

"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".

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Introduction

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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:

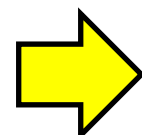
- ***Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028***
- ***New Ross Town and Environs Development Plan 2011-2017 (expired)***
- ***Healthy Wexford County Plan 2020-2022***
- ***Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028***
- ***Digital Town Blueprint New Ross 2023***

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 the traditional domain of planning as land-use administration, to comprise the critical matters of 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 explained 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 recognises 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. 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> .

Climate and Health Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
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).
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	Promotes extension of the Waterford Greenway to New Ross.
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
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.

Economic and Finance Policy	
National Planning Policy	Relevance
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.
Regional Planning Policy	Relevance
Southern RSES	New Ross is considered an alternative business location with an active port facility.
Local Planning Policy	Relevance
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 of varying shades of green and brown, indicating agricultural fields. Some buildings and structures are visible scattered throughout the landscape.

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.*



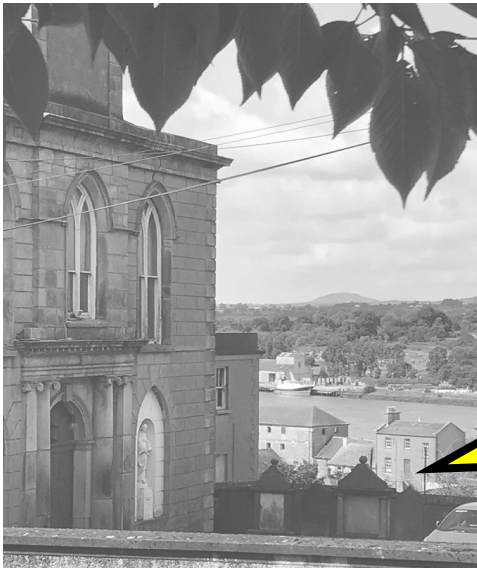
*The River Barrow is the **dominant geographic feature** of New Ross. The historic size of the port, and its continuous vital role for the town can be sensed everywhere along the riverbanks and from afar. However, one misses the positive image usually associated with a port town and gets the impression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



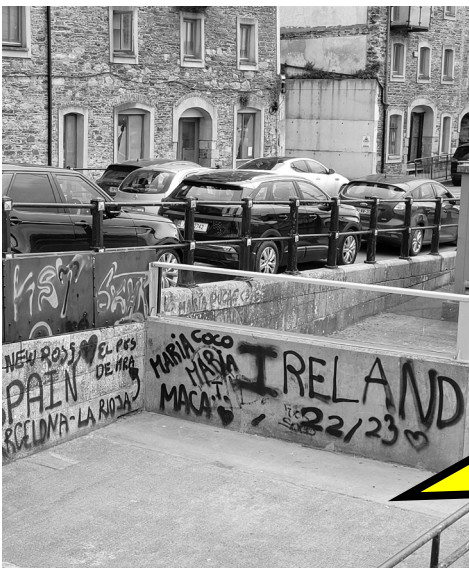
*The town centre has a **very compact core** between the Quays and North / South Streets. The buildings and streetscape are of pleasant human scale and have the potential to perform for a compact, vibrant town life in the future.*



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.



