



Ardee 2040 Regeneration Vision

Ardee, Co. Louth





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1 Introduction

Ardee Vision

The Ardee 2040 Regeneration Project is an ambitious, long-term regeneration strategy for Ardee which seeks to secure economic, social and environmental improvements in the town by 2040.

Key to achieving this strategy is establishing a long-term vision for Ardee. This Vision is, by its nature, both broad and aspirational, describing what the town will seek to become by 2040. It is informed by a number of Guiding Principles, as set out within this document, that describe how existing challenges facing the town can be overcome to deliver the Vision. The project has been awarded Category 2 funding by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), with match funding from Louth County Council. The importance of the Vision is underlined by the Louth County Development Plan (2021 to 2027) which identifies Ardee as an important regeneration area for the county.

The Need for a Vision

Irish towns are facing significant challenges including the provision of greater employment opportunities, the effect of vacant and derelict properties on the vitality and attractiveness of town centres, the impact of out-of-town and online shopping on town centre retail, poor connectivity and the closure of services where providers have found that it is no longer viable to maintain such services. Ardee town faces similar challenges to its ongoing function and purpose.

Whilst the town faces challenges, Ardee is the lifeblood of the local and wider rural economy, supporting business and generating employment opportunities. It is also the core of important administrative, social, community and recreational functions. In line with the National Planning Framework and Regional Economic and Spatial Strategy, there is a need to provide Ardee with the strategic direction required to ensure it grows and performs as a local service centre. There is also an opportunity to breathe new life into the town by reducing dereliction and vacancy rates to make it a thriving, attractive and prosperous place that the community are proud of.

To assist in achieving this, the Vision Document will act as a means to navigate project development of opportunity areas identified for Ardee.

Key Themes of the Vision

Ardee 2040 Vision will bring about urban regeneration and development in the town with the following key themes at the forefront:

- Ensuring inclusivity for all.
- Developing schemes which meet the design principles of best practices.
- Encouraging an environment which leads to daytime and nighttime activities.
- Improving connectivity and legibility for all members of the community and for visitors/tourists to the town.
- Creating quality gateways, public spaces, recreational areas, sporting areas and public realm.
- Capitalising and respecting the rich heritage of the town centre.
- Operating / employing sustainable development principles through minimising energy consumption and maximising the use of renewable energy technology.

The Purpose of the Vision

The Vision sets out the Council's aspirations of what the town of Ardee will look like by 2040. The purpose of the Vision is to bring long-term focus as to how the town is aspiring to develop and improve in the coming years. It includes a review of the town as it stands today to understand the challenges that it faces. Through this, Guiding Principles have been devised which reflect an understanding of the steps that need to be taken to achieve the Vision. The Guiding Principles will inform proposals and interventions. This Vision, therefore, underpins effective strategy and delivery by addressing existing challenges facing the town in a coordinated way and providing a long-term focus.

It is important to establish a Vision for the town to assist in the future development of a quality urban environment for existing and future residents, whilst promoting the preservation of biodiversity and encouraging climate change actions in line with national policy and targets.

The purpose of the Vision is to create a realistic and deliverable plan for the development of the town which will make a positive impact in promoting a diverse range of town centre uses in Ardee.










The Collaborative Process

Key to the success of this vision will be a rigorous and integrated approach to engaging with the local community, key stakeholders and elected members. Working collaboratively, the Design Team is placing significant importance on effective communication and coordination with all parties involved in shaping the Vision for Ardee. This will help to create a holistic analysis of Ardee, including input from the multi-disciplinary design team, Louth County Council and the wider community / stakeholders.

A staged approach to the design process will be adopted where design, technical and stakeholder reviews will test and refine the proposals. This approach will ensure that the design proposals and interventions are viable and deliverable.



Design Team

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2 Understanding Ardee Town

Before a Vision can be developed for Ardee, first we need to understand the unique characteristics and qualities of the town. This will ensure that the Vision builds on what is already important to Ardee.

The Town

Ardee is the third largest town in County Louth. The town itself is located on the River Dee, which runs through the southern end of the town and straddles the N2 Dublin to Derry National Primary Route, which runs south to north, and the N52 Dundalk to Kells National Secondary Route which runs from the west into the town, joins the N2 and then at its northern end leaves the town in a north easterly direction.

Ardee is an important local service centre in mid-Louth providing a range of services and employment to an extensive catchment that extends into parts of Meath and Monaghan. The connectivity and accessibility that the town provides, due to its location along the national road network, makes it an attractive location for growth and investment.

Strategically located on the intersection of the N2 national primary Dublin – Derry Route and the N52 national secondary Ardee – Nenagh route, with direct access provided by the N33 to the M1 and national motorway network. Ardee is well placed to continue to develop as a medium-sized town, with urban strengthening, to serve the needs of the local community and drive development within the locality.



Socio-Economic profile

Ardee town is located within the Ardee Urban Electoral District (ED). As the 3rd largest town in the County, Ardee has shown continuous growth since 2011. The latest census data (2022) shows that the population of the Ardee is now 5,478. This amounts to a 10.6% increase in the population over a 6 year period (2016 - 2022) compared with an increase of 7.3% nationally and 7.6% in County Louth. This demonstrates the attractiveness of Ardee as a place to live, primarily as a result of its strategic positioning and access to key infrastructure.

With respect to the population breakdown of Ardee, the age profile of the town is similar to that at a national level. However, the younger age (0-14 years) cohort forms a slightly higher percentage of Ardee (21%), compared to the national level (20%). The largest cohort for both Ardee and nationally is the 25–44 year olds which constituted 29% of Ardee's population and 28% of the national population. In both Ardee and nationally, there were more 0-14 year olds (21% in Ardee and 20% in State) compared to the number of people ages 65 and over (14% in Ardee and 15% nationally).

