CLONASLEE FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

Appendix 16.8: Conservation Report

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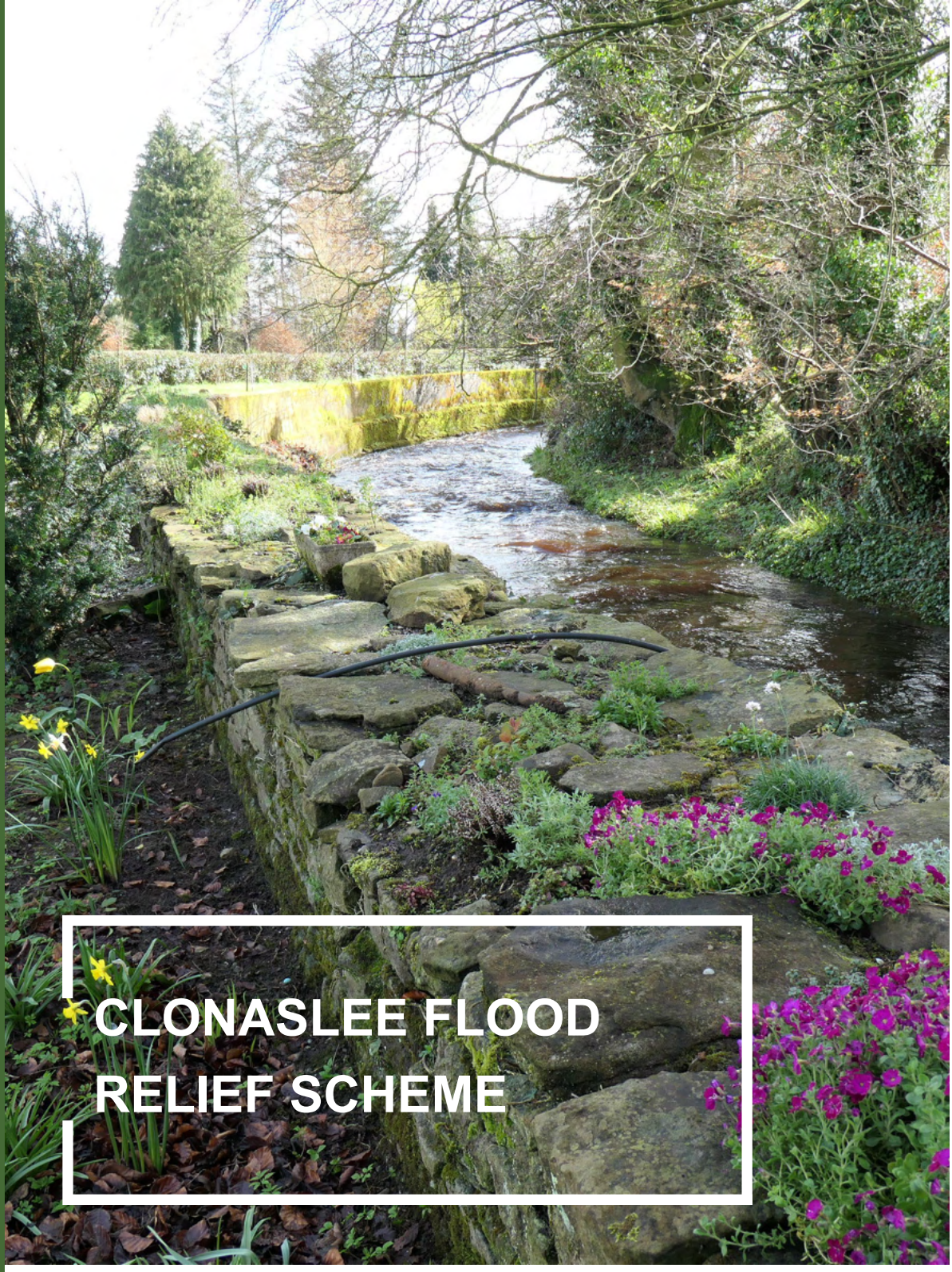

CLONASLEE FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

CONSERVATION REPORT

Prepared for

RPS Group Consulting Engineers

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1.0
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This report on the conservation and heritage issues associated with the proposed Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme has been commissioned by the RPS Group and prepared by Alastair Coey of Alastair Coey Architects. Alastair Coey is a conservation architect accredited at Grade One by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. Alastair Coey Architects has acted as Conservation Advisor with Arup for the Lower Lee (Cork City) Flood Relief Scheme since October 2017 and with RPS on the Ballina Flood Relief Scheme in 2024.

