



# Rivermeade

Village Development Framework Plan and Design Guidance  
June 2013



Rivermeade from the air; the red line delineates the proposed Local Area Plan (LAP) area, which incorporates some strong landscape features

# Rivermeade

## Village Development Framework Plan and Design Guidance

The Rivermeade Plan was produced between September 2010 and August 2011 by a team of architects and urban designers, Philip and Delphine Geoghegan of iCON Architecture | Urban Design | Conservation, and Bernard Voortman of CUMMINS + VOORTMAN, Sustainable Architecture & Urban Design. The steering committee for Fingal County Council Planning Department included Marjorie O'Shee, Patricia Conlon and Peter Byrne. They compiled and developed the brief and liaised regularly during production of the Plan.

This **Village Development Framework Plan and Design Guidance [VDFP]** is published with the Rivermeade LAP, to provide guidance for the long term sustainable development of Rivermeade.

Fingal County Council seeks to maintain and strengthen the physical character of Rivermeade village, to guide village improvements and to plan for appropriate future growth.

In setting out this guidance, The following key issues are dealt with:

- Protecting and improving Rivermeade's distinctive character of place.
- Providing for sustainable growth and consolidation, with a diverse and flexible housing mix, while protecting the quality, character and distinctiveness of important landscape assets.



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The reservoir along the River Ward at Rivermeade has been disused for a number of years. As a result, nature has taken over; the river meanders through the partially dried river bed, the trees have grown up and it is now an exclusive world for wildlife, flora and fauna. Sensitive intervention could allow for controlled public access as part of the Ward River Valley Regional Park. This pencil drawing, depicting the security fence removed and a pathway substituted, was made by Tina Geoghegan.

# Section 1

## The Context and Character of Rivermeade Village

### 1.0 Introduction - Location

Rivermeade is located within the rural area of Fingal to the west of Swords and north of Dublin Airport. The village is about 7 km to the west of Swords, about 3 km from St. Margaret's to the south and about 8 Km from Finglas.

### 1.1 Background

The settlement of Rivermeade/Toberburr was constructed in the 1970's by Dublin County Council as a social housing estate principally to accommodate residents in the village of St. Margaret's who were displaced as a consequence of the expansion of Dublin airport. The only development which has occurred since the estate was built has been the construction of 24 houses and a community facility some years ago. Rivermeade is a well established community and there is continuing demand from connected families to live there.

### 1.2 Estate or Village?

Rivermeade was designed as a single housing estate. It has been extended in a limited way, and has the

character of an isolated housing estate with severely limited facilities comprising a primary school, a small shop, a resource centre, playing fields, a playground and walking routes.

Although it has the character of an *estate*, it has the potential to act as a *village*, if those attributes of a village could be incorporated into an expanding Rivermeade. This reappraisal of the area is an opportunity to set down the structure for a sustainable regenerated village.

*The achievement of such a transformation over time is a key objective of this Village Development Framework Plan*

### 1.3 The Airport

Dublin airport, a key employment area in the Dublin region is located in close proximity to Rivermeade.

The majority of the LAP lands are located within the Outer Airport Noise Zone, while the southern arm of the LAP lands is also within the Inner Airport Noise Zone which precludes new residential development.

### 1.4 Rural Setting and Landscape Quality

Rivermeade is located in a rural area, with productive agricultural land and a large agri-business on its doorstep. Keelings a major food producer and distributor is located beside Rivermeade, south of Killeek Lane. This area will be a key expanding employment area into the future.

The LAP lands are located within the designated ROLLING HILLS CHARACTER TYPE in the County Development Plan. These lands are characterised by the mature vegetation along the Ward River and the strong vegetative field boundaries. The undulating nature of the countryside together with trees and river valley help create a rich landscape both visually and ecologically.



**Above:** the unspoiled landscape quality of the reservoir is a consequence of its disuse for some time, allowing vegetation to take over and creating a true nature sanctuary.

