

4. Tier 2 Settlements- Strategic Support Towns



Tier 2 Settlements - Strategic Support Towns

4.1 Ballybofey/Stranorlar



The twin towns of Ballybofey/Stranorlar collectively comprise the 3rd largest urban centre in Donegal and are strategically located within a strong rural hinterland in the heart of the Finn Valley and at a key point along the N15/N13 North South Transport Corridor (part of the wider Atlantic Corridor).

The towns act as the key retail, commercial, social educational and recreational centre for the Finn Valley and beyond. The twin towns have a number of established businesses and commercial entities and various bodies are development new and innovative ways to attract trade and enterprise, most visibly by the recent opening of the BASE enterprise centre. The twin towns contain a significant quantum of retail floor space that are in many respects anchored by the landmark retail outlet McElhinney Stores. The town centre has developed in a compact manner and the retail town core retains much of its original character adding to the shopping experience. The twin towns have been identified as a centre of excellence for sport within the County, holding the 'Sport 4 life' Expo and Conference in November 2015; this is sporting association is also manifested in prominent sports facilities such as McCumhaill Park, Finn Park and the Finn Valley leisure centre as examples. Ballybofey-Stranorlar boasts many social, recreational and cultural facilities including a golf course, natural woodland and walks, and the Balor Theatre as examples. In infrastructural terms the town is served, primarily by, the N15 and N14 National Primary routes and the R252 Ballybofey to Glenties Regional Road. The town has 3 primary and 2 Secondary Level schools with a combined student populations of 553 and 1130 at each respective level.

History, Culture and Heritage



Both Ballybofey and Stranorlar have clear historical cores, formed around crossroads either side of the River Finn that have over time merged into one urban structure.

There are 9 protected structures in and around the twin towns, with a further 27 listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. The River Finn is a Special Area of Conservation, and the settlement is surrounded by 12 recorded monuments. The first railway line in County Donegal was the Strabane to Stranorlar line that opened in 1863, Stranorlar was the headquarters of the County Donegal Railway for almost 100 years, employing many residents of the town and integrating many of the remoter areas into wider market networks with the last train in 1960.

This area has a long history of settlement as evidenced by the many archaeological sites and monuments throughout. The excellent fishing, fertile river valleys and the fact that the River Finn was navigable towards the Foyle and out into sea made this landscape attractive to early settlers.

Landscape characteristics

Ballybofey/Stranorlar is Located within LCA14 Finn Valley characterised by an essentially flat landscape which has facilitated the towns' development. Ballybofey-Stranorlar are two separate towns co-joined by a bridge over the River Finn. They are thriving towns that act as a service centre in the heart of the Finn Valley. Finn Valley LCA is dominated by the River Finn, its tributaries and associated valleys cut from the surrounding uplands. The landscape eastwards from Ballybofey Stranorlar towards Castlefinn is a fertile agricultural plain along the river within a wider gently undulating agricultural landscape of large square fields similar to the adjoining Laggan Valley and Foyle Valley LCAs.

This ecologically important landscape containing an SAC, SPA and pNHA as well as the important biodiversity links created by the River Finn and tributaries, river corridors that flow through this area. Tree and hedgerow bound roads and laneways and the overgrown disused railway line all form important biodiversity corridors and linkages. Details of the environmental designations within and around the town can be sourced at www.npws.ie .

The town benefits from key environmental assets such the River Finn and associated Flood Plain, and the woodlands situated around Drumboe and Dunwiley which provide an important and valuable recreational resource in a natural and tranquil setting.

There are a number of

Identification of Settlement Type (Town of Fiach's Pass" & "Flat Place of the Valley Floor)

The two separate towns of Ballybofey-Stranorlar located at either side of the River Finn have merged in form into larger linear settlement; colloquially know as the Twin Towns they combine to provide a strong critical mass with resultant high level facilities for the town and its wider hinterland.

Townscape features



Ballybofey/Stranorlar displays a generally linear development form with development arranged along the axis of both the Ballybofey and Stranorlar Main Streets. Whilst there is some residential development along, and in close proximity to, the main streets of Ballybofey/Stranorlar the bulk of the residential development is located in an irregular fashion on the approach roads to the towns with much of the development located a considerable distance from the town centre. The town centre itself is predominately arranged along the main street of both towns, displaying a strong streetscape with a reasonably compact, visually interesting form. Additional townscape features include:

- Rich architectural and streetscape detailing, presence of landmarks and hierarchy of streets and spaces which ensure the environment is stimulating.
- Dominated by active frontages contributing to a sense of vitality.
- Building frontages open directly onto the street resulting in a vibrant character.
- Church spire visible from both ends of twin towns providing a local focal point which connects both Ballybofey and Stranorlar.
- Spacious character of streetscape due to a relatively wide street proportion.
- Mix of uses provided giving residents greater access to a number of retail services.
- Commercial buildings front onto the main street resulting in a vibrant character.
- Ample Car parking provided which lessens the impact of on street parking.
- Attractive pedestrian environment with streetscape elements including street lights, bollards, formal planting and street trees which contribute to a stimulating environment adding colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved areas.
- Town well served with both estate type development of housing and looser ribbon type of individual houses and bungalows.
- Houses within this townscape are typically terraced and closely spaced giving a high sense of enclosure to the street and provides active surveillance while businesses are closed.
- Finn Harps football stadium is currently located in the centre of Ballybofey, and a new stadium is presently under construction adjacent to a cluster of other sporting facilities in Stranorlar.
- A 18 hole course Ballybofey Golf Club is situated north of Ballybofey-Stranorlar.
- The traditional town centre continues to display a strong and diverse independent retailing sector and a vibrant retail sector.
- The presence of long established residential areas provide a sense of identity and place, referencing and cultural and historic value.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form important local landmarks.
- Extensive woodlands, native planting and the banks of the River Finn provide a natural invaluable resource.
- Views channelled to the landscape setting are significant in terms of contributing to a sense of place.
- Occasional views between buildings along the main street providing glimpses of the surrounding landscape setting.
- Views projecting out to the countryside provide a connection with the settlement and the landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

4.2 Ballyshannon & Environs



Ballyshannon is one of the oldest towns in Ireland, having developed along the banks of the River Erne. The town is an area of intense archaeological and historical significance, and has been designated as both a historic and heritage town. As early as the Neolithic Period (4000-2500BC) there is evidence of human settlement and ritual activity within the town and wider hinterlands.