Alastair Coey visited Clonaslee on Wednesday 27 March 2024 and conducted an initial inspection of the areas on the east and west banks of the River Clodiagh which would be impacted by the flood relief scheme. This was not a detailed condition survey and this report comprises initial impressions which may be subject to review as additional information becomes available and more-detailed surveys are carried out.

A feedback meeting, following the site visit, was held by MS Teams with Tatiana Kelley and Jocelyn Mendoza on Thursday 28 March 2023 and the matters discussed in that meeting have served to inform this report.

1.2 Background

Clonaslee (population c.600) is a village in north County Laois situated in the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains on the R422 Mountmellick to Birr road. The village is approximately 100km west of Dublin and is close to the towns of Portlaoise and Tullamore.

Clonaslee has a long history of flooding the most recent incidence of the Clodiagh River overflowing its banks was in November 2017. The areas affected by flooding are Brittas Forest Recreation Area (Area 1) to the south of Clodiagh Bridge and Chapel Street (Area 2) and Tullamore Road (Area 3) to the north of the bridge.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management study (CFRAM) identified Clonaslee and its low-lying environs as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA). In February 2020, Laois County Council, in partnership with the OPW, appointed RPS Consulting Engineers to further assess the CFRAM Study, identify options and prepare proposals for a detailed flood relief scheme for Clonaslee which was economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sustainable.

1.3 History

The village has its origins in the twelfth century although the most significant period in its growth took place from the sixteenth century under the influence of the Dunnes of Brittas. This family left their mark on the development and history of the village as evidenced in its planned form dominated by a wide main street. Throughout the eighteenth century, Clonaslee prospered due to its location on an important highway across Laois leading onto Munster. The proximity of Brittas, the seat of the Dunnes, was also influential as the power of the family had by now grown beyond that of a native Irish Chieftain. In 1771, Francis Dunne, then head of the Dunne Family, became a Roman Catholic and built a thatched parish chapel in the village close to the site of the present church on Chapel Street/Tullamore Road. The Dunne family continued to finance the construction of landmark buildings in the village including the Church of Ireland parish church which was erected, as a vista stop at the east end of Main Street, in 1814. The village continued to grow through the early years of the nineteenth century, mainly owing to the development of the Mountmellick to Birr road and the establishment of a post office, police station and other offices of civil administration. However, the Famine years saw a dramatic slump in the village's population from which there has been no significant recovery.

A new bridge over the Clodiagh River was opened in 2011. The 25 inch OS map, dated 1907, shows a footbridge over the river to the north of Clodiagh Bridge, presumably built to provide safe pedestrian passage avoiding the previous narrow vehicular bridge. The footbridge was removed after construction of the new vehicular bridge although remnants of the eastern abutment survive.

Fig.01 Church of Ireland parish church

Fig.02 Clodiagh Bridge plaque

Fig.03 Cloadiagh Bridge

Fig.04 Clodiagh Bridge from north

1.4 Architectural Conservation Area

The topography of the village is flat but set in a landscape dominated by gentle uplands and mature woodlands. The Clodiagh River, which runs along the east side of Tullamore Road (Chapel Street), is separated from the public roadway by a rubble stone wall, makes a substantial contribution to the special character of the village. Open spaces such as the square in front of Hickey's Public House also make an important contribution to the character of the village. Single-storey cottages along the western side of Tullamore Road, while more informally arranged, and generally of a lower architectural order also contribute to the special character of the ACA.

