

Robertstown

DRAFT VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT
NOVEMBER 2008



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Section 1: Introduction and Process

What is a Village Design Statement?

The Village Design Statement is a document which is prepared based on the views of the local community, demonstrating how they want their village to develop in the future. It allows local communities to be actively involved in the formulation of design guidance for preserving and enhancing their village and its wider landscape setting.

What is the purpose of the VDS?

This Village Design Statement has been commissioned by Kildare County Council for Robertstown.



Figure 1: Signage on approach to the village.

The production of a VDS offers an opportunity for local people to work together and make a positive contribution to the future planning and enhancement of their village and provides an important focus for community development. It is also recognition of local people's knowledge and understanding of the place where they live.

The role of the VDS is to advise how development should be carried out in harmony with the character and quality of the local area. In this way, the special character of the village can be recognised, protected and enhanced for the enjoyment of both the local community and visitors to the area.

The six key aims of a VDS are:

- To enable communities to analyse and define the value of their local environment
- To act as a tool for accessing the local character of an area
- To assist the County Council in steering future development to respond to and respect that character
- To guide smaller changes (permitted development)
- To promote the scope for local environmental improvements and support community initiatives
- To become adopted and used by the Council as a material consideration in planning matters.

How has the VDS been produced?

The VDS has been produced through consultation with the local community in partnership with Kildare County Council.

The VDS for Robertstown involved the following key stages:

Stage 1: Information Gathering

This stage was undertaken through a site visit and desktop analyses. It involved gathering information and photographing the village in order to identify the village character, settlement pattern, buildings and spaces and roads and traffic.

Stage 2: Community Consultation

An initial community workshop was held in Robertstown on Wednesday the 14th of May 2008. There was a good attendance at this workshop and feedback obtained on the day and through subsequent submissions and comments has been fundamental to developing this VDS.

This workshop allowed us to understand the likely desired community outcomes from the VDS process.



Figure 2: View along Grand Canal at Robertstown.

Stage 3: Preparation of Draft Village Design Statement

This Draft Village Design Statement has been prepared for comment both by the local authority and the local community. A second community workshop in October 2008 will allow us to gather feedback on the Draft VDS.

Stage 4: Publication of Final Village Design Statement

We would anticipate that the final Village Design Statement will incorporate the following elements:

- (i) Achieve consensus with the local community as to the aims and objectives of the VDS.
- (ii) Develop design principles for Robertstown, based on the distinctive local character.
- (iii) Develop guidelines for incorporating new development within Robertstown that would take account of key issues such as:

- Landmark buildings
- Streetscapes
- Open spaces and recreation areas
- Landmark views and vistas
- Street furniture
- Proposed mechanisms and initiatives to ensure the successful delivery of this VDS.

How will the VDS work?

This VDS is not a masterplan of ready made design solutions, and its recommendations should not be viewed as a barrier to modern design. Rather, the document highlights the unique qualities of architectural, historical and natural importance that contribute to the village's character, and provides broad design guidelines to both safeguard its distinctive character and enhance quality of life within the village.

These recommendations should be viewed as a stimulus for encouraging any new development or other proposals to respect and enhance, rather than compete with, the valued character features that define the village. This will require careful consideration of how key elements of the village inter relate with each other, and how they contribute to the character of the village as a whole.



Figure 3: Marked walkway at Robertstown.

Structure of the VDS

A VDS describes the character of the village and provides broad design guidelines which address the qualities which locals consider worthy of protection or improvement. A VDS will draw particular attention to features such as:

- Village Context
- Village Character and Areas of Note
- Village Settlement Patterns
- Buildings and Spaces
- Roads and Traffic
- Critical Issues
- Design Guidelines
- Mechanisms/Initiatives for Implementation

Section 2: Village Profile & Character

2(i) Village Profile

Location (refer to context map below)

Robertstown is a small rural village set in the flat plains of the Kildare countryside. Robertstown is located adjacent to the Grand Canal in north Kildare. The nearest urban centre is Clane which is situated c.11 km to the east of the village along the R403. The town of Naas is located c.14km to the southeast of the village.

The village is T-shaped in plan and follows the canal waterfront in a north-west to south-east direction, with a secondary road running south westwards towards Kilmeage. The core of the village is focused along the canal and runs in a linear form between the humpback 'Binn's Bridge' which spans the canal and the Canal Hotel which is located at the south eastern end of the village. The majority of buildings are located on the southern bank of the canal, with the northern bank remaining largely undeveloped.

Population Change

The 2006 Census recorded a population of 621 people in Robertstown. This represents an increase of 65.6% from a population of 375 people in the 2002 census. The population of the village has increased steadily over the last 10 years with a number of new residential estates having been constructed within this time period.

Role of the Village & Land uses

Robertstown is a well established village and acts as a service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland. The village contains numerous commercial buildings including four public houses, a Chinese take away, three shops, a post office and a credit union. Unusually there is no church or graveyard located in the village. A primary school is located to the south-east of the village; it has been recently renovated and extended to accommodate the educational needs of the village. Although the village is well established and has a substantial recreational asset in the canal the community facilities in the village still remain underdeveloped.

Robertstown is situated in the parish of Kilmaogue and lies within a relatively low-lying flat landscape which largely comprises of farmland. The main activity within the surrounding hinterland is predominately tillage and livestock farming, due to the quality of the land.

Local Community

Robertstown has a strong community spirit with a local village committee. The committee are involved in the promotion and enhancement of Robertstown as a place to live and work. There is a GAA pitch and club house located approximately 1 mile from the village.



SETTLEMENT MAP

ROBERTSTOWN

POLICY THEME - CONSOLIDATION

Policy Theme
Boundary

Consolidation:
Existing Village Facilities

- *School
- *Church
- *Post Office
- *Public House
- *Shop
- *Industry/Employment
- *Community Facilities

Note: All information correct at the time of survey (June 2004)



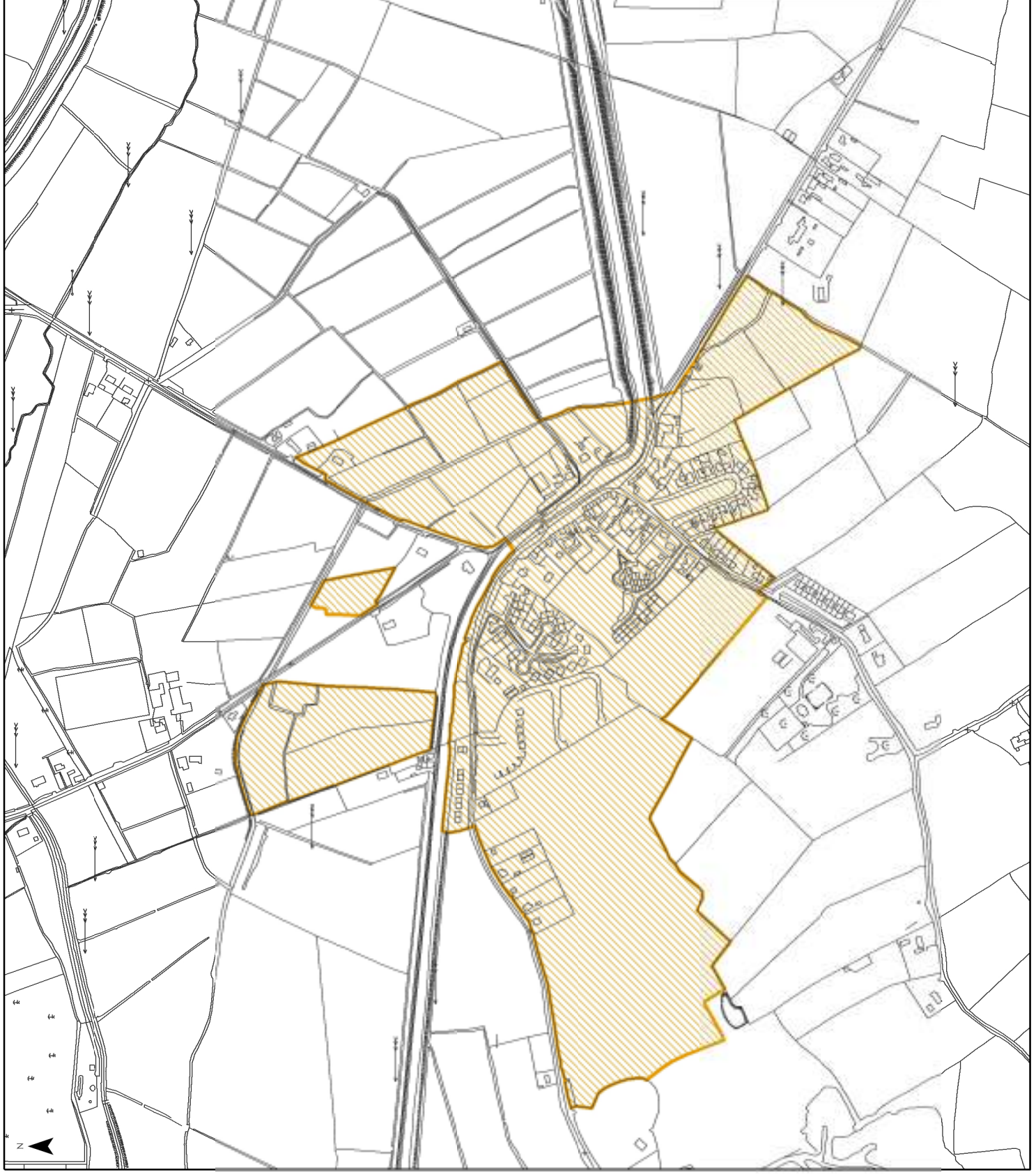
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Date: June 2008
Scale: NTS

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Roads and Traffic

Robertstown is located at the convergence of a number of minor roads which link to the R403, R409 and the R415. Traffic is generally not a problem in the village. Traffic calming is in place throughout the village. Parking is an issue that was raised at the public consultation especially along the Main Street and outside of the primary school. Road surface repairs are needed on some of the approach roads to the village.

Village Structure & Areas of Note

The village forms a T-shape with established village core on which the village pivots being located along the canal front. The majority of commercial units are located in a terraced fashion facing onto the canal. From here established residential development is located along the Kilmeage road, extending south westwards. The majority of new residential development is located to the northwest of the village core. Much of this development is relatively modern and has taken place in the last 10-15 years.

Six key areas have been identified within the village and are illustrated on the adjoining map. These have been identified as:

- Established residential development
- Recent residential development
- Grand Canal
- Village centre
- Canal Hotel
- Binn's Bridge

Established Residential Development

The established residential development is predominately located in the centre of the village and along the Kilmeage Road. The housing estate of St Bridges Terrace is located on the western side of the road. The houses are arranged in a horse shoe around a central green and are single-storey in height. Immediately beyond this is a neat row of terrace type houses fronting onto the road. One-off cottage style houses are also located on the approach road to the west of the village.

Recent Residential Development

Recent residential development is predominately located on the outskirts of the village. Housing estate such as The Moorings and Annsborough Court are similar to suburban housing types with mixed single-and-one storey detached and semi-detached houses, arranged in cul-de-sac's of 15-20 houses. Modern one off housing is also located on the approach roads to the village.

