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VIRGINIA MASTERPLAN AREA 2



Pre-Amble.

This study has been prepared at the request of Cavan County Council by David McCormack & Co., Architects, Ltd. The purpose of the study is to examine the existing built and natural environment in Virginia in order to protect the existing and to set up a suitable framework for the possible future sustainable development of the town.



Background.

Virginia is a picturesque town located on the N3 on the shores of Lough Ramor, in the South-East of the County.

It is a fine example of a plantation town founded in the reign of King James I. The character of the village owes much to its early planned beginnings.

The wide main street, which is largely intact, forms a suitable vista to the C of I Church at the Western end of the town.



The streetscape is made up of many fine traditional 2 and 3 storey buildings. The Marquis of Headford built a hunting lodge on the lakeshore in the early nineteenth century. He also built several semi-detached cottages in the picturesque/rustic style located throughout the town centre. These now form an important and integral part of the streetscape of the village centre and a link to Virginia's historic and cultural heritage.



Grave
Yard

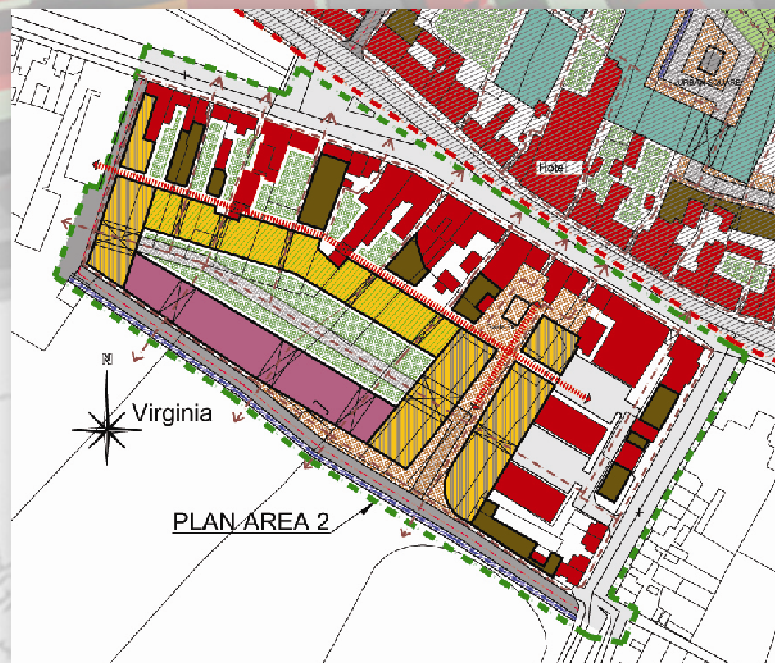
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Aim of Study

Virginia has a special quality because of its planned form and the wealth of beauty it possesses in the landscape immediately surrounding the town centre. The aim of this report is both to record the existing built and natural environment of the town with photographs and drawings, and also to put in place a set of guidelines which would form the basis of future development of the town. It is hoped that both of these aims would act as a catalyst for proper development which respects and enhances the existing built and natural environment. The ideal is to achieve a new quality of place through understanding and protection of the heritage, whilst welcoming the current process which is the creation of a renewed and vibrant town centre.

Plan Area 2

The second plan area is located to the South of the Main Street, and is bounded to the North by the Street. The playing fields of the Secondary School make up the Southern boundary, while New Street forms the boundary to the East and the laneway of the new foodstore development makes up the boundary to the West. Similar to Plan Area 1, this area is made up largely of 'back land' type areas comprising mainly of back yards and gardens. This area is delineated by a broken green line on drawing no. 07-011/02, enclosed with this document.



Existing Architecture



The Southern side of the Main Street is mainly made up of 2 storey Georgian structures of traditional form. They typically have slated pitched roofs, are finished in plaster, with stone or plaster quoins. Windows (where they haven't been replaced) are of timber sliding sash and all have a strong vertical emphasis.

