



CAMROSS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

March 2019

ABSTRACT

A Plan for a Sustainable and Vibrant Camross Community - Now and into the Future



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development

Executive Summary

Camross Community plan is a vision for Camross Parish for the medium and long term future. It is the result of Camross Parish Development Association (CPDA) coming together to develop and enhance Community facilities in the Parish with particular emphases on Camross village. This is being done against a background of a continued and consistent decline in rural villages which has seen the loss of local shops, Post Offices, Public houses and much more.

The starting point for this rejuvenation process was to develop a sustainable community plan which would ensure the development of the community facilities is done in a planned and strategic way. This is to ensure Parish property is utilised to its maximum, while also ensuring the broadest representation of people's needs and requests are met. To deliver this goal of rejuvenation CPDA applied to Laois Partnership for funding under the Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014 - 2020. Having been successful in our application for funding, we engaged the services of Cuddy QS to assist us in developing a community plan.

The first step in this process was to examine the facilities in the Parish and then endeavour to identify the gaps and/or short comings in the facilities. The identification of facility/service gaps was done through public consultation. An open information evening was held and representatives from community groups and members of the public were invited to attend. On the evening an outline was given as to what CPDA were endeavouring to achieve and the public in attendance were given blank ideas sheets inviting them to put forward their suggestions as to how and what facilities they would like to see delivered to the Parish. These suggestions along with ideas compiled by CPDA were then presented to Cuddy QS for inclusion in our Community Plan. From there we have ranked our proposals in terms of delivery. This has been done primarily, to focus us as a community in the short and medium term on delivering our goals.

In conjunction with our community plan which is looking to the future, we presently have a number of projects commenced which will be hugely beneficial to our community as a whole. As can be seen from the maps and drawings, we have a riverside walkway commenced which will circle a sports playing field. This centre of outdoor activity is complemented by a sports building which is almost complete. This new building will include a gymnasium and meeting and training space. These new facilities are for everyone in the parish and they are the cornerstone projects in our long-term development of our community facilities.

While this document is not a categorical plan in terms of what facilities can and may be delivered to Camross Parish in the future, it is a very strong foundation for all future developments within the Parish.

Camross Parish Development Association



Rialtas na hÉireann
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1. Context

1.1 Camross Village

The village of Camross is located in the Slieve Bloom Mountains, approximately 10km northwest of Mountrath. It is on the western side of County Laois and borders North Tipperary and South Offaly. The village itself has developed in a linear pattern along the main local road. It is located in the Electoral Division of Marymount. Poet's Cottage, a vernacular style thatched Cottage is a focal point within the village centre.

Residential development in the area mainly consists of one off houses located in the rural hinterland serviced by individual septic tanks, together with more longstanding dwelling units. External finishes include plaster on the modern dwellings as well as natural stone on the more traditional buildings in the western end of the village. Boundary walls are of natural stone and contribute to the character of the settlement.

Services in the village include a church, national school, Community Employment Scheme (CES) - Poet's Cottage, a recently refurbished community hall, public house and newly build community hall and crèche. There are no retail facilities available within the village, with the nearest services available in Mountrath. The national school has recently undergone refurbishment works and can now cater for over 100 children.

The GAA Field is of major significant to the village and is located approximately 3km from the village. Recreational space is also available at the school playing fields.

The Georgian Gothic church, which is now in a ruined state, is a strong architectural focal point within the village.

Extensive local afforestation activities played a major part in the initial development of the village. While still important, this industry is undergoing rationalisation in recent years with a consequent reduction in local employment opportunities.



Figure 1: Camross Village, Aerial View

While this document outlines our plans for the village of Camross, we also want to acknowledge the neighbouring villages of Coolrain and Killanure as they are important villages on our parish and their residents are part of the wider Camross Community as a whole. As such please refer to Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for details on both villages.

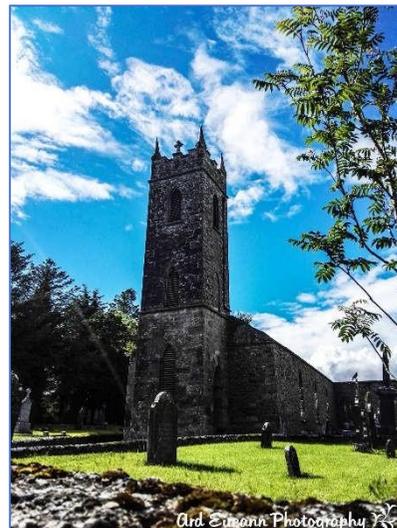


Figure 2: Photographs of Camross Village

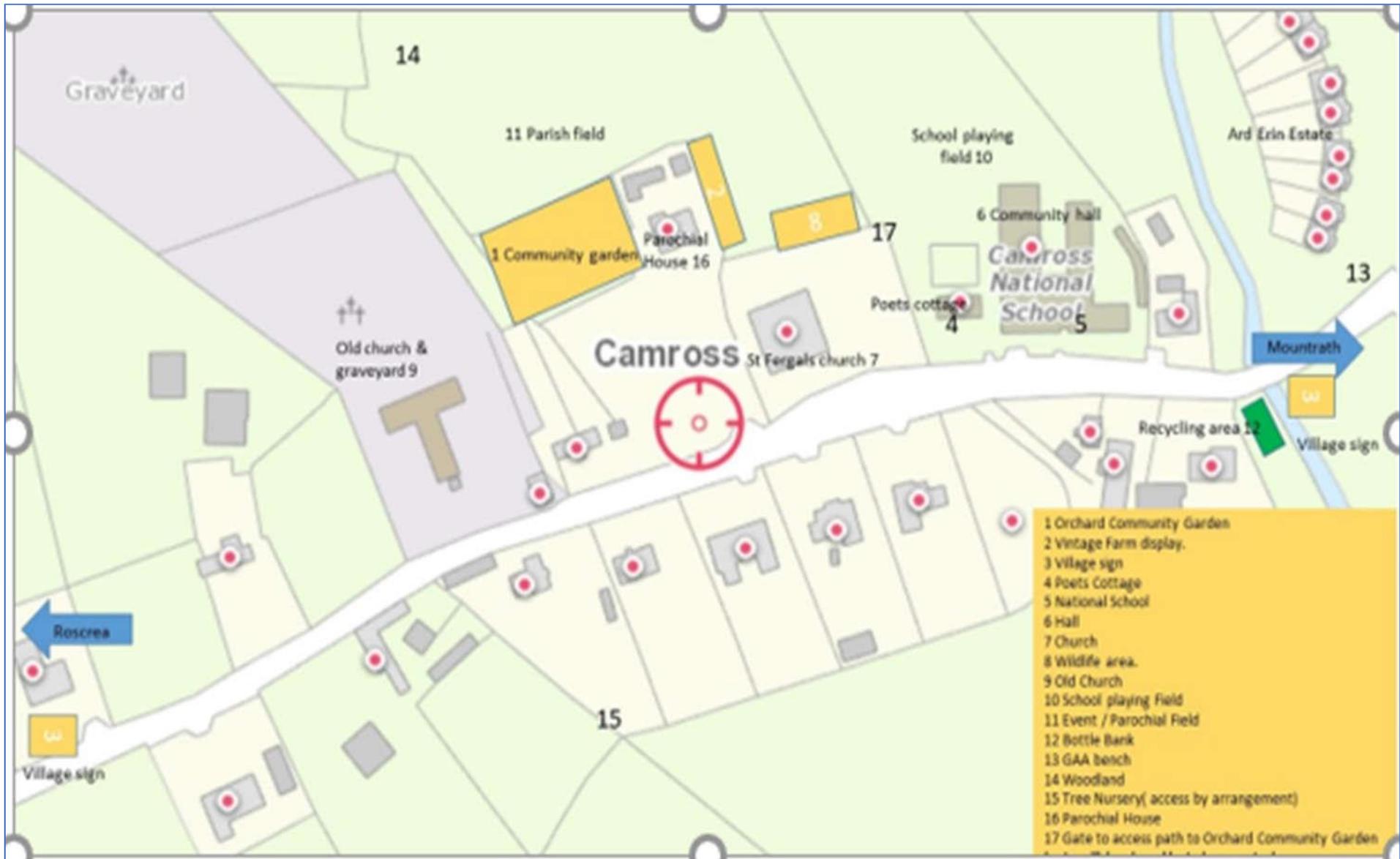


Figure 3: Camross Village Services

1.1.1 Population

The Development Plan outlines that **“County Laois was the fastest growing county in Ireland between 2006 and 2011. Strong population growth is a longstanding trend in the county. Over the last 20 years, its population growth rate has been higher than the wider midlands region or the State. Further significant growth is anticipated”**

Table 2: County Laois Population Change 2002-2011

Location	Persons 2002	Persons 2006	Persons 2011	% Change 06-11
County Laois	58,774	67,059	80,559	20%
Principal Town				
Portlaoise	12,127	14,613	20,145	38%
Key Service Town				
Portarlington	2,756	4,395	5,847	33%
Service Towns				
Mountmellick	3,361	4,069	4,735	16%
Graigucullen	1,199	2,520	3,966	57%
Abbeyleix	1,383	1,568	1,827	16%
Mountrath	1,331	1,435	1,661	16%
Stradbally	1,178	1,056	1,154	9%
Local Service Towns				
Rathdowney	1,111	1,212	1,208	-0.3%
Durrow	717	811	843	4%
Town, Villages and Open Countryside				
Remainder of the County	33,611	35,380	39,176	11%

Source: CSO

Figure 4: County Development Plan Population Statistics (pg. 15)

In terms of Camross Village, it is located in the Electoral Division of Marymount, and for 2011 had a recorded population of 41.

The population of the village and the immediate surrounding area is estimated at 1000 people.

1.1.2 Community & Business Sector

Camross has a very active Community Sector, details of which are included below. There is a very strong sense of community within Camross Village, and even though it is a small rural village, there is a very active community and voluntary sector. In recent years a new community hall was built for the community at a cost of c. €1 million, and also €400,000 spent on reroofing the Roman Catholic Church. Both projects were completely funded by local fundraising efforts and without the assistance of any grant aid.

The business sector within the community consists only of the local public house. The village does have a number of self-employed people living and working locally. The agriculture and forestry sectors are also important for this area. Coolrain Sawmills is the nearest industry to the village.

1.1.3 Camross Village Stakeholders

The following is a list of the various stakeholders and community groups within this vibrant rural village:

Organisation	Discipline
Camross Parish Development Association (CPDA)	Community
Camross Community Employment Scheme (CES)	Community
Camross Tidy Towns Group (CTTG)	Community
Camross Community Hall	Community
Camross Social Services	Community
Camross Community Alert	Community
Camross National School	Educational
Killanure National School	Educational
Camross Vintage Club	Specific Interest
Camross Pastoral Council	Community
Camross Irish County Women's Association (ICA) Group	Community
Killanure Irish County Women's Association (ICA) Group	Community
Camross GAA Club	Sports
Camross Camogie Club	Sports
Camross Juvenile Club	Sports
7th Laois Camross Scout Troop	Community
Camross Comhaltas	Specific Interest
Camross Active Retirement Group	Specific Interest
Camross Macra	Specific Interest
Camross Foroige	Specific Interest
Irish Farmers Association (IFA)	Specific Interest
Camross National School Parents Council	Specific Interest
Killanure National School Parents Council	Specific Interest

Figure 5: Camross Stakeholder Groups

Camross Parish Development Association (CPDA) was formed to address the regeneration of Camross Village and Parish, by being a representation of all the diverse groups in the community. The group canvassed the community and after consultation collated the material gathered into this feasible Village Plan to inform all further developments in the community.

