



LOUISBURGH

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

AN ACTION OF THE COUNTY MAYO HERITAGE PLAN 2006-2011



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NATIONAL
BUILDING AGENCY

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Village Design Statement?

Louisburgh has a distinctive and diverse character which is highly valued by its local residents and visitors. As Louisburgh continues to evolve, this process of change needs to be positively managed so that the unique qualities that contribute to Louisburgh's distinctive identity can be protected and enhanced, whilst managing future growth and new development.

A Village Design Statement (VDS) is a community led planning document which describes the visual qualities and the distinctive character of a village and provides design guidelines which address the qualities that local residents consider worthy of protection or improvement. The purpose of a Village Design Statement is not about whether development should take place or not, but how planned development should be carried out. The aim of the Village Design Statement is to ensure that future development and change will have regard to the unique attributes of the village, its historical context and contribute positively to the future of Louisburgh.

Objectives of the Village Design Statement

- To describe the distinctive character of Louisburgh and the surrounding countryside
- To draw up design principles based on the distinctive local character
- To work in partnership with the local planning authority in the context of existing local planning policy, and to influence future policies.

Who is it for?

Change is brought about not only by large developments, but also by the smaller day-to-day adjustments to homes and gardens, open spaces, paths and edges, which alter the look and feel of the whole village.

Therefore the Statement is addressed to:

- Statutory bodies and public authorities
- Planners, developers, builders, architects, designers, engineers
- Local community groups
- Household and businesses

The aim of the Village Design Statement in the planning process

The Statement may be adopted by Mayo County Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance with the intention that its recommendations may be taken into

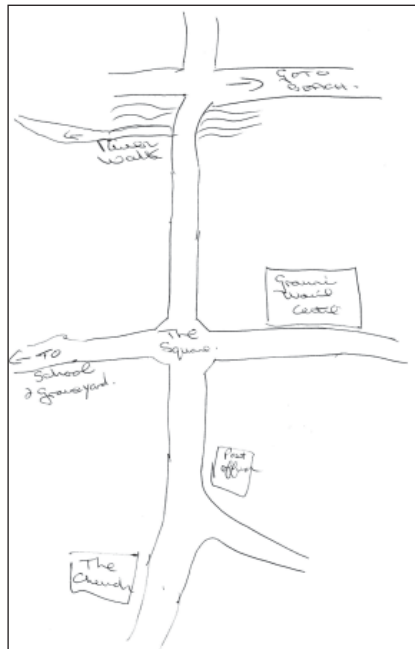
account when planning applications are assessed. It may also influence future planning policies.

Why is a Village Design Statement important to Louisburgh?

Louisburgh, with its unique surrounding landscape and proximity to Westport has been identified by Mayo County Council as an important village. Due to Louisburgh's proximity to Westport there has been an increase of commuters in recent years. Its proximity to the coast and its proximity to scenic attractions such as Croagh Patrick and Clew Bay have also resulted in significant pressure for holiday home development. The demand for housing in Louisburgh has also increased. This new development should be carefully and sensitively managed to protect and enhance the character of the village.

A Village Design Statement is therefore needed to ensure that the nature and quality of future development makes a natural progression from village past into village future by being responsive to Louisburgh's distinctive character and by having regard to its surrounding landscape and ecology.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION



Sketch 1: Mental map of Louisburgh



Photo 1: Louisburgh - Public Consultation



Photo 2: Louisburgh - Public Consultation

Community Consultation Process

A variety of community consultation techniques were used to ensure that a wide range of local residents participated in the production of this Village Design Statement. The Community Consultation consisted of a Workshop with transition year students from Sancta Maria College in Louisburgh, and a Workshop and Public Meeting open to all members of the community. The Workshop with the students was composed of a short introduction to the Planning System, an outline of key urban design principles and an explanation of the nature and scope of a Village Design Statement, its aims and objectives. The students then presented previously compiled work on their thoughts and ideas on the future development and design of Louisburgh.

The Student Workshop was followed by three activities which included:

- 1- production of mood boards using imagery and graphics, words and themes, through which students expressed their aspirations for the village;
- 2- identification on a map of the most important places in the village for them; and
- 3 - likes and dislikes about the village.

The Student Workshop was concluded with the presentation of the mood boards and a brief discussion about the role of youth in their community.

The Workshop for the broader community was composed of four parts, the first part of the Workshop introduced the Village Design Statement objectives and process. The second part of the Workshop consisted of exercises, focusing on exploring and identifying the character of the settlement, surrounding landscape, open spaces, streetscape, landmarks, building details and styles, village special features and life in the village. This was followed by a round table discussion based on the SWOT analysis (examining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the village, and a questionnaire survey inquiring about other relevant issues such as crime and car parking in Louisburgh. The majority of the participants commented that they not only enjoyed the workshop but also understood the purpose of the event and felt that it had been useful and beneficial.

HISTORY AND VILLAGE PROFILE



Historical map - Louisburgh 1838

• Location

Louisburgh is located in south-west Mayo, on the R335 regional coastal route linking Westport (to the east), and Delphi and Killary Harbour (to the south).

Louisburgh sits on the banks of the Bunowen River and is surrounded by an outstanding landscape, composed of unique mountains and beaches.

• Brief history of the village

Although there are a number of archaeological sites in the surrounding areas, which indicate the presence of settlements as early as the Megalithic, the modern day Louisburgh has its origins in the 18th century. Louisburgh is known as Cluain Cearbán – (Meadow of Buttercups and Bun Abhann – river mouth). The village was founded in 1795 by Lord Altamont (John Browne) and is a planned village. The village was named after the fortress town of Louisburgh in Nova Scotia, where a member of Lord Altamont's family had taken part in a siege in 1758.

A clear and concise village structure is evident from the O.S. map of 1838. This clearly demonstrates a formally planned village. This structure is visible in the shape of the village as it exists today. Long Street had a stronger building line than Bridge Street and further south there was a strong terraced front which has become much looser over time. There used to be a laneway connecting Long Street (north end) and Chapel Street (further to the east), but it no longer exists today. The Roman Catholic Church was originally located on Chapel Street, which gave the street its name, but it has since been replaced by dwellings. A new R. C. Church was built in the 20th Century on Long Street, at the northern entrance of the village.

As in the rest of Mayo, the Famine had a devastating effect on the Louisburgh area.

Still etched in the landscape to the present day are the ridges and furrows of the potato beds (lazy beds). After the famine the population of Louisburgh grew from 403 in 1851 to 546 in 1881. Louisburgh has gradually been growing and adapting to the demands of the present times but most importantly has managed to keep much of its traditional village character intact.

• Demographic Trends

According to the Census 2006, Louisburgh's population, within the District Electoral Division, has grown by about 14% since 1996. The population in 2002 was 755 and in 2006 it was 812. Within Louisburgh village the population was estimated at about 200 people in 2002. In order to keep up with the population trend of recent years, Louisburgh will have to upgrade its infrastructure capacity such as water supply and sewage, in order to accommodate the growth and the seasonal influx of tourists who occupy more than 50% of the existing dwellings in the village.

• Village Life Today

Louisburgh has a relatively good community spirit and has several community groups. A large percentage of the population is middle aged but there is also a significant amount of young people. There is a primary and a secondary school in Louisburgh, and organized sports and arts for the youth. However, there is a lack of adequate facilities for young teenagers in the village.

Employment/Local Economy

The largest employer in Louisburgh is Nomadic Display Ltd. The company established itself in 1979 in Louisburgh and currently has approximately 70-80 employees. The development of this industry has proved important in sustaining the livelihood of many local families and

has therefore contributed significantly to the local economy.

