



Julianstown Village Design Statement

A National 'Pilot' for the Heritage Council's VDS Programme II





An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council



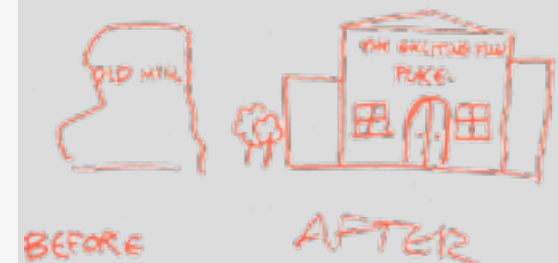
the paulhogarth company

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Introduction & Background

to the Julianstown 'National Pilot' Village Design Statement

for the Heritage Council's National Village Design Programme II

The National Context;

The Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS) is the national 'pilot' for the Heritage Council's new National Village Design Programme II. This 'pilot' project has been conceived over a period of two years and follows on from an external evaluation of the Heritage Council's VDS Programme I (2000-2008), which was completed in the autumn 2008; the Slane Castle National VDS Conference in October 2008; the launch of the Village Design booklet entitled – Enhancing Local Distinctiveness in Irish Villages - Village Design Statements in Ireland – The Way Forward, January 2009*; and the launch of the VDS Feedback Report from Tidy Towns and LEADER Groups, January 2010.

The Julianstown 'Pilot' VDS embraces a collaborative and participative approach to village design, whereby local communities have a real 'voice' in how their villages are planned and managed in the future. Communities are encouraged under the aims of Programme II, to 'Chair' the local VDS Project from the outset.

An external evaluation of the process adopted for the 'pilot' is also being undertaken on behalf of the Heritage Council by Tipperary Institute and will feed into the overall delivery of the National VDS Programme II from 2011 onwards and the development of a National Village Design 'Toolkit' for local communities, local authorities, Tidy Towns Committees and LEADER Groups. The 'Toolkit' will be supported by the introduction of multi-disciplinary training for local communities, local representatives and local authority officers.



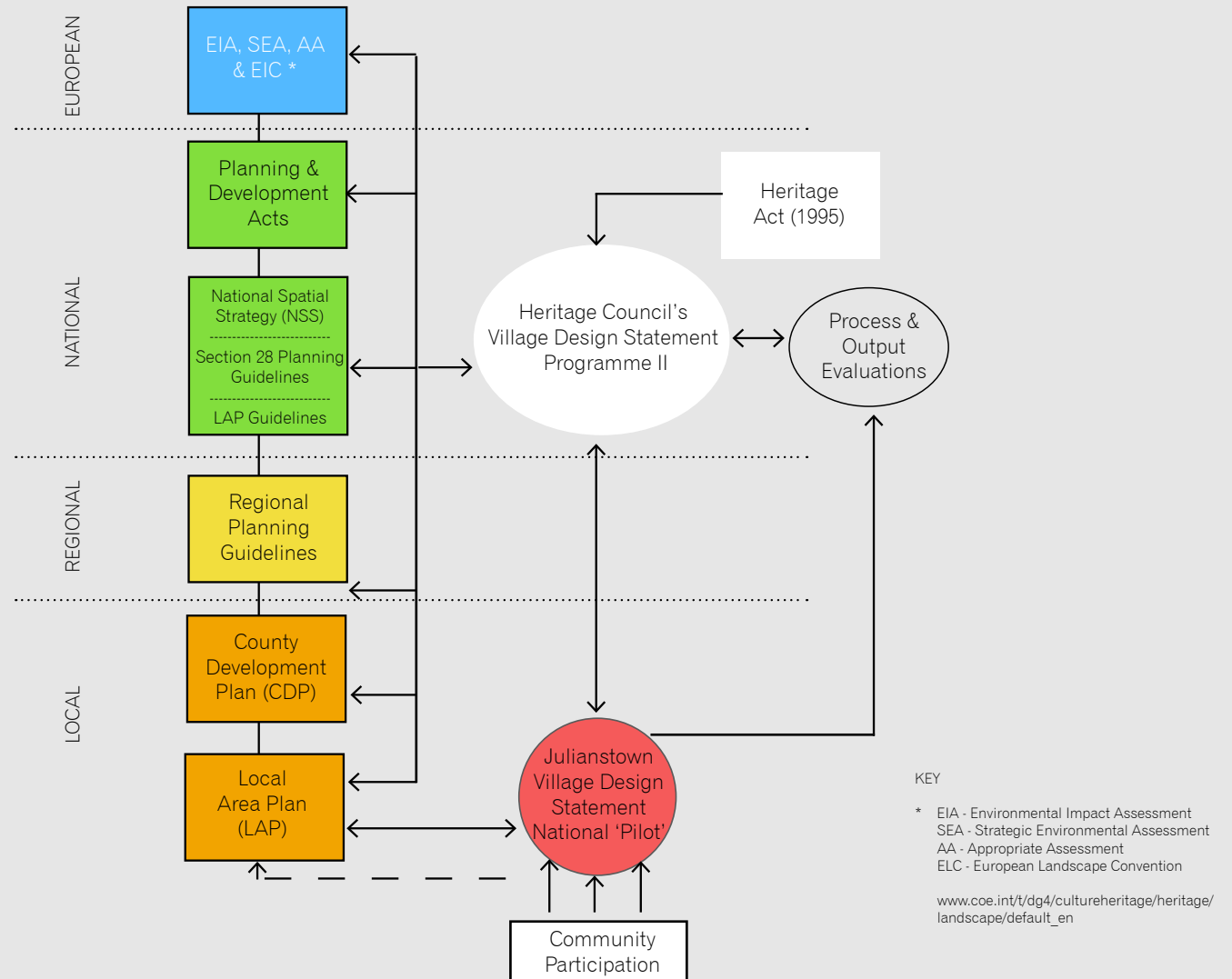
* www.heritagecouncil.ie/planning/publications/article/village-design-statements-vds-in-ireland-the-way-forward
www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Planning/VDS_Jan_2-10.pdf