The group then had the Communities authorisation to seek grant aid and make the formal applications. The next purpose has developed into the fundraising stage where CPDA are attempting to gather the finances required to make the projects proposed within this Village Plan a reality. CPDA continuously feed back to the community and actively seek opportunities to provide relevant updates.

1.2 Planning & Development Context

The following sections provided a review of the relevant planning and development context for Camross Village, in line with the planning hierarchy:



Figure 6: Planning Hierarchy

1.2.1 Regional Planning Guidelines Midlands Region 2010-2022

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Midlands Region 2010-2022 governs all development within the region. These guidelines categorise all town and villages within the settlement strategy. The RPG's designate all areas as within the Urban Core (Principle Towns) or Settlements and Rural Hinterland, including Key Service Towns, Local Service Towns and Other Towns, Villages and Open Countryside

Section 4.9.2.3 Southern Development Area outlines the Settlement Hierarchy for the region as follows:

Urban Core	
Principle Town	Portlaoise
Settlements and Rural Hinterland	
Service Towns	Mountmellick, Mountrath, Abbeyleix, Stradbally, Graiguecullen
Local Service Towns	Rathdowney and Durrus
Rural Hinterland	Other Towns, Villages and Open Countryside

Figure 7: Regional Planning Guidelines, South Development Area (pg. 78)

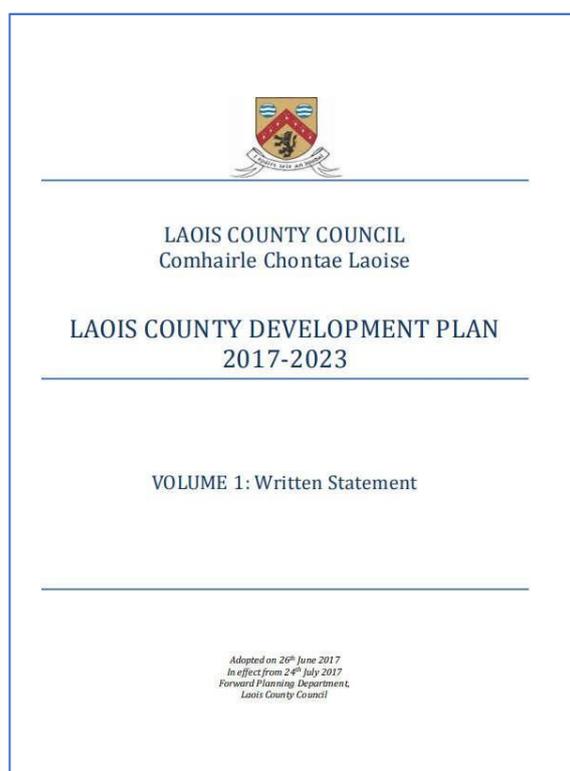
Camross falling within the “**Rural Hinterland - Other Towns, Villages and Open Countryside**” designation.

1.2.2 Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

Camross

The Laois County Development Plan was adopted in July 2017 and governs all development within the County. The main purpose of the plan is to

“set out a framework for the sustainable spatial and physical development of the County Laois while considering the conservation and protection of the built and natural environment. It also aims to carefully consider all the needs of society, its individuals and groups. Key to this is ensuring that equal opportunities are promoted under all the various themes of the plan”



Within the Settlement Hierarchy of the County Development Plan Camross is a designated a Village less than 400 population: The Plan states that:

“These areas have a limited service base and are to a large extent founded on the local primary school catchment area. These villages provide opportunities for future expansion/provision of services such as community centres, local shop, pub, petrol outlet and have the potential to attract a population seeking to live in a rural environment. Development growth should be low density, relative to the scale of the settlement, located as near as is practicable to the core area”

The Policies of the Council for these areas are:

CS37 Conserve and enhance and strengthen villages < 400 population;

CS38 Direct population growth in line with settlement strategy;

CS30 Encourage social and community uses within villages < 400 population that sustain the population;

CS4 Promote densities, relative to the scale of the settlement, located as near as is practicable to the village centre area having regard to Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas (DEHLG, 2009) and ensure that any plan or project associated with the provision of new housing is subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening in compliance with the Habitats Directive, and subsequent assessment as required.

Volume 2 of the Plan outlined Settlement the Settlement Plans & Zoning Objectives for all of the town and villages within the county. The written objectives of the Council for the village are as follows:

Character and Built Form

CM 1 Encourage suitable infill development within the village

CM 2 Protect (RPS 372) from endangerment and secure the longevity of this architectural focal point;

CM 3 Housing developments shall be of a density compatible with the prevailing density of the village;

Economic Development

CM 4 Support the existing uses within the village such as the public house use and encourage the development of village centres uses such as the local shop subject to development management standards;

CM 5 Develop commercial tourism facilities to take advantage of the Poet's Cottage and the proximity of the settlement to the Slieve Blooms;

Infrastructure

CM 6 Provide or improve footpath within the village centre and extend to new residential estate;

CM 7 Examine the feasibility of developing a passive public open space in the village;

Habitats (Natura 2000 Sites)

CM 8 Ensure that any development that has the potential to impact on the Natura 2000 site is subject to Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive;

CM 9 Implement SuDS where appropriate (Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are a natural approach to managing drainage in and around properties and other developments);

CM 10 Ensure full compliance with all existing licences and with measures prescribed under the South Eastern River Basin Management Plan;

CM 11 Ensure that any flood defence works, or river channel maintenance is assessed according to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and carried out in accordance with the NPWS and IFI authorisation;

CM 12 Ensure that recreational use is directed away from sensitive areas within the Natura site;

CM 13 Avoid encroachment on the Natura 2000 site and implement bufferzone of 10-30ms where feasible or as determined following consultation

1.2.3 Laois County Council - Recreation, Play & Sports Strategy 2018-2021

Laois County Council are currently preparing a strategic plan for the continued development of Sport, Recreation & Play in County Laois, and has called for the contribution of all interested to inform the preparation of this plan.

CPDA have been active participants in the process and are happy to assist Laois County Council with this project in any way they can.



1.2.4 Sustainable Energy Communities

Camross Village registered with The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and are members of the 'Sustainable Energy Community' (SEC) Network. The aim of the Network is to catalyse and support a national movement of SEC's operating in various parts of the county. A Sustainable Energy Community is a community in which everyone works together to develop a sustainable energy system and aim as far as possible to be energy efficient, to use renewable energy where feasible and to develop decentralised energy supplies.

Camross Village will be completing an Energy Audit in 2019 and are active participants in this initiative. When our Energy Audit is complete, we hope to apply for appropriate funding with a view to improving our energy efficiency.



1.2.5 Smart Village

The Smart Village concept is primarily about how rural communities themselves make best use of both technology and social innovation to respond to ongoing and emerging challenge. In this context, the Smart Villages concept brings renewed attention to the needs and potential of rural areas, which are often overlooked when compared to urban areas and risk being left behind as society transitions to a new and different future. It also underlines the need for greater focus on empowering communities at the very local level if rural areas are to survive and thrive in the coming decades.

1 The content is based on the work carried out by ENRD Thematic Group on Smart Villages and does not represent the views of the European Commission

A Thematic Group (TG) is working on this topic between September 2017 and July 2019. 'Smart Villages: Revitalising rural services through social and digital innovation'

The EU Action for Smart Villages was launched by the European Parliament in the spring of

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2016, with the support of three European Commission Directorates General (DGs) – DG AGRI, DG REGIO and DG MOVE. Since then the idea has attracted widespread interest from EU Institutions, national and regional governments and rural stakeholders at all levels.

According to the EU Action Plan, Smart Villages are “rural areas and communities which build on their existing strengths and assets as well as on developing new opportunities”, where “traditional and new networks and services are enhanced by means of digital, telecommunication technologies, innovations and better use of knowledge”.

An ENRD video explains that ‘Smart Villages’ are about rural people who take the initiative to find practical responses – both to challenges and to new opportunities arising locally, drawing on the range of tools available, including digital technology, and also thinking beyond the village by building new partnerships. In essence, the Smart Villages concept is very much about a process, where the local community takes on an active role in shaping its own future. There is no one model as the needs and potential of each area vary significantly.

Smart Villages are seen as a goal to aspire to in widely different circumstances. In order to respond to a rapidly evolving context and take account of the huge diversity of rural Europe, it is argued that the concept cannot be narrowly defined ex-ante and has to remain open, inclusive and flexible².

2 For information on the ongoing discussion about definitions see: <http://pilotproject-smartvillages.eu/>



2. Camross Village Plan

2.1 Objectives and Public Consultation

The key aim of this plan is to set out a clear strategy for the development of Camross Village into the future, building on the village's natural setting, built heritage, topography, existing services, linking it to the wider landscape and environments, in order to make it a more attractive place to live, work and visit.

As outlined above there are a range of community organisations that are very active within Camross, however there is a distinct lack of services on offer within the village. There is no retail offering, community internet access, tourism/community focal point. Therefore, this Village Plan seeks to address the local services and infrastructure shortcomings identified through extensive public consultation.

2.1.1 Scope & Purpose of the Plan

The Village Plan therefore includes input for all stakeholders within our community including residents, community groups and businesses.

The Plan also aims to inform an overall shared vision within the wider area, and has been developed in line with the overall objectives of Laois LCDC, Laois Partnership and other State Agencies such as Fáilte Ireland, SEAI etc.

The Plan has been drawn up to complement the Laois County Development Plan, and the plans and policies contained within same.

2.1.2 Main Objectives of the Plan

The main objectives of this Plan are therefore to:

3. To establish a 'shared vision' for the future of Camross;
4. To set out the policies, projects and practical guidelines on the management and enhancement of the area, with an emphasis on practical measures to maximise the enhancement of the village for all;
5. To work intensively with the community to strengthen and enhance community structures;
6. To consolidate the efforts of the range of stakeholders and residents of the village to draw up a single, sustainable plan for the village going forward; and
7. To identify and priorities projects for the village, and funding measures for same.

7.1.1 Approach

It is felt that the most effective way to approach the implementation of this plan includes:

- Agreeing a shared vision and consensus about the future plans for the village;
- Draw on the work completed to date and seek to maximise the wider landscape, existing infrastructure and biodiversity;
- Enhancing the existing cultural, built and natural heritage;
- Encouraging a range of economic activities within the village;
- Facilitating sustainable access and movement; and
- Ensuring that the village centre is the focal point for the village as a whole.

7.1.2 Sustainable Community Structure

The aim of this plan is to enhance the village of Camross, ensuring a sustainable place for our community where they want to work and live now and into the future. As such, it is the aim of this plan to ensure that Camross Community is:

- Active
- Well Run
- Environmentally Sensitive
- Well designed and built
- Well Connected
- Thriving
- Well Serviced
- Fair for everyone

7.1.3 Limits of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to provide an overarching and broad agenda for the future development of the area, covering all aspects of Camross village, from community facilities, economic development etc. It is recognised that the plans and proposals contained within the plan will have positive impacts on the village as a whole, however it is not possible to cover all broader aspects and concerns as part of this plan and will therefore need to be dealt with in more details alongside this overall plan.

