



Main Street build-outs - potential phasing concept

**Potential connections to walking routes**

The north section of the coastal way, from Balbriggan to the Knocknagin Viaduct, where the River Delvin discharges into the sea, is already a popular walking route. The route traverses a richly-endowed historical landscape with numerous Neolithic remains, and the substantial remnants of a 16th century harbour – Newhaven. The harbour is associated with the adjoining Lowther Lodge (in ruins). A rough and narrow track exists along the cliff top. The route would benefit from upgrading by widening the track to 1.8m and by providing a more durable surface finish.

A further new route is proposed that extends from the harbour, passing below the underpass adjoining the railway station and progressing northwards along the west boundary of the railway line to a point beyond Bremore Castle where it can be linked to the coastal path by means of another existing underpass. The route is largely on publicly-owned lands, except for a segment along the east boundary of the Loreto Convent in the town.



Potential heritage trail/ combined Sli na Sláinte

A third route is proposed from the town along Clonard Street to the ‘boreen’ in Stephenstown and to the countryside beyond. This route can be connected to the proposed paths in Mill Park and extended down to the harbour.

The three routes are interconnected and, as such, form loops, which make them eligible for support under Fáilte Ireland’s Looped Routes Scheme. They could also be associated with Sli na Sláinte.

The Fingal Development Plan proposes an extension of the coastal way south of Balbriggan. At present there is no public access along this section of coast. In terms of priorities, therefore, the upgrading of the northern section of the existing coastal path, and the new proposed route to the west of the railway line are regarded locally as the preferred measures.



### 3 Great spaces

#### The harbour and seafront

Balbriggan is a harbour and coastal town and a fundamental objective of the plan is to accentuate the maritime and coastal character of town and improve physical linkages to the shoreline; in particular linkages from the harbour and viaduct to the main street. The existing Quay Street car park offers an opportunity to not only provide better linkages to Bridge Street but an opportunity to dramatically remake this space as a public square.

The public square thus created will provide a new stage in the town for markets and events and an elegant promenading space. The reclaiming of the car park also offers the opportunity to visually 'de-clutter' the space, revealing views of the Viaduct structure and views through the arches to the harbour and sea.

The piers and parts of the quay walls are in a poor state of repair and need to be sensitively restored. The recent resurfacing of the East Pier at Dun Laoghaire Harbour provides a benchmark for quality in this regard. It is proposed to improve access from the harbour area onto the beach for pedestrians (including buggies and access for disabled people). This may involve a boardwalk-type arrangement, with better onward connections to the Martello Tower and Bremore Castle.



Indicative harbour and seafront design framework

*It is proposed, as part of this intervention, to re-route non-essential vehicular access from the harbour front to the town centre side of the viaduct and to extend the resulting new public space under the arches to improve links to the harbour and beach.*

The harbour and seafront have been identified as potential locations for water-related events, such as triathlon, beach volleyball and a sea-food festival. Making this viable in the medium to long term will necessitate improved water quality at the beach.

There is a need for improved public lighting to the existing underpasses. Existing eyesores, including the railway retaining wall and the north elevation of the pier nightclub, will detract from the character of the space, and will need to be addressed. There is potential for the relationship between the railway and the beach to be improved by the development of a new building on the embankment to interface between the platforms and the beach.

This could house a café/restaurant and viewing point and could facilitate improved access from the station to the beach for visitors and tourists.

It is proposed to improve the area surrounding the Martello Tower and former bandstand by relocating car parking. This will facilitate re-landscaping the area. This area has been identified as a point of interest on the proposed walking/heritage trail.



Indicative sketch showing improved access to beachfront and indicative reuse of the RNLI boathouse as a shop or other active use



Indicative sketch of Viaduct Markets area as envisaged

# PART FOUR MAKING IT HAPPEN



# 4 Making it happen

*Effective leadership is required to deliver the vision. Leadership needs to come from the local authority, underpinned by professional as well as political commitment.*

## 3.1 Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders include public sector bodies, community groups and private sector bodies and individuals. The extent to which different stakeholders will need to take the lead in implementation will vary depending on the nature and scope of the proposed project or projects, and the priority attached to them by the implementation group. In general terms, the Council will need to take the lead in street and public space projects, whereas community groups and individuals will be primarily responsible for projects relating to private property, with input from the Council as appropriate. There may be considerable scope for public private partnership arrangements or joint ventures, particularly where land, buildings or supporting infrastructure necessary to facilitate projects are in public ownership.

Key stakeholders whose input will be directly or indirectly needed include Balbriggan Town Council, Fingal County Council, Balbriggan Chamber of Commerce, Fáilte Ireland, the Heritage Council, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Tidy Towns Committee, the Office of Public Works, Coras Iompar Eireann, Iarnród Éireann, Community Groups and private sector individuals.