Ballyshannon is located along the Northwest Atlantic coast and N15 National Primary Route from Sligo to Lifford (between the two Gateways of Sligo and Letterkenny). It is approximately 6km northeast of Bundoran town centre, 22km south of Donegal, 44km northeast of Sligo and 45km west of Enniskillen adjacent to counties Fermanagh and Leitrim. The recently constructed Bundoran/Ballyshannon By-Pass runs to the south and east of the town. The town centre consists mainly of retail, professional, residential, public/institutional and community/health/educational developments. There are also a number of derelict buildings. The two major tourist resorts of Bundoran and Rosstown are located a few kilometres away with several quality hotels, golf courses, surfing, hiking and fishing amenities.

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The town and hinterland contains many buildings and monuments of architectural and archaeological merit, including 27 protected structures, 103 NIAH listed buildings and 21 archaeological monuments and is surrounded by 3 conservation sites.

Ballyshannon is designated as an archaeological complex and there is a large concentration of monuments in the vicinity of the town reflecting the continual occupation of these fertile lands since Neolithic times, owing to its location on the strategically important River Erne. Assaroe falls was prized for fish yields and the river

provided the link between Lough Erne and the sea. The crossing of the Erne by road made this an important transport node, for military control, trade and commerce.

The architectural heritage of Ballyshannon forms an intrinsic part of the character of the town particularly the town centre streetscape; it has structures of architectural heritage merit, groups of buildings and landmark buildings, as well as the remaining vernacular buildings and their settings on the outskirts of the town centre.

The historic streetscape of Ballyshannon includes Main Street, Upper Main Street, Market Street, Castle Street, Chapel Street, College Street, Church Lane, Bishops Street and The Mall. In the Port the historic streetscape is East Port, West Port and West Rock. These routes contain vital historic material enriching the public realm. Vibrant streetscapes and civic spaces are defined by surrounding buildings whilst having their own distinctive character, a marrying of the old and new forming a coherent interconnected network of places to support social interaction and displaying a hierarchy of private, commercial and civil functions.

The Mall boasts the largest concentration of eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings reflecting the mercantile life of the town. Previously referred to as Park Lane the Mall retains much of its rich architectural flavour, home to buildings such as Condon House, Mulligans Warehouse, Methodist Meeting House, Presbyterian Church and a number of very fine detached dwelling houses. Ballyshannon workhouse built in 1842, located in the Rock, remains a valuable asset to the area providing for an array of opportunities in terms of the restoration and redevelopment of the building and associated grounds. There are also a number of recorded archaeological monuments located throughout the Plan area, including ecclesiastical remains, standing stones, holy wells, middens, souterrains and a promontory fort of great cultural and historic importance.

Ballyshannon has many ecclesiastical buildings including Ballyshannon Presbyterian Church, St Josephs Church, St Patricks Church, Methodist Meeting House and St Ann's Church, an iconic and prominent landmark on the town's skyline

The Normans arrived in Ballyshannon in 1211. During the 12th century an order of the Cistercians was established on Abbey Island by the estuary, where the ruins of their Abbey, still remain. Remains of the Abbey Mill nearby are intact thanks to restoration work carried out by the Abbey Mills Restoration Trust in the 1990s. In 1613 Ballyshannon received Royal Charter becoming a British garrison town.

The building hosting the garrison can still be found at the Erne Bridge and 'The Barracks', as it was referred to, dates from 1700. In the 1830's, Ballyshannon comprised of three streets and a total of 689 houses. An artillery barracks for 40 men was located at Finner Camp. Also a large distillery manufacturing whiskey and brewery were located in the town.

The town, at this time, was favourably situated for commerce and manufacturers, and became a thriving mercantile port. However, following a number of naval accidents within the Erne Estuary during the 1930s, the port was deemed too dangerous for vessels, and was subsequently closed. This effectively led to the decline of the Port and the demise of the rich mercantile heritage associated with the town over previous centuries. In the 1950s Cathaleen Fall's Hydro Station was developed along the River Erne and Assaroe Lake was created as a recreational resource.

In terms of natural heritage due to the rich diversity of the area there is a significant variety of birdlife within and around Ballyshannon. The landscape setting of Ballyshannon is an important natural wildlife habitat and scenic tourism resource. Though not a natural harbour, Ballyshannon evolved as a busy port, experiencing a sustained period of prosperity. As the pre-eminent merchant town in the region its main industries included

distilling, wine, brewing, tanning, tobacco processing and saw milling. The Ballyshannon Distillery Company in full operation produced in excess of 100,000 gallons of whiskey per annum.

This prosperity continued into the nineteenth century with Ballyshannon consolidating its role as a port trading with many foreign destinations from New York, Sweden Russia and closer to home in Liverpool and Glasgow.

Natural Environment



Ballyshannon has three important natural heritage designations;

There are a number of environmental designations within and around the town; these are listed below, the detail of which can be sourced at www.npws.ie.

- Erne Estuary and Finner Dunes (Natural Heritage Area - pNHA).
- Dunmuckrum Turlough (Special Area of Conservation - cSAC)
- Donegal Bay (Special Protection Area - SPA) Landscape characteristics

Landscape Characteristics

Ballyshannon is located within LCA Unit 44 the southernmost LCA in the County which borders both County Leitrim and Northern Ireland. It is a low lying gently undulating drumlin landscape patterned with deciduous hedgerow and tree bound regular rectilinear fields framed by Tievebaun Mountains in Sligo to the South and the Cliffs of Magher and uplands in Fermanagh to the east. A large peninsular sand dune system and beach, Tullagh Strand, extend north from the N15 road narrowing the estuarine mouth of the Erne River, and the large military base 'Finner Camp' is located on the dune system close to the road. The River Erne was dammed to the east of Ballyshannon in the late 1940s dam and further east up river at Cliff in Northern Ireland creating Cathleen's Falls hydroelectric system, the first major cross-border co-operation project since partition.

