

# Urban Design Study for Ballyhale

## Character of the Landscape Setting

Ballyhale is situated in an undulating agricultural landscape that gradually rises to the south, east and west. Relatively small field patterns and dense hedgerows tend to typify the surrounding landscape. A tributary of the Little Arrigal River runs along the back of the village, roughly parallel to the N9, which forms the main street in the village. A narrow country lane which leads to the townlands of Coolmore and Ballybray runs west from the centre of the village and crosses this stream, giving attractive views of the watercourse and fine mature trees in its vicinity.

## Pattern and Shape of the Settlement

Ballyhale is a small village primarily focused on one street, creating in a linear pattern that extends approximately 500 metres in length. This linear pattern, however, takes the form of a meandering, sinuous road alignment, which adds interest to its streetscape. A short cul-de-sac runs eastwards off Main street; the above mentioned country lane runs west of the street, while at the south end of the village a second boreen runs southeast off the N9. Overall, however, there is little development on these side streets, and its linear pattern predominates.

The plots front onto the street, with agricultural lands to their rear. Plots on the west side of the street tend to be short and consistently narrower than those on the east side, where the plots run deeper and give way to a much greater mix of out buildings.

## Buildings and Spaces in the Village

The sinuous and meandering nature of the street adds great interest to the streetscape in Ballyhale. The relatively few bungalows and ribbon development on the edges, also gives a certain compactness to the settlement. Furthermore, the continuity of the building line and the relatively few infill sites along the street also enhance the streetscape composition and the sense of enclosure.

The road width varies along the streets' length and therefore the building line and the carriageway of the road don't always match up (the distance between opposing buildings frequently being much greater than the actual carriageway), giving a subtle interest to the overall streetscape particularly on street bends, which is not instantly recognised. In general, the street is reasonably wide, allowing cars on the east side of the street to be parked perpendicular to the road. A redesign of the street, with new kerbing, stone setts and/or alternative paving materials could give greater definition to the streetscape, including designated spaces for car parking, tree planting, seating and footpath.

The deeper plots on the east side of the street give way to a



**Photo 1:** Landscape Context: Glimpse view of village from west side of stream.



**Photo 2:** Strong curvilinear form near the centre of the village. Here the street broadens, permitting space for on-street car parking.



**Photo 3:** The Church - the village's most significant landmark building.

**Photo 4:** View south towards village centre - strong urban form.



series of small agricultural courtyards. The arrangement can be attractive and possibly provides a template for their future redevelopment, particularly where the outbuildings could be rehabilitated and re-used.

The general composition and form of buildings is consistent with other towns and villages in the area. Most buildings within the centre of the village are two storey in height (though actual heights can vary considerably within this range); with the number of bays ranging from 2 to 5; and roofs presenting a traditional pitch made of slate. All buildings in the village are rendered (the notable exception being the Church tower and one of the public houses which has been stripped of its plaster/dashing) and most of these have a painted finish. Most of the buildings have a simple, traditional finish and do not tend to be decorated or detailed to any great degree, though a few of the buildings present decorative quoins and pseudo hood mouldings over windows, and at least one has polychromatic brick work on chimneys. Red brick is commonly used in chimneys and a few buildings have red ridge tiles.

**Area of Notable Character**

One of the most distinctive areas of Ballyhale is in the vicinity of the Church. Though the building is set in an area that could be considered a backland area - to the rear of the buildings on the Main Street - and is also set-back some distance from the side road on which it is located, it's height gives it a certain prominence in the village.

In addition to the distinctive square shaped tower, constructed of stone, the site of the Church is bound to the east, west and south by small streams and stone walls, which give it its distinctive character.



**Photo 5:** Example of traditional agricultural farmyard to be found on the Main Street.



**Photo 6:** East side of Main Street - opportunities for redevelopment and the creation of more active uses along the street front.

**Photo 7:** View of old stone bridge and stream that runs along the back of Main Street.



**Photo 8:** Attractive setting for a village park.



**Photo 9:** A uniform and consistent approach for the integration of the stream into future development layouts will be encouraged.