## 3.2 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. Given the current state of the development market and reduced capital budgets, opportunities for public-private partnerships should also be explored, particularly in terms of their potential to unlock properties for suitable business and/or community initiatives.

### Short term priorities

In the short term, it is recommended that further studies are carried out to establish feasibility and that 'quick wins' should be prioritised in order to maintain the momentum established through the consultation progress. On this basis, the following relatively low-cost initiatives should be prioritised in the short term:

- Integrated parking, access and movement study;
- Tree build-outs;
- Selective footpath widening;
- Identification and removal of street clutter (including from building façades);
- Façade colour scheme;
- "Facelift" schemes for derelict/ vacant premises;
- Cycle facilities;
- Public lighting;
- Development management;
- Heritage trail;

- School participation; and
- Events and marketing.

### Medium and long term priorities

Significant development will need to take place to lever substantial medium and longer term public space projects such as the proposed Mill Park, Viaduct and seafront schemes. However, these projects on their own and in combination, have the potential to deliver the most benefit to the economic and tourism potential of the town.

In the interim (short to medium term), works that will facilitate and benefit from these projects taking place should be investigated, particularly the potential for re-use and rehabilitation of significant protected structures including:

- The lighthouse;
- Harbour piers and walls;
- RNLI boat house;
- Former bank and notable commercial buildings.



Some short and medium term priorities

### 3.3 Funding opportunities

Although limited in scope, there are a variety of funding mechanisms available to support the implementation of the plan, including community and local business initiatives:

- Fáilte Ireland/ NDP
- Heritage Council Grants Scheme
- Grants scheme for the conservation of protected structures
- Fingal County Enterprise Board
- Fingal LEADER Partnership
- Development contributions scheme

Therefore, full implementation will require a combination of pro-active approaches including significant private investment, and/ or sponsorship.

There is also considerable scope for business interests to foster partnerships through corporate vehicles such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). The principal benefit of BID-type schemes is to ensure that funds raised through the scheme are directly reinvested in the area.

### 3.4 Monitoring progress

Monitoring should take account of baseline data prepared at the pre-plan and the plan preparation stages in order to establish sufficient indicators against which progress can be measured at the review stage. Monitoring should be undertaken by the implementation group on an annual basis and take account of:

- The main physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of the town centre, including the vibrancy and vitality of the main street as established by the town centre health check, 2010;
- The principal purposes for which land in the area is used as established by the plan land-use study;
- Building and façade condition as established by the plan's main street façade appraisal (in conjunction with Fingal County Council); and
- Communications, transport and traffic (including accessibility by public transport) as established by the proposed access and parking study.

## 4 Making it happen

Strategy	Key projects	Note
<b>People places</b>	Build-outs to Drogheda Street and key junctions/ crossings	Potential for pilot, temporary built-out scheme.
	Resurfacing of Railway Street and station forecourt	Coordination with Iarnród Éireann required regarding station forecourt.
	Resurfacing of Quay Street	Part of overall redevelopment proposals.
	Beachfront access audit and design	Responsibility under Disability Act.
	Temporary pedestrianisation schemes	Rolling programme with events.
	Underpass improvements (incl. lighting design)	Design-led approach needed.
	Resurfacing of harbour piers	Conservation-led approach needed.
	Bicycle parking facilities	Coordinated approach needed.
	Public lighting design to seafront and viaduct, underpasses, key buildings	Potential for ideas competition.
	'Smart' parking information signage	Coordinate with integrated traffic and parking study and recommendations.
	Review of directional signage	Coordinate with existing signage design. Remove superfluous signage and clutter
	Development management to support/ promote overlooking of Mill park	Potential for special objective.
	Schools participation programme	Ongoing. Important for educational awareness raising and support.
<b>Active Places</b>	Mill Park redesign with improved connections and river walk	Dependant on redevelopment proposals.
	Promote active waterfront uses, seasonal kiosk, café etc.	Potential architectural competition or conversion of boat house.
	Promote reuse of existing vacant heritage buildings	Ongoing.
	Improve linkages to Millfield retail development	Investigate potential shuttle as part of traffic and parking study
	Promote tourism attractions	Conduct feasibility study for flagship project such as museum.
	Implement heritage trail and Slí na Sláinte	Finalise proposed route options.
	Facilitate Coastal route proposals	Coordinate with project proponents.
	Events calendar	Potential for water and sports events. Co-dependant on bathing water quality improvements.
	Development management of invasive uses	Manage proliferation of takeaways and related nuisances. Ongoing.
	Development management of vacant plots	Manage proliferation of takeaways and related nuisances. Ongoing.
<b>Attractive places</b>	Civic space at Viaduct with active frontage	Dependant on parking study and redevelopment proposals.
	Redesign of Martello tower area	Subject to design proposals including rationalisation of parking arrangements.
	Structured tree planting at town approaches, gateways and key nodes	Coordinate with design for phased build-out proposals.
	Implement recommendations of building façade study	Engage with traders to remove redundant wiring, signage etc.
	Improve layout of George's Square	Remove bollards and replace stone seating. Consider options for re-use.
	Main street colour scheme	Coordinate with Town Architect and Conservation Officer.
	Pilot façade facelift scheme	Professional approach needed. Prioritise heritage buildings.
	Address visual quality of railway embankment	Potential for interim measures such as planting/ re-cladding.
	Redevelopment at Bridge Street to unblock potential linkages	Subject to owner cooperation.
	Redevelop area at north end of beach	Subject to owner cooperation.
	Redevelopment premises at Quay Street to improve linkages with the harbour	Subject to overall redevelopment proposals.
	Marketing and branding strategy	Benefit from progressing streetscape improvements.
	Development management to focus on issues such as improved design, de-cluttering of facades and protection of established, fine grain plot subdivisions.	Ongoing.

