

Rowlestown

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Village Development Framework Plan
and Design Guidance
Fingal County Council



St Brigid's Church seen from a distance, a mid nineteenth century gothic style Catholic Church. It acts as a landmark in Rowlestown Village.

Drawing in pencil by **Tina Geoghegan**

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The Rowlestown Village Development Plan is part of the Fingal Development Plan 2011 - 2017. It was assembled 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 and Urban Design.

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Rowlestown Village Development Framework Plan and Design Guidance

The Character of the Village and A Vision for the Future

Rowlestown village is diffuse in its layout, yet maintains a beautiful, mature 18th / 19th century local landscape converging on the Broadmeadow River. In this context Fingal County Council seeks to maintain and strengthen its physical character and its local distinctiveness; to guide careful village improvement and to plan for appropriate future growth, whilst protecting the qualities of its built and natural environment. In setting out these guidelines, The following issues are dealt with;

- Distinctive character of the village,
- Current issues, particularly concerning the perceived need for consolidation of development at a village scale and around a village centre.
- The need for conservation, sustainable growth, and the protection of the quality, character and distinctiveness of important assets.

Creating a strategy for sustainable development should deliver not only solid economic and environmental benefits but will also provide an urban design framework, to guide the development of Rowlestown village sustainably into the future.

Policy Context

The challenge of a successful design framework, through the identification of local distinctiveness, is to unlock opportunities and deliver a high quality village environment with improved amenities, a better economic future with potential for tourism. **The Village Development Framework Plan is an advisory plan with a long term vision for the future. It offers support for the Local Area Plan, within the structure of the Fingal County Development Plan.**



19th century old Police Station, now a house in a beautiful mature traditional landscape



Excellent facilities in a recently completed primary school which serves a large hinterland

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Section 1

The Character of the Village

1.1 Introduction and First Impressions

Rowlestown village is about 7km from Swords. For many day-to-day services, village residents must rely on the town. Whilst there are no shops, the village possesses a Roman Catholic church, a Parish community centre and a substantial and attractive recently built Primary School. Thus Rowlestown serves a significant hinterland, despite the absence of shopping facilities. On a September day we were able to observe the preparations for a wedding in the church, the exodus from an ICA coffee morning, and the gathering of parents to pick up their children in the school. For these activities, most people travelled by car, creating an ebb and flow of movement in the area of the church, the school and the community centre. The atmosphere was friendly, informal and village-like with animated conversations on the pavements and outside the school. In the early autumn sunshine the village was captivating. Between the main road R125 and the church it has a unique rural character; village graveyard; old mill beside a robust, restructured bridge with stone parapets; glimpses of the river; avenues of mature trees, including splendid oak and horse chestnut; remarkable vernacular cottage; Rowlestown House gates, and two handsome classical houses of significant architectural quality. This area, delineated as an ACA, confirms the special character of place and makes for a remarkable 'entry' into the social centre of the village.