Grand Canal

Located predominately on the southern side of the canal, the village owes its origins to the construction of the canal at this point in the 1780's. The canal is the main focal point within the village, with the village centre facing onto it. Today it still remains an important feature from a natural, cultural, historic, social and technical aspect. The canal allows for open views towards the village. The western vista along the canal is

closed by Binns Bridge with the Canal Hotel closing the eastern view.

Village Centre

The village centres on the T-junction located on the southern bank of the canal. From here the village extends east and westwards along the canal front and southwards up the Kilmeage road. Most of these structures are historic in nature and are arranged in short terraces, with the building line fronting directly onto the street. The differing arrangement of the terraces with alternating roof and building lines adds variation and interest to the villagescape. A mix of residential and commercial premises make up these terraces, with a concentration of commercial premises being clustered at both the eastern and western ends of the village.



Figure 4: Robertstown village centre.

Canal Hotel

Located at the eastern end of the village the Canal Hotel is a prominent feature in the village. It closes both the village extension and vista to the southeast. Purposely built in the early 1800's to accommodate passengers on the canal, this hotel is built to a similar plan and design to the hotel at Portobello in Dublin. The historical, architectural and social aspects of this building were noted as it is included on the RPS for Kildare County Council and was also identified and recorded as part of the NIAH survey carried out in 2003.

Binn's Bridge

Located on the west end of the village, Binn's Bridge is a fine example of a canal bridge which are found dispersed along the Grand Canal. All were constructed to a similar hump back design. The bridge forms an imposing feature on the canal and is an attractive feature on the entrance to the village of Robertstown. Its historic, social and technical importance was noted by Kildare County Council and it is included in the RPS for the county. It was also recorded as part of the NIAH survey for Kildare carried out in 2003.

ROBERTSTOWN

AREAS OF NOTE

KEY

- Village Boundary
- Binn's Bridge
- Grand Hotel
- Village Centre
- Grand Canal
- Recent Residential Development
- Established Residential Development



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Date: October 2008

Scale: 1:6,000 @ A4

Note: Base map provided by Kildare County Council

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2(ii) Village Character: Buildings, Structure & Streetscape (refer to Historic Development Map)

Historical Background

The origins of the name Robertstown is unknown, however the village has been in existence since the seventeenth century as reference is made to it in the Civil Survey of 1654, where it noted as 'Roberstowne' under the Parish of Kilmaogue and Rathernine.

The village is recorded in the Lewis Topographical Dictionary of 1837, where the village is described as having 47 houses and 281 inhabitants. It is also noted that the village is situated on the canal as one of the packet-boat stages. Both a constabulary barracks and a dispensary are noted to exist. Reference is made to a market held in the village on a Wednesday and additional fairs throughout the year.

The historical development of the village revolves around the extension of the canal as far as this point in 1785. The village developed in a T-form along the canal from the hotel to Binn's Bridge. The hotel opened in the early years of the nineteenth century and was owned by the Canal Company. Initially the hotel prospered and the village continued to grow and expand with the construction of additional buildings along the waterfront. The coming of the railway was disastrous for the hotel, and in turn the village, as passenger numbers dwindled. Subsequently in 1853 the hotel was leased by the Royal Irish Constabulary. It has had a varied history since including been used as billets by Board na Mona, and an Oige rented the building in 1951 and it has since been a community centre.

Historical Development

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) identify archaeological sites throughout the country. The RMP for Co. Kildare identifies two sites within the vicinity of Robertstown village. These include KD013-022, a ring fort and KD013-024 an enclosure site. Both these sites predominately date to the early medieval period, indicating the immediate area around the village as been inhabited for some time.

A map dating to 1753 shows the name 'Robertstown', marked just west of Clane. It depicts a single house at this location. A small network of roads is marked to the immediate north of this house. The Bog of Allen is marked to the north and south of this location. A straight road running on a north-west to south-east axis dissects the bog just north of the village location.

Taylor and Skinner's road map of 1783 simply notes the name 'Robertstown' at a convergence of roads. The canal is not depicted at Robertstown at this point but is visible to the immediate north-east of the village, showing its construction was well in progress at this point.

The first edition Ordnance Survey (O.S) map of 1838 is by far a more detailed map and shows the village as being well established. The canal is fully constructed at this point and is

shown as running in a westerly direction from Clane and curving north-west as it passes through the village. Both the aqueduct to the south-east of the village and Binns Bridge to the village centre are depicted. Both these sites are still in existence. The majority of buildings are located on the southern bank of the canal, extending south-west on the Kilmeage Road and are shown in a terraced fashion with elongated plots running to the rear. The canal hotel building is shown but not marked at this point. Robertstown House is marked to the south-west of the village, with a small amount of linear tree planting shown.

A small amount of development took place between the first and second edition of the Ordnance Survey map in 1874. The morphology of the village predominately remained the same with additional buildings such as a national school located on the north bank of the canal.

By 1874, the map now shows the construction of a new road leading south-east from the village. The immediate area to the north of the canal is depicted as elongated fields and appears to be reclaimed land. A gate lodge is now marked to the south-west at the access to Robertstown House, with additional planting having also taken place within the surrounding grounds.

By the publication of the third edition Ordnance Survey map in 1911, little change has taken place within the village. Additional buildings are now marked however including a smithy to the north-west, an old Barracks to the south-east on the site of the hotel. A court house and school are now shown to be located on the Kilmeage road.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT ROBERTSTOWN

KEY TO HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT:



Record of Monuments
and Places (RMP)



Grand Canal



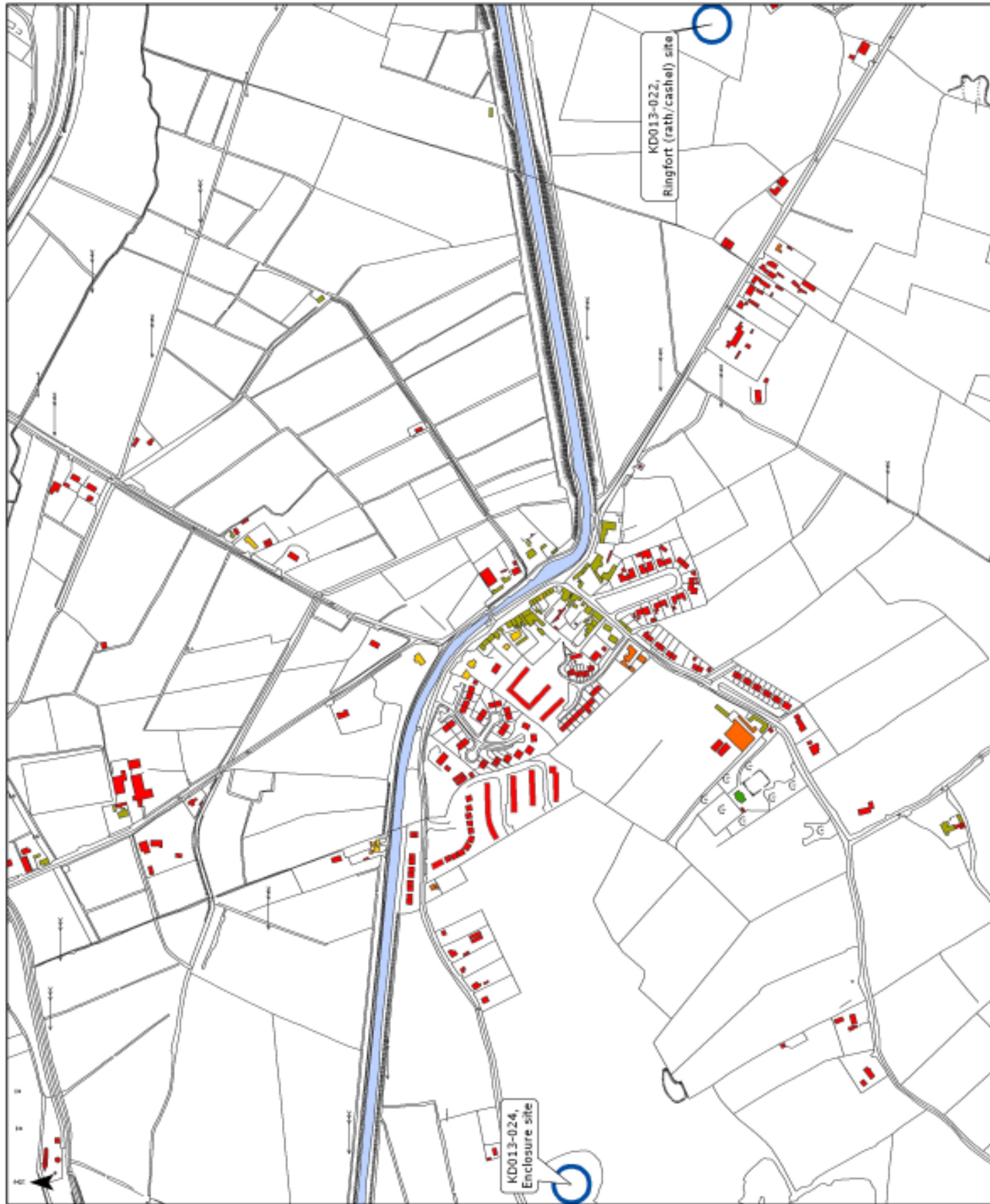
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Architectural Heritage

The Planning and Development Act 2000 made provisions for the inclusion of structures deemed to be of historic architectural importance to be included on the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and for the creation of architectural conservation areas (ACA). It is now mandatory (formally discretionary) for each Development Plan to contain a RPS, which must be complied, maintained and reviewed by each relevant local authority.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) are a state body under the administration of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, who identify, record and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage in an aim for its long-term conservation and preservation. The surveys carried out by (NIAH) form the basis for each RPS. Seven structures have been included on the RPS for Robertstown. A total of fifteen structures within the village have been identified as being of architectural importance and were recorded as part of the NIAH survey of the county.

Within the village of Robertstown, seven structures have been included on the record of protected structures, with fifteen recorded within the NIAH of the village in 2003. All buildings included on the RPS, have also been included in the NIAH survey. The buildings included on the RPS for the village are The Canal Hotel, The old RIC Barracks, Binns Bridge, Annesborough House, Robertstown House and Gate Lodge and a thatch cottage.

Canal Hotel

RPS No: B13-10

NIAH No: 1180600

Detached former canal hotel, built 1801, having pedimented breakfront with segmental-headed door opening to centre approached by flight of steps. The building was extended c. 1804. It was closed, pre-1864, and subsequently in use as Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks (post-1864) and Bord na Mona accommodation (1942-8). Renovated and in use as a training centre and museum c.1995.



Figure 5: Robertstown Canal Hotel.

RIC Barracks

RPS No: B13-11

NIAH No: 11806006

End-of-terrace rubble stone former Royal Irish Constabulary barracks, built c.1840, on a corner site. Historic material of note includes cast-iron rainwater goods and rubble limestone walls with cut-stone quoins.

