



**DRAFT**

**NEW ROSS  
MAIN REPORT  
*A Reference Document*  
2023**

**NEW ROSS  
TOWN  
CENTRE  
FIRST  
PLAN**



# New Ross Town Centre First Plan

## ***“Turning the Corner”***

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A Playful City

For:

Wexford County Council

September 2023

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[Link to be provided by WCC](#)

### ***Who, What, Where, How and Why***

Work in progress

### ***Where we start from***

Work in progress

### ***Where we want to go***

Work in progress

### ***How we get there***

Work in progress

### ***What we plan to do, and When***

Work in progress



**Introduction**



**Baseline**



**Vision**



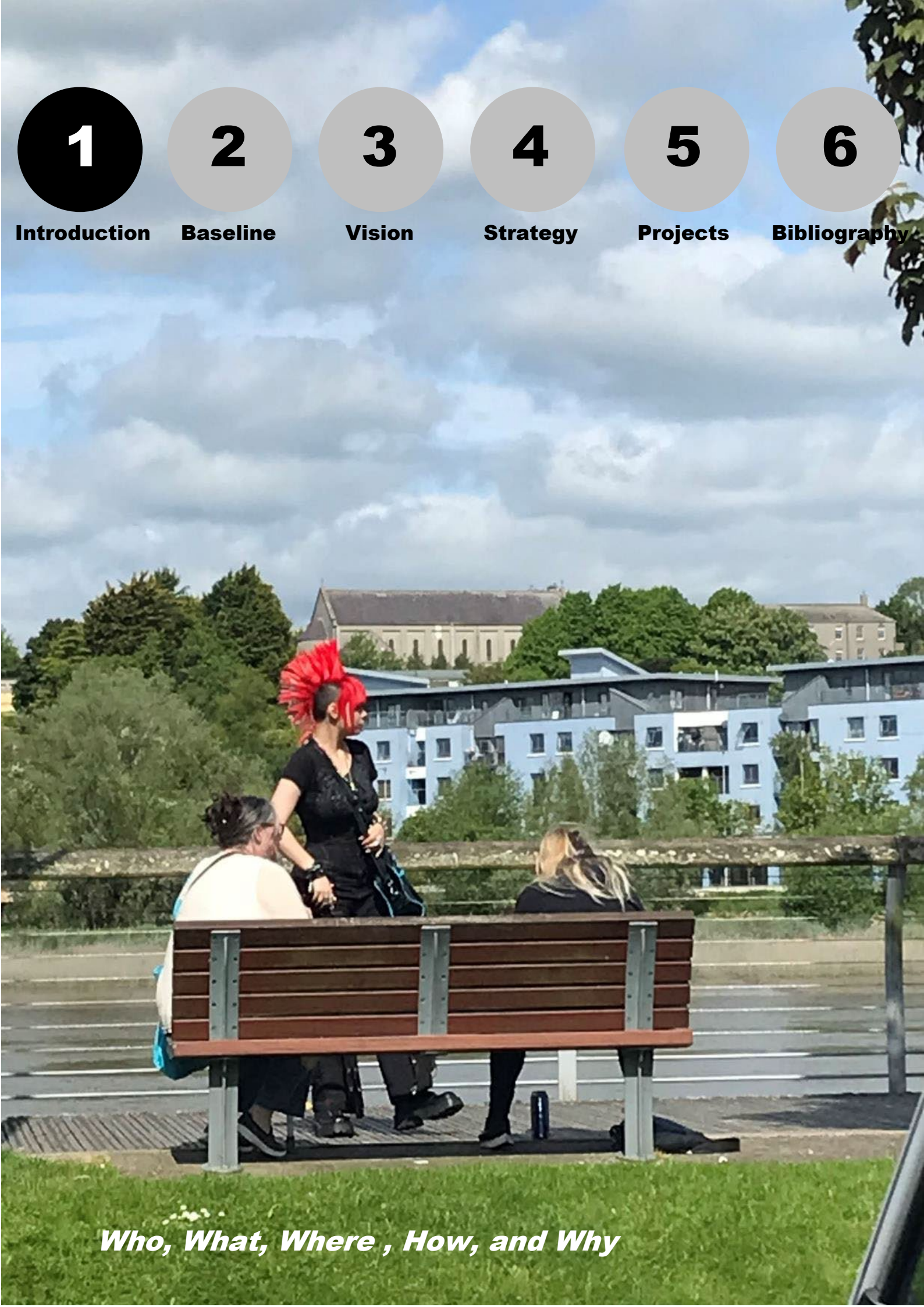
**Strategy**



**Projects**



**Bibliography**

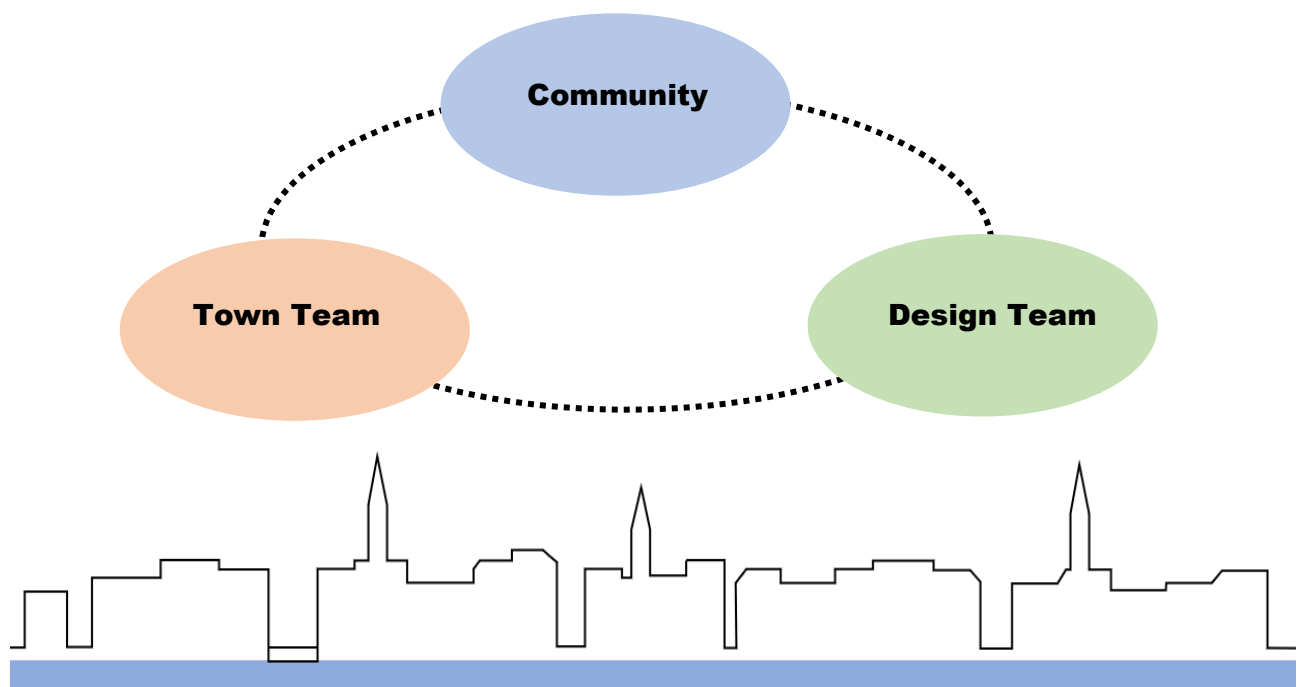


***Who, What, Where , How, and Why***

## Who – The Team

Wexford County Council have appointed the Multidisciplinary Team of Cunnane Stratton Reynolds (town planning, urban design, landscape and townscape), Optimize (demographics, economics, tourism), Howley Hayes Cooney (heritage), Tobin (engineering and access) and A Playful City (consultation and community engagement) in May 2023 to prepare a Town Centre First Plan for New Ross. This urban regeneration plan for the town will be the first of its kind for New Ross to bundle various strands of future development in a collaborative and holistic approach.

A Town Team and a Town Regeneration Officer have been nominated to steer the Town Centre First process and to coordinate the preparation of the Plan in collaboration with the multidisciplinary team. The Town Team represents the various key stakeholders for New Ross in order to address all social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of future development in the town.



## What – The Brief

This is an urban regeneration project that focusses on the town centre of New Ross. The Vision, Strategy and Action Plan of the Town Centre First Plan must achieve what is set out in the brief as follows:

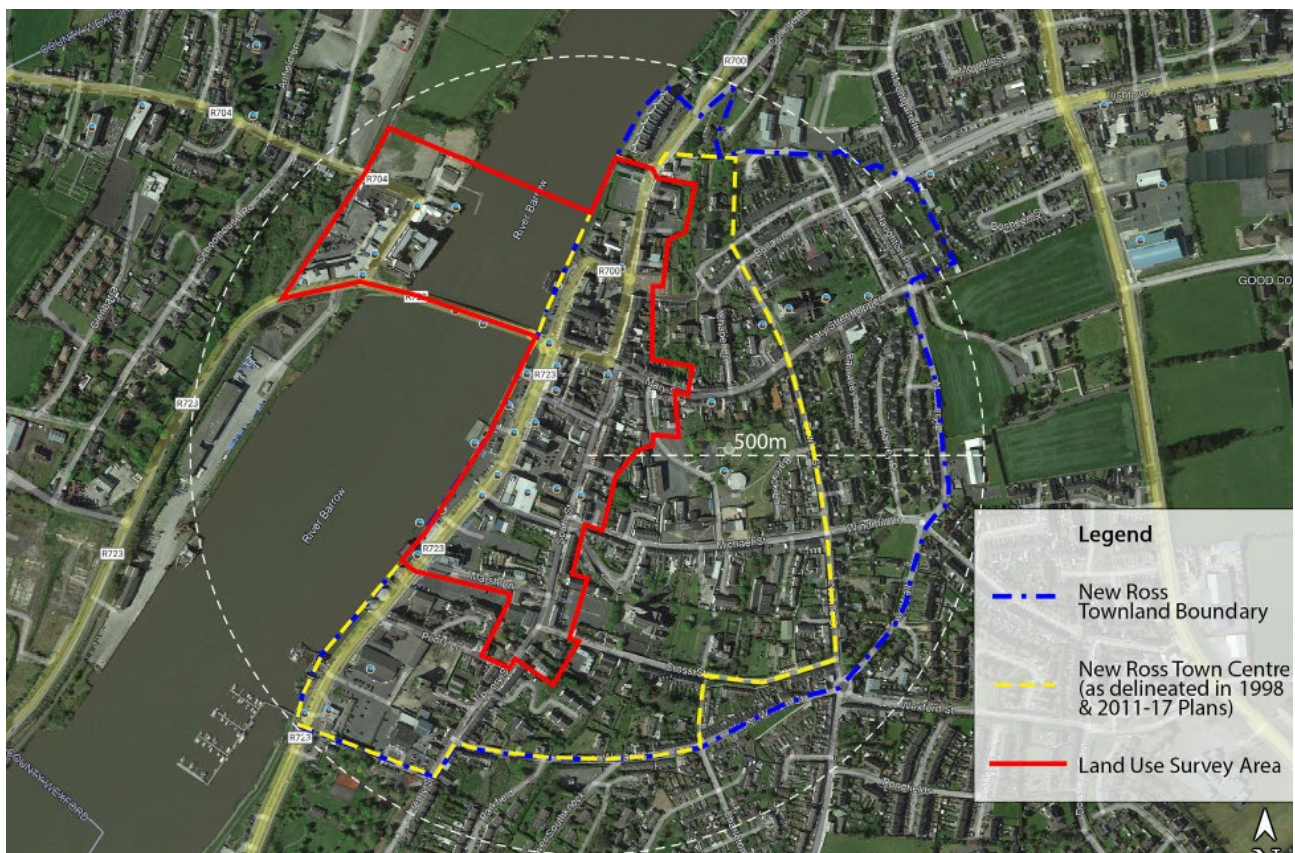
*“The Plan must promote the process of strengthening social, cultural, economic and environmental life in the town by addressing the opportunities and challenges which New Ross presents. It must also reference the cultural, economic and social history of the town.”*

In the context of New Ross, the Town Centre First Plan should assist to consolidate recently completed public realm projects, as these have become successful places for the community.

### Where – The Urban Context

This Plan contains proposals and actions directed to the town centre which are consistent with the Town Centre First policy. The focus on the town centre in terms of proposals and the emphasis of the assessments on the centre does not mean the outer areas and the catchment outside the town have not been considered. A broader assessment of the needs of the town and its hinterland, well beyond the town centre, have been carefully considered in the formulation of strategy and generation of proposals and actions.

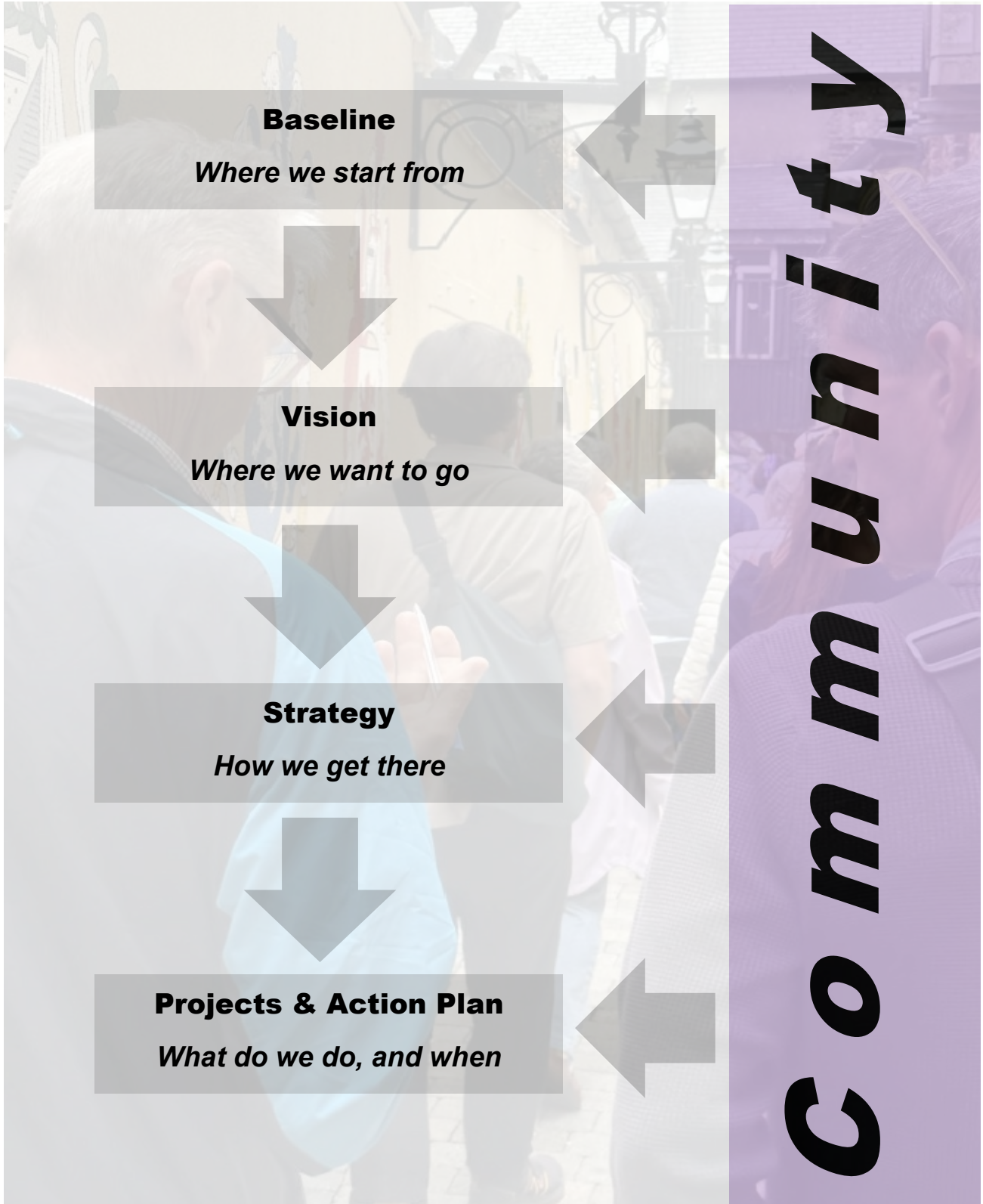
The definition of a general boundary for projects is helpful to keep the Action Plan focussed. However, it was agreed that the regeneration of the town centre cannot be treated in isolation. Physical surveys were contained within a feasible boundary while community engagement and sustainable proposals were reaching beyond any physical town centre boundary – in the sense of a holistic approach to issues of urban regeneration – which generally do not start or stop at boundaries, neither does the community involved.



*Survey and Research Area Map for the Town Centre First Plan*

**How – With the Community**

Key to this document is the process, from working with the community and from town surveys to establish a **Baseline** of what exists and what needs to improve, to agreeing a **Vision**, to developing a **Strategy** to achieve it, and to working out an **Action Plan** to structure and manage future development.





### Why - Town Centre First Policy

This urban regeneration plan has been prepared in accordance with the Government's *Town Centre First Policy*, under the *Our Rural Future Policy* to support the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages in Ireland. *Town Centre First - A Policy Approach for Irish Towns* aims to improve our town centres, so they can become vibrant and attractive places for people to live, work and visit, while the local community can enjoy better social, cultural and economic services.

The *Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS 2023)* has been a guiding scheme for this Plan as it directly supports the objectives of *Our Rural Future* and *Town Centre First*. The TVRS seeks to support the revitalisation of rural Ireland through a renewed focus on social and economic recovery / regeneration in town centres. Projects will focus on enhancing streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use and make them available as multi-purpose community spaces.

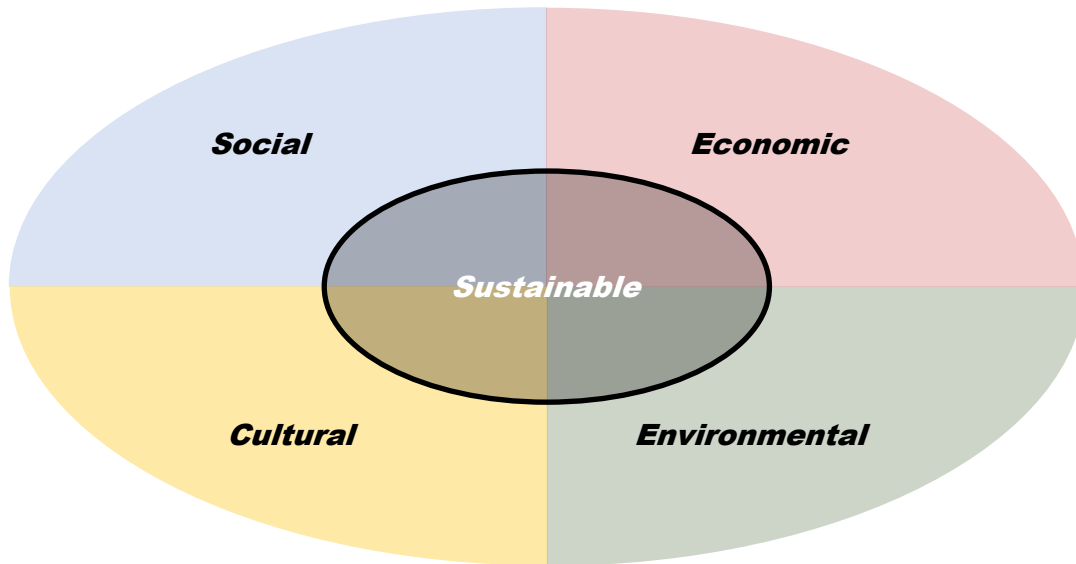
We envisage this *Town Centre First Plan* to become a useful Reference Document for future development in New Ross, and comparable development elsewhere. It provides planning and design guidance, advice and direction over a planned timeframe and process.

