



Village Development Framework Plan, showing proposals for **all** areas of Rivermeade

Original Oblique Aerial Photograph taken 27 August 2010



Village Development Framework Plan, showing proposals for **inner** areas of Rivermeade

Original Oblique Aerial Photograph taken 27 August 2010

Section 3

Rivermeade: Village Design Guidance



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3.1 Sustainable Design Objectives

Environmental Sustainability

Reduce pressure on the environment:

- Foster walking and cycling by provision of safe, attractive, clutter-free pedestrian and cycling routes between attractors of activity: school, community facilities, shops, recreation areas and proposed village parkland areas
- Promote biodiversity by conserving existing indigenous hedgerows, trees and water surfaces. Introduce 'green' pathways close to the village. Encourage community-led planting programmes
- Provide opportunities for food production through allotments and/or community gardens
- Recognise the microclimatic advantages of tree belts and hedgerows
- Use quality, sustainable materials and detailing to make streets and spaces more attractive, accessible and inclusive
- Make the best use of land – a finite resource.
- Foster waste reduction. Provide a convenient, attractive and well-maintained recycling area in the village

Making Rivermeade more attractive and sustainable: Local Identity

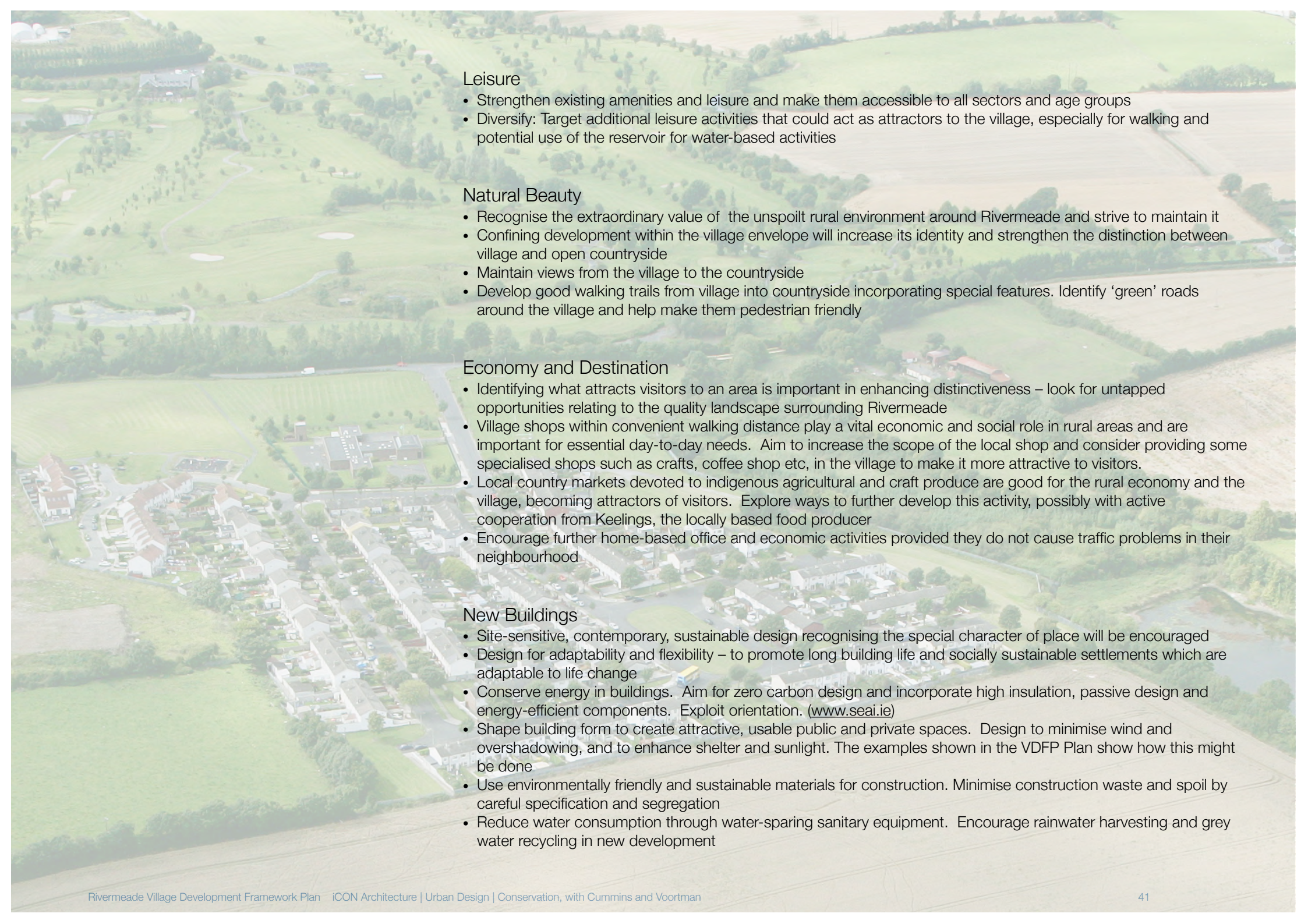
- Recognising and building on the distinctive locational identity of Rivermeade will assist community and economic regeneration. A quality environment with pride of place will benefit the community, attract visitors and promote long-term economic, social and environmental well-being
- A quality public realm is very important as the outdoors meeting place for all people of Rivermeade