Apart from this principal industry, employment in the village is from a number of small industries, some commercial and retail activity and the agricultural activity associated with the surrounding rural hinterland. Most of the village's inhabitants commute out of the area to work in Westport and Castlebar.

The village hosts a significant number of holiday homes. These do not sustain the economy and community year round, though they do contribute to the economic activity of the village during the summer months.

A key tourism product needs to be developed and branded locally - ideally, a product with a year round focus. While there has been some linkages with American Universities, whose students undertake Irish Studies, it has been suggested that there is potential for further developments in the area of cultural and educational tourism.

Leisure and Culture

As a relatively small village, Louisburgh lacks a broad range of leisure facilities. Local facilities include the GAA club, the Parish Hall and the Granuaile Centre. Annually, the Traditional Music Festival and the Famine Walk from Doolough to Louisburgh brings activity into the village. The community identified a need for more playgrounds and youth facilities, including an Art and Youth Centre, as well as indoor sporting facilities.

LANDSCAPE AND WILDLIFE



Photo 3: Old Head - Clew Bay

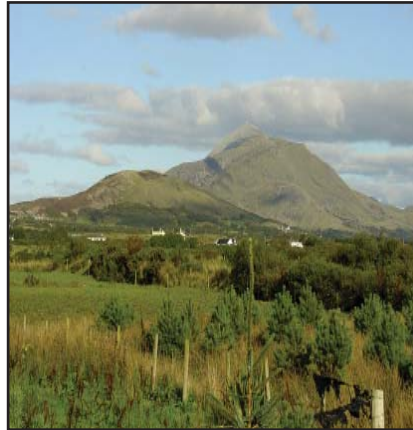


Photo 4: Croagh Patrick view from Louisburgh

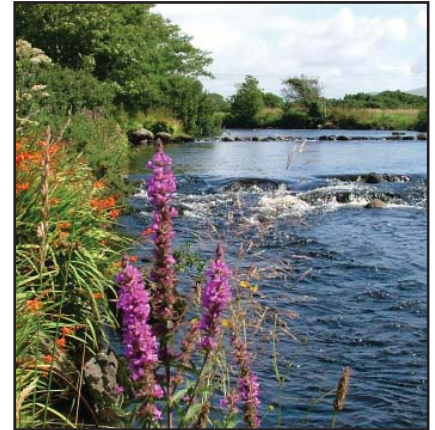


Photo 5: Bunowen River - Louisburgh

• Visual character of the surrounding countryside

Louisburgh is located on the southern shore of Clew Bay and the surrounding landscape is mostly composed of seaward sloping terrain with a combination of pasture and moorland. The Bunowen River lies to the south of the village influencing the shape and form of Louisburgh. Old Head is situated North east of Louisburgh and about 6 miles east of the village lies Croagh Patrick. To the west, at the mouth of Clew Bay, lies Clare Island.

Clew Bay is located on the west coast of Co. Mayo and comprises a series of interlocking bays and a multitude of small islands which create a wide variety of marine and terrestrial habitats, several of which are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Clew Bay's drumlin landscape was formed during the last glacial period when sediments were laid down and smoothed over by advancing ice – the sea has subsequently inundated this area, creating a multitude of islands.

Along the coast there are a number of blue flag sandy beaches including Old Head, Carrowmore and Bertra. Old Head beach is situated 2km northeast of Louisburgh on the coast of Clew Bay and it has the privilege of being one of the few locations in Ireland where old oak woodland occurs directly adjacent to the coast. The old oak woodland is listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive and was designated as a Nature Reserve in 1994. The surrounding landscape closer to the village mostly comprises of agricultural lands. The village sits within an undulating landscape which rises to the north.

• Important Views and Vistas

Louisburgh is situated at the highest point of four roads which converge at the village centre. The village centre is gradually revealed by the curvilinear shape and gradient of these approach roads. When approaching Louisburgh, Saint Catherine's Church appears to be the most significant landmark building in the village skyline as its tower can be seen from all four approach roads.

Glimpse views and full views from the village can be seen of Croagh Patrick (to the east), Carrowmore and Clare Island (to the north), and the Sheefry Hills and Mweelrea (both to the south). These features provide a scenic backdrop to the village, which gives a strong sense of both enclosure and context.

Natural assets of the village

While Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) surround the village, the Bunowen River is the main natural asset in Louisburgh. Along the river is an informal riverside walk, where significant tree groups and meadows can be found, which frame the river and provide appealing views towards the mountains and the sea. The village also contains pockets of significant trees, especially along Church Road and on the south side of the river at the end of Bridge Street.

The river, the meadows, the beaches and significant tree groups are also important for the variety of wildlife that they accommodate.

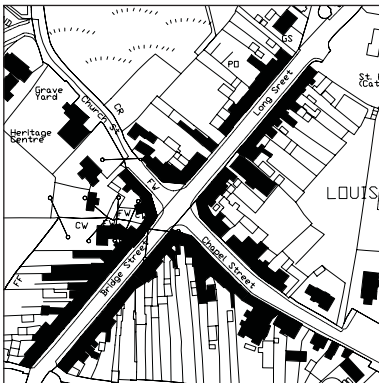
• Relationship between village and heritage items

Louisburgh is surrounded by a significant number of archaeological and historical sites which are evidence of the rich and vast history of the area. These sites are listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (archaeological sites) and on the Record of Protected Structures (buildings and structures of architectural importance), and can be found in the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-20014.

The archaeological sites closest to the village can be found in the townlands of Carrowlaggan and Caher, containing mostly enclosures. The townlands of Old Head and Carrowmore contain vestiges of a midden – a deposit containing shells and animal bones, which indicate a site of human settlement- and a fulacht fiadh – a Bronze Age open air cooking site.

There are three structures listed within the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) within the village of Louisburgh. These include the Roman Catholic Church (circa early 1900s) in a Gothic Revival style; Tully Lodge, a detached three bay-storey rendered house built in early 1800s; and Clapper Bridge, a footbridge built in the mid-1800s with limestone rubble.

VILLAGE STRUCTURE

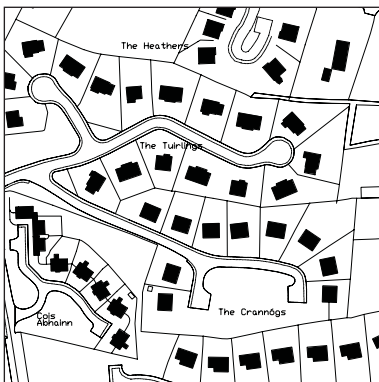


Older part of Louisburgh



Photo 6: Older part of Louisburgh

The strong sense of enclosure provided in the heart of the village is in strong contrast to the more open aspect on the village edge



Newer part of Louisburgh



Photo 7: Newer part of Louisburgh, village edge

• Village structure

Louisburgh developed on the banks of the Bunowen River and is a planned village. Louisburgh was designed to encapsulate a four street system converging at a central crossroad, locally known as “the Square”. Buildings formed a strong linear pattern along the four streets. In the centre of the village, at the square, each of the corner buildings has been specifically designed to orientate towards this central space, which

provides a strong focal point to Louisburgh. Though the street pattern of the village centre hasn't changed much since its initial foundation, the outskirts of the village, in contrast, have been built with modern housing schemes and holiday homes typically formed around cul-de-sacs.