In the ambit of the policy, proposed projects will represent a variety of Strands:

- **Reusing vacant buildings & repairing derelict buildings**
- **Connecting & reviving built and cultural Heritage**
- **Strengthening the local Community & Activities**
- **Improving Tourism & its Infrastructure**
- **Optimising conditions for Commercial activity**
- **Enhancing the Public Realm & Environment**
- **Making Transport Mobility more sustainable**
- **Introducing Digital Development and Progress**

## **Sustainable Development**

Urban regeneration in the ambit / remit of the Town Centre First Policy is a form of Sustainable Development, deriving from the Brundtland Report in 1987, and meaning development that is **socially, economically, culturally and environmentally** truly viable and acceptable for all, now and for the future.



*The Critical Overlap to achieve Sustainable Development*

**Socially sustainable** for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which address the community in its entirety, are inclusive for all ages, abilities, beliefs and backgrounds, and are based on equitable distribution of means and efforts.

**Economically sustainable** for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which are most efficient, effective and realistic in their use of material and human resources, most ethical in their goals, supportive for the local economy while not negatively impacting social, cultural or environmental objectives.

**Culturally sustainable** for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which encapsulate the community's ideas, traditions and evolving lifestyles that are reflected in the town's history, built heritage and character, today, and in the past.

**Environmentally sustainable** for Town Centre First New Ross means projects which have regard to current environmental guidance and best practice to protect and enhance vulnerable habitats and sites, flora and fauna, minimise human induced climate change, avoid the use of finite resources and contribute to a Circular Economy.

## 01 Introduction


### *Who, What, Where, How and Why*

These four principles listed above always work in accordance and with one another, never in isolation or in breach of one principle over the other. In essence, While one principle could be the initial objective, the other three will be addressed and will experience a positive impact. Sustainable Development is achieved when projects can clearly indicate a **synergy of social, economic, cultural and environmental** interests and outcomes.

This Town Centre First Plan is aligned with the core principle of Sustainable Development as described above. The 17 Sustainable Development goals set by the UNESCO and listed below will be applied in the larger scale of urban regeneration objectives, in a holistic process, and with strong community involvement.



*UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals*



*"I think New Ross needs more places to go after school or something to walk down to when you need a break"*

*"It's a fantastic location close to Waterford and Wexford, and other cities and towns in the south east also near beaches and woodlands for walking etc."*

*"I love that everyone knows everyone, in the shops, in the streets and everyone is always helpful or knows someone who knows someone who can get you what you need, I go shopping and usually come back to town to find exactly what I need and if I need to exchange something"*

*"New Ross needs more commercial activities & businesses in the town centre, a better selection of restaurants and a hotel to allow it to grow and encourage people to come visit the area".*

**Where we start from**

**1**

**2**

**3**

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**Baseline**

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### **Planning Policy, Data and Background Information**

This Baseline section serves as an overview of valuable information that has been provided by Wexford County Council, via national and regional policy, and information that is available in the public domain.

While all urban regeneration related policy guidance is relevant for the preparation of this Plan, the following documents have been considered in further detail:

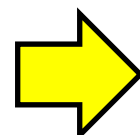
- ***Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028***
- ***New Ross Town and Environs Development Plan 2011-2017 (expired)***
- ***Healthy Wexford County Plan 2020-2022***
- ***Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028***
- ***Digital Town Blueprint New Ross 2023***

A substantial amount of useful and helpful planning policy in the context of urban sustainable development, particularly for town centre regeneration has been produced in recent years. Much of this policy is identified generally as best planning practice. Specific planning policy is promoting town centres as the preferred location for residential use, complemented by suitable employment, commercial activity and retail development. For example, the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 advocate town centres as the preferred location for the development of retail, commerce and community based services. In general, a sequential approach is adopted in national planning guidance and policy which advocates town centres as the preferred location for the above uses, with out of town locations only acceptable where all other opportunities for such development have been exhausted after careful analysis.

It should be noted that there is a significant, and ever increasing, volume of policy guidance and best practice that is expanding from traditional planning as land-use administration, to comprise the critical matters community engagement, of climate and environmental protection, sustainable transport, urban design, and funding.

All projects are clearly identified and set out. Most projects are mapped. All projects list key components, perceived benefits, key responsibilities for implementation, key measurements of success, levels of priority and timeframe, and key funders and funding sources. All projects are proven to align with the requirements for all URDF and RRDF funding applications.

**Which Policy matters, and why explain the following tables**



| Planning Policy   |   |
|---|---|
| National Planning Policy  | Relevance   |
| National Planning Framework   | Improve living standards, quality of life, prosperity, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability and promotes compact growth with people living closer to their work, maximise the return on public investment and shift from unsustainable growth patterns.  |
| National Development Plan   | Investment in cultural and civic services and recognizes investment in high quality infrastructure as being critical for a vibrant heritage and culture sector. Investment in cultural heritage underpins social cohesion and supports strong, sustainable economic growth.   |
| Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns  | Cross-cutting and collaborative framework to build sustainable vibrant town centres.  |
| Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide  | Core principles of urban design/sustainability.   |
| Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities   | Principles and criteria for sustainable and high quality residential environments.  |
| Places for People, National Policy on Architecture  | Sustainable and quality development to meet current and forecast population growth (5.7m people by 2040). Repurpose (and reuse for housing) existing buildings, public places and infrastructure, adopt new construction techniques and materials, improve living standards and accommodate new developments, all while making the transition to a sustainable, circular economy and society.                           |
| Design Manual for Quality Housing   | Guidance on designing residential site layouts, and internal layouts of new apartments/houses.  |
| Heritage Council Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme                             | Identifies challenges faced by towns and build upon each town's heritage and unique character.  |
| Retail Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities   | This relatively outdated document from 2012 sets out criteria to assess the vitality and viability of town centre via a health check. It advocates town centres as the preferred location for large scale retail providing such development can be satisfactorily accommodated in such centres and alternative locations are considered consistent with the sequential approach thereafter.                             |
| Regional Planning Policy  | Relevance   |
| Southern RSES   | The application site is located within the Southern RSES which seeks to build on natural and heritage and other assets of the region. New Ross is located within the Eastern Economic Corridor linking Belfast, Dublin and Rosslare.  |
| Local Planning Policy   | Relevance   |
| Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028   | An overall strategy and development management standards for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county.   |
| New Ross Town and Environs Development Plan 2011-2017 (was in effect until 2019, now expired) | Develop and improve in a sustainable manner the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the town and environs.<br>The predominant land use in the town centre is the Town Centre Zoning with the objective; <i>“To provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centre through consolidating development, maximising the use of lands and encouraging a mix of uses”</i> . |

| <b>Climate and Health Policy</b>                     |   |
|--|---|
| <b>National Planning Policy</b>                      | <b>Relevance</b>  |
| The Climate Action Plan 2023                         | Halve Ireland’s emissions by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. Actions for responding to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development. Promote compact development and brownfield redevelopment. Supports the regeneration and revitalisation of Ireland’s towns, including through reducing demand for travel by car, sustaining economic and social activity at street level and increasing access to shops, employment and amenities by sustainable transport modes. |
| Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2016-2019 | Promotes healthy lifestyle and active living.   |
| National Physical Activity Plan                      | Supports the provision of an environment for walking, cycling and recreational outdoor physical activity (Action 36).   |
| <b>Regional Planning Policy</b>                      | <b>Relevance</b>  |
| Southern RSES  | Promotes extension of the Waterford Greenway to New Ross.   |
| <b>Local Planning Policy</b>                         | <b>Relevance</b>  |
| Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028            | Chapter 2 seeks to reduce and adapt to the effects of climate change and to safeguard the biophysical infrastructure and well-being of the county.  |

| <b>Economic and Finance Policy</b>                        |  |
|---|--|
| <b>National Planning Policy</b>                           | <b>Relevance</b>   |
| Urban Regeneration and Development Fund                   | Deliver more compact and sustainable development as sought by Project Ireland 2040. Urban areas to be attractive and vibrant places in which to live, work, visit and invest.  |
| Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023                      | Revitalise rural Ireland with a renewed focus on town centre economic and social recovery and regeneration, achieved through projects focusing on town centre regeneration, enhancing our Streetscapes and bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use as community multipurpose spaces including refurbishment and renovation. Town is identified as a ‘Tourism Hub’ and starting point for the Norman Way. Supports South East Greenway extension linking New Ross to Waterford (Waterford MASP Policy Objective 21 (a) and (f)). Important retail and service centre with its own hinterland. Policy Objective 2 (e) supports socio-economic growth and continued investment, development and enhanced connectivity of the Waterford MASP hinterland towns including New Ross. |
| <b>Regional Planning Policy</b>                           | <b>Relevance</b>   |
| Southern RSES   | New Ross is considered an alternative business location with an active port facility.  |
| <b>Local Planning Policy</b>                              | <b>Relevance</b>   |
| Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028 Draft | Promotes and supports economic, local and community development by WCC and other stakeholders.   |

