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Nicholas de Jong Associates
URBAN DESIGN



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary County Council

Nicholas de Jong Associates
URBAN DESIGN



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CAHIR TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM Part 8 Planning Report

Tipperary County Council

October 2021



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MWP, Engineering and Environmental Consultants

Address: Park House, Bessboro Road, Blackrock, Cork, T12 X251

www.mwp.ie





1. Executive Summary

Cahir is located to the south of the junction of the M8 Dublin to Cork motorway and the N24 Waterford to Limerick Road. The town has historically developed here because the River Suir was easily crossed at this point. This historic development of the town, the high concentration of heritage assets including Cahir Castle, Swiss Cottage, the River Suir and its amenity walks provides the town with an attractive setting.

Through public consultations and submissions carried out in 2017 and 2021 it was noticeable that there is a need for public realm improvements and traffic management measures for the Cahir town centre and surrounding area.

The aim of the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm project is to enhance access and presentation of the Square and surrounding areas as a living, social and commercial place. An improved public realm that reinforces the streetscape character, and ensures that visitors feel welcome, will attract new business and tourism.

2. Introduction & Description

2.1 Introduction

The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir's town centre comprising the upgrading of the existing Square and approach streets with new high quality paving, kerbing, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works (including undergrounding of overhead ESB cables). Footpath space will be widened, traffic calming will be developed raised tables, reduced road carriageway widths and improved pedestrian crossings. Existing on-street parking to be reduced from the Square to a new Town Centre Car Park with a 90+ spaces just off the Square to the north east. This car park is the subject of a separate Part 8 Planning application.

The traffic flow through the Square will be changed from the current two way on both the east and west sides of the Square to two way flow on the east side only. Service and emergency vehicle access will be maintained to the west side of the Square. Pedestrian movement will be prioritised by the design.

The development also includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement on Castle Street, Church Street, Old Church Street and the Square end of St Mary's Road. A raised table on Castle Street will link the Castle entrance with the river walkways to the north. A similar raised table will be provided on Church Street in front of the new Town Centre Car Park entrance.

2.2 Description of the Scheme

The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir's Town Centre comprising the upgrading of the existing Square and approach streets with new high-quality paving, kerbing, landscaping, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works.

Location: The proposed development will be carried out on Castle Street, Cahir Town Square, St Mary's Road, Old Church Street and Church Street in the townland of Townparks, Cahir, Co. Tipperary.

Nature and Extent of Proposed Development:

- I. New raised table shared surface on Castle Street from Cahir Castle to the Castle Car Park entrance to the East and The Mall entrance to the North.
- II. New kerb alignment and pavement surfaces from the Castle Street Car Park entrance to The Square junction, including upgrading of pedestrian crossing, installation of new public lighting and soft landscaping.
- III. New streetscape layout for Cahir Square with new alignment design for footpaths, parking areas and trafficked areas incorporating a raised table shared surface from the junction with Castle Street, to the Junction with St Marys Road and to North of The Fountain, new kerb and pavement surfaces throughout The Square, new hard and soft landscaping, new street furniture, new bollards, new bicycle racks, installation of new and upgrade of existing public lighting.
- IV. Alteration of on-street parking for Castle Street, The Square, Church Street, Old Church Street and The Square end of St Mary's Road.
- V. New pavement surfaces on St. Mary's Road, Old Church Street and Church Street.
- VI. New controlled pedestrian crossings and soft landscaping on Church Street and Old Church St.
- VII. Undergrounding of overhead electrical cables, installation of new public lighting and upgrading of existing public lighting across the entire project area.
- VIII. Development of associated drainage services and utilities across the entire project area.
- IX. All associated site works.

The areas included in the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm plan:

- Castle Street
- Cahir Square
- St. Mary's Road
- Old Church Street
- Church Street

2.3 Scheme Objectives

The objective of the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm scheme is to:

- Revitalise Cahir Town Centre;
- Provide a focal point for activity/footfall;
- Reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflict and improving pedestrian safety;
- Reduce vehicle dominance on the Square and the main streets and improve junction capacity;
- Design the Cahir Square as a pleasant and safe place to be;
- Enhance the appearance of the town centre through careful design and selection of appropriate surfacing and street furniture;

- Safeguard the structure and appearance of heritage buildings by reducing the impact of vehicles;
- Development of enhanced pedestrian cyclist linkages throughout the town;
- Consider opportunities to enhance public realm at night.

2.4 Previous Planning Applications and Other Proposed Projects

Other proposed projects within Cahir include the Cahir Town Centre Car Park and the Cahir Market House Business Centre.

The Cahir Town Centre Car Park is a new 86 space off street car park immediately to the north east of the Square. It is envisaged that this work will be constructed in advance of the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan.

The outline boundary for the proposed project as outlined above, is included in the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan drawings for reference.

2.4.1 Cahir Town Centre Car Park

The proposed Cahir Town Centre Car Park is currently going through Part 8 Planning. This will provide 86 additional car, 2 coach and 3 mini-bus parking spaces immediately adjacent to the Square. The vehicle access will be from Church Street, while there will be a pedestrian access from Church Street and from the Square through the Market House property.

2.4.2 Cahir Market House Business Centre:

Planning granted in December 2020, the proposed development comprises the following elements:

2.4.2.1 25 Old Church Street

Alterations and refurbishment including restoration of the façade, demolition of rear section of building and construction of new two storey block and link to the Market House at the Square and Old Church Street, Cahir, Co. Tipperary to develop a new business centre.

2.4.2.2 Cahir Market House (Protected Structure)

The proposed works include the reforming of the original 3-arched façade with fully glazed infill screen, application of impost mouldings and new plinth as part of façade restoration, replacement of existing windows with timber sliding up-and-down sash windows, new panelled front door, re-levelling of arched entrance passage, removal of 3-storey rear extension, construction of new 2-storey extension at rear of existing offices, removal of screen in hall, installation of new partitions, insertion of new internal stairs with new fire exit door and steps at side elevation, removal of existing toilets and provision of new first-floor disabled toilet, installation of new lift, installation of photovoltaic solar panels on inner roof slope, and all associated internal and external alterations and link to 25 Old Church Street.

Cahir Public Realm Project, Cahir Town Centre Car Park and Cahir Market House Business Centre all form part of Cahir Town Regeneration Plan and all projects must obtain Planning Grant to proceed to RRDF Category 1 funding.

The Cahir Town Centre Public Realm, Cahir Town Centre Car Park and the Cahir Market House Business Centre all form part of Cahir Town Regeneration Plan and all projects must obtain Planning Grant to proceed to RRDF Category 1 funding.

