

Kildare County Council carried out footpath works in Monasterevin during December 2011 and January 2012. The works paid specific attention to the needs of vulnerable road users. Following the works Residents from Monasterevin have expressed their concerns and objections to the works carried out. On the 3rd February a Meeting took place in Aras Chill Dara between representatives from the newly formed Monasterevin Residents Group, Kildare County Councillors and Kildare County Council Staff. Following from the meeting it was agreed by all parties that a full review of the works be carried out and a report be presented to the Kildare Area Committee at the April 2012 meeting. The format of the report is as follows

- ***Origins of the Project***
- ***Project Selection***
- ***Design Process***
- ***Project Review and Concerns***
- ***Recommendations***

Origins of the Project.

As you are aware Kildare County Council adopted the Barcelona Declaration in 2002. By adopting the declaration, Kildare County Council committed itself to providing an accessible environment to all within the Community. The Disability Act 2005 strengthens further Kildare County Council responsibilities to ensure all services provided are accessible to people with disabilities. In order to assist Local Authorities in advancing this objective funding has been made available through various government grants. Kildare County Council was awarded a grant by Department of Transport to the value of €40,000 to address access issues within Monasterevin Town.

Project Selection

Following the awarding of the Grant the Area Office carried out the project selection process. The following was taken account of during the selection process

1. Independent Accessibility Audit.

An independent accessibility audit was carried out by Crean Salley Architects in 2008 on a number of towns in Kildare including Monasterevin. The objective of the audit was to address issues relating to accessibility for people with disabilities and also to improve the "Health and Safety and accessibility for all users of the streets". In relation to Monasterevin the audit paid particular attention to Moores Street, Main Street, Dublin Street, Drogheda Street and Drogheda Row. The value of works suggested from the audit was in excess of €310,000.

2. Kildare Local Authorities Access Implementation Plan 2007-2015

The following is an excerpt from the above mentioned plan

"Local Authorities are required under the Sectoral Plan published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and approved by the Oireachtas in November 2006 to prepare an Implementation Plan relating to access. This plan is to be developed in accordance with the Disability Act 2005, NDA Code of Practice, Sectoral Plan and LGMSB Guidelines."

The implementation plan looked at Monasterevin Town again. The report highlighted 16 new uncontrolled crossings required in the town and a further 26 existing uncontrolled crossings to be upgraded. The total cost of the works required in the town was estimated at €325,000.

