

# Thurles Town Centre Masterplan Proposals



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann  
Tipperary County Council



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040



Department of Rural and  
Community Development  
An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail



November 2021

LUC



## Document control

Version	Date	Status	Prepared	Approved
1.0	22 March 2021	Draft, work in progress	BW / TJ	TJ
1.1	23 April 2021	For comment	BW / TJ	TJ
1.2	19 November 2021	Final Submission	BW / TJ	TJ

### Project

Thurles Town Centre Masterplan Proposals

### Client

Tipperary County Council

### LUC Project Number

10921

### LUC Project Team

Tom Jonson, project director  
Ben Wayles, landscape architect

### Date

November 2021

All photos within the report have been taken by the project team, unless otherwise credited.

**01 Introduction**

**02 Site and Surroundings**

**03 Sustainability**

**04 Urban Characterisation**

**05 Strategic Masterplan Options**

**06 Urban Design Framework and  
Masterplan Proposals**

**07 Case Studies**



View east across masterplan area



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

---



View of Cathedral of the Assumption from Liberty Square



## Thurles Town Centre Masterplan Proposals

The Thurles Town Centre Master Plan Proposal work follows on from the Thurles Town Centre Renewal Strategy. The purpose of the Renewal Strategy was to provide a framework to help create a thriving, vibrant, climate resilient Town Centre. Masterplan proposals aim to build upon the framework provided in the Renewal Strategy, re-imagining Thurles town centre in a truly sustainable way. Proposals will reflect the 5 Renewal strategy objectives, which are:

- The creation of a compact, low carbon & climate resilient town;
- The creation of a vibrant and living town centre;
- The delivery of a connected town and enhanced public realm;
- The creation of a destination town; and
- The exposure and showcasing of Thurles historic & natural heritage.



**The Creation of a Compact, Low-Carbon Climate Resilient Town**



**The Creation of a Vibrant and Living Town Centre**



**The Delivery of a Connected Town & Enhanced Public Realm**



**The Creation of a Destination Town**



**Showcasing Thurles Historic & Natural Heritage**



## Delivering Project Ireland 2040

*Project Ireland 2040: National Policy Framework (NPF)* sets out the strategic framework for future development and investment in Ireland until 2040. The Plans includes ten National Strategic Outcomes as priorities over the lifetime of the Plan. Thurles Town Centre masterplan area aligns with a number of these outcomes as follows:

**Compact Growth:** The masterplan proposal seeks to utilise disused brownfield lands to the rear of residential and commercial properties in Thurles Town Centre. The Masterplan sets out options for residential development of different densities and development types, and includes a framework for urban design to ensure that the character of Thurles is incorporated into the development. The plan includes a mix of residential types and functions and has a strong focus on urban realm and placemaking so that an attractive and vibrant neighbourhood can be achieved as an invitation for prospective town centre dwellers.

**Sustainable Mobility:** A key component of the plan is permeability and enhancing movement throughout the town, particularly for walking and cycling. The lands will not only act as a catalyst for development and town centre living but will provide a safe and attractive active transport route through the town and to the train station.

**A Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills:** Although the plan represents mainly housing, it is in concept stage and intended to pivot to forthcoming opportunities. The Council will continue to forge links with companies seeking town centre locations to develop in conjunction with the residential development.

**Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities:** The Masterplan area is situated close to Thurles railway station and will be a prime location for those relocating from the Regional cities. The development is intended to be multi-functional with office, retail and remote working capabilities in line with the Government's Our Rural Future plan to reinvigorate rural areas.

**Enhanced Amenities and Heritage:** The Masterplan proposes to highlight the historic Black Castle as a public realm feature to be viewed and enjoyed by members of the public.

**Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society:** The Masterplan will strive to deliver a high-quality, environmentally and economically sustainable mix of housing to cater to a diverse population. The urban realm will include urban greening measures, SuDS, permeable paving and a number of energy efficient technologies. The layout of the area will assist in active transport connections and will contribute to the concept of the ten-minute town in Thurles.

**Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services:** The Plan seeks to provide a number of designated student units to cater for the demand associated with LIT's newly acquired university status (Technological University of Shannon) and the planned expansion of MIC.



Project Ireland 2040 covers the strategic development of Ireland



## Climate

The transition to a low carbon energy future will require a wide range of responses across the public and private sectors and in communities, to change how we use energy at home, in our work and how we travel.

Project Ireland 2040 and the Climate Action Plan 2019 have set out the scale of the climate change challenge with decarbonisation as a priority for all new developments. Creating a low-carbon society and circular economy will require changes in how we plan and develop the masterplan area to influence how people work, live, travel and access services. Compact urban growth, sustainable transport, the location of developments and the enhancement of biodiversity in the town through blue and green infrastructure will bring fundamental benefits to climate change mitigation.

Climate Policies include:-

*NSO8 Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilience Society* - Strengthen energy security and resilience / Consideration of carbon neutral electricity generation.

*NSO9 Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources* - Improve sustainable drainage and reduce the risk of flooding in the urban environment.



Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019 sets the scale of climate challenges



## Housing

Revitalising Thurles urban centre through well planned and designed residential units could help rejuvenate the Town Centre. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) seeks a dynamic approach to land use within the footprint of existing settlements. Urban regeneration and infill development must be maximised to achieve the sustainable compact urban growth of settlements of all scales. The development of a masterplan would achieve this and allow for a higher density population in the Town Centre.

The masterplan area is ideally located immediately adjacent to the primary retail and commercial Town Centre and has the potential for excellent connectivity as a result of its close proximity to the train station and road networks.

The demographic analysis carried out in the making of the Thurles Town Centre Renewal Strategy reflects a diverse residential base consistent with what would be expected in a Town Centre. Housing however, has and is concentrated to the edge of centre locations with a notable absence of infill and Town Centre apartment type developments. Need for more town centre based housing was highlighted during the consultation events undertaken during the Renewal Strategy.

Housing Policies include:-

**NSO1 Compact Growth** - Enabling urban infill development / Improving 'liveability and quality of life, enabling greater densities of development to be achieved. Building on existing assets and capacity to create critical mass and scale for regional growth.

**NSO7 Enhanced Amenity and Heritage** - Encouraging greater Town Centre living, enhanced recreational spaces and attractiveness from a cultural, tourism and promotional perspective.



Existing terraced housing in Thurles near Croke Street

## Transport

Thurles is located within 6km of the M8, with the N62 and N75 passing through the centre of the town. The wider area is served by a road network which is rural in nature. Thurles train station is located on the Cork-Limerick-Dublin rail line and is served by frequent connections to the three major cities. The town and wider area is currently poorly served by local buses, with a large proportion of local trips being made by car. Pedestrian routes tend to follow the alignment of primary vehicle routes with Semple Stadium and Liberty Square being key destinations. There is very little pedestrian permeability within the central masterplan area area.

Thurles is relatively compact, providing excellent opportunity to introduce sustainable transport. As a Key Town, the RSES requires the preparation of a Local Transport Plan in order to plan for the efficient and sustainable movement of people, goods and services within, to and from the Plan area. This will be delivered in line with a Local Area Plan for Thurles and will include a detailed demand analysis to identify existing and future travel patterns, modes of transport and reasons for travel along with modal shift targets and measures for implementation.



Vehicles parked and moving through Liberty Square



## Masterplan Aims and Objectives

The masterplan area covers backland areas, existing residential and retail plots, large areas of surface car parking and key heritage assets for the town including Black Castle. The following issues will be addressed to achieve a masterplan proposal that enhances the site and wider town.

### *Improved Connectivity within the Town Centre*

Currently connectivity around the masterplan area is fragmented and poor. The backlands area within the masterplan area is largely inaccessible, with limited movement from Parnell Street, Matthew Avenue, Castle Avenue, Friar Street and Croke Street due to private land ownership, boundary fences and overgrown scrub vegetation.

The masterplan options will be designed to improve access and connectivity through the masterplan area, opening up routes to various parts of the town centre and provide greater opportunities for active travel. Creating new walkable routes within the town centre will reduce the reliance on the car and will help to create a sustainable town centre where walking and cycling are part of people's daily routine.

### *Bringing Redundant or Disused Land Back into Use*

Large parts of the masterplan area consist of brownfield land occupied by scrub vegetation, derelict outbuildings or surface car parking. There is therefore opportunity to utilise the masterplan area land more efficiently be it for residential or commercial development. Both sites are in strategic central town centre locations, close to local shops and amenities as well as public transport provision such as the train station.

As such there is opportunity to create meaningful sustainable developments as part of the regeneration of Thurles Town Centre. Using this existing brownfield land for new development in the town centre locations, would represent a more sustainable form of development.

### *Regeneration and Revitalization of Thurles Town Centre*

Thurles Town Centre, like many towns, is suffering as a result of changes to shopping habits, and how people use the town centre. In order to reverse this decline the existing traditional retail offer should diversify and be enhanced to include more residential uses. Bringing people to the town centre and making the shopping experience in town as convenient as online shopping will bring stability back to Thurles Town Centre. It will also be important to supplement the existing retail offer with other uses such as leisure and recreation use so that retail is a less dominant use. An improved visitor experience, which includes reducing the dominance of vehicles in the town and the introduction of high quality public realm spaces will encourage pedestrian activity in the town centre.

### *Creating High Quality Civic and Public Realm Spaces*

There is opportunity to introduce a step change in the quality of the public realm as part of the masterplan proposals extending outwards beyond the masterplan boundary to encompass the surrounding streets and in particular Friar Street which is the main link to the town centre from the railway station. High quality public realm should therefore be created as key elements of the masterplan area, these should include:

- The integration of the towns historic assets such as the Black Castle into the emerging town centre, as well as providing an appropriate setting for these assets;
- Enhanced sense of place and local identity by reflecting the existing qualities of the town centre in terms of both space and high quality public realm materials;
- Create high quality civic spaces and streets that are afforded equal status to new buildings. These public realm spaces will help to re-stitch Thurles historic streets back together and are a vital part of the masterplan; and
- Enhance active travel, encouraging walking and cycling and creating new routes and improved connectivity within the town centre.

## Summary of Masterplan Aims and Objectives

### Aims of the Masterplan:

- Consolidate town centre uses with additional residential use and reduce peripheral town centre development;
- Utilise Council owned land where possible as well as bringing redundant or unused land back into meaningful use;
- Meet social/affordable housing requirements in the town;
- Meet the needs of any future demands for student housing in the town centre;
- Establish opportunities for a broad range of housing needs including young people and older members of the community;
- Maximise opportunities presented by the close proximity of the masterplan area to the existing retail core and commercial town centre as well as transport links such as the railway station;
- Ensure scheme proposals are consistent with national funding programmes for town centre redevelopment.
- Creating new high quality civic and public realm spaces;
- Regenerate and introduce a step change in the quality of the existing public realm;
- Enhance town centre permeability and active transport connections through the site and to the train station; and
- Showcase the potential for development within Thurles' urban core for education, employment, leisure and residential developments.



