

- A model farm is one such possible use for the farm buildings and adjacent land but there are other possible uses including promoting a “Sustainable Living Centre” which would provide popular destinations as the western hub of the Ward River Valley Regional Park. It would also secure the retention and refurbishment of the vernacular farm buildings for a positive and compatible new use.
- Extending the ‘riparian corridor’, the river banks and margins of the Ward River, will extend the Regional Park whilst creating an unrivaled green infrastructure for Rivermeade as a spine for recreational amenity, a ‘greenway’.

In summary:

- There is a real opportunity to integrate the distinctive quality of the village with its landscape setting.
- The riparian corridor could be improved to provide a greenway recreation / amenity spine for the expanding village.
- There is potential for this greenway to widen out to include new active recreational facilities including the reservoir which could be brought also into recreational use
- The greenway could combine in a positive way with for example the model open farm proposal, creating a synergy of uses.
- The realisation of these could achieve a remarkable transformation of the whole village environment for the residents of Rivermeade, as well as making a regional quality destination for visitors on foot by bicycle or by car.



Above: Hamptonne Country Life Museum is a remarkable example of careful restoration and the promotion of events associated with traditional agricultural life in Jersey, Channel Islands. (Photo, Jersey Heritage Trust)

Below: In Ireland, at Avoca village, Co Wicklow, the Weavers sheds and cottage have been retained in their simplicity as a promotional outlet as well as a working mill and shop. The buildings are good vernacular local buildings which have been sensitively and minimally conserved.



Left, and far left: Traditional farm and its immediate fields and Ward River side boundary is an opportunity to conserve the farm as an active museum of country life in Fingal with agricultural artifacts and, traditional furnishing of the cottage. The outbuildings might be used as a promotional shop, much in the way the Avoca Handweavers have retained their traditional buildings in Avoca village. Within the proposed development area for the village, it is an attractive opportunity to incorporate an active recreational and educational purpose which would have a county wide interest and could be a sustainable conservation project for both buildings and landscape.

2.4 Developing a ‘Sustainable Energy Community, particularly in energy and food will help create a model sustainable village

Looking to the future, there would be merit in achieving high standards of insulation and draught-proofing in the existing houses, as well as applying today’s expected standards in new development. The following might help to develop energy and food efficiency in the village:

- Consider joining up Rivermeade to the *Transition towns and Villages movement* which focuses on how to make the transition from high energy use to low. (See *Transition Initiatives Primer*, available on internet). This is a community- based movement which recognises the importance of working with local government.
- Aim to become a ‘Sustainable Energy Community’ and benefit from valuable support from SEAI (See SEAI ‘Guidelines for a Sustainable Energy Community’).
- Consider developing a *cooperative for Rivermeade* which would coordinate a specific energy policy to apply to both existing and new buildings. Locally based trades could work together with Council support to effect an upgrading of existing houses and the school.
- Providing an area for *allotments* to meet local requirements.
- Providing a community garden.
- A food cooperative, based on allotment yields may be viable for a local distribution, and may be able to benefit from direct buying from Keelings.
- Consider developing a Sustainable Living Centre on the farm and its adjacent lands.
- Consider developing a wind turbine close to the reservoir.



Rivermeade cycle routes

Greenways may be connected by shared existing country lanes provided that they are clearly signaled.

Wexford County Council, for example is implementing a network of cycle routes using quiet country roads away from trafficked routes.

For Rivermeade there is a promising prospect of developing new shared cycle and pedestrian routes which are safely away from vehicular traffic.

The best opportunity is to connect in to the Ward River Valley Regional Park.

Image, **left**, shows The Broadmeadow Estuary Cycle Route, a “family friendly traffic-free route” which it may be possible to link with Rivermeade. Photo from the National Cycle Policy 2007

Below, Left: Cyclists on the Rivers of Mount Leinster trail which begins in Carlow. There are many tourism initiatives throughout the country to improve bicycle routes. In Northern Ireland there are over one thousand routes in operation. Photograph from Discover Ireland promotion.

Below, right: Example of a priority given to cyclists where the cycleway meets a country road.





New Earswick Model Village

Above: Summertime allotment area is flourishing.

Below: Shopping Mall in the centre of the village. Convenience shop on corner provides just about everything.



2.5 Rivermeade as a renewed garden village - The Vision

A renewed vision for Rivermeade can generate a fresh interpretation of the future village, with a greater diversity of housing provision, connectivity between the zones of the village, with safe pedestrian and cycle routes, an attractive landscape, and a new village centre which incorporates recreational, retail and community facilities. Also envisaged in the village is the retrofitting of existing houses. The achievement of this renewal will probably extend over a longer timescale than the life time of the LAP, with the support of the local community and in partnership with the County Council.