3. Identification of Need

Cahir is a rural town with a population of around 3,500, however, it has not benefited from increases in revenue associated with the tourism economy in other parts of the country. The central area is cluttered with poor public realm quality. Currently Cahir's historic and very attractive Square and approach streets are traffic dominated and do not gain the full potential benefit residents, businesses and visitors to the town. Cahir Castle is one of the most impressive castles in the country, attracting significant numbers of visitors every year (90,000 in 2019). The Suir Blueway is a much more recent attraction, which will generate significant number of users over the next few years. An improved public realm that reinforces the streetscape character, and ensures that visitors feel welcome, would encourage these visitors to spend more time in Cahir and attract new business and tourism. This would give Cahir a role both as a visitor destination and as the service town for its hinterlands and communities.

Cahir is within easy reach of all the larger centers of population in Ireland. The location of Cahir just off the junction of the N24 and the M8 supports its significant potential as a major tourism and recreational destination associated with the Suir Blueway and with its heritage as promoted by Ireland's Ancient East.

Public realm improvements of the Square were prioritised in successive Local Area Plans (LAP). The LAP was produced through public consultations and submissions; further consultations were carried out in 2020 with a specific focus on the Square. These consultations further emphasised the need for public realm improvements and traffic management measures for the Square.

The Cahir Town Centre Public Realm proposal for Cahir actively addresses the issues identified in the LAP and subsequent public consultation. During the development of this Plan, there were extensive consultations with stakeholders and County Councilors.

4. Justification for the Project

The town Square and approach streets need to be redeveloped so that they adequately serve the needs of Cahir's residents, businesses and visitors as the country transitions into a low carbon economy. The inevitable reduction in the predominance of vehicles in our town centres offers significant opportunities to reimagine our public spaces so that they are more attractive and user friendly to pedestrians (particularly elderly) and cyclists. Cahir has a wealth of heritage and tourism resources which are ripe for further development including:

- Cahir's Historic Square is situated in the town's impressive Architectural Conservation Area, it is surrounded by a number of protected structures and bookmarked on either end by the historic Cahir House Hotel and the Market House. The Square was once an area dedicated to markets and gatherings and a busy intersection for passers-by.
- The River Suir with its Blueway
- Cahir Castle
- Swiss Cottage
- The 1876 fountain in the Square

- 18th Century Suir Bridge with its castle and river views
- Castle Street, where nearly every one of the buildings is listed
- The Mall, off Castle Street, which faces onto the river
- Church Street

The Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan will primarily deliver regeneration, design and enhancement of the central area and public realm

The Square and approach streets are the central spine of the town and form a direct link between Cahir Castle and the Blueway and the town centre. This is the commercial, social and cultural hub of the town. The town centre will be uplifted to become a pleasant place to be, through the development of pedestrian friendly 'zones/character areas' and enhanced way-finding i.e. through paving, interpretation, lighting, etc. A high-quality public realm and review of opportunity sites and synergies in terms of their regeneration will also be incorporated with solutions developed collaboratively.

This regeneration element shall include enhancement and amenity improvement of the central core of Chair. It is expected that significant investment in the core of the town, using its strongest assets, will further consolidate development by stimulating growth and employment, and reducing vacancy and dereliction.

This public realm plan is timely for Cahir as it will benefit from synergies with a range of recently developed and launched, regional and local tourism initiatives including Ireland's Ancient East, the Suir Blueway, the Butler Trail and Munster Vales. The tourism economy in the area has already benefited as can be seen by increased numbers coming from the Suir Blueway and will result in new businesses.

This plan will enhance the overall liveability and amenity of the central area, identify local buildings and features of specific character i.e. Market House in the town and in particular, enhance the setting of the existing built heritage of the town.

5. Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan was subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening in accordance with the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU).

The Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report(EIA) is included in Appendix A and notes that it is not considered that the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Project works will result in a significant negative effect on population and human health, biodiversity, land and soil, water , air quality and climate; material assets, cultural heritage and landscape and visual resource either alone, or in combination with other projects. Overall, the project will have a long term positive effect on the town.

The EIA screening report concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required based on the following reasons;

- Having considered the proposed development in the context of the mandatory requirement for Annex I and II projects, there is no requirement for EIA as the project is below the mandatory threshold for EIA.
- Having regard to the characteristics of the development, the proposal is of a relatively small-scale, involving pavement and junction upgrade works which are not complex in nature, within a development site that

will be contained and controlled. Therefore, the development is not of a scale that would introduce significant or complex environmental effects.

- Having regard to the location of the development, within Cahir town and outside of any sensitive or protected Natura 2000 site, it would not introduce significant or complex environmental effects.
- Having regard to the potential for effects on the environment, it is considered that due to the relatively modest scale of the proposed development and the development site location, the potential for minor effects can be alleviated through standard good site practice. Mitigation measures are available, should they be required, including any archaeological monitoring which may be advised by the County Archaeologist.
- Having considered the proposal in cumulation with existing and approved projects and activities, significant effects on the environment are not likely.
- Therefore, it is concluded that there is no likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development.

Overall the EIA Screening advised that the considered impacts or effects are minor in nature and do not pose a significant threat. Site management and good practice will minimise and reduce potential impacts on site.

6. Appropriate Assessment Screening

The Appropriate Assessment Screening report is included in Appendix B and noted that the effect of the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm project will be to improve the streetscape and infrastructure of the town. The proposed works will be carried out in the dry and there will be no significant impacts to water quality. There is no potential for significant impacts on the qualifying interests for which the Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence are designated. As such, there would be no significant direct or indirect effects on qualifying habitat or species associated with Natura 2000 sites. Given the limited scale and scope of the proposed works, in-combination impacts to the identified Natura 2000 sites identified are not envisaged.

In accordance with Article 120(1B)(b)(i) of the Local Government Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, the Screening for Appropriate Assessment report concluded that there is no likelihood for significant impacts on the Lower River Suir SAC, or other Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence of the project. Therefore, a Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement is not required.

7. Flood Risk Assessment

The Flood Risk Assessment, included in Appendix C, reviewed the proposed design and advised that the proposed alterations will not significantly change the existing ground levels across the scheme. The existing flood defence embankments and walls will not be compromised by the proposed scheme. Therefore, the proposal will not impact any important flow paths and will not affect floodplain storage or conveyance. The detailed design of the scheme will ensure that all levels and details are set on this basis.

The majority of the proposed works include cosmetic changes to the existing streetscape, replacing the existing surface finishes with upgraded finishes to footpaths and providing shared surfaces. The runoff characteristics of the proposed finishes will be consistent with the existing. Rain gardens and tree pits with reservoirs will be provided along Castle Street, the Square, Church Street and Old Church Street. The Flood Risk Assessment noted that once the scheme design is completed on this basis, the proposed scheme will not create additional surface water runoff that could otherwise increase flood risk elsewhere.