On the edges of the traditional village core, the character of the roads frequently alternates between narrow country lanes and wider sections associated with newer developments. The character alternates

between almost rural to suburban. As the village develops, this transition from rural to suburban/urban will become more pronounced, but there should be consistency in the design approach to roads in terms of dimensions, footpath provisions, lighting and materials.

• Street pattern in the historical part of Louisburgh

Louisburgh grew on the axis of two streets, and it has been along Long and Bridge Street that Louisburgh has developed most of its principal functions. Both Long and Bridge Street are composed by a dense plot arrangement and a linear building front. Most of the buildings are terraced and have little or no setback from the pavement.

Along Chapel and Church Street the plot arrangement is less dense and even though the buildings still follow a linear terraced pattern close to the Square, further along, the street the pattern becomes looser and the buildings have a greater setback from the pavement.

• Street pattern in the newer part of Louisburgh

In the newer part of Louisburgh plots are wider and the buildings are mostly detached or semi-detached with a greater setback from the pavement. Linear ribbon development along road fronts are evident in areas developed over recent years, though small housing estates focused on cul-de-sac are also common. The cul-de-sac street system follows a curvilinear shape and the plots and buildings follow this arrangement. The main issue with this type of development is that they are not orientated towards the existing roads and that they create isolated, disconnected developments with dead end streets.



The Square - Louisburgh



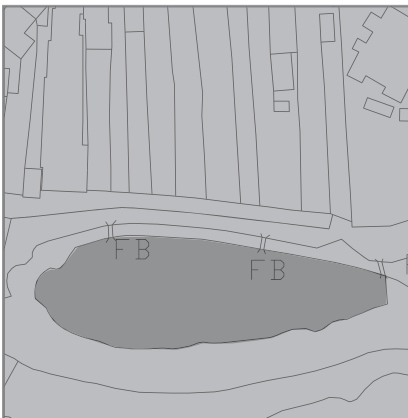
Photo 8: The Square - Louisburgh



Photo 9: Scott's Island - Louisburgh



Sketch 2: New development facing onto Scott's Island



Scott's Island - Louisburgh

• Relationship between buildings and spaces

There are three key areas in the village in terms of the relationship between buildings and spaces. The three areas are very distinct from each other. The areas in question are the village Square, Scott's Island and the Bridge area.

The Square

The Square is possibly the most prominent space in the village. It is the highest point in the village and is where all four approach roads to Louisburgh meet. It is the heart of the village and where the village concentrates its vitality. The Square is surrounded by terraced corner buildings which together with the four streets define the Square's octagonal shape. Most of

these buildings are in good condition apart from the corner building on Chapel and Bridge Street – Morrison's - which is vacant and in poor condition. Though Morrison's is a vacant, derelict building, efforts have been made to improve the character of the Square, with new paving and street furniture such as benches, street lights and planters. Tree planting has also been introduced.

Due to its central location in the village it is important that this space is well managed and maintained. The main concerns with the space would be the derelict building and the clutter of mounted road signs.

Scott's Island

Scott's Island constitutes the only public open green space in the village. It sits on the banks of Bunowen River and accommodates public art; street furniture such as benches, tables and litter bins and soft landscaping. Scott's Island is accessed by a service lane that serves the rear of the plots facing onto Chapel Street and Bridge Street. While the island is a pleasant riverside space, the adjoining backland areas are significantly under-utilised and in some cases overgrown. This area has potential to grow and be a more attractive and dynamic space in the village, but it requires new development, including a new building line or facades orientated onto the space. Car parking could be provided behind this building

line in a courtyard type development. Other improvements to the area include the provision of street and park lighting and regular maintenance of planting and furniture as the park area is susceptible to flooding.

• Character areas

These are parts of the village which are distinctive in their own right or vary from other parts of the village. Three character areas have been identified (refer to Character Areas map).

Village Core

This is the heart of the village as defined by the building form, which mostly consists of terraced development providing a certain compactness, unity and enclosure, and a stronger commercial element.

Bunowen River

This area is predominantly free from development and is characterized by an open agricultural landscape, apart from Scott's Island. It is highly valued and appreciated by the local community.

Holiday Homes

This area is typified by predominantly low density, detached dwellings in the form of cul-de-sac. It has been estimated that more than 50% of these dwellings comprise rented holiday homes.

VILLAGE STRUCTURE



Photo 10: Aerial view of Louisburgh

• **Road hierarchy**
Main routes

The main route going through the village is the R335 which links Louisburgh to Westport and Delphi. Within the village the R335 turns into Long Street and Bridge Street, and along with Chapel Street and Church Street, these four streets constitute the main routes within the village. Generally the streets are in a fair to good condition, they accommodate two single lanes in both direction, and parallel parking on both sides. They also contain footpaths with some in need of upgrade. The local residents have raised issues related to parking, traffic and signage along the main streets. These issues tend to augment in intensity in summer with the increase of tourists.

Secondary Routes

The secondary routes are narrower than the main routes and generally contain ribbon housing developments and access to cul-de-sacs. Some of these routes also connect Louisburgh to other small settlements such as Mullagh and Cullimore. Usually these routes don't have footpaths and they are generally enclosed by hedgerows, trees and stone walls. These routes usually accommodate one lane and have a greater building setback from the edge of the road.

Local Routes

The local routes are generally connected to the main routes within the village. These routes are very narrow and similar to secondary routes, they don't accommodate footpaths and are enclosed by hedgerows, trees and stone walls. The overall condition of these routes is fair or poor and in need of surface upgrade.



Photo 11: long Street streetscape - Louisburgh

• What is streetscape?

Streetscape refers to the look and character of a particular street. It refers to everything that is contained between the buildings on either side of a street. Streetscape includes building frontage, roofline, sidewalks, parking space, open spaces, street paving, street furniture (benches, lighting, litter bins, etc.), signage, landscaping (trees, planting, etc.), and other elements which help to define the character of the street.

• Streetscape in the historical part of Louisburgh

The historical part of Louisburgh corresponds to the village centre which is composed of Long Street, Bridge Street, Chapel Street, Church Street and the Square. Within the village centre, mostly along Long and Bridge Street, there is a strong sense of enclosure. This is due to the streets' shape and dense plot arrangement which generates a tight urban grain and a terraced building frontage.

Within the village centre there is little variation on the architectural style of the buildings. The buildings generally share similar window and door shapes and proportions which are consistent with the late 19th and early 20th century vernacular building style.

Building heights are predominantly two storey, with pitched roofs and deep chimneys which define the roofline. This

roofline and corresponding building height is gently stepped to follow the streets' gradients. Throughout the village centre there are a number of derelict buildings. Due to their central location and contribution to the historic streetscape, it is essential that these buildings are upgraded and brought back into use.

There are footpaths along the main streets but most of them are in need of upgrade or maintenance. Though there is some car dominance in the streetscape due to on-street car parking, the buildings play the most important role in the village centre streetscape. The vibrantly coloured and painted render of the buildings together with some traditional shop and pub fronts, and colourful planters entrusted Louisburgh with a general friendly and warm feeling.

The streetscape of the older part of Louisburgh is a historical record of the past, its people and its society. It is important to protect and enhance the features that throughout time have defined Louisburgh's identity so that future development sits in harmony with the existing character and allows a moderate and balanced transition between old and new.

Long Street

Long Street is the main entrance to Louisburgh from Westport and it contains most of the village community/public services, such as the School, Saint Patrick's

R.C.C., the Garda Station, the Post Office and the Parish Hall.