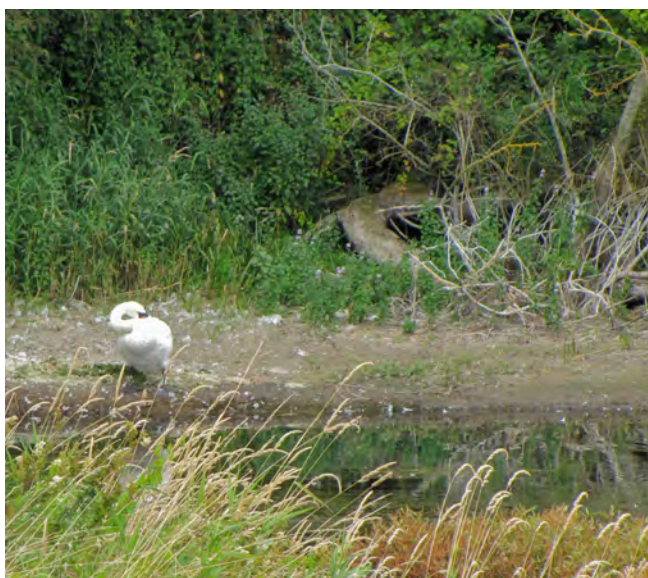
**Below:** Dublin Airport is close to Rivermeade.

Swords town is seen, right of picture, expanding westwards. The connector which is most evident here is the Ward River - the pale blue dotted line - links Rivermeade to Swords as the river flows eastwards through the Ward Valley Regional Park to Broadmeadow Estuary. It could provide an excellent, continuous, greenway for walking or cycling.



The immediate surroundings have particular landscape quality. The Ward River creates a low-lying wetlands pool beside the bridge, curves around a steeply sloping northern slope and fills out into the reservoir, a sizable surface of water and an attractive amenity with great potential for recreational use. This area has mixed woodland and mature hedgerow trees, all of which are close to the houses and help to invest an arcadian quality in the tradition of garden villages of the early twentieth century.

The river is also the source of considerable ecological interest and biodiversity. The water surface is frequented by wild birds, ducks, swans and wintering geese, and the associated wetlands appear to contain a diversity of plants. To have such a natural resource so close to the village is a benefit at the same time as a challenge - how to maximise the use of the river, reservoir and banks for the benefit of the community without adversely affecting their habitat and biodiversity?



**Above:** Aerial view over part of Rivermeade, In the foreground is the St Margaret's golf course, 1, beyond the golf course to the left is a traditional farmhouse, 2, and undulating land with original field boundaries, and to the right is the northern end of Rivermeade, 3, which comes close to the reservoir, 4, and the intimate landscape along the river and around the reservoir. In the middle distance is Swords, 5, and the coast, 6, with Lambay Island visible offshore.

The survival of the traditional farm beside Rivermeade, identified on the image, **left**, as No 2 and **below**, circled, is also an opportunity to strengthen the green infrastructure. Currently used in a limited way for grazing and rearing horses, the farm buildings and immediately adjacent fields could extend the recreational potential of the riverside.

The Ward River Valley Regional Park is a major element in the developing 'Green Infrastructure' network in Fingal. The Council proposes to extend this park westwards so that it will connect Rivermeade in time with Swords and the Broadmeadow Estuary.



**Above:** The traditional farm adjacent to Rivermeade is just above the line of the river, and has mature hedgerow trees surrounding, sheltering and screening the fields of the farm.

Planning for the long term development of Rivermeade is an opportunity to provide for the improvement, protection, enhancement and extension of existing Green Infrastructure in an integrated and coherent way for the benefit of both those living in Rivermeade and those living in the wider catchment area including Swords. The extension of the Regional Park westwards from Knocksedan to Rivermeade will greatly improve the amenity potential of the Ward River Valley and connectivity to Swords which is only 4 kilometers away, [about an hours walk) along the river valley.