The intention behind the designation of an Architectural Conservation Area is not to stop change, but to manage the nature of change in order to respect and enhance the features and characteristics that make an area special. Works to the public realm in connection with the proposed Flood Relief Scheme, within the ACA including footpaths and street furniture will be required to respect the special character of the area.

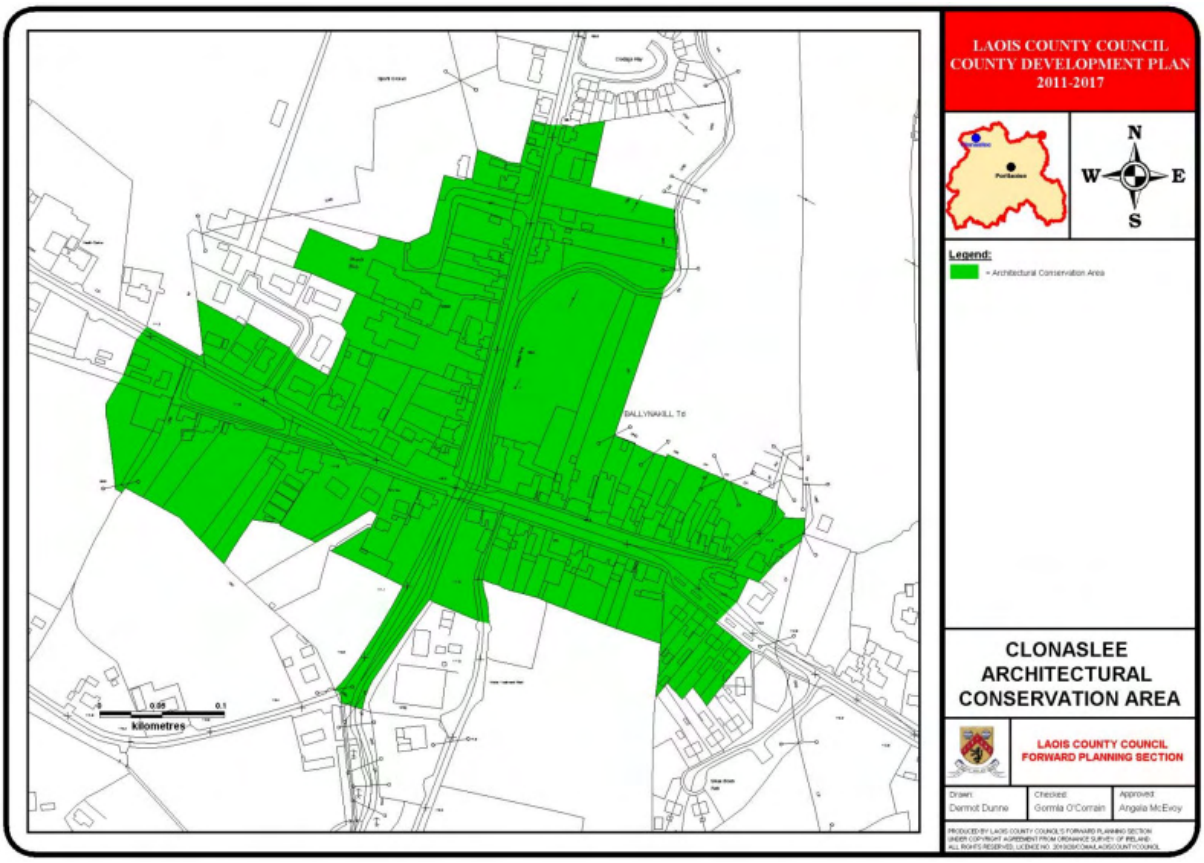

Fig.05 Clonaslee Architectural Conservation Area, Laois County Development Plan 2011-2017

1.5 Protected Structures

The village has eight Protected Structures listed in the Laois County Development Plan 2012-2027:

- RPS 338 - St Manman's Catholic Church, Chapel Street/ Tullamore Road
- RPS 339 - St Manman's former Church of Ireland Church, Main Street
- RPS 340 - W Morrisey shop façade, Main Street
- RPS 341 - Maher's greengrocer shop façade, Main Street
- RPS 342 - Fallon's pub façade, Main Street
- RPS 343 - M D Hickey pub façade, The Square
- RPS 344 - John Feery pub façade, Main Street
- RPS 345 - V E C School, Rosenallis Road

None of the Protected Structures listed above will be affected by the proposed Flood Relief Scheme.