Though the structure of the streetscape is similar to Bridge Street, Long Street is less engaging and tidy - the building colours are less vibrant and the footpaths are in poor condition and should be upgraded in order to be continuous and uniform. The concrete kerbing should be replaced by limestone, as in Bridge Street and the cracks in the pavement should be repaired. In general the streetscape is in need of upgrade such as the reduction of the road carriageway to provide traffic calming, better parking facilities, street tree planting, upgrade of existing footpaths, and the provision of street furniture such as litter bins, planters, better street lighting, and the placement of overhead wires underground.

Bridge Street

Bridge Street is the most dynamic street in Louisburgh. It contains the highest concentration of commercial activity, a number of very well maintained traditional shopfronts, some vibrancy through choice of colour and a number of very significant environmental improvements such as underground utility wires, tree planting, delineated parking bays, attractive street lighting and florid planters along the street. The street is attractive and is in good condition but it requires constant maintenance in order to preserve the



Photo 12: Long Street - Louisburgh

streetscape quality and pedestrian and vehicular safety. The main natural feature in the vicinity is the Bunowen River at the southern end of the street. The bridge across the river constitutes an important focal point of the street and village. The bridge is narrower than the street creating a “pinch point” – closing in to frame a view and providing a ‘gateway’ to Bridge Street from the southern approach to Louisburgh. The width of the bridge has led to a pedestrian-vehicular conflict with some safety concerns raised by the local community who have also cited opportunities to redesign the bridge to open up views of the river. Nevertheless, its relative narrowness acts as a traffic calming device on entering the town. A separate pedestrian bridge may be desirable.

Chapel Street

Chapel Street shares two different types of plot arrangement which results in two fairly distinctive characters. On the southern side of the street the plot arrangement is dense and narrow creating a tight and continuous building front. On the other side of the



Photo 13: Bridge Street - Louisburgh

street the plot arrangement is wider and the building pattern is looser. This generates two types of enclosure along the street; at the top end of the street, close to the Square, there is a good sense of enclosure but towards the bottom end of the street, due to deep setback of the buildings and the car park, there is little enclosure and the traditional streetscape is weakened. There are some infill and regeneration developments on the street which generally have satisfactorily respected the character of the surrounding built environment.

Some sections of the footpath have been restored with flagstones and attractive street lighting has been installed. Certain elements of the streetscape such as litter bins, signage and phone boots are still in need of upgrade.

Church Street

Church Street is the shortest street in the village centre and most of its streetscape is composed of a looser arrangement of buildings. Some buildings have a considerable setback from the road.



Photo 14: Chapel Street - Louisburgh

Apart from Saint Catherine’s Church of Ireland, the Graveyard and Grainne Mhaol Centre, this street is essentially residential. There are significant trees and stone walls framing the street. Footpaths and car parking areas require improvements.

• Streetscape in the newer part of Louisburgh

Outside the historic core of the village, there has been significant development over the past ten to fifteen years. This development consists of some residential development, though holiday homes predominate. The pattern of development bears little relationship with the compactness of the village core. These recent developments are sporadic and have not taken place in any order nor in a sequential pattern radiating from the traditional village.

These developments tend to run along wide roads and contain front gardens and off-street parking which reduces the sense of enclosure of the streetscape found in the heart of the village. The pattern



Photo 15: Long Street - Louisburgh



Photo 16: Bridge Street - Louisburgh



Photo 17: Church Street - Louisburgh



Photo 18: Streetscape in the newer part of Louisburgh



Photo 19: Footpath in the Square - Louisburgh



Photo 20: Footpath in Long Street - Louisburgh

of development is more suburban. The buildings are generally detached and semi-detached, following a standard design. Most of these estates are laid out in a curvilinear pattern and accommodate wide and well-lit footpaths. Lighting tends to be purely functional, with little consideration for design and aesthetics. This less rigid street pattern, together with plot arrangement and building typology generates fragmented and independent developments with little continuity in form.

Though there are developments which attempt to follow the design of traditional buildings, sadly most of them fail to achieve this due to the implementation of inappropriate densities, larger plots and greater building setbacks which compromise the character of the village. The streetscape is overly dominated by the road, in comparison to the village centre, where the buildings dominate the streetscape.

• Footpaths & cycle ways

Some of the existing narrow country roads are unable to support footpaths on both sides and in some cases there are none at all. Where footpaths are provided they often vary in width, materials and quality. Apart from the footpaths on Bridge Street which are in a fair to good condition, the footpaths on the other streets are in need

of improvement. It is important to provide continuous and uniform footpath so to allow pedestrian accessibility and safety. It is also important that footpaths throughout the village are consistent in design and materials and comply with the overall existing character.

• Street furniture

Street furniture refers to the collective objects and equipment, which can be installed along a street or road. These typically include litter bins, benches, bollards, railings, planters, lighting, sign posts, CCTV, post boxes and cycle stands. Sometimes these can create a cluttered appearance with too many elements spread out in a space. Even though there was an attempt to improve the general character of the Square, the street furniture appears to be too much for the compact space in which it is placed. Ideally, the street furniture should be coordinated so as to provide the required facilities without compromising the pedestrian and vehicular safety and use of the space.

It is also essential that the design of the street furniture complies with the overall character of the village. This can be achieved by keeping the coherence in the design, style, materials and colours. Local residents and the local community have identified the need for more or



Photo 21: Street furniture in the Square - Louisburgh

better street furniture in the village centre. Some of the recommendations included more and better street lighting, litter bins, concealment of overhead wiring on Long Street and a new design to the bridge with iron railings to open views over the river.

• **Boundary treatment**

Boundary treatment is important because it is the point of interface between the public and private realm. A common treatment of boundaries along a given section of street or road can provide an important element of continuity and coherence, while enabling individual house designs on private sites. Within the village very few buildings have front gardens, therefore direct frontage onto the street is the main characteristic in these areas. However, there are a number of individual plots in the edge of the village which have distinctive boundary features which also contribute to the character of the village. Most of these boundary features consist of natural stone walls, trees and hedgerows (using native species). The stone walls tend to use local material, or similar matching materials in terms of size, shape, colour and texture. The stone walls are usually laid out in an irregular order and often finished with vertical capping stones.

Though some of the new residential developments have successfully managed to respond to the traditional boundary treatment, others, particularly single or one-off houses, lack this coordination and the result can be a mish-mash of styles, colours, materials, heights and finishes. A consistent approach along a given street or section of street, would enhance the public realm and provide greater harmony. It is noted that many of the holiday home developments have no front boundary at all. Where this approach is taken, a band of street trees



Photo 22: Commercial signage in southern cross road - Louisburgh

would enhance the environmental amenity of the area, provide some appropriate sense of enclosure and reduce the overly exposed nature of some of these sites.

It is essential that new developments try to keep a sense of continuity and coherence with the traditional boundary treatments, as these play an important role in the character of the wider landscape.

Signage

Both commercial and road signage have a strong impact on the quality of a streetscape. In the particular case of Louisburgh, the main issues regarding signage can be found in the Square and at the cross road south of the Bunowen River. The proliferation of individual advertisements should be strictly controlled and follow a standard format. Road signs and private advertising signs should be managed so as to provide clear information in a respectful and complimentary manner to the surrounding environment (Refer also to Design Guidelines, Section 9).



Photo 23: Boundary treatment in Church Street - Louisburgh

Sketch 3: A consistent front boundary treatment, such as the construction of this natural stone wall made from local materials, enhances the public realm and allows for individuality to be expressed through individually designed dwellings.