Existing employment in Ardee is concentrated in Ardee Business Park, on the eastern side of the town, and Farrell's Business Park, to the north of John Street, on the western side of the town. There are also a number of independent businesses operating in the town, with a strong local services sector located on Main Street. Ardee performs a key employment role, where, in 2016 there was a Jobs:Workforce ratio of 0.93, with in excess of 1,700 jobs in the town. This is 0.22 higher than the Jobs:Workforce ratio in the wider county.

Ardee experiences a net inflow of commuters travelling for work or education, whilst the rural hinterland has a net outflow. This demonstrates that Ardee remains a key source of employment for people of the wider area and the service function of the town.



Historic Evolution of Ardee

Ardee is one of Ireland's oldest walled towns, having been established soon after the Norman Invasion of 1185. On the south side of the River Dee, in the vicinity of the Bridge St. bridge, stood the Augustinian Hospital of St. John the Baptist, founded at the beginning of the 13th century. In 1274, a Carmelite Monastery was established in the town by Ralph de Pippard, then the local lord.

Given its exposed location along the late medieval Pale boundary, the town was protected by walls with several entrance gates. During one of the many incursions, the town was attacked and largely destroyed by Edward Bruce.

The current town of Ardee retains its late medieval footprint as illustrated in a map of the town from the 18th century. Although the historic town walls have almost totally disappeared, the town's main street has survived as the most important element of the town's urban form. The historic pattern of streets, lanes, building plots and principal structures is very much in evidence in the modern town. It is critical that any proposals for improvements to Ardee's townscape include proposals to protect and reinforce the surviving historic urban form.

Many significant Historic Structures and Monuments remain in and around the historic core of Ardee, roughly grouped into the following periods of interest:

- Ancient Sites and Structures Dating from the 13th to C17th century including the basic footprint of the town's ancient walled enclosure and entrance gates, the location and alignment of which can still be seen in the alignment of streets and some property boundaries and Ardee Castle which consists of a late medieval tower house, adapted during the 19th century to serve as the town's courthouse and Hatches Castle, an impressive survival of a tower house converted to use as a private residence while retaining its essential character.
- Georgian Buildings in and around the Historic Core include: Ardee House, the home of John William Ruxton, which was built around 1780; St. Mary's Church, dating from around 1810 stands on John's Street.
- Victorian Buildings in and around the Historic Core include: a former workhouse on Johns Street; an attractive late 19th century train station on the east side of the town; and to the south of the walled town area stands the Victorian former Convent of Mercy.



Extract from the Ordnance Survey Historic 6 inch Map (1829 and 1842)



Photograph of Ardee Castle on Castle Street



View northwards from Bridge Street



Statue at Bridge St. car park



View towards Ardee Castle

Public Opinion

Louth County Council undertook preliminary engagement and consultation for the preparation of a Vision for the regeneration of Ardee. As part of the preparation of the Vision for the town, key stakeholders and members of the community were engaged via an online webinar and survey to assess the needs and aspirations of the local community. This exercise also provided an opportunity for those we engaged to provide feedback on the proposed design principles and mixed-use ambition for the sites.

To inform the Vision, a consultation survey was carried out online and received a total of 541 submissions (equivalent to c.11% of the population of Ardee town as per the last census). The responses received represented a diverse range of stakeholders with an interest in the Ardee area, or with a connection to one of the five key opportunity sites under consideration in this project.

There was a strong emphasis on harnessing the potential of Ardee Castle, the amenity of the river and associated wildlife. Having considered the combined results of the qualitative and quantitative data a number of themes emerged. These include:

- The tourism and heritage potential of the town.
- Traffic congestion and flow is an issue and there are limited car free zones.
- Youth and physical activity spaces are limited.
- Improvements could be made to make more use of the riverbank and environment.
- Under-utilisation of public and outdoor space.
- Improvements to Main Street’s public realm are required.



“*Ardee is a beautiful little town, with lovely amenities, shops and history if it was developed properly to attract tourism, visitors, workers and residential people to the town. The river is beautiful and with lovely wildlife on it*”

“*There are so many opportunities already existing in Ardee that can be utilised so much better. The castle should have a thriving historical aspect brought back to life, with adequate parking organised to assist*”

“*82% (444 respondents) strongly agreed or agreed that the town had unrealised potential to attract more people to work and live in the area*”

Issues and Opportunities

The following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was informed by feedback from the community and stakeholder engagement consultation. This analysis outlines the constraints that Ardee is currently experiencing and identifies potential opportunities that the Ardee 2040 Vision aims to deliver.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Ardee enjoys good strategic and local transport connectivity	Traffic in the town centre is high, including HGV traffic, which presents a barrier to movement
Ardee is an attractive historic town with several protected structures and heritage assets that are valued by locals and visitors alike	Ardee is one of the oldest medieval fortifications in Ireland, but its heritage and cultural assets remain under-recognised
The town has a thriving economic base associated with Castle Street and Ash Walk	High levels of parking provision in or adjoining Main Street create a car-dominant environment in Ardee’s economic centre
Ardee provides a relatively compact centre with a range of facilities accessible by sustainable modes, including walking and cycling	There are a limited number of safe pedestrian and cycle links within the town centre
The topography of the town is relatively flat, encouraging movement by walking and cycling	Poor signage of key assets within the town, including its parks, community and heritage assets makes way finding difficult
Ardee includes significant recreational and biodiversity areas, including the Railway Walk and the River Dee	Areas of recreational and biodiversity interest are not fully utilised to realise their potential for habitat enrichment, amenity and recreation value