It is hoped that this Village Plan will provide a strong basis for Camross to prepare plans for the future.

7.1.4 Priorities

In addition to the above, it was evident that in order for this Village Plan to be as effective as possible and cover the most important requirements of the village now and into the future, it was imperative to compile a priority list of projects to be addressed, based on agreement by the majority of stakeholders. Please refer to Section 3 for full details.

2.2 Objectives and Public Consultation

In line with the requirements of any Village Plan, input from all stakeholders and interested parties within the community is paramount to achieve a shared vision for Camross village, where everyone feels that they have had an appropriate opportunity to both offer their input, and that this input has been considered and incorporated into the plan in a meaningful and useful way. In order to achieve a shared vision for the area, adequate consultation was paramount.

As such a consultation plan was put in place at the start of the process of compiling this Village Plan, with subsequent inception meetings and discussions taking place.

On Saturday 24th February 2018 Camross Parish invited all within the community to participate in a public meeting to give all views and opinions on the future direction of Camross. The public meeting was the first part of a public consultation process on the development of a Village Plan for Camross.

It was the aim of this consultation to feed directly into the Community Plan, and all within the community were encouraged to provide their input.

2.2.1 Public call for submissions

A public call for submissions was advertised in the Leinster Express Newspaper, Camross Facebook page and announced at all Church Services in the parish in the preceding week, inviting all within the community to make a submission and an open invitation to a public workshop which was held on Saturday 24th February 2018. Key stakeholders and community groups were contacted by letter inviting submissions and participation in the meeting.

All relevant consultees identified within the village were contacted, and contact was made via phone, email and letter in order to record their input into the consultation process. This included;

- Statutory Agencies – Local Authority Officials, Elected Members, Service Providers
- Educational Groups – School
- Environment & Health
- Culture, Heritage & Tourism

- Local Businesses & Services
- Local Interest/Community Groups
- Individuals

And all stakeholders as outlined within Section 1.1.3 above.

2.2.2 Public Meetings

As outlined above a public meeting was held on Saturday 24th February to identify and consider all potential projects within the village, get the views of all interested parties, with a view to making a priority list of projects to be implemented as part of this Village Plan.

2.3 Public Participation - Key Findings

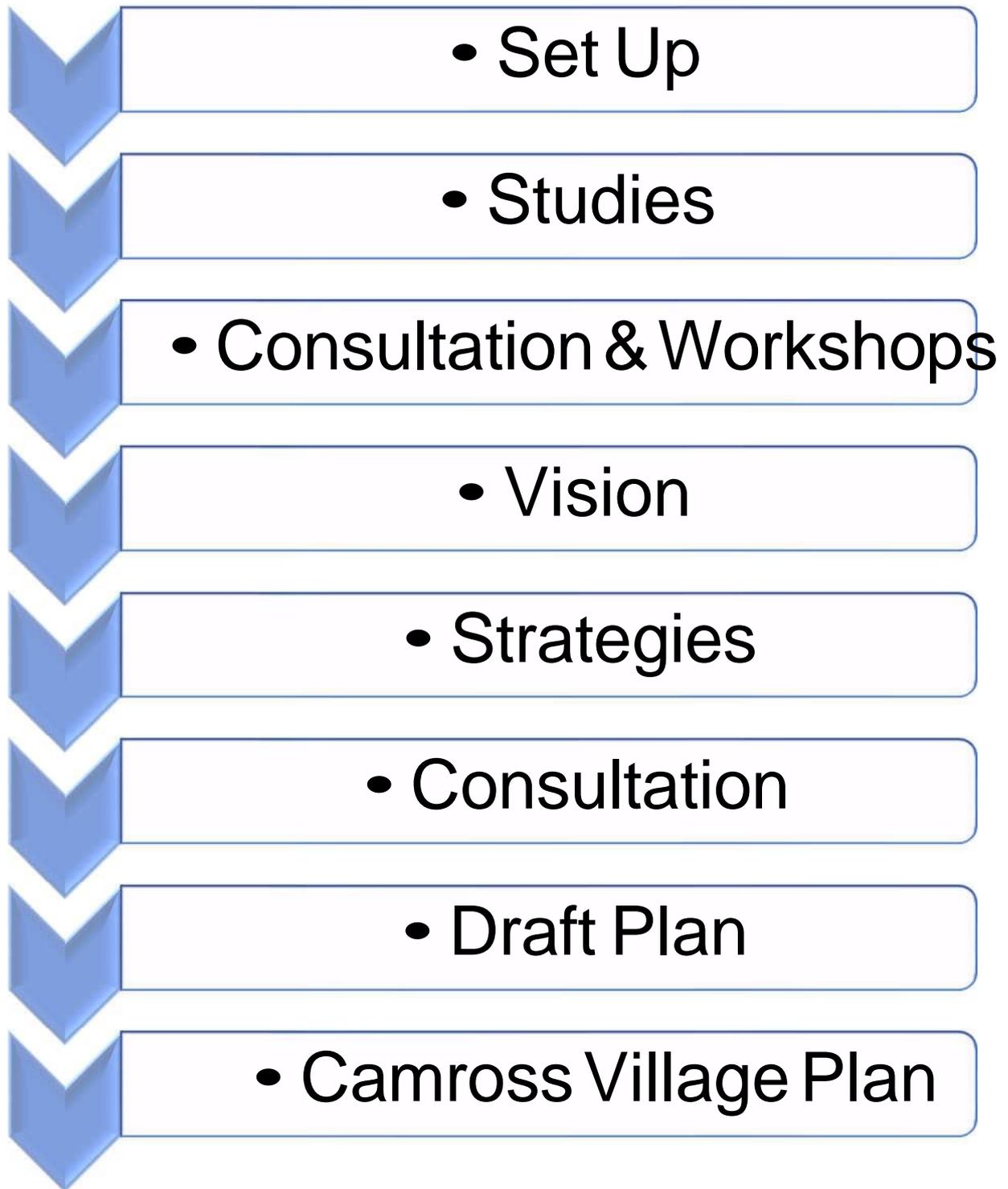
The main themes raised as part of the public participation for this Village Plan included:

- Development of the newly acquired Parish Field
- Absence of Community Hub – Shop, Coffee Shop, Internet Hub
- Insufficient services for elderly to combat rural isolation
- Absence of Recreational Activities available with the village
- Absence of Digital Hub, Business Centre
- Absence of Focal Point for Rural Tourism (Poet's Cottage is part of the Laois Heritage Trail)
- Need for meeting rooms
- Enhance of existing buildings within the village
- Absence of suitable storage facilities for the local Scout Troup

The main focus of Public Consultation held in relation to the Camross Village Plan centred around input and suggestions for the development of a newly acquired field and its surrounding environs within the village for community use, and also the associated development of a multi purposes hub for the village at Poet's Cottage Complex.

It is imperative to all of the stakeholders within the village that both developments are in the best manner possible in order to meet the current and future needs of as many people as possible within the Camross Community.

In total 23 no. proposals were received. Please refer to Appendix 3 which outlines a full and comprehensive list of all of the collective suggestions put forward by the community. As outlined above the group canvassed the community and after consultation collated the material gathered into the following proposals list.



The following provides a summary of all of the proposals for inclusion within this Village Plan, and includes details of their ranked importance following the extensive consultation process completed:

Strategy	Category	Key Project	Rank
Community	New Field Dev	Sports Pitches	High
	New Field Dev	Running Track & Athletics Club	Medium
	New Field Dev	Ball Wall	Low
	New Field Dev	Indoor Handball & Squash Court	Low
	New Field Dev	Indoor Gym	High
	New Field Dev	Playground	High
	New Field Dev	Retirement Accommodation	High
	New Field Dev	Various Classes & Clubs	High
	New Field Dev	Ancillary Facilities (Changing Rooms etc)	High
	Multipurpose Hub	Outdoor Seating Areas & Meeting Point	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Meeting Rooms	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Sports & Recreational Facility	High
	Multipurpose Hub	Digital Hub & Hot Desking	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Facility for Exhibitions	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Classroom Facilities	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Location for Camross Scout Troop	Medium
	River Enhance	Improvements river facilities	High
	Miscellaneous	Community Kitchen	High
	Miscellaneous	Poet's Cottage Enhancements	Medium
Economy	New Field Dev	Caravan/Camping Park	Low
	New Field Dev	Coffee Shop	High
	New Field Dev	Interpretative Centre	Low
	New Field Dev	Shop	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Community Tea Rooms	Medium
Place & Environment	New Field Development	Riverside walk incorporating additional features and link bridge	High
	New Field Dev	Road Improvements	Low
	New Field Dev	Forest Enhancement	Low
	New Field Dev	Wooden Hedge Maize	N/A
	New Field Dev	Lawn Bowling Area	Low
	New Field Dev	Parish Garden / Allotment	Low
	Multipurpose Hub	Landscaped Outdoor Area	High
	Multipurpose Hub	Toilets & Shower facilities	Low
	Multipurpose Hub	Playground & Outdoor Gym Equipment	Medium
	Multipurpose Hub	Hub for Slieve Bloom Bike Trail	Low
	River Enhance	Address river erosion issues	High
	River Enhance	Improve the river area	High
	Miscellaneous	Footpath & Public Lighting Improvements	High
	Miscellaneous	Road & Carparking Improvements	High
	Miscellaneous	Bottle Bank Facility	High
	Miscellaneous	Bike Trail Improvements	Low
	Miscellaneous	Tidy Towns Tree Nursery	Low
	Miscellaneous	Energy Saving Works	High
	Miscellaneous	Smart Village concept- aspire	High

Figure 10: Summary of Proposals

2.3 Understanding the Place

2.3.1 Landscape Context & Character

Camross Village is a small rural village that has developed around the linear main street at a staggered minor crossroads. There are no ancient historical buildings, but those present have been presented and developed by the Community as required.

In the recent past the Parish decommissioned the Old Catholic Parish Church and built a new one nearby. In 2000 it was developed into a Millennium Garden and open-air altar to allow outdoor ceremonies.

The compactness of the village means the church, graveyard, school, community hall, playing field and parish land are all on the same complex, physically connected within the village centre.

2.3.2 Natural Heritage

Camross Village is located at the foothill of the Slieve Bloom mountains and is a destination along the Slieve Bloom Bike Trail. It is a rural area with the surrounding area consisting of agricultural and forestry.

It is noteworthy in August 2018 the Waters and Communities Office collaborated with Camross Parish Development Association to host a Water Heritage event at the Little Delour River in the village.

We were informed the Little Delour is one of the few remaining waterbodies in Ireland which retains “pristine water quality” which is the highest quality water possible with only 10% of Irelands waterbodies being at this level. Consequently, we have included the river in our Village plan and will work hard to protect it while also making it centre stage in our plans.

