with a focus on the historic Market Square, Main Street, Spa Street, and French Church Street.
- Develop proposals for priority pedestrian and cycle linkages to connect the historic core with adjacent amenities such as People's Park, River Barrow, the Leisure and Community Centre, play areas and with the community amenity at Derryounce Bog.
- Improve traffic management of the town's historical centre aiming at prioritising pedestrians, including speed reduction, space sharing and traffic calming.
- Improve the public realm to increase biodiversity and promote safe, enjoyable, and environmentally friendly modes of transport.

3.11 Swot Analysis

As part of the development of the Portarlinton Regeneration Strategy, a SWOT analysis was carried out. This has been examined and expanded upon in the context of preparing the subject Portarlinton Local Transport Plan.

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique used to help identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to project planning.

The four components of the technique involve an examination of:

- Strengths: characteristics of Portarlinton that give it an advantage over other similar towns.
- Weaknesses: characteristics of Portarlinton at a disadvantage relative to other similar towns.
- Opportunities: elements in the environment that Portarlinton could use to its advantage.
- Threats: elements in the environment that could cause trouble for Portarlinton.

The SWOT analysis of Portarlinton is summarised in Table 3-5.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Portarlinton Railway Station: Portarlinton is a focal point of the Irish railway network and is situated on the junction for rail lines servicing the west, the south and the east.</p> <p>Bus service connections.</p> <p>Footpath network along existing road network.</p> <p>Majority of town has flat topography.</p> <p>The inclination to walk or cycle for work and educational trips as shown in Table 3-4 suggests that if severance issues are addressed and if additional travel links are developed, the resulting initiatives will provide a greater shift towards more sustainable forms of travel.</p> <p>Reasonable connectivity to the national road network.</p> <p>The River Barrow and the natural amenities it provides.</p> <p>Local parks/green areas.</p> <p>Leisure Amenities.</p> <p>Educational facilities.</p> <p>Richness of the built and natural heritage of the town centre.</p> <p>Varied and accessible services.</p> <p>Community and business groups.</p>	<p>Car dominant town centre environment.</p> <p>HGV traffic travelling through the town centre.</p> <p>Lack of a continuous inner relief road – currently, there are two separate inner relief roads, one linking Market Square to Main Street and another linking Foxcroft Street to French Church Street.</p> <p>Existing road widths on some streets such as Patrick Street and Bracklone Street may prohibit incorporation of the guidance contained in the Cycle Design Manual (prepared by NTA and published in September 2023).</p> <p>Lack of active travel infrastructure.</p> <p>Poor pedestrian / cyclist provision.</p> <p>Disjointed connectivity between Railway and town centre.</p> <p>Ad hoc bus stops.</p> <p>No ring road and only a limited section of inner relief road.</p> <p>Flooding risk.</p> <p>Lack of ESB charging facilities.</p> <p>Illegal parking impacting footpath accessibility in some locations.</p>

Table 3-5: SWOT Analysis

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Opportunity exists to advance the delivery of active travel infrastructure and to enhance the accessibility and convenience of local travel for residents and visitors alike by opening new links that will connect key destinations such as schools, shops, parks and public transport hubs. This in turn would provide more direct, safe and comfortable routes for pedestrians and cyclists, while reducing reliance on cars and improving health and well-being. A concept scheme for Active Travel infrastructure in Portarlinton (Report Ref. 22007-R-PD) was produced in November 2022 and includes both cycle and permeability links.</p> <p>Establish Portarlinton as a Public Transport Hub.</p> <p>Reinforce the green infrastructure of Portarlinton by enhancing its linkages along the River Barrow and to existing heritage locations such as Derryounce Trails and Lakes and Lea Castle.</p> <p>Portarlinton flood relief scheme not only provides an opportunity to protect amenities from future flood events but the opportunity to utilise infrastructure that might be provided as part of the scheme such as walking paths along embankments.</p>	<p>Potential uncertainty of funding – sufficient funding is necessary to deliver upgrades to the transport network, which may be impacted by government policy or other economic decisions.</p> <p>Concerns from local businesses and residents to proposed measures. Land acquisition will be required by the Local Authorities to deliver some of the proposed projects.</p> <p>Failure to progress flood relief scheme – if not undertaken then severe flooding events in the future will impact local amenities and the development of Portarlinton.</p> <p>Delays in progressing the relief roads that are in line with existing objectives of both the current Laois and Offaly County Development Plans will limit the effectiveness of many of the sustainable options available to improve transport facilities in Portarlinton due to the volume of traffic that will otherwise continue to dominate the study area and reduce the potential to reallocate and reprioritise existing road space. Such delays hinder the opportunity to develop active travel and pedestrian routes, provide better links to existing amenities, reduce traffic congestion, improve parking, free up road space, decrease air and noise pollution, help to remove HGVs from the town centre and improve the overall environment.</p>

Table 3-5: SWOT Analysis (*continued*)

4. ESTABLISH CONTEXT OF TRANSPORT PLAN

Vision

The vision for the Portarlinton Local Transport Plan is to ensure that Portarlinton 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.

To ensure that future transport decisions align to achieve this vision, principles have been set to guide the overarching transport strategy, which is to identify measures to improve connectivity within and through the town and support a better balance between vehicular traffic and more sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Consistent with local and national policy, the promotion of sustainable and active travel modes should follow the hierarchy of users shown in Figure 4-1. Suitable and adequate provisions for pedestrians is the highest priority while provisions for single occupancy private cars is the lowest.

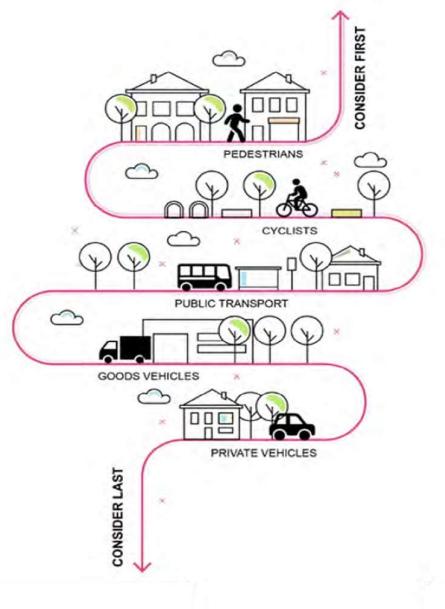


Figure 4-1 Hierarchy of Users

The following guiding principles of the transport strategy include aspects pertaining to quality, sustainability, safety, resilience, all of which relate to the quality of life of residents and visitors.

Guiding Principles

- (i) Integrated Transport Planning, Land Use and Urban Design
Adopt an approach where transport decisions are also focused on enhancing the image, quality of life, safety and cohesion of Portarlinton.
- (ii) People First
Prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport ahead of private vehicles in order to create a balanced transport system.
- (iii) Maintain and Enhance Connectivity
Maintain and enhance the capacity of the rail, road and bus network where possible, particularly given the role of Portarlinton Railway Station and the role of the rail network in providing connectivity between Portarlinton and the rest of Ireland.