Introduction & Background

This Julianstown Village Design Statement (VDS) is a non-statutory local development framework, compiled by the local community to establish a vision for the future of their village.

The aims of the Village Design Statement process are to:

- 1 To assess and describe what is distinctive and unique about Julianstown village to ensure these features are enhanced through the local planning system (and other relevant socio-economic development programmes).
- 2 To draw up design principles to guide for the future development within and surrounding the village, in accordance with published planning guidelines and the European Landscape Convention (ELC).
- 3 To effectively manage new development (including infill) and to provide advice to all decision makers, developers and their agents; and
- 4 To act as a focus for local communities to participate and collaborate effectively in the local planning process and other developments in and for their community.



European, National, Regional, County and Local Context of the 'Pilot' Village Design Statement

Introduction & Background

In their 2008 evaluation of the National Village Design Statement Programme I, The Heritage Council stressed that good Village Design Statements can:

Raise community awareness about their surrounding landscape and heritage assets;

Provide the community with a useful 'tool' to ensure that future developments and changes add to local distinctiveness and character;

Link into the planning system so that planners can use it to improve the local distinctiveness of design proposals;

Assist local authority planners, architects, developers and others by giving them local guidance up front and,

Generate and develop overall community confidence and capacity building.



Village Design Statements in Ireland - The Way Forward?



'Julianstown - Design Our Future' DVD

The Local Context;

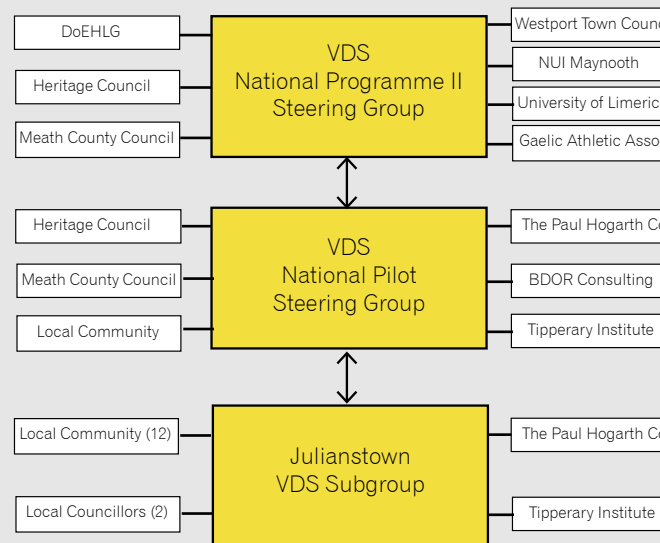
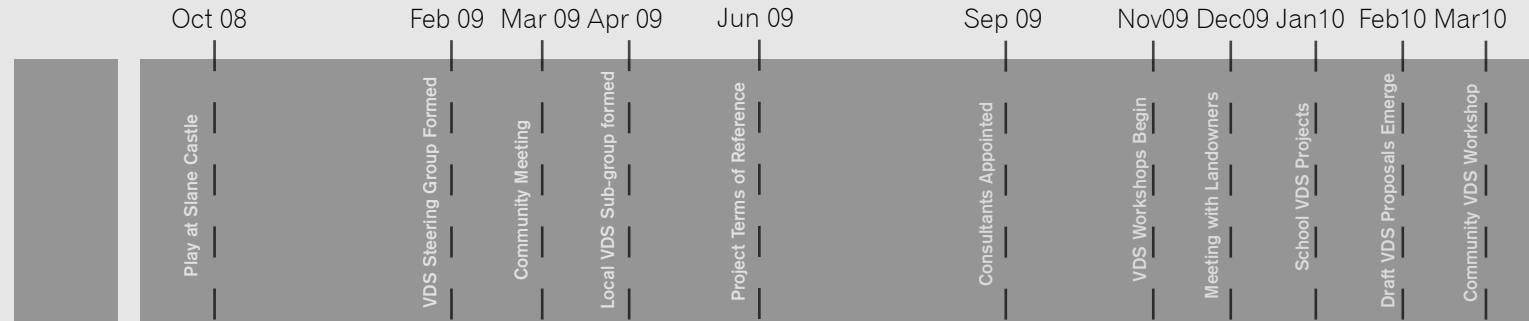
In 2007, the then Julianstown and District Resident's Association began researching the possibility of preparing a Village Design Statement (VDS), as a way of addressing the ongoing decline of facilities in the village and also to enable local people to have a say in any future development plans for the area. The Group held a meeting with the Heritage Officer of Meath County Council as a result of which they contacted and submitted an application for funding to the Heritage Council. While this was initially unsuccessful, as the Heritage Council was about to embark on an evaluation of the overall National VDS Programme I, both organisations continued to liaise.