Aerial view of the masterplan area location, in the context of the wider Thurles Town Centre



# Chapter 2

## Site & Surroundings

---



View of Black Castle within masterplan area

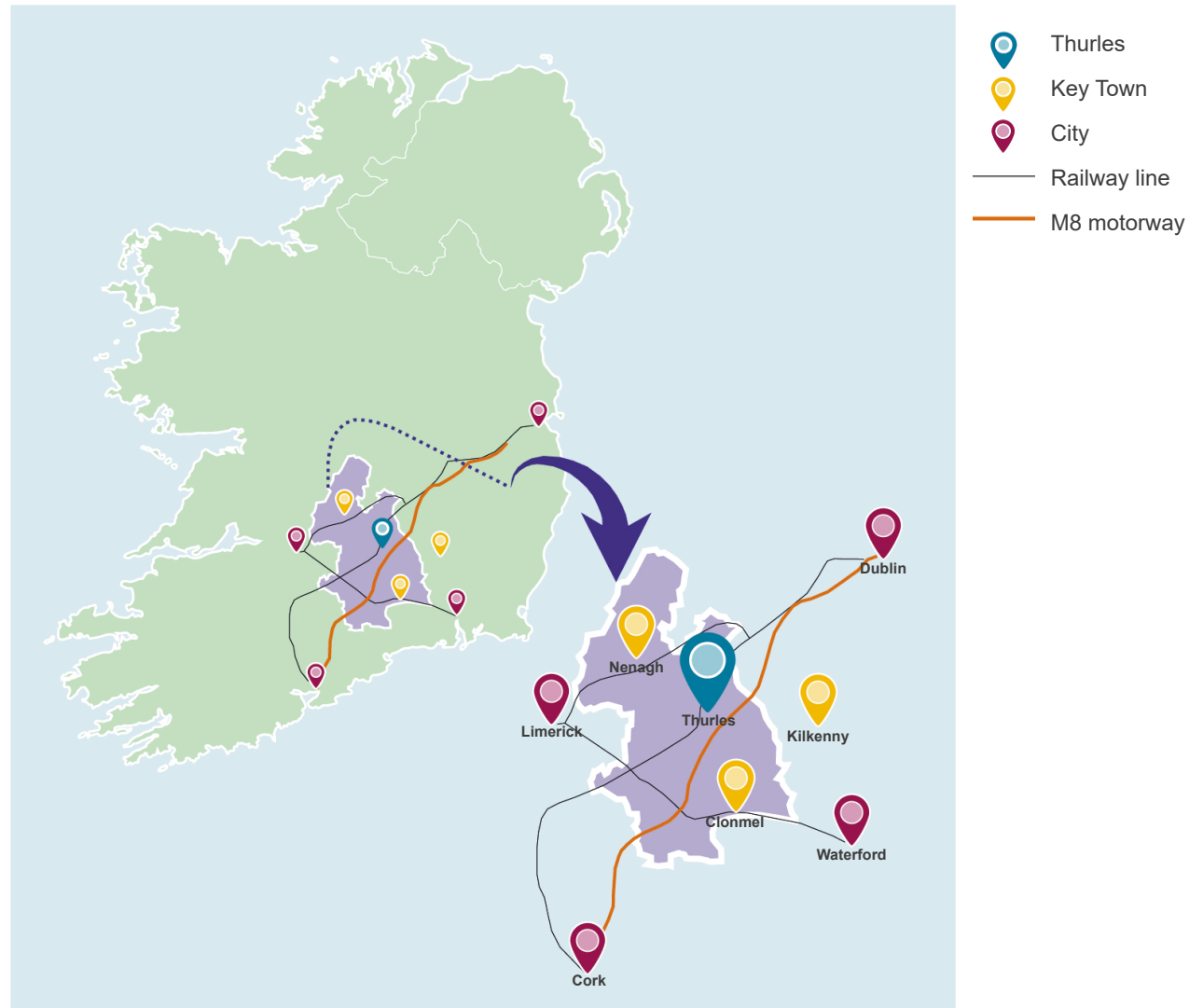


## Thurles in Context

This chapter provides an understanding of the town's geographic and historical context, along with analysis of existing conditions to define parameters and constraints that the masterplan proposals will be defined by .

Thurles is a vibrant and historic urban centre in the heart of Tipperary, with a population of almost 8,000 people, surrounded by attractive, rural countryside. It is one of the largest towns in Tipperary and was recently designated as a Key Town within the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region, due to its strategically located position and excellent connectivity by road and rail.

It is recognised as one of the most connected towns in the Region with access to motorways and intercity rail connections. It also has a strong sporting tradition, being the founding location of the GAA and previously claimed the prestigious 'European Town of Sport'.





## Site & Immediate Surroundings

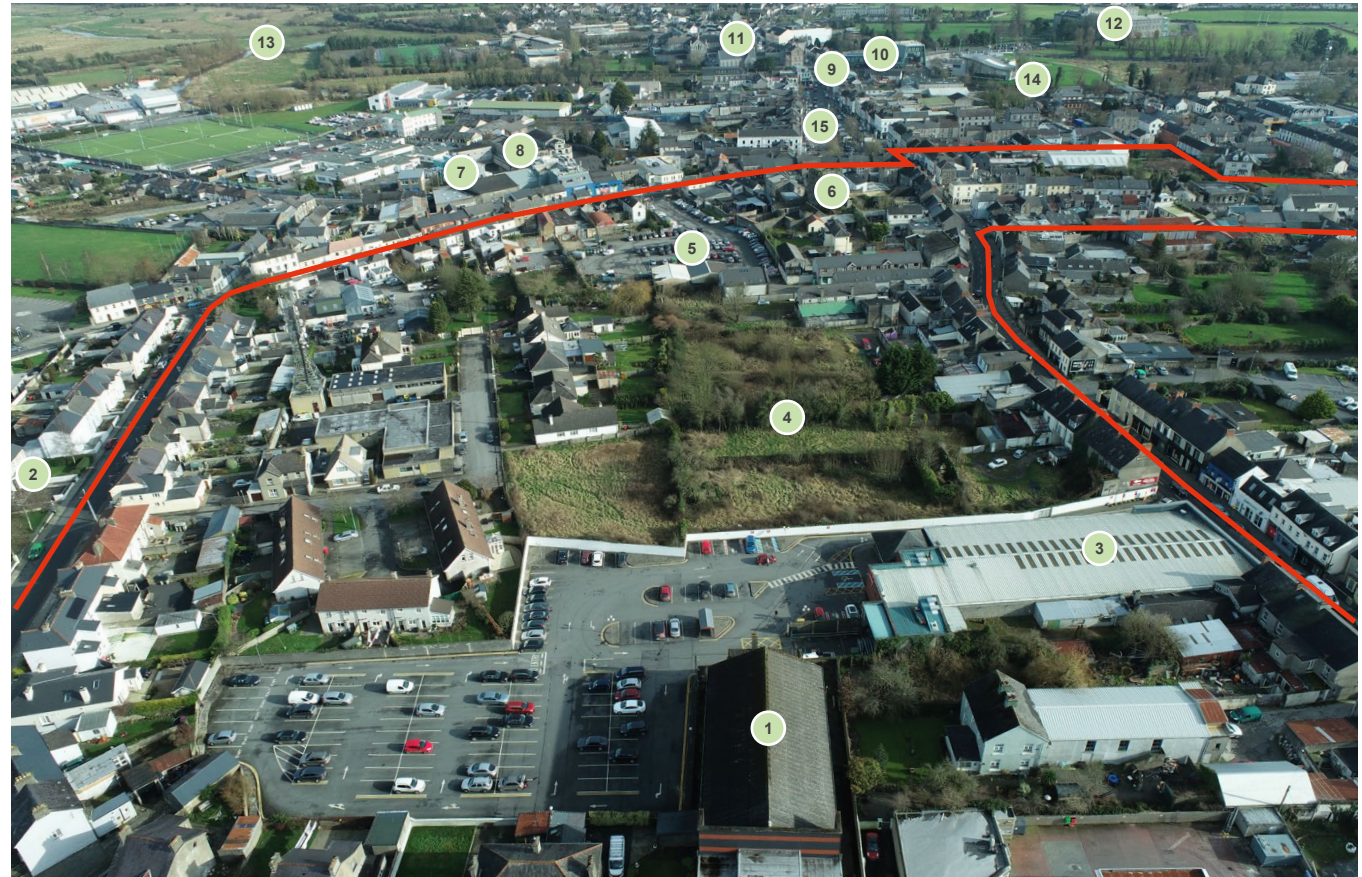
The masterplan area covers backland areas, existing residential and retail plots, large areas of surface car parking and key heritage assets for the town including Black Castle. Liberty Square, the heart of the town, is dominated by commuter traffic, through traffic and HGVs.

Mixed uses for the masterplan area include:

- Local Authority Housing;
- Private housing for sale or lease;
- 'Age Friendly' housing;
- Heritage destination;
- Community hub;
- Ground floor commercial, and office activities;
- Leisure and Recreation; and
- Student Accommodation.

### Local Landmarks

1. Capitol Cinema
2. Thurles Council Offices & County Library
3. Barry's Supervalu & Carpark
4. Backland Area's
5. Parnell Street car park
6. Black Castle
7. Thurles Courthouse
8. Premier Hall and Confraternity Hall
9. Bridge Castle
10. The Source Arts Centre & Thurles Leisure Centre
11. Cathedral of the Assumption
12. Mary Immaculate College
13. River Suir
14. Thurles Town Park
15. Liberty Square



Aerial view of Thurles Masterplan area. Source: Tipperary County Council



## Landuse

The masterplan area is mainly characterised by buildings and their associated curtilages, surface level car parking areas, roads, and brownfield land. Public access to this area is limited to the 2 car parks as elsewhere land is in private ownership. The brownfield land is generally overgrown and vegetated, with semi-mature self-set trees.

1. Overgrown brownfield land, with dense scrub vegetation and some self-seeded trees, landlocked and enclosed by fencing.
2. Barry's Supervalu supermarket car park
3. Parnell Street car park, featuring a recycling facilities and a casual trading area
4. Brownfield land, includes through access to an adjacent residential property which was historically intended to provide a pedestrian link to Slievenamon Road
5. Black Castle

The mapping of the ground floor building land-use highlights the dominance of commercial/retail uses within the masterplan area along Friar Street, and at the junctions of Croke Street and Parnell Street. There is also a dominance of retail/food and drink uses along Parnell Street, West Gate and Liberty Square. There are numerous vacant and derelict properties within the masterplan area, in particular along Friar Street and Croke Street. Vacancy level in Thurles is marginally higher than the County average for Tipperary (14.3%), and higher than the 13.3% National average.

Matthew Avenue, Castle Avenue, and Castle Gardens are residential areas, with the south end of Croke Street and northern end of Parnell Street also predominantly residential.



General land use around the masterplan area





## Connectivity and Transport

The town services a large rural catchment, highlighted by the numerous and well-used surface and on-street parking areas that indicates that Thurles is currently largely dependent on cars for transport.

The masterplan area is well served by vehicular links, with primary vehicle circulation concentrated along Parnell Street, Friar Street, and Liberty Square. Thurles has excellent connectivity by rail being on the main intercity Limerick-Cork-Dublin rail network. Pedestrian routes tend to follow the alignment of primary vehicle routes. There is very little pedestrian permeability within the central masterplan area.

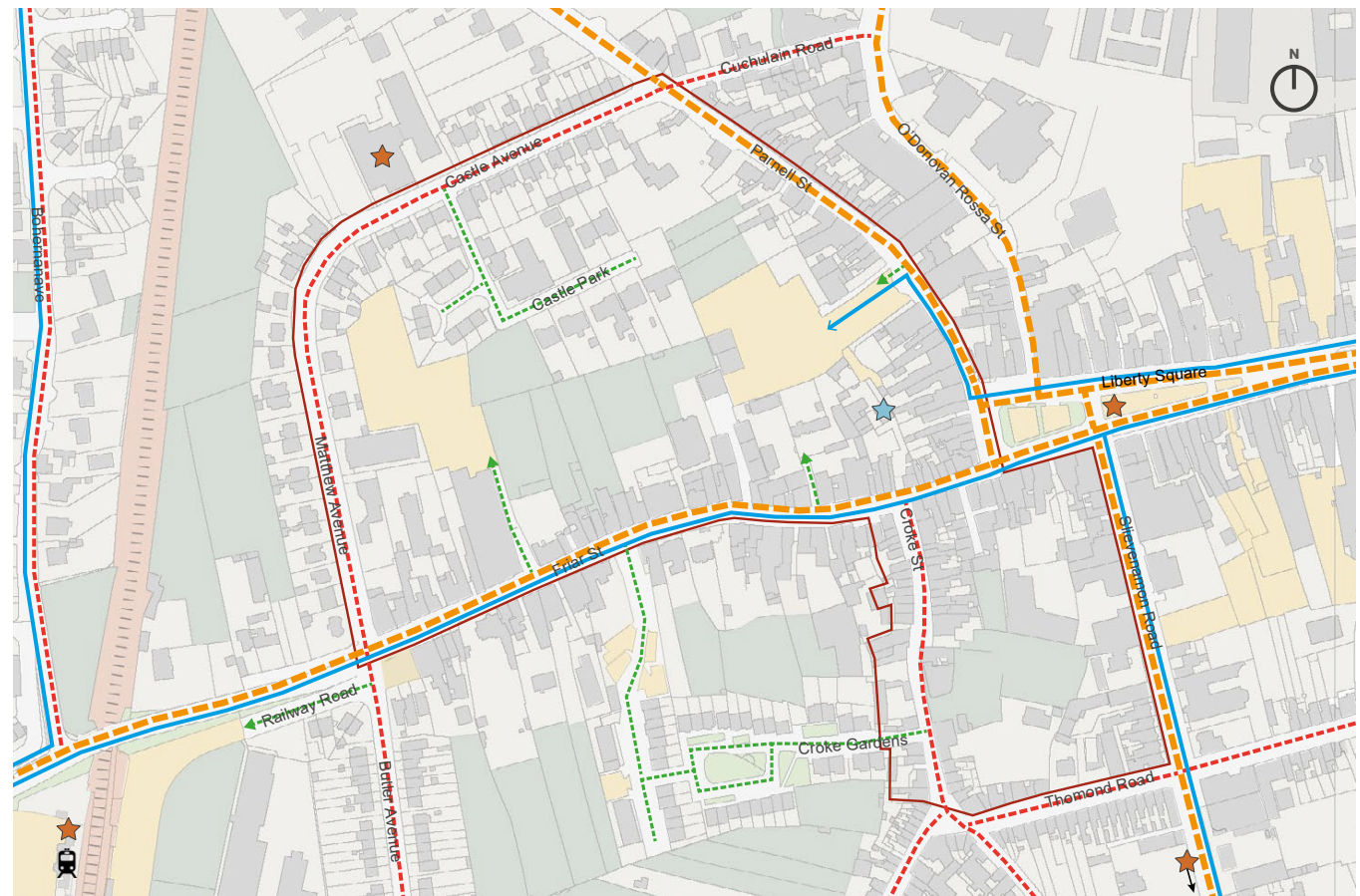
The masterplan proposals should align with that of Ireland's NPF by:-