Ballyshannon is a town with a strong environmental setting, incorporating coastal, river and lakeside activities, open spaces, walking networks, and active areas of open space. The LCA is a mostly low lying landscape of 'Ballyshannon Limestone formation' save for a narrow band of Gneiss along north eastern boundary and punctuated with pockets of sandstone and shale along the west coast.

Identification of Settlement Type (Mouth of the Ford of the Slope)

Ballyshannon is an historic strategic support town, coastally located on the River Erne providing a key service centre for the south west region of the county that benefits from

the cross border connections Northern Ireland. A former thriving mercantile port and railway town, reputedly the oldest town in Ireland, its coastal location and label as a heritage town have led to a strong tourism industry.

Townscape features



As a town, Ballyshannon encompasses many layers of heritage and an architectural fabric that reflects its rich history as an ecclesiastical, political and maritime centre. Details which inform the image of the town include street furniture, signage, ground finishes and street lighting. Additional features include:

- Rich collection of 18th and 19th century buildings.
- Distinctive local, vernacular design and materials on a number of buildings including public, private and domestic.
- A number of public areas that inform the public realm.
- Historic residential streets stemming from post war era.
- There are many fine examples of detached houses in Ballyshannon, a further indication of the wealth and notoriety of the area in its time. They are located along the Mall and on the outskirts of the town ranging from country houses, villas and farmhouses to thatched and slated cottages and include Condon House, Lia Fall, Portnason, Danby, Inis Saimer as examples.
- Town centre includes the Main Street, Castle Street, the Barracks and Market Square.
- Mix of uses within the town centre.
- Rich architectural and streetscape detailing, presence of landmarks and hierarchy of streets and spaces creating a stimulating environment.
- Dominated by active frontages opening directly onto the street contributing to a sense of vitality and a vibrant character.
- Attractive pedestrian environment with streetscape elements including street lights, bollards, formal planting and street trees which contribute to a stimulating environment adding colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved areas.
- Mature trees and vegetation enhance the visual amenity of the town.
- Rows of terraces and semi-detached properties along the streets leading into the town centre are typically 2-3 storeys which contribute to a townscape of human scale while also giving a sense of enclosure to the street and active surveillance at night.

- Square provides a valuable break in built up townscape enhancing the retail and tourist experience.
- Ornamental planting and decorative street lighting contribute to a stimulating environment.
- Dorrians thatched pub present in the town adds an almost rural character to the streetscape and symbolises an exit to the rural hinterland.
- Ballyshannon's rich historic past, including archaeological sites, fine architectural heritage of a 17th century plantation town and strong vernacular Irish character are important qualities that define the uniqueness and quality of the town.
- The Church of Ireland dominates and informs the skyline of the town and the wider surrounding landscape.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form local landmarks which are important in terms of a focal point for the community to congregate and ensure the place is easy to navigate and locate. The Church of Ireland dominates and informs the skyline of the town and the wider surrounding landscape.
- Views channelled to the landscape setting.
- Views projecting out to the coastline provide a connection with the settlement and the landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.
- Important views and prospects are also visible along vistas and long views, within the town such as those of St. Anne's church of Ireland and Gallogley's jewellers, providing immeasurable identity and character.
- Occasional views between buildings along the main street provide glimpses of the surrounding landscape setting.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

4.3 Bridgend



Bridgend is located adjoining the international border with Northern Ireland and fulfils a strategic cross border role. Currently the town provides medium scale cross border economic activity but the strategic location along the Letterkenny- Derry economic corridor, supported by good transport connections to City of Derry airport and Lisahally Port (made more accessible with the recent opening of the Skeoge link road) provide for important opportunities to promote the strategic economic growth of the town.

Historically a small rural settlement, it has evolved as a result of cross-border influences into a commuter village with a mismatch of functions for a settlement it's size, including a higher than average amount of petrol stations, gambling establishments and amusements.

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A ring fort located on the outskirts of the town which is a recorded archaeological monument. In terms of natural heritage the presence of the river within the settlement affords a connection with the landscape providing a significant contrast to the busy N13.

The settlement is also in close proximity to an ecologically important landscape containing Lough Swilly SAC (002887), Lough Swilly SPA (004075), Lough Swilly including Big Isle, Blanket Nook & Inch Lake NHA (000166). Inishowen Inch Wildfowl Reserve is of international importance for a number of protected species. Woodland adjacent to the National Primary Roundabout, trees and hedgerow bound roads and laneways line all form important biodiversity corridors and linkages. Details of the

environmental designations within and around the town can be sourced at www.npws.ie

Landscape characteristics

Bridgend is located within LCA 11 Grianan Slopes and Lowland a fertile green agricultural landscape of great environmental, historical and archaeological importance, with an extensive boundary along the border with Northern Ireland to the east and along the shores of Lough Swilly to the west. The topography is such that higher lands within the centre east of this area slope downwards on all sides to an undulating lower agricultural landform affording extensive and panoramic views out over the surrounding landscape and Lough Swilly, and conversely this area is highly visible from a wide area of Donegal and adjoining County Derry. The range of landscape assets and the location along the Wild Atlantic Way with good transport connections by air and road make this landscape area a popular area for tourists to visit and stay. Similarly these same assets have fuelled recent rural and urban population expansion within this LCA.

The area is characterised by open aspects with low hills and low lying gently undulating fields which are an interesting feature on the western, Lough Swilly, side of the National Primary road, highlighted by Burt castle located on top of a rounded hill in the town land of Grange.

Identification of Settlement Type (Head of the Bridge)

Bridgend can be identified as a small cross border village settlement located on the border between Donegal and Northern Ireland. Strategically placed on the Derry-Letterkenny corridor, the village plays an important role as a cross-border settlement and as a commuter village, serving the larger towns and surrounding hinterland. Historically, village has no real urban form, consisting of a cluster located on a crossroads. Today, village consists of a mix of commercial and residential, with a large growth in residential developments seen in last decade.