The Heritage Council's Planning Officer then invited the Julianstown community to give a presentation from a community perspective at the Heritage Council's National Village Design Conference in the autumn of 2008. The Julianstown group saw this as an excellent opportunity to be creative and strategic and devised and performed a community play, which they performed live at Slane Castle in October 2008. This effective and well received production, later produced on DVD with the Heritage Council's support, featured local residents in discussion about life in the village while 'standing at the line', waiting for their children at the local school playground.

The Collaborative Process

In early 2009, the hard work of local residents paid off as Julianstown was selected by The Heritage Council as the National 'Pilot' Project for the National Village Design Programme II. A meeting was arranged between JDCA, The Heritage Council and Meath County Council to establish a partnership and to engage full support in the process of setting up a project Steering Group.

With momentum building, JDCA organised a well attended public event in March 2009, where the community play was performed live for a local audience, and the DVD was formally launched by Tom Dowling, the County Manager. Alison Harvey from the Heritage Council gave a presentation on the vision for the National Village Design Programme II to officially mark the start of the national 'pilot' project in Julianstown. The evening also included a participative exercise which revealed a common range of concerns about the village, and resulted in the formation of a Local Village Design Sub Group made up of 15 local residents and two County Councillors. This group began meeting monthly to engage local



Management Structure of the VDS National Programme II

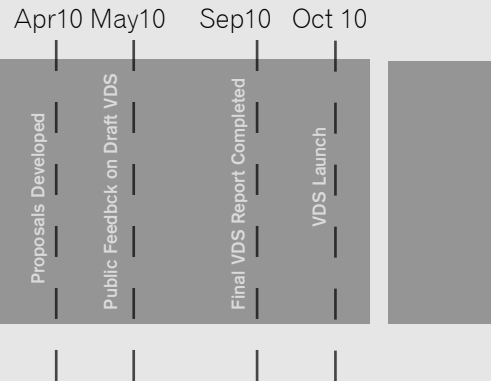
participation in the process. Meanwhile the project Steering Group began meeting monthly to oversee the strategic management of the national pilot and included the following representatives

- Julianstown & District Community Association
- The Heritage Council
- Meath County Council
- BDOR Consulting

A consultant's terms of reference was drawn up by the Steering Group and ratified by the local VDS sub-group and issued. Following interviews Urban Designers and Landscape Architects, The Paul Hogarth Company, was appointed to *support* the community in production of the Statement.

“It’s the most exciting thing that’s happened in Julianstown for 30 years!”

Local Resident



The consultant team began work in partnership with the local VDS subgroup on the Julianstown Village Design Statement in October 2009. A number of workshops took place during which analysis of the village was undertaken and a draft vision for the village established.

Consultation with local people was a core element of the VDS process. Local landowners and developers met in December to discuss the statement and how they could play their part.

Members of Foirioige Youth Group took part in an evening workshop, during which they explored their likes and dislikes about the village, as well their visions for its future. They also built a substantial model of the village over a number of weeks.

Pupils from Whitecross National School carried out a number of exercises about the village, including writings describing Julianstown in the year 2020 and village models.

Running concurrently with the VDS, a class of postgraduate urban and rural design students from Queens University Belfast studied Julianstown in detail, producing a series of ambitious strategies and design proposals, later presented to the community.

On 25th March 2010 a major public event was held in Julianstown to present the interim findings of the Village Design Statement and to seek the input of local people. A series of options for the future of the village were presented for the public to analyse and discuss. This revealed a degree of consensus on the appropriate level of development, enabling finalisation of the statement to proceed.