- Maximising access to and encouraging use of public transport, cycling and walking; and
- Developing sustainable urban and rural settlement patterns and communities to reduce distance from employment, services and leisure facilities.

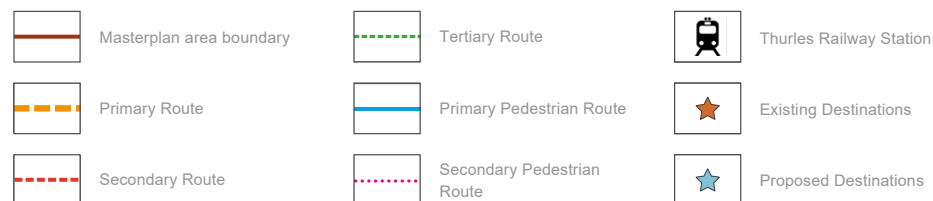
Connectivity and transport within the masterplan and surrounding area, including the promotion of active travel, improving the public realm for commuters and tourists, can help to address the town's existing issues which include:-

- Peak hour congestion;
- Parking issues ;
- Providing additional space for pedestrians and cyclists; and
- Providing a more welcoming environment for visitors to the town centre .

Wider transport strategies targeting the local and regional area will help encourage a generational change in people's approach to movement.



Connectivity and transport around the masterplan area



## Environmental and Historic

The ACA's have influence on both the historic and environmental development of Thurles and its sense of place. The ACA's are outlined in the Thurles and Environs Development Plan 2009–2015 as varied, which states that "the physical quality and character of Thurles's Architectural Conservation Areas are derived from the grouping of buildings and their relationship to one another, which create a 'sense of place'."

Black Castle is the most prominent historic feature within the masterplan area, situated to the south of Parnell Street carpark. Remains consist of a four-storey high lobby-entrance tower house built from coursed limestone rubble that is not currently publicly accessible.

Other prominent historic sites in the masterplan area include Parnell Street carpark which is the site of a levelled late 12th-century earthen motte castle. Early OS maps indicate the site of this castle as a circular feature, bounded by Moat Lane to the north and Hickey's Lane to the south.

The earliest map of Thurles showing individual buildings is the Rocque map of 1755. This map shows block outline buildings to the west of the River Suir including Black Castle, with a portion of Friar Street annotated as Garver Clahan Street (Garryvicleheen Street). On the 1903 OS Map, there are a range of historic laneways into the masterplan area from the surrounding road network, with Hickey's Lane and Castle Avenue leading directly to Black Castle. The late 12th Century Motte Castle previously located within modern day Parnell Street car park, has disappeared by this time with also a clear reduction in buildings around Black Castle.

The Strategic Tourism Marketing, Experience and Destination Plan 2016-2021 is aiming to build on the town's history and folklore, including expanding the Butler Trail to the strongholds in Thurles. The Black Castle represents a fantastic potential environment to be integrated into the masterplan and enjoyed.



Architectural Conservation Area plan (Position of Town Wall is potentially located in masterplan area, to be confirmed through further investigation)





## Environmental and Historic

### Thurles 1800s

Main routes into the town centre converge on Liberty Square. These include Friar Lane and Parnell Street, as well as Brittas Road which heads towards Liberty Square from the north and Croke Street from the south. The main street to the west was Bridge Street which shows the beginnings of the present day splayed form. The town was originally constrained by the town walls that stretched from Black Castle to the River Suir.

### Thurles 1850s

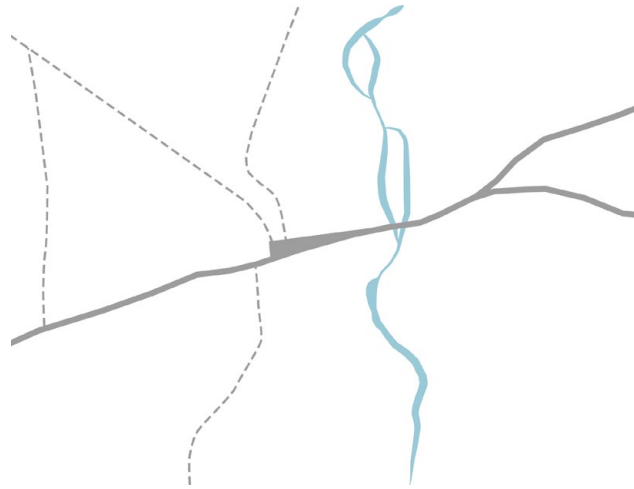
By the 1850s the initial road infrastructure was joined by other routes into the town including Slievenamon Road. These correlated with an expansion of buildings within the town that occurred during this period including land associated with the castle that was sold off for development.

### Thurles 1900s

By the 1900s Thurles continued to expand south of Liberty Square and eastwards towards the River Suir. Roads such as Thomond Road and Emmett Street facilitated this expansion. The railway was also a noticeable feature in the town during this time.

### Thurles present day

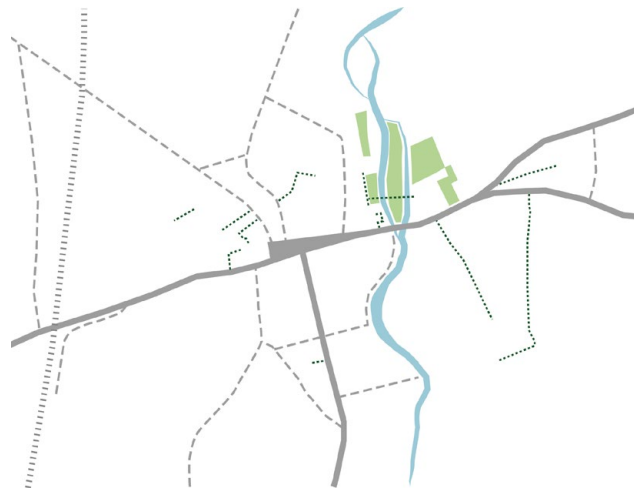
Whilst the current road layout shows the expansion of the town away from its historic core around Liberty Square the historic road network with its relatively narrow streets are largely intact and still help to define the present day character of the town.



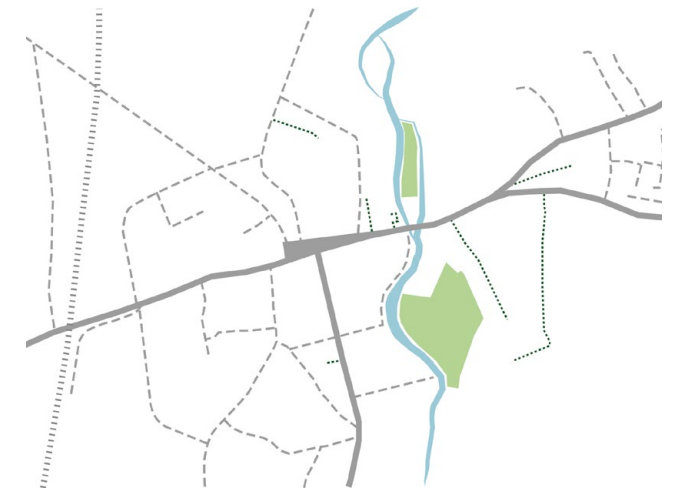
Thurles historic development - 1800's



Thurles historic development - 1850's



Thurles historic development - 1900's



Thurles historic development - 2020's





## Building Heights & Internal & External Views

Building heights around the masterplan area are relatively low, being predominantly 2 to 3 storeys, this is consistent with the rest of the town. This provides some long range views of landmarks such as Black Castle and the Cathedral of the Assumption from various points.

The largest building within the development site is Barry's Supervalu, though it is only 2 storeys high which limits its visual impact. The Capitol Cinema is the next largest building, which is approximately 3 storeys and can be seen across the backlands areas. Surrounding residential properties have largely unobstructed views into the masterplan area overlooking the large parking areas and the backland scrub planting, due to flat topography and limited large scale vegetation.



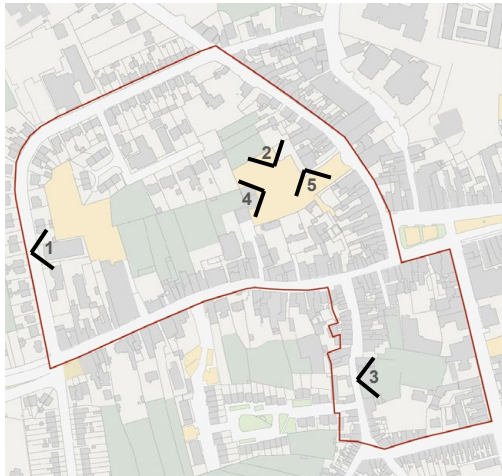
Building heights & internal & external views around the masterplan area

- 1 Visual Landmarks Located Within Masterplan area
  - 1) Black Castle
  - 2) Former Theatre
  - 3) Existing Telephone Mast
  
- 1 Visual Landmarks Located Outside Masterplan area
  - 1) BridgeCastle
  - 2) Cathedral of the Assumption
  - 3) The Source
  - 4) Semple Stadium

- Masterplan area boundary
- Height - 1 floor
- Height - 2 floors
- Height - 3 floors
- Height - 4+ floors
- 'Big Box' Typically 1-2 Floor Height
- Direct Views into Site
- Long Range Views



## Masterplan area



View locations



1 - Aerial view taken from above Matthew Avenue, looking east across the site



2 - Aerial view taken from above Parnell Street car park, looking north across the site



3 - View from Croke Street, looking east



4 - Aerial view taken from above Parnell Street car park, looking west



5 - Aerial view taken from above Parnell Street car park, looking south towards the Black Castle



## Planning

The masterplan area contains two 'Opportunity Sites' as defined within the Thurles and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 as varied.

### Opportunity Site 6

Located adjacent to the Parnell Street Carpark, bounded to the north by established residential properties. A mixture of residential, retail and commercial properties forms the southern boundary. Recent development has taken place in the form of Baker Street, a pedestrian street adjacent to the site providing potential for further retail development.

### Opportunity Site 7

Located to the rear of Parnell Street and part of Castle Avenue the site includes the car park area and the rear yards and gardens of private, retail and commercial premises in the area. At present there is limited access to the backlands. Recent development has taken place between Parnell Street carpark and the backlands area providing a pedestrian streetscape with potential to access the remainder of the lands.

