

APPENDIX 4 – URBAN DESIGN STUDY

and

Urban Design Guidelines for Future Development

Prepared for
Kilkenny County Council

By

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Urban Design Study for Goresbridge

1. Character of the Landscape Setting

Goresbridge is situated on the west bank of the River Barrow in a shallow valley associated with the River. The approach roads from the west and east descend into the town following the lie of the land. Otherwise the town and its immediate environs are relatively flat.

From the hills in the west a small stream rises and flows into Gowran a few miles westwards, before making its way to Goresbridge. This tributary runs immediately to the north of the town before entering the River Barrow.

2. Pattern and Shape of the Settlement

The town is centred on a crossroads that approximate a north-south, east-west axis. The streets that run to the north (Barrack Street) and the west (High Street) are connected by a diagonal street, which is known as Chapel Street, which has derived its name from the Church along this street. These three streets form a triangular urban block, with significant infill development opportunities.

The town's development is constrained to the east, by the presence of the River Barrow, and unlike most Irish towns, very little urban development has taken place on the opposite side of the river (in this case County Carlow). This provides a strong sense of arrival on entering the town over Gore's Bridge, from which the town derives its name. The town is relatively well contained to the south too, with little ribbon development on its edges. The town is thus reasonably well contained, though a more diffused pattern emerges to the west given the residential development on the fringe. The town is reasonably well contained to the north, though the Connolly's Red Mills Factory is a large complex immediately north of the settlement. Overall however, the impression is of a town that is relatively well contained and compact.

3. Buildings and Spaces in the Town

The town displays a good mix of buildings of various heights. Single and two storeys predominate though there are several three storey buildings on Barrack Street and Bridge Street. The continuous building lines, terraced developments and relatively narrow plot patterns along these streets provide a tighter urban grain and reflect a more commercial focus. High Street is more residential in character, with single and two storey dwellings predominating and less consistency in terms of the building lines and building setbacks. A looser building pattern is also reflected on Chapel Street, and determined in part by the larger public/institutional uses on this street with their larger site requirements, including the Church, graveyard, Convent and schools. Bungalows and large infill sites also add to this loose urban character.

Most of the buildings are cement rendered, though there are several fine examples of stone cut buildings. The most noteworthy of these are the neat row of single storey granite cottages on Barrowmount Street, near the junction with Bridge Street. The windows and doors have fine cut stone surrounds with a chamfered edge. Some of these three bay single storey cottages, have had their attics converted incorporating dormer windows. These dormers have kept the original fenestration pattern (i.e., they are aligned with the ground floor windows) and have tended to maintain consistency in their proportions and heights, which should be maintained in future conversions. Like most of the traditional buildings in the town, however, the original windows and doors have been replaced with modern materials. Despite this, the terrace retains much of its original character and charm and is set off by a generous footpath to their front.

Barrack Street is of generous width with broad footpaths on either side and ample provision for on-street car parking. There are some street trees on the west side and there are opportunities

to strengthen the row, with additional tree planting. Building heights vary from single storey to three storeys.

The most prominent buildings in the town are the two Churches. The Church of Ireland Church, while removed from the main fabric of the town, is perched on an embankment to the north of the town, giving it a certain prominence.

A number of the finer and larger townhouses frequently display fan light windows over the entrance doors, reflecting the Georgian influence on the town's building fabric. A number of other buildings reveal redbrick chimneys and/or window surrounds that reflect a more Victorian style from a later date.

On entering the town from the north and crossing Bartly's Bridge there is a large prominent site associated with the Goresbridge Cattle Mart. To the immediate south of the town is the Glanbia agri-business. Both sites interlock with the rear of plots that run from Bridge Street and in their own way, constrain the consolidation of the town.

South of High Street and west of Barrowmount Street, the town's building fabric is distinctively modern, relating to housing estates developed over the past twenty to thirty years.