# APPENDIX

# A Appendix

## A1.1 Introduction

### A1.1.1 Background

Balbriggan Town Council, in partnership with Fingal County Council, Balbriggan Chamber of Commerce and the Heritage Council, commissioned Loci, together with Áit, Michael Oregan and Associates and Optimize to prepare this plan for Balbriggan Town Centre. This plan was supported as part of a larger, all-island programme initiated by the Heritage Council.

### A1.1.2 Purpose

The plan presents an overall vision and strategy for improving streets and open spaces in the town centre, informed by public consultation and underpinned by a detailed strategy framework and priority projects. A key aim of the plan is to build on the positive aspects of the town's natural setting and topography, links to the wider landscape and environs, natural and built heritage, diversity and mix of uses, in order to make it a more attractive place to live and visit.

The plan will act as a guide for future public space projects and proposals for the town centre, and will provide a resource for local groups and organisations to support their own plans and projects.

### A1.1.3 Scope

For the purposes of this plan, 'public realm' is defined as the public streets and open spaces including pavements, carriageways, squares, parks and car parks (and the links between them). The building fronts enclosing the public spaces contribute much to the life and character of public streets and open spaces and they are considered in this plan as an integral part of public streets and spaces.

Balbriggan is the third largest urban centre in Fingal after Blanchardstown and Swords. It has a young and growing population that has more than doubled over the past 20 years. The current population is recorded in the 2011 census as being 22,676 (urban and rural Balbriggan). Over the past 15 years the area has undergone rapid expansion with extensive residential and commercial development in its suburban areas.

Higher density employment and enterprise activity is emerging to the west of the town centre, which has established Balbriggan as an important regional hub for employment and living. The westward expansion of the town has been facilitated by a series of road infrastructure developments including the M1 Dublin-Belfast Motorway interchange (3km from the town centre), the Outer and Inner Relief Roads and Naul Road upgrade. Major upgrades to the water supply and foul drainage have also been approved for the town and its environs.

Significant public realm improvements have recently been undertaken by the Council, including high quality resurfacing of footpaths, public lighting, way-finding and street furniture. However, further work is necessary to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience in the town centre. Balbriggan has considerable tourism potential in terms of its natural and built heritage and amenities, particularly its coastal location, harbour and attractive sandy beach.

Local retail activity is characterised by independent outlets with a few larger shops and supermarkets such as Supervalu, Lidl and Tesco. The Mill field district shopping center is located at the edge of town centre.

## A1.4 Planning and Development context

### A1.4.1 Statutory planning context

Balbriggan is designated as a Major Town Centre along with Swords and Blanchardstown in the Fingal County Development Plan.

The following is an excerpt of the local objectives for Balbriggan.

The Fingal County Landscape Character Assessment locates Balbriggan in the Coastal Character Type: a type that is classified as being of exceptional landscape value and of high sensitivity.

### A1.4.2 Other relevant plans and studies

#### Objective BALBRIGGAN 1

Promote and facilitate the development and growth of Balbriggan as a primary service, social, cultural and local tourist centre in north Fingal.

#### Objective BALBRIGGAN 2

Ensure the physical and visual integration of the town centre with the newly developing residential areas.

#### Objective BALBRIGGAN 3

Secure a safe and convenient road, pedestrian and cycle system and street network to minimise traffic hazard and to accommodate the growth of the town.

#### Objective BALBRIGGAN 4

Promote and facilitate an enhanced rail station (a protected structure) and rail service, including the extension of the DART rail service to Balbriggan.



Drogheda Street / Bridge Street looking south



Balbriggan Harbour and Beach



George's Square looking south