Design potential:-

- Distinct Sense of Place as significant extension to the town centre ;
- Creation of pedestrian streets with building design enclosing the space;
- Hierarchy of legible urban forms including landmark buildings, particularly at the entrances to the site and street/access intersections;
- Compatible town centre uses such as retail units, restaurants and cafes;
- Creating a variety of functional and supervised public spaces that interconnect with movement across the site and enhance pedestrian linkages;

- Residential development on upper floors with access to street level; and
- Clear views and easy orientation, including linkages with adjacent sites.

Other planning projects and documents that will influence the masterplan area include:

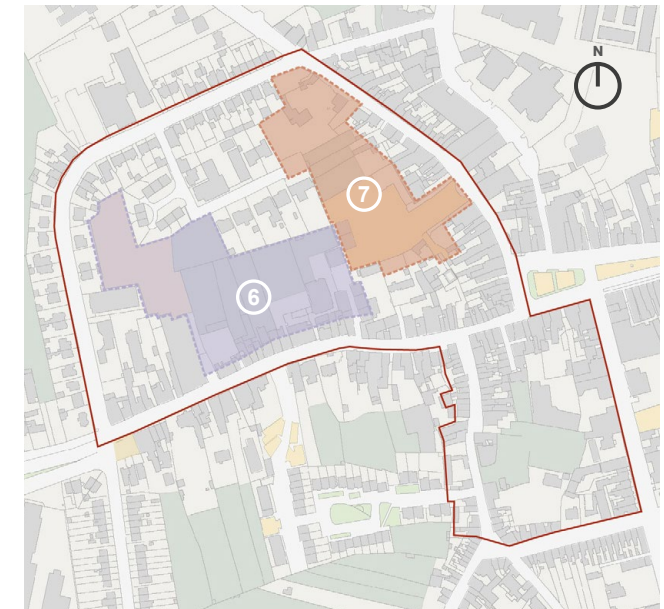
### Inner Relief Road

A design has been completed for the provision of an Inner Relief Road to link the N62, Horse and Jockey Road, with the N75, Two-Mile-Borris Road. The project will involve a new bridge over the River Suir and a new high-quality road, with cycle lanes and footpaths, and assist with the alleviation of Town Centre traffic congestion. The project is identified as strategically important in the National Development Plan and is a key piece of infrastructure in terms of the town traffic management and the provision of sustainable transport measures in the Town Centre.

### Thurles Municipal District Town Centre Initiative Report

Published in March 2016, a full SWOT analysis and a physical audit of the retail streetscape was undertaken on Thurles. Within the analysis there are details on vacancy, retail mix and suggested usages to be targeted. The report listed the following recommendations for Thurles:

- Establish a Town Centre forum;
- Town specific marketing, capitalising on the town's unique sporting offer; and
- Three year Action Plan, proposed under the following themes: Governance Structure; Leveraging Resources and Local Engagement; Town Branding and Marketing; and, Preparation for Liberty Square Enhancement to be targeted.



Masterplan opportunity sites





# Chapter 3 Sustainability

---



Derwenthorpe, York - Low carbon, eco housing development with pedestrian and green infrastructure priority



## Housing Design

As stated in the National Development Plan 'By 2040 the population of Ireland is expected to reach almost 6 million with a need for 550,000 more homes which corresponds to a long-term trend of 25,000 new homes every year. The continuation of existing patterns of development accentuates the serious risk of economic, social and environmental imbalance, for example, placing more distance between where people work and live further encouraging car use and leading to more town centre land take to meet parking requirements.

New housing in Thurles should be completely integrated into the town centre, connected by new pedestrian and cycle networks, high quality public realm and additional green infrastructure. The integrated housing proposals for the Thurles Town Centre masterplan area seek to re-imagine the idea of a vibrant town centre, embedding the community at its heart and reducing barriers of movement around the town.

The proposals seeks to reflect the local existing qualities of Thurles and are influenced by the architecture, pattern, grain and block size of housing within the existing historic town.

Existing housing stock around the site and in the wider area comprises of detached, semi-detached, terraced houses, and some flats. Housing mixes in the masterplan area would vary in accordance with local needs and established by a Housing Needs Demand Assessment to meet local needs including student housing with further mixed type and tenure properties to adapt to the growing housing demand in Thurles currently and in the future. Development will be prioritised on existing backlands sites to limit environmental impact and help improve the cohesion of the Town Centre and the new masterplan area.



Traditional vernacular of Thurles buildings in Liberty Square

## Environmental Standards

Project Ireland 2040 and the Climate Action Plan 2019 have set out the scale of the current climate change challenge. The new development should be energy efficient, and adopt the environmental standards to limit the impact it will have. Some standards of housing and environmental performance benchmarks include:

- BER Rating - A Building Energy Rating (BER) certificate indicates your home's energy performance, with ideally a minimum rating of B in new developments;
- EXEED - The EXEED Certified program aims to influence and deliver new best practices in energy efficient design;
- Passivhaus - Buildings with low ecological footprints due to ultra-low energy requirements and high efficiency; and
- Retrofit Grants and National Scheme – Improve the functionality, efficiency and use of existing homes and buildings in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

Further to defined standards, the success of the schemes' environmental performance will also rely on issues such as:

- Sustainable Urban Drainage - Mitigate and adapt to climatic changes;
- Sustainable Materials – Using sustainable, locally sourced or reused materials in the development;
- Green Infrastructure - With defined purpose such as increased biodiversity, climate mitigation, screened views, etc, whilst also creating a desirable place to live;
- People Focused Streets - Encourage more active lifestyles, feel safe and removes the sense of vehicle ownership in turn giving residents a sense of ownership of the public realm; and
- Waste Management – Including waste recycling at source and rainwater harvesting.



Carrowbreck Meadow - Highly sustainable and efficient homes



A building standard should be adopted that is energy efficient, comfortable, affordable and ecological. The transition to a low carbon energy future will require a wide range of responses across the public and private sectors and in communities, to change how we use energy at home, in our work and how we travel.

The 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007)' also sets out guidelines to help achieve sustainable developments. It states that 'A key aim in the design of any housing scheme should be to ensure that it is socially, environmentally and economically sustainable by:

- Providing a high-quality environment that meets the needs and, as far as possible, the preferences of the residents and fosters the development of community;
- Achieving energy efficiency both at construction stage and during the lifetime of the scheme, e.g., by climate sensitive design which takes account of the orientation, topography and surrounding features so as to control wind effects, while optimising the benefits of daylight and solar gain;
- Having due regard to the social and environmental consequences associated with the construction process and the use of materials and resources, e.g., minimizing the use of water and energy in construction, making efficient use of land, minimising the use of scarce non-renewable materials and using renewable resources and materials that have minimal environmental consequences, wherever practicable;
- Integrating the new housing into the existing natural and built environment in a way that makes a positive contribution to the overall environment of the locality; and
- Designing individual dwellings so that they are comfortable, adaptable to changing needs (lifecycle homes), cost effective to build and economic to manage and maintain.



Goldsmith Street, Norwich - High density, sustainable housing with a focus on pedestrian use



## Chapter 4

# Urban Characterisation

---



Historic buildings within Liberty Square



## Introduction

5 streets have been analysed to understand the intrinsic qualities of the town centre that would shape and influence the masterplan proposals so that the new development reflects place and local identity. Selection was based on the following criteria:

- The streets reflect some of the qualities that make Thurles unique including:
  - Architectural styles and detailing;
  - Building layout;
  - Street pattern and street geometry; and
  - Use of local materials/vernacular.
- The streets reflect different functions, i.e. some are purely residential streets whilst others such have a mixed use function; and
- The streets have different roles in Thurles transport infrastructure, i.e. some are primary routes such as Liberty Square, or secondary routes such as Thomond Road.

We have identified key characteristics and considered the following principles of urban design:

- Streets and spaces:
  - Pattern, width, hierarchy, parking, paving materials, sense of arrival, means of enclosure, landscape features and street trees, integration with surrounding areas and sense of identity.
- Urban blocks:
  - Size, block definition, building plots, density, relationship of buildings to spaces/streets, relationships of buildings to other buildings and boundary treatments.
- Buildings:
  - Uniformity, age, size and scale, materials, windows, doors, decoration, condition and use.
- Views; and
- Ambience and the pedestrian experience.

## Purpose of the analysis

This analysis will shape the design principles for the masterplan, ensuring that the character of Thurles is embedded within all future development.



Thurles Town Centre and peripheral residential areas

**Streets & Spaces** - Located to the eastern edge of Thurles, adjacent to St Mary's Church, Ikerrin Road is a tertiary vehicle route providing a cut through between Mitchel Street and the N75, and access to residential properties along Ikerrin Court. It has a generally linear form, pavements widths are narrow and inconsistent ranging from 1.3m – 2.0m. The carriageway is surfaced in asphalt with concrete block paving. The northern extent feels enclosed due to the narrow street and pavement widths and the Church wall. The southern extent in contrast is more open with large front gardens and open space beside the convenience store.

There is a small green open space at the entrance to Ikerrin Court consisting of grass, ornamental planting and some linear and informal tree planting. There are no other street trees present along Ikerrin Road, though some tree canopies overhang the wall of St Mary's Church providing a green vista.

**Urban Blocks & Buildings** - Residential blocks generally relate to one another in terms of style and layout. The northern extent consists of facing residential blocks, ranging from 28.0 – 34.0m in length. These properties are 2 storeys and generally don't exceed 7.5m in height. Plots are of a small to moderate size and are present on 1888-1913 historic mapping. They represent a historic character in Thurles, with high density and compact urban form.

The southern extent primarily consists of semi-detached residential blocks with some retail, ranging from 12.0 – 30.0m in length. These properties are all 2 storeys and generally don't exceed 8.5m in height. Plots are of a moderate size and were not present on 1888-1913 historic mapping. They represent more recent developments with medium density and larger plots.

**Views** - Building blocks and the Church boundary wall channel views along the carriageway in both directions. There are some views of Saint Mary's Church spire, primarily to the southern extent of the road with overall limited views of the surrounding area.

**Ambience & Pedestrian Experience** - Due to the streetscape scale, this area is primarily used by residents accessing properties. Vehicles create noise and pollution, with parking dominating the space.

## Ikerrin Road



Ikerrin Road streetscape and buildings looking north

## Urban Characterisation



Building plots and section line along Ikerrin Road



**Streets & Spaces** - Located at the centre of Thurles, Liberty Square is primarily mixed retail with food and drink as well as some residential uses, facing onto a primary pedestrian and vehicle route providing key connections from east to west. It has a rectilinear form which narrows to the east, with generous pavement widths ranging from 2.0m – 9.5m. The carriageway is surfaced in asphalt with various sizes of concrete block paving and some instances of herringbone block paving near Mockler’s Pharmacy and the central parking area.

Some street trees and ornamental planting define the boundary of the central parking area. There are street trees present at the eastern extent of the site leading to a smaller town square adjacent to Ursuline Primary School. Generally, there are few street trees and defined public spaces given the scale of the square.

**Urban Blocks & Buildings** - Urban blocks in this area are of varying lengths ranging from 25.0m – 160.0m. Blocks are terraced and face onto Liberty Square, ranging from 7.0m – 13.0m in height or 2-3 storeys. Plots are medium to large scale and were on 1888-1913 historic mapping of Thurles and can be dated much earlier than this. Liberty Square is the historic core of Thurles and is flanked by both Black Castle and Bridge Castle, defining the original boundaries of the town.

Buildings in the area are generally attractive, presenting mixes of historic vernaculars including limestone steps, ornamental block work around sash windows and decorative shop facades. Liberty Market and Devlin’s Medical Hall are great examples of buildings that have retained many of these historic vernaculars. Buildings have a direct relationship with the streetscape, though this has been diluted due to car dominance.

**Views** - The building blocks frame the site and channel views east and west. Black Castle, Bridge Castle and ‘The Stone Man’ create prominent focal points around Liberty Square, with some long range views of the Cathedral drawing your eye further into the town.

**Ambience & Pedestrian Experience** - Liberty Square feels generally open, though vehicle dominance and parking create barriers to movement, as well as noise and pollution.