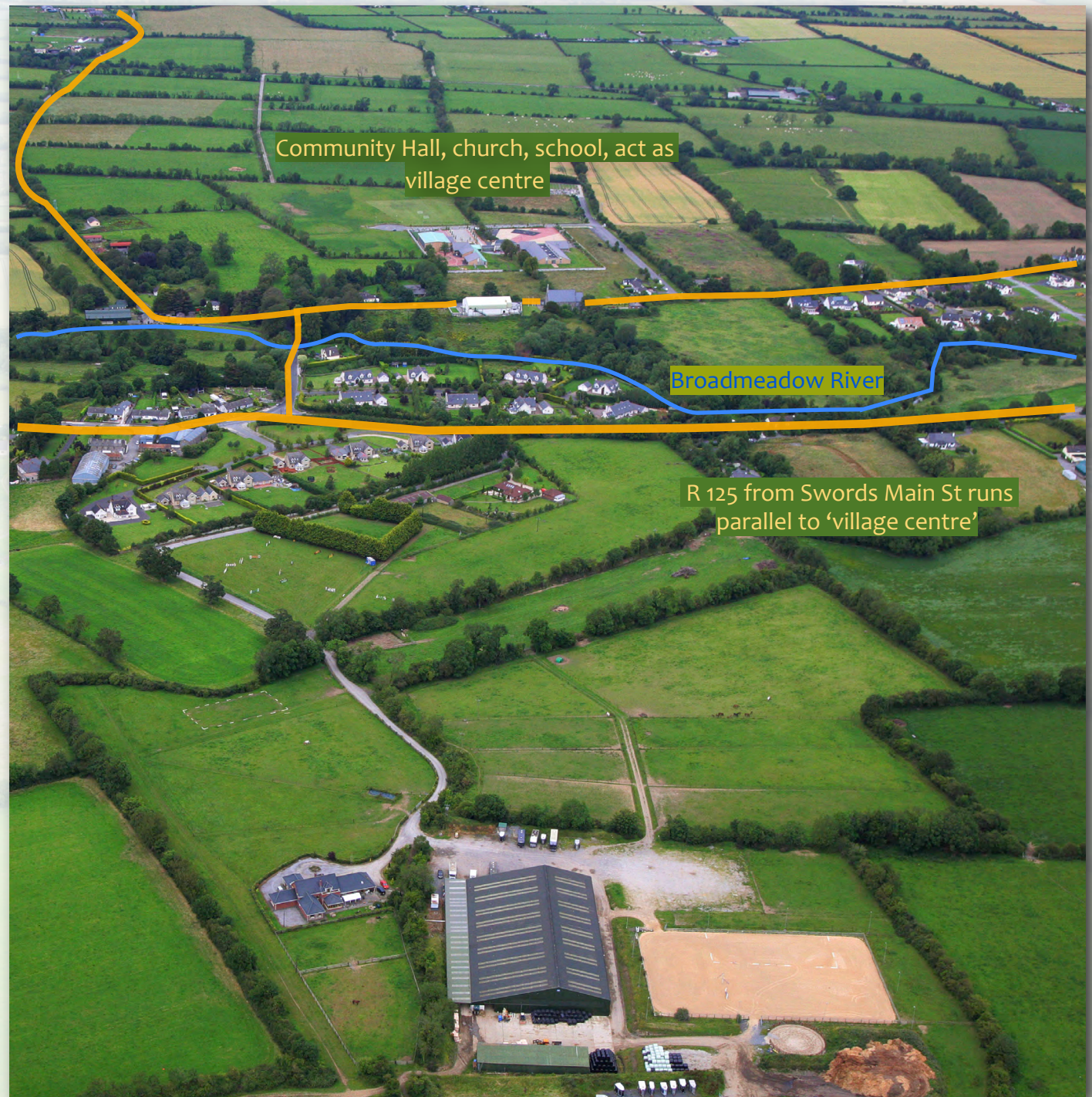


Under a canopy of horse chestnut and oak trees, the lane leads from Church Road across the bridge to the bus stop and the main road; the southern side of Rowlestown

1.2 Village Form

The village has grown with an emphasis on natural features; topography (the slope on the north side of the River is steep in parts), the meandering shape of the Broadmeadow River, and the generous tree-planting of the eighteenth and nineteenth century farming landlords. Despite the growth of the village in recent years, until now there has been a reasonable degree of retention of its natural features. The built form of the village might be described as weak, when examining the apparent *lack* of form in the layout of buildings. Thus, the current village form owes more to its landscape and natural features than to its built ones, although the vernacular buildings, Rowlestown House, church and new school are strong buildings in their own right.

Future development, including those areas which have existing permissions need to be carefully integrated with existing natural features to keep the local distinctiveness of place as village identity.