Photo 24: Stauntons Pharmacy - Louisburgh



Photo 25: St. Catherine Church of Ireland - Louisburgh



Photo 26: St Patrick R.C.C. - Louisburgh

• Buildings

Louisburgh has a number of buildings which play an important role in defining the sense of place and community pride. The character of the buildings is different within the different areas of the village. In the village the buildings follow a terraced and dense pattern, in which windows and doors share similar designs and proportions with vertical emphasis. There is also a higher concentration of buildings with historical value. Essentially it is within the village centre where the traditional and most prominent buildings of the village can be found.

A significant number of local vernacular buildings form the predominant building type in the village's streetscapes. These buildings, on their own, may not be architecturally distinctive or noteworthy, however, it is their cumulative impact and overall contribution to the streetscape which warrants their conservation. Focal buildings are buildings that hold importance because they form part of a focal view as one approaches along one of the principal radial routes leading into the town. Their

design and maintenance is important because they hold a greater prominence in the street and frequently assist in forming 'first impressions' of an area (Refer to Urban Design Appraisal Map for identified focal buildings and sites). Landmark buildings are those structures that hold greatest prominence in the streetscape or townscape, due to scale, height, community use or architectural quality. The two churches are the key landmark buildings in the village.

Stauntons Pharmacy - The Square

Stauntons Pharmacy is an attractive terraced three bay two storey rendered commercial building built in the 1800s. The building is located at the junction of Long Street and Church Street and is considered by the local population, as one of their favourite buildings in the village. Due to its location Stauntons Pharmacy is one of the village focal buildings. Unfortunately, the building is characterised by inappropriately scaled signage.

• Key Buildings

These are buildings that are prominent elements of the village's identity, consisting of both public and private buildings. They include the landmark buildings and some focal buildings. These buildings should be maintained to a high standard.

St. Catherine's Church of Ireland, Church

St. Catherine's displays a simple form with a bell tower. It dates from the early 19th century, its windows revealing a Gothic influence. The main structure is finished with a pebble dash render, while the tower has a smooth rendered finish. St. Catherine's tower is the most significant landmark in Louisburgh and is the tallest structure in the village, visible from a considerable distance.

St. Patrick's R.C.C. - Long Street

St. Patrick's RCC was built in a Gothic Revival Style in the early 20th century. It displays some very fine cut limestone and architectural detailing.

• Traditional Building Design

Louisburgh retains a significant number of traditional buildings. These are typically two storeys in height and reveal a symmetrically proportioned fenestration pattern with a general vertical emphasis. In general buildings have a pale coloured render and elements such as horizontal string courses (plastered) and quoins.

• External renders

Principal buildings fronting the street have a rendered finish while out-buildings



Sketch 4: Vertical emphasis and symmetry on fenestration pattern

frequently have a stone finish. There have been a few examples where the rendered finish has been removed to expose the stone work underneath. This should generally be avoided and should not be done without the advice of a conservation architect, as it can reveal rough stone work which was never intended to be revealed and can lead to problems such as water penetration and dampness.

• Roof features

Roofs are an important element of any streetscape. In Louisburgh the pitched roofs together with deep set chimneys create a dynamic roofline, which continuously steps up to accompany the slope of each street (refer to photos 27 & 28). The traditional slate roof is still commonly conserved and maintained.



Photo 27: Roofline - Louisburgh



Photo 28: The vertical emphasis of the streetscape is significantly enhanced by chimneys



Sketch 5: Increasingly in modern refurbishment in Louisburgh chimneys have been removed altogether. The cumulative impact of this has a negative impact on the streetscape - as indicated in this sketch

Chimneys are also a prominent element of the buildings in the village. They are deep set, rectangular in plan and are usually fitted with clay chimney pots. Chimneys are an important element of the streetscape; they add rhythm to the roofline and enhance the vertical emphasis to the building. Therefore, it is important that during refurbishment or reconstruction on infill developments, that these features are retained or reinstated.

• Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are important elements of a building as they help to define a building's style and character. Traditionally, in Louisburgh, the windows and doors follow symmetrical principles. Usually a centrally located door is flanked by a window on one or both sides. Generally the windows and doorframes are setback from the walls to provide shelter from the water, damp and offer shadow to the openings. In most traditional building designs the windows have a vertical emphasis and are symmetrically

aligned with the windows and door in the first floor. Deep window cills provide a foundation to the window (narrow or thin cills should be avoided). Throughout the village, the cills and occasional pseudo hood mouldings surrounding windows and doors, accentuate the windows shape with stronger colours that contrast with the external coloured rendering of the building. Even though several buildings in the village still have the traditional two over two wooden sliding sash windows; many have had their original windows replaced with PVC swing windows eroding the quality and character of the building. It is desirable to keep original features such as wooden sash windows, not only because it maintains the historical integrity of the building but also because it affects the financial value of the buildings. Period features are highly regarded in the property market.



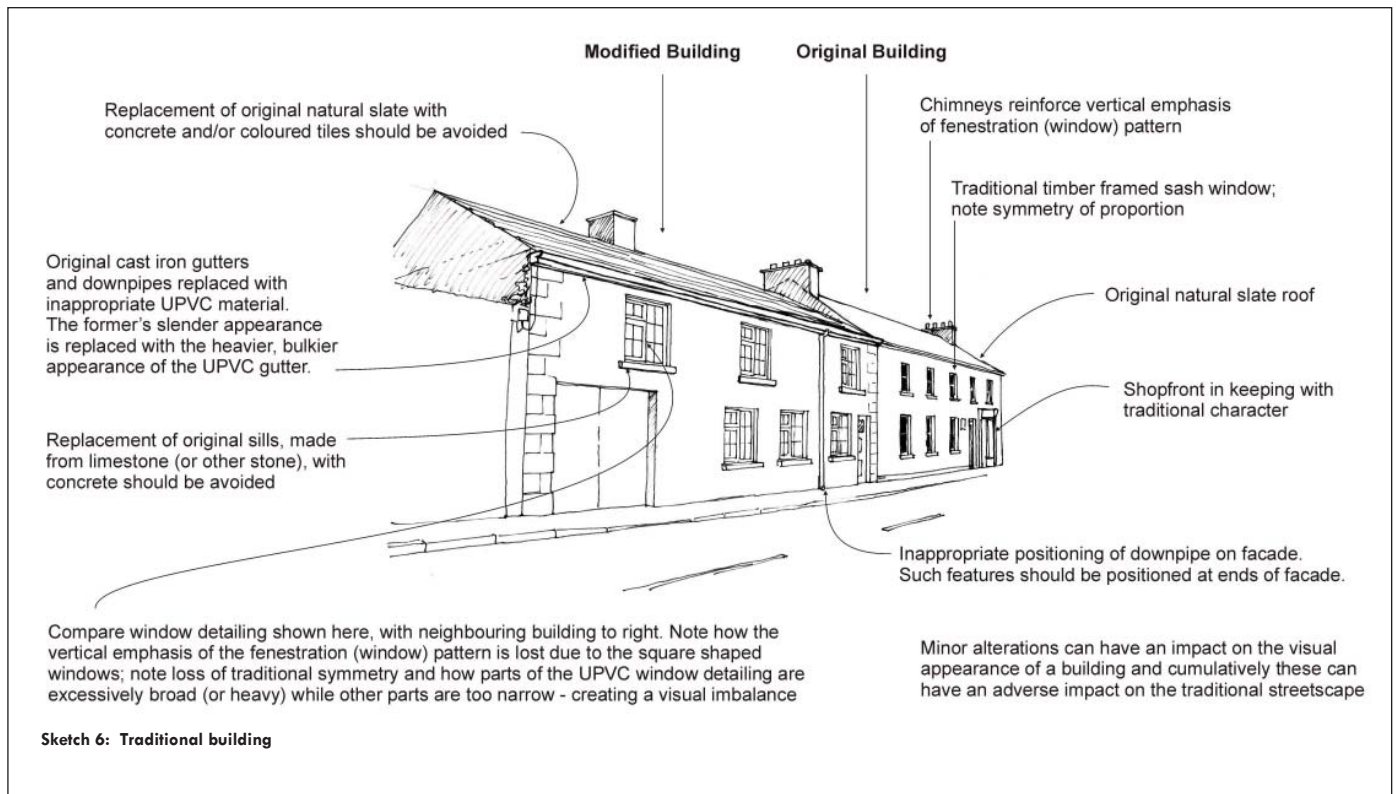
Photo 29: Traditional window - Louisburgh