The former Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks is a fine rubble stone structure. The building is of social and historical importance for its original intended purpose as one of the very few civic buildings in the village. It is prominently located on a corner site, is an attractive landmark in the village and from the Grand Canal, onto which it faces.



Figure 6: Former Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks.

Binns Bridge

RPS No: B13-12

NIAH No: 11806004

Rubble stone hump back road bridge over canal, with a date plaque of 1784. Cut limestone voussoirs, date stone/plaque and cut-stone coping. Cut-stone tow path to east.

Binns Bridge is a fine stone bridge that forms an imposing feature on the Grand Canal and provides an attractive entrance into the village of Robertstown and a fine vantage point to view the canal and Canal Hotel to the south east.



Figure 7: Binn's Bridge.

Annesborough House**RPS No: B13-14****NIAH NO: 11806001**

Detached two-storey house, built c.1845 and extended, c.1975. Historic fabric includes cut-stone course to eaves to main block on consoles, cast-iron rainwater goods, timber sash windows, decorative fanlight to door and open work cast-iron porch to front with pillars.

Annesborough House is a fine and well-maintained country house that retains much of its original character. It is composed of graceful classically-inspired proportions, and retains many original features. Annesborough House is attractively set in its own mature landscaped grounds, approached by a winding avenue, and is complemented by a small range of outbuildings.

Robertstown House**RPS No: B13-20****NIAH No: 11806010**

Detached house, built c.1865, retaining its early aspect and its open porch. Historic materials include overhanging timber eaves on brackets, cast-iron rainwater goods, timber sash windows, sidelights and spoked fanlight to door opening.

Robertstown House is a substantial house that retains much of its original character. The house is attractively set in its own landscaped grounds immediately to the south-west of the village of Robertstown, to which it gave or from which it took its name, and is an attractive landmark.

Robertstown House, Gate Lodge**RPS NO: B13-20****NIAH No: 11806011**

Detached single-storey gate lodge with dormer attic, built c.1880. Now disused with openings boarded-up. Historic features include timber bargeboards to gable, cast-iron rainwater goods hood moulding over window opening to ground floor.

The gate lodge is designed in a Tudor style and is in stark contrast to the ornate quality of the main house. Positioned just off the side of the road immediately to the south-west of the village of Robertstown, it is a prominent and attractive landmark in the locality.

**Figure 8: Gate Lodge.****Thatch Cottage****RPS NO: B13-23****NIAH NO: 11806008**

Attached thatched cottage built c.1885. Extended with flat-roofed return to rear. Gable-ended roof with thatch with decorative saw tooth bargeboards and timber sash windows. Set back from bank of Grand Canal on grass verge.

This cottage is an attractive small-scale low single-storey thatched cottage which is unusual within the setting of the village as most structures are two-storied terraces. The cottage retains many important original features and materials and is attractively set in its own landscaped plot just off the bank of the Grand Canal and is a prominent landmark.

**Figure 9: Thatched cottage in Robertstown.**

In addition to the structures recorded on both the RPS and NIAH survey as outlined above, the following structures were recorded in the NIAH survey carried out in 2003, as they were classed as being of architectural, historic, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical and social interest.

Charlie Weld**NIAH No: 11806002**

Terraced house built c.1860 extensively reconstructed with ground floor remodelled to accommodate commercial use having fascia over. Historic fabric includes timber sash windows to first floor with stone sills.

Charlie Weld's shop is a well-maintained small-scale building, typical of the type of building found in Robertstown, which fronts onto the Grand Canal. It forms part of the building line of the village which is arranged in small terraces.

Welds Shop**NIAH No: 11806003**

Terraced house built c.1870 and extensively renovated with openings remodelled to right ground floor to accommodate part commercial. Historic fabric includes stone sills and timber sash window to left ground floor.

Dowling's Shop**NIAH No: 11806005**

Terraced house built c.1830, with integral carriageway to ground floor. The building has been extensively renovated with openings remodelled to the ground floor.

Although altered over the years Dowling's is a fine example of middle sized premises which makes up the terrace structure of the village. Of social and historic interest, the building constitutes a long-standing commercial presence in the locality, which may originally have been established to capitalise on passing trade associated with the canal.



Figure 10: Dowling's.

The Grand Canal**NIAH No: 11806015**

Section of Grand Canal, constructed c.1785, with dressed stone retaining walls.

The focal point of the village of Robertstown this section of the Grand Canal is of considerable historical, social and technical significance. For many years is formed the economic backbone of the village and surrounding hinterland. The presence of the Grand Canal encouraged the building of structures along the canal front thus forming the morphology of the village.

Former School Building**NIAH No: 11806007**

Attached stone building, built c.1850, with door opening to first floor to side elevation. The building is now disused.

This building is marked as a school on early O.S. maps. The door at first floor level would indicate this purpose as separate entrances for boys and girls was common in the later half of the nineteenth century. It is a fine rubble stone structure that forms a prominent landmark on the bank of the Grand Canal.



Figure 11: Former School Building.

Aqueduct**NIAH No: 11806012**

Single-arch rubble stone aqueduct, constructed c.1780, having random rubble stone walls with rendered voussoirs. This aqueduct is a feature related to the development of the Grand Canal in Robertstown.



Figure 12: Single arch rubble stone aqueduct.

The technical significance of the following street furniture was noted as being of importance within the villagescape and were therefore included in the NIAH survey.

Waterpump**NIAH No: 11806013**

Freestanding cast-iron waterpump, cast c.1905, comprising cylindrical shaft with raised horizontal banding, fluted upper section with fluted spout, fluted ogee-domed cap and 'cow-tail' handle having open finial. Now disused.

This waterpump is of technical interest, and represents a period before mains water supply when a communal source of clean drinking water was deemed sufficient. The waterpump is attractively sited on the side of the road and forms a focal point on entry to St Bridget's Terrace.

Lamp Post**NIAH No: 11806014**

Freestanding cast-iron gas lamp standard, cast c.1900, having moulded plinth with embossed crest and fluted shaft having lamp fitting over.

This gas lamp is of considerable technical merit, both for its original purpose in providing light in public spaces. Once commonly found along the banks of the canal, this lamp is of historical and technical importance. It was subsequently converted to electricity.

New development needs to respect the character and design of the established built heritage within the village which is to be retained and enhanced. Design guidelines in relation to the treatment of this area is noted in section 4(ii).

Boundary Features

The boundary details in a village form an important aspect of how a village integrates with its surrounding landscape. There is a variety of boundary treatments appropriate to the variety of different building types in the village. Stone walls, hedges, railings, painted walls and rendered blockwork all add variety to the village streetscape.



Figure 13: Boundary features evident in Robertstown.

Street Furniture & Signage

Street furniture refers to all ancillary 'furniture' such as benches, bollards, street lighting, post boxes, phone boxes, signposting and cabling which can be found in the public realm. Robertstown has a number of benches and litter bins throughout the village. A recent schools project located specially designed litter bins at various locations throughout the village. There are a number of seating areas and picnic tables along the banks of the Grand Canal.

There is a need for clearer signage, to indicate the beginning and end of the village, with speed restrictions. Signs need maintaining to ensure they do not become hidden by vegetation and that they are pointing in the right direction. In some areas there are too many signs, which gives a cluttered and confusing appearance.

Lighting

Street lighting is evident in Robertstown especially along the banks of the canal where heritage style lighting is in place. With the need for extensions and improvements to footpaths, street lighting will also need to be considered. This lighting should be of a consistent style and not overly obtrusive.



Figure 14: Lighting along the canal.

HERITAGE DATA MAP

ROBERTSTOWN

KEY TO HERITAGE DATA:

- Village Boundary
- Grand Canal
- Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)
- Record of Protected Structures (RPS)
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)



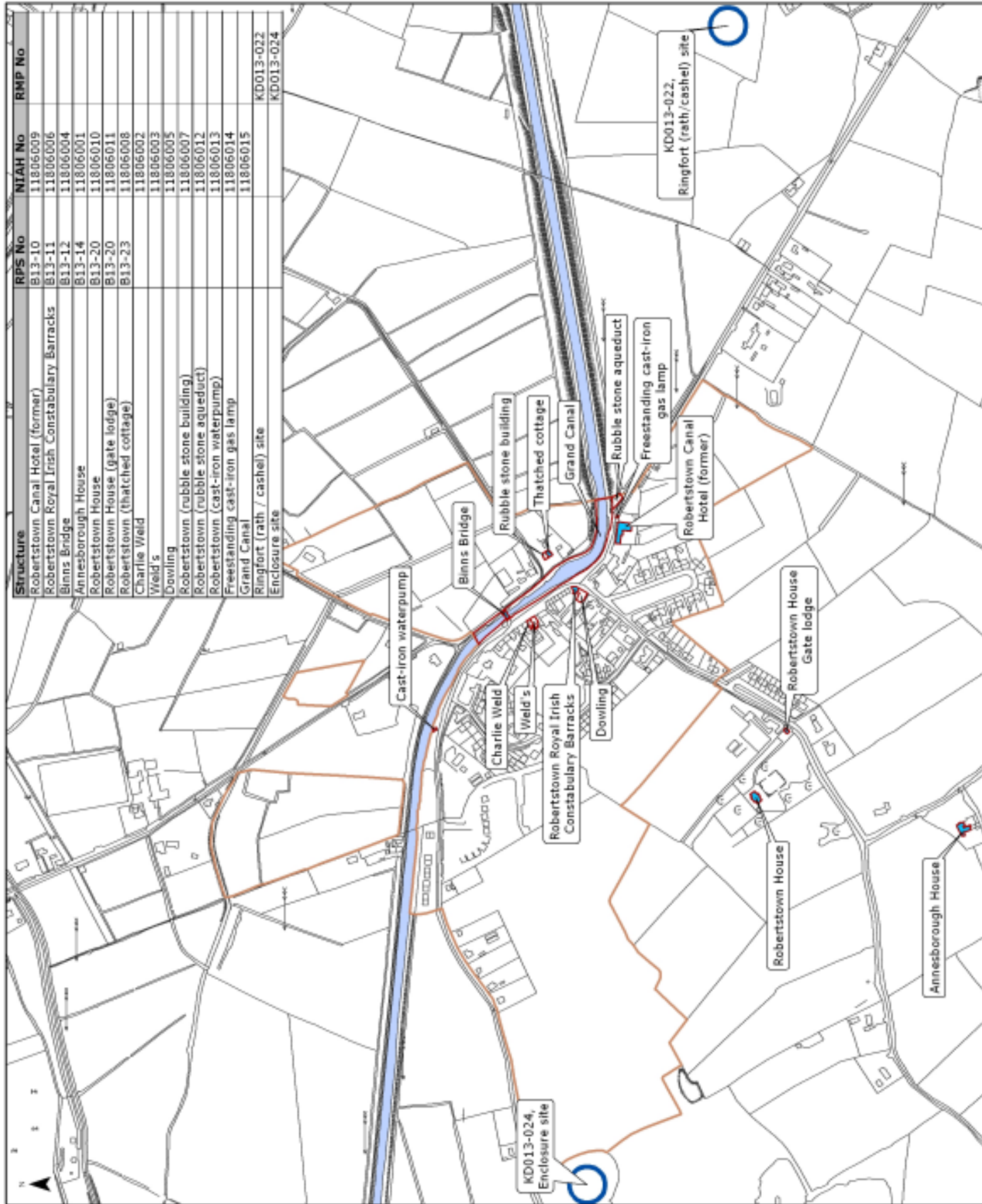
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2(iii) Village Character: Landscape and Setting (refer to Landscape Character Map)

The Surrounding Landscape

Robertstown is located within the Western Boglands landscape character area as set out in chapter 18 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011. This area is characterised by flat topography and smooth terrain, which has a high water table and is badly drained, providing generally unstable and unproductive land. Robertstown is located in a predominately rural landscape located adjacent to the Grand Canal. The skyline to the south of Robertstown is defined by the Chair of Kildare Hills. Soils in the area are largely dominated by raised bog and reclaimed peat, with some areas of grey brown podzolics and complex soils. Although boglands dominate the landscape of this area, significant areas of pastureland also exist, together with patches of tillage and non-irrigated arable lands.

