

FENIT VILLAGE DESIGN MASTERPLAN

REPORT
2022

CARR COTTER & NAESSENS ARCHITECTS





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100m 200m 300m 400m 500m 600m 700m 800m 900m 1000m 1100m



AERIAL VIEW OF FENIT VILLAGE AND HARBOUR

INTRODUCTION

Kerry County Council has determined the need to develop and deliver a Design brief for the most effective presentation, management and development of two key sites in the village of Fenit: the greenfield site including O' Sullivan's Hotel (the Central Core) and the seafront public realm centred on the playground, railway terminus and entrance to the beach (the Terminus).

These sites are justly considered as key to the consolidation and reinforcement of the urban potential of Fenit, which has been identified as a location suitable for population growth in the Tralee Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018-2024. It is appropriate that an urban design strategy is devised, a physical design model, to guide development of the village into the future in a sustainable manner that takes cognisance of the heritage and landscape assets of the village.

A comprehensive planning study, Village Design Plan for Fenit, was undertaken and published in January 2012. The design plan was commissioned by North and East Kerry Development (NEKD), which operates the LEADER programme in the greater Tralee, Listowel and Castleisland areas, and was co-funded by the Fenit Development Association. The plan was prepared by Dirk Hüttermann, Town Planning Consultant in liaison with the local community of Fenit. The aim and scope of that plan was to identify improvement projects for the village and to help local groups and organisations to bring about and implement the projects and actions that have been identified in the plan. Following a consultation process, an Implementation Plan was devised and included in the Village Design Plan. This masterplan incorporates a number of these projects into an overall masterplan that focuses on two key locations: the seafront/railway terminus and village core.

Development of village has been largely confined to the land bounded by the railway and main road with sporadic residential development disconnected from any village structure. Two potential catalysts for change are the acquisition of Sullivan'sfield by Kerry County Council and the development of the Greenway, each with the potential to bring economic and social benefits to the region. It is therefore critical that a clear and strategic design masterplan is established to inform future development, particularly if this is to take place in a phased manner. The possible rerouting of the R558 will inform development of the Central Core and strategies for this plot of land will be generated by creating legible sites that will combine to make a coherent assembly of buildings in the heart of the village suitable for mixed uses.

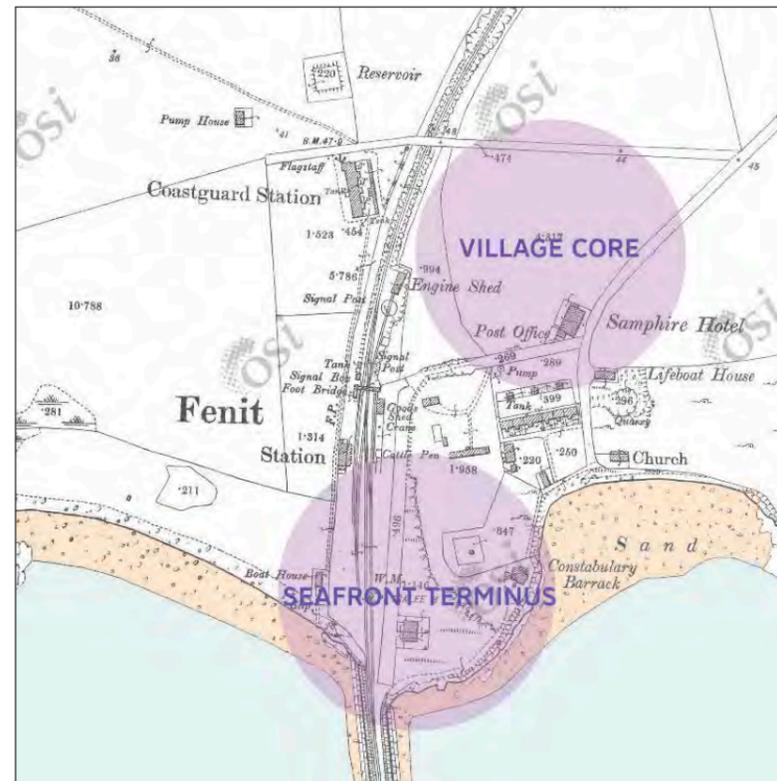


DIAGRAM OF TWO KEY SITES:
THE VILLAGE CORE AND THE SEAFRONT TERMINUS
RIGHT: MAP SHOWING RELATIONSHIP OF THE VILLAGE TO BARROW BLENNEVILLE AND TRALEE

OSI LICENCE NO. AR0069520 © OSI & GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND



THE CHARACTER OF FENIT

The character of Fenit is derived from the juxtaposition of big infrastructure elements, the railway line and harbour, set in a landscape of great natural beauty. The natural morphology of the site with its limestone outcrops has been significantly modified by man, resulting in a physical narrative documenting the evolution of the site from marine outpost and seaside resort to an expanding harbour settlement. The historic, cultural and ecological significance of these elements contributes to the complexity inherent in the site, and informs its unique character. Understanding this character will allow new ways for the village to evolve as a coherent settlement with its own authentic character on the one hand, and also as an integrated key component of the county's economic, tourism and cultural infrastructure.

Change is necessary to ensure appropriate and sustainable development. A combination of strategic "unbuilding", revealing of historic artefacts and structures such as the railway bridge and stone walls together with bold strategic interventions will facilitate existing activities and encourage new uses.

Cartographic analysis reveals the split nature of the village. The historic core was centred around the Samphire Hotel and Coastguard cottages. This nucleus is separated from the working port and railway terminus, with isolated set pieces such as Samphire Terrace, the red brick coastguard station and customs house to the west. Fenit House is set in its own grounds overlooking the seashore.

The seafront site has a long tradition as a place for recreation, transport and industry. While the playground, car park and marina are presently well used amenities, the whole site is fragmented and not achieving its immense potential. The design concept rationale describes a model for the site that exploits its civic, landscape and cultural possibilities as well as creating a new face to the village.

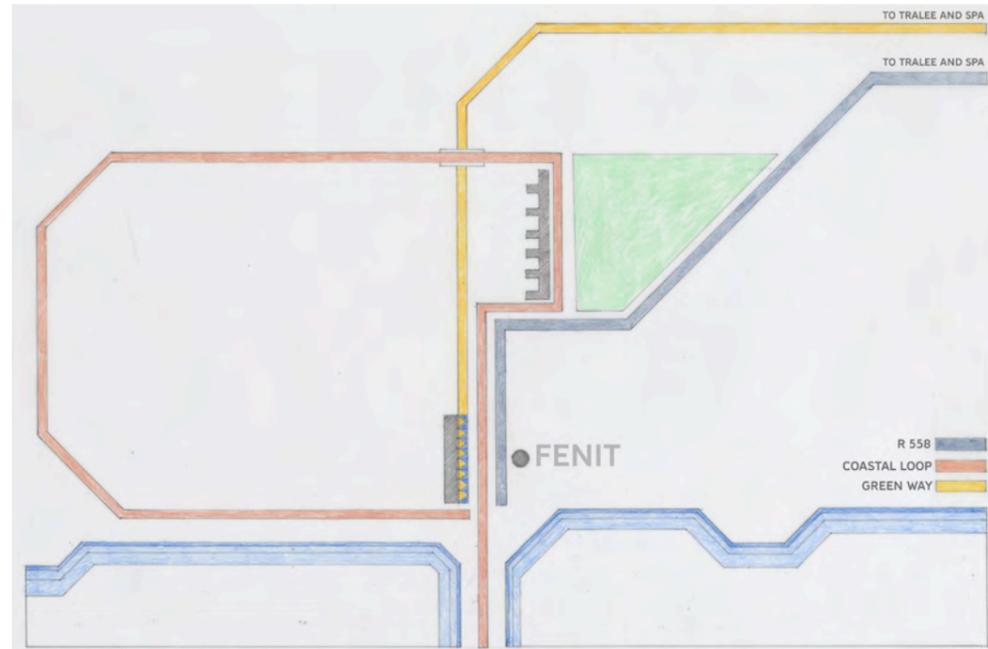
The design task in this project is to reconcile and resolve the potentially conflicting characteristics of the village:

1. the disparity between the industrial function of the village as port and terminal against that of community amenity and tourist destination.
2. the historic separation between the upper village and the coastline.

The railway may be understood as a key player in reactivating connections between these domains. There are a number of paths that may be re-activated to form looped walks for visitors but also as safe and car-free routes for local people. The field identified as the Central Core has the potential to consolidate the historic village core, with its hotel and post office. Presently reading as a void, the space has the capacity to be over-laid with a development grid providing development sites for residential, workspace and community uses.