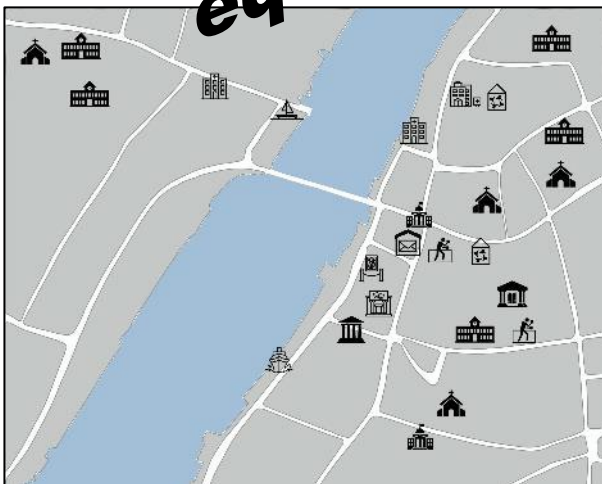
Public Buildings in New Ross

plus



Building Blocks in New Ross

equals

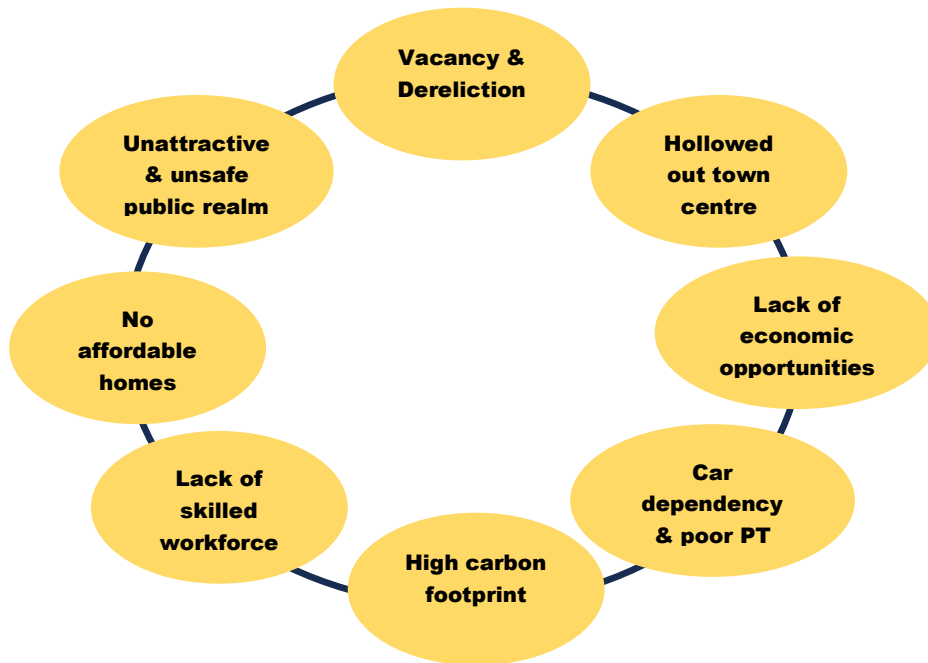


The Civitas of New Ross

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 sites on the town’s periphery and to greenfield sites. This trend was, and is, supported by a model of economic development that is 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, and a lack 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 survey, Vacancy and Dereliction and Tourism Opportunity*



*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 to be 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.

[See Appendix A – Town Centre Health Check for further information.](#)

Demographics and Economics Summary (please see Appendix B for more detail)

Demographics

The population of New Ross has experienced modest population growth over the last 20 years as indicated by Table 1 below. A small decline occurred between 2011 and 2016, but this decline was apparent elsewhere in Ireland following the national recession at the beginning of this period. What is noticeable is that the population of the urban centre (the Electoral Division of New Ross Urban), including Rosbercon, experienced a long decline between 2002 and 2016 as the population aged and younger subsets moved to the outskirts of the town, its rural environs or elsewhere. In part, the renovation of some apartments in Rosbercon and the arrival of migrants, particularly from Poland, has helped to reverse the decline in the centre of the town since 2016.

Table 1: Population: New Ross (Source: CSO)

Electoral Division	2002	2006	2011	2016	2022
New Ross Urban	4402	4034	3907	3768	3938
<i>Percent change</i>	<i>-4.9%</i>	<i>-8.4%</i>	<i>-3.1%</i>	<i>-3.6%</i>	<i>4.5%</i>
New Ross Rural	2052	3367	4014	3942	4178
<i>Percent change</i>	<i>44.6%</i>	<i>64.1%</i>	<i>19.2%</i>	<i>-1.8%</i>	<i>6.0%</i>
Total	6454	7401	7961	7710	8116
<i>Percent change</i>	<i>6.9%</i>	<i>14.7%</i>	<i>7.6%</i>	<i>-3.2%</i>	<i>5.3%</i>

While the demographics indicate that New Ross is not so different from many other rural towns in having a rather skewed spatial pattern of population with some deprivation in the centre balanced by relative prosperity on the outskirts, it does indicate that the town is missing some of the younger demographics and socio-economic categories normally associated with economic prosperity. This suggests that many people have left (or not moved in) due to employment or housing opportunities elsewhere. The relatively low level of younger population segments presents an issue in that young people often have more disposable income, or are at least are willing to spend this on consumerables and nights out. Young families typically engage in higher spending activity too. The absence of this spending has an inevitable effect on the local economy.

