



Ár dTodhchaí  
Tuaithe  
Our Rural  
Future



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development



An Ciste um Athghiniúint  
agus Forbairt Tuaithe  
Rural Regeneration and  
Development Fund

**RAMELTON RE-IMAGINED – A RESTORATIVE & TRANSFORMATIONAL  
HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM SCHEME  
AT  
RAMELTON TOWN CENTRE, IN THE TOWNLAND OF RAMELTON,  
RAMELTON**

**Description of the nature and extent of the development proposed  
in the Ramelton Re-Imagined Historic Town Centre Public Realm Scheme  
within the townland of Ramelton in the Letterkenny & Milford Municipal  
District;**

Pursuant to Part XI Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and Article  
81, Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)

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## 1.1 Background to the proposed development

The proposed Part 8 development ‘Ramelton Re-Imagined – A Restorative & Transformational Historic Town Centre Public Realm Scheme’ is a restorative and transformational town centre regeneration project comprising of multiple public realm interventions that in combination will transform the public spaces within the historic town core of the Heritage Town of Ramelton and will consequently enhance the physical, environmental, social and economic capacity of the town. The project provides for a Major Integrated Public Realm Scheme which seeks to restore and transform the historic commercial centre of Ramelton, totalling 1.72 hectares, through a suite of integrated and heritage led public realm interventions that will be designed to not only transform the physical environment but also to re-establish social purpose and commercial function to under-utilised and redundant public spaces and places of both prominence and scale. It will deliver high quality multi-functional recreation and amenity space which respects architectural heritage and conservation, is environmentally informed and provides a platform for the transition of Ramelton towards a low-carbon future.

The project forms part of an ambitious, longer term collaborative Action Plan for the town that will transform the urban fabric through environmental improvements, that will contribute to a more attractive place for residents and visitors and will support and incentivise existing and prospective business, enterprise, community and voluntary activities and private sector investment in the renewal of the town. The project has been wholly informed by the Ramelton Action Plan – ‘*A Study of Heritage Led Actions for the Renewal and Regeneration of Ramelton*’, July 2020, and proposes to deliver on a number of the identified priority actions of the Plan which include for the development of the key public spaces and places within the historic town centre with a common transformational theme. Further details on this are provided in Section 1.4.2 of this report.

Specifically, the proposed development that is the subject of this Part 8 will deliver re-imagined public realm environments at Gamble’s Square, Market Cross, Market Square and the Quays to provide function, flexibility and an enhanced user experience through adjustments to the existing infrastructure and the introduction of a quality palette of materials including surface materials, street furniture, landscaping, public art and public lighting. A new multi-user public park environment is proposed at ‘the Bing’ to include a public garden and events space, children’s play park, sensory and adventure trail incorporating new levels and topography to ensure all abilities access and opportunities for rest, play and gathering. A key emphasis of the project is to support the renewal of the town centre as a ‘place for people’, enabling new and high-quality permeability and accessibility through the site. The proposed development and associated investment will be a major catalyst in creating a vibrant town centre that actively promotes Ramelton as a destination to its residents, local businesses and visitors with significant potential to activate and leverage the private sector in the regeneration of other town centre opportunities.

The proposed Part 8 development will achieve multiple benefits for Ramelton including:

- Bringing under-utilised core town centre lands into productive use to compliment and protect the character and setting of this historic town;
- Creating new and high-quality public realm and enabling civic and community activity alongside cultural and artistic expression within the urban environment;
- Providing useable, adaptable outdoor public spaces for events and activities that respond to challenges around the public health environment and the need for social distancing;
- Enhancing pedestrian and cyclist connectivity and flow throughout the town for seamless accessibility and thus enabling modal shift and providing transportation choice for people;
- Maximising the natural assets of Ramelton and increasing the social and ecological value of the spaces to encourage healthy and low carbon lifestyles;
- Reducing dereliction and vacancy by giving catalytic effect to private sector investment;
- Increasing footfall in the town centre and activating spin-offs for local businesses;
- Contributing to a more competitive and vibrant town centre and business environment that acts as a catalyst to drive the local and regional economy;
- Strategically transforming how people engage with existing spaces in the historic town centre and extending the existing town centre functions eastwards towards its original core; and
- Strengthening the economic resilience of Ramelton to economic challenges such as Brexit by enhancing the heritage landscape and facilitating diversification and up-scaling in the tourism and business sectors.

As outlined in section 1.4 of this report, the proposed Part 8 development offers strong alignment with the Core Strategy Objectives and the ‘Strategy for the renewal and regeneration of Towns and Villages as set out in Chapter 3 of the County Donegal Development Plan, 2018-2024 (as varied). The proposals also align with the Economic Development, Tourism and Built Heritage Objectives and Policies of the Plan to revitalise out built heritage and harness the economic benefits of it in the promotion of heritage tourism. This is further reinforced by the objectives of the Ramelton Action Plan – A Study of Heritage Led Actions for Renewal & Regeneration (July 2020) which are central to the proposals presented in this Part 8 Scheme.

The project is being funded through the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF) administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development with additional funding being made available by Donegal County Council. The project has been awarded Category 2 funding under the RRDF to enable the completion of the Part 8 planning process and completion of Detailed Design, Tender and Construction Documents and ensure its progression to a highly developed shovel ready capital works project. If funding for the subsequent Category 1 capital works project is secured, then the consultancy services already procured will allow for the continuation of staged services through tender evaluations and award of construction contract and construction management to include inspection of the work on site, final certification and handover of the works ensuring delivery of the final transformational public realm project.