3. Monasterevin Access Group

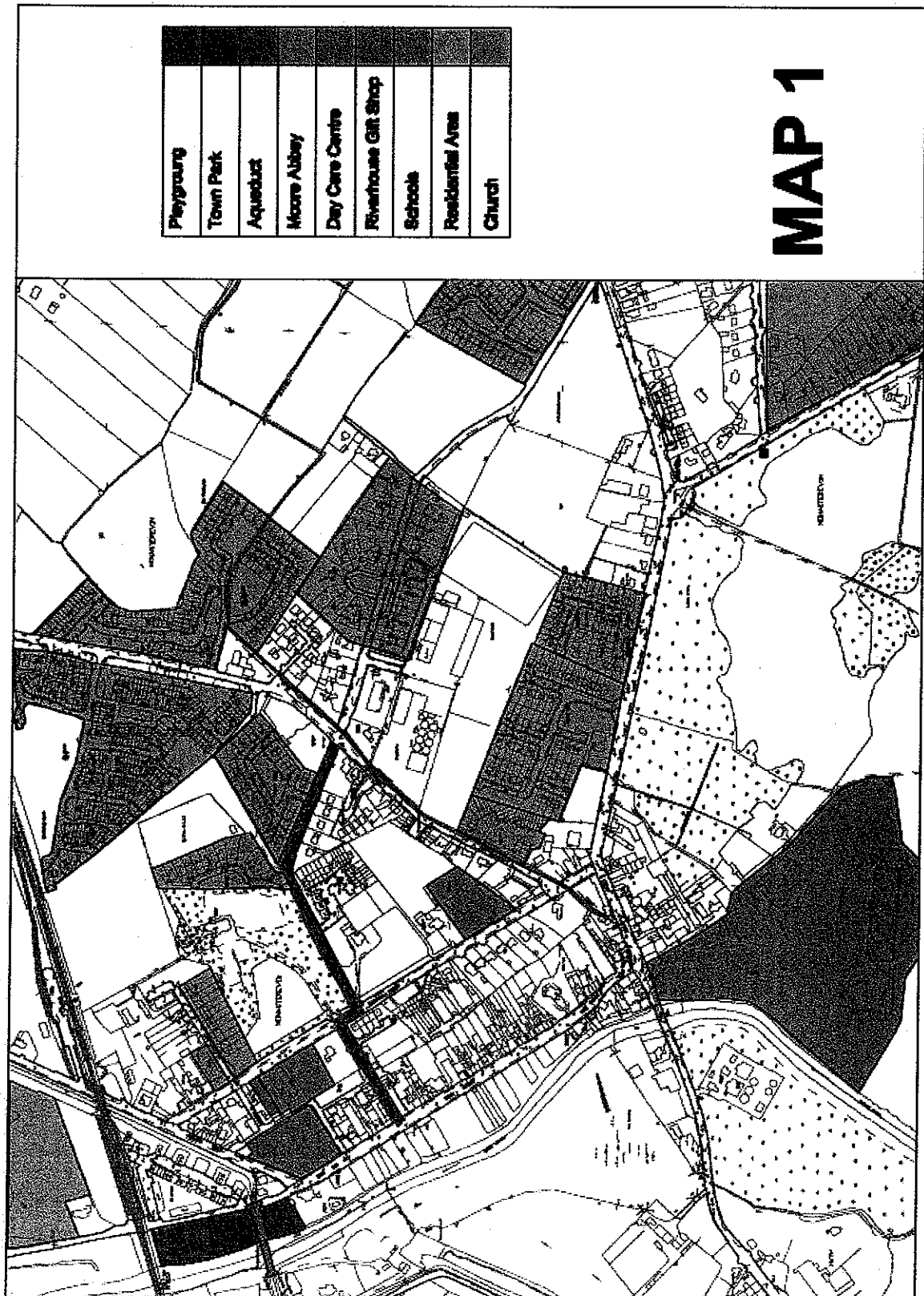
Following on from a request through Kildare County Council Access Officer a meeting took place with members of the Monasterevin Access Group and the Area Engineer. The meeting took the form of a walk through the town to allow the access group highlight particular concerns they felt needed attention within the town. The route was selected by the Access Group. The walk highlighted a route from the Day Care Centre on Drogheda Street to the Entrance of Moore Abbey via Whelans Row, Moore Street and Main Street. From the discussion with the group the route chosen highlighted a route used by the Residents of Moore Abbey. During the walk the group highlighted concerns relating to pedestrian crossing points, incomplete footpaths, pavement conditions and difficulties with existing Designated Parking Bays. The access group also highlighted the workings of the Riverhouse Gift Shop and its close ties with Moore Abbey.

4. Previous Representation

Whilst deciding where best to utilise the grant, the area office took into account previous representation made by the public and Local Councillors. Particular attention was paid to representation relating to Disability Access and other pedestrian issues.

5. Local Amenities

The area office looked at the spread of local amenities in the area compared to the key residential area in the town. Some of the key amenities identified were the local schools, Moore Abbey, Town Park, Aqueduct and the Playground. Map 1 shows that the majority of the amenities are located to the west of the town while all the residential areas are to the east. From this key pedestrian routes were identified.



Taking the above into consideration the Area Office deemed the area which would best utilise the Grant was along the route walked with the Monasterevin Access Group. Key areas for attention where

- Riverhouse Gift Shop – Provide uncontrolled pedestrian crossing and designated parking bay to include drop kerbing. Repairs to existing footpaths.
- Junction of West End and Whelans Row – Provide uncontrolled pedestrian crossing at the junction including tactile paving in accordance with current design standards.
- Junction of Drogheda Street and Whelans Row – Provide uncontrolled pedestrian crossing at the junction including tactile paving in accordance with current design standards and construct a new section of footpath. Works at this location has not been advanced due to current issues.

Design Process

Once the project was decided the area office designed the works based on the following guidelines.

- Traffic Management Guidelines – Department of Transport.
- Traffic Signs Manual - Department of Transport.
- Road and Street Design for All – Kildare County Council.
- Manual for Streets – UK Department of Transport.

The design took a number of key local issues into account.

1. Carriage Way Width – The typical road width on Main Street / Moore Street / West End is in excess of 13.5 metres.
2. On Street Parking – Along the Main Street / Moore Street / West End, on street parking is evident. Parking close to junctions is also evident thereby reducing sight visibility for exiting motorists.
3. Lack of Dished Kerbs.
4. Lack of proper designated parking bay facilities complying with current design guidelines.
5. Lack of Uncontrolled Crossings to allow pedestrians to safely cross Main Street / Moore Street / West End.
6. No line markings.