Mitigation measures as outlined above are considered sufficient to ensure that the flood risk is negligible. The Flood Risk Assessment demonstrated that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on flooding elsewhere and that the risk to occupants of the site would be acceptable.

8. Public Services

Both Tipperary County Council Water Services staff and Irish Water were contacted about the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan and confirmed that they have no plans to upgrade the networks in Cahir. They are in favour of re-directing surface water from combined sewers to dedicated surface water sewer where possible.

While the locations of gullies will change no additional connections to Irish Water network will be required under the plan.

8.1 Water Supply

The proposed scheme does not include any new demands on the water supply.

8.2 Sewerage Facilities

The proposed scheme does not include any new demands on the sewerage facilities. It is proposed as part of the scheme to separate combined sewers where feasible, this will divert additional surface water into the surface water drainage system and reduce the load on the sewerage system.

8.3 Surface Water Drainage

A Surface Water Management Plan is in Appendix D. The proposed scheme is a refurbishment of the existing streetscape and therefore does not create any additional hardstandings which would contribute to the surface water drainage system. It is proposed as part of the scheme to separate the combined sewers where feasible, this will divert additional surface water into the surface water drainage system.

8.3.1 SuDS

Where suitable, rain gardens and tree pit soakaways will be provided, these will ease the flow of surface water into the drainage network. Tree pits and rain gardens are proposed along Castle Street, the Square, Church Street and Old Church Street to capture the surface water from the footpaths.

9. Traffic and Parking

9.1 Existing Environment

9.1.1 Road Network

The R670 Regional Road and the R640 Regional Road converge in Cahir Town Centre to form the Square. The R670 brings traffic in a north-south direction, while the R640 brings traffic east-west through Cahir. Both roads

are an important link in the regional road network. The Square is a two-way gyratory that allows all vehicle movements around it. The R640 (Castle Street) forms the western approach to the Square, turning left to continue north on the Square and then right to continue east (Old Church Street). It has a typical width of 7.3m to 8.0m through Cahir.

The R670 enters the Square from the south (St. Mary's Road) and continues north before turning left at the Square and then immediately right to continue north (Church Street). Church Street is typically 7.3m wide. St. Mary's Street has a narrow carriageway width, reducing to 5.5m at its narrowest.

The Square, on its west side, provides a link between the R913 Castle Street and R670 Church Street. Vehicles can also turn from the Square (west) onto the R640 Old Church Street.

On-street parking is provided on the north side of Castle Street, both sides of Church Street, and both sides of Old Church Street. On-street parking is also provided on the east side of St. Mary's Road. Parking is provided on all sides of the Square, on both sides of the carriageway. On-street parking is typically parallel, 2.4m in width, with perpendicular parking in the centre of the Square and on the north side of Old Church Street.

The M8 Motorway runs north-east of Cahir Town Centre. Vehicles can access it via Junction 11 south of Cahir, via the R639 or Junction 10 north of Cahir, via the R670 and N24 National Primary Road. The N24 between Limerick and Waterford runs north of Cahir and is accessed via the R640 and R639. The N24 links Cahir with Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir and Tipperary Town.



Figure 9.1: Local Road Network

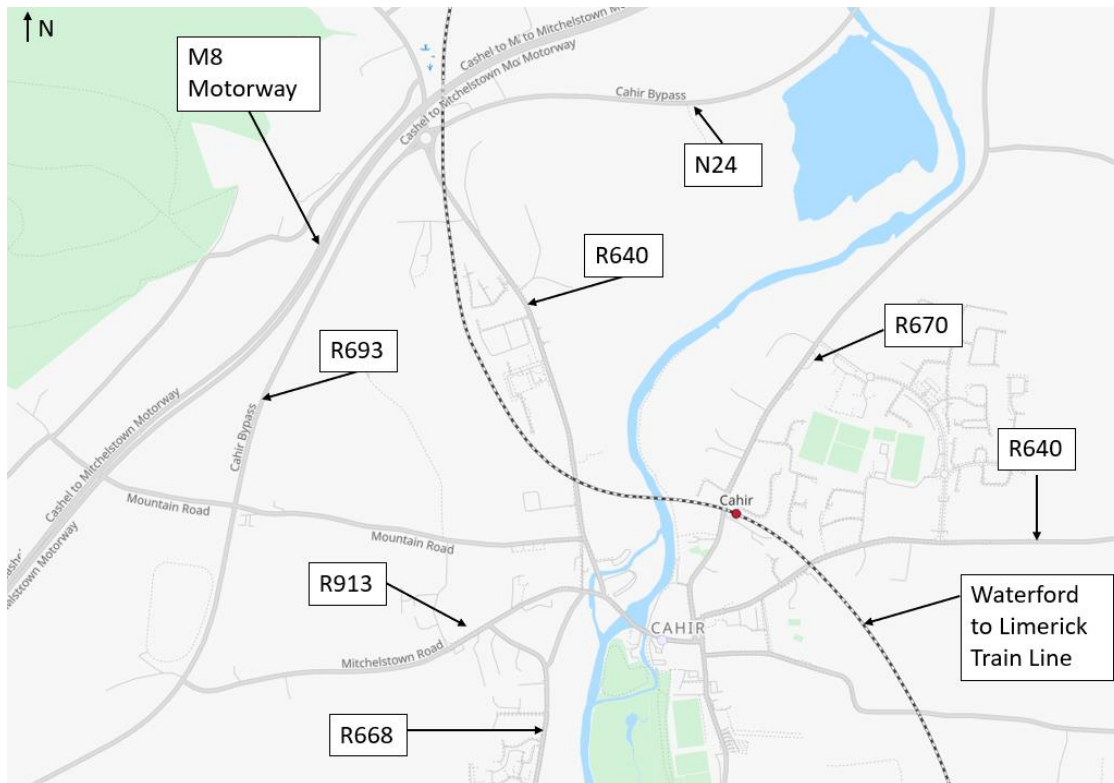


Figure 9.2: Regional Road Network

The proposed scheme is within the 50 km / hour urban speed limit.

There is an existing signal-controlled pedestrian crossing on Castle Street. There is a controlled zebra crossing on the Square, linking the east and west side.

9.1.2 Public Transport

Cahir Train Station, serving the Waterford – Limerick train line, is located approximately 500m north of Cahir Town Centre.

Two bus stops (one in each direction) are present on Castle Street. Local Link and Bus Éireann, along with other bus services, use this bus stop. This facilitates travel from Cahir to Cork, Dublin, Waterford, Clonmel and towns in Tipperary with the Local Link service.