## Liberty Square

**Future Development** - Work has recently commenced on the Liberty Square Enhancement Project which when complete will comprise a number of public realm enhancements including the widening of footpaths with high quality paving, realignment of carriageways to improve traffic circulation, the provision of street furniture, tree planting and landscaping, information boards, signage feature lighting, and a colour scheme for building/shop front enhancements.



Liberty Square streetscape and buildings looking east



Building plots and section line along Liberty Square

**Streets & Spaces** - Located to the south of Liberty Square, Slievenamon Road has mixed retail and residential use and functions as a primary route providing connections from north to south. It has a strong linear form, with varied pavement widths ranging from 1.5m – 3.5m. The carriageway is surfaced in asphalt with sizes of concrete block paving.

There are no street trees along the northern extent of Slievenamon Road with very limited public spaces. There are some instances of street trees to the south within building curtilages and defining resident parking bays. There is a large public space adjacent to the Shopping Centre with benches, ornamental planting and street trees, though it contrasts the style and scale of the rest of the street.

**Urban Blocks & Buildings** - Blocks are quite varied in function, style and layout. The northern extent consists of retail and commercial blocks ranging from 18.0m- 60.0m in length. Buildings range from 1-4 storeys and generally don't exceed 14.0m in height. Plots are medium to large scale, with no buildings present past the old Chapel on 1888-1913 historic mapping and none present on the eastern side on 1837-1842 historic mapping. They represent larger scale historic units now mixed with more modern commercial blocks such as the Petrol Station and Centra convenience store, creating gaps in the urban fabric.

The southern extent consists of mixed residential and retail blocks ranging from 14.0m-40.0m in length. Buildings are generally 2 storeys and don't exceed 10.0m in height. Plots are medium to large scale, with no buildings present on 1888-1913 historic mapping. These blocks represent more recent developments with medium density and larger plots.

**Views** - Views are channelled north to south by the building blocks. Liberty Market and Arch Bar are framed by the street which leads south to the Thurles Shopping Centre with an access point to the new Liberty Square carpark.

**Ambience & Pedestrian Experience** - The general pedestrian experience is good as the route feels generally open due to the long ranging views along the carriageway and various streets that intersect it. Comparatively vehicles do not dominate the streetscape due to defined and restricted parking areas and generous carriageway width.

## Slievenamon Road

## Urban Characterisation



Slievenamon Road streetscape and buildings looking north



Building plots and section line along Slievenamon Road



**Streets & Spaces** - Located to the south of Liberty Square, Thomond Road is a tertiary vehicle route linking to Slievenamon Road and Emmett Street, but functions as a primary pedestrian route providing access the Thurles Townpark over the River Suir. It has a linear form, pavement widths range from 1.7-2.7m and are consistent along the street. The carriageway is surfaced in asphalt with undefined resident parking bays and concrete block paving.

There are no open spaces or street trees along the route, though mature trees are present along the banks of the River Suir as it opens up into Thurles Town Park.

**Urban Blocks & Buildings** - Residential blocks relate to one another in terms of style and layout, with commercial blocks of varying styles also present. The eastern extent consists of attractive residential blocks, ranging from 28.0-46.0m in length. These properties are 2 storeys and generally don't exceed 9.0m in height. Plots are of a small to medium size and are present on 1888-1913 historic mapping. They represent a historic character in Thurles, with high density and compact urban form.

The southern extent primarily consists retail blocks, which are 46.0m in length. These properties are 1-1.5 storeys and generally don't exceed 5.5m in height. Plots are medium size and were not present on 1888-1913 historic mapping. These blocks represent recent industrial development.

**Views** - There are limited views along Thomond Road with views of further residential properties to the west and somewhat obstructed views into Thurles Townpark to the east.

**Ambience & Pedestrian Experience** - Pedestrian experience is good along Thomond Road, with generous pavements and reduced vehicle traffic due to it having somewhat limited vehicle connectivity. The route is primarily used by pedestrians moving between Thurles Townpark and residential areas to the south and west of the town.

## Thomond Road

## Urban Characterisation



Thomond Road



Thomond Road streetscape and buildings looking east



Building plots and section line along Thomond Road



Chapter 5  
**Strategic  
Masterplan Options**

---



View of Black Castle and outbuildings from existing car park



## Strategic Masterplan Options

In order to meet the masterplan aims and objectives the strategic masterplan proposals will seek to achieve the following aspirations:

- Improving Connectivity to and within the Town Centre;
- Bringing Redundant Land Back into Use;
- Regenerating and Revitalising Thurles Town Centre; and
- Creating High Quality Civic and Public Realm Spaces.

### *Improving Connectivity to and within the Town Centre*

The strategic masterplan proposals for the main masterplan area and the Croke Street site will seek to improve town centre connectivity as follows:

- Enhancing north-south routes into the main masterplan area by connecting Castle Avenue to Friar Street as well as connecting Friar Street to Parnell Street;
- Enhancing east-west connectivity in the main masterplan area by creating a new route that links Parnell Street to Mathew Avenue. To avoid vehicular traffic using this as a cut through, it is envisaged that the route would not be a continuous route;
- Improving pedestrian connectivity into the main masterplan area with a number of new and enhanced routes linking Friar Street and West Gate to the site;
- Creating a new route to link the main masterplan area to Liberty Square;
- Creating an enhanced north-south route through the Croke Street site to ultimately link Westgate and Friar Lane with Fianna Road; and
- Enhancing east-west connectivity on the Croke Street site to ultimately link Croke Street with Slievenamon Road.



High quality and well connected public realm



## *Bringing Redundant Land Back into Use*

The masterplan proposals will seek to utilize as much redundant land as possible whilst still respecting private properties and boundaries. Key aspects of the proposals to achieve this aim include:

- Creating development parcels fronting onto a main east-west axis and further development along a north-south axis towards the east of the main masterplan area;
- Utilizing as much of the backland areas and surface car parking as possible for future development;
- Retaining all peripheral residential and commercial buildings around the periphery of the masterplan area to maintain the character of the town and its streets; and
- Using an efficient street layout as well as existing highway infrastructure to unlock as much developable land as possible.

## *Regenerating and Revitalising Thurles Town Centre*

The masterplan proposals will seek to assist in the revitalising of Thurles Town Centre as follows:

- Bringing redundant buildings back into use as residential, office or leisure uses;
- Creating high quality town centre living on both the main masterplan and Croke Street sites;
- Introducing high density housing in order to maximise the value of the land released for development;
- Reducing the impact of additional motor vehicles in the town centre by reducing the number of parking spaces as appropriate in accordance with the housing mix and with cognisance to the proximate amenities and public transport provision ;

- Introducing public realm improvements outside the main masterplan study areas to form an additional part of the masterplan proposals. This will include improvements along Friar Lane including widening pavements and introducing cycle lanes in order to better connect the railway station with the masterplan area as well as the town centre generally;
- Introducing traffic calming measures and crossing points along Friar Lane and at other entry points into the masterplan area to integrate the sites into the town centre as well to minimize the conflict between vehicular and non-vehicular traffic generally; and
- Creating a significant number of new homes in the centre of Thurles to bring people back to the town centre and create a town centre living lifestyle choice for people wanting convenient access to shops, leisure and public transport facilities.



Accordia, Cambridgeshire - Utilised redundant land to create exemplar housing scheme



Highgate, Durham - Utilising local vernacular to create new development



### *Creating High Quality Civic and Public Realm Spaces*

The masterplan area will focus on providing new high quality public realm and civic spaces in order to meet the following objectives:

- Creating a series of vibrant public realm spaces around Black Castle in order to celebrate this important historic asset and make it accessible to visitors as well as the local community;
- Creating high quality new shared streets and spaces within the masterplan area that will give priority to pedestrians and cyclists;
- Creating key gateway spaces into the masterplan area that can be used as civic spaces for the new and existing communities;
- Creating streets and spaces that reflect the existing street geometry by creating intimate streets that open out onto wider more generous spaces. Buildings will face onto and relate closely to the street as they do on all of Thurles historic streets and spaces; and
- Introducing high quality hard and soft landscape materials that reflect and enhance the architectural conservation area setting of the masterplan area.



Inverness City Centre Streetscape - High quality public realm improvements

## Strategic Masterplan Phase Option - One

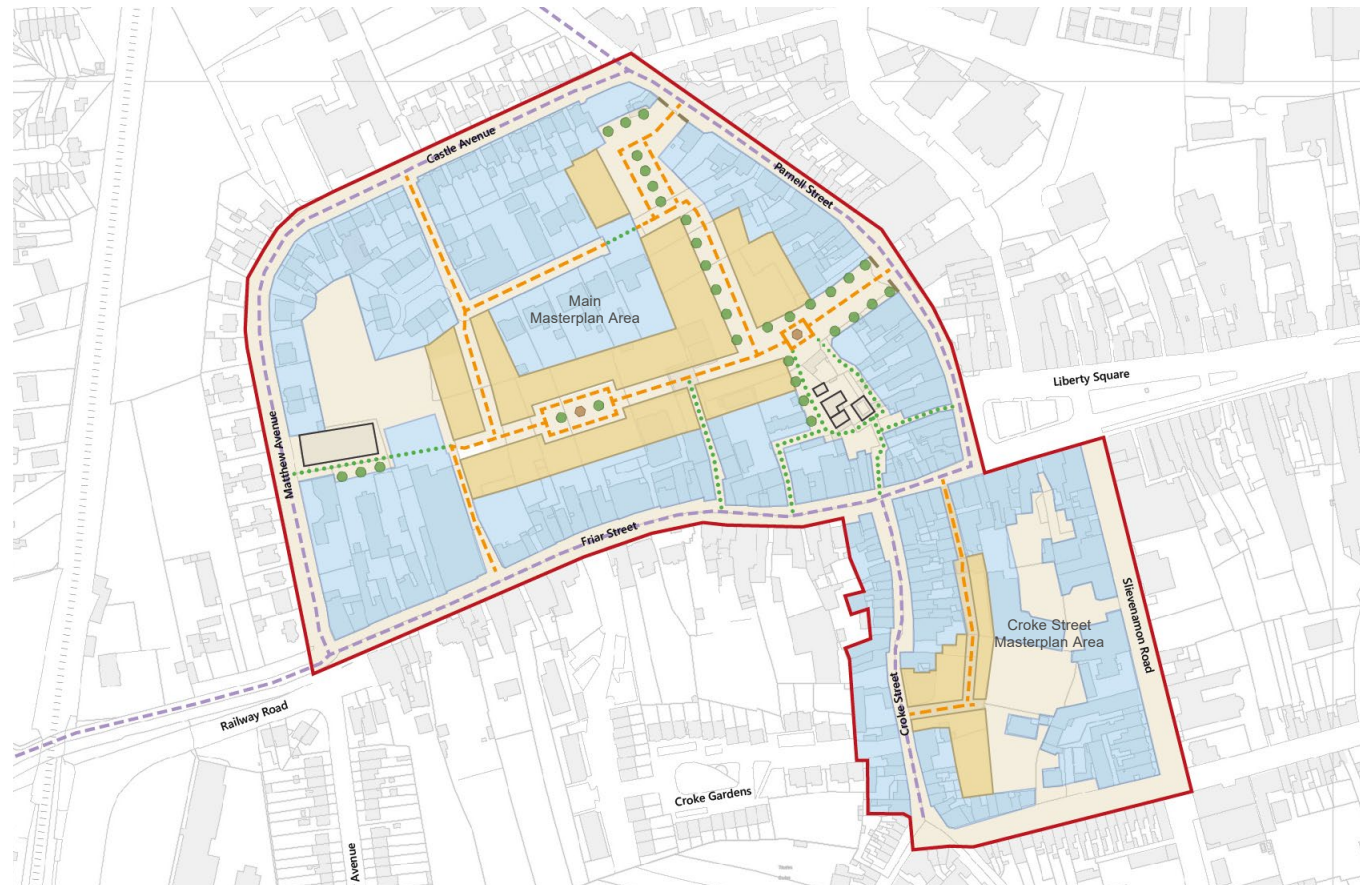
Option 1 includes the main masterplan opportunity sites 6 and 7 as defined in the Thurles and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 as varied but also includes the area of land around the Black Castle and land associated with Butler and Youngs Tyres off Parnell Street. Key elements of Option 1 include:

### Main Masterplan area

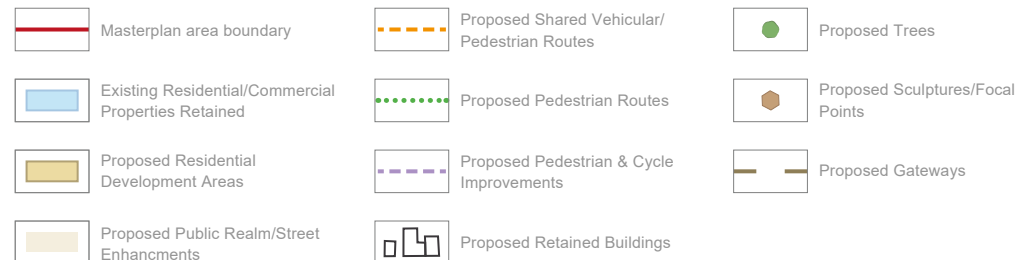
- 1.28 ha of developable land;
- 0.6 ha of new public realm/civic space;
- Retention of Supervalu and car park and Capitol Building in entirety; and
- Retention of all residential buildings in and around the main masterplan area.