- (iv) Safe Streets
Ensure streets are safe for all users by reducing speeds, providing safe crossings and dedicated infrastructure.
- (v) Value for Money
Ensure proposals are assessed on their cost and ease of implementation in order to prioritise best value for money.
- (vi) Vibrant and Great for Business
Design streets to enhance businesses in Portarlington and maximise street life both day and night.
- (vii) Efficient
Re-allocate Street space as efficiently as possible to optimise other functions such as cycling, public transport, footpaths, outdoor dining and furniture.
- (viii) Evidence-based decision making
Address traffic issues by reducing unnecessary trips and improving the attraction of alternative modes.
- (ix) 10-Minute Towns
The 10-Minute Town Concept promotes permeable mobility where access is available within a 10-minute walk/cycle or a public transport connection from people's homes to all essential services. The benefits of this concept include lower emissions, improved health, placemaking and quality of life.

Figure 4-2 indicates the walking areas encompassed within 5 minute, 10 minute and 15 minute walking-distance of the Market Square (based on an average walking pace of 1.33 m/s or 4.8km/hr). Clearly, large areas of Portarlington lie outside the 10-minute target for walking. However, with adequate cycle facilities, the target could be met by cyclists.

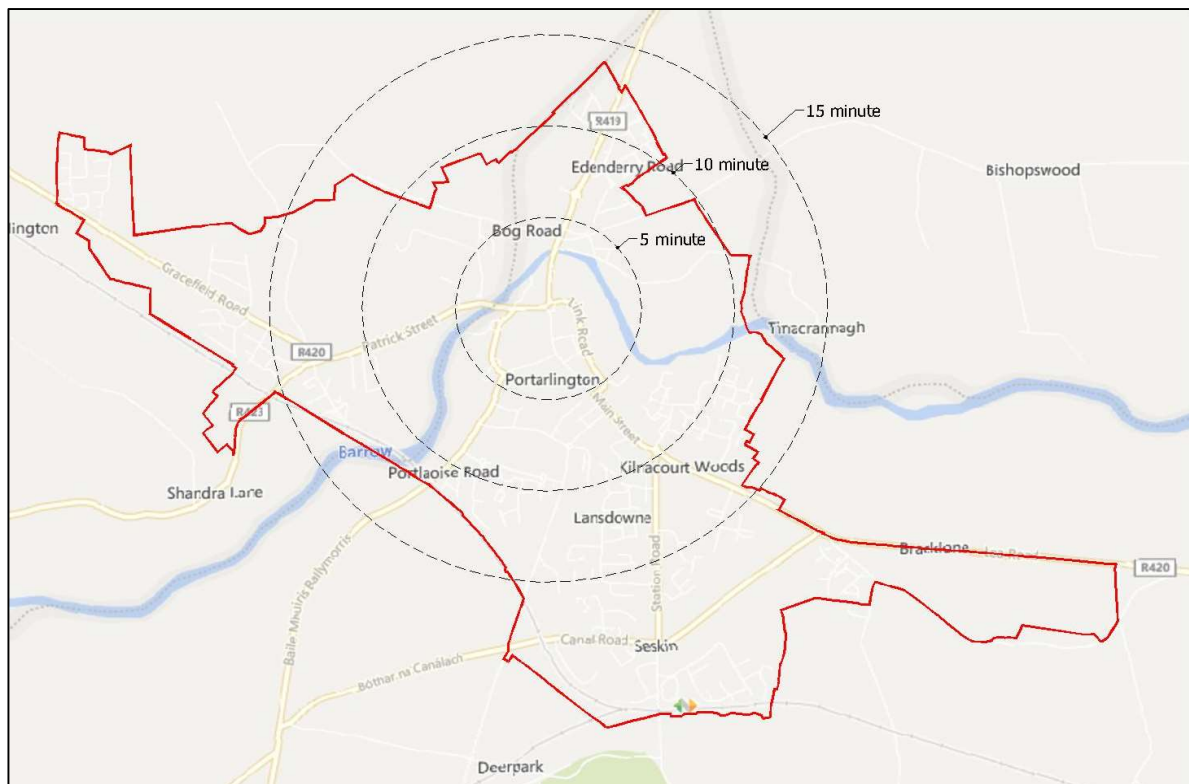


Figure 4-2 Portarlington Showing 400m and 800m Walking Radii from Market Square

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

(x) Avoid-Shift Improve

This Sustainable Urban Transport concept, as supported by the NTA seeks to:

- **Avoid** the need to improve the transport network through sustainable land use planning and the use of transport demand management techniques to reduce the number of trips required.
- **Shift** from single use private vehicle usage to active and public transport, and
- **Improve** the energy efficiency of transport modes and vehicle technology. This concept is discussed and advocated in the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action's Report on reducing emissions in the transport sector by 51% by 2030 (June 2021).



Figure 4-3 - Avoid- Shift- Improve Principle (Source: National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022)

(xi) Decide and Provide in Transport Planning

'Decide and Provide' is a transport planning tool supported by the NTA that is vision-led rather than forecast led, it seeks to set out the desired transport future for a settlement and to provide the means to achieve this vision. This principle involves determining a future transport vision for the town, developing a series of interventions to achieve this, prioritising options for moving towards this vision and putting a strategy in place to realise this future.

Objectives

Guided by these principles, the following objectives are proposed. These build to form the necessary integrated strategy for Portarlinton that promotes positive outcomes from a movement and place perspective.

- Permeability
Improve permeability between neighbourhoods, thus enhancing attractiveness and promoting connectivity.
- Active travel
Improve active travel routes, walking and cycling connections and increase the levels of physical activity.
- Public transport
Encourage the use of public transport and reduce the environmental impact of transportation.
- Integration of land use and transport
Integrate existing and future land use and transport networks.
- Parking
Utilise existing on-street parking zones along certain streets to improve the public realm, support travel by sustainable mode and provide other functions such as wider footpath, cycle parking, outdoor dining areas, new trees/planting etc.

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

-
- Safety
Improve and enhance safety for all, especially for vulnerable road users.
 - Traffic Management
Identify and implement interventions to reduce through-traffic.
 - Feasibility and value for money
Provide good value for money.

The achievement of these objectives will have the desired effect of increasing the share of trips made by sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

4.1 Transport Strategy

Based on the vision, principles and objectives outlined herein, the sub-strategies that make up the overarching transport strategy for Portarlington are further described in the following paragraphs.

The implementation of Active Travel measures must not be contingent on the completion of new roads schemes and the delivery of Active Travel measures should happen in advance of or parallel with development of new or improved roads.