The Julianstown Village Design Statement was formally launched by Minister for State, Ciarán Cuffe TD, on 7th October 2010.

In many ways, the process of developing this Village Design Statement has been as valuable as the document itself, bringing together local people, providing a focus around which all members of the community could participate and a mechanism for engagement with the Heritage Council and Meath County Council.

Meath County Council place great importance on the role of Village Design Statements and in particular, their value to the statutory Local Area Plan process. The Julianstown Village Design Statement was compiled in advance of the review of the East Meath Local Area Plan and, consequently, its findings will be used to inform the development of this plan.

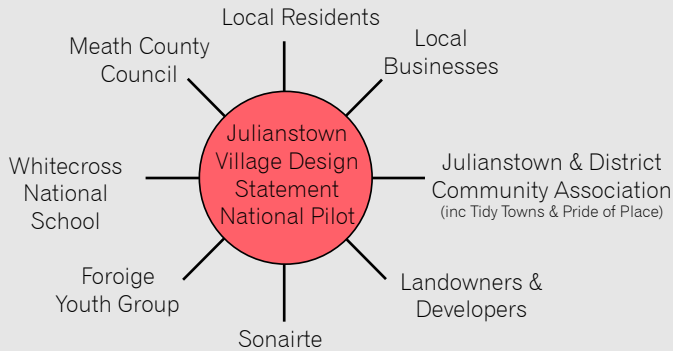
The Julianstown Village Design Statement was compiled by local residents with the full endorsement of local stakeholders and therefore represents a truly shared vision for the future of Julianstown. As such, all those with an interest in the regeneration and development of Julianstown are requested by its residents to consult this document and, wherever possible, adopt its principles in project proposals.



The Collaborative Process



The Collaborative Process



Local Project Stakeholders

A wide range of people had direct involvement in the shaping of the Village Design Statement. This included local residents, some of whom have lived in Julianstown all their lives, others who recently moved to the area. It included many children, teenagers and students, as well as some of the village's older residents. And it included local councillors, council officials, landowners, local businesses and others with a shared interest in the future of Julianstown.