The Robertstown area is highly important in respect of development of the waterways for recreational purposes. The importance of the area for tourism development has been recognised both by Fáilte Ireland and Kildare County Council.



Figure 15: Surrounding landscape.

The Grand Canal

The Grand Canal is an extensive water corridor that flows in an east to south-west direction through the county and runs through the northern village boundary. The water corridor is open on both sides with the village facing onto the canal. Long distant views of the canal-corridor and its surrounding environs can be obtained from local roads and from existing bridges. The canal is an important amenity asset to the village.

Approaches to Robertstown

Robertstown is located on a T junction on the southern bank of the Grand Canal. It is approached from a series of local roads connecting to the R403, R409 and the R415. The village has developed along the southern banks of the Grand Canal in a linear fashion. The approaches to the village are signposted with some associated landscaping. As highlighted at the public consultation there is scope to improve upon the approaches to the village and to make them more attractive.



Figure 16: Approach road to Robertstown.

Views and Vistas

The location of the village adjacent to the Grand Canal with the hill of Allen in the background creates several attractive scenic views. From all areas of the village attractive views of the canal and the surrounding landscape are offered. Views to and from Binn's Bridge are protected (GC10) under the Kildare County Development Plan 2005-2011. Although the vistas available from Binn's Bridge include the urban fabric of the town, the character of the canal corridor is maintained and the vistas can be described as having scenic value. These views and vistas are important aspects to the character of the village and it is important that they are retained and respected by any new developments.

The location of the village adjacent to the canal with the hill of Allen in the background creates several attractive scenic views. From all areas of the village attractive views are offered of the surrounding natural landscape. Attractive tunnelled views are evident along the canal with the mature planting on either side of the canal directing such views. These views and vistas are important aspects to the character of the village and it is important that they are retained and respected by any new developments.



Figure 17: View along canal from Binn's Bridge.

Landscape Features

Robertstown lies adjacent to the Grand Canal and this is an important landscape and amenity feature for the village. The canal corridor and the habitats associated with it are an important asset to the village and the opportunity exists to develop this further. The surrounding landscape consisting of low lying bogland is an important landscape feature in that raised bogs are important habitats which are becoming increasingly rare and protected in this country. Within the village and as part of various residential developments there are attractive landscape features such as the areas of open space and associated landscape seating, planting beds etc. Binn's Bridge and the banks of the canal are well maintained and are important landscape features.



Figure 18: Landscaped open space area.

Open Spaces

There are a number of open space areas in the village. The banks of the Grand Canal are well maintained and with the associated walkways along the Grand Canal are important open space corridors. Other areas of open space in the village are associated with the various residential developments. St Bridget's Terrace contains a substantial area of open space which has been attractively landscaped with tree and shrub planting, paths and seating areas. There are a number of open space areas in Robertstown which have been created in the past few years and as the associated planting in these spaces mature these spaces will become increasingly attractive.

Planting

Mature natural hedgerows occur in places throughout the village and where they do they demarcate boundaries between the built form and the surrounding landscape. Stands of mature trees form an impressive backdrop to the Canal Hotel and there is some mature tree planting on some of the approach roads to the village. There has been some tree planting along the banks of the Grand Canal and the opportunity exists to expand upon this. More recent tree planting has occurred in the incidental areas of open space located throughout the village and as a part of the various residential estates. Whilst the majority of planting within the village and within the private gardens is of species native to the area, there are a few examples of inappropriate species (such as

Leylandii hedges), which do not reflect the character of the locality.



Figure 19: Tree planting along the canal.

Environment

There is recycling facilities in Robertstown with bring banks located on the approach road from the R409. The opportunity exists to expand upon these facilities.







The current wastewater treatment plant has a capacity of 1000 p.e. (population equivalent). The current wastewater treatment has capacity to deal with an increase in population



Figure 20: Recycling facilities in Robertstown.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER MAP ROBERTSTOWN

KEY:

-  Village Boundary
-  Grand Canal
-  Viewpoints
to be protected in line with
policies & objectives set out
in Chapter 19 of Kildare County
Development Plan 2005-2011
-  Protected views from
Blins Bridge
-  Significant trees & hedgerows
-  Open Space Areas
within Village Boundary



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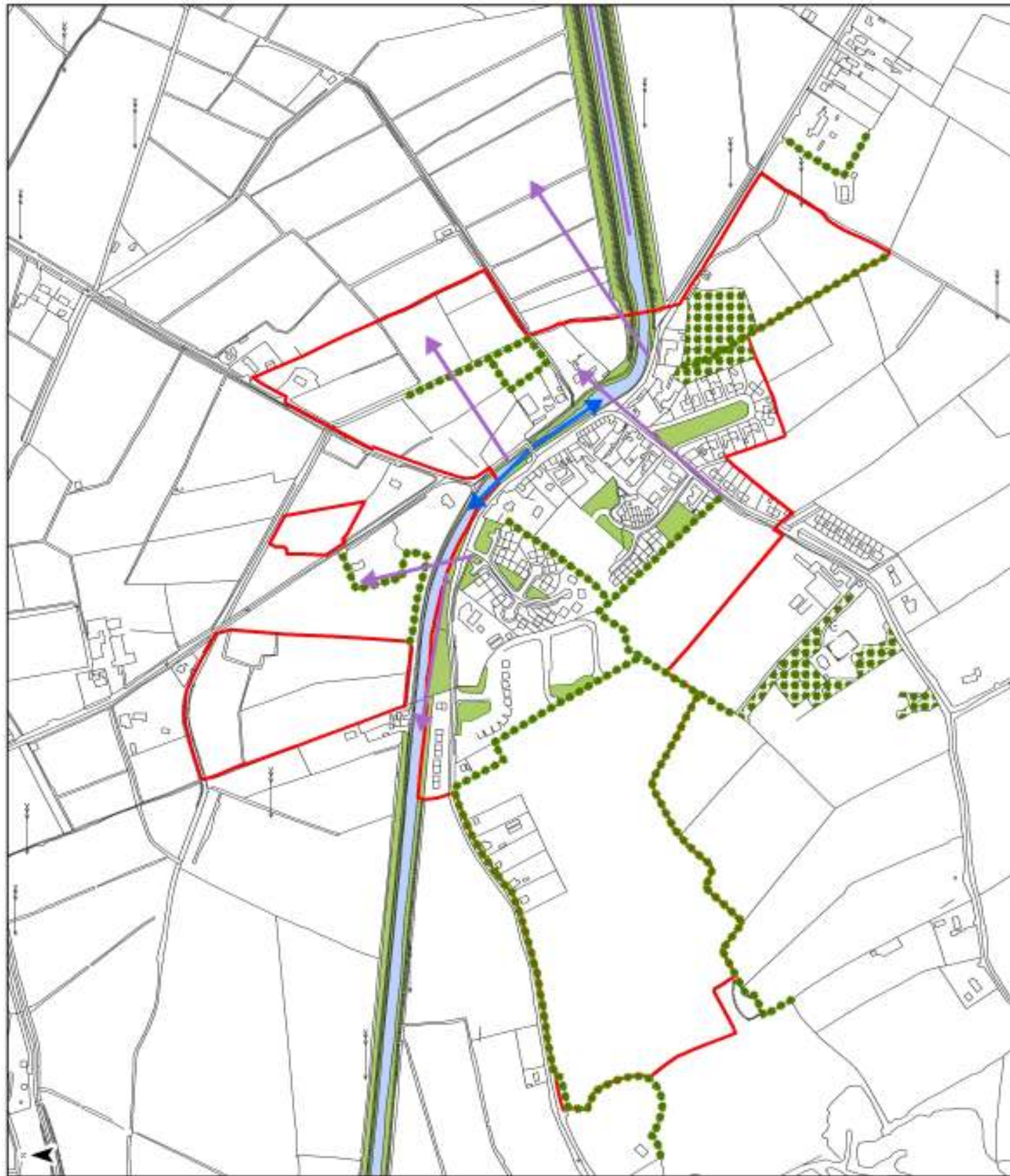


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Date: October 2008

Note: Base map provided
by Kildare County Council

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Section 3: Public Consultation

3(i) Key Issues

A public meeting was held on Wednesday the 14th May 2008 in the local primary school in Robertstown. At this meeting members of the local community voiced their opinions on what they felt were the critical issues concerning the future development of the village. The following points are a summary of the issues raised:

Local Services

- Surface water drainage capacity.
- Better bus service – 7 days to Dublin, to church for mass and for local services/ shopping. No bus route to Naas, Clane or Celbridge and no feeder service to train.
- More kerbs to keep rainwater away from houses on hillsides.
- Resurfacing of roads in village required.
- Accessible bus stop with a shelter.
- Repositioning/ relocating of recycling bins – generates dumped rubbish and fly tipping. Larger area needed for recycling bins.
- Extra land required for primary school. New development needed to cater for an increasing numbers of pupils.
- Wellfield – query on when this will take place and what it will entail. More details on the project needed and its proposed commencement date.

access for fire brigade and ambulance. Roads not wide enough.

- More speed ramps needed in the village.
- Binn's bridge and adjacent roads will not be able to take construction traffic when construction of the water wells commences.
- Problems caused by HGVs passing through village – possible weight restrictions on trucks passing through the village.

Pedestrian Safety

- Footpaths not up to standard need to be improved and linked up. Footpaths to be extended outwards from the village centre.
- Grove Lane repairs – should be pedestrianised.
- Walking Bus – get local authorities involved, especially in initial stages.
- Requirement for lollypop person for the local primary school.
- Pedestrian crossings needed. Suggested locations at the canal bridge and at the junction with Kilmeague road.
- Footpath from Binn's bridge as far as canal road for pedestrians.
- Footpath opposite hotel along side of canal.
- Walking route with lighting to Lowtown Lock.
- Permanent walkway from hotel to Healy's Bridge – with lighting.



Figure 21: Traffic control in the village.



Figure 22: New development to respect existing character of the village.