9.1.3 Road Safety

The RSA Online Map of Collisions records nine collisions between 2005 and 2016 within the proposed scheme. Seven of these were related to pedestrian collisions.

- Three minor injury pedestrian collisions were recorded on the north-east of the Square, at its junction with Old Church Street.
- One minor injury pedestrian collision on the east side of the Square.
- One minor injury pedestrian collision on the south side of the Square.
- One minor injury pedestrian collision on the north-west side of the Square, crossing Church Street.
- One minor collision involving a right turning goods vehicle on Church Street.

- Two minor collisions on Castle Street, one involving a pedestrian and one involving a cyclist.

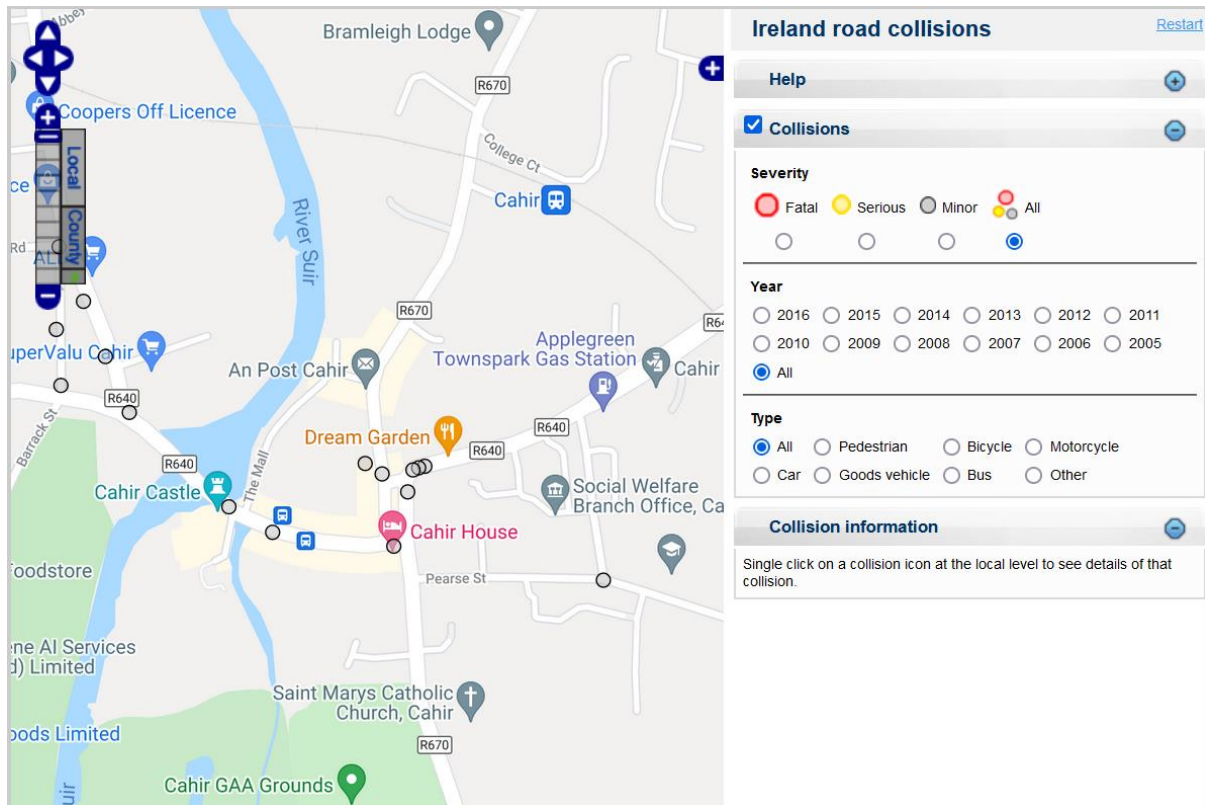


Figure 9.3: Road Safety Authority Online Map of Road Collisions - Cahir Town Centre

9.2 Policy Review

The Cahir Local Area Plan 2021 – 2027 (Tipperary County Council) contains Transport and Movement policies and objectives that the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Project contributes towards. These include:

- TM1: Improve accessibility and movement within Cahir, reduce dependency on private car transport, increase permeability in the town and encourage the use of energy efficient forms of transport through the promotion of walking, cycling and public transport.
- TM2: Ensure that new developments are designed to comply with Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019) including making provision for pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and enhancing connectivity and accessibility to the town.
- TM07.1: Continue the improvement of approach roads, including the provision of traffic calming measures and active transport modes, subject to the availability of resources.

9.3 Bus Infrastructure

There are two existing bus stops in Cahir Town Centre. Both are located on Castle Street, one eastbound and one westbound. There are no changes to the bus stop locations as part of the proposed scheme. Both bus stops remain as inset bus stops, meaning that traffic can pass by while the buses are stopped to alight passengers.

9.4 Pedestrian Crossings and Footpaths

It is an objective of the scheme to improve the public realm for pedestrians. As part of the proposed layout, two new controlled pedestrian crossings and three new uncontrolled pedestrian crossings are included. A controlled pedestrian crossing is one where the pedestrian has right of way on the crossing. These are provided as controlled zebra crossings, with belisha beacons, tactile paving, striped road markings and other associated road markings in accordance with the Traffic Signs Manual.

Controlled Zebra crossings are proposed on:

- Church Street
- Old Church Street
- Castle Street (to replace the existing traffic signal-controlled pedestrian crossing)

Four new uncontrolled crossings are proposed as part of the scheme. These crossings are where the vehicle has right of way and pedestrians can cross when there are gaps in the traffic. The traffic calmed road design will encourage lower vehicle speeds, with vehicles likely to stop to provide gaps for pedestrians crossing. The uncontrolled crossings will be highlighted with buff coloured tactile paving and a different paving pattern, indicating a change in surface for vehicle drivers.

New uncontrolled pedestrian crossings are proposed on:

- Castle Street, on the raised table at Cahir Castle
- Castle Street, opposite Cahir House Hotel
- The Square, opposite the fountain

The existing uncontrolled pedestrian crossing at the junction of the Square and St. Mary's Road will also be included in the public realm upgrade.

An uncontrolled pedestrian crossing layout, including buff tactile paving, has been provided at junctions and vehicle accesses within the scheme.

Throughout the proposed scheme, footpath widths have been widened to a typical minimum of 2.0m, up to a width of 3.0-3.5m. This increases the space available to pedestrians, allowing people to walk in groups and provide a comfortable walking experience, in line with the guidance in DMURS.