The Ward River Valley Regional Park is described by the Council as follows:

*“\* This is a linear park on the banks of the Ward River South of Swords town.*

*\* It covers an area of 89 ha. (220 acres) between Swords Town Centre and Knocksedan Bridge.*

*\* Features of interest include some 12th century fortifications, woodland habitats, wetlands and rolling grassland.*

*\* There are viewing points, picnic sites, a public playground, sports pitches and tennis courts.*

*\* Swords Town Park and Swords Castle are part of this park.”*



**Above and Right:** Cover to Chapter 3 of the Fingal Development Plan 2011- 2017, and extracts showing Aim, and Objective G110 of the Green Infrastructure Policy.

‘Create an integrated and coherent green infrastructure for the County which will protect and enhance biodiversity, provide for accessible parks and open space, maintain and enhance landscape character including historic landscape character, protect and enhance architectural and archaeological heritage and provide for sustainable water management by requiring the retention of substantial networks of green space in urban, urban fringe and adjacent countryside areas to serve the needs of communities now and in the future including the need to adapt to climate change.’

#### Objective G110

Require all Local Area Plans to protect, enhance, provide and manage of green infrastructure in an integrated and coherent manner addressing the five GI themes set out in the Development Plan – Biodiversity, Parks, Open Space and Recreation, Sustainable Water Management, Archaeological and Architectural Heritage, and Landscape.

Extracts from the Development Plan 2011 - 2017

## 1.5 Recreational Facilities

The previous section ‘rural setting and landscape quality’ makes the case for planning for the long term development of existing green infrastructure in an integrated manner for the benefit of both those living in Rivermeade and those living in the wider catchment area including Swords. This section examines existing recreational and amenity facilities and makes recommendations to improve and extend existing facilities.

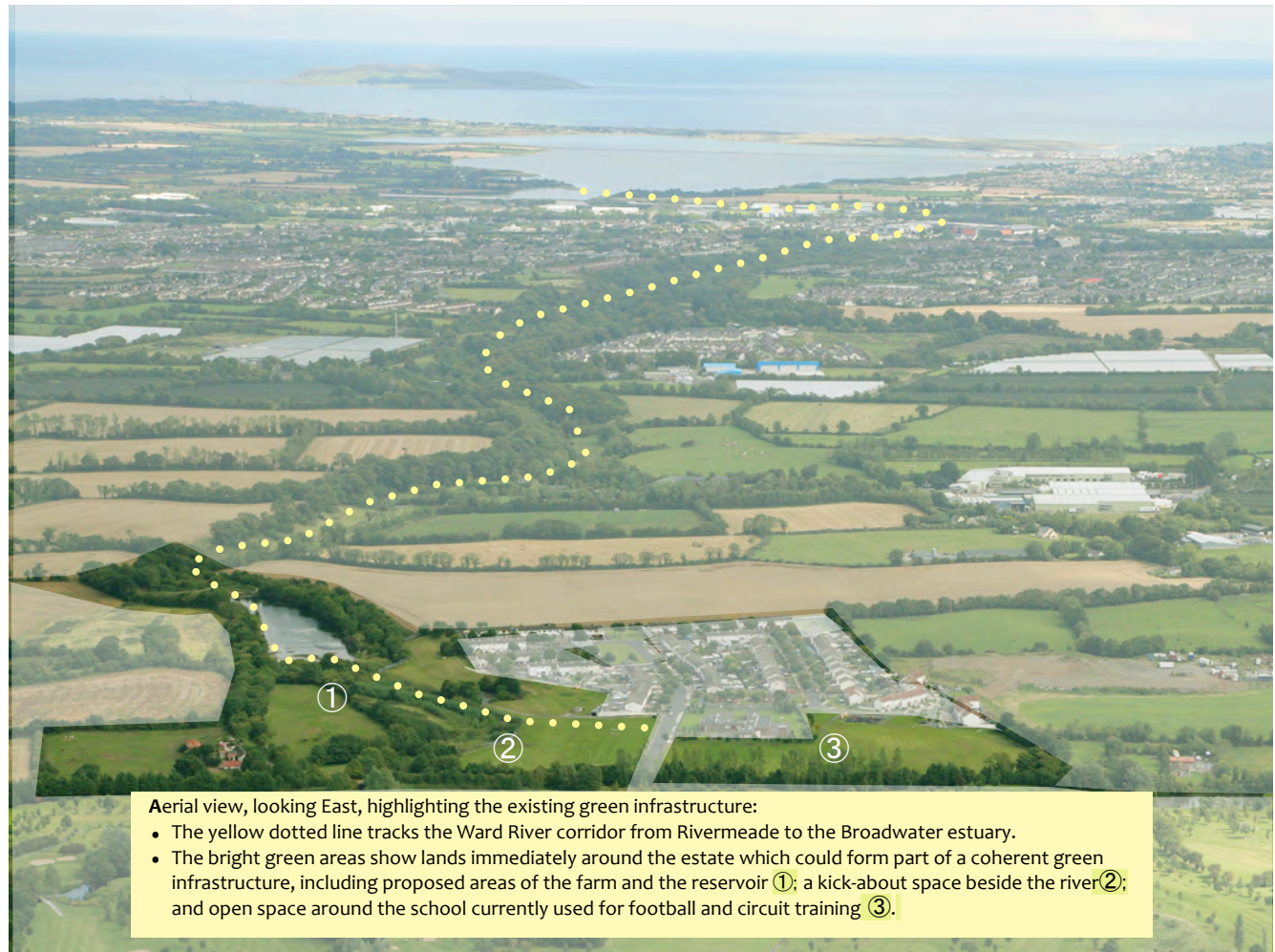
There is an abundance of public open space in Rivermeade, located both along the Ward River and adjoining the national school.