Opportunities	Threats
Better management of traffic movements through the town centre through the introduction of transport zones; smarter travel policies; and encouraging active travel	Managing traffic congestion in a manner which protects those elements of the town that are working well, i.e. its thriving economic base
Showcase the importance of Ardee’s cultural significance which contributes to the town’s sense of place through effective promotion of its heritage assets	Ensuring new development or redevelopment does not adversely impact on sensitive built and natural environment features
Capitalise on the town’s thriving economic base by supporting businesses and creating an attractive environment by targeting underutilised sites within / and adjoining the town centre for new development	Ensuring pedestrian and cyclist safety in car dominated parts of the town
Enhance connectivity across the town, including Main Street, Ash Walk, River Walk and amenity areas	Ensuring passive surveillance and safety are ensured in connecting more parts of the town
Significantly improve pedestrian and cycle linkages to/from the town, including upgrading of roads and amenity lighting	
Give consideration to the creation of public open spaces and greenways to capitalise and protect the town’s natural environment	

3 Policy Context

Planning Context

The Vision Document provides an interim review of planning policy that may be of relevance to guide the future development of Ardee. This planning policy outline relates to the Vision stage only and should be revisited once detailed proposals are devised.

National Context

The National Planning Framework (NPF, February 2018) is a national policy framework guiding development across Ireland up to 2040. The Ardee Vision is supported by NPF in particular focus on National Policy Objective (NPO) 4 relating to the creation of attractive, liveable, well-designed, high-quality urban places, NPO 5 and 6 on the creation and rejuvenation of towns as environmental assets and NO7 regarding the Rural Regeneration Fund,

The National Development Plan (NDP, October 2021) sets a total investment figure of €165 billion for Ireland from 2021 to 2030, including within housing, transportation, climate action and job creation.

Regional Context

Regional and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (2019 to 2031)

The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (EMRSES, 2019 to 2031) sets out a strategic plan and investment strategy to shape future growth in the Eastern and Midland Region to 2031.

Within the Plan, Louth falls within the East Regional Strategic Planning Area. Ardee is a 'Level 3 Town and/or District Centre' and a 'Sub-County Town Centre'. As a historic walled town, Ardee is also noted as a cultural asset for the region, being a historic walled town.

The following projects are identified which will benefit Ardee:

- N2 Ardee to the south of Castleblaney upgrade.
- N52 Ardee Bypass.

Although no specific Regional Policy Objectives relate to Ardee in particular, several are relevant to this Vision Document. These include RPO 7.23 (Green Infrastructure), 7.25 (Greenways), RPO 9.10 (Healthy Placemaking), RPO 9.14 (Social, Community and Cultural Infrastructure) and RPO 9.15 (National Sports Infrastructure).

Local Context

Louth County Development Plan (LCDP) 2021-2027

The principal policy document at Local Level is The Louth County Development Plan (LCDP) 2021-2027, which came into effect on the 11th November 2021.

This Plan provides a framework for the growth and development of the County during its lifetime with an underlying and cross cutting theme to promote the creation of sustainable, healthy communities where people can access jobs, housing, and services, and enjoy a high quality of life.

Ardee is identified as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' in the *Settlement Strategy for Co. Louth*.

The growth strategy for Ardee, during the timeframe of this Plan, will be to consolidate its designation as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town', continue to expand its employment base and facilitate sustainable residential growth that would meet the needs of a localised demand. Any expansion of the town shall be complementary to the development of the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk.

Several local policies apply to the Ardee Vision. These include Policy SS38 relating to the sustainable communities, Policy SS 40 relating to the Rural Regeneration Fund and SS45 which seeks to examine the feasibility of a running track within Ardee.

Architectural Conservation Area / Zone of Archaeological Potential

Parts of the overall project area are located in Ardee Architectural Conservation Area and within a Zone of Archaeological Potential.



Core Strategy Map from page 2-13 of the LCPD 2021 – 2027

4 Shaping the Vision

Project Potential

With a population of c. 5478 people and located a 1 hour travel time from Dublin and Belfast, Ardee has the potential to increase its importance as a key local service centre in the east midlands.

Further to this, Ardee has one of the oldest medieval fortifications in Ireland and is situated on the banks of the scenic River Dee, making it an ideal location to promote a pedestrian friendly, landscape orientated heritage town.

The Ardee 2040 Regeneration Vision has taken into account the following current projects:

- **Ardee Educate Together School:** As part of this project a section of road from the N52 to the school site will be constructed to service the school. This road will allow for the potential to extend the road to Ash Walk, connecting the school campus with the town centre.

- **The N52 bypass:** the completion of the N52 Ardee Bypass to the northwest of the town will assist in reducing traffic and HGV movement through the town, thus reducing congestion levels allowing for some ease of access around the town and hence reducing the reliance on the private car. The bypass is a key consideration of the Vision and will shape how Ardee develops in the future.
- **Redevelopment of Ardee Castle:** funding was received to redevelop the castle under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund for renovation of Ireland's largest fortified medieval tower house and to bring it back into use. This is an important tourism project for both the County and Ardee, as it has the potential to significantly increase visitor numbers to the area.

These committed development proposals provide the opportunity to better connect Ardee north and south with redeveloped educational and heritage sites.

The combination of the above projects and the redevelopment of Opportunity Areas as identified in this Vision provides the prospect to re-orient and re-balance the town, allowing people living on the south and east of the town the potential to traverse the town to access new community services on the west via an upgraded public realm and looped walkways and cycle paths.

Guiding Principles

The Ardee 2040 Regeneration Project is an ambitious, long-term regeneration strategy for Ardee which seeks to secure economic, social and environmental improvements in the town by 2040.

To support the delivery of the Vision, 8 Guiding Principles have been formulated, drawing on the results from baseline assessment, feedback from the engagement sessions, planning policy and core strategy documents.



1. A place to live, work and visit: Integrate key elements of Ardee's attractive town form, sense of community and wider strategic connections to enhance the town as a sustainable and attractive place to live and retain the important relationship and connection with the rural hinterland.