## 1.2 Location of the proposed development

The location of the proposed development is the townland of RAMELTON specifically located in the historic commercial core of the designated town centre of Ramelton and extends from Gamble’s Square in the east, along Shore Road and the Quays to the west, and returning along Castle Street and Bridge Street, including the key civic spaces of Gamble’s Square, Market Cross, Market Square and the central green space known as ‘the Bing’, together with the supporting infrastructure connecting these spaces.

Please refer to drawing no. RAM (90) LP 200 – Site Location Plan and the images that follow for further details of the location of the proposed development.



**Image 1: Gamble’s Square located at western edge and main point of entry to the site**



**Image 2: Bridge Street leading from Gamble’s Square to Market Cross**



**Image 3: View of Market Cross**



**Image 4: Shore Road**



**Image 5: View of the Quays**



**Image 6: View of Quays at eastern edge of site**



**Image 7: View of Castle Street**



**Image 8: Market Square public space**



**Image 9: View of the Bing from Castle Street**



**Image 10: View of the Bing from Shore Road**

## 1.3 Description of the proposed development

The specific nature of the proposed works is as follows:

- (i) Construction of a new public realm environment at Gamble’s Square inclusive of new materials, pavements and surfacing together with modified footpaths, new crossing arrangements, new public seating and removable bollards delivering an enhanced capacity for civic events and social purpose;
- (ii) Construction of a new public realm environment at the Market Cross inclusive of a new shared surface, modified junction alignment and the recreation of a civic meeting place inclusive of public seating area with a feature sculpture piece;
- (iii) Construction of a new multi-user public park environment at ‘the Bing’ to include a public garden and events space, children’s play park, sensory and adventure trail incorporating new levels and topography to ensure all abilities access and opportunities for rest, play and gathering;
- (iv) Construction of a new public realm environment at Market Square including a new paved shared surface and street furniture;
- (v) Construction of a new public realm environment at the Quays with re-prioritisation for pedestrian priority use through the introduction of new surface materials and street furniture; and
- (vi) All associated ancillary works to include new and improved surface and footpath upgrades, regrading of existing profiles, enhancements to public lighting, drainage and utilities, connection to services, landscaping, development related signage & public art within the overall development area and including Shore Road, Castle Street and Bridge Street.

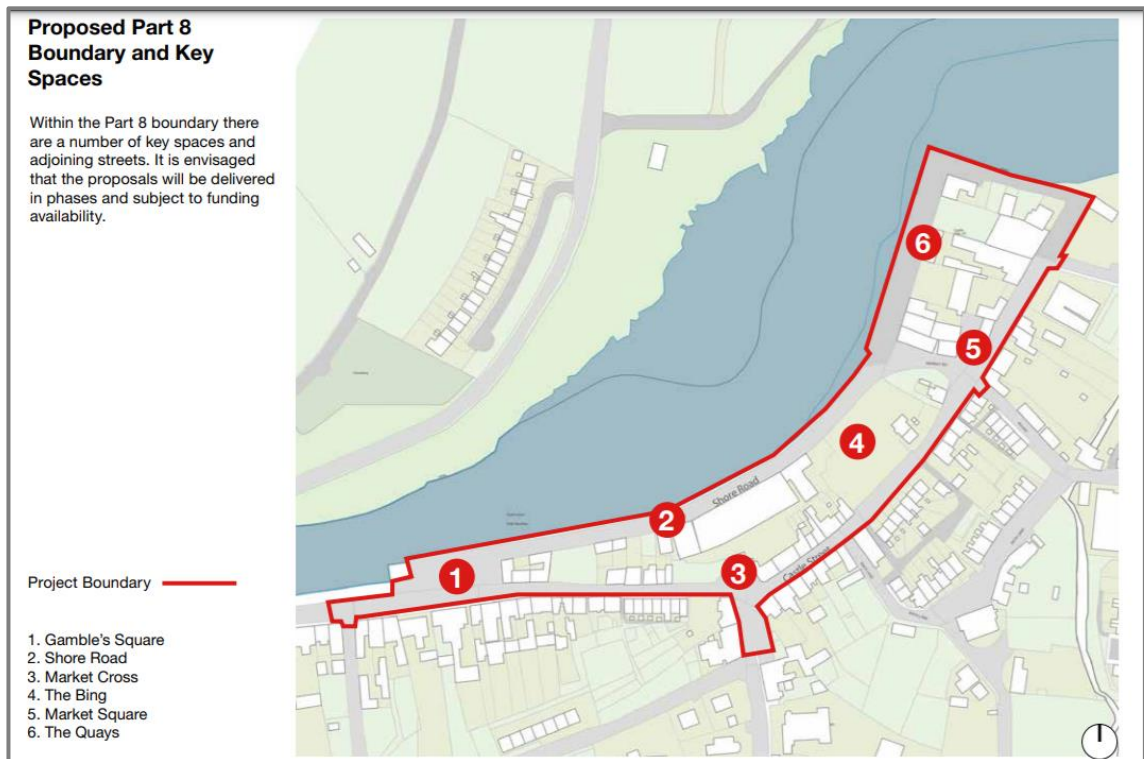
### 1.3.1 Vision and Design Concept

The project is rooted in the principles of restoring and re-imagining the principal prominent civic spaces that are at the heart of the Historic Town Core of Ramelton together with the supporting public infrastructure connecting these spaces. Historically these spaces were valuable focal points within the town centre and were places of public gathering and the locations for town markets and such, however their value and prominence has been eroded over time resulting in under-utilised, vehicle dominant areas in poor environmental condition. There is also a lack of continuity and quality in pedestrian infrastructure throughout the historic town centre which creates a disjointed and unsafe public realm for all its users. It is intended that the proposed development will transform the historic core to meet modern day lifestyles with the overall vision for the project described as:

