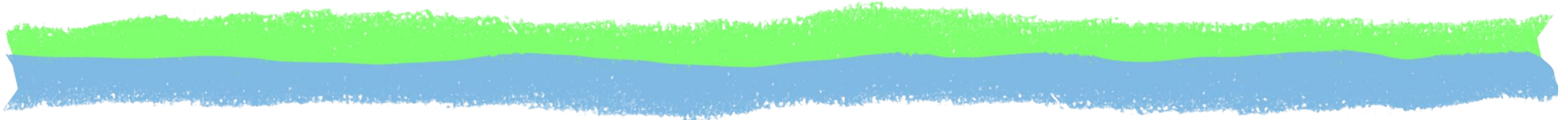


ST. MULLINS

Tourism and Heritage Masterplan

2022-2032



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Glossary of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
bn	Billion
CDP	County Development Plan
CE	Common Era
CFRAM	Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management
CLG	Company Limited by Guarantee
Co.	County
CSO	Central Statistical Office
ED	Electoral Division
EU	European Union
EV	Electric Vehicle
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ha	Hectare
HP	Haase and Pratschke
HR	Human Resources
km	Kilometre
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
MD	Municipal District
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OPW	Office of Public Works
ORIS	Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
ORS	Outdoor Recreation Strategy
OSi	Ordnance Survey Ireland
Q	Quarter
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
RRDF	Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAPS	Small Area of Population Statistics
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SI	Statutory Instrument
SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
SMART	St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group
SWOC	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Challenges
TVRS	Town and Village Renewal Scheme
UCD	University College Dublin
WI	Waterways Ireland

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Data Source: OpenStreetMap, CSO Census 2016

Unless otherwise stated, all statistical data is based upon the CSO Census of Population 2016.

Deprivation Index information and mapping is based on Haase, T. and Pratschke, J. (2017) The 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index, accessed at www.trutzhaase.eu

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Executive Summary

St. Mullins is widely recognised as a place of nationally important ecclesiastical history and is one of the country's most significant archaeological sites, comparable to Glendalough and Clonmacnoise. The settlement is in a setting of high natural amenity value. Accordingly, Carlow County Council commissioned this study to examine ways to increase the sustainability of the place for living, working, and visiting. To this end, the study focuses on enhancing the settlement's environment and amenities in the interests of residents, businesses, and visitors.

Core to the objective is the protection of the historical legacy of St. Mullins' and the appropriate and sustainable realisation of the potential for the settlement as a centre for culture, local heritage, and tourism. The ten-year Masterplan for St. Mullins (2022-2032) is designed to enhance the sense of identity of the settlement and provides: -

1. A costed options appraisal for the future development of the area (including lands owned by Carlow County Council).
2. The creation of short, medium and long-term objectives for the area in preparation for funding opportunities as they arise.
3. A roadmap for the area that presents a practical vision that can be delivered with the resources available.
4. A sustainable vision that considers the environmental, economic, heritage and social impacts and benefits for the area and the wider area
5. A review of the area's potential for appropriate and sustainable tourism, with recommendations on its future development.
6. Consultation with stakeholders, including the Office of Public Works (OPW), Carlow County Council, Fáilte Ireland, key stakeholders groups, and the local community.
7. Recommendations on models and best practice concerning the ongoing operation and management of St. Mullins Heritage Centre, including the role of community and private sector operators in the delivery of services.
8. Recommendations on necessary infrastructural improvements in the Pilgrim's Park, including but not limited to toilets, picnic facilities, walking and cycling paths.
9. A signage audit and the creation of a signage plan.

10. Identification of market opportunities, core target market segments, how the project will appeal to the target market segments and the projected visitor numbers outlining the potential economic impact of any action on St. Mullins and the wider area.

St. Mullins Settlement

St. Mullins village (Tigh Moling) is located in Muinebheag Municipal District of Carlow County Council, on the eastern bank of the River Barrow, some 17km north of New Ross, Co. Wexford and 7km south of Graiguenamanagh, Co. Kilkenny.

Map 1 - County Setting



St. Moling

The following has been extracted from 'An Early Ecclesiastical Site and Medieval Settlement in County Carlow Guide No. 5 (Archaeology Ireland).

The settlement gets its name (*Teach Moling - the house of Moling*) from its founder, St. Moling, who, according to the early annals, died in 696 CE. A fact reputed to be reliable about St. Moling is that he is listed as one of the guarantors of the Cáin Adamnán, a law promulgated by Adamnán of Iona, who wrote the *Life of Columba*. The law decreed the protection from violence of women, children, clerics, and church property.

Accounts of the life and miracles of St. Moling written in Latin and Irish survive, however, these contain little or no historical fact.

The *Latin Life*, probably written in the twelfth century, recounts how he dug a channel for water to turn his mill, and how at the time of writing it was part of the pilgrimage to wade through the full length of this watercourse against the flow. St. Moling is also credited with getting the Bóroma tribute abolished. This was a yearly tax of cattle which the men of Leinster had to pay to the King of Tara.

The final episodes of the Middle Irish tale *Buile Suibhne* ('The frenzy of Suibhne') are set in St. Mullins and contain dialogue in verse between the mad Suibhne and the saint. The tale ends with Suibhne's death at the hands of Moling's swineherd.

Present-Day St. Mullins

St. Mullins is a small settlement with approximately 200 people (2016). The CSO Census of Population 2016 defines St. Mullins village as being contained within two EDs, with one of these (Tinnahinch) comprising three Small Areas of Population (SAPs).

Table 1 - SAPS Population 2006-16

Small Area ID	With ED	Total Population 2006	Total Population 2011	Total Population 2016		Population Change 2006	Population Change 2011	Population Change 2016
017020001	Glynn	347	365	379		1.20	5.20	0.04
017049001	Tinnahinch	351	362	342		1.00	3.10	-0.06
017049002	Tinnahinch	79	150	164		3.70	89.90	0.09
017049003	Tinnahinch	247	165	142		1.00	-33.20	-0.14
Total		1,024	1,042	1,027			1.75	-2.56

Source: CSO Census of Population

The steeply descending River Barrow valley largely defines the topology of St. Mullins.

St Mullins was once an important transport hub on the Barrow Canal, reflected in the former grain stores on the canal side. For vehicular access, the settlement is served by the L3008, 2 km distant from the R729 regional road to the south, and by the L3010 from Glynn. River access is from the Barrow, which forms the southern boundary of the settlement and is also the County boundary.

The topology of St. Mullins adjacent to the River Barrow is primarily determined by the steeply descending river valley. The River Barrow becomes tidal at St. Mullins.

St. Mullins has upstanding physical remains from many significant periods in Irish history, including an early medieval monastic settlement, a Norman Motte and Bailey, a large graveyard with many insurgents from the 1798 Rebellion, 19th century flour and woollen mills and the river with its history in both fishing and canal boat transportation. Irish mythology records that the history of St. Mullins has associations with Fionn Mac Cumhail.

St. Mullins is overlooked by the Blackstairs Mountains to the east and Mount Brandon to the west and is set in the River Barrow Valley. The village presents an attractive setting for the visitor.

The former Church of Ireland Church, built in 1811, now houses the St. Mullins Heritage Centre. It is situated beside the famous monastic ruins and cemetery (National Monument No. 3 - in State ownership).

St. Mullins Heritage Centre contains a collection of local history, including publications, church records, maps, old photographs, and artefacts, providing an illustrated account of village and rural life over the centuries.

The 8km leg of the Barrow Way between Graiguenamanagh and St. Mullins is possibly the most popular along the entire 114km route from Robertstown (Co, Kildare), where the natural beauty of the Barrow Valley with its woodland and steep terrain can be fully appreciated. It is a walking route rich in history with a strong industrial heritage story in the lock houses, old mills, and archaeological sites along the riverbank. Additionally, the River Barrow Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) is designated as a prime wildlife conservation area considered important on a European and a State level. The designation reflects the quality of the local flora and fauna habitats supported by the river.

St Mullins was once an important transport hub on the Barrow Canal, reflected in the former grain stores located on the river side.

Future Tourism and Heritage Development Options

Attributes

- ❑ St. Mullins is located in an area of considerable natural amenity value. Accordingly, the River Barrow valley is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (River Barrow and River Nore SAC - National Parks and Wildlife Service Site Code 002162), reflecting its flora and fauna, notably its old oak woodland, including Bahana Forest to the immediate north of the settlement.
- ❑ The Office of Public Works designates St. Mullins Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Site as a National Monument. The scale and visibility of historic ecclesiastical buildings within St. Mullins are remarkable. The built heritage tells of usage of the place over fifteen centuries. The components exist for the settlement to become a significant regional tourist destination given that there is a domestic population of some 164,000 within a 30km radius, rising to 1,850,000 within 90 km.
- ❑ St Moling's Well is located on the opposite bank of the River Aughavaud to the Pilgrim's Park and is in the ownership of Carlow County Council. While this is potentially significant to the culturally curious visitor, it would benefit from integration into improved pedestrian permeability throughout the settlement.
- ❑ Waterways Ireland is promoting the Barrow Navigation as a recreational boating asset. The Barrow Way follows the river with a terminal point at the quay in St. Mullins. It provides a link for leisure walkers between St. Mullins and Graiguenamanagh (5km), with a connection at St. Mullins Quay and part being shared with the 8km Bahana Forest Trail running through Bahana Forest.
- ❑ The River Barrow is tidal downstream from St. Mullins, and the river basin is subject to seasonal flooding impacting many riverside properties. The Aughavaud River joins the Barrow to the immediate east of the core settlement. Water power once formed the enabling force behind the local commercial mill development, resonating with the history of St. Moling.
- ❑ A considerable local landbank is under the control of the State through various ownerships, including Carlow County Council, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Office of Public Works), Coillte and Waterways Ireland.
- ❑ Successive development reports ranging back over the past decades have indicated the extent to which St. Mullins has underdeveloped potential to contribute more significantly to the visitor offerings of Co. Carlow.

- ❑ The local community *Tidy Towns* effort is returning a dividend for the settlement regarding regional recognition of the public domain quality. In addition, it practically demonstrates community appreciation in some sectors for the quality of the local environment.
- ❑ The settlement presents three sites that could be enhanced. These sites are in the ownership of Carlow County Council. The first comprises the Pilgrim's Park, the second site contains the remains of Woodville House, which has the potential to link the upper settlement (Northern Vehicle Park) with the quay area. The third site is the St. Mullins Heritage Centre.

Key Infrastructural Deficits and Opportunities

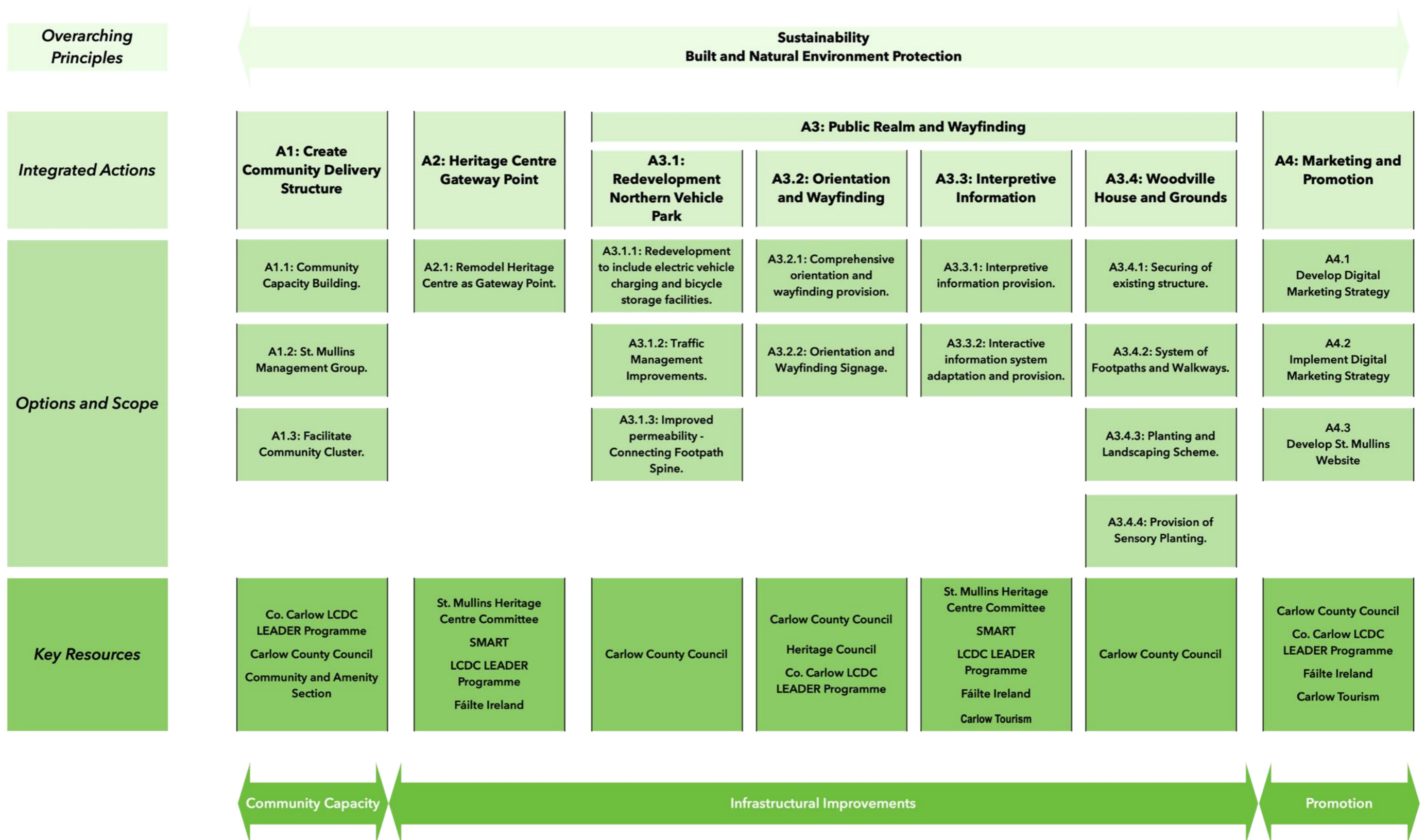
The following infrastructural deficits impact the development potential for the St. Mullins settlement: -

- ❑ Whilst a unique asset, the sensitivities in maintaining the built heritage require appropriate consideration, and the religious heritage requires particular attention and upkeep. The seasonal and special occasion use of the village green as a central car park indicates a lack of appreciation of the nature and importance of this attribute.
- ❑ St. Mullins has a relatively low population and density. This factor currently minimises local business viability resulting in reduced levels of service provision. The SAC designation, cultural and historical sensitivities and the high amenity value of the settlement will naturally define the extent of development opportunity.
- ❑ St. Mullins has a constrained wastewater treatment capacity that is technically unsustainable. This limits further development of the built environment, including the potential to redevelop existing structures within the settlement envelope.
- ❑ The settlement does not have a basic retail provision and offers no visitor bed nights.
- ❑ The settlement is dispersed over an extended geographic area and lacks critical mass and a physical core. There are two distinct physical components to the settlement. The upper level encompasses the ecclesiastical and later heritage assets. The lower level is formed by the River Barrow valley and includes the quay and access to the Barrow Way. The lower level contains the more recent commercial remains of the milling industry.
- ❑ The flood risk zones of the Rivers Barrow and Aughavaud limit development potential on the riverbank whilst simultaneously protecting the fragile environment from inappropriate development.

- ❑ The River Barrow Special Area of Conservation determines the environmental sensitivity of the river basin. This is an asset in providing under-developed eco-tourism potential to the settlement and wider area.
- ❑ There is an inadequate physical infrastructure to adequately serve visitor demand (as evidenced during the 2020 and 2021 seasons). Notably, this has reflected the extent to which traffic management within the settlement and vehicle parking are both poorly executed at peak season.
- ❑ Currently, the settlement does not provide the casual visitor with a defined arrival, orientation and departure point. There is opportunity within the existing settlement envelop to sensitively improve this situation.
- ❑ The topography of the settlement results in a lack of visual and physical integration between the upper and lower levels. This reinforces reduced pedestrian permeability, given that there is no clear segregated footpath linking the Northern Vehicle Park with the settlement core. Equally, when the settlement is approached by foot from the Barrow Way, it is difficult to gain a clear appreciation of all that is available at the upper level.
- ❑ In addition to providing a conventional presentation of the history of the settlement, the voluntarily operated St. Mullins Heritage Centre is the de facto visitor Gateway Point. However, it is challenged by its relative invisibility and dislocation from the Northern Vehicle Park arrival and orientation point.
- ❑ The summer seasons of 2020 and 2021 were unprecedented due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the number of motor homes increased nationally. There is currently no quality facility to cater to these vehicles' requirements in St. Mullins.
- ❑ The design and present condition of the L30083 Aughavaud River bridge is inappropriate for vehicular traffic. This effectively results in the river frontage being served solely by L30082 from the upper settlement. The range of dwellings to the east of the settlement running down to the riverside are then serviced from the L30083 cul-de-sac.

St. Mullins Enhancement Pathway

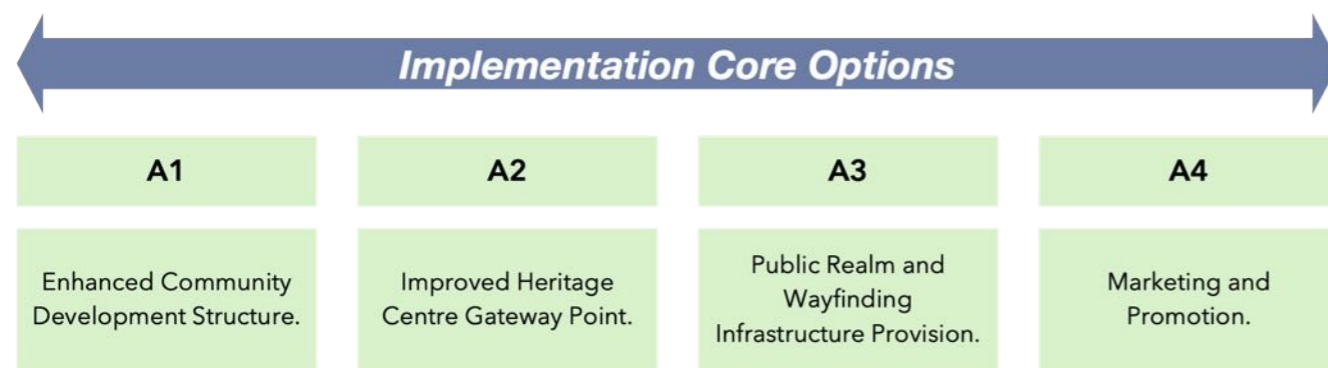
Figure 1 - Summary St. Mullins Enhancement Pathway



Implementation Plan

A suite of preferred enhancement options has been identified that will contribute to the sustainability of St. Mullins as a vibrant settlement. These options build upon the core attributes of St. Mullins as a place of national historical and cultural significance and inherent environmental attractiveness. They aim to invite people to discover St. Mullins and its environs by harnessing the underdeveloped assets of the public realm. In achieving this, the package of integrated options will increase the attractiveness of the settlement as a place in which to live and work for local people, businesses, and visitors. In addition, the package will underpin an enhanced sense of local identity by celebrating the rich culture and heritage of the area.

Figure 2 - Implementation Plan Core Components



Some of the enhancement options will be required to take account of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive to ensure compliance. The objectives of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment are to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to promote sustainable development.

A1: Enhanced Community Development Structure

Creating a solid Community Delivery Structure is key to the sustainability of St. Mullins. It will be the driver of the Tourism and Heritage Masterplan. The objective will be to empower the local community to fully appreciate the unique heritage and history of the settlement and benefit from creating a world-class visitor offering that celebrates the area's cultural, natural, and the built environment. To achieve this, three actions are proposed: -

1. Provision of targeted community training for St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group (SMART) to reinvigorate the organisation to support enhanced local development capacity.
2. Implementation of capacity-building training for the community.

3. Facilitation of the development of a community cluster in South Carlow to undertake community development (including sectoral development) at scale.

A2: Improved Heritage Centre Gateway Point

As confirmed by the outcome of the consultation process, St. Mullins presents an orientation challenge for casual visitors. The topography of the settlement and the absence of any clearly defined commercial core presents the visitor with no clear gateway point. The Heritage Centre offers the potential to provide the necessary gateway point for St. Mullins and its environs. To fulfil this role, the Heritage Centre needs to pivot to augment its existing heritage-focused offerings and provide a more comprehensive range of visitor referral materials. The need to promote the Heritage Centre as the gateway point to visitors arriving at both the upper and lower settlement levels will be of prime importance. This will involve improved wayfinding signage within the settlement directing visitors to and from the Heritage Centre.

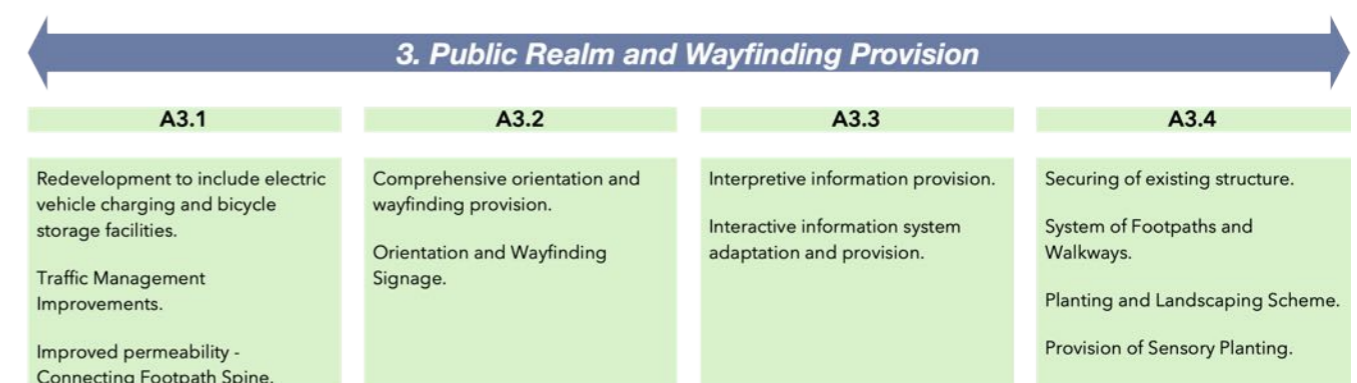
In creating the visitor gateway point, it will be necessary to design and implement a comprehensive orientation and wayfinding signage scheme extending to the environs of the settlement. The objective will be to make it as easy as possible for the casual visitor to navigate around the settlement and access the local heritage. In addition, from a promotional and referral perspective, the orientation and wayfinding signage scheme must integrate with that being developed by Carlow County Council to serve the whole of the county.

As part of implementing the proposed orientation and wayfinding signage scheme, the various existing signs should be removed such that there is one integrated signage scheme to guide visitors seamlessly. The proposed scheme will require the design, provision, and erection of thirty-five branded orientation and wayfinding signs throughout the settlement.

A3: Public Realm and Wayfinding Infrastructure Provision

The Public Realm and Wayfinding package comprises four flanking elements. Each of the elements is designed to respond to local needs and enhance the attractiveness of the settlement and its environs for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors.

Figure 3 -Public Realm and Wayfinding Provision



A3.1: Northern Vehicle Park and Permeability

The phased development of the St. Mullins pedestrian and bicycle linkages will provide an extended visitor experience and connection between the facilities in the upper and lower areas of the settlement. In addition, it will provide the missing infrastructure to link all the cultural, historical and heritage attributes of the settlement with the activities and natural environment of the riverside.

The proposed pedestrian route will move from the north car park through the Pilgrim's Park and will terminate on the riverbank immediately to the south of the remains of Woodville House. The latter will provide the visitor with a resonance of the life and times of the Odlum family and the economic significance of the river system in powering a once nationally significant commercial enterprise based on technology that reflects the ancient origin of the settlement.

The provision of the improved pedestrian permeability route will be constructed entirely on lands owned by Carlow County Council and has the potential to link with the Barrow Way and the upgraded Bahana Forest Trail.

There is considerable evidence from all levels of the consultation process of the need to agree on and implement a local, seasonal Traffic Management Plan. Given the constrained nature of the road infrastructure, this will necessarily include seasonal parking restrictions and vehicle access limitation measures. These will focus on the settlement areas under the greatest stress from vehicle incursion and encourage the better use of the existing vehicle parking provision.

The introduction of the Traffic Management Plan is likely to require the seasonal introduction of passive traffic control points. It will be supported by the comprehensive orientation and wayfinding signage scheme. In addition, there is a need to improve road signage for the existing Northern Vehicle Park to encourage its greater use by visitors.

Traffic management within the settlement has proven to be particularly troublesome over the past seasonal tourism periods. As an element of addressing this problem, the redevelopment of the existing Northern Vehicle Park to include electric vehicles and cycle storage facilities is considered to offer incremental improvement. Such provision aligns with the Carlow County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 (Theme 7: Mobility), which seeks to develop more sustainable adaptation methods of mobility in the face of climate change.

To reduce vehicular pressure within the settlement core, the Northern Vehicle Park must be better integrated by improving the linkage for pedestrians. Improved pedestrian permeability will be achieved, in part, by the acquisition of land and the provision of approximately 50 m. of new segregated footpath and cycleway linking the Northern Vehicle Park with the village green (L3008).

Over recent years there has been a national trend towards 'staycations' that feature private motor homes as the mode of transport. Whilst this trend was driven significantly by the experience of successive waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is considered likely that this form of vacation will remain significant in the foreseeable future. In addition, the motor home visitor market is known to use social media extensively, and this phenomenon may have contributed to increasing numbers arriving in St. Mullins.

A3.2: Orientation and Wayfinding

Providing a defined physical link between the upper and lower settlement that does not increase vehicle movement through St. Mullins is a significant challenge. The use of enhanced orientation and wayfinding tools for pedestrians and cyclists is seen to be a way of sympathetically optimising the physical and natural assets of the settlement whilst achieving such a link.

Enhancing the public realm with an improved wayfinding infrastructure will make St. Mullins more attractive for visitors whilst protecting and enhancing the valuable cultural, historical and environmental attributes. The key to this approach is better integrating the Northern Vehicle Park within the settlement. When this is added to introducing a seasonal traffic management plan, there will be an opportunity to manage unwanted visitor vehicle movements in the settlement core more effectively.

In providing a new physical link between the upper and lower settlement, existing County Council property will be used to assure a swift implementation.

A3.3: Improved Interpretive Information

Building on the existing Carlow County Council 'St Mullins Heritage Village' downloadable app for mobile phones, it will be advantageous to develop a specific web platform for the settlement and its environs and populate it with detailed interactive information. At one level, this can improve the experience for the casual visitor, whilst at another, it can incorporate a more detailed interpretation of the culture, heritage, and history of the settlement for those with a more specialist interest.

Mobile phone technology might also be employed to access information disseminated by QR codes. This will require repackaging some of the thirty-four information points on the existing app and affixing QR code plates at appropriate locations adjacent to points of interest integrated with wayfinding infrastructure.

A3.4: Woodville House and Grounds Redevelopment

The present remains of Woodville House and Grounds are in the ownership of Carlow County Council. This presents a considerable opportunity. The steeply terraced grounds overlook the

River Barrow, and the land links back to the Northern Vehicle Park by way of the Pilgrim's Park. The alignment provides for creating a spine footpath segregated from the public road and passing through an area of high amenity value. The reinstatement of the Woodville House Garden and its associated features including the extensive glass house, footpath and steps offers opportunity to positively reference the biodiversity of the area. In turn, this has the capacity to highlight the interconnection of the settlement's spiritual significance, the natural environment, and the commercial world, through the history of wine imports, honey production. Further, it offers the possibility of introducing an understanding of locally produced herbal medicines as used in the hospital function of monastic life.

To realise the opportunity, it will be necessary to stabilise the remains of the House, thereby visually preserving the history of the Odlum family in St. Mullins. In addition, the former gardens provide the potential to create a public landscaped area to add to the natural environment. An element of this will include a sensory garden for those seeking a contemplative experience.

With sensitive landscaping, Woodville House and Garden will contribute significantly to the experience of St. Mullins for both the casual visitor and those wishing for an international quality cultural, historical, or activity-based adventure in the area.

A4: Marketing and Promotion

It will be necessary for the local community to develop the skills needed to devise and implement a digital marketing strategy for St. Mullins. To be effective, this digital marketing strategy must focus on the key market segments that are likely to appreciate the cultural, historical and heritage offerings of St. Mullins, together with those who might be interested in the environmental and activity potential presented by the River Barrow.

It is anticipated that digital marketing will prove the most cost-effective medium for attracting and managing the profile of international and domestic visitors that will be appropriate for St. Mullins. The design and implementation of the web marketing platform for St. Mullins must supplement and augment local businesses and InCarlow (Carlow County Council) and reference the market-facing effort of Fáilte Ireland.

There will be a continuing (although diminished) need to design, print, and distribute traditional promotional materials to be used at point-of-sale and in locations where visitors might gather.

Delivery Costing

The delivery of the St. Mullins Tourism and Heritage Masterplan 2022-2032 will require significant funding to be realised. There are appropriate funding opportunities under the Rural Development LEADER Programme, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, the Active Travel Investment Programme, the Outdoor Recreation

Infrastructure Scheme, and others, to enable this opportunity to be developed in South Carlow over the period 2022-2032. Accessing this funding will require leadership by the local community, government, and the business sector to deliver the suite of projects.

In 2022, Carlow County Council submitted a Town and Village Renewal Fund application for the initial projects.

The Masterplan comprises several elements designed to be incrementally introduced over the period, with the most pressing being those seeking to improve access to and within the settlement. All of this is designed to enable St. Mullins to take its rightful place as a unique cultural, historical, and environmental destination with the capacity to both preserve and protect its heritage whilst enabling more people, including the local community, to appreciate and communicate its value.

1 Introduction

St. Mullins is situated on the River Barrow between the Blackstairs mountains and Brandon Hill. Its prominence as an ancient site is documented in a number of important historical sources for County Carlow.

St. Mullins was the site of an ancient monastery founded by St. Moling in the seventh century. Saint Mo Ling, also named Moling Luachra, was the second Bishop of Ferns in Ireland and is said to be 'one of the four great prophets of Erin'. The monastery was said to have been built with the help of Gobán Saor, the legendary Irish builder. The 8th century manuscript 'Book of Mulling', contains the earliest known plan of an Irish monastery. This shows four crosses inside and eight crosses outside the circular monastic wall. It is said that St Moling dug a mile-long watercourse with his own hands to power his mill, a task that took seven years.

Samuel Grose described St. Mullins and its church in *'The Antiquities of Ireland'* (1791). He refers to its ancient name of Teighmolin (St. Mullin's House) as a place 'being, by the superstitious, held in the utmost veneration, from the supposed sanctity of its patron, St. Mullin'.

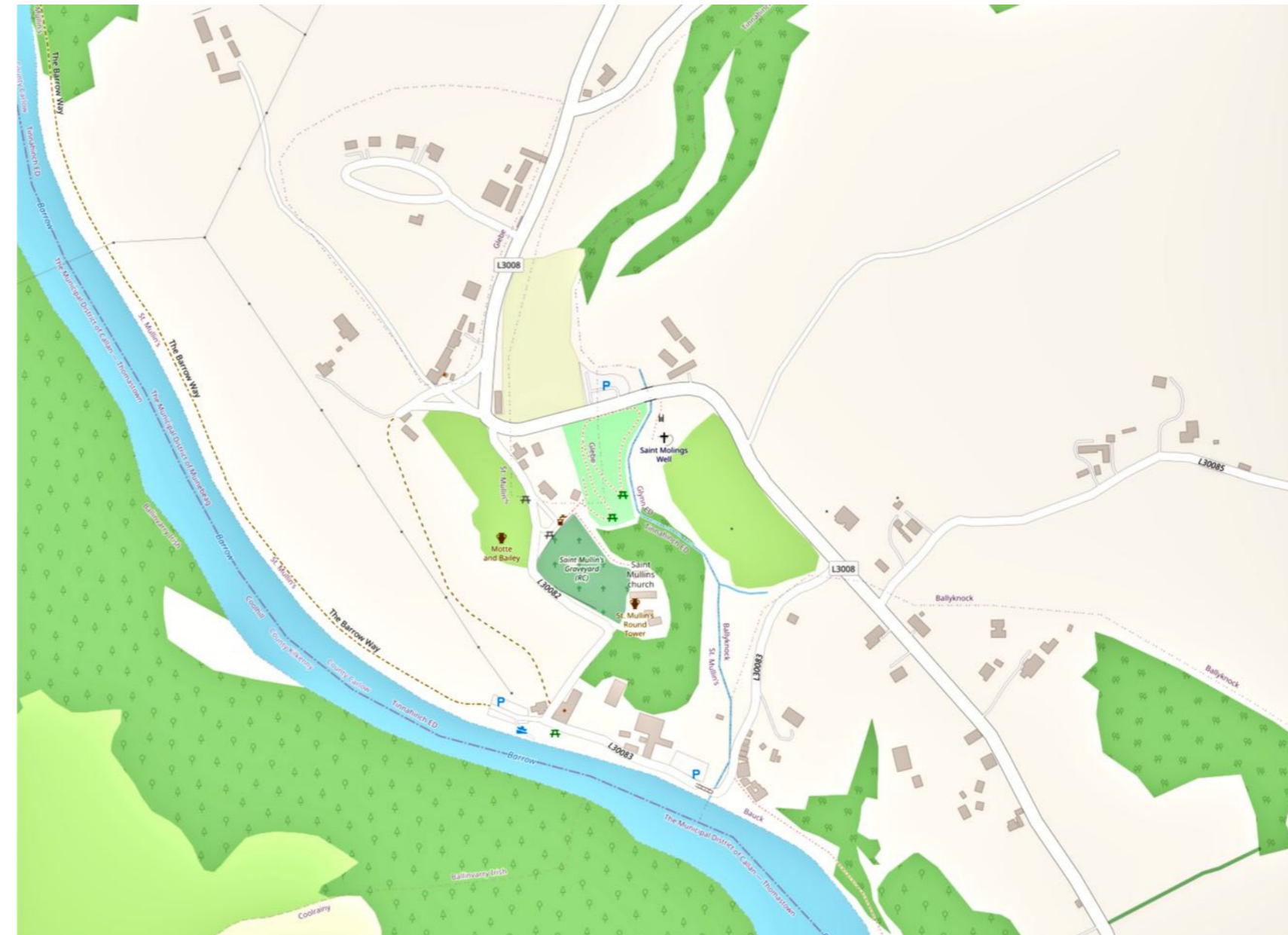
In 1837, Samuel Lewis notes in his *'Topographical Dictionary of Ireland'* that the ancient edifices occupy 'a beautiful situation on the eastern bank of the River Barrow'. He goes on to state that the remains consist of 'five small plain structures in the churchyard and a small stone cross and a small roofless building'. He also refers to the 'Holy Well enclosed by a stone wall round which the country people do penance'.

The Ordnance Survey Field Name Books for 1839, Volume III, describes St. Mullins and mentions St. Mullin's Church and graveyard and a corn mill. The Books distinguish between these buildings and the antiquities which are listed as 'St. Mullin's Monastery, Temple, Moat and Well and Cashlanmoyle Castle'. At this time St. Mullins is described as having a few scattered houses which are 'all of stone'.

The Ordnance Survey Field Name Books include a reference to the Holy Well. The Well is situated on the northern bank of the St. Moling's River which flows into the River Barrow at the northern side of the St. Moling's Abbey. The Holy Well is described as being 'a large spring about 10 or 12 feet in diameter'. It is surrounded by a row of ash trees and is situated on rising ground and is faced by 'an enclosure of masonry', about 10 foot long by 5 foot wide, without a roof. There is reference to the local custom of 'bathing children who are suffering from certain diseases' in this Holy Well.

In 1892, the historian Rev. J.F.M. French wrote about St. Mullins in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries. He states that according to tradition St. Moling was a 'skilled manager of a boat, getting into his light curragh and passing quickly up the river (the Barrow) to commune with his friend St. Laserian at Leighlin'.

Map 2 - St. Mullins



More recently, St Mullins and its antiquities are described in the 'Archaeological Inventory of County Carlow' produced by the Archaeological Survey at the Office of Public Works in 1993. Herein, short descriptions are provided of the ancient remains including the round tower, stone cross, churches, holy well, motte and bailey and mill are included. The Holy Well is described as being 'now dry'.

In the recent past centuries, the River Barrow was a significant commercial highway linking the southeast to Dublin. The River Barrow becomes tidal at St. Mullins.

In 1898, William Odlum acquired the St. Mullins Mill complex, originally constructed in c. 1841. This started a new chapter in the history of the settlement and its commercial relationship with the River Barrow. Ultimately, on Friday, 28th October 1966, the then unprofitable Odlum's Mill closed for the last time.

St. Mullins is overlooked by the Blackstairs Mountains to the east and Mount Brandon to the west and is set in the River Barrow Valley. The settlement presents an attractive setting for the visitor.

From these references it is clear that St. Mullins was and continues to be an important ancient site which is known to attract many historians, archaeologists and general visitors to County Carlow and the River Barrow area.

The former Church of Ireland Church, built in 1811, now houses the St. Mullins Heritage Centre, situated beside the monastic ruins and cemetery. St. Mullins Heritage Centre contains a miscellany of local history, including publications, church records, maps, old photographs and artefacts, providing an illustrative account of village and rural life over the centuries.

The Barrow Way long-distance walking route begins and ends in St. Mullins. It is a walking route rich in history with a strong industrial heritage story in the lock houses, old mills, and archaeological sites that line its banks along this stretch.

1.1 St. Mullins Overview

St. Mullins is situated in the south of County Carlow, at the boundary with counties Kilkenny and Wexford. The settlement is within the Muinebheag Municipal District of Carlow County Council.

1.1.1 County Setting

Co. Carlow is the second smallest of Ireland's thirty-two counties by area and the third-smallest population. In addition, it is the second smallest of Leinster's twelve counties in both size and population.

Map 3 - County Setting

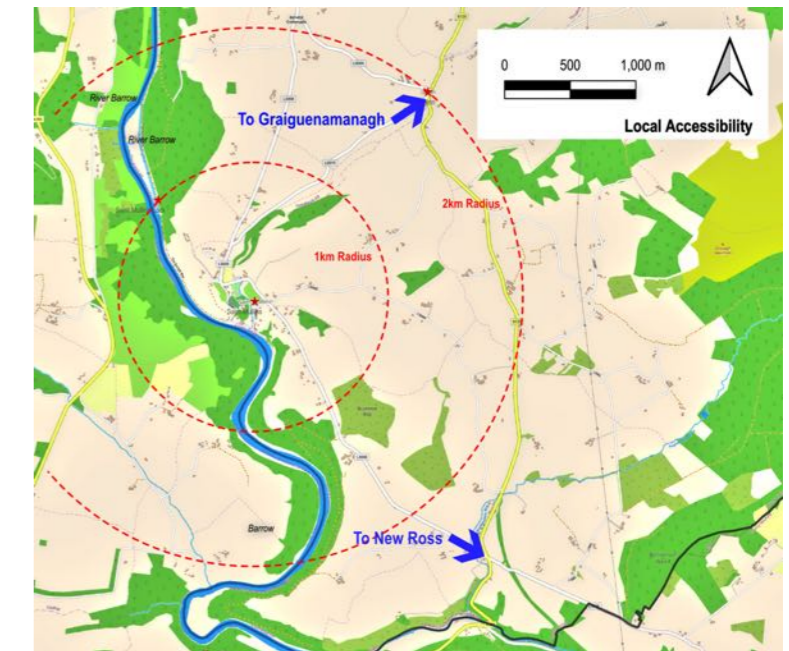


Co. Carlow's population increased by 13.1 per cent (6,583 persons) between 2006 and 2016. This was marginally faster than the State and the South-East Region (12.3 per cent and 10.7 per cent, respectively). However, population growth was not evenly distributed across the county and was most prevalent in the peri-urban zone around Carlow town. Rural areas were generally demographically weaker, particularly in the south of the county.

1.1.2 Local Accessibility

St. Mullins is located on the eastern bank of the River Barrow, some 17km north of New Ross, Co. Wexford and 7km south of Graigueamanagh, Co. Kilkenny.

Map 4 - Local Accessibility



For vehicular access, the village is served by the L3008, 2 km distant from the R729 regional road to the south, and by the L3010 from Glynn. River access is from the Barrow, which forms the southern boundary of the settlement and is also the county boundary.

1.2 St. Mullins Socio-Demographic Profile

See Annex Document 1 for the full profile.

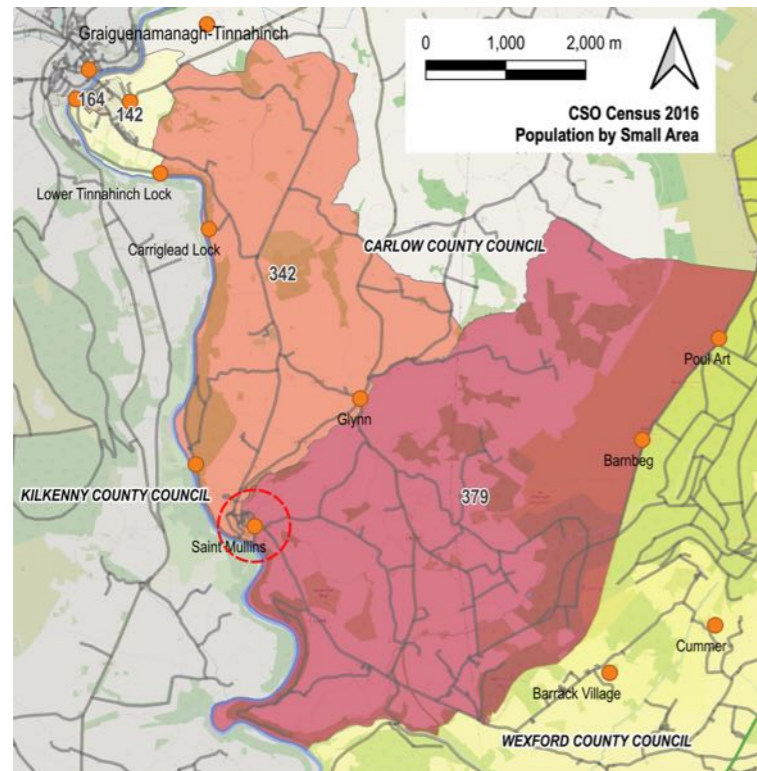
The CSO Census of Population 2016 defines the St. Mullins settlement as contained within two EDs, Glynn and Tinnahinch. Tinnahinch ED was comprised of three Small Areas of Population (SAPs).

1.2.1 Population

In 2016, the combined population of the Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs was 1,027, having fallen by 2.5 per cent from 2011. By way of comparison, across the period 2006-2016, the population of Co. Carlow increased by 13.1 per cent, ahead of the State at 12.3 per cent and the South East Region at 10.7 per cent.

The preliminary results of Census 2022 estimate that the intercensal population of Co. Carlow increased by 8.8 per cent to 61,931. This is ahead of the 7.7 percent increase over the 2016 population for the State.

Map 5 - St. Mullins Population 2016



Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

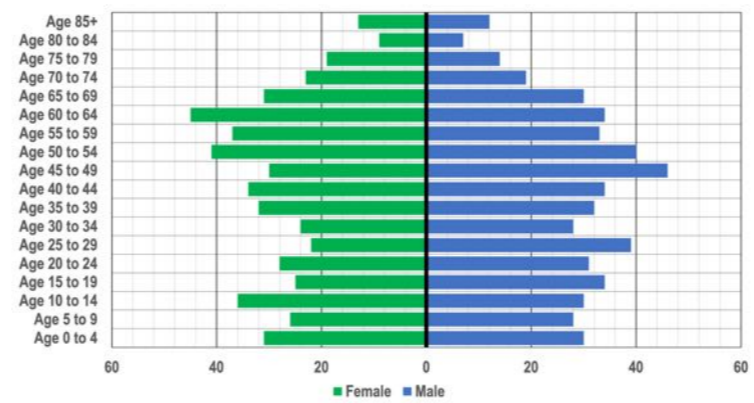
Two of the SAPS areas form part of the settlement envelope of Graiguehanamanagh, accounting for 30 per cent of the total population of the Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs in 2016.

1.2.2 Age Profile

In 2016, 17.62 per cent of the combined Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs were 14 years of age and younger (181 people). In addition, 65.14 per cent of the population was in the economically active age band of 15 to 64 years of age (669 people). The remaining 17.23 per cent of the population were over 64 years of age (177 people).

In 2016, the young dependency ratio for Co. Carlow was 22.2. However, the young dependency ratio for the combined Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs was 27.0. Thus, the area has a considerably larger cohort of young people than is the case in the county.