| Transportation Policy  |   |
|--|---|
| National Planning Policy   | Relevance   |
| National Sustainable Mobility Policy                               | Strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport journeys to meet climate obligations. Includes an action plan to 2025. Seeks safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys. Demand management and behavioural change measures to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and to reduce the journeys taken by private car. |
| National Cycle Policy Framework                                    | Complements National Sustainable Mobility Policy.   |
| National Cycle Network Plan  | This required by Action 29 of the National Sustainability Mobility Policy. New Ross is close to but not on the national network.  |
| Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets                          | Achieve balanced best practice design outcomes for street networks or individual streets.   |
| National Cycle Manual  | Promotes a safe traffic environment for all road users including cyclists. It offers guidance on integrating the bike in the design of urban areas.   |
| Regional Planning Policy   | Relevance   |
| Southern RSES  | Advocates enhanced sustainable transport links to Waterford Metropolitan Area and between hinterland towns. Improve access from New Ross to M9. Significant travel to work in Waterford Metropolitan Area from New Ross. Improve linkages to Eastern Economic Corridor and to Waterford are a priority as limited public transport (bus) services serving the town.   |
| Local Planning Policy  | Relevance   |
| WCC, 2021, New Ross Town Pedestrianisation / Traffic Studies Brief | Studies have been completed as part of managing and redirecting traffic and pedestrianisation of Quay Street.   |

| Urban Design Policy   |  |
|---|--|
| National Planning Policy                                    | Relevance  |
| NACTO (2021) Urban Street Design Guide, Island Press        | Streets to be reimagined/reoriented prioritizing safe driving and transit, biking, walking, and public activity. Urban streets are public places having a larger role to play in communities than solely being conduits for traffic.   |
| Permeability Best Practice Guide                            | Promotes more sustainable modes of transport. Ensures that transport considerations are fully addressed as part of land use planning.  |
| Regional Planning Policy                                    | Relevance  |
| Southern RSES   | Use quality urban design to enhance the character of a place and to ensure development is respectful of the existing physical, social, environmental and cultural context. Improving walking and cycling provision in towns and villages, including the re-distribution of street space and upgrade of public realm and urban design |
| Local Planning Policy                                       | Relevance  |
| Wexford County Council (2020) Public Lighting Specification | Public lighting to provide sustainable, energy efficient lighting solutions.   |



An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A wide, brown river flows from the top center towards the bottom left. The surrounding land is divided into numerous rectangular and irregular plots, some of which are green, suggesting crops or pastures, while others are brown or tan, possibly fallow or different types of land. There are some buildings and structures scattered throughout the landscape, particularly along the riverbanks and in the lower right quadrant.

## ***Community Responses, Observations, Survey Results***

- ***What the Community shared with us***
- ***What we have observed***
- ***What we have surveyed***



*The **town centre is hollowed out**, with little residential use, employment, services, retail and industry. These are amassed on the edge or outside the town - a phenomenon that can be observed in many towns in Ireland.*



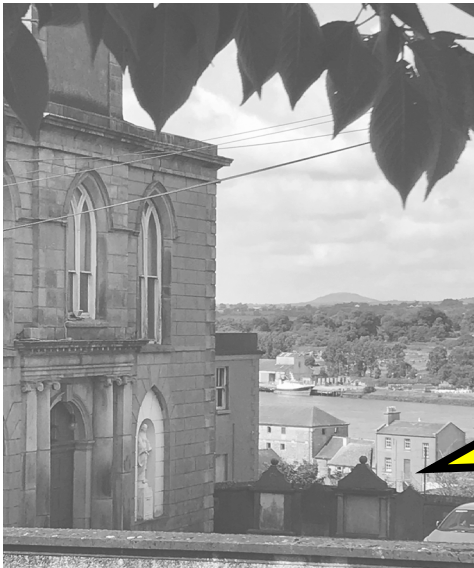
*The River Barrow is the **dominant geographic feature** of New Ross. The historic size of the port, and its continuous vital role for the town can be sensed everywhere along the riverbanks and from afar. However, one misses the positive image usually associated with a port town and gets the impression of a town that had until recently turned its back on the river.*



*The town centre has a **very compact core** between the Quays and North / South Streets. The buildings and streetscape are of pleasant human scale and have the potential to perform for a compact, vibrant town life in the future.*



*Suppressed commercial and social activity during the day, particularly in the evenings and on weekends, when many shops, cafés and services are closed.*



*The town centre has an abundance of physically appealing buildings and historically important structures, some of which are vacant or derelict, awaiting their renaissance.*



*Some streets and general public areas appear unsafe and uninviting to use, while possibly attracting antisocial behaviour, particularly at nighttime.*



Some streets and general public areas appear **inaccessible and uncomfortable** to use, particularly for the elderly, for children, and other vulnerable street users. General accessibility will always be compromised in New Ross due to the challenging terrain between the river valley and the surrounding hills.



Some streets and buildings appear unkept and poorly maintained while **vacant and derelict buildings and sites** are visible in many places.



Most of the town centre is **dominated by car traffic** and large-scale **parking** resulting from the need and habit to drive to New Ross from surrounding hinterland communities.



The N25 **bypass** has reduced thoroughfare commuter traffic. This has created a **spatial vacuum**, making the R723 too dominant for its purpose in the public realm.



Several **public realm projects** have been successfully realised which are attractive and uplifting for the immediate surrounds. However, they appear isolated and would benefit from consolidation into a **larger scale public realm strategy** that would make them a more valuable part of the town's regeneration..



Public greens such as Pearse Park, Library Park, High Hill and the linear boardwalk and riverside walk are positive additions to the greening of New Ross. However, a **green network** with planting, trees and seating distributed throughout the town is missing.

### Understanding the Built Environment

A massing map of New Ross clearly illustrates the dense and largely intact town centre between the Quays and the extent of John Street, North Street, South Street and Priory Street, with the main urban node at the crossing of Mary Street. On the eastern side of the river, the town has expanded, historically into Irishtown, and later into suburban housing estates. On the western side, this expansion has been kept fairly modest, possibly due to the close County border with Kilkenny further west.



*Massing Plan of New Ross showing the intact compact core of the town centre versus large scale structures of industry, services, retail on the outskirts*

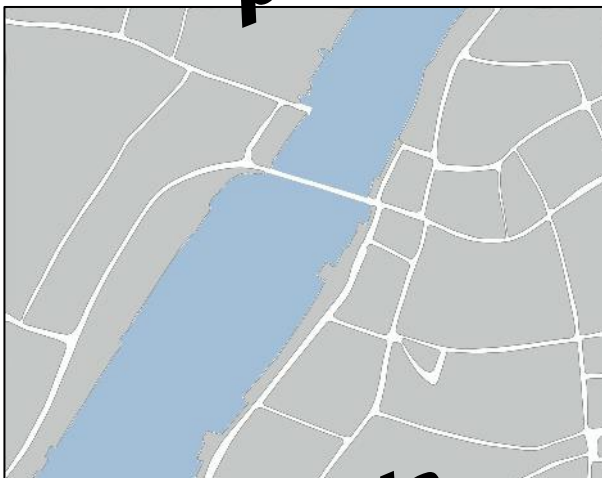
**Understanding the Urban Fabric**

Simply speaking, a town is made up of a combination of public and private structures. Together, they build what makes the town unique and characteristic – they form the **Civitas**. New Ross’ Civitas is an intact, compact and well composed built environment, with the potential to perform much better, socially, economically and environmentally.



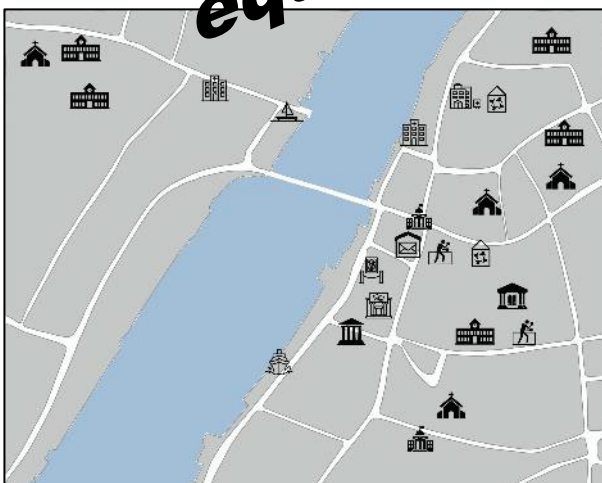
*Public Buildings in New Ross*

**plus**



*Building Blocks in New Ross*

**equals**

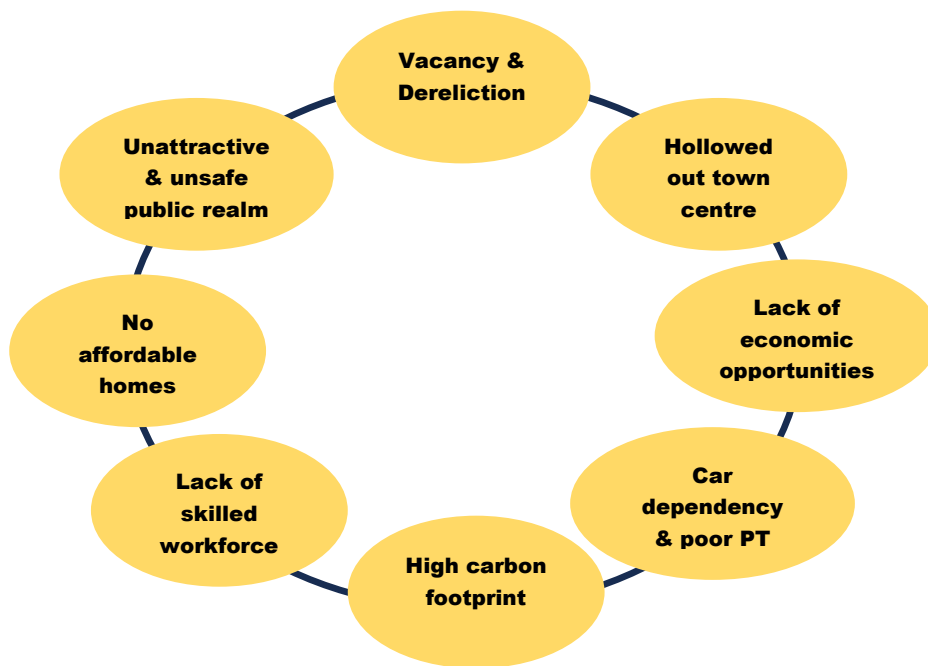


*The Civitas of New Ross*

**The Vicious Cycle of low footfall and suppressed socio-economic activity**

Over decades, town centre population, employment, retail, production and services has shrunk. The decline of all port-related industry and logistics has exacerbated this trend in New Ross. People moved to new homes in suburban areas and surrounding regions, businesses moved to available site on the town’s periphery and greenfield sites. This trend was and is supported by general economic progress based on a car dependent life style.