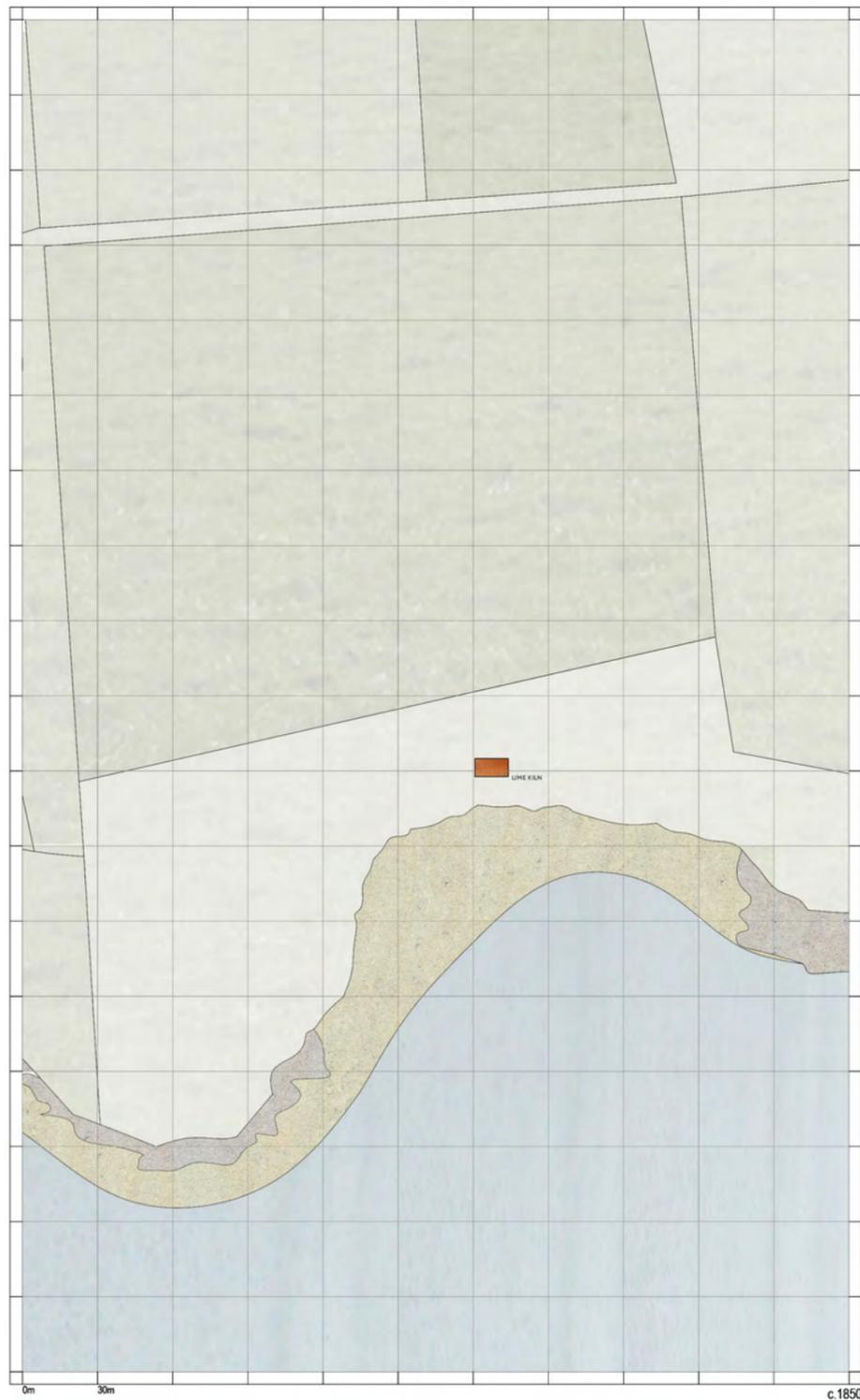
DRAWING SHOWING THE CURRENT SETTLEMENT PATTERN



MAP SHOWING THE THREE MAIN ROUTES THAT ESTABLISH THE NOTION OF TERMINUS:
THE ROAD FROM SPA AND TRALEE
THE GREENWAY
THE COASTAL LOOPED WALK



TWO ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER OF FENIT:
LIEBHERR CRANE IN TRANSPORT AND THE PICTURESQUE LIGHTHOUSE



HISTORIC MAP C 1850



HISTORIC MAP C 1875

Historical Development

The urban settlement of Fenit has a relatively recent history, and was established in the late 19th century. The Fenit Without townland is adjacent to Barrow Harbour, defended by the pair of castles, one square and one round, either side of the entrance to the lagoon. This was referred to in maps and documents as the port of Fenit and it was a strategically important harbour between 1300 and 1600.

The first edition of the OS map indicates few buildings in Fenit, with the exception of a cluster of houses in Tawlaght to the north and Fenit Lodge, which would later become Fenit House the seat of the Hurley estate. These lands would have been accessed by road from the north via Chapeltown and Churchill. The largest fishing village in the area, Kilfenora, was accessed by two sections of road, Tralee to Spa and Spa to Kilfenora, built as famine relief schemes. The completion of the road from Kilfenora to Fenit was of strategic importance. Although the main port for the county capital of Tralee was in Blennerville and later extended via the Ships Canal to Tralee, large ships including the weekly London and Liverpool steamers, anchored in the deep water at the Samphires. Goods and passengers were discharged and transported to Tralee port by boat, a labour intensive and unprofitable process, which inspired the proposal made by William Lunham and Henry Benner in November 1860 to complete the road from Kilfenora to Fenit. This was completed 20 years before the pier.

The development of the Tralee Fenit railway and the pier was first proposed by Knox Maunsell in 1846, a mere 6 months after the opening of the Ships Canal. Silting of the canal was a perennial problem and its construction was beset by delays and financial difficulties. With the advent of the railway system, the canal struggled to compete. An Act of Parliament was passed on 26th August 1880 authorising the construction of the railway from Fenit to Tralee. A commission from the Board of Works was then sent by HM Treasury, and an enquiry held in Tralee Courthouse during April 1881. The Commissioners approved the report, however the funding of £95,000 was put in place by baronial guarantee and not by the government. The contract for the pier and also the railway was granted to Messrs Falkiner and Tancred. Work started in May 1882 for the railway and in August 1882 for the pier. The first consignment of corn arrived by rail to the pier for McCowen and Sons in May 1887.

The 2nd edition 1896-7 OS map describes all the civic components of a new village, pier and railway. The buildings underpin and support the role of the village as a harbour settlement; the railway station, coastguard station, constabulary barracks and lifeboat house are the key elements. It is likely that the split nature of the village reflects its historic development, with the original nucleus centred around the Harbour View coastguard cottages, the lifeboat station and the Samphire Hotel. The cut stone lifeboat station was built on land provided by John Hurley of Fenit House. The cost of the finely built structure and its boat, the Admiral Butcher, was inaugurated in 1879 and funded by RG Butcher, a Dublin surgeon. The Samphire Hotel completed the original nucleus and was built on land owned by the Hurley estate and is likely to have been an estate house before its use and later expansion as an inn and post office. The building was leased by the O Sullivans in the 1930s and continued in use until its abandonment in the late twentieth century.

Following the completion of the Fenit pier in 1885, the Customs House was moved there from Tralee in 1898, occupying initially a house to the left of the pier entrance. The new customs house with its distinctive flat roof, was built in 1910. Adjacent to this was a brick terrace of houses occupied by the coastguards from 1900. Prior to this the coastguards had lived in the row of cottages called Harbour View with their lookout on the "Galley", now occupied by the Tralee Sailing Club. The coastguard station is a robust terrace of 6 red brick

houses with a communal wash house. A windmill once pumped water from the reservoir, set at the highest point in the village, to the pier. Following Independence, the coastguard station was occupied by the Gardai until a modern garda station was built to the north in 1980. A pathway still exists from the coastguard station behind the railway line to the site of the old boathouse overlooking Locke's beach.

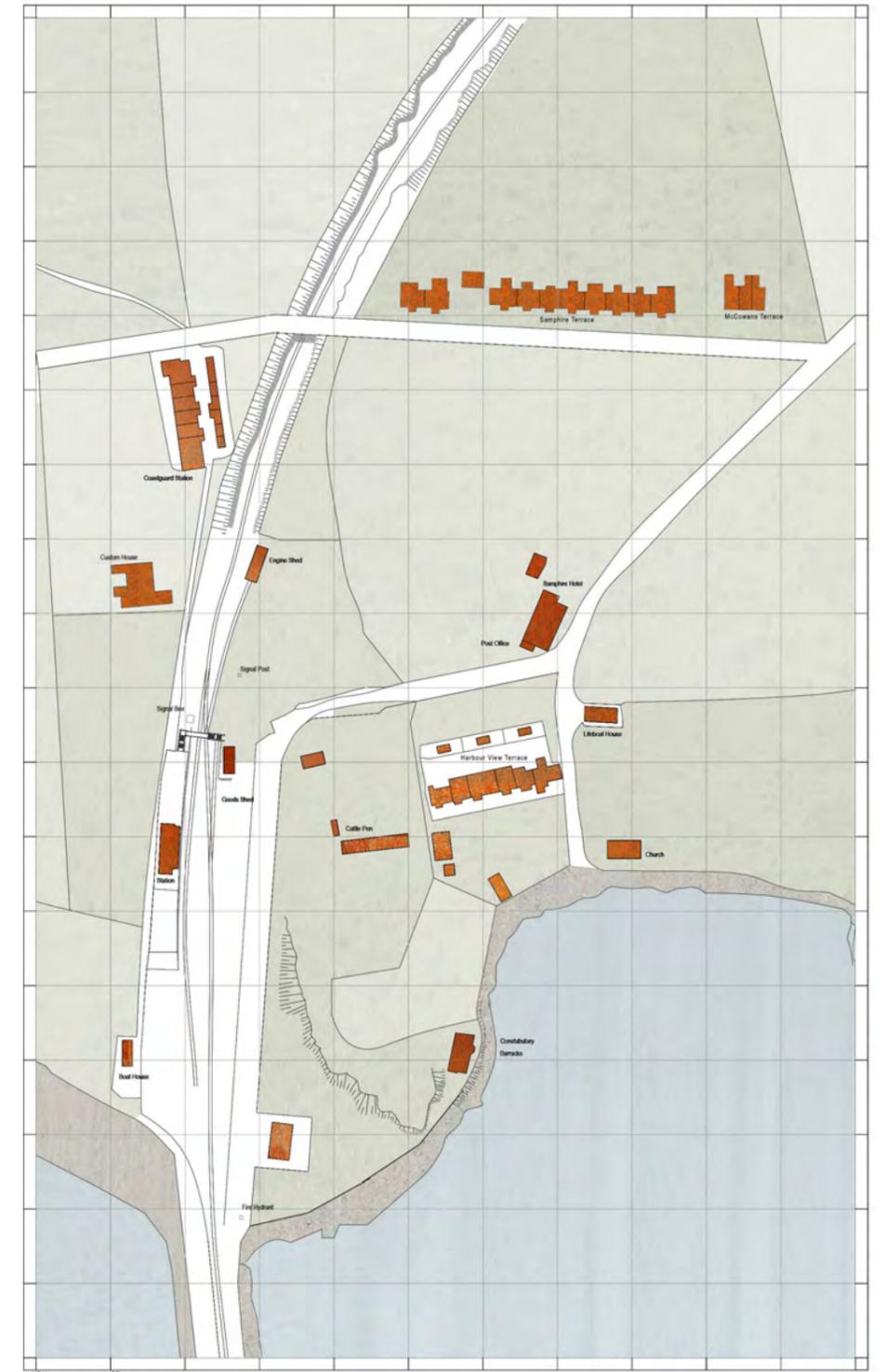
Sapphire Terrace was built in 1908 by the Harbour Commissioners to house the crane drivers on the pier. Adjacent is a substantial terrace of three houses built by McCowen & Sons for the masters of their ships. Two cottages alongside were built by the Donovans, another of the Tralee merchant families who together with the Latchfords, McCowens and Kelliher were the principal traders operating in Fenit.

The commercial activity of the port was supported by trade in grains, timber and later coal. The area had a thriving fishing industry based on herring and mackerel which flourished in the 1880s. During this time the Manx fishing fleet were based in the harbour, visiting annually from March to May, supported by their mission ship the Temple Tate and their wives who cleaned and filleted the fish on board. At the peak of the season it was reported that up to a thousand men from fishing companies from Liverpool, Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Tralee worked at Fenit packing the fish and in ice boxes and loading on to special trains which ran direct to Waterford and on to England via steamer. Mackerel was also salted and shipped to New York via Liverpool until that trade was hampered by tariffs imposed by the US Government in 1921. Trade was reduced during the two World Wars and the pier was closed from 1941 to 1955 when the old pier of Oregon pine was replaced with a concrete structure. By the 1970s the use of roll on roll off cargo ships resulted in a decline in cargo shipping for the port and by 1997 the only import to Fenit was oil. In 2003 Fenit Harbour was upgraded with the refurbishment of the pier and addition of a new marina, breakwater and service buildings. Liebherr is a major user of the port facilities with a dedicated crane to load the heavy crane sections for global export.

