

Sustainable Swords Strategy

December 2022

fingal.ie/sustainableswords



Section A

Executive Summary

The purpose of Sustainable Swords is to produce a placemaking strategy focused on the strategic regeneration and compact, sustainable development of Swords.

The goals are to increase the resilience of the local economy, and to provide for an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, child-friendly, and healthy urban environment.

The ambition for Sustainable Swords is to form a coordinating device that will establish a package of measures and projects that are prioritised, programmed, and impactful.

The aim is to identify a coordinated range of 'pipeline' projects that can be funded as part of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and other appropriate funding streams. Swords is a dynamic town that has rapidly grown in recent decades. This growth is anticipated to continue. The strategy focuses specifically on placemaking within the town centre; aiming to reverse the historic shift away from Main Street that commenced in the early 2000s to facilitate better placemaking and a more resilient town centre. The Sustainable Swords project aims to facilitate a sustainable approach to development and placemaking in Swords. This is about making a better place to live, work and visit, positioning Swords for the future as a more attractive, vibrant, and resilient town.

The project team have developed this strategy by carefully considering the physical assets and condition of Swords, along with insights provided by analysis of data, good practice elsewhere and critically from extensive public engagement. Themes and actions are therefore based on a strong foundation of evidence, and voices from the community that are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A town is never complete and it never stops changing. The challenge is to ensure that the change that happens within Swords is a positive process that will **make Swords a better place to live, work and visit**, a more vibrant town for all and a good practice example of a more sustainable approach to urban development.

Vision for Sustainable Swords:

“Collaboration and investment will see Swords town centre transformed to a more vibrant, attractive and accessible town centre, a beating green heart for Fingal.

The focus will be upon strategic regeneration and compact development, with a town centre first ethos that celebrates the town's heritage, encourages town centre living, and positions Swords as a town for current and future generations, a town for all.

An inspirational exemplar in the reimagining of town centres, Sustainable Swords will enable more sustainable choices for active travel, enhance biodiversity, foster community cohesion, reinvigorate the local economy, and ultimately contribute to a more sustainable future.”



To achieve this vision, 16 priority projects under 5 themes are identified below. This strategy outlines:

- Purpose, approach and alignment with SDGs in section 01.
- Project context including a summary of the Health Check, and Public Realm & Transport Strategy in section 02.
- Engagement undertaken for the project including summaries of survey responses, strategic conversations, workshops with schools, and webinar in section 03.
- Strategic framework including vision, themes, recommendations, projects in section 04.
- Delivery roadmap and monitoring in section 05.



Theme	Proposed Projects
Theme 1: Swords Main Street Transformation. This significant project will see Main Street, the heart of Swords, transformed and enhanced into a more attractive and vibrant place, encouraging people to stay longer and enabling a more enjoyable experience.	1 Swords Main Street Transformation
Theme 2: Reimagining Our Public Realm This envisages a step change in the quality of the urban realm of Swords town centre. The focus is upon a phased enhancement of the urban realm that provides space for all.	2 Swords Liveable Laneways Strategy 3 Swords Key Local Streets Enhancement 4 Enabling Shopfront Enhancements 5 Swords Smart Streets
Theme 3. Improving Access, Permeability and Connectivity Enabling ease of movement and more active travel is critically important with regard to reducing private car-use which in turn will have a positive impact on the environment, physical health and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These interventions will seek to showcase Swords rich natural and built heritage and capitalise on investment in Metrolink, BusConnects, The R132 and the Ward River Valley Park.	6 Swords Cycle Network 7 Swords Greenway Network Initiative 8 Swords Quietways & Home Zones 9 Swords Safe Routes to School/School Zones 10 Swords Western Distributer Road
Theme 4. Protecting and Promoting Our Heritage The built heritage of Swords provides the basis for the story of the evolution of the town. The projects included here enhance and protect that heritage for future generations as well as providing a basis for encouraging increased tourism spend in the town	11 Swords Cultural Quarter 12 Swords Stories Study 13 St Columba's Church and Round Tower Visitor Experience Feasibility Study
Theme 5. Supporting and Celebrating a Sustainable Community Swords has a thriving community. The aim is to support this community and position Swords as the best place to live, work and visit in County Dublin.	14 Swords Community Forest 15 Swords Sustainable Community Initiative 16 Swords Promotional and Branding Initiative

Project Overview – Timeline



Swords has a thriving business community. The aim is to support this community and position Swords as the best place to live, work and visit in County Dublin, and to progressively capitalise on its enhanced sustainability credentials.

FEB/MAR 2022



Project Development

SEP/OCT 2022



ROUND THREE
Public Engagement

NOVEMBER 2022



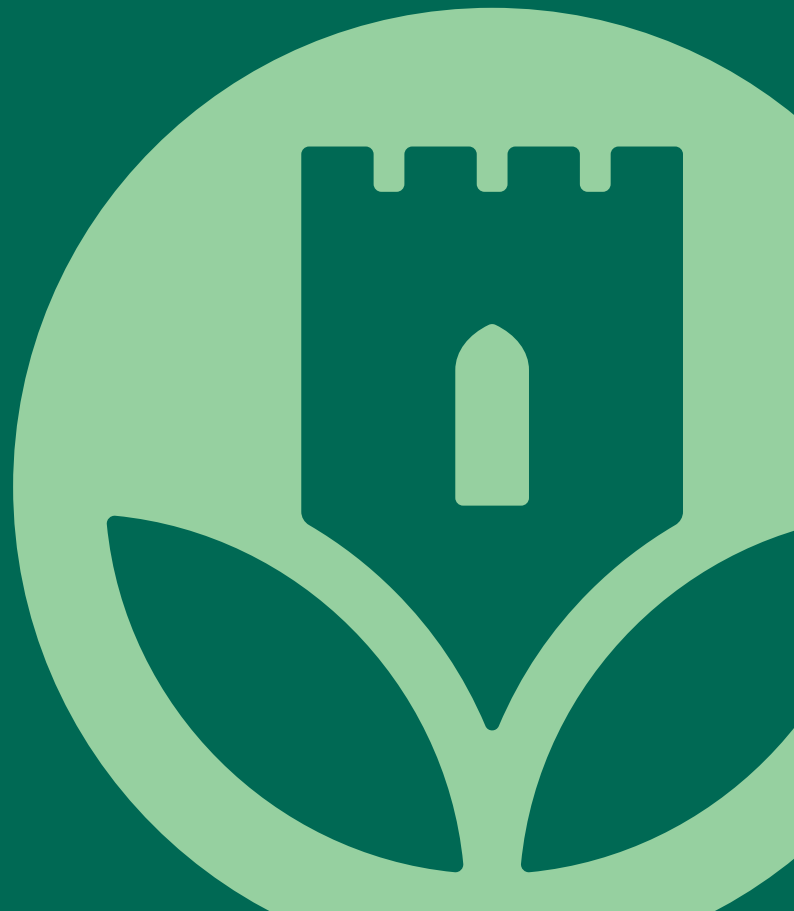
Final Project
Development



Section 01

Project Context

what this is about



Purpose

Sustainable Swords has been commissioned by Fingal County Council. The purpose of Sustainable Swords is to produce a placemaking strategy focused on the strategic regeneration and compact, sustainable development of Swords. The goals are to increase the resilience of the local economy and to provide for an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, age friendly and healthy urban environment.

Working alongside the Council an experienced project team have been engaged upon the project. Led by KPMG Future Analytics and Turner & Townsend, this includes Nicholas De Jong Associates, DBFL Consulting Engineers, Howley Hayes Cooney Conservation Architects, Irish Archaeological Consultancy (IAC), An Taisce's Environmental Education Unit's Green School's Travel Officers, and leading engineering consultancy Systra.

The Sustainable Swords Strategy is an output of strategic documents, including 'Your Swords - An Emerging City - Strategic Vision 2035' and the current Fingal Development Plan 2022-2029. The vision of the former is to consolidate and strengthen the historic town centre of Swords; whilst the latter describes several specific objectives for the town centre within the context of a plan-led development strategy. The strategy is informed by further relevant strategic policy including: Swords Castle Conservation Plan; Swords Castle Cultural Quarter Masterplan; South Fingal Transport Study; Fingal Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2023; Swords Masterplans Part A: Masterplans for Barrysparks & Crowscastle; Fosterstown; & Estuary West May 2019; and Swords Masterplan Jan 2009.

The ambition for Sustainable Swords is to form a coordinating device that will establish a package of measures and projects that are prioritised, programmed, and impactful, and that critically will enable the coordination of investment and decision-making across multiple stakeholders, maximising private sector engagement and identifying synergies and opportunities. **This strategy is grounded in thorough evidential research,** with supporting reports included in the appendix to this strategy, but also builds upon and is cognisant of previous work undertaken for Swords, and research and consultation undertaken to inform previous plans and strategies. This includes the Swords Castle Cultural Quarter (SCQ) project as well as wider town centre objectives



outlined in Your Swords Strategic Vision.

The aim is to identify a coordinated range of 'pipeline' projects that can be funded as part of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and help to transform the town centre and critically to position the town for a more sustainable future.

Swords is a dynamic town that has rapidly grown in recent decades due to its proximity to Dublin Airport, the city centre and major local investment and growth of employment hubs such as nearby Dublin Airport, the Pavilions Shopping Centre and business parks along the R132 (including Airside, Swords Business Park and Swords Business Campus). This growth is anticipated to continue, albeit there is reliance on the implementation of MetroLink to catalyse development opportunities within the 'Metro Economic Corridor'.

The focus of this project is specifically on placemaking within the town centre and aims to reverse the historic shift away from Main Street that commenced in the early 2000s (as demonstrated by the relatively high turnover, vacancy rates, and movement of smaller premises from North Street-Main Street towards the Pavilions and business parks along the R132 corridor) by moving away from early 2000s development to facilitate better placemaking and a more resilient town centre. Sustainable Swords will facilitate an accessible, inviting public realm that links with the natural and historic context of the Ward River Valley Park and Swords Castle and will aim to improve permeability and enhance the opportunities for local innovation and economic development.





“Swords is a dynamic town that has rapidly grown in recent decades...”

Approach

This Strategy provides further detail and guidance regarding sustainable development, including public realm and sustainable mobility developments and activities, that are already provided for, in general terms, by the existing land use planning and transport framework, which has been subject to appropriate levels of environmental assessment.

In order to be consented, any proposals for land use development or activity will need to receive confirmation that they can be progressed in full compliance with the current and future Fingal County Development Plan and the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

All drawings, routes and illustrations contained within this document are indicative only, for illustration purposes. All greenway and cycleway routes are taken from the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening reports have been prepared in order to examine the need for further assessment. These are available for review at <https://www.fingal.ie/sustainableswords>

“SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES ARE
ECONOMICALLY,
ENVIRONMENTALLY,
AND SOCIALLY
HEALTHY AND
RESILIENT.”



Sustainable Swords Study Area

Given the critical role that Swords as the County Town plays in the local community and the wider region, it is imperative that the study area, particularly Main Street and associated pedestrian linkages, contributes towards the quality of life of the residents whilst respecting the natural environment and historic context of the area.

This is about making a better place to live, work and visit, positioning Swords for the future as a more attractive, vibrant, and resilient town. It is critical that the town centre of Swords becomes an effective urban core meeting the evolving needs of town centres and catering for planned population growth in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

The study area for Sustainable Swords, as shown in Figure 1.1, encompasses Swords Town centre and is bound by the R132 to the east of the town going as far as the roundabout for the R125 and south to the Dublin Road roundabout. To the west the study area extends out to parts of Forest Road and includes parts of the Ward River Valley Park and the SK Biotek Factory.



Figure 1.1
Sustainable Swords Study Area

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were published by the United Nations in 2015 are the most comprehensive call for action and pathway towards achieving sustainable development by 2030. There are 17 goals as illustrated in figure 1.2, each of which are interrelated and underlaid by a comprehensive list of targets (169 in total) that are measured by specific indicators. Ireland has also published a Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2018-2020 to provide a whole-of-government approach to implementation of these goals, which is currently being updated.

The Sustainable Swords Strategy is aligned with the SDGs and it has sought to achieve lasting outcomes for the society and the planet (i.e. environment within Swords and people who visit and are within Swords) whilst recognising the symbiotic relationship between physical and ecological systems, human activities and social capital (particularly within the Swords Castle – Ward River Valley Park corridor and along Main Street). We have undertaken a benchmarking exercise to compare proposed projects against the SDGs and seek to deliver outcomes that align with the SDGs, with particular attention given to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 17: Partnerships, for the Goals to ensure a people-friendly and partnership-driven approach to deliver ‘Sustainable Swords’.

This alignment with the SDGs and the benchmarking exercise as part of the Town Centre Health Check is particularly important, given the creative efforts recently by the local community that align with the SDGs and support a Sustainable Swords. For example, environmental initiatives by local businesses have been promoted by the Tidy Towns Committee¹ energy efficiency, plastic-free and waste reduction efforts from local sports club have identified through the Swords Club Sustainability Competition, run by Fingal County Council. Great work has also been promoted by and facilitated through Fingal County Council including events such as the Christmas Market, the Fingal Fleadh and Summer Festivals, investment into electrical vehicles for the Council fleet, and open space and recreation facilities (work ongoing) along with the recently launched #RestartFingal initiative to improve the public realm and ‘See Something, Say Something’ text service in relation to antisocial behaviour.

Further, major businesses have also demonstrated their capacity to contribute towards Sustainable Swords, the Community Fund from Dublin Airport² has provided funding to many local clubs and organisations and the owners of the Pavilions Shopping Centre have committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030³. There are also a range of relevant recent and upcoming transport and social infrastructure projects including: Bus Connects, Metrolink, the R132 upgrade, the recently approved Broadmeadows Greenway and recently completed social housing at Holymount, a new nursing home between Bridge Street and Church Road and opening and expansion of Swords Community College since 2017.