Traffic Management & Parking

- Traffic control in village – slowing down traffic, yellow boxes at junctions, speed ramps, pedestrian crossings all needed.
- Proposal for double yellow lines along the canal as there is a problem with cars parking and blocking traffic.
- Cats eyes and road markings need to be implemented and/or improved.
- Cars parking on grass verges is a problem
- Lack of parking spaces outside school, dangerous at drop off and collection times and blocks through traffic.
- Parking in housing estates – causing problems for

New Developments/Housing

- Proposal to develop moorings along canal and dredging required.
- Design of new developments need to be complementary to the existing character of the village.
- Original façade of hotel to be restored.
- Taking in charge of local housing estates – issue to be raised with Council.
- Signage for all estates.
- Council monitoring upkeep of social housing – causing problems for local residents and residents associations.

Landscaping & Public Realm

- Lack of signage in the village – no finger boards and junction signs.
- Lack of Street lighting of a consistent style.
- Enhance local features – hotel, canal – use existing local amenities to best advantage.
- Information boards for tourists and locals alike – heritage boards.
- Top of Robertstown - Annesborough Court – green area that could be landscaped
- Bins required along canal.
- Area in front of hotel to be made an amenity area.
- Robertstown is badly signposted from surrounding areas.
- Mound opposite Anneborough House to be reshaped/ landscaped and made presentable as entrance point to the village.
- Need to keep the village presentable and need to achieve tidy town's recognition.
- Enhance and utilize local features i.e. the hotel, canal etc.

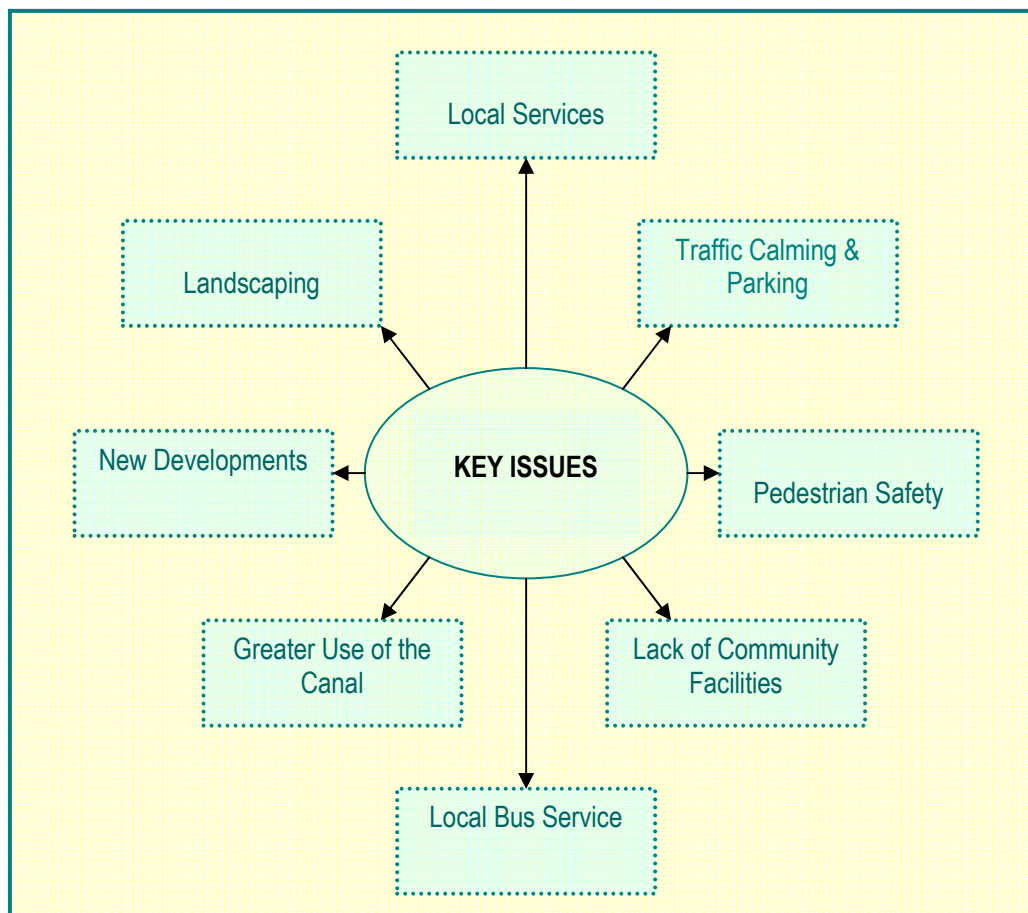
Lack of Community Facilities

- Amenities badly required in village – proposal to focus/ ringfence development levies/ contributions towards local amenities.

- Community Centre required (proposals for construction across road from School).
- 46 acres across Canal – wish to have some of this land designated as a wildlife reserve.
- Poor business and local facilities – no chemist, butchers, etc.
- Need for a Playground for children to be centrally located and accessible to all.
- More amenities for teenagers.
- Music festivals/ local activities/ associated with the canal.

Other Issues

- Keep Robertstown a village and ensure existing character of the village is retained.
- Possibility of canoe/ fishing/ swimming usage on canal.
- Waterways Ireland input.
- Is Robertstown becoming a Heritage Town?
- Grants for amenity purposes for canal usage.
- CCTV system for whole townland to stop vandalism/ anti-social behaviour.
- Need for a heritage museum to recognize the heritage and culture associated with the village.

**Key Local Issues**

CRITICAL ISSUES :

ROBERTSTOWN

GREATER USE OF THE
CANAL

RESURFACING
OF ROADS

LOCAL BUS SERVICE

NEW DEVELOPMENT
TO RESPECT EXISTING
CHARACTER OF
VILLAGE

TRAFFIC CONTROL
& PARKING

DEVELOPMENT OF
COMMUNITY
FACILITIES AND A
LOCAL PARK

RE-OPENING OF
GRAND HOTEL



Section 4: Design Guidelines

4 (i) General Design Guidelines

The following Design Guidelines have been developed following a comprehensive analysis of the qualities and character of Robertstown that contribute to its distinctive identity. These characteristics have been identified by the local community as being fundamental to the development of design guidelines that will shape the future of the village in terms of new works, facilities, services and amenities. These design guidelines are intended to retain what is special about the character of the place and to improve and enhance this special character.

These Design Guidelines have the following three strategic objectives:

1. To conserve and enhance the character of Robertstown and its important features and landmarks;
2. To set out criteria-base standards against which changes to Robertstown may be judged, to ensure that new development contributes positively to the village.
3. To make recommendations for new works, with the aim of improving the urban realm, to be carried out in partnership with the local community.

In the preparation of these guidelines reference has been made to 'The Urban Design Manual: A best practice guide' (a companion document produced by the DoEH&LG, to accompany the Draft Planning Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas). The manual states that 'the most successful—and sustainable—communities are the ones that contain a good variety of things to do, see and enjoy. For larger scale developments, this means providing a good mix of uses, housing, facilities and amenities that help to engender a successful community; and 'thought should be given to how commercial uses are placed in relation to each other to help create a vibrant neighbourhood centre'. In relation to layout the document states that a layout creates people friendly streets and spaces if:

- Layout aligns routes with desire lines to create a permeable interconnected series of routes that are easy and logical to navigate around.
- The layout focuses activity on the streets by creating active frontages with front doors directly serving the street.
- The streets are designed as places instead of roads for cars, helping to create a hierarchy of space with less busy routes having surfaces shared by pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.
- Traffic speeds are controlled by design and layout rather than by speed bumps.
- Block layout places some public spaces in front of building lines as squares or greens, and some semi private space to the back as communal courts.

More details on the implementation of this Village Design Statement are set out in part (ii) of section 4 below.

These Design Guidelines consider the village under a number of Key Strategic areas, and should be read in tandem with the "Key Strategies Map" within this document. Below there is also a series of Design Guidelines for new residential and mixed-use developments within Robertstown (as identified on the Key Strategies Map).

The "Key Strategic" areas are as follows:

Key Strategic Areas	Policy Objectives Commence with ...
1. Village Structure	Vill
2. Village Streetscape	Street
3. Landscape Setting and Open Space	Land
4. Design of New Development	Desi
5. Benefiting the Local Community	Comm

Village Structure

The Kildare County Development Plan has identified settlements and grouped them into four categories:

1. Consolidation
2. Strengthening
3. Revitalisation
4. Rural Nodes

These settlements have been categorised based on the following criteria:

- Size of the settlement;
- Existing community;
- Infrastructural facilities, and;
- Development that has taken place to date.

Having taken these factors into account, Robertstown is identified as being a village with “Consolidating” properties. This means that the Development Plan recognises that the village has experienced significant levels of growth in recent years, with some of this growth being urban-generated, thus not reflecting the needs of first time owners from the local community. Policy RS2 states, in relation to Robertstown and other “consolidating” settlements that:

Having regard to the scale and rapid pace of growth in recent years, it is considered that the capacity of these villages to absorb further growth is very limited. It is an objective that new housing shall be predominately for the local need category, who have not benefited to date from the development that has occurred in these communities, and only limited facilitation of the local growth category will be considered.

Vill 01 Incorporating New Development	Robertstown owes a large part of its historical development to the advent of the Grand Canal, which was extended to the village in 1785. The present-day village core is still focused on the southern bank of the canal, and in particular the crossing point of the canal at Binn's Bridge. The later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century saw the development of civic buildings, principally associated with the canal, including the hotel, RIC barracks and school (now disused). In the latter part of the twentieth century, the village developed southwards and westwards, including the construction of the primary school. The current village form is reasonably compact, with more recent developments being self-contained residential layouts based on cul-de-sac layouts. Given the variety of the established development pattern in terms of scale, dwelling type, plot size and urban grain, new development shall respect this diversity of character and shall not be of a scale or proportion that would engulf or imbalance the existing village settlement pattern and established grain. In the case of larger proposed residential developments, they may set their own “development pattern”. However, they must respect the context of the village and have regard to development grain, density, orientation, plot size, unit size, existing contours, boundaries and generating linkages throughout the village (see separate “Design Guidelines for New Development” below).
Vill 02 New Development Standards	Proposals for new residential developments shall respect the existing buildings and surrounding landscape by working with, rather than against, key features, including existing contours and established plot and field boundaries. Development should be adapted to the site rather than the site being adapted to the development. New development shall be of a low to medium density and in a grain that accords with the existing village grain.
Vill 03 Access to Services	New residential development shall be situated in locations that consolidate and strengthen the village core and that have easy access to local facilities and services. New village amenities, services and facilities should be located so as to facilitate ease of pedestrian access and allow for multi-purpose trips, to avoid local trip-making by car.
Vill 04 Pedestrian Accessibility	Walking routes in and around Robertstown shall be retained and improved and new routes established where possible to provide improved local access and amenity walking routes. In particular, a walking route shall be provided along the Canal (as indicated in Key Strategy 3). New residential developments shall provide footpaths linking them to the village core, local services and the national school. Promotion of walking routes should be achieved by means of improved signage and lighting.
Vill 05 Village Core	The historic village core of Robertstown has been identified as the area on the south bank of the canal, between Binn's Bridge and the bend in the canal. This is also the location of the village shops, pubs and other local services. This area shall be retained.