*‘Recapturing the essence of the historic streets and spaces of Ramelton by enhancing the setting of the town and achieving a successful and sensitive design which provides function, flexibility and an enhanced user experience’.*

The overall design concept for the project responds to the rich and unique built and cultural heritage of the historic core of Ramelton with an emphasis on high quality materials and finishes that are sympathetic to the existing architecture. Careful consideration has been given to the proposed level and nature of intervention within each space and the introduction of a quality palette of materials, including paving, street furniture, lighting and planting, to not only respect but also compliment and enhance the historic character and setting. The primary design considerations focus on materiality and connectivity as well as addressing the challenging level elements and the need to address the increased use of the outdoors by all. The establishment of attractive and adaptable spaces that are well connected and serviced will provide for a re-imagined and enlivened town centre adding to the economic and social vitality of Ramelton and stimulating wider regeneration.

The Project will address the 5 prominent public spaces within the historic town core extending from **Gamble’s Square** in the east towards **Market Cross** and **Market Square**, and further westwards and northwards to incorporate the entire **Quays** area and the largest and most central of the spaces, **‘the Bing’**, on the site of the former Pig Market. Fundamental to the successful use of these spaces is the linkages between them and the associated supporting infrastructure.



**Image 11: Proposed Part 8 Boundary and Key Spaces**



### **1.3.2 Gamble’s Square**

The construction of a new public realm environment is proposed at Gamble’s Square that will showcase the impressive Georgian character of the space as a focal point for the town and surrounding area providing for a better pedestrian experience and capacity for civic events and economic activities. The proposed works at Gamble’s Square envisage the introduction of new materials, pavements and surfacing together with modified footpaths, new crossing arrangements, new public seating and removable bollards including for, inter alia, the following:

- Provision of suitable footpaths and crossings for a better pedestrian experience and through routes to other destinations in the town;
- Introduction of high-quality natural stone paving and street furniture that is sympathetic to the existing built heritage and architecture;
- Provision of a new wide walkway linking the Mall to Shore Road; and
- Creation of a level flexible space for markets and events and commercial spill out area.

*Further details of the planned works for Gamble’s Square are outlined in RAM RP 002 – Design Report, pages 11-14.*

### **1.3.3 Market Cross**

The new public realm environment that will be constructed at the Market Cross will facilitate the recreation of a civic meeting place referencing the historical significance of Ramelton as a ‘Market Town’ and the presence of a Market Cross at this location mid-way between Church and Castle, which signified the right to hold a market granted by the monarch or local barony and once formed the very busy and bustling centre of the town. The revival of the Market Cross as the symbolic centre of Ramelton’s Historic Core will involve the introduction of a new shared surface, modified junction alignment and the addition of a public seating area with a feature sculpture piece, inclusive of the following:

- Re-instatement of the road and kerb-lines to provide a defined pedestrian space;
- The creation of a civic space for use by local and regional visitors with a paved surface and street furniture;
- A new seating area to encourage dwell time;
- The design and installation of a new sculpture / feature element referencing the original Market Cross;
- Introduce high quality natural stone paving; and
- Provision of crossings to enhance pedestrian movement and circulation.

*Further details of the planned works for Market Cross are outlined in RAM RP 002 – Design Report, pages 16 - 17 .*

#### **1.3.4 The Bing**

As the largest and most centrally located of all the spaces the 'Bing' and former site of a Pig Market, serves as the only green space within the historic core of Ramelton. This space is hugely under-utilised with adverse gradients and currently acts as a major impediment to the connectedness of the historic town centre. Accordingly, the reworking of this space, given its scale, location and prospective ecological and social value has the greatest potential to re-connect the town through the construction of a new multi-user public park environment to include a public garden and events space, children's play park, sensory and adventure trail incorporating new levels and topography to ensure all abilities access and opportunities for rest, play and gathering. The proposed enhancements at the Bing include for the following:

- The creation of a new public garden with seating opportunities, space for gathering and children's play;
- Provision of an events space for social, cultural & educational events;
- Enhanced pedestrian links through the space that connect with the rest of the town;
- Re-design of levels and topography to ensure universal accessibility and inclusivity;
- Heritage play provision for children to encourage adventure and discovery; and
- The introduction of bio-diverse planting throughout.