¹ <https://swordstidytowns.com/sustainable-swords/>

² <https://www.dublinairport.com/corporate/community-and-sustainability/community-fund>

³ <https://www.pavilions.ie/sustainability>

Sustainable Development Goals



Figure 1.2
Sustainable Development Goals

Section 02

Project Analysis

what we have discovered



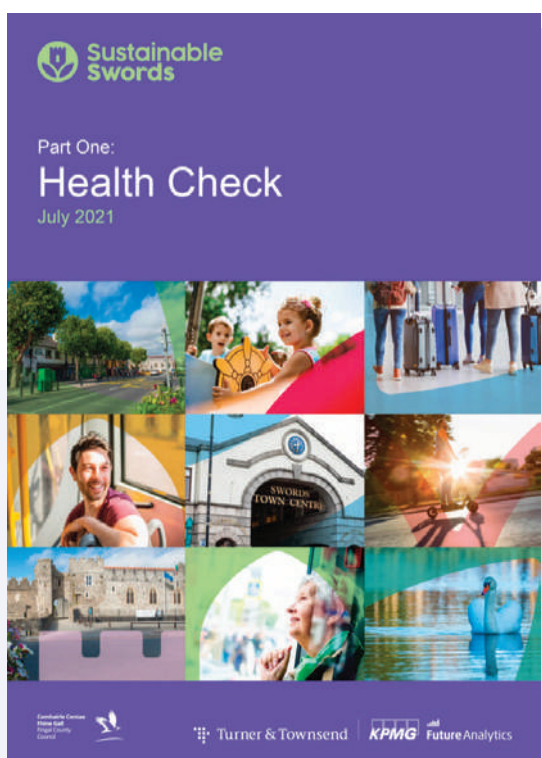
Health Check Summary

Overview

The health check of Swords town centre, which was undertaken in 2021, is based on in-depth analysis, including:

- **Socio-economic profile:** detailed analysis was undertaken to form a baseline for the town against a range of key metrics.
- **Town Character and Urban Realm:** an assessment of the public realm quality, town centre uses and vacancy with associated issues and opportunities for enhancement was undertaken to inform both this health check and the Public Realm and Transport Strategy.
- **Permeability, Accessibility, and Transport:** here the focus was on existing provision and opportunities for enhancement. This includes a detailed walking and cycling audit of the town centre, a summary of existing and proposed public transport infrastructure, as well as traffic and parking.
- **Community Infrastructure:** the focus of research was upon education, community facilities, social capital, activity and partnerships, and community enterprise with the strong Swords community role highlighted.
- **Natural Environment and Built Heritage:** detailed analysis of the natural environment is based on a preliminary ecological appraisal of Swords. Built heritage assessment is based on an audit of heritage assets in the town centre, as well as an overview of the history of the evolution of Swords. An Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Constraints Study provided valuable detail on this aspect.
- **Economy and Retail:** this area examined business support and promotion as well as the wider economic ecosystem for the town including rents, representation, and the evening economy.
- **Tourism:** an economic opportunity for Swords; research focuses on existing attractions and activities, accommodation, as well as promotion and marketing.
- **Leisure and Recreation:** associated infrastructure plays an important role in strengthening communities and research focuses on open space, town centre amenities, and sports facilities.

Detailed findings are provided in an associated [Technical Appendix](#).



Public Realm & Transport Strategy Summary

Overview

The Public realm and Transport Strategy is informed by qualitative and quantitative information sources, including:

- **Healthy Streets Approach™:** Utilising the 10 Healthy Streets indicators to assess quality of public realm on Main Street, and recommendations for its transformation.
- **Green Schools Audit:** Identification of existing barriers to walking and cycling to school safely in Swords, traffic volumes and speeds, & road safety issues.
- **South Fingal Transport Study:** Analysis of existing travel patterns in the wider Swords area. High-level recommendations for further analysis through this Report.
- **Town Centre Health Check:** Assessment of town character, level of permeability, accessibility and transport, and community infrastructure.
- **Traffic and Parking Surveys:** Utilising pre and post Covid sources of information.
- **Feedback** from public consultation webinars, Elected Members, FCC officers, residents and businesses.
- **International Case Studies:** Identification of best practice examples of Transit Oriented Development, pedestrian & cycle friendly environments, filtered permeability, Parking At Distance from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany & Spain.

Key Strategy Objectives

The following objectives guided the development of the Public realm and Transport Strategy:

- **Transformation of Main Street:** Reallocation of road space to support street vitality, people-friendly spaces, and Main Street as the beating heart of Swords.
- **Prioritisation of Walking & Cycling** for short trips (less than 5km) across Study Area, Main Street and the Cultural Quarter & on approach roads to the town centre.
- **Maximising Transformational Public Transport Investment** offered by BusConnects, future MetroLink and associated Park & Ride to transition to low carbon modes of transport and reallocate space from the private car (movement and storage).
- **Safer Routes to School:** Addressing issues raised by Green Schools Audit, Healthy Streets Check and enabling safer active travel to school.
- **Enhance Permeability:** Utilising existing laneways, green spaces, greenways and Quietways to provide active travel opportunities, neighbourhood vitality and access to town centre, places of education and reliable public transport.



Public Realm and Transport Strategy Summary





A close-up photograph of the interior of a public transport vehicle, likely a bus or tram. The focus is on a vertical black panel with a red emergency stop button. The background is blurred, showing a yellow vertical pole and a person in a red shirt. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**“Maximising
transformational
public transport
investment to
transition to low
carbon models of
transport.”**

Public Realm & Transport Strategy Summary

Key Public Realm & Transport Projects

The Public realm and Transport Strategy proposes a suite of wide-ranging projects, supporting measures and recommendations to underpin the transformation of Swords.

The following are key projects that have emerged from the Strategy:

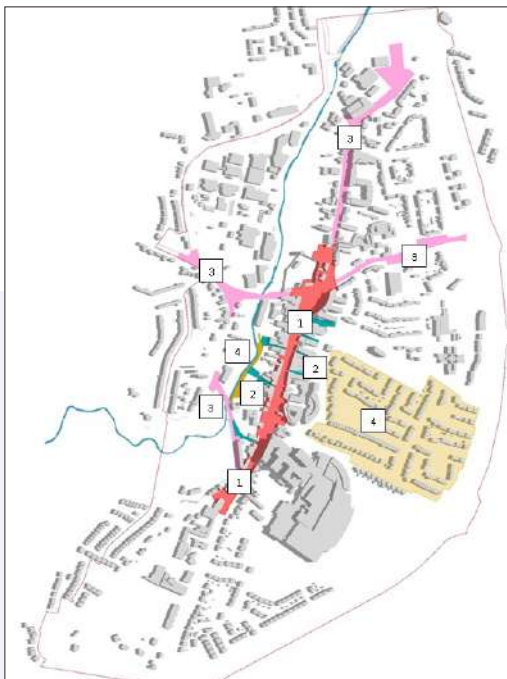
- Main Street Transformation
- Liveable Laneways
- Enhancements to Key Streets including Church Road, Bridge Street, Seatown Road, and North Street
- Quietways and Homezones including St. Colmcille's Quietway and Chapel Lane
- Swords Cycle Network
- Swords Greenway Initiative
- Safe Routes to School

Supporting Measures & Recommendations

A broad-range of supporting measures are essential to the creation of physical, social and cultural environments where people choose to walk, cycle and take public transport over the private car.

The full benefits of the Public realm and Transport Strategy proposals cannot be achieved through the provision of infrastructure alone and must be combined with measures that support the best use of that infrastructure and promote behavioural change. The Strategy recommends the use of the following supporting measures:

- A Material Palette and Design Approach for All Projects
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
- A Swords Wayfinding Strategy
- Innovative Bike Parking Solutions
- Expansion of Shared Bikes Schemes & Micromobility Facilities
- Innovative Car Parking Management
- Special Events such as Car-Free Days or Cyclovia
- Workplace Travel Plans
- "Last-Mile" Delivery Solutions









Section 03

Engagement Summary

your voice heard



Approach

Sustainable communities are those that optimise social capital to provide for an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, child friendly and healthy urban environment whilst serving the needs of the local population. There is therefore a critical role for collaboration with the client and consultation with the local communities in order to understand the benefits that can be attributed to this project and stakeholder participation will be a critical factor in the delivery of the project outcomes and improved liveability through Sustainable Swords. The project team has utilised, within the restrictions of Covid, a range of public and business engagement measures. This has included one-to-one interviews, an online business and community survey, written submissions, a survey and workshops with schools and a webinar.

We would like to sincerely thank all of those who have participated, and we welcome your involvement.



Online Surveys

Two surveys were open to the public on Fingal County Council's consultation webpage from 14th May to 20th June 2021. The public survey received 325 responses and the business survey 10 responses. This section summarises survey responses received.

Public Survey

- 93.2% of people who responded to the survey live within the area with almost 80% living in Swords for more than 10 years
- The main reasons people moved to Swords was for good housing and affordability.
- Out of the respondents, 56% use a private car as their primary mode of travel to Swords town centre, 36% walk and only 4% cycle
- When asked what would make you want to walk / cycle instead, 33% stated a new footpath or cycle way would and 17% better / safer crossing en-route to school/work
- 88% of people think Swords is a safe place to live but when asked 'what are your safety concerns' 56% responded with traffic. Other safety concerns are anti-social behaviour and policing, footpath quality and access.
- The top three strengths respondents identified for Swords were retail offering, amenities and services, and strategic location.
- The top three opportunities respondents identified for Swords over the next 10 years were 'Improved Public Realm and Pedestrianisation', 'Better Public Facilities, Events and Activities' and 'Improvements to Traffic, Transport and Parking'.
- When asked to describe Swords in three words, Vibrant, Historic, Beautiful was the most common response.

Business Survey

- 80% of respondents have their business located within Swords and the most common sector was Information and Communication with 30%
- 60% of respondents had a business of less than 5 employees and 50% of businesses have been operating for more than 10 years.
- In terms of facilities, 30% of business owned a retail unit while 0% stated they rented a retail unit and 30% use rented office space while only 20% of businesses owned office space. 20% of businesses stated they worked from home.
- Swords top three strengths as a place to do business were identified as access to services, growth potential, and quality of life
- Swords top three constraints as a place to do business were identified as cost of housing, availability of office space, and accessibility (public transport options)
- 60% of businesses responded that their sector is either growing well or very well and expect that to continue into the medium term.

Schools Engagement

It is critically important to involve children in the Sustainable Swords project and to consult with them on the development of their town. Children have often been forgotten and left out of the planning process, and as a result, towns and cities have been developed which often neglect the needs and wants of children in terms of how they use spaces, how they feel when in a space, what facilities they need and how they would like to travel. Children have an important role in building a more sustainable Swords and can greatly add to the process by bringing their unique perspectives to the project and offering solutions that may be overlooked by adults.

Ireland is a signatory to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Goal 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities sets out a vision of how we make our towns and cities sustainable. The key element to making our communities sustainable is to ensure an inclusive approach so that all members of our community have a voice when it comes to developing a town for the future. Children are the future of Swords and without their involvement an inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable town may not be achieved.

Green-Schools firstly devised a travel survey to send electronically to parents of the students of the nine participating schools. This survey was carefully designed using ArcGIS, to be clear and user friendly, while also maximising the data it would provide. Questions focused on how students usually travel to school, how they would prefer to travel to school, what are their perceived barriers to active travel, what improvements would encourage them to choose an active way to travel to and from school. The survey was very well received, with 647 responses.



Primary School Analysis

The results from the survey were particularly interesting as to show the levels and reasons why families choose different modes of transport to get to school.

For primary schools it was observed that a considerably large portion use active travel to get to school, with walking (63%), cycling (2.5%) and scooting (2%). Whilst such a high percentage of students walking is encouraging, the considerably lower figures for cycling and scooting are noteworthy. The survey question of "If you could pick your favourite way to travel to school?" adds further to the picture, with respondents giving cycling (28%) and scooting (9%). Though primary students would potentially like to take another mode of transport they may not feel able to.

When those who already travel to school in an active way were asked what would make them feel more comfortable about walking/ cycling the top four points that were selected were: **safer crossing points (30%), reduced traffic speed (24%), reduced traffic volume (20%) and new/improved footpaths (19%)**. By considering students responses as to their day-to-day experience of the paths and roads in Swords, considerations and improvements can be made to enable more to walk, cycle and scoot and to make the routes safer. It can also aid future development of the area in order to see what issues hinder people from choosing active travel modes.

What would make you feel more comfortable as you walk, cycle or scoot to school?

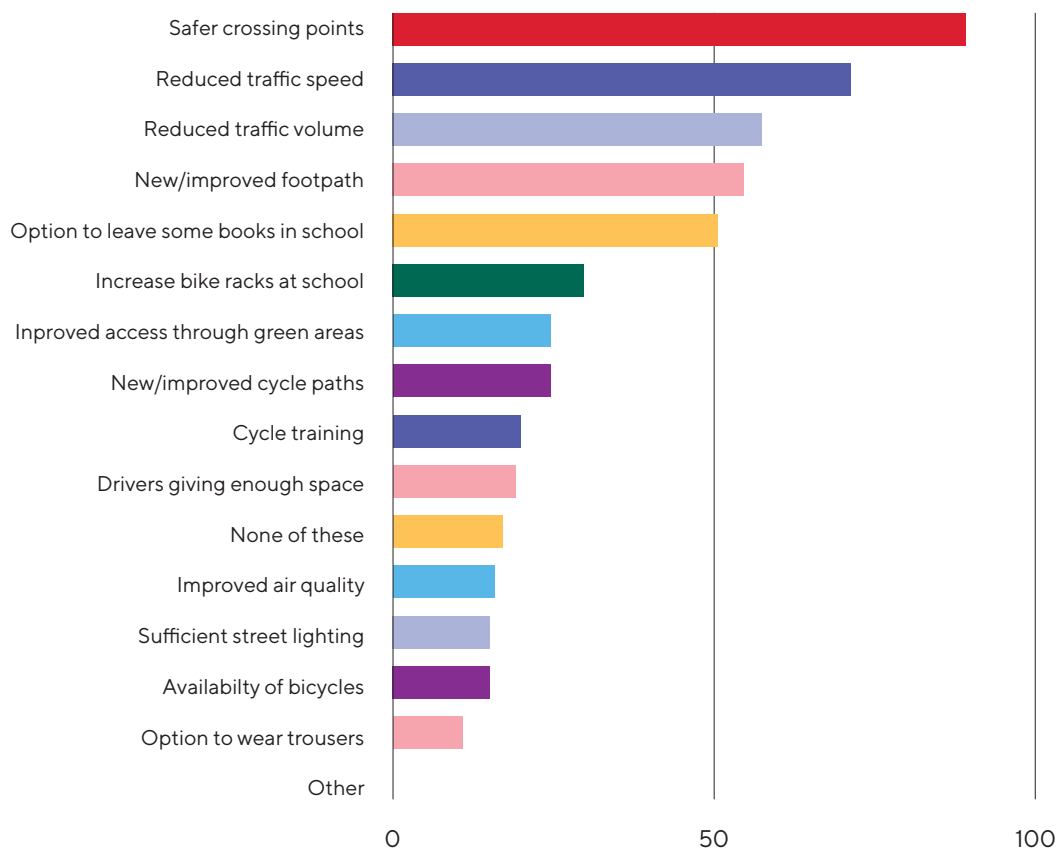


Figure 3.1
Schools survey Q7

Schools Engagement Cont.

Primary School Analysis

The results of the secondary school survey revealed the following breakdown of those travelling in a sustainable way- walking (32%), cycling (6%), public bus (9%), private bus (4%) and with car travel at (40%). When asked how they would prefer to travel, walking was (34%), cycling (15%), private bus (8%), public bus (6%) and car at (28%). (It is to be noted that the survey was conducted during Covid-19, and this may attribute to the decrease in wanting to use public transport).

With such a considerable amount travelling by car, and expressing that it is not their preferred mode, it highlights further opportunity to improve the infrastructure and address concerns in order to encourage sustainable travel modes.

When respondents who do not walk, cycle or scoot were asked what would encourage them to, the answers were a mixture of behavioural and infrastructural. The option to leave books at school was (19%) and an option to wear trousers (15%) both rated highly. The second most popular response was improved access through green areas (18%) with other options which also featured quite highly being: new/improved cycle paths (12%), new/improved footpaths (12%) and safer crossing points (10%) (fig. 3.2).

Both for primary and secondary school a large portion of students walk, with 63% and 34% respectively. Though it must be noted that the above attitudes to active travel on the school journey only reflect the eight schools surveyed, and not all the schools in Swords. However, it does indicate that **there is huge potential in encouraging and supporting the school communities in the area to walk, scoot or cycle to school.**

Secondary School Workshops

The Green Schools team undertook a workshop with the Transition Year in Fingal Community School in March 2022. Following an introduction to the project, a presentation was provided on Swords past, present and future. The students were very engaged and forthcoming with their suggestions and we would like to thank them for their involvement.