While people are undoubtedly better off, socially and economically, town centres have been hollowed out and are often characterised by low to very low footfall and activity, poor quality streets and spaces, poorly maintained buildings and sites that lead to vacancy and dereliction, and a general lack of safety and comfort. A Vicious Cycle has established itself – simply speaking: *“No one spends time in town because no one spends time in town”*.



***Break The Vicious Cycle of low Footfall and Socio-Economic Activity***

Wide roads and ample car parking facilitate people driving into town, from their homes outside the town. However, wide roads and ample car parking do not facilitate a vibrant and attractive town centre where one wants to live, work and socialise – they are direct indicators of a low 24/7 town centre population, who instead could avail of more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and bus transport.



**A Team Effort**

The multidisciplinary team received very valuable feedback from community consultations and obtained data from various town surveys. These are documented in a suite of separate reports as Appendices A / B / C / D.



*Appendix A  
Town Centre Health Check*



*Appendix B  
Demographics, Business, Tourism Data*



*Appendix C  
History, Heritage, Character*



*Appendix D  
Public Consultation*

### **Town Centre Health Check Summary** (please see Appendix A for more information)

The Town Centre Health Check has been collaboratively generated with information of land use distribution, vacancy and dereliction rates, transport mobility, heritage, commerce and tourism in accordance with the relevant advice and guidance.

Wexford County Council's very successful public realm projects are to be connected and gaps between filled in for 'cross fertilisation' while further individual private schemes should be encouraged. The surveyed vacancy rate, for retail and residential is high and many vacant buildings appear derelict, an economic concern for revitalising these buildings, but also a concern for heritage loss.

Further urban development, public and private, are set in context. The management and coordination of individual projects is critical for the process of an holistic plan for New Ross, to make the town centre more attractive for tourism, retail, employment, recreation and residential use, and indeed all the things that make a town centre successful in all necessary facets.

The quality of the town's built and cultural heritage, from the Norman past to the present is evident and undebated. It will clearly drive and define our vision and strategy for New Ross, to make the town centre more attractive for tourism, retail, employment, recreation, and certainly for residential use.

Our survey results show typical symptoms of weakened land-use and resulting poor social and economic activity in the town centre. Lack of investment, particularly in large, vacant landholdings have contributed to the erosion of the urban fabric. The town's transport mobility concept needs to be revised, for managed parking, permeability and safer, more comfortable streets. The N25 Bypass and proposed Greenway have started this process New Ross possesses highly valuable assets which are currently underused and underperforming. How these recent trends can be reversed will be assessed, through public consultation and stakeholder engagement, and through collaborative work of our design team.

Please find detailed information on the Town Centre Health Check here:

[LINK](#)

### **Demographics and Economics Summary** (please see Appendix B for more information)

#### Population

Key findings are:

- Modest growth over the last 20 years (decline 2011-2016);
- Population decline 2002-2016 (ageing population and younger groups more to the outskirts of the town, rural environs and elsewhere);
- Apartments in Rosbercon and arrival of migrants (especially from Poland) has helped reverse the decline in the town centre since 2016;
- Lower proportion of younger people in New Ross compared with other similar sized nearby towns such as Gorey;
- Lower proportion of people with advanced qualifications in New Ross than Gorey;
- Lower proportion of people with advance in New Ross belonging to the 'management and technical' class;
- Employment opportunities elsewhere determines an older population, fewer people with young families, and those associated with economic prosperity in the town. This is a town wide issue;
- Fewer younger people reduces disposable income including in consumables and nights out.

#### Economy

The key points arising are:

- Very little night time activity in the centre of the town;
- Reduced demand for new housing;
- Little new residential development in the town in recent years;
- The economy traditionally was dependent on river traffic, but while some bulk shipments continue, this traffic has declined significantly in recent times;
- High proportion of the workforce machinery is employed in processing, plant and machinery and skilled trades;
- Significant employment in commerce and trade, professional services, manufacturing and 'other';
- New Ross is an important service centre;
- The town has benefitted from reduced congestion and redirection of traffic to the N25 bypass.

#### Business

Local surveys indicate a preference for a wider selection of retailers but commercial land opportunities frustrate this objective. This can also only happen if large numbers of people visit and stay in the town centre. There is however a varied selection of smaller shops and the environment for such further growth including pleasant, safe and inviting retail and no retail town centre environment.

### Tourism

The key tourism points from the surveys are:

- The South East region had 988,000 international tourist visitors in 2019;
- New Ross is designated a 'Designated Town' for tourism purposes;
- There are 3 no. heritage strands - Norman origin, emigration and the importance of the port;
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is now contributing to the construction of an Emigrant Park;
- Links to be established with other Norman towns;
- Coach arrivals are focussed on Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience. It receives some 60,000 per year and has an annual turnover of around €1.6m;
- Some 59% of survey respondents reported feeling unsafe at night (quietness and legacy of narrow streets likely a factor);
- Absence of a hotel in town centre or hostel accommodation;
- Waterford Greenway has potential to attract 250,000 visitors a year to New Ross;
- Waterford to New Ross ferry is likely to be extended to allow for return trips from either end of the greenway.

Please find detailed information on Demographics, Business and Tourism here:

[LINK](#)

### **History, Heritage and Character Summary** (please see Appendix C for more information)

New Ross's elevated topography and strategic siting intimately bound up with its evolution and history and is a defining part of the town's character and identity. Its natural riverine advantages led to it developing as a significant inland port and Anglo-Norman walled town with a wealth of historic buildings, places and a unique character and considerable untapped potential.

Good conservation, regeneration and placemaking starts with a broad understanding of the place, its history, its evolution, its component parts – natural and manmade - and their significance. Historic structures are of high value and embodied energy even despite sometimes having fallen out of use, and with the urgent need for sustainability, housing and reinvigoration of New Ross, never has appropriately harnessing this existing fabric been more important. With imagination and high design standards, even bold intervention, viable new purpose can be given to buildings and places.

Much has been written on New Ross's long and venerable history and neither the main report nor the History, Heritage, Character report are intended to be an exhaustive synthesis of that, but rather a means to broadly understand its evolution, morphology, fabric and essential character. The History, Heritage, Character report will then give an overview of its existing built and archaeological heritage, before appraising the character of New Ross. This appraisal will include building typologies, materials and prominent detailing, alterations and infill, green space, townscape, important views, street furniture and surfacing and strengths and weaknesses within it.

The report will conclude with a number of heritage recommendations and identify a number of derelict and vacant buildings and structures. These should be considered as drivers for regeneration and greater appreciation of the town's rich heritage.

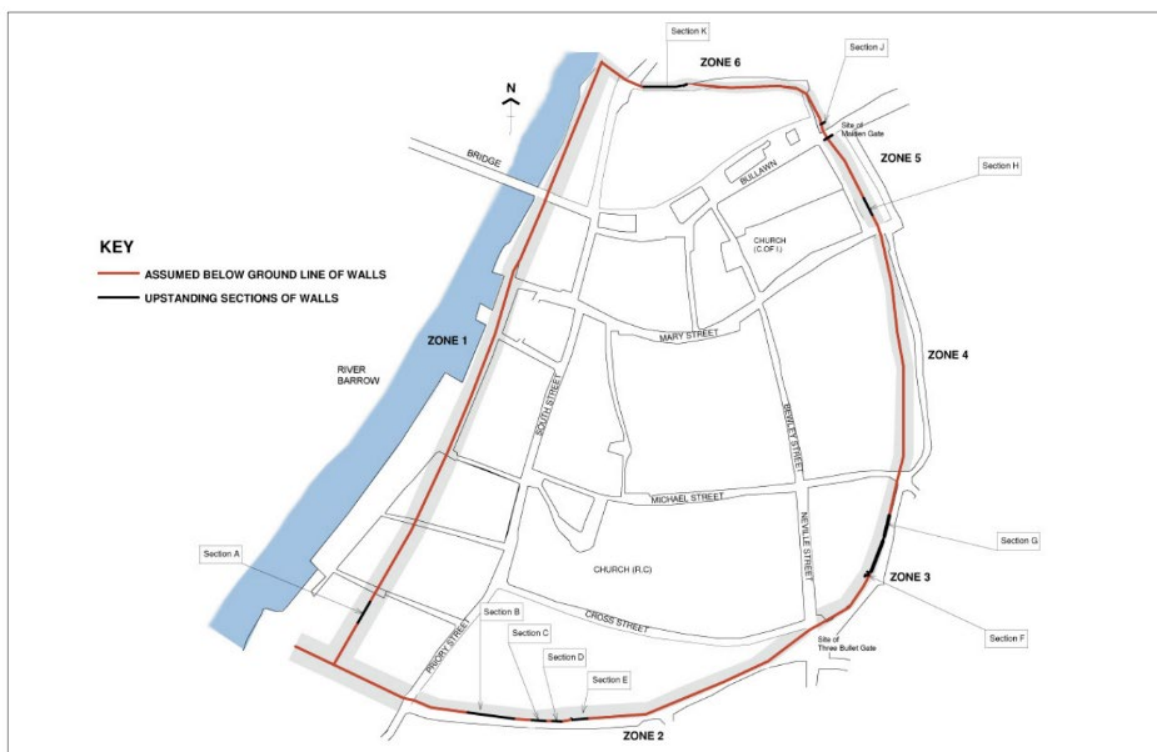


*Historic Street Signs*

New Ross's history, heritage and character is deeply textured, complex and intriguing – a palimpsest that reflects the principal periods and events that have shaped and moulded the town:

- *Pre-Norman monastic settlements in the fertile land along the rivers Barrow and Nore*
- *Norman heritage that began with William Marshal*
- *The Irish Confederate Wars*
- *The 1798 Rebellion*
- *The Great Famine and its aftermath*
- *The roots and emigration of the Kennedy Family*

The fact that New Ross does not have a castle might appear as a shortcoming. An absence, possibly owed to the fact that William Marshal and other rulers resided nearby, including Kilkenny. A castle is an iconic and characteristic asset for so many Irish towns, and is attracting large numbers of visitors year round. New Ross, however, can compensate with the general richness of its built heritage, much from the Norman era, and particularly the town wall with gates and the medieval layout centred on the port and quay area. New Ross also has a wealth of fine later buildings, including neo-classical vernacular shopfronts and deeply characterful streetscapes.



Map of Historic Town Wall (A. Coey)

**In summary, New Ross owns a rich set of heritage assets of all periods and types. Making the most of them is a key element of the town's Vision, and Town Centre First Plan.**

Please find detailed information on History, Heritage, Character here:

[LINK](#)

### **Public Consultation Summary** (please see Appendix D for more information)

Below is a summary of insights gathered from extensive community and stakeholder engagement, through youth surveys, interviews, walk and talk workshops and a town hall / drop in exhibition style meeting. These have been highlighted under the TCF New Ross themes of engagement.

#### **1. Young People**

Young people currently love sports and leisure spaces, parks and green spaces and cafes in New Ross.

Hangout spaces were seen as a priority for young people. There is a desire to provide more youth spaces, particularly outdoor spaces, and cafes and casual dining. The provision of these spaces may lead to increased vibrancy of the town centre.



#### **2. Uniqueness and Character**

A great location (nearby coastline, loop walks, natural town terrain of hills and river), sense of community and a proud heritage (The Norman Way, JFK heritage,) are current factors that add to the identity of New Ross.

Tourism, the Norman connection and loop walks were 3 elements that participants would like to see highlighted in the plan going forward.



#### **3. Business, Entrepreneurship and Tourism**

Current tourism recommended by participants highlighted the Dunbrody Famine Ship, local historical walks, Artwork Murals and local walkways.

There was also multiple suggestions to move the tourist office to its own location in New Ross and provide for tourism wayfinding in the town



There is a desire from consultation participants to have a large and small retailer in the town centre of New Ross. Smaller businesses were noted as likely to give more “*personal and friendly services*”.

There were suggestions of multiple domestic and international precedents to take inspiration from with markets, tourism, pedestrianised shopping areas, local craft / art, and community / commercial based activity hubs being highlighted.

### 4. Inclusivity and Accessibility

The majority of participants found New Ross to be somewhat accessible, however there was a desire to have

- Neurodiverse spaces
- Support / transport for the towns hilly terrain and for local link access
- Pedestrianisation of town centre streets
- River access
- Public toilets
- Public realm furniture / improvements
- Covered areas for inclement weather



### 5. Diaspora - Old/New

The majority of participants think diasporal elements of New Ross's identity as important and that it should be highlighted in the plan to encourage more people to come and settle in New Ross, both new communities and returning locals.



Town centre living, nighttime economy and improved public realm were highlighted as aspects to make New Ross more appealing to new communities and returning locals.

Inclusion festivals, support for young entrepreneurs, and alternative nighttime activities were also noted as important for new and returning communities.

### 6. Future Use and Living

Community centred spaces, greater accessibility, and nighttime activities were noted as important for older adults in New Ross.

Safety, lack of amenities and no availability of later opening establishments were noted as popular reasons why participants do not visit New Ross in the evening.



Thinking about the next 20 years of New Ross, participants noted apartment living, choices of shops, reduction of building dereliction, transport facilities and pedestrianisation as part of their answers.



### 7. Other noted comments from the public consultation

A town centre communal facility could be used for all ages and types of needs. Supporting young people, older people, entrepreneurs, arts and culture.

New Ross as a market and food destination.

Uses for vacant/derelict buildings is a major topic that was highlighted by the community of New Ross.

Community Wayfinding was highlighted as important to find out what is going on in the town. A suggestion was made of a central community info board with community wayfinding for the town centre.



Please find detailed information on Public Consultation here:

[LINK](#)

### Challenges

- Lack of affordable housing, any housing
- Aging population, lower education levels & opportunities nearby
- Vacancy and Dereliction / lengthy CPO processes (first item on survey responses)
- Lack of hotels / bed nights and tourist offers
- Strong car-dependency from the hinterland and commuter traffic with resistance to change mobility habits
- Scepticism that urban living and design will work here (*'It can't be done' mentality*)
- Existing terrain that rises from the river valley to the hills surrounding the town centre
- Car parking: manage and locate parking more efficiently
- Further enhancing conservation and heritage legacy
- Large underutilised landholdings (Tottenhams / Walshes / O'Learys / Nolans / Churches)
- Some isolated areas of some streets are untidy and some unkept shopfronts
- Irish Town community seems disconnected
- Rosbercon community seems disconnected
- Consolidation of the existing public realm projects
- Flood risk with flood defence walls obstructing permeability
- Loss of commercial / mercantile square (historically in various town centre places)
- Uncoordinated tourist information and guidance
- Kilkenny rivalry for Norman Capital of Ireland (No Castle)
- Making the town climate resilient and future proof the town against recession
- Not clear if proposed bridge extension is sufficient, for attractive and safe walking and cycling – A key deliverable of the Greenway connection into town is required
- Not clear if and when proposed Greenway loop along Red Bridge / Mountelliot Tunnel / R700 will be delivered to secure success of this important recreational / tourism infrastructure



***Each Challenge bears  
in it an Opportunity  
for Change***

### **Opportunities**

- Develop Norman experience. Ros Tapestry returning to proposed Norman Experience Centre
- Strengthen existing compact town centre for living, working, socialising
- Maximise benefits from Green-Blue Network : Greenway / Looped Trails / Red Bridge / Mountelliot Tunnel / Old Train Station
- Activate public buildings: Tholsel, Library, Court House, Scout Hall, Cinema
- Connect existing public greens through green routes & trails
- Apply Sustainable Transport & Active Travel ideas
- Reinvent the port and redevelop strategic brownfield sites
- Mapping and wayfinding for residents and visitors
- Accessibility within the town centre and surroundings
- Explore floating homes or house boats as an option
- Sustainable transport mobility concept : Filtered Permeability / Pedestrianisation / 30km/h speed limit / Shared Space & Pedestrian Priority zones with loading & delivery access
- Green-Blue Infrastructure: NBS / Rewilding streetscape / SuDS / increase urban Biodiversity
- Amalgamate tourist information into single location and online presence : consider proposed Norman Experience centre as location
- Promote and fill event & festival calendar : Kennedy Summer School (weekend event) / Piano / William Marshal / Norman Food Experience etc.
- Activate youth to co-create their own hang out places
- Explore available Funding : URDF / RRDF (both applicable according to TCF Policy) / Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2023 / Town Centre Living Initiative / other sources
- Develop Digital New Ross
- Identify sites in town centre for family housing
- New Ross Ambassador Scheme

## ***Realisations to Take Home:***

- ***No Town is Perfect***
- ***Every Town is Different***
- ***Some Things Need to Change***
- ***Some Things Should Stay***
- ***A lot can get better***
- ***There is no Magic Bullet***
- ***Rome wasn't Built in a Day***
- ***New Ross has a Lot Going for It!***



*Some Things Need to Change  
Some Things Should Stay  
A Lot can get Better*

*Where we  
want to go*

**1**

**Introduction**

**2**

**Baseline**

**3**

**Vision**

**4**

**Strategy**

**5**

**Projects**

**6**

**Bibliography**

**The Community's Vision for the Town Centre is manifold – A good thing!**

- + *More Affordable Apartments & Houses*
- + *More Shops, Bigger Shops where appropriate*
- + *More Restaurants & Cafés*
- + *More Hotels & Tourists*
- + *More Services, Jobs & Entertainment*
- + *More Trees, Planting & Seating*
- + *More Public Places to meet, mingle & rest*
- + *More Evening and Nighttime Activities*
- + *Safer Streets & Better Connections between Public Greens*
- + *More Activities & Places for Young People*
- + *Better Bus Service*
- + *Better Footpaths & Cycle Lanes*
- + *Better Access to all Buildings & Public Areas*
- + *More attractive River & Quays*
- + *Better Community Ties between different groups*
- + *More Inclusion of Minorities*
- + *Better Wayfinding & Connections for Residents & Visitors*
- *Less Vacant & Derelict Sites & Buildings*
- *Less Traffic & Cars*
- *Less Antisocial Behaviour & Drugs*
- *Less Social Deprivation & Poverty*
- *Manage Expectations*
- *Propose realistic Projects*
- *Consolidation of the existing public realm projects*
- *Compromised Accessibility due to existing terrain*
- *Identify Pilots that the Community can identify with*

**Creating a Vision for a Place is like painting an Image,  
With Colours, Forms, Meaning, and a Canvas!**

### 3 Vision

Where we want to go

#### What is our joint-up Vision for New Ross?

Here again, the Community is the expert in the forming of a vision for their town!