Fig.06 M D Hickey pub facade, The Square (RPS 343)

1.6 Notes

LIMITATIONS TO PRELIMINARY INSPECTION

- Access to east bank of the Clodiagh River was restricted owing to thick vegetation.
- No attempt was made to assess the condition of the river-facing surface of walls.

ORIENTATION

For the purposes of this report the Clodiagh River is deemed to flow from south to north and Main Street travels from east to west.

MATERIALS

Potential local sources of suitable stone to be used in the construction of new rubble stone walls and repair of existing walls has not been explored.

TERMINOLOGY

- As found – Field stone selected for wall construction.
- Rubble stone – Undressed stone.
- Uncoursed – Rubble stone built in a random surface.

MITIGATION OF IMPACTS

The report is concerned only with mitigation of the impacts of the proposed Flood Relief Scheme on existing stone walls forming the boundary with Clodiagh River. The recommendations below should therefore be considered in the context of the practicalities of essential civil and structural engineering implications.

RIPARIAN CONSIDERATIONS

It has been confirmed that flood relief interventions on the river-facing side of existing walls should be minimised. As a result, it has been decided that, in order to avoid contamination of the river, any new flood relief walls will be constructed on the landward side of existing walls and that work to the river-facing side of existing walls will, if possible, be confined to removal of vegetation.

DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO

- Laois County Development Plan 2012-2027
- Drawings: File Identifier MDW0867QG0100, Status: S2, Rev: P01, Drawn: JM, Checked: BC, Date: 06/12/2023
    - Proposed Defences Area 1: Brittas Wood
    - Proposed Defences Area 2: Chapel Street
    - Proposed Defences Area 3: Tullamore Road

2.0
AREA 01:
BRITTAS WOOD

2.1 Brittas Wood

The area impacted by the Flood Relief Scheme was reviewed and contains no structures of built heritage significance.

Fig.07 Brittas Wood information board

3.0
AREA 02:
CHAPEL STREET

3.1 Introduction

Area 2 contains a length of rubble stone riverside walling on the east side of Chapel Street extending from the north-west sweep of Clodiagh Bridge to the southern boundary of a property owned by a Mrs Mary McGrail. From this point, the riverside wall is entirely within the garden of the McGrail property and the river curves to the north-east.

3.2 Chapel Street Wall

The wall between Chapel Street and the river is approximately 800mm high, reducing in height towards the south end at Clodiagh Bridge. It is approximately 600mm wide and is constructed from uncoursed, as-found, rubble stone laid in lime mortar bedding. The height of the original wall was increased at some time in the past through the addition of a course of vertically-set stones spaced apart and set in a roughly domed mortar bed. The wall can be considered in ten sections demarcated by square planters set alongside the wall and numbered 01 to 10 from north to south.

Fig.08 Chapel Street from south

- Section 01 – Height of wall increased as described above. Wall bulges outwards towards north end. Extensive moss growth on west face. Extensive vegetation to top and east face. Low flower bed to north end in rough quadrant plan constructed in rubble stone with flat stone coping. 1no. tree. 1no. painted steel square section post behind planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.


Fig.09 Section 01, flower bed


Fig.10 Section 01, wall

- Section 02 – Height of wall increased as described above. Extensive moss growth to top of wall. Extensive vegetation to east face. 1no. tree. 1no. recently installed octagonal galvanized steel electricity pole. 1no. painted steel square section post beside planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.


Fig.11 Section 02, wall

- Section 03 – Height of wall increased as described above. Some moss growth and vegetation to top and west face. Extensive vegetation to east face. Extensive mass concrete repairs. 1no. tree. 1no. painted steel square section post behind planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.