The workshop began by discussing what Swords is like to live in and go to school in; the history of Swords and the reasons people settled here, modern day Swords, and the built heritage and the importance of preserving key buildings. Discussion then followed on what makes up a town and what services and infrastructure a town needs. The students did a break out session where they discussed in pairs what services a town needs, they listed these and included what they feel is 'missing' in Swords or what they would like to see or what they feel would improve their town. They feel would improve their town and what would attract them into the town centre more.

Things that featured heavily were The Jacko; having more lighting there and creating a safer atmosphere and creating official links from it to different areas and housing estates. Students highlighted the lack of cycle lanes and how difficult it is to cycle in the town centre and the lack of bike racks in the town. They felt there should be more sports, leisure and entertainment facilities geared to their age group in more central locations that they can get to on bike or on foot. They also talked about the shops in the town and how they would like to see more independent and charity shops, rather than generic high street shops.







Strategic Conversations Summary

Strategic conversations were held with 24 individuals and groups of people representing key focus areas. Principal points made echo many of the comments made by those completing online surveys. The key themes coming from these strategic conversations are as follows:

The positives

- **Swords has a strong heritage that can be promoted as a way of bringing people into the town.** Swords Castle and the Round Tower are a unique selling point for Swords in this aspect, Swords would benefit from promoting this heritage as a way of attracting visitors into the town.
- **The Swords Cultural Quarter will provide an attraction for the north end of main street** and north street and will attract greater numbers of footfall to the area, this space has potential for a cultural centre, regular food markets and other outdoor events.
- The number of **parks and green areas around Swords is a big positive** for the town, the proximity to the Ward river and the Ward river valley park benefits the town hugely, connections and permeability to these areas should be increased to maximise this benefit.
- The **new estates being built to the north west have great cycle infrastructure to schools**, if this was replicated for the whole of Swords it would enable more kids to safely cycle to school.

Accessibility and permeability

- One of the positives was Swords' close proximity to parks and green spaces, particularly the Ward River Valley Park and the Malahide Estuary however, it was a key theme in these conversations **that there is a lack of or poor connections from the town centre to these parks and green spaces.** It was noted that if these connections were improved, school kids, would use these connections more as a means to travel to school.
- **Walkability and cyclability in and around Swords was a reoccurring topic. In many of the conversations people stated it was not easy or safe to walk into the town from the surrounding areas let alone cycle,** if this aspect was improved, less people would rely on their cars getting into the town.

Public Realm and maintenance

- A key theme that came out in almost every strategic conversation was **the poor conditions that the footpaths and cycleways around and in Swords town centre are in**, these bring a lot of negatives to the town such as lack of access for the disabled/elderly population and it is perceived as unsightly.
- The main street has many architecturally pleasing buildings, but many are **negatively impacted by poor shopfront design at ground level.** Several people highlighted the need and benefit that a universal shopfront design.
- Many of the strategic conversations spoke about an **element of pedestrianisation on main street, this was either for full or partial pedestrianisation with many people mentioning a one-way system** as a compromise if full pedestrianisation was not realistic from a transport planning perspective.

Traffic and roads

- **Traffic and congestion within the town centre, particularly around the junction to the north end of Main street is an issue.** There is a high level of car dependency within Swords and this can be seen on Main St where on-street parking is extremely busy most days.
- **There is a lack of sufficient pedestrian crossings in Swords, particular around large junctions and main street.** If more of these were to be added, it would make Swords more accessible for children and those with mobility impairment.

Online Webinar

As part of the second round of public engagement for Sustainable Swords, Fingal County Council held an online public webinar on the evening of 12th October 2021. The project team gave an overview of the Sustainable Swords project. At this session the public had an opportunity to hear from the project team and consultants, who discussed emerging themes for Sustainable Swords and answered queries during the Q&A session. The webinar attracted 46 people, whose opinions greatly benefited the project team's understanding.



Submissions

Following the completion of online surveys and the town centre health check, a number of themes and projects emerged. These were published on the Sustainable Swords webpage on the Fingal County Council website for public comment and observations. Public submissions were invited between the 28th September and 4th November 2021 with 23 submissions received. The project team are grateful to those who took the time to send in submissions, which have been very informative.

Key points arising from submissions include:

- Most submissions supported positive changes to Swords town centre.
- Issues around mobility and access to the town centre raised, with suggestions given to address this.
- Challenges bicycle users and walkers face around and in Swords town centre were highlighted, with many submissions calling for dedicated routes that provide safer travel for non-car based transport modes.
- Transformation of Main Street was a key theme within the submissions, with a range of ideas, and the potential for enhancement acknowledged and supported.
- The importance of the green spaces in and around Swords was a recurring theme, with support for the implementation of greenways and enhanced parks.
- Swords' built heritage was highlighted as being an important element of the town and an aspect that could attract more visitors to Swords.

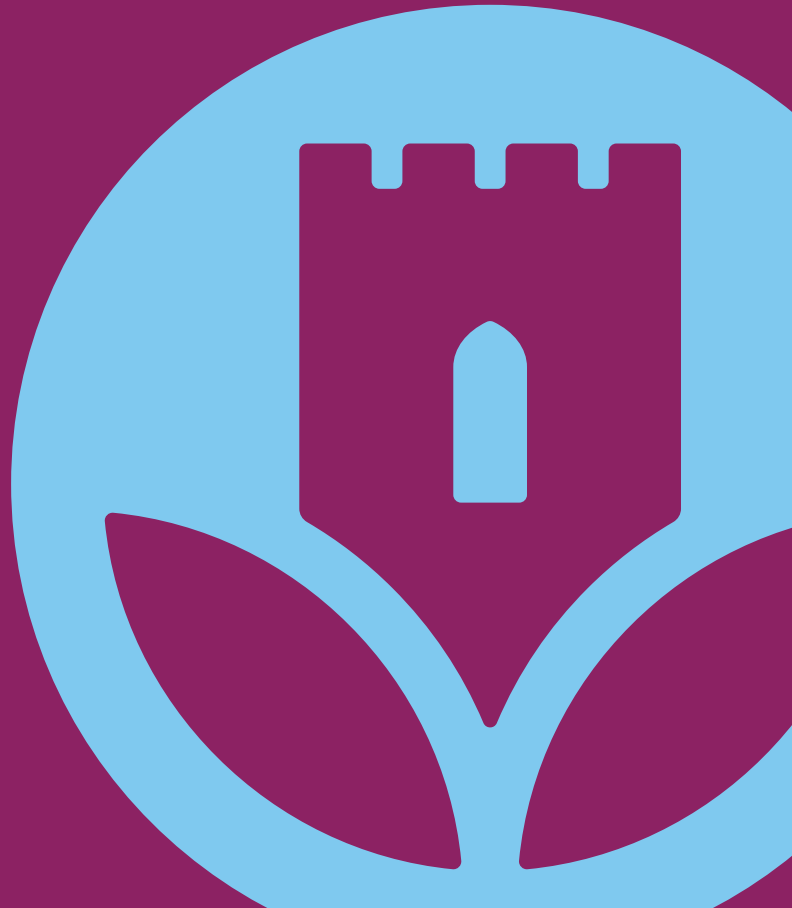
The Draft Sustainable Swords Strategy was published on the Fingal County Council website for public comments and observations. Public submissions were invited between 7th September and 1st November 2022 with 29 submissions received. The submission have helped to inform the strategy and the project team are grateful to those who made submissions.

A report was prepared on submissions received and presented to Elected Members of Fingal County Council on 12th December 2022.

Section 04

Strategic Framework

what is proposed



Vision

A town is never complete and it never stops changing. The challenge is to ensure that the change that happens within Swords is a positive process that will make Swords a better place to live, work and visit. **Swords is a dynamic town that has rapidly grown in recent decades.** This growth is anticipated to continue. The focus of this Strategy is specifically on placemaking within the town centre; aiming to reverse the historic shift away from Main Street that commenced in the early 2000s, to facilitate better placemaking and a more resilient town centre. Sustainable Swords will facilitate a sustainable approach to development and placemaking in Swords. This is about making a better place to live, work and visit, positioning Swords for the future as a more attractive, vibrant, and resilient town. The aim is to increase the resilience of the local economy and provide for an enhanced, accessible, inclusive, child-friendly, and healthy urban environment.

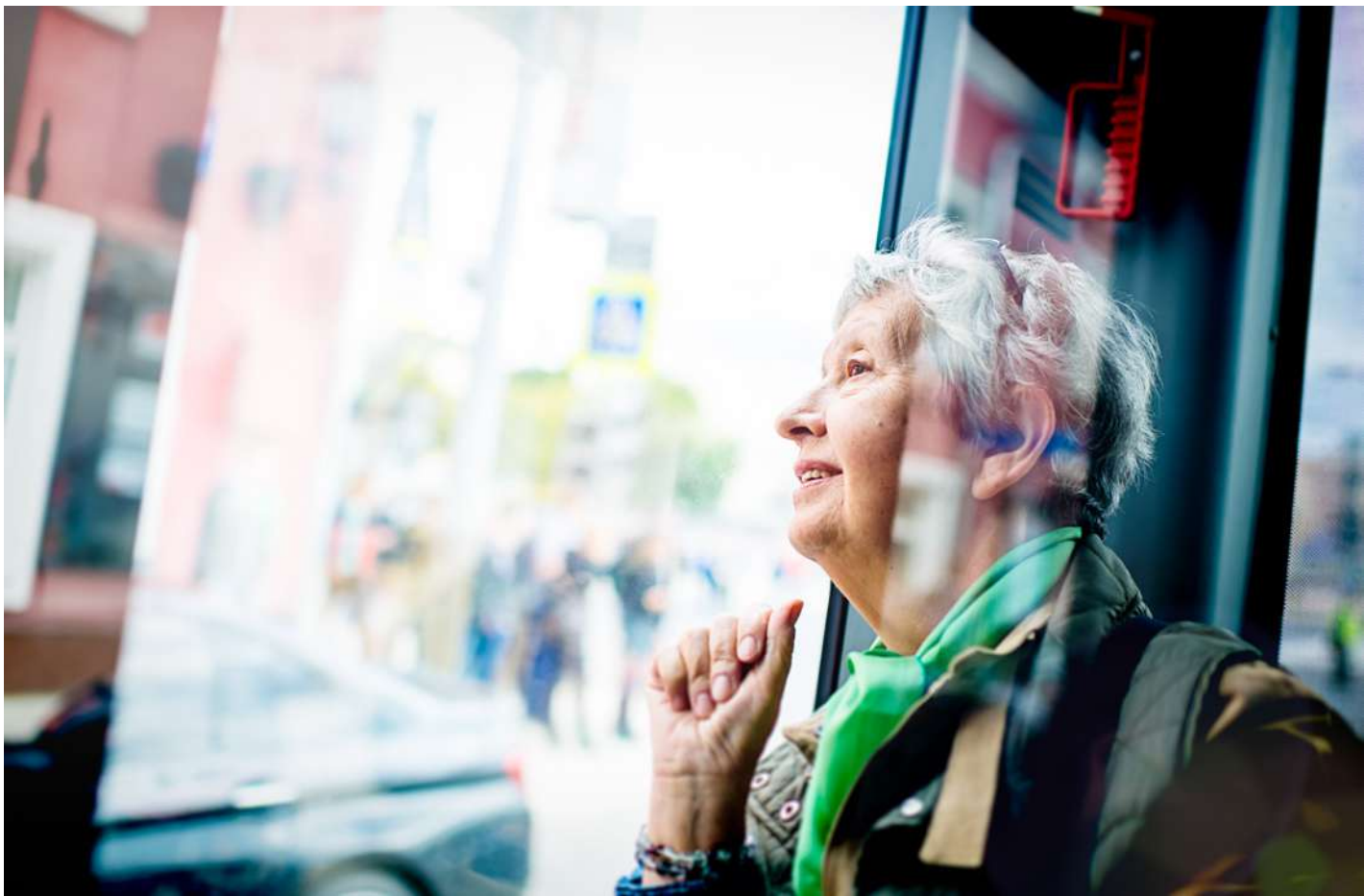
Based on research and engagement undertaken for this project a vision for Sustainable Swords can be described as:

“Collaboration and investment will see Swords town centre transformed to a more vibrant, attractive and accessible town centre, a beating green heart for Fingal.

The focus will be upon strategic regeneration and compact development, with a town centre first ethos that celebrates the town’s heritage, encourages town centre living, and positions Swords as a town for current and future generations, a town for all.

An inspirational exemplar in the reimagining of town centres, Sustainable Swords will enable more sustainable choices for active travel, enhance biodiversity, foster community cohesion, reinvigorate the local economy, and ultimately contribute to a more sustainable future.”

Recommendations outlined in this report are suggestions informed by professional experience, best practice examples and critically by engagement with key stakeholders. It is hoped that they can inspire more people and businesses to get involved with Sustainable Swords to bring real and tangible changes for Swords and its community.



Vision: Collaboration and investment will see Swords town centre transformed to a more vibrant, attractive and accessible town centre, a beating green heart for Fingal

Theme	Proposed Projects
Theme 1: Swords Main Street Transformation. This significant project will see Main Street, the heart of Swords, transformed and enhanced into a more attractive and vibrant place, encouraging people to stay longer and enabling a more enjoyable experience.	1 Swords Main Street Transformation
Theme 2: Reimagining Our Public Realm This envisages a step change in the quality of the urban realm of Swords town centre. The focus is upon a phased enhancement of the urban realm that provides space for all.	2 Swords Liveable Laneways Strategy 3 Swords Key Local Streets Enhancement 4 Enabling Shopfront Enhancements 5 Swords Smart Streets
Theme 3: Improving Access, Permeability and Connectivity Enabling ease of movement and more active travel is critically important to reducing private car-use which in turn will have a positive impact on the environment, physical health and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These interventions will seek to showcase Swords rich natural and built heritage and capitalise on transformative level of investment in Metrolink, BusConnects and the R132.	6 Swords Cycle Network 7 Swords Greenway Network Initiative 8 Swords Quietways & Home Zones 9 Swords Safe Routes to School/School Zones 10 Swords Western Distributer Road
Theme 4: Protecting and Promoting Our Heritage The built heritage of Swords provides the basis for the story of the evolution of the settlements. The projects included here enhance and protect that heritage for future generations and provide a basis for encouraging increased tourism spend in the town	11 Swords Cultural Quarter 12 Swords Stories Study 13 St Columba's Church and Round Tower Visitor Experience Feasibility Study
Theme 5: Supporting and Celebrating a Sustainable Community Swords has a thriving community. The aim is to support this community and position Swords as the best place to live, work and visit in County Dublin.	14 Swords Community Forest 15 Swords Sustainable Community Initiative 16 Swords Promotional and Branding Initiative

Proposed Project - Themes

01 Swords Main Street Transformation

02 Reimagining Our Public Realm

03 Improving Access, Permeability and Connectivity

04 Protecting and Promoting Our Heritage

05 Supporting and Celebrating a Sustainable Community

Theme One: Swords Main Street Transformation

This significant project will see Main Street, the heart of Swords, transformed and enhanced into a more attractive and vibrant place, encouraging people to stay longer and enabling a more enjoyable experience.