*Further details of the planned works for the Bing are outlined in RAM RP 002 – Design Report, pages 18 - 22.*

#### **1.3.5 Market Square**

The construction of a new public realm environment is also proposed at Market Square to allow for the creation of a useable civic space including a new paved shared surface and the addition of street furniture, sensitive lighting and a feature tree. The proposed design aims to visually enhance the enclosed setting of the Square and compliment the established business uses overlooking the space. The proposed works include the following:

- Re-instatement of the road and footpath at the same level to provide a shared surface and more pedestrian priority;
- The creation of a civic space for use by local and regional visitors with a high-quality natural stone paved surface, street furniture and sensitive lighting that is sympathetic to the existing built heritage and architecture;
- Addition of a feature tree strategically positioned to compliment the setting; and
- Provision of pedestrian linkages to nearby public spaces.

*Further details of the planned works for Market Square are outlined in RAM RP 002 – Design Report, pages 23 - 24.*

### **1.3.6 The Quays**

The Quays is recognised as one of Ramelton’s most renowned and ambient spaces and the construction of a new public realm environment at this location aims at enhancing this attractive asset whilst retaining its openness in character and celebrating its industrial heritage. The Quays has been highlighted through public consultation as being the most important area for improvement in the town and the priority is to reverse its decline through improvements to the public realm. There is significant potential here to explore reduced road widths and greater pedestrian infrastructure, particularly on the Quayside, allowing for re-prioritisation for pedestrian priority use through the introduction of new surface materials and street furniture. The key enhancements include for the following:

- Introduction of high-quality natural stone paving and robust street furniture that is sympathetic to the existing built heritage and architecture;
- Introduction of a formal forecourt area to facilitate trade and outdoor dining;
- A new sensitive lighting scheme to improve light levels and avoid light pollution; and
- Provision of pedestrian linkages to nearby public spaces.

*Further details of the planned works for the Quays are outlined in RAM RP 002 – Design Report, pages 25 - 27 .*

### **1.3.7 Linkages - Shore Road, Castle Street & Bridge Street**

The proposals for the five key civic spaces as outlined above have the potential to dramatically transform the historic town core of Ramelton; however the realisation of these interventions is reliant on the inclusion within the project of new and enabling infrastructure, including discreet traffic management and improved pedestrian facilities, to ensure the safe and seamless movement of people and complete connectedness to and through all town centre assets and amenities. It is proposed to transform the re-purposed town centre environment to one which is a pedestrian priority area with shared surfaces and significantly improved footpath provision, the introduction of crossing points and the upgrade of lighting and drainage within the overall development area and most specifically along Shore Road, Castle Street and Bridge Street.

## 1.4 Policy Context

### 1.4.2 County Donegal Development Plan (CDP), 2018 – 2024 (as varied)

The purpose of the CDP is to provide the strategic planning framework and vision for County Donegal. It includes a Core Strategy which sets out an overarching and ambitious vision for the future growth and development of the County over the 6-year life of the Plan (to 2024) and beyond to a 20-year timeframe (2038). Its vision is that:

*‘By 2028, County Donegal will be a connected place with a strong, competitive and innovative economy that is attracting and sustaining a population of upwards of 200,000 people, offering a quality of life ranked highest in the county and asserting a key role in the context of the North West City Region and within the area of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly.’*

It encompasses 18 Core Strategy objectives including:

**CS-O-5** “To support the growth of a network of ‘Strategic Towns’ as key locations of population growth and/or as places performing ‘special economic functions’”, and

**CS-O-11 (e)** “To support economic growth throughout the county through the prioritisation of regeneration, renewal and developmental objectives in ‘Towns with Special Economic Function’ over the Life of the Plan”.

Chapter 3 of the Plan sets out a **‘Strategy for the renewal and regeneration of Towns and Villages’**, the aim of which is to *“unlock the potential of towns and villages through regeneration and renewal so as to strengthen the social, community and economic capacity and vitality of towns and strengthen rural communities.”* The Plan establishes a strategic framework to focus renewal and regeneration of towns through which collaborative, multi-agency and cross-sectoral approaches can be managed. The Plan identifies a small number of towns for particular regeneration, renewal and revitalisation focus which have been selected in a strategic, co-ordinated manner to ensure an equitable distribution of this focus across the County having regard to the anticipated key drivers of growth in the areas outside of Letterkenny and the inherent qualities and attributes of the smaller towns and villages to deliver such anticipated growth. The Strategy for renewal and regeneration of towns is provided across two categories and Category 1 consists of towns described in the Core Strategy as the County’s ‘Strategic Towns’ that perform a ‘Special Economic Function’. Ramelton has been identified as a Strategic Town having a special economic function in the thematic area of ‘Heritage Town with significant built heritage resources’.

It is an objective of the Strategy for renewal and regeneration of Towns and Villages to:

**TV-O-1** “Support initiatives for renewal and regeneration of County Donegal’s towns and villages with a particular focus on ‘Strategic Towns’ identified in the settlement structure”;

**TV –O-3** “Support initiatives to strengthen and improve the physical environment of towns and villages and encourage positive place making”; and

**TV-O-5** “Support collaboration across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors in order to progress the regeneration and renewal of towns and villages”.

And it is a policy of the Strategy to:

**TV-P-1** “Encourage proposals aimed at harnessing the particular “Special Economic Functions” of the County’s Strategic Towns.....”.

The project delivers comprehensively on the Strategy for renewal and regeneration, providing as it does for the regeneration and renewal of the Strategic Town of Ramelton on the basis of restorative and transformational interventions which are built on the Built Heritage special economic function of the Town. The Project also offers excellent delivery in strengthening the physical environment of the town and ensuring that positive ‘place making’ is at the core of the Historic Town Centre regeneration.