Townscape features



This particular townscape offers a unique experience not provided by other settlements. The presence of amusements, euro exchange facilities and petrol stations offers another strand of services which is characteristic of this settlement type. It has its own niche established as a result of its cross border location. In particular to counter act strict gaming laws which are present in the north amusement and gaming facilities have developed over time. The role of the landscape has been largely determined by the degree to which continued investment has been spent within this area. In turn this has provided for the development of businesses including Dohertys' Café and Harry's Restaurant. Additional townscape features include:

- A mix of uses including residential, retail and commercial which providing active and passive surveillance.
- Built form is of functional design, large scale with open space being utilised for car parking.
- The River and grass verges provide a tranquil setting in contrast to busy road.
- Large volume of visitors for the sole use of the many petrol stations within the area.
- The town is well served with both estate-type development of varieties of housing and looser ribbon- type of individual houses and bungalows.
- Built fabric contains a small number of urban vernacular tin buildings which enhance the landscape setting.
- Vacant units and plots within settlement which offer an opportunity for development in the town.
- Local produce food market operates weekly in the town.
- The townscape which could be enhanced further by investment in ornamental and formal planting to add colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved and car park areas.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Views channelled to the open countryside include Scalp Mountain and Grianan Slopes.

4.4 Buncrana



Buncrana is the second most populated town in the county and a key service centre for Inishowen and the wider Donegal County. Located between the River Crana and River Mill, it boasts a very rich history and heritage, with many fine examples of architecture and urban planning throughout the town, many of which are protected. Buncrana developed as a traditional Irish linear settlement, before the plantation era seen George Vaughan create planned main street and market square, as well as historic Buncrana Castle in 1718. The Buncrana Railway Station opened in 1864 and the railway ran until 1953, boosting the growth and vitality of the town and its tourism industry. The railway also helped support a strong textile industry from 19th Century, that continued through to the new millennium. The River Crana from whence the town gets its name and form around which the town has evolved remains a focal and integral element of the town.

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Buncrana is a historic settlement intrinsically associated with Lough Swilly as evident from the plethora of recorded monuments and protected structures in the landscape including enclosures, middens, cairns, promontory forts, Napoleonic forts, a castle, seaside Victorian architecture and vernacular buildings. Evidence of Buncrana's key role in the textile industry remains in the form of the Swan Mill and Tullyarvan Mill, these structures inform the character of the town reflecting its industrial heritage. Buncrana's significant maritime and defensive history owing to its strategic location alongside the large glacial Fjord that is Lough Swilly, has a number surviving structures including: Porthaw Fort, Buncrana castle and the Lighthouse along Buncrana shore. The variety of historical fabric provides a qualitative and intrinsically unique quality to the town.



Landscape characteristics

Buncrana is located within LCA Unit 8 Buncrana Coast consisting of undulating fertile agricultural landscape with underlying schist geology, framed by uplands to the north, east and south and Lough Swilly to the west (one of only three glacial fjords in Ireland). Buncrana LCA is an interesting and active landscape with a synergy of land uses that contribute to the unique character of this area.

The coastline has a low rocky edge along the northern section of the LCA with a softer sandy shoreline towards the south from Lady's Bay along Buncrana Beach towards the Blue Flag beach at Lisfannon. An Ecologically important landscape containing SAC, SPA and pNHA as well as the important biodiversity links of the riverine corridors, and the old railway line.

Large fluid sand dune system and coast along the south and patchwork of medium to large sized agricultural fields generally bounded by native hedgerow and deciduous trees. There are large areas of deciduous woodland particularly along the coast and along river valleys.

Townscape features



Buncrana began as a traditional Irish linear settlement on the banks of the Crana River and was modified during the 'Plantation' to create a planned main street and market square. Buncrana Railway Station operated from 1864-1953 connecting Buncrana to Derry to the south-east, and Clonmany to the north fuelling the growth and vitality of the town as a market centre of production and trade and as a quality seaside resort. Buncrana has retained its function as service centre for Inishowen and wider Donegal County with a concentration of retail, services, education and community facilities; a synergy of land uses that also contribute to the unique character of this area. Buncrana has also continued to grow as a resort town and tourist destination based on its many natural, built, heritage and cultural strengths. Additional Townscape Features include:

- The Main Street area remains the retailing, service, and entertainment, cultural and social heart of the town and demonstrates a vitality, vibrancy and diversity not evident elsewhere in the town centre.
- Rich architectural and streetscape detailing, presence of landmarks and hierarchy of streets and spaces which ensure the environment is stimulating.
- Dominated by active frontages that open directly onto the street resulting in a vibrant character and contribute to a sense of vitality.
- Ample Car parking provided lessening the impact of on street parking.
- Attractive pedestrian environment with streetscape elements including street lights, bollards, formal planting and street trees which contribute to a stimulating environment adding colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved areas.
- Houses within this townscape are typically terraced and closely spaced giving a high sense of enclosure to the street and provides active surveillance while businesses are closed.
- The town is well served with both estate-type development of varieties of housing and looser ribbon- type of individual houses and bungalows.
- Mature trees and vegetation enhance the visual amenity of the town.
- Variations in rooflines that 'step up' and step down' along the Main Street add to the town centres' distinctive character.
- Mix of uses along the main street including residential, commercial and retail provide active and passive surveillance all day long contributing to sense of vitality within the settlement.
- Topography of the town within the landscape provides occasional open vistas over looking Lough Swilly.
- Spacious character of streetscape with a relatively wide street proportion
- Lough Swilly provides a tranquil setting and connection with the physical landscape.
- A number of traditional shop fronts and vernacular buildings remain and add character and quality to the streetscape.
- The town expresses a well defined setting and compact centre.