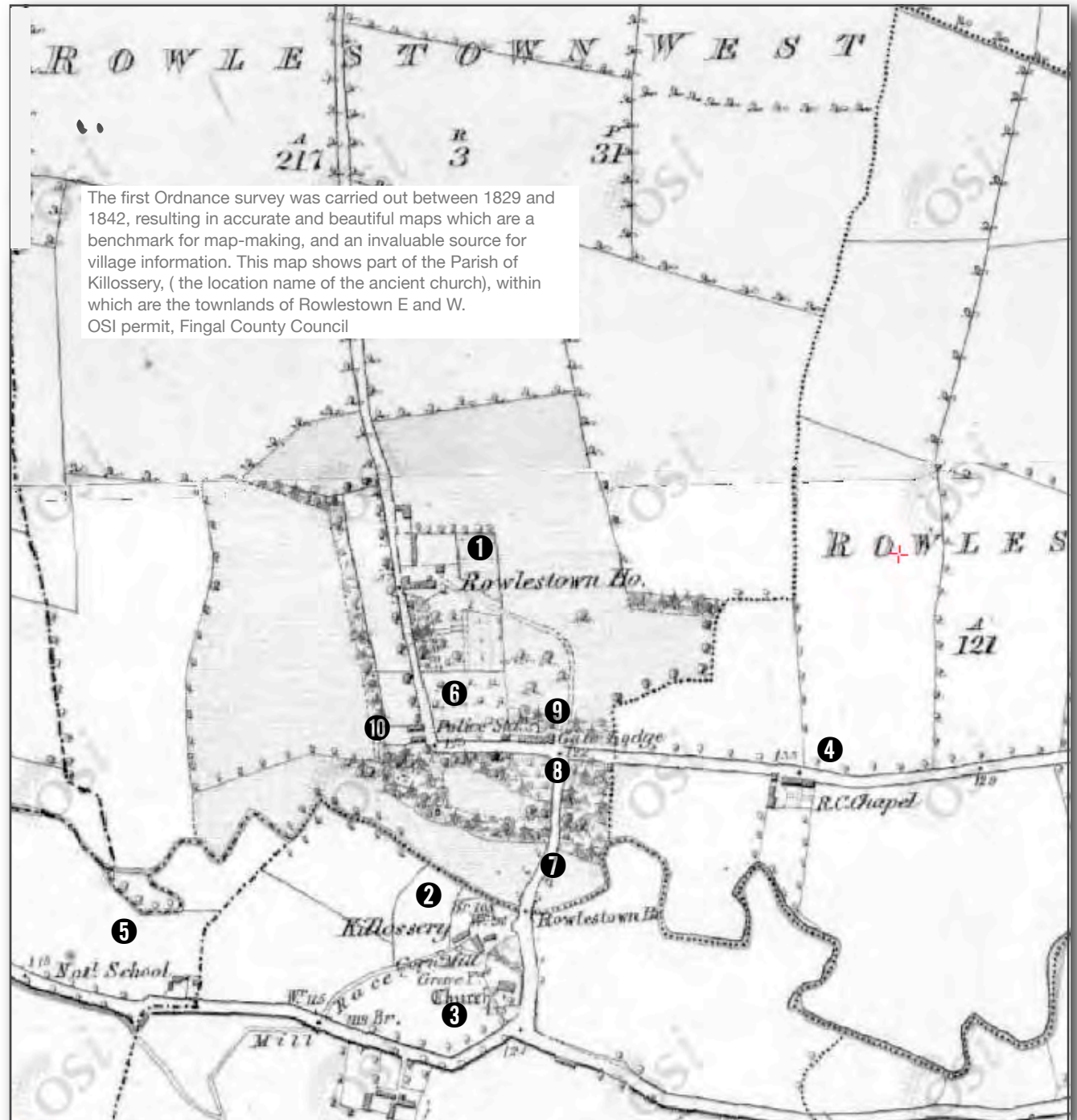
Aerial view, right: long view from the South. The **blue** line traces the line of the Broadmeadow River as it travels through Rowlestown. The **gold** lines show the two parallel roads with connection in the village. The community hall, church and school are on the northern side of the village. They act together as a village centre. There is development land along this road with some potential for growth and consolidation of the centre. The contours between community hall, church and river are steep and will act as a constraint on development. There is now also a 30 metre flood zone on either side of the River as a further constraint to be followed.