Village Streetscape

Robertstown has a strong streetscape along the canal, and a varied townscape within the residential areas to the southwest. New residential developments shall provide pedestrian links to the village core, in particular to access services/ retail/ facilities. New residential developments shall provide local amenities and services to augment, but not compete with, those in the village core. In this regard please refer to Section 4 (iii) Delivery, Action and Implementation below.

Street 01 Canalside Streetscape	The existing streetscape of Robertstown fronting the Canal shall be retained, and new development assessed in accordance with how well it integrates into this streetscape and how sympathetically it relates to the established streetscape in terms of the following criteria: (i) Building line; (ii) Building height; (iii) Building mass (proportion of solid to void); (iv) Orientation of windows—the existing fenestration has a vertical emphasis; (v) Roof height, slope and roofing material. These buildings were originally rendered and proposals to remove this render and expose the rubble stone work will be discouraged by the Council.
Street 02 Canalside Improvement Area	The canal bank at Robertstown represents a significant amenity and leisure asset to the village. An area has been identified as a “Canalside Improvement Area” on the Key Strategies Map (number 3), in which the following urban improvements are proposed: (i) Footpath to be introduced/ consolidated along the length of the canal; (ii) New planting and trees to be introduced at this location, using appropriate species to create colour, and year-round interest; (iii) Seating and litter bins to be provided, using appropriate materials that will be both durable and attractive and sympathetic to the heritage of the village; (iv) The existing lighting scheme along the Canal bank to be extended, where necessary, using a similar heritage-type design.
Street 03 Street Trees and Ancillary Green Spaces	There is not a significant presence of street trees in Robertstown. Where possible, new street trees shall be introduced in new developments, in order to improve the visual amenity of the streetscape. These should be carefully selected indigenous or other appropriate tree species and planted in an appropriate way and scale that reflects the rural character of the village, which has been described in Section 2 (iii) of this document.
Street 04 Form of new Residential Development	New development areas are located to on the outer edges and approach roads to the village. It is important that these create a strong delineation between the village of Robertstown and the surrounding countryside, and that the form of housing provides an alternative to urban-generated rural housing. New developments on the approach roads shall have a design, layout and street frontage that creates a “presence” on the street. Open space and the rear of houses shall not be located on the main road. Clustered housing will be the favoured form, in particular where this allows for pedestrian routes to be provided linking various residential developments to the village centre and the canal.
Street 05 Traffic Management & Footpaths	Traffic management measures and new and improved walking and cycling routes (to increase public safety) should be a priority for implementation. This includes the introduction of footpaths and the resurfacing of local roads. These improvements are identified on the Key Strategies Map as numbers 4 & 5.
Street 06 Layout of New Developments	In general, new developments shall be laid out and the residential units designed and orientated so as to encourage active frontage and lively streetscapes. This may include the use of the gable form, the introduction of porches and entrance doors located on the front elevations (rather than the side). Boundary treatment shall be low in scale and height, and open spaces shall be overlooked on as many sides as possible, thus encouraging passive surveillance.

4 (ii) Design Guidelines for New Development Areas

New development areas have been identified on the Key Strategies Map within two broad categories, as follows:

- (i) Future Residential areas—to be predominantly residential, and include services/ local amenities/ community benefit, in accordance with the social needs assessment criteria, and to include facilities listed in Section 4(iii) .
- (ii) Mixed Use/ Town Centre Expansion areas—these areas to incorporate a broader mix of uses and may include employment-generating uses, community, retail, commercial, civic and leisure uses.

A supporting statement must accompany all planning applications for new residential and mixed-use developments in these areas indicating how the development meets the guidelines and criteria set down below. In addition, all development proposals will require a social needs assessment as set down in Section 4 (iii) below.

In general, this supporting statement shall demonstrate how the developer will deliver a quality residential environment on a particular site. Planning permission will only be granted for new residential development where it is demonstrated that the proposal will create a quality and sustainable residential environment.

Quality design proposals should emerge from a careful analysis of the site's location, surrounding context and the specific characteristics of the site itself. The statement should outline in writing the overall design concept and objectives for the site, based on the appraisal of the site and its context. Any proposal for residential development which fails to produce an appropriate quality of design and which fails to conform to these and other relevant criteria will not be permitted.

Although no specific sites have been identified in this VDS for infill housing, we would note that Section 5.10 of the Kildare County Development Plan states the following in regard to infill housing:

Infill housing in existing built up areas of the towns and villages of the county will be encouraged. Any proposals should be designed to integrate successfully with the existing pattern of development in terms of housing type, scale and details such as materials, finishes, building lines etc. In all cases the protection of the amenities of existing development should be a significant consideration.

Furthermore, please refer to Chapter 6 “Rural Housing Policy” of the Kildare County Development Plan for further policy objectives that are of relevance to new residential development within Robertstown.

<p>Desi 01</p> <p>New Development Design Standards</p>	<p>The design of new development shall draw upon the best local traditions of form, materials and detailing, which would include the use of stone and render finishes, simple house forms, pitched roofs and a mix of wide frontage and gable frontage houses. Vertical emphasis shall be introduced to window orientations, and some taller, narrow-frontage houses be included in new developments, which refer to the type of housing along the canal frontage. In this regard, all planning applications shall be accompanied by a supporting statement that outlines how the design approach has been achieved.</p> <p>Generally, providing a mix of narrow and wide frontage houses will be encouraged, in order to vary plot size and create a varied plan form. Private open space shall be provided in all instances in accordance with Development Plan standards.</p>
<p>Desi 02</p> <p>Housing Layout & Permeability</p>	<p>In developing housing layouts, permeability shall be a major consideration, most particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. Layouts based on cul-de-sacs will not be permitted as these increase travel time, reduce accessibility to local services and amenities and do not promote walkability of places. In all residential developments, the safety of pedestrians and quality of life should be given priority over vehicular traffic. The layout and design of all developments shall be configured so as to deter crime and promote personal safety.</p>



Figures 23 & 24: Images of the type of architectural form around which new developments should be based, which takes its design form from the Georgian canal frontage. These design traits include vertical emphasis to windows, tall, steeply pitched roofs, some articulation of the front door, natural materials and finishes.

Desi 03 Building Heights	The use of varied building heights is a useful device in creating urban enclosure and in forging a strong sense of place. Building heights of between one and three storeys are acceptable.
Desi 04 Spacing Between Buildings	Particular account will be taken of the spacing between buildings, the safeguarding of privacy, the scale and massing of buildings, the use of materials, impact on existing vegetation and landscape design. Where applicable, the adjoining established residential amenity and privacy shall be respected. New dwellings that closely overlook the rear curtilage of existing dwellings will not normally be permitted.
Desi 05 Size of Sites	In the interests of the sustainable use of land, no single residential sites within the village development boundary shall be in excess of one acre (1 acre). In exceptional circumstances sites larger than half an acre (1/2 acre) will be permitted for new housing, subject to a case being made to support this proposal.
Desi 06 House Types	A range of house types shall be provided within residential developments to cater for all needs. Apartment and duplex units would not normally be considered appropriate for development in Robertstown.
Desi 07 Open Space	Within new development areas, adequate provision shall be made for public and private open space and landscaped areas (in accordance with Kildare County Development Plan standards). However, these areas shall be provided as an integral part of the development. Where appropriate, planted areas or discrete groups of trees will be required along site boundaries in order to soften the visual impact of the development and assist in its integration with the surrounding area. Open space and amenity areas shall be configured so as to provide both ancillary green areas and a single larger area of open space to provide for the amenity needs to residents. Residential units shall be orientated facing areas of open space in order to provide passive surveillance.
Desi 08 Parking	Adequate and appropriate provision shall be made for parking which, in principle, should be operationally and physically unobtrusive. In new residential developments, parking shall be provided within the curtilage and in accordance with Kildare County Development Plan standards.



Figure 25: Layout to control traffic speed (Urban Design Manual 08).

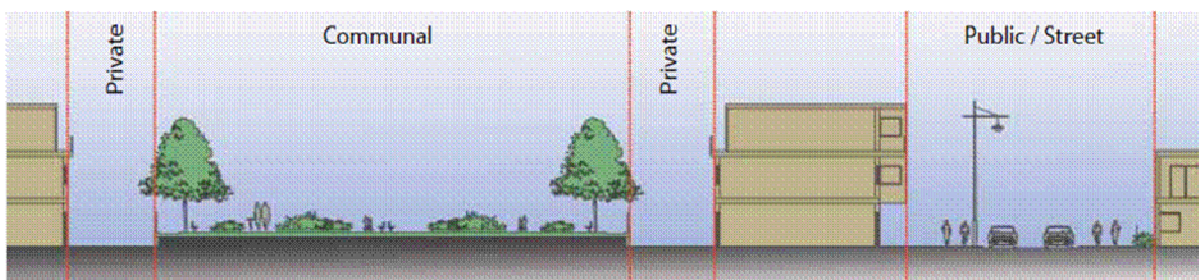


Figure 26: Layout design and open space (Urban Design Manual 08).

Desi 09 Infrastructure	It shall be demonstrated within all planning applications that the infrastructure has the capacity to absorb the demands of the proposed development (existing and new/ upgraded infrastructure).
Desi 10 Materials	In terms of materials, given the variety of materials within Robertstown, a range of new materials will be acceptable, subject to agreement with the planning authority. Within any single development there should be a limited palette of materials to avoid visual clutter. New developments to comply with section 15.2.10 of the CDP regarding use of materials.
Desi 11 Future Residential Development Sites	<p>Areas for “Future Residential Development” have been indicated on the Key Strategies Map (as number 1), which are of a size and scale to establish their own character, while working within the parameters of this VDS.</p> <p>Proposals for these sites must demonstrate the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of pedestrian linkages to key services and amenities; • design incorporating a strong road frontage that complements the existing street-scape; • clustered/ grouped housing within the site that maximises the efficient use of land and provides for a permeable layout; • includes a range of house types and sizes; • provision of open space that is of a scale, location and configuration that maximises usage by all members of the local community with all levels of mobility, including a children’s playground/ play area; • provision of amenities/ local facilities or an alternative planning gain that will benefit the entire local community— see list included in Section 4(iii) of this VDS under social needs assessment requirements.
Desi 12 Mixed Use/ Town Centre Expansion Sites	<p>These areas to incorporate a broader mix of uses and may include employment-generating uses (particularly on Site 2B) and community, retail, commercial, civic and leisure uses (particularly on Site 2A).</p> <p>These sites have been identified as areas with potential for the location of a community centre/ hall, catering for the needs to the entire community.</p> <p>The nature and scale of residential development is to be in accordance with the general guidance provided for “future residential development” areas (see Desi 11 above).</p>
Desi 13 Orientation of Layouts	Good natural light makes dwellings more attractive, pleasant and energy efficient. Housing layouts shall be designed, oriented and sited so as to maximise daylight and sunlight (solar gain) to dwellings as far as possible, thus being sustainable by design. This is to be achieved while maintaining high standards of design in general, particularly in relation to privacy, existing residential amenity and the achievement of an attractive streetscape.
Desi 14 Waste Storage	New housing estates and layouts will allow for the inclusion of waste storage and collection facilities deemed appropriate for households and estates.
Desi 15 Naming of Estates	The naming of all new housing estates should be demonstrated to have a local connection and relevance and should reflect the character of Robertstown and its setting.
Desi 16 Gated Developments	The development of residential gated communities will not be permitted by Kildare County Council in Robertstown.