Pedestrian Sub-strategy

The Pedestrian Sub-strategy seeks to encourage those in Portarlington to walk more frequently by increasing the safety and attractiveness of the pedestrian infrastructure by focusing on improving the safety, accessibility, connectivity and attractiveness of walking as a mode of transport and recreation for both residents and visitors.

The main objectives of the pedestrian sub-strategy are:

- To improve permeability for pedestrians,
- To provide new footpaths where there are gaps in the existing network or where there is high demand for walking,
- To improve existing footpaths by:
 - providing new pedestrian crossings and improving existing crossing where they are needed to facilitate safe and convenient crossing of roads, and
 - by integrating walking with other modes of transport such as cycling and public transport.

The pedestrian sub-strategy contributes to the national policy goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving public health and enhancing social inclusion.

Cycle Sub-strategy

The Cycle Sub-strategy is aimed at promoting cycling as a safe, convenient, and sustainable mode of transportation. Its primary focus is on creating a comprehensive network of cycling infrastructure throughout the town, including new cycle lanes and improved cycle parking. By developing a cycle-friendly environment, the plan seeks to encourage more people to cycle as a means of commuting, shopping, going to school, and as a leisure activity. Through the development of a safe and accessible cycle network, traffic congestion will be reduced, air quality improved, and the health and wellbeing of residents will be enhanced.

The main objectives of the cycling sub-strategy are:

- To provide new high quality cycle infrastructure designed in accordance with the guidance contained in the Cycle Design Manual (prepared by NTA and published in September 2023), where there are gaps in the existing network, particularly where there is high demand for cycling, such as on routes to schools,
- To provide new cycle parking where needed to facilitate secure and convenient storage of bikes,
- To integrate cycling with other modes of transport such as walking and public transport.

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

Permeability Sub-strategy

Permeability is the ease with which people can move around an area using different modes of transport, especially walking and cycling, addressing the desire lines as closely as possible. A permeability plan should aim to identify and address the barriers and gaps that prevent people from travelling within and between different areas of Portarlinton.

The Permeability Sub-strategy emphasizes the creation of new links that will enhance the accessibility and convenience of local travel for residents and visitors alike. It will focus on opening new links that connect key destinations such as schools, shops, parks and public transport hubs. These links will provide more direct, safe and comfortable routes for pedestrians and cyclists, reduce their reliance on cars and improve their health and well-being.

Public Transport Sub-strategy

The Public Transport Sub-strategy is aimed at improving the accessibility, reliability, and sustainability of public transport services within the town. The main objectives of the public transport strategy are:

- Increase public transport mode share for commuting trips.
- Make interchange between public transport modes as smooth as possible.
- Work with the relevant stakeholders including the NTA to:
 - a. Improve train station facilities and engage with the National Transport Authority and Iarnród Éireann regarding the feasibility of developing an integrated Public Transport Hub at Portarlinton Train Station.
 - b. Investigate the potential for new bus routes in the study area.
 - c. Provide new bus stops where necessary and improve infrastructure for bus stops.

Road Network Sub-strategy

The Road Network Sub-strategy aims at rationalising vehicular movements in the town to improve circulation and support other elements of the overall strategy through reallocation of road space to sustainable modes of transport. This can be achieved through a range of measures such as junction design/layout improvements, the incorporation of Active Travel into existing roads and streets, and new relief roads in line with existing objectives of both the current Laois and Offaly County Development Plans.

The main objectives of the traffic management strategy are:

- Diversion of through traffic/strategic traffic, especially HGVs, from roads and key junctions used by pedestrians and cyclists,
- Enable more effective traffic management within and around Portarlinton and reallocate town core road-space in favour of public transport services and walking/cycling facilities.

Car Parking Sub-strategy

The Car Parking Sub-strategy proposes a range of measures to improve the existing car parking function in Portarlinton to facilitate sustainable modes of transport and to provide facilities for electric car charging. This sub-strategy recognises the need to reduce the demand for on-street parking along certain streets to improve the public realm and provide other functions such as wider footpaths, cycle parking and outdoor dining areas.

It will be necessary to conduct a car parking analysis of the town, the outputs of which will comprise a comprehensive parking plan for the town centre that will determine the changes required to improve the existing car parking arrangements and possible changes to Parking Bye-Laws.

As part of this exercise and strictly subject to environmental and planning considerations, the following locations could be considered for use as alternatives to some of the town centre on-street parking:

- Possible location at Foxcroft Street

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

- Possible location at Upper Main Street at the rear of the former AIB
- Off-street parking located at the Link Road.

Feasibility and Value for Money

The feasibility and value for money of the proposed measures plays a critical role in the Portarlington Local Transport Plan. There is a need to prioritise lower costs and easily implemented measures, such as Rapid Build facilities, that provide the most significant benefits for the town. By ensuring that proposed interventions are practical and cost-effective, Portarlington can make a sound investment in its future transport network.

The cost of implementation includes not only the initial capital cost, but also ongoing maintenance costs. It is important to prioritise measures that are affordable and could be funded through more traditional means. For example, consideration should always be given to firstly investing in low-cost measures such as improved signage or designated cycle lanes, ahead of expensive infrastructure projects.

Investing in measures that encourage active travel, such as cycling and walking, will have a positive impact on public health, reduce congestion and improve air quality. These benefits may outweigh the cost of implementation and ongoing maintenance. Additionally, measures that have a positive impact on the environment, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, will provide long-term cost savings.

Another important factor in the feasibility and value for money assessment is the ease of implementation of the proposed measures. Measures that are easy to implement and cause minimal disruption to existing infrastructure and services are likely to be more successful. In considering feasibility, it is also important to link the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure with private development through the planning process, where appropriate.

4.2 Transport Gaps Identified in Portarlington

Having considered the guiding principles, objectives and strategies set out herein for the Portarlington Local Transport Plan and having reviewed the baseline data, including the Cycle Routes Scheme prepared in November 2022 and the SWOT analysis, the following gaps in infrastructure in Portarlington are apparent when compared to the applicable policies and plans. These gaps form the basis of several transport measures which have been developed and which are described further in Section 5:

(i) Pedestrian Facilities

- Walking distances to many of the main trip generators are extended due to severance caused by lack of permeability in some locations. Examples are lack of walkways between high density residential areas such as Ballymorris Court, Canal Court, Whitefields, St. Brigid's Square, Arlington Estate and facilities on Canal Road such as St. Patrick's National School and Portarlington GAA.
- Minimal pedestrian crossing points of the River Barrow. The Portarlington Greenway proposal described in Section 3.7 herein would address this and would improve both pedestrian and cycle facilities in the town.
- Potential benefits of the River Barrow and linkages between the town and the Barrow are not being maximised to their full potential.
- Limited road/junction crossing facilities, with lengthy junction crossing distances in places.
- Town centre is car focused with minimal pedestrian-only areas.
- Authorised on-street parking reduces potential for shared surface pedestrian friendly spaces.
- Unauthorised on-street parking on footpaths obstructs pedestrians.