Proposed Project

1. Swords Main Street Transformation

Detail on this project is included on the following pages and within the Public Realm and Transport Strategy, which also includes the following relevant recommendations:

- SS 5: Junction Improvements
- SS 8: Town Centre Parking Study
- SS 9: Delivery and Servicing
- SS 13: Swords Right Tree, Right Place Policy
- SS 14: SuDS / Nature Based Solutions
- SS 16: Universal Access/Design
- SS 17: Inclusive Design
- SS 22: Last-Mile Deliveries



The Strategy for Public Realm and Transport

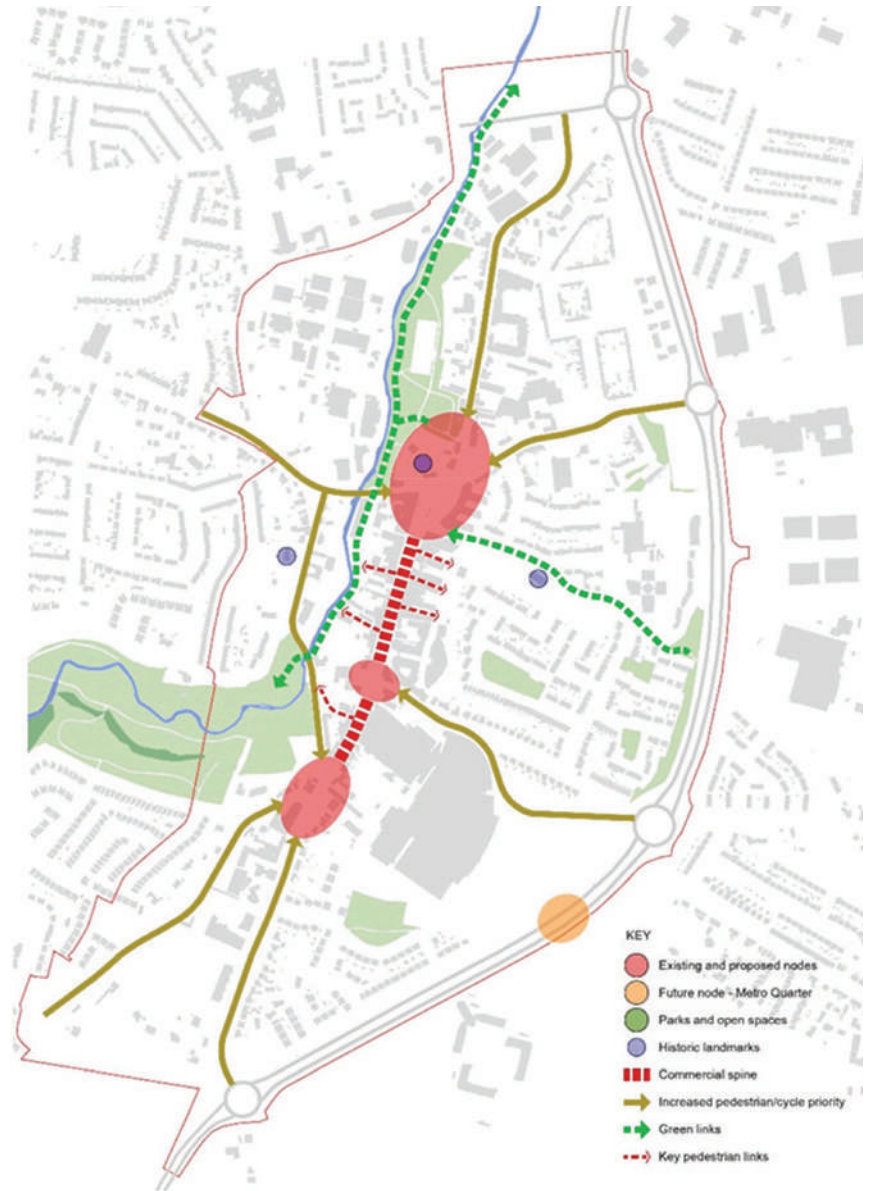
The strategy for upgrading the public realm of Swords town centre responds to the Strategic Vision for creating a sustainable new urban environment and an inspiring destination for citizens and visitors.

The public realm is recognised as having a key role to play in this process by meeting the following strategic objectives:

- » Enhancing the identity of the town centre through the development of Swords Civic Centre and Cultural Centre;
- » Delivering an improved accessible child and age-friendly public realm that includes new public nodes in Swords Town Centre.
- » Facilitating the creation of a new street /pedestrian walkway fronting the river walk to the west of Main Street opening up these 'backlands' and supporting co-ordinated infill development on key strategic sites along Main Street and North Street.
- » Promoting core recreational and amenity spaces, utilising in particular The Ward River Valley Park, Swords Cultural Quarter including Town Park, The Ward River Walk west of Main Street area.

The approach adopted for developing the Public Realm proposals is centred on creating a coherent, high quality and welcoming place, thereby reinforcing the vitality, vibrancy and viability of the Town Centre with resulting increased benefits for liveability and the local economy. This is achieved through the following principles:

- » Encouraging people to live in Swords town centre - a Town Centre First approach with a focus on Living above the Shop.
- » Developing a public realm that has a balance between the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles.
- » Creating spaces that are legible and compliment the urban form.
- » Retaining items of local history and through simple design allow the varied character of the town to be expressed and appreciated.
- » Creating a safe environment by the careful consideration of designing-out crime and anti-social behaviour from the outset.
- » Utilising a consistent, simple public realm through the reduction of unnecessary street clutter, both visual (paving) and physical (barriers and furniture).
- » Introducing features that enhance the biodiversity of Swords.



Public Realm and Transport Strategy Plan

Movement Hierarchy



Key Public Realm and Transport Projects

The key projects identified for best meeting the Sustainable Swords objectives within identified timeframes comprise:

- » **PROJECT 1: Main Street**
- » **PROJECT 2: Liveable Laneways**
 - Well Road
 - St. Colmcille's Court
 - River Mall
 - Chapel Lane
 - Mainscourt
 - Cock Tavern Lane
 - The Plaza
- » **PROJECT 3: Key Street Enhancements**
 - Church Road
 - Bridge Street
 - Seatown Road
 - North Street
- » **PROJECT 4: Quietways & Homezones**
 - St. Colmcille's Quietway
 - Residential Homezones

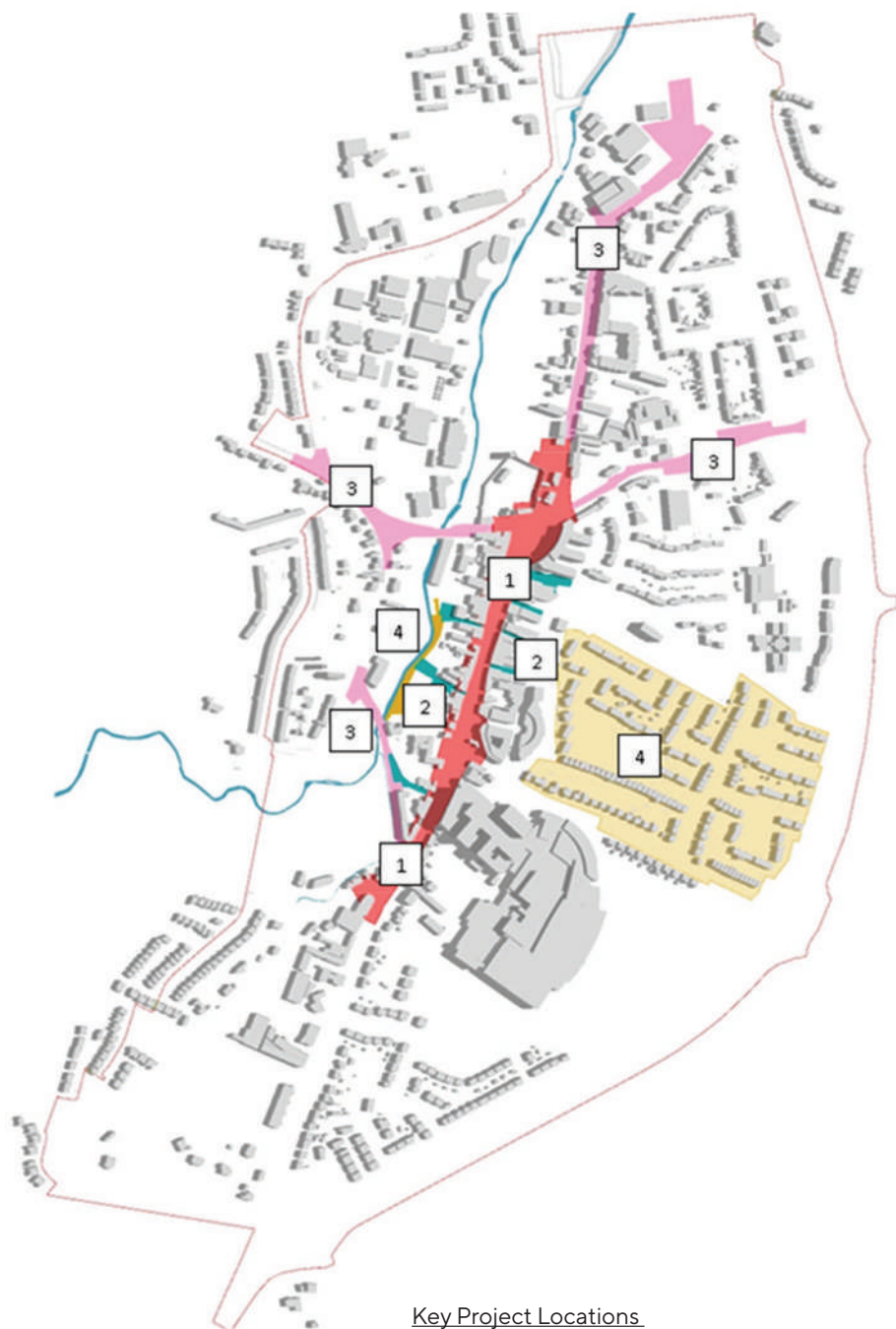
It is anticipated that Sustainable Swords will be delivered in a phased manner over time, with a series of short, medium and long-term projects. These will incrementally build on each other to achieve the overarching objectives of the Public Realm and Transport Strategy.

Indicative timeframes are:

Short Term: 1-3 years

Medium Term: 4-7 years

Long Term: 7-10 years

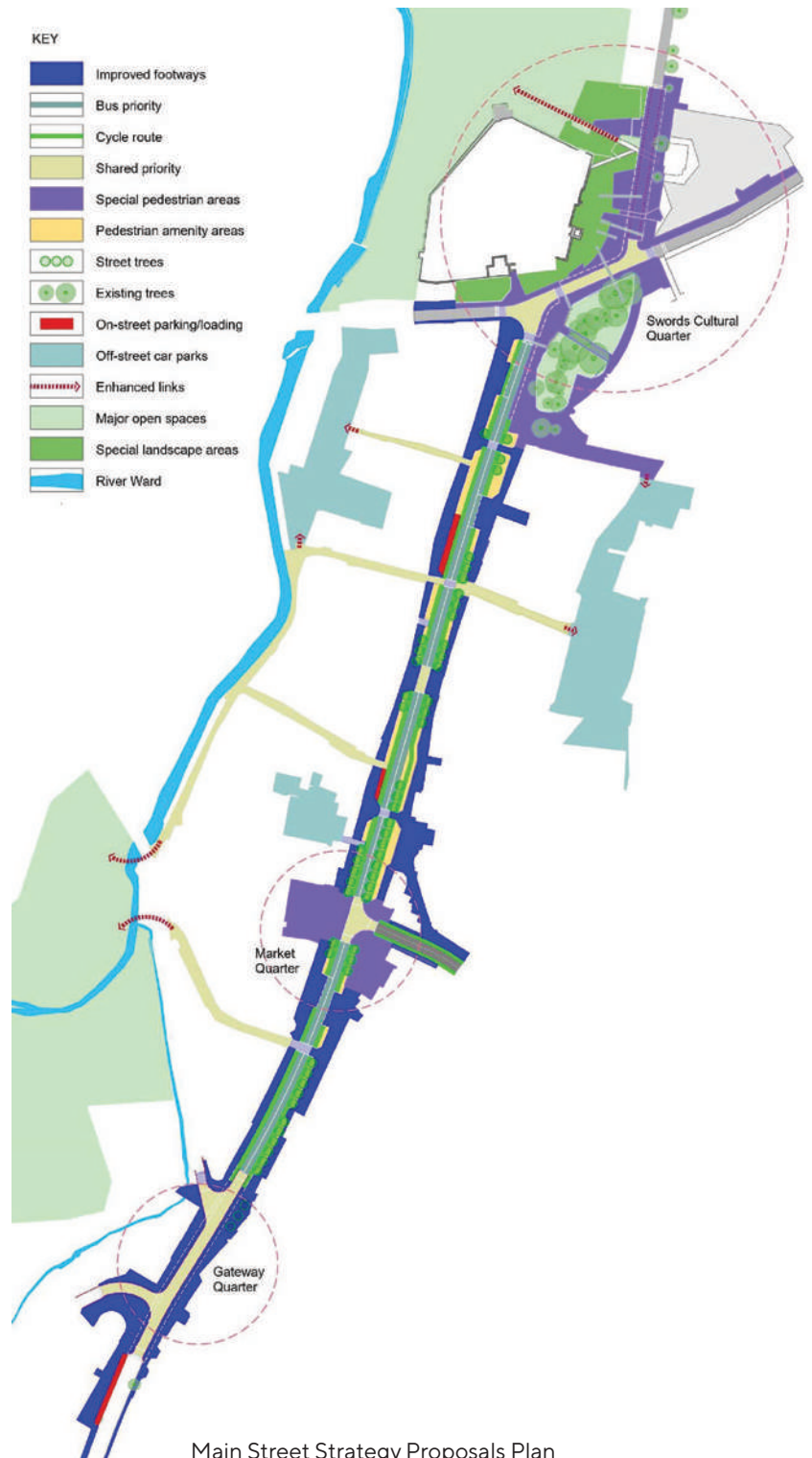


Project 1: Main Street

Key to the success of Sustainable Swords will be the consolidation and strengthening of the role of Main Street, facilitating the integration of town centre expansion; realising the three distinct Quarters with highest quality public realm – Swords Cultural Quarter, proposed Market Quarter, future Gateway Quarter; and providing a high-quality public realm for living, working and visiting.

The main features of the Strategy Proposals include:

- » Completion of Swords Cultural Quarter public realm
- » Creation of new public space outside The Old Borough, linked to Garda Station public space as new Market Quarter
- » Southern gateway with traffic calming and enhanced pedestrian and cycle facilities, and to facilitate a future new town centre Quarter as envisaged by 'Your Swords, Strategic Vision 2035'
- » Extended footways and enhanced pedestrian crossings
- » Creation of pedestrian amenity zones with coordinated street furniture, activity elements and rain gardens
- » Cycles lanes both sides of road, integrated with the public realm
- » Replacement street trees, with linked root cells where possible (SUDS)
- » Continuous southbound and northbound bus routes
- » Northbound general traffic
- » Bus stops rationalised and up-graded
- » Raised tables at junctions with Bridge Street, Malahide Road and Forest Road/ Church Road, for traffic calming and place making
- » On-street parking relocated and loading rationalised
- » Enhanced pedestrian links to public car parks and the riverside
- » Essential service/emergency vehicle access only retained
- » Laneway enhancements as Project 2
- » Age friendly infrastructure including provision of age friendly parking close to the town centre





Main Street southern gateway as proposed, with traffic calming, enhanced pedestrian/cycle facilities and high-quality surfacing, street furniture and planting.