Figure 4 - Population Age Pyramid 2016

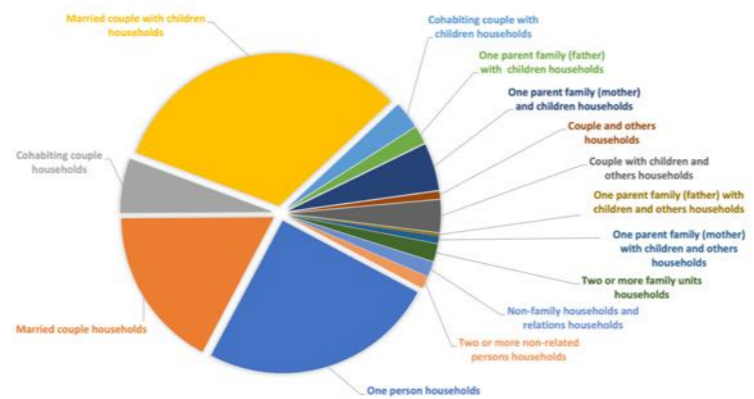


Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

1.2.3 Households

The CSO Census of Population 2016 records 380 households in the Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs. The majority of these comprised married couples with children (123 households: 32 per cent of total households).

Figure 5 - Households 2016



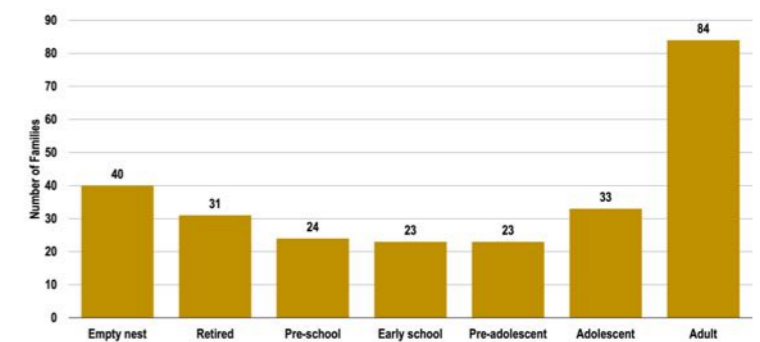
Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

1.2.4 Families

In 2016, there were 281 families living in the Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs. Of these, the single largest proportion (34 per cent) had no children. Thirty per cent of the children of families with one child were under 15 years of age.

In 2016, 25 per cent of families were classified as pre-school, early school or pre-adolescent family cycle units.

Figure 6 - Families by Family Cycle 2016

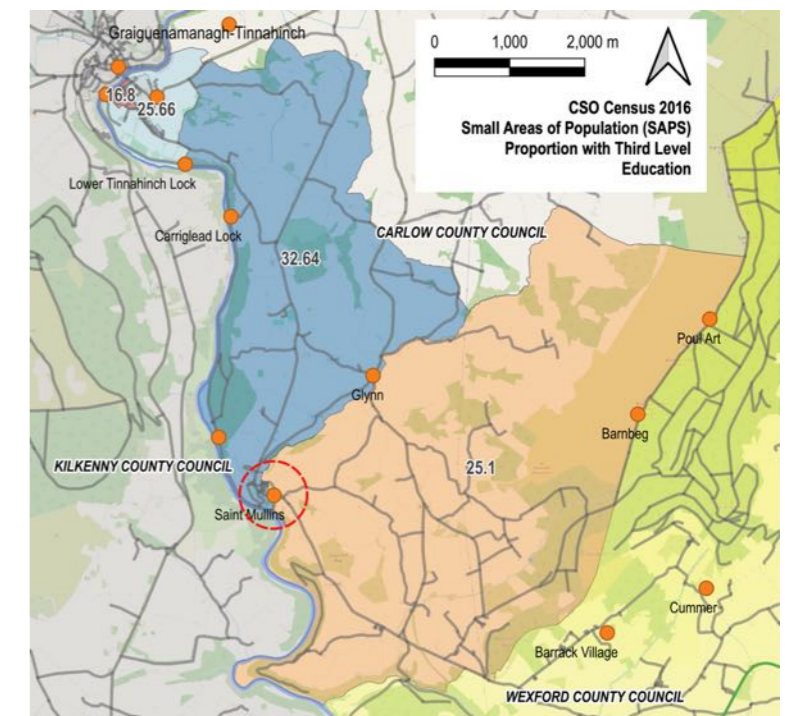


Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

1.2.5 Educational Attainment

The *Socio-Demographic Profile of Carlow: 2019* (Carlow LCDC) reports that in 2016 Co. Carlow and the South-East Region exhibited a higher level of educational disadvantage than Ireland as a whole. The proportion of the adult population in Co. Carlow, with a third-level qualification stood at 29 per cent.

Map 5 - Population with Third Level Education 2016



Source: Haase, T. and Pratschke, J. 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index

The comparative rate of the adult population in Co. Carlow, with a third-level qualification was considerably below the state average (36 per cent). The proportion of persons who had completed formal full-time education and who did not progress beyond lower secondary education (Group and Junior / Intermediate Certificate or equivalent)

was considerably higher in the county and region (>33 per cent) than was the case across the State (29 per cent).

1.2.6 Unemployment

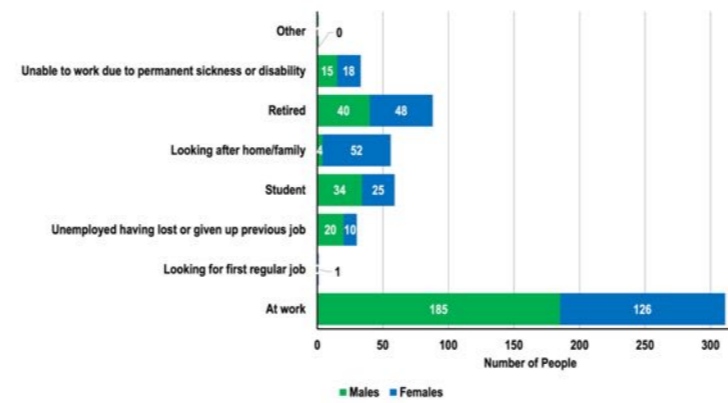
The highest rates of both male and female unemployment in 2016 were found in the southern environs of Graiguenamanagh within Tinnahinch ED.

The male unemployment rate in St. Mullins in 2016 was estimated to be 10 per cent of the working population. This rate is approximately half of that achieved by the county (18 per cent). The estimated female unemployment rate for St. Mullins was 8 per cent of the working population.

1.2.7 Employment

In 2016, the greater St. Mullins area's working population (those over 15 and under 65 years of age) included 250 males and 222 females. Twenty males and ten females were unemployed, having lost or given up their previous job.

Figure 7 - Employment Profile 2016



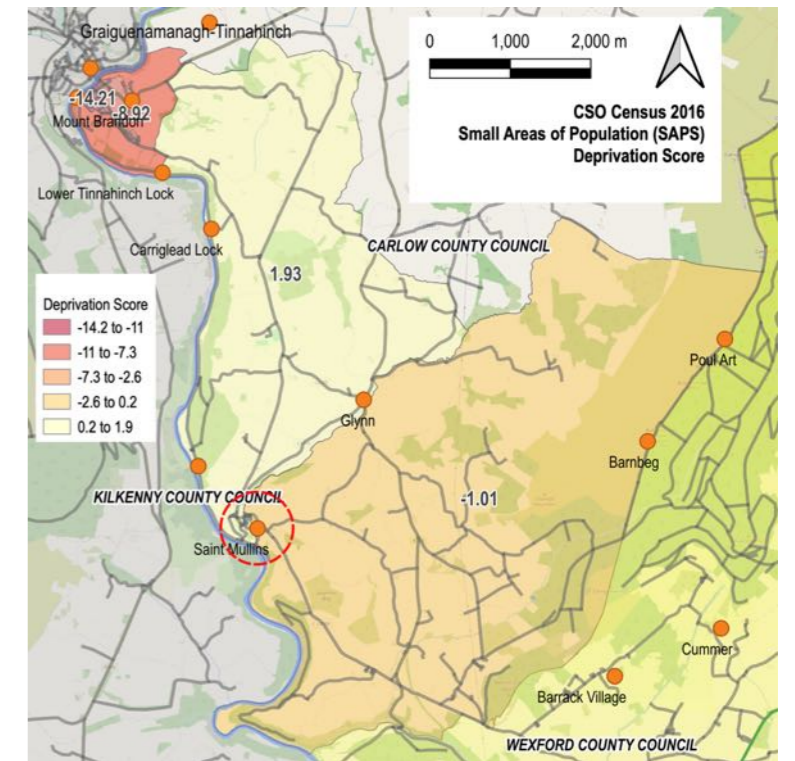
Source: CSO Census of Population 2016

1.3 Disadvantage

Using data compiled from various censuses, the Pobal HP Deprivation Index (Haase and Pratschke, 2017) measures an area's relative affluence or disadvantage. A scoring is given to the area based on a national average of zero, ranging from approximately -35 (the most disadvantaged) to +35 (the most affluent).

In 2016, the SAPS area to the immediate south of Graiguenamanagh in Tinnahinch ED returned a Deprivation Score of -14.21, giving the area *Disadvantaged* status. The remaining SAPS areas are either *Marginally Above Average* or *Marginally Below Average* on the Pobal HP Deprivation Index.

Map 6 - Disadvantage 2016



Source: Haase, T. and Pratschke, J. 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index

2 Heritage and Historical Context

Fáilte Ireland notes that heritage and culture is at the heart of the Irish international tourism offering, attracting overseas visitors, and bringing investment into local economies. However, research carried out by Fáilte Ireland in 2011 showed that ‘over half of all heritage sites had no marketing plan. In addition, they generally lacked marketing knowledge’.¹

The heritage of St. Mullins comprises tangible, natural and intangible assets. These assets have been inherited from the past and are to be valued and enjoyed in the present. The challenge is preserving and passing all of this on for future generations to experience.

In St. Mullins, the tangible characteristics that contribute to the local heritage include the concentration of historical sites, buildings, monuments, objects, and artefacts, together with the archives of the assets. The natural characteristic of the settlement includes the waterways, landscapes, woodlands, habitats, native wildlife, insects, plants, trees, birds, and animals. The intangible characteristics incorporate local customs, sports, music, dance, folklore, crafts, skills, and traditions.

All these attributes, along with their associated mythology, legends, traditions, and memories, provide an insight into the area and its people. But, beyond providing a record of the past and how St. Mullins has evolved, it explains why things are the way they are. In this respect, the local heritage assets play an important role in politics, society, business, and understanding a worldview.

The Heritage Council recognises that the community's engagement to take responsibility for and participate in the development and conservation of the local heritage will energise the wider area and provide opportunities for local people to review, re-engage with, and re-interpret their surroundings.

In St. Mullins, the effective management and enhancement of heritage assets will provide a basis for local economic development and innovation in tourism, agriculture, entertainment, education, and business generally.

2.1 Tangible Characteristics

2.1.1 Built Environment

The *St. Mullins Framework for the Protection of Heritage and Amenity 1995* assesses the built environment within the settlement envelope. Given the nature and extent of the constraints on the development of

St. Mullins, there has been little in the period 1995 to the present day that has impacted many of the assessments.

The following table references the survey work undertaken by Dr. Sean O'Reilly of the Conservation Studies Unit, School of Architecture, UCD, 1995.

See *Annex Document 2* for a full description of the identified structures.

Table 2 - Key Built Environment Features 1995

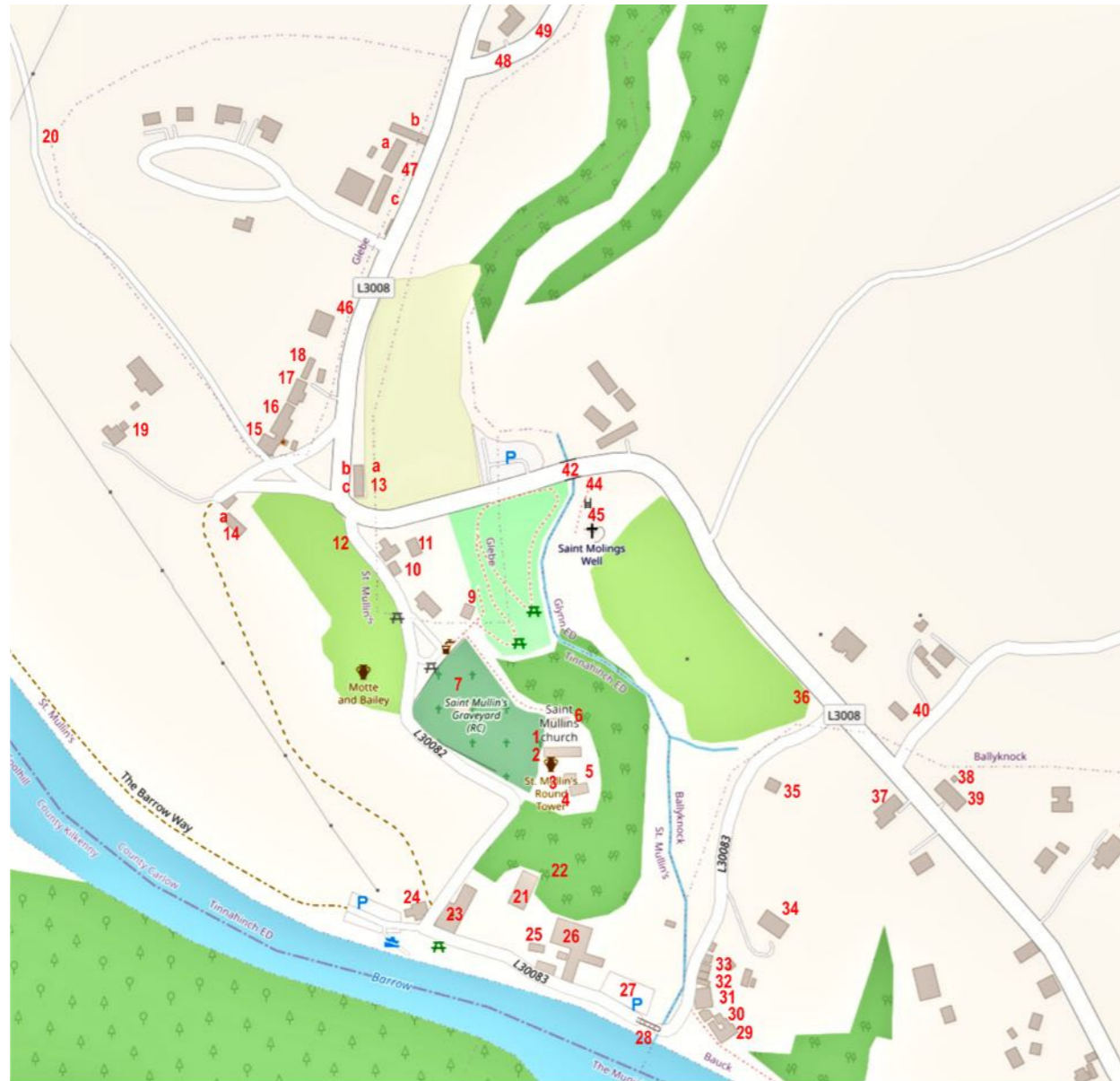
Key Features	Map Ref.	Structure
Ecclesiastical Structures.	1	Teampall Mor.
	2	The Abbey.
	3	Gabled Stone Building.
	4	Low Structure Without Gables.
	5	St. James's Chapel.
	6	Church of Ireland Church.
	7	Penal Altar.
Village Green.	8	Motte and Bailey.
	9	Public Toilets.
	10	Bungalow.
	11	Bungalow.

/continued

Key Features	Map Ref.	Structure
Village Green.	12	Pump.
	13	House.
	14	Bungalow.
Terrace of One and Two-Storey Blocks.	15	Blanchfields.
	16	Outbuilding.
	17	House.
	18	House.
Houses.	19	House.
	20	Farmhouse.
Woodville House.	21	House.
	22	Conservatory.
Riverside Industrial Mill and Warehouse Complex.	23	Warehouse and Mill.
	24	One-Storey Lean-To Structure with Galvanised Roof.
	25	Mill House Lodge.
	26	Mill House.
	27	Picnic Area.
	28	Bridge.
	29	The Cottage.
Terrace.	30	House.
	31	Bed and Breakfast.
	32	House.
Residences.	33	House.
	34	House.
	35	House.
	36	Derelict Block.
	37	House.
Houses.	38-39	Houses.
	40	House.
	41	Farmhouse.
Buildings on route to St. Moling's Well.	42	Bridge.
	44	House.
Buildings along the Graiquenamanagh road.	45	St. Moling's Well.
	46	Boundary Wall.
	47	Farmhouse.
	48	House.
	49	House.

¹ A *Tourism Toolkit for Ireland's Built Heritage* (2012).

Map 7 - Key Built Environment Features 1995



2.1.2 Dispersed Settlement

St. Mullins can be classified as a settlement rather than a village. It has no discernible village core and no local shop. Instead, its buildings are distributed in groups over an extensive area.

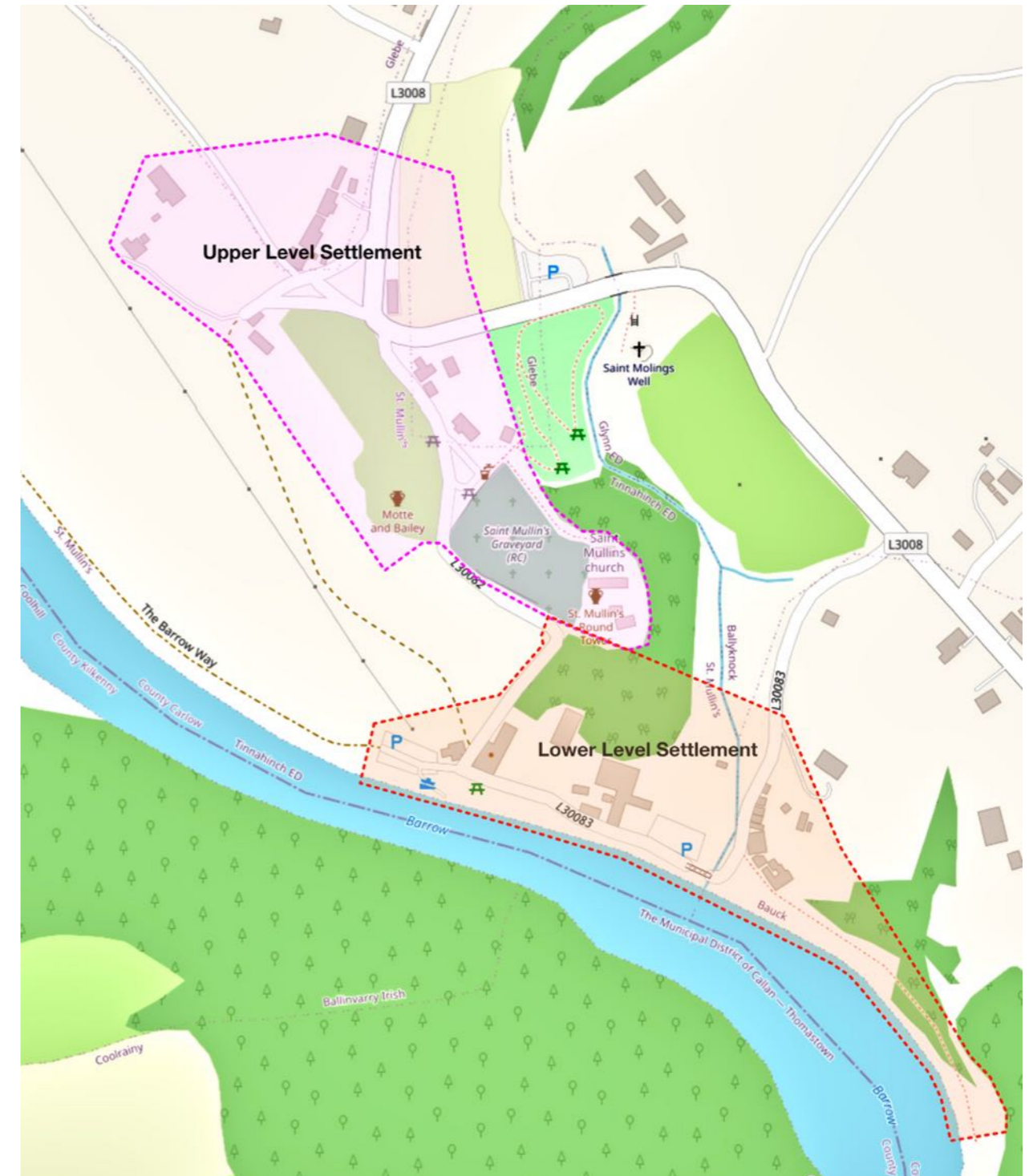
Two principal nuclei for the settlement were identified in the *St. Mullins Framework for the Protection of Heritage and Amenity 1995*, and this remains the case today as identified in the following map: -

1. The Village Green/Churchyard area is at the higher level.
2. The complex along the River Barrow quayside.

The two areas are isolated visually and spatially, with the only visual connection being the graveyard. This is seen separately from either the Green or one small part of the quayside area. Based on local observation given during the consultation process, it is not unknown for the visitor to spend time on the Green and Church grounds and leave again without being aware of the river and quayside.

The dispersed nature of the settlement is further emphasised by the two farm complexes, which are highly visible from the Village Green area. These provide almost as much building mass as the entire upper nucleus.

Map 8 - St. Mullins Settlement Nuclei

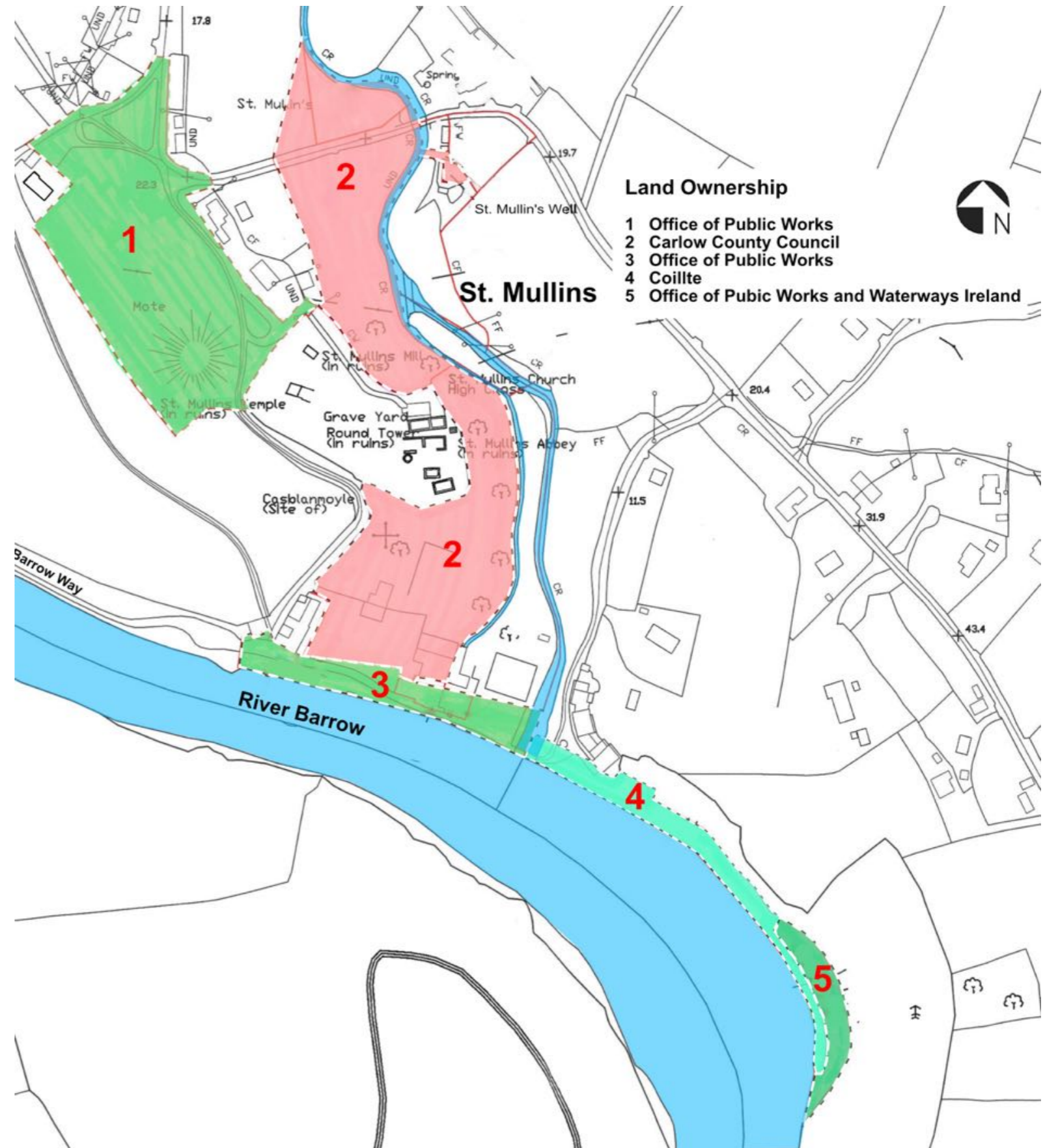


2.1.3 Public Land Ownership

A considerable amount of land within St. Mullins is held in public ownership, as indicated on the adjacent map.

The Barrow Way is in the ownership of Waterways Ireland, and several parcels of land within the St. Mullins settlement are in the ownership of the Office of Public Works and Carlow County Council.

Map 9 - Public Land Ownership



2.2 Natural Characteristics

2.2.1 Road Access

The topography effectively divides the settlement into upper and lower levels. The local roads L30082 and L30083 present significant gradients between the upper and lower levels. In past times, the L30082 was sufficiently steep to prevent laden commercial traffic from climbing away from the lower level. The solution saw the development of a haulage road which is still in existence but is in private ownership.

Map 10 - Riverfront Road Access

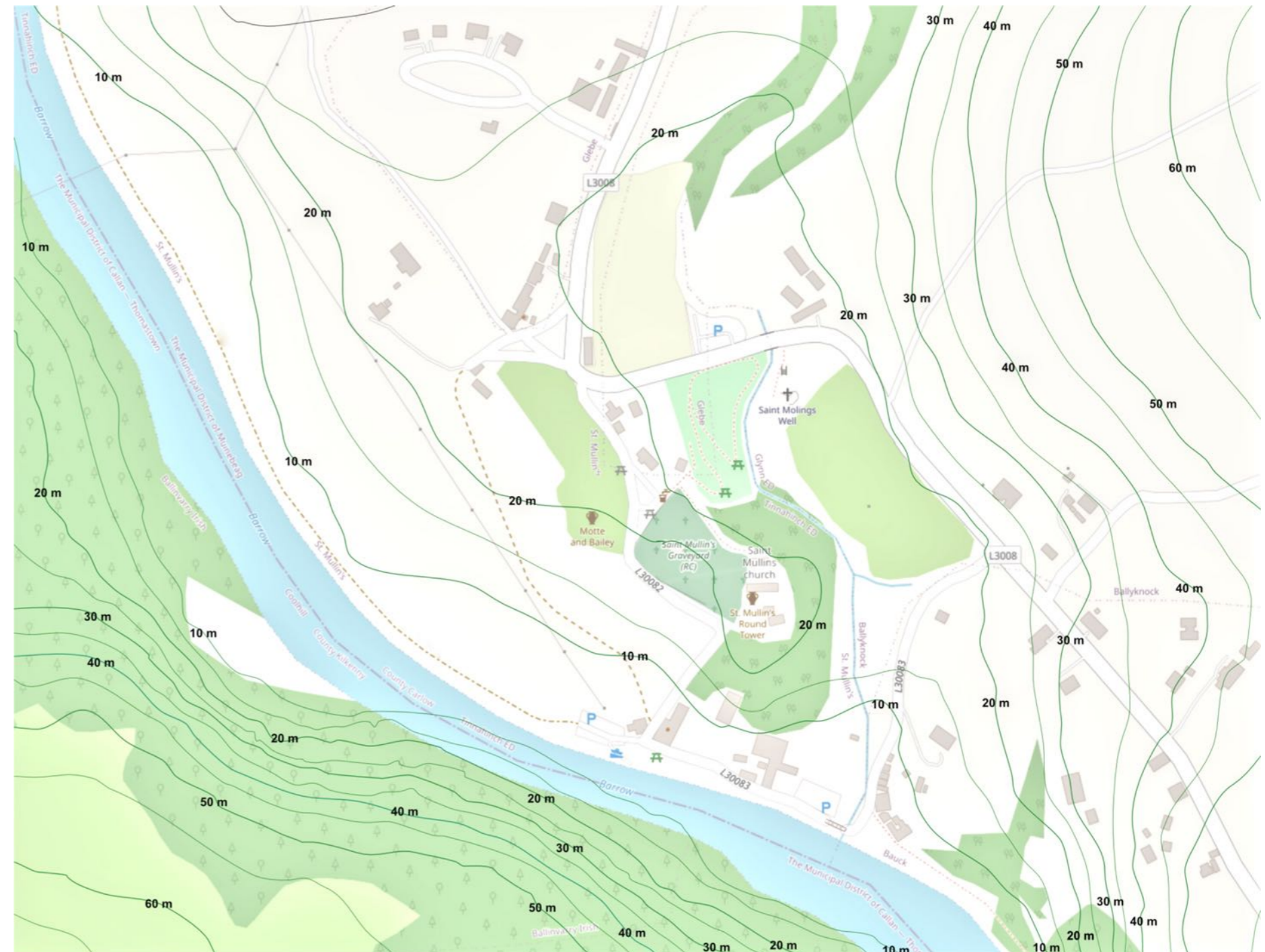


2.2.2 Topography

St. Mullins settlement is defined to the immediate south by the Barrow River Basin, effectively forming a gorge. The proximity of the Village Green to the River Barrow creates significant gradients on the linking road infrastructure.

Extensive woodland on the steeply sloping southern bank of the River Barrow (Ballinvarry Irish and Coolrainey Townlands) adds to the sense of separation between the river frontage and the upper settlement.

Map 11 - St. Mullins Topography



2.2.3 Flooding

The Barrow River Basin constrains the local flood capacity of the River Barrow and the River Aughavaud.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 identifies areas close to St. Mullins at risk of flooding. The simplified map below shows the areas for further assessment under the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment notes that it is inappropriate to undertake significant redevelopment within Flood Zone A that might introduce additional people to the area.

Map 12 - Flood Risk Areas



2.2.4 River Barrow Special Area of Conservation

The Barrow and Aughavaud rivers dominate the natural environment of St. Mullins. The strategic regional importance of the River Barrow stretches back into distant history.

In Ireland, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service² (NPWS) as prime wildlife conservation areas considered important on a European and a State level.

Old Oak woodland within the River Barrow SAC occurs on the steep slopes of the lower course of the River Barrow.

² The River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (site code 2162) provides a series of conservation objectives relating to woodland habitats.

Flora Habitats

Floating river vegetation is well represented in the Barrow and its many tributaries. The species found in the river include water-starworts, Canadian Pondweed, Bulbous Rush, Water-Milfoils, pondweeds including Broad-leaved Pondweed, Fennel Pondweed, Perfoliate Pondweed and Crowfoots³.

In the River Aughavaud foothills, small patches of wet heath dominated by Purple Moor-grass with Heather, Tormentil, Carnation Sedge and Bell Heather. Other habitats which occur throughout the SAC include wet grassland, marsh, reedswamp, improved grassland, arable land, quarries, coniferous plantations, deciduous woodland, scrub and ponds.

Seventeen International Union for Conservation of Nature Red Data Book plant species has been recorded within the SAC. Nine are protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015.

Fauna Habitats

The Barrow River Basin SAC is significant for several EU Habitats Directive Annex II animal species, including Freshwater Pearl Mussel, White-clawed Crayfish, Salmon, Twaite Shad, three lamprey species, the tiny whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* and Otter. In addition, the SAC is the only site in the world for the hard water form of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel and one of only a handful of spawning grounds in the country for Twaite Shad.

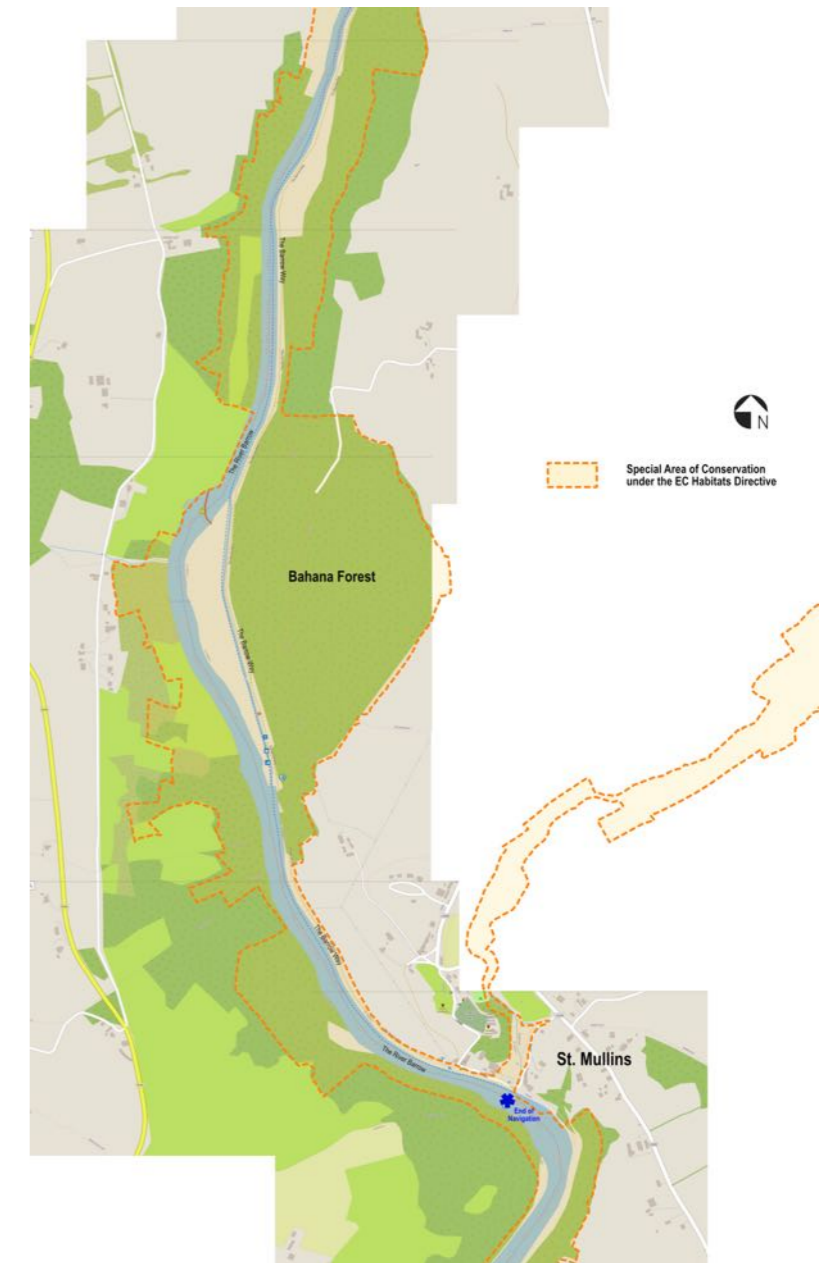
The SAC supports many other important animal species, including Daubenton's Bat, Badger, Irish Hare and Common Frog.

The rare fish species Smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) occurs in estuarine stretches of the SAC.

The Barrow River Basin SAC is of ornithological importance for several EU Birds Directive Annex I species, including Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan, Bewick's Swan, Bar-tailed Godwit, Peregrine and Kingfisher. In addition, nationally important numbers of Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit are found during the winter.

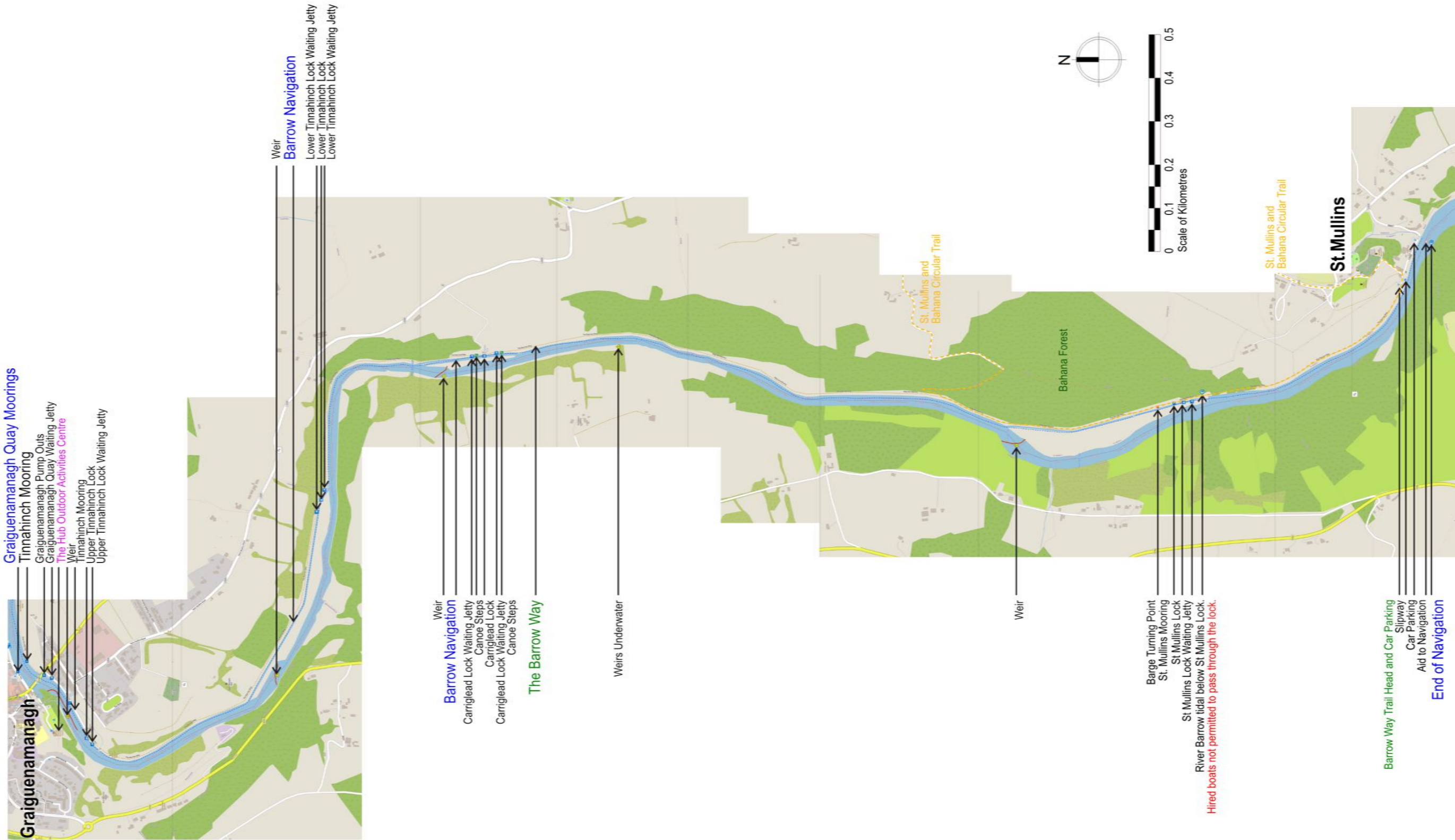
³ The water quality of the Barrow has improved since the vegetation survey was carried out (EPA, 1996).

Map 13 - River Barrow Special Area of Conservation



The legal basis on which the River Barrow SAC was selected and designated references the EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011), as amended.

Map 14 - Barrow Navigation Graiguenamanagh to St. Mullins



2.2.5 River Barrow Commercial Significance

The River Barrow was a significant commercial canalised waterway up to the 1950s, linking with the important facilities of Athy, Carlow, Graiguenamanagh and New Ross. It was of strategic importance to the mills at St. Mullins, facilitating the waterpower to drive the grain milling processes and providing the inbound and outbound transport artery.

2.2.6 Landscape Character

St. Mullins settlement is located within an area of high landscape sensitivity derived from its small scale and inter-visibility between the Barrow River Valley and the surrounding uplands. The County Development Plan identifies the area as part of the Central Lowlands.

The central plain landscape character area occupies a substantial portion of Co. Carlow, including the county's major settlements. The landscape is primarily rural, with medium to large fields defined by well maintained and generally low hedges and occasional hedgerow trees. In addition, there are important stands of conifers located in the south along the River Barrow Valley.

Protected Views and Scenic Routes

The Carlow County Development Plan, 2022-2028, includes three protected views and two scenic routes near St. Mullins. In addition, the Carlow County Landscape Character Assessment and Schedule of Protected Views (2015) identifies an additional scenic route.

Table 3 - St. Mullins Protected Views and Scenic Routes

Ref.	Location	Orientation	Route	Type	Features
14	West of Clonmore at Blackhill.	North	L2007-21	View	Eagle and Constable Hills.
15	West of Clonmore at Blackhill.	Southeast	L2007-21	Vista	The south end of River Slaney. East Rolling landscape and Blackstairs.
47	Carriglead	East	L3008	Vista	The south end of Blackstairs
48	Glynn/St. Mullins.	Southwest	L3010	View	View towards Brandon
49	St. Mullins	South	L3010	View	Approach to settlement.

Additional Scenic Route

Ref.	Orientation	Route	Features
21	North	St. Mullins to Glynn along the river valley.	Views are intermittent because of tall hedges. The southern part of the route is an integral part of St. Mullins.