Photo 30: Traditional window - Louisburgh

• Shop fronts

The main commercial core of Louisburgh is focused along Bridge Street. A number of traditional shop fronts have been kept and maintained as a feature of the village streetscape. Whether for renovation, alteration or the introduction of new shop fronts, all works should be carried out carefully, taking into consideration all the elements that are necessary in order to retain or enhance the established character. In the case of a new shopfront being installed, it is important that the materials, design details and the pallet of colours used sit together in a complementary manner to the building and the street. Excessively large nameplates should be avoided. (Refer also to Section 9, Design Guidelines).



DESIGN PRINCIPLES BASED ON DISTINCTIVE LOCAL CHARACTER- DESIGN OBJECTIVES

VDS 1

The Bunowen River is an important natural asset to the village which contains a variety of local wildlife; therefore it should be protected from degradation and over development by **creating a Linear Park along the river** with improved access points and riverside walks.

VDS 2

The **natural environment should be promoted** by improving and creating **walking and cycling routes** to the surrounding mountains and beaches, and the encouragement of sustainable **activities related to the natural environment** such as eco-tours and bird watching.

VDS 3

Consider the creation of **a Coastal walkway from Carrowmore to Old Head**

VDS 4

Significant tree groups should be protected and considered for **Tree Preservation Orders**. Existing established native planting, including mature trees and hedgerows should generally be maintained.

VDS 5

Ensure the provision of community facilities including a children's **playground, a public park, in addition to indoor and outdoor sporting facilities**. Sporting facilities could be developed south of the Bunowen River.

VDS 6

Facilities for all ages should be developed in line with future growth and development of the village, including provision for the elderly, teenagers and young children.

VDS 7

Consider the provision/protection of land for **school expansion** immediately north of the school grounds.

VDS 8

Consider the potential of developing **a village green** on Church Street with the possibility of buildings framing and overlooking the green.

VDS 9

Consider the comprehensive **development of backland areas** (to the rear of existing traditional plots in the centre of the village) and ensure that developers have regard to the possible need to provide access to these areas in any future development scheme.

VDS 10

Ensure that the existing narrow plot pattern and **urban grain** that finds expression in the facades of buildings in the village centre is maintained and protected.

VDS 11

Ensure the continuation of existing building lines or the establishment of new building lines in accordance with guidelines indicated on the **Urban Design Framework Map**.

VDS 12

The **building height** and number of storeys which are evident in the street should be retained.

VDS 13

Maintain the scale, composition and **character of the streetscape** in the immediate vicinity of the village centre.

VDS 14

Encourage the **retention of older features of the streetscape** including original slates, timber sash windows, doorways, traditional shop fronts or elements thereof.

VDS 15

Maintain **pitch roofs and features such as chimneys** which add interest and variety to the roofline.

VDS 16

Ensure **consistency in the use of materials and features** that are to comprise part of the public domain including kerbing, footpaths surfaces, boundary treatments/walls, lighting, litter bins and planters.

VDS 17

Upgrade and resurface, as resources permit, the **footpaths** along Long Street and Bridge Street.

VDS 18

Floral displays such as window boxes and lamp mounted baskets should be provided specially along Long Street to enhance and enliven the streetscape.

VDS 19

Promote infill development of an appropriate scale, composition and character in accordance with **Design Guidelines on New Development**.

DESIGN GUIDELINES



Photo 31: Very successful modern infill building - this broad infill site has been successfully sub-divided - through various design elements, notably the subtle recess and projection of the facade with the use of different materials such as stone, plaster render and timber. A modern fenestration pattern and windows design also maintains and reinforces the traditional vertical emphasis of the streetscape, as does the alternation of roof heights.



Photo 32: The use of different shades of colour, together with subtle recessions, projections and deflections of the facade assists in integrating this hotel development into the streetscape. These features echo the traditional plot division and 'urbangrain' of the streetscape.

• Landscape and views

- New development should have regard to the floodplain and where possible should be oriented towards the river and its associated open space (see example, Sketch 2).

- The planting of native trees is essential in maintaining and promoting local wildlife and biodiversity. Therefore, the planting of native species as opposed to non-native species should be encouraged as an environmentally friendly and cost effective method of improving the character of areas. Planting should also be strategically located to act as an amenity feature and also encourage traffic calming and speed controls on busy routes.

- New development proposals should have regard to the setting and views of the tower of St. Catherine's Church of Ireland, the most prominent landmark in the village's skyline, Croagh Patrick and surrounding mountains.

• Streetscape

Good streetscape design requires a certain harmony in the interrelationship between buildings. New buildings should therefore try to respect or have regard to the existing building fabric which contributes so much to the existing character of the village. This requires a sensitive approach which has regard to local context. This existing context can relate to a number of streetscape elements, such as plot width, building height, building line, roof type/pitch, fenestration pattern, materials, detailing, etc.

It would be inappropriate to slavishly copy each of the streetscape elements referred to above. These elements – the plot dimension, the height, building setback, roof type, materials, etc., offer a cue from which the modern designer can select so as to produce a modern building and/

or innovative design that has regard to the existing character and context. This is sometimes referred to as 'context design'. Examples which illustrate good 'context design' are shown in photos 31 and 32. Other principles are illustrated in photo 34, 36 and various sketches on the following pages.

• Windows and doors

- Property owners should retain, maintain and restore original vernacular and architectural details as important character features of the building and village.

- When replacing windows and doors it is important to retain the style and appearance that respects the building's age and character. It is strongly recommended to maintain or reinstate original hardwood windows and doors rather than change to PVC materials (refer to sketch 6).

• Other streetscape issues

- The owners of derelict and unused buildings should be encouraged to renovate them for new uses such as residential, business, tourism or small workshops. Derelict Sites Orders may be issued by the Council to improve such sites.

- Street furniture is best clustered at strategic locations to reduce visual clutter and provide a sense of order in the streetscape.

- Car parking should be designed to enhance the streetscape through the incorporation of street trees.

- Street trees should be incorporated in the streetscape to absorb air and noise pollution and enhance the image of the street.

- External wall mounted lighting of buildings should normally be avoided or



Photo 33: View of Sheefry Hills and Mweelrea from Louisburgh

Single Ownership

Residence	Shopfront	Shopfront
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- 1 Step in building height maintains vertical pattern of the streetscape facades.
- 2 Note how chimney maintains traditional depth and overall proportions
- 3 Original timber sashed windows retained



Photo 34: Good example of refurbished property on Bridge Street which is very much in keeping with the traditional streetscape. Note how traditional plot division is reinforced through facade and building elements, namely - from left to right - a residence and two separate shopfronts.

incorporated into the architectural details. However, the sensitive and selective lighting of key buildings such as the tower of St. Catherine's Church of Ireland can enhance the nighttime view of the village.