9.5 Junction Strategy

The junction strategy for the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Project has been developed within the context of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (May 2019) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland Publication DN-GEO-03060 (June 2017) Geometric Design of Junctions.

The principal of narrowing the carriageways to a 3.5m lane width (7.0m carriageway width) is in accordance with DMURS. This is intended to reduce vehicle speeds on entering the town centre. Raised tables have also been provided at key locations, which also contribute to the traffic calming effect. Buildouts, wider footpaths, landscaping and pedestrian crossings will further reduce traffic speeds along the routes.

The road layout in Cahir Town Centre has been rationalised as part of the project. The proposed layout reduces the current four priority junction layout around the Square to two priority junctions. This will optimise traffic flow through the town centre, ensuring priority for the main traffic flow, which travels between Castle Street and Old Church Street. The reduction in the number of junctions will also improve traffic flow as there will be less locations

at which traffic is stopped to let other vehicles turn. The relocation of on-street parking to off-street car parks, as well as the new car parking spaces within the Square, will also improve traffic flow around the Square.

Traffic junction counts were undertaken in May 2018 and provided by Tipperary County Council. The traffic counts included all arms of the junctions and have been conservatively summarised to provide average annual daily traffic counts (AADT). These are vehicle counts of two-way traffic on the road. The traffic counts have been factored to 2021, using the TII Project Appraisal Guidelines for National Roads Unit 5.3 – Travel Demand Projections May 2019. The guidelines envisage that car and light vehicle volumes on Tipperary national roads, will increase by an annual growth factor of 1.0119 during the period to 2030 and by a factor of 1.0306 for heavy vehicles, based on their central growth rates.

Table 9.1: Average Daily Traffic Counts for Cahir Town Centre

Road Name	Arm Description	Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) 2021
R640 Castle Street and Old Church Street	Major	6766
R670 St. Mary’s Road	Minor	1003
R670 Church Street	Minor	2976

The traffic volumes at the two proposed junctions in Cahir Town Centre are within the TII traffic volume guidelines for priority junctions. The guidelines recommend that where a major road has an AADT of less than 10,000, the minor arm is recommended to have an AADT of between 450 and 3000.

9.6 Parking Strategy and Impacts

9.6.1 Existing Parking

Cahir Town Centre has a significant amount of on-street for use by residents, businesses and tourists. On-street parking in Cahir is free and has a two-hour limit. This is enforced by a traffic warden on site. There is no dedicated loading or set down spaces within the town centre.

On-street car park is present within the project extents on the following streets:

- Castle Street
- The Square
- St. Mary’s Road
- Old Church Street
- Church Street

Cahir Town Centre also has, as existing, four off-street car parks:

- The Castle Car Park (paid for parking)
- Park Avenue Car Park (Behind Cahir House Hotel) (free parking)
- The Granary Car Park (free parking)
- The Viaduct Car Park (free parking)

9.6.2 Proposed Parking Strategy

As part of developing the public realm design and rationalisation of the traffic movements within the town centre, 33 on-street parking spaces are required to be removed from the street and relocated to the proposed Cahir Car Park, located north of the Square. Vehicles will access the car park from Church Street, with an additional pedestrian access linking the Square with the car park. The proposed car park will provide an additional 86 car parking spaces, along with two mini-bus spaces and 3 coach spaces. This is subject to a separate Part 8 Planning Application.

The centre of the proposed Cahir Car Park is approximately 150m from the centre of the Square using the pedestrian route. Parking is typically considered to be within close proximity to a site when it is within a 350m walk.

On-street parking in Cahir will remain free, with a two-hour time limit.

Dedicated loading / set down bays are also provided within the proposed layout. Signage will be provided to limit the time for loading activities to between 09.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.. Outside of this time, the spaces can be used as normal parking spaces.

The Square will have 10 permanent car parking spaces, 3 of which are disabled parking spaces. It will also have two loading / set down bays, which, when not used for loading, revert to car parking spaces. This provides overall 12 permanent parking spaces within the Square. During the winter months, an additional 12 spaces will be made available on the Square, in the pedestrian area. During these months, the total available spaces in the Square will be 24.

Castle Street will have 9 car parking spaces, with 1 loading / set down bay. This equates to a total of 11 parking spaces. The removal of parking on Castle Street will facilitate the introduction of a raised table and pedestrian crossing at the entrance to the Blueway and Cahir Castle.

Old Church Street will have 15 car parking spaces. This is a reduction from the existing 21 car parking spaces. This is due to the change from perpendicular parking to parallel parking due to road safety concerns.

Church Street will have 20 car parking spaces, with 1 loading / set down bay. This equates to a total of 22 car parking spaces.

St. Mary's Road will have 2 car parking spaces. The junction of St. Mary's Road and the Square were realigned as part of the proposed layout, bringing it into line with current guidance in DMURS and best practice for road safety design. This resulted in the loss of parking spaces. St. Mary's is a narrow road, with a carriageway width of 5.4m at its narrowest, which did not allow for additional car parking.

During the design process, a number of parking spaces were identified as being sub-standard. This was due to their proximity to pedestrian crossings and their impact on the visibility splay at the junction. In a Do-Nothing scenario, it would be recommended that 9 parking spaces were removed to improve road safety in Cahir Town Centre.

DMURS recommends that on Arterial and Link streets, on-street parking spaces should be provided in a series of bays that are parallel to the vehicular carriageway. Vehicles reversing onto roads with high volumes of traffic can

cause delays and have the potential to cause a collision. Altering the parking layout on Old Church Street from perpendicular to parallel results in the loss of 6 parking space. Altering the parking layout in the Square from perpendicular to parallel would result in the loss of 10.

9.6.3 Parking Impacts

Table 9.2 and Table 9.3 summarises the proposed changes to parking in Cahir Town Centre.

Table 9.2: Existing Car Parking Spaces

Location	Existing Car Parking Spaces
Castle Street	15
The Square	41
Old Church Street	21
Church Street	26
St. Mary's Road	4
Total	107
Removed for Road Safety Reasons	
Removed for sightlines at junctions	9
Change from perpendicular to parallel parking - Square	10
Change from perpendicular to parallel parking - Old Church Street	6
Total Parking Removed for Road Safety	25
Total existing parking when taking into account spaces removed for Road Safety	82

Table 9.3: Proposed Parking in Cahir Town Centre and Impacts

Location	Proposed Car Parking Spaces	
	Winter	Summer
Castle Street	11	11
The Square	24	12
Old Church Street	15	15
Church Street	22	22
St. Mary's Road	2	2
Total	74	62
Difference between existing and proposed	8	20
Cahir Car Park Spaces	86	86
Total Parking Spaces for Cahir Town Centre	160	148
Parking Gain for Cahir Town Centre	78	66

9.7 Road Safety Audit

A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken on the proposed scheme by an independent Audit Team. The report is included in the Part 8 Planning Application. All items raised by the Audit Team have been addressed in the design. A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit will take place on completion of the detailed design of the scheme.