Map 15 - St. Mullins Scenic Routes

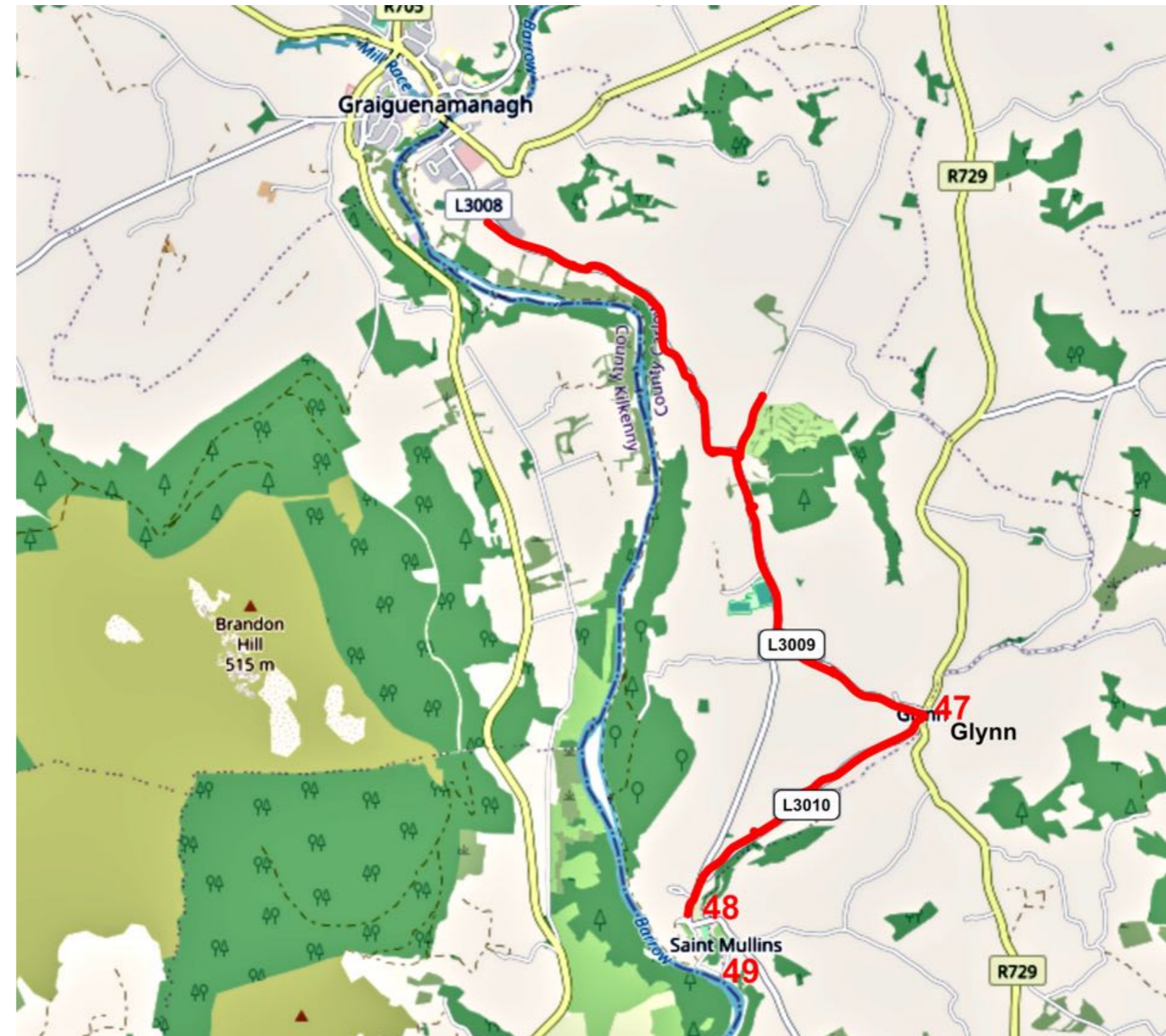
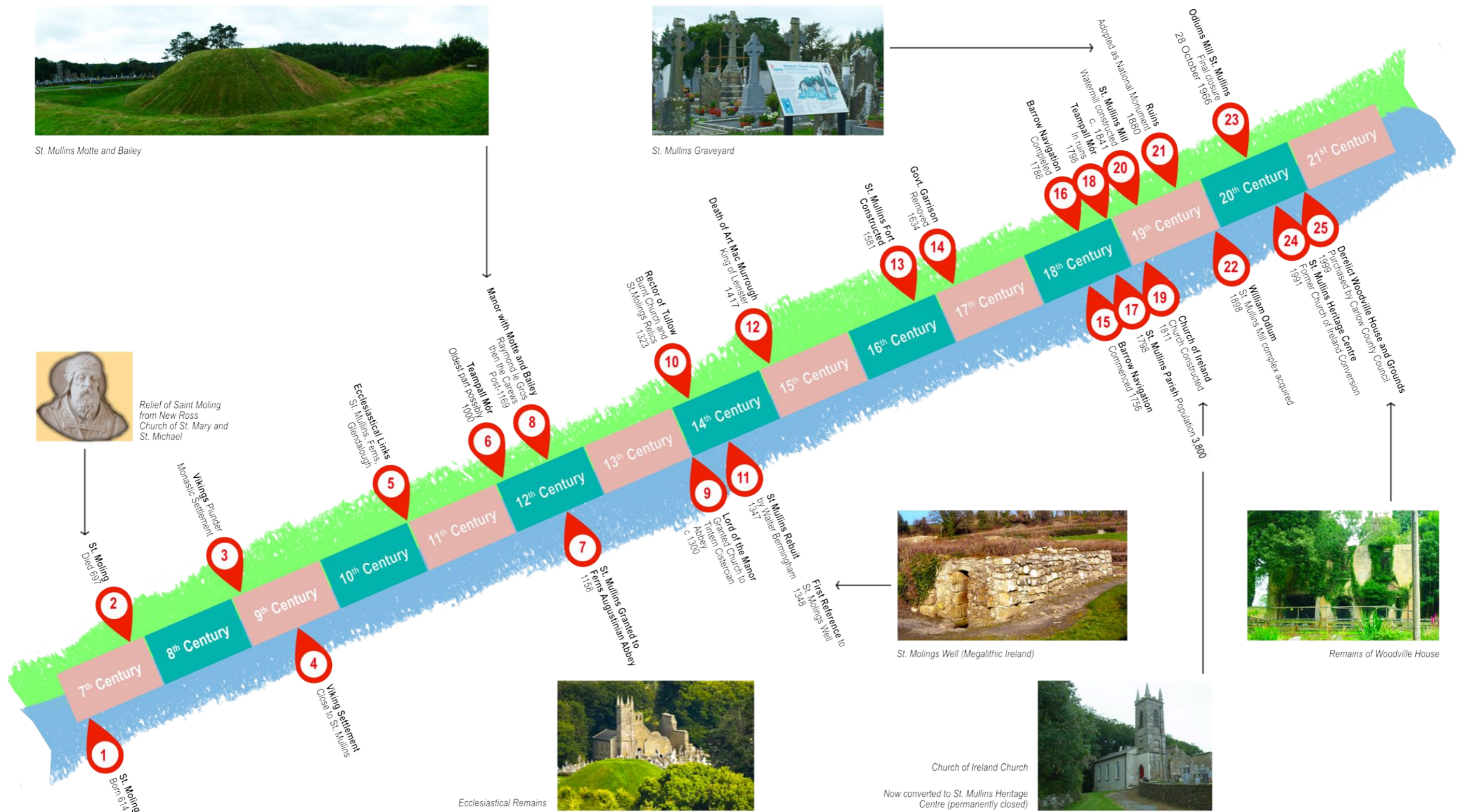


Figure 8 - St. Mullins Historical Timeline



2.3 Heritage and History

St. Mullins gets its name from St. Moling (614 – 696 CE). The area has physical remains from many significant periods in Irish history. It offers physical reference to an early Christian monastic settlement, a Norman Motte and Bailey, a large graveyard with many insurgents from the 1798 Rebellion, 19th century flour and woollen mills and the river with its history in both fishing and commercial canal transportation.

This section provides an overview of some of the important events in the area’s history for which physical evidence can be seen today. The information in this section references some of the published records of the area.

2.3.1 Early History

The early history of St. Mullins is contained in myths and legends and goes back much further than St. Moling.

Fionn mac Cumhaill

The Book of Leinster⁴ records that in the third century, four hundred years before St. Moling built his monastery at St. Mullins, Bressal Bélach macFiachu Ba hAiccid, a descendant of Cathair Már and king of Leinster to 436⁵, engaged the mythical warrior Fionn mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool) and his army, the Fianna, to help him defeat the High King of Ireland, Cairbre Lifechair, son of Cormac mac Airt. He imposed the Bóroma (cow-tribute tax). Bressal Bélach won the battle at Camross, where nine thousand were reported killed, but later Cairbre Lifechair defeated him in the Battle of Dubchomar and from then on exacted the Bóroma Tax.

However, this account appears to be a variance with the chronology of Geoffrey Keating’s (c. 1569 – c. 1644) Foras Feasa ar Éirinn and the Annals of the Four Masters⁶, which suggests that Cairbre Lifechair’s son, Fiacha Sraibhtine (a High King of Ireland) ruled between 273–306 or 285–322 and was defeated in what became known as the Battle of Dubchomar (Fiacha’s druid was Dubchomar).

There are many accounts of Fionn mac Cumhaill and his army, the Fianna, taking part in battles near St. Mullins.

Suibhne mac Colmáin




In Irish folklore, St. Mullins is said to be where Suibhne Geilt (Suibhne the madman) dies after being welcomed into the monastery by Saint Moling. It is unclear who Suibhne Geilt was, but one version of the tale suggests that he was Suibhne mac Colmáin, king of the Dál nAraidi, who was driven insane by the curse of Saint Rónán Finn. The insanity makes Suibhne leave the Battle of Mag Rath and begin a life of wandering.

⁴ The Book of Leinster was compiled c. 1160. It was formerly known as the Lebor na Nuachongbála,, a monastic site known today as Oughaval, Co. Laois.

⁵ Lineage of the Kings – Kings of Leinster - <https://sites.rootsweb.com/~irlkik/ihm/kilings.htm>

2.3.2 7th to 12th Centuries

Table 4 - St. Mullins 7th to 12th Centuries




Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	614 to 696 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Moling was born in the Sliabh Luachra area of Co. Kerry, near the village of Brosna, in 614. Both he and his mother were taken into the protection of St. Brendan’s Monastery at Uaimh Brennáinn, where Moling was first educated by Collannach, a great teacher of that time. According to the early annals, Teach Moling (House of Moling) is named after its founder, St. Moling, who died in 696 CE. Accounts of the life and miracles of Moling written in Latin and Irish survive but, as with most Irish saints’ lives, might contain little or no historical fact. It is thought that St. Moling eventually went on to become the second Bishop of Ferns in 691. During his lifetime, he was said to have performed many miracles. The manuscript entitled <i>The Birth and Life of St. Moling</i>’ copied in 1628 by Micheál Ó Cléirigh (one of the Four Masters) from an older manuscript, <i>The Book of Tighe Mulling</i>’, describes how St. Brendan, The Navigator, sailed up the River Barrow to what is now St. Mullins to establish a monastic community. However, an angel appeared and told him that thirty years hence, Moling of Linn Mór would come to build his monastery at Ros Bruic (Badger’s Wood), the old name for St. Mullins. Brandon Hill, on the west bank of the River Barrow, gets its name from St. Brendan. According to tradition St. Moling was said to have been a descendant of Cathair Már, who was a Prince of Leinster. It is said that he studied to be a monk at the Ferns monastery in County Wexford and also as a monk in Glendalough. With some assistance, most likely financial from the Maedoc of Ferns, he founded his monastery at Achad Cainigh, which became Teach Moling in the 7th century. The monastery was said to have been built with the help of Gobban Saor, the legendary Irish builder. The <i>Latin Life</i>, probably written in the twelfth century, recounts how he dug a channel for water to turn his mill and how, at the time of writing, it was part of the pilgrimage to wade through the entire length of this watercourse against the flow.
	824 to 825 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The monastery at St. Mullins prospered and became a target for a large fleet of Vikings who landed in Waterford.
	892 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Vikings of St. Mullins, Wexford and Waterford were defeated by Riagan, son of Dungal⁷. Two hundred were slain, suggesting that there must, at least temporarily, have been a Viking base here.
	917 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sitric, the grandson of Ivar, lands a fleet of vessels at Cenn Fuait (near St. Mullins). Sitric, the grandson of Ivar, routs Laigin at Cenn Fuait. Five hundred or more were killed, including Augare son of Aillill, king of Laigin, Maolmórda King of East Liffey, Muirón son of Cendétigh King of three Comann and Láigis, and Cinaedh, son of Tuathal, King of Uí Enechglais. Vikings of Cenn Fuait plunder Kildare.
	952 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fleet plundered St. Mullins monastery under the command of a Viking named Lairic, after whom Port Láirge (Waterford) got its name.
	1138 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The abbey was destroyed by fire, possibly following a further Viking attack. Before establishing the monastery, St. Moling was a monk in Glendalough. The Venerable Bede, an Anglo-Saxon scholar, referred to him as a ‘good and wise man, excellently versed in the knowledge of the Scriptures’. As a significant archaeological site, St. Mullins is considered to stand in importance with Glendalough and Clonmacnoise.

/continued

⁶ Compiled between 1632 and 1636.


⁷ Extract from ‘A County by County Reference List for Viking Activities in Ireland as Described in the Annals of the Four Masters’ Fischer L. http://www.vikingage.mic.ul.ie/pdfs/c7_viking-activity-in-ireland-by-county-in-annals.pdf

/continued

Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	1000 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The oldest church in St. Mullins is located adjacent to the former Church of Ireland church and is known as the Teampall Mór (great church). The remains of a nave and chancel exist, with little more than the gable ends surviving. It is believed the walls of the original Nave extended beyond the gables forming antae. Teampall Mor is a 15th century church, although parts date to the 10th and 11th centuries. By 1792 it was in ruins, as shown in a view of that date in Grose's Antiquities of Ireland.
	1158 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Book of Mulling (late 8th century) records St Mullin's was renowned as a place of pilgrimage, possibly stretching back to pre-Christian times and the festival of Lughnasa. In the 12th century, King Dermot MacMurrough, gave the lands at St Mullin's to the Augustinian canons of Ferns, probably so that they might administer the pilgrimage to the site. There is a reference to an oath being sworn on the altar and shrine of St Moling in 1170. The focus of pilgrimage at St Mullins is likely to have been water rather than relics.
	Post-1169 CE	<p><i>Record of Monuments and Places Key Map Reference 1.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The motte and bailey site is outside the graveyard and forms part of the village green. This was a medieval system of defence in which a stone tower on a mound (the motte) is surrounded by an area of land (the bailey), which in turn is encompassed by a barrier such as a ditch. A large portion of the bailey on the riverside has been quarried away, The Anglo-Norman invasion, led by Richard de Clare (Strongbow), took place in 1169. The Anglo-Normans were attracted to St. Mullins by the presence of a thriving monastic site and the Viking settlement. By 1171, a manor house was established with a typical motte and bailey castle. This was in Raymond le Gros's possession for a time before it passed to his heirs, the Carews. In St. Mullins, the motte-and-bailey consists of a large, flat-topped mound of earth surrounded by a ditch or fosse and a rectangular bailey or banked enclosure attached to one side. The mound was built around the later part of the 12th century when permission was granted by Richard De Clare (Strongbow). The fosse was fortified with a palisade fence with a tall watch tower on top. It was built to dominate the passage and crossing on the tidal River Barrow. Attached to one side was a rectangular bailey or banked enclosure which would have housed the castle's garrison and household.

2.3.3 13th to 17th Centuries

Table 5 - St Mullins 13th to 17th Centuries





Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	c. 1300 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around 1300 CE, Richard Tallon, then Lord of the Manor, granted the monastic site to the Cistercian Abbey of Tintern, Co. Wexford. The early 1300s was a time of turmoil in Ireland. The Anglo-Normans, who had overrun much of the country following the 1169 CE invasion, had been pushed back by the resurgent Irish. Many of the Norman families who had been granted lands in Ireland no longer felt any allegiance to the King of England and at this period could be found fighting either with or against the Irish or English, depending on what suited the circumstances of the day.

/continued

⁸ <https://www.tcd.ie/library/early-irish-mss/st-mullins/>

⁹ <https://www.tcd.ie/library/early-irish-mss/the-book-of-mulling-and-the-kings-of-leinster/#more-1145>



/continued

Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	1323 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the <i>Annals of Ireland</i> (1849), Friar John Clyn records that 'In the year 1323, on Friday within the octaves of Easter, Philip Tallon, with his sons and about twenty-six of the Codhlitans, was slain by Edmond Butler, Rector of Tullow, who, aided by the Cantitons, dragged them out of the church and burned the church of Thamolyn, with their women and children, and the reliques of Saint Molyng'.
	1347 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to Trinity College Dublin⁹, St. Mullins was 'rebuilt' in 1347 at the behest of Walter Bermingham, the Justiciar, or king's representative in Ireland at the time. The Dublin administration's interest in the place was most likely strategic, and again in 1581, £350 was raised to erect a fortification protecting the Barrow navigation. This was likely achieved through the conversion of one of the churches on the site, the so-called abbey, which incorporates several domestic and defensive features.'
	1417 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Moling's Well is approached beside the bridge on the road running east from the Green. It has an unusual structure, like a small early stone church with antae, through which the water flows. Trinity College Dublin⁹ notes the connection between MacMurrough Kavanagh (Mac Murchadha Caomhánach), Art Mór (1357-1416/17), king of Leinster, and St. Mullins. 'As Anglo-Norman control of Ireland began to wane in the fourteenth century, Art MacMurrough emerged as a powerful force. It was Art who was responsible for the making, or repair, of the shrine that held the Book of Mulling and is now at the National Museum of Ireland. Relics (and their shrines) were one of the insignia used in ancient Gaelic inauguration ceremonies. Although there is no direct evidence of the Moling shrine being used in this way, it is not improbable'.
	1581 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1581 Anthony Colclough was contracted to erect a robust fort at St. Mullins to hold a government garrison. The star-shaped structure was constructed on Coolyhune Hill and was decommissioned in 1634. The remains of the fort are still extant. According to Trinity College Dublin¹⁰, the Dublin administration's strategic interest in St. Mullins resulted in '£350 being raised to erect a fortification protecting the Barrow navigation. It is likely that this was achieved through the conversion of one of the churches on the site, the so-called abbey, which incorporates several domestic and defensive features'.

¹⁰ <https://www.tcd.ie/library/early-irish-mss/st-mullins/>




2.3.4 18th Century

Table 6 - St Mullins 18th century

Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	1756 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1703 the Irish House of Commons put forward a motion to make the River Barrow navigable. Following extensive delays, in 1756, the building of the Lock System to make the Barrow navigable was begun at Carriglead. By 1785 the Barrow was navigable from St. Mullins to Monasterevin. The boats were pulled along the towpaths by hauliers, replaced by horses as the tonnage got heavier. The cargo consisted mainly of corn, meal, malt, and flour. Passengers were also carried on canal boats called 'clarauns'. The Barrow Navigation Company was incorporated in 1790. There was a depot on the quay in St. Mullins near the Steamer Hole. The Barrow Navigation Company was incorporated in 1792 to canalise the river to make it navigable for boats carrying up to 40 tonnes. The River Barrow maintained its commercial significance until the mid-20th century. However, in 1959 all trading barges were withdrawn from the river system. Waterways Ireland is now responsible for the Barrow Navigation and manages the waterway assets. Waterways Ireland seeks to increase public awareness, affinity, and participation on and along the waterways. The Barrow Line stretches from Lowtown to the River Barrow at Athy, a distance of 45 km, including nine locks. From here, the Barrow Navigation runs from Athy to St. Mullins over 66 km with 23 locks.
	1798 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1798 the population of the parish was approximately 3,800, comprising mainly Catholic with less than half a dozen Protestant families. At that time, St. Mullins was a bustling parish of mostly thatched cottages with a few larger houses, which were slated. Most people spoke Irish and were seriously discontented with the Crown Forces and in league with the United Irishmen. The few Protestant families attended a small Church located in the Graveyard, which was replaced by the Church of Ireland (now St. Mullins Heritage Centre), which was built in 1811 with a grant of £800 from the Board of First Fruits. The Rector was the Rev. Francis Thomas.¹¹
	1798 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teampall Mór (great church) is the oldest church in St. Mullins. By 1792 it was in ruins, as shown in a view of that date in Grose's <i>Antiquities of Ireland</i>.

2.3.5 19th Century




Table 7 - St Mullins 19th century

Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	c. 1811 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage describes the former Church of Ireland building as a 'detached three-bay single-cell rubble stone-built Board of First Fruits style former Church of Ireland church, c. 1811, with pointed-arch openings, cut stone dressings and tower having corner pinnacles. Interior with a group of wall monuments and flat plaster ceiling.'
	c. 1841 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage describes St. Mullins Mill as 'a water mill complex, constructed c. 1841 and extended c. 1875 and once again c. 1925. The linked complex of miscellaneous rough-cast and rendered Georgian and Victorian stone-built structures of industrial origin is enclosed by a high boundary wall hiding much of the structure. The centrepiece is the tall seven-bay, four-storey gabled late Georgian warehouse on a rectangular plan, set at right-angles to the river. Lower mid-Victorian gabled extensions with shaped bargeboards that project to the front and are linked by a boundary wall and joinery survives. Further buildings extend to the north, enclosed by a tall boundary wall. This is a distinguished and intact complex of comparatively modest scale, with additions to the Georgian warehouse enhancing the variety of this complex.' The St. Mullins Mill complex was built by a Mr Devereux from Wexford, who later transferred the ownership to Sutton and Howlett, who sold it to the Budd family in 1833. It has been speculated that the large cut granite stone used in the mill's construction was obtained from the ruined remains of a castle. In 1898 the Mill changed for the last time when William Odlum acquired the complex.
	1880 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage classifies the whole of St. Mullins as an <i>Historic Town</i> where the remains consist of a round tower (CW026-011002), upper portion and base of a solid-wheeled cross (CW026-011003), a motte and bailey with wall foundations visible on the summit (CW026-011012), a holy well (CW026-011011). There are also the remains of six churches (CW026-011004), (CW026-011005), (CW026-011006), (CW026-011007), (CW026-011008), (CW026-011009) and the remains of a mill (CW026-011013). The <i>Conservation and Management Plan for the Pilgrim Route at St. Mullins, Co. Carlow</i>, published by the Heritage Council (2015), notes that 'in 1880, the ruins at St. Mullin's were designated a National Monument. After the Land Acts of the early twentieth century, diverse owners held parts of the townland. More recently, the land surrounding the Pilgrim Route has been taken into the ownership of the Local Authority.'
	1898 CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1898 the St. Mullins Mill complex was acquired by William Odlum. The Odlum family were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), who contributed to Ireland's business and economic development. The River Barrow was the essential transport infrastructure that enabled Odlums Mills to operate commercially. The Mill was water-powered, and Odlums had their own barges to transport grain from the sailing ships in New Ross harbour and distribute the flour to the Irish market. In the early days of mechanised road transport, it is understood that the gradient on the road from the mill to the upper settlement level of approximately 1 in 11 caused a significant problem for laden lorries. The solution adopted by Odlums was to provide a new line, running at a lesser and more consistent gradient of approximately 1 in 20. The new line road is still extant but is in private ownership. The Odlum family had a reputation of being a good employer and a generous family.

¹¹ Extracted from the 'Bicentenary of the 1798 Rising - Souvenir Booklet' (July 1998).

2.3.6 20th Century

Table 8 - St Mullins 20th century

Figure 8 Reference	Date	Description
	28 th October 1966	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 9th September 1966, the <i>Nationalist and Leinster Times</i> reported that 'eleven employees of Odlum's Flour Mills, St. Mullins are under notice which expires on Friday, 28th October 1966; the day that the Mill grinds to a halt for the last time. It has been in production for 150 years but is now uneconomic.' Subsequently, the generational ties between the Odlum family, milling and St. Mullins were broken.
	1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The former Church of Ireland church was renovated in 1990 by the community for use as St. Mullins Heritage Centre.
	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodville House was the St. Mullins home of the Odlum family and was occupied by family members until 1967. The census of population records that in 1911, Rossmore and Nora Odlum lived in Woodville House. The Odlum family imported exotic trees and established them in the gardens of Woodville House. These trees included examples of Holm Oak, Lime Tree, and Oriental Plane. Since the departure of the Odlum family, the house and grounds became derelict. In 1999 Carlow County Council acquired the remains of the house and its grounds.

2.4 Record of Monuments

The National Monuments Service Archaeological Survey of Ireland provides the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP).

National monuments in State care include those which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG). Other owners of national monuments are empowered under Section 5 of the National Monuments Act (1930) to appoint the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government as guardian of such monuments. This means in effect that while the property of such a monument remains vested in the owner, its maintenance and upkeep are the responsibility of the State.

Monuments which may be defined as national monuments are also in the ownership or guardianship of Local Authorities which have similar responsibilities under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004) to DEHLG.

The Historic Monument Viewer¹² identifies thirteen structures within the St. Mullins settlement.

¹² <https://maps.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/>

2.4.1 Record of Monuments and Places

Map 16 - Record of Monuments and Places Key Map

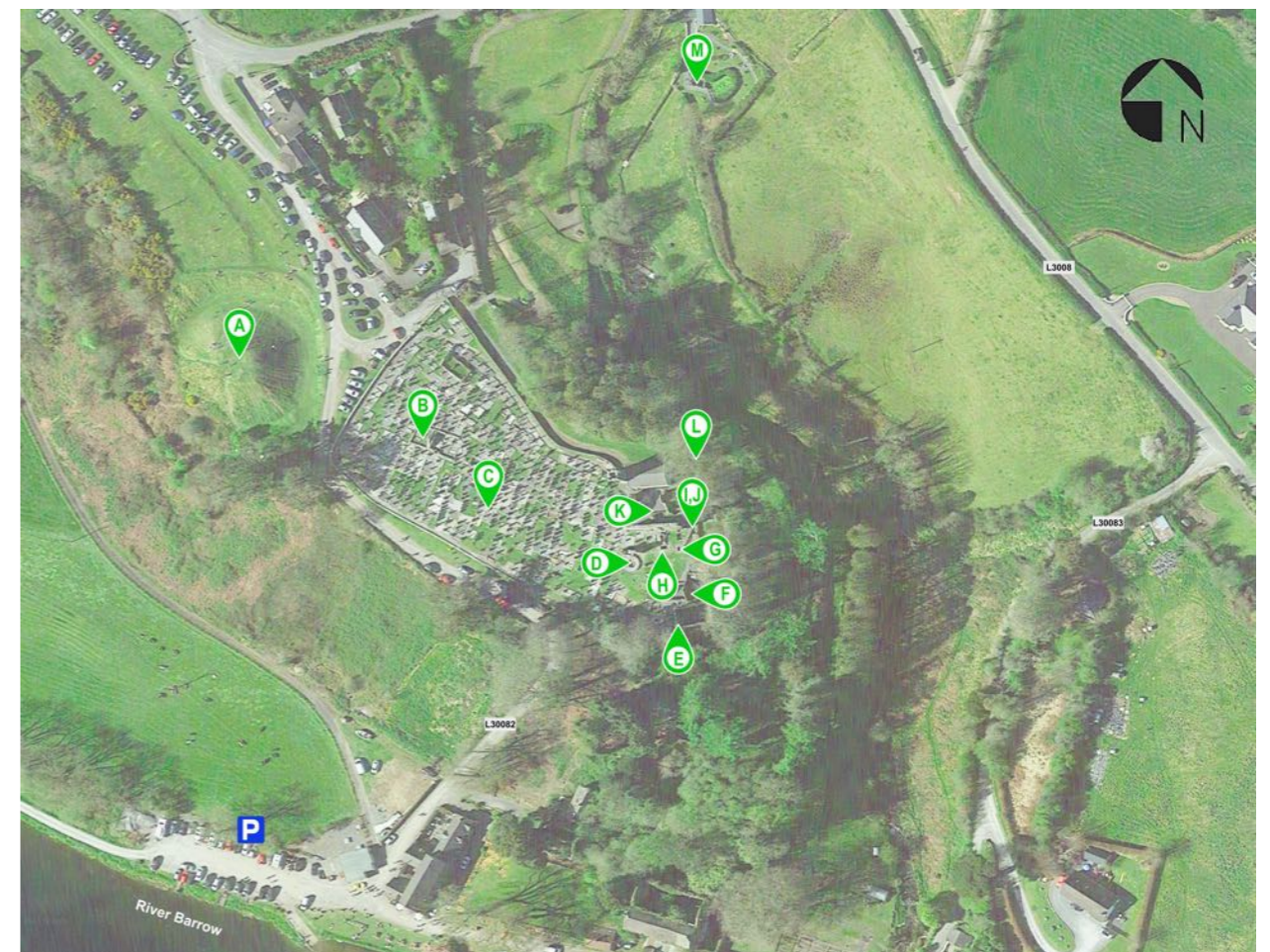






Table 9 - St. Mullins Key Monuments and Places

Map 16 Reference	Figure 8 Reference	Structure	Record of Monuments Description and Other References
		Motte and bailey. National Reference: CW026-011012.	<p>Situated on ridge overlooking river to West. Steep-sided mound (diam. c. 40m; h. 9m) enclosed by deep wide fosse and outer bank at north and east (Depth of fosse below bank c. 4m; base width of fosse 3m).</p> <p>Rectangular bailey (dimensions 24m x 46m) at northwest, enclosed by low bank and external fosse (width c. 3m).</p> <p>Traces of wall foundations visible on summit of motte and on bailey. (Bradley 1989)</p>

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Map 16 Reference	Figure 8 Reference	Structure	Record of Monuments Description and Other References
		Church. National Reference: CW026-011009.	National Monument No. 003. Lowest courses of rectangular barrel-vaulted structure (dims. 10.8m x 7.1m), with piscina and Latin cross, re-used as burial enclosure. Walls modified and masked by grave monuments. (Bradley 1989).
		Graveyard. National Reference: CW026-011001.	A sub-rectangular graveyard (map dimensions. c. 140m NW-SE; c. 55m NE-SW) located on high level ground with the river Barrow to the west. Remains of round tower (CW026-011002-), high cross (CW026-011003-) and several ecclesiastical buildings within it.
		Round Tower. National Reference: CW026-011002.	National Monument No. 003. Remains consist of four courses of granite ashlar (int. diam. 2.8m). (Bradley 1989).
		Rectangular Structure. National Reference: CW026-011007.	National Monument No. 003. Rectangular structure (dimensions. 11m x 6m) of uncoursed granite rubble (height of walls c. 5m). Lintelled doorway in west gable. East gable has diamond-shaped opening and two wall niches. Lintelled window in south wall towards SW corner. Fireplace in north wall. (Bradley 1989).
		Rectangular Structure. National Reference: CW026-011006.	National Monument No. 003. Rectangular structure (dimensions. 7.3m x 4.9m) of uncoursed granite rubble (height of side walls 2m; height of gables 5m). Lintelled doorway in west gable. Two lintelled openings in both north and south walls, opening in west gable and rectangular opening in east gable now masked by memorial stones on inside. Foundations of two further structures attached to north and east of building. (Bradley 1989).
		Grave Slab. National Reference: CW026-011010.	Thirteenth or fourteenth century granite grave slab with Maltese cross and four roundels in false relief set in a niche in the south wall of church (CW026-011005-). (Bradley 1989).




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Map 16 Reference	Figure 8 Reference	Structure	Record of Monuments Description and Other References
			National Monument No. 003. Rectangular structure (dimensions. 23.3m x 7.2m) represented by north, parts of south and east wall of nave and chancel church of uncertain date, modified for domestic and defensive purposes. Original structure divided by chancel arch, chancel interior being slightly narrower than nave. Ogee-headed window in north wall of nave. South wall survives only at west corner, with now broken out spiral stairs in wall thickness leading to upper levels, or to adjacent round tower. Corbels inserted in north and south walls to carry first floor. Chancel remains consist of north wall, with twin-light window, standing to full height and levelled east and south walls. Filling of chancel removed (Diameter c. 2m) to reveal stone altar against east gable, tomb niche with worn thirteenth/fourteenth-century grave slab and piscina. Barrel vault over chancel and spiral stairs in cross wall. (Bradley 1989). The second and largest church ruin is south of Teampall Mór and dates from about the fifteenth century. It again is a nave-and-chancel church, but the chancel was vaulted in stone, and a spiral stair north of the chancel arch gave access to accommodation above the chancel. The nave of this church was converted into a residence probably in the sixteenth century. This might have been the house built by Brian Kavanagh after 1539, or it might have been related to the fort of 1581.
	 	Rectangular Structure. National Reference: CW026-011005.	
		High Cross. National Reference: CW026-011003.	National Monument No. 003. Upper portion and base of solid-wheeled cross. Base and shaft decorated. Wheel shows large figure of Christ (total present height 1.6m). (Bradley 1989). Between the oratory and Teampall Mór is the ancient granite cross, consisting of the damaged head and upper part of the shaft re-erected in modern times in its original cylindrical base. This cross probably dates from the ninth century and is part of a group of similar crosses found along the Barrow valley.
		St. James's Chapel. National Reference: CW026-011008.	National Monument No. 003. St. James's Chapel. Rectangular structure (dimensions. 2.1m x 2.5m) of roughly coursed granite rubble (height of north, south and west walls c. 1m; height of east gable 3m). Small lintelled splayed opening in east gable. (Bradley 1989). A tiny cell oratory dedicated to St James is east of the last two churches. It has the remains of a west doorway and an east window.



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Map 16 Reference	Figure 8 Reference	Structure	Record of Monuments Description and Other References
		Church.	<p>National Monument No. 003.</p> <p>The oldest church in St. Mullins is located adjacent to the former Church of Ireland church and is known as the Teampall Mór (great church).</p> <p>Fifteenth-century rectangular structure (dimensions. 19.5m x 5.7m) of roughly coursed granite rubble with some ashlar, represented by west gable of nave and chancel walls.</p> <p>Entrance at centre of west gable, with pointed arch and small granite water stoup adjacent at north.</p> <p>Nave and chancel divided by wall with pointed chancel arch, now blocked and pierced by doorway.</p> <p>Gables of chancel and side walls stand to full height (c. 7m and c. 4m respectively). Double belfry surmounts nave/chancel wall. (Bradley 1989).</p>
		Mill.	<p>Mill unclassified.</p> <p>St. Mullins known to have had mills since pre-Norman times. Existing rectangular structure has no diagnostic features. (Bradley 1989).</p> <p>Just outside the graveyard boundary is the supposed site of St Moling's Mill, where a millstone, still visible, was found during excavations in the 1890s. This is well above the stream, and parts of the millrace that worked it can be traced for over a mile.</p>

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Map 16 Reference	Figure 8 Reference	Structure	Record of Monuments Description and Other References
		St. Moling's Well	<p>Well now dry. With small circular chamber.</p> <p>Water passed into chamber via two holed slabs, below one of which is rectangular stone with circular basin (diameter 0.27m). (Bradley 1989).</p> <p>St Moling's Well has an unusual structure, like a small early stone church with antae, through which the water flows.</p> <p>An article in <i>Archaeology Ireland</i> links St. Moling's Well to the progress of the Black Death across Ireland. The article notes that the first reference to a Holy Well at St. Mullins is found in the Annals of Friar Clyn (1348), who wrote that thousands of pilgrims travelled to St. Moling's Well:</p> <p><i>'bishops and other ecclesiastical and religious prelates, noblemen and others from diverse parts of Ireland to the pilgrimage and wading in the water of Teach Molinge, in such crowds and so great a multitude that you might see many thousands of men come together there during many days: some came from the affection of devotion, but others (and they were the greater number) came from fear of the plague which was then at its height.'</i></p> <p>It is believed likely that the River Barrow was a conduit for carrying the Black Death from the port towns of New Ross and Waterford deep into the Irish midlands.</p> <p>Like many Irish wells, the water of St. Moling's Well (also known as Tacarda) is still highly revered.</p> <p>Tomás Ó Carragáin (<i>Churches in Early Medieval Ireland: Architecture Ritual and Memory</i> - Yale University Press 2010) describes the unique characteristics of St. Moling's Well. It is noted as an eleventh-century baptistry chapel designed to resemble an early Irish stone church.</p> <p><i>'At the east, where the alter in a church would normally be, two large stones are set upright, each with a square hole. Water flows into the church through these holes from a stone-lined pool at the rear. Water from one of the holes pours into a stone font. The water flows across the building floor, formed by massive granite slabs, and out of the west doorway. The positioning of the west doorway is typical of a church from this period, as are the antae (projections) of the side walls beyond the western end. Despite its obvious affinities with church buildings of the period, it also echoes intriguing comparisons with contemporary watermills.'</i></p> <p>During the 19th century, a pilgrimage to St Moling's Well would occur twice a year, on 17th June and 25th July. The Well House was used for bathing children suffering from various diseases.</p> <p>St Moling's Well is the only surviving baptistry chapel from early medieval Ireland, but these may have been a feature of many more important ecclesiastical sites throughout the country.</p>

2.5 Legend and Tradition

St. Mullins continues to be an important ancient cultural site that attracts many historians, archaeologists and general visitors to Co. Carlow and the River Barrow area.

Given the wealth of historical assets concentrated in and around St. Mullins, there is a considerable body of reference to the culture and tradition of the area.

2.5.1 Rinn Ros Broc

The area now known as St. Mullins was first referred to as Rinn Ros Broc (the headland of Badger's Wood). According to local tradition, the legendary hero Finn Mac Cumhaill was the first to visit the area. It was here legend tells he witnessed angels ascending and descending from heaven. This caused Finn Mac Cumhaill to proclaim that the sacred place would come to be dominated by a saint - Moling Luachra.

St. Brendan the Navigator was next to arrive; sailing up the River Barrow, he stopped at Rinn Ros Broc for a spot of fishing. So impressed by the number of fish caught by his monks, he naturally thought this an ideal place to build a monastery. However, an angel appeared and told him that not he, but St. Moling was to reign here.

2.5.2 St. Moling

It is said that St. Moling was descended from the race of Cathaoir Mor of the Leinstermen, Monarch of Erin. His father is reputed to have been a farmer in Co. Kerry. He accumulated considerable wealth and came to Hy Degha, situated on the River Barrow.

Moling himself was born in Hy Kinsellagh. This territory extends to the present counties of Carlow and Wexford. An angel who had assumed human form blessed Moling as an infant, and he entered monastic life at an early age.

At the beginning of the seventh century, the saint founded a monastery on the River Barrow. Over time, the settlement grew up around it.

According to local tradition, St. Moling established a mill there, and he is reputed to have been the first person to introduce rye into Ireland. In addition, he helped his people by distributing corn and meal during a particularly inclement summer.

St. Moling is linked with the folklore character Suibhne Geilt (Mad Sweeney). It is said that Suibhne Geilt went mad at the Battle of Moira (Mag Rath) in AD 634. Afterwards, he travelled to Teach Moling, where he was murdered there by Mongan, who was the swineherd of St. Moling. He was buried with great honour within St. Mullins church by its founder and patron.

During Moling's time, the people of Ossory owed allegiance to the King of Leinster. Eventually, they rebelled, and so the King marched on them with his army and attacked their territory. He plundered their herds and flocks, bringing devastation upon them. St. Moling went to meet with the Leinstermen, who became powerless in his presence. They decided to offer all their captured goods to the saint, who immediately returned them to the people of Ossory, their rightful owners.

St. Moling praised the Leinstermen for this good deed and predicted that the people of Ossory would one day become their subjects. His prediction came to pass. St. Moling then built a church to commemorate this event, and it was called Teampall na mBó (The Church of the Cows).

There is a difference of opinion about the date of St. Moling's death. It has been said that he lived until his eighty-second year, but this is not certain. One account puts his date of death in AD 689, while in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, it is said to have been in AD 692. On the other hand, according to the *Chronicum Scotorum*, he died in AD 693 and the *Annals of the Four Masters* state that it was in AD 696.

In 1892, the historian Rev. J.F.M. Ffrench wrote in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* that according to tradition, St. Moling was a 'skilled manager of a boat, getting into his light curragh and passing quickly up the river (the Barrow) to commune with his friend St. Laserian at Leighlin'. He also gives a detailed account of the Holy Well and the significance of the surrounding ash trees, and their 'peculiarly sacred character'.

Patrick O'Leary (1855-1925) compiled 'St. Mullins Illustrated - A Local History and The Life of St. Moling', published in 1913. This work was re-published in 2004 as part of an anthology of the writings of the O'Leary family of Graiguenamanagh entitled 'The O'Leary Footprint'. Patrick O'Leary cites extracts from the 'Annals of Teach-Moling', which quote the Venerable Bede's description of St. Moling as a 'good and wise man, excellently versed in the knowledge of the Scriptures'. Later entries tell of Danish plunder at St. Mullins circa AD 824 and the rebuilding of Teach Moling by Walter Bermingham in AD 1347.

2.5.3 Monastic Site

The historian John Canon O'Hanlon (1821-1905) refers to the Monastic site at St. Mullins in the 'Lives of the Irish Saints'. He describes it as including 'four ruined churches or houses, with a small cell erected at the east side of the Monastery, said to have been St. James' Chapel.' Further references note that 'in a small square enclosure in the graveyard at St. Mullins is stone altar arched overhead, where, according to tradition, Mass used to be celebrated in Penal Times'.

2.5.4 St. Moling's Well

The first reference to a Holy Well at St. Mullins is found in the *Annals of Friar Clyn*, which dates from the year AD 348. In those times, the plague was rife, and pilgrims made their visitations to the Holy Well in St. Mullins out of fear of the plague.

In 1833, John Ryan, the County Carlow historian, referred to this well where 'the deluded peasantry do penance on the eve of the fair days'. O'Donovan refers to the local custom of 'bathing children suffering from certain diseases' in this Holy Well.

The Ordnance Survey Letters of 1839 describe the St. Moling's Well as a 'large spring about 10 or 12 feet in diameter, planted round with ash trees'. It is described as being on 'rising ground and faced with a mason work enclosure without a roof, 10 feet long by 5 feet wide'. It continues by stating that 'through the wall of the enclosure there are two openings through which the water falls into a recess, from which a strong stream flows to the little river'.

The Archaeological Inventory of County Carlow, published in 1993, describes this Holy Well as being 'now dry'.

St. Moling's Well and its traditions are frequently featured in the recording of local folklore for the survey of Irish Folklore gathered by Irish schoolchildren in the late 1930s. In these excerpts, it is stated that 17th June is St. Moling's Day. It is also recorded that 'it was the custom long ago to visit the well, but very few people visit it on that day now'. Another young person recorded that many people 'were cured from toothaches' at the St. Moling's Well. In another excerpt, St. Moling's Well is described as 'one of the nicest and largest wells in the country' and that there is a pattern to it each year and 'pilgrims drink some of the water and wash their faces in it'.

2.5.5 Feast and Fair Days

For hundreds of years, St. Moling's Well was a revered place of pilgrimage. Canon O'Hanlon, the famous author of 'Lives of the Irish Saints' whose account dates from the late 1800s, tells of the crowd assembling there on the 17th of June and the 25th of July each year. They drank the water and brought some home for those unable to visit. The pilgrims made the rounds (a prescribed walk) three times and waded barefoot through the stream. They also recited prayers at each of the ruined churches, where they prayed around an old stone slab there nine times, saying a Pater (Our Father) and an Ave (Hail Mary) each time. A stone was then placed on the slab. Then they entered the inner building and prayed under the east window, where the altar once stood, placed a leaf in this window and kissed the stone underneath it. The pilgrims then returned outside, sat on a grave, put on their shoes, and distributed alms to the assembled poor.

Patrick O'Leary (1855-1925) records that four fairs were held annually in St. Mullins on 17th June (St. Moling's Day), 25th July (St. James' Day),

8th September (Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary), and on the 1st November (Feast of All Saints).

O'Leary notes the importance of the Patron Day on the 17th June. This day was traditionally kept as a day of rest in the parish, and nobody would work. It is reported that on one such occasion, a local family went to work in the fields as usual. Suddenly, St. Moling appeared to them. One of those present attempted to run away, and he was turned into a stone at the place he had reached, which is called 'Stuckan-na-Drana'. The workers who remained eating their lunch were also turned into stones. This happened at 'Maol Oula' (the Bald or Barren Place).

Each year, on the Sunday before 25th July, a 'Pattern' or pilgrimage day is held at St Mullin's. This is a survival of the Lughnasa Festival.

2.6 Visitor Interpretation and Orientation

The distinctive topography of St. Mullins creates particular issues for visitor interpretation and orientation.

2.6.1 St. Mullins Heritage Village

Carlow County Council has produced 'St Mullins Heritage Village' as a downloadable app for mobile phones. The app content provides a self-guided introduction to thirty-three points of historical interest in and around St. Mullins. The narrative content is provided in English, Arabic, Bulgarian, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian Bokmål, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Swedish, and Traditional Chinese.

The app contains information on the following: -

Motte and Bailey.	Cashlanmoyle
Mill-Race.	The Barrow Navigation.
The Fair Green.	Drummin Bog.
The 'Bath'.	'Cripples Cottage'.
The Penal Altar.	Poulmounty Castle
Ornamental Headstones.	Coolhill Castle.
The Heritage Centre.	Teampall na mBó.
Teampall Mor.	Star Fort at Coolyhune.
The Abbey.	St. Michael's Church and Holy Well.
The Round Tower.	Tinnahinch Castle.
The Ruins.	Duiske Abbey.
Domestic Building.	Newtown.

St. James' Cell	Clashganny.
9 th Century Celtic High Cross.	Borris House.
St. Moling's Mill	Ballybeg Tower Houses.
The Pilgrimage.	Rathgeran Stone, Ballymurphy.
St. Moling's Well.	

2.6.2 St. Mullins Heritage Centre

St. Mullin's Heritage Centre is operated voluntarily and is located in the old Church of Ireland building. It was opened in 1991.

In 2009/10, St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group (SMART) facilitated the upgrading of St. Mullins Heritage Centre by the UCD School of Architecture. During this refurbishment, the fabric of the building was repaired and painted, and a whole new bespoke exhibition was designed and installed.

The Heritage Centre was designed to provide an interpretation of the ecclesiastical heritage of St. Mullins and includes the history of the flour and woollen mills, farming, fishing and river and canal transport. In addition, the heritage centre houses a collection of artefacts enhancing the display detailing the history of the locality. It also caters for genealogical inquiries about ancestors from the local area and neighbouring parishes.

St. Mullin's Heritage Centre is currently closed.

2.6.3 Visitor Signage and Way Marking

There is no obvious thematic messaging system to guide the visitor within St. Mullins. Furthermore, the signage is piecemeal and bears no consistent branding. Instead, it reflects the viewpoint of the organisation or agency that has provided the signage and fails to present a coherent interpretation of the layers of historical information.

Example 1: Barrow Way Carpark

This panel is located on the Barrow Way car park entry and carries the Fáilte Ireland *Ireland's Ancient East* branding. However, the map does not readily orientate the visitor and therefore does not particularly facilitate the exploration of St. Mullins.

The reverse face of the panel details the Bahana Forest Trail, taking in part of the Barrow Way.



Example 2: Pilgrim's Park

Whilst stylish, the design of this sign requires considerable interpretation. The messaging invites the visitor to travel to distant *Ireland's Ancient East* visitor destinations.

The red stand next to the sign contains details of the St. Mullins visitor app.



Example 3: St. Mullins Monastery

The OPW interpretive panel matches the style of a similar installation describing the motte and bailey. The panel provides an overview of

the monastic site with a graphical representation of the remaining structures.