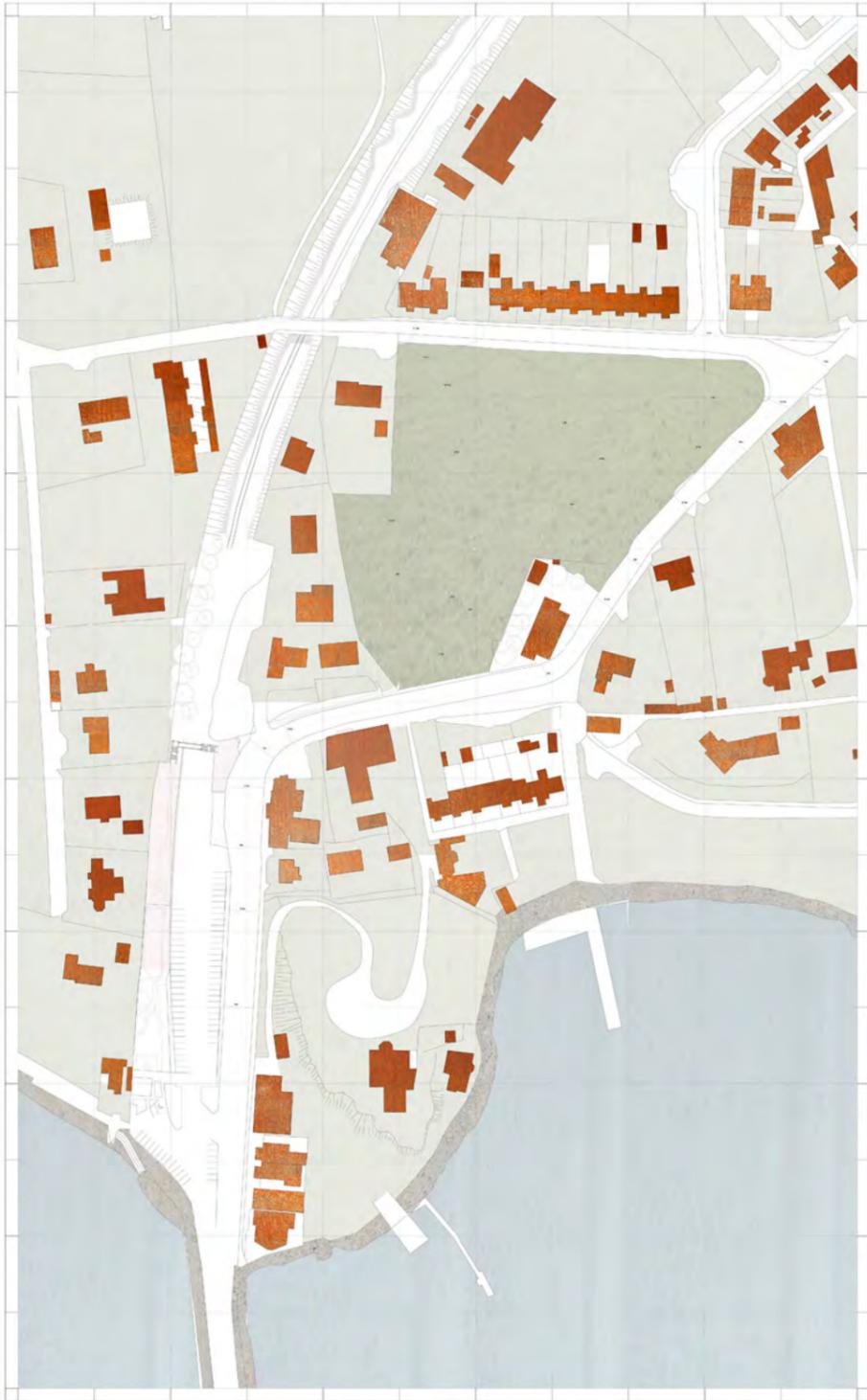
Fenit Railway station catered for goods, passengers and livestock and at one stage included a 1 1/2 ton crane and a 16t weighbridge. There was also an engine shed, a 40ft turntable and a 4750g water tank beside the footbridge. The twice daily passenger service increased in the summer of 1888 to 3 return trips on a Sunday as the beach and pier was a popular resort for the people of Tralee. The passenger service was formally withdrawn by the Great Southern Railway on 31st December 1934, however a Sunday service was resumed by CIE in 1959 which was a through service from Cork via Tralee up to 3 trips every Sunday in the summer months until 1975. The station house and its canopy were demolished after passenger services ceased. The goods store was razed to produce a high bank for loading beet shipments, which took place between October and March. Seasonal onion traffic and beet shipments between October and March continued until the 1978 following which the station area and tracks were removed in 1981. A plan was made by the Great Southern Railway Preservation Society to restore a collection of old rolling stock and re-opening the branch line to Fenit. Although some work was done on restoring the track and rolling stock, this was abandoned in 1989 and the train redeployed on the Blennerville track. In 2009 the Spa/Fenit Community Council applied for Leader funding in order to convert the Spa to Fenit section of the line into a Greenway. Kerry County Council committed to undertake the development of the route and began clearance of the line starting at Rock Street in Tralee in 2010. Work has now commenced on the Fenit section with the intended completion of the Tralee-Fenit Greenway and a looped connection at the Spa to the Cockleshell Road to Canal walkway.



HISTORIC MAP C 1900



HISTORIC MAP C 1930



MAP C 2000

c. 2000s



PATTERN OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

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LOCKES BEACH



SURVIVING SIGNAL LEVER



THE WEST END BAR AND GODLEYS FROM THE BRIDGE



SAMPHIRE TERRACE VIEWED ACROSS THE OPEN FIELD



THE TERMINUS AREA FORM THE BRIDGE

WILDMIND FESTIVAL 2019





HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH OF FENIT REGATTA (1957)



LIEBHERR CRANES IN TRANSIT (1959)



DAY OUT AT LOCKES BEACH (1971)

IMAGES: KENNELLY ARCHIVE



WILDMIND FESTIVAL 2019

PLANNING CONTEXT

Fenit is identified as a village in the Tralee Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018-2024. The Local Area Plan states that Tralee Municipal District will be an area where emphasis will be on the growth of the main settlements of Tralee, Ardfert and Fenit for the principal location for future investment in housing, employment, infrastructure, social and community facilities. The provision of housing and zoning of lands is dependent on capital expenditure and infrastructure. A new wastewater treatment plant in Fenit is to be built as part of the Irish Water Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme shortly. The Local Area Plan also identifies the full potential of Fenit port for industrial, maritime and leisure activities are realised, while the surrounding infrastructure serving this strategic port in the Tralee MD area is developed further to facilitate increased usage, delivering greater economic benefit to the region.

Section 3.4 of the Local Area Plan states that in order to allow Fenit to develop in an orderly manner, it is important that

- The strategically designated R558 Tralee to Fenit Road is upgraded in order to support access to and the development of Fenit Port and improve the Ports links to the Tralee-Killarney Hub.
- The industrial, leisure and maritime activities at Fenit Port are protected and developed sustainably.
- Fenit is promoted as a growth village for the Municipal District and every effort is made to achieve its population target as per the core strategy.
- The upgrading of the waste water infrastructure is developed as committed to.

Fenit has a population of 538 in 2016, the only settlement in the Tralee MD to register a population increase in the last census period. A target population growth of up to 3480 additional people has been allocated for the Tralee Municipal District with 122 people or 46 housing units scheduled for Fenit (table 2.2) in lands zoned R1. These sites are generally adjunct to existing housing development. The site of O Sullivan’s Hotel is zoned M1, mixed use. Fenit is located in an area rich in natural and historic assets. The Tralee Bay Ramsar site designated for the protection of wetlands is nearby as are two Natura 2000 sites, Barrow Harbour and Fenit Island Special Protection Area (Tralee Bay Complex SPA) and the candidate Special Area of Conservation (Tralee Bay and Magharees Peninsula). Fenit beach has blue flag status.

The Tralee Municipal District area has a number of natural and man-made attractions. Key objectives include the development of the Tralee Fenit greenway, the further development of the Tralee-Fenit Blueway and sustainable development of the Fenit Bay loopwalk.

Fenit has an Architectural Conservation Area comprising the central core which includes Samphire cottages and the cut stone lifeguard station. Outside the Architectural Conservation Area there are a number of historic artefacts of value, including the pedestrian bridge over the railway, stone walls and cast iron street furniture. It is an objective of the Local Area Plan to protect buildings and streetscape which forms part of the villages historic, cultural and architectural heritage and to encourage the appropriate reuse and sensitive restoration of unused/derelict vernacular properties in the village.



MAP SHOWING ARTEFACTS OF HISTORIC INTEREST



LEFT: FENIT LAP ZONING MAP

PLANNING STRATEGY

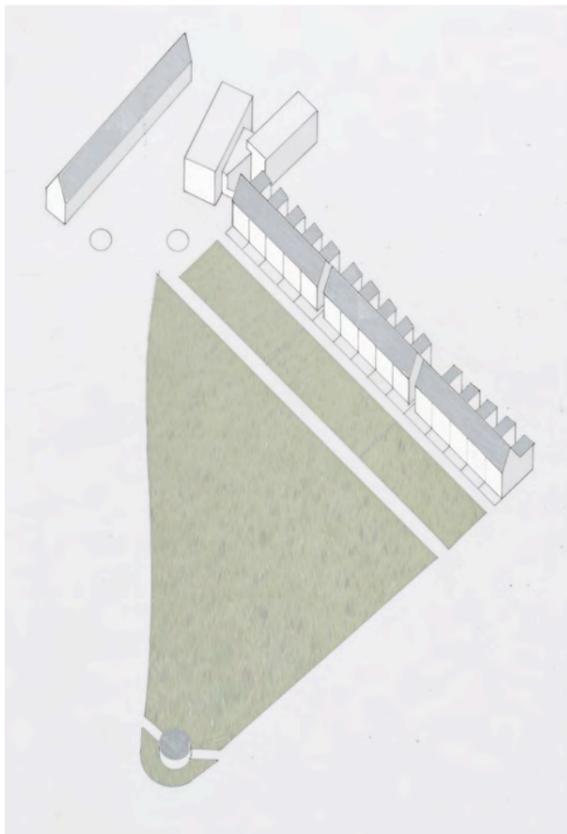
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AXONOMETRIC IMAGE OF THE PROPOSED CORE VILLAGE GREEN

VILLAGE GREENS IN IRISH TOWNS
MITCHELSTOWN
TYRRELLSPASS
INSTOGUE
BLARNEY



FENIT VILLAGE MASTERPLAN

THE CENTRAL CORE

The R588 is the main road from Tralee which takes the scenic route along the coastline to the harbour. The road to coastguard station, school and sports grounds joins the R588 at this point, which is the perceptible gateway to the village, with views opening up from the large open field of the Slieve Mish mountains and sea beyond.

The historic core of the village was centred on the Samphire Hotel and cut stone boathouse, with an access road leading to the harbour cottages and slipway at Locke's beach. Now both of these structures are unused and falling into disrepair.