(ii) Cycle Facilities

- Lack of cycling infrastructure throughout the town for functional use.
- Lack of cycle parking at trip generators.

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

-
- c) Lack of infrastructure for recreational use and cycling tourists – the Blueway along People’s Park is limited in scope and could be extended.
 - d) Unauthorised on-street parking creates challenging environment for cyclists to travel on the road.
 - e) Road and junction widths are poorly defined in locations - this creates ambiguity relating to cyclists’ road positioning.
 - f) Cyclists required to choose between roads which are generally of insufficient width and poorly aligned to accommodate both cyclists and vehicles, and footpaths which are of insufficient width to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians and are often obstructed by parked vehicles.
- (iii) Public Transport
- a) Transport links to Portarlinton Railway Station are in need of improvement.
 - b) Bicycle facilities at Portarlinton Railway Station are in need of improvement.
 - c) Bus links between the town and Portarlinton Railway Station are in need of improvement.
 - d) Lack of formal bus stops.
 - e) Minimal accessible public transport facilities at formal bus stops.
 - f) Additional bus stop locations along the access roads and within the town would encourage an increased uptake of public transport.
- (iv) Road Network
- a) All routes through Portarlinton take all modes of transport through busy built-up areas near schools, business / commercial centres and residential areas. The lack of inner relief roads and / or a by-pass route results in traffic congestion and delays and discourages sustainable modes of transport.
 - b) Below standard junction design with limited pedestrian crossing at key junctions along the R419, R420 and R423.
 - c) Town centre speed limit of 50km/h is incompatible with town centre pedestrian movements and discourages cycling as a mode of transport.
 - d) Speed limit of 50km/h along primary routes to schools within urban areas discourages cycling as a mode of transport.
- (v) Parking Facilities
- a) Minimal parking restrictions for on-street parking facilitating extensive informal parking in undesirable locations.
 - b) Minimal charging stations for electric vehicles.
 - c) Minimal accessible parking facilities such as Disabled, Age Friendly or Parent and Child.
 - d) No ‘Park and Stride’ facility.

4.3 Modal Share Targets

It is considered that the Transport Gaps identified in Section 4.2, particularly those relating to pedestrian and cycle facilities, contribute to the predominance of private cars as the main form of transport for the population of Portarlington.

It must therefore become a priority to support and facilitate a modal shift to sustainable transport options over the period of the Portarlington JLAP 2025~2031 and to unlock the benefits of sustainable mobility as depicted in Figure 4-4, which is an extract from the National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022.



Figure 4-4 - Benefits of Sustainable Mobility

In setting modal share targets, the ambitions of both the current Laois and Offaly County Development Plans have been taken into account in determining suitable targets for Portarlington.

Chapter 8 of the Offaly County Development Plan 2021~2027 (Sustainable Transport Strategy) states that Offaly County Council will, in improving the modal share shift away from the car, exercise an Avoid – Shift –

Improve framework as set out in Figure 4-5 hereunder. It also states that each town plan includes modal share objectives tailored to its specific needs.

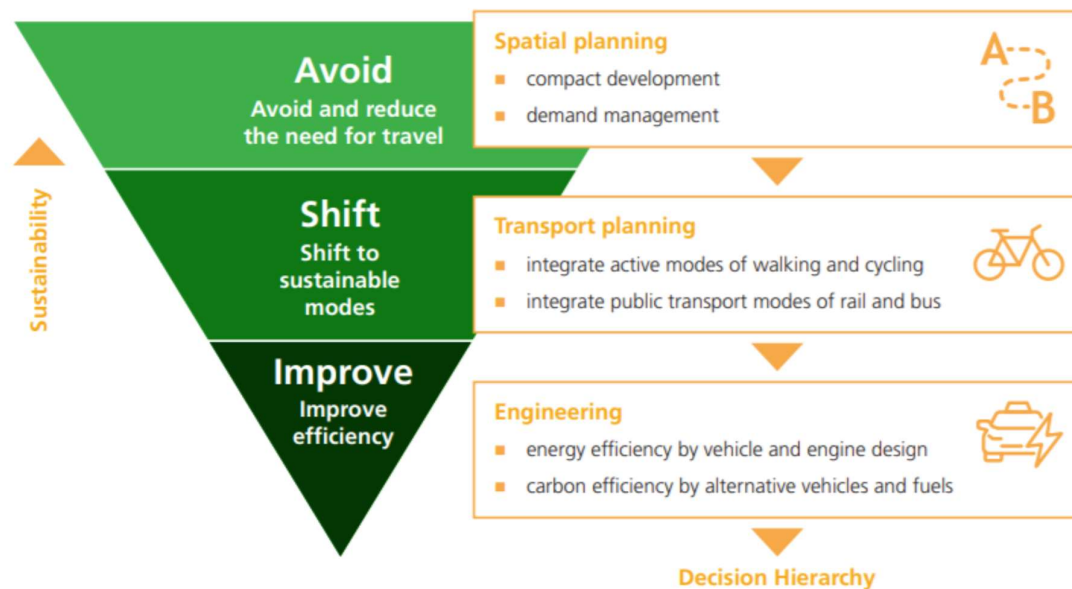


Figure 4-5 - Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework (Source: EPA Document 'Ireland's Environment - An Integrated Assessment 2020') & Offaly CDP 2021~2027

The Laois County Development Plan 2021~2027 states in Section 14.8.1 that the mode share targets set for County Laois are based on the targets set out in the policy document: "*A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020*". It is the aim of Laois County Council to achieve these targets by 2040. The targets are:

- Work-related commuting by car will be reduced to 45%.
- By accommodating car drivers on other modes such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing, travel by means of these sustainable modes are targeted to rise to 55%.

The Climate Action Plan 2024 sets a target of 50% increase in additional active travel and public transport journeys per day and a 20% reduction in kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars by 2030. Modal shift change will occur by means of a number of factors including lifestyle change, change in settlement patterns (such as more compact growth in line with Town Centre First principles) and investment on active travel and public transport.

Taking the policies and objectives of the following policy documents into consideration and based on the approaches taken in those policy documents, targets for modal share in Portarlinton have been established for work and education trips:

- Laois County Development Plan 2021~2027
- Offaly County Development Plan 2021~2027
- Climate Action Plan 2024
- Laois Climate Action Plan 2024~2029
- Offaly Climate Action Plan 2024~2029.

The targets are set out in Table 4-1.

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

Census 2022 data shows that the total number of people who travel to work by car in Portarlinton is 2,345 (69.34%) and the total number who travel to school by car is 1,338 (49.69%).