The public open space along the River Ward comprises an informally laid out grass football pitch at the entrance to Rivermeade and a linear area of public open space along the river with houses backing onto it providing a low level of informal supervision.

A large area of public open space around the school contains a recently built multi-use all weather games area; a children’s playground and footpaths which loop around the open space and are well used for walking and running.

There is an opportunity to plan for the long term optimal use of existing and proposed public open spaces in Rivermeade. Improved and additional recreational and amenity facilities can be provided which will be of great benefit to residents in Rivermeade and its wider hinterland as follows:

- Improving the amenities of the linear open space along the Ward.
- Extending this Green Corridor into new public open spaces provided in the eastern section of the LAP lands. (This area could provide for an all weather



floodlit football pitch, three tennis courts and basket ball courts.)

- Restoring the reservoir for recreational use for example canoeing, kayaking and fishing.
- Providing for improved amenities including additional active recreational facilities in the large area of public open space around the school for example a skateboard park.

- Providing for a network of direct and attractive pedestrian and cycle linkages along the River Ward and throughout the village.
- Making small areas of public open spaces around the estate more useful and attractive.

**The overall aim should be to maximise the use and amenities of public open space which over time can be integrated within an extended Ward Regional Park.**



## 1.6 The Urban Form and Built Environment of Rivermeade

Rivermeade was developed as a housing estate in the middle of the rural hinterland north of Dublin airport and west of Swords, with few services and amenities and very poor links to Swords, resulting in a high dependence on cars to access services.

Within those constraints the design of the area was carefully structured to present attractive streets wide enough for tree planting, green spaces within the housing area and larger spaces on the edge. Originally built as social housing, most of the houses are now privately owned. The location of Rivermeade in a rural area and its comparative isolation suggest that the development should have been planned for a higher degree of self-sufficiency. The fabric of the houses in Rivermeade, is of good quality, but each house is capable of greatly improving its insulation values, and reducing fuel costs. An estate wide scheme to reduce the carbon footprint of the community whilst achieving dramatically better comfort levels could be an effective pilot scheme for the County.

Some of the enclosures such as boundary walls are visually unattractive, because of an absence of coordination of material finishes and colour. Vehicular openings have been enlarged for car parking in an unregulated way, with assorted opening widths and gates. The estate, which was built in the 1970s, is generally well kept, but there are numerous opportunities for revitalising spaces and improving the visual appearance of boundaries and gates at the end of rear access lanes.