Main Street central public realm as proposed, with shared priority street, bus and cycle lanes, pedestrian amenity zones, raingardens and new street trees.

Key components



Widened footways (safe pedestrian space),
cycle lane, mixed amenity zone.



Extra wide footway, rain garden, amenity
zone with play and smart furniture.



Long term view



At certain times, or permanently in the longer term, the street can be closed to all traffic so as to become a vibrant pedestrian spine connecting the Quarters at each end of the Town Centre.

Theme Two: Reimagining Our Public Realm

This envisages a step change in the quality of the urban realm of Swords town centre. The focus is upon a phased enhancement of the urban realm that provides space for all.

Proposed Project

2. Swords Liveable Laneways Strategy
3. Swords Key Local Streets Enhancement
4. Enabling Swords Shopfront Enhancements
5. Swords Smart Streets

Detail on these projects is included on the following pages and within the Public Realm and Transport Strategy, which also includes the following relevant recommendations:

- SS 5: Junction Improvements
- SS 7: Mobility Points
- SS 9: Delivery and Servicing
- SS 12: Swords Town Centre Laneways Strategy
- SS 13: Swords Right Tree, Right Place Policy
- SS 14: SuDS / Nature Based Solutions
- SS 16: Universal Access/Design
- SS 17: Inclusive Design
- SS 22: Last-Mile Deliveries



Project 2: Liveable Laneways

The purpose of the Liveable Laneways project is to provide accessible, convenient and desirable pedestrian access in order to facilitate greater footfall, vibrancy, activity and investment in the town centre. Related benefits include enhancing the perception of safety, making them more welcoming and attractive for all, and developing a strengthened sense of community.

Swords Main Street is connected westwards to the River Ward and eastwards to off-street parking areas by a series of laneways that add considerably to the character of the town centre. While contributing to the permeability of the core area, these spaces tend to be dominated by cars leaving either narrow or no footpaths for pedestrians, poor surface quality, poor lighting and little passive surveillance.

Key elements of the project include:

- » Diversifying the range of uses, particularly residential infill, to reinforce the 'Liveable Laneways' concept.
- » Providing an interesting public realm to support the endeavours of small businesses and retailers who may wish to maximise their properties or locate to the laneways.
- » Prioritising pedestrians by restricting vehicle access to essential traffic only and creating wider footpaths and/or high quality shared surfaces.
- » Promoting active frontage and uses that encourage increased activity and footfall (passive surveillance).
- » Encouraging adjoining business to enhance existing openings into the laneways or creating new ones, as well as high quality display windows and suitable overspill activities.
- » Introducing a range of innovative lighting effects in order to enliven laneways and encourage an attractive and safe environment.
- » Ensuring that the principles of 'Safer Places: the planning system and crime prevention' (ODPM) are incorporated as part of any new development.
- » Introducing street furniture where complementary to the laneways and adjacent shop fronts, and including consideration of seating, mini-gardens and living wall planting.
- » Removing superfluous or unsightly components or obstacles, to enhance the appearance of the spaces and to reduce clutter, including unsightly third-party apparatus, such as bin storage, aerials and satellite dishes.



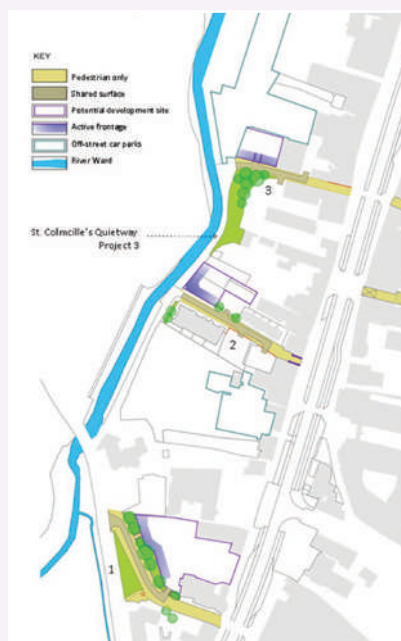
Cock Tavern laneway
as proposed ↓



Outline Proposals (eastern laneways), Short term

- » **1. Well Road**
 - Residents' vehicle access only from Church Road
 - Good quality pedestrian and shared priority surfaces (pc concrete)
 - Potential mixed-use development with housing overlooking the road
 - Existing trees retained
 - Public green space upgraded
- » **2. St. Colmcille's Court**
 - Residents' vehicle and car park access only from Church Road
 - Opportunity to animate entry from Main Street with window opes in side walls and/or archway feature
 - High quality pedestrian and shared priority surfaces, street lighting
 - Potential housing development overlooking the road and river
 - Boundary improvements to existing parking areas
- » **3. River Mall**
 - Residents/business vehicles' and car park access only from Church Road
 - Opportunity to animate entry from Main Street with mural to blank gable end
 - High quality pedestrian and shared priority surfaces, wall-mounted lighting
 - Potential housing development overlooking the road
 - Public green space upgraded

Eastern Laneways



Outline Proposals (western laneways), Short term

- » **4. Chapel Lane**
 - Change to pedestrian only
 - Creation of civic space as extension and enhancing access to SCQ plaza
 - High quality surfaces (granite slabs + setts)
 - Potential retail development to animate corner at Forster Way
 - Formal trees, street furniture and feature lighting
- » **5. Mainscourt**
 - Pedestrian only
 - Explore removal of Bank of Ireland division railing to enhance public realm
 - High quality surfaces (granite setts) and street lighting
 - Improved pedestrian crossing to Senior Citizens Club
- » **6. Cock Tavern Lane**
 - Pedestrian only
 - Created civic space as extension and enhancing access to SCQ plaza
 - Encourage Cock Tavern to extend outdoor refreshment around corner -improved awning and removal of high boundary wall
 - High quality surfaces (granite setts) and wall-mounted lighting to western end and catenary lighting to eastern end
- » **7. The Plaza, Swords Town Centre**
 - Pedestrian only
 - Feature lighting to archway
 - High quality surfaces (granite slabs + setts)
 - Coloured canvas canopy to existing structure with lighting effects
 - Linear rain gardens and exotic vegetation (e.g. 'palm house')

Western laneways



Project 3: Key Street Enhancements

Sustainable Swords Street Hierarchy

The long-term Street Hierarchy envisaged for Sustainable Swords has been informed by the Preliminary Movement Strategy and the area's land use pattern. The general aim is to prioritise pedestrian, cyclist and public transport users for internal movements within the town centre core, but also facilitate external connections by all transport modes.

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) categorises the street hierarchy based on the different movement function of a given street. The categories appropriate to Swords Town Centre are identified as:

- » Arterial Streets: Major routes via which the key nodes are connected. The R132 is the main Arterial Street in Swords and will continue to perform a multi-modal function.
- » Link Streets: Provide connections to Arterial Streets or between neighbourhoods and/or suburbs.
- » Local Streets: Provide access within communities and to Arterial and Link Streets. The majority of the integrated street network within Swords consists of Local Streets.
- » Quietways: Walking and cycling routes that have been identified where vehicular traffic is generally quieter and calmer or not present at all.

Whilst the majority of the streets in the Study Area are Local Streets, the following have been identified as Key Local Streets:

- » Church Road
- » Main Street
- » Bridge Street
- » North Street
- » Seatown Road

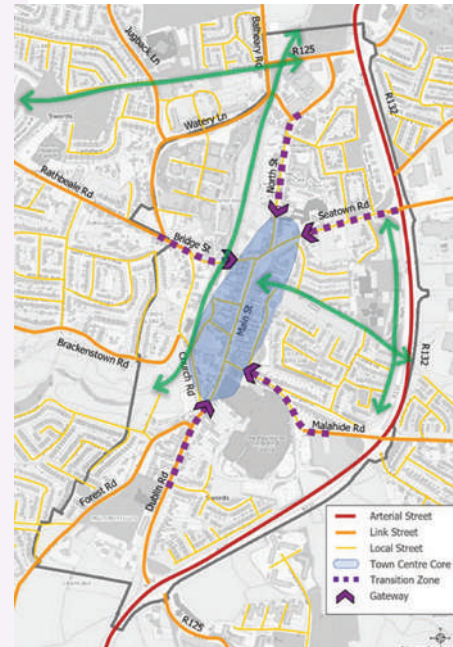
Church Road

Church Road is an important route for all users, linking the southern end of the Town Centre to the Ward River Valley and adjoining established residential areas.

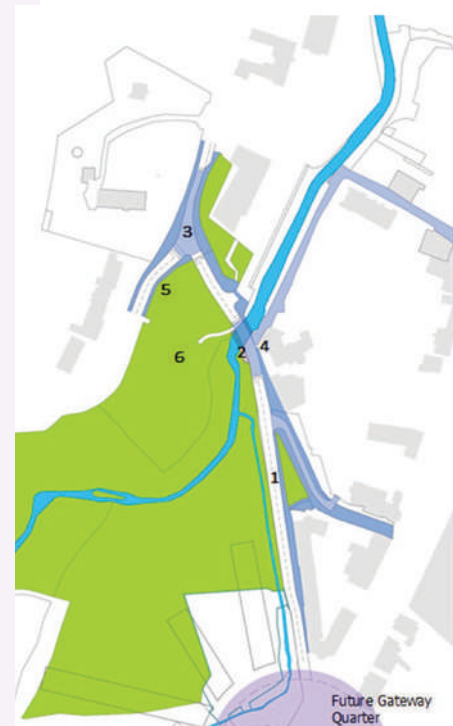
The key short to medium term proposals for Church Road include:

1. A new pedestrian and cycle path on the western side of the road, between the junctions with Main Street and Brackenstown Road, including a possible cantilever structure to the west of the existing bridge for a shared pedestrian and cycle path.
2. Upgrade of the existing footpath on west side of bridge - the width of the roadway could be reduced to 5.5m if two-way bus movements are not required.
3. Upgrade of Main Street/Church Road and Brackenstown Road/Church Road junctions.
4. A raised table for traffic calming and increased pedestrian/cycle accessibility at the junction with St. Colmcille's Quietway.
5. Enhance existing permeability between St. Columba's Rise and Church Road by widening and opening up the path and providing street lighting.
6. Open space improvements as per the FCC Ward River Masterplan.

As outlined in the Transport Strategy, longer term considerations include the creation of a Quietway along the northern section of Church Road by implementing filtered permeability at the Brackenstown Road/Church Road Junction for pedestrians, cyclists, and local vehicular (access) traffic only. This is likely to be part of a phased approach and potentially after the completion of the proposed Western Distributor Road.



One of the main aims of the Sustainable Swords project is to reinforce the street hierarchy for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.



Church Road outline proposals

Bridge Street

Bridge Street links the residential areas to the west of the Town Centre to Swords Cultural Quarter. It is a busy movement corridor, narrow in parts, and also serving BusConnects routes.

1. Reduction in carriageway width to 6m where possible and utilising remaining space to widen footpaths on southern side of street.
2. Shared space at eastern end of the Street between Main Street and the Town Park to integrate with the SCQ area.
3. Consideration of a shared pedestrian and cycle path to the north of existing bridge to reduce conflict.
4. Provision of a Toucan crossings near Care Choice Nursing Home, connecting with the green open space, and at the entry to the Town Park (in line with St. Colmcille's Quietway).

As outlined in the Transport Strategy, longer term proposals include:

- » Consideration of restricting through (private) traffic along the street and introducing bus priority, subject to the completion of the Western Link Road. Access arrangements for the redevelopment of the Castle Shopping Centre would also need to be factored into the decision.
- » Toucan crossing at the Swords Castle Shopping Centre entrance to align with long-term Section 3 of St. Colmcille's Quietway.
- » Removal of the chain barrier at the Town Park entrance on Bridge Street to facilitate crossing on desire lines.

Seatown Road

Seatown Road provides direct access to Swords Cultural Quarter from the R132 and the M1 motorway, and has the potential to become an attractive pedestrian route between the Town Centre and the proposed Seatown Metro stop, and reinforcing its role in the development of a pedestrian friendly urban centre.

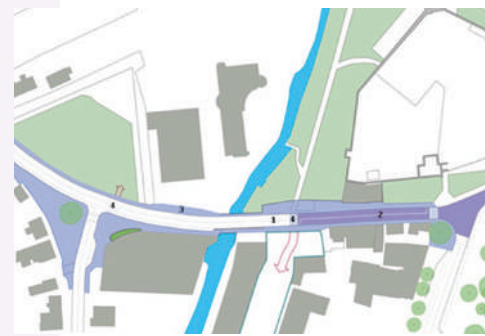
Medium term proposals include:

- » Key access point to Seatown Metro – retain as two-way access to SCQ and Main Street initially.
- » Cycle tracks from Seatown Road Roundabout (tie-in with R132 Connectivity Project).
- » Shared space (as per SCQ) as far as entrance to Fingal Community College.
- » Reduce speed limit to 30kph and Gateway and Transition Zone treatment.

As outlined in the Transport Strategy, longer term consideration could be given to either a shuttle system, or a short one-way section to limit through vehicular traffic and accommodate wider footpaths. This may be contingent on full completion of 'ring road' system and access requirements to the Aldi and residential properties at St Columcille's Drive.



Bridge Street/Church Street junction



Bridge Street outline proposals



Seatown Road by Aldi



Seatown Road outline proposals

Project 3: Key Street Enhancements

North Street

North Street extends from Swords Cultural Quarter northwards to the R125 and Estuary Roundabout. It forms a continuation of Main Street as the principal thoroughfare and commercial core of Swords Town Centre.

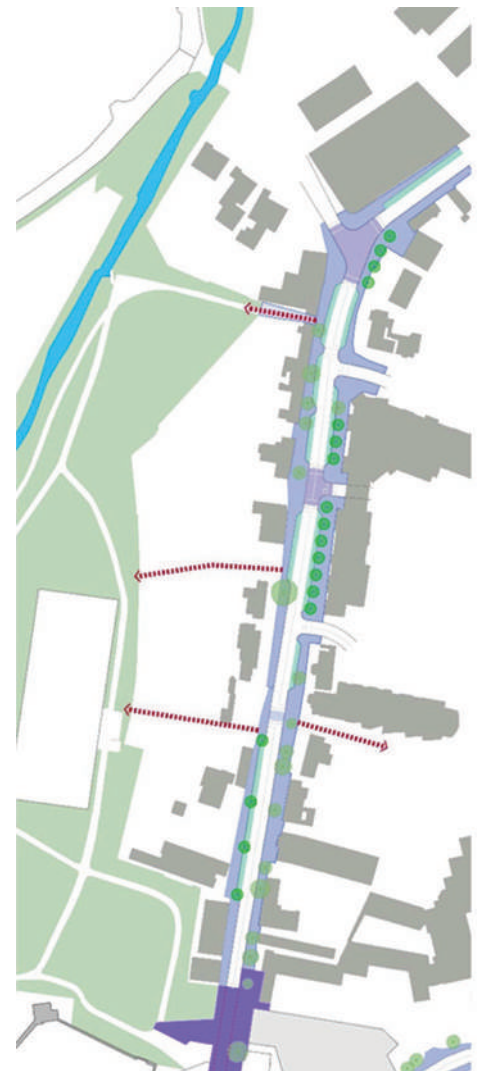
Short-Medium Term proposals:

- » It will be necessary to retain two-way vehicle movement, and traffic calming measures should be undertaken to reduce the dominance of traffic.
- » On-street parking to be rationalised and more clearly defined.
- » Cycle lanes to be incorporated on both sides of the street to the junction with the R125.
- » Shared space is proposed at the southern end of the street to integrate with the SCQ area.
- » Side street junctions to have reduced radii and improved pedestrian crossings.
- » The Town Park access at northern end near The Estuary Public House to be enhanced.
- » Street lighting and signage to be up-graded, particularly for enhancing the presence of heritage and amenity assets.
- » Junction with Balheary Road to be enhanced in line with DMURS (e.g. reduced corner radii, raised table, removal of guard railing and clearly defined pedestrian crossings).
- » Provision for closure of all or part of the street for special occasions and events.