### Croke Street Site

- 0.28 ha of developable land;
- 0.01 ha of new public realm/civic space; and
- Retention of all occupied residential buildings in and around the main masterplan area.



Masterplan option 1





## Strategic Masterplan Phase Option - Two

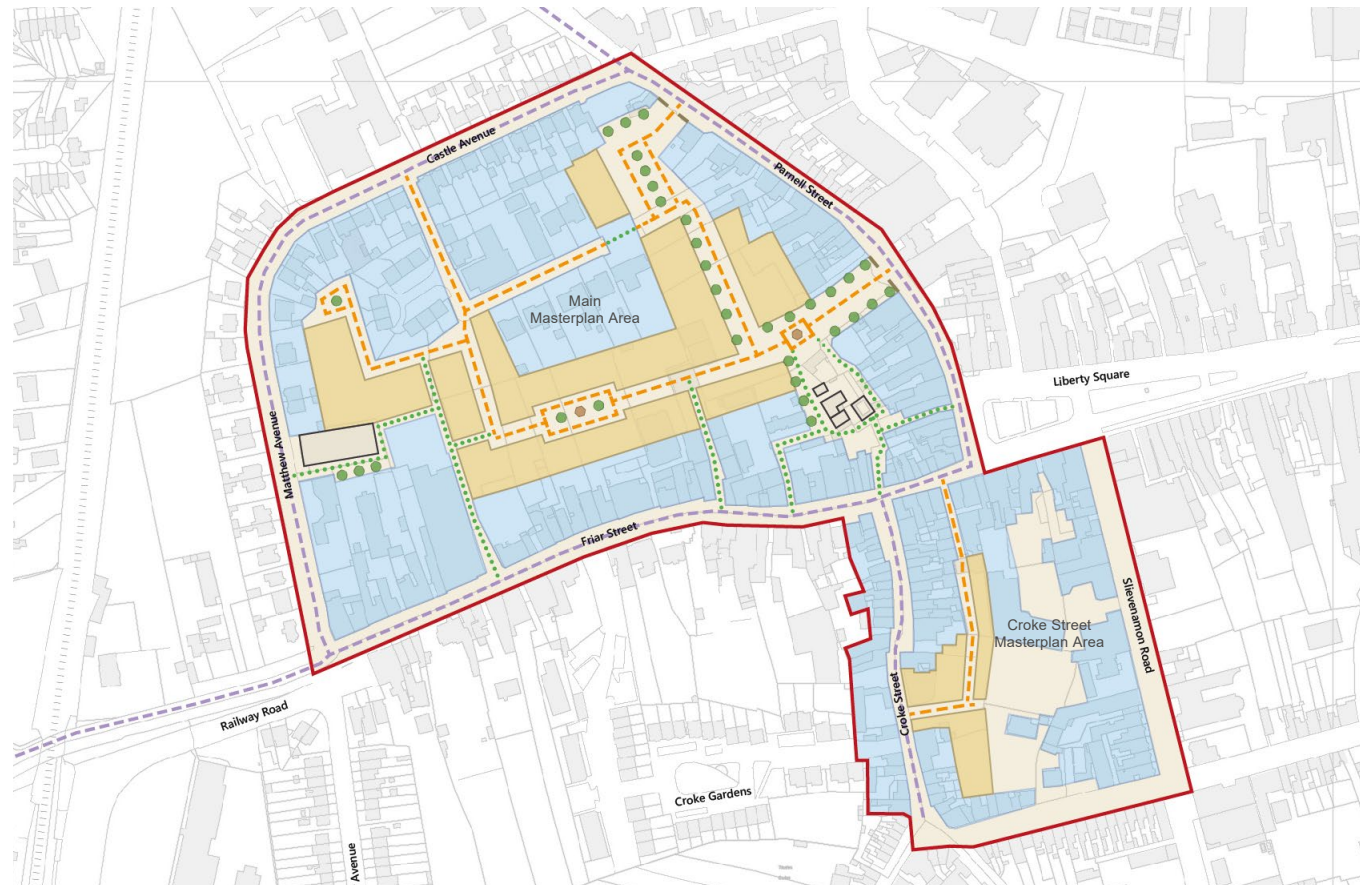
As with Option 1, Option 2 includes main masterplan opportunity sites 6 and 7 but also includes additional areas of land the utilize part of Supervalu car park. Key elements of Option 2 include:

### Main Masterplan area

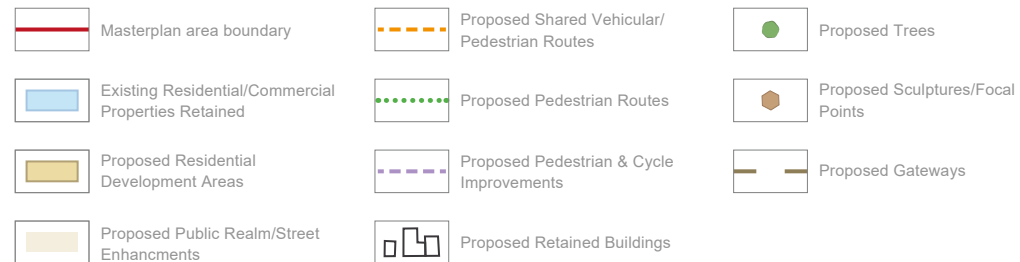
- 1.42 ha of developable land;
- 0.7 ha of new public realm/civic space;
- Retention of Supervalu and Capitol Building but only half of the existing Supervalu car park; and
- Retention of all residential buildings in and around the main masterplan area.

### Croke Street Site

The Croke Street Site for Option 2 remains the same as for Option 1.



Masterplan option 2



## Strategic Masterplan Phase Option - Three

Again Option 3 includes the main masterplan opportunity sites 6 and 7 and again includes the area of land around the Black Castle and land associated with Butler and Youngs Tyres off Parnell Street. Further land considered as part of this masterplan option includes all of the Supervalu car park and land to the west of Supervalu including the existing petrol station and the Capitol Building. Key elements of Option 3 include:

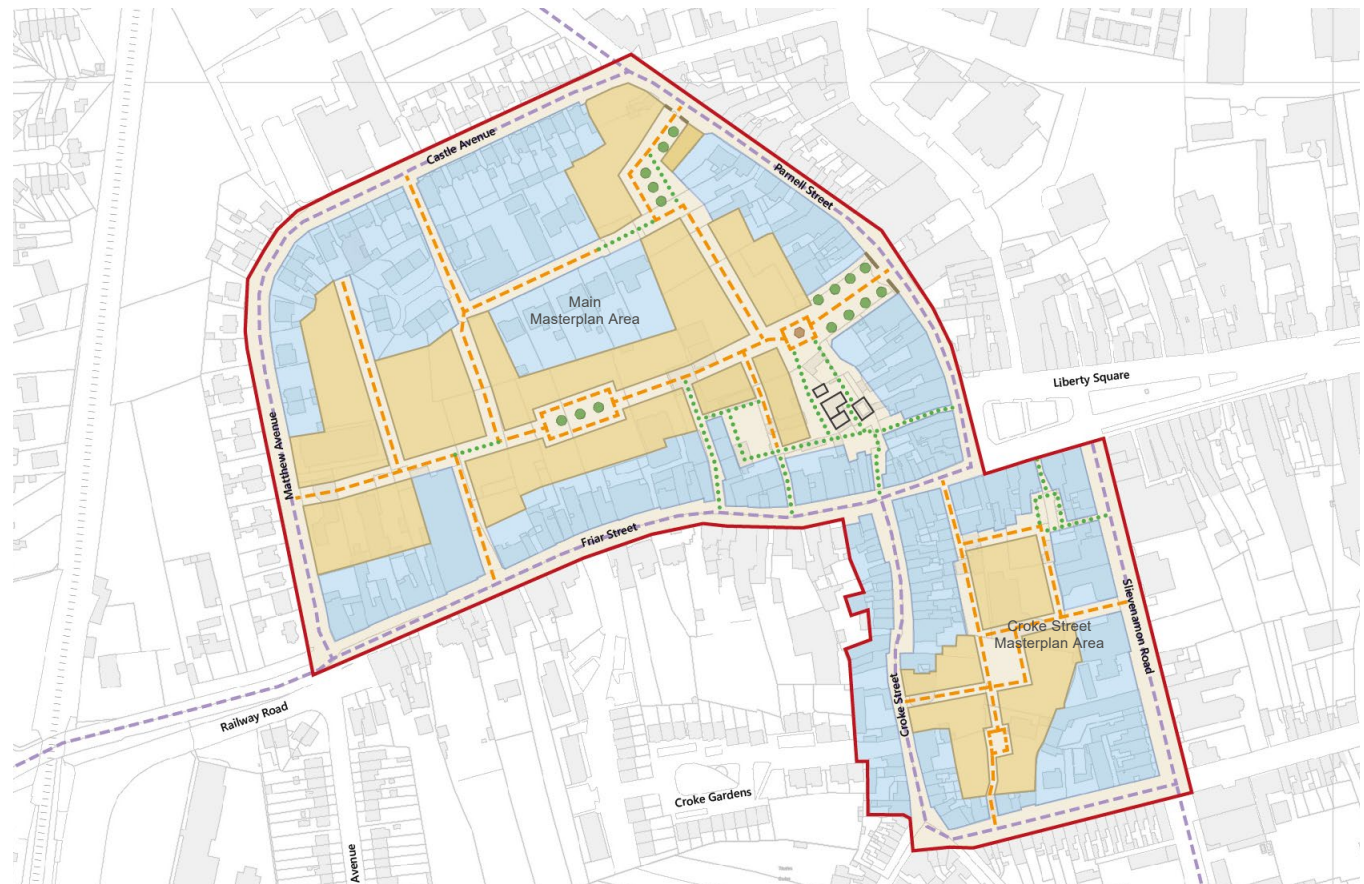
### Main Masterplan area

- 3.1 ha of developable land;
- 0.8 ha of new public realm/civic space;
- Retention of Supervalu building only; and
- Inclusion of 2 existing residential buildings to the entrance to Butler and Youngs Tyres, a property to the west of Black Castle and a property to the west of Supervalu as part of the masterplan.

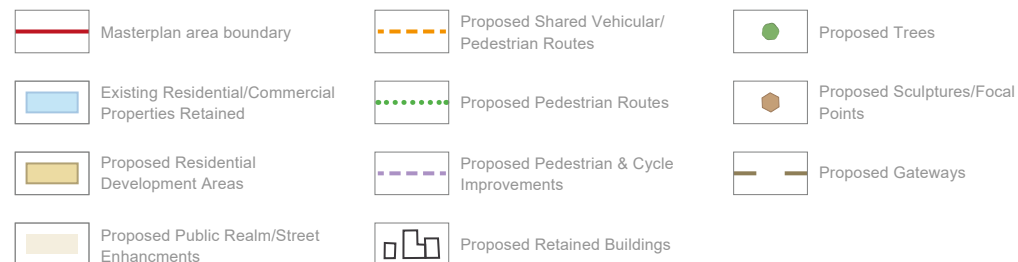
### Croke Street Site

The masterplan for the Croke Street Site in Option 3 includes additional developable land as a result of relocating Lyons Tyre Services to a more suitable out of town location. Key elements of Option 3 include:

- 0.61 ha of developable land;
- 0.02 ha of new public realm/civic space;
- New civic space created at the centre of the site with properties facing onto this civic space
- An additional route linking the site to Liberty Square;
- New east-west link between Croke Street and Slievenamon Road;
- Continuation of the north-south route to link Westgate/ Friar Lane with Fianna Road; and
- Retention of all occupied residential buildings in and around the main masterplan area.