### The Nature of Open Spaces

Pairc an Seamrog, the local GAA grounds, is the most significant area of open space in the village. Any additional areas of open space remain incidental to the adjoining residences, i.e., adjoining the cul-de-sac and in the vicinity of Ballyhale bridge.

The stream that runs to the back of the Church and graveyard is an attractive feature that merits consideration for inclusion into any future open space strategy of the village. Opportunities exist, along its length to enhance the interface between development and the stream in a manner similar to the recently developed houses in the vicinity of Ballyhale Bridge (Hazelbrook Development). This will assist in benefiting local wildlife, of which kingfisher and heron have been noted.

### Roads and Traffic

The Main Street also doubles as the busy N9, where a continuous flow of heavy traffic passes through on route from Dublin and Kilkenny to Waterford and back. Speeding traffic and heavy flows, not only cause concern for pedestrian safety, but also seriously detract from the amenity and character of the village.

The road surface is generally in a good condition, with the notable exception of the corners of the junction of the boren that runs west past the Church. The provision and quality of footpaths varies considerable. Many sections of the street are



**Photo 10 & 11:** Intermittent provision of footpaths and exceptionally narrow footpath widths as shown above raise concerns for pedestrian safety. Redevelopment of the above site could see a 'rationalisation' in the building line linking into to the neighbouring site to the north.

**Photo 12a:** Though the road carriageway is fairly wide, vehicles tend to park on the footpath (west side of street).

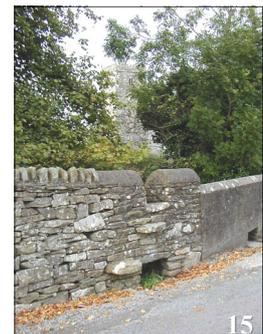
**Photo 12b:** Poor footpath condition on the west side of the village's centre.

**Photo 12c:** Poor road surface at the junction to the Church.

**Photo 13:** View of Village and Landmark Building on approaching the village from the south.

**Photo 14:** Billboards detract from view of historic building.

**Photo 15:** Attractive stone stile adjacent to bridge.



without a footpath, though they do tend to exist immediately in front of where development has taken place.

All footpaths are constructed in concrete with no kerbing as such, the one exception being the section of tarmac footpath leading towards the school. Close by however, footpaths are so narrow as to be practically meaningless or they include steps, both of which hinder their use for wheelchair users and children's buggies.

Serious consideration should be given to traffic calming measures so as to force the movement of vehicles to proceed at a slower speed through the village. This would also facilitate the provision of footpaths with designated on-street car parking bays.

### **Design Principles based on distinctive local character.**

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

- Examine the feasibility of providing a designated village park along the stream course immediately west of the Church and graveyard.
- Promote the development of a linear park along the stream course on lands to be developed in the future.
- Encourage a consistent and uniform treatment to the stream course on existing developed lands.
- Improve the provision of footpaths leading from the village centre to the National School - to include the possibility of removing or altering the building line to accommodate a safer environment for the pedestrian.
- Examine the feasibility of enhancing the streetscape in the centre of the village by narrowing the main carriageway, extending the footpath and incorporating designated car parking bays and street trees, defined by attractive kerbing and surface materials.
- Promote quality design treatments of all focal sites and buildings identified on the Urban Design Map.
- Improve the quality of bins in the village through painting, maintenance and/or replacement.
- Examine the feasibility of providing all overhead wires underground, so as to improve the quality of the streetscape.
- Maintain the traditional water pump as a historic feature of interest in the streetscape.
- Ensure that all new infill developments have regard to established building lines or tie in with the building lines of adjacent plots on either side.
- Ensure that any new infill development respects traditional building lines in the vicinity. New infill developments will be expected to have regard for the Design Guidelines on Infill Development (Appendix A).

See Appendix A for **Design Guidelines for Future Infill Development**



**Photo 16:** Example of poorly maintained bin in front of National School.

**Photo 17:** Traditional water pump - a historic feature of interest in the street.

**Photo 18:** The proliferation of overhead wires detracts from the streetscape.

**Photo 19:** Room for improvement - the broad street pattern facilitates surface improvements with parking bays, street trees, street furniture and possibly new paving in the form of stone sets.