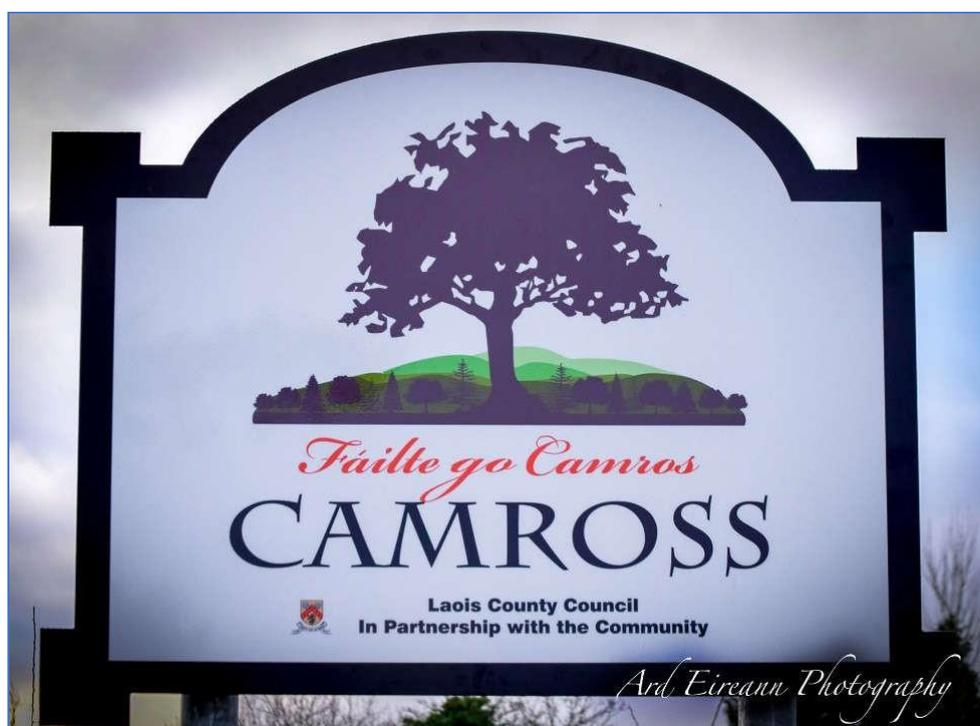


Figure 11: Camross Sign

2.3.3 Land Use & Urban Form

As noted, the above Residential development in the area mainly consists of one-off houses located in the rural hinterland serviced by individual septic tanks, together with more longstanding dwelling units.

There is only 1 group of houses within the village consisting of 12 houses names Ard Erin.

Services in the village include a Roman Catholic Church, National School, Community Employment Scheme (CES) - Poet's Cottage, a recently refurbished community hall, public house and newly build Recreational Building and Play School. There are no retail facilities available within the village, with the nearest services available in Mountrath.

The GAA Field is of major significant to the village and is located approximately 3km from the village. Recreational space is also available at the school playing fields.

The outlying areas of Coolrain and Killanure also form part of this overall Village Plan. See Appendix 1 & 2 for details.

2.3.4 Public Open Space

Camross is a rural village surrounding mainly by forestry and grass agricultural land. There are many forest walks in the vicinity including Lacca Woods and Windsor Bog.

The Poet's Cottage is located in the centre of this complex and is the hub of the village. It is a thatched Irish Cottage, build by the community in the vernacular style to replicate a local Cottage of that time, and also to celebrate the local poet Patrick Ryan.

The GAA Field is of major significant to the village and is located approximately 3km from the village. Recreational space is also available at the school playing fields.

There are also a number of key projects underway within the village to improve and enhance the civic space within the village. Please refer to Section 3 for full details.

2.3.5 Access & Movement

The primary vehicle access to the town is via the main local road, which follows the main street in an east-west direction. The village itself is accessible and there are 7 no. regional roads that access same, from Roscrea, The Pike of Rushall, Castletown, Mountrath, Clonaslee and Kinnity directions.

Camross is located approximately 11km from the M9 Dublin/Limerick motorway and 14km from the M8 Dublin/Cork motorway.

The main parking resource for the village is located along the Main Street, by means of parallel parking. There is public car parking within the church grounds and also to the rear of the community hall.

Pedestrian movement is also focused on the main street of the village; however, footpaths do require attention.

In terms of public transport, there is a bi-weekly Local Link Service to Portlaoise and Mountrath which is well utilised.



3 Strategy

3.1 Strategies for Camross Village Plan

It is the key aim of this plan to ensure that people want to live, work and spend their recreational time in Camross village, now and into the future. The village therefore needs to meet the needs of residents and users by provide adequate facilities, being sensitive to the surrounding environment, and improve and enhancing existing and new services and facilities.

Camross Village has the potential to be a vibrant, thriving local rural community, with a strong sense of place.

Vibrant communities are:

- Inclusive and Fair;
- Healthy and Safe;
- Aware and Involved; and
- Have a strong sense of identity and civic pride.

Thriving local economies are:

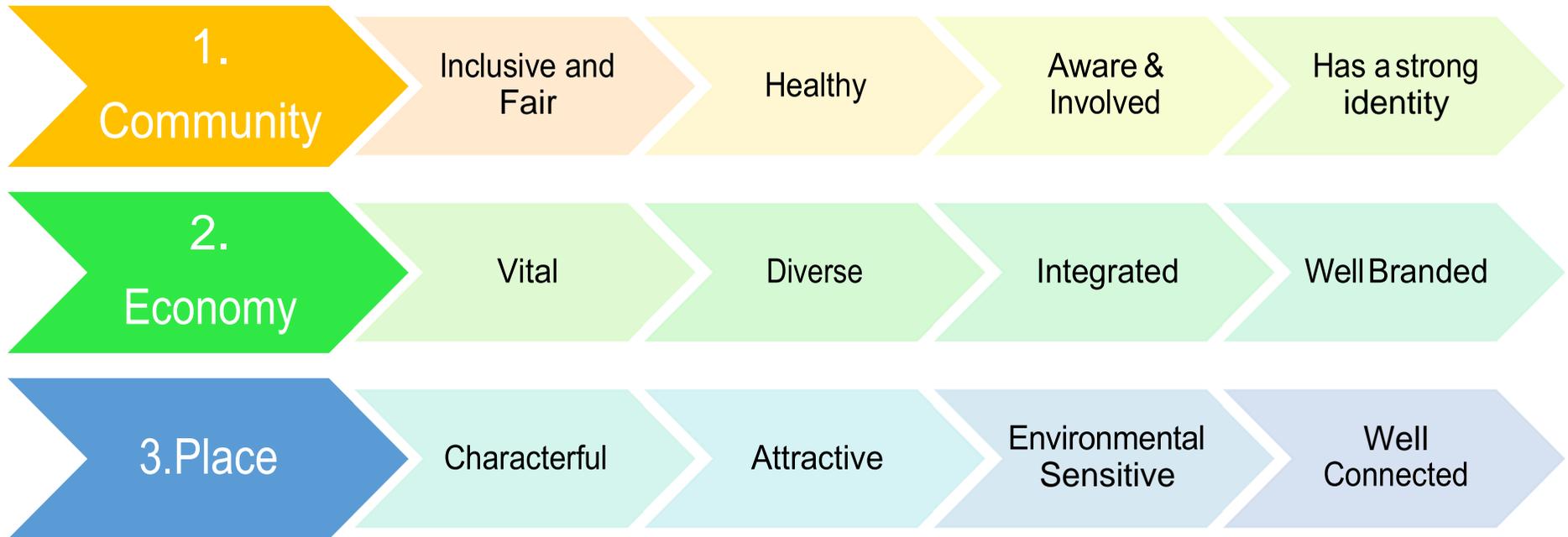
- Vital;
- Diverse;
- Integrated; and
- Well branded

Places with a strong sense of place and respect for the environment are:

- Characterful;
- Attractive;
- Environmental sensitive; and
- Well Connected



The Aim of this Plan is to make Camross a community with...



3.2 Public Realm Projects - Examples of Completed Projects

The following section provided an example of a public realm project which has been completed within the village to date. The key aim of this plan is to build on the excellent work and community spirit which has been utilised to complete these projects to date, further improvement and enhance these facilities, and incorporate and link them into the proposed priority projects to be completed as part of this plan.

3.2.1 The Orchard Garden

The Orchard Community Garden has been a major project for the Camross Tidy Town group with the CES providing the manpower and building skills. It has been built using donated, recycled and repurposed items.

Phase 1

In 2016 Camross Tidy Town used grant funding to commence the development of an Organic Community Garden at the centre of Camross village in the old parochial Orchard.

The main aim of the project was to development the site into a “fit for purpose” educational, multifunctional outdoor space where horticultural and gardening could be undertaken, and that a vegetable garden would benefit the wider community.

The initial phase delivered the installation of hard landscaping and sowing of the first batch of crops, then using donated and recycled items the group were able to process the garden further than anticipated.

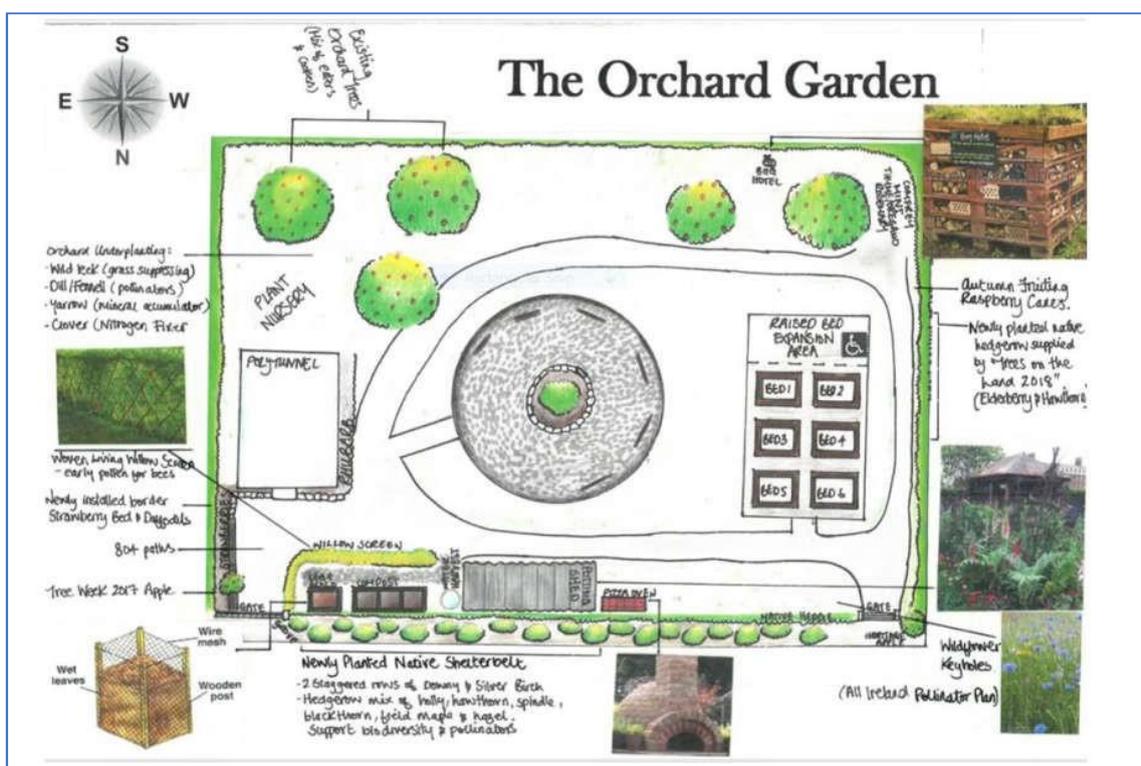


Figure 12: The Orchard Garden – Inception Sketch

Phase 2

Then in 2017 further grant aid allowed the provision of seating, a potting shed and boundary fencing to be installed.