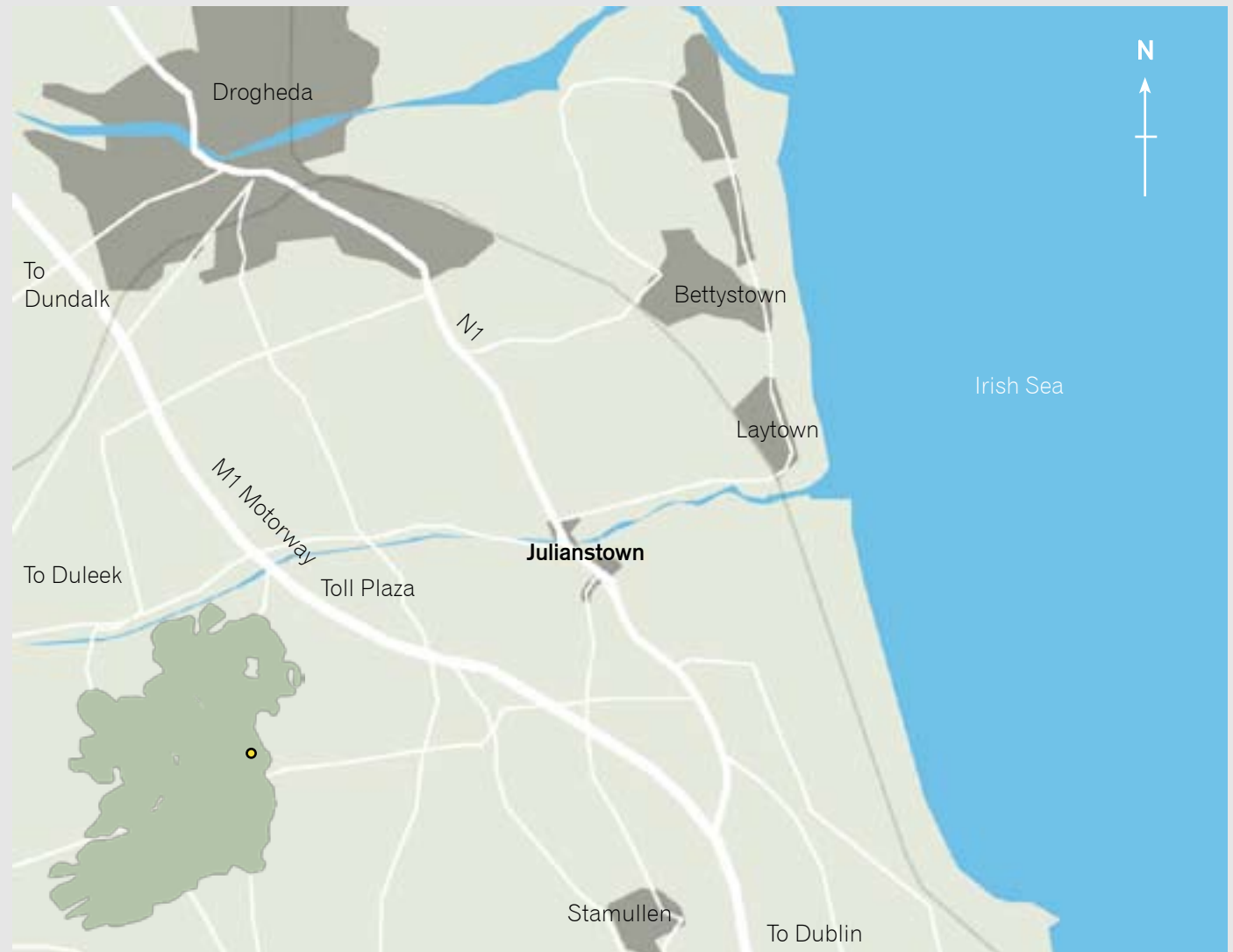
Context

With a population of 600, Julianstown is located in the east of County Meath, 7km south of Drogheda and 40km north of Dublin. It is located on the N1 road which, until construction of the M1 motorway in 2003, was the principal road connection between Dublin and Belfast. The motorway is accessed via Junction 7 to the south of Julianstown, the last exit before the toll plaza located near Drogheda. To the east of Julianstown lie the seaside towns of Bettystown and Laytown, providing Julianstown's nearest rail link on the north / south line.

Significant levels of construction during the 1990s and 2000s have seen the towns of Drogheda, Bettystown and Laytown grow considerably. This has resulted in increased traffic flows through the village, caused mostly by Dublin-bound commuters joining the motorway at Junction 7. Evidence suggests that some motorists pass through Julianstown to avoid the motorway toll plaza.

Any future growth of these towns would therefore be likely to further increase pressure on Julianstown's roads. Similarly, urban sprawl from these settlements and along main roads could in time, threaten its distinctive identity.

A challenge for this Village Design Statement has been to find a balance between facilitating sustainable growth while maintaining the village's character and identity.



Location Plan of Julianstown

History



Historic Plan of Julianstown - 1836 - 1837 (Meath County Council)

The first historical references to the parish of Julianstown date back to the Norman era of the 12th Century, although evidence points to human activity dating back much further. This includes references to a battle in the year 852 involving the local Cianachta clan.

The history of Julianstown is intrically linked to the River Nanny, both as a crossing point and a resource for industrial activity.

In 1641 the village's bridge was chosen by Colonel Plunkett as the ideal location at which to ambush a contingent of government troops on their way to reinforce a besieged Drogheda. This bloody episode is now commemorated by a plaque on the current Bridge.

The River Nanny is also thought to have had 14 mills located along its length. The most evident of these today is a cornmill beside the bridge, since converted into a hotel. Further downstream, the ruins of a limekiln also remind us of brickworks that once operated in the area.

The village grew in close relationship with three nearby estates of Dardistown, Moymurthy and Ballygarth. It consisted of few houses and a travellers inn along the road, then growing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to include the 6 swiss cottage style houses, garda station and courthouse. A more recent spell of growth in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has resulted in the village we see today.

Landscape Setting



Julianstown nestles in the valley of the River Nanny as the watercourse makes its way to the Irish Sea at Laytown. Much of the village's character stems from this pronounced topography, with nearby fields and the river floodplain clearly visible as the main road dips either side to meet the bridge. The character of the village is therefore intrinsically linked to its landscape setting, sense of place and cultural heritage.

With plentiful naturalised areas, Julianstown has good ecological value and high local biodiversity. Its vegetated river banks are home to many species of bird, such as Kingfisher and Grey Wagtail, and its relatively clean waters host Mullet and Trout. As such, it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It could therefore be said that Julianstown exists in a degree of balance with nature, reminding us that improving the village must not just be for people, but for all of its residents.





Satellite Photograph of Julianstown - early 2000s

The Village

In an era of villages throughout Ireland looking increasingly the same, it is essential to identify the components of Julianstown that make it distinctive. It is then possible to determine how these can be enhanced and protected for future generations.

The landmarks on this map were jointly identified by members of the community as the key components of Julianstown's distinctiveness. They include buildings and structures, as well as landscape features.

Julianstown is fortunate to have such a wealth of historic features, ranging greatly in nature from a 14th century castle to an award winning modernist church. Key sections of the village have been classified by Meath County Council as an Architectural Conservation Area. The landscape is also an integral part of Julianstown's character, focussed primarily on the river and associated topography. In considering the future of the village, it will be essential to consider how best to enhance these features, with scope for them to play a role in attracting visitors to the village.