Masterplan option 3





## Chapter 6 Urban Design Framework & Masterplan Proposals

---



Accordia. Cambridge- Using sites unique qualities to create a distinct sense of place



# Urban Design Framework & Masterplan Proposals

## Placemaking Principles

A number of place making principles have been adopted in order to create a strong sense of place for the new residential community. A range of house types are proposed across the site, including 1 and 2 bed apartments, 2 bed terraces, 3 bed terraced town houses and occasional 4 bed terraced town houses. A number of principles have been adopted to create place which are as follows :

- All routes into and streets within the site are overlooked by residential buildings with habitable rooms facing the street in order to create a continuous built edge along the street but also to maximise natural surveillance;
- House types are mixed in order to create variety and reflect the characteristics of Thurles;
- Parking is reduced in order to minimise the impact on the street scene;
- Building set backs from the carriageway vary again to reflect the characteristics of traditional housing in Thurles;
- Numerous street trees will overtime create a strong landscape framework for the housing;
- The larger 3 storey buildings ( 1 and 2 storey apartments) are generally located towards entrance of the site in order to enhance sense of arrival and create gateways into the new development; and
- Lifecycle housing allowing for diverse residential communities which include elderly and disabled living, families, single people and students.



Mixed house types along pedestrian streets



Residential development with shared community space and a focus on green infrastructure



Vehicle access limited to boundary roads, with focus on creating public spaces



Street trees integrated into residential streets



## Building Heights and Massing

The majority of buildings around the Thurles masterplan area are 2 and 3 storeys in height. This is also typical of the majority of buildings within the immediate town centre. Buildings are also of a domestic scale and on the whole reflect traditional residential and retail uses. They also reflect the historic origins of the town where properties originally consisted of a house located on a long narrow plot of land called a burgage plot. This has resulted in many properties being narrow terraced town houses occupying the full width of the plot and thus creating an intimate town centre environment where buildings provide strong definition to the streets. It is this character that the masterplan seeks to replicate. As such, the scale and height of proposed buildings are generally 2 and 3 storey in height. The majority of the properties are terraced town houses which seek to create a continuous built edge to clearly define a new street which runs east/west through the main masterplan area. In order to create a varied and attractive street scene, 3 storey apartments or town houses sit cheek by jowl with 2 storey terraced cottages. Again this approach has been adopted so that the masterplan reflects the character of the existing town centre.



View looking east along Main Street towards the main entrance into the site from Parnell Street

## Masterplan Proposals





## Masterplan Proposals - Elevations (Not to Scale)



A A-

Section A to A- indicates the proposed units on the north-south route that links Friar Street to Parnell Street



B B-

Section B to B- indicates the proposed street scene for the main east-west axis running through the site. The variety in scale, with two and three storey buildings standing next to each other is reflective of Thurles traditional street characteristics. Residential, retail and leisure properties are mixed along the proposed main street providing easily accessible destination points.



C C-

This section indicates the proposed units on the north-south route backing onto Parnell Street. Whilst this elevation indicates a contemporary approach to the architecture it isn't envisaged that both approaches are used together. A single approach to the design of the buildings would create stronger identity and sense of place.

## People Friendly Streets

A number of design responses have also been applied to the scheme proposals in order to create people friendly streets. These include the provision of:

- A shared surface route throughout the site where pedestrians and cyclists take priority over the motor car in accordance with DMURS;
- Parking is minimised in order to create more generous public realm spaces and reduce the dominance of parking across the site generally;
- Raised crossing points into the masterplan area to act as traffic calming measures including facilitating safe pedestrian movement for people and cyclists emerging from the masterplan area as well as enhancing sense of arrival;
- Vehicle speeds are designed to be minimised in accordance with DMURS within the site with visual clues and planting introduced to limit vehicle speeds;
- Street geometry across the site would vary depending on the road type. Whilst street widths would range from 4.0m to 6.0m to allow vehicles to safely reverse out of parking bays.
- Waste storage would be stored in rear gardens with rear paths connecting gardens to key collection points. The Shared surface would have a minimum width of 6m and with refuse vehicles not having to reverse.



View looking west along the Main Street towards the SuperValu building



## Built Form

The proposals seek to celebrate traditional Irish architecture and acknowledge the location of the site within the architectural conservation area as well as helping to reinforce place and local identity. New housing would therefore reflect the qualities of traditional architecture in Thurles rather than following the contemporary architecture route which is often common place in Ireland. The new homes which would reflect traditional high quality architecture would also be designed as sustainable homes with efficient insulation, energy supply and use, and sustainable water resources and waste management etc. Buildings facing each other are positioned approximately 14.0m apart in order to create more intimate human scale streets whilst still maintaining privacy. Buildings are also positioned so that buildings facing the gable ends of adjacent buildings are 12.0m apart.

Buildings are located to achieve the following aspirations:

Provide structure, definition of public realm spaces and routes;

- Enhance gateways into the site and create a strong sense of arrival; and
- Enhance legibility and wayfinding with key buildings located at the end of views and vistas.

The buildings have been arranged to create a varied roofline as well as to provide interest to the street scene.

A key characteristic of the houses lining the main streets in Thurles is the variety in scale, with larger and smaller two storey buildings standing cheek by jowel, not to mention two- and three-storey buildings standing next to each other. This suggests that leases made no stipulations about building heights, scale or uniformity and this irregularity, which has persisted into the early 20th century, is a feature of present-day Thurles and has become a key element of the masterplan.



View looking northwest from top of Old Baker Street towards residential, retail and leisure units with and civic space with outdoor seating and planting

## Concept Image of Mixed Use Development

The development consists of 175 units across the main masterplan area which is approx. 3.1ha in size. Densities will be developed for the masterplan area in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas (2009). The masterplan area will include a mix of residential, commercial and recreational uses to reflect its town centre orientation and to assist the development of Thurles as a sustainable '10 minute town'.

A housing needs demand assessment will determine the specific mix of housing as appropriate at the time of development. The masterplan area will include mixed uses including retail, commercial, and recreational.



Colour coded masterplan indicating type of development blocks across the main masterplan area



## Student Accommodation

### *Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Thurles*

The Mary Immaculate College which was founded in 1898, is a university-level College of Education and the Liberal Arts, academically linked with the University of Limerick. The College is a multi-campus institution, with a student population of over 5,000, enrolled in undergraduate programmes both in Thurles and Limerick.

MIC Thurles is located in the heart of Thurles town adjacent to the River Suir. Existing student accommodation is provided on site but this is limited to 36 en-suite bedrooms. Spaced out over three floors, they provide accommodation for 36 male or female students on a single room basis. Facilities also include, communal TV lounge and a self catering kitchen area.

### *Limerick Institute of Technological University of Shannon (LIT now TUS), Thurles*

LIT (now TUS) has recently been awarded Technological University status in consortium with Athlone IT. The institution is expected to comprise a student population of more than 14,000 and a staff of approximately 1,200 people across six campuses in Athlone, Limerick (2), Clonmel, Ennis and Thurles. This new designation will increase higher education access, drive enhanced regional development and increase opportunities for students, staff, business and enterprise, and local communities. The Existing LIT campus in Thurles is located off Nenagh Road and adjacent to Semple Stadium. As part of proposals to increase student numbers by 15,000 across its 6 campuses, the LIT is currently developing a new state of the art engineering focussed campus at Coonagh in Limerick and have also acquired €18m of funding to make the Thurles Campus a Regional Sports Campus. LIT is aiming for potentially up to 1500 additional students at the Thurles campus as part of this development.



Leicester Mill Lane - High quality and well connected public realm through university campus with extensive SUDs planting areas

## Masterplan Layout With Student Accommodation

As a result of these higher education facilities being located in Thurles, and with both MIC and LIT planning to expand further, there will inevitably be a demand for additional student housing in Thurles with some of this student housing potentially being delivered as part of the masterplan. If student accommodation is to be provided as part of the masterplan it would be beneficial to locate this at a single location within the main masterplan area so that the student accommodation has its own sense of identity that presents an attractive lifestyle offer for students. It is not envisaged however that the proposed student accommodation differs in style or character to the remaining development across the site as would impact on the continuity and identity of the masterplan area. It is envisaged however that the student accommodation could be mid-rise development of 4 storeys as opposed to the 2 and 3 storey residential properties.

This masterplan option indicates the area of land at the northern end of Parnell Street being identified for student housing due to:

- It is the closest part of the main masterplan area to the LIT campus;
- It is located to the north of the main street within the masterplan and hence quite self-contained;
- The increased height of buildings will not impact on the setting of Black Castle; and
- Student life and activities will not impact on new and existing residential areas.





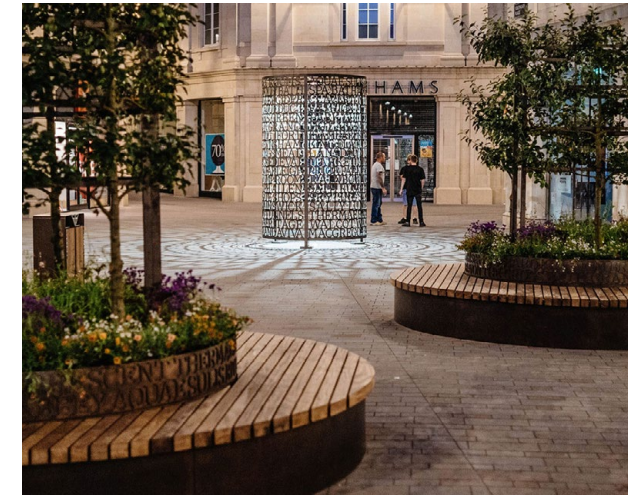
## Public Realm Spaces

A series of public realm spaces are proposed as part of the masterplan. These will act as new civic spaces that can be used for social interaction but also include focal points that would welcome people into the new urban community. High quality public realm materials, planting and street trees will create a series high quality civil spaces and streets. It is proposed that Black Castle is opened up, with redundant buildings, sheds and clutter cleared away from the main castle building in order to create meaningful external spaces around this historic feature. It is envisaged that the castle could be restored as a museum or alternatively with a civic function and that the castle walls retained to create 2 walled gardens, with a café that would act as an attraction for local people and people visiting the town whilst also enhancing the setting of this important heritage asset.

New rain gardens are proposed as part of a SUDs system and included within each new street in order to capture surface water drainage and reduce the amount of water entering the positive drainage system. New street trees will help create a green new urban quarter in Thurles.



Proposed connectivity through residential areas prioritising pedestrians



High quality civic spaces for pedestrians with seating, cycle routes and limited parking



The incorporation of heritage features into the public realm



Integrating SuDS planting into the streetscape for improved drainage



## Public Realm Spaces

A number of public realm and highway improvements are also proposed for Friar Street, Parnell Street Castle Avenue as part of the proposals. These include:

- Introducing a step change in the quality of the public realm materials for the pavements at the entry points into the site;
- Increasing the width of the pavements and quality of the public realm materials along the entire length of Friar Street since this route connects the town centre and main masterplan area to the railway station and contains numerous entry points into the main masterplan area; and
- The introduction of raised tables/crossing points within the carriageway at key gateway locations into the main masterplan area.