Given the urban profile of Portarlinton and the strong potential for a bigger proportion of local trips to be undertaken by sustainable means, the targets outlined in Table 4-1 should be seen as minimum targets to be achieved during the lifetime of the Portarlinton LPT 2025~2031.

Modal Share Targets (Work Trips)				
	Walking	Cycling	Public Transport	Car
2022 Baseline	5.83%	0.97%	8.74%	69.34%
Mode Share Target	20%	15%	20%	45%
% Change	+14.17%	+14.03%	+11.26%	-24.34%

Modal Share Targets (School, College or Childcare Trips)				
	Walking	Cycling	Public Transport	Car
2022 Baseline	19.04%	2.37%	21.37%	49.69%
Mode Share Target	25%	10%	25%	40%
% Change	+5.96%	+7.63%	+3.63	-9.69%

Table 4-1 – Modal Shift Targets

5. OPTIONS ASSESSMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND TIMELINES

In order to determine overarching transportation measures for Portarlinton, the gaps in infrastructure identified in Section 4 were assessed against the context, vision, guiding principles and objectives of this Local Transport Plan. As a result, measures have been identified under the following transport headings:

- Pedestrian Facilities,
- Cycle Facilities including Cycle Parking,
- Permeability,
- Public Transport,
- Road Network,
- Car Parking Facilities.

Figure 5-1 presents straight line 5-, 10- and 15-minute radii for walking outwards from Market Square. Only one Primary School (Sandy Lane) lies within the 10-minute radius. While all the schools lie within the 10-minute cycling radius from Market Square, there is a lack of dedicated cycling infrastructure to provide a safe environment and to support a modal shift to cycling.

Deficiencies for pedestrians in terms of junctions and road crossings, footpaths, lack of permeability in some places, unruly car-parking and driver behaviour all serve to currently limit a modal shift to walking.



Figure 5-1 Portarlinton Showing 5, 10 and 15-Minute Walking Radii from Market Square

Potential timelines for the implementation of transportation measures are set out by reference to timescales defined as follows:

- **Short term:** Measure intended for implementation within 1-2 years.
- **Medium term:** Measure intended for implementation within 3-5 years.
- **Long term:** Measure intended for implementation within 6-10 years.

In considering the implementation of transportation measures, it must be kept in mind that Portarlinton is one of a number of development areas throughout Laois and Offaly which require investment in transport infrastructure and services.

5.1 Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA)

In order to assess the transportation measures recommended in this plan, a qualitative Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA) was undertaken in order to inform the prioritisation of the various measures. MCA is an appraisal tool that ranks proposals based on identified criteria. The criteria would normally reflect policy, programme or project objectives and other considerations as appropriate, such as value for money, environment, social inclusion, etc.

Specific criteria have been developed for each sub-strategy that make up the overarching transport strategy for Portarlinton.

The resulting matrices in respect of each element of the transport strategy are shown in Table 5.1 to 5.5 respectively.

Colour	Matrix Definition	
	3	Significant benefit / improvement
	2	Some benefit / improvement
	1	Neutral
	0	Significant disadvantage

Matrix Definitions

While the overall suite of measures developed for each transport mode is presented in Table 5-1 to Table 5-5 and will inform the Implementation and Priority Plan, a summary table of some of the Localised and Strategic Measures are presented in Tables 5-6 and 5-7 respectively.

The criteria for each sub-strategy that make up the overall transport strategy for Portarlinton are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Pedestrian

The criteria used for pedestrian measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Improves safety.
- Improves part of a key route to schools.
- Potential cost.
- Ease of implementation.

Cycle

The criteria used for cycle measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Improves safety.
- Improves part of a key route to schools
- Potential cost
- Ease of implementation.

The criteria used for **cycle parking** measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Located adjacent to a key destination.
- Can be easily accessed from the proposed cycling network.
- Can be implemented without other infrastructural changes.
- Allows for interchange with other transport modes.

Permeability (Pathfinder Routes)

The criteria used for permeability measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Improves safety.
- Improves part of a key route to schools.
- Potential cost.
- Ease of implementation.

Public Transport

The criteria used for public transport measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Improvement to interchange between modes.
- Improves attractiveness of public transport.
- Potential cost.
- Ease of implementation.

Road Network

The criteria used for public transport measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Provides additional space for active travel mode and /or public transport.
- Reduces congestion.
- Potential cost.
- Ease of implementation.

Appendix 2 - Local Transport Plan

Car Parking

The criteria used for car parking measures are as follows:

- Forms part of the transport objectives from the Local Transport Plan or higher tier plans.
- Improves potential for active travel.
- Improves public realm.
- Potential cost.
- Ease of implementation.

The following elements of the transport strategy are shown on Map 5 (*Transport Elements - Schematic Layouts*) in Appendix A of this Local Transport Plan:

- Active Travel Routes (AT)
- Active Travel Pathfinder Routes (P)
- Road Network comprising Traffic Management (TR) and Roads (R).

Options	Transport Objectives	Safety	Improves Part of a Key Route to School	Cost	Ease of Implementation	Average
Provide Permeability Links in locations between Ballymorris Road and Station Road and Canal Road. (P1)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Provide Permeability Links in locations between Bracklone Street and Canal Road. (P2)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carry out survey to determine defective footpaths and/or gaps in the existing infrastructure and design a priority list for repair/infill works in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders.	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
Provide safe crossing points at all junctions.	2	3	3	2.5	2.5	2.6
Provide Active Travel from Main Street to Kilnacourt Wood and Station Road Roundabout. (AT4)	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
Provide Active Travel from Canal Road East to Station Road including junction of Canal Road and Lea Road. (AT6)	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
Provide Active Travel on Canal Road West. (AT7)	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
Provide Active Travel from junction of Canal Road West/Ballymorris Road to Crowe Lane to Main Street. (AT8 / AT9)	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
Provide controlled pedestrian crossings at key crossing points.	2	3	3	2	2	2.4
Provide Active Travel between French Church Street and Market Square. (AT1)	3	3	3	1.5	1.5	2.4
Provide Active Travel link on Bog Road (L7178) west of its junction with Botley Lane (AT12)	3	3	3	1.5	1.5	2.4
Provide Active Travel between Market Square and Main Street, including the R420 Link Road and its junction with Main Street. (AT4)	3	3	2	2	2	2.4
Provide Active Travel from R419 Portlaoise Road at Ballymorris to French Church Street. (AT11)	3	3	3	1.5	1.5	2.4

Table 5-1: MCA Matrix - Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability Measures