Example 4: Village Green

The view encompasses the water pump and free library installation and includes an assortment of information and directional signs. These include the brown tourism finger signs and local road directional signs. Also making up the cluster is several signs relating to commercial facilities.



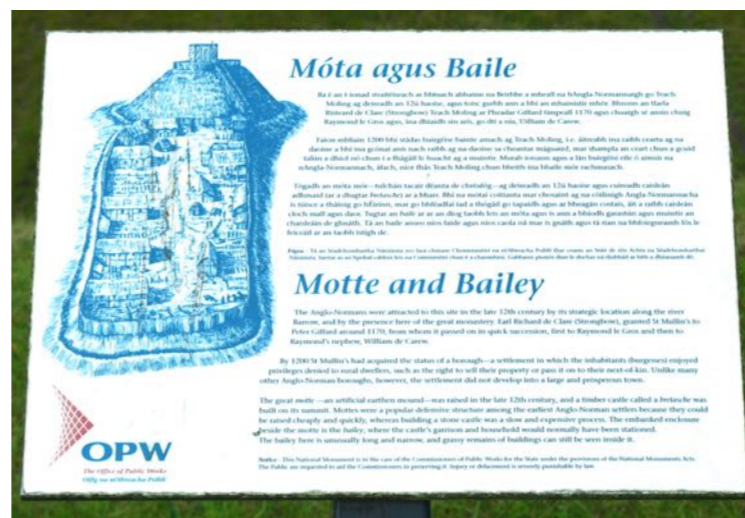
Location of Signage Cluster



Source: Google Maps

Example 5: Motte and Bailey

The OPW interpretive panel is adjacent to the motte and bailey and is in a similar design style to that of St. Mullins Monastery. The panel provides introductory information on the origin and purpose of the structure but makes no follow-through reference to St. Mullins Heritage Centre.



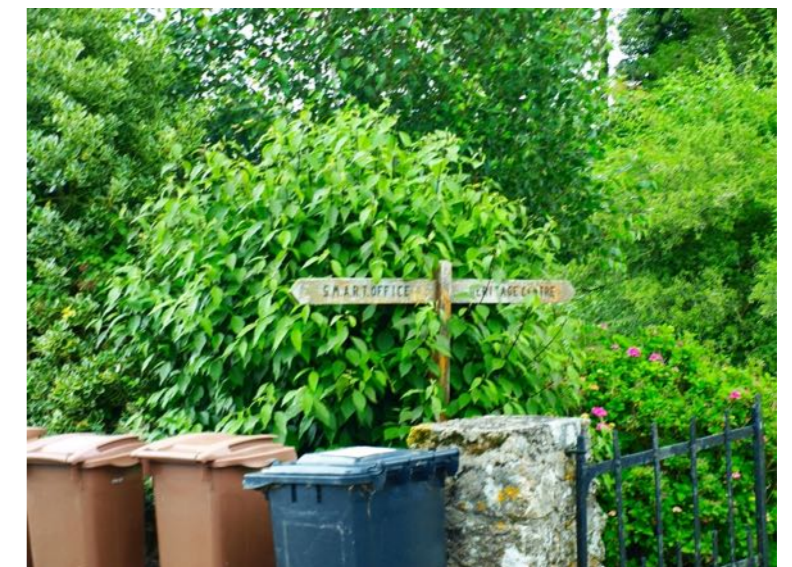
Example 6: Barrow Way Head

Located in the Barrow Way Carpark panel, this seemingly random collection of regulatory signs does not suggest clarity of message or attention to design.



Example 7: Heritage Centre and SMART Office

This badly decayed finger sign is located in the vicinity of the public toilets and indicates the direction of the Heritage Centre and SMART Office. The location, style and condition of the finger signs are poor and do not indicate the distance of either destination.



Example 8: L3008 Car Park Entrance

The recently constructed public car park served by the L3008 local road has not been provided with herald signage. In addition, because of the secluded nature of the approach road, many visitors likely fail to locate the entry, instead arriving at the Village Green.



2.7 Summary Observations

The tangible, natural and intangible assets of St. Mullins present considerable development potential once this is realised regarding the constraints and sensitivities of the settlement and its environment. However, aspects of all three assets also present challenges that define the development framework for the settlement and its environs.

2.7.1 Tangible Characteristics

St. Mullins and its environs contain an extensive concentration of historical sites, buildings and monuments conveying the story of the area's development across the centuries.

Interpretation

The outcome from the consultation process suggests that the extent and significance of the ecclesiastical and historic attributes are not well known to the public. Further, there is no easily accessible interpretation of the complete infrastructural collection for the non-specialist visitor. Where on-site interpretation is presented, it is provided in a piecemeal fashion that is not conducive to easy visitor orientation. This lack of coherence undoubtedly adds to the difficulty of visitor management at peak season.

Topographical Impacts

The topography serves to compound orientation challenges resulting in the unique offerings of the upper and lower levels being effectively hidden from the view of the visitor commencing a journey at either of the levels.

For the casual visitor arriving at the terminal of the Barrow Way, there is little to entice them to climb the L30082 to discover the wealth of history at the upper level. But conversely, the casual visitor arriving at the village green may not necessarily be aware of the commercial history of the settlement or the natural amenity of the River Barrow to be found at the lower level.

Orientation

There is an opportunity better to present the early medieval period structures whilst creating a logical narrative to guide the visitor between the two levels and offerings of the settlement. Significantly improved orientation and passive guidance throughout the settlement are critical to a more successful visitor experience.

2.7.2 Natural Characteristics

Aspects of the River Barrow valley have been sensitively developed at Graiguenamanagh. The Barrow Way link provides a green corridor to present flora and fauna of the area to the visitor. In addition, the river offers the opportunity to further develop mild activity offerings by way of walking, canoeing, and fishing, whilst the upper-level road network provides for cycling.

By comparison with other local towns and villages, there is currently limited local infrastructure available to exploit the natural assets of St. Mullins. This lack of local infrastructure creates an opportunity for uncontrolled activity to emerge, which may inadvertently harm the environment.

River Barrow SAC

The River Barrow SAC designation underlines the potential of the prime wildlife conservation area. There is an opportunity to develop, interpret and present flora and fauna to non-specialist visitors in an accessible way. This can bring people into the natural environment in a controlled presentation designed to protect particularly vulnerable locations and habitats.

The River Barrow valley is notable for its old oak woodland, including Bahana Forest to the immediate north of St. Mullins. The Barrow Way provides a link for leisure walkers between St. Mullins and Graiguenamanagh (8km), with a part being shared with the Bahana Forest Trail running through Bahana Forest.

Flood Risk

The Rivers Barrow and Aughavaud flood risk zones limit development potential on the riverbanks. Sustainable planning and development management, together with land-use management and natural flood risk management, are the primary tools used to mitigate the impact of flooding. These tools serve to protect the fragile environment from inappropriate development.

The St. Mullins to Graiguenamanagh stretch of the Barrow Way is designated as a footpath only given the impact of water erosion on the wearing surface caused by the frequency of flooding incidents.

Wastewater Treatment

The settlement currently has an unsustainable wastewater treatment system whereby it is collected locally and transported by road to the nearest treatment plant.

The lack of capacity in the local system effectively limits any significant development that requires wastewater services.

2.7.3 Intangible Characteristics

Infrastructure

St. Mullins and its environs is an area of relatively low population density. This has resulted in the settlement being devoid of a physical core, including a lack of basic village retail provision and local services beyond those provided seasonally by the Mullicháin Café and the Blanchfields Country Pub.

Over recent years the local road infrastructure has proven seasonally inadequate, with the settlement being overwhelmed with visitors and their cars. This situation is amplified by the lack of a traffic management system and poor orientation signage.

History, Legend, and Tradition

St. Mullins is an ancient cultural site of national significance. It attracts many historians, archaeologists and casual visitors to Co. Carlow and the River Barrow area.

The rich story and legacy of St. Moling is evident through the remains at the upper and lower levels of the settlement. These remains include the Monastic Site, Graveyard, and St. Moling's Well, embodying the early medieval period. In addition, there are associated local days of traditional significance, including St. Moling's Day, St. James' Day, the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Feast of All Saints.

The historically strategic importance of St. Mullins is evidenced by the prominent remains of the Norman period Motte and Bailey.

Commercial Activity

The commercial significance of the River Barrow is identified by the Barrow Navigation and St. Mullin's Mill, which eventually became Odlums Mill in 1898. Unfortunately, this seemingly unlikely location for a mill of national importance ended in 1966 with its closure due, in part, to technological underinvestment. Tellingly, it remained powered by the River Aughavaud to the end. Beyond the legacy of the remaining mill buildings, the remains of Woodville House and Garden, the Odlum's family home, is still standing.

2.6.4 Visitor Interpretation

All of the tangible, natural, and intangible local assets contribute to the character of St. Mullins. However, none of this is easily interpreted by the casual visitor. This situation represents a considerable loss of opportunity to sensitively protect and exploit the historical journey of the settlement in a way that might resonate with people whilst simultaneously protecting the narrative for the present and future generations.

3 Policy Framework

See Annex Document 4 for full policy framework detail.

To be effective and sustainable, the optimal development of St. Mullins must align with key development policies and high-level strategic statements.

3.1 European Level

3.1.1 A New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024

In June 2019, the European Council agreed on an agenda for the EU for the current period. 'A new strategic agenda 2019-2024' establishes the priority areas that will steer the work of the European Council and provide guidance for the work programmes of the EU institutions.

The strategic agenda identifies four main priority areas: -

1. Protecting citizens and freedoms.
2. Developing a strong and vibrant economic base.
3. Building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe.
4. Promoting European interests and values on the global stage.

The priorities of developing a strong and vibrant economic base and building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe are relevant to creating a vision for St. Mullins.

3.1.2 European Green Deal

The European Green Deal provides for a new growth strategy that will transform the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where: -

1. There will be no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.
2. Economic growth is decoupled from resource use.
3. No person and no place are left behind.

The European Green Deal is the Commission's plan to make the EU's economy sustainable. This is to be achieved by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities and making the transition just and inclusive for all.

From the above, it follows that the development of St. Mullins should incorporate measures to reduce carbon emissions, enhance local biodiversity and, where appropriate, positively consider opportunities to support sustainability through the circular economy and local community resilience.

3.1.3 Cultural Heritage

In a communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, it is noted that cultural heritage provides an undervalued contribution to economic growth and social cohesion and is a source of social innovation for smart, sustainable, and inclusive development.

The future development of St. Mullins should support cultural heritage as one of the critical elements of social dialogue. By presenting the history of St. Mullins in its local context, the experience will leave the visitor with a sense of connection with the rich historical and cultural tapestry of the area and its community.

3.2 National Level Policy

3.2.1 Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

Ireland 2040 - Our Plan: National Planning Framework (NPF) notes that 'rural areas make a significant contribution to Ireland's identity and overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms. Rural areas hold much of Ireland's natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities, and landscape and contribute in a unique way to Ireland's culture. Rural areas are also a focus for living and working, and recreational activities'.

NPF Rural Policy Objectives

NPF Section 5: *Planning for Diverse Rural Places* identifies the following relevant rural policy themes: -

1. Supporting Rural Communities.
2. Planning for the Future Growth.
3. Rural Towns.
4. Countryside.
5. Rural Job Creation.
6. Rural Investment Coordination.

NPF People, Homes and Communities Vision

Section 6 of the National Planning Framework sets out a vision for People, Homes and Communities. The NPF identifies the following ten elements that support quality of life: -

1. Arts, Culture and Heritage.
2. Economic and Physical Safety.
3. Education.
4. Employment.
5. Governance and Basic Rights.
6. Health.
7. Leisure and Social Interactions.

8. Material Living Conditions.
9. Natural and Living Environment.
10. Overall Life Satisfaction.

Hierarchy of Settlements and Related Infrastructure

The NPF provides an infrastructure model for sustainable smaller settlements and rural areas. This model includes the following eight fundamental indicators: -

1. **Commercial:** Shop, Pub, Petrol Station, Post Office.
2. **Environment:** Access to Clean Sewage System.
3. **Health:** General Practitioner, Pharmacist, Ambulance Outreach.
4. **Justice:** Neighbourhood Watch.
5. **Networks:** Broadband, Street Lighting.
6. **Productive:** Workshop, Business Unit.
7. **Skills:** Primary School, Pre-School Early Childhood Care and Education.
8. **Social:** Local Hall, Play Areas.
9. The need to support the concept of **Compact Growth**.

3.2.2 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

Funded through the NPF, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) supports sustainable growth in rural areas that meets some or all the criteria below: -

1. Enhance the attractiveness, viability, and vibrancy of smaller towns and villages and rural areas to achieve more sustainable patterns and forms of development.
2. Ensure transition to more sustainable modes of travel (walking, cycling, public transport) and energy consumption (efficiency, renewables) within smaller towns and villages and rural areas.
3. Encourage and attract entrepreneurship and innovation in the context of the rural economy and its continuing sustainable diversification, particularly where low carbon outputs can be achieved.
4. Cater for a niche or specialised development is intrinsically required to be located in a rural setting and has more comprehensive benefits for the local rural and regional economy.
5. Cross-boundary collaboration at the county and regional level to achieve more sustainable outcomes for rural communities, including applicable to shared settlements, landscapes, amenities, and lands in state ownership.
6. Enhance coordination of various funding streams for rural development that support the place-making policies of the NPF.

3.2.3 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The preparation of St. Mullins Tourism and Heritage Masterplan 2022-2032 is supported by the Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS).

TVRS is managed on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development by Carlow County Council. TVRS is funded under Project Ireland 2040.

The Scheme is targeted at towns and villages with a population of 10,000 or less, and all projects funded under the Scheme must be completed within a 12 to 18 month period.

The 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme emphasised projects supporting remote working and enhancing town centre living, as outlined in *Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025*. The minimum grant available was €20,000, and the maximum grant was €500,000.

Carlow County Council was invited to submit up to eight applications under the 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

3.2.4 Town Centre First

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Rural and Community Development, Town Centre First provides a policy approach for Irish towns. The policy's objective is to 'create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community.'

The Covid-19 pandemic has focused on the importance of quality public realm, streets, parks and other amenities in towns that provide space for communities to socialise and recreate. The policy recognises that towns impact our quality of life and should be attractive places for people of all ages, abilities and social backgrounds to live. They remain the focus of work and enterprise, with new opportunities now presented by remote working. Towns also serve the needs of visitors and tourists and are an essential source of community character, identity, and local pride.

The Town Centre First approach identifies the following characteristics of successful places: -

- ❑ An attractive public realm designed to invite people to meet, mingle and dwell.
- ❑ Contain a variety of services and shops that provide employment opportunities.
- ❑ Provide a range of cultural, recreational and community spaces that bring together community members and attract visitors and tourists.

- ❑ Contain a well-maintained building stock that creates visual interest and animates streets and spaces.
- ❑ Conserve, adapt and highlight historic buildings and streetscapes that provide the town with a unique identity.
- ❑ They are attractive vibrant places for enterprises to grow and develop.
- ❑ They are well connected and accessible to sustainable modes of transport, enabling a high proportion of journeys to be made by foot or bicycle from the immediate hinterland (the '10 minute town' concept).
- ❑ Manage traffic within central areas so that streets prioritise vulnerable users (pedestrians and cyclists), enabling them to move about safely and in comfort.
- ❑ Provide a mix of housing typologies and tenures to cater to diverse communities regarding age, income, and mobility.
- ❑ Utilise digital technology to enhance the experience of living and working in towns, enabling greater choices in terms of location and lifestyle.
- ❑ Provide opportunities for the amenity, health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors.

Whilst the Town Centre First policy relates primarily to settlements of scale, many of the principles are appropriate for consideration in the context of St. Mullins.

3.2.5 Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025

Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 establishes the vision for a thriving rural Ireland as integral to the national economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being and development. The policy enables an holistic, place-based approach to rural development that encourages and supports rural communities to develop cohesive and integrated plans to meet the long-term needs of their particular area.

Policy Objectives

In the context of St. Mullins, the following policy objectives are key: -

1. Supporting improved quality employment and career opportunities in rural areas.
2. Assisting the regeneration, repopulation and development of rural towns and villages.
3. Enhancing the participation, leadership and resilience of rural communities.

The achievement of the objectives will be underpinned by: -

1. Investment in rural towns and villages as hubs of economic and social activity.
2. Adopting a place-based approach to rural development to meet local needs holistically and maximise the impact of the investment.
3. Investing in and empowering rural communities to design and deliver responses that meet their local needs.
4. Actively involving young people in rural areas in decisions that affect them and their future.

3.2.6 Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021

It is noted that the Tourism Industry and all of its components have been one of the sectors of the economy most profoundly impacted by the Covid-19 international pandemic. Unfortunately, this situation has rendered many of the goals of the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 undeliverable.

The Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media) sets out priority actions to maintain sustainable growth in overseas tourism revenue and employment. Each action involves specific tourism stakeholders, both in the public and private sectors, all of whom we expect to work towards completing actions within the specified timeframe proactively.

The Action Plan recognises the pivotal role of the local community in tourism and notes that the County Council will encourage and support community activation and participation in award schemes such as the 'Pride of Place' community programme.

3.2.7 Waterways Ireland: Heritage Plan 2016-2020

Waterways Ireland is the navigation authority for approximately 1,000 km of navigable waterways, including the Barrow Navigation. The agency is statutorily responsible for managing, maintaining, developing, and restoring the waterway, principally for recreational purposes.

The overarching aim of the Waterways Ireland: Heritage Plan 2016-2020 is to 'identify and protect the unique waterways heritage and promote its sustainable use for the enjoyment of this and future generations.'

Strategic Objectives

The Heritage Plan comprises four strategic objectives: partnership and collaboration, promoting awareness and community engagement, integrated management, and developing heritage as a core value within Waterways Ireland.

1. Fostering partnerships to continue building waterway heritage knowledge through storing information, undertaking research, and developing best practice.
2. Promoting awareness, appreciation, and enjoyment of waterway heritage, focusing on community engagement.
3. Promoting the integrated management, conservation, protection and sustainable use of the inland navigable waterway asset.
4. Developing Waterways Ireland as a heritage organisation committed to achieving the aim of the Heritage Plan 2016-2020.

3.3 Regional Level Policy

3.3.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region 2020-2032 is designed to implement the NPF at a regional level. The stated strategic vision of the RSES is to: -

1. Nurture all places to realise their full potential.
2. Protect and enhance the environment.
3. Work to achieve economic prosperity and improve the quality of life for all.
4. Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations *and*
5. Promote the region's international reputation as one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions.

Strategic Issues

The principal strategic issues for Co. Carlow identified in the RSES include the following: -

- ❑ Designation of Carlow Town as an economic self-sustaining regional driver and a focus of significant growth within the county.
- ❑ Recognition of the opportunities afforded by the Waterford-Kilkenny-Carlow-Dublin M9 and Rail Network Axis.
- ❑ Supporting the strong network of towns, villages, and diverse rural areas in achieving the objectives of the NPF.

Planning for Rural Areas

The RSES reflects the position of the NPF that the countryside 'is and will continue to be a living and lived-in landscape focusing on the requirements of rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise, while at the same time avoiding ribbon and overspill development from urban areas and protecting environmental qualities.'

Of relevance to St. Mullins is the importance placed on sub-regional interdependencies by the RSES. These interdependencies include the location of a settlement in relation to nearby settlements and the scope for collaboration, including potential cross-boundary collaboration between settlements across adjoining local authority boundaries.

3.3.2 Ireland's Ancient East

Through *Ireland's Ancient East - Path to Growth*, Fáilte Ireland intends to make Ireland's Ancient East the most personally attractive cultural destination in Europe by harnessing the authentic character of the real Ireland, its living culture, lush landscapes, and hidden history, thereby opening it up for everyone.

Challenges

Ireland's Ancient East faces several strategic challenges: -

- ❑ Creating brand awareness and understanding amongst those not currently involved, particularly the broader community within the geographic territory of Ireland's Ancient East.
- ❑ Continuous engagement with local industry to upskill and equip them to develop their product, align or cluster it with others locally and regionally, and market it effectively, domestically, and internationally.
- ❑ Continuous investment in cut-through international marketing communications at the trade and consumer level.
- ❑ Management and development of the alliance with the Office of Public Works (and other key stakeholders whose support is essential) to ensure that the quality of the visitor experience lives up to the brand promise.

Strategic Priorities

Fáilte Ireland has identified four key priorities for resources and effort to develop and deliver a compelling Ireland's Ancient East experience, as follows: -

1. Visitor Experience Development.
2. Visitor Awareness, Motivation and Engagement.
3. Stakeholder and Community Engagement.
4. Enablers to Develop Ireland's Ancient East.

3.4 County Level Policy

3.4.1 Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Carlow County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028 was adopted by the Elected Members of the Council on 23rd May 2022 and came into force on 4th July 2022.

The stated vision for County Carlow is to: -

1. Champion improved quality of life through local employment provision.
2. Support high-quality development, healthy placemaking and transformational regeneration.
3. Grow and attract a diverse, innovative economy that supports the transition from a linear to a circular economy.
4. Encourage a low carbon, climate resilient environment.
5. Embrace inclusiveness.
6. Enhance the natural and built environment for future generations.

High-Level Strategic Objectives

The County Development Plan is designed to accord with the legislative and policy environment, thereby ensuring consistency. The Plan establishes fourteen strategic objectives.

Table 10 - CDP Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective	Summary
S 01	Direct new development to provide for the sustainable development of the County for the period 2022-2028, following the principles of compact growth, consolidation and regeneration.
S 02	Support and promote the role of Carlow Town as a Regional and Interregional economic growth driver.
S 03	Support and facilitate the development and further expansion of IT Carlow, its links with industry and its transition with IT Waterford to the Technological University of the South East.
S 04	Promote consolidation and growth in the District Towns of Tullow and Muine Bheag, building on existing assets.

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Strategic Objective	Summary
S 05	Maintain and promote a broad economic and employment base in the County.
S 06	Support the role of rural areas with an increased emphasis on the renewal of smaller towns and villages and seek to sustain the livelihood of rural communities by promoting the development of the broader rural economy while recognising the need to manage land and resources sustainably.
S 07	Protect and enhance the unique character and identity of Carlow's towns and villages and improve quality of life and wellbeing.
S 08	Transition to low carbon and climate resilient County by developing renewable indigenous energy resources, supporting energy efficiency, reducing energy demand, and implementing mitigation responses to climate change.
S 09	Afford suitable protection to the environment, built, cultural and natural heritage assets of Carlow.
S 10	Conserve, protect and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure, including ecosystems, habitats and associated biodiversity.
S 11	Promote the provision and maintenance of high-quality infrastructure, infrastructural networks and environmental services.
S 12	Ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning through the increased use of sustainable transport modes and the minimisation of travel demand.
S 13	Promote, develop and maintain sustainable communities in the County by providing a range of facilities and services to meet the diverse and expanding needs of all residents, including the needs of younger persons, thereby supporting community participation and social inclusion and improving the quality of life for everyone.
S 14	Support and promote tourism in the County as a key economic driver compatible with the sensitivity of rural areas, the existing quality of life, and the protection and enhancement of the County's natural environment.

St. Mullins Settlement Classification

The CDP Settlement Strategy classifies St. Mullins as a Rural Serviced Village with a population of less than 200. The Settlement Strategy anticipates a projected population increase in 2028 of 271 persons (Bennekerry, Old Leighlin, Nurney, Ardattin, Glynn, Ticknock, Ballinkillen, Bilboa, St. Mullins, and Clonmore).

Infrastructure and Environmental Management

The CDP notes that groundwater source protection plans have been prepared for several group water schemes, including Glynn/St. Mullins.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

Chapter 9 of the CDP 'Landscape and Green Infrastructure' identifies some valuable views, prospects and scenic routes in the vicinity of St. Mullins.

Table 11 - Views and Prospects

Reference	Description	Location
49	View south and approach to the village.	St. Mullins
52	Vista, the green area beside the mound and parish church.	St. Mullins
53	View southwest, across Heritage Centre.	St. Mullins
54	View southwest of River Barrow.	St. Mullins
55	View south and east, across St. Mullins Heritage Centre.	Templebaboe

Table 12 - Scenic Routes

Ref.	Route	Description	Location
20	L3010	Scenic views to the south.	Glynn to St. Mullins
21	L3008-64	Scenic views of Brandon northwest and Blackstairs Approach to east.	Approach to St. Mullins from south
22	From St. Mullins to Glynn along the river valley.	Intermittent views to Blackstairs and Brandon east and west.	St. Mullins

Natural and Built Heritage

Concerning the natural and built heritage, the stated aim of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 is to protect, conserve, manage and enhance the features of the County to ensure the survival of their intrinsic value for future generations and to ensure they contribute to the future sustainable development of the County.

The CDP notes that County Carlow has 'an exceptionally rich spiritual and ecclesiastical heritage, featuring several sites of national significance. These include the monastic site at St. Mullins, the medieval Cathedral at Old Leighlin, the eighteenth-century Carlow College, St. Patrick's, the nineteenth-century Catholic Cathedral in Carlow Town, and the idyllic Adelaide Memorial Chapel at Myshall'.

The CDP further describes the County's transport heritage as including a range of eighteenth-century canal structures along the Barrow Navigation.

Regarding religious and ecclesiastical sites, the CDP notes that 'the monastic settlements at St. Mullins and Clonmore, and the medieval Cathedral of St. Lazerian Old Leighlin, comprise significant early ecclesiastical sites dating from the 6th and 7th centuries'.

Tourism and Recreation

Chapter 11 of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 'Tourism and Recreation' reports that it is the aim of the County Council to: -

1. Promote, enhance and maximise the tourism potential of County Carlow.
2. Leverage regional experience tourism brands and initiatives.
3. Capitalise on and safeguard the County's natural and built heritage assets.
4. Support the provision of high-quality and accessible recreational facilities, amenities and open spaces for residents and visitors to the County in recognition of the contribution of all forms of recreation to quality of life, personal health and wellbeing.

The CDP reflects on the significance of the River Barrow, Ireland's second longest river system running for 192 km from its source in the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the sea. It is navigable for 69 km between Athy and St. Mullins (Barrow Navigation). Some of this waterway's most beautiful visual stretches flow through County Carlow.

The River Barrow constitutes one of the country's most significant industrial heritage monuments with bridges, corn-mills, locks and lock-houses, and its history alone is a vital tourism resource. The Barrow remains a bustling river accommodating many activities, including walking, cycling, fishing, boating and canoeing.

The CDP notes the importance of three of Ireland's key national walking routes, the South Leinster Way, the Barrow Way, and the Wicklow Way. 'The Barrow Way has been voted as one of the top five finest and most impressive visitor attractions in the country. The route follows the original towpath along the River Barrow, along which horses would have historically pulled barges and goods for transport. The length of the Barrow Way from Lowtown in Co. Kildare to St. Mullins in Carlow is 114km'.

The Bahana Forest Trail is considered to be essential and valuable facility for the community. It is easily accessible and has widespread appeal.

Rural Development

It is the stated aim of Carlow County Council 'to support the role of rural areas with an increased emphasis on the regeneration and renewal of smaller rural towns and villages and to seek to sustain the livelihood of rural communities by promoting the development of the wider rural economy while recognising the need to manage land and resources sustainably'.

The CDP envisages that rural areas will play a vital role in supporting economic development with opportunities emerging that offer the

potential to ensure the countryside remains and strengthens as a living and working environment. Rural areas contribute to the local identity and contain important economic, social, cultural and environmental attributes. However, lacking employment opportunities in villages significantly impacts maintaining vibrant centres.

The role of micro-enterprises and the importance of securing quality communication infrastructure to encourage growth is a significant focus for the Council. This includes high-quality broadband and mobile communication services to settlements and rural locations, other infrastructure including water and wastewater facilities for the growth of settlements, sustainable energy supply, enhanced transport connectivity including rural public transport services and greenway walking and pedestrian corridors between settlements.

3.4.2 Co. Carlow LECP 2016-2021

Co. Carlow Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 provides an integrated vision for the county's development designed to complement the County Development Plan. The LECP reflects the extent of change that occurred to the local authority's remit following the 2014 Local Government Reform.

The LECP contains five high-end goals: -

1. Build thriving, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive communities.
2. Strengthen and promote a thriving and sustainable enterprise culture in Co. Carlow.
3. Ensure access to education and skills for all members of communities.
4. Optimise the tourism product and message.
5. Maximise external investment into Co. Carlow.

Communities

The LECP High-End Goal 1 identifies thirty-five discrete actions to build thriving, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive communities. The following three actions particularly focus on themes of relevance to heritage development: -

1. To identify and promote the economic and societal benefits of a high-quality natural environment.
2. To develop and implement a Heritage Plan for Co. Carlow.
3. To develop and implement a Biodiversity Plan for Co. Carlow

¹³ Comhairle na Tuaithe was established in January 2004, and comprises representatives of farming organisations, recreational users of the countryside and state bodies with an interest in the countryside. It has three priority areas of: access to the

Tourism Product and Message

The LECP High-End Goal 4 identifies eleven discrete actions designed to optimise the tourism product and message, as follows: -

1. Develop a world-class tourism product, including ongoing development and promotion of Co. Carlow.
2. Further the development of sector and product basic methodology to tourism development.
3. Support the development of the River Barrow and the Blackstairs as a key Tourism Asset for Co. Carlow.
4. Support the continued development of key strategic assets through partnership.
5. Continue, strengthen, and fund initiatives such as Co. Carlow's Pride of Place and Tidy Towns initiatives and prioritise the involvement of local businesses.
6. Development of a County Carlow Tourism and Development Strategy.
7. Promote engagement using community education principles between FET providers, industry, and employment services to ensure that FET provision is relevant to the needs of learners and the labour market.
8. Implement a strategic programme for collective marketing of Co. Carlow tourism product.
9. Develop a strategic programme to develop and promote Carlow tourism, heritage and cultural products and trails.
10. Develop a strategic programme for tourism accommodation proposals.
11. Develop a strategic programme to cluster, develop and promote tourism in specific sub-county geographical areas.

3.4.3 Co. Carlow SICAP 2018-2022

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 addresses high and persistent levels of deprivation through targeted and innovative, locally-led approaches. It supports disadvantaged communities and individuals, including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single-parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller and Roma community and other disadvantaged groups.

The programme is managed locally by Co. Carlow Local Community Development Committee with support from Carlow County Council.

countryside, developing a countryside code and developing a countryside recreation strategy.

Actions are delivered by the Programme Implementer: Carlow County Development Partnership CLG.

3.4.4 Co. Carlow Local Development Strategy

Co. Carlow Local Development Strategy (LDS), January 2016, provides the agreed framework for delivering the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

LDS Priority Needs

The LDS identified six priority needs, as follows.

Table 13 - Co. Carlow LDS Priority Needs 2016

Theme	Relevant Priority Needs (Summary)
Economic Development Tourism	Develop rural tourism as a key economic driver in the county. The development of walks. The development and marketing of the tourism product.
Enterprise Development	Villages have a role to play in developing a prosperous economy. Improved skills development to adapt to new technologies.
Rural Towns	Revitalise rural villages through investment in communities.
Social Inclusion	Develop targeted support for hard-to-reach communities.
Rural Youth	Develop targeted supports for rural youth.
Rural Environment	Provision of training in biodiversity, water conservation, and renewable energies.

3.4.5 Co. Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2020-2023

Slí 2040, the Co. Carlow Outdoor Recreation Strategy (ORS) reflects Comhairle na Tuaithe's¹³ principles and vision for countryside recreation in Ireland. The ORS references five key baselines of relevance: -

1. Healthy Ireland identifies a key role for sports and physical activity to support physical and mental health and well-being.
2. National Sport Policy 2018-2027 emphasises the role of sports and physical activity so that '*people will be inspired, their lives enriched, their enjoyment enhanced, and their quality of life improved because of their active or social participation in sport.*'
3. The Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy highlights the '*important role of the outdoors as a venue for sports and physical activity and the importance of an inclusive and fair culture and realising 'sport for life for everyone'.*'

4. Fáilte Ireland emphasises the importance of experiential tourism as 'something which one does, sees or feels which is (ideally) unique and certainly distinctive to a particular place.'
5. Carlow CDP, 2015-2021, identifies that 'the county's countryside holds vast potential to develop outdoor recreation activities to benefit both tourism and residents.'

River Barrow - Key Asset

The ORS recognises the importance of the River Barrow as a key asset with latent potential. The ORS states that 'the River Barrow is unique in that it provides an unspoilt wilderness that is easily accessed and passes alongside or close-by many villages and towns.'

The River Barrow has national importance for recreational walking and water sports. Waterways Ireland is responsible for the operation and upkeep of the River Barrow and has supported outdoor recreation in, on and alongside the river.

Supporting the use of the river and its environs as an outdoor recreation space is challenging given the rich and, at times, fragile cultural and environmental heritage that it hosts. A partnered, planned, and well-resourced approach is required to sustain this fragile heritage as the recreational use of the river increases.'

Tinnahinch and Graiguenamanagh Node

The ORS states that the Tinnahinch and Graiguenamanagh Node ((Including St. Mullins) is a popular section of the River Barrow for walking and water sports activity.

The development of the Barrow Valley Activities Hub in Graiguenamanagh has increased the profile and potential of this area for local and visiting outdoor recreation.

The ORS identifies actions that are required to support the largely unspoilt environment of the Tinnahinch and Graiguenamanagh Node, including: -

- Increasing awareness.
- Sustainably managing outdoor recreation.

3.4.6 Co. Carlow Tourism Strategy 2020-2025

The County Carlow Tourism Strategy and Action Plan was commissioned by Carlow Tourism. The stated purpose of the strategy is to: -

1. Improve the profile of Carlow as a holiday destination.
2. Maximise the economic outputs for tourism.
3. Grow tourism-related employment.
4. Improve the product offering and visitor experience.

Strategic Principles

County Carlow Tourism Strategy and Action Plan identifies five strategic principles to underpin tourism development in the county: -

- The appropriate utilisation of the natural and built heritage of the county.
- The requirement of all marketing efforts to align with Fáilte Ireland *Ireland's Ancient East* international brand.
- The recognition of a long-standing need to develop a flagship attraction for Co. Carlow.
- Fulfilling the unmet opportunities for world-class visitor experiences and product development.
- Addressing the imbalance in the county arising from the segregation of tourism support products in the north and areas of attractive scenery located in the south of the county.

Tourism Support Experiences

County Carlow Tourism Strategy and Action Plan identifies four key tourism support experiences for future development.

Table 14 - Key Tourism Support Experiences

Ref.	Key Tourism Support Experiences	Product Headline
1	Megalithic, Ecclesiastical and Normans (Built Heritage)	<i>A Journey Through Time</i>
2	Houses and Gardens	<i>Big Houses and Beautiful Gardens</i>
3	Activities and Places (Natural Heritage)	<i>Valleys Views and Vales</i>
4	Cultural Heritage	<i>Inspired by Carlow</i>

3.4.7 Co. Carlow Heritage

Heritage Tourism

Carlow County Council recognises that the natural and built heritage of Co. Carlow is the foundation that attracts visitors to the county. The opportunity lies in ensuring this heritage is protected for current and future generations while facilitating a sustainable tourist experience.

Religious and Ecclesiastical Sites

Carlow is a county with a vibrant, spiritual and ecclesiastical heritage. It has several sites of national significance. These include: -

1. The monastic site at St. Mullins.
2. The medieval Cathedral of St. Laserian, Old Leighlin.
3. The eighteenth-century College and nineteenth-century Catholic Cathedral in Carlow.
4. The Adelaide Memorial Church at Myshall.

Trails of the Saints

Carlow - *Trails of the Saints* features some fifty-one ecclesiastical attractions presented in a series of three driving routes. These routes cover north, mid and south County Carlow. St Moling's Trail covers the south Carlow area and features thirteen attractions including St Mullins ecclesiastical site, St Moling's Holy Well and Templenaboe.

Columban Way

St Mullins provides an access point to the national and European Columban Way. The Columban Way (Via Columbanus - Turas Columbanus) traces a route from Mt. Leinster to Bangor running across Ireland and eight countries of Europe to Bobbio in Northern Italy. The pilgrimage route crosses different counties and countries and is inspired by the 6th century monk and pilgrim, St Columbanus.

The Columban Way is a sustainable tourism experience, encouraging people of all ages and origins to discover of the cultural heritage of Europe, and to walk, cycle or drive along its route, visiting its many historic sites and places, such as St. Mullins.

Historic Towns and Villages

In cooperation with local communities, businesses, and other relevant stakeholders, Carlow County Council supports the improvement of the physical presentation and appeal of villages throughout the county.

This will be achieved both through the statutory planning process and by implementing initiatives such as *Pride of Place* and through funding from the TVRS and the RRDF.

Natural Heritage and Amenities

The River Barrow is Ireland's second-longest river system, running for 192 km from its source in the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the sea. It is navigable for 69 km between Athy and St. Mullins. This stretch is known as the Barrow Navigation.

Some of the most beautiful visual stretches of the River Barrow flow through Co. Carlow. The river constitutes one of the country's most significant industrial heritage monuments with bridges, corn mills, locks and lock-houses, and its history alone is an important tourism resource.

The Barrow remains a bustling river accommodating many activities, including walking, cycling, fishing, boating, and canoeing.

It is the policy of Carlow County Council to: -

- Maximise, enhance, and support opportunities for the use of the county's uplands and waterways, including the River Barrow, as tourism and recreational amenities, and engage with relevant agencies, bodies, and key stakeholders in this regard, including

Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, and local communities, to develop the infrastructure, quality and amenity of these natural assets.

- ❑ Support the provision of ancillary infrastructure and services that enhance the user experience of the River Barrow.
- ❑ Work closely with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, and neighbouring Local Authorities to promote and enhance the tourism and recreational potential of the River Barrow.
- ❑ Facilitate infrastructure to enable increased tourism activity associated with the waterways.

3.4.8 Co. Carlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy

The InCarlow Economic Development and Business Support Strategy 2022-2027 recognises that the county's economy suffered a devastating downturn due to the Covid-19 pandemic while facing the changed trading context brought about by Brexit. The strategy identifies many strengths the county can call on to drive economic recovery. Whilst County Carlow has a highly educated workforce, two Institutions of Higher Education, substantial infrastructural developments, and proximity to both Dublin and the major transport hubs, it is recognised that towns and villages require support to maintain their viability.

The Economic Development and Business Support Strategy notes that tourism *'is considered underdeveloped in the county and offers a route to drive greater economic activity across the whole county.'* This resonates with Fáilte Ireland's refocusing on outdoor leisure since Covid-19 and the extent to which St. Mullins can contribute to a step-change in local visitor offerings.

The strategy notes that the county has significant visitor assets but is generally challenged by underdeveloped visitor experiences. To address this, the strategy will support the development of a sustainable Tourism and Community Festivals series for the county.

3.5 Local Level Policy

3.5.1 Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch

The Draft Joint Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Local Area Plan 2021 is currently being prepared by Carlow County Council and Kilkenny County Council. Amongst the twelve strategic objectives for Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch, the following have the potential to influence St. Mullins: -

- ❑ Tinnahinch will maintain a minimum of 0.80 per cent of Co. Carlow's population allocation.

- ❑ The promotion and support for the economic development of Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch such that it capitalises on its location on the River Barrow, with the heritage and tourism assets being identified as key economic strengths for the settlements.
- ❑ The creation and enhancement of a network of pedestrian walkways, footbridges and open spaces connecting the River Barrow and other recreational and tourist attractions within the settlement.
- ❑ Improvement of pedestrian and cycling mobility across the River Barrow between Graiguenamanagh and Tinnahinch to ensure ease of access to services and amenities.

Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Tourism Potential

The Draft Joint Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Local Area Plan 2021 identifies the tourism sector as the leading economic strength of the settlement. Consequently, the future development of tourism-related activities is the key objective for generating employment. In addition, the Draft Plan identifies twelve assets of Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch that are nationally and internationally renowned yet, to date, are relatively untapped. Borris and St. Mullins are included in this grouping.

4 Consultation

See Annex Document 3 for a full consultation process description.

Using the principles of Community-Led Local Development, a two-level consultative process was implemented.

- Consultation Level 1: Engagement with the local community.
- Consultation Level 2: Engagement with all other relevant stakeholder agencies and organisations with the capacity to support the development of St. Mullins and its environs.

Covid-19 Pandemic Impact

Adherence to the Covid-19 pandemic emergency measures prevented formal community meetings. Additionally, it was anticipated that many people would be disinclined to attend mass meetings due to fears concerning Covid-19 transmissibility at such events. To address this unusual situation, the community consultation was delayed until the easing of the guidelines around public meetings had been announced. Additionally, the stage one engagement was carried out through a virtual meeting platform, and it was agreed that the subsequent public meeting would be held in an outdoor setting.

4.1 Level 1: Community Engagement

4.1.1 Stage One Community Engagement

A virtual public briefing was held in August 2021, using the Carlow County Council MS Teams platform.

Figure 9 - Stage One Engagement Notice



The hour-long briefing event attracted twenty-eight participants, with others requesting copies of the information disseminated.

4.1.2 Stage Two: Public Meeting

In conformity with the Covid-19 pandemic guidelines, the public meeting was held in a marquee at Blanchfields Country Pub, St. Mullins. The venue was provided free of charge by the proprietor.

Figure 10 - Stage Two Meeting Notice



Building on the previous public briefing attendance, some thirty individuals attended the public meeting held in September 2021.

Public Meeting Focus

The public meeting was designed to identify unmet community needs and issues. Additionally, it was used to assess the capacity of the community to ultimately deliver on the potential outcomes of the process. Asset-mapping was used to provide a framework for the engagement.

4.2 Level 2: Agency and Organisation Consultation

To commence the agency engagement, Elected Members of the Carlow County Council, Muinebheag Municipal District, were invited to discuss the main matters of concern that the local community had expressed. Subsequently, an inclusive engagement process was entered into with the following key representatives of the Carlow County Council Executive: -

- Director of Services: Community, Housing, Recreation and Amenity.

- Director of Services: Corporate/HR, Planning, Health and Safety, Economic Development /LEO.
- Director of Services: Transportation, Environment and Water Services, Building Control and Emergency Services.
- Head of Finance: Finance, Information Systems, Arts and Culture.
- Executive Planner.
- Senior Planner, Forward Planning Section.

4.2.1 Key Organisation Consultees

The consultation was undertaken with representatives of the following key agencies and organisations: -

- Bagenalstown Area Chamber of Business and Tourism.
- Carlow Chamber of Commerce.
- Carlow County Development Partnership CLG.
- Carlow Tourism.
- Fáilte Ireland.
- Office of Public Works.
- Seven Oaks Hotel and Leisure Club, Athy Road, Carlow.
- Slaney Fishing.
- Waterways Ireland.
- Woodford Dolmen Hotel, Kilkenny Road, Carlow.

4.3 Community Needs and Concerns

Consultees were asked to consider the unmet community needs and the factors that might shape the future development of the settlement. For clarity, St. Mullins was considered with reference to the upper and lower settlement. These definitions were originally identified in the report entitled 'St. Mullins Co. Carlow - Report on a Framework for the Protection of Heritage and Amenity.' The report was commissioned by the Office of Public Works in 1995.

The rationale adopted by the 1995 report to define the upper and lower settlement of St. Mullins related to the distinct topographic features of the river valley and the significantly higher altitude of the Village Green remains relevant today.

4.3.1 Upper Level Key Concerns

St. Mullins built heritage and cultural amenity is located mainly on the upper level of the settlement. Consequently, this area dominated the concerns expressed by the community respondents, possibly resulting in less commentary on the natural heritage focussed on the river valley.

Table 15 - Upper Level Areas of Concern Map Key

Theme	Location	Map Ref.	Description
Access, Roads and Parking.	Village Green.	1	Vehicle parking on the Village Green.
	Motte and Bailey.	2	Misuse.
		3	Infrastructure: paths.
Heritage	Graveyard.	3.1	Heritage conflicts with current use.
		3.2	Capacity and expansion.
	4	Internal repair.	
	Heritage Centre.	4.1	External Fabric, Bell Tower.
		4.2	Opening hours.
	4.3	Management structure.	
Infrastructure	Public Toilets.	4.4	Wastewater system.
Access, Roads and Parking	Upper-Level Car Park.	5	Too far removed from settlement nucleus.
		5.1	Potential capacity issues.
Heritage	St. Moling's Well.	6	Access.
		6.1	Maintenance and upkeep.

4.3.2 Lower Level Key Concerns

The key areas of concern identified within the lower settlement level related primarily to access, roads and vehicular parking.