Heritage and Culture

- Conserve the older farm buildings in Rivermeade, and find sustainable opportunity for its sensitive reuse
- Cherish distinctive local features, especially the landscape quality – provide good signage and develop cultural tourism by creating attractors for people in Swords and the county area surrounding Rivermeade

Community

- Assets that help constitute local identity include a strong community spirit, a culture of friendliness and neighbourliness, and a strong and unique local brand that is born of history and shared experience.
- Promote community participation in the implementation of proposals for the public realm
- Erect and manage a public notice board for events, local news, and possibly a local website

An aerial photograph of the Rivermeade village and its surrounding countryside. The village is a cluster of buildings, mostly residential, situated in a valley. To the right, a large reservoir is visible, surrounded by green fields and trees. The landscape is a mix of built-up areas and open countryside.

Leisure

- Strengthen existing amenities and leisure and make them accessible to all sectors and age groups
- Diversify: Target additional leisure activities that could act as attractors to the village, especially for walking and potential use of the reservoir for water-based activities

Natural Beauty

- Recognise the extraordinary value of the unspoilt rural environment around Rivermeade and strive to maintain it
- Confining development within the village envelope will increase its identity and strengthen the distinction between village and open countryside
- Maintain views from the village to the countryside
- Develop good walking trails from village into countryside incorporating special features. Identify 'green' roads around the village and help make them pedestrian friendly

Economy and Destination

- Identifying what attracts visitors to an area is important in enhancing distinctiveness – look for untapped opportunities relating to the quality landscape surrounding Rivermeade
- Village shops within convenient walking distance play a vital economic and social role in rural areas and are important for essential day-to-day needs. Aim to increase the scope of the local shop and consider providing some specialised shops such as crafts, coffee shop etc, in the village to make it more attractive to visitors.
- Local country markets devoted to indigenous agricultural and craft produce are good for the rural economy and the village, becoming attractors of visitors. Explore ways to further develop this activity, possibly with active cooperation from Keelings, the locally based food producer
- Encourage further home-based office and economic activities provided they do not cause traffic problems in their neighbourhood

New Buildings

- Site-sensitive, contemporary, sustainable design recognising the special character of place will be encouraged
- Design for adaptability and flexibility – to promote long building life and socially sustainable settlements which are adaptable to life change
- Conserve energy in buildings. Aim for zero carbon design and incorporate high insulation, passive design and energy-efficient components. Exploit orientation. (www.seai.ie)
- Shape building form to create attractive, usable public and private spaces. Design to minimise wind and overshadowing, and to enhance shelter and sunlight. The examples shown in the VDFP Plan show how this might be done
- Use environmentally friendly and sustainable materials for construction. Minimise construction waste and spoil by careful specification and segregation
- Reduce water consumption through water-sparing sanitary equipment. Encourage rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling in new development

3.2 General Village Objectives

3.21 Entrances to the village

Currently, there is one entrance only to the village, off the Toberburr Road.

