

3 Great spaces

The network of spaces in the strategy is elaborated by an overall street and public space framework plan.



Indicative Public Realm Framework Plan (note: potential for new/ infill buildings is shown in dark grey)

The river and park

The plan proposes a restructuring of the park to provide more legible through routes and better connections to the town centre: at main street on the axis with the Church; adjacent to the “Combined Clubs” community hall; George’s Square and at Bridge Street. It is proposed to reintroduce water as a landscape structuring element to foster biodiversity to act as a flood management element and to provide interest and amenity. Provision can also be made for sports and recreation activities and play spaces.

At present, the town effectively ‘turns its back’ on the park. The plan proposes to address this by encouraging new infill buildings that will overlook the park and activate its edges. It is suggested car access should be maintained to these sites to generate activity and passive surveillance.

There is potential for infilling the car park site opposite the Church with a new community ‘gateway’ building. This will improve the sense of arrival into the town by enclosing space and overlooking the park at this prominent location, and has the potential to create a synergy between the Church, the community and use of the park. Church events will be encouraged to ‘spill out’ into the park and the inclusion of community uses will draw people through the park. It is recommended that this car park and the car park at the viaduct are replaced by smaller and more numerous pocket car parks at strategic locations within the town centre to be supplemented by enhanced directional/ information signage (This should be the subject of a more detailed traffic, access and car parking study for the town centre).

There is further potential to develop the site at Bridge Street where the park meets the town centre, to unblock access and to provide new buildings and uses that have the potential to unlock the park’s potential at this key location. This may involve the creation of new buildings that create a transitional space between softer landscape elements and the more urban character of the town. This transition could be marked by a new weir and walkway upstream from the existing path, incorporating potential for a turbine to generate renewable energy



Mill Park indicative design framework

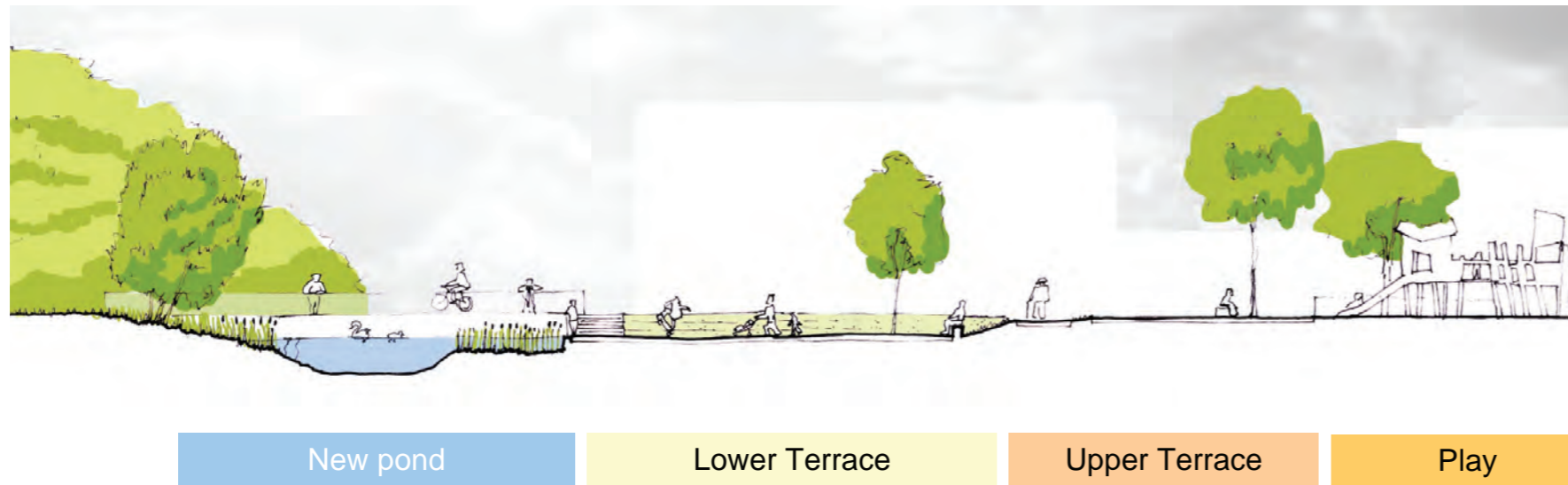
Several of the plan proposals will involve the rationalisation of existing car-parking arrangements. As a result, these proposals will need to be preceded by a comprehensive and integrated traffic, parking and access study

Key proposals for the river and park:
Better connections into and through the park;
Reintroducing water and managed wetlands;
Encouraging infill buildings that will overlook the park and activate its edges;
Space for sports and recreation facilities;
Unblocking the connection between the park and the town centre at Bridge Street and George’s Square.