4. The Nature of Open Spaces

There is no formal area of public open space in the town. There are however a number of incidental areas of open space associated with road verges (on Green Street) and the small housing estates. These are generally well landscaped and maintained.

A small pocket park exists beside the Bridge and this provides some seating and picnic benches alongside the river. The Barrow is a significant amenity of the town and a public walkway is provided along the eastern bank.

Outside the town's boundary on the east side of the river, there is a sports ground that caters for some active open space needs of the town (note that this is in County Carlow, though serves the town).

The Fair Green is a significant space in the centre of the town that is currently used for horse grazing. It is bound by an attractive stone wall and gateposts. The Fair Green would make an interesting park within the centre of the town. The space could be framed with a single row of two-storey development on its west and south sides, creating an attractive green similar to that of Freshford or Inistioge. The development would frame the space and give it strong sense of enclosure; it would also assist in financing the construction of a quality open space with trees lining its perimeter and the provision of street furniture.

Should the backlands of Chapel Street be developed or the site of the Goresbridge Cattle Mart, then there are possibilities to develop a linear park along the stream in the vicinity and along the west bank of the River Barrow (Refer to the Urban Design Map).

5. Roads and Traffic

The town is situated on a regional route (R702) in a predominantly rural and agricultural area. Within the town, Chapel Street generates a certain amount of traffic associated with the school situated here and the Church. Speed ramps have been provided in the vicinity of the Primary School.

Road and footpath conditions are good. The surface of the R702 is excellent, having recently been resurfaced.

Footpaths are found on every street in Goresbridge, though are lacking in the following areas:

- the south side of Chapel Street;
- west of the Cluain Mhuire housing estate, on its south side;
- on the R702, west of the junction with Chapel Street;
- on the west side of Green Street and on both sides north of Bartly's Bridge; and,
- on Gore's Bridge, due to its relatively narrow width.

Car parking is provided on-street in the town and this appears to be adequate to serve the needs of the town.

6. Other Design Considerations

6.1 Street Furniture

There is a notable absence of street furniture in Goresbridge, with the exception of some planters in front of the stone cottages on Barrowmount Street. In front of one of these cottages there is a modest stone bench, formed by two upright stones and a narrow horizontal slab. Only one litter bin was noted, on Barrack Street, near the junction with Chapel Street. It is in good condition.

6.2 Infill Development

On Barrack Street there is a good example of an infill housing scheme, that maintains the street frontage and provides a courtyard effect to the rear, with adequate car parking and simple and effective landscaping. In other examples of housing schemes on Bridge Street and also on Barrowmount Street, the gable ends of houses front onto the street in a much less effective manner. Such sites should be designed with individual buildings that specifically 'turn the corner' and are orientated to both streets that they front onto (See Appendix A for Design Guidelines for Future Infill Development).

6.3 Historical Features

Other notable features that provide character to the town, include the stone walls, typically found on the approach roads to the town centre, on Gore's Bridge and bounding the Fair Green. Where practical the old stone walls should be retained in new developments.

6.4 Signage

The town does not have a strong commercial presence and therefore commercial signage is not overly dominant and generally tends to be neat. However, in a few exceptions, there is a proliferation of smaller commercial signs giving a somewhat cluttered impression of premises.

6.5 Shopfronts

There are a few premises in the town that have altered shopfronts dating from the 1960's or 1970's with stone cladding and/or brick that is not generally in keeping with the original character of the building. However, they are not too prominent. On the other hand, Thomas Murphy's pub on Barrack Street contains a simple, attractive, traditional shopfront that makes a positive contribution to the streetscape.

6.6 Landscaping

A number of street trees align the west side of Barrack Street and the east side of Barrowmount Street. Consideration should be given to 'infill planting' and extending the row of street trees in

these areas. Young beech trees or beech hedging is noted on a portion of Green Street and on High Street in front of Cluain Mhuire.