2. Quality spaces and an enhanced public realm: Quality public spaces and recreational areas enclosed by key gateways and connected by an enhanced public realm. Deliverable and effective design interventions to better integrate the town centre and surrounding areas.



3. Heritage and distinctiveness: Capitalising on those elements of the town that make Ardee distinctive, including its rich built heritage.



4. Recreation and biodiversity: Enhancing Ardee's existing natural heritage assets, including the Railway Walk and River Dee to the benefit both of the local community and natural biodiversity.



5. Movement and connectivity: Improving connectivity for all members of the community, visitors and tourists alike, through smart investment to the town centre movement strategy and its connections to the wider strategic network.



6. Vibrancy and inclusivity: Increasing footfall in the town centre's vibrant economic base by creating a welcoming centre which is compact, accessible and inclusive for all members of the community, building on the age friendly initiatives that currently operate in the town. From the youngest to the oldest, pedestrians and cyclists, mobility impaired and marginalised, Ardee will provide a welcoming and vibrant day and nighttime economy.



7. Climate resilience: Employing principles of sustainable development, minimising energy consumption and maximising renewable energy technology.



8. A place of creativity and enterprise: provide the infrastructure to support Ardee to become a sought-after business destination providing for growing and established organisations.

Opportunity Areas

A strategic appraisal of the existing transport, heritage, land use, landscape and public realm areas in Ardee was carried out to inform the development of the Vision Document. This appraisal, alongside the SWOT analysis prepared for the town and feedback from community consultation, were used to identify the following Opportunity Areas. The Opportunity Areas have been identified as key locations in Ardee which, when combined, will deliver the Guiding Principles of the Ardee Vision.

Opportunity Area 1 – Main Street (including Ash Walk)

The Main Street Opportunity Area extends from the north of Ardee town centre and extends to the south along Main Street, including lands south of the River Dee at Bridge Street, William Street, John Street and Drogheda Road. The opportunity area also includes a portion of Golf Links Road to the north west of Main Street and the public road/existing footpath and public realm areas within Ash Walk.

Opportunity Area 2 – Old Railway Lands

The Old Railway Lands Opportunity Area is located on an area of grassland to the south of Sean O’Carroll Street and north of dwellings fronting onto Tierney Street.

Opportunity Area 3 – Amenity Lands

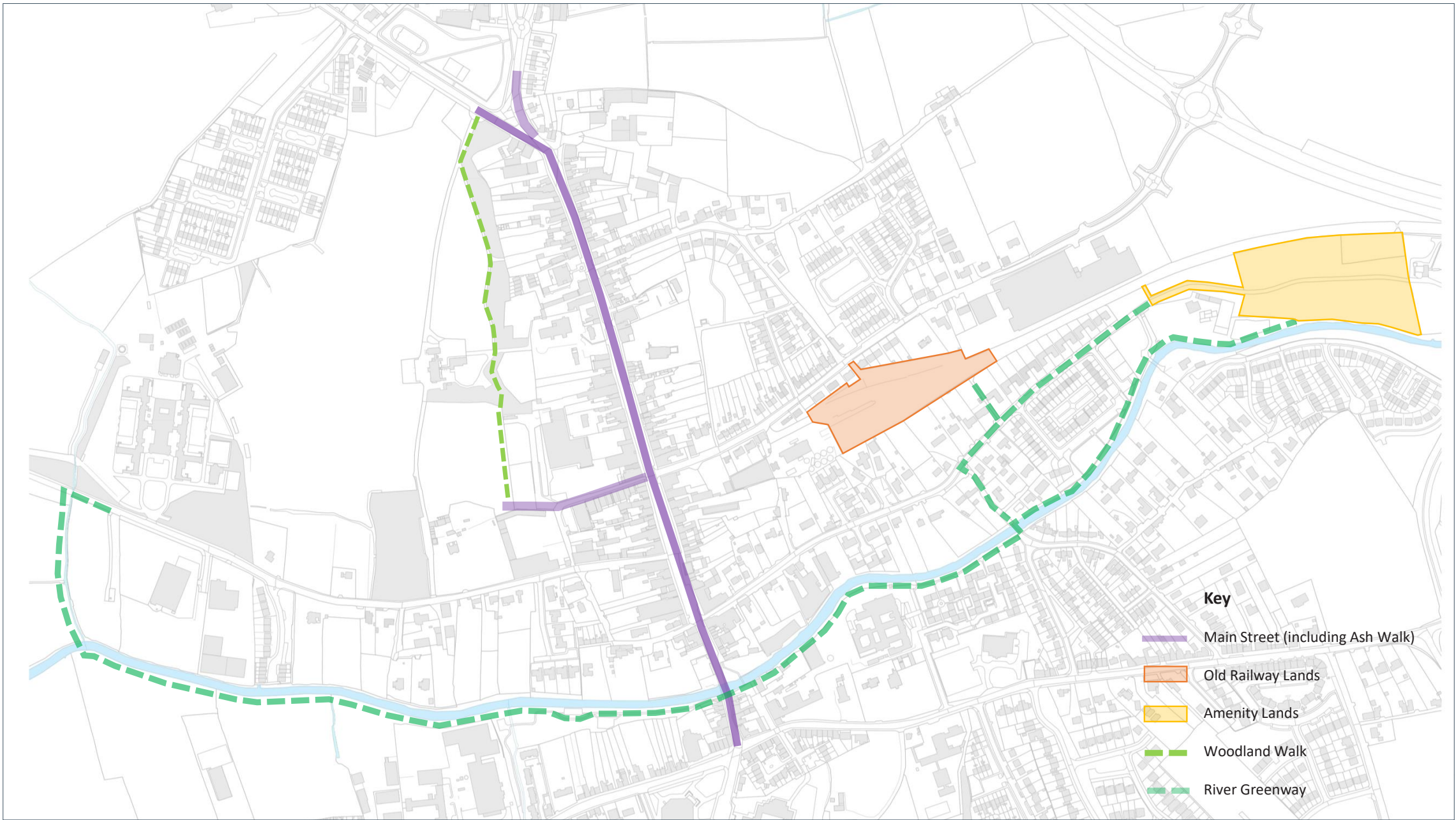
The Amenity Lands Opportunity Area is located on an area of unmaintained grassland to the east of the town, directly to the west of Ardee Wastewater Treatment Works, and north of the River Dee.