Mature trees produces a leafy, pleasant appearance and green areas are generally well maintained. Most of the gardens are well maintained. Promoting a sustainable village will take time and resources and sufficient growth to achieve a critical mass, which would allow for better facilities.



**Aerial View from East:** compact form of the village, with its integrated spaces. The entrance avenue crosses a green area to arrive at the school, and then enters the estate where the street, with houses on either side gives a sense of enclosure. A secondary road system creates a loop, with link to the more recent housing extension, (top left). Links off the Main Street at the green, link to other parts of the estate. The houses have footpath rear access. It can be seen that most residents have added workshop type buildings or sheds at the end of their garden. Most streets have mature tree growth which contribute greatly to the settled character of the place. There is good provision of public open space, small and large green areas, within and around the houses.

## 1.7 Economic and Social Context

The estate was developed as a social housing scheme by Dublin County Council. Those people living there were originally chosen from the Housing List, although since then over 80% of the houses have been bought out by the tenants.

The location of Rivermeade on the fringe of Dublin and close to Swords could be advantageous to further development of the village, with the possibility of increasing the number of residents to support basic services such as: incubator and small business units and local shopping and community based facilities, which could be used for health, recreation and educational purposes. Given that there is already good potential for outdoor recreation in a quality landscape, there is potential for transforming the estate into a village. This issue is incorporated into the Development guidelines.

### Sustainable Infrastructure

Retrofitting\* the housing and school for a more durable future means that an integrated, area-based retrofit programme can deliver economic, environmental and social co-benefits.

These works have the potential to:

- Reduce carbon emissions
- Make efficient use of resources
- Improve energy security
- Make places more resilient to the impacts of climate change
- Create local jobs
- Strengthen local economies
- Improve the quality and value of existing places
- Reduce fuel poverty
- Improve health and reduce health inequalities
- Strengthen communities and improve community interaction

(Source: "The Future is Local", The Sustainable Commission, UK)

\*retrofitting refers to installation of insulation or new energy-efficient heating into an existing dwelling.

# Sustainable Energy Communities Programme

## What is an SEC?

A Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) is a community in which everyone works together to develop a sustainable-energy system. To do so, they aim as far as possible to be energy-efficient, to use renewable energy and to develop decentralised energy supplies. This integrated approach allows for a balance of demand and supply, which gives the community greater energy autonomy.

The Sustainable Energy Community model begins by establishing a clearly defined geographic area called the Sustainable Energy Zone (SEZ). The SEZ establishes sustainable energy targets that are measured and monitored and creates a focal point for partners, projects and proposals to integrate in a structured way. This allows new technologies and techniques be tried and tested in an incubator or living laboratory environment.

A Sustainable Energy Community is the integration and collaborative action in the wider community (e.g. town or region) to expand and replicate ideas tested in the SEZ. [More...](#)



Above: The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland SEAI has a new programme promoting and supporting 'Sustainable Energy Communities' to identify community need. A 'Sustainable Energy Communities Toolkit' is under development (April 2011). Individual communities will have the facility of the Toolkit. [www.seai.ie](http://www.seai.ie)



Left: a 'word map' forms the cover for a valuable report produced for the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC). This publication shows the relationship between technological solutions and local capacity building, emphasises that every situation is different, and that infrastructure retrofit is 'an ongoing process rather than a one-off upgrade'. The content of the book is reasonably accessible to non-technical people.'SDC Sustainable Neighbourhood Infrastructure: evidence base structure' [www.sd-commission.org.uk/](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/)



Rivermeade, June 2010



**Top, left:** 'Main Street' of the estate, with mature trees; shop is on the left side, a garage sized extension at the side of a house.