7. Design Principles Based on Distinctive Local Character

- Consider additional tree planting on Barrack Street and Barrowmount Street to enhance the existing row of street trees on those streets.
- Examine the potential of developing a civic square (grassed and tree-lined) on the Fair Green, with the possibility of buildings framing this space on its south and west sides.
- Ensure the protection of stream courses and their incorporation into a series of linear parks. Where feasible, ensure that developments are orientated to overlook these new open spaces.
- Ensure the continuation of existing building lines or the establishment of new building lines in accordance with the guidelines indicated on the Urban Design Map.
- Encourage all focal sites and focal buildings to adopt good quality architectural designs. These sites are identified on the Urban Design Map.
- Protect, reinstate and/or repair old stone walls in those areas identified on the Urban Design Map, while allowing for necessary access to serve future development proposals.
- Ensure that with any new infill development on the south side of Chapel Lane that a footpath is provided to County Council standards
- Provide additional litter bins along Bridge Street, Barrowmount Street, Barrack Street and Chapel Lane.
- Encourage the comprehensive development of backlands (sites to the rear of plots) and ensure that developers have regard to the possible need to provide access to these areas in any future development scheme.
- Promote the comprehensive redevelopment of infill and brownfield sites in the urban block delineated by Chapel Street, High Street and Barrack Street.

Photographs to Accompany Text



Photo 1: View along High Street towards Bridge Street, with gradual descent to River Barrow.



Photo 2: View of Small Stream to the north of the town – a tributary to the Barrow.



Photo 3: Approach to Goresbridge along the R702 – the landscape is reasonably level.



Photo 4: Approaching the town over Gore's Bridge – a strong sense of arrival is achieved on crossing the bridge.



Photo 5: Streetscape view of Bridge Street typified by rather uniform building lines, terraced developments and a tight urban grain (reflecting narrow plot widths). Note variation in building heights.



Photo 6: View along Barrack Street – note variation in scale and height of buildings.



Plate 7: Chapel Street – characterized by public/institutional buildings, undeveloped sites and variations in building setbacks. The urban design quality of the street is not as well developed as other streets in the town. Note lack of footpath, to left of photo.



Photo: View of attractive stone cottages on Barrowmount Street.



Photo: Barrack Street is distinguished by a broadness – with ample space for on-street car parking and street trees.



Photo: The Church of Ireland sits on an embankment north of the town.



Photo (Far left): Attractive Doorway with fanlight over door and stone surround.

Photo (Near left): Architectural detailing, such as this doorway with classical motif as expressed in the pilasters, adds interest to individual buildings.



Photo: The most significant amenity of Goresbridge – the River Barrow, with pocket park, seating and picnic benches.



Photo: The Fairgreen – an under-utilised resource in the centre of the town, with great potential for development into a civic space – a park that would act as a focal point in the centre of the town, framed by an attractive terraced development.



Photo: Street furniture is limited in the town. Litter bins are sparsely provided, though are generally well maintained.



Photo: Simple traditional elements of the street, such as this stone bench provide added interest to the streetscape.



Photo: A focal site is a site that is the focal point of a prominent vista or view along a particular street. They are frequently found on corner sites and road junctions. The treatment of such sites is critical to good streetscape design and a visitor's first impression of a place. Buildings should be individually designed to respond to the characteristics of its site. In the first example, the building is discreet but its role is underplayed, whereas in the second example, the building has a greater townscape presence; note also how its façade responds to both streets it fronts onto.

Photo: Attractive traditional shopfront, well proportioned, with appropriately scaled nameplate and lettering. Note also how additional brand signage is limited and thereby complements rather than detracts from the premises. Traditional timber sash windows are also in keeping with the character of the structure.

Photo: While most of the buildings in Goresbridge are cement rendered, there are some fine examples of stone construction using granite (i.e., the cottages on Barrowmount Street) and limestone. In this example both materials are used. The use of granite reflects the proximity to the Leinster Mountains.

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