Strong and high quality natural and designed open space in the town is provided by areas along the shore, the beach and sea, and Swan Park in addition to other local recreational areas and sports grounds

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form local landmarks
- Views channelled to open countryside including Scalp Mountain and Lough Swilly coastline.
- Occasional views between buildings along the main street which providing glimpses of the surrounding landscape setting.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

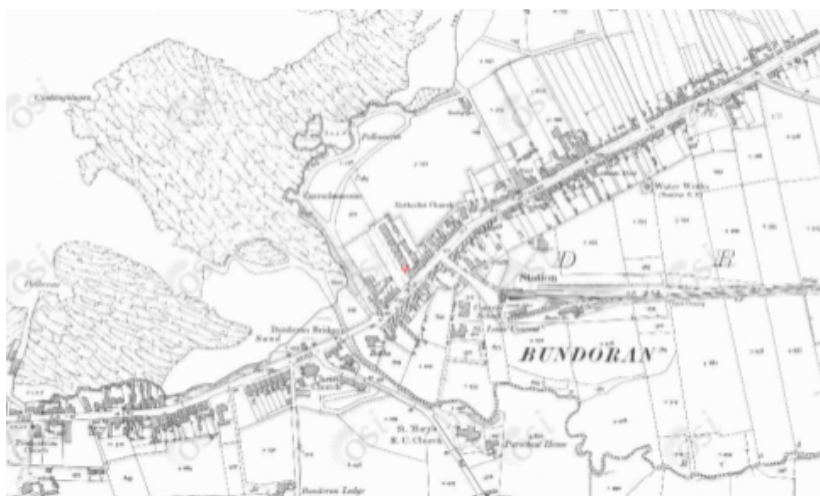
4.5 Bundoran



Context

Bundoran is situated along the strategic N15 National Primary Route linking Donegal with Leitrim and Sligo. The town has developed in a linear form along a main axis route parallel to the coast. Bundoran is predominantly a seasonal tourist town, with a noticeable turnover in independent retailers that set up mainly to serve the tourists, which continues to impact on the viability and vitality of the town at off-peak periods. Bundoran is strategically well placed in terms of transport infrastructure provision and ease of accessibility due in part to its proximity to Sligo Town.

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The urban core has unique character and structures around the town are of historical and architectural merit, with 8 protected structures and 14 NIAH listed buildings. Surrounding areas include 4 conservation sites and 8 archaeological sites.

Architectural Conversation Area includes ACA1 Bayview Terrace: Row of eight two-bay, three –storey Victorian houses, built c. 1890.

Tourism

Bundoran has historically been a seaside resort and tourist destination. It retains a strong tourism function and character based on its seaside location and natural amenity. Bundoran serves as a gateway to the County and provides a strong accommodation and touring base for visitors to the County. The tourism industry in the town is well

established with its origins as a nineteenth century seaside retreat. The attractiveness of Bundoran as a destination resort is largely based on the high quality natural environment which includes the rocky shoreline, cliffs, sand beaches, stony beaches, seaweed beds, rock pools and the Bradogue River. These natural habitats are recognised as important elements of the natural heritage value of the area

There are a number of environmental designations within and around the town; these are listed below, the detail of which can be sourced at www.npws.ie .

- Lough Melvin SAC site code:000428
- Drummuckrum Turloughs SAC site code: 002303
- Donegal SPA site code: 004151

Landscape characteristics

Bundoran is located within LCA Unit 44 the River Erne Lowlands characterised by a low lying gently undulating drumlin landscape patterned with deciduous hedgerow and tree bound regular rectilinear fields framed by Tievebaun Mountains in Sligo to the South and the Cliffs of Magher and uplands in Fermanagh to the east.

Bundoran has an interesting coastal edge of rock slabs extending to sea and two sheltered sandy bays, just north the large peninsular sand dune system and Tullagh Strand. The quality of the coastal environment is of significant amenity value for Bundoran, which is of National, Regional and Local tourism importance.

Identification of Settlement Type (Mouth of the Little Water River)

Bundoran is a coastal town which serves as the service centre for the south west of the county. Historically, the settlement existed as two linear villages at each side of the bridge, known as Bundoran and Single Street. It was the opening up of Bundoran Railway Station in 1968 which seen the merging of the two villages. The railway closed in 1957.

Today, the town is dominated by the hospitality and entertainment sectors, with a large number of holiday homes and a number of mobile home parks. The coast is a key tourist attraction with the surf being an attraction for many local and overseas visitors. The town is a key base for tourism in the south west of Donegal and wider region and has been reinventing itself and expanding on its tourism offer with music events and festivals.

Townscape features





Despite new developments, Bundoran's town centre remains synonymous with the traditional retail core of the town – which is focused on the town's Main Street and which can be classified as the town's "primary retail core". It is observed that this area of the town is geared primarily for the tourist market, with land uses being dominated by lower order comparison goods shops, amusement arcades, pubs and restaurants. The linear development of the town, principally along the Main Street has resulted in the development of a well defined streetscape and although a lot of the development in Bundoran is reasonably new, there are some fine buildings of architectural quality that give Bundoran a unique sense of place. Bundoran's role as a traditional Irish seaside resort is manifest in its past and present built environment. Additional townscape qualities:

- Differing uses, architectural styles, and facades of the hotels, shop fronts and amusement arcades and interesting juxtaposition of uses contribute to a diverse physical streetscape, in many locations
- The 18-hole Golf Course and Great Northern Hotel at Aughrus Point located within the Coastal Conservation Zone.
- Presence of allotments (pictured above).
- Height of traditional linear development in the old town gives a sense of enclosure to the street.
- Building frontages open directly onto the street resulting in a vibrant character.
- Attractive pedestrian environment with streetscape elements including street lights, bollards, formal planting and street trees which contribute to a stimulating environment adding colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved areas.
- Dominated by active frontages contributing to a sense of vitality.
- Sporadic instances of mature trees and vegetation enhance the visual amenity of the town.
- Variations in rooflines contribute to a stimulating environment and effectively break up the elevation adding to the town's distinctive character.
- Mix of uses along the main street including residential, commercial and retail provide active and passive surveillance all day long contributing to sense of vitality within the settlement.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form local landmarks.
- Views channelled to open countryside include the iconic Ben Bulbin mountain and Dartry Mountain.
- The marine landscape including seaward views and prospects, the impressive open (designed and natural) landscape of the golf course and beyond and features of natural beauty that contribute to Bundoran's 'sense of place'
- Occasional views between buildings along the main street provide glimpses of the surrounding landscape setting.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

4.6 Dungloe



Context

Dungloe is strategically positioned in the north-western sub region of the county functioning as a key service centre to the surrounding area. Its role as a Strategic Support Town is evidenced through a strong number, range and level of services and facilities concentrated primarily along Main Street. In addition, the town provides for higher level activities including Dungloe Community Hospital, Garda Station, Donegal County Council Public Service Centre and secondary level education again demonstrating the role of the town as serving not only its own population but that of the rural towns and open countryside surrounding.