Chapter 4 of the Plan also includes an **Economic Development Strategy** which is a plan led, spatial response to the issues facing the local economy. This Strategy is ambitious for the growth of the County, particularly those towns with special economic functions such as Ramelton. The Strategy sets out 11 objectives seeking to align new economic and employment development with the role and function of settlements and aims to promote integration of appropriate employment uses with other land uses including tourism and retail to provide balanced development. This is enshrined in Economic Development Objectives to:

**ED-O-3** “facilitate and direct appropriate employment generating developments into the Gateway Centre of Letterkenny and the Strategic Towns to support economic development”; and

**ED-O-7** “facilitate the appropriate development of tourism throughout the County through the support of sustainable tourism projects and the promotion of creative industries as a resource subject to environmental, heritage, infrastructure and amenity considerations”.

The project targets the special economic function of Built Heritage and Tourism and the new public realm inclusive of transformed infrastructure, improved commercial conditions and multi-user spaces of social purpose and function will create opportunities for new enterprise, diversification and growth, located in the historic town core of Ramelton, and enjoys clear cohesion with the plan led and spatial focus of the Economic Development Strategy to build on sectoral strengths and provide balanced development.

Chapter 7 of the Plan highlights the importance of **Donegal’s built heritage resource** and references the Councils first Landscape Character assessment which was prepared in 2016. This study gives an insight into the time depth of Donegal’s landscape and evidences that the physical and socio-political climate has moulded the County’s very specific and unique identity such that

the distinct qualities of our built heritage, particularly Donegal’s rural architecture, are as important to our cultural identity as the spoken word or written verse. The Plan recognises the value of heritage conservation in driving economic prosperity and the growth in ‘heritage tourism’ which has become a significant contributor to Donegal’s economy providing associated employment opportunities.

Specifically, the Plan recognises the County’s designated ‘Heritage Towns’ as being important settlements with strong physical characteristics that contribute to the economic growth of the County by providing a marketing tool for the tourism industry. The Heritage Towns, including Ramelton, are recognised as having an important and evolving role in the economic development of the County which has resulted in their identification as having a special economic and tourism function. The Plan requires that development in these towns is informed by their built heritage to protect their unique historic character and in the context of Ramelton specifically requires that the industrial architecture of the warehouses in Ramelton should be facilitated by a programme of preservation, restoration or adaptive re-use to curtail their process of decline.

It is a Built Heritage objective of the Plan to:

**BH-O3** “Promote economic growth and sustainability through the ongoing regeneration of the built environment”;

**BH-O-4** “Harness the economic benefits of the historic environment including the promotion of heritage tourism in both rural and urban areas”;

**BH-O-5** “Facilitate appropriate revitalisation and reuse of the built heritage throughout the County including vernacular and/or historic industrial and maritime buildings using the best conservation practice and traditional building skills”.

And it is a Built Heritage Policy to:

**BH-P-15** “Preserve, protect and enhance the special built character and functions of the Heritage Towns of Ardara, Ballyshannon, Merville, **Ramelton** and Raphoe”.

Ramelton receives particular recognition in the Built Heritage Chapter of the CDP for the quality of its built heritage particularly in the area of the Quays. This project finds its genesis in the quality and scale of the built heritage of Ramelton and the desire to ensure its preservation, adaptation and re-use as a part of the restoration and transformation of the Historic Town Centre. The project therefore is the vehicle by which the built heritage objectives and policies of the Plan to revitalise our built heritage and harness the economic benefits of it in the promotion of heritage tourism can be realised. The project will give effect to the achievement of these objectives and will achieve outcomes and deliverables of the highest policy compliance.

Chapter 9 of the CDP also includes a **Tourism Strategy** which is based on protecting Donegal’s Key underlying tourism resource, facilitating new tourism developments which provide

signature, supporting and ancillary tourism experiences consistent with the overarching themes and brand proposition of the Wild Atlantic Way and in a manner which safeguards the tourism resource and generates economic benefits for the community.

It is a Tourism objective of the Plan:

**TOU-O-4** “to facilitate the development of a wide range of tourism products and attractions which provide supporting visitor experiences based on things to see and do and thus increase visitor dwell time, in a manner consistent with the brand identity of the WAW”;

**TOU-O-6** “to support the development of quality public visitor infrastructure at strategic tourism attractions and other locations throughout the county”;

**TOU-O-10** “to protect and enhance the vitality, vernacular character, streetscape and design quality of our towns and villages as vital tourism assets of our overall tourism product”;

**TOU –O-11** “Protect and enhance the built and historic heritage of the County (including..... heritage towns...) as an important element of the County’s overall tourism product.”

The project offers excellent alignment with the objectives of the Tourism Strategy and in restoring the built heritage environment of one of the most unique and important Heritage Towns in the County the project will protect and enhance the quality of the town of Ramelton and its built and historic heritage and in so doing improve the County’s offer to the tourism market, particularly in the area of Heritage Tourism. This will serve to develop Donegal’s tourism product and the range of visitor experiences which can be enjoyed in the County and on the Wild Atlantic Way.