- Toberburr Road is a delightful country lane, difficult for drivers because of its restricted width. It is nevertheless an attractive way to approach Rivermeade, with mature tree hedgerows, as can be seen on the introductory page to Section 3. The approach to Rivermeade becomes more open and the turn into the village does not announce the village as may be expected. Several measures are suggested in Section 2.6 to overcome this, including avenue tree planting, a change in road surface treatment and a proposal to make unique signage which will identify Rivermeade at its entrance

3.22 The Public Realm

Generally:

- Establish a principle of unfettered pedestrian and disabled mobility - **this should be applied to the Main Street first**
- Reduce visual clutter, on-street signage and planters
- Keep green in the public realm by retaining trees, grass, shrubs, preserving glimpses to countryside etc
- Provide for village outdoor furniture (seats, litter bins, lighting); it should be contemporary in style and similar in type throughout the village to provide cohesive identity
- Provide litter bins as necessary using attractive, contemporary types
- Provide seats in proposed new civic space; maintain seats in good repair
- New, contemporary street lighting of village scale relating to pedestrian routes and traffic will enhance safety and look better - contributing towards overall civic quality
- Protect existing trees; proposed new tree planting should be deciduous.
- Encourage the implementation of a 'litter-free' village
- Bollards are visually intrusive and best avoided in village locations, except where safety is a priority. Favour trees or planting instead
- Reduce traffic speed with traffic calming where necessary and provide accessible pedestrian crossings

Opportunities

- Opportunities identified in Rivermeade aim to complement the actions proposed to make the estate a better, connected place to live. They are focussed on the *existing* built environment and measures which may help towards a better appearance, safer movement for pedestrians, a strategy for tidying up the entire village, improvement in off street parking and ways of further greening the main avenues of the village.
- The entrance zone would be greatly enhanced with some planting of avenue trees
- The proposal to locate a village centre and Square will also help to give character to the village at its entrance
- A change in surface treatment with associated parking will help to reduce traffic speeds and congestion outside the school.
- Street signs should be surveyed and replaced where they may be faded, damaged or broken
- Provide off street parking spaces in existing situations where there are generous grass corner verges
- Some parking spaces for heavy trucks are needed.
- Better pedestrian and cycle routes are proposed to give priority to the safety of people who would choose to walk or cycle.
- The mixed appearance of some of the boundaries and gardens (although in a few places only) is not something that can be easily regulated, but if there is a general wish and sensitive drive to improve the appearance, it may be achieved.



3.23 Public Buildings

Generally

- Rivermeade would benefit from new village centre buildings which could act as landmarks for the place, albeit modest in scale.

Primary School

- Provide pedestrian crossing and traffic calming to school approaches, as proposed in Section 2.6 of the VDFP
- The railings to the school grounds are quite severe. Although it is well maintained, its appearance could be softened, perhaps with more planting in front of the buildings as well as at the entrance

Community Centre

- The present community centre is small and located away from the central part of the village
- Plan for future community resources as part of the village growth and locate in the new central square, as shown in the VDFP Plan
- A community centre in the proposed square may be able to act as a focal point to develop potential for tourism development in the village
- Consider making provision for an outdoor market within the square

3.24 New Village Centre

Generally

- Adhere to the design requirements of the County Development Plan
- New designs should establish the architectural quality, character of a renewed village, and be in scale with the surroundings
- New designs should use a limited palette that does not conflict with existing materials, scale and rhythm
- In new design, find a contemporary, simple, modern expression derived from context and design creatively with it
- Avoid fussy detailing, porches, dormers, overhanging eaves, heavy barge boards - simple is best
- Make quality boundaries, where fronting streets. There are many combined wall and hedge/shrub versions in Rivermeade, which point towards attractive local quality solutions
- There is no need to introduce 'fussy' landscaping – learn from what is there
- Ensure quality 'finishing' of all development in and around the village
- Maturing trees in the village and mature trees around the village are an important part of the distinct character of the village, especially along the river and around the reservoir


3.3 Residential Design Recommendations

Provide a Site Design Statement, (See 3.4), to precede or accompany a planning application.