Distinctiveness



1. Community Centre



2. Fields & Community Garden



3. Courthouse & Barracks



4. Old Mill



5. Bridge



6. Cherry Trees



7. St Mary's Church & Parish Rooms



8. The Gallops Pub



9. Swiss Cottages



10. River Nanny & Valley



11. Lime Kiln



12. Mile Stone



13. Whitecross School



14. Woods



15. St Mary's Church



16. Sonairte



17. Ballygarth Castle



18. Dovecot

The Village

Julianstown is a village with many qualities in terms of local distinctiveness and character that must be both preserved and enhanced. However, there are other parts of the village that are not working so well, requiring more efforts to address them.

For a long time traffic has been a major problem in Julianstown. This stems back to its location at a principal crossing point of the River Nanny, making Julianstown a key point on the road northwards from Dublin. Despite construction of the M1 motorway, traffic through the village is heavy and relatively fast.

Recent traffic counts indicated that 22,000 vehicles drive through Julianstown each weekday, including heavy goods vehicles. Causes can be linked to housing growth in south Drogheda, Laytown and Bettystown, as well as the location of road tolls on the M1, encouraging some drivers to take an alternative route through the village.

The direct impacts of traffic on Julianstown are substantial. These include:

Noise pollution
Road safety
Air pollution
Vibration

However, it is the indirect impacts that greatly influence Julianstown's ability to function as a normal village. Despite scenic views and attractive gardens, the impact of traffic is such that few people spend time out in the village. And so great is the risk of traffic to pedestrians and cyclists that few parents let their children walk through Julianstown alone and hardly anybody tries to cross from one side of the road to the other. As the road splits Julianstown in two, this greatly affects the way in which the village is used by residents. This is further compounded by a lack of pavements in key areas and the existence of only one pedestrian crossing point. Young people and other non drivers are affected the most.

Is this acceptable?



Another factor that has a particularly negative impact on Julianstown is the Old Mill Hotel, which currently lies in a derelict state. This prominent building is thought to date back to Norman times and functioned as one of 14 mills along the River Nanny. The building was extended over time and used more recently as a hotel and bar. The Old Mill was gutted by a major fire in 2007 and has been derelict since.

Due to its prominence in the centre of Julianstown, the dereliction of this building has an impact on the entire village. To passers by it sends out a negative message and discourages them from stopping. And to residents, who remember the Old Mill Hotel as a lively meeting place, it's a poignant and constant reminder of the village's decline. Action on the Old Mill is therefore of paramount importance to Julianstown.



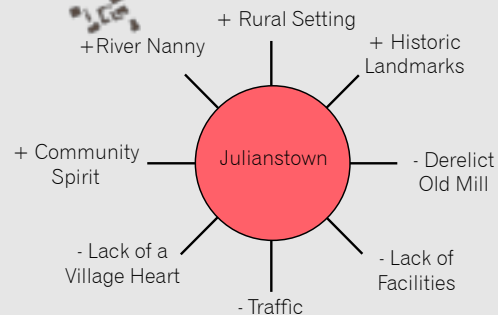
Analysis



Figure Ground Study

In addition to closure of the Old Mill Hotel, Julianstown has seen other amenities close, including a shop, post office and gardai station. The Gallops Bar and Restaurant, Pitch and Put and Golf course and a crèche are the only remaining commercial enterprises located within the village centre, with other businesses located along the main road, primarily aimed at drivers and beyond a comfortable walking distance from the village. Again, heavy traffic and lack of pavement provision further discourages residents making journeys to these on foot.

The lack of commercial activity in Julianstown has led to a lack of physical and social activity as well. With little or no reason to go into the village, the streets are noticeably empty of people. It is now rare for residents to meet one another on the street, directly impacting on the sense of community.



Key Analysis Findings

This analysis of Julianstown was carried out by local residents with support of the consultant team. It included a number of exercises, building on the feedback received at the initial public meeting.

Perhaps the most poignant discovery of this analysis process is reflected by above plan. Using a technique known as figure ground study, residents mapped all buildings in the village, enabling conclusions to be drawn from the result.