Benefiting the Local Community














The process of preparing this Village Design Statement is one that has been fundamentally based on community participation, without which this document would not have been prepared. A community consultation workshop with the local community has led to the formulation of the objectives and strategies within this VDS. The majority of the aims and objectives have been conceived so as to benefit the local community in the shorter, medium and longer term.

Comm 01	Key Strategy 3 provides for a scheme to be developed in the Canalside Improvement Area. This urban enhancement scheme is to include improved planting, seating, a theme for street furniture (such as litter bins and lighting) and the location of a community notice board. This scheme to be undertaken by the local community, in conjunction with Kildare County Council and Waterways Ireland.
Comm 02	The expansion and development of local services and facilities, including the Primary School is vital to the continued growth of Robertstown. In the case of the Primary School, an alternative, larger site or building may be provided in the context of new development. Adequate parking is to be provided for the Primary School. New development proposals must be accompanied by a Social Needs Assessment, in particular outlining how they provide the community services and facilities listed in Section 4(iii) of this document.
Comm 03	The feasibility of establishing a local bus service is to be examined. This bus service needs to provide a link to local services and to retail areas and a train station. Local community-based transport providers are to be approached in relation to establishing such a service (OK Transport currently operate in this area).

ROBERTSTOWN

KEY STRATEGIES MAP

KEY:

-  Village Boundary
-  Village Core
-  Town Centre (mixed use)
-  Existing Residential Development
-  Grand Canal
-  Existing Open / Amenity Space
-  Future Residential Development
-  Existing Agricultural / Sheds
-  Mixed Use Town Centre Expansion
-  Canalside Improvement Area
-  Area For Future expansion of School Site
-  Pedestrian Crossing Points
-  Please refer to full explanation of Key Strategies overleaf



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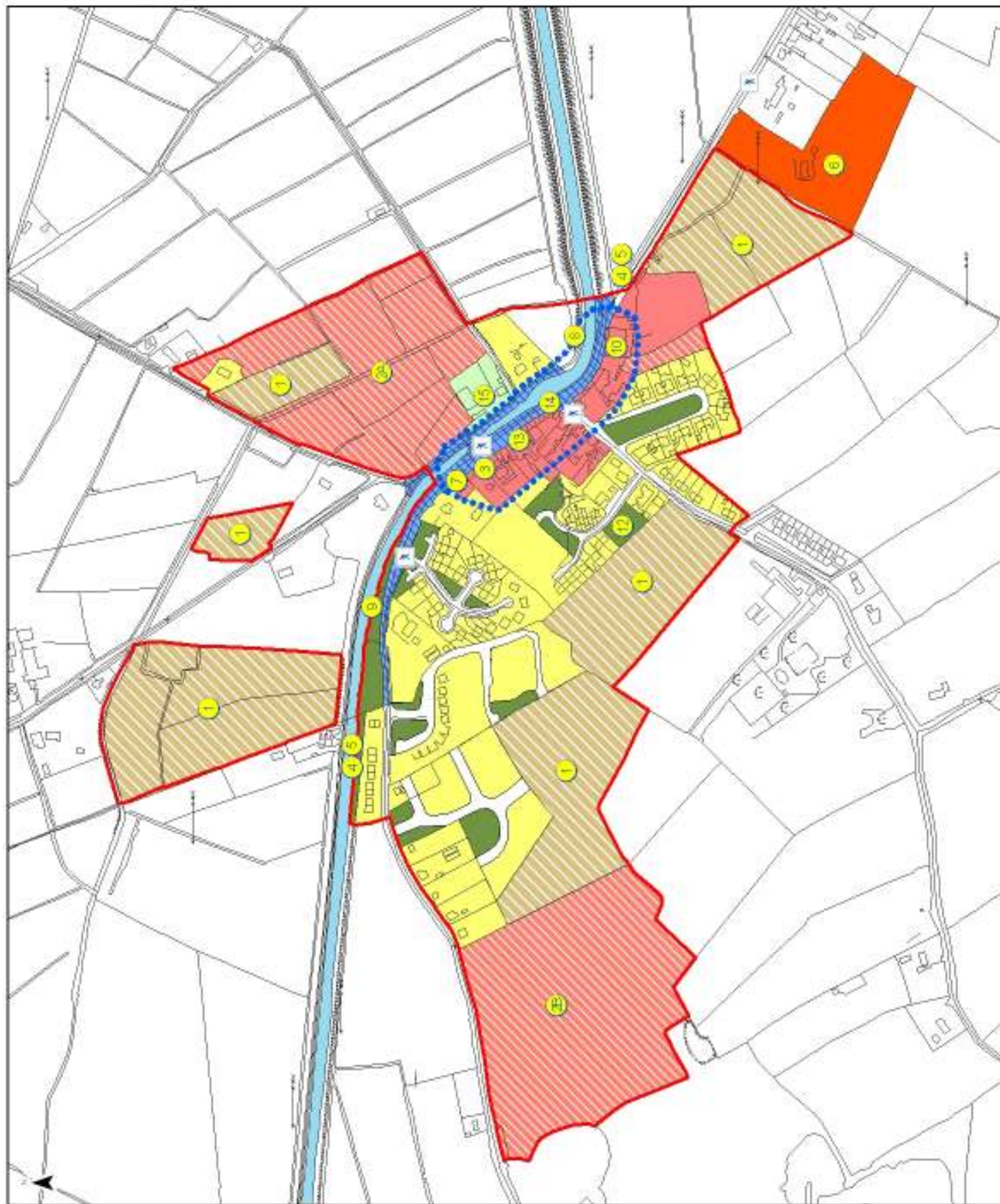
Date: October 2008

Note: Base map provided

by Kildare County Council

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KEY STRATEGIES—REFER TO MAP ABOVE

1. Areas indicated as being for “Future Residential Development” to be developed as outlined in Policy **Desi 11** above. They should seek to consolidate the village form whilst maintaining permeability. It may be necessary to create new access points from the village main street in order to access these developments, which shall be provided in accordance with KCC roads and other relevant standards. New developments shall provide planning gain in terms of services/ amenities/ facilities for the current and future local community (see list provided in Section 4 (iii) below).
Area 2A has been identified as being a location for community facilities, as a means of connecting development on the north side of the Canal to the village centre. Area 2B has been identified as having the potential to accommodate employment-generating land uses.
2. Areas indicated as being for “Mixed Use/ Town Centre Expansion” to be developed as outlined in Policy **Desi 12** above.
3. Canalside Improvement Area - an area has been identified on the Key Strategies Map for an urban enhancement scheme including improved planting, seating, a theme for street furniture (such as litter bins and lighting) and the location of a community notice board. This scheme to be undertaken by the local community, in conjunction with Kildare County Council and Waterways Ireland.

Images:

Figure 27: Empty building located on the northern bank of the Canal (former Primary School). Key Strategy 15 proposes that this building be converted to a Canal/ Waterways Museum.

Figure 28: Example of a restored barge, with other exhibitions, which could be displayed in the Canal/ Waterways Museum.

Figure 29: Example of public seating that could be installed as part of the Canalside Improvement Scheme. This “stone sofa” is a piece of public art, commissioned for a similar location in the UK. This type of feature could be installed following a competition, and should be appropriate to Robertstown and the Canalside setting.

Figure 30: Public art, in the form of a sculpture garden. Again, this type of feature would be a major attraction along the Canal at Robertstown, and the possibility of it being installed as part of the Per Cent for Art Scheme (as set out specifically in Government Decision - S.29498, 13/05/97 and the Recommendations of the Public Art Research Project Steering Group Report to Government (1997). See www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie for more information.

Figure 31: An example of the type of treatment of the public domain that could form part of the Canalside Improvement Area (Key Strategy 3), including bollards, cobbles, tree planting, and screening of parking along the Canal using low hedges.



Above: Figures 27 - 31 (top to bottom)

KEY STRATEGIES continued ...

4. The roads accessing Robertstown and within the village boundary are to be upgraded, resurfaced where necessary, and the footpaths and pedestrian routes upgraded accordingly to provide continuous, safe pedestrian routes throughout the village and extending as far as the primary school.

As part of these works, traffic calming measures comprising pinch points, ramps and speed limit signage are to be put in place on the road entering the village from the east and west (as indicated by number 4 on the *Key Strategies Map*). These traffic calming points are to be designed so as to act as crossing points for persons with limited mobility and those with pushchairs. Crossing points are to be provided at the following locations: (i) Adjacent to Binn's Bridge; (ii) Robertstown National School; (iii) Adjacent to The Moorings residential development.



Figure 32: Above image is an example of the type of treatment of crossing points in the village, including a raised area for crossing and a clear demarcation of this pedestrian route using different coloured road surfacing and paving materials. Bollards and "pinch points" (in this case using planted areas) also act to calm and slow traffic.

5. The roads improvement works included under Key Strategy 4 above shall be completed in tandem with improvements to surface water drainage, including upgrading of current capacity and condition of drainage infrastructure to cater for current and future predicted surface run off levels.
6. An area has been identified for the possible future expansion of the Primary School in Robertstown to cater for the growing population of the village and its hinterland.
7. Street trees are to be introduced in the village centre, and most particularly along the Canal.



Figure 33: Example of street trees planting in a grass verge.

8. The wirescape within Robertstown is to be placed underground within the area defined by the village boundary.

KEY STRATEGIES continued ...

9. Signage is to be put in place in Robertstown to provide both directional and local information signage, as follows: (i) signage for the names of local housing estates; (ii) Street signage; (iii) directional signage to local features of note and other nearby villages; (iv) Signage of local walking routes, including a canal walk and heritage walk. This signage is to have a common theme and should reflect the local character of the village and be the basis for a consistent local colour palette and design scheme.



Figure 34: Type of informational signage to be developed in Robertstown, on a theme that reflects the character of the village

10. In the context of restoration or redevelopment works, the façade of the Grand Canal Hotel is to be restored in accordance with best practice standards to provide a focal point and landmark building within the town. Further guidance in this regard can be provided by the Conservation Officer in Kildare County Council.



Figure 35: View of Grand Canal Hotel, Robertstown

11. A site is to be identified for the construction of a local community centre/ hall, which should be accessible to the whole community for a range of uses. This may be located in one of the areas identified under Key Strategy 2 (mixed use/ town centre expansion areas).
12. Proposed location of playground that would be available for the use of the whole community of Robertstown.