As outlined in the Transport Strategy, in the longer term there will be a need to tie in east-bound cycle movement from North Street to the R125/Estuary Roundabout as part of the R132 Connectivity project. Consideration should also be given to creating a filtered (point closure) at the southern end of the North Street to restrict vehicular access through the SCQ plaza.



Recent development at north end of North Street



Project 4: Enabling Swords Shopfront Enhancements

Fingal County Council in partnership with the Dublin Fingal Chamber of Commerce, Balbriggan Chamber of Commerce and Malahide Chamber of Commerce have developed a Shopfront and Main Street Residence Panting and Improvement Grant Scheme for Fingal County.

Fingal County Council will promote this shopfront improvement scheme within Swords town focusing on properties on Main Street as well as lanes and streets leading directly off of Main Street. For example this would encourage enhancements of shopfronts at the north end of Main Street near Swords Castle.

This scheme will support business owners and residents who contribute to the local environment of Swords and elevate the image of Swords Town.

Source: Fingal.ie



Project 5: Swords Smart Streets

Smart Streets aim to combine the physical infrastructure of streets with digital infrastructure which provides good quality information for better and informed decision making. The implementation of smart infrastructure such as smart bins, smart benches and smart lighting enables the owner and operator to get more out of their assets and provide additional services to the population.

It is recommended that Fingal County Council consider installing smart infrastructure such as smart bins, smart benches, water filling stations etc in the Swords Town area to provide additional services to the population while also gathering useful information to provide an evidence base for decision making.



Theme Three: Improving Access, Permeability and Connectivity

Enabling ease of movement and more active travel is critically important to deliver on ambitions with regards to reducing private car-use which in turn will have a positive impact on the environment, physical health and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These interventions will seek to showcase Swords' rich natural and built heritage and capitalise on investment in Metrolink, BusConnects and the R132.

Proposed Project

6. Swords Cycle Network
7. Swords Greenway Network
8. Swords Quietways and Home Zones
9. Swords Safe Routes to School
10. Swords Western Distributor Road

Detail on these projects is included overleaf and within the Public Realm and Transport Strategy, which also includes the following relevant recommendations:

- SS2: Dublin BusConnects, SS3: MetroLink, SS4: Connectivity to the DART
- SS 6: Mobility Hub Feasibility Study
- SS 18: Green Schools Audits
- SS 19: Workplace Travel Plans
- SS 20: BleeperBikes
- SS 21: Car Clubs/Car Sharing Schemes



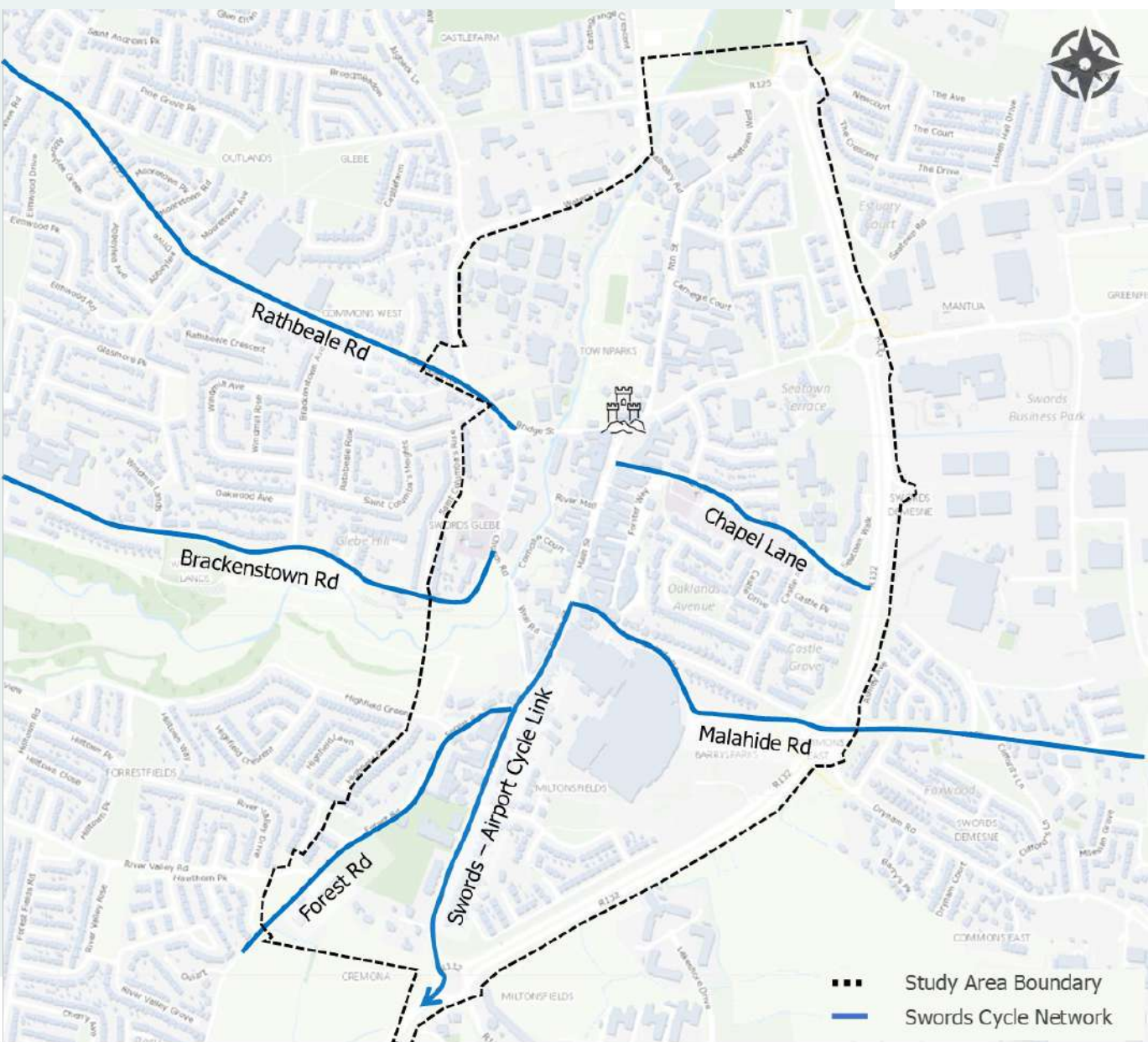
Project 6. Swords Cycle Network

The proposed Swords Cycle Network comprises 6 radial routes linking the outer residential areas to Swords Town Centre, as well as key destinations such as community facilities, schools, and employment hubs.

These include:

- » Forest Road;
- » Brackenstown Road;
- » Rathbeale Road;
- » Chapel Lane;
- » Malahide Road; and
- » Swords-Airport Cycle Link.

These routes form part of the wider Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network. The final design of these routes are subject to further feasibility and detailed design studies. Development of the routes will provide a step-change in facilitating active travel in Swords town centre. Development of these routes, in association with complementary measures such as a low traffic neighbourhood approach, will be a critical element in encouraging and facilitating a cycling culture in Swords.



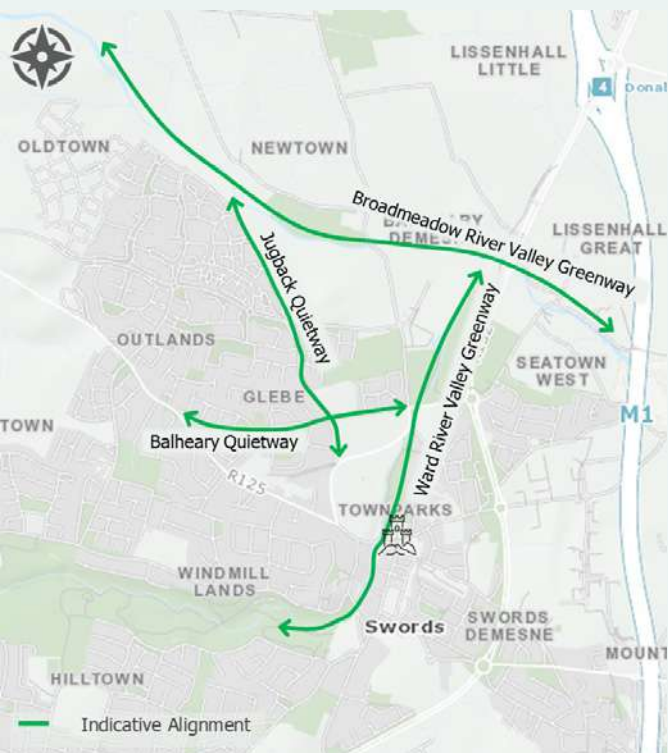
Project 7. Swords Greenway Network

Swords boasts extensive natural assets including the Ward River, Ward River Valley Park, the Town Park, and the Broadmeadow River. This network of green and blue corridors have significant potential to facilitate more sustainable modes of transport to places of work and study as well as enabling recreation and tourism throughout Swords.

The upcoming project for the Ward River Valley Regional Park offers an opportunity to improve access and links with the town.

The network could, subject to further feasibility studies and detailed design, link:

- » Ward River Valley to Broadmeadow Valley Greenway via Town Park;
- » Swords town centre to Rivermeade via the Ward River Valley;
- » Town centre to Malahide via off-road estuary greenway; and
- » Other local linkages to residential areas, schools and community facilities.



Project 8: Quietways and Homezones

Quietways

The Sustainable Swords Strategy recommends a series of Quietways as a means for improving permeability for people walking and cycling, which together with public realm and junction upgrades, will also help create Safer Routes to Schools. The proposed Quietways have been identified where vehicular traffic is generally quieter and calmer, primarily using lightly trafficked residential streets and laneways, through parks and alongside waterways. They are designed to appeal particularly to new and inexperienced cyclists.

The following links, as included on the plan below, have been identified as Quietways:

N-S: St. Colmcille's Quietway (as part of the Ward River Valley Greenway)

- » E-W: Rathbeale to Balheary Quietway (formalisation of existing filtered permeability/desire lines. To be tied in with the Ward River Valley Greenway)
- » N-S: Jugback Quietway which ties in with the Balheary Quietway, providing a Safe Route to School (St. Finian's College)
- » N-S: Between Seatown Road and Malahide Road via Seatown Terrace and Castle Avenue.

Homezones

The Quietways also provide the framework for introducing traffic calming and shared priority measures to entire residential neighbourhoods. The concept of Home Zones has developed where people and vehicles share the whole of the street space safely, and on equal terms, and where the quality of life takes precedence over the ease of traffic movement. The concept has been used for both new developments and for converting traditional streets. The projects further developed as an integral part of the Public Realm Strategy are:

- » St. Colmcille's Quietway (north-south link forming part of the Ward River Valley Greenway)
- » Chapel Lane Quietway and Homezone



Active Travel recommendations. ↑

Typical Quietway ↓



Typical Homezone



St. Colmcille's Quietway

The Ward River Valley forms an attractive green belt to the south of Brackenstown Road, linking into the Town Park at the northern end beyond Bridge Street, close to the Civic Core, and ultimately terminating in the Broadmeadow Estuary. The narrow St. Colmcille's laneway borders the river from Church Road to St. Colmcilles Court and continues as a footway to River Mall, which both provide convenient links to Main Street, and thereon through an existing parking area to Bridge Street.

Although of high amenity value, the laneway is currently under-utilized and has a neglected appearance that detracts from its potential as a recreational spine to Swords Town Centre and the Ward Valley Greenway.

Short to medium term proposals include:

1. Continuation of pedestrian/cycle route to Bridge Street and the Town Park
2. Development opportunities for family terraced houses overlooking the route
3. Upgrading of River Mall to strengthen pedestrian links to Main Street (as Project 2)
4. Pedestrian/cycle only section
5. Upgrading of St. Colmcilles Court to strengthen pedestrian links to Main Street (as Project 2)
6. Possible footbridge across river to school
7. Good quality surface finishes to reinforce pedestrian and cycle character of the route
8. Possible viewing platform to river
9. Raised table outside the Old Schoolhouse to signify entry to the Quietway and for traffic calming on Church Road (as Project 3)

St. Colmcille's Quietway as proposed (with indicative infill housing development)



Chapel Lane Quietway

Chapel Lane provides an east-west link between Main Street and the R132/Metro stop (to be combined with new at-grade crossing on R132), and is one of five of such routes proposed by Sustainable Swords to further promote movement by alternative means to the private car.

Chapel Lane is one of the Key streets linking the town centre to an established residential area and to St. Colmcille's Girls NCS. It would connect with the new civic space proposed at the eastern end of Chapel Lane extending to Main Street. The proposed Quietway will facilitate local access only and prioritise movement by walking and cycling, supported by public realm improvements. As traffic volumes and speeds are relatively low, it is anticipated that cyclists will generally share the roadway with vehicles. There is adequate width along the roadway to widen the currently narrow footpaths.

The Chapel Lane Quietway could serve as a pilot scheme for the other potential routes identified for Sustainable Swords.

Chapel Lane Homezone

The established residential area to the east of the Town Centre, around Castle Avenue and Oaklands Avenue, adjoins the proposed Chapel Lane Quietway and is mostly within 5-10 minutes walking distance of Main Street. Traffic volumes are generally low and restricted to local vehicles.

Combined with good quality public realm, the street pattern could be re-engineered so that the space around people's homes can be safely used for social and leisure activities. Improvements may include shared surfaces, indirect traffic routes, areas of planting, and features to encourage the use of the street, such as seating and informal play spaces.

Traffic speeds should be low enough that walking in the middle of the street is not unsafe. Clear indications are needed at the entry and exit from the area to signify that it is fundamentally different from normal road space in its design, layout and use.

The proposed Castle Avenue/Oaklands Avenue Homezone could also serve as a pilot scheme for similar initiatives within residential areas around the Town Centre, such as the neighbourhoods of Applewood, Rathbeale and Brackenstown to the north of the Ward River and Knocksedan, River Valley, Rathingle, Highfields, and Boromhe to the south side of the river. As well as Seatown, Lissenhall, Holywell and Drynam which lie to the east of the town core.