In 2018 access to the garden was addressed and improvements to the roadway and parking are being delivered.



Figure 13: The Orchard Garden



Figure 14: The Orchard Garden – Aerial View

3.2.2 Vintage Machinery Display

The development of the Orchard Community Garden brought extra footfall to this area and the Tidy Towns group with CES support developed a Vintage Farm Machinery display on the approach road to the gardens. This permanent display in the field where all vintage events are held remains a work in

progress as further machinery has been donated and the display area will be extended in this appropriate setting. The Camross Vintage Club were supportive of this endeavour and the machinery being displayed together in one site.



Figure 15: Vintage Machinery Display



Figure 16: Vintage Event in progress beside the display area

3.3 Priority Projects

The following section outlines the Public Realm Projects that Camross Village aim to prioritise within the scope of this Village Plan and are in line with the outcomes of the community consultation undertaken in the development of this strategy for the village.

It is important to note that it is the aim of this plan to integrate the Orchard Community Garden into the proposed new developments within the village, and as such the following proposals are to further integrate and enhance the village as a whole, with a view to forming a Village Hub for all those living, working and visiting Camross Village.

Details of the following Priority Projects will now be outlined:

Project 1 –Camross Village Hub

Project 2 -Village Park development

Project 3 - Delour River Upgrade Work

Project 4 – Sheltered/ retirement Accommodation

Project 5 – Additional Miscellaneous Projects

Project 6 - Coolrain Area

Locals have identified need for public toilet at the village playground, and if funding allows this will form our 6th Priority Project. Please refer to **Appendix 1** for further details.

Project 7 – Killanure Area

Please refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

3.3.1 Project 1: Camross Village Hub - Multipurpose Recreational Area in Poets Cottage Complex

Priority Project No. 1 involves the development of a “Village Hub” which will be multipurpose recreational area located at the centre of our village at the Poets Cottage complex. This will be made possible by completing the building behind the Poets Cottage and linking both buildings by a new courtyard. This courtyard can also function as a new public space. It is also the aim of CPDA to develop a community gym and link the “Village Hub” with the evolving Village Park and incorporate appropriate landscaping. We then aim to address the tourist/heritage aspect of the Poets Cottage.

Following extensive consultation and discussions with various members of Camross Parish, the project that would appear to be the most beneficial to the widest cohort of the community at large, is the redevelopment of Poet’s Cottage Complex. It is felt that this project would allow for a new and modern facility for use by the entire community for sports, arts, community and recreational uses.

As such this is the project that has been chosen as Priority No. 1. Further details are outlined within **Section 4** below which includes Sketches and Cost Plan details.

3.3.2 Project 2: Camross Village Park Development

Priority Project No. 2 is development of our newly acquired parish field as our “Village Park Development”. This will incorporate the enhanced sports pitches, looped walkway and enhanced riverside walk. It is also our aim to develop new playground facilities, further landscaping etc.

Our Committee (CPDA) was initially formed to progress and deliver this portion of our village regeneration which has evolved into our Village Park project. Initial funding from the Town & Village Renewal Scheme allowed us to install a looped walkway and a Sports Capital Grant gave funding to

enhance the playing pitches. This is the area we initially addressed and will continue to develop the landscaping aspect linking it to our new village Hub. Our national school is in this complex and therefore has access to these outdoor facilities- this has been a major incentive to our planning and fundraising.

The Community rowed behind the project and volunteered their time, work and skills to help the instillation get the work progressed.

A committee member designed the walkway project **logo**, and this was launched at our Public Consultation evening

In October 2018 we held a sod turning event where we launched our project and had media coverage. It was a very successful evening where school children representing our local schools and two of our senior ladies officiated.



Figure 17: Hannah & Kathleen turning the sod



Figure 18: Group photo at launch



Figure 19: Camross Walkway Route

This above map illustrates the village complex, and the school adjacent to the walkway route.

The following photographs illustrate the riverside portion of the walkway that has also been progressing with the support of the Community Water Office. It is a very special part of our walkway and enhances the project where we opened windows to the river, creating some nice break out areas seating will be added when the groundworks are completed.



Figure 20: River View



Figure 21: River View

This portion of our village plan (Project 2) remains a work in progress and we will continue to seek funds to install further phases. Immediate plans involve further work along the riverside portion of the walkway, planting native trees and hedging, to address fencing on the western boundary and to work with the Tidy Towns group on some environmental projects. We also hope to get support for the installation of a playground.

3.3.3 Project 3: Little Delour River Improvements & Enhancements

In Summer 2018 CPDA started work in partnership with the Community Water Office and after hosting a Heritage week and Water Heritage Day 2018 event were informed that the Little Delour River was one of the few remaining waterbodies in Ireland which retains “pristine water quality” which is the highest quality water possible with only 10% of Irelands waterbodies being at this level. Our Community Water Officer advised that we should aim to bring the river into community focus and therefore encourage people to take ownership and be protective of it and other waterbodies, that is now our aim.

To date we have de-tunnelled the river and are planning further ecological landscaping to enhance the looped walkway, (all projects are interconnected). We hope to continue working with The Community Water Office to address erosion at a sand bank and develop a riverside location as an outdoor classroom, all within our new Village Park area.

With this in mind, the upgrade of the Little Delour River is our Priority No. 3 Project.



Figure 22: Delour River highlighted in yellow



Figure 23: Heritage Water Day 2018, exploring the Little Delour River in Camross Village



Figure 24: Billy Flynn, Ecologist, gives talk on Little Delour River

3.3.4 Project 4: Sheltered / Retirement Accommodation

For Priority Project No. 4 CDPA aim to carry out a scoping exercise to investigate further the need for sheltered accommodation for the elderly. The key aim here is to address rural isolation in the elderly and enhance services for this cohort in the village.

3.3.5 Project 5: Additional Miscellaneous Projects

Further developments that require to be added to Camross Village include:

- Works identified from our energy audit to improve our Community energy efficiency, for example improve insulation in community hall, review heating in community hall and school etc.
- Community Hall Kitchen will require upgrading to help facilitate the growing demand and usage.
- The Footpaths through the village will require attention.
- Street lighting needs to be addressed.
- Car park requires an upgrade, resurfacing, kerbing, lighting.
- We have been informed by the County Council that our bottle bank can no longer remain in its current riverside location and early 2019 it will be removed. An alternative site has not been found to date and we have been unable to solve the dilemma. Unless a new site (that fulfils all requirements) is found the village will lose its bottle bank facility.
- Poet's Cottage upgrade redevelopment to enhance its tourism appeal and tap into heritage and tourism funding.
- Investigate possibility of a Community Tea Rooms and shop- as a community meeting point and resource.
- Mindful of the bike trail and possible increased footfall to village, how will it link, what can we do?
- Tree and plant nursery: Ongoing support for this Tidy Towns initiative where trees, shrubs and plants are being propagated for the village Park.
- Continue evolving as a Smart Village and avail of the promised opportunities where "traditional and new networks and services are enhanced by means of digital, telecommunication technologies, innovations and better use of knowledge". (EU Action Plan Smart Villages 2016)

4. Multipurpose Recreational Village Hub

The main priority project for the Camross Village Plan is to develop a Village Hub that will function as a multipurpose recreational space providing new enhanced facilities for our community. As such it is our aim to finish the multipurpose sports recreational building behind the Poets Cottage and develop a new "Village Hub". To link the existing Poets Cottage with the new building by developing a courtyard area that can also function as a new public space. To develop a new community gym and link the "Village Hub" with the evolving Village Park by appropriate landscaping. Then address the tourist/heritage aspect of the Poets Cottage.

We plan to finish the multipurpose sports recreational building behind the Poets Cottage and create a courtyard that will link to the Poets Cottage. This courtyard will function as a new public space and link the "Village Hub" with the evolving "Village Park" by appropriate landscaping.

We will approach this project in phases as funding becomes available.

4.1 Phase 1

In 2018 Camross Parish Development Association in partnership with Camross Tidy Towns group sourced funding with a view to transforming the space between the Poet's Cottage and the new recreational building into a sheltered courtyard. It was envisaged that this multipurpose recreational space would greatly enhance the amenities in our village.

This courtyard can then function as an outdoor seating area for the proposed Community Tea Rooms, an outdoor meeting point for our older residents when they can sit and chat when meeting in our new community rooms for their recreational pursuits. A place where our Comhaltas groups can sit and play music, our set dancers dance.

A courtyard that can be used by our youth for creative outdoor events, perhaps small plays or theatre experiences. It will serve as a safe outdoor area where our older residents could benefit from seated exercise classes or some projects in the future if we were lucky to engage with the sports organisations.

It is envisaged that landscaped areas of cobblelock suitable for dancing incorporating areas of sympathetic planting, permanent seating, to display our Pride of Place sculpture, a water feature. The main aim to provide additional facilities suitable for our older residents but still being suitable for all the community, a place where they could sit and still be part of what was happening. An area that can be used for sports and recreational pursuits but can also be adapted for social or cultural occasions. It will have to have hard landscaping suitable for high traffic areas, as it will function as the entry and egress site for the building. If the proposed Community shop and Tea rooms are located in the area it will also cater for that traffic and be an ideal spot for an older person to sit and relax.