“A neighbourhood partnership’s role is to drive and coordinate the planning and delivery of sustainability improvements at a local level, which have been identified as priorities by the community. These partnerships should aim to improve infrastructure at a local level to deliver carbon reduction and adaptation measures while at the same time achieving wider economic, environmental and social benefits.

Partnerships should gather a team interested in taking forward the neighbourhood retrofit work, develop a vision and targets, produce spatial neighbourhood retrofit plans, and develop a delivery and funding model.” (The Future is Local - Sustainable Development Commission, UK, 2010)

2.51 Housing Refurbishment and New-Build in a garden environment

The net density of the current estate is under 30 houses per hectare: circa 10 per acre. This is a modest density compared with targets set out over recent years, but it allows for good sized gardens and green spaces which will maintain the arcadian, garden village identity, and will facilitate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). The development of the village in future as a **‘sustainable energy community’** is an opportunity to improve the

living quality and economics of energy conservation, for existing as well as new residents. A programme for upgrading the insulation of existing houses, private and public, could be driven by a local cooperative with active support from Sustainable Environment Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and the County Council.

New houses will be expected to meet the highest insulation and draught proof standards.

The vision will provide for the increasing needs of older people for ‘lifetime’ and sheltered Housing. Larger houses incorporating home offices might also be provided.

2.52 Recreation, Leisure and Open Space

Opportunities for recreation are limited in a village due to a lack of ‘critical mass’, sufficient numbers to support specific activities. Overcoming this can be a challenge to create within the structure of the village, an attraction which will work at a regional as well as local level, so that, for example people in Swords may choose to travel out to Rivermeade to participate in an activity. The proposal for a ‘living farm’ as a museum of country life, or a sustainable living centre linked with recreational activities, including a network of walks, and active water recreational use could add up to a country park for the county. A suggestion for a pedestrian/ cycle link along the Ward river area through the Ward River Valley Regional Park and onto Swords would not only improve the connectivity of the place, but would also locate proposals for Rivermeade in the broader strategic structure in the county for active recreation.

A centre for fitness and well-being in the Village Centre could also draw on a wider population than that of the village, and could offer outdoors activities.

Allotment gardens as proposed will not only encourage a degree of self-sufficiency, but will also act as significant recreational outlets.

Added to this, the development of additional sports areas beside the playground and school with the possibility of a full sized football pitch within the village envelope, and a good network of walking routes in the Rivermeade development areas, could help to offer a wide range of recreational facilities, more than commensurate with comparable small villages.

2.6 Environmental Improvements within the village

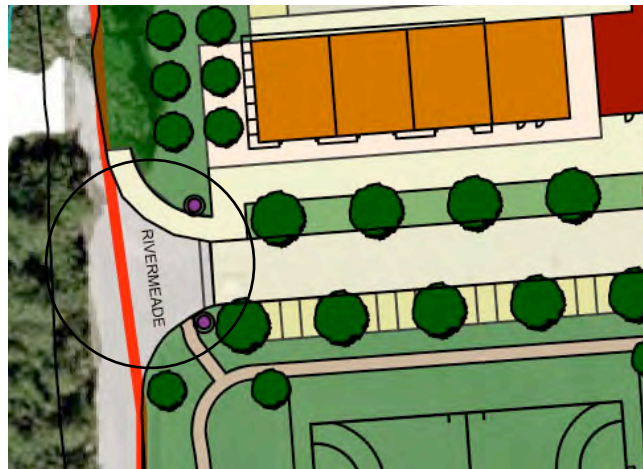
Overall, Rivermeade is well looked after, with regular maintenance of public areas. However, there is ‘always room for improvement’ and this list of opportunities is aiming to complement the actions proposed to make the estate a better, connected place to live. This list is focussed on the existing built environment and measures which may help towards a better appearance, safer movement for pedestrians, a strategy for tidying up the entire village, improvement in off street parking and ways of further greening the main avenues of the village. These measures will help to create a positive climate for growing the village and its facilities. It is crucial for the success of any of these proposals that they have the consent and participation of the community of Rivermeade in their implementation, following consultations.

2.61 Improving appearance at entrance to Rivermeade.

The general appearance of Rivermeade at its only entry point is attractive because the country road (Toberburr Rd) that connects Rivermeade to the outside world is special, restricted in width and has traditional hedgerows enclosing it. It heightens the feeling of Rivermeade being located in the countryside. Beyond the village entrance and off the Toberburr Rd is open

space. To the right the National School fronts the road and to the left open fields have a gently wooded horizon. This transition is very open with an absence of planting, unlike the streets within the estate which create a canopy over many parts of the main streets. The School contributes in announcing the settlement, with its frontage onto the entrance road.