Opportunity Area 4 – Woodland Walk

The Woodland Walk Opportunity Area travels in a north to south direction through the existing HSE land in the west of the town linking Ash Walk to Golf Links Road.

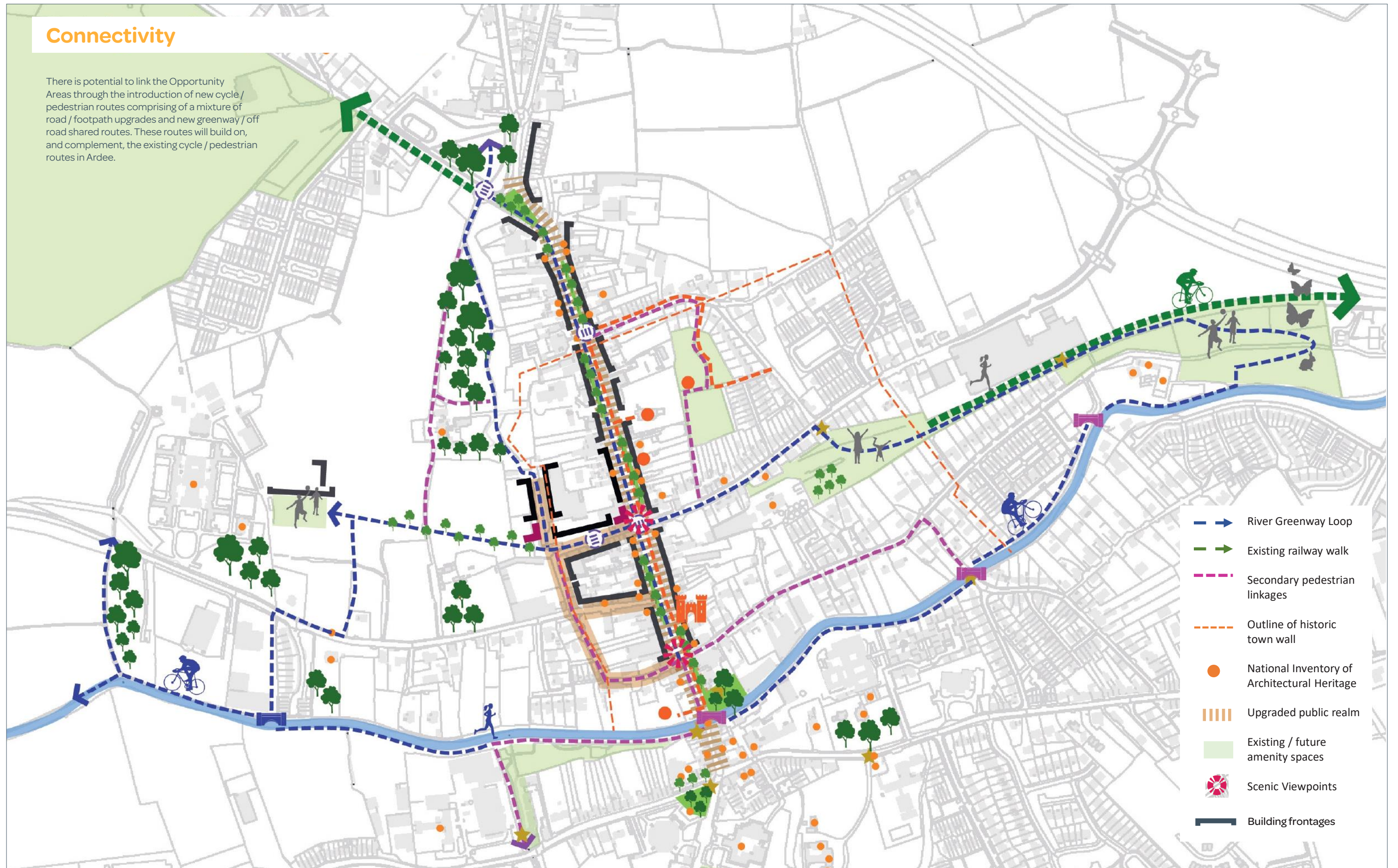
Opportunity Area 5 – River Greenway

The River Greenway Opportunity Area potentially could commence in the west of the town on the southern side of the N52 road, cross the River Dee and continue eastwards along the southern bank of the river as far as New Dawsons Demense, potentially intersecting with Main Street on the way. The route could then potentially cross to the northern bank of the river and travel along Tierney St. to link to the Old Railway Lands and Amenity lands.



Connectivity

There is potential to link the Opportunity Areas through the introduction of new cycle / pedestrian routes comprising of a mixture of road / footpath upgrades and new greenway / off road shared routes. These routes will build on, and complement, the existing cycle / pedestrian routes in Ardee.



5. Ardee 2040 Vision

Opportunity Area 1 – Main Street

Ardee Main Street extends to approximately 1km and is the central spine of the town, incorporating the commercial core of Ardee and provides linkages to the main transport routes to the north (N2 and N33) and south (N52).