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In terms of natural heritage, the topographical features together with the river and coastline provide high amenity areas due to the landscape characteristics, distinctiveness and visual amenity value. The settlement is also in close proximity to several conservation areas, including the Glenveagh National Park, nearby presence of pNHA (002047) and SAC (002047) and presence of designated Shellfish Area.

The town contains 8 buildings on the NIAH which contribute significantly to the character of the landscape and established identity of the town, as does the cumulative character of the vernacular terrace along the Main Street. The tourism industry has long been associated with this town due to the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape and unique vernacular of the town. The influx of tourists increases the vitality of the town making it a more desirable place to live and work in.

The railway extended to Dungloe in 1903 from Letterkenny and onwards to Burtonport offering an important opportunity for the town to connect to wider markets and promote itself as a destination for tourists.

Landscape characteristics

Dungloe is located within LCA Unit 28 The Rosses Knock & Lochan Islands & Coast comprising of a long indented shoreline and the offshore islands of: Inishfree Lower, Owey, Cruit, Inishkeeragh, Rutland, Inishfree Upper and Donegal's largest inhabited island, Arranmore. The mainland area has a distinctive 'knock and Lochan' landscape, and is known locally as 'The Rosses'. An undulating glacial landscape of bog covered hills and eroded hollows containing small lakes with distinctive rock outcrops, contained and framed by the Derryveagh Mountains to the east. This predominantly bog landscape is interrupted by isolated occurrences of more fertile landscapes dotted near lakes, along rivers and along the coastline, and also by geometric areas of planted forestry.

The geology of this area is predominantly granite and although it is undulating it is one of the most low-lying areas in Donegal. The rocky outcrops give a rough bare appearance to the area. Although the landscape consists mainly of bog there are scattered patches of agricultural land located in thin bands along the coastline, along some stretches of rivers and a few patches around lakes.

Defining natural features within the town include the Dungloe River, the silty coastline and Dungloe Lake, in addition the presence of mature vegetation in some ways defines the arrival to the town from the surrounding bog landscape.

Identification of Settlement Type (The Grey Stepping Stone)

Historically, the town had a traditional linear form, and today the town has a clear core and structure with a strong tourism industry due to its location and distinctive character. The town is an important service centre for the surrounding rural area with educational, retail, business and employment and cultural and social facilities

Townscape features



This particular townscape is very distinctive in character in terms of architecture and layout

This townscape is very distinctive in character in terms of architecture and layout with notable townscape quality along the main street providing an immediate sense of place within a unique vernacular town. Additional townscape features include:

- Tree lined avenue along the main street breaks up the pavements giving a sense of enclosure and tranquillity.
- Highly detailed frontages and variation in rooflines along the main street arranged in a step down fashion create a stimulating environment.
- Buildings open directly onto street resulting in a vibrant character passive surveillance during the day.
- Rows of terraces and semi-detached properties along the main street, typically 2-3 storeys, contribute to a townscape of human scale while also giving a sense of enclosure to the street.
- Streetscape elements include ornamental planting, street lighting and seating areas.
- Ample car parking available on lower main street beside the playground counteracts pressures of on-street parking and provides a tranquil peaceful setting along the coast line.
- Direct access to the coastline off the main street.
- Townscape enhanced by the visual links created by the strong linear feature of the stone wall surrounding St Crone's Parish Church (pictured below)
- Occurrences of mature trees and vegetation enhance the visual amenity of the town.
- Churches provide a focal point in the town.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Occasional views between buildings along the main street.
- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from both ends and looking down on the settlement from Mill Road.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form local landmarks.
- Views projecting to the coastline provide a connection of the settlement with the landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.
- The Stone wall and mature tree located by St Crone's Parish Church pictured above forms a distinctive feature of the landscape.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

4.7 Carndonagh



Context

Carndonagh is a regional town located at the centre of Northern Inishowen, within the valleys of the Glenagannon and Donagh Rivers. It is the second largest town in the peninsula after Buncrana. Carndonagh has developed as a key service and employment centre within the area and its rural hinterland extends to the towns and villages of: Ballyliffen, Clonmany, Culdaff, Gleneely, Glengad, Malin Head, Malin Town and Rasheney.

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There is a long recorded history of settlement in Carndonagh, with early association with Christianity and in Particular St.Patrick who it is believed to have founded a monastery here; Carndonagh Cross and slabs remain in the town and date from the early Christian period. The town is also one of the more notable plantation towns in the County, a 'planned' diamond with roads radiating from the centre, within a typical plantation landscape of quality agricultural lands.

The railway extended to Carndonagh from Derry via the west coast of Inishowen from 1907 until 1935, that integrated this and other more remote towns into wider markets. The relatively short life of the railway to Carndonagh had no lasting negative effect to the growth of Carndonagh that retained its function as a market town serving the wider rural hinterland.



Rich legacy of megalithic, pre-Christian and early Christian settlement within this LCA as evidenced by the many surviving archaeological structures including the Carndonagh crosses remains of Bocan Stone circle and the Temple of Deen among others.

A regionally important aquifer extends from the Northern part of the town to Trawbeaga Bay and there are a number of environmental designations within and around the town; these are listed below, the detail of which can be sourced at www.npws.ie .

- Trawbeaga Bay SAC
- Trawbeaga Bay SPC
- Trawbeaga Bay pNHA

Landscape characteristics

Carndonagh is located within LCA 3 North Inishowen Mountains and Valleys characterised by a diverse and varied landscape area that extends west from the northeast Atlantic coast of Inishowen towards the sheltered estuary of Trawbeaga Bay. The area stands alone within the Inishowen peninsula in part due to the expanse of fertile agricultural land containing a variety of farm types and features, historic stone bound field patterns along the coast, surviving clachans, and easily accessible and diverse coastline. This Landscape Character area is predominantly agricultural with isolated upland bog and peat areas and pockets of coniferous plantations. Good farmland has been improved in the valley slopes and includes a patchwork of straight-sided rectilinear fields reminiscent of richer lands to the south.