The Samphire Hotel, later O Sullivan's Bar, was part of the Hurley-Fuller estate. The Hurley-Fuller family were the principal landowner of the village and their house, Fenit House retains its walled enclosure overlooking the sea to this day.

The morphology of the village is not based on the conventional arrangement of street and market place, but specific set pieces and infrastructure elements such as railway and road. The road has developed as a functional vehicular route to the harbour and lacks footpaths and significant building frontage. The challenge is to incorporate the road into a coherent urban framework that allows space for pedestrians, cyclists and the development of new buildings that consolidate the village core.

Another significant challenge lies in the dimensional constraints of traffic management. Although the R588 is the main artery through the village, it is also the access route to the harbour and must cater for the oversized vehicles that transport crane parts from the Liebherr factory in Killarney to the port. Liebherr are the largest user of the port, which has developed to accommodate the storage and dispatch of crane parts from the port. A marina has also been developed to facilitate sailing boats and fishing vessels, however the crane deliveries pose the most significant dimensional constraints on access routes.

Kerry County Council are reviewing the improvement of the R588 to accommodate the anticipated increase in large transport movements. This entails a rerouting of the road where it enters the village and negotiates the bend in the road at the railway terminus. Two options have been considered and assessed in accordance with impact on existing buildings, impact on future development and integration with secondary vehicular access to adjoining developments.

The first route entails the demolition of O Sullivan's Bar and the second route retains this building by taking a wider detour through the field.

Regardless of the route taken, a design strategy has been adopted for the central core to facilitate a sustainable and legible urban composition that is appropriate in the context.

The open space of the field, overlooked by Samphire Cottages is a positive landscape feature and suggested the opportunity to develop this and create a new village green to order development around it. The village green traditionally developed from commonage in medieval settlements-an open space shared by villagers for the grazing of animals and later for communal activities. The green was adopted as an ordering device in planted villages and successful examples in Ireland include Tyrellspass, Blarney and Mitchelstown.

The village green in Fenit offers the opportunity for a green community space overlooked by existing and proposed residential development. The provision of this green is a complementary counterpart to the public space on the seafront which is a busy hub linking port, beach and greenway. The land adjoining the eastern side of the railway has been developed incrementally in an ad-hoc fashion by single houses. A new terrace of residential units is proposed running north to south which

will contain and screen these houses and present an ordered façade to the green. The proposal includes an access road to the rear for parking and deliveries. There is a pedestrian footpath to the front of the terrace with a communal lawn and avenue of trees. The village green is retained as a meadow landscape with small information pavilion at the apex junction. Additional overflow car parking spaces may be placed along the northern side of the green. An anchor building defines the end of the terrace as it meets the road and a small forecourt is created to suit commercial or leisure use in this pivotal location.

The form of buildings proposed is based on clean geometries and a limited palette of materials including rendered walls with limestone elements, slate roofs for the residential buildings and simple fenestration.

This is the fundamental building block of the proposed design strategy. Variations are subject to the configuration of the road and required density. Where it is feasible, additional buildings are inserted in available plots to augment the density and redefine the road as a village street.

Two options have been considered for the reconfigured R558. Each option is determined by means of full vehicle tracking using a range of articulated truck and container sizes.

Route A retains O Sullivan's Bar however the building is then surrounded by a road front and back in an island configuration, which permanently alters the original context, which is key to understanding the building's significance. Presently the building presents a clear front and back to the village. The backyard is enclosed and planted with a dense grove of deciduous trees including oak and ash.

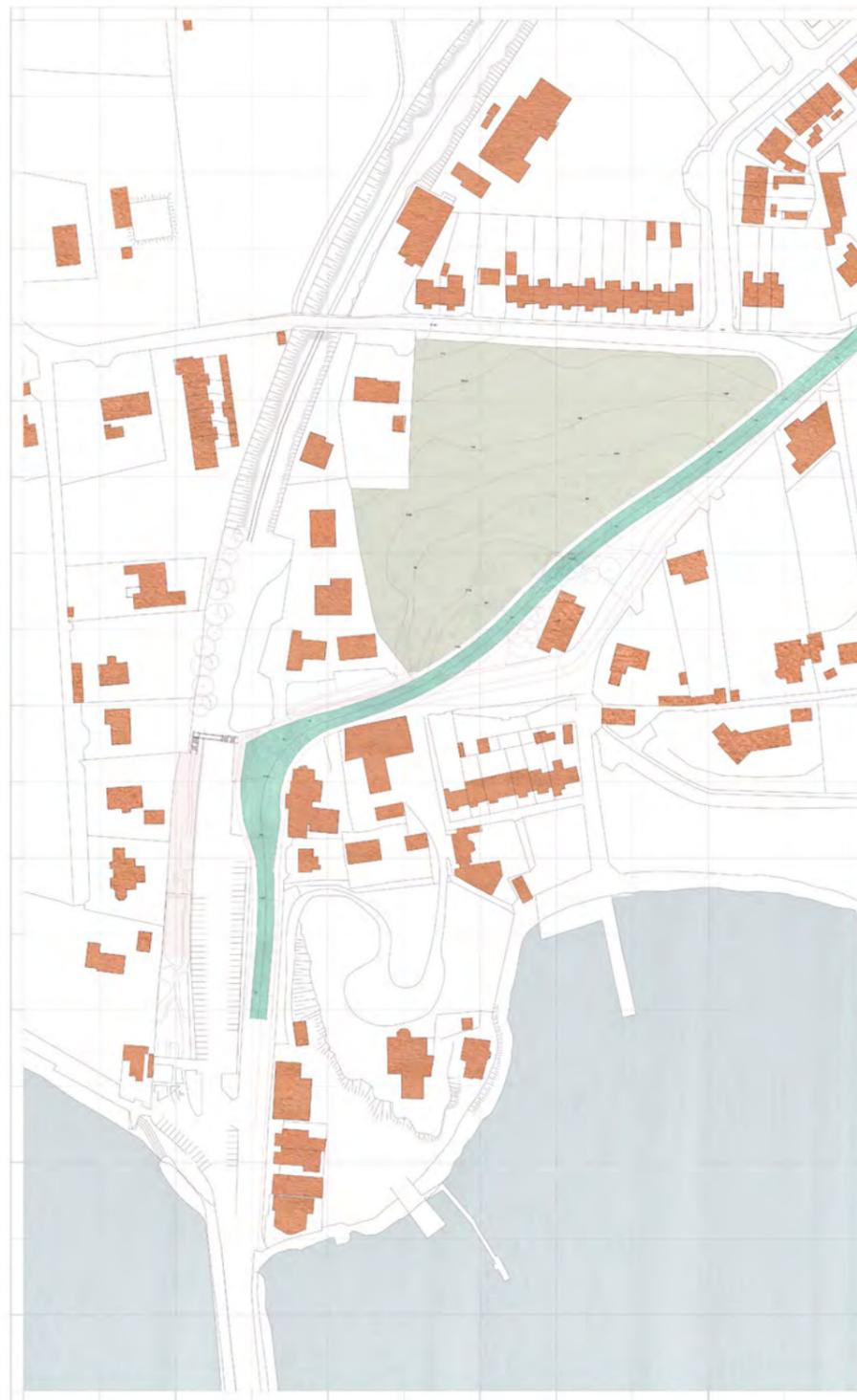
Part of the site under consideration is located in an Architectural Conservation Area which includes the boathouse and harbour cottages on the south side of the R558. None of the buildings are listed on the Record of Protected Structures or in the NIAH. Regardless of the designation, the individual buildings and O Sullivan's Bar contribute to the architectural, social and historical value of the set piece.

Unlike the boathouse which is a finely proportioned building with refined details and high quality materials, O Sullivan's Bar is a typical vernacular structure, albeit with well proportioned fenestration including dormer structures. The bar, previously the Samphire Hotel has a strong place in the memory of the village and typically these multi-functional buildings fulfilled the role of community hub, service point and social centre for the village. The building has been vacant for a number of years and the economic viability of refurbishing the building is in question the longer it is left out of use and not maintained.

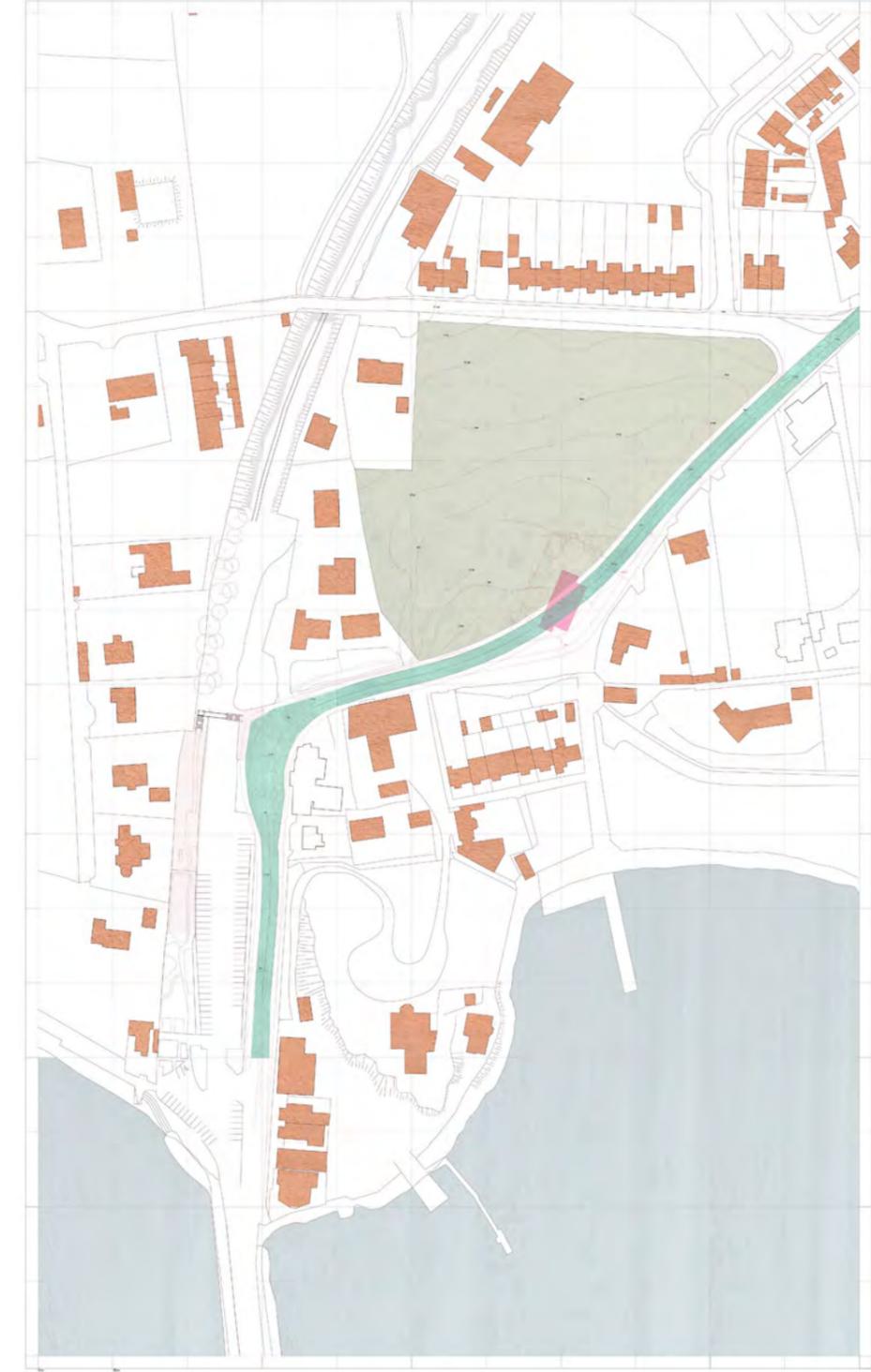
Retention of O Sullivan's Bar would also require the creation of a new front façade to the rear as well as comprehensive refurbishment and repair for re-use.