10. Archaeological Assessment

An Archaeological Assessment was undertaken for the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Project. A copy of the report is included in Appendix F. It is noted in the report that the majority of the proposed works are within

the Zone of Archaeological Notification/Potential (ZAP) for the historic town of Cahir. Within the historic town there are 59 known sites or monuments of archaeological significance, including the complex of medieval and post-medieval castle building at Cahir Castle.

An evaluation of the potential impacts of the proposed project on the archaeological resource was undertaken.

The report recognises that the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm project will enhance access and presentation of the core of Cahir as a living, social and commercial place which will be supported by a plan that encourages pedestrian movements, and car-parking at locations outside of the medieval core.

It is noted that the ground disturbance required to undertake the works, has the potential, if unmitigated, to negatively impact on the archaeological resource of the town. The report recommends that all ground disturbances should be archaeologically monitored, by a suitably experienced archaeologist.

11. Architectural Assessment

An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) was undertaken for the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Project. A copy of the report is included in Appendix G.

The AHIA assessed the physical and visual impacts of the proposed works and highlighted the materials which are to be retained. Overall, the AHIA concluded that the proposed public realm works will result in positive visual impacts on the setting of the historic buildings. The AHIA recommended the following mitigation measures:

- Historic architectural elements such as limestone doorsteps, doorcases, limestone steps, railings and plinth walls, carriage archways and doorways should be protected during the course of works from any physical damage which may occur during the installation of the new surfaces, lighting etc. and from damage caused by materials such as cement and grouting.
- Historic street furniture elements such as limestone kerbs and jostle stones should be retained and reused in their original locations rather than discarded and/or replaced.
- A number of the buildings in the centre of Cahir have stone shopfronts and/or stone pilasters, including Glengall House, the Bank of Ireland and the shops to the west side of the Square. These architectural features must be protected during resurfacing works and should not be altered or damaged by the laying of new surfacing material.
- Some of the works are proposed in locations which may be archaeologically sensitive and may require monitoring, for example in the vicinity of the north side of Castle Street and on the bridge.
- Some buildings along Castle Street have basements and others may be retained below street level. These are often vaulted structures with the top of the vault quite close to the surface of the street which should be considered where trees are proposed for planting.
- To the front of the Market House a plaque marks the location of the burial of a military horse in the mid-19th century. This will require further investigation before commencing works to install a new set of steps. The plaque should be relocated.

These recommendations will be considered in the detailed design phase and construction phase of the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan.

12. Design Standards

The scheme was designed in accordance with the various publications as listed:

National Cycle Manual (NCM), 2007, National Transport Authority. <https://www.cyclemanual.ie/>

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) Version 1.1, 2019, Government of Ireland. <https://www.dmurs.ie/>

Traffic Management Guidelines, 2003, Department of Transport, Government of Ireland.

Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 7 Road Markings, 2019, Department of Transport, Government of Ireland.

Design Manual for Bicycle Traffic, 2016, CROW.

Cycle Infrastructure Design, Local Transport Note 1/20, July 2020, UK Department for Transport.

TII Publications (Standards), Transport Infrastructure Ireland. <https://www.tiipublications.ie/>

TII Publications (Technical), Transport Infrastructure Ireland. <https://www.tiipublications.ie/>

DN-PAV-03021 Pavement and Foundation Design.

DN-PAV-03024 Bituminous Mixtures, Surface Treatments, and Miscellaneous Products and Processes

DETR Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving surfaces

<http://universaldesign.ie>

Natural Stone Surfacing – Good Practice Guide

Guideline for Managing Openings in Public Roads

Basis of Design: IS EN 1990: Eurocode – Basis of structural design. (EC0)

General Actions: IS EN 1991: Eurocode 1: Actions on structures. (EC1)

Design of concrete: IS EN 1992: Eurocode 2: Design of concrete structures. (EC2)

Design of steel: IS EN 1993: Eurocode 3: Design of steel structure. (EC3)

Design of timber: IS EN 1995: Eurocode 5: Design of Timber structures. (EC5)

Design of masonry: IS EN 1996: Eurocode 6: Design of masonry structures. (EC6)

Geotechnical: IS EN 1997: Eurocode 7: Geotechnical design. (EC7)

Building Regulations of Republic of Ireland

Wastewater: IS EN 12056 Gravity drainage systems inside buildings

Sewer Foul and Storm: IS EN 752:2008 (Drain and sewer systems outside buildings) and the Sewers for adoption 7th Edition.

SUDS: Ciria (C753) SuDS manual

Rainfall data: Met Éireann

Code of Practice for Water Infrastructure Connections and Developer Services; Design and Construction Requirements for Self-Lay Developments; July 2020 (Revision 2) <https://www.water.ie/>

Water Infrastructure Standard Details Connections and Developer Services; Construction Requirements for Self-Lay Developments; July 2020 (Revision 4) <https://www.water.ie/>

Code of Practice for Wastewater Infrastructure Connections and Developer Services Design and Construction Requirements for Self-Lay Developments July 2020 (Revision 2) <https://www.water.ie/>

Wastewater Infrastructure Standard Details Connections and Developer Services Design and Construction Requirements for Self-Lay Developments July 2020 (Revision 4) <https://www.water.ie/>

The electrical installation shall be in accordance with the following:

Complying with Irish Standard I.S. 10101: 2020 'National Rules for Electrical Installations' Edition 5.0;

Complying with ET 206:2009, ET213:2007 and subsequent addendums;

Guidelines on Selection of Lighting Classes PD CEN/TR 13201-1:2014

Road Lighting Performance Requirements IS EN 13201-2: 2015

Code of practice for the design of road lighting. Lighting of roads and public amenity areas BS 5489-1:2020 and subsequent addenda

Current ESB Networks Regulations, Codes of Practice and Guidelines including the latest edition of the ESB National Code of Practice for Customer Interface and ESB requirements for Works on Public Lighting on ESB's Networks;

Current edition of ESB Requirements for Work on Public Lighting on ESB's Networks;

Complying with ESB Networks Ltd. Contractor Pack for Working Near Live Overhead or Underground Cables and subsequent addenda;

Complying with ILP Code of Practice for Electrical Safety in Highway Electrical Operations and subsequent addenda;

ESB Networks Procedure Public Lighting Work Activities (PLWA);

Tipperary County Council Public Lighting Policy

13. DMURS Statement

The objective of "The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets" (DMURS) is to achieve better street design in urban areas. This will encourage more people to choose to walk, cycle or use public transport by making the experience safer and more pleasant. The proposed layout for Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan promotes and prioritises walking and cycling.