Figure 25: Poet's Cottage – Courtyard located to the rear



Figure 26: Poet's Cottage & Courtyard

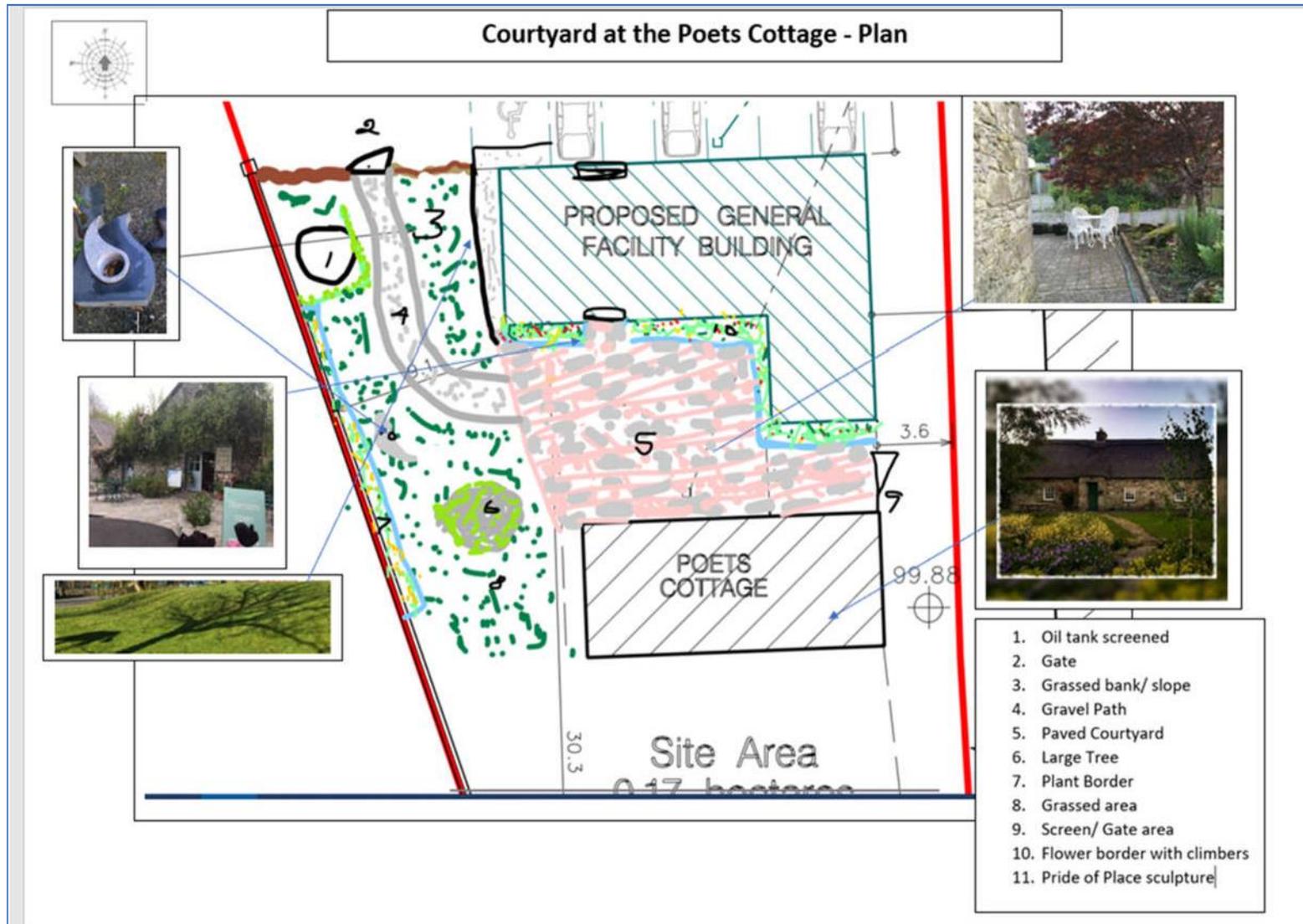


Figure 27: Poet's Cottage Courtyard – Plan for development of same

4.1 Phase 2 - Future Plans

It is envisaged that Phase 2 of this plan will allow the completion of the surrounding buildings and incorporate a multipurpose sports/recreational facility, creation of the Camross Village Hub, and will deliver the following:

- Small Meeting rooms, suitable for small intimate groups, social gatherings, music tutorials, small yoga or dance classes, seated exercise
- Upstairs an open recreation space with exercise machines, facilities also suitable for the older person, darts, cards, again suitable for small exercise/dance classes, adaptable for all ages.
- Community Coffee Shop incorporating a shop for basics items. Incorporating artisan produce and crafts for sale. A place to relax after a sports class
- Facility for occasional art/ craft exhibitions
- Digital hub, hot desk facility, supporting local enterprise and study/library facilities for students.
- Toilet/ shower facilities to support our walkway and enhanced sports/ recreational facilities.
- Classroom facilities for the CES/general training and further courses run at the community garden. Being able to use the café for meals, a previous limitation; and
- Enhancing our tourist facilities. Coffee shop/link from bike trail. Allow us to develop our Poet's Cottage facilities

It is the aim of this Plan to provide sports, recreational and play facilities for all, and this facility will be available to everyone within the community. Particular emphasis will be placed on the needs of the older people with the Camross community, while attempted to target social isolation and loneliness. The key to the provision of the Camross Village Hub is that it will be inclusive and open to everyone.

The facility will be open to all groups, small classes, incorporating a range of recreational activities, crafts, book clubs etc. The enhanced facilities will enable us to organise more age-related events, providing better facilities for our older population, perhaps even the health services offering some satellite health clinic or exercise class. Our research has also suggested that by increasing services and facilities in one area it can also stimulate growth in another, perhaps allowing other small local business to develop in tandem, like supplying the Tea Rooms or providing a service like dance or yoga class.

It is likely that due to funding constraints the completion of the new buildings will be provided on a phased basis. It is felt that that this multipurpose areas will greatly enhance the facilities within the village, and benefit all residents and groups.

As can be seen from the map below our community hub will be located at the centre of our village placing it at the heart of everything happening in the community.



Figure 29: Camross Village – Community Facilities



Figure 30: Proposed Building Improvements



Figure 31: Side view of building showing area for proposed courtyard



Figure 32: Building to be used for proposed multipurpose recreational Village Hub



4.3 Courtyard Development

It is the aim of CPDA to develop a sheltered courtyard at the centre of our village as a recreational/multipurpose space. This area located behind the Poets Cottage has been created by the construction of our new Recreational/Sports building. The CPDA have been given permission to transform this space into a courtyard that can greatly enhance the amenities in our village.

Conceptual sketches have been prepared for the proposed works at Poet's Cottage, see included below. These sketches were prepared in order to consider and illustrate the best way to utilise this space for use by the community.

The sketches were used as a consultation tool to highlight the proposals to the community and to seek their feedback. Following consultation it was decided that the best and most appropriate use of this space would include hard paving as opposed to the extended lawn shown in Figure 35 below. This decision was taken as a direct result of the outcome of the public consultation process, given that the courtyard will be a high traffic area, being used for dancing, outdoor café and community tea rooms etc.

We costed an initial plan which would incorporate a large paved area, suitable for café use, outdoor entertainment and most importantly be suitable for Comhaltas use where dancing and music could be performed. Landscaping gardens incorporating stone work and permanent seating, planting and bespoke gates and screening to enclose the area and adding to the ambiance. Some lighting, a water feature and incorporate our Pride of Place sculpture. The Tidy Towns were helping with the instillation by growing some plants, collecting top soil and securing some of the required stone.

We received some grant money, arranging to deliver some of the features later when funds became available. We will deliver some of the features by using our CES team and hope to reduce costs by partnering with the Tidy Town group who have collaborated on the design.

At our planning meeting we decided that it was necessary to make the patio area larger than initially planned and of course this was going to be more expensive. Observation of recent pedestrian traffic had highlighted this as essential for traffic flow and practicality. The area needed to be large enough to cope with the events that people were already planning for the space.

We are situated on the school complex and this has provided an additional challenge as we must work around the school timetable (we share entrances and are adjacent to the playground) so this may mean delays, working at weekends or early in the morning to get certain jobs done before the children arrive. It also means that the finished courtyard will also be a valuable outdoor space that may also be useful to the school.

The courtyard will be delivered in stages as funds allow and linked to the Village Park by our landscaping. It is envisaged that it will be an ongoing project that will develop as new needs are identified and money becomes available.



Figure 33: Conceptual Sketch Poet's Cottage (1)



Figure 34: Conceptual Sketch Poet's Cottage (2) – Noted extended lawn area to be replaced with paving (see note above)

5. Coolrain & Killanure

Coolrain

The village of Coolrain is situated in the west of the county in the foothills of the Slieve Blooms, 6 kilometres from Mountrath and 7 km from Borris in Ossory. It lies due north of the approved M7/M8 motorway. It has experienced very limited amounts of development, mainly in the form of one-off dwellings on its southern and eastern outskirts.

The village itself developed in a linear pattern along a long road, and there are significant gaps along the main street for potential infill development. A number of vernacular style Cottages with thatched roofs are located on the main road which gives the village character & is attractive to tourists.

Other buildings along this main street are single and two-storey traditional style structures with pitched roofs. Roadside boundary treatments are of stone.

A number of archaeological monuments are located at Anatrim, east of the village centre. The river to the south of the village is a Special Area of Conservation. Coolrain does not have its own public waters supply at present. A recycling bring bank is located in the village centre. The absence of foul drainage infrastructure is a development constraint. Other constraints include the limited service and community base in the village.



Figure 35: Coolrain Aerial View



Figure 36: Coolrain Main Street



Figure 37: Church at Annatrim



Figure 38: Sheeran's Pub



Figure 39: Coolrain



Figure 40: Coolrain Playground

Laois County Development Plan – Coolrain

Within the Settlement Hierarchy of the County Development Plan Coolrain is also designated a Village less than 400 population.

The written objectives of the Council for the village are as follows:

Character and Built Form

COOL1 Infill development to consolidate Main Street and backland development to the east of the Main Street;

COOL2 Ensure development along the Main Street is sympathetic to the vernacular character of some of its buildings;

COOL3 Encourage the restoration or redevelopment of de relict, vacant or underused structures, as appropriate;

COOL4 Landscaping features and welcome signs incorporating natural materials to be located on the approach roads to the village in consultation with the community;

COOL5 Housing developments shall be of a density compatible with the prevailing density of the village, higher densities may be considered within the village centre.

Economic Development

COOL6 Support the establishment of a retail unit or additional commercial uses within the village;

COOL7 Encourage the development of commercial tourism facilities at Coolrain to take advantage of the proximity of the settlement to the Slieve Bloom Mountains; Infrastructure **COOL8** Maintain the footpath network within the village centre;

COOL9 Provide a direct pedestrian link between the main street and the monuments at Antrim by way of backland development if the opportunities arise;

COOL10 Improve incrementally the existing road network;

COOL11 Support the establishment of additional community services;

COOL12 Provide disabled parking within the village centre.

Habitats (Natura 2000 Sites)

COOL13 Ensure that any development that has the potential to impact on the Natura 2000 site is subject to Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This includes recreation or residential plans for the river area that have the potential to impact on the Natura 2000 site;

COOL14 Implement SuDS where appropriate (Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are a natural approach to managing drainage in and around properties and other developments);

COOL15 Ensure full compliance with all existing licences and with measures prescribed under the South Eastern River Basin Management Plan;

COOL16 Ensure that new housing has sufficient wastewater treatment facilities and conditions of maintenance attached;

COOL17 Ensure that any flood defence works or river channel maintenance is assessed according to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and carried out in accordance with the NPWS and IFI authorisation;

COOL18 Ensure that recreational use is directed away from sensitive areas within the Natura site;

COOL19 Avoid encroachment on the Natura 2000 site and implement buffer zone of 10-30 meters where feasible or as determined following consultation with the Inland Fisheries Ireland.