A working landscape: A key characteristic of this particular settlement is its large farming culture which has evolved through time due to the rich fertile agricultural land which surrounds it. Farming has largely influenced the towns' development and is still evident with the survival of livestock mart located close to the town centre. The promotion of agriculture as a major land use will help maintain the existing features of the landscape value while supporting the local economy. The Inishowen Agricultural show is held within the settlement on an annual basis showcasing cattle, sheep and horses and a wide range of home industries and rural skills.

Identification of Settlement Type (Cairn of the Church)

A vibrant town located on the Donagh River, Carndonagh is a service centre for North and East Inishowen, the town also plays a supporting role to nearby Buncrana and the surrounding hinterland. The principal market town for north Inishowen, the town has a large range of services.

Townscape features



The town centre is focused around an historic, plantation diamond, of strong heritage and architectural character, retaining a vernacular scale and proportion. A large Italianite Catholic Church sits atop higher ground to the south of the town, this large and imposing structure sits within mature grounds and is visible from much of the town and the surrounding landscape and approach roads to the town. Additional features in the town include:

- Wide street proportion within the town centre and approach roads..
- Mix of uses along the main street includes residential, commercial and retail uses providing active and passive surveillance all day long contributing to sense of vitality within the settlement.
- Building frontages open directly onto the street resulting in a vibrant character.
- Attractive pedestrian environment with streetscape elements including street lights, bollards, formal planting and street trees which contribute to a stimulating environment adding colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved areas.
- Dominated by active frontages contributing to a sense of vitality.
- Elements of mature trees and vegetation enhance the visual amenity of the town.
- Church spire visible from both ends of the town providing a local focal point which connects the town to the surrounding landscape.
- Buildings located around diamond give a sense of enclosure to the streetscape.
- Diamond square provides a valuable break in built up townscape and enhances the retail experience for the locals and tourists.
- Houses within the townscape are typically terraced giving a high sense of enclosure to the street.

Elevation of landscape provides open vistas within the town and to the surrounding landscape.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Church visible from outside the town is an iconic and significant local landmark within the town and the wider landscape.
- Views projecting to the coastline provide a connection with the settlement and the landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.
- Sporadic breaks between buildings along Main Street, provides vistas of the surrounding landscape setting.
- Mature trees located within the diamond at the centre of the Main Street enhance the visual amenity of the town and have a particular individual and collective value.

The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

4.8 Donegal Town



Context

Donegal Town is the 5th most populous town in Donegal and the principal urban centre in the south of the county. The town is strategically located at the head of Donegal Bay at a key point along the N15 North South Transport Corridor (part of the wider Atlantic Corridor) at the junction with the N56 National Primary route which serves the west of the county. The town acts as the key retail, commercial, social and recreational centre for the southern part of the county and in particular attracts a significant number of tourists on a seasonal basis. In infrastructural terms the town is served, primarily by, the N15 and N56 National routes. The town has 2 primary and 1 Secondary Level schools.

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Donegal town has a long and chequered recorded and evidential history. Evidence of the earliest settlement in and around Donegal Town is from Neolithic times in the form of round forts, probably due to the location on the River Eske and Estuary. The Annals of Tirconnel record Vikings in the area in the early 800s arriving through the navigable waters of Donegal Bay. Donegal castle and Abbey were both built in the 15th Century, and it was in the ruined Donegal Abbey during the 1600's that the 'Annals of the Four Masters' commenced.

The 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607 paved the way for the plantation of Ulster and lands in and around Donegal were granted to Sir Basil Brooke by the English. He re-designed

Donegal Town around a 'diamond' and this was used as the market place from then until the 1950s; the form of the diamond remains.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has identified Donegal Town as a Historic Town for general protection, recognising its important and intriguing History.

The railway from Stranorlar to Donegal Town in opened in 1882 and was subsequently extended on to Killybegs in 1893 and Ballyshannon in 1905. The arrival of the railway, like other more remote towns in the County, opened up greater opportunities for enterprise and access to wider markets as well as tourism and day excursions. Although the former railway closed in 1960 it remained important in terms of its association with the landscape and culture and a Donegal railway heritage centre is located in Donegal town.

There are a number of environmental designations within and around the town; the detail of which can be sourced at www.npws.ie .

Landscape characteristics

Donegal town is located within LCA Unit 37 Donegal Bay Drumlins consisting of a large expanse of distinctive drumlins which fall from the Blue Stack Mountain Range to the north and the Pettigo Plateau area to the east. The drumlin formation is more prominent to the north as it converges around the head of the Donegal Bay and the axis of the Drumlins are oriented towards the bay with the drumlins becoming less prominent towards the south.

This landscape predominantly consists of a patchwork of fertile agricultural fields of various sizes bound by hedges and trees. It is also characterised by patches of wooded areas with various conifer plantations to the north and the area is scattered with Loughs which are particularly concentrated to the south. There is a network of rivers running from east to west towards the Atlantic and the coastline is characterised by distinctive features such as long sandy strands, sandy estuaries and an area of glacial drifts that form peninsulas ovoid islands at the head of the bay.

Series of biodiversity rich river valleys flowing down from the Bluestack Mountains that run from east to west to the coast including the protected rivers of Eske and Drummery to the north.

Donegal Bay is an area rich in biodiversity and whales, sharks, sun fish, turtles and dolphins are regularly spotted. This area has special protection for both the shell fish at Donegal Bay and Inver Bay. This area also contains the international protected Fresh Water Pearl Mussel.

The town and its immediate hinterland are physically defined and characterised by the River Eske, its estuary into Donegal Bay and the surrounding drumlin type landscape.

Identification of settlement type (fort of the stranger)

Donegal town is a historic heritage town located on the River Eske. A service centre for the south west of Donegal, similar to nearby Ballyshannon, which it shares a complimentary relationship with. There are many historic structures within the town, including Donegal Castle. During plantation era, a new wing was added to castle and the

town was planned and built around the 'diamond' at the core of the settlement. The textile industry is key to the areas history and still remains today.