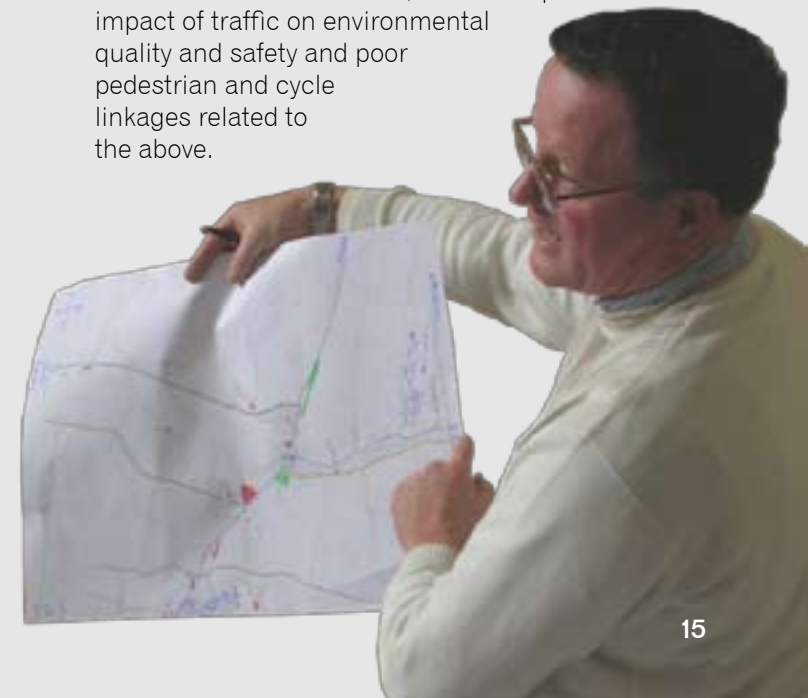
The clear observation is that Julianstown is split into four separate parts, either side of the river and the road. What is also particularly evident is a large gap between buildings in the middle, indicating that Julianstown lacks a defined centre - or a heart.

“Our village lacks a heart: there is nothing at its centre, just a big hole!”
VDS Subgroup member

Analysis Findings

To summarise, Julianstown has a wealth of qualities that must be retained and enhanced. These include: buildings and structures of historic architectural significance (including the Old Mill in need of urgent action), a strong landscape character of river and valley; and a combination of the above to create a unique urban form.

However, analysis suggests that Julianstown is unsustainable in its present form because of a limited ability to support local amenities and employment; lack of a centre around which such amenities can be focussed; an unacceptable impact of traffic on environmental quality and safety and poor pedestrian and cycle linkages related to the above.



What kind of place would you like Julianstown to be?

Having identified its distinctive features and the issues and opportunities associated with the village, we can now look to the future. What kind of place would you like Julianstown to be? This fundamental question was discussed at length by local residents, including school children and the Village Design Subgroup. It challenged people to think in some detail about what qualities they would like Julianstown to have in the future.

Visioning exercises included selecting key words that best describe the village of the future (right), drawings and essays on Julianstown in the year 2020 and the development of an options matrix, describing different levels of development and associated projects.



The Shared Vision

“Julianstown will grow into an attractive, safe and sustainable village. Founded on its rich history and ecology, it will be home to a vibrant, creative and enterprising community, welcoming to all”.



The Shared Vision Statement (above) represents the aspirations that the people of Julianstown have for their village. It was developed through an open process of discussion, debate and revision, to reflect the views of as many people as possible. All future development and regeneration projects in Julianstown must now seek to contribute to the realisation of this vision.

Aims

1

To protect and enhance Julianstown's distinctive identity through its buildings, structures landscape

- Conservation / Restoration
- Public Realm and Space Enhancement
- Management of New Development

2

To develop Julianstown into a sustainable village with the amenities and quality of environment its community desire

- New appropriately designed housing
- Comprehensively tackling traffic issues
- Interconnection of parts of the village
- Introduction of new amenities and facilities

3

To bring a social and economic vitality back to Julianstown

- Development of a strong, mixed use village centre
- Attraction of investment and employment

These 3 aims and accompanying objectives set in place how the Vision for Julianstown will be realised. They are accompanied by the adjacent Village Design Concept. This identifies key concepts for the future of the village and, on the following pages, provides the framework by which principles and projects are identified.

Village Design Concept



VDS Concept Plan

-  **The Welcome**
Creating a more welcoming village for locals and visitors alike
-  **The Street**
Tackling traffic and creating a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists
-  **The Heart**
Establishing a defined centre for the village
-  **Our Heritage**
Protecting and enhancing the village's historic features, including the Old Mill
-  **The Village**
Providing new homes and managing growth
-  **The River**
Improving the River Nanny as a place for people and wildlife
-  **Landscape**
Safeguarding the village's natural setting and enhancing the environment
-  **Community**
Nurturing a stronger sense of community

What does Julianstown say to you? First impressions and the quality of arrival experience in the village are key considerations. This is not just for aesthetic reasons, important as they are, but in the messages conveyed to people, be they residents, passers by, tourists or potential investors. Scope exists to improve the arrival experience from all directions into Julianstown, improving external perceptions of the village and giving everybody a warmer welcome.

Julianstown currently lacks an identifiable crest or logo. Consideration should be given to development a brand for the village, so helping to send out a positive image of Julianstown to those from outside. This will be particularly important if the village seeks to attract tourists, in what can be a competitive market place. The process of developing a brand identity must involve the input of the local community, so that it fits the village, as opposed to something falsely imposed upon it.