Whilst the Main Street is a functional area, it is currently dominated by tarmac and paving with limited landscape or amenity spaces, creating a town centre experience with limited spaces available for people to meet and lacking a diverse mix of uses for residents.

There are underutilised areas along Main Street, for example Library Square, which could be reimagined to create an attractive space that could create a town square for small gatherings, events and markets.

Heritage is a key feature of Ardee town centre and many historic buildings, including Ardee Castle, Hatches Castle and St. Marys Church, are located along Main Street. The regeneration of Ardee town centre should retain heritage as a cornerstone of any future proposals and build upon existing improvements including the refurbishment and extension of Ardee Castle which has received Part 8 planning permission.



Aerial view of Ardee Main Street



Public Realm area – Copenhagen

There is an opportunity to improve the public realm to create attractive, useable soft and hard landscaped areas and improve pedestrian connectivity and accessibility. The regeneration of the Main Street area presents the opportunity to improve cycle, walking and public transport facilities to encourage people to consider alternative, more sustainable modes of transport. This should be balanced with the need to ensure that adequate car parking facilities remain to support the existing thriving commercial core of the town.

The regeneration of the Main Street area also creates an opportunity for the inclusion of species rich landscape areas which will encourage biodiversity and create an attractive, green streetscape which will add to the existing green gateway created by the park to the north of Golf Links Road.

The regeneration of the Main Street area should incorporate layers of mixed uses which complement each other and combine to create a vibrant town centre environment which is designed with connectivity, heritage, nature and the economy at its heart. When delivered, the southern green gateway will be located adjacent to the River Dee and the proposed Greenway, which will create a new landscape character and provide for a level of biodiversity enhancement in an urban setting.



Shared spaces - Rotterdam



Active public realm - Clonakilty, Co. Cork

Opportunity Area 2 – Old Railway Lands

Opportunity Area 2, known as the Old Railway Lands, is located on lands between Sean O'Carroll Street and Tierney Street. The Old Railway Lands are located in a strategic position in Ardee providing a pedestrian link from the existing railway walk in the east to the town centre in the west. The existing green space is traversed by pedestrian paths that provide access to Sean O'Carroll Street.

The opportunity site bounds existing residential uses therefore any future development on the site must respect the amenity of existing residents. The existing access onto Sean O'Carroll Street is used for maintenance vehicles / pedestrians only therefore improvements to visibility splays should be incorporated into any future proposals should vehicular access be proposed for the area.

Community parks serve multiple purposes which can help to revitalise an area. They can create spaces for children to play, they can promote a healthy lifestyle and they can increase the biodiversity of an area.

We believe that this Opportunity Area has the potential to provide a visually appealing space which will act as a place for people to socialise and children to play. We envisage an area comprising of multi-use grass areas, equipped children's play area and active uses including allotments.

Alongside this, we believe that a small economic enterprise, such as a small café, would help to establish the park as a destination that the local community looks forward to visiting. To help sustain the future of this space it should be designed to be accessible to all and include a mixture of uses which attracts people of all ages, whilst retaining and building on the existing heritage assets of the site.



Tiered seating using existing ground levels



Outdoor games, activities and seating area



Potential commercial use



Attractive multi-use grass area

Opportunity Area 3 –
The Amenity Lands

Opportunity Area 3, known as the Amenity Lands, is currently an underutilised grassland area to the east of the town, adjacent to the Wastewater Treatment works. The site is accessed from Tierney Street.

Through consultation with the local community, sports groups and the wider public it has been suggested that this site would be an ideal location to establish a new sports hub in the town, delivering a mixture of formal and informal facilities and recreational activities that will link seamlessly to the town centre via the Old Railway Lands Park (Opportunity area 2) and the River Greenway (Opportunity Area 5).

The development of a purpose-built sports hub has the potential to increase the number of people participating and volunteering in sport through being part of a local sporting network. It will also create a focal point which makes it easier for people to get involved in a more active and healthier lifestyle.

The area of the site ensures that a number of sports and leisure uses can be accommodated. We envisage a proposal which comprises of a mixture of uses around a central hub. Such uses could include a running track, formal and informal walking trails, a skate park, multiuse hard courts, bowling green etc. In addition to sports uses, there is potential to include a hard landscaped area and outdoor stage which could be used for small events.

We would recommend that further consultation with the local community, community groups and sports groups is carried out to identify uses that would be supported by the local community to ensure that the site becomes a busy, vibrant space.



Potential for new BMX / skate park



Running track integrated with landscaping



Large areas of useable open space



Formal pedestrian routes and seating areas constructed from natural materials

Opportunity Area 4 – Woodland Walk

The overall objective in this Opportunity Area is to develop a walking facility through Ardee Town with a north to south orientation through the HSE lands, linking the Fairgreen to the Ash Walk Area.

The wooded area surrounding St. Joseph’s Hospital, to the west of Main Street, is a valuable natural environment in the town. There is potential to increase accessibility to this space by proposing a woodland walk along the existing informal trail which traverses through the trees which will assist with improving physical and mental health and provides access to this natural environment. The woodland walk could begin in the north, linking seamlessly to the potential public realm works at Fairgreen. The route could potentially continue through the HSE lands and connect to a new road which could extend westwards from Ash Walk.

Given the untouched character of the existing trail, we recommend a minimal intervention approach using a cellular confinement system specifically designed for tree root protection. The system creates a stable, load bearing surface for traffic or footfall whilst eliminating damage to roots through compaction and desiccation of the soil. This approach will ensure that the existing trees are not impacted by any future development.