Homezone in Dun Laoghaire



Homezone in Cambridge

Location of Chapel Lane Quietway and Homezon



Location of Chapel Lane Quietway and Homezon



Chapel Lane looking towards the Town Centre

Project 9: Swords Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School Programme launched nationally in March 2021 intends to deliver a suite of proposed solutions such as front of school improvements, traffic calming, footpath improvements, crossing points, filtered permeability and point closures, etc. to make walking and cycling to school a safer, more convenient option for all.

There are seven primary and secondary schools within the Sustainable Swords Study Area, with more in the wider catchment. Green Schools Audits and Universal Walkability Audits will be undertaken to inform school-specific interventions, complemented by the wider aims and recommendations of the Sustainable Swords Transport and Placemaking Strategy.

Design Elements could include:

1. Carriageway narrowing where possible (build-outs using inexpensive materials could be used for Quick-Build Schemes).
2. Vertical/horizontal deflection at start of zone.
3. Surface colour/texture change.
4. Visible pedestrian crossing with good lighting.
5. Distinctive signage (minimise use of warning signs).
6. Planting and trees (use planters for Quick-Build Schemes).
7. Seating
8. Potential art elements.
9. Protected cycle lanes connecting to wider cycle network



Source: Safe Routes to School Design Guide.

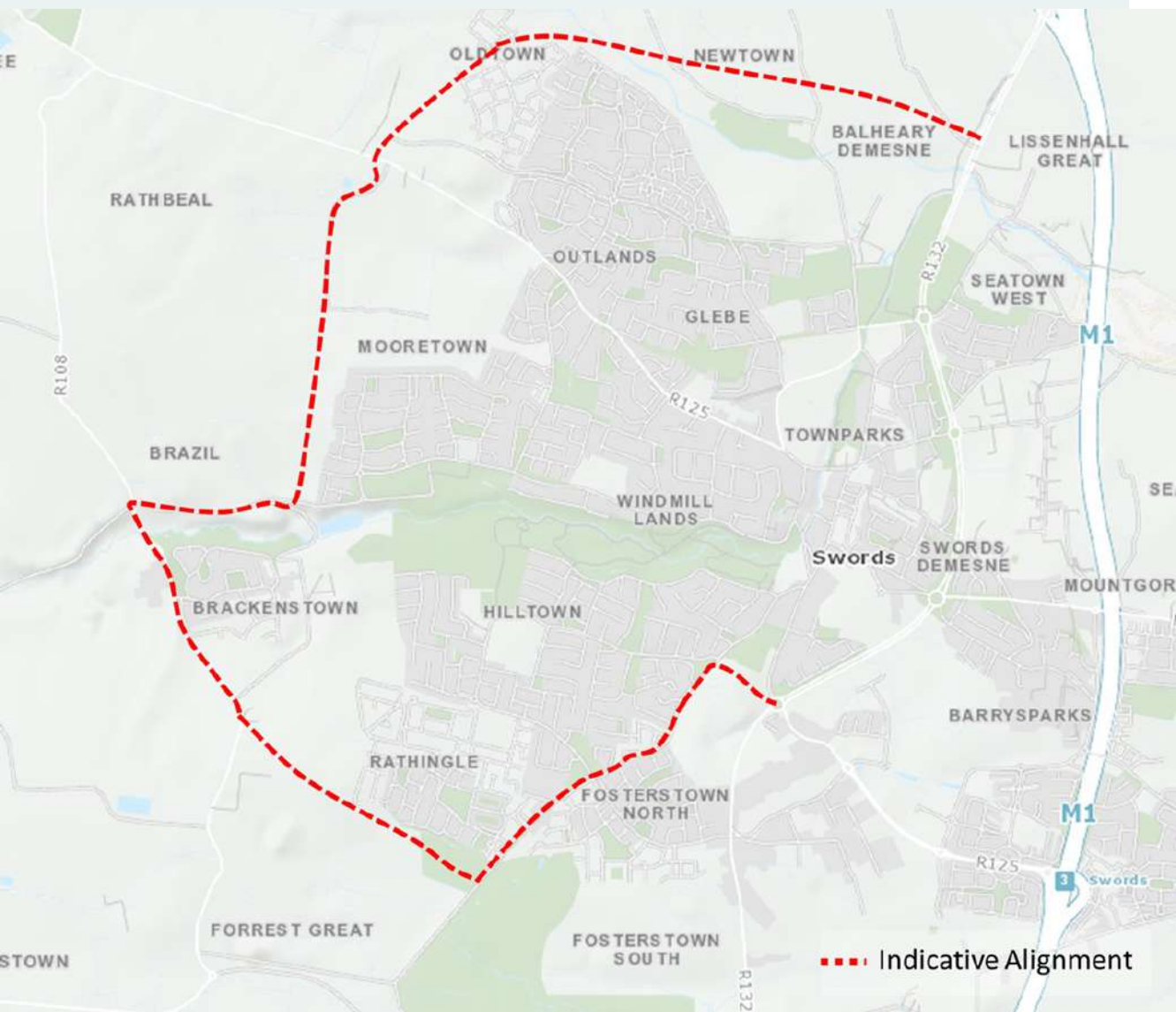


Project 10: Swords Western Distributor Road

The delivery of the Swords Western Distributor Road (SWDR) is a key objective of the South Fingal Transport Study and the Fingal Development Plan, and is considered a critical enabler for Sustainable Swords as:

- » It is expected to play a multi-modal function, with high-quality, segregated walking and cycling facilities and the potential to incorporate bus priority where appropriate.
- » Along with the R132, it creates a traffic cell to direct vehicular through-traffic away from Swords Town Centre, allowing public realm and urban design enhancements to take place to make it a healthier, more attractive and vibrant place to live, work, invest and spend time in.
- » It creates opportunities for sustainable development of existing landbanks, such as the Oldtown Mooretown area. However, it is critical that the SWDR does not enable urban sprawl.
- » It facilitates improved connections to the proposed MetroLink Estuary Station and Park and Ride.

Further detailed studies are required to inform its final alignment, design and delivery.



Theme Four: Protecting and Promoting Our Heritage

The built heritage of Swords provides the basis for the story of the evolution of the settlement. The projects included here enhance and protect that heritage for future generations, as well as new experiences for visitors which in turn will encourage increased tourism spend in the town.

Proposed Project

- 11. Swords Cultural Quarter
- 12. Swords Stories Feasibility Study
- 13. St. Columba's Church and Round Tower



Project 11. Swords Cultural Quarter

Swords has an important and significant heritage town centre with many civic and cultural landmarks including, the castle, courthouse, the civic offices and Ward River Valley Park.

Swords Castle is being transformed into a new cultural hub, including a theatre and library, that will instil and foster a sense of place and civic pride and also act as a counterpoint to the shopping and business areas of the town.

This project recommends continued support from Fingal County Council to the Swords Cultural Quarter. The Swords Cultural Quarter is currently the subject to public consultation under Part VIII consent process.



Project 12: Swords Stories Feasibility Study

Swords has a rich and evocative history. Many people in the town have stories of the past that would be of interest to current and future generations. 'Swords Stories' would capture these stories and provide an immersive and compelling experience.

These stories could be integrated with the Greenways and Quietways proposed to tell a story around Swords and provide a visitor attraction within and around the town.

It is recommended that a Swords Stories feasibility study should lead to detailed design followed by a delivery plan. It is proposed this initiative includes both a heritage trail around the town and an exhibition space located in Swords Cultural Quarter.

Courtesy of EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum



Courtesy of Peter Varga (EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum)



Project 13. St. Columba's Church and Round Tower

It is recommended that a feasibility study is conducted on the creation of a St Columba's Church and Round Tower Visitor Experience in Swords.

This feasibility study should include potential locations as well as an analysis into the economic factors involved, visitor demand, visitor journey, concept development, business case, and timelines for potential developments.

The development of such an attraction in Swords would celebrate the town's built and cultural heritage, adding to a sense of place. It would also encourage more visitors to Swords and for those visitors to stay longer, increasing local revenue generation from tourism. This project would require consultation with statutory agencies/National Monuments Service given its status.



Theme Five: Supporting and Celebrating a Sustainable Community

Swords has a thriving community. The aim is to support this community and position Swords as the best place to live, work and visit in County Dublin. This theme includes a focus on enhancing the natural environment, supporting community initiatives, and celebrating Swords through promotion and branding which will include a wayfinding strategy.

Proposed Project

14. Swords Community Forest

15. Swords Sustainable Community Initiative

16. Sustainable Swords Promotional and Branding Initiative



Project 14: Swords Community Forest

Green Infrastructure is a key component of sustainability for any town or city. Urban woodland is an important element of Multi-functional Green Infrastructure as it provides a wide range of Ecosystem Services and Nature Based Solutions to urban living.

The Swords Woodland Association has formulated an advanced plan for a tree planting initiative around Swords town. It is considered that this project would be supported as a Swords Community Forest in line with the policies, objectives and actions outlined in the Council's adopted tree strategy "The Forest of Fingal, A Tree Strategy for Fingal". It would be progressively implemented where feasible to provide green corridors around the town and linking into the centre of Swords. It is important to involve the local community in this project to develop local ownership of the initiative and to ensure it is properly utilised and maintained. It is envisaged this project would include a feasibility study into locations for a community forest, forest school classroom, and an environmental assessment followed by detailed design and a delivery plan.

Source: Swords Masterplans, 2019, Fingal County Council



Project 15: Swords Sustainable Community Initiatives

It is recommended that community led sustainable energy initiatives are supported and promoted by Fingal County Council.

SEAI have already engaged with Swords Tidy Towns to assist the group move Swords towards a Sustainable Energy Community.

Taking inspiration from the work done by the Knocklyon Network Sustainable Energy Community, community initiatives should be organised to raise awareness of the need for energy saving measures such as a 'local energy show'.

This initiative can tie in with the new National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme which increases the opportunity for people to upgrade to a more sustainable home through increased grants.

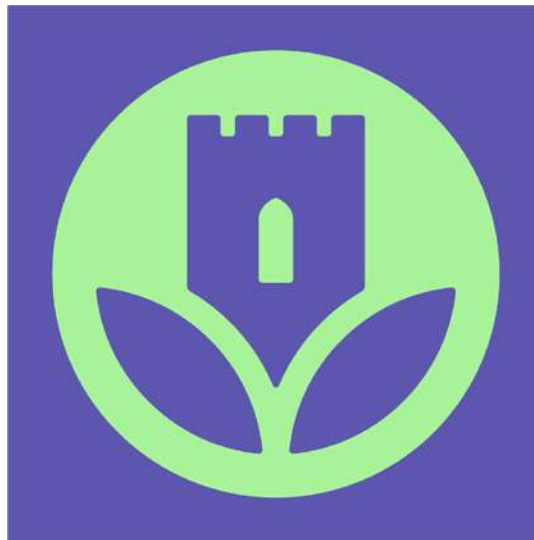


Project 16. Sustainable Swords Promotional and Branding Initiative

Business community initiatives aimed at rebuilding the local economy in Swords will encourage the public to shop local and support the town's service and retail providers.

A campaign developed off the success of the 'In It Together' initiative will encourage business to network, collaborate, and provide support for each other, and give them the online and branded resources to inspire their customers. A concurrent social media campaign aimed at the public will encourage purchasing in Swords and develop pride and advocacy among customers.

Developing a brand identity for Swords and consistently maintaining this brand will be key for this projects successful implementation.



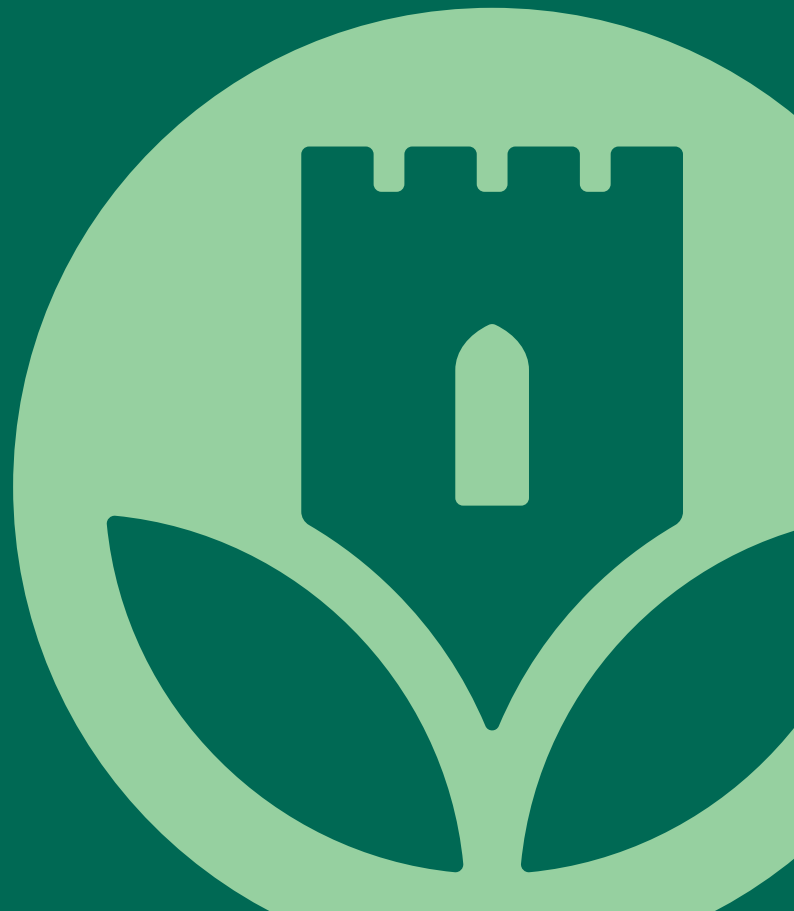
**Sustainable
Swords**



Section 05

Delivery Roadmap

making it happen





Delivery Roadmap - Action Plan

The town health check, transport and urban realm assessment, SCOT analysis, the consultation in the form of community and business surveys, submissions, online webinars and stakeholder interviews have all been invaluable in identifying not only the proposed projects, but also the actions required to realise these projects. These actions are key to the overall delivery of the proposed projects. This section outlines the indicative actions proposed, which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Related (SMART) in nature.

The actions are evidence based and need to be supported by the local community in order to attain maximum benefit for Swords. Real change will come when public and private sectors, institutions and small businesses, sellers and customers work towards the same goals. Forming these partnerships are vitally important.