- All wires and control gear to be concealed and care must be taken to ensure the fittings do not damage character of the structures.

• Shop Fronts

- Traditional shop fronts should be retained and maintained as a feature of the village; therefore it is preferable to keep and restore in favour of replacement.

- New shop fronts should be designed respecting the style, structure, materials and proportions of the building and surrounding traditional typology.

- Signage should not clutter or dominate the façade. The dimension, design, materials

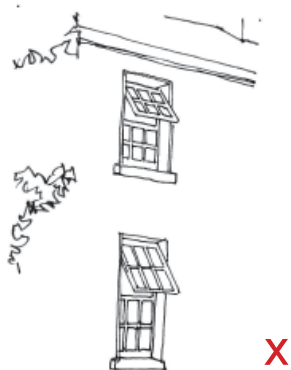


Photo 35: Inappropriate uPVC windows with outward opening has replaced traditional hardwood sliding sash window. Where possible original windows and doors should be conserved or re-instated.



Photo 36: This is a nicely refurbished townhouse on Chapel Street. Although it is not refurbished to strict conservation principles - it is more than acceptable. Ground floor windows and door openings are broader than those typically found in the traditional streetscape, yet they retain an adequate recess, deep cills, and a vertical emphasis with two-over-two timber sash windows - all very complimentary.



Photo 37

- 1 Roof materials - this image shows a sample of three different roof types used in Louisburgh. From left to right - I - Modern manufactured imitation slate - too reflective; II - Concrete tiles - can appear heavy; III - Traditional slate - appears lighter and more refined - a natural material that should be conserved.
- 2 Overly horizontal emphasis for traditional streetscape.



Sketch 7: Solid to void ratio refers to the proportion of the facade that is solid wall versus openings such as windows and doors. In this example the area of facade that is solid is excessive and results in a poor design.

and colours should complement and not be aggressive to the shop front and the building character. Ideally they should be positioned below the first floor window level.

- Illumination and hanging/projection signs should only be permitted in premises which are open late at night. Back lighting is preferred over spotlighting to reduce clutter. Letters and characters should be illuminated internally, an illuminated background or lit by 'halo' illumination. If this is not possible, discreet low-intensity spotlights should be used.

• **New development**

- All new development should complement the established character of Louisburgh

and contribute towards the village's distinctive sense of place. Therefore it is important that in any new development the new buildings blend in with the scale, details and materials of the existing traditional buildings.

- New development should consolidate and strengthen the core of the village by promoting compact and sustainable growth of the village.

- New development should respect the local characteristics of the setting and its wider context. Where appropriate features such as contours, river, significant tree groups and established boundaries, should be protected and incorporated into development layouts.



Sketch 8: Traditional shopfront

Windows should be longer than they are wide reinforcing the vertical emphasis and fenestration of the traditional street

Neo-traditional shopfront or modern innovatively designed shopfront having consideration for the following factors:

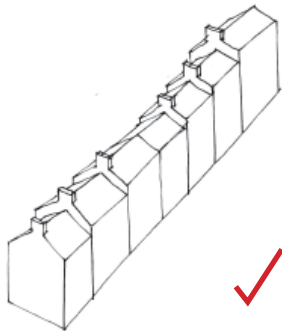
- Fascia panel should not be too deep and should be proportionate to size of facade

- Lettering on fascia to be in scale with fascia panel

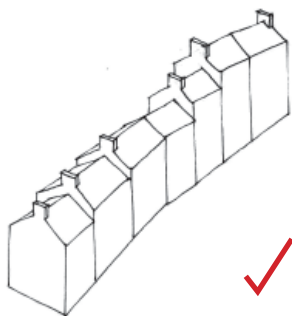
- Stall riser – provides base to shopfront and protects window from splashing + road dirt

- Pilasters create vertical emphasis, reflecting traditional fenestration (window) pattern and 'frame' the shopfront.

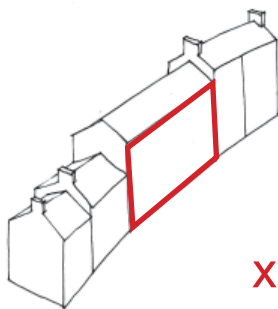
DESIGN GUIDELINES



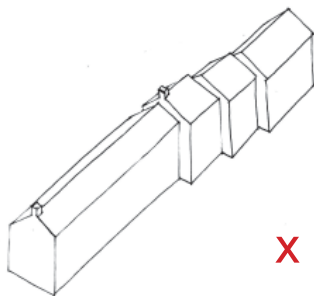
Sketch 9: Traditional straight building line



Sketch 10: Traditional deflected building line also evident in Louisburgh



Sketch 11: Plot amalgamation and associated redevelopment can result in a disruption of scale of vertical emphasis in streetscape. The cumulative impact of this over generations can significantly erode the inherent character of the traditional streetscape



Sketch 12: Stepping of building lines in new infill development should be avoided

- New development and infrastructure should avoid direct or indirect damage to sites of known ecological interest within and surrounding the village.

- The established pattern of development within the village, including plot arrangement, building lines, setback levels, enclosure, building scale and proportion of architectural features, should be used to guide the design of new development (refer to sketches: 9,10,11,12,13 & 14).

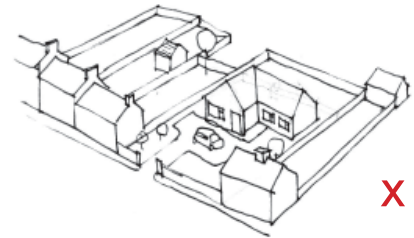
- Materials used in any proposed new development should fit in with the prevailing character of the village and designed to reflect and respect nearby colours, textures, shapes and proportions.

- New development should carefully consider the traditional design, proportion and details when designing elements such as doors, windows and roofs.

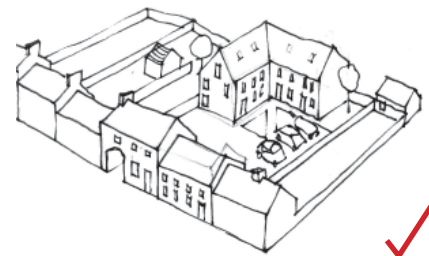
- New buildings within the village should follow the existing coloured render pattern. Whereas buildings outside the village centre should paint their rendered wall with discrete and pale colours.

- New Development should consider opportunities to improve pedestrian access and provide links to the village and surrounding amenity areas.

- Boundary treatment in new developments should consider designs, materials and proportions that reflect the past and that complement the proportions of existing boundary treatments.