#### **1.4.2 Ramelton Action Plan – A Study of Heritage Led Actions for Renewal & Regeneration, July 2020**

In cognisance of its designation as a Strategic Town with a special economic function for Built Heritage and as a result of the need for regeneration and renewal of the town and specifically its built heritage, Ramelton was selected by the Executive and Elected Members of Donegal County Council for an application to the Town & Village Renewal Scheme in 2016. The application was successful and one of the outputs funded by the award was an Action Plan for Ramelton which would produce heritage led actions for renewal and regeneration. In December 2017 Dedalus Architecture were appointed as a professional consultancy service to deliver the Action Plan and over the next two years undertook a comprehensive programme of research, building condition surveys, a town centre health check and consultations with the public, key stakeholders, agencies and sectoral interests. This process concluded with the publication and launch of the Ramelton Action Plan – A Study of Heritage Led Actions for Renewal & Regeneration in July 2022.

**The Objectives of the Plan are to:**

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>1</b> | Ensure the reuse, restoration and appropriate adaptation of the Town’s distinctive built fabric on the basis of an informed ‘heritage led’ approach. |
| <b>2</b> | Facilitate public realm improvements to enhance the function of public spaces for use by people.   |
| <b>3</b> | Encourage new economic activity by extending the designated town centre eastwards to its original historic core.                                     |
| <b>4</b> | Re-establish the historic town centre as a living place.   |
| <b>5</b> | Support an environmentally informed approach to the regeneration of the town.  |
| <b>6</b> | Improve pedestrian linkages and extend walking routes throughout the town.   |

The Plan focuses on the historic extents of the town and its landscape setting and has developed a series of actions to realise its vision and implement the community objectives of the Plan to provide for the future renewal and repair of the physical fabric of the town into a unique heritage asset.

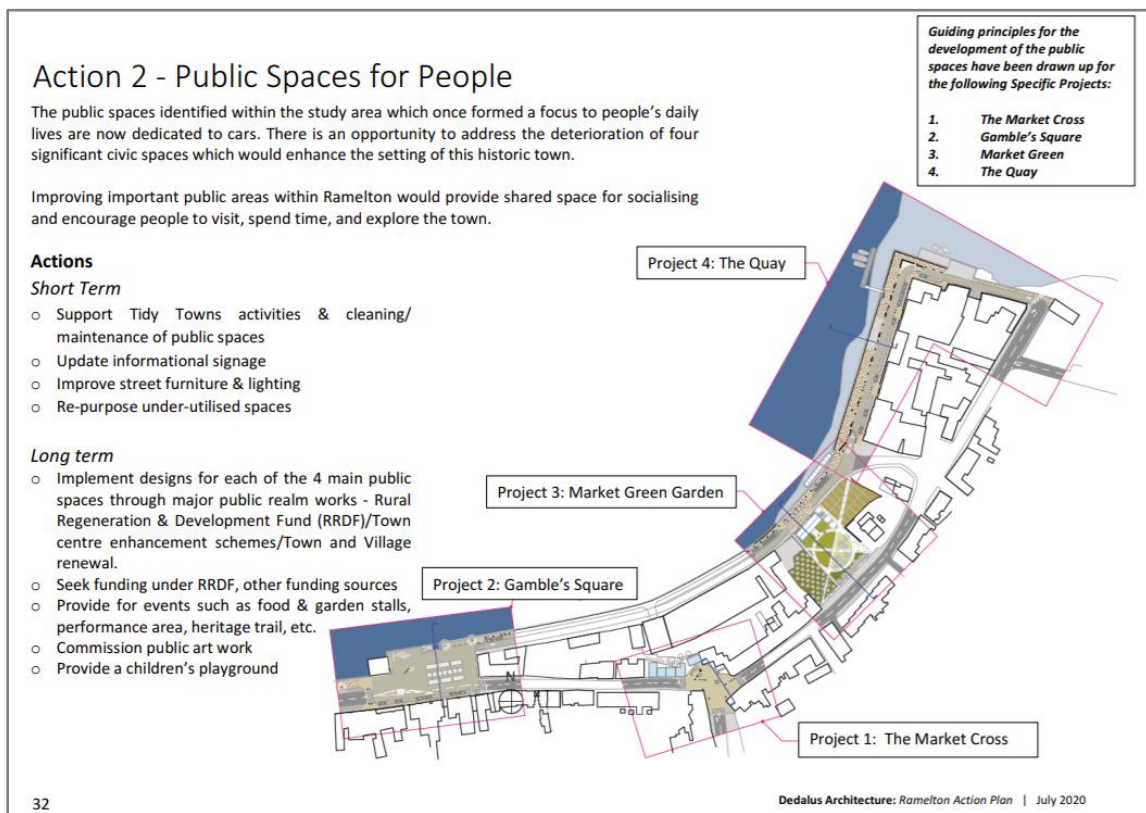
**Priority Action 1 concerns the repair of Historic Buildings & Streets.** This action has already received some attention through the recent success of the Historic Towns Initiative which secured funding from the Heritage Council together with co-funding from Donegal County Council to assist in the preservation of 14 no. Heritage buildings in the Market Cross and Castle Street areas. This initiative has also leveraged significant private owner investments in these buildings and there is further evidence of private investment in areas such as the Quays that has already delivered significant restoration to a number of the historic buildings and streetscapes of Ramelton.