Traffic calming has been included through the narrowing of carriageways and the introduction of a raised table across the Square. Pedestrian crossings have been included in the layout.

13.1 The Square

The traffic on the Square will be significantly calmed under the proposed scheme, with the removal of the road along the west side of the Square, tighter lane widths, a raised table in the southeast of the Square and controlled crossing points. This will make it much easier for pedestrians to cross the Square in between designated crossing points. A significant new plaza area will be created on the west side of the Square. Part of this area can revert to on street parking in the late autumn, winter and early spring, when visitor numbers are lower. The footpath widths on the east and south sides of the Square will be increased. The plaza area, on the north side of the Square will also be increased in size and enhanced.

13.2 Castle Street

A raised table is proposed between the castle entrance and the car park. This will calm traffic on the approach to the core of the town and allow easier movement of pedestrians from the river walkway and businesses, on the north side of Castle Street to the castle entrance and car park. The footpaths along Castle Street will be widened, while maintaining the bus stops and majority of on street parking. The pedestrian crossing will be enhanced.

High quality surface materials will be used to areas of new footpaths and the raised table to encourage the movement of pedestrians across the spaces. The raised table is intended to calm traffic movements, while reinforcing pedestrian activities and enhancing visual amenity, economic performance and perceptions of personal safety.

13.3 Church Street

A raised table is proposed opposite the entrance to the new Town Centre Car Park (separate Part 8 application). This will calm traffic on the approach to the core of the town and allow easier movement of pedestrians to and from the car park and connecting down to the river walkway. The footpaths along Church Street will be widened, while maintaining the majority of on street parking. Two new pedestrian crossing will be provided.

High quality surface materials will be used to areas of new footpaths and the raised table to encourage the movement of pedestrians across the spaces. The raised table is intended to calm traffic movements, while reinforcing pedestrian activities and enhancing visual amenity, economic performance and perceptions of personal safety.

13.4 Old Church Street and St Mary's Road

The footpaths on both streets will be widened. The underutilised and unsafe perpendicular parking, on Old Church Street, will be converted to parallel parking. The pedestrian crossing, on Old Church Street, will be moved closer to the Square to reflect pedestrian desire lines. This will be even more significant once the proposed Town Centre Car Park and pedestrian link is constructed.

14. Utilities Impacted by the Scheme

Services enquiries were issued to the utility providers requesting a copy of their records of services within the proposed project area. In addition to the services enquiries to the utility providers, a Topographical Survey was undertaken in October 2021 and a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey was undertaken, again in October 2021. This information was used to assess the existing utilities in comparison with the proposed design and to identify any potential clashes which may require diversion of utilities.

14.1 ESB

The project brief requests for the undergrounding of all overhead electrical cables. All electrical cables in the Square currently run underground.

There are a limited number of overhead cables on Castle Street, but it is understood that these are for Christmas lights and need to be retained. There are some overhead cables on Church Street and Old Church Street. As part of the public realm upgrade works, it is proposed to liaise with ESB Networks and underground the existing overhead ESB cables.

Depending on the depth of the underground MV electrical cables running in the Square and along Castle Street, these cables may need to be lowered to accommodate a concrete slab underneath the raised table and shared surface areas.

14.2 Gas

While Board Gais have plans to extend their network to Cahir, there is no town supply at present.

14.3 Irish Water

Tipperary County Council Water Services staff were contacted and confirmed that they have no plans to upgrade the networks in Cahir but they are in favour of re-directing surface water from combined sewers to dedicated surface water sewer where possible.

14.3.1 Water Supply

The proposed public realm project does not require any additional water supply requirements.

It may be required to undertake minor alterations to the positioning of Water Hydrant points or Water Meters in conjunction with proposed landscaping and pedestrian crossings. Where this is required, any alteration to the positioning of a water supply hydrant or meter point will only be undertaken with the agreement of Irish Water.

14.3.2 Wastewater Network

The proposed public realm project does not require any additional wastewater treatment.

It is proposed to re-direct surface water from combined sewers to dedicated surface water sewer where possible. Re-direction of surface water away from the foul network will reduce the load on the wastewater network and treatment facilities.

It will be necessary to locally reposition wastewater manholes to coordinate access points with the proposed landscaping works. Where manhole cover locations need to be repositioned to suit new line and level of the proposed streetscape design, this will be coordinated with Irish Water at detailed design.

14.3.3 Surface Water Network

The proposed public realm project is a refurbishment of the existing streetscape and is a replacement of the existing hardstanding areas within the town. The area of hardstanding within the town centre will not be noticeably altered by the proposed design. SuDS techniques are incorporated into the design to provide sustainable surface water management. Where new trees have been introduced a localised reservoir beneath the

trees is included as a SuDS design measure. Where manhole cover locations need to be repositioned to suit new line and level of the proposed streetscape design, this will be coordinated with Irish Water at detailed design.

14.4 Public Lighting

The Public Lighting scheme proposed uses single and double tear drop type LED lanterns mounted on 8m heritage columns together with localised uplighters in the Square and recessed wall lights to steps. All lighting schemes shall be in accordance with Tipperary County Councils Public Lighting Policy and IS EN 13201.

These lights shall be controlled via individual dusk to dawn photocells.

14.5 Telecoms

It is not proposed to alter any Telecoms services, where manhole covers need to be repositioned to suit new line and level of the proposed streetscape design, this will be coordinated with the Service providers at detailed design.

14.6 Data

It is not proposed to alter any data services, where manholes covers need to be repositioned to suit new line and level of the proposed streetscape design, this will be coordinated with the service providers at detailed design stage.

14.7 Traffic Lights

It is not proposed to alter any traffic lights under the plan. However, new or upgraded pedestrian crossing will be provided in a number of locations.

15. Demolitions

As part of the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan existing footpaths and carriageway surfaces, street furniture, signage, some light standards, some ESB poles and traffic lights will be removed.

All demolition works will be undertaken safely, the public will be kept informed of upcoming works as the project progresses. All waste will be disposed of by an appropriately licensed haulier and disposed in an appropriately licensed facility.

16. Drawings

Refer to Appendix H for List of Drawings.

17. Public Consultation

As an integral part of the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement, a comprehensive public consultation exercise was undertaken during August and September 2021, to understand and benefit from the views of the local community and their vision for the future of Cahir Town Centre. The consultation process comprised on-line workshops with key stakeholders and local councilors; the display of concept options in the windows of Cahir Market House (current library), with feedback forms available; a meeting with the Student Council of Coláiste Dún lascaigh; and the inclusion of material and response forms on the Tipperary County Council Consultation portal. Three initial Public Realm Concept Options were prepared in order to promote dialogue on the scheme and to gauge the level of intervention considered appropriate by the consultees.