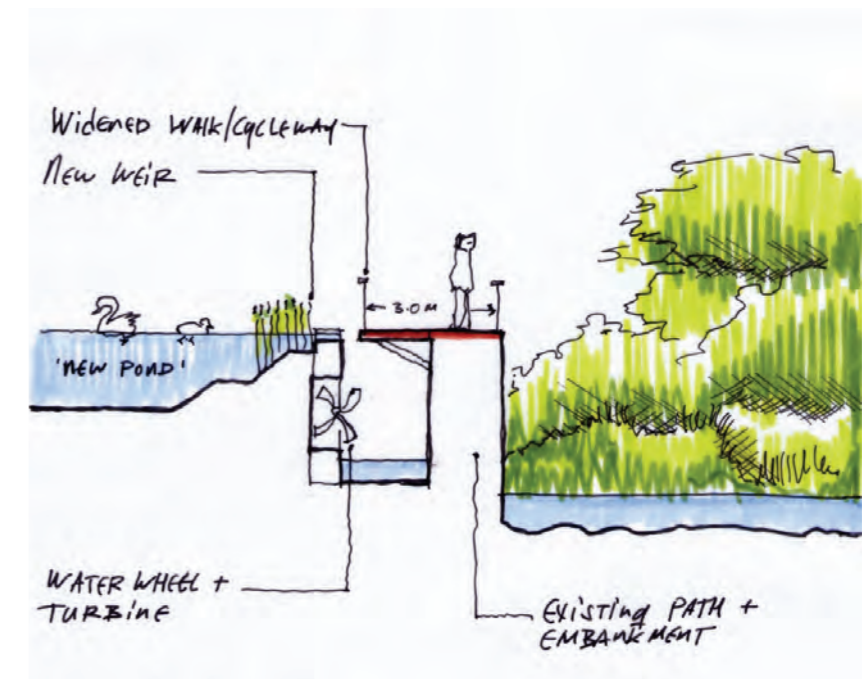


Similar park elements elsewhere

3 Great spaces



- Potential park activities:
- Play;
 - Terrace (sitting out, gatherings etc.);
 - Lawn, meadows (passive recreation);
 - Sports courts;
 - Community gardens; and
 - Managed wetlands.



Potential for new pond and weir constructed using a water wheel and turbine. The existing path is retained and widened to accommodate cyclists.

Indicative sections through new amenity areas at Mill Park as proposed. The park incorporates a formalised urban area with landscape terrace spaces and play area. The lower terrace provides flood storage during exceptional flood events buffering lower points in the town centre.



Indicative sketch view of town centre end of Mill Park as envisaged.

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The aim of the proposals for the main street is to re-balance the function of the street as a 'link' for vehicular traffic and as a 'place' in its own right, by making it more comfortable for residents, businesses and visitors, on a phased basis.

The main streets and connections

Drogheda Street, Bridge Street, George's Square and Dublin Street form the commercial and civic spine of the town. Many of the town's important public buildings are located along this route in addition to a hotel, shops, cafes, banks and supermarket. Footfall surveys undertaken show Drogheda Street is the busiest node in the town. It is also, conversely, where the footpaths are narrow and constrained. As a result, spill-out of activity from shops and cafes does not and cannot occur.

The broad objective will be to build on the high quality streetscape works completed in 2009 and, at strategically important locations, enlarge the pedestrian areas with build-outs and pavement widening; providing more space for people to move around and rest and space for outdoor cafe seating. Build-outs and pavement widening will also contribute to traffic calming and greater ease and safety in crossing the street.

Tree planting at each end of the main street will improve the sense of arrival into the town. It will also soften the character of the streetscape and promote biodiversity.

The impression of the town on arrival from the train station is negatively affected by car parking, tarmac and the poor quality of surfacing of Railway Street. The connection between the station and the town could be enhanced by introducing a new, shared-surface arrangement and by devising a scheme to improve the station forecourt in cooperation with Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail.

The physical and visual 'bottleneck' near the Bridge Street/The Quay junction impedes the vista to the viaduct and the harbour beyond. This was highlighted in consultation as a key point of concern. It is proposed to improve this relationship with a shared surface arrangement and to open up the vista and physical connection through re-development. The affected uses could be relocated in more favourable accommodation fronting the Bracken River and a new civic space enclosed by new infill development, with active ground floor uses.

Key proposals for the main street include:

Footpath widening at key locations;

Build-outs for structured tree planting;

Improvements to secondary streets such as Railway Street and Quay Street;

Removal of clutter from the street and building facades, including a coordinated colour scheme; and

Heritage trail with visitor information.

Extract from framework plan indicating location of potential improvements to pedestrian environment along the main street



(note: potential for new/ infill buildings is shown in dark grey, area with potential for shorter-term pavement build-outs/extensions shown in pink)