Sketch 13: Avoid: suburban imposition on traditional streetscape - inappropriate building design+setback

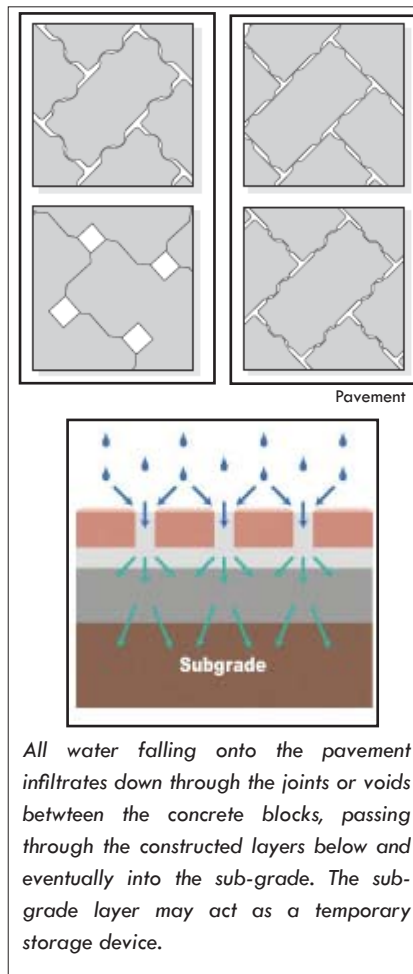


Sketch 14: Preferred: New infill respects traditional streetscape with potential for courtyard or backland development



Photo's 38, 39 & 40 (Above): Good modern design of shop fronts co-existing with traditional, Belmullet, Co. Mayo.

Permeable Surfaces



• Energy efficiency

- New development should incorporate sustainable design principles and energy efficiency into the building process.
- The form and layout of new development should be designed to ensure passive solar gain and adopt the principles of the passive house.
- New development should adopt ecological principles for the site design and landscaping (eco-landscaping, permeable paving, etc.)
- New development design should optimize the energy performance of the building and the reduction of related CO2 emissions

- New development should minimize the production of waste during the construction process and provide for recycling of both construction and domestic waste.

• Infrastructure – roads / services

- New development should be phased in pace with improvements to local infrastructure, village facilities and services, such as the sewage system, roads, pavements and lighting.
- Where possible cycling lanes should be provided along the main approach roads to the village to increase accessibility to the school and village centre, and promote a healthy lifestyle while relieving the village from car dominance.

COMMUNITY SWOT ANALYSIS

• **SWOT analysis -**
An examination of the village's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as identified by the community:

Strengths

- Scenery
- History
- The River
- Wildlife
- Proximity to the beach
- Coastline
- Traditional character
- Peace, quiet and serenity
- Services: restaurants, supermarket, community projects, library, doctor, chemist, post-office, police, bus service
- People
- Mountains and lakes
- Room to expand

Weaknesses

- Traffic congestion in summer
- Derelict sites
- Lack of car parking spaces
- No bus parking
- Lack of footpaths and street lighting
- Lack of recreation areas for families, children and teenagers
- No industry
- No proper water scheme
- Lack of banking and council services
- Limited library opening
- Lack of recycling/waste management services
- Lack of sheltered public spaces
- Exposed to elements – problems with electricity supply; planting, etc)
- Limited school capacity
- Flooding upstream and downstream of river
- High concentration of holiday homes
- Deserted village in winter
- Litter
- Lack of community unity.
- Politically remote from major urban centres

Opportunities

- Potential for walking, cycling, surfing, hiking, mountaineering, canoeing, bird watching, eco-tours
- Public transport to tourism / activity sites
- Develop Grainne Mhaol Centre
- Outdoor education facility
- Youth hostel
- Tourism Office
- Tourism potential – history and landscape of the area should be promoted better through Westport tourism office.
- Staging events: Arts
- Workshops with rural skills such as sheep shearing, basket making, etc
- Sports and recreation facilities (gym and Community Park)
- Alternative energy
- Market for local produce
- Summer camps for children
- All weather / indoor tourism activity
- Internet café
- Coastal walk to Old Head, loop walks to beach
- Waste management centre
- Island linkages

Threats

- Holiday homes
- Bad planning
- Lack of commitment from Local Authority
- Over-development
- Collapse of farming as a vocation and reliance on oil based transport
- Increasing house prices
- More private spaces than public spaces
- Pollution of water supply
- Lack of investment
- Dormitory settlement – commuting community
- Development without the necessary infrastructure
- Aging population
- Vacancy in town centre
- Anti social behaviour
- Lack of community involvement in projects

• **Questionnaire Survey Analysis**
The majority of the workshop participants stated that they found the VDS workshop enjoyable and beneficial.

Louisburgh's most distinguished characteristics were:

- The crossroad, – the Square
- Bridge street streetscape - building traditional character
- The rural feel and aspect of the village – small and cozy
- The surrounding landscape: Bunowen River, the coastline, and the scenery

Most people agreed that Louisburgh's population age group majority ranges between the middle aged and older groups.

66% of those surveyed agreed that the character of the village centre is different from the surrounding areas. The cited differences were:

- the commercial and traditional, dense and active feel of the village centre as distinct from the dispersed, sporadic development pattern of the surrounding areas.

Development that the community suggested were most needed in the village:

- Road improvement
- Footpaths
- Street lighting
- Car parking solutions
- Restore derelict buildings in village centre
- Infrastructure
- Hotel
- Banking facility
- Indoor and outdoor sport facilities such as: tennis courts, golf and pool.
- Outdoor areas for recreation such as parks, playgrounds and riverside walks
- Art centre
- Community focused development
- Youth facilities
- Employment – more industry
- Recycling centre/waste management – sustainable living/education

The favourite buildings are:

- Chemist
- Church in Church Street (windows)
- St Catherine's
- Library
- Replacement of the garage

The favourite spaces are:

- Square
- Bridge Street
- Riverside walk
- Scotts Island

The favourite streets are:

- Bridge Street
- Long Street
- Church Street

66% of those consulted indicated that they visit local parks and public spaces, including:

- Scotts Island
- Westport
- Riverside
- Carrowmore Beach
- Back roads
- Walking routes
- Mountains
- Woods

89% of those consulted believed that Louisburgh has car parking problems. The situation is generally in the village centre and increases in summertime with tourists.

82% of those consulted dislike the way in which the village is growing. The main issues raised were:

- Too many Holiday Homes
- Large developments developed too quickly
- Village losing character and becoming a ghost town
- Need for overall village planning

Dislikes:

- Lack of community spirit and facilities
- Lack of infrastructure and provision of services
- Derelict buildings
- Lack of leisure and recreational facilities
- Lack of communal areas

Likes:

- Natural environment
- Architecture

There is a general consensus that Louisburgh is a safe village

COMMUNITY WISH LIST

• Louisburgh Community Wish List

During the public consultation process local residents have put forward suggestions for improving the village - but some of the issues addressed are beyond the scope of the Village Design Statement. The following wish list is a compilation of the significant ideas which local residents would like to see happen within the village of Louisburgh:

- More business and recreational facilities should be provided in order to encourage people to work and live in Louisburgh and prevent it from becoming a commuter village.
- Open the river to the public by providing and improving access points and riverside walks.
- Develop a riverside walk linking the village to Carrowmore beach.
- Provision of public park and playground facilities for children.
- Provision of indoor sporting facilities for the general use of the community.
- The development of new holiday homes should be limited due to its already existing significant number in the village.
- Facilities for the youth should be provided in order to encourage and promote a constructive and healthy lifestyle.
- Restoration of the derelict building within the village.
- Development of a cultural and tourism strategy to promote the culture and history, heritage and natural environment within and surrounding the village.
- Improvement of footpaths, street lighting and car parking facilities throughout the village
- Recycling centre/waste management facilities in order to promote a sustainable community.
- Provision of internet cafe

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Village Design Statement was initiated by Mayo County Council in association with the Heritage Council. Mayo County Council, the Heritage Council and County Mayo Heritage Office wishes to acknowledge the support of the community of Louisburgh and Sancta Maria College (classes T1 and T2) towards the realisation of this Village Design Statement.

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