Fig.12 Section 03, wall

Fig.13 Section 03, mass concrete repair

- Section 04 – Height of wall increased as described above. Some moss growth to top. Extensive vegetation to top and east face. Wall steps out for approximately two metres at north of section, step at south end of projection possibly intended to provide access steps to river side of wall. Isolated mass concrete repairs. 1no. tree. 1no. circular metal traffic sign post. 1no. painted steel square section post behind planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.

Fig.14 Section 04, step in wall

Fig.15 Section 04, possible access steps

- Section 05 – Height of wall increased as described above. Extensive moss growth to top. Extensive vegetation to top and east face. Extensive mass concrete repairs. 1no. tree. 1no. circular metal traffic sign post. 1no. painted steel square section post. 1no. recently installed octagonal galvanized steel electricity pole. Planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.

Fig.14 Section 05, wall

Fig.15 Section 05, mass concrete repair

- Section 06 – Height of wall increased as described above. Extensive moss growth on west face. Extensive vegetation to top and east face. Extensive mass concrete repairs. 1no. tree. 1no. circular metal traffic sign post. 1no. painted steel square section post adjacent to planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.

Fig.16 Section 06, wall

- Section 07 – Height of original wall increased as described above. Part of wall towards south end rebuilt in roughly squared rubble sandstone. Extensive moss growth on west face of original wall. Extensive vegetation to top and east face. Isolated mass concrete repair to original walling. 1no. tree. 1no. painted steel square section post behind planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.


Fig.17 Section 07, wall


Fig.18 Section 07, rebuilt wall

- Section 08 – Height of wall increased as described above. Some moss growth on top of wall. Extensive vegetation to east face. Wall steps out for approximately two metres, to access steps on river side of wall. Isolated mass concrete repairs. 2no. trees. 1no. painted steel square section post behind planter to south end. 1no. recently installed octagonal galvanized steel electricity pole. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.


Fig.19 Section 08, wall


Fig.20 Section 08, wall


Fig.21 Section 08, step in wall


Fig.22 Section 08, riverside access steps

- Section 09 – Height of wall increased as described above. Some moss growth on top of wall. Extensive vegetation to east face. Isolated mass concrete repairs. 1no. tree. 1no. circular metal traffic sign post. 1no. planter to south end. Crushed aggregate surface between wall and yellow line.


Fig.23 Section 09, wall


Fig.24 Section 09, wall

- Section 10 – Height of wall increased as described above. Some moss growth on top of wall. Outward projection having 4no. stone cappings and small stone ‘seat’ built into top of wall.1no. painted steel square section post to north end. Bitmac pavement with concrete kerbs extending to bridge.


Fig.25 Section 10, wall


Fig.26 Section 10, projection and seating

3.2 McGrail Garden - Southern Boundary Wall

The first section of wall at the southern end of McGrail's garden was difficult to access because of the presence of a number of small trees and shrubs planted in the lawn close to the wall. It is approximately 600mm high on the garden side but considerably higher on the river side. The vertical face of the wall is largely concealed by mosses, lichens and ivy and the top surface is entirely obscured by dense vegetation including ivy and perennial plants. As a result, it was not possible to make a meaningful assessment of the structural condition. It appears that the wall is constructed from uncoursed, as-found, rubble stones with lime mortar jointing and perhaps a thin surface coat of lime-based harling.

Fig.27 Southern boundary wall

3.3 McGrail Garden - Central Boundary Wall

The central section of wall is approximately 600mm high on the garden side but considerably higher on the river side. It is more readily accessible than the first section and is also constructed from as-found stones but apparently substantially without mortar bedding and jointing. The wall is capped by loose stones creating a roughly flat surface which supports deliberate planting. Extensive ivy cascades down the river side of the wall which appears to be pointed.

Fig.28 Central boundary wall, capping

Fig.29 Central boundary wall, riverside

Fig.30 Central boundary wall

3.4 McGrail Garden - Northern Boundary Wall

The third and final, northernmost, section of wall is constructed from insitu concrete. It is approximately 800mm high on the garden side but considerably higher on the river side. The upper section is finished with an integral curved top and is approximately 300mm wide. On the river side the wall thickens at the base. The top and inner face of the wall supports extensive moss growth. A gravel path, approximately one metre wide, flanks the garden side of the wall.

