

APPENDIX D: BENCHMARKS

The way the world moves. By design.

Gort Town Centre First Plan

Case studies

September 2023



Benchmarks in Ireland

Roscommon Town Public Realm

Issues identified

- Lack of **pedestrian crossing** points and connectivity.
- Lack of **cycle parking** / provision.
- **Dominance of car parking** in the town.
- Increased **reliance on car** and limited attractiveness of the town centre.



Figure 1: Roscommon Town Centre

Solutions

Market Square and Main Street to become **highly connected pedestrian friendly places** with links to the rest of the town via **key sites**.

- Revised traffic layout, reduced carriageway lane widths, realigned carriageway to improve traffic flow.
- Proposed removal of car parking in several locations in the town centre.
- Upgrade links to car parks
- Enhance **pedestrian crossings**.
- Create more **pedestrianised areas** by widening footpaths: a paved pedestrian civic space to be provided to the north and south of Market Square.
- Implement new **signage** directing people to the town centre.
- Proposed **a network of cycling tracks** to provide inter-connection between the town's core services, out of town retail, schools and other services.

Works started March 2021

Benchmarks in Ireland

Tobar Place, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo

Issues identified

- **Car-dominated** town centre, does not allow people to gather and enjoy the public realm
- The **pedestrian routes** through the town have **no focal points** to give a balance to the wide streets and through traffic.
- Tobar Place surrounded by **parked cars** and rarely used. Its improvement will need to fit in the local context and events.

Solutions

- Analysis of the **local calendar of events, pedestrian routes and traffic flow.**
- Improvement of Tobar Place: terraced platform that acts as a **'route through'** and links an existing pedestrian route to the town centre (accessibility for vulnerable road users unknown).
- Other **pedestrian links** to be improved to link several public spaces and **create journeys** through the town **for pedestrians.**



Figure 2 and 3: Tobar Place redeveloped in Sligo

Benchmarks in Ireland

Westport, Co. Mayo

Issues identified

- **Car-dominated town centre** and poor pedestrian connectivity.
- **Low attractiveness of the town** and lack of design strategy.

Solutions

- Created a coherent design strategy: **Town Design Statement, 'Westport 2000'**.
- The Town Hall was refurbished and **car parking spaces** near it **removed** to improve the quality of the public realm and make it more attractive and pedestrian friendly.
- The town created a square and removed **parking spaces** around it to create a place to move and stay. Public art (a sculpture) was provided to enhance the sense of place.

Public square

Before



After



Benchmarks in Ireland

Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Issues identified

- Dominance of car parking in the town, embedded in the town character.
- Lack of social activities taking place on streets.
- Because of the resulting low footfall, many of the Emmet and Asna Squares retail frontages were vacant.

Solutions

- **Re-allocating car parking** was seen as an **opportunity** to improve the public realm and created more pedestrianised space and allowed space for **street furniture** and **tree planting**.
- Establishing pedestrian priority was central to reallocating road space.
- **Asna Square** consists of a **shared surface** which accommodates passing cars, café seating and informal gatherings around a new pocket park and ensures pedestrian priority.
- The property market confirms higher value, and the **empty buildings are now occupied**, delivering new urban vibrancy and sense of community.



Figure 5: Asna Square, pedestrianisation



Figure 6: Asna Square redeveloped

Benchmarks in Ireland

Thomas David Square, Mallow, Cork

Issues identified

- Dominance of car parking in the town, embedded in the town character.
- Lack of pedestrian crossing points and connectivity.

Solutions

- Pedestrian links improved, more crossing points provided. **Traffic was reduced to one lane** on Thomas David Square which made the area more welcoming to pedestrians.



Figure 7: Thomas David Square redeveloped

Benchmarks in Ireland

Waterford, Viking Triangle and car parking

Issue identified:

- Lack of **good pedestrian links** between the eleven national monuments and museums. The **cultural heritage of the area** was not enhanced, and the tourist activity negatively impacted.

Solutions

- Creation of **new and improved public spaces and pedestrian links** by removing car parking, creating journeys via interconnected streets and adding public art in public spaces.
- **Place making was aligned with history:** The principle was “1000 Years in 1000 steps” with new museums being aligned in chronological order.
- One of the Waterford car parks was turned into a **public space for events and festivals**.
- The three museums now attract **105,000 visitors per year. Seventeen new retail premises** have opened since 2011.



Figure 8: A former car park in Waterford is now a public space for events and festivals



Figure 9: Public art in a newly designed public space



Key takeaways from the benchmarks

Investment to improve pedestrian movement within the public realm (crossing points, squares, footpaths) resulted in **increased footfall**, more regular **use of public spaces** and generated **economic gain** for town centre businesses. Strategies include:

- **Re-allocating road space** and **on-street car parking** to improve pedestrian routes, create public squares or introducing cycle lanes and parking
 - Example: **Westport** removing car parking space to create a public square
- Introducing **traffic calming measures** to make the environment more pedestrian friendly
 - Example: **Thomas David Square**
- Conducting analysis of the local context: events, traffic flow, pedestrian movement to increase the local community's support.
 - Example: **Tobar Place** evaluating the local calendar of events

Opportunities for Gort:

- **Re-allocate the road space** in the town centre. Use the opportunity of the wide carriageways on Main Street, Market Square, and Crowe Street.
- Re-allocate the on-street parking around Market Square to create a central public space.
- Introduce **traffic calming measures**. Reduce vehicle's speed in the town centre.
- **Analyse current pedestrian movements** in the town centre from/to the bus stop, shops and the Square.
- **Improve the links to the new off-street car parks** located on the periphery of the town centre.

The way the world moves. By design.

Thank you