Table 16 - Lower Level Areas of Concern Map Key

Theme	Location	Ref.	Description
Access, Roads and Parking.	Local Road L30083.	7	Traffic overuse (Google Maps).
		7.1	Emergency access at busy times.
		7.2	Speed of traffic.
		7.3	Signage.
	Aughavaud River Bridge L30083.	8	Access (peak periods, large vehicles).
		8.1	Capacity.
		8.2	Right of way access. Capacity at busy times.
	Barrow Way track to St Mullin's Lock.	8.2	Capacity at busy times.
	Lower-Level Car Park.	8.3	Capacity and access
	Access, Roads and Parking.	Quay Car Parking Area.	8.4
River Barrow Quayside.		8.5	Emergency access.
		8.6	Unprotected access and capacity.
Outdoors.	St. Mullins Lock.	8.7	Landing capacity (portage).
	St. Mullins Lock (houses).	8.8	Access
	St. Mullins Lock.	8.9	Access to lock keys.
		8.10	Awareness and training (use and flow).
	River Barrow Waterway.	8.11	Maintenance and upkeep.

Map 17 - Identified Areas of Concern



4.4 Consultation Outcomes

The consultation process was framed with four principal themes: -

1. Heritage amenity.
2. External environment.
3. Roads, traffic and vehicular parking.
4. Infrastructure.

4.4.1 Heritage Amenity

Table 17 - Heritage Amenity Key Challenges

Key Challenges	Response Summary
Heritage Assets	<p>The most common consultation response reflects concern at the under-appreciation of the heritage assets in the locality.</p> <p>For stakeholder groups, the locality is considered to compare favourably to Clonmacnoise and Glendalough as a prime national heritage site.</p> <p>In general, the poor upkeep of all heritage sites is consistently noted. Some respondents connected this to the inappropriate use of the assets, including car parking on the green area in front of the Motte and Bailey and unfettered access to the surrounding area.</p>
Holy Well	<p>Significant feedback was obtained concerning the Holy Well (St Moling's Well). Questions of jurisdiction and ownership featured with both residents and stakeholders.</p> <p>The continued importance of St. Moling's Well in terms of baptisms and other village celebrations was clearly expressed and led to questions about public access to the site. Recollection of a footpath linking St. Moling's Well to the graveyard is clear among residents and is evidenced in a photograph of a wooden pedestrian bridge across the stream¹⁴.</p>
St. Mullins Heritage Centre	<p>Concern was expressed about St. Mullins Heritage Centre by respondents from both levels of consultation. The Centre is currently not open to the public due to structural problems arising from water ingress through the roof. For residents, the haphazard nature of restricted opening hours reflects an ongoing issue of underfunding, particularly in the context of the resource offering.</p> <p>The operation of St. Mullins Heritage Centre is also a noted concern. This relates to the lack of volunteers to support the facility and the management and oversight structure.</p> <p>There was a general sense that much work was needed to bring the facility to an acceptable standard. Some respondents expressed regret that the exhibition, which was a gift to the community curated through the dedicated staff and students in UCD, was being neglected.</p>

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Key Challenges	Response Summary
Graveyard	<p>The graveyard adjacent to the Heritage Centre was also noted.</p> <p>There was a keen appreciation of the different historical sites within the graveyard and the key historical figures buried on site.</p> <p>The voluntary work necessary to keep the sites and the graveyard clean is appreciated in several comments. However, concern was expressed at the poor state of pathways and the external fabric of the Heritage Centre and the Bell Tower.</p> <p>At the community level, there was an appreciation of the need to expand the graveyard. However, there was sensitivity on how to handle the conflict between its history and continuing current use; for some, that conflict was represented in the nature of the contemporary materials used in grave construction and the impact on the heritage material asset.</p>
Motte and Bailey	<p>The Motte and Bailey is the least referenced asset. Where it was referenced, it was in the context of the issue of misuse noted earlier.</p> <p>It was noted that non-invasive onsite research might be possible using geophysical technologies such as ground-penetrating radar. This might contribute to a more active appreciation of the site.</p>
Development	<p>Many comments note the general sense of underdevelopment.</p> <p>At both the agency level and among residents, there is an awareness that St. Mullins has a story to tell.</p> <p>It is noted that the nature of the signage is somewhat ad-hoc and that old Dúchas signage vies for attention with more contemporary offerings.</p> <p>The physical disconnection between the upper and lower level of St. Mullins is reinforced in the messaging of the signage, with one respondent noting that 'signage at the lower level is like a different story'. Again, the need for a cohesive story that would combine local knowledge with historical data was noted.</p> <p>Reference was made to the opportunity to better frame the heritage of St. Mullins in the context of a regional and county perspective. This might embrace the Trail of the Saints, the Columban Way, St. Murrow, and the Viking Battle site, all of which were noted as contributing to the picture of local heritage.</p>

4.4.2 External Environment

Table 18 - External Environment Key Challenges

Key Challenges	Response Summary
Waterways	<p>The river and canal are the most referenced in responses regarding the tidal nature of St. Mullins. St. Mullins Lock is also strongly referenced.</p> <p>There was some disparity in the views of those who use the river and the authorities overseeing it. However, there was a shared appreciation for the resource and amenity value on the one hand and shared concerns about the need for upkeep and maintenance.</p> <p>Agency input, however, was more reflective of the constraints, particularly in terms of the time needed for statutory planning permission concerning all works on the river and banks. It was noted that planning permission was not something that previous authorities faced. Its requirement emanates from the SAC status designation and the attendant case law coupled with heightened sensitivity from the Blueway decision (2015). A five-year application is currently in the final drafting stage by Waterways Ireland, with the intent for immediate submission.</p> <p>The tidal transition was an essential consideration for craft operators, and the value of local knowledge was positively noted.</p> <p>The situation of small craft was noted as challenging as health and safety concerns restrict their use in the lock system, with the associated need for safe portage. In addition, the inadequacy of landing facilities was a concern, although the potential use of landing boards is currently under review by Waterways Ireland further upriver.</p> <p>The river's maintenance and upkeep were noted as a concern, with specific reference to weeds along the bank. However, the cutting back of bankside weeds does not require planning permission. Instead, it is undertaken by agreement between Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries, and National Parks and Wildlife Service to maintain biodiversity.</p> <p>Awareness of the lock system and safe navigation, and access to lock keys were noted as a concern.</p>
Onshore Area	<p>A significant level of feedback was expressed concerning onshore amenities and access.</p> <p>The issue of vehicle access along the Barrow Way to the lock houses was acknowledged in many responses. The congested nature of the track at busy times was cited as a challenge. In addition, tidal flooding on the path limits its Greenway potential, although off-path access away from the flood zones was considered an option.</p> <p>The lack of onshore facilities was commented on, although access to the café was positively regarded.</p> <p>Respondents noted that there were facilities further upstream and that similar schemes might be possible in St. Mullins.</p> <p>Some respondents seemed unaware of the toilet facilities at the upper level, highlighting the divide between the upper and lower levels.</p>

¹⁴ St. Mullins Framework for the Protection of Heritage and Amenity (1995), Loughlin Kealy, School of Architecture UCD.

4.4.3 Roads, Traffic and Vehicular Parking

Table 19 - Roads, Traffic and Vehicular Parking Key Challenges

Key Challenges	Response Summary
Local Road L30083	<p>The relative narrowness of the roadway was contrasted with the traffic volumes experienced at busy times.</p> <p>There was a view that Google Maps directs traffic down the road. It was noted that campervans attempt to use the road but must turn around at the Aughavaud River Bridge and return up the hill, adding to local congestion. <i>Chaos</i> was the word used to describe the effect, and bottlenecks were reported to be common at this time.</p> <p>Excessive speed was also noted as an issue.</p> <p>Residents recognised the Council's efforts to address the problem, including the planned signage directing that the road is only for residents and emergency vehicles.</p> <p>Ramps were suggested to reduce speed.</p>
Aughavaud River Bridge	<p>It was reported that the Aughavaud River Bridge had achieved notoriety in the aftermath of a busy seasonal period.</p> <p>The situation has been elevated to local media attention; such is the degree of the bottleneck that has been witnessed.</p> <p>Several respondents described the situation as one where inexperienced or 'Sunday' drivers are overwhelmed by the traffic volume and the attendant hold-ups at the bridge.</p> <p>There was a degree of uniformity in suggesting one-way traffic flow solutions. In general, it was felt that the road, which passes directly in front of the entrance and external seating area of the riverside Mullicháin Café represents a potential hazard.</p>
Vehicle Parking	<p>In addition to residents' challenges with road access to their houses, there is an associated parking challenge. The feedback suggests that traffic difficulties can be a causal factor in drivers assuming parking privileges in the nearest vacant space.</p> <p>Lower Level Parking</p> <p>Parking challenges are noted on the riverbank, at the row of houses, in the lower car park (capacity) and on the quayside (large vehicles and access/emergency access).</p> <p>Upper Level Parking</p> <p>In the view of residents, the most contentious issue was the Village Green, which is assumed to be a parking lot by visitors to the village. There was a considerable depth of negative feeling about the level of inappropriate parking on a heritage site that should only be used for recreation.</p> <p>Inappropriate parking comprised day visitors and campervans effectively using the Green as an accommodation site.</p> <p>The official County Council Car Park was considered redundant (distance from upper and lower levels) and too small to accommodate the volume of vehicles if parking restrictions were introduced.</p>

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Key Challenges	Response Summary
Roads	<p>The local roads were considered a challenge rather than an issue.</p> <p>Many respondents noted the narrowness of the roads. However, it was recognised that the settlement size does not suggest that a higher specification of road design was needed.</p> <p>Solutions were suggested in the existing roads infrastructure, the most common being the provision of designated passing bays at intervals along the route.</p>

4.4.4 Infrastructure

Table 20 - Infrastructure Key Challenges

Key Challenges	Response Summary
Wastewater Capacity	<p>Wastewater capacity represented the most serious issue concerning infrastructure. Several respondents noted that even in the context of existing demand, there is a need for upgrading the capacity.</p> <p>Feedback was clear in noting that future development would have to factor in the need for wastewater facilities.</p> <p>Facilities operated by Waterways Ireland at Clashganny were noted as facing similar challenges.</p> <p>Most respondents regarded the constraint as providing a positive limit on the scale by preventing inappropriate major development.</p> <p>The former Mill Building was addressed in the feedback, where it was noted that the scale of the building mitigates against development.</p>
Broadband	<p>The quality of broadband service was noted as a concern by many respondents. Varying levels of bandwidth capacity were reported in different areas of the settlement.</p> <p>In general, it is felt that the service was poorer on the lower level.</p>
Roads, Parking and Access	<p>Roads, parking, and access were treated separately within the consultation framework.</p> <p>In terms of infrastructure, the flood potential of the River Barrow was noted as being a limiting factor in the Greenway development potential.</p> <p>The lack of active travel infrastructure for walkers and cyclists was also noted.</p>

4.5 Community Capacity Assessment

The socio-demographic profile reveals that St. Mullins is a sparsely populated, low density and mature settlement. In this context, the consultation sought to assess the capacity within the community to ultimately sustain and manage activity at a local level.

The challenges that are currently being faced by the local community include: -

1. **Volunteers:** the shortage of volunteers was recorded by all respondent groups, with a lack of interest and motivation among the terms being used.

2. **Time:** the issue of work commitment was noted across all groups. Amongst those who engage in community volunteering in St. Mullins, it is one of the more common responses. The time constraint of shift working is also noted as a challenge.

Other observations: The challenge of fundraising was noted by all community volunteers. Among those who do not engage in community volunteering, there was a reference to the skills levels required in dealing with the paperwork necessary for voluntary groups. Some respondents also noted a dearth of local information relating to aspects of community volunteering.

Willingness to engage: 80 per cent of respondents stated that they did not engage in community volunteering yet indicated a willingness to become involved in implementing the St. Mullins Masterplan. A relatively low score from existing community volunteers (71 per cent) suggested that existing commitments are a constraint; however, community leaders will be involved in the implementation process.

Eighty-five per cent of the respondents who volunteer in surrounding communities noted the importance of community networking.

5 Visitor Experience

St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group (SMART) describes the settlement as unique. St. Mullins contains the physical remains of most of the defining periods and the significant events of Irish history, from the early medieval period up to the present day.

5.1 Accessibility

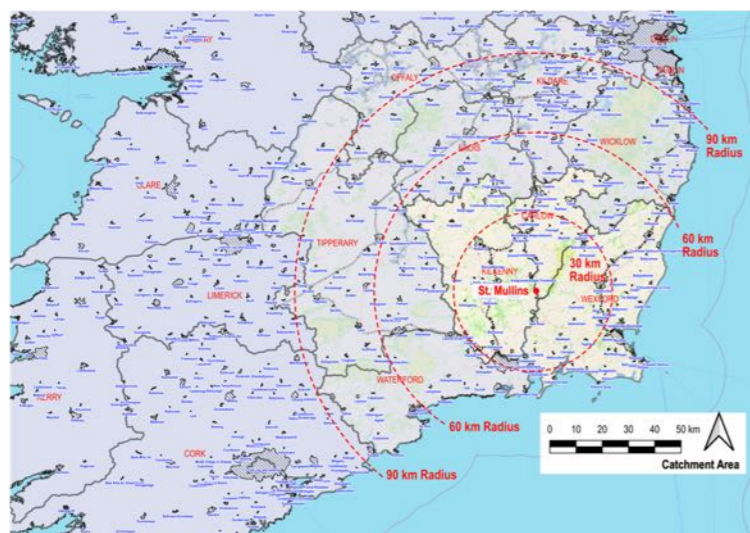
Although only 17 km. from New Ross, Co. Wexford, St. Mullins is not located in an immediate area known for mass tourism, this contributes to a sense of remote serenity further amplified by the topography of the River Barrow.

Cork City (2016 population 124,391) is approximately 158km by road from St. Mullins, Waterford City (2016 population 53,504) is approximately 42km distant, and Dublin City (2016 population 544,107) is about 133km distant.

5.1.1 Population Catchment Zones

Fáilte Ireland notes that the optimal catchment area for a visitor attraction can be defined by travel distance and, consequently, travel time. For example, it has been shown that in certain circumstances, domestic visitors may travel up to 90km (90 minutes) to visit visitor attractions, whilst it is more reasonable to project travel distances on 60km (1-hour travel time).

Map 18 - St. Mullins Population Catchment Zones



In 2016, the total estimated population within the 30km. catchment area was 164,083. The total estimated population within the 60km. catchment area was 536,623 in 2016 and within the 90km. catchment area, the total population was 1,852,215.

Bahana Forest, in the ownership of Coillte, provides the Bahana Forest Trail suitable for recreational walks, as does the Barrow Way from St. Mullins to Graiguenamanagh.

Table 21 - Population Estimates by Catchment Zones 2016

Total Population	30km Catchment	60km Catchment	90km Catchment
Age Band 0 to 4	11,439	38,013	66,401
Age Band 5 to 12 <i>Primary School</i>	19,681	65,843	115,186
Age Band 13 to 18 <i>Secondary School</i>	13,720	44,811	77,520
Age Band 19 to 64	95,751	314,393	544,355
Age Band 65 Plus	23,492	73,563	122,645

5.1.2 Access Modes

Road Access

St. Mullins is served by the local road L3008, which joins with the R729 to the southeast and via the L3009 at Glynn to the northeast. The L3008 ultimately connects with Graiguenamanagh to the north. The L3008 is of local road quality, with limited capacity and restricted forward visibility in places.

Public Transport Access

St. Mullins is served by a *Local Link* service connection from Carlow town to New Ross three times per day, seven days per week. There are three stops in St. Mullins. This service provides links with Bus Éireann services in Carlow town and New Ross.

The Local Link service facilitates the promotion of the Barrow Way route between Graiguenamanagh and St Mullins for those wishing to muse public transport.

Bus Éireann services do not directly serve the settlement.

- ❑ Bus Éireann service 375 New Ross to Enniscorthy provides a single service every Wednesday.
- ❑ Bus Éireann service 881 Kilkenny city to Graiguenamanagh provides a daily service Monday to Saturday.

The nearest Iarnród Éireann railway station is Thomastown (Dublin to Waterford line). This is 23km from St. Mullins.

5.2 Quality of Physical Presentation

The Tidy Towns Competition Adjudication Report 2019 provides a helpful indicator of the relative quality of the physical presentation of the settlement (July 2019).

St. Mullins is considered a Tidy Towns *Category A* settlement based on its population of less than 200. Within this category in Co. Carlow, St. Mullins came second in 2019 to Clonmore, which achieved 327 marks.

This outcome confirms that St. Mullins offered a physical presentation of a high order achieved through considerable local effort.

Table 22 - Tidy Towns Competition Adjudication Report 2019

Category	Maximum Mark	Awarded 2018	Awarded 2019
Community Planning and Involvement	60	51	52
Streetscape and Public Places	60	37	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	41	42
Nature and Biodiversity	50	36	37
Sustainability	50	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	61
Residential Streets and Housing Areas	50	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes	50	36	37
Total	470	312	319

5.3 Active Recreation

Healthy Carlow County Plan 2018-2021 (Carlow LCDC) recognises the importance of active recreation: -

- ❑ Priority 1.2 seeks to develop and coordinate programmes that provide families with opportunities to be active together in collaboration with key stakeholders - with a particular focus on outdoor recreation.
- ❑ Priority 9.1 notes the need to develop sustainable, safe, and accessible amenities. This includes indoor and outdoor facilities, built facilities, trails, green spaces and recreational spaces.
- ❑ Priority 9.2 notes that Healthy Carlow aims to work collaboratively with local policymakers and planners to ensure that health is incorporated in all local infrastructural plans.
- ❑ Priority 9.4 has the objective of establishing Community Wellbeing Spaces.

Much of the focus of these objectives are equally appropriate for the visitor as it is for the local community.

5.3.1 Fishing

The tidal section of water on the River Barrow at St. Mullins is attractive to coarse anglers, especially during May and early June. In addition, there are several fishing stands suitable for anglers with special needs along the river.

5.3.2 Walking

In May 2020, Sport Ireland published a report entitled the *Impact of Covid-19 Restrictions on Sport and Recreational Walking*. The research confirmed that approximately 710,000 participated in the exercise, 680,000 in running and 510,000 in cycling. These were the highest rates ever recorded, with more than half of the adult population reporting that they were engaging in sufficient activity levels to meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines.

Map 19 - Bahana Forest Trail



The Bahana Forest Trail is a 6.27km walk that starts and finishes at the Map Board, located outside the Graveyard Wall, St. Mullins.

The Barrow Way

The Barrow Way walking route links St. Mullins with Lowtown, Co. Kildare. It covers a distance of 114km, taking in the settlements of Monasterevin, Athy, Carlow, Leighlinbridge, Bagenalstown, Goresbridge, Graiguenamanagh and St Mullins.

The entire walk of the Barrow Way takes approximately four days. The walk is divided into six stages, with stage six being Graiguenamanagh to St. Mullins (8km).

5.3.3 Cycling

The Sport Ireland research estimates that in May 2020, 510,000 people within the Republic of Ireland were enjoying cycling as a form of exercise, participating at least once per week. This represents an increase of over 50 per cent for 2019.

Barrow Valley Activities Hub, Graiguenamanagh, promotes several cycle routes, including the East Kilkenny and South Kilkenny loops.

5.4 Visitor Accommodation

The CDP 2022-2028 Issues Paper anticipates that tourism will significantly contribute to the county's economy. However, it is also recognised that this achievement will require further development of visitor accommodation, with the rebalancing of provision to the south of the county.

The Fáilte Ireland Accommodation Supply (May 2021) report identifies the following registered and approved properties in Co. Carlow.

Table 23 - Co. Carlow Accommodation Supply May 2021

Accommodation Type	Properties	Rooms/Units	Bed Spaces
Bed and Breakfast	6	23	56
Guesthouse	1	13	31
Hostel	1		30
Hotel	9	506	1,396
Self-Catering	4	34	201
Welcome Standard	9	35	108
Total	30	611	1,822

5.4.1 Camping and Caravan Parks

Under the Tourist Traffic Acts 1939-2016, any tourism business calling itself a caravan or camping park must be registered with Fáilte Ireland.

The Raven's Rest campsite is located between Tinahely and Hacketstown on the Carlow-Wicklow border, however, it is not registered with Fáilte Ireland. Similarly, the Hub, Graiguenamanagh and Brandon Hill Camping are both located in proximity to St. Mullins, but are also not registered with Fáilte Ireland.

5.4.2 Accommodation Facilities

The Fáilte Ireland Accommodation Supply (May 2021) report notes that of the county's nine registered and approved hotels, 56 per cent (five) were offering four-star accommodation, with three-star and approved accommodation accounting equally for the remainder.

According to the Statutory Approved Accommodation listing Q4 2021, the nearest registered and approved hotel to St. Mullins is the Step House, Main Street, Borris, which is a four-star standard and has 30 rooms. The Q4 Non-Statutory Approved Accommodation listing records the following properties close to St. Mullins.

Table 24 - Q4 Non-Statutory Approved Accommodation

Property	Location	Rating	Units
Blackstairs Ecotrails	Borris	Approved	4
Borris House	Borris	Approved	4
Brandon View House	Graiguenamanagh	Four-star	4
Brenda's B&B	Borris	Approved	4
Joyce's	Borris	Approved	1
Mount Brandon	Graiguenamanagh	Four Star	4
Osbourne's Storehouse	Borris	Approved	1

Source: Fáilte Ireland

New Ross has a more highly-developed accommodation offering.

Table 25 - New Ross, Co. Wexford Accommodation Supply May 2021

Accommodation Type	Properties	Rooms/Units	Bed Spaces
Bed and Breakfast	1	6	14
Hotel	1	78	254
Welcome Standard	1	15	30
Total	3	99	298

Source: Fáilte Ireland Accommodation Supply (May 2021)

From the above, it can be seen that as a visitor destination, St. Mullins is challenged by a relative dearth of local accommodation offerings.

5.5 Visitor Attractions and Amenities

St. Mullins presents two entwined visitor experiences. The first relates to the ecclesiastical history of the settlement, and the second to the impact of commercial activity on the area. The exceptional natural environment envelops both themes.

The extensive history and heritage context is summarised in section 2 of this Masterplan. The breadth of the timescale of the settlement is evidenced from the seventh century through to the present day, leading to a sense of tangible timelessness.

St. Mullins Heritage Centre was conceived by the local community as a facility to capture and interpret the history of the settlement for those who might be interested.

5.5.1 Vehicular Parking

It is recognised that the continuing Covid-19 Pandemic impact resulted in 2021 being an exceptional year for tourism. Fáilte Ireland reports that in 2020, international tourism volume reduced by 80 per cent below 2019. In 2021 international volume fell a further 80 per cent.

Mobile Homes and Recreational Vehicles

During the summer of 2021, people were encouraged by public health advice to replace international holidays with domestic *staycations*. Anecdotally, one result of this was a significant increase in mobile-home based vacations impacting many of the tourism hot spots in the country in 2021.

The National Vehicle and Driver File showed the number of campervans in the country rose from approximately 11,200 in 2018 to 13,700 by October 2020 (a 15 per cent increase).

This experience was echoed in the outcomes of the community consultation process. It was further noted that the nature of the local

road network is not generally appropriate for the non-professional driver of a larger recreational vehicle.

- ❑ The recently constructed North Vehicle Park is designed to serve the upper level. It has a delineated capacity for three coaches,

Map 20 - Off-Street Parking Provision



Since St. Mullins does not offer any serviced pitches for recreational vehicles and mobile homes, the increase in the numbers arriving aggravated the already difficult seasonal traffic problem.

Vehicle Parking Locations and Capacity

There are three designated off-street vehicle parking areas in St. Mullins settlement providing approximately fifty-six cars and three coach spaces.

- three disabled person vehicles and approximately fifteen cars.
- ❑ The West Vehicle Park serves the Barrow Way Trailhead. It has an undelineated capacity of approximately thirty vehicles.
- ❑ The East Vehicle Park has an undelineated capacity of approximately eight vehicles.
- ❑ The aerial photograph below (Google Maps) illustrates some seventy-five vehicles parked on green space at the upper level

of the settlement. In addition, five cars are parked on the L3008 linking the upper and lower levels.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

There are three ESB electric vehicle charge points in New Ross.

5.5.2 St. Mullins Heritage Centre

St. Mullins Heritage Centre, essentially by default, acts as the visitor wayfinding node.

The voluntarily run Heritage Centre is currently closed due to structural issues with the former Church of Ireland building.

Underlying Business Model

One of the significant outcomes of the consultation process confirmed that the current business model that supports the Heritage Centre is not viable. However, it was noted that those who actively supported the facility were dedicated both to preserving its messages and steering it back towards reopening.

St. Mullins Heritage Centre contributed to the Irish Museums Survey 2016, conducted by the Irish Museums Association, in cooperation with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Heritage Council. The survey clearly illustrates the many challenges voluntarily run community-based organisations face. These challenges revolved around the extent to which the costs of operating such facilities exceeded the potential revenue generation capacity.

The survey found that 50 per cent of museums charge less than €5 for admission. In addition, a large majority of museums offered guided tours and entry to special exhibitions at no charge, and 50.4 per cent charged visitors for special events.

It is likely to remain impossible for the Heritage Centre to generate sufficient revenue to financially sustain itself from its core product for several well-documented reasons, including: -

1. The international visitor often anticipates that the state will underpin the operating costs of museums. However, if an entry cost is charged, the offering must meet international experience quality standards.
2. Visitors to small-scale offerings are relatively unlikely to revisit since they will have seen all that is on offer.
3. Museums and interpretive centres are most successful in high footfall or established mass-tourism destinations.
4. The facility must have the capacity to provide the visitor with a quality core offering supported by a range of other services, including refreshment and retail offerings.

When it was operational, the Heritage Centre was open during the summer season and operated reduced hours during the winter period.

Refurbishment

In 2021 St Mullins Heritage Centre received funding of €40,195 for upgrade and conservation work to the Heritage Centre. This was secured through the Department of Rural and Community Development Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS), administered locally by Carlow County Council.

Heritage Centre Operations

St. Mullins Heritage Centre was developed by the local community Muintir na Tire group. This group remains responsible for the operational management of the Centre.

5.5.3 Pilgrim's Park

The Pilgrim's Park is in public ownership and comprises approximately 0.7 ha. The park has been laid out with footpaths, seating and planting. In addition, the space includes a wild biodiversity garden.

Map 21 - Pilgrim's Park



Source: Google Maps 2021

The Pilgrim's Park is maintained to a high standard by St. Mullins Tidy Towns.

5.5.4 Public Toilets

Male and Female public toilets are located to the east of the core settlement area. The facility is of modern construction and appears to be well maintained.

Figure 11 - St. Mullins Public Toilets



The location of the public toilets is adjacent to a temporary building that serves as the SMART facility. It is situated off the footpath linking St. Mullins Heritage Centre to the Village Green and the Pilgrim's Park; however, it is not clearly signposted and hidden from view.

5.5.5 Village Green

Google (Aerial) Maps reveals the Village Green being used effectively as a carpark.

Seasonal vehicle parking is an issue that became predominant over the summer months of 2021.

Map 22 - Village Green



5.5.6 Graveyard

St. Mullins Graveyard encapsulates the Ecclesiastical history of the settlement. In addition, the graveyard presents the dominant image of the upper settlement, reflecting its physical scale and historical importance.

The visitor interpretation for St. Mullins Graveyard is provided by a panel that summarises the principal structures to be seen. This information is further augmented by material located in the Heritage Centre.

5.5.7 Drummin Bog

Drummin Bog is the only raised bog in South Co. Carlow. It is located some 2km to the south of St. Mullins settlement.

The Drummin Bog Project is a voluntary community project to restore the only raised bog in Co. Carlow. The restoration project will initially undertake baseline surveys which will include: -

- Topographical.
- Hydrogeological.
- Geological.

¹⁵ Tourists are defined as overseas visitors staying at least one night.

Ecological.

The information from these surveys will inform the restoration works, including rewetting and removing trees. In addition, the final phase of the project will include the development of access to the bog for both amenity and education use.

Currently, access to Drummin Bog is limited due to the sensitive nature of the habitat and its status as a wildlife reserve.

Map 23 - Drummin Bog



Source: Google Maps

This project is in receipt of grant aid from Carlow LCDC under the LEADER Rural Development Programme Ireland 2014-2020.

5.6 Tourism Potential

The CSO figures for tourism in 2019 identified a mixed picture, with an additional 80,000 (1 per cent increase compared with 2018) overseas visitors. However, the revenue from overseas visitors to Ireland in 2019 declined by 1 per cent. Within this short-term window, tourists from Britain grew marginally (+1 per cent) from Mainland Europe by almost +3 per cent and from long-haul markets by +5 per cent. However, the North American market saw a decline of -3 per

cent in 2019. It is generally considered that the geopolitical situation was responsible for the sectoral variabilities experienced in 2019.

2019 was the last year in which the industry could perform effectively. The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic has been felt most severely in the tourism and hospitality sector. Before this, the following projections for the international tourism sector had been estimated: -

- Tourism Ireland** released details of a new three-year tourism strategy for 2020-2022, aiming to grow overseas tourism revenue to €6.54bn from €5.8bn in 2019 and visitor numbers to 12m from 11m in 2019.
- Gov.ie** anticipated that employment in the tourism sector would be 310,000 in the Republic of Ireland by 2025, compared to around 260,000 in 2018. There would be 11.6m tourists¹⁵ visiting the Republic of Ireland annually by 2025 compared to 9.5 million in 2018.
- The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation** estimated that inbound tourism to Ireland by 2025 could grow to €8.1bn annually, employing a further 80,000 people nationally. This would result in 13.7m international visitors, and the exchequer tax return from direct tourism-related activities would grow by 65 per cent per annum. A key enabler of the future strategy would be achieved by delivering a better regional and seasonal spread of tourism activity.

Regional Tourism Performance

In 2017, Fáilte Ireland reported the following top-line tourism performance for the South-East Region (Counties Carlow, Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny and Tipperary (South)).

- Nine hundred fifty-four thousand overseas tourists spent €271 million.
- 1.4 million Irish residents' trips generated €253 million.
- 46,000 Northern Ireland resident trips, generating €14 million.

Of the five regional counties, Co. Carlow returned the lowest relative performance rate in 2017.

- Overseas Tourists: 79,000 (revenue €45 million).
- Co. Carlow and Kildare Domestic Trips: 228,000 (revenue €36 million).

County Tourism Performance

In 2017, the CSO placed Co. Carlow twentieth in the State in terms of overseas visitor numbers. The CSO recorded Co. Kildare and Co.

Carlow together, placing them sixteenth in terms of domestic visitor numbers.

Figure 12 - Co. Carlow Overseas Visitor Numbers 2017

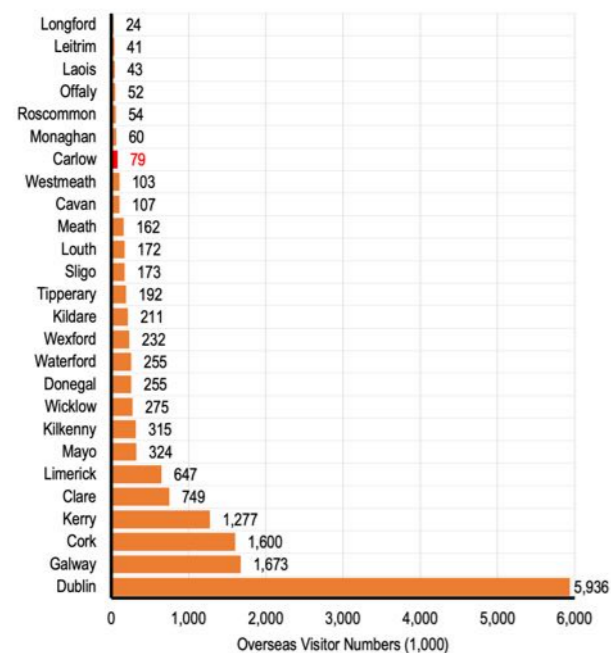
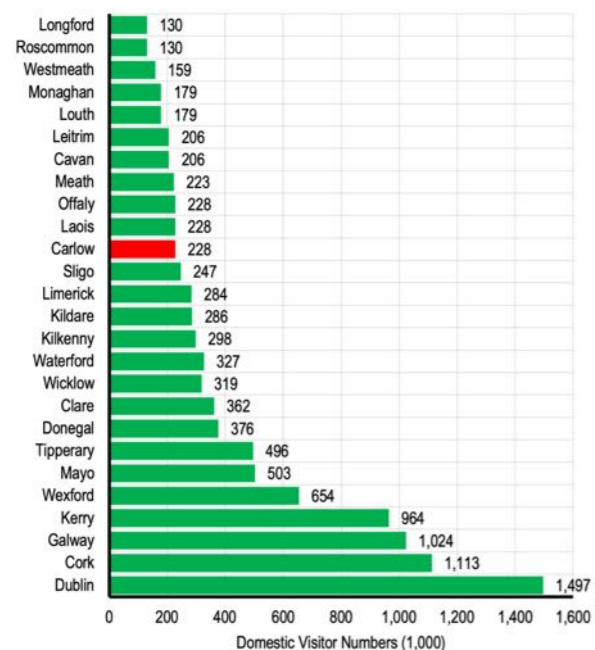


Figure 13 - Co. Carlow Domestic Visitor Numbers 2017



Source: CSO

Relative to the national number of international visitors in 2017, Co. Carlow accounted for 0.53 per cent of the market share. However, the county attracted a more significant 2.10 per cent of the national market share.

5.6.1 County Target Visitor Market

The CDP 2022-2028 Issues Paper confirms that Carlow County Council envisages that the tourism industry will significantly contribute to the local economy. To achieve this outcome, it is intended that there should be an expansion of the existing tourism product.

Carlow County Council and Carlow Tourism recognise their role in supporting tourism by: -

- ❑ Acting as the primary developer of a range of public tourism infrastructure.
- ❑ Acting as a link between the State tourism agencies and communities by supporting community efforts for major national tourism initiatives.
- ❑ Supporting community effort in destination development, including assisting communities to align their efforts with the tourism agencies' brand architecture and consumer segmentation model.

County Carlow Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025 (Carlow Tourism and Carlow County Council) notes that the county is very dependent on domestic tourism, with over 82% of bed nights in Ireland's Ancient East region originating from the domestic and Northern Irish market.

Overseas Visitor Market

The economic impact of an international visitor in terms of spending for the county is estimated at €570 as against €117 for a domestic holidaymaker. The long-term objective for the county is to attract an increased number of overseas visitors.

The Tourism Strategy and Action Plan concludes that attracting domestic visitors is essential. However, increasing the number of overseas visitors will enable the growth of the visitor economy from a lower volume of visitors.

County Market Contribution

The following total direct revenue figures reflect the relative contribution of overseas visitors (by origin) to the economy of the county in 2017: -

- ❑ Mainland Europe: 49 per cent (€22m).
- ❑ United Kingdom: 31 per cent (€14m).
- ❑ North America: 18 per cent (€8m).
- ❑ Rest of the World: 2 per cent (€1m).

Whilst these figures indicate that visitors from Mainland Europe were the most economically important for Co. Carlow pre-Covid-19, it

suggests an opportunity to increase the North American market share.

5.6.2 Key International Market Segments

Fáilte Ireland has identified the *Culturally Curious* and *Greater Escaper* international market segments as appropriate for Ireland's Ancient East brand messaging.

5.6.3 German Visitor Market

Tourism Ireland reports that before the Covid-19 pandemic, there was relatively strong growth in the German visitor market being experienced across recent years, with visitor revenue increasing by 62 per cent in the four years between 2012 and 2016.

- ❑ German consumer perceptions of the island of Ireland are generally positive. This sentiment is particularly true regarding the island's nature and untouched beauty.
- ❑ The *Culturally Curious* German market segment has a strong affinity with the offerings of the island of Ireland. Research shows that this segment is mainly motivated by 'living historical stories' and offerings that focus on being 'active in nature'. In the German market, these are the largest and best-defined consumer segments and are pre-disposed to visit the island of Ireland.

Market Engagement

Tourism Ireland research confirms that: -

- ❑ Visual stimuli are a significant motivator for the German consumer, particularly video and imagery.
- ❑ Concerns that need to be addressed include a dearth of destination knowledge and fears over ease of access, and
- ❑ Guidebooks are an important source of information for the German market.

Key German Market Segments

It is recognised that focus is required on the best-prospect consumer segments, including: -

- ❑ The concentration of resources on targeting the *Culturally Curious* visitors, who represent the largest market segment in Germany (27 per cent).
- ❑ The second-largest segment in the German market is the *Great Escapers* (24 per cent). This segment shares many common motivations and purchase behaviours with the *Culturally Curious*, enabling the same media buying strategy and marketing communications to target these segments cost-effectively.

5.6.4 French Visitor Market

France is the fourth largest market for Ireland and accounted for 547,000 visitors, delivering revenue of €305m in 2018 (revenue per French visitor was €557.59).

French holidaymakers are active visitors. They enjoy exploring historical sites and engaging in multiple events and activities while on the island.

Ninety-three per cent of French visitors reported visiting sites of historical interest whilst visiting Ireland.

5.6.5 British Visitor Market

Tourism Ireland reports that before the Covid-19 pandemic, the British market had the potential to grow holidaymaker revenue by 25 per cent to the Island of Ireland by 2022 (33 per cent in Northern Ireland and 24 per cent in the Republic of Ireland). It is also noted that British holidaymakers venture outside of the main tourism hotspots, supporting regional growth and season extension by visiting lesser-known locations and visiting throughout the year. They seek an authentic experience that is easy to access and different.

Key British Market Profile

- ❑ There are estimated to be some 4.5m *Culturally Curious* and 3.3m *Social Energisers* in the British visitor market.
- ❑ Ninety-two per cent of British holidaymakers are *independent travellers*.
- ❑ Sixty-five per cent of holidays by British tourists take a short break of up to five nights.
- ❑ Sixty-six per cent of British tourists travel with their partner or as part of a small group of adults comprising 1-3 people.
- ❑ Fifty-seven per cent of British visitors to the Republic of Ireland and 53 per cent of those to Northern Ireland are on a repeat trip to the island of Ireland.
- ❑ Forty-two per cent of British visitors travel between October and March. However, these travellers consider the island of Ireland a year-round destination, and many are happy to travel at any time of the year.

British Market Expectation

Increasingly, choosing a destination and planning a trip is something British people do together. This is often triggered by *'snippets'* – compelling visual ideas or experiences in video or picture form that can be shared online with friends and partners. There is a growing trend for *snippets* to be the starting point or the trigger for further research around a potential holiday destination.

British holidaymakers consider ease as crucial for a short break. For example, they are looking for a destination they can reach in under two hours and airline schedules that fit a weekend break. In addition, they want to have an authentic experience, not something that they perceive to be put on for tourists.

Pre-Covid-19 Growth Potential

It is estimated that before the Covid-19 pandemic, the British market had considerable potential to grow holidaymaker revenue.

Table 26 - British Market Revenue Growth

Destination Market	Estimated Increased Revenue	Estimated Revenue 2022
Northern Ireland	33%	€129 m
Republic of Ireland	14%	€572 m
Island of Ireland	25%	€705 m

Source: Tourism Ireland

5.6.6 North American Visitor Market

Tourism Ireland reports that before the Covid-19 pandemic, tourists originating from North America, specifically the USA, continued to be one of Ireland's strongest performing markets, delivering visitors who tend to stay longer and spend more than average.

- ❑ Ireland's Ancient East brand experience is considered to resonate well with key US segments and offers future potential for development and growth.
- ❑ The peak capacity of both accommodation and attractions was a short to medium-term issue that negatively impacted the growth potential of this market.
- ❑ The island of Ireland's competitive ranking was slipping, and it had been identified that there was a requirement to develop more outstanding brand distinctiveness for this market.
- ❑ Whilst online marketing sources were prominent at the initial purchase stage, offline sources remained very important to the North American market. It has been identified that the key *Culturally Curious* market segment relies more heavily on offers/prices, travel TV/books and the marketing effort of the official tourism promotion organisations.
- ❑ Current North American marketing effort tends to reinforce existing perceptions of Ireland as a destination rather than prompt people to reassess their assumptions and get them to book immediately. This results in the potential reaction being too passive, leaving the island of Ireland on the *'visit someday'* list. To address this, it is important that North American marketing

focuses on the *'wow'* factor of the imperative *'instagramable'* moment.

- ❑ North American vacation seekers used multiple sources offline and online to inspire, select and book. Tourism Ireland considers that releasing the potential from the connected holidaymaker requires the island of Ireland to maximise *'micro-moments'*. Micro-moments are intent-rich moments when decisions are made, and preferences shaped.

To capitalise on all the above, Tourism Ireland recommends that future marketing efforts for North America must: -

- ❑ Enhance interactivity to deliver personalised, authentic experiences on the ground and through rich media.
- ❑ Personalise each experience for the consumer.
- ❑ Ensure communications are active in multiple channels, including sharing on social media, *and*
- ❑ Trigger assessment with unexpected benefits that align with travel aspirations.

Market Communications and Messaging

- ❑ It is recommended that to capture the attention of North American consumers, Irish offerings must portray the destination as being vivid, motivating, noticeable and arresting.
- ❑ Retaining a primary focus on the *Culturally Curious* market segment must be the core focus of attention for *'above the line'* communications. It is accepted that the North American market is particularly receptive to Ireland as a holiday destination. This is evidenced by the fact that they outperform other market segments on spending while here (€925.00 per visitor) and are more likely to explore different regions and visit outside of the peak seasons.
- ❑ Tourism Ireland has identified *Social Energisers* as a key secondary target, with research indicating a significant latent potential in the market segment. The US *Social Energisers* tend to share similar motivations around the landscape, heritage, and culture with the *Culturally Curious* traveller, but differences emerge around their planning and booking behaviours. Additionally, the availability of more low-cost air access, especially from the US East Coast, increases the propensity for this segment to visit the island of Ireland on a *'short break'* and during the off-peak season.

5.6.7 Domestic Visitor Market Profile

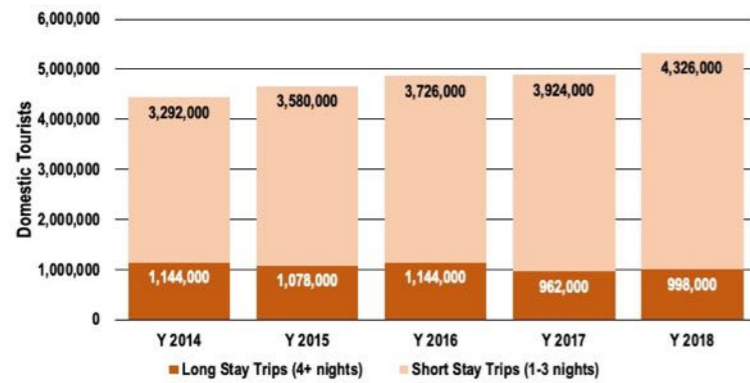
Tourism is Ireland's largest indigenous industry. It was responsible for more than 4 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) in the State and employed around 325,000 people across the island in 2019. It is

recognised that there is a clear interconnection between the vibrancy of the domestic travel market and the capacity of Ireland to attract overseas visitors.

Domestic Market Trend

In 2018, Irish people took over 10m domestic trips, 5.3m of which were holidays worth €1.23bn revenue.

Figure 14 - Domestic Long and Short Stay Holiday Trend 2014-18



Source: CSO Household Travel Surveys 2014-2018

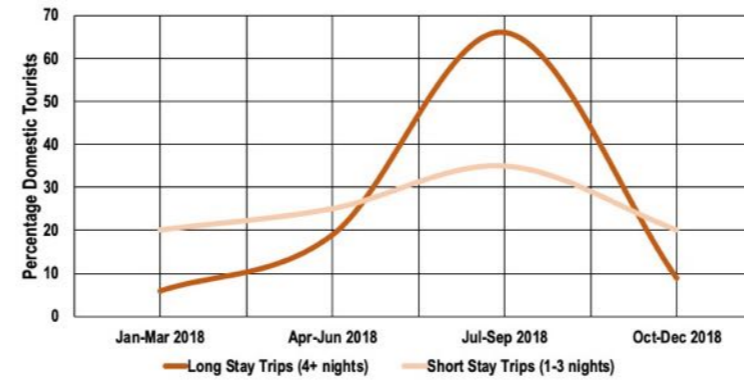
From the above, the domestic market's total number of holiday trips grew by 20 per cent from 2014 to 2018. Within this, short-stay trips of 1-3 nights by the domestic market grew consistently over the period 2014-2018 at a rate of 31 per cent, whilst long-stay trips of 4+ nights by the domestic market fell by 13 per cent.

Domestic Market Seasonality

In 2018, long-stay trips accounted for only 19 per cent of all domestic holiday trips. They also were predominantly taken between June and October, corresponding to the academic year, and contributing to the marked seasonality of the sector.