There has been rather little new residential development in the town in recent years. Although it is understood from local sources that there is good demand for accommodation, particularly for families, a shortage of accommodation is deterring some people from moving to New Ross. A case is made in this report for refurbishing vacant and above shop properties and for restoring derelict properties for residential use. However, this argument is made from the perspective of needing to raise the population of the town centre as a stimulus to activity and spending. While there is demand for apartments, these properties are less suitable for the main demand group, but rather for single individuals.

Economy

The New Ross economy has been traditionally dependent on river traffic, but while some bulk shipments continue, this traffic has declined significantly. The occupational profile of the town indicates some legacy of its trading and industrial past with high proportions of the workforce employed in “Processing, Plant and Machinery” and “Skilled Trades” . New Ross is an important services centre for its hinterland and has developed in recent years as a tourism hub. Most businesses surveyed believe the town has benefitted from the reduced congestion and transfer of traffic to the recently opened N25 Bypass. The principal recommendation of the RSES for the Southern Region is to further improve transport connectivity with the M11 to Rosslare and Wexford and with the M9 to Dublin and Waterford.

In terms of retail, New Ross is fortunate in having held on to a good selection of independent retailers in the centre of the town. Responses from the surveys undertaken for the project indicate that local people would like there to be a wider selection of retailers. In practice, this can only happen once there a larger number of people prepared to visit the centre for shopping, including people from the town, its outskirts, and tourists. Attracting more visitors will help keep existing small businesses viable, including the cafes and numerous specialist shops. Moreover, New Ross is not unfavourably positioned in that three of the country’s major retailers are located on the R723 Ring Road close to the town centre. This road is significantly less trafficked than it was prior to the construction of outer bypass. Therefore, there is an opportunity to persuade people to cross the road to the centre of town. Much investment has gone into improving the environment of the quays, along with the Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience and the high quality of the local parks and riverside. If people do make it across the main road to South Street where other retail outlets are located, they find a varied selection of small shops, many with traditional shop fronts which are an often overlooked, but almost unique characteristic of Ireland.

Tourism

The South East Region received 988,000 international tourism visitors in 2019. In County Wexford, these visitors are responsible for the employment of up to 5,000 people and revenue of €282m. The number of domestic visitors was greater at 1.8m. Their numbers have begun rising again following the pandemic. New Ross has received funding as a Destination Town and will be listed as such in the forthcoming new County Wexford Tourism Plan. The town has much appealing heritage with three strands connected to its Norman origins, North American links and its former importance as a port. It has many fine heritage buildings including St. Mary’s Church.

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is now contributing to the construction of the Emigrant Park. The town is marketed within the context of Ireland’s Ancient East and there is cooperation with other nearby towns of historic interest, including Enniscorthy, Waterford and Kilkenny. Links exist too with other Norman towns in France, but it is the historical connection with

North America that draws many visitors. Coach passengers are, though, allowed rather little time to explore the towns in which they arrive and much of their spending remains within the Dunbrody Famine Ship Experience which receives 60,000 visitors throughout the year and has an annual turnover of around €1.6 million.

The steep hill to the rear of South Street and North Street is part of the aesthetic attraction of New Ross when seen from across the River Barrow, but it does severely restrict visitor excursions into the town. Once again, the Council has done much to draw visitors up the slope including through the recent construction of the High Hill Norman Garden, although it too would benefit from more awareness and a link to the Quays.

New Ross's connections with America are, of course, a major asset for the town. Linked to this is JFK Arboretum and the Annual Kennedy Summer School which help to maintain the connection and are, along with the Piano Festival, a significant cultural resource. There is a strong need to attract more domestic and other visitors and it is likely that more tourists will be attracted from the Continent now that the Rosslare EuroPort is being expanded. Although situated in self-contained private grounds, the Brandon Hotel is reasonably close to the town centre. However the absence of much other hotel accommodation or a hostel is an obvious and serious deterrent to visitors spending time in the town and contributing to its night-time economy. The Council propose to establish a campervan/motorhome park.. They have also identified a suitable site for a hotel beside the Emigrant Park for which they aim to seek a private investor. It is likely that some investors will take the initiative prior to the opening of the greenway, though a large investor has yet to step forward.

There are some significant tourism developments in the pipeline. The contract for the Norman Heritage Centre has now gone to tender. The centre will display the Ros Tapestry and is likely to contain attractions with much appeal to tourists and families. A farmers' market is also proposed for the area and will help to attract more visitors across the road from the riverside carparking.