Shop fronts have a simple traditional form and are mostly in timber. The Southern side of the Main Street while it has had more redevelopment than the Northern side is still quite intact. Again it is punctuated by a fine 3 storey premises which accommodates 2 number restaurants on the ground floor. The Southern side is also slightly more disjoint and had a greater variety of structures and materials than on the opposite Northern side of the street.



Existing Landscape



The majority of the study area comprises of 'back land' areas to the 'rear' of the Main Street. These all fall gradually away from the Main Street and some of the properties have semi basement floors as a result. All of the properties in this study area back onto a large green area, currently used as playing fields, which in turn lands look onto Lough Ramor. It is quite unique to have such a large amenity type area in such proximity to the main thoroughfare.



Proposals Plan Area 2

The main aims for Plan area 2 are as follows:

- To open up 'back land' areas for suitable Town Centre use and thus bring more activity and vitality to the Town Centre.



Virginia, because of the river to the North and due to its early beginnings as a 'planned' plantation town, is linear in nature. As a result, if development was ever to be permitted in an unplanned fashion, the result would invariably be that of urban sprawl. Therefore the further development of the town core is of the utmost importance. Having carried out this study of the town, it is evident that there are very large areas of land to the 'rear' of the main street which are either underused or not used at all. These areas provide the key to providing suitable development land which is ideally located for town centre uses (mixed residential/commercial/retail). The development of these areas would serve to concentrate development in the core of the town where it is best suited.



The reinforcement and development of the town centre would not only bring additional activity to the core but would enhance and improve the trade and vitality of existing retail, commercial and social activities in the town. The proposals presented later in this report suggest ways in which this can be achieved.

- To protect the existing vernacular which make up the exceptional streetscape of Virginia.

Virginia has quite an unspoilt streetscape which is becoming rarer throughout rural Ireland. Every reasonable measure should be taken to ensure that the existing architectural fabric is protected and that any future development should enhance and complement the existing urban fabric.

Where possible existing building should be restored and renovated, in particular the facades. Where new development takes place, it should respect existing building lines, heights, proportions, plot widths, materials etc. While it is necessary to respect existing structures, new structures need not 'mimic' them. This can result in pastiche imitations which never quite replicate the older and original vernacular.

New structures can be constructed as interpretations of the original and existing structures. New materials and forms can contrast and compliment their traditional neighbours.



- To set a standard for new developments

New buildings should be 'of their time' and should be constructed employing best practice and using the technology and materials which are contemporaneous with the time of their construction. Both can exist side by side and this harmony will result in a varied, vibrant and contemporary streetscape.

- To create a new street running parallel to Main Street connecting New Street and the Ballyjamesduff Road.



At present the Southern side of the Main Street backs onto the 'playing grounds' adjoining the Secondary School. In general these 'back land' areas present a very unkempt and haphazard backdrop which is rather unsightly. We feel that there is an opportunity here to create a new single sided street that would form a planned backdrop to the green area and also a suitable 'rear elevation' to the Main Street. It is proposed that this new road would connect the existing New Street with the laneway currently under construction at the retail development on the Western end of the plan area. It is planned for this street to incorporate a substantial amount of vehicular parking on the 'unbuilt' Southern side. This new road should in time be connected to the Main Street via as many pedestrian routes as possible (as new developments occur). When creating this new streetscape it will be important to observe a set of guidelines so as development is carried out in an orderly and planned fashion. This streetscape should respect the plot widths of the Main Street. Buildings should be 2/3 storeys in height in order to provide a strong architectural backdrop to the green area. Buildings should generally be of a modern design and should employ materials which can both compliment and contrast those of the Main Street. Suitable and convenient connections to the Main Street for both pedestrians and motorists are essential to the commercial and everyday success of this new area.

- To create a planned pedestrian route from the proposed 'Link Road' to the Main Street.

The proposal for the main pedestrian link to Main Street is indicated on Drawing No. 07-011-02. It is proposed that this route be lined with shops, offices, etc. on ground floors with a mixture of residential, commercial and retail on the upper floors. It is also planned that this route be quite wide and it further widens towards the new 'Link Road' in order to invite and encourage use. In addition the new access opens into a public space which in turn leads

to the Main Street via an archway. This new route should be very well lit and a mixture of uses is essential in order to ensure that there is activity here at all times of the day. The curved access, the tapering nature of the street and the proposed public space are all design elements which will encourage use and assist with the social maintenance of the route.