**Priority Action 2 concerns Public Spaces for People.** This Action is targeted at providing a public realm fitting for the built heritage of the town. The Plan acknowledges that the public spaces identified within the Plan area, which once formed a focus to people’s daily lives are now dedicated to cars. The Action Plan proposes addressing the deterioration of four significant civic spaces to enhance the setting of the historic town and provide shared spaces for multiple uses encouraging people to visit, spend time, and explore the town.

The Action Plan outlines guiding principles for the development of major public realm works and specifically tailored and integrated interventions in Gamble’s Square, the Market Cross, The Market Green Garden (the Bing) and The Quays. Preliminary design concepts were developed for each space following the consultation process with multi-user criteria set out as follows:

- The Market Cross - reinstatement as a meeting place for people;
- Gamble’s Square – pedestrian priority shared commercial civic space;
- Market Green Garden (the Bing) – public garden, events space & children’s play area; and
- The Quays – public realm improvements focussing on pedestrian priority & maritime heritage.





**Image 12: Action 2 – Ramelton Action Plan**

These concepts formed the basis of the successful Category 2 application to the Rural Regeneration & Development Fund (RRDF) in 2020 as referenced in the introduction in this report and have since progressed and evolved into the proposals presented within this Part 8 application which embodies the idea of 'Public Spaces for People'.

The other principle priority actions within the Action Plan are as follows:

**Priority Action 3 'commercial activity'** seeks to grow the creative economy and culture led economic development;

**Priority Action 4 'Historic Town Centre'** seeks to restore social and commercial purpose to abandoned public spaces and to re-establish the historic town centre of Ramelton; and

**Priority Action 5 'Climate Change: Environmental Actions'** seeks to inspire a transition to low carbon living.

The proposals provide for a transformative public realm scheme of integrated interventions which will deliver on all six key Priority Heritage Led Actions of the Plan towards the regeneration and renewal of Ramelton and is a huge step forward in creating environmental, social and commercial conditions which will create the catalyst for the restoration of the Historic Town Centre as a new, vibrant and cohesive place to live, work and visit.

## 1.5 Screening in relation to Appropriate Assessment

In order to ascertain whether the proposed development required Appropriate Assessment (“AA”) Donegal County Council carried out a screening of same in accordance with Article 250(1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and made a determination in view of best scientific knowledge that the development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on a European site in view of the site’s conservation objectives and that AA was not required. Please refer to accompanying Screening Report and Determination which includes the main reasons and considerations on which the determination was based.

## 1.6 Screening in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment

The proposed development does not comprise a project listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 or Part 2, of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) and therefore a Screening Determination in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment is not required. Please refer to accompanying EIA Screening Step 1 for further details.

## 1.7 Built Heritage Conservation

The brief for the current scheme was prepared in response to the *Ramelton Action Plan – A Study of Heritage Led Actions for Renewal & Regeneration*, published in July 2020, which was informed by a heritage audit of around 450 buildings, undertaken in 2018, and a town Conservation Plan document also prepared in 2020, which highlighted priority areas requiring intervention and repair. The proposed Part 8 scheme has taken the public realm elements contained within the initial Heritage-Led Action Plan and has developed these in detail, evolving into working designs which reflect the detailed design brief, engineering requirements and budget.

In order to inform the Part 8 plans, a further detailed inventory has been carried out by an RIAI Accredited Grade 1 Conservation Architect of the historic street fabric. The Conservation Architect has also undertaken a **Built Heritage Impact Assessment** of the planning application stage designs and their impact on the items contained within the inventory, the historic setting, and the setting of the adjacent protected structures. As the public realm areas are already devised as part of an overall Heritage-Led Plan, only issues relating to detailed aspects of the proposals are considered within the Built Heritage Impact Assessment report and some recommendations for further minor refinements are identified for inclusion in more detailed design drawings during the construction phase of the development.

Please refer to accompanying Built Heritage Impact Assessment Report, prepared by Duncan McLaren, Dedalus Architecture.

## 1.8 Archaeological Heritage

The Ramelton Re-Imagined Public Realm Scheme, excluding Gamble’s Square, is located within the Zone of Notification (ZoN)/Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) for the historic town of Ramelton (DG046-005---) and therefore the proposed development has been the subject of Archaeological Impact Assessment carried out by an archaeologist licensed by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. An **Archaeological Desktop Constraints Report** has been produced which concludes that archaeological monitoring of ground works should be undertaken during the construction phase of development.

Please refer to accompanying Archaeological Desktop Constraints Report, prepared by John Cronin & Associates.

## 1.9 Flood Risk and the proposed development

OPW Flood maps ([www.floodinfo.ie](http://www.floodinfo.ie)) provide information on flood risk for a range of flood event scenarios including climate change. The OPW flood maps show that the proposed site is located within Flood Zone B where there is a Moderate probability of flooding, i.e. 0.1% or 1 in 1,000 year for coastal flooding. In accordance with the Objectives and Policies in relation to flooding set out in Part B, Chapter 5 of the County Donegal Development Plan, 2018 – 2024 (as varied), and ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities’, November 2009, DoEHLG, the proposed development is classified as ‘Water Compatible Development’ and as such, within an area identified as Flood Zone B is considered as ‘Development Appropriate’. As a result, a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.