Supervalu has been retained as part of the development and a new civic space has been created to the north of this for customers and new residents. The masterplan also allows for a service yard and new car park with 44 spaces is provided as part of the development. It is anticipated that this car park will be used by customers during the day and residents during out of hours. Elsewhere 105 parking spaces have been provided across the main site. This allows for 1 space for every 2 units and an additional visitor space for every 10 units. Parking has been located in discrete locations so as not to dominate the street scene or be associated with particular residential units. No on-plot parking has been provided again to encourage a greater shared use of all parking within the masterplan area. Parking provision has been deliberately reduced to encourage active travel, reduce the use of vehicles within the town centre, provide a more pedestrian friendly environment within the masterplan area and acknowledge the sites location within a town centre that has good access to existing public transport provision.



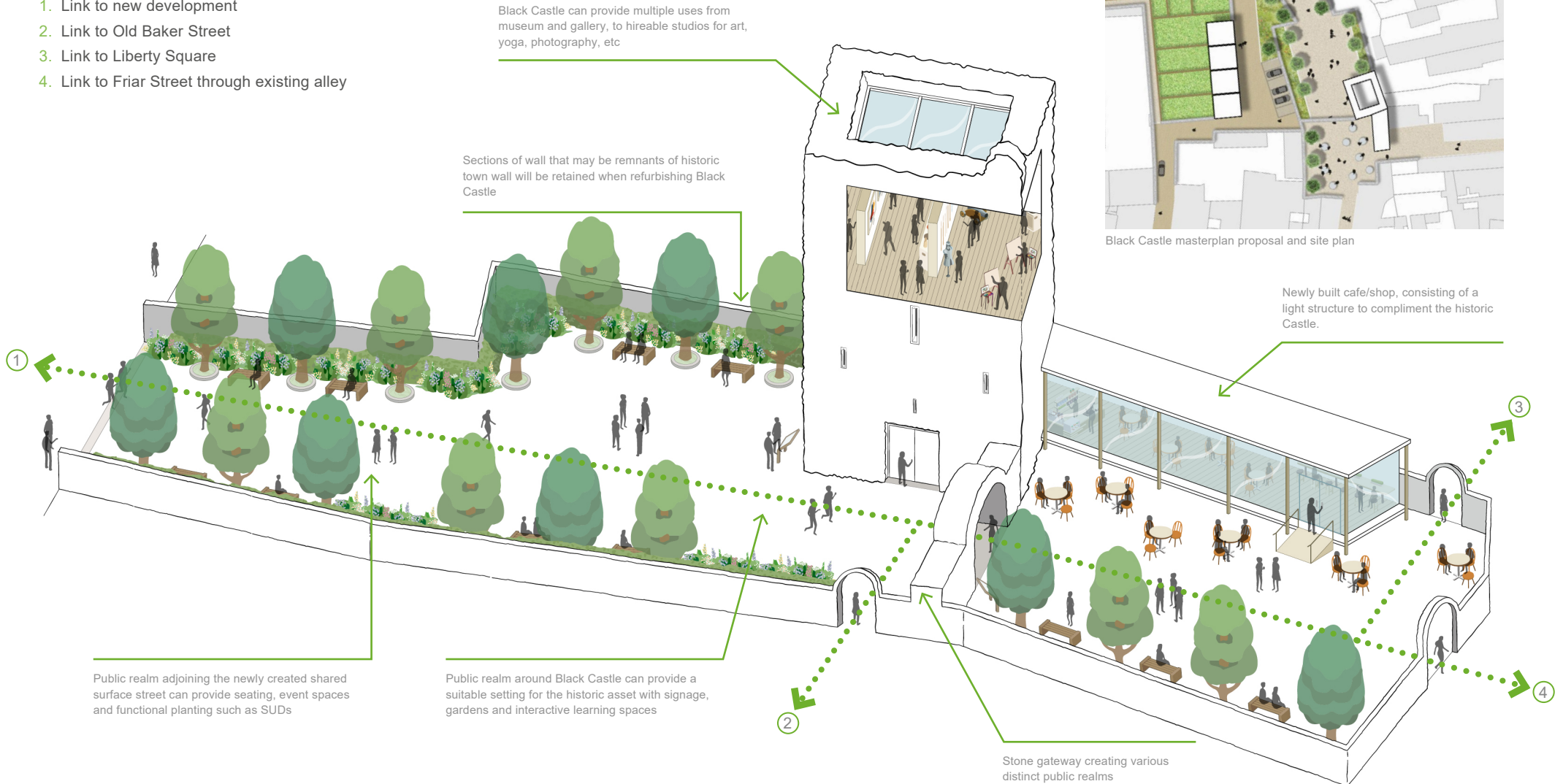
View looking south east across the civic square north of the SuperValu building



# Urban Design Framework & Masterplan Proposals

## Public Realm Spaces

- • • Clear routes through the Black Castle site with connections to the new development and existing destinations including:
  1. Link to new development
  2. Link to Old Baker Street
  3. Link to Liberty Square
  4. Link to Friar Street through existing alley



Masterplan with Landownership Boundaries



- A1 - Access Lane 1 - between Liberty Square and Friar Street
- A2 - Access Lane 2 - between West Gate and Friar Street
- A3 - Access Lane 3 - between Friar Street and Parnell Street



## Repurposing Existing Buildings

Changing shopping habits, a reduced footfall, and the creation of major out of town retail parks have decreased demand in the town centre. All of these factors have resulted in an increase in vacant and underutilised units throughout the town.

Revitalising Thurles and rejuvenating the town centre relies on well planned and designed new developments, as well as the repurposing of existing vacant or underutilised units in the town centre. With a change in working patterns brought about by COVID-19 there is an opportunity to repurpose some of these vacant buildings as flexible office space or as residential uses. Flexible co-working space and offices should provide uniquely designed, inspiring co-working office space to help establish a creative community of driven, young and entrepreneurial businesses.



10 Westgate Currently vacant

## Existing Building Uses

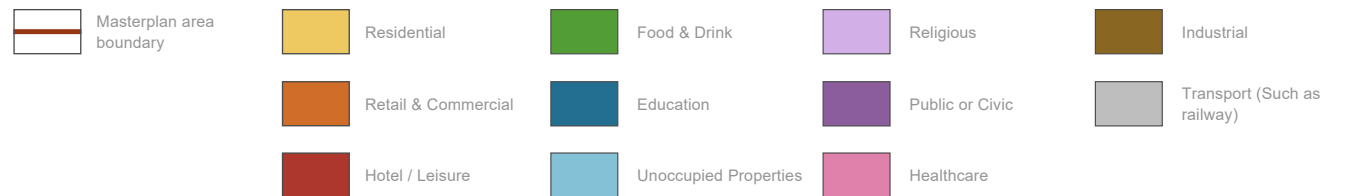
The mapping of the ground floor building land-use highlights the dominance of commercial/retail uses within the masterplan area along Friar Street, West Gate, and at the junctions of Croke Street and Parnell Street. This mix of predominantly retail and commercial properties interspersed with licensed premises and cafés. There is also a dominance of retail/food and drink uses along Parnell Street and Liberty Square. There are numerous vacant and derelict properties within the masterplan area, in particular along Friar Street and Croke Street which could be re-purposed and brought back into use.

A 2018 Town Centre land-use survey recorded the presence of 1,823 different business interests and activities occurring within the defined 'Town Centre' area. Vacancy level in Thurles is marginally higher than the County average for Tipperary (14.3%), and higher than the 13.3% National average.

Matthew Avenue, Castle Avenue, and Castle Gardens are residential areas, with the south end of Croke Street and northern end of Parnell Street also predominantly residential. There are very few vacant buildings in these areas.



Building use around the masterplan area





## Vacant Buildings

The majority of vacant buildings within or immediately adjacent to the masterplan area are located along Friar Street, Croke Street and Slievenamon Road. Many of these vacant properties were former retail premises or buildings used for leisure such as the Watermill building on Slievenamon Road which has a bar and restaurant. Whilst a town centre that provides a range of uses is important there is logic in clustering similar uses so that the particular offer is not too dispersed around the town. There is also logic in clustering retail uses towards the main retail offer and Liberty Square. Therefore, towards the western end of Friar Street vacant buildings could be repurposed for residential use, whereas towards the eastern end of Friar Street, Croke Street and Slievenamon Road, vacant buildings could be repurposed for commercial, or leisure use as well as retail use.

Inevitably there will be buildings in this location that also lend themselves to residential use or student accommodation due to the plan site or internal configuration of the building.



Vacant buildings around the masterplan area



## Non-Residential Uses - Flexible Workspaces

There was strong support from both stakeholders and community members to repurpose any vacant town centre buildings as co-working office space.

Co-working spaces offer communal desks and private offices for hourly, daily, weekly, monthly or annual use, both for individuals and small-scale businesses. There is currently a lack of such space within Thurles. Co-working hubs allow for flexible working, and therefore reduce the use of the private car, but also create an incentive for people to relocate back to Thurles from larger towns and cities brought about by a general increase in working remotely as a result of COVID-19.

The introduction of 'flexible shared workspace' accommodation would ideally be located within larger vacant units such as 10 Westgate that allow a greater degree of flexibility due the larger plan size and footprint of the building. The following example shows a reception on the ground floor along with some retail use, flexible office working space on the first floor and residential use created on the second floor.

Repurposing existing vacant units would involve upgrading existing buildings to improve functionality as well as upgrade facilities. Repurposed buildings would provide the opportunity to revitalise the town centre with a move away from traditional retail uses and introduce a greater diversity of uses, including housing, employment and leisure in the town centre. This increased diversity is intended to create a desirable and liveable town centre that increases footfall, stimulates demand and encourages the residential population to return to or remain within Thurles.

In order to bring vacant buildings back into use it is envisaged that:

- Vacant Building Prospectus is created. This will involve establishing database of properties, including details of; permitted/established use, retail and/or residential floor space, services, parking, rates applicable;

- Vacant Property Working Group: Tipperary County Council (TCC) to put in place a working group of housing, planning and engineering staff to look at applying and promoting a scheme to bring vacant buildings back into use. TCC will work collaboratively with town centre groups to apply initiatives and bring about change; and
- Utilise Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland the Government's housing plan which includes a package of measures for addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock.



10 Westgate Currently vacant



Example of how 10 Westgate which is currently vacant could be re-purposed from its existing use to new co-working office space on the first floor and residential use on the second floor



## Chapter 7 Case Studies

---





## Highgate – Durham City, England

Highgate is a street in the city of Durham that measures approximately 190m long and 50m wide. It contains 50 no 2 and 3 storey town houses and apartments that were completed in 2004. The housing styles replicate Georgian Durham town houses and could easily be mistaken for long-established part of the city. Its design has won from praise from CABI and the fiercely protective City of Durham Trust amongst others.

The scheme was awarded a Building for Life Gold award which recognises design quality for residential developments. The scheme was judged to have met high standards in terms of:

- Character distinctiveness, architectural quality, layout, legibility, and landscape;
- Road layout, sensitive and integrated approach to car parking and pedestrianisation priorities;
- Design and construction techniques reflecting local detailing, public realm, and adopting high housing standards; and
- Environment / community public transport, sustainability, variety, facilities.

*Density:* approximately 50 units per ha



Modern town houses which reflect the local historic character. Image copyright David Millington Photography Ltd



## Poundbury– Dorset, England

Poundbury is a residential urban extension to the town of Dorchester. It is an integrated rather than zoned development, consciously designed as a challenge to the conventional, open, car-dominated suburban residential estates, which have sprawled around the edges of most of UK cities and towns over the past fifty years. These land-hungry developments have eroded the setting of many of the historic towns and villages, which have rightly been cherished as conservation areas.

There are four key principles in particular which have been pioneered at Poundbury:

- Architecture of place. Creating beauty and reflecting local character and identity.
- Integrated Affordable Housing. Integrated with and indistinguishable from private housing, offering a variety of options.
- A walkable community. Designed to be welcoming and useable for pedestrians rather than just the car.
- A mix of uses. Integrating homes with retail and other employment uses and public areas.

The success of Poundbury has now been recognised beyond Dorset and many of the founding principles have been incorporated into UK national and local planning policy. Poundbury is also proving to be increasingly influential with an international audience, attracting interest and generating many organised tours every year from architects, town planners, academics and developers across the globe.



Housing referencing local character, set within a pedestrian friendly public realm





Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann  
Tipperary County Council



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040



Department of Rural and  
Community Development

An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail



November 2021

LUC