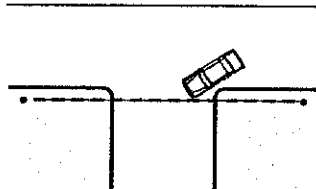
Due to the road width difficulties are experienced by pedestrians trying to cross the road. This issue is heightened when you take into account the level of on street parking. Frequently pedestrians are forced to cross the road between parked vehicles, often hidden from oncoming motorists. In addition for pedestrians with disabilities, wheelchair users and pedestrians with buggies the street is inaccessible in locations due to the lack of dished kerbs. Based on these observations the design looked at placing safe pedestrian

crossing points at key locations along the route. The initial locations identified were at the Riverhouse Gift Shop and the junction at Whelan Row. The distance between both crossings is approximately 300metres. Due to the distance it was felt a further crossing point should be constructed mid way between Riverhouse Gift Shop and Whelans Row. The crossing points would restrict the carriageway width at these locations to 7metres. This would increase the visibility of the pedestrian to motorists and also allow the pedestrian greater visibility before crossing the road.

In relation to The River House Gift Shop a designated parking bay was located outside the shop. Due to the increased dimensions over a standard parking bay the orientation of the bay was restricted to parallel parking. The bay installed can cater for parked vehicles up to mini bus size. It should be noted that this is the only designated bay in Monasterevin which meets design guidelines.

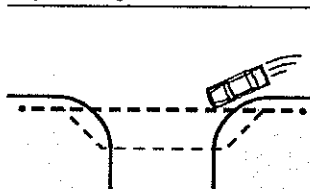
In relation to the Junction of Whelans Row the design looked at confining the junction to a 7metre carriageway thereby reducing the crossing width for pedestrians. The build outs have been formed to reduce the possibility of parking within the junction area which previously was causing difficulties to exiting vehicles. The design allows for the corners to be tightened in accordance with current design practices. The "Design Manual for Streets" published by The UK Department of Transport suggest turning radii in areas with low HGV volumes should be reduced to 2m from the typical radii of 6m previously used. The NTA are currently drafting similar guideline documents which will include similar design standards.

Small radius (eg. 1 metre)

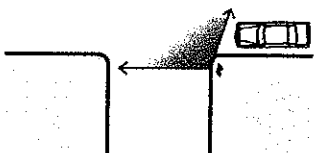


- Pedestrian desire line (---) is maintained.
- Vehicles turn slowly (10 mph – 15 mph).

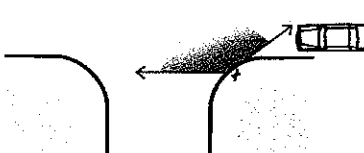
Large radius (eg. 7 metres)



- Pedestrian desire line deflected.
- Detour required to minimise crossing distance.
- Vehicles turn faster (20 mph – 30 mph).



- Pedestrian does not have to look further behind to check for turning vehicles.
- Pedestrian can easily establish priority because vehicles turn slowly.



- Pedestrian must look further behind to check for fast turning vehicles.
- Pedestrian cannot normally establish priority against fast turning vehicles.

By using the tighter radii the speed of cars negotiating the bend is reduced thereby improving pedestrian safety at the junction. In areas where the percentage of HGV's are using the road it is deemed acceptable that they cross the centre white line when making left turn movements. In relation to this junction the HGV content is 1.5%.



Project Review and Concerns

Following from concerns raised by local residents the Area Office has carried out a review of the project. A number of issues were raised by the Monasterevin Resident Group which will be addressed under three main headings, Safety, Heritage and Necessity of the Scheme.

Safety.

1. Visibility of the islands during poor weather – As part of the works the area office has installed line marking to mark the centre and edges of the driving lanes. Signage has been installed to inform motorists of the kerb lines.
2. Radii of the bend at Whelan Row. – The area office accepts that modification needs to be made on the two corners in question. The radius should be increased to approximately 3metres which will in turn require the tactile paving and dished kerb to be relocated approximately a further 2metres away from the corner.



3. Vehicles exiting Whelans Row having to cross the centre white line – As discussed earlier current design guidelines deem this acceptable. The area office recommends increasing the radii however this will still require HGV's to cross the centre white line all be it not to such an extent. To eliminate this practice would require the radii to being increased significantly thereby allowing cars to make the turn at higher speed which poses a safety risk for pedestrians.

4. Removal of the Carriageway Restrictions – The area office does not recommend this option as it would negate the safety improvements achieved.

Heritage

A number of issues were raised by the Group in relation to the designation of Monasterevin as a Heritage Town. Further issues were raised by Bridget Loughlin Heritage Office for Kildare County Council. The following is a section of her memo highlighting her concerns

"The main areas of concern are the following:

The impact of the street narrowing on the urban historic architectural character of the Street in terms of the material used and the reduction in the width of the street. The terrace of houses on West End and Moore Street, along with the wide street and detached garden plot located on the opposite side of the street on the bank of the River Barrow is an important component of the architectural heritage of Monasterevin. The relationship between these three elements should be maintained.