The creation of parallel road system would require assessment of traffic movements down to Locke's beach and the secondary entrance into the Paddocks. Traffic travelling east from the harbour would either use a shared surface behind the Harbour cottages or turn back at a junction further east.

Route B proposes the removal of O Sullivan's Bar with the establishment of a new village nucleus to the west.



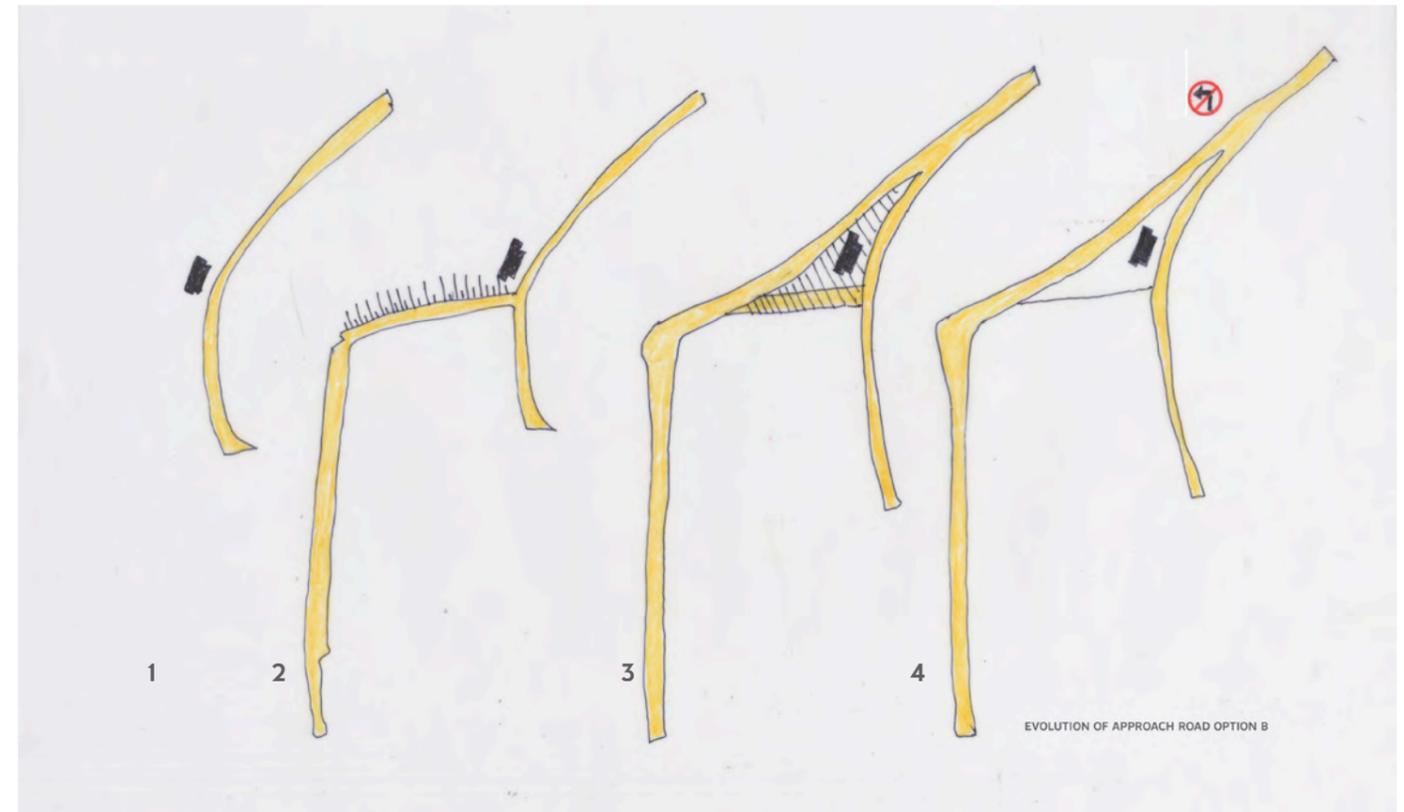
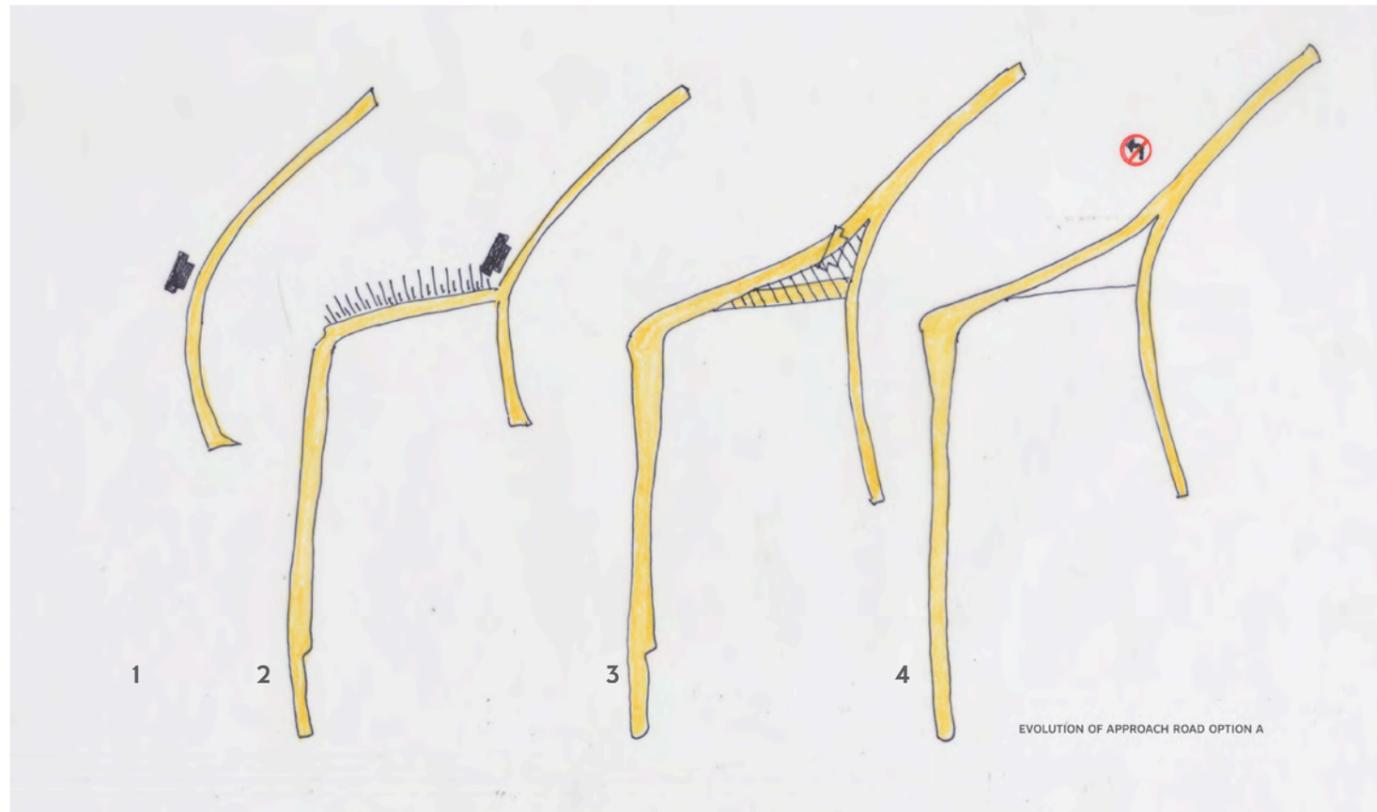
PROPOSED ROUTE A