1.3 Village Form, historical structure

The OSI 1829-42 map of Rowlestown, **right**, tells the background to the current village structure rather clearly.

- ➊ **Rowlestown House** (c.1760), has acted as the generator of the village, along with:
 - ➋ **Killossery Mill**, an earlier arrival, said to have been there since the sixteen hundreds. The river offered the opportunity for mill races to power the mill, and the road and bridge connected to the local road network.
 - ➌ This area contained an **old church and grave yard**.
 - ➍ The **new church**, named on this map as 'RC Chapel, is now St Brigid's church,
 - ➎ the **National School** and
 - ➏ the **Police station**, were all in existence at the time of this survey.
 - ➐ The **vista** from the bridge to
 - ➑ the **gate** of Rowlestown House, introduces the ornamental drive, now disused, to the House through a planted landscape. Many of these great trees survive, generating a focal point at the junction and the gates to the House.
 - ➒ The **Gate Lodge**, no longer existing, appears on this map, with a roadside frontage.
 - ➓ The **vernacular cottage** with parallel agricultural outbuilding, shown on the cover, is on the corner as the road turns sharply northwards.
- This pattern of development could hardly be described as the *making* of the village, but as often happens, the position of a church creates a focal point and draws in other institutional uses such as the school and community facilities.

The logic behind the positioning of the National School on this map is difficult to understand, other than for its convenience on the roadside for those travelling to and



from the school. It is still removed from the village, and is now disused.

Right, this is a part of the up to date map, which has been superimposed on the first OS map from 1829-42. They show how the village has grown in a haphazard way within the LAP boundary.

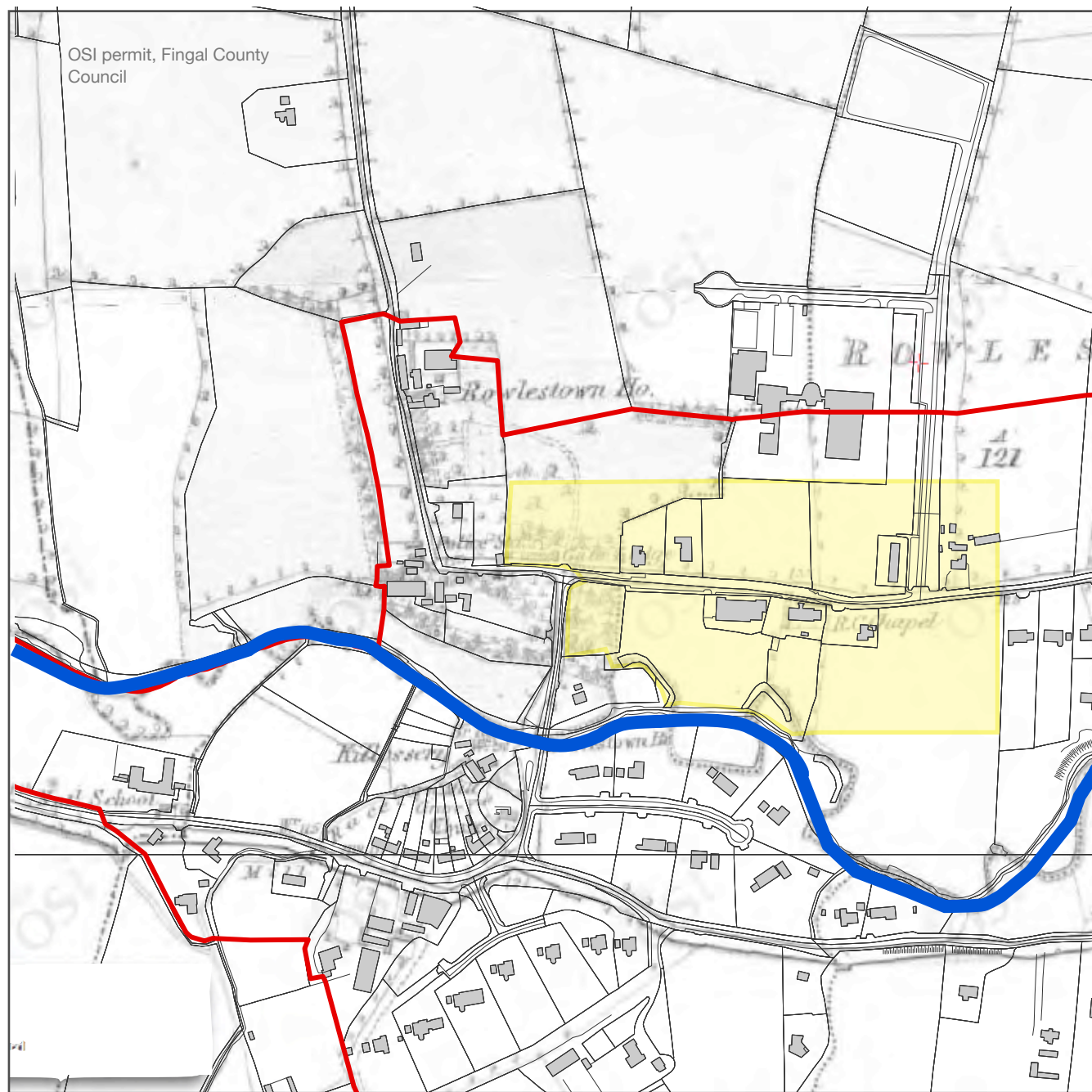
The River has been 'rationalised' to allow for a deeper riverbed, a higher rate of flow and a smoother route with fewer bends.