Photograph of existing woodland walk



Potential to create shared walking / cycling route

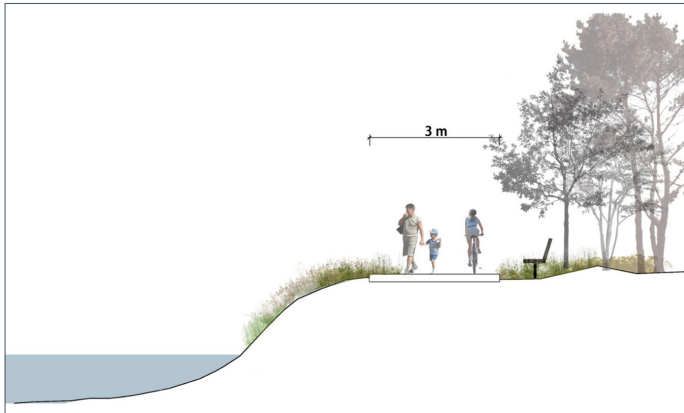
“Exposure to forests strengthens our immune system, reduces blood pressure, increases energy, boosts our mood and helps us regain and maintain our focus in ways that treeless environments don’t”



Proposed Woodland Walk Route

Opportunity Area 5 - River Greenway

Greenways can make a huge difference to our daily lives by providing the opportunity to enjoy safe and easy access to fresh air and exercise, encouraging more people to journey by foot or bicycle, more children to walk or cycle to school, and by providing a vital leisure resource for local people and visitors alike. Other, perhaps less obvious, benefits of greenways include the creation of business and job opportunities making them an invaluable resource in the regeneration and growth of a town.

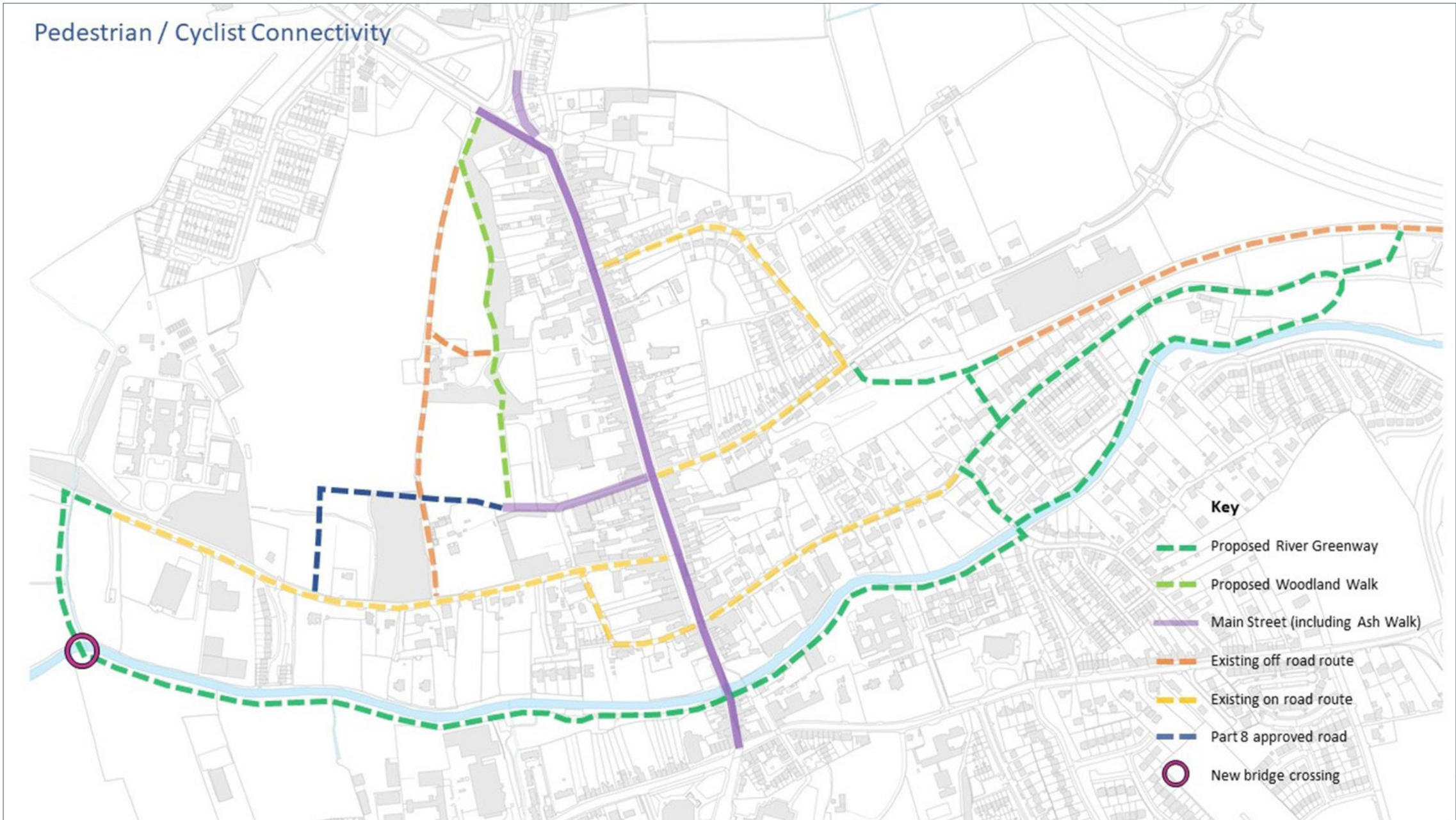


Typical cross section through greenway

Ardee has a number of existing walkways / cycleways. It is the intention to extend / add to and create links to these existing routes and other amenities within the Town. Key characteristics of the Vision include:

- New and improved walking, cycle, and greenway routes around the town.
- Integrate the existing N33 walkway into the design.
- Provide a dedicated greenway cycle and walking facility through Ardee Town, in a west to east orientation along the River Dee - linking into existing walkways.
- Increase connectivity to / between adjacent roads, open spaces, industry, housing schemes and future developments and accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians (including appropriate road and river crossings).
- Include for appropriate route lighting in context with the varying urban and river locations.