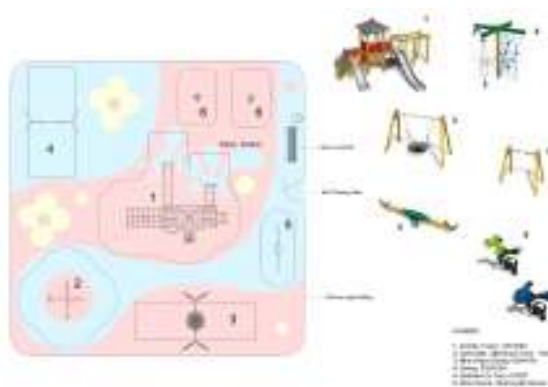


Figure 36: Example of playground

13. The feasibility of establishing a local bus service is to be examined. This bus service needs to provide a link to local services and to retail areas and a train station. OK Transport currently operate a service from Robertstown to NUI Maynooth.



Figure 37: Example of a community bus shelter, that could possibly incorporate a community notice board within the shelter

14. Community Notice Board for Robertstown is to be located at a central point in the village, to accommodate a permanent display in relation to local history/ heritage/ information and a space for temporary/ current notices.

KEY STRATEGIES continued ...

15. The empty building (former school building, as noted on the NIAH), to be converted to a Canal/ Waterways Museum as a focal point of local tourism and a potential source of local employment in Robertstown. See Figure 27 above for image.

Other examples in the UK are located in London, Gloucester, Ellesmere Port (Cheshire), Goole (Yorkshire), and Stoke Bruerne (Northamptonshire).

4(iii) Delivery - Action & Implementation Programme

This VDS sets out aims and objectives for the management of development that will act as a positive tool for change to benefit the community of Robertstown. This VDS has outlined the analyses and the proposals, as put forward by the local community, to be achieved in the short, medium and longer term.

This particular section of this VDS sets out a framework for the achievement of the plan's objectives. The delivery of the plan involves cooperation from the local community, developers and local authorities in order to promote the protection, conservation, appropriate uses and future management of the village.

The implementation of this plan will require investment in both physical and social infrastructure to support the protection and conservation of the area and the other developments within Robertstown. The Local Authority will expect and require that developers fund and provide the infrastructure necessary to support any development proposed by them and to contribute financially to the cost of other essential infrastructure and amenities necessary to support the development of the town as a whole. This will be achieved through the measures outlined below.

All significant development proposals will require a social needs assessment as part of the planning application to ensure that the following list is provided for in the village:

1. Playground
2. Open Space & Amenity Areas
3. Upgrading of local road surfaces
4. Community hall
5. Adequate wastewater treatment facilities
6. Improvements & extension of footpaths
7. Crèche or playschool facilities
8. Playing pitches
9. Upgrade surface water drainage
10. Street Lighting
11. Expansion of Primary School

Establishment of Community Council

In order for the objectives of this VDS to be delivered, it is proposed that a Community Council be established as a limited company with charitable status. This Community Council will effectively be the "project champion" for this VDS. Its role will be the following:

1. Establish a committee of members elected by the local community annually for the purpose of achieving the objectives set down in this VDS.
2. Secure funding for projects proposed within this VDS, and others projects in the future. This VDS may be used in support of funding applications - potential sources of funding are listed in Appendix 1 below.
3. Act as a community liaison and contact point for Kildare County Council and other statutory bodies and agencies in future proposals and managing change for the village of Robertstown.
4. Update the objectives of the VDS and develop new objectives, as appropriate. (See the "Performance Report" below)
5. Keep the local community updated by various means, including holding meetings, a community website and notice board and using any other local forum, for example a local newsletter or newspaper. (See the "Communications Strategy" below)

Communications Strategy & Performance Report

The delivery of this planning strategy will rely on all the relevant information being provided to the delivering organisations. The adoption of a Communications Strategy will clearly set down matters such as the protocols and regularity of meetings and communications to partners and the wider local community. It may be considered useful to establish a community notice board, website, email circulars, and other means of communicating regular updates.

It is also suggested that an annual "Performance Report" on the plan's progress. This will ensure that progress is monitored and evaluated and that, where necessary, priorities are reassigned or new projects/ actions are identified.

Funding and Timeframe

There are many varied sources of funding available in order to achieve the objectives set down in this VDS. Some examples of funding sources are listed in the Appendix 1 of this document.

In order to deliver this VDS in an effective, timely and coordinated manner, a series of priorities must be set down. The Action Plan table below sets out the following:

- i. Action
- ii. Level of Intervention
- iii. Timescale
- iv. Project Lead/ Champion
- v. Possible Source of Funding

“Quick win” projects have been identified in the table. These have one or more of the following criteria:

- I. Deliverable in the short term;
- II. Have the potential to have a positive spin-off or catalytic effect;
- III. May not require a significant level of funding;
- IV. May not be impacted by regulatory or other constraints;
- V. Are readily achievable within the current structure/ available funding.

It is vital that this Action Plan be regularly augmented and amended so that priorities are updated as necessary and that any new projects are identified on an ongoing basis.

LIST OF DELIVERABLES AND LEVEL OF INTERVENTION REQUIRED FOR ACTION						
Deliverable 1: Urban Realm Improvement Plan						
No	Action - low intervention	Action - medium intervention	Action - high intervention	Project Champion	Possible Sources of Funding	PRIORITY
1	Introduction of street trees within village of suitable species and at appropriate locations			Community Council	Crann & Kildare County Council	HIGH
2		New signage to be erected within the village, including finger post signs indicating local features and facilities and directional signage to other locations, including walking and cycling routes in the vicinity. This signage to be developed on a common theme and colour to reflect the local identity of Robertstown		Community Council	Heritage Council (Local Heritage Grants scheme). Assistance from Waymarked Ways of Ireland	HIGH
		Provision of a playground on the site identified on the Key Strategies Map		Community Council	Kildare LEADER	MEDIUM
3			Streamlined lighting within the Robertstown development boundary to reflect the local identity	Community Council	Kildare County Council/Community Council/Leader & Private Charitable Lottery (funding is available from National Lottery for the setting up of these charitable lotteries - see www.lotto.ie)	MEDIUM
5			Undergrounding of wirescape within village	Community Council		LOW

Delivery

Deliverable 2: Grand Canal Improvements					Project Champion	Possible Sources of Funding	PRIORITY
No	Action - low intervention	Action - medium intervention	Action - high intervention				
1	Erection of Community notice board in area identified under number 3 on Key Strategies Map				Community Council	Kildare County Council to assist local community	HIGH
2		Speed limit signage and signage with weight limit on Binn's Bridge to be placed in Robertstown and on surrounding roads as appropriate			Kildare County Council	Signage to be put in place by Kildare County Council	HIGH
3			Canalside Improvement Area to be developed in area identified under number 3 on Key Strategies Map for the improvement of amenity uses and access to the Grand Canal, including improved marked walking routes, planting, seating and themed street furniture		Community Council	Waterways Ireland/Local Businesses/Community Council	MEDIUM
4			In the context of (re)development, the façade of the Grand Canal hotel is to be restored in accordance with best practice principles		Community Council	Owner/ Developer	LOW

Delivery

Deliverable 3: Improvements to Roadways and Services			Action - high intervention	Project Champion	Possible Sources of Funding	PRIORITY
No	Action - low intervention	Action - medium intervention				
1	Speed limit signage and pinch points and ramps (for the purposes of modifying traffic speeds) to be introduced on all roads entering Robertstown. These ramps could provide an opportunity for safe crossing points on the road			Kildare County Council	Kildare County Council	HIGH
2		Improvements to roads, including resurfacing roads and establishment of continuous footpaths within village boundary of Robertstown		Community Council	Kildare County Council	MEDIUM
3		The community council are to investigate the establishment of a local bus service linking Robertstown to retail services and a train station.		Community Council	Not-for profit companies running community bus services would assist and the service is funded by customers paying for journeys.	MEDIUM
4			As part of roads and footpath improvements, incorporate adequate surface water management measures to accommodate current and future surface water run off	Community Council	Kildare County Council	MEDIUM
5			Research for greener ways of approaching all aspects of life and assistance with putting it into place, eg recycling	Community Council	Cleaner Greener Production Programme with the EPA (see www.epa.ie) and ongoing funding mechanisms in place	LOW

Delivery

Potential Sources of Funding

There are a number of sources from which funding could be sought for the implementation of this project. A number of such sources are listed below.

DOEHLG Civic Structures Conservation Grants Scheme

Heritage Council

See: www.heritagecouncil.ie/grants

International Fund for Ireland

LEADER+

Leader+ aims to encourage the emergence and testing of new approaches to integrated and sustainable development that will influence, complete and/or reinforce rural development policy in the Community.

The New Culture Programme (2007-2013)

International Funds for Ireland

PEACE III

The Getty Foundation

The Ireland Funds

The Ireland Funds is an international charitable organisation operating in 11 countries and has raised over \$300 million for worthy causes in Ireland.

Irish Georgian Society

The conservation of Ireland's rich architectural heritage is the principal aim of the Irish Georgian Society. Many important buildings continue to be threatened either by neglect or unsympathetic development.

Irish Landmark Trust

The Irish Landmark Trust Limited saves heritage buildings that are abandoned or at risk throughout the whole of Ireland. The Trust undertakes their conservation, restoration and maintenance by converting them to domestic use suitable for short-term (e.g. holiday) lettings.

OPW

The OPW has responsibility for the day-to-day running of all National Monuments and Historic Properties.

Gulbenkian Foundation

The UK Branch of the Portugal-based Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is responsible for grant aid in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Irish Heritage Trust

Launched in 2006, and still in the process of being commissioned, the Irish Heritage Trust will acquire, through negotiation and tax incentives, historic properties, houses and gardens that will be open for everyone's enjoyment forever. Sources of funding may be available through this agency in future years. Part of its brief is to protect the heritage of Ireland, and to actively engage with local communities.

Artists in the Community Scheme

Foras na Gaeilge

(Contact: Foras na Gaeilge, 7 Merrion Square, Dublin 2)

The Arts Council

(Contact: The Arts Council, 70 Merrion Square, Dublin 2)

Festivals and Cultural Events (Failte Ireland)

The Festivals and Cultural Events Initiative has the objective of expanding regional tourism through festivals and cultural events.

(Contact: Bord Fáilte, Baggott Street Bridge, Dublin 2)

The Community Development Programme

(Contact: Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs)

Carnegie UK Trust's Rural Community Development Grant Policy

(Contact: Carnegie UK Trust, Comely Park House, 80 New Row)

National Lottery

Katherine Howard Foundation

Tidy Towns (DoEHLG)

EPA Cemetery Maintenance Grants (Kildare Co Co)

Community Grants Scheme (Kildare Co Co)

Litter Bin Grants (Kildare Co Co)

*Please note that all information was correct at time of publication. Please refer to Kildare 4 Community on the internet for further local sources of funding.

www.open4community.ie/kildare/

This Village Design Statement, undertaken in partnership with the community of Robertstown, was produced by Kildare County Council.

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For further information please contact:

Kildare County Council
Civic Offices
Devoy Park
Naas
Co Kildare
Tel: 045 980200
Fax: 045 980240

www.kildarecoco.ie

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