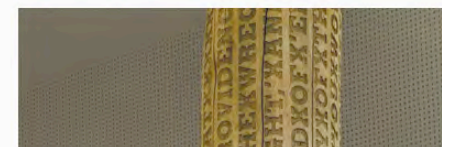
The entrance zone would be greatly enhanced with some planting of avenue trees. The proposal to locate a village centre and Square will also help to give character to the village at its entrance. A change in surface treatment with associated parking will help to reduce traffic speeds and congestion outside the school. An idea derived from the work of Gordon Young, is to make unique signage which will identify Rivermeade at its entrance. Street signs should be surveyed and replaced where they may be faded, damaged or broken. Such improvements will add to the sense of renewal.



Projects
Recent
Information

Gordon Young is a visual artist who focuses on creating art for the public domain. His work ranges from sculptures to typographic pavements for places as diverse as government headquarters and village squares. The common denominator for all projects is the basis of relevance to the surroundings.

Previous / Next



Above: Illustrations of some of Gordon Young’s public art work. Whilst this example is interior most of it is outdoors. This example is for a public library in Crawley, London. It is nominated for a Design Council award 2011.

Left: diagram of the entrance junction to Rivermeade. The circle might be literally applied as bronze casting in the surface of the road, with radius curves marked in the paving. Two ‘totem poles’ might contain graphic information about the village and might be in wood, steel, concrete or stone and sculpted by a local artist. Should the proposal to identify the lake and vernacular farm area as part of the Ward River Valley Regional Park, then one totem might bear this name. The paved surface would be extended along the front of the School with parking bays, and avenue trees planted on either side.

2.62 Better parking arrangements and off street parking for large vehicles

The location of Rivermeade and the need to travel outward for work, shopping, secondary education and entertainment / relaxation means that a high level of car ownership is essential. Mostly the car is kept within the front garden, but there is pressure on the roadways for parking space. The strategy is to provide off street parking spaces in existing situations where there are generous grass corner verges which may be edged by parking strips demarcated on the ground with paved surface (1). Some parking spaces for heavy trucks are needed (2).

2.63 Better pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings

The key objective in proposing better pedestrian and cycle routes is to give priority to the safety of people who would choose to walk or cycle. Within the existing road system it is fortunate that there is ample dimension in the streets and relatively low traffic, so sharing as at present should not be a problem.

2.64 Street Improvements (edges) and Lane Security Review

The appearance of the street is affected by its edges, and in the case of Rivermeade, by the type and condition of the boundary walls and hedges. For the most part there is great care taken to make the front garden attractive, allowing for the reality that most people choose to keep their vehicles within the boundary of the house. The mixed appearance of the boundaries and gardens in a few places is not something that can be regulated, but if there is a general wish to improve the appearance, it can be done. Tidy towns communities around Ireland take up those challenges, sometimes with dramatic beneficial impact.



- A. Raised surface would achieve traffic moderation as well as heightening the sense of arrival. Tree-planting on either side of the road helps to take away the bleakness of the open grass area.
- B. Example of roadside parking as part of traffic moderation measures. The location here is to facilitate parking for the school and for users of the recreation areas who may arrive by car and wish to continue on foot.

- C. Pedestrian crossings are made with stripes of different material rather than painted on the road surface. These two shown play a significant role in giving priority for pedestrians who would choose to travel to and from the proposed Village Square in Development Area 1.

Local initiative in Rivermeade on a street by street basis may yield good results.

Rear lanes present a challenge in terms of residential and visual amenity. The best lane security for households is to provide lockable gates. Currently, those gates are unattractive. Their appearance might be softened by attaching a robust timber boarded finish, which could be painted and would look more garden-like and fit in with the green environment.

2.65 Landscaping of existing public spaces

The existing public spaces of the village are pleasant and well used. The parkland around the National School is gently contoured which helps its overall appearance, although the openness of the area is somewhat bleak. The VDFP shows a strategic approach to planting which includes the existing areas as well as those within proposed new development areas.

Strategic planting focuses on the use of trees and shrubs to define the boundaries, to screen and to shelter and to strengthen routes defined as corridors or greenways which are seen as future recreational amenities. Responsibility for detailed planting is likely to be vested in a local group, where responsibility for planters or specific flower beds would be carried out and managed on a seasonal basis. The larger scale maintenance of recreation areas and playing fields and ‘strategic planting’ would be carried out, as happens currently, by the County Council.



Below: Rivermeade Drive, the Main Street of Rivermeade is an opportunity to reinforce the sense of being part of the centre of the village by making a change of road surface; this has the potential to act as traffic calming for vehicles. In areas like Rivermeade, both cycling and pedestrian movement is light and likely to continue to be so.

Street side parking is indicated beside the green with designated surface which would be contained within planted stop-ends. The light coloured area from boundary wall to boundary wall is an indication that the whole width should be examined to improve the street .