Options	Transport Objectives	Safety	Improves Part of a Key Route to School	Cost	Ease of Implementation	Average
Provide Active Travel from Kilmalogue/Bog Road Junction to Coláiste Íosagáin and continuing along R423 Road to Na Cluainte Estate. (AT2-Phase 1)	3	3	3	1.5	1.5	2.4
Provide Active Travel from Botley Lane/French Church Street Junction along Patrick Street to Kilmalogue/Bog Road Junction. (AT2 – Phase 2)	3	3	3	1.5	1.5	2.4
Provide Active Travel on Bog Road from Coláiste Íosagáin to White Heart Lane serving New Residential and Community Use Lands. (AT2 – Phase 3)	3	3	3	1.5	1.5	2.4
Improve existing footpaths throughout	2	2	3	2	2	2.2
Provide Active Travel on Marian Hill Road/ Droughill Road serving new Residential lands at Droughill. (AT14)	3	3	2	1.5	1.5	2.2
Provide Active Travel on Station Road (including Railway Mews, which connects Portarlinton Station to Station Road) and junction of Canal Road and Station Road. (AT4)	3	3	3	2	2	2.2
Provide Active Travel from French Church Street to Botley Lane to Local Road at end of Botley Lane to Spa Street and back to Market Square. (AT1)	3	3	2	1.5	1.5	2.2
Modify existing footpaths to accommodate shared cycle/footpath.	2	3	2	2	2	2.2
Provide Amenity Active Travel link to Derryounce Lake.	3	2	1	2.5	2	2.1
Provide Active Travel link to serve the 'employment lands' on the R420 Regional Road (Lea Road). (AT13)	3	3	0	2	2	2
Within the Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris referred to in Table 5-4, provide Greenway to include new pedestrian / cyclist bridge across River Barrow catering for all active travel modes and vulnerable road users, upgrade of Riverside Estate and upgrade of crossings from Riverside Estate to Coláiste Íosagáin.	2	3	3	1	1	2
Provide Permeability Link between Kilnacourt Wood and Amenity Active Travel route along River Barrow. (P3)	2	2	1.5	2	2	1.9
Provide off-line Amenity Active Travel link from Lea Road with potential to link to Portarlinton RFC and Arlington AFC.	3	2.5	1	1.5	1	1.8

Table 5-1 (Contd.): MCA Matrix - Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability Measures

Options	Transport Objectives	Located Adjacent to Key Destination	Easy Access from Cycling Network	Does Not Require Other Infrastructural Changes	Allows for Interchange with Other Transport Modes	Average
Incorporate bicycle storage at selected suitable locations.	2	3	3	2.5	3	2.7
Provision of additional cycle parking at railway station, schools, Leisure Centre and sports facilities.	2	2	3	3	2	2.4

Table 5-2: MCA Matrix - Cycle Parking Measures

Options	Transport Objectives	Provides Improvement to Interchange Between Modes	Improves Attractiveness of Public Transport	Cost	Ease of Implementation	Average
Improve bus links between town and Portarlinton Railway Station.	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
Provide formalised bus stops for Local Link bus service.	3	2	3	3	3	2.8
Support the increased connection of bus services.	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
Engage with bus services providers and other stakeholders to rationalise bus stop locations – in so doing, review the current locations of bus stops and increase where deemed necessary.	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
Engage with the National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann and other stakeholders regarding the feasibility of developing an integrated Public Transport Hub at Portarlinton Train Station.	2	3	3	2	2	2.4

Table 5-3: MCA Matrix – Public Transport Measures

Options	Transport Objectives	Provides Additional Space to Active Travel Mode/Public Transport.	Reduces Congestion	Cost	Ease of Implementation	Average
Traffic Management Scheme TR2 – one way traffic eastbound only along Sandy Lane.	3	3	3	2	2	2.6
Traffic Management Scheme TR1 – one way traffic southbound only along Spa Street from junction with Local Road as far as Market Square.	3	3	3	2	1.5	2.5
Traffic Management Scheme TR3 – one way traffic eastbound only along Bracklone Street as far as Canal Road.	3	3	3	2	1.5	2.5
Provide inner relief road connecting the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Kilmalogue. (R2)	3	3	3	1	1.5	2.3
Provide Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris.	3	3	3	0.5	1.0	2.1

Table 5-4: MCA Matrix – Road Network Measures

Options	Transport Objectives	Improves Potential for Active Travel	Improves Public Realm	Cost	Ease of Implementation	Average
Implement changes to eliminate unauthorised parking on footpaths to provide safer passage for Vulnerable Road Users.	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
Modify the Parking Bye-Laws to reflect the plan approved subsequent to the completion of the car parking analysis.	2	3	3	3	2	2.6
Conduct a car parking analysis of the town, the outputs of which will comprise a comprehensive parking plan for the town centre.	1	3	3	3	2	2.4
Examine possibilities provision of Park and Stride facilities.	2	3	1	3	2	2.2
Provide EV Charging Stations at suitable locations.	2	1	1	2	2	1.6

Table 5-5: MCA Matrix – Car Parking Measures

Measures	Options
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Carry out survey to determine defective footpaths and/or gaps in the existing infrastructure and design a priority list for repair/infill works in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders.
	Improve existing footpaths and provide safe crossing points at all junctions.
	Provide controlled pedestrian crossings at key crossing points.
	Provide off-line Amenity Active Travel link from Lea Road with potential to link to Portarlington RFC and Arlington AFC.
Public Transport	Improve bus links between town and Portarlington Railway Station.
	Engage with bus services providers and other stakeholders to rationalise bus stop locations.
Road Network	Traffic Management Scheme TR2 – one way traffic eastbound only along Sandy Lane.
	Traffic Management Scheme TR1 – one way traffic southbound only along Spa Street from junction with Local Road as far as Market Square.
	Traffic Management Scheme TR3 – one way traffic eastbound only along Bracklone Street as far as Canal Road.
	Provide inner relief road connecting the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Kilmalogue. (R2)
Car Parking	Conduct a car parking analysis of the town, the outputs of which will comprise a comprehensive parking plan for the town centre.
	Implement changes to eliminate unauthorised parking on footpaths to provide safer passage for vulnerable road users.