Townscape features



The town centre displays a strong built form and high quality streetscape centred upon the historical and vibrant Diamond area; Additional Townscape Features include:

- Central and northern portions of the town display a compact form
- Spacious character of streetscape due to a relatively wide street proportion.
- Mix of active uses.
- Rich architectural and streetscape detailing, presence of landmarks and hierarchy of streets and spaces which ensure the environment is stimulating.
- Building frontages open directly onto the street resulting in a vibrant character.
- Attractive pedestrian environment with streetscape elements including street lights, bollards, formal planting and street trees which contribute to a stimulating environment adding colour and life perceptually breaking up large paved areas.
- Dominated by active frontages contributing to a sense of vitality.
- Mature trees and vegetation enhance the visual amenity of the town.
- Rows of terraces and semi-detached properties along the streets leading into the town centre are typically 2-3 storeys which contribute to a townscape of human scale while also giving a sense of enclosure to the street and active surveillance at night.
- The Diamond remains as a historic town centre reflecting the plantation layout in the 1600s that still functions as an important public realm.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form local landmarks.
- Views out to the coastline provide a connection with the settlement and the landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.
- Views from parts of the main street which provide vistas of the surrounding landscape setting.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

4.9 Killybegs



Context

Killybegs is the largest natural deepwater harbour in Ireland located at the tip of a fjord like inlet west of Donegal Bay; it one of the most sheltered deep water harbours in Ireland and is home to large scale commercial fishing and associated industries. Situated along the R263 Regional Road, a spur off the N56 National Secondary Road, it is located 27km from Donegal Town and 26km from Glencolmcille. Killybegs is designated as an Historic Town and the centre of Killybegs retains much of its original character in a compact traditional form. The history, built and cultural heritage of the town combined with its location on the edge of Donegal Bay and location along the Wild Atlantic Way combine to strengthen the tourism offer in the town.

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Killybegs has a rich heritage, with high quality architecture and historical monuments in and around the area. 5 structures are protected, 23 are listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and there are 18 monuments identified on the Record of Monuments and Places, including Megalithic tombs dating back 6000 years.

Christianity arrived in the region around the 4th Century with the arrival of St. Colmcille. However, the town has become associated with St. Catherine, a 4th Century martyr in Alexandria, Egypt. A Holy Well and St. Catherine's Church, thought to originate from the 12th Century was erected in her memory. In 1355 the tower of Kits Castle was

constructed by Bishop McMonagle, later becoming the residence for many subsequent bishops from the dioceses of Raphoe. By the 14th Century the Scottish Mc Sweeney clan took up residence in the town. The harbour, according to the Four Masters, was saved by the intervention of St. Catherine, the patron saint of the town in 1513. That same year the O'Malley pirates attacked the town. In 1588 two Spanish Armada vessels, sank in the harbour. Killybegs was granted borough status by King James and became a plantation town in 1616. In 1842 the town was described as a 'rigmarole looking' place. Aside from the 17th Century Church and a cross slab, most developments in the town stem from the 19th and 20th Centuries, yet this built form hides a much earlier settlement.

Protected structures include:

St John's Church, St Mary of the Visitation, Coastguards Station, The Old Rectory, National School, Fintragh House Stables and Robinson School.



The town also has three important and protected historical heritage sites, these include; the ruins of Cats Castle, St Catherine's Well and the Old Church and Graveyard, all located in the Glebe area. These historic sites have been places of pilgrimage for many centuries, and also a place to relax and reflect, bringing comfort and pride to the local community. There are also many Neolithic Tombs and Mass Rocks dating back to the penal times in the 17th Century.

Landscape characteristics

Killybegs is located within LCA Unit 36 South Donegal Lowlands. The town has developed organically around a natural harbour and is situated amid undulating lands. The land is generally undulating and slopes down from elevated bogland to the north towards the coast which is characterised by a series of four substantial and distinctive peninsulas. This area is framed by vast mountain range to the west and as such the western land cover tends to be rugged with sparsely vegetated land and areas of scrub. There is more vegetation including farmed land bounded by hedges to the east of this area which then extends into the distinctive Donegal drumlins to the east.

Ecologically important landscapes to the south of St John's Point and along the Muckros Head coastline which contains SAC, SPA and pNHA as well as the important biodiversity links of the riverine corridors. The killybegs fault line is a distinctive geological feature which runs down the west of this area.

Identification of Settlement Type (The Little Cells)

Killybegs is a coastal town located to the north of Donegal Bay and is home to the largest and busiest port in Ireland. Town has a strong economic centre, with port serving

as the key industry mainly through fishing, but also with a variety of other uses. Fishing industry also makes the town distinctive in character. Area is also famed as the home of Donegal Carpets, with production halting in 2003. A large traditional fishing village with significant harbour and industrial buildings associated with the fishing industry.

Townscape features



Whereas most Irish towns have developed in linear form, Killybegs is different, it has developed organically around a natural harbour and within an often steeply rising landscape. While the setting, topography and street network have created an attractive and characteristic harbour town; these factors have also contributed to significant development constraints, access difficulties and traffic congestion. The organic development form evolved historically due to the narrow construction of adjoining buildings, within narrow plots, along thoroughfares. Plot sizes and their narrow configuration determined building line and each building was often finished with slightly varying colours and materials. This variation ensures visual interest, a pleasant sense of enclosure and adds significantly to the charm and character of the town. Within Killybegs 'Old Town' the appearance of and patterns created by buildings reflect the town's history and geography, making it different from other towns within the County. Additional features include:

- The meandering town streets composed of a series of varied, deflecting building facades, which together make up and contribute to the character of the town.
- Ornamental planting and decorative street lighting contribute to a stimulating environment.
- Variations in rooflines also contribute to a stimulating environment and effectively break up the elevation adding to the towns' distinctive character.
- Commercial buildings front onto the main street and traditional shop fronts resulting in a vibrant character.
- Mix of uses along the main street including residential, commercial and retail provide active and passive surveillance all day long contributing to sense of vitality within the settlement.
- Established community already exists
- Harbour provides a tranquil setting and connection with the physical landscape.

Views and prospects



The following perspectives are considered to be of particular importance in terms of landscape setting and the protection of views:

- Views of the settlements skyline, particularly from strategic approaches to the town from either end.
- Church spires visible from outside the town form local landmarks which.
- Views projecting out to the coastline provide a connection with the settlement and the landscape contributing to a strong sense of place.
- Occasional views and vistas from the town provide glimpses of the surrounding landscape setting.
- The layout of the town centre and traditional streetscapes.