Conversely, short-stay trips accounted for 80 per cent of domestic tourism trips in 2018 and indicated only a 15 per cent increase over the traditional low season months.

Figure 15 - Seasonality of Domestic Tourists by Duration of Trip 2018

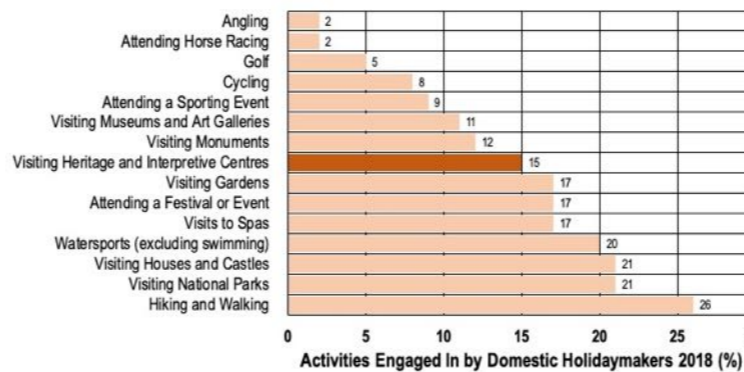


Source: CSO Household Travel Survey 2018

Domestic Holidaymaker Activities

According to Fáilte Ireland, some 15 per cent of domestic holidaymakers visited an Interpretive Centre in 2018, ranking this activity as the eighth most popular in a basket of fifteen activities.

Figure 16 - Activities Engaged in by Domestic Holidaymakers 2018



Source: Fáilte Ireland Domestic Omnibus 2018

5.6.8 Local Visitor Performance

In 2018, Fáilte Ireland ceased issuing performance data at the county level. This has resulted in the absence of verifiable tourism sector data below the regional level. The lack of data is compounded by the absence of any local accommodation provider of scale that might otherwise generate visitor number indicators.

Ireland's Ancient East Potential

Co. Carlow is located in *Ireland's Ancient East* regional brand destination. The brand focuses on the built, natural and cultural legacy. It encourages accessibility for the visitor through stories and interpretation at key historical sites, including those managed by the OPW (such as at St. Mullins).

In terms of domestic visitors, Ireland's Ancient East brand is designed to attract the *Culturally Curious* and *Great Escaper* customer segments. Of these two, the *Culturally Curious* visitors are more closely identified with the region, whilst there is potentially a greater volume of *Great Escapers*.

5.7 Visitor Offerings

At present, St. Mullins offers the potential visitor three distinct product themes: -

1. Heritage tourism.
2. Religious tourism and pilgrimage.
3. Outdoor activities and recreation.

These themes have a commonality in well-being, with the first two being particularly poorly developed. These two themes are based on the upper level of the settlement, whilst the third relates mainly to the lower level.

5.7.1 Heritage Tourism

It is noted that St. Mullins uniquely presents a tangible history spanning from the seventh century to the present day. However, the story of St. Mullins is not currently packaged or presented as a coherent product to appeal to a non-specialist visitor.

This situation suggests that St. Mullins might be significantly underperforming as a visitor attraction, given that at the State level, 38 per cent of domestic visitors (2 million) in 2018 were visiting museums and art galleries, monuments and heritage and interpretive centres.

5.7.2 Religious Tourism

There are 2,470 Ecclesiastical Sites in Ireland (Griffin, Gorman, Stacey, and O'Halloran (2008)). The marketing of such sites in Ireland is typically considered a cultural or heritage tourism experience.

The study entitled *The Problems of Deficient Data when Planning for Religious Tourism: An Irish Case Study*, undertaken in 2016 by Enongene Vreny and Kevin Griffin (Technological University Dublin), estimated the following visitor numbers to key religious sites.

Table 27 – Key Religious Site Visitor Numbers

Sacred Site	2012	2013	2014
Knock Shrine	1,600,000	1,500,000	1,600,000
St Patricks Cathedral (Dublin)	385,000	410,000	500,000
Rock of Cashel	240,000	255,338	
Holly Cross Abbey	240,000		
Croagh Patrick	220,000	210,000	
Christ Church Cathedral (Dublin)	157,486	165,000	
Clonmacnoise	138,481	139,413	150,000
Glendalough Visitor Centre	79,983		
Ballintubber Abbey	35,000		
St Audeons Church	26,548		
Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery	26,460		
Jerpoint Abbey	20,032		
Lough Derg	20,000		
Brigit's Garden	17,500		
Ennis Friary	15,747	22,000	16,000
St. Anne's Church	15,000	20,000	18,000
Dunbrody Abbey and Visitor Centre	14,000		
Mellifont Abbey	12,182		
Sligo Abbey	11,802		
Skellig Micheal	11,577		
The Black Abbey	10,000	10,000	10,000
Tintern Abbey	9,814		
Boyle Abbey	9,164		
Loughcrew	7,224	9,235	11,079
Ardfert Cathedral	6,286		
St Mary's Abbey (Dublin)	4,100		
St Mary's Collegiate Church	3,165	1,500	2,500
Scattery Island	1,121		

Source: TUD

World religious travel is considered to be a fast-growing niche segment.

The fourth International Congress of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimages was organised by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation in Krakow, Poland, in November 2021. This event highlighted the importance of the tangible and intangible cultural assets related to pilgrimages and spiritual routes, underlining the positive contribution of pilgrimages to the sustainable development of tourism.

Despite the religious significance of St. Mullins, there is little evidence of activities that might present the spiritual experience to new, non-specialist audiences.

Insight

An example of the potential for developing a spiritual visitor attraction in St. Mullins can be seen at the Nano Nagle Birthplace in deeply rural Ballygriffin outside of Mallow, Co. Cork. Here the natural scenery provides a backdrop for visitors to spend time away in contemplation with God and nature. The Nano Nagle Birthplace runs retreats in various areas, including spiritual, mindfulness and yoga. These offerings include tailor-made school retreats, reflection days, and eco-spirituality programmes.

The Nano Nagle Birthplace provides two self-catering bungalows on site that can accommodate individuals or groups of up to eighteen people. One of the bungalows is divided into three self-catering apartments. The advertised cost of a self-catering bungalow for one week is €525.

The contemplative nature of religious tourism provides an opportunity to create counter-cyclical visitor offerings in terms of tourism seasonality.

5.7.3 Outdoor Activities and Recreation

Whist St. Mullins boasts an outstanding natural environment, access to the River Barrow and the Barrow Way, and rich cultural history. Unfortunately, there is no similar recreational activities hub in the settlement to match Graiguenamanagh.

Insight

The Barrow Valley Activity Hub is a purpose-designed community enterprise located at the Old Dock Road, Graiguenamanagh.

The Activity Hub includes changing and shower facilities, a kitchen, secure storage and a large training and gathering space facing the area's natural assets. The building is located on a site of 1.6 ha that acts as a natural town park and is central to local walks and swimming facilities. The facilities are located on the bank of the River Barrow. It is suitable for hosting large groups and significant community sporting events and festivals.

Figure 17 - Barrow Valley Activity Hub



Source: Barrow Valley Activities Hub

The facility provides eight serviced campervan pitches (ranging from €15 per night with electrical connection). In addition, there are toilets, showers, a chemical loo disposal facility and a wash-up area. There is an additional €2 for using the site's waste disposal bins.

The Activity Hub provides facilities for visiting groups, including school trips where the focus is outdoor activities. The site also has an all-weather pitch serving visitors and the community.

Wellness

Mulvarra House overlooking the quayside in St Mullins is a dedicated wellness and retreat centre. They offer yoga, mindfulness and nature retreats. Given the serene nature of the local environment and its monastic history, there may be opportunity for additional offerings.

Combining the themes of outdoor recreational activity with the natural environment, Discover Ireland currently lists some eighteen Wellness offerings in Ireland.

Table 28 - Wellness Offerings

Offerings	Centre	Location
	Creacon Lodge Wellness Retreat.	New Ross, Co. Wexford.
	The Wicklow Escape.	The Glen of Imaal, Co. Wicklow.
	Cliffs of Moher Retreat.	Co. Clare.
	The Boghill Centre.	Co. Clare.
Retreats	Dzogchen Beara Retreat.	Beara Peninsula, Co. Cork.
	Tawnylust Lodge.	Co. Leitrim.
	Ard Nahoo Eco-Retreat.	Co. Leitrim.
	Cloona Health Retreat.	Co. Mayo.

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/continued

Offerings	Centre	Location
Yoga Retreats	Burren Yoga Retreat.	Co. Clare.
	Wild Atlantic Way Yoga.	Kinsale, Co. Cork.
	Macalla Farm.	Clare Island, Co. Mayo.
Wellness Experiences	Sólás na Mara Seaweed Baths.	Waterford.
	The Healing Forest.	Dublin
	Victor's Way.	Co. Wicklow
	The Organic Centre.	Co. Leitrim.
Eco-Centres	Hillside Organic and Holistic Farm.	Co. Roscommon.
	Blackstairs Eco Trails.	Co. Carlow
	Sonairte - The National Ecology Centre.	Co. Meath.

Source: Discover Ireland

Insight

Creacon Lodge Wellness Retreat is located 22 km. from St. Mullins, off the N25 New Ross Bypass.

Originally an historic Irish Inn, Creacon Lodge underwent a major refurbishment in 2016, and €1.5 million was invested in the renovation and redesign of the original building. The Wellness Retreat offerings focus on self-care, relaxation and rejuvenation. The retreat experience specialises in yoga and meditation to revitalise the spirit, mind, and body.

The retreat offers locals, guests and visitors a serene environment with a range of wellness services, including facials, massage, acupuncture, psychotherapy, daily yoga and mindfulness class. The café is open daily, offering nutritious and delicious meals, refreshing cold-pressed juices, tea/coffee, and desserts.

Many packaged offerings include bed and breakfast, three-day juice cleanse, weekend getaway, yoga and meditation retreats. Overnight packages include accommodation in newly renovated modern, media free guest suites.

5.8 Visitor Marketing

As a visitor experience, aspects of St. Mullins are currently marketed through the following web platforms (November 2021): -

- ❑ www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/history-heritage/folklore-of-ireland/carlow-folklore/st-moling/st-mullins-ancient-site
- ❑ www.carlowtourism.com/st-mullins
- ❑ www.discoverireland.ie/carlow/st-mullins-ecclesiastical-village
- ❑ www.megalithicireland.com/StMullinsMonasticSite
- ❑ www.riverbarrow.net/st.-mullins

- ❑ www.southeastireland.com/pstmullins-carlow-ireland

The above sites generally focus on the ecclesiastical history of St. Mullins.

The Office of Public Works classifies St. Mullins Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Site as a National Monument. The role of the OPW Heritage Services is to manage the State heritage sites. It does not provide a marketing function for St. Mullins.

5.8.1 Visitor Data

There is currently no publicly-available baseline visitor data available for St. Mullins. Therefore, it is highly recommended that a methodology be adopted commencing in 2022 to enable an evidence-based assessment of visitor performance.

5.8.2 Local Marketing

No social media or web-based platform is dedicated to marketing St. Mullins as a visitor destination. In addition to the web platforms noted above, the following organisations and commercial operators provide visitor information on aspects of the settlement.

St. Mullins Heritage Centre

The St. Mullins Heritage Centre Facebook page provides information about the facility: www.facebook.com/StMullinsHeritageCentre. Unfortunately, it appears that the information has not been updated since 2018.

Mullicháin Café

The Mullicháin Café, The Quay, St. Mullins, has a fully-featured, well-designed website that promotes the business, the village and the locality - www.themullichaincafe.ie. The main café operates on a seasonal basis (February to October) and at weekends only in February and March. The adjacent Far Side Coffee Dock operates at weekends (11 am - 4 pm) during the winter season.

The visitor offering of the Mullicháin Café is straightforward, and the setting makes the outdoor dining experience compelling for many. The nature of this experience will have been particularly appropriate in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic public health recommendations.

The café facility provides a significant attraction for visitors to come to the lower level of the settlement.

The Mullicháin Café website effectively markets St. Mullins to a broader audience beyond those interested solely in the ecclesiastical history of the settlement. It contains references to the commercial importance of the river and the Odlums' operations and presents these in an easy to assimilate, visually-rich manner. In addition, the

facility makes use of all the major social media platforms for promotion.

Subject to overcoming the constraints of services, it is understood that future development of the adjacent Lorry House might include bicycle hire, boat and canoe storage, toilets, showering and changing areas (including washing and drying facilities for all activity tourism requirements). Provision of facilities for overnight accommodation for activity tourists and an assembly area for visitor groups.

Figure 18 - Mullicháin Café



The Mullicháin Café provides seasonal employment for approximately ten local people.

Blanchfields Country Pub

Blanchfields Country Pub is the only public house in St. Mullins. It reopened under new ownership in September 2020.

Figure 19 - Blanchfields Country Pub



In 2021 the pub was open seven days a week in July and August. Food was served from 3 pm Monday to Friday and from 12 midday on Saturday and Sunday.

The facility uses social media to promote itself and its activities.

6 Options Appraisal

St. Mullins settlement is in a tranquil and visually attractive setting beside the River Barrow and its tributary, the Aughavaud.

Despite offering physical evidence of local heritage over the centuries, the settlement has not developed the infrastructure to optimally interpret its legacy for the volume or specialist visitor market.

Over recent years the settlement has become increasingly attractive to day-visitors of such a volume that the local infrastructure has been unable to accommodate them adequately.

Population Profile

St. Mullins straddles the Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs. The combined population of these was 1,027 in 2016, having fallen by 2.5 per cent from 2011. The total population of the St. Mullins settlement in 2016 was approximately 200.

In 2016, the population profile contained a relatively large proportion of young people.

Topography

The River Barrow gorge physically defines St Mullins settlement. The upper level contains important historical references, whilst the lower level provides direct access to the riverside.

Accessibility

The history of St. Mullins is tied to River Barrow regarding trade and transport links and as a power source for industry. The quality of the road network is appropriate for a village but was overwhelmed during recent tourist seasons. There are no direct public transport services.

Infrastructure

The settlement has an unsustainable wastewater treatment system. The lack of capacity in the system effectively limits any significant development that requires wastewater services.

The public domain of St. Mullins includes the Pilgrim’s Park, the Village Green (which incorporates the remains of the motte and bailey), and the river frontage, which provides access to the Barrow Way walking trail. There are two designated car parks at the lower level and one at the upper level.

Community effort provides the maintenance of the public domain. It also maintains the public toilets and the St. Mullins Heritage Centre (closed pending refurbishment).

Visitor Experience

Despite the St. Mullins Ecclesiastical Site being classified as a national monument, there is no visitor orientation node and limited wayfinding provision.

6.1 Building on Opportunities

The settlement of St. Mullins has many strengths and offers numerous opportunities for future development. However, to ensure that development is sustainable, it will be necessary to balance these against the area’s principal internal weaknesses and external challenges.

Table 29 - Heritage and Historical SWOC

Settlement Strengths	Settlement Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Largely untouched by overdevelopment, St. Mullins provides an accessible account of over fourteen centuries of community life. <input type="checkbox"/> St. Mullins Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Site is classified as a national monument. <input type="checkbox"/> The Motte and Bailey provide a solid visual reference to a significant period in Irish history. <input type="checkbox"/> The culture of the settlement is still tangible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The Village Green is used as a seasonal car park, destroying its amenity value. <input type="checkbox"/> St. Mullins Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Site is not well promoted. <input type="checkbox"/> Despite being a nationally recognised name, the Barrow Navigation and Odlums Mill history are poorly presented as part of the historical continuum. <input type="checkbox"/> Despite its air of serenity, little effort has been made to interpret history in a modern context.
External Opportunities	External Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Public policy statements generally support the sensitive development of St. Mullins. <input type="checkbox"/> Linkage with other centres of ecclesiastical history, religious tourism and waterways-based activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to create a meaningful partnership between the local community and the key agencies will limit the potential to unlock the full potential of the heritage and history of St. Mullins.

Table 30 - Environment SWOC

Settlement Strengths	Settlement Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> St. Mullins is located in an area of very high visual amenity value. <input type="checkbox"/> The River Barrow SAC status acknowledges and will protect the amenity value of the river environment (Barrow and Aughavaud). <input type="checkbox"/> The River Barrow environs provide an environment that is rich in biodiversity. <input type="checkbox"/> The settlement contains several undeveloped opportunity sites that are in public ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is little evidence of the promotion of the local environment to a broader audience <input type="checkbox"/> The wider area (Glynn and Tinnahinch EDs) experienced a population decline between 2011 and 2016. <input type="checkbox"/> The unsustainable wastewater treatment system constrains development. <input type="checkbox"/> The population size of St. Mullins is below the critical mass necessary to support large-scale community actions. <input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian permeability through the settlement is poor.
External Opportunities	External Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Public policy statements generally support the sensitive development of St. Mullins. <input type="checkbox"/> The continuing promotion of Barrow Valley Activity Hub creates the possibility for mutually beneficial networking activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The promotion of Barrow Valley Activity Hub will drive more people to St. Mullins, exacerbating the existing infrastructural weaknesses. <input type="checkbox"/> If the public investment is not forthcoming in the wastewater treatment system, further settlement development will be constrained. <input type="checkbox"/> Failure to manage the development of the opportunity sites in St. Mullins will result in continuing piecemeal development, with risk to the amenity value of the settlement.

Table 31 - Visitor Experience SWOC

Settlement Strengths	Settlement Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Largely untouched by overdevelopment, St. Mullins provides an accessible account of over fourteen centuries of community life. <input type="checkbox"/> St. Mullins Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Site is a national monument. <input type="checkbox"/> The Motte and Bailey provides a strong visual reference to a significant period in Irish history. <input type="checkbox"/> The natural environment and setting are of high amenity value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> St. Mullins lacks the basic infrastructure to be anticipated in a visitor attraction. <input type="checkbox"/> There is no local visitor accommodation base of scale. <input type="checkbox"/> There is no effective visitor orientation point, and consequently, wayfinding is not intuitive. <input type="checkbox"/> Despite its air of serenity, no effort has been made to interpret St. Mullins’ history in a modern context involving wellness or religious tourism. <input type="checkbox"/> Public vehicle parking facilities are seasonally inadequate. <input type="checkbox"/> There is no single integrated marketing vehicle for the totality of St. Mullins’ offerings.
External Opportunities	External Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Public policy statements generally support the development of the St. Mullins visitor experience. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a clear opportunity to encourage an area-based structure to develop and promote the potential visitor experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The lack of a critical mass of population will continue to limit the development opportunities for St. Mullins. <input type="checkbox"/> Underinvestment will result in a loss of employment opportunities and underperformance.

7 Preferred Development Options

The suite of preferred development options for St. Mullins reflects the outcomes of the consultation process and references the relevant strategic policies that shape the settlement and its environs. The resulting development actions are designed to have a clear positive impact on the settlement regarding place-making and sustainable regeneration.

St. Mullins does not have a discernible commercial core, resulting in a poorly defined sense of place. The proposed actions are designed to stimulate new and existing economic activity associated with the core and harness the existing yet underdeveloped, historical, cultural, and environmental assets. By sensitively managing the presentation of these assets to a broader audience, the local community will be encouraged to participate in social and economic activities that positively engage with the hinterlands and neighbouring townlands. To this end, sectoral networking initiatives with local hot spots, including Graiguenamanagh and New Ross, will be central to growing and sustaining economic activity.

The preparation of the St. Mullins Tourism and Heritage Masterplan demonstrates the degree of close collaboration between the local community and business interests. The realisation of the development actions will strengthen this collaboration through the positive support of Carlow County Council. This will necessarily result in leveraging many other supports offered by Government Departments or agencies. In this respect, the actions will focus on optimising activities in culture, heritage, and the arts. In addition, they will provide for enhanced recreational facilities in the settlement and will see otherwise derelict infrastructure being repurposed.

As custodians of St. Mullins, the local community will be the primary stakeholder in implementing the actions. The capacity for community activity will be increased by revitalising the Tidy Towns effort and the Heritage Centre. Additionally, the optimisation of the cultural, historical and environmental assets of the settlement and its environs will contribute to the effort by Carlow County Council, Fáilte Ireland, OPW, Coillte and Waterways Ireland to expand the quality tourism product. This will culminate in new visitor offerings that both protect and celebrate the unique assets of St. Mullins and its hinterlands for future generations.

7.1 Overarching Development Principles

The summary Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) outlined above indicate the breadth of potential options for the sustainable development of St. Mullins over the period 2022-2032.

7.1.1 Sustainability

The key dimensions of sustainability for the development of St. Mullins are founded on the need to protect the built and natural environment of the settlement. The visual impact of the centuries of monastic and ecclesiastical remains, coupled with the industrial use of the natural river amenity by past generations, form the unique essence of St. Mullins. It follows that safeguarding, restoration and enhancement of the heritage and natural environment of St. Mullins will serve to optimise its capacity to inform the current generation and to educate into the future.

Social Dimension

A key high-level objective of the Tourism and Heritage Masterplan is the reinforcement of St. Mullins as a settlement in which local people can take pride. There is ample evidence through the work and results of the Tidy Towns group of the local focus on the public domain. However, much more can be done to elevate the settlement to an international standard.

Increasing the capacity of the local community to oversee the integrated development of the settlement will require facilitation. To achieve a critical mass capable of increasing voluntary activity, it may be necessary to consider the development of a network of adjacent communities. There are numerous examples of success across the State, including Ballyleague (Co. Roscommon) with Lanesborough (Co. Longford), and Ballyforan, Dysart, Four Roads and Mount Talbot uniting in Co. Roscommon.

Community-led networking will provide the prospect of joint applications being made for scale funding streams, together with area-based projects. The latter might be of particular importance in supporting multi-dimensional activity by developing community structures of adequate scale to drive and manage local development opportunities.

Built Infrastructure

The development of improved pedestrian accessibility and permeability will impact linking the upper settlement to the lower riverside.

Currently, the settlement has a seasonal vehicle parking problem that results from the lack of a meaningful traffic management plan. This

situation is made worse by the nature of the road infrastructure and the access afforded by motor vehicles to the Village Green.

Effective traffic management will require the introduction of incentives to encourage walkers, cyclists, and the semi-ambulatory to leave their vehicles in the upper-level vehicle park and, from there, enjoy the St. Mullins experience. To achieve this, it will be necessary to introduce much stronger orienteering and wayfinding assets commencing at the vehicle park, which will need a much-increased presence.

Much of the history of St. Mullins is expressed through the built environment. The remains of the ecclesiastical buildings, the graveyard and the motte and bailey and St. Moling's Well tell part of the history of the settlement. Equally, the Barrow Navigation, the mill building complex, the warehouse, and Woodville House bring the story closer to the present day. For those less well informed, the remarkable historical narrative of the settlement may not be obvious.

The current wastewater treatment system limits further physical development within St. Mullins.

Natural Environment

The River Barrow provides an unusual local habitat as it transforms from a tidal flow to an inland waterway at St. Mullins. Currently, the Barrow Way provides a linear biodiversity corridor that links St. Mullins and Graiguenamanagh (and beyond).

Beyond wide recognition in the angling community as providing excellent game fishing, the outstanding natural flora and fauna of the River Barrow are not interpreted for the benefit of the casual visitor.

The quality of the local environment is reflected in the designation of both rivers under the EU Natura 2000 Special Area of Conservation. This designation ensures the long-term survival of the State's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

7.1.2 Attractions and Offerings

As a destination, St. Mullins combines heritage, culture, and a quality natural environment within a tranquil riverside location. The fragility of this mix has been tested over recent years by an increase in the number of seasonal day visitors.

Components

The key components contributing to the attractiveness of St. Mullins include: -

- ❑ The significant monastic heritage in the graveyard and the ruined ecclesiastical structures.
- ❑ Multiple layers of local history and stories are embedded in the landscape. These layers span fourteen centuries, from ancient times through the industrial age to the present day.

- ❑ The settlement’s location is an important gateway to the Barrow Way and beyond.
- ❑ Public accessibility to the River Barrow’s waters and its tributaries is set in a rich natural landscape.
- ❑ St. Mullins settlement, supporting living traditions of cultural significance.

7.1.3 Visitor Experience

The lack of evidence-based visitor performance data is a significant deficit impacting the setting of targets for improving the local visitor experience. This matter should be addressed as quickly as possible.

Product Offering

The objective of improving the visitor experience offered by St. Mullins will be to create a place of worldwide significance to be visited by people from across Ireland and the world. In turn, this will facilitate the enjoyment and understanding of visitors of the outstanding monastic and recreational significance of the settlement and its environs.

Given the quality of the historical and environmental environment of St. Mullins, with better presentation, there is considerable opportunity to package St. Mullins as a day destination with other local visitor attractions and accommodation providers in counties Carlow, Wexford, and Kilkenny. Appropriate niche market segments include: -

- ❑ Activities – natural environment, water-based and land-based.
- ❑ Educational Packages (formal and informal).
- ❑ Specialist – including waterways, industrial archaeology, ecclesiastical and medieval history.
- ❑ Spiritual Tourism.
- ❑ Wellness Retreats.

Visitor Accommodation Limitation

The lack of any visitor accommodation effectively diminishes the main driver for developing new visitor experiences in St. Mullins. Notably, the settlement has proven unable to support a local shop over recent years.

It has been shown that innovative visitor experiences are generally driven by the commercial need to fill bed nights. Therefore, the objective is often to increase the visitor dwell time by offering overnight accommodation as part of an integrated visitor experience.

The current infrastructural limitation on property development prevents the encouragement of any local provision. Given the absence of any visitor accommodation of scale, it will be necessary to package offerings with remotely located accommodation. This

solution will be less than optimal for generating direct economic gain accruing to the settlement.

7.1.4 Key Challenges

The sustainable development of St. Mullins presents four principal challenges: -

1. Creating a local, voluntary community organisation with development and management capacity.
2. The location of the Heritage Centre Gateway Point in St. Mullins and its visitor offerings.
3. The need to simultaneously improve the public realm of the settlement and a readily understandable wayfinding provision to guide visitors.
4. Develop a targeted, sustainable marketing platform to promote St. Mullins as a quality visitor destination.

7.2 Core Components

The core components of the Masterplan have explicitly been identified to address the four key challenges emerging from the consideration of the overarching development principles.

Figure 20 - Core Development Components



7.2.1 A1: Community Development Structure

The local community will drive the future development of St. Mullins and its environs. Over the past decades, St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group (SMART) and St. Mullins Tidy Towns group have provided the impetus for much local place-making activity.

To optimise the cultural, historical and environmental potential that has been identified in St. Mullins and its environs, it is necessary to mobilise and incentivise the local community. The community must be empowered to take ownership of a community-led local development process. In this regard, they will be supported by an awareness-building and training package delivered through Carlow County Council Community and Amenity Section.

7.2.2 A2: Heritage Centre Gateway Point

St. Mullins Heritage Centre is the principal visitor wayfinding node in St. Mullins settlement. However, the voluntarily operated facility

presents key challenges, not least of which is that it is operationally non-viable.

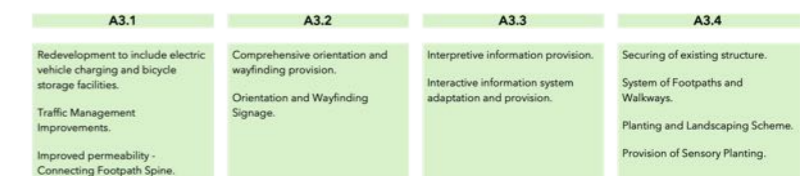
The well-being of the Heritage Centre is of strategic importance to St. Mullins. The current management group is dedicated to the sustainability of the facility. It has considerable experience in its history, rationale, and the needs of visitors to the facility. The demonstrable level of commitment of the group provides the opportunity to build further business and tourism sector skills. These skills will enable the Heritage Centre to more effectively position itself as the visitor Gateway Point involving the development of a new multi-annual business plan.

The strategic partners potentially best positioned to assist the management group in this task include Carlow Local Enterprise Office and Carlow County Development Partnership.

7.2.3 A3: Public Realm and Wayfinding Infrastructure

Improvements to the public realm and wayfinding infrastructure in St. Mullins comprise a suite of four related actions.

Figure 21 - Public Realm and Wayfinding Infrastructure Action Suite



Extending back over many years, much evidence has been gathered of the difficulty that the topography of the settlement presents to the visitor seeking an appreciation of the cultural, historical and environmental assets of St. Mullins and its environs. Over recent years the situation has been compounded by increasing seasonal visitor numbers and attendant vehicular traffic circulation issues.

Subject to adequate resourcing, an opportunity exists to deliver a suite of integrated actions to simultaneously improve the settlement’s public realm, accessibility, and wayfinding situation. The suite of integrated measures encompasses the following key infrastructural components: -

1. Redevelopment of the Northern Vehicle Park and its access signage and vehicular traffic management with improved pedestrian/cycle permeability.
2. Orientation and Wayfinding Provision signage within the settlement.
3. Interpretive information integrated provision.
4. Woodville House and Grounds site development involves the securing of the remains of the structure, provision of an outdoor experience and contemplative space.

7.2.4 A4: Marketing and Promotion

Using international and national comparators, it is clear that St. Mullins and its hinterland are significantly underperforming as a cultural, historical, and environmental destination for visitors. This represents a considerable revenue loss to the local community and County Carlow.

The prospective improvements to the Heritage Centre Gateway Point and the Public Realm and Wayfinding Infrastructure are specifically designed to enhance the visitor experience. However, all this will be of limited immediate benefit unless supported by a complementary initiative to bring the improved offerings to market.

To capitalise on the proposed infrastructural investment, it will be necessary to devise and implement a directed digital marketing campaign. To be effective, this campaign will have to target specific market segments that are likely to be attuned to the offerings of St. Mullins. If engineered correctly, the campaign presents an opportunity to manage the seasonality of visitors to the settlement. In addition, it will provide a tool to encourage more diverse and sustainable sectors of the tourism and activities industries in the locality.

It is proposed that support for the design and implementation of the digital marketing campaign will involve the local community and draw on expertise from County Carlow Local Enterprise Office and Carlow Tourism.

7.3 Action 1: Community Development Structure

Implementing the suite of actions under the St. Mullins Tourism and Heritage Masterplan will require expertise and effort. As the primary beneficiaries of the actions, the community of St. Mullins must be able to manage and control the implementation of the Masterplan. In addition, they must contribute to the realisation of the actions and develop these further into the future.

As the incumbent community body, SMART will be supported to gain new skills and governance structures to fulfil its new role. Working with the existing membership, it may be appropriate to reconstitute the organisation's membership to engage with representatives from communities across the hinterland, including the Heritage Centre, Tidy Towns and the Graveyard Committee.

To be effective, the community body should be capable of demonstrating the following characteristics and qualities: -

1. Governance Standards - to include transparency and accountability, conflict of interest, code of conduct for members,

compliance with legal/insurance requirements, and awareness of obligations under its Constitution.

2. Annual Planning and Funding - to include connections between annual planning and existing plans and strategies such as Local Economic Community Plan (LECP), Local Development Strategy (LDS), County Development Plan, and Local Action Plans.
3. Vision and ability to embrace change - accept change as a necessary component to achieve long term sustainable aims.
4. Membership and structure - include the participation of marginalised groups and the routine nomination of members by other community and voluntary sector groups. Engagement with County Council (Municipal District) Elected Members.

7.4 Action 2: Heritage Centre Gateway Point

The community consultation has identified an opportunity to enhance the appeal of St. Mullins to the tourist market through improved visitor movement, orientation and wayfinding. In the past, much of this role has fallen to St. Mullins Heritage Centre, which is appropriately operated by a voluntary community organisation. However, in recent years the Heritage Centre has found difficulty in raising sufficient revenue to sustain itself. In addressing this issue, there is an opportunity to reimagine the Heritage Centre as taking a pivotal role in protecting the heritage in St. Mullins and developing a more robust visitor offering.

7.4.1 Extended Role Options

The regeneration of the Heritage Centre will place it at the core of the following strategic elements: -

- ❑ **Gateway Point:** The Heritage Centre will broaden its scope to become the gateway point to St. Mullins. It is potentially challenged in this new role by its physical location and relative lack of visibility.
- ❑ **Arrival/ Departure Point:** This will involve the redevelopment and equipping of the Northern Vehicle Park as the designated arrival and departure point. The role of Gateway Point will be to ensure that visitors can permeate readily around St. Mullins and arrive at the Gateway Point.

The Gateway and Arrival points must be designed to improve 'first impressions' for visitor arrival with stand-out welcome orientation and interpretive wayfinding points uniquely designed for St. Mullins.

- ❑ **Orientation, Wayfinding and Interpretation:** Using the technologies and techniques described, the Gateway Point will be responsible for maintaining and improving the visitors'

orientation, wayfinding and interpretive experiences. Thus, the existing Heritage Centre will be required to embrace an agenda that is knowledgeable on all aspects of the offerings of St. Mullins and has sufficient technical knowledge to manage the systems employed.

- ❑ **Water-based and Land-Based Environment:** The Gateway Point must offer the visitor a complete understanding of the area's offerings. This will place the cultural and historical attributes within a more extensive contemporary environmental frame, embracing the rich biodiversity of the local flora and fauna.
- ❑ **Attractions:** The Gateway Point will be required to maintain a library of all of the available attractions within the locality. These can be easily packaged into offerings for visitors.
- ❑ **Digital Support:** To fulfil its role as the Gateway, Point, it will be necessary for the former Heritage Centre to have the technical capacity to effectively and efficiently use digital resources. These will be the most appropriate for managing and growing the visitor base to St. Mullins and its environs using social media, web-based tools and Customer Relationship Management solutions to attract multiple visits.

7.5 Action 3: Public Realm and Wayfinding Infrastructure

Effectively linking the upper and lower settlement for pedestrians and cyclists is the key to optimising the physical and natural assets of St. Mullins. This must be achieved in tandem with addressing seasonal vehicular traffic flow in the settlement core and integrating the Northern Vehicle Park into the settlement.

Providing an enhanced public realm that integrates with an appropriate and easily assimilated wayfinding infrastructure forms the foundation for making St. Mullins more attractive for visitors whilst protecting and enhancing the valuable cultural, historical and environmental attributes.

7.5.1 Objectives

The better integration of the upper and lower settlements will achieve the following objectives: -

1. Enhanced amenity scale and value of St. Mullins for the local community and visitors. This will increase the potential dwell time of visitors leading to an increase in local dining and accommodation spend.
2. The Northern Vehicle Park will be made more relevant to the settlement, which, when coupled with the introduction of a

traffic management plan, will help control unwanted visitor vehicle movements in the settlement core.

3. Existing County Council property in the settlement will be optimised by bringing underutilised assets into practical use. Further, the development of the public realm and wayfinding infrastructure will be provided on County Council owned land, assisting swift implementation.
4. Provide a direct response to key outcomes of the community consultation process.

To meet the required objectives, it follows that the improvements to the public realm and wayfinding infrastructure will be comprehensive. Delivery will be achieved through an integrated programme of discrete components, including the following.

7.5.2 A3.1: Northern Vehicle Park and Traffic Management

Given that the settlement infrastructure has limited capacity to absorb large volumes of vehicular traffic, it is recommended that the three existing car parks are better developed to cater for seasonal requirements.

The Northern is the most underused of the three vehicle parks (north, east and west). Therefore, this offers the greatest opportunity to address the parking issues identified in the settlement whilst also improving the seasonal traffic management situation.

Northern Vehicle Park

Several simple improvements should be implemented to make the Northern Vehicle Park more appealing to visitors and effectively act as the Arrival Point for St. Mullins. These include: -

- ❑ Improvement is required to the directional signing for the Northern Vehicle Park from the L3008.
- ❑ Whilst the car park provides three spaces for disabled person vehicles, there is no apparent provision for the semi-ambulatory elsewhere in the settlement's infrastructure. This should be addressed in the traffic management scheme by demarking routes with dropped kerbs.
- ❑ A primary wayfinding installation is required at the pedestrian exit from the car park. This installation should include a directional map of the settlement supported by an introductory web page accessed through a QR code.
- ❑ The visibility of the Northern Vehicle Park from the L3008 and beyond should be improved by removing the vegetation to the southern boundary.
- ❑ The Northern Vehicle Park should have at least three e-vehicle fast charging points.

- ❑ The Northern Vehicle Park should be provided with a covered bicycle stand.

Traffic Management

Options to control car parking on the green spaces include: -

- ❑ A range of low bollards of either natural stone or recycled plastic (appropriately finished). The bollards should be generally placed at no more than 1.8-metre intervals. When seasonal access is required to the green, controlled access points should be provided using demountable bollards.
- ❑ Ground cover planting might be introduced in sections to deter vehicle overrun.
- ❑ *No Parking* signs should be introduced to protect the vulnerable public domain areas, including the link road between the upper and lower settlement. Ideally, yellow road marking lines should be avoided as they will negatively impact the visual amenity of the settlement. In addition, this approach would allow for the settlement to be promoted as a future film location.
- ❑ The design loading capacity of the Aughavaud River bridge is unknown. It has no guarding on its southern (Barrow River) parapet. The bridge deck is narrow (insufficient for vehicle and pedestrian use simultaneously). It should be signed for emergency vehicle use only and heralded by *No Through Traffic* signs at traffic control points CP1 and CP2.
- ❑ L5: Mixed Use roadways should be designed as such. To differentiate the zones, consideration should be given to changing the road surface finish for a length on either side of CP2. The mixed-use section must be capable of providing for pedestrians and cyclists and both light and occasional heavy (delivery) vehicles. Street furniture and soft and hard landscaping must reflect the mixed-use nature of the space.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Permeability

The proposed traffic management arrangements in St. Mullins aim to reduce the number of unnecessary vehicles entering the settlement core. This will add to the visual amenity of the settlement, particularly during the peak visitor period, reflecting its timeless serenity.

- ❑ **L1:** The pedestrian crossing on the L3008 should be marked, lit and protected by traffic calming measures. This crossing will reinforce the attractiveness of using the vehicle park.
- ❑ **L2:** Development of the connecting footpath spine running from the Northern Vehicle Park through the Pilgrim's Park to Woodville House is vital to improving the visitor offering and the sense of place for the local community. This will require introducing waymarking points to guide the visitor through the layers of history and culture otherwise hidden in St. Mullins.

- ❑ The gradients involved in certain sections of the connecting footpath spine preclude the safe addition of a cycleway.
- ❑ A link (**L3**) will be formed from the footpath spine to the core of the upper settlement. This will utilise the existing pathway connecting the Pilgrim's Park to the Public Toilets/Heritage Centre Gateway axis.
- ❑ **L4** will link the Northern Vehicle Park to St. Moling's Well. This will largely use the existing Pilgrim's Park infrastructure.
- ❑ The return leg for pedestrians (**L5**) having reached the River Barrow quay will be along the shared space L30082 road. However, the lack of forward vision for pedestrians and vehicle drivers at the graveyard creates a challenge. This situation should be addressed by curtailing speed limits on this stretch to 35kph. In addition, in the interests of safety, it is essential to demark this road as a *No Parking* zone since traffic must move in two directions over this stretch.
- ❑ **L6:** Bahana Forest Trail Link joins the L5 mixed-use link in the upper settlement at the Village Green. The Forest Trail forms a connection with the Barrow Way.
- ❑ **L7:** Barrow Way commencement point joins L5 at the Mullicháin Café on the riverfront. This will be the entry point to the settlement for those travelling the Barrow Way, and an improved orientation point will be required.

Map 24 - Northern Vehicle Park, Traffic Management and Public Realm



7.5.3 Public Realm and Universal Design

The public realm in St. Mullins incorporates extensive natural green areas and street furniture, including public seats, litter bins, traffic signs, guard rails and bollards. The location and provision of informational signage also impact the quality of the public realm as perceived by visitors.

The improvement of the public realm must promote Universal Design principles. This will make getting into and moving around the settlement much easier. In addition, it must be people-centred so that there are better facilities for the old and young in particular. This will include the provision of more seating and relaxation opportunities.

In St. Mullins, the approach must seek to redress the balance favouring pedestrians and cyclists over vehicular traffic. This will be achieved through active traffic control measures and passive improvements to the hard and soft physical fabric quality.

The application of Universal Design to the settlement core will focus on the design and composition of the environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. In this respect, the environment (building, product, or service) must be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. If the environment of St. Mullins is accessible, usable, convenient, and a pleasure to be in, everyone benefits.

7.5.4 A3.2: Wayfinding

Map 29 - Key Wayfinding Points



Wayfinding Components

The creation of a settlement-wide wayfinding network for St. Mullins must, at a minimum, incorporate the following components: -

1. Discourage non-essential private vehicles (other than for residents) as a mode of transport in the settlement core.
2. Create an identity at each key location that is different from all others.
3. Use of existing landmarks to provide orientation cues and reinforce memorable locations (*Instagram Moments*).
4. Provide a well-structured footpath network.
5. The demarcation of areas of differing visual identity reflecting the local character and theme (such as monastic settlement, Viking era, Victorian industry, built and natural environments).
6. Offer limited options for visitor navigation (simple messages) to reduce confusion.
7. Provision of an easy to understand vista or map of the offerings.
8. Provision of signs at decision points to inform wayfinding decisions.
9. The use of line-of-site to show what is ahead.

Key Wayfinding Points

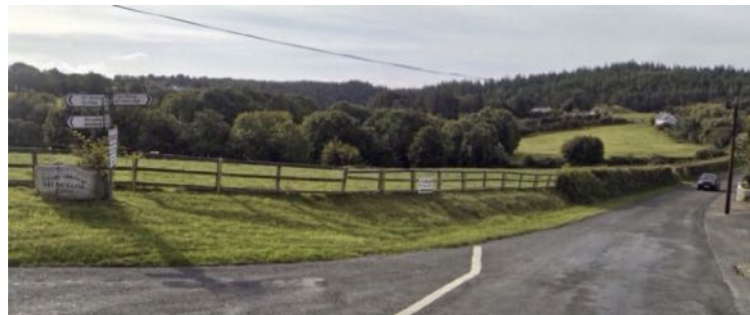
The map adjacent indicates the thirteen key wayfinding points in St. Mullins. In developing the wayfinding concepts for St. Mullins, reference has been made to the following: -

- ❑ *Traffic Signs Manual* - Department of Transport (2019).
- ❑ *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future* - Department of Transport (2009-2021).
- ❑ *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* - Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (2014).
- ❑ *Local Area Plans - Guidelines for Planning Authorities* - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2013).
- ❑ *National Cycle Manual* - National Transport Authority (2011).

Village Herald Points A and B

Road verge signs define the northern and southern L3008 entries to St. Mullins.

Figure 22 - L3008 Settlement Signage



Northern Entry L3008 (From Graiguenamanagh)



Southern Entry L3008 (Junction with L30083)

The existing settlement road signs are understated, leaving no clear sense of entry into the village. It is recommended that these are reinforced with new verge-side signs that reflect the branding of St. Mullins.

The objective of these signs should be to: -

- Herald the settlement.
- Be of scale and design sufficient to attract attention.
- To announce entry into an area of national historical importance.
- Uphold the shared-use nature of the settlement road network.

The herald signs should broadly comply with the Transport Infrastructure Ireland *Policy on the Provision of Tourist and Leisure Signage on National Roads* (2011). Approval for the design and positioning of the herald sign will be required from Carlow County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

Figure 23 - Upgraded Herald Signs Points A and B



Source: After Roscommon County Council

Chapter 4 of the *Traffic Signs Manual* - Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (2019) provides a standard range of symbols for tourist attractions and destinations, leisure activities and facilities. The following are appropriate to herald St. Mullins.

Figure 24 - Selection of Appropriate Symbols



A further option for herald sign design is provided in Appendix A3.

The herald signs should be constructed of either aluminium raised letters or cast aluminium for maximum durability and maintainability. In addition, reflective lettering should be used for night time visibility.

Wayfinding Point C

The current arrangement of finger signs at the L3008 and the village green intersection is confusing.

Figure 25 - L3008 Village Green Signposting



Subject to the recommendations of a Traffic Management Plan being undertaken by Carlow County Council, it is anticipated that leisure visitors will be encouraged to use the Northern Vehicle Park to access the settlement. Currently, there are no signs on the L3008 identifying the location of the Northern Vehicle Park. Further, its junction with the L3008 is obscured.

Advance signs are recommended to be located to the north and south of the car park announcing its purpose and location.

Figure 26 - Potential Northern Vehicle Park L3008 Signage



The advance signs should be located to the north and south of the Northern Vehicle Park, together with a more prominent sign at the entrance to the park.

Wayfinding Point D

The existing Northern Vehicle Park requires considerable development to become a significant seasonal facility serving the entire settlement. The objective will enable as many visitors as possible to leave their vehicles at this location and access the settlement on foot. Consideration of the requirements is provided in section 8.6.4 below.

It is recommended that two vertical banners (see Appendix A3.2) are used to flank the vehicle park entry/exit to increase the facility's visibility significantly.