Table 5-6: Summary of Localised Measures

Measures	Options	Timeline
Public Transport	Engage with the National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann and other stakeholders regarding the feasibility of developing an integrated Public Transport Hub at Portarlinton Train Station.	Short Term
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Provide Active Travel from Main Street to Kilnacourt Wood and Station Road Roundabout. (AT4)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel from Canal Road East to Station Road including junction of Canal Road and Lea Road. (AT6)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel on Canal Road West. (AT7)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel from Ballymorris Road to Crowe Lane to Main Street. (AT8 / AT9)	Short Term
	Provide Active Travel along Sandy Lane (AT10).	Short Term
Road Network	Traffic Management Scheme TR2 – one way traffic eastbound only along Sandy Lane.	Medium Term
	Traffic Management Scheme TR1 – one way traffic southbound only along Spa Street from junction with Local Road as far as Market Square.	Medium Term
	Traffic Management Scheme TR3 – one way traffic eastbound only along Bracklone Street as far as Canal Road.	Medium Term
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Provide Active Travel from Kilmalogue/Bog Road Junction to Coláiste Íosagáin and continuing along R423 Road to Na Cluainte Estate. (AT2-Phase 1)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel from Botley Lane/French Church Street Junction along Patrick Street to Kilmalogue/Bog Road Junction. (AT2 – Phase 2)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel on Bog Road from Coláiste Íosagáin to White Heart Lane serving New Residential and Community Use Lands. (AT2 – Phase 3)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel on Marian Hill Road/ Droughill Road serving new Residential lands at Droughill. (AT14)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel link on Bog Road (L7178) west of its junction with Botley Lane. (AT12)	Medium to Long Term
	Provide Active Travel from R419 Portlaoise Road at Ballymorris to French Church Street. (AT11)	Medium to Long Term
Road Network	Provide inner relief road connecting the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Kilmalogue. (R2).	Long Term
	Provide Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris.	Long Term
Pedestrian, Cycle & Permeability	Provide Active Travel between French Church Street and Market Square. (AT1)	Long Term
	Provide Active Travel between along Botley Lane from its junction with French Church Street. (AT1)	Long Term
	Provide Active Travel on Station Road (including Railway Mews, which connects Portarlinton Station to Station Road) and junction of Canal Road and Station Road. (AT4)	Long Term
	Provide Active Travel link to serve the 'employment lands' on the R420 Regional Road (Lea Road). (AT13)	Long Term
	Within the Southern Transport Corridor from the R420 at Shanderry to the local road at Ballymorris, provide Greenway to include new pedestrian / cyclist bridge across River Barrow catering for all active travel modes and vulnerable road users, upgrade of Riverside Estate and upgrade of crossings from Riverside Estate to Coláiste Íosagáin.	Long Term

Table 5-7: Summary of Strategic Measures

6. PLAN PREPARATION AND FINALISATION

This Local Transport Plan for Portarlington examines the transport network within Portarlington to provide supportive analysis, which will assist in providing an evidence-based development of future revisions of the Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan. It also sets out objectives which may be included as objectives in the Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan.

Having examined the transport context of Portarlington and outlined a baseline analysis of the current conditions, key constraints and opportunities have been identified. These have informed the development of a suite of measures for each transport mode and they aim to deliver on the transport principles, objectives and targets described in Chapter 4, all of which contribute to creating the desired vision set out for Portarlington.

The pedestrian, cycle, and permeability measures aim to increase the attractiveness and reduce the journey times of active travel modes.

The public transport measures aim to improve the catchment and use of public transport along with improving existing facilities.

The road network and car parking strategies aim to rationalise vehicular movements and street space in the town core.

The overall suite of measures developed for each transport mode were assessed using a Multi Criteria Assessment, with criteria tailored specifically to each individual mode. The outcome of this assessment is presented in Table 5-1 to Table 5-5 and will inform the Implementation and Priority Plan, which can be ranked in accordance with the average scores identified in the Tables. The higher average scores could be considered to represent shorter term measures, with the lower scores representing longer term measures.

When implemented, these combined measures will contribute to a considerable increase in trips made using sustainable transport, with Portarlington playing its part in meeting the Climate Action Plan and National Sustainable Mobility Policy targets.

A summary table of some of the Localised and Strategic Measures are presented in Tables 5-6 and 5-7 respectively, with possible timeframes provided in respect of the strategic measures identified in Table 5-7.

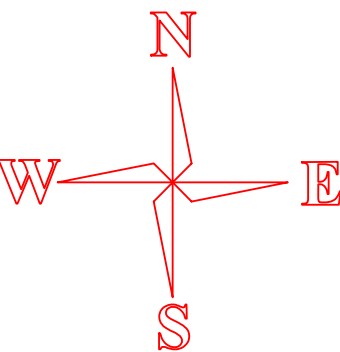
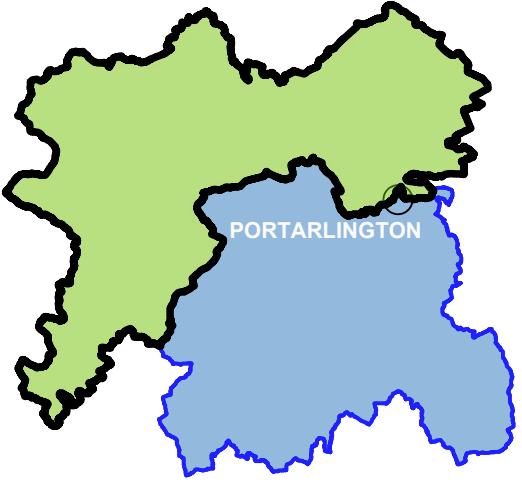
While this LTP includes some high-level discussions on some options, these would not be sufficient for the purpose of assessing an individual project developed from an objective within the Joint Portarlington Local Area Plan. This LTP does not purport to be a definitive analysis of all the options for the potential schemes, but rather a broad reckoning which recommends networks and transport objectives to inform the Joint Local Area Plan.

It should also be noted that the individual projects will be subjected to public consultation, environmental and heritage studies together with relevant statutory procedures and consultation with the relevant statutory stakeholders.