3.31 Recommendations:

- Design with careful regard to the objectives set out in Fingal County Development Plan and the Local Area Plan. The achievement of high quality, innovative, safe and pleasant residential environments is a key objective
- Avoid typical patterns of estate housing - creative, site-sensitive innovation is desirable
- Allow the form of the land and landscape to shape design
- Residential amenity, environmental sustainability, high standards, quality materials and attractive forms are significant factors
- Apply Sustainable Design Objectives
- Avoid long straight roads in favour of gentle curves
- Provide for cycle and pedestrian routes in development areas to increase permeability and access
- Make a secure, attractive, intimate feeling within development, creating shared space and safe play areas
- Shape design for easy access by children to green areas; design for safe children's play in public areas close to home
- Optimise outlook to green / open space to provide passive surveillance
- Reduce the options of 'front of house' car parking: consider shared and supervised small groups or garage solutions; it will help to create a more attractive, less repetitive environment
- Exploit orientation to increase light and passive solar gain
- Design to reduce the visual clutter associated with rear gardens - sheds, washing lines etc
- Zero carbon design is the aspiration - creating a house which makes a positive contribution to energy conservation
- Avoid overshadowing where light and sunshine may be seriously affected by the adjacency of dwellings
- Use materials judiciously on site to enhance the ambience and create a sense of identity and place
- Create special places of intimate scale within the design
- Promote views to landscape to continue the quality and enjoyment of the landscape around Rivermeade

3.3 Residential Design Recommendations



3.32 Form:

To provide:

- Simple legible forms of varying size and type
- High standard of detailing and workmanship
- Natural roofing materials
- Contemporary design
- Sustainable design

3.33 Materials:

- High quality sustainable materials
- Rendered elevations
- Timber windows and doors preferred
- Provide quality boundary walls, planters, seats and other special areas

3.34 Landscaping and Sustainable Drainage:

- Design and incorporate suitable landscaping, hard and soft
- Design to maximise microclimatic advantage
- New residential development should incorporate planting which takes into account existing tree types and patterns
- Identify plant and tree types at the outset. All external landscaping will require a completion certification to be submitted to Fingal County Council before residential units may be placed on the market

3.35 Soft Landscaping and Sustainable Drainage:

- Make it meaningful - to enhance privacy, to create attractive neighbourhoods or to provide play area
- Learn from existing on-site planting and local planting
- Retain and protect all existing mature, healthy trees and hedgerows
- Promote co-ordinated planting at boundary edges
- Be creative but keep it simple – identify specific types to bring simplicity and cohesion
- Use soft landscaping as an opportunity for permeable drainage surfaces, and make swales (shallow channels in green areas which have the capacity to hold surface water and slow down the entry of water into the local stream).
- Use pervious materials on areas which may normally be hard such as parking areas, and recreational areas. These must be designed as engineering contributions with a high landscape sensitivity.

3.36 Hard Landscaping:

- Minimise hard landscaping; use permeable gravel or hogging where appropriate.
- Quality materials; resist the tendency to cover paved surfaces with cobble effect concrete bricks. The appearance of these areas deteriorates with use, whereas natural stone, appropriate to location, has a more durable lifespan
- Hard landscape space should have a useful purpose. Left over hard surface space may be a future liability.

3.4 Site Design Statement (SDS)

All development must reflect the need to safeguard the quality of village life in Rivermeade, to protect, and to enhance, the character of its environmental assets.

Successful design relies on effective contextual analysis to identify the characteristics of place - scale, character, rhythm, materials, opportunities, challenges and even the oddities in a particular streetscape. The aim should be to stimulate contemporary interpretation and place-making.

This document suggests that all planning applications within Rivermeade should be preceded or accompanied by a Site Design Statement with accompanying contextual photographs and maps. This checklist is not intended to be prescriptive, since each proposal will have its own specific influences and requirements.

An SDS should include the following:

- Introduction - the applicant, the proposal, existing use and planning history if any.
- Planning Requirements - County Development Plan, Local Area Plan, zoning, designations applicable to site or adjoining lands, protected structures, archaeological interest, National Monuments in vicinity
- Development context – existing pattern language, neighbouring buildings, uses, character, materials, scale, rhythm, frontage widths, landscape, etc
- The Site - Site dimensions, topography, orientation, overlooking, views and prospects drainage, plot ratio, site coverage, location and capacity of services and relevant planning conditions
- Proposed Use - main issues, attractor/generator of activity, benefits, challenges
- Urban Opportunity - identify benefits to village
- Design Opportunities - identify the main design issue, including sustainable drainage proposals
- Landscaping Opportunity - vegetation and landscape features
- Vehicular and Pedestrian Opportunities – safe pedestrian routes and linkages
- Preliminary Design Proposal - Summary of design aims, preliminary sketches including Before and After sketches of the streetscape