Wayfinding Point E

Optionally, St. Mullins Heritage Centre should form the Gateway Point for the settlement; however, its physical location presents a significant challenge for this role.

Figure 27 - St. Mullins Heritage Centre Setting



The addition of a permanent sign to the former steeple of the Heritage Centre would be inappropriate given the sensitive historic nature of its location. Four options, or combinations) are possible for visually identifying the building in its role as the visitor orientation location: -

1. Addition of a flag and flagpole to the steeple.
2. The provision of a range of bollards along the footpath leading to the Heritage Centre, with bollard covers, applied seasonally.
3. The provision of cast metal plates for inclusion into the footpath to direct pedestrians.
4. The provision of way marker plates fixed to the boundary wall of the graveyard to direct pedestrians.

Wayfinding Point F

The existing graveyard interpretive panels should be updated to incorporate the agreed St. Mullins branding.

Wayfinding Point G

The existing motte and bailey interpretive panel should be updated to incorporate the agreed St. Mullins branding.

Wayfinding Point H

The location of the existing public toilets needs to be better integrated into the system of improved wayfinding points. This improvement will include finger signs mounted on fingerposts and a seasonal vertical banner in proximity to the facility.

Figure 28 - Typical Finger Sign



Wayfinding Point I

A seasonal vertical banner might highlight the location of St. Moling's Well from the Pilgrim's Park.

It is understood that the site of the Well is in the ownership of Carlow County Council.

Wayfinding Point J

It is intended that the remains of the former Woodville House (opportunity Site 1) will be redeveloped or partially restored. Each of these possibilities will require the development of a specific signage plan.

Wayfinding Point K

Subject to the outcome of a structural and site survey, one of two potential development options may be possible for Opportunity Site 2. These identified alternatives are: -

1. The development of a Wellness residential facility.
2. The provision of a secure boat storage facility.

Each of these possibilities will require the development of a specific signage plan.

Wayfinding Point L

Carlow County Council has commissioned a study to consider the potential development of the connecting footpath spine linking the upper settlement North Vehicle Park to the lower settlement. The proposed route runs through the Pilgrim's Park and arrives at the site of the former Woodville House.

Figure 29 - Viewing Platform Example



To ensure that each wayfinding point is in visual contact with its neighbour to encourage a logical visitor journey, various indicators might be used at the appropriate locations. These include finger signs, vertical banners and bollard covers.

Wayfinding Point M

The junction of the L30082 and the western vehicle park (river frontage) at the Mullicháin Café provides a wayfinding link point between the lower settlement and the Barrow Way. This represents the entry point for visitors travelling the Barrow Way from Graiguenamanagh and will require full orientation information relating to the settlement and its offerings.

7.5.4 A3.3: Interpretive Information

High-Level Visitor Information

To improve the visitor experience of St. Mullins, it is recommended that an interpretive information package be offered.

Blanchfields Country Pub, the Mullicháin Café, the Heritage Centre and the local accommodation providers form the main local distribution points for printed interpretive information. A package of branded thematic information sheets should be printed seasonally for visitors. The five key themes include: -

1. The Monastic Settlement and St. Moling.

2. The Medieval Period to the 15th century, including the Manor with the Motte and Bailey.
3. The Renaissance Period of the 16th and 17th centuries, including St. Mullins Fort.
4. The Modern Period from the 18th century to the present day. This period includes the Barrow Navigation and the flour mills.
5. The present-day, including activities and leisure pursuits.

These are the same themes that should be carried by a new, integrated St. Mullins community visitor social media platform, which must incorporate cross-links with existing information primarily generated by the local businesses.

Interactive Information

QR (Quick Response) codes are the most robust technology that can be readily deployed to provide interactive information for visitors. However, the quality of the QR experience is wholly dependent upon access to the internet. Initially, there were issues with the connectivity of mobile phones and the quality of their cameras, although almost all are now capable of providing a high-quality connection.

Over recent months, there has been a rapid roll-out of QR code readers in the hospitality sector to confirm customer's Covid-19 certificate validity.

QR codes for interpretation enable the visitor to avoid text-heavy chunks of information. For example, research shows that if a visitor is presented with a display of several paragraphs, most people will read the shortest first paragraph, regardless of where it is in the layout, making visitors miss essential details of the presentation.

The provision of a QR code mounted adjacent to an item of interest will enable the visitor to access and download information in real-time. In this context, the historical infrastructure in St. Mullins can be interpreted by the visitor using their smartphone and the QR code.

Integration of Existing App

Carlow County Council has produced a downloadable app for use on smartphones. This is available from all of the app stores at no cost. The app 'St. Mullins Heritage Village' provides a self-guided tour listing of the settlement.

The tour provides thirty-four pages of content, including an introduction to St. Mullins and brief descriptions of the significant historical sites and locations within the settlement and environs. These are linked to the user's location through location alerts.

The app offers further potential for development through integration with an augmented QR code application to provide the user with greater levels of functionality and information. This might create opportunities for the monetisation of quality information for those

with more than a passing interest in the history and heritage of the settlement.

Comparative Insights

In the example of a QR code application below, **Monmouthshire County Council** (Wales) developed an initiative with Wikipedia to provide tourist information throughout Monmouth town. In this instance, the QR codes take the visitor to a page describing each location of interest. The pages are available in up to twenty languages, including Welsh.

The initiative led to a free Wide Area Network WiFi service for visitors across the town. This was necessary to prevent visitors from receiving large mobile bills for data downloads.

Figure 30 - Practical Application of QR Codes



Source: Monmouthshire County Council

In Kanturk, Co. Cork, the **Kanturk Heritage Trail** was developed by Kanturk Tidy Towns based on a community information brochure. QR-code symbols were added to twenty-four information plaques around the town, enabling smartphone access to detailed

descriptions of the area. The project was grant-aided (€2,360) by the Heritage Council Of Ireland to meet the following objectives: -

1. Raise the profile of the local heritage trail to satisfy tourism and the local community interest.
2. Use communications technologies as a means of interpretation.
3. Create a local digital infrastructure to facilitate future projects.

Figure 31 - Kanturk Heritage Trail QR



Implementation Potential

It is proposed that the option to provide a similar service in St. Mullins should be explored, possibly supported under a *Smart Village* initiative or through the Heritage Council Community Heritage Grant Scheme.

QR codes provide several opportunities for the community to monetise the service. These include capturing information relating to the individual accessing the service, with a chance to upsell additional local services, subject to conformity with GDPR. Ultimately, this information might be used to develop a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to engage with visitors to St. Mullins.

Interpretive Languages

To conform with Fáilte Ireland recommendations, all the interpretive materials to be provided must be available in English and Irish. English will serve visitors from the key international markets of Great Britain, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the other key languages that should be offered are as follows: -

- German.
- French.

- Spanish.
- Italian.

The requirement for these languages must be reflected in the international marketing effort for St. Mullins.

7.5.5 A3.4: Woodville House Opportunity Site

Woodville House was a two-storey mid-Victorian era residence. It was the St. Mullins home of the Odlum family and was occupied by family members into the 1960s. Since that time, the house has become derelict, and the remains of the house, together with its terraced grounds of approximately 3 ha., were purchased by Carlow County Council in 1999.

The site fronts the L30082 River Barrow quay to the south and abuts the Pilgrim's Park to the north. The building was damaged by fire and has been roofless for many years. The remains of the overgrown garden to the front (south) of the building suggest that it was terraced.

Map 25 - Woodville House Historic 25" Map



Source: Ordnance Survey Ireland

Structural Condition

In late 2021, Carlow County Council commissioned a survey report of the remaining structure. David Kelly Partnership, Chartered Engineers, undertook this survey.

The building is not listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, nor is it a Protected Structure in the Carlow County Development Plan 2015 to 2021. However, it lies within the Zone of Notification for the cluster of Recorded Monuments in St. Mullins. In

addition, historical Ordnance Survey maps name the house 'Woodville' and indicate that the garden to the north of the house is the site of 'Cashlanmoyle'.

The survey notes that overall, the house is in very poor condition. The survey concludes with a series of recommendations based on the assumption that it is intended to retain the house as a ruin.

Latent Potential

The remains of Woodville House provide a unique physical reference to the industrial history of St. Mullins and its association with the Odlum family. The environment of the remains of the house and gardens evoke the mid-Victorian to the mid-20th century period, further reinforced by the adjacent mill complex and the River Barrow.

The remains of Woodville House provide an accessible key to the interpretation of the economic importance of the mill, both locally and nationally. In this context, the former garden is proposed to be restored as a contemplative visitor space, possibly incorporating a scheme of sensory planting.

The redevelopment of the area in proximity to Woodville House will protect any adjacent historical evidence of the site of Cashlanmoyle (as noted on the OSi map).

The Woodville House site extends to meet the Pilgrim's Park boundary to the immediate north. This proximity creates the potential linkage to form the connecting footpath spine.

Footpaths and Walkways

Woodville House and grounds are located at the southernmost extent of the connecting footpath spine. Therefore, it is proposed that the footpath spine should link directly with a system of footpaths and walkways across the grounds of the house and ultimately terminate at the riverside.

Given the considerable natural gradient across Woodville House grounds, the line of the footpath spine should follow in sympathy with the land contours at a maximum gradient of 1:20 to make access possible for those with limited mobility. The footpath spine might be augmented with additional walkways that contain steps or are of a higher gradient. These should be designed to maximise the elevated vistas over the river valley sensitively.

Due to gradients and traffic segregation factors, the footpath spine will not be suitable for bicycles. Beyond pedestrian traffic, the design and materials to be used should be capable of supporting maintenance machinery and wheelchairs. Regarding the latter, the footpath spine surface should be firm, level, non-glare and non-slip when wet or dry. Loose materials, such as gravel, cobbles and uneven

setts, are not recommended. Suitable surfaces must have a well-consolidated sub-base to avoid surface cracking, moving or rutting.

Walkways should be well constructed and should give firm, non-slip access. Loose materials, such as gravel and soft bark, are unsuitable and should not be used for the spine footpath. The minimum recommended widths for footpaths and walkways to serve wheelchair traffic are: -

- 2.0m, providing room for two wheelchairs or two people, side-by-side.
- 1.5m, providing space for one wheelchair plus pedestrian alongside.
- 1.0m, providing room for a single wheelchair with no room alongside.

Passing places will be essential on busy sections of the footpaths and walkways. Where appropriate, these should also provide seating.

Throughout the footpath and walkway system, seating should be provided at a maximum distance interval of 50 m. Research has found that of all the people with a disability who could walk at all, approximately 30 per cent could manage no more than 50 m without stopping or severe discomfort, and a further 20 per cent could only manage between 50 and 200 m.

Planting and Landscaping

It is understood the terraced grounds of Woodville House were once planted with exotic species. An inspection of the remaining flora should be undertaken to identify any that might remain. If possible, these should be protected or regenerated to form an element of a biodiversity record.

The terraced arrangement of the original garden of Woodville House should be followed in a comprehensive planting and landscaping scheme. The landscaping scheme should be designed to be attractive for people and provide an environment that positively supports biodiversity. Perennial plants that offer excellent nectar sources for pollinators across their lifecycle should be considered.

The planting and landscaping scheme should be designed with the following objectives: -

- Representing relatively low maintenance.
- Ease of establishment.
- Provide a strong and memorable visual impact.
- Represent greater cost-effectiveness than bedding schemes over the longer term.
- Provide a natural style of planting.
- Provide habitat and nesting materials for birds and insects.

The reinstatement of the garden and associated features, including the glass house, footpath and steps will be consistent with the interests of the Odlum family. It also presents the opportunity to use the garden area to highlight discrete biodiversity and educate people on nature and commerce. This will echo the long-forgotten role of the monasteries in Ireland in wine importation, honey production, and the development of naturally-based medical cures.

7.6 Action 4: Marketing and Promotion

It has been identified that, except for certain existing businesses, the marketing of St. Mullins as a location of regional heritage importance and a visitor attraction is currently understated.

An appropriate marketing strategy for St. Mullins must deliver the following: -

- Communication with the potential international and domestic visitor market.
- Communication concerning the offerings and potential of St. Mullins with the broader community within the locality, the county and area.
- Communication with external stakeholders, including potential funding organisations, Carlow County Council, government agencies and the business community.

7.6.1 Visitor Performance Data

There is a shortage of accessible data that defines the current performance of St. Mullins as a visitor destination. However, a considerable body of evidence has gathered over recent years that the settlement is seasonally attracting more visitors than the infrastructure can accommodate.

To effectively manage the volume and expectations of visitors to St. Mullins, an evidence-based measurement process must be introduced. In the first instance, it is recommended that a simple visitor questionnaire be administered at three sampling points in the settlement: -

1. The Heritage Centre.
2. The River Frontage (Mullicháin Café).
3. The Northern Vehicle Park.

Annual Visitor Survey

The objective of the annual visitor survey will be to generate primary qualitative and quantitative data. The survey should be undertaken amongst a representative sample of visitors to St. Mullins and should focus on providing the following information profile: -

- Basic demographic profile of the visitor.
- Origin, immediate itinerary, and destination of the visitor.
- The relative importance to the visitor of the key components of the St. Mullin's offering.

It is proposed that a pro-forma questionnaire should be developed to capture the above information. This should be delivered through a one-to-one interview process to be carried out with volunteer visitors. The survey should be undertaken across a minimum of seven days and organised within three weeks.

Table 32 - Suggested Visitor Survey Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Week 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Week 2			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Week 3					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Based on best practice principles, the proposed survey pattern above is likely to produce a balanced profile and broad range of participants.

A target of 500 completed surveys should be set for the seven-day process. In addition, for comparative and trend-recognition purposes, the survey must be undertaken annually following an identical methodology.

7.6.2 International Target Audiences

The primary international target audiences for the St. Mullins offerings are the 'Culturally Curious' and the 'Great Escapers' market segments. The rationale is that evidence shows that members of these segments are more inclined to visit attractions, want to 'live like a local', have immersive, authentic experiences, stay longer, stay in the off-season, and are higher spenders,

Culturally Curious Market Segment

The 'Culturally Curious' visitor is characterised by Fáilte Ireland as follows: -

- They choose their holiday destinations carefully and are independent 'active sightseers' looking to visit new places and expand their experience by exploring landscapes, history, and culture.
- They are most likely to stay in a hotel, self-catering accommodation, or bed-and-breakfast accommodation.
- The age group for this demographic is typically aged 40 years plus.

- ❑ The *Culturally Curious* visitor likes to delve deeper into the history of a location and enjoy connecting with nature off the beaten track.
- ❑ They are most likely to be attracted by exploring landscapes, including castles, gardens, museums, country houses and art galleries.
- ❑ They enjoy walking, cycling, or pleasure boating to explore a new place.

Culturally Curious: Market Potential

So that St. Mullins optimises its international visitor potential for this sector, it will need to create the conditions to encourage international visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interact with people, engage the senses by getting active, attend festivals, learn the history and stories of the places, and enjoying the food and entertainment on offer.

Thus, the focus must be on delivering memorable moments that inspire tourists to share their experiences with others and encourage them to return.

Great Escapers Market Segment

Of secondary importance to St. Mullins, Fáilte Ireland defines the ‘*Great Escapers*’ market segment as follows: -

- ❑ They are often couples, approximately 30 years old, some with babies or young children. They are specifically interested in rural holidays and travel as a couple or family. They are more interested in connecting to nature than other segments, especially in the more remote and exciting places.
- ❑ They appreciate peace and quiet between activities. Typically, essential experience elements include: -
 - Escaping to breath-taking landscapes.
 - Actively exploring more remote and exciting places, on foot or by bicycle.
 - Visiting a castle or a landmark.
 - A gentle exploration of the place - walking, cycling, pleasure boating.
 - Relaxed meal of fresh local produce or a fun evening in an authentic pub.
- ❑ They consider that Ireland offers plenty of what they’re seeking.

Great Escapers: Market Potential

The profile of this international market segment has similarities with the ‘*Culturally Curious*’ and, for this reason, is likely to be of potential relevance to the offerings of St. Mullins.

Of particular interest is the propensity for the *Great Escapers* cohort of visitors to engage in a gentle exploration of the locality. Exploiting this trait will enable St. Mullins to act as a point of departure to disperse visitors beyond the traditional tourism honeypots through the arteries of Ireland’s Ancient East and beyond.

7.6.3 Domestic Target Audiences

An impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been to radically change the traditional tourism market segments, both internationally and domestically. In respect of the latter, these visitors have become of particular importance, and consequently Fáilte Ireland have redefined a number of market segments, including: -

Families: looking for opportunities to spend time together through shared experiences. Pre-2020, *Connected Families* made up 23 per cent of the domestic market, the single largest segment. They comprised of relatively young families, with parents in their 30s and early-40s and children generally under the age of 10.

Fáilte Ireland profiled family holidays as important events where people spent quality time together. Generally, families spent time planning and discovering everything a destination has to offer, the best places to stay, the hidden gems and all the activities that adults and children can share. Of greatest importance was having ‘*things to do together*’ nearby.

+45s: travellers in their mid to late forties are well educated, and enjoy getting away and spending time with like-minded people. They account for 15 per cent of the domestic market. They love the opportunity to get a break from their routines and responsibilities, relax, and enjoy themselves during a weekend with friends. Although value-conscious, they regularly take short breaks.

Young Adults: will generally be looking for active experiences that they can share with others.

Schools and Community Groups: This specific group should be targeted annually during Q1 and Q4, and although representing a limited window of opportunity in terms of income and availability, they will be targeted for the following reasons: -

- ❑ School groups are a valuable source of income during Q1 and Q4, typically a low tourist season.
- ❑ Heritage education is a fundamental part of the mandate of St. Mullins.
- ❑ Children brought to St. Mullins during school trips might convince parents to retake the journey when the family return to the area.

7.6.4 Specialist Market Segments

In addition to the international and domestic visitor segments identified above, two specialist visitor offerings are provided by St. Mullins and its environs: -

1. Ecclesiastical Heritage.
2. Activity Tourism.

Ecclesiastical Heritage

Ireland is well known as a heritage destination, and ecclesiastical sites are an essential element of Ireland’s tourism attractions. Examples include Glendalough, Clonmacnoise, Cashel and Croagh Patrick. However, other heritage attractions motivate people to visit an area, including Newgrange, Tara, The Burren, the scenery of the southwest, the River Shannon, music and the Irish language.

In the context of networking, St. Mullins falls within the south-eastern ecclesiastical grouping of Ferns, Enniscorthy, New Ross, Wexford, Taghmon, Dunbrody, Tintern, and Lady “s Island.

The Fáilte Ireland report entitled *The Use of Networking in Developing and Marketing the Irish Ecclesiastical Product* (2009) identifies that within the geographic cluster, there are sites that will appeal specifically to the following visitor types: -

1. The accidental and general visitor, primarily because of the range of facilities and things to do and the critical mass of other attractions and activities within the area.
2. Sites that will only appeal to the interested and scholarly markets.
3. The religiously fervent market will find specific sites appealing, though they may be enticed to consider some of the lesser-known sites. The Pilgrim Paths will also help to extend their usage of other sites.

The key characteristics of the three cohorts of visitors with an interest in the cultural assets of St. Mullins are as follows: -

- ❑ The accidental and general market may find ecclesiastical trails of interest. However, their tourism experience is more likely to be developed using several different attractions and activities rather than focusing specifically on sites and monuments of an ecclesiastical nature.
- ❑ The scholarly market tends to enjoy the process of discovery. Ireland is renowned for its hidden nature, untouched countryside, dispersed population and trails or driving routes. In addition to organised walking routes, pilgrim paths or cycle routes, these factors may be appealing to this segment. However, it is essential that a full experience is developed and links are made with all associated local elements to add value to

the routes. The essence is to ensure authenticity and an element of discovery that would appeal to this market segment.

- ❑ The fervent market segment is interested in specific aspects of sites. Therefore, it requires this information to be easily accessible and of a tone and style which respects their needs and desires for a spiritual journey.

Activity Tourism

Activity Tourism includes physical activity, a cultural exchange, or activities in nature. In the context of St. Mullins, the scope of Activity Tourism is best considered through potential networks.

St. Mullins already has a variety of soft adventure offerings, including walking, hiking, cycling and river-based activities, including fishing. Soft activities are an essential segment since they constitute the majority of the market with the following characteristics: -

1. Appeal to a wide range of people.
2. Require less physical effort (and commitment) than hard activities.
3. Generally have lower perceived or actual risks.
4. Are easily adapted for different visitor segments, particularly families.

Many activities, such as walking, hiking and cycling, are typically free to access and so do not have a value market size in their own right. However, they enhance the visitor experience and increase visitors' spending opportunities. This type of visitor will spend money on food, drink and accommodation.

7.6.4 Branding

For maximum leverage, the St. Mullins visitor brand identity must echo the Fáilte Ireland *Ireland's Ancient East* brand. Therefore, the brand's tag line '*Wander Through Time*' is most appropriate to the offerings of St. Mullins.

Figure 32 - *Ireland's Ancient East* Brand Identity



The key strategic objectives of Ireland's Ancient East initiative include the following: -

1. To increase the number of overnights spent by overseas visitors in the region and increase the tourism revenue generated and

the associated tourism employment numbers by delivering world-class visitor experiences.

2. To move Ireland's Ancient East from a transit zone to a touring zone by increasing visitor dwell time in the region.
3. Disperse visitor traffic across the geography by encouraging the exploration of both signature and lesser-known sites and experiences. The destination brand is designed to ensure that the area is presented in a cohesive and unified manner. For example, on a trip through Ireland's Ancient East, stories should connect different places, enhancing the experience for the visitor. In addition, the brand will make good use of stronger attractions to cross-sell and promote secondary and tertiary attractions and experiences and help disperse visitors into local towns and villages throughout the east and south regions.

Section 2.5.3 of this report provides a photograph of the current *Ireland's Ancient East* sign in the Pilgrim's Park.

Development of St. Mullins Visual Brand Identity

Appendix A3: *Visual Brand Identity Options* provides two potential St. Mullins Visual Brand Identity images designed to graphically reflect the offerings of the settlement whilst harmonising with *Ireland's Ancient East* Brand Identity and being appropriate for application across a range of media.

The visual brand identity includes the logo as the crucial element. Sustainable tourism development in the context of St. Mullins focuses on three pillars: -

1. Built and Natural Environment.
2. Responsible Tourist Activity.
3. Historical remains are protected sustainably.

These abstract images are captured in the optional Visual Brand Identities. These have been produced to appeal to the important Culturally Curious market segment.

7.6.5 Promotional Strategy

The provision and development of new opportunities during the off-peak season will assist in reducing the negative impact of seasonality locally. In addition, the development of a quality visitor experience will underpin the aspiration of Ireland's Ancient East to be a world-leading experience brand through a growth in the level of awareness and understanding of the history and culture of the area across key markets.

In the context of promotion, the objective will be to add incremental value and increase domestic and international revenue for the community of St. Mullins and County Carlow by identifying new

market opportunities. In addition, the promotional effort must raise brand awareness amongst identified target segments in these markets (*Culturally Curious and Great Escapers*).

At a high level, the promotional effort must strive to increase bednights and revenue from domestic overseas visitors in the locality whilst sustaining and growing employment in the quality tourism sector and providing new commercial opportunities for local tourism businesses.

Strategic Focus

The promotional effort for St. Mullins will seek to: -

- ❑ Respect, preserve, interpret, and present the heritage of St. Mullins.
- ❑ Equip the local visitor sector (sellers) to effectively upsell and sell more bednights and services to the source domestic and international markets.
- ❑ Proactively and imaginatively engage with distribution channels (buyers) by generating new leads and new niche markets.
- ❑ Create new local sales platforms to drive Business-to-Business sales opportunities.
- ❑ Work with Carlow Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, and Tourism Ireland to ensure the St. Mullins experience brand is a worthy component of all appropriate domestic and international marketing communications activities.
- ❑ Create and curate digital content articulating the St. Mullins experience brand across various digital platforms compelling to the key target consumer segments.
- ❑ Develop a one-stop web platform for the St. Mullins experience brand to encourage engagement and interaction with consumers, trade, and local communities.
- ❑ Ensure that social channels are optimised to encourage engagement with target consumers (with a specific focus on key international and domestic markets).
- ❑ Equip the local industry offerings (*supply side*) to effectively upsell and sell more local products and offerings to the source domestic and international markets.
- ❑ Engage with distribution channels (*demand side*) and partners to generate new leads and new niche markets (including Ecclesiastical, Activity, History and Culture) to work with them to feature St. Mullins in their programming and to increase the distribution share of programming.
- ❑ Present new saleable visitor experiences to new and existing market intermediaries.
- ❑ In association with Carlow Tourism, Fáilte Ireland, and Tourism Ireland, support media and trade activities, including Southern

Europe, the Nordic Countries and Australia and the eastern Developing Markets.

7.6.6 Promotional Channels

Whilst traditional marketing media should be used to a limited extent, digital media, including social media, will be the preferred marketing channel. Most of the anticipated St. Mullins visitor experience markets are currently using digital channels for information and ideas. This is reinforced by the reach of web-based material worldwide. In addition, the cost of updating and customising the marketing message through electronic media is small compared to traditional promotional channels.

Befitting a quality visitor experience, St. Mullins should develop promotional materials suitable for use across the full spectrum of the traditional marketing channels. This will include printed and visual materials.

Effective operation of the visitor pathway will be assisted by introducing a Customer Relationship Management System such as *Microsoft Dynamics CRM 2011*, *Salesforce*, *Oracle*, *ACT!* and *Goldmine*. The better of these integrate seamlessly with the Microsoft Office Suite.

Image Library

Over time, the community should build a photographic and video library as a promotional resource. The library will have high quality, royalty-free imagery designed to reflect the principal storylines of the visitor experience and the locality.

The need to create content for use in printed brochures and leaflets can be partly addressed by encouraging visitor-generated content

Printed Material

It is proposed that a small volume of printed thematic flyers should be produced annually. These should be distributed through the local trade channels and Fáilte Ireland regional offices before the commencement of each season. Additionally, seasonal and special event printed material will be produced.

It is proposed that the printed materials should be designed to be appropriate for both Business to Business (B2B) channels and Business to Customer (B2C) channels. In addition, all printed materials should provide information in both English and Irish, together with translation panels using the key market languages of German, French, Spanish and Italian.

Local Radio

St. Mullins should develop a working relationship with Kilkenny Carlow Local Radio (KCLR) and sponsor appropriate radio

advertisements to support seasonal or special occasion activities and events.

All radio advertising will reflect the core brand message of St. Mullins and will be consistent with that of a significant regional tourism attraction. The community should work with other local businesses to deliver joint promotional activities and programmes.

St. Mullins should also develop a working relationship with RTÉ concerning radio and television exposure potential.

Digital Marketing Channels

With the development and availability of many online touchpoints, the chances to communicate effectively with the prospective target audience have increased. Digital marketing has reformed the whole marketing economy by offering marketers new platforms and media formats. One of the most significant advantages of digital marketing is cost-effectiveness.

St. Mullins should make the most of the Digital Marketing Strategy and commit to constant reviews, data analysis, optimisation, revision, and improvements of specific activities and the entire strategy if necessary. The consideration of metrics, insights and processes are valuable assets.

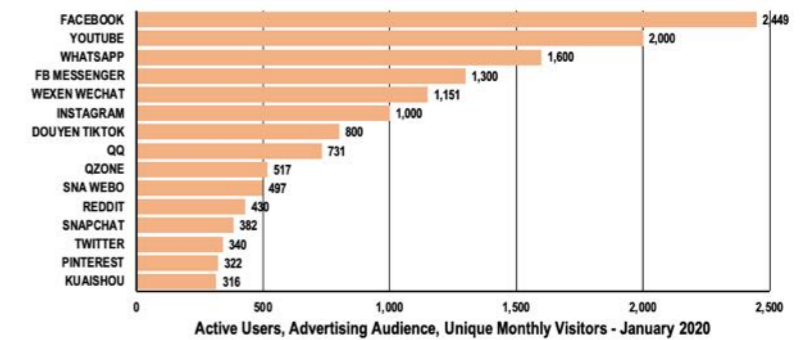
According to the latest global digital report by *WeAreSocial* in collaboration with *Hootsuite*, it is evident that digital has become indispensable and part of everyday life worldwide. The report reveals that more than 4.5 billion people across the globe now use the internet, while social media users have passed 3.8 billion. Furthermore, more than 60 per cent of the world's population is already online, and the latest trends suggest that more than half of the world's total population will use social media by the middle of this year.

On average, the interaction time globally is 6 hours and 43 minutes per day. The typical user spends more than 40 per cent of their waking life using the internet, with mobile devices accounting for more than half of all the time spent online. In addition, on average, the world's internet users spend 2 hours and 24 minutes using social media across all devices every day.

Social Platforms

The world's most used social media platform is Facebook. The following table shows the relative usage of social platforms as of 25th January 2020 based on a combination of monthly active users, active user accounts, advertising audiences or unique monthly visitors measured in millions.

Figure 33 - World's Most Used Social Platforms



Source: *WeAreSocial Hootsuite*.

International Audience Segments

Content, relatable images, and messages need to be carefully developed for each target market, making sure to interact and connect differently with each (*i.e. Facebook is more relevant to Culturally Curious*).

7.6.7 Potential Digital Marketing Approach

Within the stipulations of the EU General Data Protection Regulation, St. Mullins should deploy the following marketing data gathering methodologies: -

- Explicit data capture on the website via specific landing pages and data capture activities such as competitions and giveaways.
- Offline data capture via St. Mullins events, festivals, and fairs and directly via feedback forms or data gathering activities.
- Social data capture via lead generation ads (designed to deliver email addresses directly to the database): lead ads include a contact form for people to fill out directly on Facebook.
- Email data capture via a specific thematic newsletter design will further deepen knowledge of consumers' likes and dislikes.
- Waking up any dormant contacts via effective re-engagement campaigns.

7.6.8 Four Year Marketing Implementation

The following provides a recommended initial marketing framework. The implementation of the framework will be governed by the extent to which the key infrastructural work progressed, including the redevelopment of the northern car park, provision of the connections to overall site, and the development of the Gateway point. This phased approach will be necessary to avoid generating further pressure on the existing inadequate facilities.

Year 1 Focus: Building Brand Awareness and Reach

- ❑ Reach and promote St. Mullins to as many targeted visitors as possible, domestically, and internationally. The digital activities should be connected and integrated across different digital platforms and social media networks to drive consumer relevance and achieve brand awareness whilst creating curiosity and growing visitors.
- ❑ Drive growth through meaningful partnerships with local, regional, and national Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), including Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, to strengthen the St. Mullins brand and position it as an extraordinary visitor experience.
- ❑ Inspire and inform consumers to increase visits and increase dwell time in the area and County Carlow.
- ❑ Implement regionality and seasonality focused initiatives.

Year 2 Focus: Consumer Engagement and Deepening Connection with Target Audiences

- ❑ Further strengthen consumer engagement by leveraging the domestic and international markets and reinforcing the *call to action* to visit, experience and explore the St. Mullins experience.
- ❑ Making the message ‘contagious’ and generating further interest in the experience through word-of-mouth and trade advocacy internationally.
- ❑ Tap further into visitors’ interests and passions of the targeted audience to deepen connections and encourage visits.
- ❑ Continue to work on regionality and seasonality activities and promotions with industry and trade, delivering compelling reasons to book now and leveraging seasonality.
- ❑ Focus on building connections with local communities (including local schools and community groups), especially during low season, giving reasons for visits to students, schools, educational and cultural communities.

Year 3 Focus: Increasing brand awareness through publicity, deepened connections, and increased share of ‘voice’ in all markets

- ❑ Broadening the publicity to generate engagement with news and media domestically and internationally and further strengthen the positioning of St. Mullins as a visitor destination within the markets (domestically and international) by creating event-driven publicity.
- ❑ Further grow website visits to increase 3rd party referrals and advocacy with the local and domestic tourism industry, media outlets and consumers.

- ❑ Deepen connections with past and future visitors to stimulate further word of mouth through social media and digital PR.
- ❑ Optimise relationships with industry, trade, and stakeholders, and continue working on cooperative campaigns with local businesses and communities to convert and increase further bookings and visits.

Year 4 Focus: Expand further internationally (reach and awareness in new target markets) and maintain brand positioning domestically

- ❑ Target new international markets and maintain brand positioning in previously targeted international and domestic markets.
- ❑ Grow website visits and referrals to increase advocacy with local and domestic tourism. Continue working on cooperative campaigns with local businesses and communities to convert and increase further bookings and visits.
- ❑ Continue to deepen connections with past and future visitors to stimulate further word-of-mouth about the area via social media and digital PR.
- ❑ Develop campaigns to increase dwell time in the area, especially for specialist international and domestic visitors.

7.7 Revenue Generation

Some of the above options have revenue-generating capacity. For example, a social economy community organisation might undertake the management and operation. This might reasonably form the income-generating element of a community vehicle of scale and capacity incorporating St. Mullins Heritage Centre.

7.7.1 Anticipated Visitor Behaviour

Fáilte Ireland anticipates that a typical visitor to any tourist destination will engage in the following menu of activities.

Figure 34 - 24-hours for a Typical Visitor



Source: Fáilte Ireland

From the above, it can be seen that the typical visitor will spend two hours of a notional full-day visit engaged in arrival, orientation and departure. From the visitor’s customer satisfaction perspective, it is essential that they quickly understand St. Mullins’ offerings and comfortably navigate between them. From the communities perspective, visitors should arrive at the locations that are likely to be of most significant interest to the individual or group.

8 Action Plan

A suite of four integrated actions has been identified for implementation between 2022 and 2032. These actions are described in the preceding sections of this report. They will culminate in environmental, economic, heritage and social impacts that will benefit the community of St. Mullins, its wider environs, and the county generally.

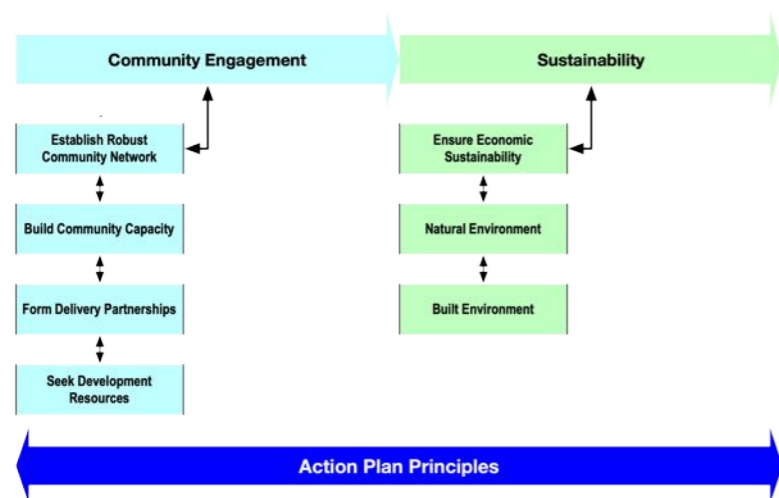
A metric that can measure the benefit accruing to the area is the extent to which St. Mullins can generate new business opportunities and maximise its latent potential as a visitor destination of regional importance whilst effectively managing the seasonal visitor volumes.

The future actions are framed within a development roadmap for the area that can be delivered within the resources available and accessible.

8.1 Action Plan Principles

The four integrated actions reflect the overarching development principles identified earlier. The development principles can be logically prioritised in addressing the identified challenges facing St. Mullins.

Figure 35 - Action Plan Overarching Principles



8.1.1 Community Engagement

Without the fullest engagement of the community of St. Mullins and its environs, in partnership with the enabling agencies, the delivery of the proposed development actions will not be possible. Therefore, reinforcing the existing community and voluntary sector organisations will create a robust delivery structure with the required technical capacities to pursue public co-financing streams.

To achieve the necessary level of engagement, it will be required to facilitate the building of capacity at a local level using several community animation tools. Consideration might be given to providing such facilitation in the context of a network of settlements in proximity to form a network.

8.1.2 Sustainability

The development of St. Mullins will require the co-investment of community and public funds. It will not be possible to access such funding unless proven that each action is environmentally and economically sustainable.

Economic Recovery in a Rural Location

A key objective of the Tourism and Heritage Masterplan focuses on rejuvenating the St. Mullins settlement core. The strategy intends to sensitively harness the cultural heritage, historical and environmental assets of St. Mullins and its environs and to use these to celebrate their significance in the past and present life of the county and region.

The intended impact of the Masterplan is to signal that St. Mullins has opportunities as a place to live and work whilst enjoying a lifestyle that does not require a daily commute. It will achieve this by improving the sense of local wellbeing whilst simultaneously helping to address climate change.

Transformational Change

The action plan components are designed to be fundamentally disruptive to the cycle of gradual decline that might otherwise befall St. Mullins over the coming decades. Investment in relatively large-scale infrastructure is a proven tool that can generate secondary, synergistic 'multiplier effect' actions within the community. In addition, the outcomes from the consultation process that underpins the Masterplan suggests that there are individuals that would follow through with other flanking actions arising from the implementation of the suite of actions.

All of this will have the impact of significantly increasing both social and economic activity within St. Mullins, which will have the effect of protecting the unique mix of cultural heritage, historical and environmental assets in St. Mullins and its environs, whilst simultaneously making it a more desirable place to live and raise a family.

Economic Advantage

The actions are designed to act as a pilot to introduce more local people to the actual value of the area's cultural heritage, historical and environmental assets. Further, the approach will be sustained by enabling the sensitive development of these assets. This will encourage local people to generate appropriate levels of economic activity through their promotion to both the casual visitor and those

who have a more profound interest in the spiritual and ecclesiastical message they present. In so doing, the approach will harness both the natural and built environment of St. Mullins and its environs.

8.1.3 Environmental Sensitivity

Before they can be implemented, some of the actions will be required to take account of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and Article 6 of the Habitats Directive to ensure compliance.

The objectives of the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment are to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to promote sustainable development.

It is proposed that a two-step screening process should be used once the detail of the actions are developed. The first step will determine whether the proposed action will require an SEA, and this will be carried out through a pre-screening check. Pre-screening will allow rapid screening-out of actions that will not have any environmental impact and screening-in of those that require an SEA.

It is anticipated that the following key characteristics of the action will typically determine the requirements: -

1. The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either concerning the location, nature, size and operating conditions or allocating resources.
2. The degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes, including those in a hierarchy.
4. The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular, to promote sustainable development.
5. Identification of environmental challenges relevant to the action.
6. The relevance of the action for implementing legislation on the environment (for example, where linked to waste-management or water protection).

Concerning Appropriate Assessment, some of the actions will have a spatial land-use plan. Therefore, any projects arising from the action suite that require development consent under planning legislation will be required to comply with the land use and environmental policy of the County Carlow Development Plan.

8.2 Action Plan Components

Table 33 - A1: Community Development Structure Improvements

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Potential Resources
A1: Create and/or Reinforce Community Delivery Structures	Implementation of capacity-building training for the community.	Carlow County Council	Carlow County Council
	Provide community training for SMART to create integrated local development capacity.	Carlow County Council / Community and Amenity Section	Carlow County Council
	Facilitate the development of a community cluster in South Carlow to undertake community development (including sectoral development) at scale.	County Carlow LCDC. Carlow County Development Partnership.	LEADER Programme.

Table 34 - A2: Heritage Centre Gateway Point Improvements

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Potential Resources
A3: Heritage Centre Gateway Point	Remodelling of existing Heritage Centre to create Gateway Point.	SMART, Integrated Local Development Body. Carlow County Council. County Carlow LCDC. Fáilte Ireland.	LEADER Programme. Heritage Council: Heritage Capacity Fund. Heritage Council: Historic Towns Initiative. Fáilte Ireland: Platforms for Growth (element).

Table 35 – A3: Public Realm, Wayfinding and Woodville House

Objectives	Sub-Actions	Action Components	Responsibility	Potential Resources
A3.1: Redevelopment of Northern Vehicle Park	A3.1.1: Northern Vehicle Park Improvements	Redevelopment of existing Northern Vehicle Park to include electric vehicles and cycle storage facilities.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
	A3.1.2: Traffic Management Improvements	Design and introduction of vehicular traffic management scheme, including seasonal parking restrictions and vehicle access limitation measures to the village green area.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
	A3.1.3: Connecting Footpath Spine	Improved pedestrian/cycle permeability through the connecting footpath spine running from the Northern Vehicle Park to Woodville House and river front.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
A3.2: Orientation and Wayfinding Provision	Development and implementation of a settlement-wide orientation and wayfinding scheme to incorporate signage that conforms to County design standards.	Comprehensive Orientation and Wayfinding Signage Scheme. Removal of existing signage. Design, provision, and erection of thirty-five branded orientation and wayfinding signs throughout the settlement (approximately €1,820 per sign).	Carlow County Council. Fáilte Ireland. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (OPW).	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
A3.3: Interpretive Information Provision	A3.3.1: Creation of interpretive information.	Development of printed and digital interpretive information.	Carlow Tourism.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
	A3.3.2: Design and introduction of QR code self-guided tours.	Development and distribution of QR code visitor information system.	Carlow Tourism.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
A3.4: Woodville House and Grounds Site Development	A3.3.1: Stabilisation of existing structure.	Site clearance and structural stabilisation/reinforcement works to existing walls.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
	A3.3.2: Construction of footpaths and walkways.	Design and provision of a system of footpaths and walkways in the vicinity of the Woodville House structure. Linking of footpaths and walkways to the footpath spine.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
	A3.3.3: Landscaping and planting.	Design and implementation of landscaping and planting scheme in the vicinity of the Woodville House structure.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.
	A3.3.4: Provision of sensory planting	Design and creation of sensory planting and contemplative spaces in the vicinity of the Woodville House structure.	Carlow County Council.	Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Table 36 – A4: Marketing and Promotion

Objectives	Actions	Responsibility	Potential Resources
A7: Marketing Strategy	Develop skills to devise and implement a digital marketing strategy for key market segments.	Local Enterprise Office - Carlow County Council	LEADER Programme. Carlow LEO.
	Design and implement a web marketing platform.	Carlow Tourism.	LEADER Programme. Carlow LEO.
	Design, print and distribute integrated marketing material.	Carlow Tourism.	LEADER Programme.

9 Financial and Resourcing Plan

The proposed actions will protect the heritage and natural environment of St. Mullins and its environs whilst promoting the settlement as a centre for quality visitor experiences.

9.1 Development Value-for-Money

In determining the potential value-for-money that might accrue from the controlled development of St. Mullins, consideration must be given to the social return on investment (SROI) together with the financial return that is to be anticipated.

9.1.1 Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment measures social, environmental, and economic costs and benefits. This is an appropriate tool to assess the value-for-money of the area's future development (including lands owned by Carlow County Council).

Social Return on Investment seeks to balance social, environmental, and economic costs and benefits. All three of these factors underpin the rationale of the Tourism and Heritage Masterplan.

Social Return on Investment measures social, environmental, and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated where it is found that typically €1 of investment delivers €3 of social value.

Monetising the value of the social return is challenging; however, the overall impact of the development is likely to be significant.

The proposed investment in St. Mullins is likely to provide several benefits. It will add to the sense of identity within the local community since it will be a high-profile development with the capacity to speak to an international audience. It will also value the ecclesiastical heritage and local culture as a medium for telling the story of the monastic settlement and the people whose lives were impacted by it. Further, it will bring this history up to date by showing how natural assets were once used as commercial highways, enabling businesses to flourish in remote rural areas. This will add to the skill base and knowledge bank within local society.

Social Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

A *'do nothing'* scenario would see no public resource being invested in St. Mullins. The key impact of this approach is that the redevelopment of the existing State-owned property in the settlement would not be possible, resulting in an effective abandonment of the existing asset. Ultimately, the State would have to find another purchaser for the property or another State use for the

buildings. Additionally, the latent potential contained within the property would not be realised.

A *'do little'* scenario would see the minimum public resource being invested in the development of St. Mullins. This would effectively result in the status quo being maintained, representing a significant social and economic loss to the region and the State.

Failure to improve the local visitor offering will ultimately result in the progressive underperformance of the local area and the county. Tourism is a vital industry serving the national economy. It is a significant employer, yet it constantly requires more and better visitor experiences. The heritage and natural environment of St. Mullins have been preserved in excellent condition, and the proposed visitor experience will be highly competitive in the international market.

Beyond the positive impact on the tourism sector by reinvestment in St. Mullins, the development will enable the settlement to improve its function as a node for local employment. The rapidly changing nature of work requires new solutions to facilitate new enterprises. The development of the tourism and heritage offering is designed to respond directly to this opportunity. It will result in improved support for the social and economic performance of the area.

9.1.2 Financial Return on Investment

During the first ten years of implementation (2022-2032), it is estimated that the investment in the settlement will leverage a total net income to the area across all streams of €7.28 million.