Despite the haphazard growth and because of;

- the planted areas which have been conserved;
- the new growth of trees, shrubs and hedges on more recent development plots;
- and the preponderance of modest scale bungalow-type houses;

the result is a green and leafy village.

The position of the church and community centre, and the new school, all on the northern side of the river, and away from the main road, is implanting a structure for the future of the village. This plan will propose to further establish the village centre in this area by showing an optimal use of sites along Church Road and around the school. The area shown in pale yellow is proposed for detailed consideration of a developed structure for the village centre.





The Old Mill at Killossery, a remarkable survival of vernacular architecture in the village, used to be a centre of social activity. The gable front fronting the road used to be a shop with a bar behind. Although the interior is in poor condition, there are many elements of structure which may be conserved. It is one of the most important cultural heritage buildings in the village

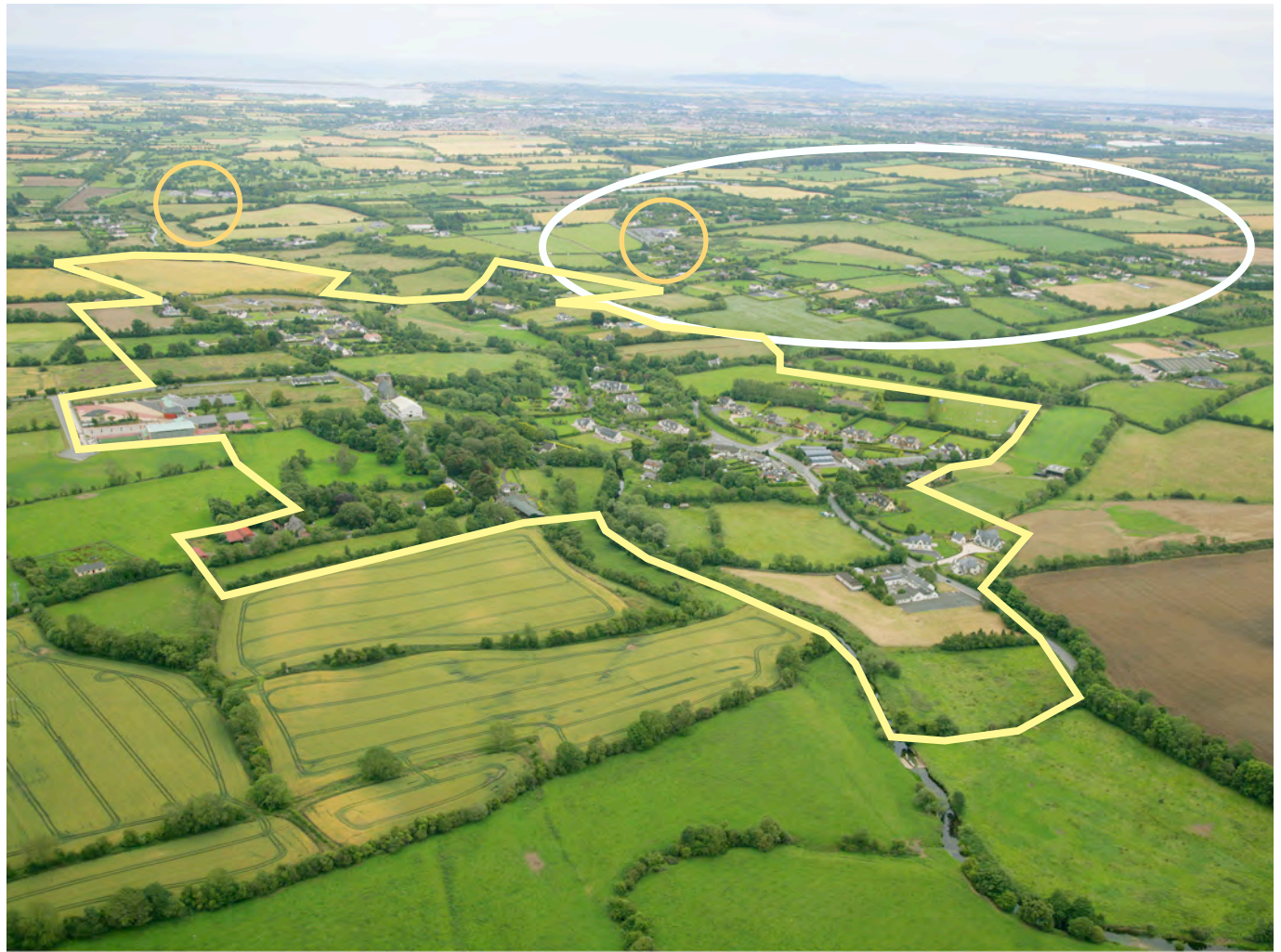
1.4 Economic, Social and Environmental Sustainability Context

1.41 Economic

By the beginning of 2012, the village had grown by 11 units since adoption of the Local Area Plan in 2002. This is a modest growth during the 10 year period. There are now a total of 85 residential units of which 3 are unoccupied. The increase in housing units, from 74 to 85, is just under 13%.

There are outstanding permissions for 197 housing units within the village, plus a further existing houses located at The Rath, to the south of Rowlestown. (See image to right: the area outlined in white oval shape)

This period is very uncertain for development, with bigger macroeconomic issues affecting the process and not solely questions of good planning. However it is a time for review and reassessment of the current situation. The strong landscape context prevails, yet existing permissions at relatively high density threaten its survival as integral to the character of the place. This Framework Plan acknowledges the reality of the development pause and sets out a qualitative structure for the long term future for Rowlestown which underlines the need for environmentally and socially sustainable development. The Plan establishes key development goals for a future attractive and sustainable village which will have the capacity to respond to the economic context as and when the climate permits.



Above: Aerial view looking East, with coastline on the horizon. The yellow line delineates the Local Area Plan Boundary, and the two circles show the locations of Roganstown Golf Hotel, **upper left**, and Kettles Country House Hotel, **upper centre**. The dark grey oval shape shows substantial recent ribbon development outside the village boundary which links to Kettles and beyond, about 70 houses, approaching the total number of houses within the village boundary (85). There is also a Garden Centre in this area.