Fig.31 Northern boundary wall

Fig.32 Northern boundary wall, riverside

4.0
AREA 03:
TULLAMORE ROAD

4.1 Tullamore Road

The area impacted by the Flood Relief Scheme was reviewed in the company of William Clooney (ICW Coordinator) and was found to contain no structures of built heritage significance.

Fig.33 Tullamore Road

5.0
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW FLOOD RELIEF WALLS IN AREA 2: CHAPEL STREET

5.1 Introduction

The following recommendations have been discussed with the RPS design team. Detailed designs and specifications for the heritage elements will need to be prepared for approval by the Council's Heritage Officer in due course.

The RPS proposal for increased flood protection is to build onto the existing wall sections on Chapel Street and in the McGrail garden, is to construct reinforced concrete walls in the form of an inverted 'L', faced with stone cladding all set on a mass concrete footing. It should be noted that it is not possible to replicate rubble stonework in thin cladding because it is not practical to saw cut relatively thin sections from lumps of rubble stone. An additional problem is that the existing walls are largely constructed from 'as found' soft edged field stone rather than hard edged quarried stone. The ideal solution would be to dismantle the existing walls and use the salvaged stone to face both sides and top of a new reinforced core. It is understood that this approach has been discounted in order to avoid river contamination and the necessity to erect scaffolding in the river and to not cause an increased risk of flooding during the construction of the Flood Relief Scheme.

5.2 Recommendations for Chapel Road

- The river facing sides of all existing rubble stone walls should be fully repointed after removal of vegetation in order to prevent erosion of the masonry.
- Wall offsets (Sections 04 and 08) contribute to the character of the existing wall and should be replicated in the Floor Relief Scheme.
- Proposal - New flood walls should comprise a reinforced concrete core formed against the west side of the existing walls and faced with new uncoursed rubble stone and capped with vertically placed merlon stones set in a hog back mortar bed.
- Capped projection Section 10) is a significant historic feature and should be replicated in the Flood Relief Scheme.
- Existing square metal posts should be removed.
- Existing road signs should be removed and relocated.
- Recently-installed electricity poles should be relocated to permit construction of new flood relief wall.
- Vegetation should be removed from east face of existing wall to permit inspection of stonework and jointing.
- If a new pavement is required by Laois County Council it should be provided adjacent to the new flood walls with an insitu concrete surface and granite kerbs. This would be an appropriate solution although bay size, aggregate selection and surface finish should all be carefully considered.
- Existing trees will need to be removed but could possibly be re-planted in tree pits behind the new kerb line.

5.3 Recommendations for McGrail garden walls

- Existing shrubs and trees should be removed from the southern boundary.
- River facing sides of all existing rubble stone walls should be fully repointed after removal of vegetation in order to prevent erosion of the masonry.
- If engineering solutions can be reached which allows reinforcement of existing walls, these should be implemented. If not, a completely new wall should be constructed, parallel to and offset by approximately 1.5 metres from the existing walls and having a reinforced concrete core and faced and capped with new quarried rubble stone. A new gravel path should be formed between the existing and new walls. A floodgate would be required to provide access to the pathway. The owners consent would be required.

5.4 Recommendations for Clodiagh Bridge amenity area

Consideration should be given to landscaping and provision of new seating to the east side of the river at Clodiagh Bridge.

Fig.34 Clodiagh Bridge amenity area

6.0
CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary of conclusions

- Area 01: Brittas Wood – No conservation issues
- Area 02: Chapel Street, Public Realm – Existing walling to be replicated with new wall to be constructed against existing wall.
- Area 02: McGrail Garden – Existing walling to be consolidated if possible, to provide effective flood relief. If this proves not to be possible the alternative recommendation will apply.
- Area 03: Tullamore Road – No conservation issues.

Implementation of the recommendations suggested in this report will preserve and, to some extent, serve to enhance the Chapel Street public realm.