PROPOSED ROUTE B

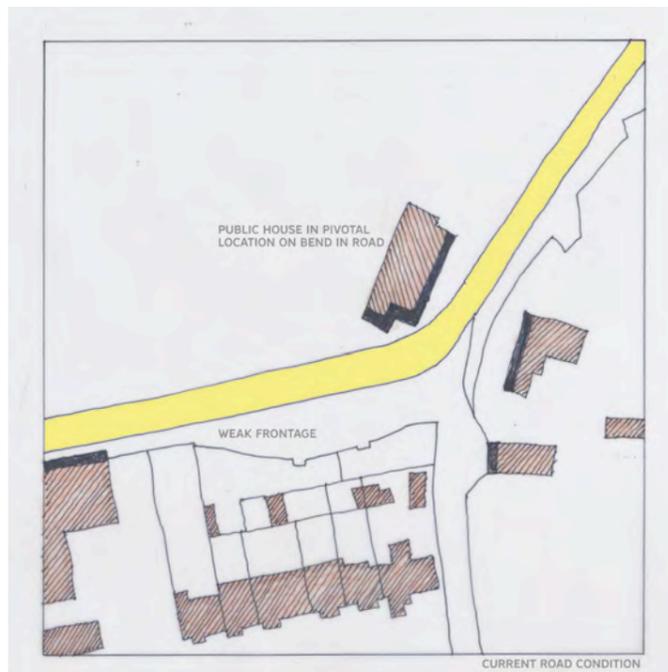


O SULLIVANS BAR

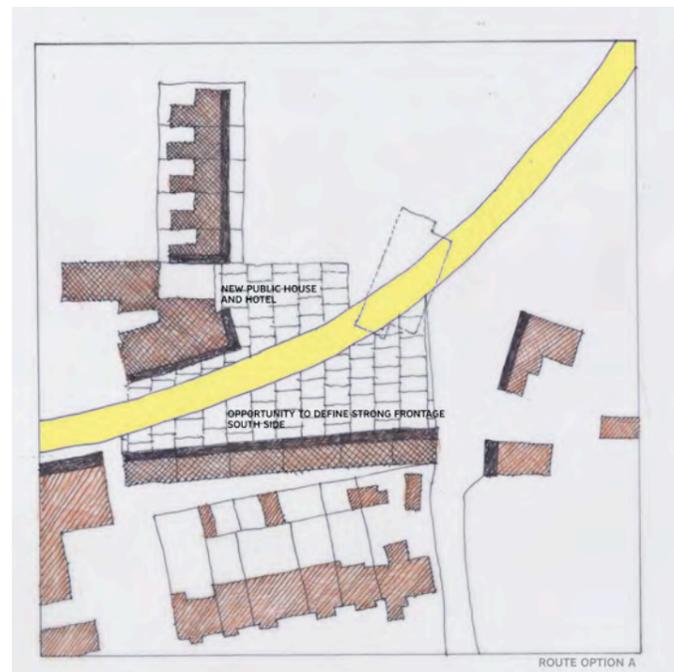


EVOLUTION OF THE ROAD TO THE PIER

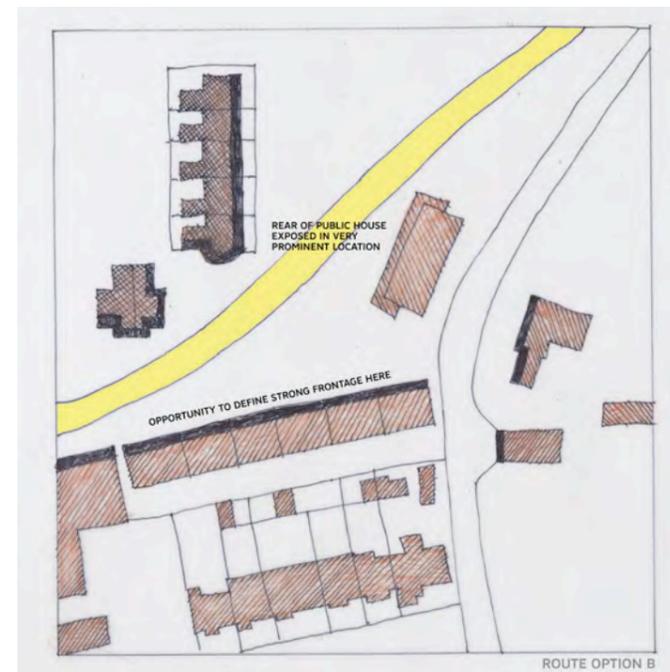
- 1 PRE RAILWAY ROAD DOWN TO COAST
- 2 ROAD EXTENDED WESTWARD TO CONNECT WITH RIALWAY
- 3 ROAD REALIGNED ROUTE A AND B
- 4 ROADS RATIONALISED WITH EXCESS ROADWAY REMOVED



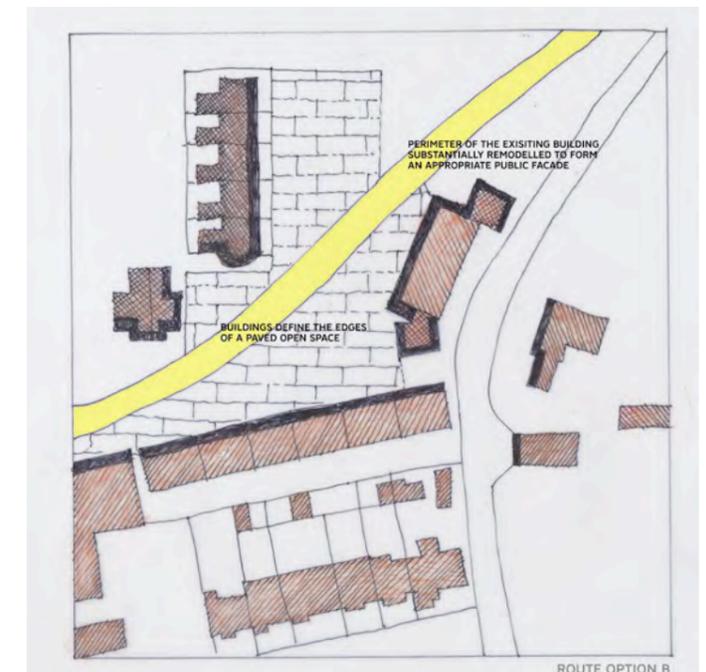
THE FRONT AND SIDE FACADES OF THE PUBLIC HOUSE FACE AND ADDRESS THE ROAD. GENERALLY IN A VILLAGE ALL BUILDINGS FACE THE PUBLIC ROAD OR STREET AND HELP DEFINE THE URBAN SPACE OF THE SETTLEMENT. THE REAR YARDS OF THE TERRACE TO THE SOUTH FACE THE ROAD AND THIS PRESENTLY CAUSES A WEAKNESS IN THE URBAN READING OF THE VILLAGE.



ROUTE OPTION A REMOVES THE PUBLIC HOUSE. PROPOSED BUILDING TO THE NORTH ADDRESS THE ROAD AND STRENGTHEN THE URBAN DEFINITION OF THE VILLAGE. FURTHER OPPORTUNITY EXISTS TO THE SOUTH WHERE A NEW BUILDING COULD BE DEVELOPED TO THE REAR OF THE TERRACE PROVIDING A NEW BUILT EDGE AND THIS GROUP OF NEW BUILDINGS WILL FORM AN URBAN SPACE BETWEEN THEM THAT COULD BECOME THE FOCAL HEART OF THE VILLAGE.



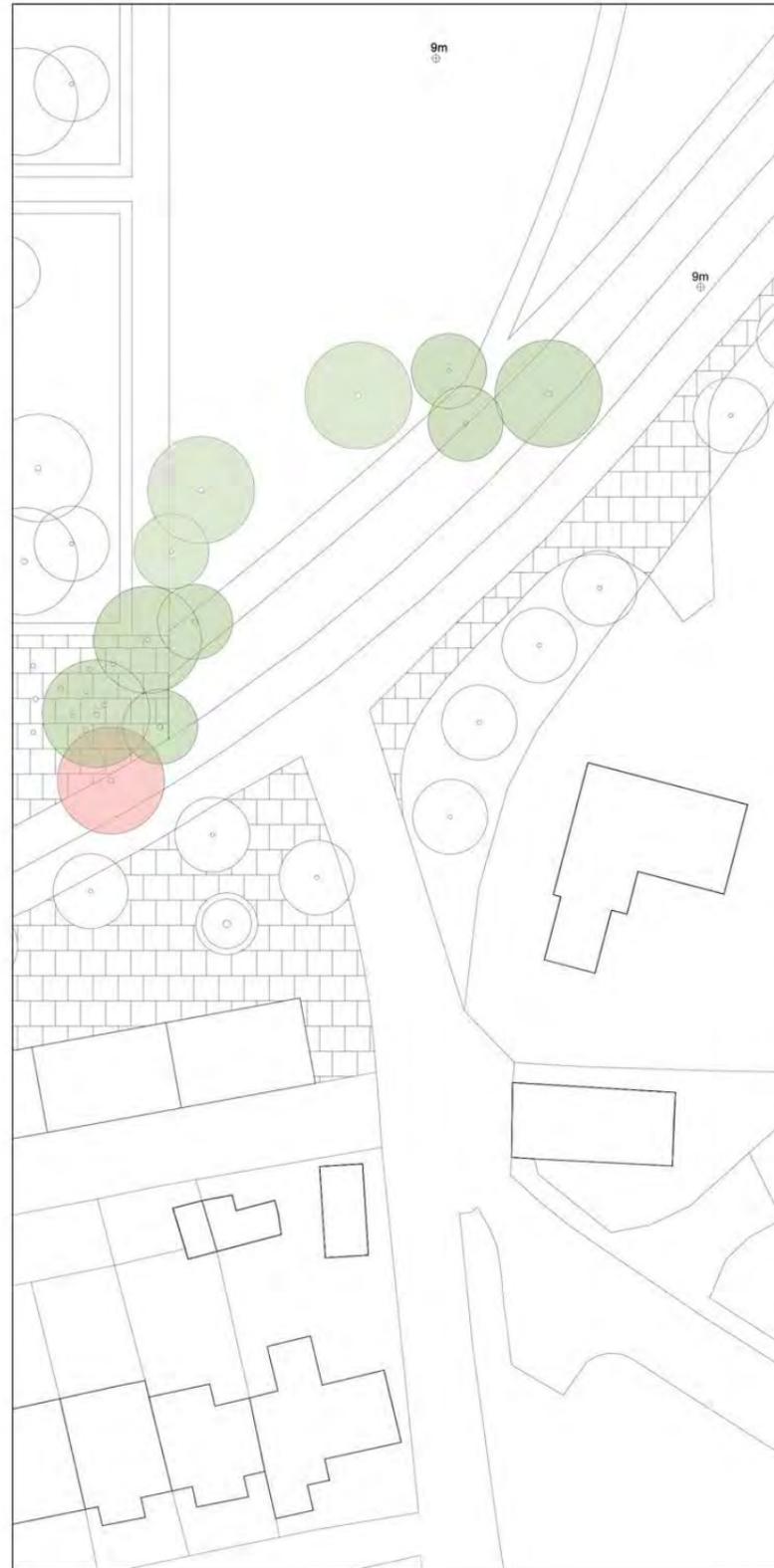
ROUTE OPTION B DIVERTS THE ROAD NORTH TO ENABLE THE RETENTION OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE. HOWEVER THE REAR FACADE IS EXPOSED TO PUBLIC VIEW.



ROUTE OPTION B IDEALLY THE PUBLIC HOUSE WOULD BE REDEVELOPED AND REMODELLED TO PRESENT A PUBLIC FACE TO THE NEW ROAD HOWEVER THE PRECISE ROAD ALIGNMENT DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY DIMENSION AT THE BACK OF PAVEMENT TO CARRY OUT SUCH DEVELOPMENT.