Project	Actions	Owner(s)	Project Support	Indicative Cost/ Funding	Timeline	KPI
Theme One: Swords Main Street Transformation						
1	Swords Main Street Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek consent through Part 8 process Submit Funding application 	FCC	NTA, local businesses.	URDF €15 -€20m all stages	2022 - 2025	
Theme Two: Reimagining Our Public Realm						
2	Swords Liveable Laneways Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek consent through Part 8 process Submit Funding application 	FCC	Community, Schools, Tidy Towns	URDF €150k - €500k per laneway	2022-2025	Funding application submitted (URDF) Number of laneways enhanced
3	Swords Key Local Streets Enhancement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek consent through Part 8 process Submit Funding application 	FCC		URDF €1m (Church Road), €0.5-0.75m (Bridge Street), €0.25-0.50m (Seatown Road), €1-1.5m (North Street)	2022 - 2025	Funding application submitted (URDF) Number of local streets enhanced
4	Enabling Swords Shopfront Enhancements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Swords Shopfront Enhancements 	FCC	Fingal LEO	URDF	2022/2023	Number of applications for shopfront enhancements
5	Swords Smart Streets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install smart infrastructure within Swords Town Prioritise installation of smart EV charging points within the Town and in public parking areas 	FCC	Local Businesses	URDF Under €500K	2022/2023	Number of smart infrastructure fully installed i.e. Smart Bins and Lampposts, Smart Bench's, Water Bottle Fountains, and Smart EV charging points

Project	Actions	Owner(s)	Project Support	Indicative Cost/ Funding	Timeline	KPI
Theme Three: Improving Access, Permeability and Connectivity						
6	Swords Cycle Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce feasibility studies for each route Produce detailed design for each route 	FCC, NTA	National Transport Authority	NTA Sustainable Transport Measures Grant >€1million	2024 - 2026	Seek consent through Part 8 process Funding applications submitted Feasibility and detailed design studies completed
7	Swords Greenway Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce feasibility studies for each route Produce detailed design for each route 	FCC, NTA	National Transport Authority	NTA Sustainable Transport Measures Grant, Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) >€1million	2024 - 2026	Seek consent through Part 8 process Funding applications submitted Feasibility and detailed design studies completed
8	Swords Quietways & Home Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek consent through Part 8 process Submit funding application 	FCC		Developer contributions, URDF €300-500,000 (St. Comicille's Quietway), €250-750,000 (Chapel Lane)	2023-2026	Quietways completed Home zones completed
9	Swords Safe Routes to School / School Zones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify routes to schools for project Apply for Safe Routes to School Programme for local schools 	FCC, NTA, Green Schools	National Transport Authority, Green Schools	Safe Routes to School Programme c. €1million	2022/2023	Number of schools signed up to programme Number of safe routes complete
10	Swords Western Distributor Road <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support Swords WDR 	FCC, NTA	National Transport Authority	URDF >€20million	2026-2030	SWDR completed

Project	Actions	Owner(s)	Project Support	Indicative Cost/ Funding	Timeline	KPI
Theme 4. Protecting and Promoting Our Heritage						
11	Swords Cultural Quarter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support the development of the Swords Cultural Quarter 	FCC	Local Businesses, Local Community	URDF	2024-2026	SCQ completion
12	Swords Stories Feasibility Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct feasibility study for Swords Stories Conduct Concept Study for Swords Stories 	FCC, Swords Woodland Association, Local Schools	Swords Woodland Association, Local Community, Schools	URDF Feasibility and Concept Study €150k, Design and Construction	2022/2023 - 2026	Feasibility Study completed Concept Study Completed Funding applications completed
13	St Columba's Church and Round Tower Visitor Experience Feasibility Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with Church of Ireland regarding project Conduct feasibility study for visitor experience Conduct Business Case 	FCC, Church of Ireland	Faite Ireland, Church of Ireland	Leader / URDF Feasibility Study and Business Case €100k	2023 - 2026	Feasibility Study and Business Case completed Funding applications submitted
Theme 5. Supporting and Celebrating a Sustainable Community						
14	Swords Community Forest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of Tree Strategy for Fingal Engage and involve community groups 	FCC, Swords Woodland Association	Swords Woodland Association, Local Community, Schools	€2m+	2022 - 2025	Strategy implemented Number of trees planted Number of community groups engaged with
15	Community Driven Sustainability Initiatives Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Groups that would use funding Set up dedicated fund 	FCC	SEAI, Swords Tidy Towns, Local communities, Schools	National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme	2022 - 2026	Number of funding applications received Amount of funding granted Number of projects funded
16	Swords Promotional and Branding Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement promotional and branding campaign Maintain and promote branding campaign. 	FCC, Faite Ireland	Local Businesses, Local Community, Faite Ireland	Under €500k	2022/2023	Branding project implemented

Monitoring

This section sets out Fingal County Council's approach to accurate high-quality monitoring and evaluation of Sustainable Swords project. It will provide the Council and its partners with a strong evidence base to assist decision making and ensure accountability in relation to action owners and supporting agencies. The monitoring and evaluation of Sustainable Swords will be key to understanding its success and impact. It will allow the council and key partners to learn from past and current actions and identify and understand what works well and why, as well as those actions that have not been as successful as expected. In doing so it will also assist in ensuring efficient allocation of resources and value for money.

The Monitoring and Evaluation framework has been developed in consultation with key partners and the identified owners of actions in the implementation plan. In developing the framework the Council and its partners have:

- Identified the goals, objectives, key desired outcomes and actions.

Defined KPIs in relation to:

- Agree methods for data gathering, identify sources and frequency at which data will be recorded etc.
- Identify those response for tracking indicators etc.
- Agree approach to distribute and communicate findings with key partners and explore how progress can be communicated to the wider community where applicable.

Using the above approach, the Council will monitor and evaluate progress on Sustainable Swords and disseminate information on progress and lessons learned as appropriate.

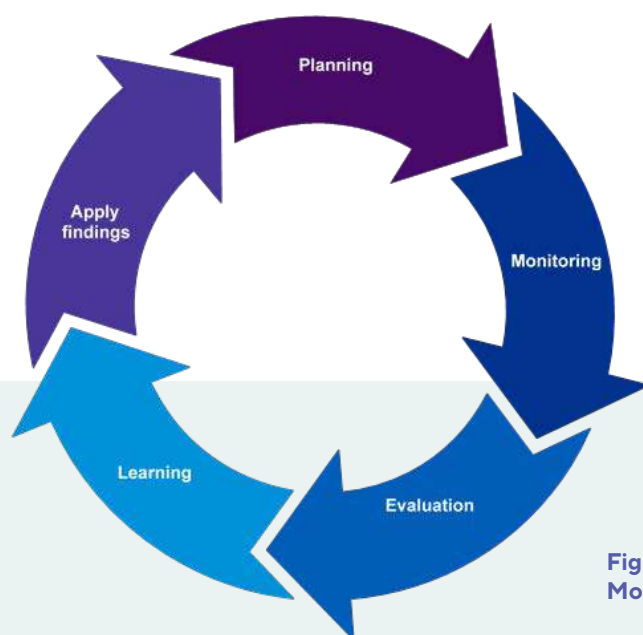


Figure 5.1:
Monitoring and Evaluation Wheel

Next Steps

The Sustainable Swords project aims to facilitate a sustainable approach to development and placemaking in Swords. This is about making a better place to live, work and visit; positioning Swords for the future as a more attractive, vibrant, and resilient town.



Swords has a thriving business community. The aim is to support this community and position Swords as the best place to live, work and visit in County Dublin, and to progressively capitalise on its enhanced sustainability credentials.

FEB/MAR 2022



Project Development

SEP/OCT 2022



ROUND THREE
Public Engagement

NOVEMBER 2022



Final Project
Development



SWOT Analysis

This analysis helps us understand the town's issues and opportunities. It is based on the extensive research and engagement undertaken for the Sustainable Swords project.

Strengths

- Strategic location on Dublin – Belfast Economic Corridor – strong employment base
- Excellent road connections with City Centre, Dublin Port, other areas of GDA (M1, M50, Port Tunnel)
- County Town with a rural village feel close to Dublin
- Once-in-a-generation public transport investment in Metrolink and BusConnects
- Funding available for cycle lanes under NTA 5-year programme
- Natural assets offered by the Town Park, Ward River Valley Park and Broad Meadow River, and proximity to Estuary
- Historic assets offered by Swords Castle and St. Columba's Church and Round Tower
- The architecture of the main street buildings
- Architecture of the main street buildings providing a village feel
- Relatively flat topography highly amenable for walking and cycling where conditions are favourable
- Planned investment in the Swords Cultural Quarter
- Pavilions Shopping centre in the centre of town attracting large volumes of footfall
- The towns environs food expertise
- County Hall being located within the town
- Large population that is continuously growing
- Strong sense of community through social groups and enterprises
- Evening economy in Swords has a large catchment area.
- Wide footpaths through the town centre

Weaknesses

- Lack of connectivity to Dublin, Airport and other destinations
- Little dedicated cycle infrastructure with Study Area
- Quality of pedestrian environment and crossings variable across the town centre
- Cluttered public realm in town centre – dominated by car-parking and road engineering
- Town centre highly dominated by the car. No restrictions for through traffic
- Lack of safe access to the town centre from Knocksedan estate
- Impact on quality of life and health through car-based emissions
- East-west mobility is limited by road corridors (R132, M1) and lack of permeability through housing estates.
- Underdeveloped public transport and active travel connectivity with wider FCC area
- Lack of accessibility for disabled citizens
- Poor pavement conditions on sections of Main Street
- Lack of all-weather playing pitches at Fingallians and high-quality public facilities
- Lack of public toilets
- Lack of lighting along Ward River
- Restaurants blocking Ward River Walk
- Refuse collection and litter blackspots
- High vacancy and poor quality of public realm along North section of Main Street
- Lack of a central attraction within the town
- Swords in not included in the LEADER catchment
- Side streets are neglected
- Poor signage on Main street
- Some poor-quality retail offering on Main Street
- Presence of anti-social behaviour
- Lack of facilities for youth
- Lack of connectivity and permeability through parks

Opportunities

Improvements to public realm in the town centre

- Transformation of Main Street to include paving, trees, outdoor seating, public toilets / bins, façade treatments, seasonal instalment of overhead canopies along Main Street where restaurants/cafés/ bars are located, and improved access for disabled citizens and those with mobility challenges
- Shopfront incentivisation scheme to enhance appearance of town centre retail
- Enhancements to laneways and outdoor dining facilities

Enhanced transport links to encourage modal shift to active travel

- Main Street & Cultural Quarter: Potential to remove significant amounts of through vehicular traffic and significantly enhance the town centre
- Opportunity for car-free and car-lite developments in line with National Planning Framework and Sustainable Housing Guidelines
- Western distributor road to ease town centre traffic congestion and enable public transport corridor, Estuary Park and Ride and R132 upgrade
- Increase sustainable transport mode share for short journeys
- Well-designed cycle and pedestrian linkages to Metrolink to facilitate complete journeys by active travel and public transport
- Undertake and leverage temporary walking, cycling and placemaking interventions
- Implementation of Safe Routes to School programme and development of School Zones
- Enforcement of permeability measures in new estates
- Provision of a bike share scheme around Swords (private sector led)
- Provision of EV delivery/public transport hub

Provide better public amenity and facility provision

- Improved cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, including potential Greenway from Malahide to Swords and link to Fingal Coastal Greenway, and Donabate to Swords
- Opportunity to significantly enhance Ward River Park to act as a sustainable access route linking west Swords to the town centre and north to the Town park and Broadmeadow Greenway (estimated to be completed in 2022). Ward River Greenway & Heritage Trail to link Rivermeade to Swords
- Provide better public amenity and facility provision – particularly for those aged between 12 and 18 years, and with consideration of swimming pool for Swords, to encourage physical activity
- Better linkages and connectivity from town centre to the surrounding parks

Opportunities

Position Swords as an exemplar of sustainable urban living

- Becoming Ireland's first carbon neutral town
- Engagement of Swords businesses in Fingal County Council's Sustainable Business initiative
- Opportunity for compact, concentric development in what will be one of the most accessible town centres in the State by 2027
- Facilitate Green infrastructure initiatives including enhanced green space, community gardens to increase biodiversity and connect communities to nature
- Increase in number of trees in Swords Town centre and links to green infrastructure network around the town to include community-based tree planting initiatives
- New build developments encouraged to integrate rooftop solar and environmentally friendly heating systems (heat pumps) and EV charging stations on site where possible
- Identify and support circular economy initiative for Swords as described in the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 - 2023
- Creation of a tool library/tool shed
- Bottle filling stations and public fountains rolled out to reduce plastic bottle waste, following on from the successful rollout of 9 contactless Ecofil stations in 2020.

Encourage vitality in Swords town centre

- Integration of national Town Centre First policy, consideration of CPO or CSO (Compulsory Sell Order) for derelict buildings, and consideration of adaptive re-use to encourage upper floor use
- Consider role for a town architect to provide strategy implementation oversight and consistency of approach and delivery
- Repurposing of vacant buildings to create a remote working hub in the town centre to reduce need for commuting
- Utilise vacant site levy and building rates to minimise vacancy and dereliction in the town centre
- Redevelopment of the existing Garda station to provide a fit-for-purpose building that also reflects the prevailing building heights, scale and massing on the adjoining Swords Central and Pavilions sites.

Use tourism and events to generate footfall and revenue

- Promotion of Swords Cultural Quarter as a local and visitor cultural and events hub
- Promotion of Swords and Malahide as a two castle offer to domestic and international visitors, linked by a new Greenway along the Estuary and with bike hire available
- Enhanced wayfinding to make the town centre more legible and easier to navigate
- More seasonal events and activities in town to increase animation
- Consideration of St Columba's Church and Round Tower as a visitor attraction as a part of a Swords Heritage Trail (site maps, signage etc.)
- Community centred cultural programmes to celebrate all of Swords' diversity and traditions
- Regular Swords Castle Market or Market on Main street with potential for sponsorship of a Swords Farmers Market to provide farmers with a direct market for their produce and facilitate shorter supply chains and a lower carbon footprint for our food
- Make use of free council parking at weekends to bring people into the town centre for events.
- Invest in public art / street art

Threats

- If opportunities to restrain car parking in housing and employment developments are not taken then the future transport network is likely to remain congested. Failure to reallocate road space from private car to pedestrian, walking and cycling may lock-in car-dependency under a 'do-nothing' scenario
- Change in the economic cycle that delays Metrolink and other key infrastructure
- Changes in political climate at local and national level that does not adhere to NPF Compact Growth principle could lead to a de-prioritisation of investment in public transport and active travel.
- Growth of online retail and changing consumer patterns may impact upon viability of town centre retail leading to vacancy
- Brexit may have long term impact
- Covid may continue to have an ongoing negative impact on the economy

Glossary

Quietways are convenient cycle routes on lower trafficked residential streets and greenways. They are designed to be well signposted, direct and easy to follow for those who would prefer to walk or cycle on quieter, calmer routes. The concept of filtered permeability is critical for longer-distance Quietway network planning. Where Quietways join busy roads, they are typically separated from vehicular traffic.

Filtered permeability – is a transport planning concept that 'filters out' through running vehicular movements but creates an attractive environment that enables full permeability or access for pedestrians and cyclists. Typical measures that enable filtered permeability include tree planting, emergency gates, bollards or pocket parks.

Mobility Hubs – Off-street, multi-purpose parking structures that comprise of sustainable transport infrastructure including high quality and high capacity, cycle parking, dedicated car club facilities, EV charge points, e-mobility, and some private car parking. Mobility hubs are typically located in areas that have excellent accessibility to high frequency public transport and offer mixed-use commercial and/or residential uses.

Mobility Points – Co-location of on-street sustainable transport infrastructure including cycle parking, bus stops, car clubs, shared bicycle systems and e-mobility.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) are a range of water management methods designed to naturally mitigate storm surge overflows and surface run-off in urban environments where urbanisation and development have reduced the availability of permeable, green areas. These typically entail de-paving and comprise of elements such as rain gardens, living walls and swales that support biodiversity, greening strategies and reduce surface run-off in times of heavy rainfall.

Wayfinding Strategy – wayfinding is the use of signs and information to enable people to help navigate a place. This can include orientation, directional and interpretative signage.



fingal.ie/sustainablewords