Principles

- Define and celebrate entrance points to the village
- Communicate the identity of Julianstown in a coordinated way

Signage is an important means of communication, informing people of directions, road safety, goods and services. However, left uncoordinated, signage can have a negative visual impact on its surroundings. Julianstown has a wide variety of signage types throughout the village, especially to either side of its approach roads. A signage coordination strategy should therefore be established to identify appropriate locations and designs for signage around the town. A series of simple design guidelines can help to harmonise signage, without overly limiting creativity.



The w

“Make the village stand out in your mind”

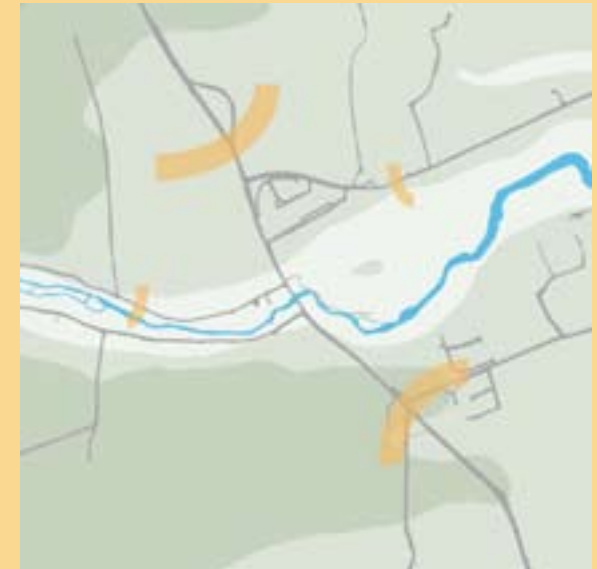
Participant at the VDS Public Workshop

Defining where the village 'starts and stops' is a crucial task. In developing this statement, residents found that different people had different views on this issue, perhaps reflective of the tendency for development to sprawl out of the village in recent years. Entrance points have thereby been identified on the adjacent plan. This allows for the creation of gateways, through the balanced use of public art, signage, lighting and street trees.

Public art in Julianstown should be site specific - ie responsive in subject to its setting, rather than designed in isolation from the village and sited afterwards. Inspiration could be taken from the village's rich history or landscape.

Projects

- 1 Public art at main road entrances to village, signage to attract tourism
- 2 Coordinate all signage via a strategy
- 3 Develop a Julianstown brand & logo



Creating a more welcoming village for locals and visitors alike

welcome



The main road through Julianstown is wide and fast, greatly affecting the way in which the village functions. A number of measures are therefore required to address this issue, so that Julianstown can prosper as a safe place in which to live, shop, stop off and play.

Over the long term, reduction of traffic flows through Julianstown should be addressed at a regional level. This could include establishment of a bypass to the west of the village, or reconfiguration of motorway exits and tolls to provide more direct access to south Drogheda and the east coast. However, it is recognised that this is unlikely to take place in the near future, requiring other measures to be put in place.

Principles

- Reduce traffic volume and speeds
- Improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists
- Transform the character from road to street, via building frontages and streetscape design

Most places are about striking a balance and Julianstown is no different. Efforts are needed to readdress the balance between motorised vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. At the moment, drivers have little indication that they are passing through a village and therefore little inclination to slow down. Tackling this issue is not just about traffic calming - it's about changing the whole relationship with the road.

It is advocated that Julianstown seeks to turn its road into a street, helping it to become the focus of the village, while also encouraging drivers to pass through with more care (or even stop off). Achieving this will require new development to provide positive frontage onto the street, as seen in the vicinity of the Swiss Cottages.



The Street

“Would you let your kids walk to school in Julianstown?”

Participant at the VDS Public Workshop



A comprehensive streetscape project would also help in this transformation. This would include increased foot and cycle paths, attractive high quality surfacing and a consistently applied approach to street furniture (eg. seating, bins and light columns). Where possible, street furniture should be bespoke designed to enhance local distinctiveness. Details should be very robust but appropriate to a village setting rather than a main road.

Reducing the impact of cars on Julianstown will also be achieved through other projects proposed by the VDS, including the provision of community facilities within walking distance of the village (thus reducing local car usage.) Less cars and more people would be a major step in giving Julianstown back its village character.

Tackling traffic and creating a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists

Street

Julianstown needs more pedestrian crossing points, to allow safe passage across the road while also slowing traffic.



Projects

- 4 Lobby for long-term by pass or another untolled exit from M1
- 5 Implement concentrated traffic calming in the village
- 6 Streetscape - Implement footpaths and lighting along roads, making a central feature of the Old Bridge
- 7 Explore lorry ban