EXISTING VILLAGE



OPTION A



OPTION B

- RETAINED TREES
- REMOVED TREES

DIAGRAM OF TREE RETENTION OPTION A + B



THE CENTRAL CORE
OPTION A

- 1 VILLAGE GREEN
- 2 RESIDENTIAL TERRACE
- 3 RESIDENTIAL PARKING
- 4 HOTEL OR HOSTEL
- 5 PAVED PIAZZA
- 6 ADDITIONAL EVENTS PARKING
- 7 SEASONL COMMERCIAL UNITS
- 8 REALIGNED ROAD
- 9 SAMPHIRE TERRACE
- 10 HOTEL PARKING
- 11 POND



THE CENTRAL CORE
OPTION B

- 1 VILLAGE GREEN
- 2 RESIDENTIAL TERRACE
- 3 RESIDENTIAL PARKING
- 4 HOTEL OR HOSTEL
- 5 PAVED PIAZZA
- 6 ADDITIONAL EVENTS PARKING
- 7 SEASONAL COMMERCIAL UNITS
- 8 REALIGNED ROAD
- 9 SAMPHIRE TERRACE
- 10 HOTEL PARKING
- 11 POND
- 12 EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSE



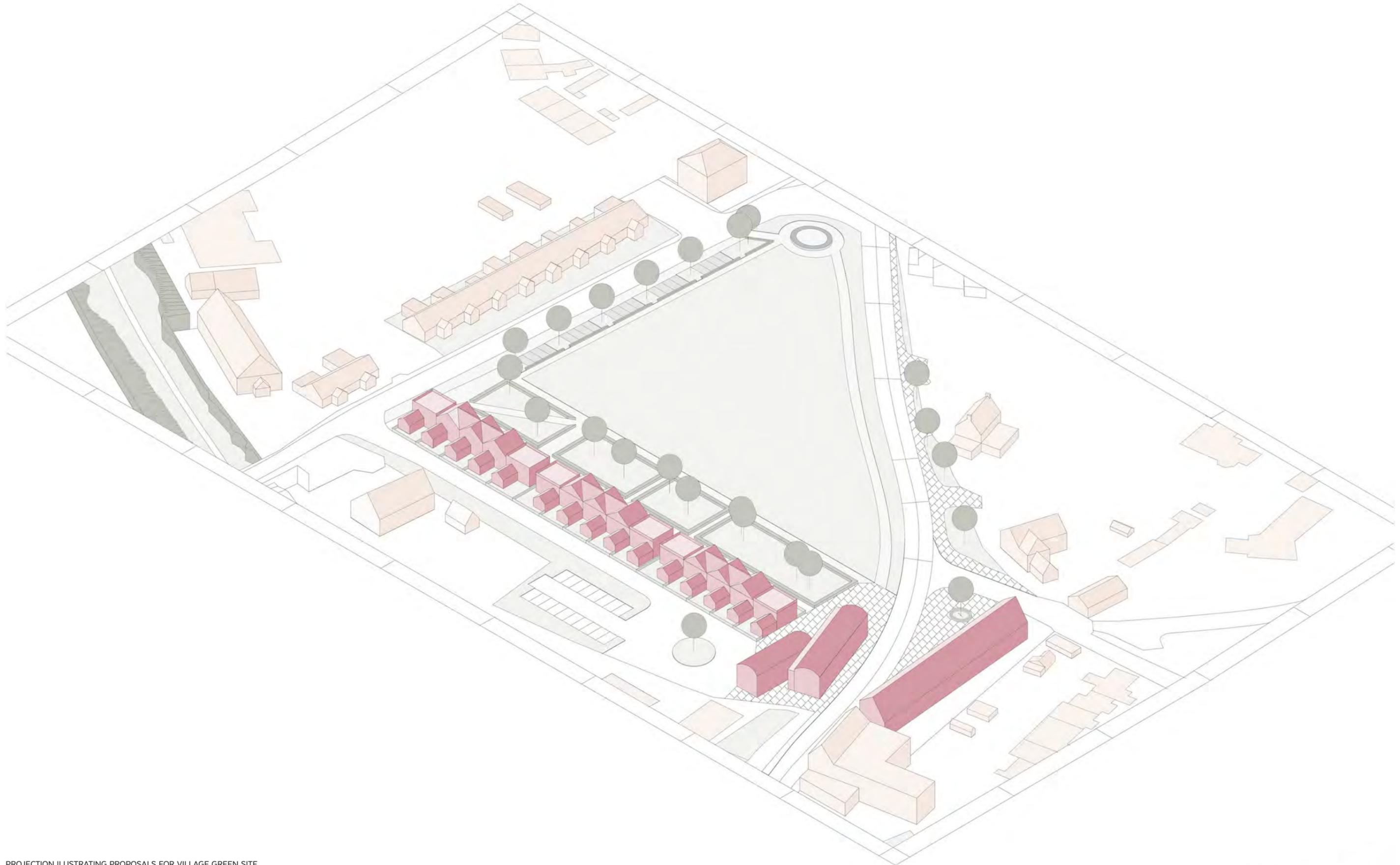
VIEW OF VILLAGE GREEN ON APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE



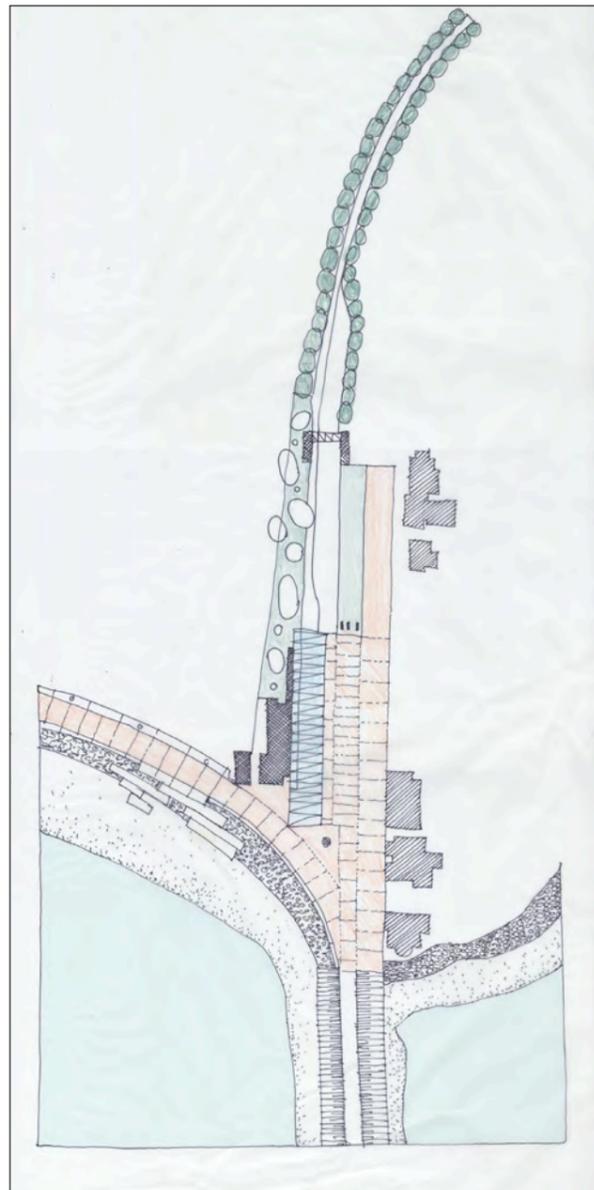
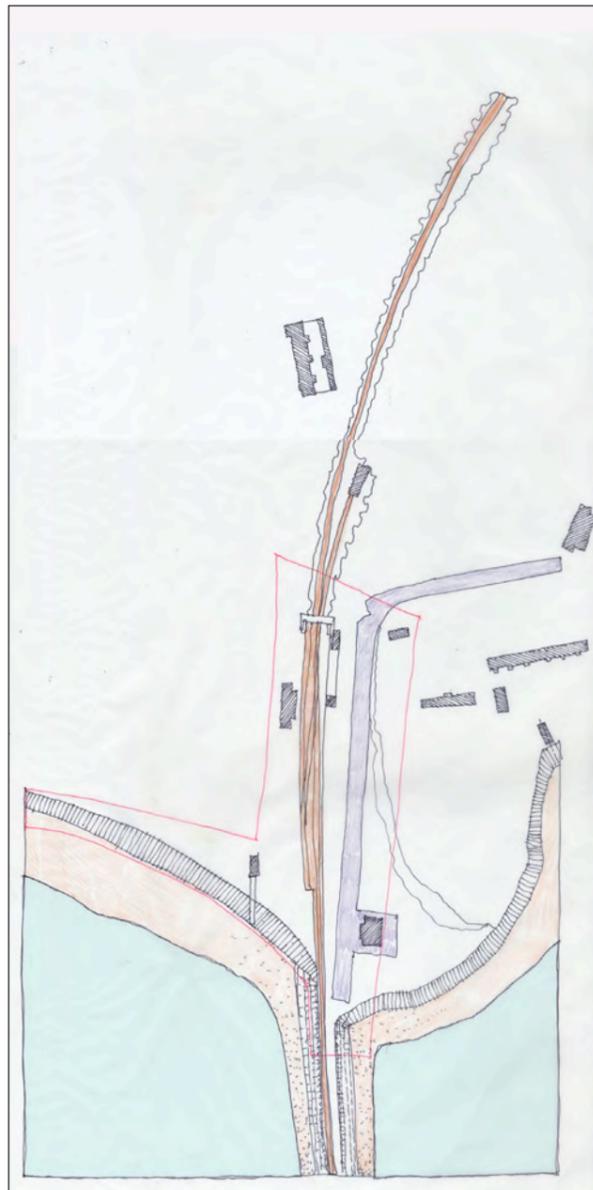
THE NEW VILLAGE HOTEL AND PUB



THE MEETING PLACE AT THE APEX OF THE GREEN MARKS THE ENTRANCE TO THE VILLAGE



PROJECTION ILLUSTRATING PROPOSALS FOR VILLAGE GREEN SITE
(ROAD OPTION A)



EARLY DIAGRAMS OF THE NOTION OF TERMINUS



SHUNTING BEET TRAIN



FENIT STATION

IMAGES: ODEA COLLECTION COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

THE TERMINUS

The Tralee & Fenit line was an important piece of infrastructure in transporting goods from the harbour to Tralee town. The line was also used for leisure with Sunday return trips three times a day in the summer months. The last train left in 1978 and the line and associated structures were abandoned in 1987, the line is now to be reopened as a greenway connecting Tralee to Fenit.

The opportunity is there to consolidate and enhance existing facilities for people who visit the beach and pier. A new market will arise for pedestrians and cyclists using the Tralee to Fenit Greenway on completion. A number of greenways have been established with great success in recent years, including Westport to Achill and Dungarvan and it is clear that new facilities will be required to meet the needs of walkers and cyclists.

The character and functioning of the station place is at present uncoordinated and incoherent as space is shared by pedestrians, cars, crane deliveries and boat storage. Events and festivals take place in the summer months including the famous Christmas Swim. There is not a coherent plan to manage the space and to facilitate its shared use by all stakeholders. Since the closure of the railway station, development has taken place incrementally, adding the toilet block, playground and signage. Original elements including limestone walls and railway artefacts have been removed or allowed to fall into disrepair.

A comprehensive assessment of the historical development of this place, allied with an understanding of the social, economic and cultural factors, allows an integrated plan to be put in place to inform future development for the benefit of all.

The railway line and its remaining structures, the platforms and iron bridge comprises a valuable historical resource. The social and cultural importance of these artefacts is bound to its importance as a piece of infrastructure but also as a reminder of the ritual of the Sunday outing for the people of Tralee and its hinterland. This tradition of leisure and recreation, which coexists with the industry of the harbour has thrived in the vibrant sporting traditions, sailing, swimming and diving, triathlon and fishing that continue. However these activities require facilities that will underpin an active public realm. The development of the railway line into a greenway will act as catalyst for growth and bring a new visitor, the cyclist and walker to the village. There will be a covered picnic area that will provide shelter and facilities for those arriving on the greenway. However the creation of a space, an outdoor public room that people will feel at home in is as important as the amenities that enclose it.