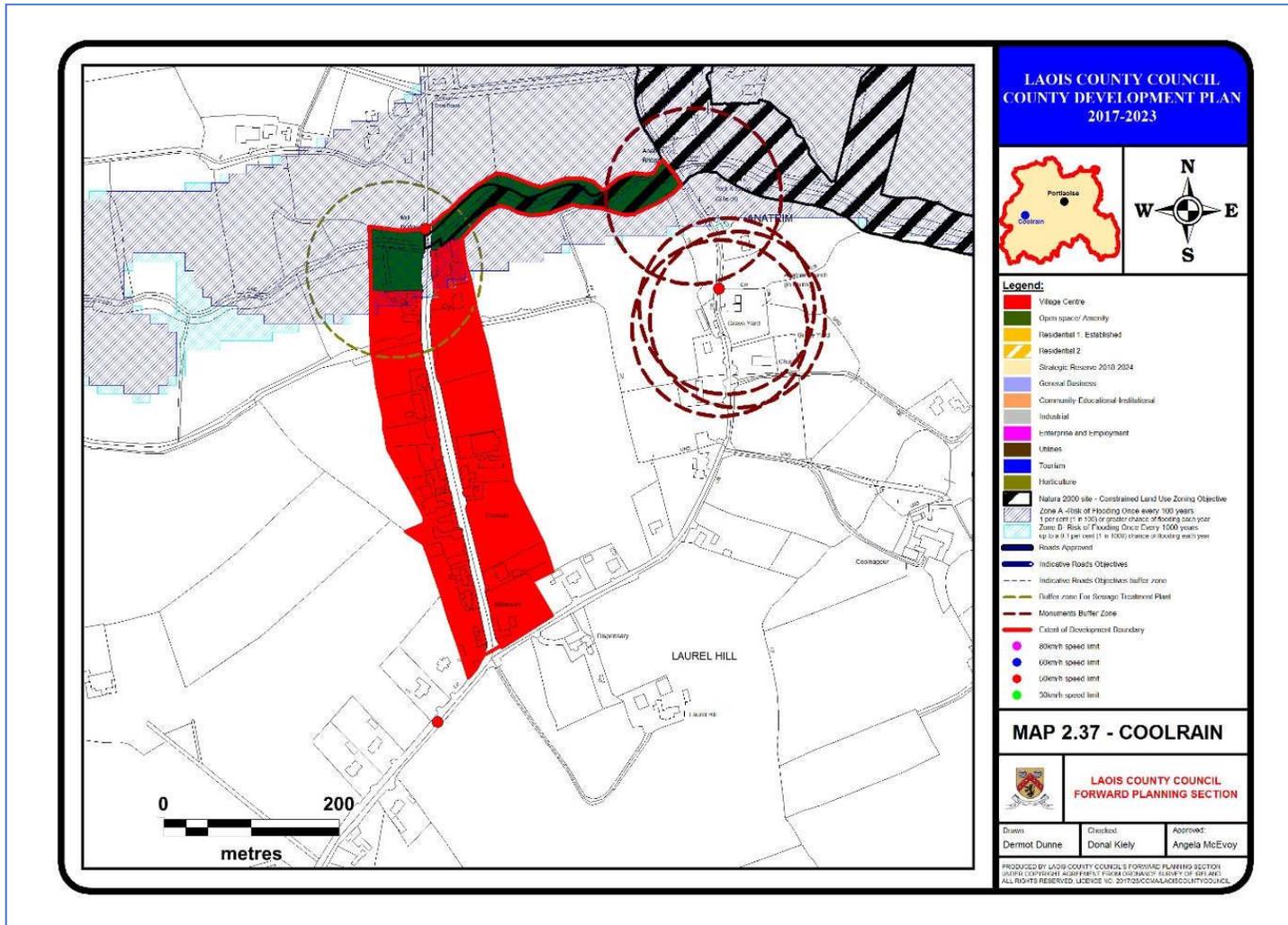


Figure 41: Coolrain Land Use Zoning Objectives

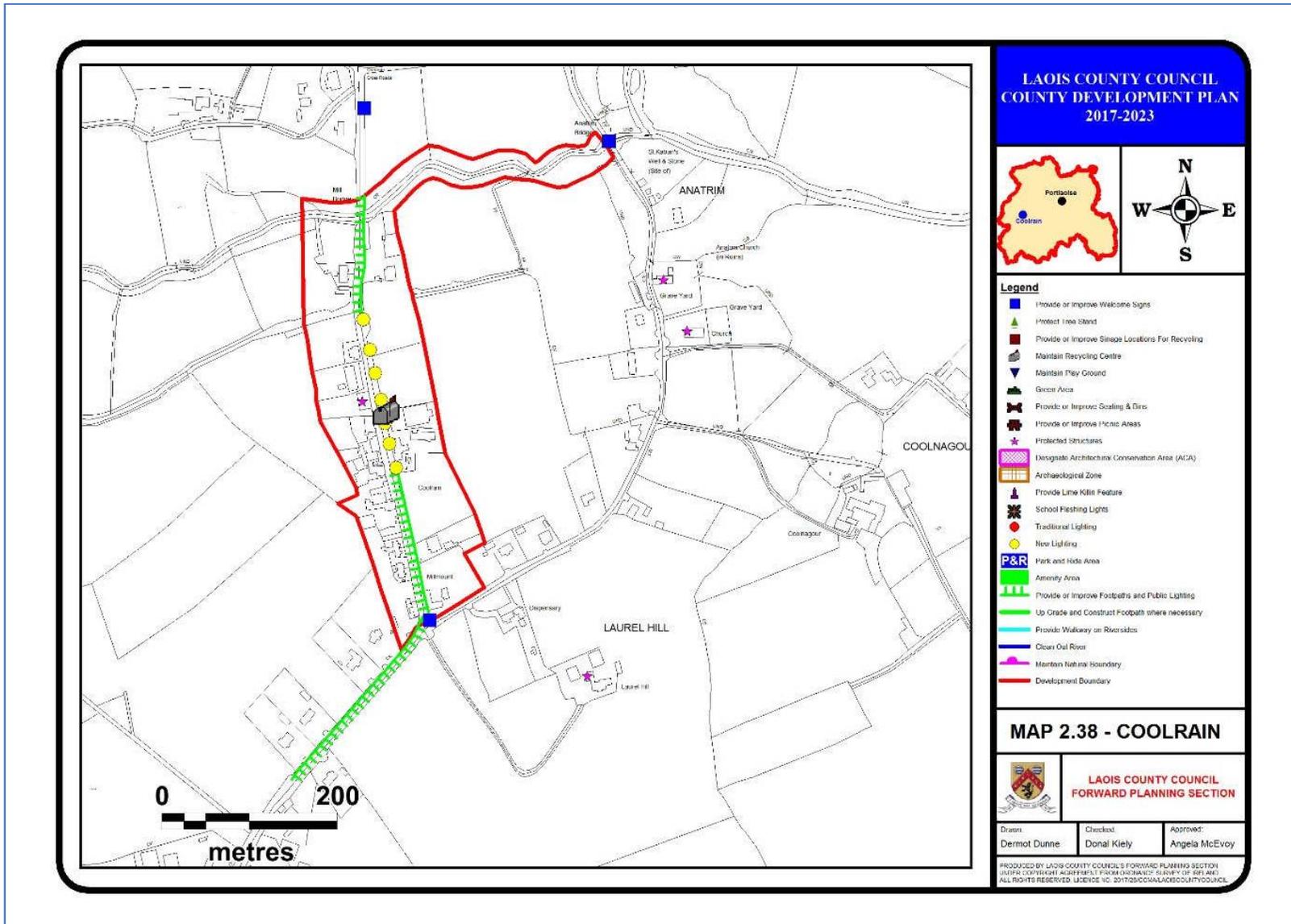


Figure 42: Coolrain Land Use Zoning Objectives

Work required in the future as funds allow:

- Waste Water Treatment Plant was identified in the County Development Plan
- Public consultation identified the need for a public toilet at the playground.

Killanure

The townland of Killanure also forms part of this Village Plan. It is noteworthy that Killanure has not been included within the Laois County Development Plan. Its name means “Coill an Lubhair” which translates as Church of the yew tree.

A national school and Catholic church are situated at the junction of the R440 and the L1030, the school having a new extension opened in 2018. Local clubs use the school facilities for meetings after hours. Both buildings share a car park.

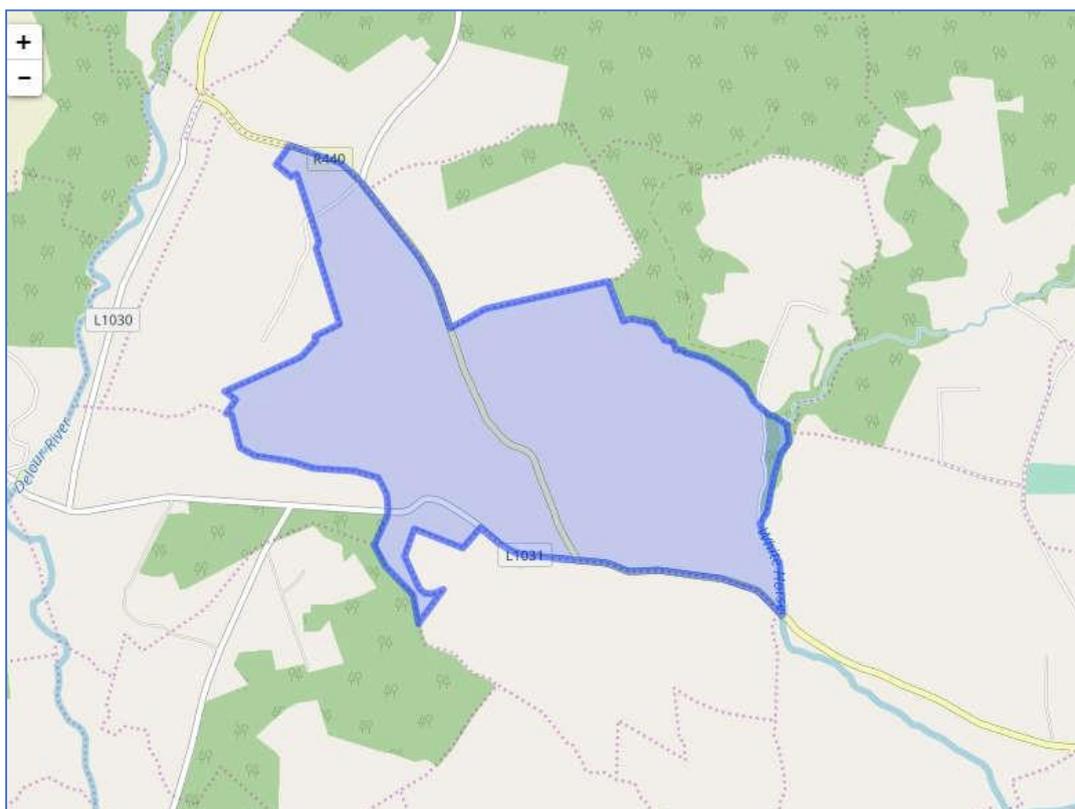


Figure 43: Killanure Townland



Figure 44: Killanure School



Figure 45: Killanure School



Figure 46: Killanure Catholic Church

Work required in the future as funds allow:

- Killanure Car Park - It has been suggested that Killanure would benefit from an upgrade in context of the increased footfall expected from the Cycling trail and the fact that it is also used as a base for walking groups who use the car park as a meeting point when exploring the Slieve Blooms.
- Upgrading of this area was suggested with some landscaping, seating and an information board with maps etc suitable for the tourist trail. The current road signage needs review as it is cluttered, especially at the village T junction. An old pump in the village could be restored and become a feature before it rusts away. It was suggested that Killanure's rural/ scenic aspect could be further enhanced as it is a beautiful location with huge potential.
- It was also put forward that the addition of a handrail at the church is required, and to improve the school / playground/ pitches.

6. Delivery

6.1 Implementation

The following section outlines the proposed implementation processes for the Camross Village Plan.