The following page summarises the existing and potential pedestrian / cycle connectivity routes within Ardee which, when implemented, will create a connected town.



Shared cycle / pedestrian facilities integrated with landscaping



Greenway along rivers edge - rural context



Greenway along rivers edge - urban context

6. Implementation

Route to Delivery

The Council will encourage and support other local organisations from the public, private and community sectors who are interested in taking forward projects that help realise and fulfil the ethos of the Vision, including collaboration with the Town Centre First Initiative, vacant / derelict buildings initiative and other key stakeholders including, but not limited to, elderly representative groups, sport groups, retailers, institutions and businesses.

This Vision belongs to the people of Ardee, the input of whom has been central to its development. It is therefore vital that everyone is kept informed and involved in the process to deliver its actions over the long term. Excellent levels of public communication must be sustained through a range of outlets, including traditional media and online. Opportunities should also be found to actively involve the public (of all ages) in the process of transformation. These opportunities could be complimentary community led projects, events that demonstrate and celebrate progress or hands-on initiatives to care for green spaces. By working together collectively, an exciting opportunity is presented for Ardee and its people.

Sequence of Delivery

The Vision is focused on reimagining Ardee Town by creating and connecting more green spaces, embracing heritage, transforming the urban environment as a place for people and making it the go-to destination.

The Ardee 2040 Regeneration Vision delivery process must be sustained over many years. At this stage, and subject to funding, it is anticipated that the Vision will be delivered in the following sequence:

- 1 - Opportunity Area 1: Main Street (including Ash Walk)
- 2 - Opportunity Area 3: Amenity Lands
- 3 - Opportunity Area 4 : Woodland Walk
- 4 - Opportunity Area 2: Old Railway Lands
- 5 - Opportunity Area 5: River Greenway

The delivery sequence will be continually monitored by Louth County Council and updated as funding becomes available.

Funding Mechanisms

It is anticipated that the Ardee 2040 Regeneration Vision will be delivered through national funding schemes. Key funding mechanisms to deliver the Vision include, but are not limited to:

National Development Plan

The government brought forward its revised National Development Plan (NDP) for 2021-2030 in October of 2021. The NDP set out a total figure of €165 billion for investment in, inter alia, housing, transportation, climate action and job creation. The NDP states that achieving a high-quality stock of infrastructure throughout Ireland will require sustained and elevated levels of investment over the long-term.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is a commitment of €1 billion by government to be invested in rural Ireland over the period 2019 to 2027. Proposals may be made in respect of towns with populations of 10,000 or fewer and their outlying areas.

The purpose of the fund is to support job creation in rural areas, address de-population of rural communities and support improvements in our towns and villages. Initial funding of €315 million has been allocated to the fund on a phased basis over the period 2019 to 2022.

The fund is supporting coordinated and integrated projects between government departments, State agencies, local authorities, other public bodies, communities and, where appropriate, philanthropic funders and/or the private sector, which will have an impact on sustainable economic and social development in rural areas.

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund

The Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency and offers finance for infrastructural requirements that will support Project Ireland 2040 priorities such as regional development, housing, and climate change.

Active Travel Grants Programme

The Active Travel Grants Programme funds important projects supporting strategic pedestrian and cyclist routes, access to schools, permeability links, urban greenways and some minor public transport improvement projects. National Transport Authority (NTA) has allocated funds to Ireland’s local authorities with a view to spending on walking and cycling infrastructure in 2023. This substantial investment will fund approximately 1,200 Active Travel projects, contributing to the development of almost 1,000km of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure across the country by 2025. This includes the development of segregated cycle lanes and widened footpaths, new walking and cycling bridges, and new pedestrian crossings. Additional funding opportunities through this programme may become available.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme provides grant funding to support the economic and social recovery of rural towns with a population of less than 10,000. Applications are submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development though Local Authorities and the scheme focuses on projects that have a positive impact in terms of place making and town centre regeneration. Projects funded have included the regeneration of banks, courthouses, cinemas and halls for community use, the development of public plazas, town parks, playgrounds, community gardens and dog parks. The scheme also funds projects at pre-development stage and the acquisition of suitable vacant or derelict properties that could be taken into public ownership and converted for community use. It has also provided specific funding to enhance streetscapes and shopfronts under the streetscape enhancement initiative.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding for the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure. It also provides support for the necessary repair, maintenance, enhancement or promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas across Ireland.

The scheme supports outdoor recreation activities such as walking, trekking, cycling, kayaking and hiking. It supports the economic and tourism potential of the area for both local communities and tourist visitors alike. The ORIS has three funding bands including funding for small scale repair/development/promotion and marketing projects, medium scale repair/upgrade and new trail/amenity development projects and large scale repair/upgrade and new strategic trail/amenity development projects.

Heritage Council Funding - Historic Towns Initiative

In support of the Town Centre First: a policy approach for Irish towns (2022), the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council which aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland’s historic towns.

The Historic Towns Initiative 2025 aims to provide support to historic towns engaged in a programme of heritage-led regeneration. The funding is delivered in Two Streams. Stream 1 allows for a maximum award of €350,000 in total per town for proposals to bring vacant or underused floor area in historic buildings back into residential use. Stream 2 allows for a maximum award of €50,000 in total per town to deliver a heritage-led regeneration plan which will examine the existing heritage of a town and determine what conservation focused interventions are required.

A total fund of €2 million (capital funding) is available to local authorities under the HTI 2025. Both Streams require match funding of 20% from the Local Authority or owners of the heritage asset.

Ardee 2040 Regeneration Vision sets out an ambitious strategy for the future redevelopment of the town. The value of the Vision will rest on its ability to deliver positive change.

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