Of most significance is the South East Greenway (see **Appendix B**). This will form an extension of the existing, and very successful, Waterford Greenway and has the potential to attract a similar number (up to 250,000) visitors a year to New Ross, noting especially that the town is located close to what will be two of the greenway's principal attractions, namely the Red Bridge across the Barrow and the Mountelliot Tunnel. The recently established ferry service between Waterford and New Ross is likely to be extended to allow for return trips from either end of the greenway, a potentially unique attraction. The sheer number of potential users of the greenway is likely to have a transformational impact on the economy of New Ross, just as the Waterford Greenway has had on Kilmachthomas and Dungarvan. The River Barrow is also identified as an underused tourism asset and a masterplan is now underway on its Blueway potential.

[See Appendix B – Demographics, Business and Tourism Report for further information.](#)

History, Heritage, 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.

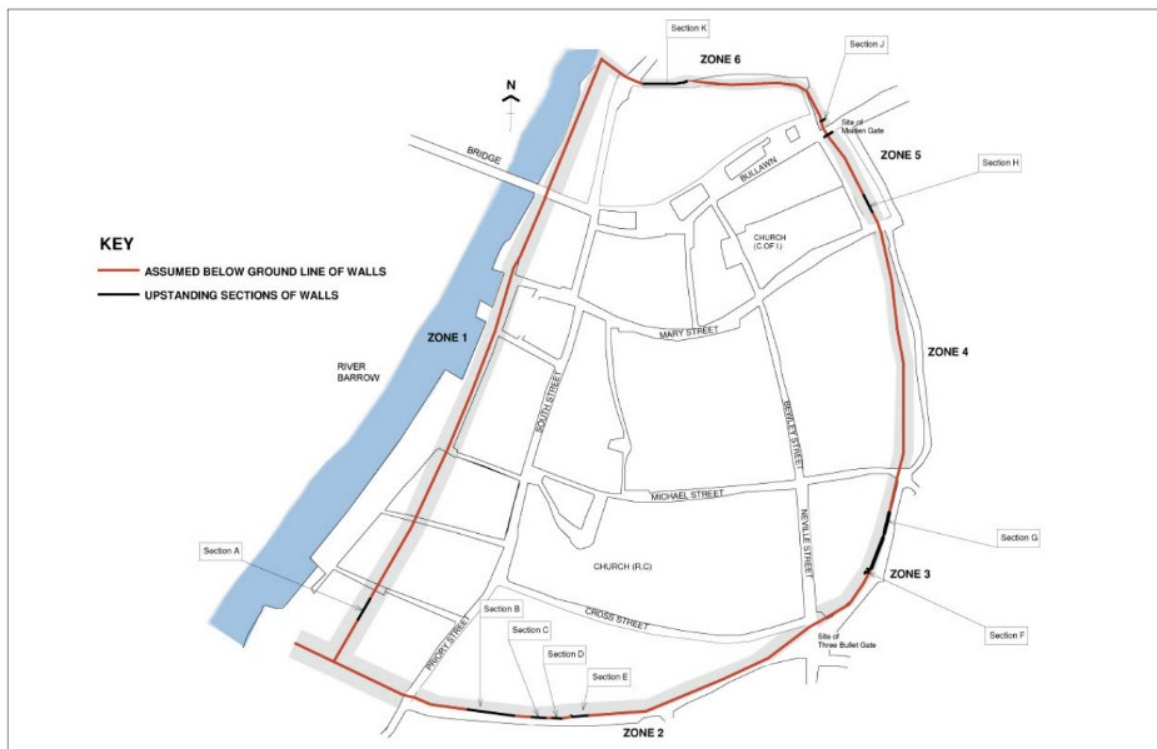


Historic Street Signs

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.

[See Appendix C – History, Heritage, Character for further information.](#)

Public Consultation Summary (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.

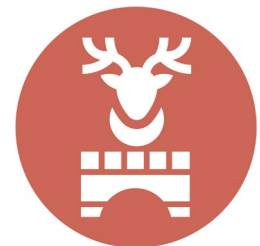
Hangout spaces were seen as a priority for young people. There is a desire to provide more youth spaces, particularly outdoor spaces, and cafes and casual dining. The provision of these spaces may lead to increased vibrancy of the town centre.



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.



[See Appendix D - Public Consultation Report for further information.](#)

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
- 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 are 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!***