It is based on feedback from:

- The Community, including the Town Team
- Key Stakeholders, including Wexford County Council
- Observations and Surveys from the Multidisciplinary Team



In general, a very strong overlap can be found, between Community ideas, Key Stakeholder advice, and conclusions and recommendations from the Multidisciplinary Team – They pretty much all want a similar future for New Ross:

#### ***A Vision of Place Making:***

***A vibrant,***

***safe,***

***comfortable,***

***attractive***

***and accessible***

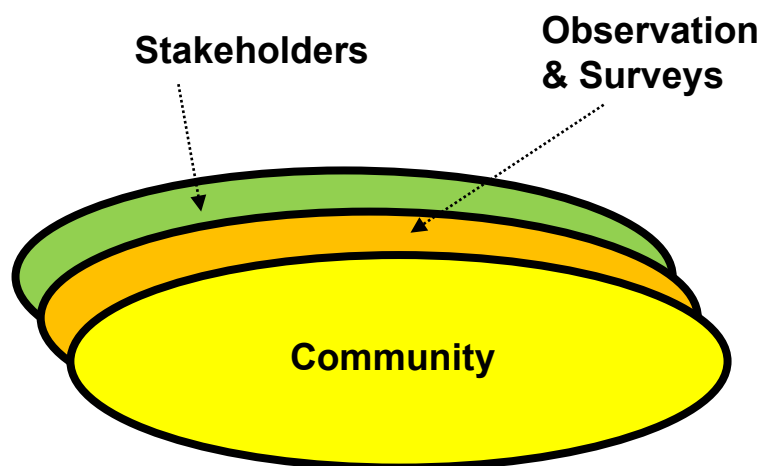
***town centre,***

***to live,***

***to work,***

***to meet***

***and to visit, for everyone.***



#### **The Community's Vision for the Town Centre is about Quality of Life**

The multidisciplinary team is presenting a vision for a better New Ross that is in full accordance with the objectives of the Town Centre First policy. Some conflicting interests arose in the process to find one common voice and direction. These are normal, and to be expected when it comes to a complex task of forming a Vision for your own place and lifestyle.

The main questions for the community (and perhaps most contested matters among urbanists) are how a town like New Ross should look like in the future:

- ***The redistribution of public space – simply speaking, how much road and parking will be relocated and reduced, where, and how would the community like to use this reclaimed space?***
- ***How can the Virtuous Cycle be started, to attract both, more town centre living, and more town centre business & amenities at the same time?***
- ***How can we create a stronger Sense of Place for the Community in the Town Centre?***
- ***Who is responsible?***



**New Ross owns 5 outstanding assets of immense value for Quality of**



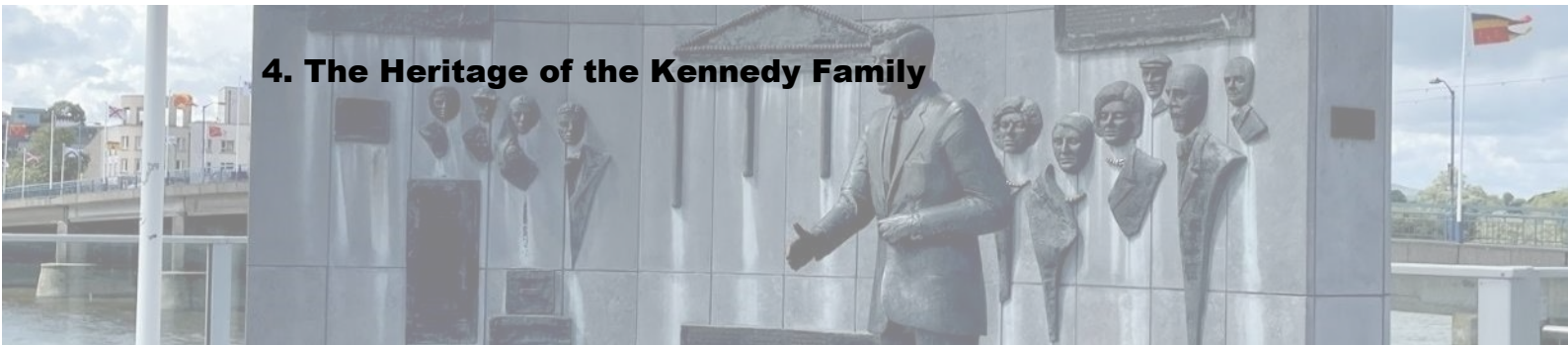
**1. The River Barrow**



**2. The Heritage of the Normans**



**3. A Compact Town Centre**



**4. The Heritage of the Kennedy Family**



**5. A very Creative & Strong Community**

**These 5 are essential for the Town's Values, Reputation & Place in the Southeast**

**They are vital for the Town's IMAGE**

## 1. The River Barrow

The river is over 200m wide when it flows through the town – one of the widest river stretches in the country! The river is tidal which makes for a constantly changing shoreline, with a unique flora and fauna. A living and healthy waterbody on the town's doorstep is a major asset:

- **Natural Beauty & Biodiversity**
- **Exciting everchanging Landscape**
- **Source of the Town's Existence as a Norman Port**
- **Great Opportunity for Sustainable Connection to Waterford, Coast, Inland**
- **Great Opportunity for Recreational and Sports Activities**

**We are fully aware of the flood risk that a tidal river creates.**

With Climate Change and rising sea levels the town needs to protect itself better from future floods. Therefore, expectations how to make the River Barrow an active and attractive part of the town have to be managed.

**Also, the river is a clear physical divide between the main town and Rosbercon.**

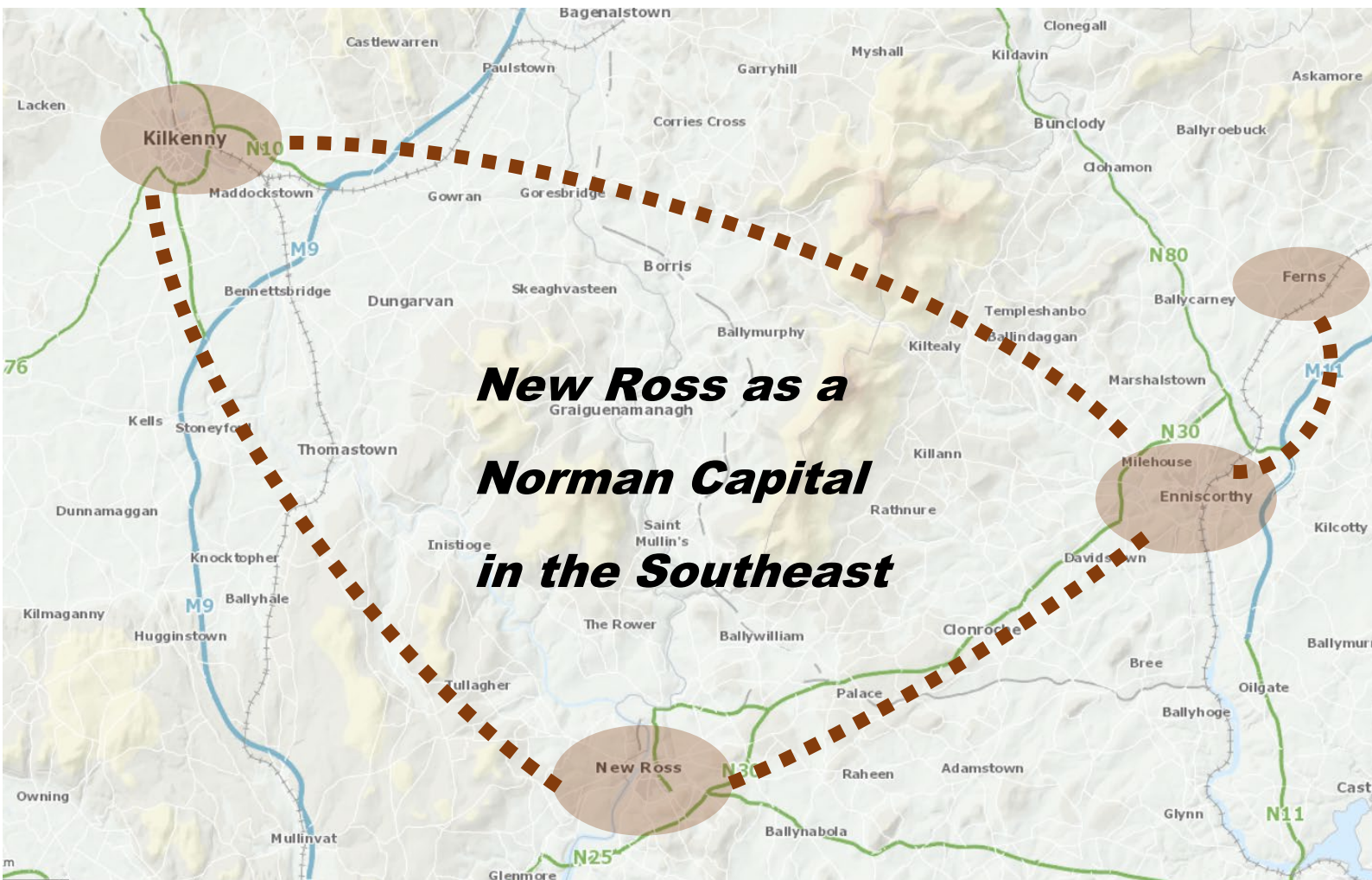
Therefore, to enhance the river means having more, better opportunities to cross it.