2.66 Further Greening of the village

Within the estate there are many examples of exemplary gardens which contribute to the overall quality of environment.

Further enhancement of the green surroundings to the housing, with the addition of strategic planting would strengthen the landscape character and setting of Rivermeade.

2.67 Strategic Landscaping

The landscape component of the existing estate is unusually generous, and has helped to ground the scheme well into its larger landscape context. The proposed extension of the estate in the creation of a village should not detract from the existing sense of connection with the surrounding landscape. Strategic landscaping will be used to help strengthen the identity of place and to define, screen and shelter where appropriate.



Left, above and below: very good examples of front gardens which contribute to the enjoyment of the whole area. Use of hanging baskets as additional colour in both pictures softens the frontage of the house, and attractive, well, maintained hedging between houses looks good and encloses the garden, encouraging wildlife to find a home in the garden. This is below the canopy of trees which so effectively characterises parts of the street.

Right: A sign on a grand scale for Blackpool as part of a large urban park linking the new station with the beach. The sign is part of an adventure course climbing structure (people can be seen climbing up the facade). It is an example of how Ward River Valley Regional Park could be signaled by a large, compelling and useful sign. Design by Gordon Young with why not associates, graphic designers.

Far Right: a stand of young trees , an example of strategic planting, are growing to create a shelter belt, which is permeable at ground level; even in wintertime it has a strong visual presence.



Areas where strategic landscaping will help the development of the village are as follows:

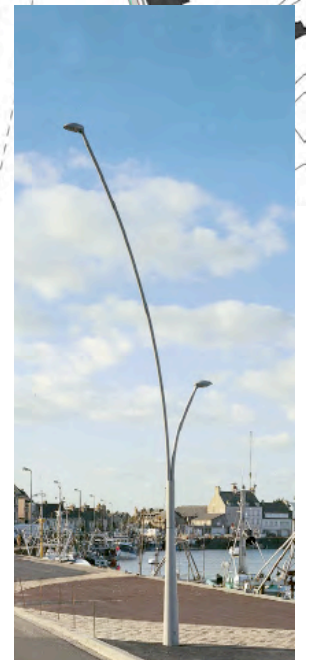
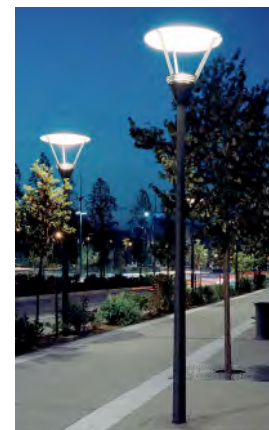
- **Southeast corner (1):** a buffer zone to reduce sound, and visual impact of the Swords Western Ring Road.
- **South boundary of LAP (2):** a tree screen to hide the unsightly development to the south. Planting here would have to be undertaken on lands outside the LAP boundary, subject to the agreement of the landowner.
- **At the entrance to Rivermeade, West (3):** to soften and emphasise the avenue of arrival.
- **Behind the School (4):** to provide a backdrop and to articulate the different zones of the parkland space
- **Western boundary to Rivermeade LAP (5):** to screen the service zone of the business units
- **Between the old farm and the reservoir (6):** to give shape to this location, as a node which connects the northern housing area to the centre and the elements of the Ward River Valley Regional Park on either side.

2.69 Street and greenway lighting

Street lamps in Rivermeade are simple and utilitarian. The new opportunity is to give attention to providing lights along greenways, which need not be at such a high level as the streets. Examples of suitable light fixtures include:

- lighting bollards, as a street light suitable for the Avenue into Rivermeade and,
- contemporary street lighting for pedestrian lighting.

These can be chosen from a wide selection of available products for using lighting to contribute to the atmosphere, character and safety along streets, greenways and footpaths in housing areas. These lighting fittings are designed to reflect light downwards, and avoid lighting up the night sky.



The Development Areas show designed schemes which are quite realistic in their visual presentation. They should be viewed as a snapshot in time; an image of what *might* be, to facilitate long term planning of amenities and infrastructure, and primarily to act as a vehicle for illustrating and promoting the guidelines in Section 3. These reflect a longer term strategy to achieve a sustainable development process in the village, with each scheme or zone being evaluated at the time of submission against these development criteria.

2.7 Development Areas

Development Areas are divided into 11 parcels for convenience of development.

Area 1 is focussed on a new village square with mixed uses designed to create an active place for work, retail / commercial / community uses, a creche and residential development.

Close to the village, **Areas 2,3 and 5** provide a consolidating phase of residential development, each incorporating some housing for older or special needs people.

Areas for recreational purposes are at **4, 6, 7 and 8**, and an outlying layout for housing development includes **Areas 9,10 and 11**.

The Development Areas may be seen in context on this aerial view, **below**, of proposed development.

