

Appendix 4 – Urban Design Study

and

Urban Design Guidelines for Future Development

Prepared for

Kilkenny County Council

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Urban Design Study for Stoneyford

To be read in conjunction with the Stoneyford Urban Design Map as attached.

Character of the Landscape Setting

Stoneyford is situated approximately 11 kilometres south of Kilkenny City on the N10. The village is set within a saucer like depression in the landscape, at the junction of roads from the Cotterellsbooley (north-east), Mountjuliet (west) and Rathduff (south) townlands.

Two small streams run through the village – one to the west and the second to the north of the village. Both streams join to the north of the village and continue northwards as a tributary to the Kings River, which is less than 500 metres from the village.

Fields surrounding the village are typically used for pasture, though some arable is noted. Field boundaries are comprised of hedgerows containing hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble and ivy – and many tend to be neat and well maintained. Boundaries close to the village also reveal the use of dry-stone walls, some of which are overgrown with vegetation.

Pattern and Shape of the Settlement

The village is laid out in a linear fashion along Main Street. A notable feature of the village's plan¹ is the uniformity of the plot pattern, with most of the traditional plots running to the same depth, with the notable exception of the traditionally more important Church. This would suggest that the village was laid out or planned at one particular point in time, as opposed to a slow or gradual evolution over a few hundred years.

While the 1839 Ordnance Survey map revealed that some development had taken place on the west end of the village on what is now the N10 and that these dwellings backed onto the stream in the vicinity, there is only one such development evident there today. However, the west end of the village, does reveal a number of smaller modern housing developments in addition to a number of bungalows developed in a linear fashion along the road front of the Kells Road. The status of the National primary route - the N10 - has restricted such development along its route in the interests of traffic safety and has thus assisted in containing the village.

Buildings and Spaces in the Village

Though the village displays dereliction, it maintains its traditional character to a significant extent and retains its attractiveness. The street is broad with on-street car parking and wide footpaths on either side. A continuous building line runs along much of the street. Where infill development has taken place, it generally has tried to maintain former and existing building lines or establish new ones along traditional principles.

Traditionally, a departure from standard or existing building lines was reserved for important civic and religious buildings and this is evident in Stoneyford in the siting of

¹ As derived from examining the Ordnance Survey maps of the area, dated from the present day and particularly from 1839

the Church. It is set-back significantly from the street and in doing so, has positioned the Church on a more elevated portion of the site, thus enhancing its profile in the local community. Peculiarly, there are two small cottages positioned on either side of its entrance and this detracts from its profile. It is of interest to note that these dwellings are not evident on the early Ordnance Survey Map of 1839, and thus appear to be a later addition.

There are no areas of civic space within the village, such as a market square and it appears that the village was never of significant size to merit one.

There are few buildings of notable character, with perhaps the exception of the Catholic Church, which is of simple cruciform shape, to which an additional porch was added to in later years. There is good variation in building heights in the village with single and two storeys predominating with some three storeys also evident. Most buildings are finished in a cement render and have slate roofs. Few buildings, if any, retain the original timber sash windows or doors. A notable feature of several buildings on the Main Street are the projecting porches, which have been feasible in light of the broad pavement, and which otherwise would not be a notable feature of the Kilkenny village streetscape.

The core area of the village, as described in the foregoing paragraphs, generally retains its distinctive character and as such it has been delineated on the attached Urban Design Map as an 'Area of Notable Character'.

The Nature of Open Spaces

The only formal area of public open space in the village is the GAA grounds, providing for active recreational amenity. A small area of passive open space is situated at the entrance to the housing estate near the junction with the Kells Road. This park lies to the west of the stream in the vicinity and thus is provided with an attractive setting, with older tree groups and facilities in the form of picnic benches and a refuse bin.

Roads and Traffic

The N10, connecting Kilkenny to Waterford City, runs directly through the village of Stoneyford and thus it experiences fairly heavy traffic volumes. As a National Primary route, the road is maintained to high standards.

There is no off-street car park in the village. Public car parking is provided by means of on-street car parking. The street is broad with parking provided in the margins and this appears to adequately serve the needs of the village.