2. The Heritage of the Normans

Norman history has shaped New Ross, starting with William Marshal and Isabel de Clare who founded the town more than 800 years ago. Norman heritage, in the form of the town layout, buildings, walls and the cultural narrative of New Ross like The Ros Tapestry can be seen and sensed everywhere in town. The Vision for New Ross is taking the town’s rich heritage on a journey into the future. The Vision for New Ross has to include:

- An almost intact Town Wall (and the ITWN support & background)
- The impressive structure of St Mary’s Church & The Norman Way
- Remains of the Historic Port
- The Ros Tapestry returning to New Ross
- The Development of the Norman Experience Centre on the Quays
- The Strengthening of a Norman Heritage Triangle:

***Kilkenny – New Ross – Enniscorthy***



### **3. A very Intact Building Stock in a Compact Town Centre**

New Ross has not undergone the process of suburban sprawl to the same extent as many other Irish towns. One reason might be the established medieval setting of streets and places that worked well then, and now. Another reason might be the economic advantage of the riverfront while the terrain rises from the river in every direction.

The building stock in the town centre consist mostly of 'ordinary' terraces houses, with a few more outstanding grander buildings interspersed among them. However, the ensemble value of these buildings is an outstanding physical quality that is unique to New Ross. It undoubtedly adds to the urban density, character and charm of a historic town – a quality we often appreciate so much when abroad in mediterranean villages and towns!

***The Quality of the  
Medieval Vernacular***

#### 4. The Heritage of the Kennedy Family

The Kennedys emigrated from New Ross to the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, long before John F. Kennedy. JFK came on an epic visit to Ireland, and New Ross in 1963. His visit to his family's hometown wrote national history and has put New Ross on the map for many since. The Kennedy Family are the most famous emigrants having left New Ross during the Great Famine in 1848. The Vision for New Ross clearly evolves around Emigration and Immigration, Leaving and Arriving, Loss and Gain. The Kennedy Family from New Ross display this so well:

- **The John F. Kennedy Trust – Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience**
- **The Kennedy Summer School - a Festival of Irish-American History & Politics**
- **The Kennedy Arboretum & Homestead near New Ross**
- **Strengthening Heritage Tourism**

***Make New Ross a Place  
that remembers Emigration,  
and welcomes Immigration!***

## 5. A Creative & Strong Community

New Ross has a population of over 8,000 which makes it a mid-size town for Irish standards. CSO data and statistics show one side of the coin. The other side is the sensual, the character and vibe of the place. We hear from the Community that the will and energy to change things for the better are there and strong – bring it on! We hear from locals and visitors alike that the town has so much going for it and that it needs a stimulus to ‘awaken’ from a depression that hasn’t left the town for quite some time.

- Annual Festivals & Events
- The Inclusion of Newcomers
- Theatre – Arts – Music
- Safe & Comfortable Streets & Places
- New & Fresh Businesses like Shops, Services, Food & Beverages
- Local Sports Clubs – from Rowing to Cycling to Boxing and More
- People’s Pride in their Town, and how they show it

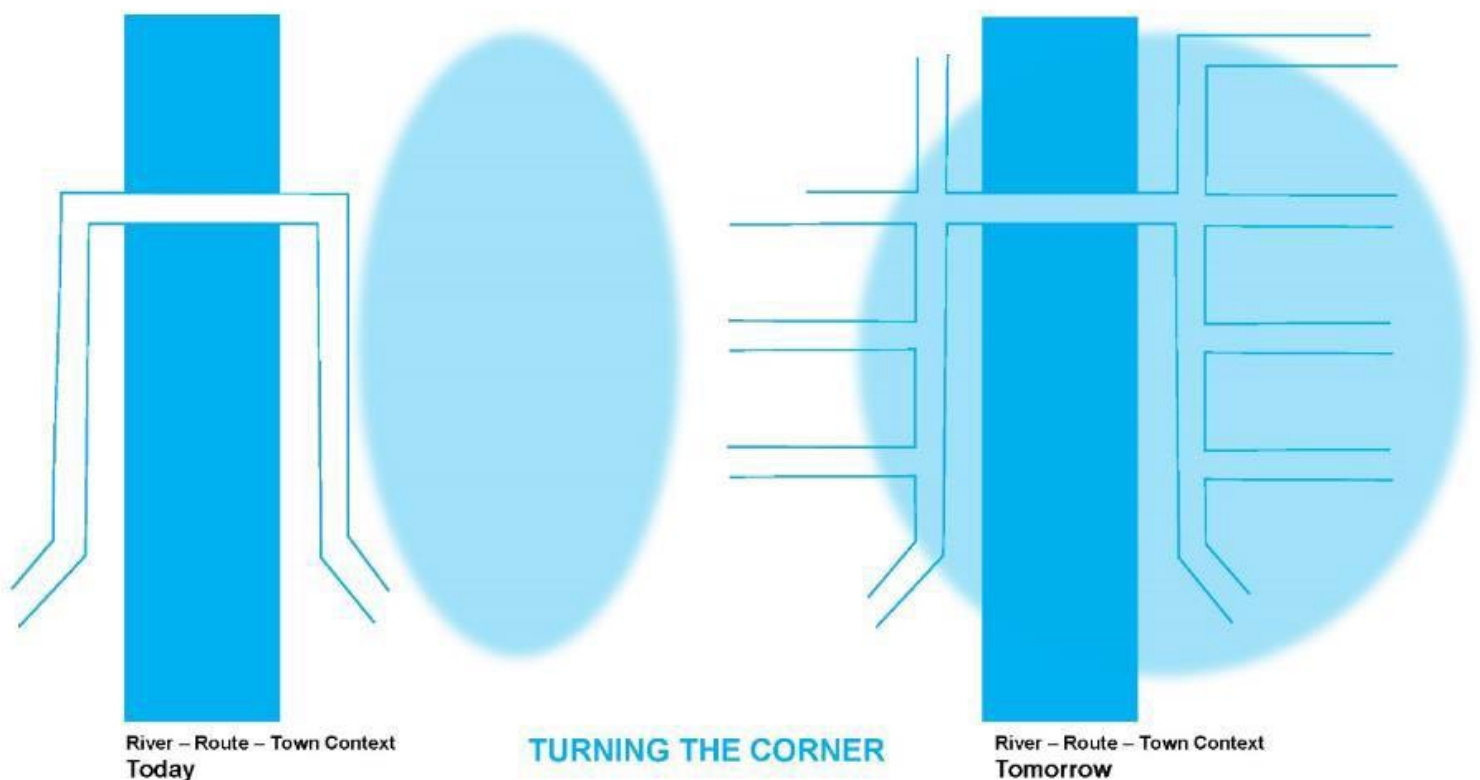
***Break the Vicious Cycle of Depression.  
Start the Virtuous Cycle of More Life –  
more Living, Working and Socialising  
in the Town Centre,  
and in the Evenings and at Weekends!***

#### **Reactivating / Reimagining / Reintroducing the river into the town**

The current flow of traffic and general movement through New Ross is still set by the main thoroughfare along the Quays. This was the N25 with a higher traffic volume and traffic speed until this section was bypassed in 2020 and the road downgraded to a regional road, the R723.

The bypass has been well intentioned as it reduced the negative impact of through traffic on the historic town centre and has increased economic activity. However more importantly left a legacy of wide roads with car engineered infrastructure and design, in a vacuum – we are experiencing **the Bypass Dilemma**.

**The town’s Vision has to include a better version of this space, predominantly by reclaiming road space and making it available as quality public realm, for walking, cycling, for planting & trees, and for sitting and resting, with the best views one can have of New Ross, across the River!**



***Activating the Quays will pump new Life into the Streets and Laneways that are leading to the river, on both Sides!***

**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**



*The River Walk*

*Cork City Docklands and Haulbowline Island*





**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**

*Reviving the Port*



*Titanic Quarter, Harland & Wolff Shipyards, Belfast*



**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**



*Sabarmati Riverfront, Gujarat, India*

***The Linear Park***



**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**



***Reimagining Industrial Heritage***

*Borneo-Sporenburg Docks, Amsterdam, Netherlands*

***Living on the Waterfront***



Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Amsterdam, Netherlands

*Living over the Shop*

**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**



*Dawson Street, Dublin*

***Living over the Shop***

Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision



Rye River Café, Kilcock, Co Kildare

***Adaptive Urban Reuse***

**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**

***Adaptive Urban Reuse***



*Retrofitted Warehouse for Living, Shanghai, China*



*Retrofitted Warehouse for Living, New York, USA*

**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**



*Greenway Bridge, Athlone  
Co Westmeath & Roscommon*



***A Shared Surface Bridge***

*Bridge serving as Public Space  
Providence, USA*



**Best Practice Examples of Urban Regeneration that inspire our Vision**





***“If you plan for traffic and cars,  
you get traffic and cars. If you  
plan for people and places, you  
get people and places.”***

***Fred Kent, Project for Public  
Spaces (PPS.org)***

***Illustrations of pedestrianised Quay Street  
(Wexford CoCo)***



***The Vision for a better New  
Ross needs to be constantly  
nurtured and supported by the  
Community and the Local  
Authorities – with the Town  
Team as the Task Force for the  
Town Centre First Plan!***