In addition to this route which runs North to South it is proposed to provide a further route which runs East to West and links the new street (under construction) and the proposed new pedestrian route (North to South). This route will serve to open up access to land at the rear of Main Street for a variety of town centre uses. In addition it will allow the free flow of pedestrian traffic from the established Main Street to any new 'town core' developments.

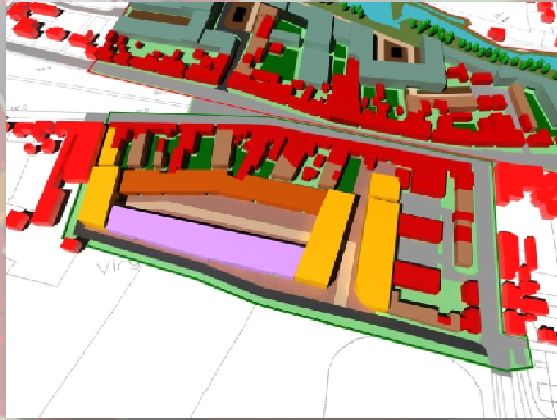
- To Create a Semi-Public open space to the rear of Main Street and the New 'Link Road'.

A semi-public space is indicated on drawing No07-011-02 for use by residents of any future developments. This space would be overlooked to the North by 2 or 3 story mixed use developments but should only be directly accessible to residents. The southern side of the space is to be bounded by 2 or 3 storey residential units accessed from the new 'Link Road'. The Eastern and Western sides of this space should be bounded by 3 storey 'Town Core' developments which should have no access to this space. Limited vehicular access should be permitted to allow servicing of the residential units. This should occur East to West as indicated. Parking for residents should be provided along the new 'Link Road'. The landscaping of this space should be a mixture of high quality hard surfaces and soft planting. Again this area should be well lit using high quality light fittings and street furniture.

The Northern side of this development serves two purposes. Firstly, it encloses the Northern side of the proposed semi-public space. Secondly, it provides a 'stop end' to the 'back land' type development behind Main Street. The 'infill' proposals and the 'semi-public' spaces indicated immediately to the rear of Main Street should be read as indicative only. The intention here is to provide pockets of 'semi-public' space where new residential development occurs.



- To provide pedestrian links to Main Street and plan Area 1 and also to provide adequate carparking.



As previously stated suitable and convenient pedestrian and vehicular links are essential for the success of any new developments. Adequate vehicular traffic is necessary for servicing of the shops offices, apartments, etc. Pedestrian links are essential in order to provide easy and convenient access to the Main Street. These links are of paramount importance in order to integrate the retail, commercial, residential and social activities of the existing urban fabric with any new development. The development of this new road will provide an alternative route for vehicular traffic in the town and will connect the new retail development (under construction) with the town core. In addition we feel that this is an ideal location for substantial on-street parking which would benefit both the proposed redevelopment area and the existing commercial and social activity of the main street. The pedestrian links, indicated on drawing no. 07-011/02, utilise existing archways on the Main Street. These pedestrian routes should be developed as regularly as possible and should be well lit with high quality light fittings and should be surfaced with high quality natural stone materials.

- To increase the awareness of Lough Ramor as an amenity.



Lough Ramor is a magnificent and extremely scenic amenity for any town to have on its immediate doorstep. It provides a natural amenity for a variety of activities and is very much an under exploited asset that Virginia possesses. One of the main aims of the proposed new street is to improve the awareness of the general public in relation to the lake. At present New Street is a cul-de-sac and gets little use. However by linking New Street, the new retail development, and the Ballyjamesduff road, the public will then have a reason to utilise this new thoroughfare. This new road will increase the awareness of Lough Ramor and will integrate the lake more for use as part of the amenities of the town. This is another way of fully exploiting what Virginia has to offer and in turn should lead to a more vibrant and exciting town centre.



Grave
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