VIEW OF BEACH STEPS AND VILLAGE

There is a conflict between the industrial function of the village as port and terminal against that of community amenity and tourist destination. This is a constraint, but also a factor which informs the unique character of the place as a working port with a strong social character. Logistics of time and space can be employed to manage the use of public spaces to facilitate the seasonal, the temporary and ephemeral-festivals, art and culture, markets and other events. Fenit is driven by the seasons and while improved facilities will encourage a more consistent use of the amenities, there will be a need for the public realm to be adapted for seasonal use. We have considered a space that can accommodate mobile food pods, or be reconfigured for festivals, temporary art installations: a place that works when empty or full.

Two transport corridors, the road and Greenway converge towards the port; a memorable public space can be created at this important node.

The area requires clear organisation to delineate movement and to support flexible use at different times of the year. The public space at the seafront will be supported by a consolidated car parking area. Overflow car parking capacity is identified throughout the village for events and festivals.

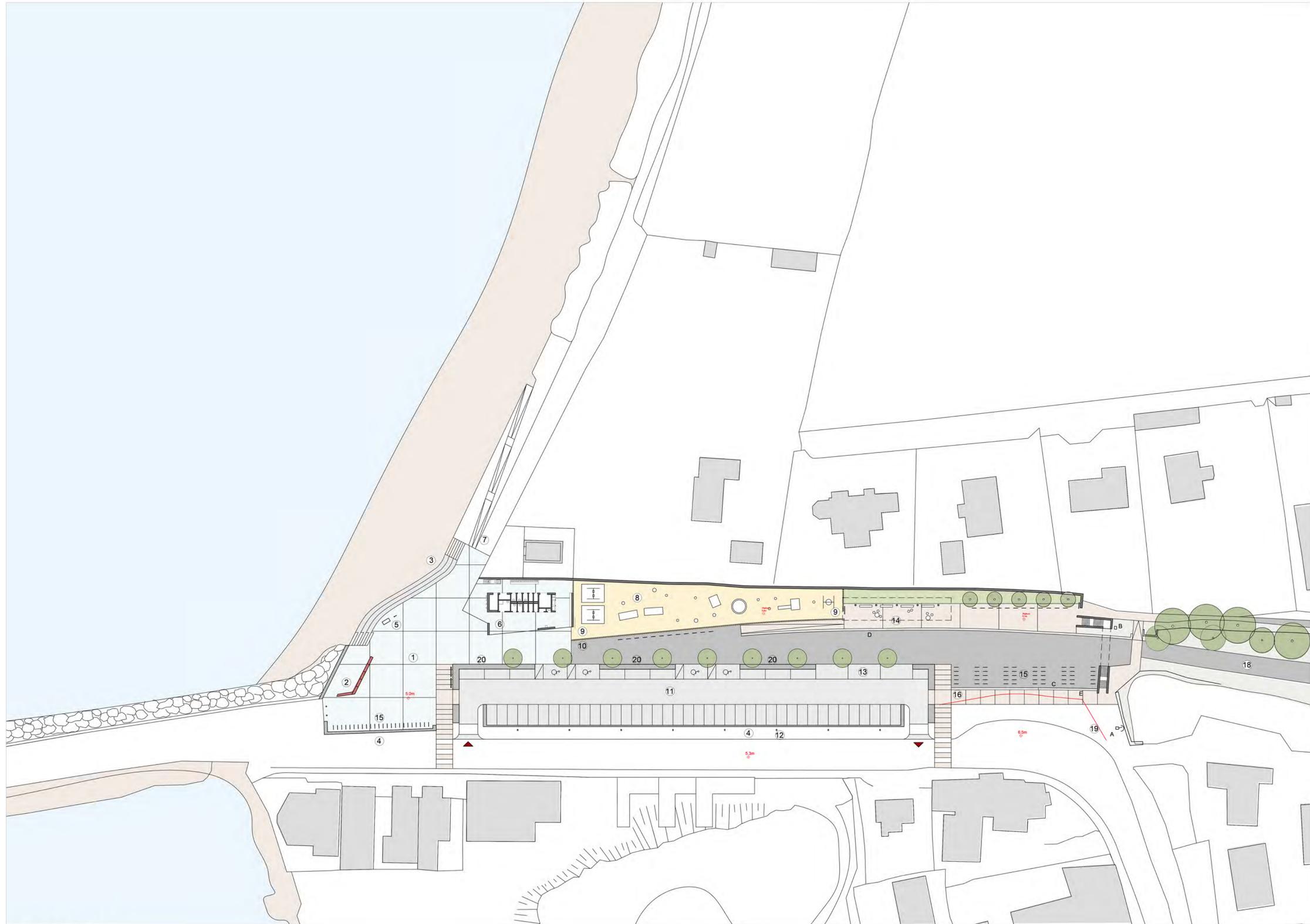
The character of the space will be distinct and reflect the rich history and culture of the village and port. Existing features will be retained and incorporated into the development, such as the limestone kerbs and walls, and railway signals and iron gates. The strong north south axis from the termination of the railway line to the beach entrance will be reinforced, preserving the iconic view of the Sliabh Mish mountains.

For topographical reasons, the east side of the road leading to the marina is fragmented with open areas retained by industrial fencing. Development opportunities have been identified that slot in to the space available. Buildings in these locations will create a more coherent enclosure and consolidate the seafront space.

Design Strategy

The seafront and Greenway terminus are considered together as an integrated design proposal that reconciles the requirements of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular access to create a clear sense of place. The area is defined in four parts:

- 1 The Greenway terminus is located to the south of the railway bridge. There is generous bicycle parking provision to the east. The old railway platform is reinstated and resurfaced. An open pavilion is proposed in the location of the old station house, which will provide a sheltered area for rest and play. Picnic benches and water stations are proposed as well as play equipment such as outdoor table tennis tables.
- 2 The central area includes car parking which is arranged in a more compact fashion in a one-way configuration with new entrance and exit. A number of bays are allocated for casual trading. The car park is separated from the Greenway by a low seat arranged under a line of small trees, hardy evergreens such as Arbutus Unedo. The existing playground is retained with a new timber fence and sliding gates at each end for improved access. There are also stands for cargo bikes.
- 3 The seafront plaza is kept free for pedestrians and primarily a place for people to gather and meet up. The existing view point will be opened up by the removal of the wall and enhanced with new seating. The concrete seat steps are extended and new stairs placed at each end. A shallow ramp allows universal access to the beach.
- 4 The existing toilet block will be replaced with a new beach facility incorporating showers, toilets and lockers. A prototype facility has been developed by Failte Ireland to include a lifeguard station.



A. EXISTING GATE



C. OLD RAIL TRACKS



B. RAILWAY SIGNAL POST



D. PLATFORM STONE



E. LIMESTONE WALL TO BE SALVAGED



PROPOSED FINISH TO SEAFRONT PLAZA:
HONED CONCRETE WITH EXPOSED AGGREGATE & SEASHELLS

PARKING PROVISION	
CARS	49
DISABLED PARKING SPACES	4
CASUAL TRADING BAY	3
BICYCLES	148
TRAILER BIKES	24

- LEGEND**
- SEAFRONT PLAZA
 - CONCRETE SEATING
 - CONCRETE SEAT STEPS
 - LIMESTONE WALL
 - WILD ATLANTIC WAY SIGNAGE AND INFO POINT
 - LIFEGUARD HUT AND TOILET/CHANGING FACILITIES
 - RAMP TO BEACH
 - PLAYGROUND
 - NEW SLIDING GATE
 - NEW TIMBER FENCE
 - CAR PARKING
 - LIGHT COLUMNS
 - CASUAL TRADING BAYS
 - COVERED PICNIC AREA
 - BICYCLE PARKING
 - NEW WALL INCORPORATING SALVAGED LIMESTONE
 - PATH TO BACK BEACH
 - GREENWAY
 - CLEARANCE FOR CRANE TRANSPORT
 - WALL/SEAT

- MATERIALS**
- SEAFRONT PLAZA:
HONED CONCRETE PATHS WITH EXPOSED AGGREGATE & SEASHELLS
- CAR PARK:
PERMEABLE CONCRETE PAVING
- VILLAGE GREEN:
INCORPORATING BIOSWALES AND PERMEABLE PAVING

1 SEAFRONT PLAN
102 1:500



CONCLUSIONS

Fenit was transformed in the late 19th century by a number of ambitious infrastructure projects. The harbor, pier and railway were significant developments of great social and economic benefit to the village and hinterland. The first buildings were typical examples of the solid and robust municipal architecture of the Board of Works. Even the most modest functions of coastguard cottages attained a civic status by means of the built forms employed, coherent urban terraces and simple geometries and material palettes. The village was determined by its relationship to the sea. Unlike towns which began as market places, the particular genesis of Fenit as a harbor and rail terminus resulted in a lack of street development. Recent development has been sporadic and suburban in scale, tending to sprawl.

The history of the harbor development reveals the impact of wider economic and political forces. The two World Wars, American import tariffs and decline of the railways, allied with the increasing importance of roll on roll off cargo ships have had an impact on progressive development of the harbor and its railway infrastructure. Environmental issues too have played a part in the changing fortunes of the locality, demonstrated by depletion of fish stocks and particularly the disastrous decline of the once flourishing oyster beds.

The support of a thriving harbour and marina together with the ongoing development of the Tralee Fenit Greenway has the potential to bring economic and social benefits to the village and its hinterland. There is a challenge in reconciling the often conflicting requirements of industry, community and leisure use. It is critical therefore that a clear and strategic village design proposal is established to inform future development, particularly if this is to take place in a phased manner.

Successful places serve the community as well as visitors. Fenit has the benefit of an engaged and active community supporting marine leisure, walking cycling and environmental initiatives. While the playground, car park and marina are presently well used amenities, the whole site is fragmented and not achieving its immense potential. The design concept rationale describes a model for the site that exploits its civic, landscape and cultural possibilities as well as creating a new face to the village.

The railway line and its remaining structures, the platforms and iron bridge comprises a valuable historical resource. The social and cultural importance of these artefacts is bound to its importance as a piece of infrastructure but also as a reminder of the ritual of the Sunday outing for the people of Tralee and its hinterland. This tradition of leisure and recreation, which coexists with the industry of the harbour has thrived in the vibrant sporting traditions, sailing, swimming and diving, triathlon and fishing that continue. However these activities require facilities that will underpin an active public realm. The development of the railway line into a greenway will act as catalyst for growth and bring a new visitor, the cyclist and walker to the village.

Change is necessary to ensure appropriate and sustainable development. It is important that the process of change is managed so that existing assets, of landscape, history and environment, are protected. A development strategy should be sufficiently flexible to recognize constraints and practical requirements of the place, accommodate compatible development and at the same time enable the significance of the place and its artifacts to be retained or revealed. In order to advance policies aimed at protecting this significance, it is important that this is identified and understood by stakeholders and developers. In this way policies can be advanced in a dynamic process, dealing with the interfaces between the past, present and future needs.

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Maps
Ordnance Survey of Ireland

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