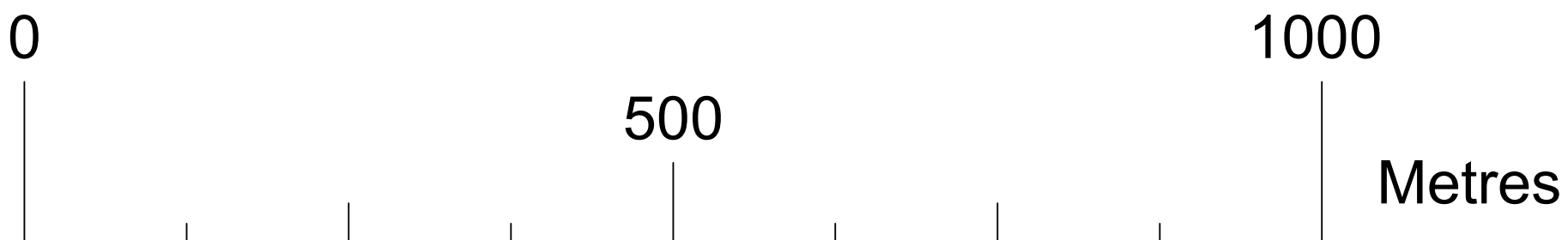
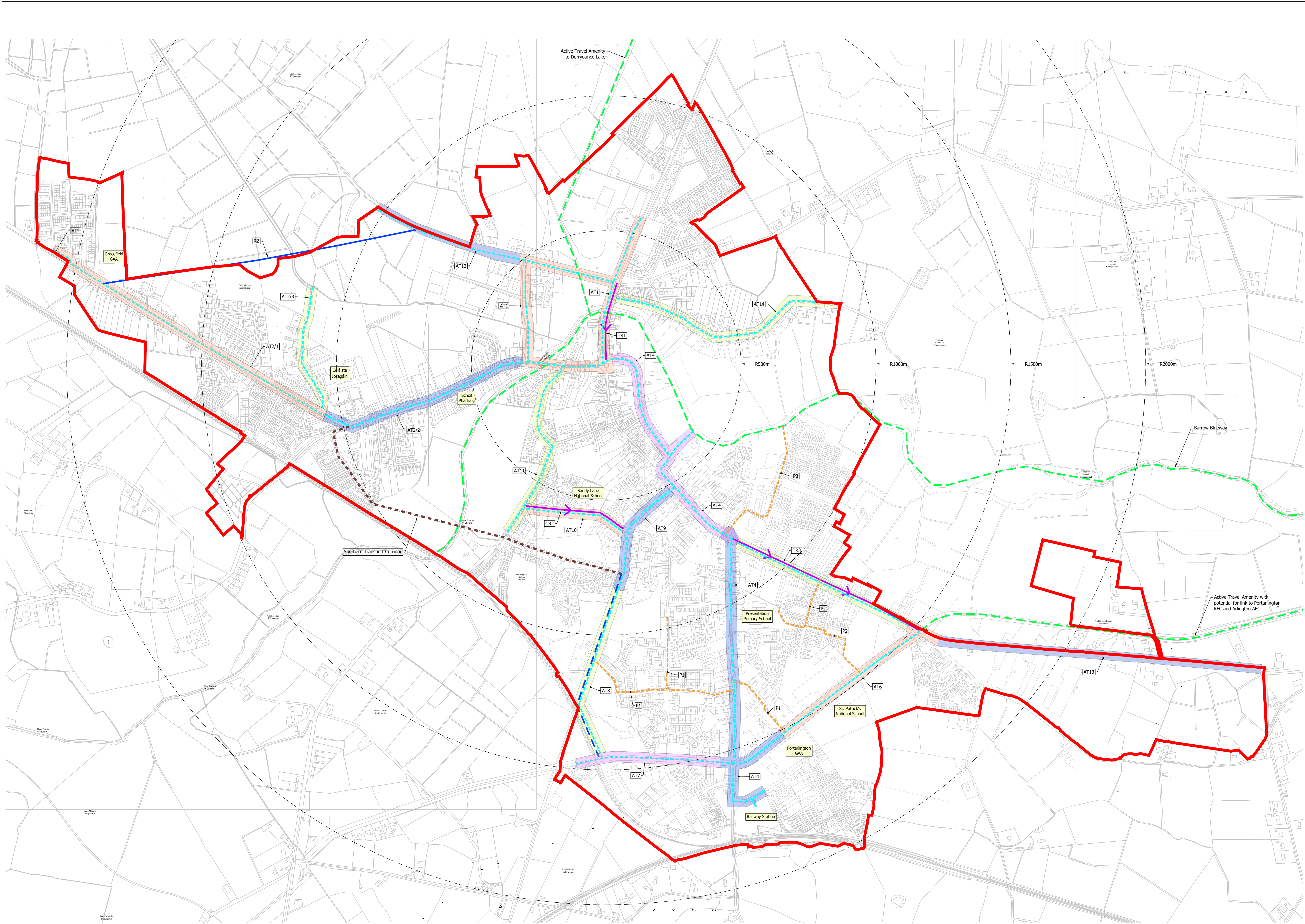
Submissions relating to transport and movement that were received during the consultation process for the Joint Local Area Plan have been considered and incorporated into the Portarlington Local Transport Plan 2025~2031, where appropriate.

Appendix A – Map 5 (*Transport Elements - Schematic Layouts*)

ADOPTED
PORTARLINGTON
JOINT LOCAL AREA PLAN
2025-2031

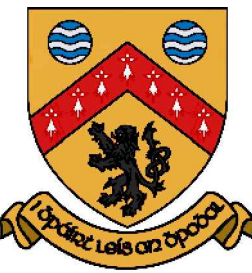


- Transport Corridor
- Active Travel - existing route
 - Active Travel - new route
 - Active Travel - improvement of existing road
 - Active Travel - Amenity
 - Active Travel - Pathfinder Routes through existing residential areas
 - Road - new route
 - Road - improvement of existing road
 - Road - convert to one-way for vehicles



SCALE
1:5000 at A0

MAP 5
SCHEMATIC LAYOUT OF
TRANSPORT ELEMENTS



LAOIS & OFFALY
COUNTY COUNCIL'S
PLANNING SECTIONS



Drawn:
Stanislav Kravets

Checked:
Nathan Smith

Approved:
David O'Hara

Note: Details shown on this map is for information purposes only. Further details on any item should be clarified with Laois County Council. This map has been produced by Laois County Council with available Local Authority and Taithe Eileann Surveying Base Data. © Taithe Eileann Surveying. Licence number CYAL50380044. NOTE - UNAUTHORISED REPRODUCTION OF THIS MAP INFRINGES STATE COPYRIGHT.

Appendix B – Description of the Preferred Flood Relief Scheme for Portarlinton
(Source: Binnies / Nicholas O'Dwyer)

Description of the Preferred Scheme

Area	Flood Defence Description	Average Heights	Total Lengths
Upstream of Barrow Bridge	Embankments and walls on the right bank of the River Barrow.	1.6 m—2m	780 m
	Wall on the left bank of the River Barrow.	1.6 m	310 m
Barrow Bridge to Spa Street	Embankment on the left bank of the River Barrow.	1—1.2 m	520 m
	Wall on the River Barrow right bank.	1.5 m	300 m
Downstream of Spa Bridge	Embankments and walls situated on the right bank directly downstream of Spa Bridge.	1.2 m	145 m
Portarlington Fire Station	Embankments and walls on the right bank protecting the Portarlington Fire Station and the properties at Link Road.	1.2 m—1.5 m	345 m
Bracklone Business Centre	Embankment along the southern end of the Bracklone Business Centre.	0.8 m	550 m
	New culvert along the existing crossing Bracklone Business Centre.	N/A	350 m
Blackstick Drain	Creation of a formalised floodplain to the south of the Blackstick Drain. Diversion of 500 m length of the existing drain through the proposed floodplain. Bridge removal and replacement to accommodate existing access.	N/A	1800 m ² (Area)
	Embankments on the south of Blackstick Drain floodplain.	0.7m -1 m	950 m
	Wall and embankment along Botley Lane Industrial Estate .	1.5 m	540 m
	Removal and replacement of existing culvert crossing Botley Lane.	N/A	15 m
Bog Road	Removal and replacement of existing culvert crossing Bog Road.	N/A	20 m
Marian Hill Road	Removal and replacement of existing culvert crossing Marian Hill Road.	N/A	15 m

Map of Preferred Scheme