The choice of materials used in developing the disability access points should reflect the historic architectural character of the street."

In relation to the first paragraph based on the literal meaning, safety issues for pedestrians could not be catered for. Based on the current layout existing boundaries formed by the housing and the garden walls are still the dominant structures in the area highlighting the width of the street. In relation to the second paragraph the material choice could be looked at for future improvements. There are numerous materials in use in footpaths through the town from brick paving, concrete slabs, concrete and macadam. It should be noted that the area office selected concrete based on the fact that in the immediate locality of the works concrete has historically been used and is evident. The new concrete area will weather over time. The area office is open and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Residents Group to reduce the visual impact while maintaining the safety for all road users. Such options which could be examined is landscaping both soft and hard, integrating the area of the Hopkins Memorial and create a focal point for the area. Currently I feel the

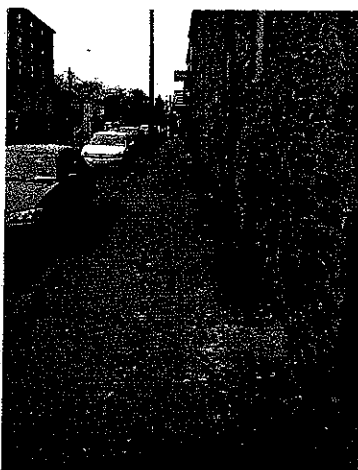
Hopkins Memorial could benefit from works to the area to highlight the significance it has to the town.



Concrete Path

Concrete Path

Brick Paving



Macadam Path



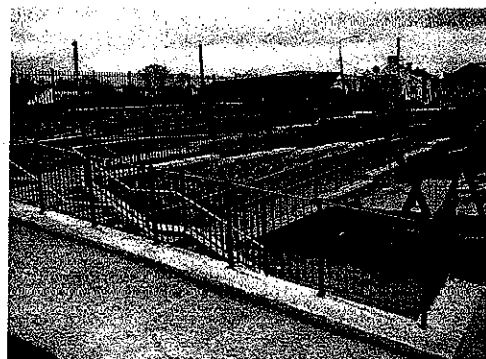
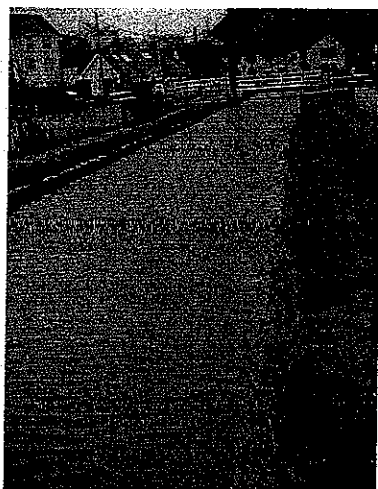
Hopkins Memorial

Necessity of the Scheme

During discussions it has been implied that there was not a valid necessity for the works carried out. The area office stands over the necessity of the scheme based on the following.

- The area office met with the Monasterevin Access Group and listened to there concerns and were guided by there experiences.
- Concerns rose in relation to pedestrians negotiating a 13.5metre carriageway.
- Car parking is provided for on both sides of the road and requires pedestrians to cross the road to reach local amenities at various locations.
- Pedestrians from the town wishing to gain access to local amenities such as the Hopkins Memorial, Town Playground, Aqueduct and the Town Park have to frequently cross the road.

The area office does accept that other areas in the town have an equal requirement for Access Issues to be addressed. It is hoped that further works can be carried out in the town subject to a funding source being identified. The area office feels that the scheme main aim of providing safe crossing points and providing designated parking bay is a valid and necessary.



Recommendations

Following from the review of the project the area office accepts that a number of issues need to be addressed. From the meeting with the Monasterevin Residents Group, they have expressed their wish that the carriageway width be restored to the 13.5metres to preserve the heritage of the town. The area office cannot agree to this option as it is felt that the measures carried out to date improve the safety of all road users significantly and can be improved further based on the findings of this report. The following is proposed to address the concerns of the residents.

1. Radii at the Whelans Row junction to be increased and tactile crossing points to be reinstated accordingly.
2. A meeting to take place with representatives of the Monasterevin Resident Group to examine ways of integrating the works carried out to date into the local environs.
3. A meeting to take place between representatives of the Monasterevin Tidy Towns, Monasterevin Access Group, Monasterevin Residents Group, Local Councillors and Kildare County Council to identify projects for the town with the aim of creating a synergy between various groups requirements.

If the Councillors wish for further elements of the scheme to be assessed, the Area Office will arrange for this in due course.