**Top, centre:** Car parking is generally within the front garden area, however, on street parking is also prevalent.

**Top, right:** Rear garden boundaries differ from house to house; contrast of trimmed hedging with exposed concrete blocks. Relatively minor improvements to boundaries will have an impact on overall appearance.

**Centre, right:** Security gates to rear access lanes would benefit from painted surface.

**Left:** A canopy of leaves from the mature street trees provides an attractive 'arcadian' quality.



## 1.8 Movement to and from, and in and around Rivermeade

### 1.81 To and from Rivermeade

The road access to the estate is along a narrow country road. Rivermeade estate was constructed in the rural hinterland north of Dublin airport and west of Swords over 30 years ago. It is served by a very poor road network of narrow winding roads with no footpaths or facilities for cyclists. There is potential for local road improvements which could connect the area better with Swords:

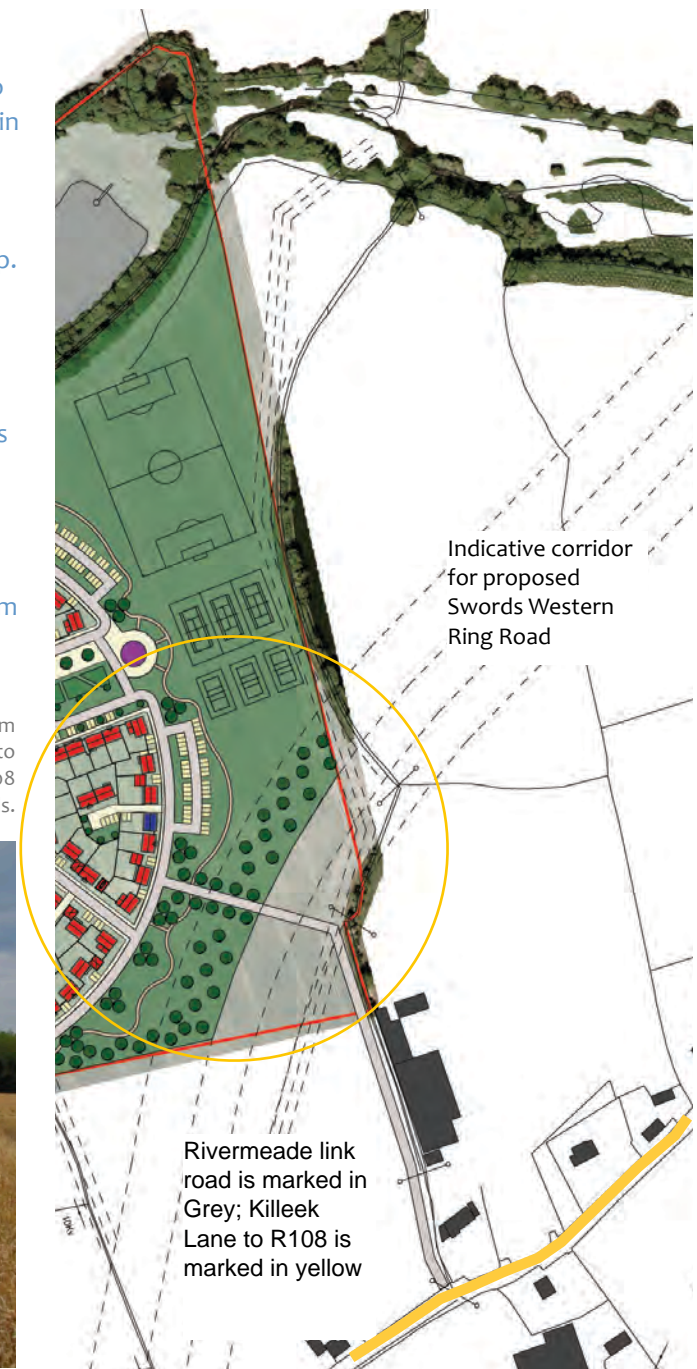
- The entrance to Rivermeade is off Toberburr Road. Killeek Lane connecting the Toberburr Road to the Naul Road adjoins the LAP lands to the south.
- The proposed Swords Western Ring Road [SWRR] crosses through the southeast edge of the LAP lands. This road is planned as long term strategic road connecting the M1 north of Lissenhall to the N2 north of the M50 (via the Airport Box roads system). It will provide a strategic bypass for Swords providing a high quality, fast route to the N2, M50 and other national primary roads.
- There is a need to improve road connections between Swords and Rivermeade which will facilitate movement in and out of the village and lessen the sense of isolation felt by the residents. The proposed new link road connecting Rivermeade to an improved Killeek Lane will greatly improve access in and out of Rivermeade and the connections between Rivermeade and to Swords. It would contribute to a coherent overall plan, providing two entrances / exits to the renewed village.