6.1.1 Setting out roles & responsibilities

The plan is intended to coordinate community interests and as such the implementation of the plan as a whole will need to be driven by the community to a large extent, underpinned by professionals as well as political commitment, particularly for projects affecting, or affected by, the public realm. Places where high quality development has been delivered tend to share one or more of the following characteristics:

- A proactive local authority;
- A dedicated delivery organisation; and
- An influential project promoter acting within a supportive organisation.

6.1.2 Establishing Priorities

Implementing the plan in full will require substantial works and investment over the short medium and long term. This requires priorities to be established in terms of potential project costs and benefits and their likely timescales, so that delivery (and expectations) can be managed effectively

The projects selected by Camross Parish have been ranked in order of importance. It is believed that the plan will set out works subject to finding and/or external finance.

The priorities identified here relate to those projects and actions described in the plan. Other priorities relating to wider objectives remain to be identified and driven by the community of Camross.

6.2 Funding Opportunities

There are a variety of funding mechanisms available to support the implementation of the plan, however they are limited in scope. Therefore, full implementation will require a combination of proactive approaches including significant private investment:

- Town & Village Renewal Scheme
- Sports Capital Grant
- Tidy Town Federation
- Laois County Council
- Failte Ireland/NDP
- Department of Environment, Communities and Local Government
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Heritage Council Grants Scheme
- Grants scheme for the conservation of protected structures
- Laois County Enterprise Board
- Enterprise Ireland
- Laois Partnership

- Development contributions scheme

Camross Parish will require to set up financial committees with particular relevance where public funding support is required to be matched by private and/ or community investment. Wider sustainability objectives will require a combination of 'top-down' and 'bottom up' initiatives, as they will require support of national agencies but will need to be driven by the community

6.3 Monitoring Progress

Monitoring should be undertaken by the implementation group on an annual basis and take place account of:

- The main physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of Camross Village, including the vibrancy and vitality of the main areas of the village;
- Ongoing monitoring of our Priority Projects, how they are progressing, funding available, the best use of available funding, and ensuring that what has been gained and learned from the public consultation process is underpinning all development in the area; and
- Include a process for the review of our Village Plan on an annual basis.



References

DEFRA. Definition and components of sustainable communities, DEFRA, March, 2005.

EU Ministerial Informal on Sustainable Communities, UK Presidency, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, March 2006.

Laois County Council Development Plan, 2012-2018.

Appendix 1: Summary of all Public Consultation Submis

For the sake of completeness all 23 no. proposals for the newly acquired Parish Field are listed here, with details and specific outlines as appropriate. The ideas put forward by members have been categorised into the following categories:

- *Sports*
- *Recreational Play Area*
- *Accommodation*
- *Garden / Environment*
- *Use of Poet's Cottage*
- *Other Activities*

Sports

The following lists the various suggestions for the development of the field for sports facilities:

1. Sports Pitches

- Full size playing pitch
- Juvenile pitch
- Playing field for multipurpose use
- All weather pitch, with GAA and soccer goalposts

It is noted that there is general consensus on the development of a playing pitch, as it would be available to Camross National School pupils during school hours, and available to all within the wider community outside of school hours.

In relation to a sports field, the development of nets and mobile dugouts available with the sports field is important. In addition dressing rooms and shower facilities should also be provided.

2. Running Track & Athletics Club

The development of an athletics track was also a popular suggestion, and could be development in conjunction with the establishment of an athletics club for Camross.

3. Ball Wall

4. Indoor Handball & Squash Courts

CDPA have been advised this suggestion would require additional building work.

5. Indoor Gym

An indoor gym facilities is also suggested as something that would be easily catered for as part of the overall development of the field. It is noted that there is an ideal space in the upper section of the new building at the back of the Poet's Cottage which would be suitable for a gym. It is suggested that the overall management of a gym facility could be incorporated with the caretaking element of the community hall.

Recreational / Play area

In the recreational and play area category there were a number of uses proposed in order to incorporate the adjoining river into the development:

6. Riverside Walk

The development of a riverside walk featured strongly amongst the ideas put forward. Given the location of the river, it could become a huge asset to the village. Also, the ideas put forward in terms of signage and information points along the river would make the riverside walk an educational activity as well as a physical activity.

7. Splash Area for Children

A splash area at the river for kids incorporating the development of a strand and river slide for children including metal diggers, paddle boats etc. Canoe route along the river could also be incorporated. A river park could be developed which would be unique to Camross and would encourage others to visit Camross and utilising other facilities within the village.

It is noteworthy that after the public consultation was completed, Camross Parish representatives were advised that the river is in "pristine" condition, therefore had this knowledge been known it would have further informed some of the submissions with regard to the river.

Camross Parish have since been professionally advised that it is appropriate to encourage public use of the river in an appropriate manner, with the possibility of the development of an outdoor educational facility to allow children and adults enjoy information about the river in an inclusive and fun way.

It is also of note that given this information received, some of the public suggestions on the possible uses of the river are not feasible due to the size of the river. Paddle boats, canoes, large water turbines etc would not be able to navigate the water unless they were miniature in size etc.

8. Creation of small lake for wildlife

This suggestion was also put forward as an alternative way to address site drainage in an environmental friendly manner, and as also suggested as an item to include when we planned the development of the northern side of the river.

9. Link bridge across the lake (20 to 30 ft to link both sides)

This item was suggested as a way to link both sides of the river via and also extend the existing walkway. Several sites on the bank appear to be suitable for same. This is an item that can be added to a later stage, as funds allow.

10. Installation of benches along the river

A riverside walk with bridges at both ends which could include a nature walk with signs on route describing the local habit and fun facts about nature in general. The walk would include unique signs on the walkway stating all sorts of facts about the parish.

There is also the potential for this to extend around the sports field with the incorporation of appropriate lighting and timber railing for health and safety purposes. The walk could also extend

around the property under development. The walk would require to be wide enough to accommodate traffic in both directions.

11. Road Improvements

Further suggestions proposed the removal of the ditch and building of a stone wall or wooden railing alongside the roadway up from the Cottages (towards Cappanarrow) approximately 240 metres long. In conjunction with the wall, it is also proposed to build a footpath outside the wall providing safe access and creating a loop back into the village. Construct a parking area off the Derry road providing access to the riverwalk, playground, lake area, access to pitch etc. This would enhance the view of the village

12. Playground

A new playground which would include an outdoor gym and a climbing wall. Also mentioned was a zip wire and a recreational/play area.

The idea of a playground facility for Camross is supported by a number of people. There are a range of potential design options, however the outdoor gym and climbing wall were the two most commonly mentioned features of a new playground. It is proposed to incorporate different features to those included in the playground in nearby Coolrain.

The idea of a paddle/splash area in the river is something which many are in favour of. This could be complemented by some of the other activities as identified above.

13. Forest Enhancement

It was suggested to leave as many of the mature trees as possible on site to facilitate the later landscaping. We were asked to incorporate a fairy village / fairy door feature as this is very fashionable at present and would be an attractive amenity for children. Native Irish trees and hedging are being propagated by the Tidy Towns Group for the programme, and as such they have requested that this project be incorporated into the village plan.

14. Wooden hedge maize

It was suggested to include this outdoor activity within the plan.

15. Lawn bowling area

This suggestion was in the content of activities that would be suitable for the older residents of the area, and could be facilitated in close proximity to the Village Hub as part of an overall programme of activities. It was suggested that the pitch had been developed to a high standard could also accommodate this type of activity.

Accommodation

16. Caravan /Camping Park

It is noteworthy that this suggestion generated a number of diverse opinions, with the suggestion that it was suited to a private enterprise and would be an additional tourist facility on private land.

17. Retirement accommodation

Another suggestion was retirement accommodation for the elderly in the parish, in the form of the development of a small number of chalet type houses which would be a type of supported living accommodation.

It was noted that this would provide safe and supported accommodation for the elderly in Camross. This would help to combat against rural isolation and promote inclusive communities that meet the needs of the older generation within the area. It was noted that many elderly people are living in fear and have become isolated due to their inability to travel and the lack of public transport options available in the area. It was proposed that if it were possible to provide a small number of chalet type houses together, which are safe and supported for the elderly who no longer wish to live in isolation, it would be a huge addition to the elderly in the Parish.

Either of these suggestions would be an addition to the Parish and may be an option for the 2 acres on the other side of the river. However there are many issues to be addressed before either could be considered, particularly the retirement accommodation.

Garden/environment

18. Parish garden/ Allotment

There is an existing parish garden in place, "Orchard Garden" which is being developed by the CE scheme in conjunction with the Camross Tidy Towns committee. It is located at the side of the Parochial house and is a work in progress with a considerable amount of work planned for this year.

This project is now being incorporated into the Village Plan and a suggestion was put forward to development it further as an amenity and training site. It was put forward that the development of the hub with catering and classroom facilities would facilitate educational programmes being held in Camross in the future.

Poet's Cottage Development

19. Coffee shop

There were some requests to provide a coffee shop/tea room facility using the Poet's Cottage, and include a food serving facility selling local produce. Suggestions that locally produced arts and craft items could also be sold.

20. Poet's Cottage Refurbishment

To re-develop Poet's Cottage to include an Interpretative Centre which could be a gateway to the Slieve Blooms. Incorporating the following:

- Digital display screens that have push touch screens detailing the history of the parish and Slieve Blooms
- Museum pieces displayed in the Poet's Cottage and a small exhibition space for locals to display their wares.
- Tables to sit around inside and outside.

This whole area could be a place for everyone but particularly the older people of the parish to meet and have tea, play cards go for a walk etc. The above should be community based and run for the community with any profits used to further enhance the area.

21. Shop

There was support for developing a local shop in the Poet's Cottage complex, selling groceries and basic requirements, stamps etc., which would also incorporate a coffee shop/tea room. The option of it functioning as a co-operative was discussed and some suggested that it could be supplied with local produce which would help to enhance the tourist appeal of the village. It was also put forward that it would serve as a meeting point for local groups, the active retired community etc, and could have an outdoor element to further enhance its appeal.

22. Toilets

Already in place – We may need to enhance/improve the current facilities in the future, hours of opening, charges etc.

Other Activities

As well as developing the physical environment and facilities, it has been suggested that the following activities would be very beneficial to the community if they could be organised and established.

1. Health and fitness classes for all but with particular emphases on the over 60s (something like the fitness classes run last January in the hall)
2. Yoga classes
3. Wellbeing & meditations classes
4. Art classes (maybe run/given by one of our committee members)
5. Music classes
6. History area indoor outdoor
7. Wood & sculptor works
8. Walking cycling club
9. Men's shed / old trades classes
10. Addition of Playground - The additional of a playground facility is also something that would be an added benefit to the Camross Village Hub, and would encourage exercise in children etc. Identify a site and approach the council.

11. Outdoor Gym Equipment – Looped Walk - It would be beneficial if some outdoor gym equipment could be sourced and placed along the looped walkway to encourage exercise. Equipment facing the river could also take advantage of the natural views and scenery of the area.
12. Slieve Bloom Bike Trail - Integration the existing Bike Trail & provide a meeting place for same
13. Camross Scout Troop – The Troop asked that we document their request to locate a base in the village to become their “Scout Den”. They identified their main requirement as storage facilities for their equipment, tents, poles, large items which could be stored in a converted container if space was located.