While the road surfaces in the village are generally in quite good condition – with perhaps one exception near the junction with the Kells Road, where the junction has been widened – footpaths throughout the village are in quite poor condition. Most are constructed of concrete and are cracked, broken and in a number of places the concrete surface has been worn away completely. Footpaths on the east end of the village, near the junction with the townland of Cotterellsbooley and in the vicinity of the school, are of tarmac surface with concrete kerbing, and are well maintained. It is noted too, that in

front of recent infill development at this end of the village, the area of on-street car parking has been differentiated with the use of concrete stone setts, providing a pleasing appearance. Continuity in the design approach of the public realm is important, and therefore, it is recommended that should any further improvements such as this be initiated, that there is consistency in the use of materials and design layout.

Other Design Considerations

Street Furniture

Street Furniture in the village comprises a number of features, including a number of planters, a telephone kiosk, benches, a traditional water pump and litter bins. Seating is available in the form of picnic tables in the pocket park on the west end of Main Street and there is a stone inscribed seat (in memory of Tess McGuire) in the vicinity, on the bend of the N10. The seating is in good condition. The litter bins are well maintained and well distributed along the street.

The planters are generally of poor standard and at the time of survey (early Spring 2004) were not well maintained and the choice of planting was questionable.

Commercial Signage

The number of commercial premises in the village is not significant and as such, shop front signage does not tend to be obtrusive in the streetscape. The need to control portable on-street signage (i.e., sandwich board type signs) should be monitored, in addition to projecting signage from facades (including flagpoles, canopies, etc.). The pub-front of O'Grady's premises, while significantly altered, nonetheless retains an important element of the traditional 'shop-front' design – particularly the nameplate, lettering and external proportions of the shopfront in relation to the façade. The retention and reinstatement of such features can add great character to the streetscape.

Street Trees

There is just one street tree noted in the village, though the pavement is wide enough to take a line of trees on either side of the street. Should such a programme be initiated, care should be taken to ensure that overhead electrical and telecommunication wires will not interfere with the development of crowns and tree canopies in future years. Liaison with service providers is recommended with options explored, including the provision of overhead wires underground.

Significant Trees in the Village

A number of older trees exist around the village, in boundaries and hedgerows. The more notable have been identified on the Urban Design Map and every care should be taken to ensure their protection.

Natural Stone Walls

The use of natural stone in the construction of walls and boundaries is common in the village, though many walls on the approach roads to the village are overgrown with

hedgerow species. In granting planning permission, the Planning Authority will seek to retain and/or reinstate such features.

Commercial Billboards

There is one commercial billboard mounted on the gable end of a building on the east end of the village. Additional billboards, particularly of similar scale, should be restricted in the interest of the village's visual amenity.

Design Principles Based on Distinctive Local Character

The following principles will apply and should be read in conjunction with the Urban Design Map (attached):

- Maintain, and where necessary, reinstate the stone walls on roads leading into the village, as far as is practical.
 - Maintain the scale, composition and character of the streetscapes in the immediate vicinity of the village centre and within the 'Area of Notable Character' delineated on the Urban Design Map.
 - Ensure the continuation of existing building lines within the centre of the village.
 - Encourage all focal sites and focal buildings to adopt good quality architectural designs. These sites are identified on the Urban Design Map.
 - Upgrade and resurface, as resources permit, the footpaths on either side of the street and consider, subject to National Roads Authority approval, the delineation of parking bays with concrete stone setts.
 - Consider, in association with any improvements to footpaths, the provision of overhead wires underground and/or the provision of a new row of street trees on either side of the street.
 - Protect and maintain the old water pump as an attractive feature of the streetscape.
 - 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. It is advisable to consider the possible future provision of through access roads or streets connecting each of the roads that radiate from the village.
 - Encourage the replacement of existing planters and their maintenance.
 - Consider the provision of a linear park alongside the stream that runs through the west end of the village.
 - Encourage the retention of older features of the streetscape, including original slates, timber sash windows, doorways, traditional shopfronts or elements thereof.
 - Have regard to the unique characteristics of Stoneyford, as shown on the Urban Design Map and outlined above.
 - Promote infill development of an appropriate scale, composition and character, in accordance with the Design Guidelines on Development (Appendix A).
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