The workshops held on 16th and 17th August 2021 were well-attended by representatives of the Cahir Development Association, the Cahir Social and Historical Society, the OPW and local businesses, and a wide range of issues were discussed. Most were very supportive of the intention to up-grade the public realm of the town centre and considered this to be essential for continuing to strengthen the vitality of a Cahir as a place to visit and spend time in. The presence of the Castle, the River Suir and Cahir Park Gardens were highlighted as being especially important assets of the town, and improving pedestrian linkages between these and the town Square a major consideration for the public realm plan. Parking was raised as a recurrent issue, for local traders in particular, and it was stressed that existing provision on Castle Street and Church Street should not be significantly reduced. Whereas it was accepted that the proposed new car park to the north of the Market House would provide a large number of additional spaces, it was noted that many traders were dependent on passing trade from the R640. Traffic circulation around The Square was also considered to be a major issue, providing convenient access for some but with vehicle movements and parking tending to dominate the character of the historic space. It was agreed that the traffic circulation needs to be rationalized while maintaining the requirements of through traffic, delivery and emergency vehicles, and the safety of pedestrians. Similarly, on-street parking within The Square needs to take account of local trader's preferences while enhancing the quality of the space for pedestrian use and enjoyment. Provision for disabled persons parking was also considered essential.

These and related issues were discussed at workshops with Local Councilors on 20th and 24th September 2021.

Similar considerations were also raised by way of response forms from the public display and the on-line Consultation portal of the County Council (the deadline for which was extended to 3rd September 2021).

At the meeting with the local Student Council on 6th September 2021, many interesting ideas were explored, especially for The Square in particular, as included in the summary responses below.

A total of 79 responses were received from the residents, business owners and students. Although there was no clear consensus from the submissions, in summary, the main issues arising included:

- Loss of parking at The Square
- Traffic circulation around The Square, and consideration of a one-way system
- Proposed new car park and its pedestrian link to The Square
- Re-alignment of street junctions to streamline traffic flow and with adequate space for turning
- Improved pedestrian crossings
- Speed and weight restrictions on town entry including bridge, to reduce HGV traffic passing through the centre

- Charging points for electric cars, CCTV and power points for events
- Retention of trees around the fountain
- Refurbishment of the fountain
- The need for free and short-term parking within the town centre
- Retention of recessed bus bays on Castle Street
- Possible filter lane in front of the Cahir House Hotel for turning right onto the Ardfinnan/St Marys Road
- The two lane exit from the Castle Carpark
- Space needed for young people to hang out with canopy for shelter and coloured seating to liven up the place.
- Improved cycle facilities
- High quality paving, street furniture, lighting, bins and signage essential
- A canopy structure and spaces for seasonal events and festivals
- Flexible use of The Square, with closure during summer months while allowing some vehicle access for rest of the year
- Animating the space outside the tourist office to help draw visitors up into the town centre
- Seating areas with smart tech and a covered canopy
- More litter bins
- Public toilets not needed in The Square
- Improved signage and a heritage wall/interactive screen show-casing the town story
- Undergrounding of overhead cables
- Rain gardens and focus on biodiversity

The public consultation material is given in Appendix H.

18. Conclusions and Recommendations

18.1 Conclusions

The proposed design for the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan promotes pedestrian movement and reduces vehicle dominance within the town centre by providing a new central plaza within the Square and wider footpaths around the Square and on the approaches to it. The redesign of the Square and approach streets provides a pleasant environment, providing space for the enjoyment of outdoor dining and will enhance the presentation of the historic buildings. The new surfaces to Castle Street, linking Cahir Castle to the Square invites visitors enjoying the Suir Blueway and the castle to continue their journey into the historic town centre of Cahir.

The proposed scheme was well received by the public and the feedback received during the public consultation informed the design development of the scheme. There was strong support for the core elements of the scheme which include widening of footpaths to facilitate outdoor dining, traffic calming and improved linkages for pedestrians and cyclists.

The proposed scheme addresses the desired objectives of the scheme and will assist the economic and social regeneration of Cahir.

18.2 Recommendations

The following summarises the recommendations and conclusions as set out in the assessment reports:

- An Environmental Assessment Screening report advised that the considered impacts or effects of the proposed works are minor in nature and do not pose a significant threat. Site management and good practice will minimise and reduce potential impacts on site.
- The Appropriate Assessment Screening report noted that the effect of the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan will be to improve the streetscape and infrastructure of the town. Given the limited scale and scope of the proposed works, in-combination impacts to the identified Natura 2000 sites identified are not envisaged.
- It was concluded in the EIA Screening report that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and that an EIA is not required in this instance.
- A Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken to assess the potential impact of the proposed scheme on flooding, it demonstrated that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on flooding elsewhere and that the risk to occupants of the site would be acceptable. Mitigation measures have been provided in the Flood Risk Assessment which will be sufficient to ensure that the flood risk is acceptable.
- The proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan does not pose any additional demands on the water services within the town.

- Detailed traffic and parking analysis was undertaken to ensure that proposed scheme did not adversely affect the available parking within the town and that every opportunity to improve traffic flows, while supporting cycle and pedestrian movements was included in the proposed design.
- The Archaeological Assessment recognised that the proposed Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan will enhance access and presentation of the core of Cahir as a living, social and commercial place which will be supported by a plan that encourages pedestrian movements, and car-parking at locations outside of the core. The report recommends that all ground disturbances should be archaeologically monitored, by a suitably experienced archaeologist.
- An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) concluded that the proposed public realm works will result in positive visual impacts on the setting of the historic buildings. The AHIA included recommendations to protect and retain identified existing features noting that the works at sensitive locations the such as Castle Street adjacent to Cahir Castle may require monitoring.
- The scheme will only affect existing services where there is a need to carry out works to align with the proposed streetscape design for the Public Realm project. However where appropriate, the opportunity to redirect surface water from combined sewers to dedicated surface water sewer will be considered, this will reduce the load on waste water treatment facilities. Proposals to underground overhead electrical cables will declutter the streetscape.



Appendix A

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report



Appendix B

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report



Appendix C

Flood Risk Assessment Report



Appendix D

Surface Water Management Plan



Appendix E

Stage 1 Road Safety Audit

Appendix F

Archaeological Assessment Report



Appendix G

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report



Appendix H

Drawings



**Refer to Drawing Pack
accompanying this report.**



Appendix I

Public Consultation Material



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary County Council