The investment will provide approximately fifteen full-time equivalent jobs sustained in the area through indirect economic benefit. Based on similar experiences elsewhere, it is anticipated that the employment will have a multiplier effect on the local economy, ranging from encouraging more local businesses to improving work-life balance for those who are encouraged to live and work locally.

The proposed investment will also generate indirect and induced impacts through expenditure on sub-contracting and sub-supply opportunities for services and goods.

Assuming that fifteen new jobs are created that require a range of skill levels and employment types. This will account for a local wage bill of over €4.2 million within the local economy over the initial ten years of the investment period.

Over the first decade of operation, the visitor attraction will bring over 50,000 visitors to the area over the initial ten years of the investment period. Assuming the average spend per person per day in Ireland by overseas holidaymakers is €91, and for domestic overnight trips is €74 (CSO). The indirect revenue accruing to the local economy will be over €4 million in the initial ten years of operation. A proportion of this will be dispersed across County Carlow.

9.1.3 Environmental Return on Investment

Investment in infrastructure is a proven tool that can generate secondary, synergistic *'multiplier effect'* actions within the local community. The future development of St. Mullins will serve to disrupt the cycle of decline that might otherwise follow the Covid-19 Pandemic. It is also timely to introduce the prospect of enabling the local economy to become more competitive whilst capitalising on new thinking and technologies designed to address climate change.

Circular Economy

In the first instance, the proposed enhancement of the tourism and heritage assets of St. Mullins represents a practical example of the application of the principles of the circular economy.

The proposed development is designed to preserve and extend the life of the substantial remains of the monastic settlement. The existing structures will be retained as required under the terms of their statutory protection. Design principles that accord with the circular economy will be employed in redeveloping the Heritage Centre to become the Gateway Point. In this regard, the use of materials that cannot be readily reused and recycled at the end of their design life will be minimised. Additionally, the existing structure will be reinforced through the new floor and roof works to survive for a further extended period.

Low Carbon Transition

Any new building works should be designed, where possible, to be serviced by a combined heating and cooling centralised heat pump system with a high-efficiency LPG gas-fired hot water calorifier. This energy-efficient arrangement can be controlled by a Building Energy Management Heating Distribution System and significantly save CO₂ emissions compared to a more traditional system. Additionally, any future development should feature a high level of fabric insulation, low-power LED lighting, PV power generation, and other technologies.

Climate Resilience

Both the circular economy and low carbon transition should feature as design principles. This will contribute to climate resilience being built into the proposed development components.

Environmentally Sustainable Economy

In developing the construction methodology to be used in any repurposing of existing building structures, the following objectives for achieving sustainable development and design for the project should be considered: -

1. **Resource Conservation:** Energy Conservation, Material Conservation, Water Conservation and Land Conservation.

2. **Cost-Efficiency Conservation:** Initial Cost, Cost in Use and Recovery Cost.
3. **Adaptive Design for Occupation and Use:** Protecting Human, Animal and Plant life.

9.1.4 Deadweight, Displacement and Duplication

In terms of deadweight considerations, the proposed investment cannot proceed without the grant-aid sought from public resources.

There are no displacement effects for existing enterprises in the locality held in private or public ownership.

The development of the tourism and heritage potential of St. Mullins is designed to improve the visitor experience, both for those wishing to visit the area and for the local community.

The project will not duplicate existing provisions in terms of infrastructure or services but will fully integrate into and add value to the existing publicly funded investments undertaken to date in the area.

9.2 Potential Resources

It is noted that the objectives of individual State support programmes will be modified to address specific challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

9.2.1 Town and Village Renewal Scheme

The Town and Village Renewal Scheme (TVRS) is a key initiative under the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and is part of the Government's Project Ireland 2040 Rural Regeneration Programme.

The 2021 Town and Village Renewal Scheme emphasised projects supporting remote working and enhancing town centre living as outlined in *Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy 2021-2025*. The Scheme supported these objectives to encourage more people to return confidently to town and village centres to work, shop and socialise.

The minimum grant available was €20,000, and the maximum was €500,000. Local Authorities were invited to submit up to eight applications per Local Authority area under the 2021 Scheme.

A new Project Development Measure was introduced on a trial basis in 2021. This measure provided the development costs for one large-scale strategic project that may be progressed with funding from the Town and Village Renewal Scheme. Grant funding of up to €50,000 was available at a 90 per cent rate of aid.

9.2.2 Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) was established in 2019. The Fund seeks to provide investment to support rural renewal, strengthen and build resilience in rural communities and assist in the regeneration of towns and villages with a population of less than 10,000 and outlying areas.

The RRDF, along with other funding interventions delivered through the Rural Development Investment Programme, such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, CLÁR, the Local Improvement Scheme and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme, seek to assist in achieving the National Strategic Outcomes of Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities, as set out in the National Development Plan.

The Fund seeks to support coordinated and collaborative projects between Government Departments, State agencies, Local Authorities, other public bodies, communities, and, where appropriate, philanthropic funders and/or the private sector, positively impacting sustainable economic and social development in rural areas.

The Fund will only support investments of scale that would not otherwise be delivered without the additionality provided by the Fund, prioritising projects outside the scope of funding by existing schemes. In this context, projects are likely to be multi-annual and multi-faceted, involving several elements or phases as part of a comprehensive strategic plan.

The minimum request from the Fund for Category 1 (capital projects) is €500,000. There is no upper limit, but all proposals must demonstrate detailed project costings and clear value-for-money.

9.2.3 CLÁR

The CLÁR Funding for Small-Scale Rural Projects (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered the most significant population decline.

9.2.4 Heritage Council

The **Heritage Capacity Fund** (formerly The Heritage Sector Support Fund) supports organisations' capacity, with a demonstrated national relevance, working in the heritage sector by providing funding towards their core costs.

The **Historic Towns Initiative** is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council, aiming to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns.

9.2.5 Platforms for Growth

Platforms for Growth: A Programme for Tourism Investment 2019-2022 is Fáilte Ireland's capital investment programme. *Platforms for Growth* concludes in 2022.

The programme, which falls under the *Project Ireland 2040* strategy, explicitly targets *platforms* or project types with the greatest potential to grow tourism across Ireland throughout the year.

Funding has been available through *Platforms for Growth* in the *Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions 2019 Scheme*. The second platform: *Shared Facilities for Activity Providers*, has been launched.

9.2.6 Walks Scheme

The Department of Rural and Community Development *Walks Scheme* is a national scheme involving landholders on National Waymarked Ways, Looped Walking Routes and Heritage Routes, and other trails approved by the Sport Ireland Outdoors.

Rural Recreation Officers are responsible for the rollout of the National Walks Scheme.

9.2.7 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provides funding to develop new and existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in rural areas, such as cycleways, walking trails, blueways and mountain access routes.

The 2020 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) provided funding under three separate measures: -

1. Small Scale repair/Promotion and Marketing (maximum grant: €20,000).
2. Medium-scale repair/upgrade and new Trail/Amenity Development (maximum grant: €200,000).
3. Significant scale Repair/upgrade and new Strategic Trail/Amenity Development (maximum grant: €500,000).

9.3 Delivery and Management

Carlow County Council has commissioned this study to provide a blueprint for the future development of St. Mullins; however, the implementation of the recommendations will be the responsibility of the local community. To this end, the optimal development of St. Mullins to achieve its potential as a place to live, work, and visit must be driven by the local community working in partnership with Carlow County Council and other enabling stakeholders. Therefore, the local community's capacity must be increased to assume the lead role.

The outcome of the consultation process suggests that it will be desirable to develop a new structure to integrate the effort of all of the existing interest groups and add additional scale to the community effort. Creating a single overarching body would enable the current groups to continue their individual effort, integrating new skills and capacity within the extended local community.

9.3.1 Research and Policy Alignment

The focus on developing adequate community capacity in St. Mullins is predicated on the EU, national and regional policies. This is exemplified in the most recent rural policy statement, *Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025*, which sees support for proportionate growth of and appropriately designed development in rural settlements that will contribute to their regeneration and renewal, including interventions in the public realm, the provision of amenities, the acquisition of sites and the provision of services.

Comparative Insight

What much of the research is saying is best summed up in a piece reflecting on Smart villages in Scotland (*Stakeholder Reflections: Smart Villages in Scotland*. Slee B. European Network for Rural Development) that communities with '*cohesion and capacity to engage*' that can '*draw down public support*', are able '*to make profound differences to the wellbeing of their citizens*'.

Research and work with other communities suggest that cohesion directly links with the capacity to engage. However, this is difficult to achieve in what the Scottish study terms '*fractured and diverse communities of interest*'.

9.3.2 St. Mullins Situation

During the consultation process, it has been confirmed that successful implementation of the Tourism and Heritage Masterplan requires the St. Mullins community to act as the '*driving force of regeneration*'.

For the impetus to engage, a group of committed activists is required. A key finding of the community survey confirms a strong level (80 per cent) of commitment to working with this initiative. This is evident

amongst existing and non-volunteers and independent of positive or negative opinions about community engagement and capacity.

Onto this willingness to engage can be mapped an existing base of community service and commitment that has sustained community services in the settlement to this point. Through the activities of SMART and other groups, the work that has been required to date has been effectively achieved.

The implementation of the Masterplan will require a commitment to work with existing volunteers and leaders to shape a future for St. Mullins that is owned by the community.

9.3.3 Settlement Level Organisation

A community-wide structure (village development network, village action group) is proposed to be created or developed through an existing organisation. The history and relatively broad remit evident in the St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group (SMART) could make a positive base for growth.

SMART Future Role

SMART works effectively with a small core volunteer team supported by '*as needed*' event or activity volunteers. Using an existing body such as SMART immediately sets the structure on a legal and operational base that would otherwise involve time-consuming start-up processes.

The organisation or model can be developed or adapted in different ways. For example, a more informal village action group/development network could come together in an advisory capacity with SMART as the legal entity through which its projects are submitted. The village network or action group can ensure that village-level initiatives are sanctioned within this model before funding is sought. There are advantages and disadvantages to be anticipated with any '*new*' organisational approach, and these will have to be addressed by all stakeholders for a renewed structure to emerge.

It is considered that the existing SMART business model will not suffice to drive the scale of change envisaged in the Masterplan. For the group itself, this can be seen as an opportunity to engage new community members inclusively. This should include a '*new committee structure combining*' diverse communities of interest' such as the local business community, the Heritage Centre, the Graveyard Committee, and other groups. Residents should also be engaged within the structure, perhaps through Upper and Lower Settlement representation at the committee level.

9.3.4 Institutional Level Organisation

The impetus for change at the community level should be matched with what is termed in the Scottish study as a '*supportive architecture*'

of policy actions at authority and agency levels. The Scottish context for integration at the agency and authority level is bound by law (Community Empowerment Act 2015). It is echoed in the relatively recent emergence of the SMART Villages Policy Platform at the EU level, which is an extension of the '*Community Led Local Development*' (CLLD) principles initially applied through the EU LEADER Programme and now adapted in other EU programme strands. This bottom-up rather than top-down approach sees the rural village as the driving mechanism for development, using the supportive architecture to grow.

In Ireland, the LEADER Programme has engaged in local development through CLLD in serving the community and voluntary development sector. National, regional, and county policy advocates themes such as empowerment, cohesion, and sustainable development. The concept was introduced at a National Rural Network seminar in 2019 (*Smart Villages and Rural Towns in Ireland: Revitalising Rural Areas through Community-Led Innovation*) supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD).

The original impetus for SMART Villages was to facilitate community-level access to the digital economy and wider society. An association, the '*SMART Villages Network*', found in its research that the approach was, ironically, top-down. It found that the Smart Village concept was not adequately defined and that the concept could not differentiate itself in substance from other local initiatives such as CLLD. In terms of definition, digital was considered too restrictive, and a wider definition now embraces economic and social development defined within the context of the geographical community. In terms of differentiation, the Network further proposes the evolution of '*multi-funded and integrated*' approaches that have emerged in CLLD towards a genuine '*multi-funded approach*' where multiple funds support single Smart Village strategies.

9.3.5 Structural Opportunity

St Mullins represents an excellent opportunity to test a coordinated agency and authority approach at a single settlement level. This would bring to the local level an approach that applies on an as-needed basis at a corporate level. Potentially this can happen without negatively impacting institutional policy and jurisdictional mandates. In addition, establishing a time-limited, cross-agency working group could coordinate appropriate funding disbursement to facilitate integrated development phases put forward by the community.

As a practical example, this could see coordination between County Council, Waterways Ireland, the OPW, residents and heritage interests to agree on a coordinated Traffic Management Plan. This could embrace existing plans and jointly agree to measures to address gaps and future developments. Enabling resource actions at the local level can be sourced from Carlow County Council, Carlow

LEADER Programme, Fáilte Ireland, the Heritage Council, Waterways Ireland, HSE and others. The EU Smart Village approach might see a core funding action such as the Town and Village Renewal Scheme supplemented with targeted funds from other agencies in an integrated manner, subject to agreed preconditions commensurate with standard public funding processes.

9.4 Organising for Action

Experience shows that successful measures identified in the Masterplan require a cohesive coordination group with appropriate committee structures to focus on execution. St. Mullins has had success in accessing funding to improve the lives of residents. The positive community spirit evident in the turnout for the community survey can be harnessed to ensure a fully representative village management group builds the capacity to engage. Membership should include committed community leaders from each of the key service providers in the area.

It will be essential to ensure that all village groups and sectors adopt the plan and are represented within the implementation group or its thematic sub-structures. This may not be possible at the outset, but the goal of inclusive representation should never be lost.

This can be instrumental in overcoming the constant coordination and communication challenges in ensuring that all stakeholders scattered over a diverse area from the village centre to outer environs are up to date with all developments.

9.4.1 Facilitation Support

In the first instance, it is recommended that assistance be sought from Carlow County Development Partnership CLG to facilitate the community of St. Mullins to realise its social and economic potential. In this respect, it will fulfil its role by being an active partner in a strategic, collaborative community initiative to establish the appropriate community network structure.

With the establishment of the network, the existing community structures in St. Mullins would continue to operate independently but will be affiliated with the new umbrella group. Each existing community and voluntary group would reflect the same strategic aims and ethos of developing St. Mullins as a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and visit.

9.4.2 Anticipated Challenges

Standard engagement challenges identified clearly in the community survey that must be factored in at individual and organisation levels include: -

- ❑ **Workload:** membership will comprise community leaders whose work and commitments within their organisations is time intensive.
- ❑ **Structure:** The need to coordinate and communicate across a wide area and with different stakeholders requires the buy-in and trust of all involved to chart functions, responsibilities, actions, and accountability beyond the informal commitments made at meetings.
- ❑ **Trust:** Survey responses suggest that trust levels require 'topping up', acknowledging a degree of 'fractured and diverse communities of interest'. Trust will build with engagement and shared efforts towards a track record of positive actions for the betterment of the overall community. However, trust can take time, and time should be given to allow the trust to evolve.

To overcome challenges, the structure must evolve to ensure adequate oversight and operational efficiencies in terms of coordination and communication, with the community's full support.

9.5 Delivery Structure

With support from Carlow County Council, the LCDC, and Carlow County Development Partnership CLG, SMART will be reconstituted as the delivery structure or a new entity, 'St. Mullins Management Group' will be formed to engage with all stakeholders, including sports and community organisations, to design and implement village planning to reinvigorate the area collaboratively. In common with accepted best CLLD practice, the management group must consider all stakeholders' needs and ultimately seek community leaders' support on behalf of the residents to agree with its vision, mission, and objectives.

If a new structure is established, it is recommended to be formed as a legal entity (Company Limited by Guarantee). This will enable the organisation to pursue and secure public co-finance of scale. Additionally, if it is to seek Charitable Status, then it will be required to adopt the Charities Governance Code (Charities Regulator: Section 14(1)(i) of the Charities Act 2009).

9.5.1 Governance

St. Mullins Management Group will continue to seek public resources to develop the local area. To successfully achieve this, it follows that, in addition to the principles outlined above, the group and each of its member organisations should demonstrate good governance and a capacity to manage and be accountable for public resources equitably.

To this end, the delivery structure should adopt a proven model for community and voluntary sector governance, such as that developed by The Wheel - *Sustainable Communities: A Governance Resource Book for Small Community and Voluntary Organisations*.

As with all thriving community and voluntary sector organisations, the delivery structure will require a framework of mandatory legal, financial, and fiduciary responsibilities with which it must always be compliant. Beyond this, the governance principles will reflect the ethos and standards that the delivery structure adopts in undertaking its day-to-day activities.

- ❑ **Leadership:** St. Mullins Management Group should foster effective decision-making that collectively ensures delivery of its objects, sets its strategic direction, and upholds its values.
- ❑ **Accountability:** St. Mullins Management Group should collectively be responsible and accountable for ensuring and monitoring that the organisation is performing well, is solvent, and complies with all its obligations.
- ❑ **Responsibilities:** St. Mullins Management Group should have clear duties and functions and compose and organise to discharge them effectively.
- ❑ **Review and Renewal:** St. Mullins Management Group should periodically review its effectiveness and take necessary steps to ensure it works well.
- ❑ **Delegation:** St. Mullins Management Group should set out the functions of any committees in clear and delegated authorities and should monitor their performance.
- ❑ **Integrity:** St. Mullins Management Group should act according to high ethical standards and address conflicts of interest appropriately.
- ❑ **Openness:** St. Mullins Management Group should be open, responsive, and accountable to the community, beneficiaries, partners, and others interested in its work.

9.5.2 Responsibilities

Any elected Chairperson should oversee St. Mullins Management Group and set the agenda for meetings. The agenda should take account of the issues and the concerns of all members. Agendas should be forward-looking and concentrate on strategic matters.

St. Mullins Management Group should have the diverse range of skills, experience, and knowledge needed to deliver the Local Action Plan effectively.

The Management Group should set clear terms of reference for committees, standing groups, advisory panels, etc. In addition, the group should encourage and enable appropriate engagement of key

stakeholders, such as funders and beneficiaries, in planning and decision-making.

9.5.3 Communications Strategy

St. Mullins Management Group will implement a coordinated communications strategy to engage the local community and the supporting agencies. The Communications Strategy will provide the necessary tools to: -

- ❑ Ensure that key audiences understand the issues of the area and the importance of CLLD.
- ❑ Engage the key priority groups, including vulnerable, sports, community, and arts organisations, empowering them to contribute positively to establish win-win solutions for the area.
- ❑ Engage positively with local press, media, and social media to disseminate St. Mullins Management Group information.
- ❑ Maximise the information available to the community at large.

Appendices

A1 Archive Plans and Reports

A1.1 Framework for the Protection of Heritage and Amenity 1995

The study entitled *St. Mullins Framework for the Protection of Heritage and Amenity 1995* was commissioned by the Office of Public Works. The objective was to consider: -

1. The various strands of heritage protection.
2. The provision of amenities.
3. The maintenance and protection of the character of the historic settlement.

Overview

The Framework notes that St. Mullins is a place rather than a village. Its buildings are distributed in groups over quite an extensive area. Thus, it is essentially a dispersed settlement.

There are two principal concentrations or nuclei for the settlement: -

1. The Green/Churchyard area at the higher level.
2. The complex along the River Barrow quayside.

The two areas are isolated visually and spatially from one another. The only visual connection is the graveyard, and this is seen separately from either the Green or from one small part of the quayside area. Indeed, based on local experience, it is not uncommon for the visitor to spend time on the Green and Church grounds and leave again without being aware of the river and quayside.

The dispersed nature of the settlement is further emphasised by the fact that two farm complexes which are highly visible from the Green area, have almost as much built fabric as has the upper nucleus itself.

Overarching Recommendations Summarised

Table 37 - 1995 Framework Recommendations Summarised

Scope	Ref.	Recommendations
General	1	The Area of Special Amenity is indicated on Map No.5a. In addition, Carlow County Council Development Plan 1989 should be extended to the north and the east to encompass important views, prospects, and backdrops.
	2	The River Barrow valley should be the focus of special collaboration between Kilkenny and Carlow counties to ensure adequate protection of the Special Amenity Area of St. Mullins.
	3	Explanatory material should be provided within the ecclesiastical complex to help the visitor understand the relationship of structures and the place of the surviving structures within the site's history.
The Upper Settlement	4	The area in the vicinity of the cross of St Moling should be excavated.
	5	Improved access between the monastic site and the former Church of Ireland church should be provided, and the space between (then upgraded).
	6	The access to the pilgrim route must be improved.

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Scope	Ref.	Recommendations
The Upper Settlement	7	Professional advice is required regarding the former Church of Ireland church. The interior environment of the church must be monitored over a period so that appropriate conditions can be provided
	8	The tower of the former Church of Ireland church would appear to require urgent repair and maintenance. Professional advice is needed here also.
	9	The former Church of Ireland church should be protected under a provision in the County Development Plan.
	10	The existing record of burial plots should be updated and form the basis for a register. As a matter of urgency, burials in the existing graveyard should be restricted to those residents of the Parish with plots that have the capacity for additional interments. Such capacity should be established by the Burial Board (Local Authority) in co- operation with the local community and the Health Board.
	11	An extension to the existing cemetery should be created as soon as possible. This new graveyard should be available when the restriction above comes into force.
	12	It is of the utmost importance that the existing graveyard continues to be maintained when the new graveyard comes into use.
	13	It would significantly enhance the environmental qualities of the existing and proposed graveyards if only local stone were used for headstones.
	14	A portion of the 'Woodville' site is the preferred option for extending the graveyard. Cashlanmoyle is the second choice in this regard.
	15	The Local Authority should prevent further destruction of the derelict building adjoining the access to St. Moling's Well.
	16	Regarding the pilgrim's route, the Local Authority should acquire the relevant land and create and maintain appropriate and safe means of access. Alternatively, an agreement should be reached with the landowner through which the pilgrim's route passes to ensure public access in perpetuity.
	17	The features known as St. Moling's Mill should be conserved and presented to the public in an accessible manner.
	18	New arrangements should be put in place to incorporate St. Moling's Mill into the pilgrim's route.
	19	Maintenance and repair of the motte must be sustained.
	20	The custom of planting the Tricolour flag on top of the motte should be discouraged if possible. If local sentiment insists that the custom continue, a box should be inserted to reduce the damage caused by the practice.
	21	A map of the entire settlement, together with a detailed map of the upper settlement, should be provided on the Green.
	22	Where original features in buildings survive, these should be kept.
	23	Direction signs should be relocated.
	24	The wall surrounding the pump should be painted, and this location should be utilised as the site for an overall map of St. Mullins.

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Scope	Ref.	Recommendations
The Lower Settlement	25	The Mill Stores should be protected under the County Development Plan and restored as a venue related to river-based activities. In addition, it could form the basis for an application for the LEADER Programme funding.
	26	Original detailed features of the Mill Stores complex should be retained in any future restoration.
	27	Restoration of the mill machinery would provide a new focus of interest for the settlement and an additional attraction for visitors and should be encouraged. Associated with the restoration of the machinery is the reinstatement of the mill race
	28	Limited continuing use of the sawmill is desirable. However, a significant expansion is likely to conflict with other potential development. This question should, therefore, be kept under review.
	29	Every effort should be made to retain the front block of the seven-storey Mill.
	30	The galvanised, corrugated steel-sheeted buildings should be retained and repaired.
	31	It is difficult to envisage a thorough-going restoration of "Woodville". Since the structure occupies a significant location in any development, it is recommended that the shell and scale of the house be retained as a dominant element of the project and that the relationship of house, front garden and river frontage be maintained. The gardens to the rear of the house are also of potential amenity value.
	32	A map of the entire settlement with a detailed plan of the riverside section should be provided in the car park beside the Aughavaud River to complement the map and plan provided for the upper nucleus around the 'green'. This map should identify each of the key elements of the lower nucleus.
	33	The riverbank in the vicinity of the bridge should be cleaned and maintained.
	34	The proposed restoration of the millrace and the industrial machinery will provide an attraction in this area. Public access to the yard from the car park would be required. The wall between them should be retained.
The Lower Settlement	35	The waterfront buildings should be protected under the County Development Plan. New windows and doors should be timber and carefully modelled on surviving examples.
	36	Rubble-stone walling should be rendered to match the prevailing finish of the grouping.
	37	Vehicular access to future development downriver must be kept subordinate to the scale of the buildings and be no wider than the present access road.
	38	Any route provided through the picnic area should be for access to the anchorage only, and parking should not be permitted in this area.
	39	Any new development in the picnic area should be on an appropriate scale. In addition, any structures should be sited away from the riverbank and be of a scale and design that will not subordinate the existing waterfront buildings. This should not mean that they should adopt a pseudo-vernacular style, but rather that a skilful and sensitive design is required.

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Scope	Ref.	Recommendations
The Environs	40	Care should be taken not to over-restore the Templenaboe site.
	41	The entrance gate should be repaired and painted, not replaced.
	42	The structure's interior should be carefully cleared of heavy vegetation and debris, taking care not to disturb any fallen stone from its present position.
	43	A notice explaining the significance of the Templenaboe site should be provided.
	44	The owners of farm complexes in the vicinity of the village should be encouraged to ensure that future development employs materials and colours consistent with existing buildings.
	45	Several interesting buildings located on the periphery of the settlement should be protected under the County Development Plan.

A1.2 St. Mullins Draft Tourism Development Plan 2000

In September 2000, Carlow County Council commissioned the *St. Mullins Draft Tourism Development Plan*.

The Plan identified St. Mullins as a picturesque small village located on the River Barrow at the southern tip of Co. Carlow. By virtue of its scenic appeal and important historical monuments, the village has considerable tourism potential. It is an asset for the county, and this is recognised in the County Development Plan (1997), which maintains the designation of St. Mullins as an area of special development control.

Among the stated objectives of the County Council for St. Mullins was the acquisition of certain lands, the provision of parking space and the facilitation of the development of refreshment centres, woodland walks, and picnic areas. Under these objectives, the Council acquired land in St. Mullins and anticipated increasing its holding by Compulsory Purchase Order.

The goal of the Council was to ensure that optimum economic utilisation would be made of these lands, with emphasis on tourism and leisure amenity development. A clear priority for any development was that it should be environmentally sustainable and in keeping with the natural and historic character of the area.

Attractions and Activities

The ecclesiastical site is of national significance and is one of the southeast's most interesting and important heritage sites. In addition, the remains of the motte-and-bailey castle strengthen the site, and its scenic setting greatly enhances its touristic appeal.

In addition to visiting the heritage sites and enjoying the scenery, visitors to the area can engage in a wide range of activities.

Table 38 - St. Mullins Activity Offerings 2000

Ref.	Offering	Summary Description
1	Walking	The towpath along the Barrow is ideal for walking, and St. Mullins Amenity and Recreational Tourism Group (SMART) has marked out a 'Sli na Slainte' walk along the towpath from St. Mullins and up through Bahana Wood. There are walks at Tinnahinch, White Mountain and Brandon Hill, and the South Leinster Way passes through Graiguenamanagh.
2	Angling	The tidal waters at St. Mullins offer excellent game fishing, and the waters are widely recognised for coarse fishing. St. Mullins' Angling Club hosts a popular annual shad fishing competition each May.
3	Boating	The River Barrow is navigable from St. Mullins to Monasterevin. Its locks and towpaths provide scope for a range of leisure activities, including canoeing, sculling, cruising, and other water sports.
4	Golf	There is an 18-hole course at New Ross, a nine-hole course at Borris and an eighteen-hole, par-3 course at Carriglead.
5	Cycling	There are good scenic routes for cycling from St. Mullins, extending through south Carlow, south Kilkenny, and Wexford. There is a cycling tours centre at Bagenalstown.
6	Horse-riding	Available at Bagenalstown and nearby locations in Co. Wexford, including Clonroche and Enniscorthy.
7	Outdoor Activities	There is an outdoor pursuits centre at Shielbaggan near New Ross, and quad biking is available near Borris.
8	Hang-Gliding	Available at Mount Leinster (Nine Stones), one of Ireland's premier hang-gliding sites.
9	Ornithology	The Barrow Valley is a significant migration route during autumn and spring. The west side of the Blackstairs Mountains and the surrounding scrubland is of greater interest in the summer months.
10	Arts and Crafts	There is a centre at Poulmouny Mill where classes can be taken in weaving and stained glass.
11	Festivals	In addition to the Shad Fishing Festival in May, there is a 'wayfarers' walk to the top of the Blackstairs, attracting large numbers to the St. Mullins area. The Sunday which falls between the 18 th and 25 th July is known as 'Pattern Sunday' when a large crowd converges on St. Mullins for mass and remembrance of the dead.

Strategy

The broad development concept was to develop tourist facilities and services at St. Mullins that would contribute to its character as an area for exploration (intellectual, religious, physical), recreation and relaxation. In addition, developments were required to relate to the environmental and locational qualities of the village.

The dominant themes emerging from the identified qualities were heritage, water, open space, and tranquillity.

It was considered that the successful implementation of the concept would lie in the balance between environmental enhancement on the one hand and the development of visitor facilities on the other.

The approach was to confine new development to the quay area and the lower part of the land to the north of the monastic site (while avoiding intrusion upon St. Moling's Well) and to conserve the central heritage area, effecting only minor improvements in the interests of visitor access and

circulation. Existing buildings were to be used, as far as possible, to house new tourist facilities and services.

The proposed approach was designed to stimulate and facilitate the movement of people in north-south and east-west directions. The monastic settlement and the heritage centre were to become the hub, and all areas were to be easily and safely accessed on foot from there.

Objectives

The St. Mullins Draft Tourism Development Plan 2000 identified seven tourism development objectives: -

1. To achieve a sustainable increase in the economic benefits of tourism.
2. To respect the character of St. Mullins in any development activity.
3. To enhance St. Mullins' existing natural and built heritage resources.
4. To develop marketable products.
5. To build on the existing tourism assets and infrastructure.
6. To extend the tourism season.
7. To increase visitors' length of stay and average spend.

Development Proposals

The St. Mullins Draft Tourism Development Plan 2000 recommended the following preliminary proposals on a preliminary basis. No detailed studies of the physical or commercial viability of the various proposals had been undertaken at this stage.

Table 39 - Tourism Development Proposals 2000

Ref.	Element	Description
1	Former Church of Ireland Church	Now in the ownership of Muintir na Tire, this building should be developed as a flagship heritage centre for St. Mullins and Co. Carlow. Direct access from the church grounds to the monastic site and a renewed Pilgrim's Way should be improved.
2	Motte and Bailey	To ensure its protection, this site should be acquired by the County Council and a management plan prepared in conjunction with Dúchas. In the future, an archaeological dig could be initiated with access for visitors who would be invited to watch and learn.
3	St. Moling's Well	The Well and reservoir need to be cleared of weeds, the access path upgraded, the garden area improved (as a garden of meditation) and an interpretative panel located in a suitable position.
4	Old houses beside St. Moling's Well	If possible, these should be restored, a lesser option being to replace them with a similar building using the cut stone from the originals. Appropriate uses for the buildings include craft workshops, retail outlets and offices/meeting rooms for the local community. In addition, the existing entrance from the main road should be closed and a new access route created across the Aughavaud River from the car park proposed for the field on the west side of the river.

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Ref.	Element	Description
5	Field to West of Aughavaud River	The lower part of this field should be a new car park location. This should be connected to St. Moling's Well and the old houses beside the Well using a bridge across the Aughavaud. A new Pilgrim's Way should be created from the Well up to St. Moling's Mill and the monastic site.
6	St. Moling's Mill	The area around the Mill needs clearing and landscaping, and an interpretative panel should be in a suitable position.
7	Wooded area to the east of the monastic site	These woods must be maintained, given their importance to the visual character of St. Mullins. A path from the monastic site should lead visitors through the woods and down through the gardens of Woodville House to the riverside.
8	Woodville House and Gardens	The house should be demolished, and no new building should be erected. The emphasis should be on restoring the gardens and creating an attractive area for walks, picnics, and relaxation. A children's playground could be located there. It is not recommended that the gardens be used to extend the graveyard.
9	The Mill	Given the shortage of tourist accommodation in South Carlow, it is recommended that the Mill be converted to holiday apartments or a holiday hostel. Ground floor space could be reserved for a cafe and shop.
10	Mill Stores and Garages	The mill stores would suit several uses, including holiday apartments, restaurant, retail outlets and craft workshops. The garages might be refurbished for use, in conjunction with the Mill stores, as a centre for outdoor activity. Equipment could be stored in the garages and administration offices located in the stores.
11	Sawmill	If the building is retained, it should be painted green to be less intrusive. Potential uses include continuation as a sawmill, an outdoor activity centre, or a boatyard.
12	Quay	The quay area could have more seats, picnic tables and an appropriately surfaced path. The 'steamer hole' should be cleared, dredged, and restored to its original use as a small harbour at its eastern limit. The County Council should seek to take ownership of it.

Competitive Position Analysis

The St. Mullins Draft Tourism Development Plan 2000 identified St. Mullins' principal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) when viewed from a tourism perspective.

Table 40 - St. Mullins' Tourism Potential 2000: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<input type="checkbox"/> Scenic beauty <input type="checkbox"/> Historic ecclesiastical site <input type="checkbox"/> Rivers (Barrow and Aughavaud) <input type="checkbox"/> Woodlands <input type="checkbox"/> Open green spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor activities <input type="checkbox"/> Local community	<input type="checkbox"/> Access <input type="checkbox"/> Not on the main road <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of visitor services/facilities <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of visitor accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown in market <input type="checkbox"/> Derelict buildings <input type="checkbox"/> Funding

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Opportunities	Threats
<input type="checkbox"/> Under-exploited assets <input type="checkbox"/> County tourism initiative <input type="checkbox"/> Growth in tourism regionally and nationally <input type="checkbox"/> Demand for new experiences and new destinations <input type="checkbox"/> Filling local product gaps to meet visitor demand <input type="checkbox"/> Lands in County Council ownership	<input type="checkbox"/> Growing competition in the market <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of awareness/orientation to tourism <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental degradation <input type="checkbox"/> Economic downturn

A2 Potential Visitor Market Segments

A2.1 Culturally Curious Market Segment

The 'Culturally Curious' visitor is defined by Fáilte Ireland as Follows: -

- ❑ They choose their holiday destinations carefully and are independent 'active sightseers' looking to visit new places and expand their experience by exploring landscapes, history, and culture. They are unlikely to return for some time once they have visited a new place, and often travel as a couple or as individuals and rarely in a family group.
- ❑ They are most likely to stay in a hotel, self-catering accommodation, or bed-and-breakfast accommodation.
- ❑ The age group for this demographic is typically aged 40 years plus.
- ❑ The *Culturally Curious* visitor is interested in all that a place offers and is attracted to authentic travel. They like to delve deeper into the history of a location and seek unusual experiences and enjoy connecting with nature and wandering off the beaten track.
- ❑ They are most likely to be attracted by exploring landscapes, including castles, gardens, museums, country houses and art galleries. In addition, they enjoy literary tours, UNESCO sites, visitor centres, and browsing for books to deepen their experience. They also enjoy good food and wine, particularly local specialities, and engage in local festivals and events.
- ❑ They enjoy walking, cycling, or pleasure boating to explore a new place.

Culturally Curious Segment by Geographic Market

Fáilte Ireland¹⁶ has defined the *Culturally Curious* segment by referencing the key geographical market of origin.

- ❑ *Culturally Curious* visitors from Britain like authenticity, are independent and want to immerse themselves in a place. They like connecting with people, nature, exploring cultural sites and having fun, although they will not choose a place to visit just to follow the crowd.
- ❑ The North American *Culturally Curious* segment is significantly more interested in new things, mind-broadening, and knowledge building. Typically, they will have undertaken research and selected their preferred experiences. Whilst the US *Culturally Curious* visitors are more likely to be interested in feeling special or spoiled, this is still well below 50 per cent of them.
- ❑ The German *Culturally Curious* market segment is slightly more likely to be interested in peace and quiet, active outdoor and coastal areas. They respond less to superlative-laden descriptions and have a greater focus on broadening the mind. There is also less focus on gourmet food. Along with the French, they have absolutely no interest in meeting and having fun with other tourists.

A2.2 Great Escapers Market Segment

Fáilte Ireland defines the 'Great Escapers' market segment as follows: -

- ❑ They are often couples, approximately 30 years old, some with babies or relatively young children. Most are in serious need of time out from busy

lives and careers. They are specifically interested in rural holidays and travel as a couple or family. Great Escapers are on holiday for a break, getting physical with nature, and reconnecting with their partner. They are more likely to participate in slightly more strenuous but not extreme exploration. They are more interested in connecting to nature than other segments, especially the more remote and exciting places.

- ❑ They appreciate peace and quiet between activities, so they classify the experience as 'down time'. It's being off the beaten track. It's a great escape. But it's important that getting away from it all is easy enough - they want the 'wow' factor without too much effort. Great Escapers wish to come home refreshed and revitalised, their batteries recharged.
- ❑ Typically, important experience elements include: -
 - Escaping to breath-taking landscapes.
 - Actively exploring more remote and exciting places, on foot or by bicycle.
 - Visiting a castle or a landmark.
 - A gentle exploration of the place - walking, cycling, pleasure boating, and
 - Relaxed meal of fresh local produce or a fun evening in an authentic pub.
- ❑ They are likely to take more short breaks than the average visitor and consider Ireland offers plenty of what they seek.

Great Escapers Segment by Geographic Market

Fáilte Ireland has defined the *Great Escapers* segment by reference to the key geographical market of origin.

- ❑ *Great Escapers* originating from Britain like connecting with the landscape, having quality time together and are more likely to stay in self-catering accommodation in rural Ireland. They generally require 'wow' moments without effort and enjoying downtime off the beaten track.
- ❑ The US *Great Escapers* segment values flexibility and freedom to change plans. They also prefer to move at their own pace in an unrestricted way.
- ❑ German *Great Escapers* have an even greater focus on nature and getting rural than those from other markets. They have less need for the 'wow' factor given that they are more interested than others in simple nature and rural Ireland. The most marked difference from their global counterparts is the lack of importance of 'gourmet' food experiences.
- ❑ French *Great Escapers* are less active when outdoors than those from other countries. To balance that, they want more culture. As a result, they are less exploration-focused and are less motivated than their US counterparts on a famous site.

A2.3 Social Energisers Market Segment

Fáilte Ireland classifies the *Social Energisers* Market Segment as typically comprised of young couples or adult groups looking for excitement, exciting new experiences, fun, and social holidays somewhere new and different. In addition, they are generally friends or colleagues looking for a cool, exciting trip somewhere fresh and vibrant.

Whilst not as potentially significant to St. Mullins as either the *Culturally Curious* or the *Great Escapers* segments, given that nearly 33 per cent of the EU population were under the age of 30 in 2016, it is considered that they do represent an important secondary potential market segment.

Social Energisers Segment by Geographic Market

Fáilte Ireland has defined the *Social Energisers* segment by reference to the key geographical market of origin.

- ❑ British *Social Energisers* tend to holiday in groups, mainly in city destinations. Here they like the spontaneity and partying atmosphere in cool and vibrant venues. As a segment, they tend not to plan too far ahead.
- ❑ North American *Social Energisers* are slightly more likely to be interested in the 'wow' factor, experiencing things that are new to them and are keen to soak up the atmosphere. Exploration is also slightly more important (they are coming from farther away than their European counterparts) and seeking fun and laughter. Food and drink are more important to North American *Social Energisers* than to others, and they are slightly more likely to stay in a 4-star or mid-range accommodation.
- ❑ More so than other *Social Energisers*, German *Social Energisers* also want freedom, to be active and adventurous outdoors, rather than party. They are more interested in broadening their minds than partying.
- ❑ Fifty per cent of French *Social Energisers* rate partying compared to just 28 per cent of Germans. However, for German *Social Energisers*, partying is still very strong relative to other things.

A2.4 Other Niche Sectoral Markets

In addition to the Priority Consumer Segments above, Fáilte Ireland has previously identified several trends in the profile of those engaging in activity holidays.

Aging Baby-Boomers

The older generation (over 50s) lives longer and is healthier and more active than their predecessors. As a result, they will generate increased demand for holidays in the coming years, taking more short breaks, and are more amenable to taking holidays outside of the peak season, whether due to having no domestic obligations or retirement.

Generations X and Y (18-44 years of age)

Generations X and Y tend to be well-travelled and internet savvy, and they fall into two distinct groups: -

- ❑ High disposable income/time-poor - this group tries to fit as much as possible into their holiday. They are seeking once in a lifetime experience and are likely to use a tour operator. Social media is important to them.
- ❑ Smaller budget/time rich - this group have more time and maybe on 'gap' years (becoming popular, not just among school/university leavers). They are seeking engagement with locals and their culture to have authentic experiences. Value/budget is a key selling point, and trekking and backpacking are popular, given their abundance of time

¹⁶ Fáilte Ireland - Growing International Sales: Global Segmentation Toolkit.

and smaller budgets. Environmental matters are a key value among this group, so sustainability/responsible tourism is essential.

Changing Families

The nuclear family (parents and children) is becoming smaller in numbers of children, but there is an increase in single-parent families. To compensate, families are forming into a more vertical structure, with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins becoming more important in the family's lifestyle.

Patchwork Families

Families comprised of parents who have children from previous relationships (who may or may not live with them full-time), in addition to their 'shared' children, and by extension, a multiplicity of grandparents, aunts/uncles and cousins. Furthermore, the age group of the children of such 'patchwork' families may be quite broad, from the very young to adults with children of their own.

Several implications arise from the above developments as these families seek to share their leisure time. For many, activity holidays are the platform for families to bond and generate shared memories and experiences. In addition, parents wish to experience and share a renewed sense of adventure with their children and provide them with a sense of freedom that children from urban areas do not get to experience daily.

Single Households/Women Travelling Alone

People are marrying later, which means that people live on their own for longer. As a result, there will be an increase in people travelling alone in the coming years. In addition, there has been a steady increase in the number of women travelling either alone or in groups. These two segments have very similar needs. They seek above all to travel safely and securely, but they also wish to use their holidays as an opportunity to socialise, either with friends or to make new friends.

Activity holidays provide an opportunity to engage with a group through an activity. Singletons seek out smaller groups that allow mixing socially and making new friends. In addition, women travellers look for a high standard of good attentive service.

A2.5 International Target Markets

CSO data for 2019 records 35 per cent of overseas visitors to Ireland originating from Great Britain, with 22 per cent being from the USA and Canada. In terms of individual expenditure, overseas visitors from France and Australia and New Zealand recorded the highest levels of individual expenditure, whilst overseas visitors from Other Countries and Australia and New Zealand recorded the longest average length of stay.

Table 41 - Key Target International Markets

2019				
Area of Residence	Overseas Trips to Ireland by Non-Residents (Thousand)	Overseas Trips to Ireland by Non-Residents Percentage of All Overseas Trips	Average Length of Stay by Overseas Travellers to Ireland (Nights)	Expenditure by Individual Overseas Travellers in Ireland (excluding fares)
Great Britain (includes England, Scotland, Wales)	3,787	35.04	4.1	€64
The United States and Canada	2,412	22.32	6.4	€175
Other Europe	2,129	19.70	7.4	€113
Germany	813	7.52	7.3	€137
France	577	5.34	8.9	€464
Other Countries	473	4.38	13.7	€199
Italy	392	3.63	8.0	€114
Australia and New Zealand	225	2.08	12.0	€229
Total 2019	10,808	100.00	6.4	€118

Source: CSO StatBank / Tourism and Travel Quarterly Series / TMQ09 / Select from table TMQ09

A3 Visual Brand Identity Options

A3.1 St. Mullins: Find Yourself Here...

Figure 36 - St. Mullins: Find Yourself Here...



The circle reflects the High Cross in St. Mullins Abbey, and the concentric circles reference the layers of history to be found in the settlement. It also suggests the plan form of the motte.

The circular device is simple, strong, and capable of easy recognition for application in various media. In addition, it can be reproduced in tactile relief for presentation in a range of natural materials (stone, ceramics, and timber).

The colour palette harmonises with the Fáilte Ireland *Ireland's Ancient East* logo.

The tag line 'find yourself here' reflects the serene nature of the settlement's location and rich natural and historical environment.

Potential Application



A3.2 St. Mullins: Simply Enchanting

Figure 37 - St. Mullins: Simply Enchanting



The upper half of the circle reflects the built and natural environment. The lower half represents the Rivers Barrow and Aughavaud.

The simplified circular device is capable of easy recognition for application in various media. It can be reproduced in tactile relief for presentation in a range of natural materials (stone, ceramics, and timber). It presents a modern appearance that contrasts with the St. Mullins typeface (Erin).

The tag line 'simply enchanting' refers to the visual amenity of the setting and the settlement itself.

Potential Applications



Vertical Banner (Temporary)



Bollard Cover (Temporary)

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