**Right:** The Southeast corner of the proposed LAP, showing the boundaries of the field within the LAP.

### 1.82 In and around Rivermeade

The entrance avenue is very open, giving no emphasis to the entry into the estate, although the school is located in a pivotal position beside the entry. The estate entry is marked solely by the blank gable of a terrace of houses. There is a bus service to and from the estate. Circulation within the estate comprises the Main Street and the loop. In order to promote low traffic speeds, it would be possible to introduce traffic calming measures. For example raised paved areas which may be used also to effect environmental improvement. There is no conflict between drivers and pedestrians as the widths of streets and pavements are generous, but in the process of expansion, the provision of cycleway / footpaths to create loop walks within the estate should be explored. These would be integrated with green corridors extending throughout a new village structure. Apart from the bus service, access for heavy vehicles within the village needs to be restricted.

**Far right:** The LAP for Rivermeade shows the proposed long term SWRR cutting across the south-east corner. There is an opportunity to link Rivermeade and its new development with Killeek Lane, the R108 and Swords.



# Section 2

## Key Decisions and A Vision for the Future

### 2.1 The Village needs better accessibility

The sense of isolation of Rivermeade has much to do with the *impression* of a housing estate ‘parachuted’ into a rural area, although in reality it is close to the airport and Swords. There is a need to improve road connections between Swords and Rivermeade. The proposed new link road connecting Rivermeade to an improved Killeek lane will greatly improve access to and from Rivermeade and connections between it and Swords, lessening the sense of isolation.

### 2.2 The Village Needs a Centre

The well-established community of Rivermeade has made the place its own, despite deficiencies in typical provision of services for a small community. The creation of a new village centre is an ambitious goal which seeks to develop the existing estate into a vibrant village with a degree of self-sufficiency. The School is in a positive, pivotal position at the entrance to Rivermeade. The location of a village centre opposite the school could strengthen the perception of Rivermeade as a village and create a hub which would become the village centre.



Above: The heart of the village at Avoca, Co Wicklow, with shops, left and colourful new local authority houses, right, “a sense of place”.

**Bee Park Resource Centre** is a newly built facility in the Centre of **Manorhamilton** offering an excellent environment from which a number of service providers in the areas of **Youth, Sport, Disability, Childcare Education, Women, and Men's Groups** work.

- ☑ [Tiny Toppers Pre-school Play Group](#)
  - ☑ [Tiny Hearts Crèche and Play School](#)
  - ☑ [Manorhamilton Enterprise Forum](#)
  - ☑ [Leitrim Vocational Education Committee](#)
  - ☑ [North Leitrim Men's Group](#)
  - ☑ [North Leitrim Women Group](#)
  - ☑ [Sean Mac Dermott Boxing Club](#)
  - ☑ [National Learning Network](#)
  - ☑ [North Connaught Youth and Community Services](#)
  - ☑ [Bee Park Fitness Gym, Manorhamilton, Leitrim](#)
- With Gym inductions in Manorhamilton, Fitness Programme Development, Top Quality Exercise and Nutritional Guidance, a Wide variety of Quality Equipment, Client Appraisals, Personal Training in Manorhamilton.
- ☑ [North West Simon Community](#)

Above: Diverse offerings of a recently built community centre in Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim, a small town serving a rural hinterland.