In the context of implementation of best practice, the proposed development has been designed in close consultation with the CFRAMs Unit of Donegal County Council and appointed Engineering & Environmental Consultants for the Ramelton Flood Relief Scheme, ByrneLooby. As the Ramelton Flood Relief Scheme progresses through ongoing development and design, and statutory approvals processes, the Ramelton Public Realm Scheme will have due regard to proposed flood relief measures, which will fundamentally protect and sustain investments in the public realm.

Please refer to accompanying Flood Risk Screening prepared by Stuart Summerfield, CST Group.

## 1.10 Public Consultation

Public consultation in respect of the Ramelton Public Realm Scheme has been an evolving process beginning in part with the programme of public and stakeholder consultation which took place during the course of the preparation of the Ramelton Action Plan, commencing in early 2018, and including the hugely significant launch event for the Draft Ramelton Action Plan which

took place in February 2020 at Ramelton Town Hall. The attendance at the event was considerable and demonstrated a high level of community endorsement for the Action Plan.

Further targeted consultation took place with the Ramelton Regeneration Group, formed to collectively represent the broad array of community stakeholders within the town. The Group have been highly participatory in the development of the Ramelton Action Plan, the Category 2 RRDF application and most notably the proposed Part 8 scheme.



**Image 13 – Public Consultation Event in Ramelton in November 2021**

An informal public consultation event in advance of the publication of the Part 8 planning scheme for the proposed development took place on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2021 from 11am to 7pm in Sip ‘n Slice, Ramelton. Preliminary designs for the scheme were on display and BDP Consultants and officials from the Regeneration & Development Team were available to address queries and provide information on the project. This event was managed in accordance with the public health guidelines and protocols and the Covid-19 Regulations as they applied at that time. The event was well attended over the course of the day and the feedback was on the whole positive regarding the proposals. The emerging designs were also made available on the Donegal County Council Website and the public were invited to email their thoughts or comments on these designs during the 4-week period following the event up until and including the 1st December 2021. A total of 30 no. submissions were received in this period and again the responses were largely positive with one localised issue identified at Gamble’s Square arising from the introduction of the new pedestrian crossing at this location. This issue has since been resolved through direct consultation with the affected parties and the crossing has been repositioned to allow for the retention of car parking insofar as possible.

Otherwise consultation with Elected Members, local area staff, property owners and traders has taken place throughout the preparation of the Part 8 plans and proposals.

### **1.11 Road Safety Audit (RSA)**

TII Publications GE-STY-01024 and GE-STY-01027 refer. These technical documents set out the Stages of RSA. Stage 1 may be completed at preliminary design stage, however there is scope for discretion and for Stage 1 and 2 to be combined at detailed design stage in respect of some minor schemes and depending on type, size and complexity of a scheme. It is considered that the proposed development is a minor scheme which presents limited considerations in related to type, size and complexity. It is not considered that there are any grounds for requiring a discretionary Stage 1 Audit at this stage. The design has been completed in accordance with DMURS and a discretionary combined Stage 1 and 2 RSA will be completed at detailed design stage. A Stage 3 and 4 RSA will be completed post construction and in the early stages of operation if required.

Otherwise it is noted that as the development does not access a Strategic road an RSA is not required in accordance with Policy T-P-8 of the County Development Plan, 2018-2024 (as varied).”

### **1.12 Proper planning, sustainable and orderly development of the area**

It is considered that the proposed Part 8V development providing for the ‘Ramelton Re-Imagined – A Restorative & Transformational Historic Town Centre Public Realm Scheme’ is in accordance with the provisions of the County Donegal Development Plan, 2018-2024 and the Ramelton Action Plan – ‘*A Study of Heritage Led Actions for the Renewal and Regeneration of Ramelton*’, July 2020, and in particular will give full effect to the regeneration and development objectives and policies therein. It is considered that the proposed development is therefore in accordance with the proper planning, sustainable and orderly development of the area.

### 1.13 Schedule of Plans and Supporting Reports

Document No.	Document Title	Scale	Size
	<b>Plans:</b>		
RAM (90) LP 200	Site Location Plan	1:1000	A1
RAM (90) LP 100	Masterplan	1:1000	A1
RAM (90) LP 201	Gamble's Square Site Layout Plan	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 202	Shore Road Site Layout Plan	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 203	Market Cross Site Layout Plan	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 204	The Bing Site Layout Plan	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 205	The Quays South & Market Square Site Layout Plan	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 206	The Quays North Site Layout Plan	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 300	Existing Overall Layout	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 301	Existing Layout – 1 of 6 – Gamble's Square	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 302	Existing Layout – 2 of 6 – Shore Road	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 303	Existing Layout – 3 of 6 – Market Cross	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 304	Existing Layout – 4 of 6 – The Bing	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 305	Existing Layout – 5 of 6 – Market Square & the Quays	1:200	A1
RAM (90) LP 306	Existing Layout – 6 of 6 – The Quays	1:200	A1
	<b>Reports:</b>		
	Design Report	n/a	A4
	The Nature & Extent of Development Proposed	n/a	A4
	AA Screening Report & Determination	n/a	A4
	EIA Screening Step 1	n/a	A4
	Built Heritage Audit & Impact Assessment	n/a	A4
	Archaeological Desktop Constraints Report	n/a	A4
	Flood Risk Screening	n/a	A4